

Information Package as Facilitating Tool for Student Mobility in European-Asian Credit Transfer System (EACTS) Student Exchange Program

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Abstract: - This paper intends to give an overview of the role of Information Package to facilitate student mobility in the EACTS student exchange program. It basically provides students with an overall view of the institution itself, locations, academic courses, administrative procedures necessary to register and general information for students such as accommodation and facilities around the institution. The Information Packages acts as guidance for new, foreign or exchange students studying in the respected institution. Besides that, students also acquire the desired information the traditional way which is direct counseling between counselor and student or just by paying a visit to the foreign office of host institution.

Key-Words:- EACTS, Information Package, Credit Transfer, Student Mobility

1 Introduction

A consortium of four partner universities namely Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, University of Indonesia, and University of Parma, Italy is currently developing a European-Asian Credit Transfer System or EACTS. The project is funded by the EU-Asia Link Program. The Asia-Link Programme was launched at the beginning of 2002 as an initiative by the European Union to foster regional and multilateral networking between higher education institutions in EU Member States and South Asia, South-East Asia and China. The program aims to provide support to European and Asian higher education institutions in the areas of

human resource development, curriculum development and institutional and systems development.

With the title “Contribution towards an EU-ASEAN Credit Transfer System leading to Implementation of Student Mobility and Joint-Award Degree Programs in Engineering Education”, the EACTS project focuses by its two-fold specialisation: firstly, the facilitation of student mobility between two specific regions, namely Europe and ASEAN. Secondly, it specializes on student mobility within engineering education.

The aim of the project is to develop and establish a Credit Transfer System for the implementation of joint venture initiatives between EU and ASEAN

countries on engineering education program so as to facilitate the implementation of transnational student mobility (EU-ASEAN CTS).[1]

The project also aims to support mutual understanding between the partner institutions on the differences in educational and cultural systems in order to support student mobility and joint degree programmes. Finally, the project aims to establish joint-venture initiatives for engineering education degree programmes between the four partner institutions, by combining phases of education at different partners, with the final aim of offering joint-award degree programmes.

This paper intends to give an overview of the role of Information Package to facilitate student mobility in the EACTS student exchange program.

Currently, Information Packages are available in most institutions. It basically provides students with an overall view of the institution itself, locations, academic courses, administrative procedures necessary to register and general information for students such as accommodation and facilities around the institution. The Information Packages acts as guidance for new, foreign or exchange students studying in the respected institution. Besides that, students also acquire the desired information the traditional way which is direct counseling between counselor and student or just by paying a visit to the foreign office of host institution.

The ECTS has also developed its own Information Packages. Institutions, which use ECTS, will produce their own Information Package containing all the

relevant information for students. They are circulated to partner institutions for students and professors to consult and use in planning study abroad program [2]. However, the desired EACTS Information Package will give focus on facilitating the student mobility between the EU and ASEAN region. One set of Information Package will be developed which contains all relevant information from all partner universities.

2 Outline of proposed Information Package

The Information Package/ Course Catalogue (IP/CC) is one of the most important documents of the EACTS system. It contains a description of the institution, the degree courses offered, detailed description of each individual course unit or didactic module, as well as academic and practical information for both the local and the mobile student.

In EACTS, the IP/CC contains two parts; Part One: Information on the Institution, Part Two: Information on degree programmes and Part Three: General information for students. Detailed description of each part is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Details checklist for the Information Package/Course Catalogue

Part One: Information on the Institution

- Name and address
- Academic calendar
- Academic authorities
- General description of the institution (including type and status)

<p>Description and address of the Engineering Faculty, corresponding website, and of the related Departments, websites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of degree programmes offered in the engineering field - List of student exchange programmes - List of Double Degree programmes <p>List of partner institutions involved in EACTS mobility agreements in engineering (exchange and double degree)</p> <p>The following information should be given under the respective exchange/ Double Degree programme unless the same regulations/deadlines are valid for all exchange/ Double Degree programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for mobility programme (requirements, procedures & deadlines) • Admission/registration procedures & status of enrolment of exchange or double degree students (including info on fees and payment) • Main university regulations (notably recognition procedures, including info on EACTS recognition documents) • EACTS co-ordinators/ responsible personnel
<p>Part Two: Information on degree programmes</p> <p>(to be compiled only for the Double Degree programs or for the programs involved in the specific exchange)</p> <p>A) General description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification awarded • Admission requirements • Educational and professional goals • Access to further studies • Course structure with EACTS credits • Final examination, if any • Examination and assessment regulations

<p>B) Description of individual course units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course title • Course code • Type of course • Level of course • Year of study • Semester/trimester • Number of credits • Name of lecturer • Objectives of the course (preferably expressed in terms of learning outcomes and competences) • Prerequisites • Course contents • Recommended reading • Teaching methods • Assessment methods • Language of instruction
<p>Part Three: General information for students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of living • Accommodation • Meals • Medical facilities • Facilities for special needs students • Insurance • Financial support for students • Student affairs office • Study facilities • International programmes • Practical information for mobile students • Language courses • Internships • Sports facilities • Extra-mural and leisure activities • Student associations <p>FAQ</p> <p>Teaching and learning cultures (main features (e.g. focus on independent self-study in Germany) and curious details (e.g. the ‘academic quarter’ at German Universities)</p> <p>Type of classes (e.g. what is a lecture, tutorial, etc.)</p> <p>Benefits of mobility</p> <p>Pointer to a description of the national education system (focus on higher education)</p>

The IP/CC of an institution is to be published in English and in the local language of instruction where different, on the Web and/or in hard copy. It is not uniquely conceived for mobile students; it should rather be considered as a document used by all students, local and visiting. Experience shows that the IP/CC considerably simplifies the task of understanding and comparing study programmes, both for students and staff, local and foreign.

Setting up and maintaining the IP/CC is a relevant and costly effort, although well paid in terms of international visibility. One of the objectives of the EACTS system is encouraging partner institutions to gradually set up a documentation, which may eventually evolve towards a full IP/CC.

To this aim, when a student applies for mobility in the framework of an EACTS exchange program, both the home and host schools shall make available to the EACTS community at least the sections of the Information Package concerning the degree programmes in which the student is enrolled in the home and host institution, and the detailed course/didactic module programs pertinent to those degree programs. This information is made available to the EACTS community on the EACTS Web site, either directly or as links to web sites maintained at the partner universities, supplemented by the indication of the date of creation. It is strongly recommended that each partner institution take care to maintain the documentation provided up-to the-date; in any case the documentation should be updated in correspondence of each new student exchange. The “up front” work required to set up an IP/CC according to

the EACTS style is thus replaced by “just in time” work, minimizing the corresponding effort. In this way, as the number of mobile students increases, the amount and scope of the information made available becomes larger and larger, ultimately resulting in the availability of complete information packages for the partner universities.

3 Special Features of proposed EACTS Information Package

Among the special features which will be included in the EACTS Information Package are:

3.1 Supplements Academic Information

This includes all academic information containing the grading system and conversion, amount of accumulated credit to be transferred or taken, information regarding the requirement for industrial placement and final dissertation. The supplement academic information may also include the partner institution’s local language and cultural requirements.

3.2 Envisaged Target of IP

The IP also will not only benefit the exchange students but also the academic staff of the corresponding institutions. Aside from being useful to potential exchange students, info on IP is also useful to other foreign students not on exchange programme. An example of the EACTS Information Package is currently available and may be viewed at www.fb9dv.uni-duisburg.de/dd/ for the students of partner institutions who are interested in continuing their studies in

University of Duisburg – Essen, Germany.

3.3 Questionnaire

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the distributed Information Package, a survey will be conducted at the Information Package target domain. The purpose of such survey is to gather and analyse feedback from all the potential students and academicians, not only from the partner's institutions but also from other institutions that show interest in the EACTS program. Figure 1 below illustrates an extract of such a survey questionnaire.

Figure 1: Example of Questionnaire distributed in EACTS Information Package

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Word document with the following content:

General

1.1. Duration of stay abroad

1.1.1. How long do/ did you plan to stay at the host institution abroad (in weeks)?

1.1.2. How long have you stayed? (If you are still abroad please estimate, in weeks)

1.2. Study level of student when going abroad and study objective

1.2.1. At which stage of your study did you go abroad?

1.2.2. What are/were your objectives for your study period abroad? (more than one answer possible)

Courses Thesis Internship Double Degree

1.3. Which were the requirements for participation in the exchange programme? (more than one answer possible)

4 Conclusions

This paper reports an overview of the role of Information Package to facilitate student mobility in the EACTS student exchange program. In particular, the EACTS IP focuses on facilitating the student mobility between the EU and ASEAN region.

It provides students with an overall view of the institution itself, locations, academic courses, administrative

procedures necessary to register and general information for students such as accommodation and facilities around the institution. The Information Packages acts as guidance for new, foreign or exchange students studying in the respected institution. Besides that, students also acquire the desired information the traditional way, which is direct counseling between counselor and student or just by paying a visit to the foreign office of host institution.

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[2] ECTS Information Package, *ECTS – European Credit Transfer System. A common language for academic recognition.*

<http://www.archweb.metu.edu.tr/programs/ects.htm> (accessed: 4/20/2007)