

D4.5. – Report on the pilot issuing of a joint European degree label certificate following the compliancy exercise

Attachment 5 – EDLab guiding document for issuing a joint European degree label certificate2.0 (v.31/3/2024)

This document provides guidance to coordinators and administrators of joint programmes that will participate in the pilot awarding of the joint European degree label certificate in the EDLab framework. It builds upon the current status of the draft criteria, making abstraction of the fact that those criteria themselves are still object of discussion.

Introduction

The joint European degree label certificate is a possible intermediate step towards the establishment of a model for a diploma for a possible future 'joint European degree'. The current label certificate is to be awarded on a voluntary basis by the higher education institutions (HEIs) that jointly offer a joint programme that meets the draft set of co-created European criteria.

In essence, the label certificate testifies that the holder successfully participated in a study programme that is compliant with the label criteria. Under the EDLab pilot, a small number of such programmes has been identified in a joint exercise led by the universities of Cadiz (ES) and Ghent (BE)¹. In the future, a dedicated procedure may be decided upon.

The label certificate is to be awarded to students who successfully participated in the joint programme, alongside the actual joint diploma and corresponding single diploma supplement (to distinguish paper from text, here we use the word 'diploma' to refer to the official document used for the purpose of awarding the joint degree). Under the pilot, tests of such issuing will take place beginning of 2024.

EDLab suggests for the label certificate to project as much as possible the look of an 'ideal' joint diploma, thereby fully rendering the joint efforts of the HEIs involved in the joint programme². This with a view to the possible development of a future template for an actual diploma for a joint European degree, which would have to be accommodated in the respective national/regional regulatory frameworks. For this exercise we have built upon the current models of joint diplomas received in reaction to our call among EDLab project partners, with the aim of establishing a common denominator³.

¹ Further information can be found in D4.5. 'Report on the pilot issuing of a joint European degree label certificate following a compliancy exercise'.

² Further information on the design of the joint European degree label certificate within EDLab context can be found in D4.4. 'Template for a joint European degree label certificate'.

³ Further information on the exercise can be found in D4.1. 'Repository of existing joint degree models', D4.2. 'Report on (joint) degree certificate prescriptions' and D4.3. 'Report on the options for a digital joint European degree label'.

Maximum readability and recognisability for institutions, students and employers is the prime objective, as it is indeed the wish to render the transnational character of the cooperation and overcome the multitude of combinations, models and templates for degrees that are currently awarded by transnational joint programmes, either as joint, double or multiple degrees.

The guidelines below are geared towards the issuing of the certificate in the PDF format, also allowing for print.

Chapter 1 - Contents

EDLab recommends that the following elements are included in the joint European degree label certificate:

- Identification of the certificate holder (full name, date, place of birth);
- Reference to the joint study programme for which the label certificate is awarded;
- If different from the title of the joint study programme, reference to the corresponding qualification(s) awarded on the corresponding joint diploma;
- Inclusion of the name and logos of the HEIs involved in the awarding of the corresponding degree(s);
- Inclusion of the name and logo of the European University Alliance(s) involved, if the joint programme is offered under the umbrella of such (an) Alliance(s). We remark that the use of such logo supposes some form of 'ownership' by the Alliance over the joint programme. Currently not all Alliances form a legal entity and none hold the competency of awarding degrees. It would be up to the Alliance(s) on hand to decide on a policy with the conditions on when the inclusion of the Alliance logo(s) on the label certificate is fitting;
- Inclusion of the logo of the joint programme (if available and preferred)
- Inclusion of a logo for the joint European degree label to act as key visual identifier which can also be used on the programme website (for joint programmes meeting the criteria and allowed to award the label certificate), as well as on the joint diploma (or corresponding diploma supplement) itself (for those institutions allowed to do so as per their prescriptions).
 - Under pilot context: Pilot issuing in the EDLab framework are to use the logo which was designed in the context of the EDLab project;
- Reference to what the joint European degree label stands for and how it is awarded (for example through a link to a webpage which includes and explains the common

set of co-created European criteria as well as the process for obtaining the label (currently in the pilot phase under (self-)assessment);

- Under pilot context: Reference to a dedicate webpage that is included on the EDLab project website⁴;
- Under pilot context: A disclaimer referring to the Erasmus+ European Policy Experimentation in Higher Education Call (2022), in order to clarify the experimental issuing;
- Place and date of issuance of the certificate;
- In terms of lay-out: No use of separate columns per national / regional system and institution, in order to maximally render the programme's joint nature.

Chapter 2 - Language of the certificate

For the sake of clarity, EDLab suggests to include only one language on the label certificate, but to allow for multiple translated versions, if wished for by any of the HEIs participating in the awarding for the joint programme.

- The label certificate is preferably issued in the language of instruction of the joint programme (if a single language is used within the joint programme).
- Preferably, if the language of instruction is not English, a combination of two label certificates is issued, whereby one version of the label certificate is offered in the language of instruction, alongside an identical copy in English (or any other major EU language), to facilitate its understanding in an international context.
- As an alternative, a combination of two label certificates could be issued, whereby one version of the label certificate is offered in the official language of the HEI that prepares the label certificate for the joint programme (often the coordinating HEI), alongside an identical copy in English (if English is not the official language of the HEI that prepares the label certificate for the joint programme).
- As an alternative, a combination of multiple label certificates can be issued, whereby one version of the label certificate is offered in the official language of the HEI that prepares the label certificate for the joint programme (often the coordinating HEI), alongside identical copies in English, and in the official languages of the other participating HEIs.

⁴ <https://www.ed-lab.eu/pilot-label-certificate-info>

Merely using the language of the institution where the label certificate is prepared to some extent undermines a clear rendering of the jointness of the consortium, a jointness which is especially relevant in multilateral contexts with HEIs in different language environments, or for programmes that are offered in multiple languages. On the other hand, multilingual certificates for joint programmes in multilingual teaching environments are likely to lose on transparency. Given the importance attached to multilingualism in the context of the European Education Area, we propose to allow for copies of the certificate if required by any of the participating institutions in the programme, which can then be used at the discretion of the certificate holder.

Chapter 3 - Number of signatures

A joint degree is awarded by all HEIs that contribute fundamentally to the joint programme and are in the legal position to award joint degrees, upon the arrangements defined in the corresponding (consortium) agreement between the HEIs involved in the offering of the joint programme. Ideally, to render the joint nature of the programme, the certificate includes physical signatures for all those institutions. However, practice shows that the collection of said signatures is administratively cumbersome and takes significant time, especially for larger consortia.

For some joint diplomas, practical solutions are agreed among the degree awarding institutions, whereby for instance (as per consortium agreement) the involved HEIs agree to use digital images of the signatures from the legal representatives of the participating HEIs. However, not all HEIs agree to the sharing of said digital images with the issuing institution (often the coordinating HEI).

In other instances, only the signature of the issuing institution is included, with reference to the fact that this legal representative signs also on behalf of the other participating institutions.

- If allowed by all degree-awarding HEIs involved in the joint programme, digital images of the signatures of the respective legal representatives are to be included.
- For the sake of consistency, if one HEI does not allow for the use of such image, no such images are to be used at all, apart from the image of the signature of the legal representative of the issuing institution, with a clear reference to the fact that the representative is signing on behalf of all degree-awarding HEIs.
- If the issuing institution cannot use an image of the signature, a digital PDF signature can be used.

- For institutions that cannot allow the use of images for signatures, nor digital signatures, a ‘wet’ signature on paper from the legal representative of the issuing institution is suggested. To allow for the provision of a PDF, the signed paper label certificate is to be scanned.

Chapter 4 - Authenticating the label certificate

The label certificate is inseparable from the diploma. This will be mentioned on the label certificate. No specific authentication measures for the label certificate are currently foreseen under the framework of the pilot issuing, other than the fact that the label certificate cannot be considered separately from the diploma, which provides its own authentication method (code, weblink, QR-code, etc.). The presenting of any label certificate without accompanying authenticated diploma holds no value.

It is advisable that the coordinators of the joint programmes that participate in the pilot awarding keep a record of the graduates to whom they issue the label certificate (name, student number, date and place of birth, nationality, date of graduation, date of issuing the certificate, certificate number). Apart from record-keeping at programme-level, this will allow the EDLab project to collect meta-data at aggregated level (no personal data will be requested).

Chapter 5 - Model certificates

In attachment four examples of potential label certificate models are included.

- The current draft certificates each carry the EDLab design for a logo for the certificate as distinctive feature.
- Each example provides for the optional inclusion of the logo of the relevant European University Alliance for joint programmes offered within the context of such Alliance, with the logo of the Alliance on the top left corner of the certificate.
- The models are further diversified according to the option for the inclusion of the physical / digital signatures of either one HEI signing on behalf of the consortium or of all of the higher education institution(s) involved, as well as the position of the institutional logos. The third and fourth option allows for the easiest inclusion of a variety of logos for multilateral cooperations, while maintaining an attractive lay-out.

Annexes

- 1. Model certificates**
- 2. Draft label criteria**

Attachment 1 to guiding document: EDLab model joint European degree label certificates

First example



joint European degree label certificate

This certificate is awarded to

[Name]

born [date of birth], [place of birth]

having successfully completed the

International Master of Science in Joint Degree Awarding

This is a joint study programme of [HEI, HEI, HEI], amounting to XXX ECTS. The programme is evaluated as meeting the joint European degree label criteria.*

This certificate is awarded on behalf of the participating higher education institutions.
The certificate is issued alongside the joint diploma.

Issued in [place], on [date]

[SIGN]

Name
Full title
HEI

[Logo Institution]

[Logo Institution]

[Logo Institution]

[Logo Institution]

[Logo Institution]

Label certificate number: [acronym JP] / [year of graduation] / [n°]



joint European degree label certificate

This certificate is awarded to

[Name]

born [date of birth], [place of birth]

having successfully completed the

International Master of Science in Joint Degree Awarding

This is a joint study programme of [HEI, HEI, HEI], amounting to XXX ECTS. The programme is evaluated as meeting the joint European degree label criteria.*

This certificate is awarded on behalf of the participating higher education institutions.
The certificate is issued alongside the joint diploma.

Issued in [place], on [date]

[SIGN]

Name
Full title
HEI

[Logo Institution]

[SIGN]

Name
Full title
HEI

[Logo Institution]

[SIGN]

Name
Full title
HEI

[Logo Institution]

[SIGN]

Name
Full title
HEI

[Logo Institution]

Label certificate number: [acronym JP] / [year of graduation] / [n°]

Second example



joint European degree label certificate

This certificate is awarded to

[Name]

born [date of birth], [place of birth]

having successfully completed the

International Master of Science in Joint Degree Awarding

This is a joint study programme of [HEI, HEI, HEI], amounting to XXX ECTS. The programme is evaluated as meeting the joint European degree label criteria.*

This certificate is awarded on behalf of the participating higher education institutions.

The certificate is issued alongside the joint diploma.

Issued in [place], on [date]

Name

Full title

HEI

[SIGN]

[Logo Institution]
[HEI]

[Logo Institution]
[HEI]

[Logo Institution]
[HEI]

[Logo Institution]
[HEI]



joint European degree label certificate

This certificate is awarded to

[Name]

born [date of birth], [place of birth]

having successfully completed the

International Master of Science in Joint Degree Awarding

This is a joint study programme of [HEI, HEI, HEI], amounting to XXX ECTS. The programme is evaluated as meeting the joint European degree label criteria.*

This certificate is awarded on behalf of the participating higher education institutions.

The certificate is issued alongside the joint diploma.

Issued in [place], on [date]

Name

Full title

HEI

[SIGN]

Name

Full title

HEI

[SIGN]

Name

Full title

HEI

[SIGN]

Name

Full title

HEI

[SIGN]

[Logo Institution]
[HEI]

[Logo Institution]
[HEI]

[Logo Institution]
[HEI]

[Logo Institution]
[HEI]