

Development Dialogue

Programme: European MSc in Occupational Therapy (wo-master)
Variant: Part time
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Participating auditors: Ursula Costa (panel member)
Mark Delmartino (panel Secretary)

“A long standing programme with a unique profile”

As a final part of its two accreditations¹, the European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy programme (OT-EuroMaster) held a development dialogue with the Secretary of the panel, Mark Delmartino, and one of the panel members, Ursula Costa. From the programme, the two directors Debbie Kramer-Roy (Director Education) and Claudia Galli (Director Organisation) and two module coordinators Ton Satink (module 2 coordinator) and Natalia Rivas Quarneti (module 4 coordinator) were present.

As a starting point of the dialogue, the panel summarized their feedback and suggestions. The aim of the dialogue was to further discuss this feedback and to contribute to the development of the programme. Two themes were discussed more in depth: the long-term strategy and the option of a Joint degree.

The long-term strategy of the OT-EuroMaster

The panel had noted the lack of an up-to-date strategy document which outlines the aims of the programme in a long-term perspective and which shows how and why the international construction of the programme is so important to achieve the learning aims. A clear vision and mission would outline “where the programme wants to go” and what it wants to further develop. Such a document would also be very helpful for marketing activities, making the unique selling points of the OT-EuroMaster more explicit. In addition formulated values will also help to further develop the branding of the programme.

The external experts and the present programme members were in agreement that the uniqueness of the programme lies in the combination of making intercultural collaboration and learning happen, in combination with the research orientation of the programme, and the theoretical foundation in Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science.

In view of a future strategy document, it was discussed how more Eastern European students or partners could be involved and how focusing on European values would still offer unique selling points that are relevant for potential non-European students. The strategy document should also outline what the unique contribution the OT-EuroMaster can be for different societies or communities.

Suggestion: The external experts strongly suggested to develop a long-term strategy paper which emphasizes the uniqueness of the programme and which clarifies its internationalization goals. This document should make clearer why internationalization is at the core of the construction of the programme and how this serves the aims of the programme. Additionally, it should also highlight that the programme is a research-oriented programme which provides high level education in research for Occupational Therapists, including intersectionality and diversity aspects.

¹The European MSc in Occupational Therapy participated in the experiment with institutional accreditation and a lighter programme accreditation. Therefore, only standards 1 and 4 were assessed. The Self-Evaluation Report was prepared for the re-accreditation of standards 1 and 4 by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) and the re-assessment for the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation (CeQuint) by the ECA.

Joint degree and other further development options

The OT-EuroMaster is a jointly offered programme, but not a formal “Joint Degree”. Being formally accredited as a joint degree could provide further stability also in view of political developments where internationalization of education is being questioned.

The change of one institution within the partnership raises the question about becoming a formal Joint degree forward again. Additionally, in view of the need to develop a new strategy, a series of ideas for further development of the programme was explored. For example:

- Joint degree: What would a joint degree add to the programme? Would it strengthen its profile? What implications would this have regarding accreditation, quality assurance, admission processes, policies and the collaboration among the partners?
- Develop a European PhD-programme? The richness of research expertise among the partnership could be a strong starting point, although it would be a different/additional scope for the partnership.
- Develop an additional programme with a more global perspective? What could be the opportunities and risks of such a development? Again, this would add a different scope to the partnership.

The discussion showed that the ‘joint degree option’ should be discussed again in depth within the consortium in order to arrive at a clear position and decision in this regard. The other ideas would lead to a new scope and maybe also to a new composition of the cooperation, but the OT-EuroMaster partnership could initiate or stimulate such a development.

Suggestion: The OT-EuroMaster is offered by a solid and long-standing cooperation of five partners. For further development, the above discussed questions regarding a joint degree should be explored in order to arrive at a clear position and decision in this regard.