



Agentur für
Qualitätssicherung
und Akkreditierung
Austria

Summary report – Joint Master's Programme 'Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG)'

A Consortium of cooperating universities approached AQ Austria, on behalf of University of Salzburg (PLUS), to conduct an external quality assurance assessment based on the *European Approach for Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes* (European Approach, short: EA) of the Joint Programme "Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG)". According to the EA, cooperating higher education institutions (HEI) can select a suitable quality assurance agency registered in the European Register for Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR). AQ Austria is an EQAR-registered agency. By granting accreditation to joint programmes, AQ Austria confirms the compliance of the respective Joint Programme with Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) according to the EA. The Joint Programme in Political Science (PoSiG) was first accredited in 2016 by AQ Austria¹, and re-accredited by the German quality assurance agency ZEvA in 2024².

Since then, the Joint Programme has been further developed as part of the 'Joint MA Programme in Political Science' (JoPScip) project. This project is funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) programme (project number 101128841; duration: 36 months, 2024–2027). Universities from Georgia, Armenia, Austria and North Macedonia are collaborating on this EU-funded project. The accreditation procedure coordinated by AQ Austria in 2025 focused on integrating and diversifying the established Joint Programme due to the addition of new universities.

1 Accreditation decision

At its 93rd meeting on 25th June 2025, the Board of AQ Austria dealt with the review report of the review panel of the Joint Master's Programme 'Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG)' and decided to grant accreditation without conditions for a period of six years to the

Joint Master's Programme Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG)

¹ See: https://www.aq.ac.at/de/akkreditierte-hochschulen-studien/dokumente-entscheidungen-au/PoSiG_summary-report_20170411.pdf?m=1494233799& (as of 25/06/2025)

² See: https://www.zeva.org/site/assets/files/1576/0917_european_approach_accreditation_report_u_salzburgfinal_zeko.pdf (as of 25/06/2025)

The accreditation of the Joint Programme is valid until 24th June 2021. The Joint Programme is implemented at the hereinafter named Universities of the Consortium:

Austria, Salzburg:	Paris Lodron University of Salzburg (PLUS)
Albania, Tirana:	European University of Tirana (UET)
	University of Tirana (UTIR)
Armenia, Yerevan:	Yerevan State University (YSU)
	Eurasia International University Yerevan (EIU)
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo:	University of Sarajevo (UNSA)
	Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST)
Georgia, Tbilisi:	Tbilisi State University (TSU)
	Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)
Italy, Trieste:	University of Trieste (UNITS)
North Macedonia, Skopje:	Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM)
Kosovo, Prishtina:	University of Business and Technology Prishtina (UBT)
	University of Prishtina (UP)

2 Short information on the accreditation procedure

The Consortium on behalf of PLUS, submitted a self-evaluation report (SER) on 23/02/2025. On 19/03/2025, the Board of AQ Austria decided on the nomination of the following review panel members:

Name	Function and Institution	Area of competence
Dr. Stephan H. Astourian	American University of Armenia (Yerevan, Armenia) and MAIRD Programme and Director, Turpanjian Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)	Field: History and politics of the Modern Caucasus, Armenia, and the Middle East
Ass.-Prof. Dr. Zarina Burkadze	Ilia State University of Georgia (Tbilisi, Georgia), Founding member and secretary general of the Georgian Association for Public Opinion Research	Field: Political Science
Prof. Dr. Davor Trlin	International Burch University (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and No Omega (Business consulting - scientific research and experimental development in the social sciences and humanities)	Field: International law and diplomacy, Public administration
Tim Bendix Thiessen, BA	Goethe-University Frankfurt a.M. (Frankfurt am Main, Germany)	Field: Master Programme - International Studies/Peace and Conflict Research

A site visit took place in Salzburg at PLUS on 29/04/2025, which was conducted by the review panel members and project-coordinator from AQ Austria.

3 Subject matter of the application and key information on the profile of the study programme

Information on the applicant consortium	
Applicant institution (Lead partner on behalf of the PoSiG Consortium)	Paris Lodron University of Salzburg (PLUS) - Salzburg (Austria) https://www.plus.ac.at/politikwissenschaft/studium/joint-master-political-science-integration-and-governance-PoSiG/
Consortium partners/sites of study	<p>Austria, Salzburg: Paris Lodron University of Salzburg (PLUS)</p> <p>Albania, Tirana: European University of Tirana (UET) University of Tirana (UTIR)</p> <p>Armenia, Yerevan: Yerevan State University (YSU) Eurasia International University Yerevan (EIU)</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo: University of Sarajevo (UNSA) Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST)</p> <p>Georgia, Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University (TSU) Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)</p> <p>Italy, Trieste: University of Trieste (UNITS)</p> <p>North Macedonia, Skopje: Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM)</p> <p>Kosovo, Prishtina: University of Business and Technology Prishtina (UBT) University of Prishtina (UP)</p>
Programme title	PoSiG - Joint Master's Programme in Political Science - Integration and Governance
Website	https://PoSiG.info/
Type of study programme	Joint Master Programme
ECTS-credits	120
Duration of programme	4 Semesters
Planned number of students per academic year	Intake capacity per year: Until 2022/23, the annual intake capacity was 15 students; all students started at PLUS. With the recent curriculum reform – due to the enlargement of the PoSiG Consortium, a higher annual intake per year is possible. Students can start at the first semester as of 2025/26 at all sites – e.g. PLUS, UKIM, SSST, UP, GIPA, TSU, YSU and EIU. In particular, YSU has a minimum number of 10 students to start the programme (8 with special decision from the rector); TSU, EIU and GIPA have a minimum of 5.

Academic degree/degree giving/issuance of certificate	Depending on the national requirements (e.g. denomination, performance, formal) and the student's path, the award of a joint or a double degree is possible. Overall, a joint degree can only be awarded after a student has completed his/her studies in compliance with the curriculum by attending at minimum two and maximum four PoSiG Consortium member universities (90 ECTS-credits from course of the programme, and 30 ECTS-credits for the Master's thesis and its defence). The PoSiG Consortium is overall issuing a certificate with all partners logo's and signatures. PLUS – Master of Arts (MA) UET - Master of Science (MSc) UTIR - Master of Science (MSc) YSU – Master of Arts (MA) EIU – Master of Arts (MA) UNSA – Master of Arts (MA) SSST – Master of Arts (MA) TSU - Master of Science in Political Science (MSc) GIPA Master of Science in Political Science (MSc) UNITS - Joint Master's Degree in Political Science - Integration & Governance UKIM - Master of Science in Political Science (MSc) UBT Master of Arts (MA) UP - Master of Arts (MA)
Organizational form	Full-time
Language/s	English
Tuition fee	https://PoSiG.info/finances-and-scholarship/

The Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG) is based on international standards and benchmarks of teaching political science in accordance to level 7 of the European Qualification Framework and to second cycle qualification of the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). The 13 partner institutions contribute with their specific academic profiles in

- Comparative Politics,
- European Integration,
- International Relations,
- Public Administration and Policy,
- Political Theory and
- Methodology.

4 Assessment and recommendations of the review panel report dated 11/06/2025, following the consortium's statement on the report dated 28/05/2025, issued on 05/06/2025.

“(Expert from Review Panel Report 11/06/2025) [...] Summary and final evaluation

The review panel appreciated the welcoming and collaborative environment observed during the on-site visit, as well as the inclusive nature of the Joint Master's Programme in Political

Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG). The programme provides students with the essential skills and qualifications required for various careers in political science, with a particular focus on the Western Balkans and - due to the enlargement - South Caucasus regions and their integration into European institutions. The joint Master's programme brings together universities with diverse research backgrounds and cultures. It offers five distinct modules covering political theory, comparative politics, public administration, international relations and European integration. In addition to these modules, students must complete compulsory and optional courses, as well as defend their Master's theses. The joint faculty is qualified and ready to educate students. Furthermore, the review panel found that the PoSiG programme is specifically designed to align with EQF Level 7 and the second cycle of the QF-EHEA. The review panel concluded that the joint programme effectively prepared graduates for suitable employment in fields such as academia, international programme management, the media and political organizations, aligning with their career goals. The flexible mobility programme, enhanced by JoPScip to incorporate additional entry points, facilitates various academic and professional pathways. However, the review panel made a number of recommendations to ensure the effective implementation of the Joint Master's Programme and to create equal opportunities for all participating students and partner universities. The recommendations aim to ensure that the joint pathway is not lost in any area of developing and implementing the joint programme. The PoSiG Consortium has grown to a size that requires even more attention to ensure that the essence of a joint programme is not lost.

Final Assessment

The review panel's recommendation to the Board of AQ Austria is to decide in favour of the extension of the PoSiG Joint Master's Programme to universities from Armenia and Georgia, acknowledging its strong adherence to the standards set out in the European Approach and its commitment to providing a shared educational experience. The review panel would like to highlight specific features of the joint programme in the commendation issued. The recommendation should support further commitment to enhancing the quality of the joint programme, ensuring that the Consortium does not lose sight of the essential requirement of jointness, which goes beyond all necessary national requirements that must be in place and which have been considered in the Partnership Declaration.

The review panel recommends that the Board of AQ Austria grant accreditation to the Joint Master's Programme in Political Science — Integration and Governance (PoSiG) as a whole, and supports the recommendations for further improvement and quality safeguarding issued to the Consortium."

Standard	Assessment	Recommendations	Commendations
Standard 1: Eligibility			
1.1 Status	The standard is met		
1.2 Joint design and delivery	The standard is met		The review panel congratulates that consortium members share specific methodologies for studying political science. By expanding their partnerships, consortium members can identify areas of complementarity and thoroughly explore the various dimensions of political science. This is of the utmost importance, since national systems are becoming increasingly dependent on integration, necessitating the development of internal capacities and the promotion of collaboration.
1.3 Cooperation Agreement	The standard is met	Once the national and regional circumstances for participation have been resolved, the review panel recommends that the University of Belgrade and the University of Montenegro sign the Partner Declaration and contribute as full implementing partners to the PoSiG Consortium.	
Standard 2: Learning Outcomes			
2.1 Level	The standard is met	The review panel recommends that by the start of the academic year 2025/26, the PoSiG Consortium should evaluate in detail that all partner institutions, including the newly integrated partners (YSU, EIU, TSU, GIPA), have implemented a standardized process for aligning course learning outcomes with EQF Level 7. The outcome should include sample course syllabi and assessment methods from each partner, verifying the delivery of advanced knowledge, critical analysis, and independent research skills.	The review panel commends the joint programme for its clear alignment with Level 7 of the EQF and the second cycle of the QF-EHEA. The review panel is convinced that this ensures graduates acquire the advanced, specialized knowledge and critical skills necessary for leadership roles in governance, diplomacy and academia. The programme's emphasis on highly specialized knowledge and complex problem-solving is a significant strength.
		While the programme excels in Political Science expertise, the review panel recommends that the Consortium evaluate the	The review panel commends the programme's ability to allow

		possibility of incorporating training in digital tools for data analysis (e.g. big data and AI-driven policy modelling). This would further align with the emphasis on cutting-edge skills in rapidly evolving professional fields at EQF Level 7.	students to tailor their specialization through module selection and mobility across partner universities. This supports the development of individualized learning paths and enhances the programme's ability to meet a range of advanced professional and academic goals.
		The review panel recommended that the Consortium evaluate the introduction of explicit leadership training components, such as workshops or courses on strategic decision-making and policy advocacy. This would maximize the programme's effectiveness in preparing participants for high-level roles.	The review panel commends the programme's focus on managing complex and multicultural settings, which is facilitated by international mobility. This aligns well with the expectations of EQF Level 7 regarding autonomy and professional judgement. This means that students are well-prepared for a dynamic environment.
2.2 Disciplinary Field	The standard is met	The review panel recommends that the Consortium ensure the balance of the expanded course offerings (85 new/revised courses) is maintained across all subfields, particularly Political Theory and Methodology, as these may be underrepresented in the portfolios of newer partners. Continuous evaluation processes will support this task..	The review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing comprehensive coverage of Political Science subfields, ensuring a robust disciplinary foundation enriched by the diverse academic profiles of the expanded PoSiG Consortium. Integrating regional expertise from new partners in Armenia and Georgia enhances the programme's relevance to contemporary political challenges in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. The collaborative development of module descriptions and course syllabuses demonstrates a shared disciplinary vision and ensures coherence across diverse institutions.

2.3 Achievement	The standard is met	The review panel recommends the Consortium to develop targeted retention strategies, such as enhanced academic advising and mentorship programmes, to reduce drop-out rates across all student groups, with particular attention to addressing the challenges faced by students who switch to other programmes.	The review panel congratulates the Consortium on its success in placing graduates in diverse, high-quality professional roles, which demonstrates that it has achieved its intended learning outcomes. The flexible mobility scheme, which will be expanded by the new partners, is also worthy of praise. It allows students to tailor their academic experience to their career goals, thereby enhancing their employability. The structured internship component effectively bridges the gap between academic learning and practical application, as evidenced by its role in developing research interests for the Master's thesis.
		Additionally, the review panel recommended that the Consortium establish a formalized alumnus tracking system (in addition to the recent to the site visit started LinkedIn network) to systematically document graduate achievements and provide data for future accreditation reports, particularly given the expanded PoSiG Consortium.	
2.4 Regulated Professions	Not applicable		
Standard 3: Study Programmes			
3.1 Curriculum	The standard is met		The review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing a comprehensive programme offering qualifications and skills for various traditional political science careers, with a particular focus on the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus, and their integration into European institutions. Resulting from significant collaborative work, the PoSiG programme is highly

			integrated and based on the main sub-fields of Political Science.
3.2 Credits	The standard is met		
3.3 Workload	The standard is met	While workload monitoring is the responsibility of each partner at this point, the review panel recommends making every effort to promote greater jointness of that monitoring.	
Standard 4: Admission and Recognition			
4.1 Admission	The standard is met	The review panel recommends the Consortium to update and clarify the information about the admissions and selection process provided on the PoSiG website.	
4.2 Recognition	The standard is met		
Standard 5: Learning, Teaching and Assessment			
5.1 Learning and Teaching	The standard is met	The review panel recommends that the "Jour-Fixe" Internship & Field Experience sessions are consistently implemented at (now) all first-year universities (e.g., YSU, TSU, GIPA, EIU) to support students in the expanded PoSiG Consortium, with clear guidelines for local coordinators.	The review panel is satisfied that the student-centred approach adopted by the Consortium, reinforced by a flexible yet integrated curriculum and mobility scheme, effectively supports diverse learning needs and fosters independent academic development. Another added benefit is that comprehensive training for instructors, delivered through workshops and teaching academies, ensures the consistent application of modern teaching methods across the Consortium, including new partners.
		The review panel therefore recommends that the Consortium conducts regular peer reviews and teaching observations across all partner institutions, to ensure that the student-centred approach and constructive alignment are applied uniformly, particularly at newer partner universities with less PoSiG experience.	
5.2 Assessment of students	The standard is met	The review panel recommends the establishment of an integrated mechanism, such as a subcommittee of the existing QAB, to periodically review assessment practices across all partners, ensuring alignment with PoSiG standards. This is	The review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing a robust collaborative framework and transparent documentation.

		especially relevant for new partners (YSU, EIU, TSU, GIPA) to ensure consistency with established Consortium	The review panel also commends the Consortium for its harmonized grading system, its inclusive approach to disability.
		In light of the growing diversity of Consortium partners resulting from geographical expansion of the Consortium, the review panel recommends ensuring uniform training in quantitative methods and R software.	
Standard 6: Student Support			
	The standard is met	The review panel recommends creating official and formal contact points for students across the programme, addressing the current lack of a centralized support mechanism.	The review panel supports the idea of holding a similar exchange event to the Teaching Academy for the different university administrations in 2026. This would provide an opportunity to inform and facilitate the administrations, as well as giving them the chance to share information. The review panel strongly supports this in to streamline administrative processes and overcome common issues concerning the programme.
		The review panel recommends developing stronger communication channels between support services at different universities, facilitate information sharing and administrative coordination, and executing exchange events for administration (currently proposed for 2026).	Another outstanding aspect that the review panel commends is the regular "Jour-Fixe" meetings in Salzburg every 4–6 weeks, as well as the informal meetings with the coordinators. These efforts are highly appreciated and seem to have a positive effect on students' wellbeing.
		The review panel recommends improving student involvement by establishing stable election procedures for the ASB, enabling remote participation in the ASB and enabling participation in the "Jour-Fixe" remotely for all PoSIG-students.	Lastly, the review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing excellent internship support and Erasmus+ scholarships to all students for at least two semesters. These efforts can considerably ease the burden of studying and, at the same time, ensure economic

			stability and promote equal opportunities for students facing financial hardship.
		The review panel recommends creating a unified digital platform for students and alumni to socialize, exchange experiences, network and support each other, but also to organize politically to provide feedback for the programme.	
Standard 7: Resources			
7.1 Staff	The standard is met	The review panel recommends providing more attention to administrative staff, as well as training for this group, since they play a vital role in dealing with foreign graduate students.	
7.2 Facilities	The standard is met	The review panel recommends that the PoSiG Consortium ensures the joint creation of digital and online resources, tools and programmes, and provides the necessary facilities for their joint implementation and for sharing responsibility for supporting enrolled students.	
Standard 8: Transparency and Documentation			
	The standard is met	The review panel recommends enhancing the SH and website with the help of students, in to provide consolidated support information and detailed guidance on navigating multiple universities.	
		The review panel also recommends considering the creation of a unified digital platform for programme-wide communication and resource sharing.	
		The review panel also recommends implementing information sessions or other formats to introduce partner universities, explain administrative procedures and support student mobility.	
Standard 9: Quality Assurance			
	The standard is met	The review panel recommends the Consortium further strengthening a collective quality assurance mechanisms, including the (re-)definition of shared quality benchmarks, regular cross-institutional audits, and the establishment of a centralized platform for sharing best practices and resources.	
		The review panel recognizes the existing governance structures, such as the CB and other relevant bodies, but recommends and encourages the Consortium to further strengthen their coordinating and governing role in quality assurance and strategic programme development and decision-making, to ensure consistent communication and alignment across partner universities.	

5 Decision of the AQ Austria Board

The Board of AQ Austria decided in its 93rd meeting on 25th June 2025, to grant accreditation for six years to the Joint Master's Programme 'Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG)'. The accreditation is valid until 24th June 2031.

The requirements defined in the relevant standards are being met. The recommendations proposed by the review panel and supported by the Board of AQ Austria are aiming to encourage the further development of the Joint Master's Programme. Essentially, the AQ Austria Board shares the review panel's assessment that, given the now extensive number of partner universities from various regions, the momentum of 'jointness' must not be lost in favour of 'regional approaches'.

The Board of AQ Austria based its **decision** on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) from 23/02/2025, and supporting documents submitted by the Consortium and the Review Panel Report from 28/05/2025 as of 11/06/2025. The final Review Panel Report took the Statement of the Consortium on factual accuracy from 05/06/2025 into consideration and amended the report where needed.

6 Annex

- Review Panel Report as of 11/06/2025
- Statement of the Consortium as of 05/06/2025

Expert report

PLUS_JoPScip-PoSiG_EAP_2025

Joint Master's Programme in Political Science - Integration and Governance –

Erasmus+ CBHE project "Joint MA Programme in Political Science"

Vienna, 11/06/2025

Overview of the accreditation procedure	3
Preliminary remarks.....	6
Assessment and evaluation pursuant to European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (EA)	8
1. Eligibility	8
1.1 Status	8
1.2 Joint design and delivery	10
1.3 Cooperation Agreement.....	12
2. Learning Outcomes	15
2.1 Level [ESG 1.2].....	15
2.2 Disciplinary field.....	16
2.3 Achievement [ESG 1.2]	19
2.4 Regulated Professions	20
3. Study Programme [ESG 1.2]	21
3.1 Curriculum	21
3.2 Credits	22
4. Admission and Recognition [ESG 1.4]	23
4.1. Admission.....	23
4.2. Recognition	24
5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3].....	25
5.1 Learning and teaching	25
5.2 Assessment of students	26
6. Student Support [ESG 1.6]	28
7. Resources [ESG 1.5 & 1.6].....	30
7.1 Staff.....	30
7.2 Facilities.....	31
8. Transparency and Documentation [ESG 1.8].....	32
9. Quality Assurance [ESG 1.1 & part 1]	33
Summary and final evaluation	36
Viewed documents	44
Glossary	44

Overview of the accreditation procedure

Information on the applicant consortium	
Applicant institution (Lead partner on behalf of the PoSiG Consortium)	Paris Lodron University of Salzburg (PLUS) - Salzburg (Austria) https://www.plus.ac.at/politikwissenschaft/studium/joint-master-political-science-integration-and-governance-PoSiG/
Consortium partners/sites of study	<p>Austria, Salzburg: Paris Lodron University of Salzburg (PLUS)</p> <p>Albania, Tirana: European University of Tirana (UET) University of Tirana (UTIR)</p> <p>Armenia, Yerevan: Yerevan State University (YSU) Eurasia International University Yerevan (EIU)</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo: University of Sarajevo (UNSA) Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST)</p> <p>Georgia, Tbilisi: Tbilisi State University (TSU) Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)</p> <p>Italy, Trieste: University of Trieste (UNITS)</p> <p>North Macedonia, Skopje: Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM)</p> <p>Kosovo, Prishtina: University of Business and Technology Prishtina (UBT) University of Prishtina (UP)</p>
Programme title	PoSiG - Joint Master's Programme in Political Science - Integration and Governance
Website	https://PoSiG.info/
Type of study programme	Joint Master Programme
ECTS-credits	120
Duration of programme	4 Semesters
Planned number of students per academic year	<p>Intake capacity per year:</p> <p>Until 2022/23, the annual intake capacity was 15 students; all students started at PLUS. With the recent curriculum reform – due to the enlargement of the PoSiG Consortium, a higher annual intake per year is possible. Students can start at the first semester as of 2025/26 at all sites – e.g. PLUS, UKIM, SSST, UP, GIPA, TSU, YSU and EIU. In particular, YSU has a minimum number of 10 students to start the</p>

	programme (8 with special decision from the rector); TSU, EIU and GIPA have a minimum of 5.
Academic degree/degree giving/issuance of certificate	<p>Depending on the national requirements (denomination, requirements) and the student's path, the award of a joint or a double degree is possible. Overall, a joint degree can only be awarded after a student has completed his/her studies in compliance with the curriculum by attending at minimum two and maximum four PoSiG Consortium member universities (90 ECTS-credits from course of the programme, and 30 ECTS-credits for the Master's thesis and its defence). The PoSiG Consortium is overall issuing a certificate with all partners logo's and signatures.</p> <p>PLUS – Master of Arts (MA) UET - Master of Science (MSc) UTIR - Master of Science (MSc) YSU – Master of Arts (MA) EIU – Master of Arts (MA) UNSA – Master of Arts (MA) SSST – Master of Arts (MA) TSU - Master of Science in Political Science (MSc) GIPA Master of Science in Political Science (MSc) UNITS - Joint Master's Degree in Political Science - Integration & Governance UKIM - Master of Science in Political Science (MSc) UBT Master of Arts (MA) UP - Master of Arts (MA)</p>
Organizational form	Full-time
Language/s	English
Tuition fee	https://PoSiG.info/finances-and-scholarship/

The applicant consortium, represented by PLUS, submitted the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) on 23/02/2025. According to the decisions from the Board of AQ Austria on 19/03/2025, the following experts were nominated for this procedure:

Name	Function and Institution	Area of competence
Dr. Stephan H. Astourian	American University of Armenia (Yerevan, Armenia) and MAIRD Programme and Director, Turpanjian Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)	Field: History and politics of the Modern Caucasus, Armenia, and the Middle East
Ass.-Prof. Dr. Zarina Burkadze	Ilia State University of Georgia (Tbilisi, Georgia), Founding member and secretary general of the Georgian Association for Public Opinion Research	Field: Political Science
Prof. Dr. Davor Trlin	International Burch University (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and No Omega (Business consulting - scientific research and experimental development in the social sciences and humanities)	Field: International law and diplomacy, Public administration
Tim Bendix Thiessen, BA	Goethe-University Frankfurt a.M. (Frankfurt am Main, Germany)	Field: Master Programme - International Studies/Peace and Conflict Research

A site visit was held at PLUS on 29/04/2025, representatives from the Consortium, particularly those involved in the "Curriculum Development—Joint Master Programme in Political Science (JoPSic)"-project, participated in the visit.

Preliminary remarks

The subject of the AQ Austria-coordinated external quality assurance procedure was the accreditation of a Joint Master Programme in **Political Science**. On behalf of the Consortium, the University of Salzburg (PLUS) has requested an external quality assurance evaluation in line with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (EA). The programme has been (further) developed within the scope of the JoPScip-project, financed by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) funding scheme (project number 101128841, duration: 36 months, 2024–2026). Under the umbrella of this EU-funded project, universities from Georgia, Armenia, Austria, and North Macedonia have been collaborating up. The participating institutions in this EU-funded project are:

- University of Salzburg (PLUS),
- Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM),
- Tbilisi State University (TSU),
- Georgian Institute for Public Affairs (GIPA),
- Yerevan State University (YSU),
- Eurasia International University (EIU).

The key features of the Joint Programme are characterized by:

- An integrated curriculum jointly developed by the Consortium with contributions from all partners.
- Common admission criteria and procedures, ensuring coordinated student recruitment and selection.
- Unified examination procedures and joint regulations, distinguishing it from dual degree programmes.
- Joint internal quality assurance practices that leverage the added value of collaboration and go beyond individual institutional policies.
- Mobility for students and staff, fostering international and intercultural exchange.

The PoSiG programme was initially accredited by AQ Austria in 2016/2017. The joint programme was initially developed also with funding from the European Commission in 2015. UKIM and PLUS were already collaborating in the so-called "PoSiG" project. PLUS had a leading role in Euro PS, while GIPA has a leading role in the JoPScip projects.

The joint programme has been re-accredited by the German ZEVA in 2024. Within the remit of the re-accreditation the Consortium has been enlarged with universities from Montenegro and Serbia. However, both are currently not implementing partners of the PoSiG programme.

A key outcome of the current JoPScip project is the expansion of the existing PoSiG cooperation network. With the inclusion of universities from Georgia (TSU, GIPA) and Armenia (YSU, EIU), the Consortium grows further, enhancing its regional and academic reach. Unlike the extensive (new) curricular development within PoSiG, JoPScip focused on refining and updating existing curricular content. Additionally, it facilitated amendments to the partner agreements, ensuring alignment with the Consortium's expanded structure. JoPScip should enable PoSiG to explore new study tracks and broaden the range of courses available, strengthening the programme's academic diversity and appeal.

The PoSiG Consortium has ensured that the four new universities meet the fundamental requirements for participation in Joint Master's Programmes. Due to the history of the

cooperation within the PoSiG Consortium, this evaluation focuses on the capacity of the new Consortium partners to integrate into the joint programme framework, particularly assessing compliance with key standards.

Regarding the SER, the review panel would have liked more detailed explanations and critical reflection, particularly about the challenges posed by the enlarged Consortium.

The site visit in Salzburg on 29/04/2025, played a crucial role in evaluating the Joint Master's Programme's adherence to essential standards regarding eligibility, learning outcomes, curriculum, admissions and recognition, teaching and assessment methods, student support, resources, transparency and documentation, as well as quality assurance. The review panel had the opportunity to examine the concept of "jointness" within the Consortium in addition to the discussions on the curriculum.

The review panel acknowledges and values the positive and welcoming attitude of the consortium members, especially the representatives from PLUS, who effectively hosted and organized the site visit. The consortium members also showed enthusiasm, dedication and commitment to the further development and design of the Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG).

The review panel has given its endorsement to the proposed submission of application for external quality assurance procedure aimed at the accreditation of a Joint Programme in Political Science. The review panel found that all required standards were met. The review panel made recommendations for further quality improvements, where deemed appropriate.

The review panel commends the Consortium for its specific methodologies in studying political science, comprehensive coverage of political science subfields, expansion of partnerships, willingness to transition to a *fully* joint degree-awarding system, placement of graduates in diverse, high-quality professional roles, and commitment to a student-centred approach, which is reinforced by a flexible curriculum and mobility scheme.

In summary, the review panel is satisfied with the robust collaborative framework, transparent documentation, harmonized grading system, inclusivity for individuals with disabilities, and support for joint degree awarding. Despite these positive assessments, the review panel has presented several recommendations for the PoSiG Consortium to consider for the purpose of quality improvement.

Assessment and evaluation pursuant to European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (EA)

1. Eligibility

1.1 Status

The institutions that offer a joint programme should¹ be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree(s) should ensure that the degree(s) belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based.

¹ The Standards use of the common English usage of "should" which has the connotation of prescription and compliance.

Review Panel Assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and Evaluation

The review panel received all relevant information regarding the recognition of the joint programme and the involvement of consortium members as higher education institutions by the respective national authorities. The Joint Master's Programme "Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG)" was designed in the course of the Erasmus + project "Curriculum Development Joint European Political Science MA (EuroPS)" in 2016. Initially, PoSiG was accredited by the Board of AQ Austria with conditions. All other Consortium member universities are registered as higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as entitled under their respective national legislations to participate in a joint master programme, and issue a joint degree or a double degree. According to the SER, the JoPScip project, composed of a series of meetings, held meetings in May 2024 with representatives from ministries, quality assurance agencies (QAAs), rectorates, administrative and academic staff in Armenia and Georgia. These meetings aimed at assessing the conditions for joint programmes and to aim as well to supporting the national implementation of the EA in these countries. Within the scope of the initial accreditation and reaccreditation of the PoSiG programme, the question of the national implementation of the EA has been discussed in depth, as has the legal status of joint programmes and the possibility of joint degree awards.

For improved clarity, the review panel offers a concise overview of the national legal frameworks of the Consortium partners (in alphabetical order) and examines how these frameworks facilitate their participation in the joint program and the awarding of a joint degree.

For instance, the review panel discovered that for the two universities in **Albania** involved, once a program is launched, it must go through an accreditation process. In this regard, the institutions can assess the program through a Quality Assurance Agency that is either a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) or listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). During this process, the Albanian higher education institution must seek prior approval from the National Accreditation Board based on the collected information. The review panel notes that while the higher education law does not require an initial evaluation from an international agency, it also does not prohibit it.

As a full member of ENQA, **Armenia** acknowledges accreditations carried out under the European Approach via the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA). Armenian national law mandates that universities inform ANQA by sending an official letter before starting the accreditation process. Thus, it is recommended for universities to take this action without delay. After the accreditation decision is reached, the outcomes will be recorded in the official register. At the time of the site visit, the process was ongoing in a final state. Also, during the on-site visit, experts discovered that Consortium member universities have experience in implementing double degree programs. However, Armenia strives to develop joint degree programs by establishing agreements in the fields of mathematics, physics both at the national and international level. For instance, Yerevan State University seeks to collaborate similarly with Humboldt University. Consequently, the mechanisms, practices and experiences necessary to enhance joint degree programs are already in place. Nevertheless, issuing a single joint diploma may involve legal complexity.

In the case of **Austria**, the European Approach is applicable because the Austrian partner is a public university. Overall, the European Approach is fully implemented in Austria, beside public universities, also for private university colleges, private universities and universities of applied science. Public universities in Austria have the right to self-accredit their study programs. PLUS is currently taking all necessary measures to self-accredit the Joint Programme, in concrete the additional extensions due to the JoPSic project.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the relevant ministry is primarily focused on licensing of new study programs. According to the relevant legal framework, it can be inferred that both partners from Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely the UNSA and SSST, are positioned to initiate a joint programme without needing to go through an additional national accreditation process initially. According to the information provided, the joint programme will however not be included in the state register of accredited higher education institutions and study programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Currently, no additional actions are required from higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canton Sarajevo, regarding the expansion of the programme.

In the case of **Georgia**, the Accreditation Charter of Georgia acknowledges the decisions made by foreign agencies. As per the charter, when evaluating compliance with accreditation standards for joint higher education programs conducted in partnership with foreign institutions recognized by another country's laws, the quality assurance methods established by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) are considered. The accreditation of a higher education program, including joint programs developed in line with Georgian legislation, can be conducted by a foreign organization with the necessary accreditation and recognized by the National quality assurance agency (NCEQE). NCEQE accepts accreditation from organizations that are members of ENQA and are listed in the EQAR, operating within EU member states, the United Kingdom, and the member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), as authorized by their national laws. The higher education institution must provide NCEQE with relevant information about the chosen organization and the educational program, including the program title, qualifications to be awarded, programme components, total credits, and credit distribution. Recognition is granted based on the statement submitted by the higher education institution to NCEQE, the report made by the review panel from the foreign organization, and the foreign organization's decision (AQ Austria) regarding the programme's accreditation.

Italy has officially adopted the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. Currently, they are waiting for the EQAR website to be updated to show this change. Thus, it is recommended to the University of Trieste (UNITS) to adhere to this process

for the recognition and accreditation of Joint Programmes in accordance with the European Approach.

For partners from **Kosovo**, it has become clear that the National Quality Assurance Agency (KAA) recognizes and validates the accreditation of study programs that have been accredited by a foreign agency that is a full member of ENQA or is listed in EQAR. In this case, KAA acknowledges the foreign accreditation for the duration specified by that agency. Consequently, even though the existing procedures in Kosovo do not provide clear regulations for the accreditation of joint programmes, focusing instead on the accreditation of transnational study programmes, there are no restrictions on implementing the EA in Kosovo.

The review panel learned that the partner from **North Macedonia**, specifically the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, a national accreditation process must occur in accordance with national regulations, regardless of the individual accreditation process carried out under the European Approach. North Macedonia's legal framework allows joint degrees to be established through collaborative agreements. Also, according to the SER, the review panel found that there is no direct approval of the outcome of the EA accreditation; however, the decision made by the Board of AQ Austria will be used in the accreditation process.

In the case of **Montenegro**, the review panel learned from the EQAR database that a comprehensive quality assurance system has been implemented across the country. According to the SER, the review panel found that, despite their ongoing interest in joining the PoSiG Consortium, universities in Montenegro experience excessive administrative challenges in implementing the joint programme. To facilitate their possible future involvement, their credentials are retained in the relevant documents. The same applies to the partner from **Serbia**, the University of Belgrade. This university is also not currently an implementing partner. Both joined the PoSiG Consortium during the time of re-accreditation of the initial PoSiG programme in 2023, but are currently not implementing partners.

The award of the degree is subject to different national regulations and denominations, such as Master of Arts and Master of Science qualifications, as indicated in the Diploma Supplement (DS). Consequently, the DS reflects that a joint degree may not always be possible based on the student's academic path. Not all partners can award Master of Arts (MA). The review panel recognizes the willingness of the Consortium to transition to a *fully* joined degree-awarding system. Nevertheless, their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree.

1.2 Joint design and delivery

The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme.

Review Panel Assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and Evaluation

The JoPSic project's Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and interviews with consortium members during the site visit revealed that the participating universities have developed a joint master's programme in Political Science, alongside a multilateral management framework. The core foundation was laid during the initial PoSiG development. The cooperating universities aim to contribute jointly to the Europeanization project by exchanging the best academic practices between European Union (EU) partners and partners in the Western Balkan and the South

Caucasus. Collaborations among universities positively influenced curriculum (further) development, the design of module and course descriptions, and syllabi.

From the outset of the PoSiG programme, a sense of collaboration was evident, and this spirit has continued throughout the process of further developing the programme within the JoPScip framework. This collaboration includes meetings of the coordinators and quality boards, as well as teacher workshops and academies. The programme is presented to students as a comprehensive and cohesive “package”. Teacher academies have played a vital role in overcoming cultural differences between the participating universities.

The international exchange of students, along with the exchange of academic staff, serves as a key indicator of joint design and delivery in education for this program. This programme leverages regional resources and researchers to support these objectives, while ensuring to maintain global standards in teaching and research. This joint initiative fosters networking, mutual understanding, and the exchange of diverse skills. The Western perspective on political science studies has been crucial, as has the geographical proximity of the regions (the South Caucasus and the Western Balkan). In light of the foregoing, the review panel concludes that the standard for the joint delivery of the program has been met. Students are granted the freedom to organize their studies from the outset by selecting foundational theoretical and methodological courses at the PLUS and other partner universities from the Western Balkan and the South Caucasus along with other additional courses. The partners express satisfaction with the division of responsibilities and consider themselves to be on equal footing.

According to the SER, the Erasmus+ KA2 capacity building project known as EuroPS supported the PoSiG initiative, while the Erasmus+ capacity building project, JoPScip, provided funding for the creation of a Master's program in Political Science within the Eastern Partnership area. As the project evolved, it was combined with the existing PoSiG Consortium, leading to the joint design and delivery of 85 courses, and intending to expand PoSiG.

Commendation:

- The review panel congratulates that consortium members share specific methodologies for studying political science. By expanding their partnerships, consortium members can identify areas of complementarity and thoroughly explore the various dimensions of political science. This is of the utmost importance, since national systems are becoming increasingly dependent on integration, necessitating the development of internal capacities and the promotion of collaboration.

1.3 Cooperation Agreement

The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement should in particular cover the following issues:

- Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme
- Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.)
- Admission and selection procedures for students
- Mobility of students and teachers
- Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

According to the SER, the review panel learned that the partner institutions signed a *Partner Declaration*, which is to be understood as a Cooperation Agreement. *The Partner Declaration* addresses the following issues in line with the terms and conditions of the joint programme:

- the program objectives
- admission of students PoSiG courses and teaching Staff
- examination regulations, Master's theses and Master's thesis defences and the degree awarding
- multilateral programme coordination
- information, documentation, and transparency
- participation costs and business plan
- duration, amendment, review, and termination of the Agreement
- application of the law of Austria to govern the institutional declaration
- conflict resolution

In addition, the consortium members provided different appendixes to the implementation of the curriculum, criteria and procedure for student selection, convention for the conversion of grades, quality management handbook, examination and teaching books, including forms for course and module description, student services and student elections, diploma supplement.

- The "Denomination of the degree(s)" awarded in the programme is covered under the 5th section of the *Partner Declaration (Awarding the Joint Degree)*. According to this provision of the declaration, the joint degree shall only be awarded after the student has completed his/her studies in compliance with the PoSiG curriculum by attending at minimum two and maximum four PoSiG Consortium member universities (90 ECTS-credits from course of the programme, and 30 ECTS-credits for the Master's thesis and its defence). The denomination of the degree depends on the various national requirements - Master of Arts - Master of Science (with extension or not) and others - as of the DS. Therefore, the DS shows that, depending on the students' path, not always a joint degree can be awarded - it also depends on where the students deliver the core of the courses. The denomination of the degree is different, and not all consortium member universities can award the joint degree.
- The joint diploma is issued at a PoSiG Consortium university where a student defends the Master's thesis, and it is accompanied by the diplomat supplement (as of Article 3 of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, 11 April 1997) detailing the student's academic achievements at all consortium member universities. A (joint) certificate containing the logos of all PoSiG consortium members (PoSiG-CM) universities signed by all the member universities the student attended during the PoSiG studies is additionally issued. The PoSiG Executive Director is responsible for the diploma issuing process, and

also assisted by the PoSiG coordinators from all consortium member universities at where the student attended his or her studies.

- The coordination and responsibilities of the partners regarding management and financial organization (including funding, cost and income sharing, etc.) are regulated under the so-called "Multilateral Programme Coordination" provision of the *Partner Declaration*. To ensure effective coordination and equal responsibility for quality assurance, each consortium member nominates a Programme Coordinator (PC) who is responsible for implementing the programme in accordance with the *Partner Declaration*. The PoSiG programme includes coordinating institutions to guarantee academic and administrative effectiveness. Such institutions are: The Coordinators' Board (CB), which is responsible for the academic and strategic coordination of the PoSiG programme; the selection of students; the allocation and award of scholarships when they are available; applications for national and international projects and grants; financial management; and the inclusion or exclusion of new PoSiG Consortium member universities. The Quality Assurance Board (QAB), in which each member university nominates a quality manager to: supervise the CB in coordinating the programme; review the design and management of instruments providing top-quality teaching and learning practices; evaluate course and master's thesis supervision and examination quality; and prepare quality assurance reports for external reviewers. The Alumni and Student Board (ASB) is responsible for representing students' rights and interests, supporting and reviewing the decisions of the CB and QAB, and nominating one or two ASB members to the QAB. Decisions are made by consensus; however, if consensus cannot be reached, the board members decide by a simple majority. During the site visit, consortium members stated that they treat international students similarly to local students, adhering to international standards. They do not require additional incentives or resources, as these are already available. Internal grants serve as an additional resource for students, providing motivation to engage with local staff. However, hourly rates vary based on local regulations of consortium members.
- The admission and selection procedures for students are regulated by the second provision of the *Partner Declaration*, which states that the CB selects and registers students as joint degree candidates based on the common admission criteria outlined in an appendix to the *Partner Declaration*. Candidates must choose their specialization modules and the consortium member universities they intend to attend during both semesters of their first year, as they are required to complete a minimum of four terms at two different PoSiG-CMs. Regular student registration is valid for the entire study cycle at all consortium member universities that the student will attend (a minimum of two and a maximum of four). PoSiG coordinators document the registration of PoSiG students. This registration eliminates the need for records of general and specific university entrance qualifications and their legalization. Joint degree candidates must adhere to the standard rules, regulations and enrolment procedures of the host institutions, registering only with the host institution for the parts of the PoSiG programme that fall under its responsibility. Students on the PoSiG programme will receive all the benefits of candidates on 'mobility programmes' regarding registration procedures and support services, such as supervision, language training, accommodation and social integration. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, all partners apply their own policy on tuition fees.
- According to the SER, the mobility of students and teaching/support staff is supported by Erasmus+ funds (KA131 and KA171). During the on-site visit, the review panel found that, according to the internal processes of one of the PoSiG member universities, a mobility competition is announced twice a year. During this period, professors and

educators present their proposals. Candidates then participate in an interview and, upon their return, are required to write a one-page report. For example, one of the consortium members mentioned that they currently have 18 active EU agreements. Returning professors conduct sessions for local teaching staff, sharing best practices for internationalization. Another representative of a member university noted that a course costing €4,000, in addition to travel and accommodation expenses, has been offered in Belgrade and Austria. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to collaborate with colleagues on research projects and expand one's professional network. Grants are available for semester- and full-year programmes, with small contributions from the home university for students amounting to €120–€150 per day. Professors can deliver three weeks of instruction and also provide online courses. However, consortium member universities do not permit online courses only, as a student-centred approach requires more than just online teaching. They utilize a guest lecturer format to facilitate mobility, integrating guest lecturers into existing courses based on their needs and capabilities. They also offer internal research grants at the faculty level. Each year, they announce grants that are also available to bachelor's and master's students.

- The review panel found that the examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree-awarding procedures within the PoSiG Consortium are addressed in the fourth provision of the Partner Declaration and in the self-assessment report. The assessment and grading criteria and methods are published in advance on the following webpage: PoSiG.info. Each PoSiG-CM is responsible for course and module examinations. To standardize local grades into a unified grading scale, the PoSiG-CM grading convention, which is based on the European Credit and Transfer System grading system (ECTS-grading system), is utilized. Master's theses are supervised by two instructors from different PoSiG-CM universities. Supervisors have a relevant academic background in relation to the thesis topic. The final defence of the MA-thesis takes place before an examination board led by the local PoSiG coordinators at the university where the student completed their studies. This board includes both thesis supervisors and two examiners specializing in the student's area of study. Members of the examination board are drawn from all PoSiG-CM programmes that will confer the joint degree. The board collectively determines the final grade for the master's thesis. According to the SER, the PoSiG Examination Book (EB) aims to document students' academic progress as part of Annex E to the Partner Declaration. Apart from recording students' progress, the EB communicates students' needs to the coordinator at the next university during the mobility phase. Students cannot schedule their master's thesis defence at the programme's conclusion without completion verification in the examination book, along with the transcript of records from the universities they attended. In summary, the EB is essential for monitoring the required courses outlined in the curriculum, and it lists all courses approved by the coordinators. The ECTS is being implemented correctly, with each module carrying 18 credits. Essentially, each course should carry six credits. Furthermore, during the on-site visit, the consortium members provided additional information about the assessment methods and stated that they do not centralize this process because local regulations apply. Centralization may lead to contradictions, so they rely on - as stated - European guidelines instead. Teachers incorporate these jointly developed guidelines into their frameworks, which are reflected in the course descriptions used in PoSiG and in assessments. They emphasize a student-centred approach as opposed to a teacher-centred approach. They believe that this aligns with a research-based teaching methodology. The catalogue includes approximately hundred master's courses, representing a significant body of knowledge. The courses primarily focus on foundational texts (80%), while the second component emphasizes

methodology. This approach promotes clear harmonization and multilateral cooperation, which will be utilized within this research-centred framework. The consortium's special topic seminars provide valuable opportunities to integrate research into teaching.

Recommendation:

- Once the national and regional circumstances for participation have been resolved, the review panel recommends that the University of Belgrade and the University of Montenegro sign the Partner Declaration and contribute as full implementing partners to the PoSiG Consortium.

2. Learning Outcomes

2.1 Level [ESG 1.2]

The intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s).

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The review panel finds that the PoSiG programme is explicitly designed to align with Level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the second cycle of the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). The SER articulates this alignment, emphasizing that the curriculum focuses on advanced knowledge, critical analysis and independent research skills. The programme's structure, which requires 120 ECTS-credits to be completed over four semesters, supports the development of specialized political science competencies, as demonstrated by the requirements for the Master's thesis and internship. The expanded PoSiG Consortium, incorporating new partners from Armenia and Georgia through the JoPScip project, maintains this level by ensuring that all partners offer courses that adhere to these standards, as outlined in the jointly developed module descriptions and course syllabuses. At EQF Level 7, PoSiG graduates are expected to demonstrate highly specialized knowledge and critical awareness of knowledge issues. They should also demonstrate specialized problem-solving skills and the ability to manage complex environments, as well as effective communication and leadership skills. Their mastery of political science theories and practices, with a focus on integration and governance, enables them to contribute to original research and policy development. This includes region-specific expertise in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus, establishing graduates as authorities on Europeanization processes. The project gives them the competence to develop innovative strategies for political and societal issues, supported by advanced methodological training and the practical experience gained through internships and thesis work. The programme's international mobility requirement enables them to work in unpredictable and multicultural settings. Students develop autonomy and professional judgement, preparing them for leadership roles in governance, diplomacy or academia. Through their studies, they learn to communicate research findings, policy recommendations and strategic solutions to diverse audiences, including academic, professional and public stakeholders, thereby fostering effective engagement in political and civic spheres. The review panel is convinced that the alignment of the programme with EQF Level 7 ensures that graduates are prepared for advanced professional roles and academic careers in political science. The curriculum's emphasis on student-centred learning enables individuals to customize their studies by selecting two specialization modules from five options and choosing partner universities that align with their academic and professional objectives. This flexibility,

combined with rigorous academic standards, ensures that PoSiG graduates meet EQF Level 7 expectations, equipping them for careers in public administration, international organizations, NGOs, diplomacy, the media and academia.

Recommendations

- The review panel recommends that by the start of the academic year 2025/26, the PoSiG Consortium should evaluate in detail that all partner institutions, including the newly integrated partners (YSU, EIU, TSU, GIPA), have implemented a standardized process for aligning course learning outcomes with EQF Level 7. The outcome should include sample course syllabi and assessment methods from each partner, verifying the delivery of advanced knowledge, critical analysis, and independent research skills.
- While the programme excels in Political Science expertise, the review panel recommends that the Consortium evaluate the possibility of incorporating training in digital tools for data analysis (e.g. big data and AI-driven policy modelling). This would further align with the emphasis on cutting-edge skills in rapidly evolving professional fields at EQF Level 7.
- The review panel recommended that the Consortium evaluate the introduction of explicit leadership training components, such as workshops or courses on strategic decision-making and policy advocacy. This would maximize the programme's effectiveness in preparing participants for high-level roles.

Commendations

- The review panel commends the joint programme for its clear alignment with Level 7 of the EQF and the second cycle of the QF-EHEA. The review panel is convinced that this ensures graduates acquire the advanced, specialized knowledge and critical skills necessary for leadership roles in governance, diplomacy and academia. The programme's emphasis on highly specialized knowledge and complex problem-solving is a significant strength.
- The review panel commends the programme's ability to allow students to tailor their specialization through module selection and mobility across partner universities. This supports the development of individualized learning paths and enhances the programme's ability to meet a range of advanced professional and academic goals.
- The review panel commends the programme's focus on managing complex and multicultural settings, which is facilitated by international mobility. This aligns well with the expectations of EQF Level 7 regarding autonomy and professional judgement. This means that students are well-prepared for a dynamic environment.

2.2 Disciplinary field

The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The PoSiG programme is firmly rooted in political science and covers the following key subfields: Comparative Politics, European Integration, International Relations, Public Administration and Policy, Political Theory and Methodology. The expanded PoSiG Consortium enhances the programme's interdisciplinary scope by leveraging the unique academic profiles of new partners, particularly those in the South Caucasus, who contribute regional expertise on political developments. The flexibility of the curriculum, which allows students to choose two out of five

specialization modules, ensures depth while accommodating diverse interests. The addition of 85 new or revised courses by the JoPScip project (60 from Armenia and Georgia, and 25 from UKIM and PLUS) strengthens the programme's relevance to regional political contexts, thereby enhancing its appeal and applicability. In addition, the Joint Master's Programme (PoSiG) covers the field of political science, with a specialized focus on integration and governance in the context of Europeanization and regional political dynamics in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the programme integrates complementary perspectives from related social sciences and humanities to provide a comprehensive understanding of political processes, institutions and policies. This disciplinary foundation provides students with the theoretical, methodological and practical tools required to analyse and address complex political and societal challenges in a globalized world.

At its core, PoSiG is grounded in political science, emphasizing the study of political theories, institutions, actors, processes and policy fields. The programme is structured around five specialized modules that define its political science framework: Political Theory; Comparative Politics; Public Policy and Administration; International Relations; and European Integration. These modules provide students with a robust education in Political Science, equipping them with the skills to critically analyse political phenomena, develop evidence-based solutions, and engage with governance challenges at local, national, and supranational levels.

While Political Science is the programme's primary disciplinary focus, PoSiG also incorporates interdisciplinary perspectives to enhance students' understanding of integration and governance. The programme draws on insights from four related fields: law, economics, sociology, and history. For instance, law offers a framework for grasping the legal basis of governance, including EU law, constitutional law, and international legal frameworks pertinent to integration processes. Meanwhile, economics provides tools for analysing the economic ramifications of political decisions, such as the effect of EU integration on trade, development, and fiscal policies in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. This interdisciplinary approach ensures that students develop a comprehensive understanding of political science, equipping them to address multifaceted challenges that require insights from various disciplines. For instance, analysing the Europeanization of the Western Balkans requires an understanding of political science, legal frameworks, economic policies and sociological factors, such as public opinion and cultural identity.

The review panel concluded that the PoSiG programme is unique within the field of political science due to its specialization in European integration and governance at both thematic and regional levels. It has a particular focus on the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. This specialization aligns with the programme's objective of addressing the unique political, social, and economic challenges faced by regions bordering the EU. Key aspects of this focus include, as mentioned: Europeanization, multilevel governance and regional political dynamics. This is essentially achieved through examining the political, social and economic transformations in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus, including democratization, state building and conflict resolution. This regional focus is embedded in the curriculum through specialized courses, research projects and the compulsory Master's thesis, encouraging students to address the political challenges unique to these regions. The programme's mobility structure, which requires students to study at a minimum of two partner universities (e.g. in Salzburg, Tirana or Sarajevo), further reinforces this focus by exposing them to various regional perspectives and areas of expertise. A study plan ensures that students meet the programme's requirements and comply with the 120 ECTS-credit curriculum. It also guarantees international mobility across a maximum of four consortium universities. It also guarantees adherence to the revised

curriculum structure, comprising compulsory courses, elective modules and an internship. This equips students with specialized knowledge in political theory and European integration, preparing them for a career in public administration or international organizations.

Based on the SER and the interviews conducted during the site visit, the review panel concluded that the PoSiG disciplinary field is underpinned by a strong emphasis on methodological rigour, which is a hallmark of advanced political science education. Students are trained in qualitative and quantitative research methods, equipping them to design and conduct independent research, critically evaluate scientific literature and apply findings to real-world issues. The programme's practical components, including a compulsory one-month internship and a master's thesis, combine theoretical knowledge with applied political science, preparing students for careers in governance, policy analysis, diplomacy and academia.

Overall, the review panel concludes that the 'JoPScip Modules 2024' demonstrate the presence of intended learning outcomes comprising knowledge, skills and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s). An examination of over a dozen syllabuses indicates that these three learning outcomes are identifiable as distinct categories, although some present a list of learning outcomes that is not organized according to these three categories. Nevertheless, the specific goals included in that list implicitly address these subdivisions. More broadly, the Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration & Governance provides a thorough grounding in political science and governance, with a specific focus on European integration. Consisting of the following components: Comparative Politics, European Integration, International Relations, Public Policy & Administration, and Political Theory, it also enables participants to incorporate knowledge about their own regions into the Joint Master's curriculum. This integration has the potential to improve the application of knowledge, skills and competencies, ultimately enhancing governance in the regions of consortium members.

The review panel is therefore convinced that the PoSiG programme aligns with international standards for political science education as defined by frameworks such as the EQF and the QF-EHEA. The programme's subject area corresponds to ISCED field 0312 (Political Sciences and Civics), ensuring that graduates meet global benchmarks for expertise in political science and related interdisciplinary areas.

Recommendations

- The review panel recommends that the Consortium ensure the balance of the expanded course offerings (85 new/revised courses) is maintained across all subfields, particularly Political Theory and Methodology, as these may be underrepresented in the portfolios of newer partners. Continuous evaluation processes will support this task.

Commendations

- The review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing comprehensive coverage of Political Science subfields, ensuring a robust disciplinary foundation enriched by the diverse academic profiles of the expanded PoSiG Consortium. Integrating regional expertise from new partners in Armenia and Georgia enhances the programme's relevance to contemporary political challenges in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. The collaborative development of module descriptions and course syllabuses demonstrates a shared disciplinary vision and ensures coherence across diverse institutions.

2.3 Achievement [ESG 1.2]

The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The PoSiG programme enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes through a combination of coursework, internships and a Master's thesis. The report highlights that graduates secure qualified employment in academia, international programme management, the media, and political institutions, indicating alignment with the intended professional outcomes of the programme. The flexible mobility scheme, which has been expanded through JoPScip to include new entry points (e.g. YSU, TSU, GIPA and EIU), supports various academic and professional pathways. As the programme has been implemented for almost ten years, the Consortium was also able to reflect on drop-out rates. Delays in programme completion due to job commitments have also been reported. This suggests that there are challenges in ensuring consistent achievement across all students.

The curriculum's modular structure, combined with mobility across at least two partner universities (e.g., Salzburg, Tirana, Sarajevo), ensures that students are exposed to diverse academic perspectives and regional contexts, reinforcing their ability to achieve interdisciplinary and region-specific learning outcomes. Overall, the dropout rate is quite low, with the exception mentioned above. The low dropout rate, with the exception noted above, suggests strong student engagement and programme effectiveness, likely due to the curriculum's flexibility and the enriching experience of studying in multiple academic environments. However, the specific exception to the dropout rate warrants further investigation to identify potential challenges or barriers at the mentioned institution, which could inform targeted improvements to sustain overall student retention.

The review panel learned, from the sources of evidence provided, that PoSiG employs student-centred teaching methodologies to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes. According to the review panel's understanding, these include interactive lectures and seminars, case studies, problem-based learning, research-oriented training, and collaborative learning. These methodologies are designed to ensure that students acquire knowledge and develop the critical thinking, methodological expertise and practical competencies outlined in the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are rigorously assessed through various methods that evaluate theoretical understanding and practical application, including written examinations, essays, research papers, projects, master's theses, internship reports and presentations, and oral examinations and discussions. Assessment criteria align with EQF Level 7 expectations to ensure students demonstrate advanced knowledge, critical awareness and specialized problem-solving skills. Students are provided with feedback on their assessments to guide their progress and ensure continuous improvement. Mandatory internships and international mobility are critical to achieving practical and intercultural learning outcomes. The one-month internship, which is usually hosted by organizations involved in governance, policy or European integration, enables students to apply their theoretical knowledge in a professional environment. This experience ensures the achievement of outcomes relating to the identification and resolution of political and societal problems, and the effective communication of solutions. Studying at a minimum of two partner universities introduces students to different academic cultures and regional viewpoints, particularly about the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. This enhances their ability to work in complex, multicultural environments and adapt their analyses to different

contexts, which aligns with the requirements of EQF Level 7 for managing unpredictable settings.

In addition, PoSiG employs a quality assurance framework to ensure that learning outcomes are consistently achieved through regular (local) evaluation and feedback mechanisms, as well as alignment with EQF and QF-EHEA. The review panel is convinced that PoSiG's success in enabling students to achieve its learning outcomes is evidenced by the high completion rate, graduate employability, thesis quality, and stakeholder feedback.

Recommendations

- The review panel recommends the Consortium to develop targeted retention strategies, such as enhanced academic advising and mentorship programmes, to reduce drop-out rates across all student groups, with particular attention to addressing the challenges faced by students who switch to other programmes.
- Additionally, the review panel recommended that the Consortium establish a formalized alumnus tracking system (in addition to the recent to the site visit started LinkedIn network) to systematically document graduate achievements and provide data for future accreditation reports, particularly given the expanded PoSiG Consortium.

Commendations

- The review panel congratulates the Consortium on its success in placing graduates in diverse, high-quality professional roles, which demonstrates that it has achieved its intended learning outcomes. The flexible mobility scheme, which will be expanded by the new partners, is also worthy of praise. It allows students to tailor their academic experience to their career goals, thereby enhancing their employability. The structured internship component effectively bridges the gap between academic learning and practical application, as evidenced by its role in developing research interests for the Master's thesis.

2.4 Regulated Professions

If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account.

This standard is not applicable.

3. Study Programme [ESG 1.2]

3.1 Curriculum

The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The result of significant collaborative work, the PoSiG programme is highly integrated and based on the main sub-fields of political science. It has a particular focus on European integration, governance and area studies-relevant knowledge. The programme is well thought through and structured, from the two methodology courses to the final master's thesis. The first year focuses mainly on methodology and fundamental and theoretical knowledge in Political Science, while the second year enables students to specialize in classes from their two elective modules. During on-site discussions, consortium members from the South Caucasus convincingly explained how they have integrated regional or area studies knowledge into classes such as Political Theory, Small States and Social Movements and Civic Activism in Europe and the South Caucasus.

The SER indicates that the specialized areas and modules align with the level of academic proficiency of the consortium members. The most notable alteration to the curriculum concerns the mobility scheme and the responsibilities of the partner universities. Various partners have agreed to provide courses for the first year, including Basic Text, Methodology I and II, according to mutually established standards and module descriptions. According to the SER, the PoSiG Consortium jointly offers all courses to students participating in the PoSiG curriculum. The module descriptions and over 120 course syllabuses were developed through collaborative discussions about academic and instructional standards. At the curriculum level, the review panel finds that the intended learning outcomes are organized according to knowledge, skills and competencies. At the module level, all definitions of intended learning outcomes must clearly align with this threefold distinction.

The site visit showed that, in terms of methodology, the instructors try to provide sound methodological training and courses to students. For example, quite a few students use the R programme to conduct methodological analysis in their Master's theses. One student used this software and uploaded her work to the Open Science platform. Students actively use surveys such as the Caucasus Barometer and the European Values Survey, as well as other data sources. Half of the enrolled students have used R software.

However, the review panel would also like to highlight a few observations relating to the 'methodology courses'. By doing so, the review panel emphasizes the necessity and ability of the Consortium to continuously improve and reflect on the curriculum design and implementation.

The review panel likes to emphasize that while the course "Methods 1" provides an introduction to both quantitative and qualitative methods, "Methods 2" focuses only on quantitative methods and the statistics program R, as it is listed in the PoSiG course list 2025. Both are obligatory. It is only possible to focus on qualitative methods if the elective path of "advanced methods" is chosen in the specialization. In this case, however, it is not possible to specialize in "Applied Politics courses", which is the other string. According to the review panel's understanding, this

leads to an imbalance between quantitative and qualitative methods. The review panel encourages the Consortium to offer qualitative alternatives for students in the compulsory course "Methods 2". Students could thus specialize in qualitative methods without being forced to also specialize in quantitative methods and thus being denied the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in the "Applied Politics" courses. At the same time, the review panel emphasized that the module name should be changed, as it is misleading that the course to be called "Methods 2", when only covers quantitative methods and the statistics program R. According to the syllabus, the learning objective of "Methods 2", which focus purely on quantitative methods, are not comprehensible for the review panel. Therefore, they should be edited accordingly. According to the SER and the provided documents, students must link their internships to their MA-thesis, thereby connecting science to practice. Through this curriculum, consortium members enable students to explore real-life scenarios through role play and view experience as an empirical space. By prioritizing their students, the consortium members have achieved an employment rate of 50–60%. They collaborate with private NGOs, hold contracts with the European Commission, and engage in local political development initiatives in the Western Balkans and Georgia (Caucasus). This facilitates alignment with the EU. They also collaborate with international aid organizations in the United States and Japan.

Commendations

- The review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing a comprehensive programme offering qualifications and skills for various traditional political science careers, with a particular focus on the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus, and their integration into European institutions. Resulting from significant collaborative work, the PoSiG programme is highly integrated and based on the main sub-fields of Political Science.

3.2 Credits

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The review panel learned that, according to the SER, students must select two out of five 'Obligatory Elective Modules', each of which is valued at 18 ECTS credits. The available modules are Political Theory, Comparative Politics, Public Administration and Policy, International Relations and European Integration. In addition to these modules, students are required to complete compulsory courses, including methods courses, a Master's seminar and an internship, totalling 24 ECTS-credits. Each obligatory elective course is worth six credits, while additional courses account for a further 24 ECTS-credits. Furthermore, students must prepare and defend a Master's thesis, which carries a weight of 30 ECTS-credits. Based on the information provided in the SER and the additional reflections on the ECTS during the site visit, the review panel is convinced that the ECTS is being used effectively and that there is a shared understanding within the Consortium. The ECTS was a significant topic in various teacher workshops and academies. The ECTS is incorporated into the course description forms. During these workshops, PoSiG teachers received training on how to use ECTS-credits for didactic course planning, with the aim of achieving constructive alignment. The EB is also used to monitor the credits earned by each student. The 2015 ECTS User's Guide served as a key reference for preparing the aforementioned workshops and training sessions. The curriculum structure indicates that each module is worth 18 ECTS-credits, with each individual course typically

assigned 6 ECTS-credits. If a partner institution wishes to offer a course worth fewer than 6 ECTS-credits, two or more courses must be combined to reach a minimum total of 6 ECTS-credits.

3.3 Workload

A joint bachelor programme will typically amount to a total student workload of 180-240 ECTS-credits; a joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60 ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA); for joint doctorates there is no credit range specified. The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The review panel concluded that the ECTS standardizes the curricula and workload of all consortium members, and thus their students. The 120 ECTS-credits required to complete the joint degree corresponds to the standard annual workload of 60 ECTS-credits in the EHEA, which equates to 1,500–1,800 hours of study. Therefore, this joint programme meets the requirements set by the EHEA tools. Two issues highlighted in the SER warrant special attention in the coming years. As discussed in the SER, local regulations must be applied regarding the student workload per ECTS-credit. The review panel learned that, on average, one ECTS credit equates to 25 hours of work in most countries. However, in Armenia and North Macedonia, it is 30 hours. As stated in the SER, the monitoring of the actual student workload for individual courses is the responsibility of each partner, typically as part of course evaluations. This also applies to any necessary adjustments in cases of inaccurate workload assessments. In line with the recommendation for Standard 3.2, the review panel recommends establishing a comprehensive approach that allows for evidence-based monitoring and adjustment in the event of inaccurate workload assessments or deviations in module and course sizes at individual partner universities. This is to ensure that the structure remains in place and that the comprehensive approach in terms of workload and the average time needed to complete the programme continues to work.

Recommendation:

- While workload monitoring is the responsibility of each partner at this point, the review panel recommends making every effort to promote greater jointness of that monitoring.

4. Admission and Recognition [ESG 1.4]

4.1. Admission

The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The review panel concluded that the admission requirements and selection procedures were appropriate for the programme's level and discipline. According to the SER and the information provided during the site visit, the PoSiG is open to applicants who hold a Bachelor's degree in Political Science, International Relations, or a related subject at Level 6. Students with fewer than 10 ECTS-credits in methodology and scientific work are expected to take the necessary courses to make up for their shortfall in these areas. Additionally, students whose Bachelor's

degree is not deemed equivalent to the required standard are expected to complete academic work totalling up to 30 ECTS-credits. The CB is responsible for assigning this additional academic work. The admission requirements are consistent with studies on the structure and learning outcomes of Bachelor's programmes in the field. This pre-qualification, alongside theory-guided courses and advanced methodological training, enables students to conduct theory-driven, empirical, and analytical research in the social and political sciences, employing innovative research strategies.

Students are selected based on shared admission criteria. The CB is responsible for determining student selection, considering academic performance and motivation. References are also considered, with at least one reference from an academic referee required. Prospective students then undergo an interview process to assess their English language proficiency. PoSiG attracts students from the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus, and the Eastern Neighbourhood. Applications are made online via www.PoSiG.info. At the PoSiG Website, the admission requirements and aligned process are published. The information is concise, but the review panel feels that it could be presented better.

The information provided during the site visit corroborates the description of the admission-related procedures. For instance, the experts were informed that PoSiG adheres to the procedures set out in the report and by the coordinators' board. European University Tirana manages the application database, which displays the declaration points and enrolment assessment criteria.

As the responsible programme partner for maintaining the database, the UET has upgraded the application database to a new version. This new version is expected to support the application process even more effectively. Technical and substantive checks are being carried out. Any technical issues can be resolved by sending an email to the IT specialist. To ensure effective management, the local administrations responsible for student admissions have been fully informed about the admissions procedures and enrolment policy. The CB also has access to shared drives where the students' application documents are stored.

During the site visit on 29/04/2025, the review panel was informed that 91 applications had been received for the 2025/26 academic year via the joint application platform. Of these, 37 applicants had completed and uploaded the required documents. The review panel is convinced that the Consortium has developed a sound application and selection process from the outset, enabling collaboration between all partners. However, they might consider improving the presentation of the relevant information on the programme's website.

Recommendation:

- The review panel recommends the Consortium to update and clarify the information about the admissions and selection process provided on the PoSiG website.

4.2. Recognition

Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The review panel found that recognition of prior learning in the admission's process is based on entrance level, as referred to in Standard 4.1. After examining the Bachelor's programmes of partner institutions and the Bachelor's degree criteria in International Relations and Political Science, the PoSiG Consortium has decided to primarily accept candidates with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science that includes adequate methodology training. Applicants whose training does not meet these standards, or who hold degrees in other subjects, will be admitted conditionally and will need to address this gap before the start of their studies. The CB is responsible for recognizing programmes of study at all partner institutions for the upcoming academic year. This decision is based on the common standards and criteria set out in the curriculum and institutional agreements. The QAB oversees and monitors this process. Consequently, students enrolled on courses from this approved programme can rest assured that their courses will be recognized. Each partner institution publishes the PoSiG course programme on their website. According to the review panel, understanding the procedure involves recognizing courses within the framework of international mobility, as set out in the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3]

5.1 Learning and teaching

The programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the learning and teaching approaches applied should be adequate to achieve those. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The PoSiG programme takes a student-centred approach, emphasizing constructive alignment between learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessments. The flexible curriculum allows students to choose specialization modules and mobility tracks, fostering autonomy and personalization. The expanded Consortium, through JoPScip, builds on this by offering additional entry points and course options, supported by the new virtual education space (PoSiG.online). Train-the-trainer workshops, Teaching Academies and the Teaching Handbook ensure that instructors at all partner institutions are trained in modern pedagogical methods, including seminar-based teaching to promote active learning. However, the SER notes that the 'Jour-Fixe' support sessions, which were previously only offered in Salzburg, must now be extended to at least the first-year universities. This indicates a need for adaptation within the expanded Consortium.

PoSiG's curriculum is structured to meet international standards and is aligned with Level 7 of the EQF and the second cycle of the QF-EHEA. It comprises five specialized modules: Political Theory; Comparative Politics; Public Policy and Administration; International Relations; and European Integration. Students select two modules in which to specialize, alongside advanced methodological and applied courses, a compulsory internship and a Master's thesis (30 ECTS credits). The programme is taught in English and emphasizes international mobility, requiring students to study at least at two partner institutions across the Consortium. The teaching approach integrates theoretical and empirical perspectives with practical, student-centred methods to foster critical thinking, analytical skills and policy-oriented research. The programme is designed to address regional political developments and prepare graduates for careers in academia, public administration, international organizations and civic education. The review panel understands that ESG 1.3 emphasizes learning environments in which students

enjoy autonomy and flexibility and are actively engaged in their learning process. PoSiG demonstrates strong alignment with this through flexible study tracks, active learning, and diverse learning methods. Students design their own qualification and mobility strategies by selecting two specialization modules and choosing partner universities for their first and second years. This flexibility enables students to customize their academic journey according to their interests and career aspirations. The programme encourages active learning through research-based assignments, seminars and practical components such as internships. Courses such as "Foundations of Comparative Politics" and "Quantitative Methodology in Political Science" involve interactive seminars that promote student engagement. PoSiG employs various teaching methods, including lectures, seminars, workshops and fieldwork, to cater for different learning styles. The programme's focus on developing competencies such as critical reasoning, policy analysis, and independent research demonstrates its commitment to student-centred learning.

The review panel is convinced that PoSiG's teaching methods are designed to foster critical and analytical thinking, in line with ESG 1.3's guidance to adopt diverse and inclusive teaching approaches. Modules combine normative and empirical theories with practical applications. The "Public Policy and Administration" module, for example, provides students with the analytical tools necessary for policymaking, while the European Integration module examines multilevel governance in real-world contexts. The programme draws on the expertise of faculty members with diverse academic and regional backgrounds, thereby enriching the learning experience. International mobility across EU and Western Balkan partners introduces students to various teaching methods and viewpoints. Courses emphasize discussion-based seminars, case studies and problem-based learning, encouraging students to connect theoretical insights with the practical challenges of governance and integration.

Recommendations

- The review panel recommends that the "Jour-Fixe" Internship & Field Experience sessions are consistently implemented at (now) all first-year universities (e.g., YSU, TSU, GIPA, EIU) to support students in the expanded PoSiG Consortium, with clear guidelines for local coordinators.
- The review panel therefore recommends that the Consortium conducts regular peer reviews and teaching observations across all partner institutions, to ensure that the student-centred approach and constructive alignment are applied uniformly, particularly at newer partner universities with less PoSiG experience.

Commendations

- The review panel is satisfied that the student-centred approach adopted by the Consortium, reinforced by a flexible yet integrated curriculum and mobility scheme, effectively supports diverse learning needs and fosters independent academic development. Another added benefit is that comprehensive training for instructors, delivered through workshops and teaching academies, ensures the consistent application of modern teaching methods across the Consortium, including new partners.

5.2 Assessment of students

The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They should be applied consistently among partner institutions.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The review panel learned that the joint programme follows a robust assessment framework that combines direct assessment methods, such as written and oral assignments, for courses, and a structured Master's thesis defence involving multiple examiners from different institutions. Despite local variations in regulations, which have to be addressed in the Partner Declaration, the use of a common grading convention based on the ECTS-grading scheme ensures consistency across partners. The SER and the evidence obtained during the site visit demonstrated to the review panel that the expanded Consortium adheres to this framework, with the EB and Master's defence records ensuring transparency and recognition of achievements. However, while the SER addresses diversity by offering alternative examination arrangements for students with disabilities, it lacks detail on how cultural and academic diversity is accommodated in assessments. The addition of new partners to the JoPSic project necessitates careful monitoring to ensure that assessment standards remain consistent. As outlined in the SER, the PoSiG programme's assessment framework and its elements ensure consistency across the diverse Consortium, despite variations in local regulations. The EB and Master's defence records serve as centralized tools for documenting and recognizing student achievements, thereby promoting transparency. While the report acknowledges provisions for students with disabilities through alternative examination arrangements, it lacks detailed strategies for accommodating cultural and academic diversity in assessments. The expansion of the Consortium under the JoPScip project, which adds four new partners from Armenia and Georgia, creates opportunities and challenges regarding maintaining consistent assessment standards across diverse educational systems.

The addition of YSU, EIU, TSU and GIPA to the JoPScip project expands the programme's geographical and academic scope. This expansion introduces 85 new or revised courses, as outlined in the SER, as well as a new virtual education space called PoSiG.online. While this expansion enhances the programme's diversity, it also poses challenges in maintaining the comprehensive structure and ensuring jointness.

The SER acknowledges that local examination regulations apply, but the common ECTS-grading convention mitigates variations. However, new partners from Armenia and Georgia, where national frameworks for joint programmes are still in development, may struggle to align with the established PoSiG assessment standards. The framework's provision for alternative examination arrangements for students with disabilities, as outlined in the SER, is commendable, but the SER lacks specific strategies for addressing cultural and academic diversity. The review panel as learned from the SER, that because students come from various backgrounds (including Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Armenia, among others), assessments must consider different levels of academic preparation and cultural perspectives, particularly in seminar-based discussions and written assignments. The new partners' regional expertise (e.g. on South Caucasus political developments) offers an opportunity to tailor assessments to diverse contexts, but this requires explicit guidelines. The expanded PoSiG Consortium requires improved quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that assessment standards remain consistent and thorough. While the QAB's role in supervising course recognition and the annual teacher trainings and academies provides a foundation, the integration of new partners requires additional training and oversight to maintain assessment rigour.

Recommendations

- The review panel recommends the establishment of an integrated mechanism, such as a subcommittee of the existing QAB, to periodically review assessment practices across

all partners, ensuring alignment with PoSiG standards. This is especially relevant for new partners (YSU, EIU, TSU, GIPA) to ensure consistency with established Consortium.

- In light of the growing diversity of Consortium partners resulting from geographical expansion of the Consortium, the review panel recommends ensuring uniform training in quantitative methods and R software.

Commendations

- The review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing a robust collaborative framework and transparent documentation. The review panel also commends the Consortium for its harmonized grading system, its inclusive approach to disability.

6. Student Support [ESG 1.6]

The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

Firstly, the review panel states that, given the nature of this programme, which involves the cooperation of 13 universities, this (joint) master's programme cannot exist independently of these universities and their structures. However, as the on-site visit focused on the programme as a whole rather than on individual universities, only the aspects of student support that are centrally organized by the PoSiG programme coordination can be discussed. This makes it difficult to evaluate this conclusively, as most student support offers are decentralized and thus institutionalized at the respective university. As stated in the SER, student support is the responsibility of the local partners. Therefore, student support may vary from university to university as the structures will differ, and national university accreditation must be relied upon to evaluate institutionalized and administrative support structures. During the site visit, it became clear that next to the programme coordinator, there is no general contact person for this programme for students. Usually, the respective universities are responsible for the well-being and care of the students. This may work in the current situation, but could become challenging if personnel change or the programme coordinator's workload increases. Now that the first semester can be studied at various universities of the programme, a formalized general contact office or similar could be established to coordinate the student support. As noted, the general student support institutions are decentralized at each university. Furthermore, the review panel has learned that there are no regular communication channels between the various student support institutions, e.g. the international offices, administrations, etc. However, during the site visit, the review panel was informed about the idea to introduce a similar exchange event to the teaching academy for the different administrations in 2026. This would provide an opportunity to inform and facilitate the administrations, and enable them to share information. The review panel strongly supports this idea, as it would help to streamline administrative processes and overcome common issues related to the programme. This seems especially helpful given that, in the *Quality Report 2024-25* and during the site visit, the level of awareness among administrative staff was described as varying depending on the university and being less responsive in some cases. In the SER, it is stated that new students of the programme receive support in the fields of applying for visa, accommodation, language assistance, registration procedures, arriving at Salzburg through an invitation to the "Welcome Days". However, this only applies to the PLUS. About the other universities, there is no such information. The *PoSiG Quality Report 2024-25* states that arriving at Western Balkan universities can be more difficult, especially concerning the administrative processes. The

review panel likes to mention that it has not verified this statement during the review process. However, during the site visit, the review panel got the impression that students' problems get solved creatively, and that students feel supported, especially by the programme coordination. Nevertheless, this strengthens the recommendation to establish a channelled coordination and regular exchange between the student support institutions.

Although local regulations concerning students with needs or disabilities are in place, the review panel was unable to evaluate them in detail. Similarly, as each university has its own mental health support mechanisms, these were not subject to evaluation. For example, PLUS in Salzburg provides psychological support to all students. The Consortium could consider offering this psychological assistance remotely to all PoSiG students, or determining whether mental health support at all partner universities is sufficient. The review panel was informed that Erasmus+ grants are not offered directly by the programme. However, all PoSiG students can apply for them at their respective universities and receive financial support for two semesters, as stated in the SER. According to the PoSiG website, other scholarship options are available, depending on the university at which the student is enrolled. Furthermore, the PoSiG programme provides a list of possible institutions for the compulsory 4-week internship, which can be viewed in the SER attachment. This facilitates the internship search for students and will be extended over time. Additional funding is available through the Erasmus+ practice scholarship during this period, which improves students' financial situation. According to the site visit, the quality of Master's thesis supervision varies between universities and supervisors. However, there is currently no general mechanism in place to file a complaint about poor supervision. In terms of student participation, there is a Student & Alumni Board that is supposed to monitor and supervise the Coordinators Board. In reality, however, there are no stable election procedures for student representatives. As stated during the site visit, there are currently no official student representatives in power. It is difficult to promote active student involvement in the programme. This can be explained by the fact that students on this programme tend to stay at one university for a short time. Nevertheless, the programme coordination and Consortium should be interested in promoting student participation. They should consider how to support students in their organization, which could also be done remotely. Although there is no formal student involvement at institutional level in the SER, the review panel was informed about a regular meeting at PLUS in Salzburg every 4–6 weeks. It could be considered to offer this meeting to PoSiG students from all universities remotely. This could foster a greater sense of community among the students, as the programme can be started at any partner university, which could otherwise weaken the sense of community among the student body. Furthermore, as stated during the site visit, informal meetings are in place for discussing minor issues with the programme coordinators. Thus, according to the review panel's evidence, qualitative feedback is given mostly personally and informally. However, students do not play an active role in the decision-making process, as was observed during the site visit. Nevertheless, no complaints were raised during the interviews at the site visit. A networking platform for alumni has recently been created on LinkedIn. This effort is supported by the review panel. Considering the possibility of students starting the master's programme at any partner university, it could be an option to create one platform where all students can socialize, exchange experiences, network and help each other. This would help students to stay in contact and foster a sense of community, as well as enabling them to organize politically within the master's programme and provide feedback.

Recommendations

- The review panel recommends creating official and formal contact points for students across the programme, addressing the current lack of a centralized support mechanism.

- The review panel recommends developing stronger communication channels between support services at different universities, facilitate information sharing and administrative coordination, and executing exchange events for administration (currently proposed for 2026).
- The review panel recommends improving student involvement by establishing stable election procedures for the ASB, enabling remote participation in the ASB and enabling participation in the "Jour-Fixe" remotely for all PoSIG-students.
- The review panel recommends creating a unified digital platform for students and alumni to socialize, exchange experiences, network and support each other, but also to organize politically to provide feedback for the programme.

Commendations

- The review panel supports the idea of holding a similar exchange event to the Teaching Academy for the different university administrations in 2026. This would provide an opportunity to inform and facilitate the administrations, as well as giving them the chance to share information. The review panel strongly supports this in to streamline administrative processes and overcome common issues concerning the programme.
- Another outstanding aspect that the review panel commends is the regular "Jour-Fixe" meetings in Salzburg every 4–6 weeks, as well as the informal meetings with the coordinators. These efforts are highly appreciated and seem to have a positive effect on students' wellbeing.
- Lastly, the review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing excellent internship support and Erasmus+ scholarships to all students for at least two semesters. These efforts can considerably ease the burden of studying and, at the same time, ensure economic stability and promote equal opportunities for students facing financial hardship.

7. Resources [ESG 1.5 & 1.6]

7.1 Staff

The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The review panel found that, in the early stages of the programme, teaching staff were nominated by the PoSiG coordinators alongside a brief CV. The next step in the selection process was to ensure the quality of the submitted course descriptions. As the experts were informed during the site visit, PoSiG administrative and teaching staff are required to participate in periodic training sessions. According to the SER, PoSiG offers its teaching staff a flexible mobility scheme. Staff development activities include:

- Train the Trainer workshops, where teachers collaborate on course descriptions, joint academic papers and projects over the course of two weeks;
- Seminars of Excellence, designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of individual teachers and researchers;
- Quality Weeks, where quality managers from all partner universities gather to develop shared quality assurance standards;
- The Annual Teacher Academy in Salzburg, which brings together teachers from partner and prospective partner universities to improve teaching practices and develop research networks;

- Regular Coordinators Board meetings, which occur online and coincide with the Teacher Academy;
- A Teaching Handbook is available for teaching staff.

The review panel concludes that the teaching staff are sufficiently qualified and experienced to implement the study programme. While enough convincing information is provided about the academic staff, there is relatively little about the management staff, in particular graduate advisors, who play a significant role in supporting young graduate students. These advisors are even more significant in this case, considering the mobility and intercultural dimensions involved in this programme.

Recommendation:

- The review panel recommends providing more attention to administrative staff, as well as training for this group, since they play a vital role in dealing with foreign graduate students.

7.2 Facilities

The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

According to the SER, the review panel learned that each Consortium partner is responsible for providing appropriate facilities and learning resources. For example, as all partners offer Political Science programmes, they all have to ensure sufficient library resources. Each partner has to offer e-learning services and guarantees operational technical infrastructure, including an email address and a plagiarism detection tool. Due to the Erasmus+ CBHE project JoPScip funds, the Consortium has obtained software, including Turnitin and Moodle. During the site visit, the review panel learned that students are required to enrol at each partner university where they take courses. They have access to one partner university through the PLUS Online platform and the PLUS Intranet. Although the platform is only available in German, the review panel was assured that students can easily switch to English using Google's language options. Tools such as aTrain for transcribing audio material, MAXQDA and SPSS are, according to the information provided, available at every university. The so-called Studo-app provides built-in forums for student interaction, while the Blackboard forum facilitates discussions among Salzburg University students. Each partner university has its own intranet, including VPN access and databases. In addition to all attempts to ensure joint responsibility for the implementation of the joint programme, a joint digital infrastructure would also contribute to the necessary jointness. The review panel believes that a common VPN solution, for example, would support the programmes in this regard. To train the new universities to the infrastructure available, staff received training in Yerevan on how to use online resources. They also participated in sessions focusing on pedagogy, digitalization, artificial intelligence, and other digital teaching resources. Partner universities have access to up-to-date e-books and materials. While the partner universities have adequate learning resources to support the joint programme, the programme's leadership has opted not to allocate additional funds or to make extra efforts to utilize, enhance, or expand these resources. This could reflect a strategic decision, resource constraints, or a missed opportunity to fully leverage what's available.

Recommendation:

- The review panel recommends that the PoSiG Consortium ensures the joint creation of digital and online resources, tools and programmes, and provides the necessary facilities for their joint implementation and for sharing responsibility for supporting enrolled students.

8. Transparency and Documentation [ESG 1.8]

Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The review panel found that, while the PoSiG website (<https://PoSiG.info/>) provides a general overview of the Master's programme and its characteristics, it falls short of offering a clear and comprehensive insight into the programme experience from the perspective of students. Prospective and current students may find it difficult to obtain essential information. Additionally, the website lacks details about funding opportunities. Similarly, the existing Student Handbook (SH) has substantial shortcomings in its current format. With only four pages, its scope is limited, and it fails to provide comprehensive guidance for students navigating the complexities of a multi-university programme. The handbook lacks the critical elements necessary for effective student orientation and support. Students require consolidated information about support structures across different universities, as well as comprehensive guidance for transitions between partner institutions.

From the perspective of the review panel, a significant challenge could emerge from the programme's decentralized delivery. Each partner university operates distinct digital platforms, library systems, administrative interfaces and local resource access mechanisms. Students must enrol at every partner university they visit throughout the programme, which creates a complex and potentially confusing administrative landscape. This approach requires constant adaptation to different institutional systems and platforms. The absence of a unified digital platform for programme-wide communication exacerbates existing difficulties. Inconsistent language support exacerbates these difficulties further. Fragmented information distribution across multiple university-specific systems could overwhelm students.

According to the review panel, the current information-sharing mechanisms regarding potential partner universities and study programmes could be improved, as a lack of promotion and knowledge among students was evident during the site visit. This is a particularly pertinent concern given that the first semester is open to all partner universities, as prospective students need comprehensive information about their study options.

Recommendations

- The review panel recommends enhancing the SH and website with the help of students, in to provide consolidated support information and detailed guidance on navigating multiple universities.
- The review panel also recommends considering the creation of a unified digital platform for programme-wide communication and resource sharing.
- The review panel also recommends implementing information sessions or other formats to introduce partner universities, explain administrative procedures and support student mobility.

9. Quality Assurance [ESG 1.1 & part 1]

The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.

Joint quality assurance processes in place should adequately reflect and be in accordance with ESG 1.1 & part one of the ESG:

- Policy (ESG 1.1)
- Design and approval of programmes (ESG 1.2)
- Student - centred learning, Teaching and Assessment (ESG 1.3)
- Student Admission, Progression Recognition and Certification (ESG 1.4)
- Teaching staff (ESG 1.5)
- Learning resources and student support (ESG1.6)
- Information Management (ESG 1.7)
- Public Information (ESG (1.8)
- On - going monitoring and periodic review of programmes (ESG 1.9)
- Cyclical External Quality Assurance (ESG 1.10)

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement and evaluation

The review panel found that the PoSiG-CMs had established an integrative internal quality assurance system from the beginning of the joint programme in 2015, fully aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). This system was formalized in a collaboratively developed Quality Management Handbook (QMH), which outlines the relevant processes and procedures. As confirmed during the site visit and evidenced in the SER, this overarching approach to quality assurance has been in place since the programme's inception. This approach was very much focused on establishing and implementing a joint quality assurance processes that adequately reflected and were in accordance with ESG 1.1 and Part One of the ESG. Exemplary, the review panel refers to the processes ensuring the quality of curricula.

Additionally, students from various programmes were invited to participate in hybrid formats through online meetings to provide valuable cross-checks and gauge overall satisfaction with the programme. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were utilized to minimize subjectivity. Students are invited to participate in hybrid formats through online meetings to address any issues they may have.

The Consortium also holds quality weeks and QAB meetings every few years, scheduled to align with the teaching academy's calendar. The aim is to cultivate a shared understanding of quality management. According to the SER, the following people play crucial roles in matters of quality assurance: one representative from each partner university; the ASB ; the Executive Director (ED); local coordinators; and the CB.

Teacher Academies promote a shared understanding of the PoSiG teaching methodology, strengthen professional networks and facilitate discussion of educational topics. Furthermore, annual meetings involving the ED, local coordinators, department heads, deans and rectors from partner universities greatly enhance quality assurance efforts. Quality Week provides an opportunity to update and monitor both the curriculum and the Partner Declaration.

The Teaching Handbook (TH) remains a foundational resource addressing topics such as the development of PoSiG's European Teaching Approach for higher education, instructor

guidelines, module and course descriptions, advice on online collaboration and best teaching practices.

The SER also indicates that the majority of the recommendations from the Re-Accreditation process for 2023/24 have been addressed. The consortium members have tackled concerns related to mobility schemes and study tracks, updated descriptions for compulsory internships, website improvements, the establishment of a new alumni network (including a recently established LinkedIn Community), documentation of certain Teaching Academy sessions, syllabus updates for regular literature review, and actively encouraging graduates to participate in surveys for a formal evaluation of student workload.

However, the review panel acknowledges that the decentralized allocation of responsibilities at the regional level – as referenced in various contexts – may affect the coherence of quality management and, consequently, the overall quality of the programme. Adopting a "local rules apply" mindset may hinder or conflict with a unified, comprehensive and integrated approach. To maintain a collaborative stance, it is advisable for the Consortium to (re-)establish a collective quality assurance mechanism. This initiative aims to foster a sense of common identity (jointness), while respecting the autonomy and decentralization efforts of partner universities. This structure is essential for the sustainability of the PoSiG, ensuring that the programme is not dependent on individual personalities, but rather robust institutional frameworks. To address this, the Consortium should refocus on developing a robust collective quality assurance mechanism by incorporating standardized quality benchmarks, conducting regular cross-institutional audits, and creating a centralized platform for sharing best practices and resources. Additionally, creating a joint governance body with representatives from each partner university would ensure consistent communication and alignment on programme goals. This body could oversee the development of a comprehensive quality assurance framework, incorporating clear metrics for student outcomes, faculty performance, and program coherence. Training programs for faculty and staff on unified quality standards could further strengthen implementation. Such a structure is essential for the sustainability of the PoSiG, ensuring that the program remains resilient and independent of individual personalities, relying instead on robust institutional frameworks. By balancing local autonomy with collective accountability, the Consortium can enhance program cohesion, maintain high academic standards, and support long-term success across all partner institutions.

To conclude: The review panel encourages the Consortium to pursue a balanced approach that respects institutional autonomy while fostering a shared identity and collective accountability. This balance is key to maintaining programme coherence and academic quality. The panel highlights the importance of developing robust institutional frameworks that ensure the sustainability of the PoSiG programme. These should reduce reliance on individual actors and promote long-term stability. Therefore, the review panel issues some recommendation to the Consortium:

Recommendation:

- The review panel recommends the Consortium further strengthening a collective quality assurance mechanisms, including the (re-)definition of shared quality benchmarks, regular cross-institutional audits, and the establishment of a centralized platform for sharing best practices and resources.
- The review panel recognizes the existing governance structures, such as the CB and other relevant bodies, but recommends and encourages the Consortium to further strengthen their coordinating and governing role in quality assurance and strategic

programme development and decision-making, to ensure consistent communication and alignment across partner universities.

Summary and final evaluation

Summary and final evaluation

The review panel appreciated the welcoming and collaborative environment observed during the on-site visit, as well as the inclusive nature of the Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSiG). The programme provides students with the essential skills and qualifications required for various careers in political science, with a particular focus on the Western Balkans and - due to the enlargement - South Caucasus regions and their integration into European institutions. The joint Master's programme brings together universities with diverse research backgrounds and cultures. It offers five distinct modules covering political theory, comparative politics, public administration, international relations and European integration. In addition to these modules, students must complete compulsory and optional courses, as well as defend their Master's theses. The joint faculty is qualified and ready to educate students. Furthermore, the review panel found that the PoSiG programme is specifically designed to align with EQF Level 7 and the second cycle of the QF-EHEA. The review panel concluded that the joint programme effectively prepared graduates for suitable employment in fields such as academia, international programme management, the media and political organizations, aligning with their career goals. The flexible mobility programme, enhanced by JoPScip to incorporate additional entry points, facilitates various academic and professional pathways. However, the review panel made a number of recommendations to ensure the effective implementation of the Joint Master's Programme and to create equal opportunities for all participating students and partner universities. The recommendations aim to ensure that the joint pathway is not lost in any area of developing and implementing the joint programme. The PoSiG Consortium has grown to a size that requires even more attention to ensure that the essence of a joint programme is not lost.

Final Assessment

The review panel's recommendation to the Board of AQ Austria is to decide in favour of the extension of the PoSiG Joint Master's Programme to universities from Armenia and Georgia, acknowledging its strong adherence to the standards set out in the European Approach and its commitment to providing a shared educational experience. The review panel would like to highlight specific features of the joint programme in the commendation issued. The recommendation should support further commitment to enhancing the quality of the joint programme, ensuring that the Consortium does not lose sight of the essential requirement of jointness, which goes beyond all necessary national requirements that must be in place and which have been considered in the Partnership Declaration.

The review panel recommends that the Board of AQ Austria grant accreditation to the Joint Master's Programme in Political Science — Integration and Governance (PoSiG) as a whole, and supports the recommendations for further improvement and quality safeguarding issued to the Consortium.

Standard	Assessment	Recommendations	Commendations
Standard 1: Eligibility			
1.1 Status	The standard is met		
1.2 Joint design and delivery	The standard is met		The review panel congratulates that consortium members share specific methodologies for studying political science. By expanding their partnerships, consortium members can identify areas of complementarity and thoroughly explore the various dimensions of political science. This is of the utmost importance, since national systems are becoming increasingly dependent on integration, necessitating the development of internal capacities and the promotion of collaboration.
1.3 Cooperation Agreement	The standard is met	Once the national and regional circumstances for participation have been resolved, the review panel recommends that the University of Belgrade and the University of Montenegro sign the Partner Declaration and contribute as full implementing partners to the PoSiG Consortium.	
Standard 2: Learning Outcomes			
2.1 Level	The standard is met	The review panel recommends that by the start of the academic year 2025/26, the PoSiG Consortium should evaluate in detail that all partner institutions, including the newly integrated partners (YSU, EIU, TSU, GIPA), have implemented a standardized process for aligning course learning outcomes with EQF Level 7. The outcome should include sample course syllabi and assessment methods from each partner, verifying the delivery of advanced knowledge, critical analysis, and independent research skills.	The review panel commends the joint programme for its clear alignment with Level 7 of the EQF and the second cycle of the QF-EHEA. The review panel is convinced that this ensures graduates acquire the advanced, specialized knowledge and critical skills necessary for leadership roles in governance, diplomacy and academia. The programme's emphasis on highly specialized knowledge and

			complex problem-solving is a significant strength.
		While the programme excels in Political Science expertise, the review panel recommends that the Consortium evaluate the possibility of incorporating training in digital tools for data analysis (e.g. big data and AI-driven policy modelling). This would further align with the emphasis on cutting-edge skills in rapidly evolving professional fields at EQF Level 7.	The review panel commends the programme's ability to allow students to tailor their specialization through module selection and mobility across partner universities. This supports the development of individualized learning paths and enhances the programme's ability to meet a range of advanced professional and academic goals.
		The review panel recommended that the Consortium evaluate the introduction of explicit leadership training components, such as workshops or courses on strategic decision-making and policy advocacy. This would maximize the programme's effectiveness in preparing participants for high-level roles.	The review panel commends the programme's focus on managing complex and multicultural settings, which is facilitated by international mobility. This aligns well with the expectations of EQF Level 7 regarding autonomy and professional judgement. This means that students are well-prepared for a dynamic environment.
2.2 Disciplinary Field	The standard is met	The review panel recommends that the Consortium ensure the balance of the expanded course offerings (85 new/revised courses) is maintained across all subfields, particularly Political Theory and Methodology, as these may be underrepresented in the portfolios of newer partners. Continuous evaluation processes will support this task..	The review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing comprehensive coverage of Political Science subfields, ensuring a robust disciplinary foundation enriched by the diverse academic profiles of the expanded PoSiG Consortium. Integrating regional expertise from new partners in Armenia and Georgia enhances the programme's relevance to contemporary political challenges in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. The collaborative development of module descriptions and course

			syllabuses demonstrates a shared disciplinary vision and ensures coherence across diverse institutions.
2.3 Achievement	The standard is met	The review panel recommends the Consortium to develop targeted retention strategies, such as enhanced academic advising and mentorship programmes, to reduce drop-out rates across all student groups, with particular attention to addressing the challenges faced by students who switch to other programmes.	The review panel congratulates the Consortium on its success in placing graduates in diverse, high-quality professional roles, which demonstrates that it has achieved its intended learning outcomes. The flexible mobility scheme, which will be expanded by the new partners, is also worthy of praise. It allows students to tailor their academic experience to their career goals, thereby enhancing their employability. The structured internship component effectively bridges the gap between academic learning and practical application, as evidenced by its role in developing research interests for the Master's thesis.
		Additionally, the review panel recommended that the Consortium establish a formalized alumnus tracking system (in addition to the recent to the site visit started LinkedIn network) to systematically document graduate achievements and provide data for future accreditation reports, particularly given the expanded PoSiG Consortium.	
2.4 Regulated Professions	Not applicable		
Standard 3: Study Programmes			
3.1 Curriculum	The standard is met		The review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing a comprehensive programme offering qualifications and skills for various traditional political science careers, with a particular focus on the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus, and

			their integration into European institutions. Resulting from significant collaborative work, the PoSiG programme is highly integrated and based on the main sub-fields of Political Science.
3.2 Credits	The standard is met		
3.3 Workload	The standard is met	While workload monitoring is the responsibility of each partner at this point, the review panel recommends making every effort to promote greater jointness of that monitoring.	
Standard 4: Admission and Recognition			
4.1 Admission	The standard is met	The review panel recommends the Consortium to update and clarify the information about the admissions and selection process provided on the PoSiG website.	
4.2 Recognition	The standard is met		
Standard 5: Learning, Teaching and Assessment			
5.1 Learning and Teaching	The standard is met	The review panel recommends that the "Jour-Fixe" Internship & Field Experience sessions are consistently implemented at (now) all first-year universities (e.g., YSU, TSU, GIPA, EIU) to support students in the expanded PoSiG Consortium, with clear guidelines for local coordinators.	The review panel is satisfied that the student-centred approach adopted by the Consortium, reinforced by a flexible yet integrated curriculum and mobility scheme, effectively supports diverse learning needs and fosters independent academic development. Another added benefit is that comprehensive training for instructors, delivered through workshops and teaching academies, ensures the consistent application of modern teaching methods across the Consortium, including new partners.
		The review panel therefore recommends that the Consortium conducts regular peer reviews and teaching observations across all partner institutions, to ensure that the student-centred approach and constructive alignment are applied uniformly,	

		particularly at newer partner universities with less PoSiG experience.	
5.2 Assessment of students	The standard is met	The review panel recommends the establishment of an integrated mechanism, such as a subcommittee of the existing QAB, to periodically review assessment practices across all partners, ensuring alignment with PoSiG standards. This is especially relevant for new partners (YSU, EIU, TSU, GIPA) to ensure consistency with established Consortium	The review panel congratulates the Consortium on providing a robust collaborative framework and transparent documentation. The review panel also commends the Consortium for its harmonized grading system, its inclusive approach to disability.
		In light of the growing diversity of Consortium partners resulting from geographical expansion of the Consortium, the review panel recommends ensuring uniform training in quantitative methods and R software.	
Standard 6: Student Support			
	The standard is met	The review panel recommends creating official and formal contact points for students across the programme, addressing the current lack of a centralized support mechanism.	The review panel supports the idea of holding a similar exchange event to the Teaching Academy for the different university administrations in 2026. This would provide an opportunity to inform and facilitate the administrations, as well as giving them the chance to share information. The review panel strongly supports this in to streamline administrative processes and overcome common issues concerning the programme.
		The review panel recommends developing stronger communication channels between support services at different universities, facilitate information sharing and administrative coordination, and executing exchange events for administration (currently proposed for 2026).	Another outstanding aspect that the review panel commends is the regular "Jour-Fixe" meetings in Salzburg every 4–6 weeks, as well as the informal meetings with the coordinators. These efforts are highly appreciated and seem to have a positive effect on students' wellbeing.
		The review panel recommends improving student involvement by establishing stable election procedures for the ASB, enabling	Lastly, the review panel congratulates the Consortium on

		remote participation in the ASB and enabling participation in the "Jour-Fixe" remotely for all PoSIG-students.	providing excellent internship support and Erasmus+ scholarships to all students for at least two semesters. These efforts can considerably ease the burden of studying and, at the same time, ensure economic stability and promote equal opportunities for students facing financial hardship.
		The review panel recommends creating a unified digital platform for students and alumni to socialize, exchange experiences, network and support each other, but also to organize politically to provide feedback for the programme.	
Standard 7: Resources			
7.1 Staff	The standard is met	The review panel recommends providing more attention to administrative staff, as well as training for this group, since they play a vital role in dealing with foreign graduate students.	
7.2 Facilities	The standard is met	The review panel recommends that the PoSiG Consortium ensures the joint creation of digital and online resources, tools and programmes, and provides the necessary facilities for their joint implementation and for sharing responsibility for supporting enrolled students.	
Standard 8: Transparency and Documentation			
	The standard is met	The review panel recommends enhancing the SH and website with the help of students, in to provide consolidated support information and detailed guidance on navigating multiple universities.	
		The review panel also recommends considering the creation of a unified digital platform for programme-wide communication and resource sharing.	
		The review panel also recommends implementing information sessions or other formats to introduce partner universities, explain administrative procedures and support student mobility.	
Standard 9: Quality Assurance			
	The standard is met	The review panel recommends the Consortium further strengthening a collective quality assurance mechanisms, including the (re-)definition of shared quality benchmarks, regular cross-institutional audits, and the establishment of a centralized platform for sharing best practices and resources.	

		The review panel recognizes the existing governance structures, such as the CB and other relevant bodies, but recommends and encourages the Consortium to further strengthen their coordinating and governing role in quality assurance and strategic programme development and decision-making, to ensure consistent communication and alignment across partner universities.	
--	--	--	--

Viewed documents

- Self-Evaluation Report (SER) from 23/02/2025, version 13/03/2025.
- Subsequent document with additional information on the SER provided by the Consortium as of 13/03/2025.
- Subsequent documents as of 28/04/2025 provided by the Consortium due to additional requests of the review panel before the site visit.
- Information on country-specific requirements compiled by AQ Austria on the application of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes between 13/03/2025 and 28/03/2025. All Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs) from the countries involved have been contacted. Additional information was derived from the EQAR website (implementation of European Approach).
- Statement of the Consortium on factual accuracy from 05/06/2025.

Glossary

Short and long forms of the most frequently used terms	
Alumni and Student Board	ASB
Coordinator Board	CB
Curriculum Development - Joint MA Programme in Political Science	JoPSic
Curriculum Development Joint European Political Science MA	EuroPS
Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje	UKIM
Deputy Coordinator	DC
Diploma Supplement	DS
Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education	CBHE
Eurasia International University Yerevan	EIU
European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes	EA
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education	ENQA
European Credit Transfer System	ECTS
European Free Trade Association	EFTA
European Higher Education Area	EHEA
European Qualifications Framework	EQF
European Quality Assurance Register	EQAR
European Union	EU
European University of Tirana	UET
Examination Book	EB
Executive Director	ED
Georgian Institute for Public Affairs	GIPA
Higher Education Institution	HEI
Joint master programme Political Science – Integration and Governance	PoSiG
National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance	ANQA
National Quality Assurance Agency Kosovo	KAA
Paris Lodron University of Salzburg	PLUS
PoSiG Consortium Member	PoSiG-CM
Programme Coordinator	PC
Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area	QF-EHEA
Quality Assurance Agency	QAA
Quality Board / Quality Assurance Board	QB / QAB



Quality Management Handbook	QMH
Sarajevo School of Science and Technology	SSST
Self-Evaluation Report	SER
Student Handbook	SH
Tbilisi State University	TSU
Teaching Handbook	TH
Turpanjian Institute of Social Sciences	TISS
University of Business and Technology Priština	UBT
University of Prishtina	UP
University of Sarajevo	UNSA
University of Tirana	UTIR
University of Trieste	UNITS
Yerevan State University	YSU



**The PoSIG consortium:
Statement on the draft of the expert's review
5. June 2025**

Dear members of the review panel,

we would like to thank the review panel for providing the accreditation report so quickly and for the careful and well-structured analysis it provides. The report is not only well-elaborated but also offers deep and thoughtful insights into our programme. We feel that our programme and its efforts have been accurately perceived by the review team.

In general, we agree with the conclusions and appreciate the constructive feedback. Nevertheless, we would like to offer a few minor remarks and clarifications on the following pages.

for the PoSIG consortium

General remark on the scope of the accreditation:

- In the preliminary remarks the first AQ Austria accreditation is mentioned, but the re-accreditation by ZEvA is not.
- Generally, it is not clear whether the scope of the current accreditation is only the extension of the consortium or the programme as a whole. Our intention was clearly the latter.
- If the current accreditation is only for the extension it should/must refer to the recent and valid 2024 ZeVA accreditation. The AQ accreditation from 2017 is no longer valid.
- From the previous communication and the talks on April 29 we expected that the scope is the full accreditation of the extended PoSIG programme.
- The “concise overview of the national legal frameworks of the consortium partners” refers to all partner countries; hence we conclude that the accreditation procedure also refers to the whole consortium.
- Hence, we would ask for an update of the “Final Assessment” on page 37.

Overview of the accreditation procedure

P4: Academic degree/degree giving/issuance of certificate

- For UKIM also “Master of science in Political science (MSc)” would be correct, as for GIPA and TSU

Preliminary remarks

P.6: “Mandatory mobility for students and staff”

- We definitely have a high level of staff mobility, many colleagues attended the teaching academies and met at other opportunities, also teaching mobility, joint seminars etc. But it is not regulated that it is mandatory.

P.6: “UKIM and PLUS were already collaborating in the so-called “PoSiG” project. PLUS has a leading role in both projects.”

- While PLUS has a leading role in Euro PS, JoPScip project is led by GIPA.

P.8f: “concise overview of the national legal frameworks of the consortium partners”

- Many thanks for this informative overview!

1 Eligibility [ESG 1]

1.1. Status

1.2. Joint design and delivery

P.11: “It is worth mentioning that the University of Belgrade also submitted 10 syllabuses to participate in the programme, even though it is currently not in a position to be considered an implementing partner.”

- The 19 syllabi from the University of Belgrade are not part of the consortium's [final course catalogue \(by institution\)](#); hence not part of this accreditation application.

P.11: "Students are granted the freedom to organize their studies from the outset by selecting foundational theoretical and methodological courses at the PLUS, while partners in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus offer various additional courses."

- Foundational and theoretical courses are not offered only by PLUS, but by several partners. See the [course catalogue \(by institution\)](#)

P.11: “The review panel recommended that the consortium evaluate the introduction of explicit leadership training components, such as workshops or courses on strategic decision-making and policy advocacy. This would maximize the programme's effectiveness in preparing participants for high-level roles.”

- The program's mandatory courses guarantee that students meet the learning outcomes and develop the skills necessary for successful employment after graduation. While new courses may be added in the future, the current learning outcomes can still be achieved without explicit course offers in that manner.

1.3 Cooperation Agreement

P.12: “each consortium member nominates a Programme Coordinator (PC) and a Deputy Coordinator (DC)”

- There is no deputy coordinator.

P.13: “PoSiG member universities announce a mobility competition twice a year”

- This seems to refer to an internal GIPA process that has been discussed during the site visit. It does not apply to PoSIG in general.

P.14: “The catalogue includes hundreds of master's courses”

- While we do not offer hundreds of courses, the catalogue includes [approximately 100](#).

2. Learning Outcomes

2.1 Level [ESG 1.2]

P.15f: “The review panel recommends that by the start of the academic year 2025/26, the PoSiG consortium should evaluate in detail that all partner institutions, including the newly integrated partners (YSU, EIU, TSU, GIPA), have implemented a standardized process for aligning course learning outcomes with EQF Level 7. The outcome should include sample course syllabi and assessment methods from each partner, verifying the delivery of advanced knowledge, critical analysis, and independent research skills.”

- This process has already taken place. During various teacher workshops, the alignment of learning outcomes was a central topic. After the course descriptions were submitted, they were also reviewed in this manner, along with all the other aspects of these descriptions.

P.16: “While the programme excels in Political Science expertise, the review panel recommends that the consortium evaluate the possibility of incorporating training in digital tools for data analysis (e.g. big data and AI-driven policy modelling).”.

- This is already part of the Methodology I and especially the Methodology II courses, and teachers are aware that these new elements have to be further developed in the teaching practise.
- (Maybe not in all details like AI-driven policy modelling, but in general the use of digital tools definitely is.)

P.16: “The review panel recommended that the consortium evaluate the introduction of explicit leadership training components, such as workshops or courses on strategic decision-making and policy advocacy. This would maximize the programme's effectiveness in preparing participants for high-level roles.”

- Policy advocacy is not offered explicitly but is an element of PublAdmin courses taught by SSST staff (in 3 weeks of the course program). The consortium welcomes this recommendation which also could be implemented in applied politics course of the curriculum.

P.16: “The review panel recommends that the consortium evaluate the possibility of offering optional language courses. Given the programme’s international scope, providing such courses (e.g. in regional or EU working languages) could improve students’ ability to work in multilingual governance contexts, thereby reinforcing their EQF Level 7 communication skills.”

- Students can take language courses outside the regular curriculum. And, language courses are already recognised when students require further language competence for their MA thesis project.
- It is also important to note that, in practice, a student may spend only one or two semesters at a specific partner university. Given this limited time frame, it is questionable whether a student

could realistically acquire a new foreign language to the extent required for EQF Level 7 communication skills.

2.2 Disciplinary field

P.17: “Path of student ensures compliance with the curriculum’s 120 ECTS-credit requirement, international mobility across three consortium universities (PLUS, UKIM, UTIR), and adherence to the redefined curriculum’s structure”

- What is meant by “path of student”?
- International mobility is not limited to the three mentioned universities. The requirement is for a minimum of two and a maximum of four partners.

2.3 Achievement

P.19: “However, the specific exception to the dropout rate warrants further investigation to identify potential challenges or barriers at the mentioned institution, which could inform targeted improvements to sustain overall student retention.”

- The mentioned phenomenon is not about a specific institution, but about students from Kosovo, who specifically tend to move over to the local PolSci Master in Salzburg (maybe especially in terms of student visa for extended stay in Schengen space).

P.19: “these include interactive lectures and seminars,”

- There are no lectures in the course catalogue.

P.20, recommendation: “The review panel recommends the consortium to develop targeted retention strategies, such as enhanced academic advising and mentorship programmes, to reduce drop-out rates across all student groups, with particular attention to addressing the challenges faced by students who switch to other programmes.”

- This recommendation will be picked up with an extension of the "Jour Fix" approach to all partner institutions and students in all phases of the program. It will have a local program but share at least once per month an online and live opportunity to all enrolled students. The consortium wants to motivate students to join the existing LinkedIn platform which includes also alumni and lecturer of the program.

P.20, recommendation: “The review panel also recommends implementing structured support for students balancing work and study, such as flexible thesis submission deadlines or part-time study options, to address delays in programme completion.”

- Flexible thesis submission deadlines are already part of the consortium policy. Students after work leave can reenter the program and complete their studies. Also, part-time study is already possible. Times-to-completion data shows that students make great use of this opportunity.

P.20, recommendation: “Additionally, the review panel recommended that the consortium establish a formalized alumnus tracking system (...)”

- We share the recommendation of the panel that the consortium should establish a more formal alumni tracking system. But, the limit to such an instrument is the responsiveness of alumni. With the rollout of the new Jour Fix addressed to all students the consortium also wants to create interaction on LinkedIn which could extend the reachout to our alumni. Also, the alumni workfields could find support with students internships and MA thesis projects.

2.4 Regulated Professions

-/-

3. Study Programme [ESG 1.2]

3.1 Curriculum

P.21: “The SER indicates that the specialized areas and modules align with the level of artistic and academic proficiency of the consortium members.”

- artistic?

P.21: “The review panel likes to emphasize that while the course "Methods 1" provides an introduction to both quantitative and qualitative methods, "Methods 2" focuses only on quantitative methods and the statistics program R, as it is listed in the PoSiG course list 2025. Both are obligatory. It is only possible to focus on qualitative methods if the elective path of “advanced methods” is chosen in the specialization. In this case, however, it is not possible to specialize in "AppliedPolitics courses", which is the other string.”

- Methods I and II should be viewed as integrated courses in our curriculum. While Methods I is more about research design, Methods II is about analysis - both qualitative and quantitative. This may not be fully reflected in the readings/topics mentioned in the syllabus, but it is done in practice. The Master thesis seminar is also a compulsory course in which students work on the research design on their master thesis - qualitative, quantitative and mixed (see the syllabus [here](#)). In addition, students can enrol in Advanced Methodology courses without losing the possibility to enroll in Applied Politics courses. These have elective courses status and can be taken as part of additional courses that should be completed within the curriculum (24 ECTS).

P.22: “According to the SER and the provided documents, students must link their internships to their MA-thesis, thereby connecting pedagogy to science.”

- pedagogy?

P.22/23: There the term “module” is misused several times for the term “course”.

- In our case a module of 18 ECTS credits typically consists three courses with 6 ECTS credits each.

P.23, recommendation: “The review panel specifically recommends offering qualitative alternatives to students on the compulsory module 'Methods 2'.”

- It’s not a module (in the logic of our curriculum), but a course.
- The discussion on qualitative/quantitative approaches in methodology in social science has a long tradition. The PoSIG model for methodology teaching is not taking up this discussion since it is seen as fact that both approaches are needed to handle the complexity of politics from sociological, institutional, economic and ecological perspectives and the fact of an highly interactive process in between local and global developments. The primary focus on statistical methods to analyse data in Methods II is therefore seen as an instrument also for the analysis of data collected with qualitative methods. The inclusion of Political Theory and History of Political Ideas in the academic profile of the programme is a further proof of this integrative approach.
- Further deepening of qualitative and quantitative methods for students with research interests in that direction are offered in elective courses and advanced methods seminars where courses work with aggregated datasets from political economy (eg. Trade and Economics) and explore normative and sociological elements of politics collected with qualitative methods (e.g. Populism research).

P.23, recommendation: “The review panel also recommends renaming the 'Methods 2' module, as it is misleading for a module to be called 'Methods 2' when it only covers quantitative methods and the R statistics programme.”

- Firstly, why should a course on only quantitative methods (if it would be the case) not be called “methods 2”?
- But in fact, and we even checked this back with our teachers, the course does also include qualitative methods (see repeated above).
- It’s a course, not a module.

3.2 Credits

P.23, recommendation: “The review panel recommends establishing a clear process that allows for evidence-based modifications to deviations from module and course sizes at individual partner universities, to ensure that the overall defined structure remains intact.”

- We have a regulation on this, it is mentioned directly in the previous paragraph: "If a partner institution wishes to offer a course worth fewer than 6ECTS-credits, two or more courses must be combined to reach a minimum total of 6 ECTS-credits."

3.2 Workload

P.24: “The PoSiG programme only accepts candidates with a Bachelor’s degree in International Relations or Political Science, along with a minimum of 10 ECTS-credits in Methodology. Upon reviewing the transcripts, standard issues were encountered with applicants from non-EU countries. While these applicants are accepted, they are required to complete several additional courses.”

- Firstly, this is a repetition of the first paragraph on this page.
- The requirement for additional courses has nothing to do with the origin of students, only with their preparation in their respective Master programmes.
- Unlike the overall implementation of Bologna Models in Political Science with a clear dominance of MA programs fields of specialization (with strong criticism on this from the side of ECPR) the size and varieties of academic specializations of partner institutions allows to offer the program as integrated and all dimensions of politics including program. As a consecutive program at EQL 7 PoSiG therefore needs to have the relevant education on BA level in these fields of specialization available in master classes. .

4. Admission and Recognition [ESG 1.4]

4.1. Admission

P.25: “During the site visit on 29/04/2025, the review panel was informed that 91 applicants had been received for the 2025/26 academic year.”

- correct is: 91 have started at the application platform in this year and 37 have completed the required documents and uploaded them.

P.25, recommendation: “The review panel recommends the consortium to update and clarify the information about the admissions and selection process provided on the PoSiG website.”

- The consortium thanks for this recommendation and will ask the new selected candidates 2025 for comments and suggestions about the improvement of this information. The same time the consortium also received positive feedbacks about the information offered. And the way applicants have used the information about the selection of fields of specialisation and mobility tracks indicates that this information was understood and sufficient. Anyway improvement is always on the agenda when it comes to communication with students as our central target group.
- From our POV, since its recent reform, the PoSiG website consistently offers updated information on the admission and selection processes for all partner universities.

4.2. Recognition

-/-

5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3]

5.1 Learning and teaching

-/-

5.2 Assessment of students

P.27: “The review panel learned that the joint programme follows a robust assessment framework that combines direct assessment methods, such as written and oral assignments, for courses, and a structured Master's thesis defence involving multiple examiners from different institutions.”

- Here we are missing a reference to our Teacher's Handbook, and, more importantly, to our provision for course descriptions to use ECTS credits, i.e. the workload of a course, to plan student activities and align them with assessment methods.

P.27: “As outlined in the SER,”

- From here on it is a repetition of the first half of this long paragraph.

P.28, recommendation: “The review panel recommends the consortium to develop and provide targeted training for new partners' faculty on PoSiG's assessment standards, leveraging the Teacher's Handbook and JoPScip workshops, to ensure uniform application of constructive alignment and ECTS grading.”

- This is a standard procedure in the course of the annual teacher trainings; and, nes teachers, were trained during the recent JoPScip workshops.
- Besides this, for all teachers, there is the Teacher's Handbook available and there are the requirements from the form for course descriptions with their didactical implications. ...

P.28, recommendation: “In light of the growing diversity of consortium partners resulting from geographical expansion of the consortium, the review panel recommends ensuring uniform training in quantitative methods and R software.”

- The meaning of this sentence is unclear to us, especially in relation to geographical expansion.

6. Student Support [ESG 1.6]

P.30, recommendation: “The review panel recommends creating official and formal contact points for students across the programme, addressing the current lack of a centralized support mechanism.”

- The consortium will strengthen the visibility of the Executive Director as central contact point for PoSIG students and administrative staff involved in the implementation of the program at all partner universities. The PoSIG Teacher Academy 2026 will also focus on the management of innovation and internationalization of HEIs and will be addressed to administrative staff groups.

P.30, recommendation: “The review panel recommends improving student involvement by establishing stable election procedures for the ASB, enabling remote participation in the ASB and enabling participation in the "Jour-Fixe" remotely for all PoSIG-students.”

- It is planned to extend the Jour Fix to all students of the program enrolled at partner universities and to provide this service to students from the first and the second year. Each partner will offer the Jour Fix as local supervision space and to connect this to joint online events jointly delivered with the partner universities. Including first/second year students will allow peer learning opportunities from different stages and challenges of the study experience of students.

P.30, recommendation: “The review panel recommends creating a unified digital platform for students and alumni to socialize, exchange experiences, network and support each other, but also to organize politically to provide feedback for the programme.”

- With regard to the recommended joint digital platform for alumni, students and teaching staff the consortium here has high expectations in the started establishment of the PoSIG Alumni Network (PAN) on LinkedIn.

7. Resources

7.1 Staff

P.31: “Staff development activities include:”

- We would once again also mention the Teacher’s Handbook and the form for course descriptions here. Sure, these are no “training activities”, but they have big didactical implications.
- Small remark: The QAB can also be physical, when coinciding with other activities.

P.31, recommendation: “The review panel recommends providing more attention to administrative staff, as well as training for this group, since they play a vital role in dealing with foreign graduate students.”

- It is intended that the workshop for administrators at the PoSIG Teacher Academy 2026 will create a stronger interaction within the administrative staff involved in the program implementation. This could be established with a direct communication line of the Executive Director with admin staff (where this up to now is organized via the Coordinators) and to create low level communication on practical issues also in between the involved staff (Whatsapp or Signal) but also to have at least once per year a Coordinators Board online meeting on administrative issues with inclusion of the relevant staff. This should encourage peer to peer learnings from administrative practices at partner institutions from admission up to degree giving issues.

7.2. Facilities

P.32: “The review panel learned that because of Global Protect, access to other partner universities beyond Salzburg University is provided via EURODOM registration.”

- The meaning of this sentence is unclear to us.
- There is no restriction.
- Some Universities use Eduroam for easy access, others don't have that and have other solutions.

P.32: "Although partner universities are equipped with the necessary learning resources, the programme has chosen not to invest in them."

- The meaning of this sentence is unclear to us.

8. Transparency and Documentation

P.33: “The absence of a unified digital platform for programme-wide communication exacerbates existing difficulties.”

and

P.33: “The review panel also recommends considering the creation of a unified digital platform for programme-wide communication and resource sharing.”

- To this purpose the platform posig.online is developed in the scope of JoPScip. As it is still in development, it was not actively used by now, but will be an option in the future.

P.33, recommendation: “The review panel recommends enhancing the SH and website with the help of students, in to provide consolidated support information and detailed guidance on navigating multiple universities.”

- The consortium wants to strengthen the visibility of the central contact point for students and will analyse the fit of the offered information at the website to students needs. The direct interaction of the Executive Director as central contact point for PoSIG students with supportive administrative staff at the partner institutions will create more effectivity, efficiency and transparency of the program and its partners procedures to the students.

P.33, recommendation: “The review panel also recommends implementing information sessions or other formats to introduce partner universities, explain administrative procedures and support student mobility.”

- As mentioned and acknowledged elsewhere in the experts review a workshop for admin. staff is already in preparation.
- This workshop (planned for the teacher's academy 2026) shall be used to also create higher transparency on these topics and allow improvements in the information and supervision services toward students and young lecturers at the partner universities.

9. Quality Assurance

P.34: “The Consortium set up a (Quality) Committee for each course, made up of members from different programmes, to carry out mutual evaluations (sociologists assessed political science courses, and vice versa).”

- We are unsure of the origin of this statement. In fact, we don’t have a committee for each course.
- What we have, especially during the work on the course descriptions and for the review and selection of courses, are module coordinators.

P.35: Referring to the whole paragraph, beginning with “However, ...”

and

P.34, recommendation: “The review panel recommends the consortium to refocus its efforts on strengthening a collective quality assurance mechanism. This should include the (re-)definition of shared quality benchmarks, regular cross-institutional audits, and the establishment of a centralized platform for sharing best practices and resources.”

- Many of the elements suggested here are already in place:
 - standards: defined in the Teacher’s Handbook and in the form for course descriptions
 - governance body: the coordinators board and the quality board
 - trainings: annual teacher academy.
 - platform to share best practice: also the teacher academy, and during the last year the teacher workshops to work on course descriptions; these course descriptions are available to everyone. During the teacher workshops best practice courses (and course descriptions) were presented and discussed.

P.36: “The review panel recommends developing a joint administrative structure to address students’ needs and other quality assurance issues effectively.”

- While there is room for improvement, but there definitely is a joint administrative structure, with a Executive Director, a Coordinators Board, a Quality Board, the Examination Book as the tool to collect and admin student data from various institutions. Additionally the new platform posig.online is in preparation that will also provide an online alternative or replacement of the Examination Book.
- Additionally, with the new admin workshop, as acknowledged in the expert review, a new approach to jointness in administration is already in preparation.

