

**ERASMUS PLUS
HIGHER EDUCATION CAPACITY BUILDING**

QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN/STRATEGY



**Erasmus+ Project
New and Innovative Curricula in Precision Agriculture / (NICOPA)**

597985-EPP-1-2018-1-KZ-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication / communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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1. Introduction

This document forms a single point of reference on the quality that will be governed during the NICOPA project. The aim of the Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) is to define the quality control and quality assurance activities that will be carried out throughout the project in order to ensure smooth implementation, continuous monitoring and high quality level of the project results and the project outcomes.

NICOPA's QAP plan will ensure that the project's processes and outputs are monitored and evaluated in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact.

The QAP will enable an efficient collaboration among the project partners and delivery of project results and outcomes, whereas the risk assessment analysis is necessary for evaluation and control of potential project risks, focusing on their precautionary diagnosis and handling.

2. Distribution List

This Quality Assurance Plan will be distributed to all project partners:

Partner #	Organisation Name	Acronym	City / Country
P1	S.Seifullin Kazakh Agro Technical University	KATU (Coordinator)	Astana, Kazakhstan
P2	Technische Universität Berlin	TUB	Berlin, Germany
P3	Agricultural University Plovdiv	AU	Plovdiv, Bulgaria
P4	Ceska Zemedelska Univerzity v Praze	CULS	Prague, Czech Republic
P5	Exolaunch GmbH (formerly known as ECM space technologies GmbH)	EXO	Berlin, Germany
P6	Shokan Ualikhanov Kokshetau State University	KokSU	Kokshetau, Kazakhstan
P7	North Kazakhstan State University Named After Manash Kozybayev	NKSU	Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan
P8	Turkmen Agricultural University Named after S.A. Niyazov	TAU	Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
P9	The Turkmen State Architecture and Construction Institute	TSACI	Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
P10	Turkmen Agricultural Institute	TAI	Dashoguz, Turkmenistan
P11	National University of Uzbekistan	NUUz	Tashkent, Uzbekistan
P12	Tashkent University of Information Technologies	TUIIT	Tashkent, Uzbekistan
P13	Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers	TIIAME	Tashkent, Uzbekistan
P14	Ministry of Education and Science		Astana, Kazakhstan
P15	The State Inspection for Supervision of Quality in Education		Tashkent, Uzbekistan
P16	Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan		Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

The QAP (draft version) is prepared by P5. All partners need to revise and update the QAP. The final QAP will be presented and discussed during the Kick-off meeting to be held in Berlin on March 2019.

3. Quality Assurance Plan of NICOPA

Quality assurance (QA) is an integral part of the internal management of all EU institutions following the standards in the European Higher Education Area. Quality assurance helps to support teachers and build expertise and capacity in the higher education system to deliver positive outcomes for students. Through sharing, understanding and applying standards and expectations, quality assurance helps to raise standards, expectations, and levels of consistency across HEIs. Efficient and effective approaches to quality assurance will require building on local practices, developing working approaches across HEIs authorities and partners and linking this work at a national level.

According to the NICOPA project application, EXOLAUNCH GmbH (P5), as the lead partner for the Work Package 3 (WP3) – Quality Control, has prepared an outline of the Quality Assurance Plan/Strategy in collaboration with the project coordinator, the S.Seifullin Kazakh Agro Technical University (KATU) (P1).

The outline was presented to the members of Project Management Board (PMB) and all partner institutions in order to receive the feedback from all consortium members. Finalized version was adopted by the PMB and uploaded on the NICOPA project website.

NICOPA's QA methodology allows for regular feedback to inform the day-to-day as well as longer-term functioning of the project. This will encourage a flexible management, coordination and implementation of the project, so that evolving needs can be met, and corrective measures taken. The specific mechanisms to be deployed throughout the three years of the project to ensure the monitoring and evaluation of all project processes and outcomes are summarized below.

3.1. QA Objectives and Goals

The objectives of the QA WP3 – Quality Control are to:

- ✓ Establish QA procedures for the project as a whole;
- ✓ Coordinate the work of an academic staff that will help ensure that project deliverables and outputs meet the requirements of a wider stakeholder group.

QA procedures will be established at the start of the project and applied to all activities. It will be the joint responsibility of all partners until the complete discharge of all obligations under the project. The main goals of the QA procedures are:

- ✓ To document and assess the project's progress;
- ✓ To evaluate the contribution of the on-going results to the project's objectives;
- ✓ To discover deviations at an early stage, and feed the information to the PMB, to initiate remedial actions (if necessary) as soon as possible

3.2. Quality of project deliverables

The deliverables of NICOPA may be classified into tangible deliverables such as reports, publications, manuals, methodology, plans, presentations, printed and electronically available promotional material, media articles as well as intangible deliverables in the form of organized events (trainings, workshops, study visits, coordination meetings, monitoring visits, conferences, etc.), developed and launched project website, social media, etc.

A common quality expectation for all deliverables is their relevance to reach the overall objective and the specific objectives, with a further focus on their development in an efficient and effective manner. Timely delivery following the project workplan as identified in the Application Form is expected.

3.3. Quality of document-based deliverables

A consistent and common format for all document-based deliverables (Word documents, Power Point presentations) is to be followed by all partners using templates worked out by P5.

All templates are adopted in order to ensure a common appearance of deliverables as well as to ensure that a minimum amount of information will appear consistently in all documents produced by the project. This is not relevant to deliverables that by their nature need to have a different format (i.e. project brochures, newsletters).

When partners produce studies and publications as deliverable, they are obliged to put Erasmus+ logo consisting of sentence “Co-funded by Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union” on the cover or the first page. Moreover, they must use following disclaimer: *„This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication / communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.”*

3.4. Quality of the Meetings

Meeting requests: Meetings will be organized and scheduled by contacting all team members. Meeting dates should be agreed upon and pre-announced at least 2 (two) weeks beforehand. The respective team leader is responsible for initiating meeting organization. Meetings will be collocated when possible to minimize expenses and travel time of partners.

Participants to meetings: A pre-determined number of team members from each partnering organization is required to attend meetings, as prescribed by the project proposal and project plan. All meeting participants are required to participate in cooperative manner. If a planned participant is unable to attend a meeting, they must inform the meeting organizer beforehand, and/or provide a substitute member to take their place.

Meeting Agenda: Meeting agendas are prepared by meeting organizers. A meeting agenda must be distributed to all participants 14 (fourteen) days in advance. Meeting participants may suggest additional items to be added to the Meeting Agenda, but no later than 5 (five) days before the start of the meeting. During the meeting, the consortium can add new items on the agenda following a unanimous decision.

Meeting minutes: Meeting minutes will be distributed within 10 business days following the meeting by the team leader of the organizing partner. All decisions become binding after they have been recorded in the meeting minutes and the meeting minutes have been accepted by the participants.

3.5. Quality of organization of NICOPA events

All events organized by project partners, during the project should be organised professionally. The organizers should provide in due time a full information package to the participants

including the draft agenda, study visit guide or a note on the logistics (informing about travel arrangements, venue, suggested hotels, etc.). Time for preparation activities depends on the type of event e.g. several months for study visits or conference and several weeks for trainings. This obligation is defined as a separate task for host institution/partner.

The meeting organizers ensure smooth registration processes and the implementation of the meetings respecting appropriate time for event sessions and breaks as well as the availability of all necessary materials (e.g. meetings, training and promotional material). The organizers will also ensure the recording of minutes of the meetings in a concise style including a list of action points. Where appropriate (e.g. for trainings) also feedback forms will be distributed among participants and event reports related to feedback forms will be prepared by responsible partner. Power point presentation should be prepared using appropriate template created by P5. All prepared documents by project partners will be prepared on project designed document template.

Based on obligations of the beneficiaries, related to information requirements, the partners shall inform the public, press and media (internet included) of the event which must visibly indicate “Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union” as well as the graphic logos of the project and Erasmus+ Programme. Posters, roll-up and other promotional materials shall be displayed during the event.

3.6. Quality of promotional materials

Communication and dissemination activities of the NICOPA project will adhere to the Dissemination and Sustainability Plan of the project. All promotional materials will reflect the visual identity of the project and the Erasmus+ Programme.

P5 is responsible for design and distribution of all promotional material. The draft version will be sent to all partners for comments and suggestions, before printing, publishing and distribution. The materials will be disseminated by all project partners at events which are relevant to reach the project’s target group.

3.7. Quality of the project websites and other electronic media

The project envisages setting up the public part of NICOPA website (<https://nicopa.eu/>) and Intranet part – NICOPA Workspace platform as intranet tool for project communication and project management within project partners. The NICOPA platform can be accessed by all project partners with the purpose to keep all project documents and deliverables on one place. It will be the single point of reference for the project documentation and communication among partners. P5 will be responsible for setting up and maintaining the NICOPA website with all information and materials received from project partners.

Moreover, Facebook page – either in the form of the fan page, will be established, in order to ensure project’s visibility in the social media sphere. All representation tools will be continuously updated by the partners and are intended to effectively communicate activities and the results of the project.

All partners are asked to promote NICOPA project on their universities’ websites and other social media channels (such as: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram profiles/groups, newsletters,

etc.) by providing short description of the project, logo, project events and link to NICOPA website. All tools will be implemented with high performance, good functionality and stability, emphasizing the maximum reach and awareness of the target audience.

3.8. Quality of Project Management

The project management structure was established at the project's Kick-off meeting to ensure effectiveness, decisiveness, flexibility and quality of work. At the Kick-off meeting Project Management Board (PMB) was also established, where all project partners have representative members and its deputies.

The PMB will review the activities and decide on any necessary contingency measures in reorganisation tasks and resources – as usual with a strong focus on the project impact. The project management will be transparent and flexible but also strict enough to ensure the implementation of the project activities in order to achieve the project's objectives. P5 responsible for administrative part of the project and preparation of internal reporting.

Each partner is equally and independently responsible for assigned activities, money use and reporting. Contact persons have the responsibility for the local management.

4. Project Management and Risk Plan

As part of the internal quality management, a regular risk assessment will be carried and reviewed out during the regular PMB meetings (Risk brainstorming) which shall lead to corrective actions and potential adaptations of the Work Plan based on a sound process.

The project management and risk plan strategy addresses issues that could potentially endanger the achievement of the overall goal of the project and its objectives considering potential financial risks (overspending and underspending), timing (postponing of activities / deliverables), performance risks (project management), and sustainability of the project results. The main aim will be to provide a sound assessment, to anticipate challenges in a systematic way and to minimize the potentially negative overall impact.

The identification and assessment of new risks is a joint responsibility of all project partners who have to communicate them to the Project Coordinator P1 and the PMB, eventually suggesting also possible interventions and solutions, as soon as they get aware of those risks. In particular, partners may think of preventive actions (avoiding that the risk occurs) and corrective actions (decreasing the severity and impact), specifying also the resources that would be needed.

The PMB may react in several ways, ranging from the simple acceptance of the situation in the case of negligible risks, to the enforcement of a mitigation plan including alternatives, workarounds and the proposed corrective actions that will make the risk consequences acceptable for the consortium.

Also, the external reviewers (representatives of NEO and EACEA) will be involved in the risk management. During their monitoring visits they will assess if there is a risk that the project will fail to meet its key indicators and if there is a risk that project partners will not be able to spend all the money according to the planned project budget.

The proper allocation of resources to the project by the individual project partners is of outmost importance. There are several possible risks connected: the delay of the project implementation as defined in the project work plan; the rushed implementation of the work plan with low quality; an underspending during the project implementation (also causing a shift in the headings' ratio), meaning that the project timetable is followed with reference to technical deliverables, yet the relevant expenditures are not timely invoiced or validated; etc.

All project partners have to ensure that they allocate the needed resources to the project, both human and financial.

5. Quality Management Approach

Quality management includes planned and systematic processes, activities and outcomes to build confidence among project's partners that they do the right things at the right time and in the right way.

More specifically, the purpose for managing quality is to validate that the project deliverables are completed with an acceptable level of quality. Quality management assures the quality of the project deliverables and the quality of the processes used to manage and create the deliverables.

The quality management plan identifies the following key components:

Objects of quality review	Quality Measure	Quality Evaluation Methods
Project Deliverables	Deliverable Quality Criteria	Quality Control Activities
Project Processes	Process Quality Criteria Stakeholder Expectations	Quality Assurance Activities

The following is a brief explanation of each of the components of the quality management plan:

Project Deliverables and Processes	The key project deliverables and processes subject to quality review.
Deliverable Quality Criteria	The quality criteria that are the “measures” used to determine a successful outcome for a deliverable. Deliverables are evaluated against these criteria before they are formally approved.
Process Quality Criteria and Stakeholder Expectations	The quality criteria that are the “measures” used to determine if project work processes are being followed. Stakeholder expectations describe when a project process is effective as defined by the project stakeholders.
Quality Control Activities	The quality control activities that monitor and verify that the project deliverables meet defined quality criteria.
Quality Assurance Activities	The quality assurance activities that monitor and verify that the processes used to manage and create the deliverables are followed and are effective.

5.1. Quality Management Objectives

The following objectives are defined to achieve it based on monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement:

- ✓ to ensure that high standards of updated/modernized curricula are maintained and outcomes improved for students;
- ✓ to meet standards and expectations through the internal universities resources;
- ✓ to analyse and meet National Qualifications Frameworks;
- ✓ to ensure assessment materials and exemplification, including those that will be available;
- ✓ to ensure that accreditation of the developed curricula at national/institutional levels, regulations and guidelines are met, as well as applicable;
- ✓ to train target universities staff and academic faculty on quality improvement processes;
- ✓ to provide quality assurance approaches of other non-academic partners;
- ✓ quality control as a part of external evaluation.

6. Main QA Activities

1. Development of the Internal quality assurance system in the form of QA centres/responsible specialists in partner universities. This means that centres should have effective quality checks in place, define assessment tasks and activities, valid and reliable assessment decisions in line with national standards, and responsible for the internal verification of their assessments.

2. Development the procedure for self-monitoring by EXO (including reports template, questionnaires, surveys plan and feedback reports from target students /academics/ stakeholders groups, peer-view).

3. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) including testing of self-monitoring reports with necessary conclusions and recommendations every 6 months (by P5) (including comparison with timetable of the project activities; evaluation of outcomes and their quality in form of special developed report template; interviews with stakeholders; online evaluation). It will ensure an appropriate focus on coherent planning, checking, sampling, reviewing and providing feedback for quality improvement.

4. External monitoring: Establishing the Inter Project Coaching and PMB to serve as a structure to initiate corrections/improvements in the Work Plan/activities based on results of self-monitoring and external evaluation. This can also ensure that appropriate target-setting, monitoring and tracking of progress is in place and self-monitoring is based on a wide range of evidence across all aspects/outputs of the project including benchmarking information to inform improvement planning and raising achievement.

5. Project approaches will include opportunities for collaboration both virtual (for example, through P5) and face-to-face (for example, through network groups and professional development workshops with support of P5).

Through the series of workshops curriculum planners and managers (faculty heads/principal teachers) of target universities will train to build on existing practices to ensure that quality assurance activities are fit for purpose, comparable, manageable and accessible. The workshops also will provide opportunities and support for staff working collaboratively on quality assurance, verification and contributing to the National Qualification Frameworks.

During QA process the following outputs/project products should be examine: competence matrix, syllabuses, learning materials, tests, delivery and support system of Web-based courses, new BA/MSc courses implementation and learning.

Milestones: self-monitoring system established; feedback, questionnaire, annual reports; QA centres/responsible specialists in place; online evaluation in function; peer-view; the Inter Project Coaching and Evaluation Board established; report of inter project coaching; external M&E reports.

Indicators: number of self-monitoring reports, number of IEB meetings; number of questionnaires and surveys; number of reports of inter project coaching; external M&E reports; number of internal QA centres/specialists; number of specialists trained in QA.

7. Internal and External evaluation of NICOPA

The NICOPA project incorporates the system of monitoring strategies/methods targeting at ensuring high quality of results and smooth project implementation. In order to set up effective quality control mechanism, the Internal Evaluation Board (IEB) will be appointed. The list of activities will include: comparison with timetable of the project activities in Work plan; Evaluation of outcomes and their quality in form of Questionnaires/Interview reports received from target students/academics/stakeholders, and graduates groups; Online evaluation based on online procedures and questionnaire on website of the project. Besides that, Inter project Coaching and a Project Advisory Board (PAB) will be set up after the start as two parts of external monitoring to serve as assessments improving the quality of project outcomes. The external monitoring includes the assessment of various aspects of project implementation, such as *relevance* (is project still relevant in terms of its previously determined goals and achievements), *efficiency* (are the activities in work-packages done on time in line with the proposed project Working Plan), *effectiveness* (how well are project specific objectives met), *impact* (at the level of departments, faculty, university, etc.) and *sustainability* (what would stay after the project is finished).

PAB will include 1 representative of DAAD; 1 of each NEO in KZ, TM and UZ capable of external monitoring. These external evaluators will review most important project outcomes using annual reports on project results/interview reports provided by IEB and answer their recommendations on further project run. Inter project coaching as a part of external evaluation will serve as an assessment improving the quality of project outcomes. The official feedback received by the consortium will be taken as input for the quality enhancement.

Apart from the external monitoring, the Kazakh Agro Technical University (KATU) (P1) will additionally subcontract the external evaluator for the purpose of preparation of External Audit Report on the project. The evaluation will target project content development i.e. extent to which it contributes to the stipulated goals in accordance with the recommendations and templates of EACEA. The external component will consist of the evaluation by an external

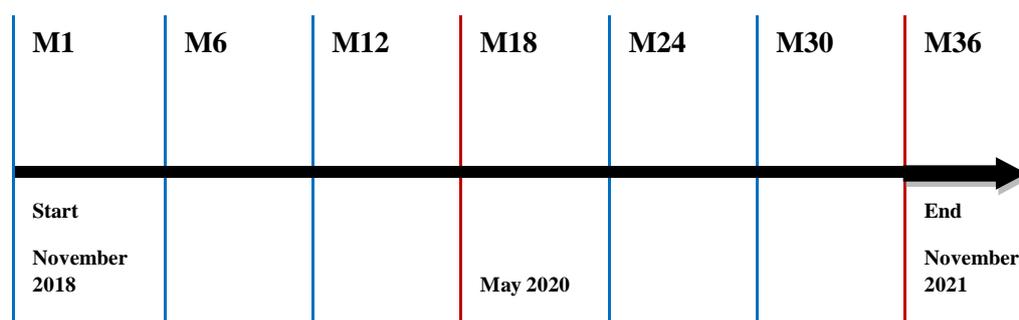
independent expert, appointed by the PMB during 2019, with the task to produce a report on the effects of the project with regards to its goals.

8. Plan of monitoring of the project activities

	2019		2020		2021	
Periodic reporting on the project achievements based on self-monitoring reports	15/05	15/11	15/05	15/11	15/05	15/11
Field monitoring visits:						
	2019		2020		2021	
Kazakhstan						
Turkmenistan						
Uzbekistan						
Interim reporting			15/05			
Final reporting					15/11	
Annual reporting*	15/11		15/11		15/11	

* This is the date of submitting final corrected version of report

Timeline of reporting:



Periodic, interim, final and annual reports should be based on the following contents.

Contents of the project monitoring & evaluation:

- a.* Cruciality of the project activities
- b.* Efficiency of the project realization
- c.* Project achievements (results)
- d.* Impact of the project measures (follow ups)
- e.* Sustainability of the project results. Periodic surveys and feedback analysis of target groups.
- f.* Communication process between consortium partners
- g.* Dissemination of the project activities and results
- h.* The project management