Enhancing Quality of Technology-Enhanced Learning at Jordanian Universities
EQTeL

Best Practices Manual for Jordan TEL

INTRODUCTION

The Best Practices Manual represents one of the core outcomes developed within the eQTeL project, the international initiative co-funded by the European Commission, EACEA Agency, under the TEMPUS IV sub-programme, focused to improve the quality and relevance of technology - enhanced learning (TeL) in Jordan and to enhance the quality assurance framework, new accreditation standards, guidelines for distance learning courses according to EU practices.

The new guidelines and standards highlighted during the project will foster the sustainable capacity building process aimed at supporting technology transfer in academic distance education.

Main objective of the *Best Practices Manual* is to provide an overview of the local and European strengths and threats/obstacles faced during the life of the project as emerged throughout research phase, and during the capacity-building programme, the intense study visits for staff, professors and institutional stakeholders carried on by partners.

The document will represent one of the core outcome for dissemination. It will contribute to the widespread transfer of knowledge and practices acquired during the lifetime of the project.

The profitable pilot experiences will be aimed at reinforcing the role of Higher Education in Jordan, the strategic vehicle to boost economic growth, employment rate and as a consequence the quality of life and social well-being of citizens. Being aware of the extremely important role of higher education for the sustainable development of a country, the challenge will be to contribute to the rise of students' enrolment numbers, despite the difficult conditions of the fluctuant economic growth, increasing the widespread use of e-learning methodologies and enhancing the quality of such learning offer.

The document has been designed and structured concentrating on the core topic, the Best practices. In order to describe the whole process, we have followed to select them, we have firstly introduced the *European and Jordanian frameworks* within which the e-learning experience is unfolding (the strengths, the weaknesses, the threats and the external helpful factors). We have included a list of the most valuable practices of the European context that can be a profitable experience for Jordan to consider in order maximising the implementation of e-learning in the area.

In a second stage, we have described the *selection criteria* at the basis of our choices. We have decided to mark a difference between *Best* and *Good* Practices considering the *Good ones* more suitable to be an example within new environments. The criteria on which we have based our evaluation are, certainly, strictly connected with the backgrounds. The strengths and the weaknesses have represented the ratio of the selection of the Best Practices in a second stage.

Later on we have introduced the stakeholders' perception, which is the point of view of the main actors involved in the process to improve the quality and relevance of technology - enhanced learning (TeL) in Jordan and to enhance the quality assurance framework, new standards or guidelines for distance learning courses.

Finally, we have listed the Good Practices in Jordan as a starting point developed through the eQTeL project as well as those developed in the Arabic geographical area and the connected long and mid-term objectives they have contributed to achieve.

Conclusions and lessons learnt have highlighted the key recommendations for a local and international audience in order to maximise the dissemination process and support the enlargement and reinforcement of the project success.

The document has been drawn up with the essential documental and pilot testing contributes of the *Jordanian partners:* the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHE), the Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC), The University of Jordan, Yarmouk University (YU), The Hashemite University, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University (AHU), Princess Sumaya University for Technology, The

Association of Arab Universities and the *European Partners* Fundació per a la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (ES), Università degli Studi "Guglielmo Marconi" (IT), University of Turku (FI), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (BE) and Agència per la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (ES).

1. E-LEARNING BACKGROUND: STRENGTHS AND THREATS

The widespread use of e-learning is strictly connected to the different information technology systems, infrastructures and networks that nowadays allow to easily transfer knowledge, make lessons accessible at any time or place exploiting standards and techniques of distance education applied to the learning process.

The concept of e-learning is used interchangeably with other terms such as virtual learning, online learning, computer based learning, distance learning or, finally distance education considering all the didactic activities developed by means of electronic tools.

E- learning could be described also as technology based delivery of learning. Current trends stress that e-learning is specifically targeted towards computer based learning, whereas m-learning includes mobile phones and i-Pad learning. It is important to define which are the boundaries related to any delivery mechanism of learning. What is suitable in technology-based delivery could be sometimes an issue due to the fast track to which technology currently changes.

Technology's progress could turn policies and procedures obsolete thus providing an explanation to why accrediting agencies often use to avoid assessment of e-learning, technology-based delivery of learning and their regulations.

As concerns the types of e-learning, we can list the most relevant as follows:

a. *E-learning based techniques* or *distance learning* that is the specific television technology, broadcasting, broadcasting via satellite (satellite channels), and learning using video tapes and audio tapes. These techniques are the same techniques used in distance education demonstrating that distance education is the first generation of e-learning;

b. *E-learning computer based techniques* implemented exploiting *education software*, multimedia software, hypermedia software. All of them allow to experiment an active interactive environment addressed to the learner;

c. *E-learning based on internet* employing Internet in teaching and learning in traditional and virtual classrooms.

d. *E-learning based on mobile phones*;

e. *Blended learning* meaning that the learning pathway is structured exploiting both traditional/online tools.

E-learning concept comprises thus a complex scenario of different learning processes all characterized by technology and interaction.

As concerns the *Strengths* related to e-learning as experienced by partners and as emerged from documental research, it is possible to highlight the following key added values. E-learning represents a process completely coherent with the core characteristics of *learners of the third millennium*. Learners nowadays in fact represent the *digital natives* who think and process information in a completely different way, who either need a different way to transfer/acquire competences and knowledge.

E-learning is characterized by a high *flexibility* and independent *accessibility* of educational process.

E-learning also provides significant customization of learning pathway connected to the of the learners' needs. It either versatile, it offers a great potential diversity of methodologies, techniques, methods, tools and procedures to learning path.

It allows to exploit specific *intuitive features*, in fact e-learning could include written text and audio combined in a kinesthetic way to effectively show the lessons. Colors, images, simulations, 3D effects, videos, graphics, animation enrich and facilitate a curriculum that would otherwise be very difficult to learn only from book. It thus guarantees a profitable interactivity in the educational process. Multimedia lessons foster debate beside those technical tools allow representation of processes and simulations. Dynamic lessons, images, sound and texts stimulate connectivity in terms of representation of thinking content as well as the cognitive processes in particular considering the sensory, rational, analytic and synthetic aspects. E-learning *promotes the collaborative learning* by using platforms and networks as well as building up a professional learning community. Moreover, an effective e-learning pathway could be *motivating*, in fact, through the assignments, the quick feedbacks, and self-assessments it encourages and helps the increase learners' self-confidence, and

gradually fosters learners' involvement in learning allowing them to appropriate their responsibility of learning. Experience demonstrates that motivation without a teacher reduces the stress.

Finally, *e-learning increases the focus on the learner*. In fact, an approach where learner is the key actor, supports the reinforcement of attention on the process, how to teach and how the technology could be ongoing adapted to the learning process.

As concerns the weaknesses related to e-learning methodology, it is important to highlight the possible *inadequate compatibility,* that is a certain break that sometimes could occur between the technological and the psychological elements of the learning process. Another issue concerns the *flexibility and autonomy* in learning which can be *weak and relative* and can cause deceptions for learners, instructional designers, and teachers. Another issue could be identified in the scarce, *inadequate learning customization* in fact, sometimes the design of the e-learning pathway does not fix with the learners' needs.

Moreover, the use of *too many different learning tools* can cause imbalances between training features that develops digital competence and ones that develop academic skills.

Finally, the loss of interactions between learners, and between them and the teacher could penalize the level of shortest and instantaneous communication. It could happen, in fact, that exploiting e-learning, it could cause reliance to technology and further isolation of the learner, instead of increase interrelations among those involved in the learning process.

As concerns the *Opportunities* related to e-learning, we can outline that the *widespread use of technology* could foster the development of a perfect environment for expression and for the development of e-learning educational services. E-learning represents an aspect of the overall generalized transformation of different ways to approach to education as a result of technology dynamics (how to obtain diploma, how to assess results, how to design the infrastructure, interaction between teacher and students).

Distance learning could raise the interest of *additional categories of learners* widening the audience of people who access to education. Interest in the deployment of e-learning systems is thus growing more and more.

There is an *increased market demand for e-learning educational packages* and a decrease in demand for traditional training showing the logical result of the evolution and the intensification of requests.

Finally, a latter consideration is related to the lower costs of e-learning services and a further evidence of a reduced distribution costs.

As concerns the *Threats* related to the e-learning, we can highlight that *overstating the key role of technology* could cause negative consequences such as the possibility to train a generation of *noncritical thinkers* or the possibility to face technical troubles or inadequate infrastructure management such as lack of internet connection, telephone transmission rate and very low bandwidth, poor ICT infrastructure that could all limit the access to services, or cause limitations in online administration (registration, monitoring the students, assessment, etc..).

Moreover, we could highlight as a further threat the *psychological dimension* of learners connected with the level of training as an example a potential criticism towards e-learning methodology, lack of confidence in its effectiveness, lack of trust in e-learning didactics, skepticism towards substitution of teacher by computer, scarce practice in ICT.

Apart from them we could list additional potential threats such as long time necessary to develop and maintain e-learning courses, the necessary investment to update teaching methodologies, the inadequate motivation to choose e-learning in fact there is no adequate financial return provided by the universities and institutional actors to develop e-learning learning objects, there is no enough motivation to encourage the engagement of teachers as well as the motivation to encourage student for such long term learning pathway.

Independence and flexibility do not always promise a high student performance, unfortunately a high dropout rate still continues, the lack of a satisfactory face to face ongoing monitoring and the lack of students' sense of responsibility cause the desertion of any learning objectives.

Costs of e-learning process are not so irrelevant. Costs on new technology, of up to date services and training, qualification of main actors, transmission's costs, costs of maintenance of equipment and those connected with the production of materials.

If e-learning wishes to be effective there is a necessary investment required behind such choice. Innovative and up to date services require a consistent investment in technology, human resources training, expenses to design and develop up to date distance courses.

Finally, we need to highlight as an external affecting factor, the lack of a comprehensive and up to date regulation framework on digital learning processes. In Europe and in the international scenario as well there are no adequate legislation and policies which standardize, monitor and assess e-learning programs, there is a no a shared quality standard framework for e-learning, or no shared quality controls.

We have decided to point out a sort of SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Treats and Opportunities) related to e-learning methodology and educational offer, since all the Universities and Educational providers which wish to build up or enlarge distance learning offer should take them into account, weaknesses and threats need to be causes for reflection.

Adequate measures need to be applied to cope with them, management strategies need to be adopted to change perceptions, existing and new funding for investments need to be introduced and effectively allocated.

Academic educational offer needs to ensure the quality of content which represents the must for higher educational offer, moreover, technology should represent the tool and the added value that integrates the traditional learning pathway.

Innovativeness of e-learning requires in fact *modernization of organizational systems* within public and Higher Education institutions. Implementation of Information and Communication Technology learning pathway should efficiently merge *Pedagogy*, *Technology* and *Research*.

Competencies need to be updated and specialised in ICT strengthening the organizational-managerial Knowledge of instructional designers, teachers, technicians, all those who are involved in developing online training paths.

In this framework *Quality* represents an essential factor of higher educational offer which is a real revolution in the processes of valorisation the common heritage of competences constantly producing new skills and knowledge.

As natural consequence Quality Assurance's objectives are strictly related to the SWOT analysis stated before. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Treats are the ground for the development of an effective Quality strategy.

It is necessary to define shared standards for the delivery of quality learning paths in order to be valid at local and at international levels.

As an example, learning institutions to effectively work, could set and manage several interconnected activities by means of a *process-driven approach*. This approach envisages the identification, interaction and management of processes in order to achieve the expected results. The resulting advantage is represented by the possibility of regularly checking the connection and the implications of such processes.

The application of the *process-driven approach* to a distance education system allows to draw particular attention to:

- the input requirements satisfaction;
- the process evaluation in terms of added value;
- the results achievement in terms of performance and process effectiveness;
- the ongoing processes' improvement based on measurement of objective indicators.

Compared to applied standard models such process is not easy to develop since it is necessary to organize and monitor all services in a structured way paying attention to an accurate cost-effective planning and a strong investment in human resources. The core element of this process is indeed the *valorisation of human capital*. The learning process is perceived like a path in which the student has a central role in an interactive dynamic process between different actors.

However, the core role of human capital in the process of distance learning focuses not only on the final user but also on the team contributing to the success of the various procedural steps.

In this concern the organization should:

- determine the necessary competence of the staff carrying out the activities affecting compliance with the requirements of the learning object;
- where applicable, provide training or take other action to acquire the necessary expertise;
- evaluate the effectiveness of taken actions;
- ensure that its staff are aware of the importance of such activities and of how they can contribute to achieve the quality's aims;

- maintain appropriate records of guideline, training, skills and experience.

The organization must also identify, provide and maintain the infrastructure needed to achieve conformity to product requirements. The goal of the procedure is therefore to provide functional management and operational criteria to handle, monitor and complete all the phases in terms of effectiveness/efficiency of the overall process. As an example, *planning* represents the first and the core stage of the whole initiative. This phase is characterized by the processing and organization of all information shaping the whole activity structure, the establishment of a first analytical contact with the social, cultural and organizational environment in which the training action will be carried out and the definition of all the strategic guidelines to follow during the subsequent stages. *Production* stage set the teaching materials needed to meet the training needs identified in terms of duration, treatment content and levels of interactivity/ multimedia/usability/accessibility.

The different characteristics of the materials fit the content and the educational objectives of the course. *Delivery* phase is aimed at implementing all the strategies needed for a correct/complete fruition of the course by the final users: counselling services, tutoring and Help Desk can assist and support the learner throughout the course. These exchanges of reports, among other things, allow the unit design/production to constantly monitor the fruition of the course and have continuous feedbacks on published materials.

A *Comprehensive Evaluation Process* is foreseen at the end of the course to evaluate its quality and overall coherence, it is a contribute to its further improvement for subsequent deliveries and reshape the training plan on the basis of the potential criticisms detected.

It is necessary to carry on a *multi-perspective approach* which allows the education institution to satisfy the needs of the potential leaners in compliance with the context, the social, political and economic tissue. The evaluation process needs to involve firstly an assessment of institutions' main goals taking into consideration the learners' value, the consideration of the learning outcomes' appropriateness and its quality.

As concerns the weaknesses emerged, further reflections could be carried on the reason why the e-learning processes and regulations are not standardized, as well as the reasons why e-learning is not formally recognised as an effective profitable learning method.

Until now, we have pointed out SWOT analysis, general features concerning quality assurance of e-learning processes and provided an example of quality assurance approach, but, in order to definitely set a quality assurance model, we should need to point out local context core objectives which are strictly connected with the QA strategy. In the document we will describe, thanks to a documental research and pilot practices carried on by project partners, basic information on quality assurance systems used identifying the best approaches considering the local context and the core criteria we suggest to consider as well as self-assessment indicators. As concerns the targets of assessment connected to Quality indicators, we could focus on:

- Policy Report;
- Institution's aims and purposes;
- Quality management systems;
- Review mechanisms;
- Implementation of policies and monitoring;
- Lessons delivery;
- How e-learning offer is developed, delivered, assessed and reviewed;
- Staff and Learner (selection/assistance) policies;
- Management system and Assessment policies;
- Financial, administrative and physical resources of the organization.

These targets certainly concern traditional and distance learning delivery and they are either essential to assess and define institution quality assurance strategy.

1.1 THE EUROPEAN BASELINE STUDY: LIST OF PRACTICES

The European Baseline Study is based on experiences and previous researches carried on by Fundació per a la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (ES), Università degli Studi "Guglielmo Marconi" (IT), University of Turku (FI), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (BE) and Agència per la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (ES).

A precious picture they have introduced concerns the general overview of the Quality Assurance approaches relating to e-learning practices at European level. The Baseline on technology enhanced learning has supported the settlement of guidelines and recommendations to establish an appropriate national QA framework in Jordan in coherence with the global context.

In order to introduce an effective analysis, we have presented the European quality approaches related to e-learning; quality of e-learning with some examples of European e-learning labels, degree of openness, and current instruments to measure the outcomes of e-learning; reflections on e-learning in the light of the basic principles of the European Standards and Guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area (ESG); and some future prospects for e-learning in Europe. The aim was to identify a quality scale with reference to certification, benchmarking and labelling.

The aim is to provide a brief background of the European Background on Quality Assurance approaches related to e-learning practices. European baseline for pedagogical construction processes based on quality assurance approaches will support Jordan to set up a guide for technology-enhanced learning including the fundamental consideration of students as active participants in an engaging learning experience.

The increasing widespread use of e-learning among higher education institutions has the consequence that institutions and agencies need to include distance learning in their QA approaches. They are aware how the existing QA procedures need to be further improved and adapted to the changes in the learning provisions.

Also the European Commission do supports e-learning to enlarge the audience of and exploits its advantages. The EU eLearning strategy in fact encourages the promotion of digital literacy; the strengthening of virtual campuses; the improvement of tools and methodologies related to e-learning; and e-cooperation among organisations and practitioners in the educational and training systems. It stresses the urgent need of learning process and content to be more flexible, innovative to improve quality and relevance to a wider number of learners.

The baseline research fostering the sustainable capacity building process aimed at supporting technology transfer in academic distance education, will further contribute to the promotion of *Digital Literacy* in European society encouraging the acquisition of new skills and knowledge that are needed for personal and professional development and for active participation in an information-driven society. The use of ICT to learning will further support those who, due to their geographical location, socio-economic situation or special needs, do not have easy access to traditional education and training. E-learning has a great potential thus is also important to promote innovative teaching methods and institutions' methodologies with the core aim to improve the quality of the learning process and foster the autonomy of learners.

European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher Education ENQA has developed European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. In coherence with the specific aims of the Bologna Process all European universities have taken these quality measures in use when designing learning and teaching in their own institutions.

Over the years, mission, vision and strategy of higher education institutions are even more linked to these educational policies considering as an example learning outcomes and curricula reform, constructive alignment between learning outcomes and learning assessment and learner-centred pedagogy. Quality in technology enhanced learning, as well as the institutional policies/procedures are indissolubly linked with the university and the education process provided in the current society.

Quality of technology enhanced learning is based on the institutional context, learning resources and expertise in the learning process. Jordanian aims to use more online learning in higher education due to the rising student numbers. But the equation is not that simple that online learning automatically would provide high quality level and cheap teaching and learning for masses of students. If the quality of the teaching and learning is set high in the criteria, then there is need to develop strategies of HE organisations and to invest in training of teachers and online expertise of the organisations.

European Framework previously developed provides examples of different strategies how flexible studies are produced in European autonomous open universities and in dual-mode universities (Both open university students and full time students are served). Common and global challenge for all higher education organisations are trends like Open Educational Resources (OER) and MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses). Higher education organisations should set up a strategy on how to deal with these issues, i.e. whether they accept MOOC-courses as part of students' degrees and how do they gain and maintain the expertise in online learning.

Information and communication technology is an area ongoing changing and learning environments should be developed and updated according to the evolution of the research and industrial contexts.

Higher education, should be driven by its interest in fostering quality of learning. In this sense it is important to promote the expertise of online learning in Jordanian with wide-scale training, national and international development projects, research and networking of experts and researchers. There should be a forum where the motivated professors, instructional designers and technicians can share their expertise with a wider audience. Best Practices Manual together with other core documents developed during project life will contribute to build up the foreground for the implementation of a community of practice in Jordanian higher education context which will ongoing cooperate and work together even after the project end.

Precious conclusion of European framework research is a profitable contribution for the development of an effective Best Practices Manual. Pedagogical expertise of online learning is strictly connected to the QA of higher education in general. QA of TeL was not among the top priorities of higher education institutions and QA agencies in Europe for long time. In addition, the e-learning community established its own bodies and guidelines for e-learning, such as EFQUEL (ECBCheck Certification) and EADTU (E-xcellence Associates Label). But with the changing scene and the increase in the use of technologies in the delivery methods of institutions, QA of TeL has now emerged as a hot topic that asked for special attention among institutions and QA agencies. In fact, a growing number of institutions and QA agencies are now considering TeL methods when developing or elaborating internal or external QA procedures. There is still a lot of work to be done and areas to be explored (such as the assessment of the learning outcomes or the legal and financial implications) with regard to QA of TeL, but the future looks promising, as the institutions and QA agencies are absolutely aware of the need to adapt their procedures to the rapidly changing environment.

In order to provide just an example of formal Quality Assurance reference, *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* should be considered as a frame for QA, a catalyst for the development of new concepts related to quality. Within this point of view, the analysis of the basic principles of the ESG could support the comprehension of how the ESG can be consistent with e-learning and contribute to the widespread use of e-learning settlement in an wider international scenario.

In the European framework developed by EU partners in the research phase, it is important to focus attention on issues and reflections concerning the basic principles of the ESG and e-learning based on the ENQA Workshop report on Quality Assurance of E-learning:

➢ One of the basic principles of the ESG states that providers of higher education should have the primary responsibility to ensure the quality of their provision. However, e-learning programmes are increasingly crossing borders, with students enrolling from different countries and teachers being located in others. With regard to e-learning, the question here would focus on how to match this primary responsibility of institutions with the needs of their respective QA agencies and other stakeholders;

➢ Another basic principle of the ESG underlines that the interests of society in the quality and standards of higher education need to be safeguarded. The concept of society here needs to be reflected upon carefully, as the definition gets broader when considering e-learning. This gains even more importance if one wishes to consider the *society's* voice when looking at the quality of study programmes. This is also true when it comes to funding schemes for higher education. It is useful to think who is investing in higher education and who benefits from it;

➢ A third basic principle focuses on the quality of academic needs to be developed and improved for students and other beneficiaries of higher education across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In this sense, e-learning could be seen as an important means to support mobility in higher education across the EHEA and provide interesting opportunities to students and other stakeholders;

➢ A fourth basic principle refers to the need of efficient and effective organisational structures within academic programmes. E-learning can support this principle and provide the flexibility to organise the programmes in different ways with the help of the new technologies. E-learning can offer the opportunity to improve the way in which departments and institutions are organised. However, it is important to underline that the current QA procedures/strategies need to adapt to the rapid changes in the technologies used for e-learning;

➢ A fifth basic principle of the ESG points out transparency and the use of external expertise in QA processes. These are crucial to increase confidence in the quality of all kinds of programmes but especially those of e-

learning. The external QA of e-learning is still a vague issue, and QA agencies have much to explore in this field;

➤ A sixth basic principle states that accountability processes should be developed, so higher education institutions can demonstrate their accountability, including for public and private money. Considering that e-learning enables the easy delivery of academic programmes at the European level, accountability for public and private investors would be an issue to be handled with care, and the expectations of various stakeholders on the national and international level should be met. This is another topic that needs to be considered by QA agencies;

➤ In addition, one of the main outcomes of the revised version of the ESG is the emphasis it places on student-centred learning and teaching, which is translated by an additional standard on *Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment*. This standard states that institutions should ensure the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process. The guidelines provided for the implementation of this standard encourage flexible learning paths, the use of different modes of delivery, a variety of pedagogical methods, and a sense of autonomy in the learner - all of which support and are compatible with TeL.

As concerns the future opportunities of eLearning within Institutions in Europe, the EUA study on e-learning researched some possible future prospects for higher education institutions in the European context and considered the future plans of the surveyed institutions for e-learning. The study shows the strategic objectives of the institutions in terms of flexibility of provision and effectiveness and prospects for collaboration.

According to the study, flexibility of learning provision, enhanced effectiveness of classroom time, and more and better learning opportunities for distance learning and resident students are the main motives for institutions to develop e-learning further.

When asked about the most important objective concerning the development of e-learning in the future within their institutions, over a quarter of the respondents stated that e-learning provides for more flexible learning. This is in line with the spirit of the revised ESG, which supports the implementation of student-centred learning, teaching and assessment through enabling flexible learning paths, consideration and use of different modes of delivery, flexible use of a variety of pedagogical methods, etc. Increasing the effectiveness of classroom time and providing more learning opportunities for off-campus students constitute the second objective for the development of e-learning for the institutions. The results show that the need and trend towards flexible learning provision is present.

Interestingly, e-learning is seen as a way of enhancing internationalisation by only 8 percent of the respondents. It seems that the benefits of e-learning for internationalisation have not been fully identified by the institutions and would require some more time.

The study also concentrated on how the surveyed institutions perceive the impact of e-learning on collaboration, which constitutes an important factor for the future of European higher education. The results underlined that the majority (70%) of the respondent institutions perceive e-learning as a means of enhancing collaboration within their own institutions and with other higher education institutions abroad despite the fact that internationalisation is not perceived as one of the main objectives of e-learning. The results also suggest that less importance is given to collaboration with higher education institutions within the same country, employers, and private education providers.

Another potential benefit of e-learning, as underlined by the results of the survey, concerns the future plans of respondent institutions regarding online degrees offered jointly with other higher education institutions. Currently, 60 percent of respondent institutions (82 out of 137) who consider collaboration via e-learning with other institutions important are already offering joint online degrees or plan to do so in the future.

The results of the survey underline that institutions clearly perceive e-learning as a means to collaborate within their institutions and/or with other institutions abroad. These potential collaborative e-learning initiatives would need to be further explored within the framework of institutional approaches along with their potential legal and financial implications.

Beside the aforementioned analysis of the general background of institutional and organisational e-learning patterns, we wish to list the experience of European partners as a practical example on how e-e-learning has been implemented or lessons have been learnt from.

1. UOC Experience

General Features

The mission of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) is to provide people with life-long learning and educational opportunities. Its aim is to help individuals meet their learning needs and provide them with full access to knowledge, above and beyond the usual scheduling and location constraints.

The vision of the UOC is to drive the creation of a global knowledge space and cutting-edge research in the knowledge society by being connected to other universities at the global level.

UOC's educational model focuses on students; it provides them with a top quality and personalized education that allows them to be competitive and contribute to the progress of society.

Annual accounts of the UOC are made following the Accounting Plan for foundations and associations and the Board of Trustees have presented and approved them in the session of July 22nd 2014. Deloitte, SL audited the annual accounts for the exercise 2013 with a positive report.

In 2013, public grants covered the expenses of the institution, which made up about 28 percent of the UOC's income, whilst student fees contributed to two thirds. The university made up the difference through revenue from several sources as consultancy services, managing other programmes, transferring its model to other universities and assessing other institutions.

University Educational Offer

In the educational programme design-process, a series of steps and tests are identified. This process is led by the departments, which receive support and specific training from the management teams.

The vice president is responsible for assessing the different proposals and submitting them to the Academic Committee for final approval.

The portfolio of UOC's degrees is approved by UOC's Governing Council. As part of the design of a degree, a feasibility study must be submitted. It must include, among other things:

- Academic, financial and management resources required.
- The internal consistency of degrees and their relationship with the rest of the training offered by the UOC.
- The alignment with the overall objectives of the university.

This feasibility study is evaluated by the Vice-chancellor for Academic Management and Faculty, by the Academic Commission, by UOC's management areas, and finally by the Governing Council. After the Governing Council approves the proposal for the new programme, it can proceed to be verified by the Spanish Ministry for Education.

University Quality Assurance

UOC has an integrated system for extracting and analysing the outcomes of the teaching activity. This tool, called DAU (Data warehouse for UOC), transforms data taken from academic management systems and from the processes that collect satisfaction surveys, and makes them available to faculty.

UOC's Department of Planning and Quality ensures the collection of student satisfaction data. This area coordinates the design of questionnaires involving representatives of different interest groups, tracks participation, presents the results and produces reports for internal and external dissemination.

The University performs a questionnaire to the students at the time of programme completion, to obtain results in relation to the level of satisfaction with the education received, intended continuation of education, and professional expectations. In addition, the University conducts a survey three or four years after the completion of the degree. These results are valued primarily by the Degree Committee and are considered when making decisions regarding the design and operation of the programme.

The ultimate responsible for the quality that the student receives in each course falls to the lecturer responsible for the course (PRA). The lecturer designs the learning plan, plans the activity to be developed throughout the semester and reviews and assesses its implementation.

As concerns *manageability of eLearning programmes*, there are six main principles underlying the UOC eLearning programmes:

Flexibility: The freedom given to the students regarding the organization and planning of their own learning strategies and working pace.

Evaluation: Quality evaluation at the UOC seeks promoting internal self-improvement.

Adaptability: The teaching materials and the syllabus for every course are well defined so professors can give clear indications about how much dedication is needed to the declared goals.

Cooperation: The UOC is committed to cooperation in helping other universities to develop high-quality virtual learning systems which in turn it will increase its own credibility.

Human Resources: There are two types of teaching staff: full-time faculty members and part-time tutors.

Towards to a Response to a Social Need: The institution is commitment of covering the society's needs in higher education and the objective to offer academic programmes that are strongly relevant regarding professional needs and clearly transferable to the working context. Furthermore, the UOC is committed to follow high quality standards and a clear relation of the studied contents with the students' real needs.

As concerns *Student Services, t*he main services that students can find in the UOC are:

Planning and Communication Tools: which include My profile, student's mailbox and academic calendar.

Managing Students' Academic Affairs: The Virtual Secretary's Office exists in order to facilitate the student's access to the necessary self-management tools.

The Virtual Classrooms: Subjects are taught in the virtual classrooms spaces, which includes a forum, a calendar specifying the deadlines for each activity, specific learning resources for the subject, the teaching programme, and the tools for submitting assessment activities.

The Help-Desk Service: The Help Service will answer student's queries quickly and effectively.

The Virtual Library: offers students all the information, resources and services that they might need to successfully complete their tasks, final tests and projects.

The UOC Card: The card identifies students whenever required.

Regional Network: The UOC has a regional network of several regional centres that offer complementary services beyond those to be found on the campus and encourage student participation at the university.

2. Turku University Experience
General Features

The University of Turku is an internationally competitive university, the operation of which is based on high-quality multidisciplinary research. The University promotes free research and academic education and provides higher education based on research. The University is part of the international academic community and works in collaboration with society.

Evaluation systems are monitored in the University's quality management system. In accordance with the quality management policy approved by the University Board, the aim of the University of Turku quality management is to:

- support and ensure the realisation of the objectives and vision set in the Strategy of the University;
- guide the operation with sufficiently exact and real-time monitoring and evaluation information;
- improve the quality of the University's operating processes and free the academic staff's work time for the basic missions;
- make the central principles and the high quality of the University's operation visible.

The University's quality management tool is its quality system, the central principles of which are presented in the University's Quality Manual approved by the Rector and its appendices. In addition, more detailed instructions and method descriptions are presented in the operations manuals of the various units of the University.

The authority and duties of different actors are defined in the University's Rules of Procedure, Regulation on Studies and Rules of procedure for the University of Turku Graduate School (UTUGS).

The responsibilities of one of the Vice-Rectors include the development of education and educational structures, teaching and learning environments, and the progress of studies. The Vice-Rector acts as the chairperson of the University's Teaching and Learning Council, whose duty is to

- monitor and advance the implementation of the University's education strategy
- develop the quality of teaching and learning.
- prepare matters related to education for decision by the Board or the Rector.
- monitor whether the aims set for student admission are achieved and when needed, give the faculties recommendations on developing student admissions.

The funding of the university is based on a model that recognizes reaching targets in the areas of of education (41%), research (34%) and educational policy (25%). In each of these target areas several subcategories are evaluated with a weighing as presented in the following table.

In short, the funding model of the Finnish universities highlight factors such as quality, results, internationalization and smooth progress of studies. The universities and ministry of education and culture have frequent negotiations on the targets and the results. This information is collected in an open databank annually. The figures are evaluated in the negotiations and form the legitimation to receive the basic funding for the university operations.

University Education System

Open University education in Finland is open to all regardless of age or educational background. Students of Open Universities may have different goals: to improve general knowledge, to upgrade their basic education or to work toward self-development. Studying at the Open University also provides an idea of what studying at university is like and helps one to prepare for academic degree studies. When full-time students get flexibility to their studies it supports at least students in working life to proceed in their studies but also other full-time students.

Open University education is arranged in cooperation with university departments. Its objectives and requirements correspond to those of regular degree studies. Open Universities cannot award degrees, but credits are transferable and can be incorporated into a university degree. Each Open University provides teaching on its own and in cooperation with other educational institutions as adult education centres, folk high schools and summer universities. Online courses and blended courses have become a popular option for Open University studies. Also in face-to-face courses lectures are usually recorded and delivered online. In blended learning courses students participate local study centres' groups or Moodle groups. In fully e-learning courses interaction, material delivery and assessment all take place online.

3. Catalonia Quality Assurance of TEL Programs

General Features

Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (hereinafter AQU Catalunya or AQU) is a public entity with an internationally recognised status. Its mission is to assure the quality of higher education through compliance with international standards of quality and to safeguard the interests of society in the quality of higher education. Evaluation of Pre-European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Degrees:

The Agency activities started in 1996, with the development of QA methodologies that permitted to conduct evaluations of 1st. and 2nd. Cycle programmes, but also Institutions and Services (such as Library services) by 1998. During a long period of more than 10 years, the main activity vas focused on evaluate almost all programmes in Catalonia, with a continuous improvement oriented methodology called PROQ.

The PROQ methodology put emphasis on some elements that permitted to measure the capacity of the Institutions and Programmes to sustain an improvement based on the analysis of key elements and quality indicators, and the establishment of criteria and reference values for each standard.

Assessment Methodology

By 2007 a new methodology based on the PROQ experience was designed to evaluate Institutions that delivers online Programmes. It was called 'Virtual Program', and was tested in 2008 in collaboration with Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC).

The adaptation of the assessment system to the specific nature of online distance learning suggested that we should divide the methodology in two units of analysis:

- Institutions;
- Degrees.

One specific methodology to assess the institution (in that case, the UOC, and other specific methodology to assess 'n' number of Programmes or Degrees. The 'Institutional' methodology established the following standards:

1. Institutional mission and vision
2. System capacity

- Students
- Teaching
- Staff
- Infrastructure
- External Relations

3. Internal QA System
- Study
- Programme
- Learning assessment
- Outcomes

The 'Programme' methodology established the following standards:

1. Strategic position
2. Study program
3. Instruction design
- Methodology
- Organisation
- Student
- orientation
- Technical
- Setup
- Communication system
4. Learning assessment
5. Outcomes
- Academic
- Professional
- Personal

Each Programme to be evaluated took into consideration the results of the 'Institutional' evaluation. All the information about Virtual Program can be consulted in the AQU Catalunya website: http://www.aqu.cat/universitats/abanseees/virtual_en.html.

Evaluation of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Degrees

Nowadays, the main activity of AQU Catalunya in the field of programmes evaluation is the evaluation of Bologna adapted Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate programmes. It is established by law, and it has consequences on the recognition of degrees.

It consists on a set of QA procedures: ex-ante assessment, monitoring, modification and accreditation that conform the current Framework for QA of recognized degrees.

Besides the increasing diversity of modes (online degrees, blended learning, traditional degrees enhanced by technologies,) all of them must be evaluated by the same framework.

A QA Framework for TEL programs should be aligned to the national (and international) QA Standards. In our case in Catalunya our QA methodologies must follow the ESG European Standards and Guidelines).

Taking into consideration our experience with the Virtual Program, a QA Framework should not forget the relevance of internal QA procedures, and assessment at institutional level

Finally, in order to complete the Framework, more benchmarks are needed in order to:

1. Define useful indicators for TEL;
2. Set reference values;
3. Identify good practices.

4. Guglielmo Marconi University
General Features

The *mission* of the Università degli studi Guglielmo Marconi (USGM) is to provide innovative and affordable high-quality degree programs and learning opportunities to both domestic and international students alike,

utilizing the latest technologies and responding to students' needs in their pursuit of academic, personal, and professional integrity.

USGM *vision* is to offer high quality professional degree programs, to promote interdisciplinary research and innovation and to foster collaboration and worldwide interaction among other institutions with the same objectives. USGM encourages student-centred learning approaches at all levels supported by technological resources and led by qualified faculty and staff.

As concerns *Financial Resources, t*he University is autonomous as provided for under Article 33 of the Italian Constitution, and benefits consequently, of didactic, organizational, administrative and disciplinary autonomy, in conformity with the general Italian laws and specific current regulations for universities and also within the limits of its recognized and published internal Charter (Statuto). The University is promoted and supported by the Tertium Foundation, based in Rome, which ensures the pursuit of institutional goals and provides the relative means for conducting university activities. The Marsilio Ficino Foundation, also based in Rome, promotes e-learning training initiatives and contributes to the advancement of the university through the use of its real estate assets. Various public and private entities also promote the growth of the University by supporting the promotional activities.

University Education Offer

As concerns the Educational Offer Design, the educational programmes' production process consists of three basic steps: design, development and publishing. The design activity is followed by the Didactic Coordinator (DC) who initially define a feasibility study of the training programme and afterwards, together with the Expert (or Professor), starts working on the general programme structure.

All degree programs contain and list specific educational objectives that the student may expect to meet during his or her course of study, necessary for their successful development into a trained and capable professional ready to enter the job market. In addition to the core and concentration courses that are more knowledge-specific for a given degree, a student's study plan contains General Education courses as well, which consist of four principal areas which favour the intellectual development and future professional performance of the students: Natural Science and Mathematics, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Humanities and Fine Arts, and a unique grouping of USGM General Competencies designed to help students increase their Communication, Critical Thinking, and Human Development skills. The learning activities of this General Competencies group include Scriptwriting, Internship or Linguistic laboratories, additional specific training activities and a dissertation, depending on a student's course of study.

General Education components are the basis to acquire the theoretical and analytics skills for 1st level bachelor degree programs and represent more than one third of the total planned activities. Each program requires the completion of a minimum of 45 ECTS/ credits in General Education for a 1st level bachelor degree and reach an average of 60 credits with the additional general competencies, designed to strengthen the personal and academic competencies of the students, before focusing on specific professional areas of study.

As concerns the Evaluation systems, USGM has a University Quality Board that has a pivotal role in ensuring quality assurance of all education and research activities. The Board is in charge of developing the Research Triennial Plan together with the Research strategic guidelines: defining a clear quality framework and achievement indicators. The R&D department has an active role within the Board.

On a regular basis the following control actions are taken to ensure the fulfilment of goals from our mission statement. The controls are carried on in cooperation between top management, the multimedia production department and core faculty members in order to:

- Check courses' content;
- Update didactic materials;
- Assess students' satisfaction ratio;
- Project new didactic material;
- Plan corrective actions;
- Manage e-learning programme;
- Provide students' support.

As concerns orientation Office, students undergo orientation on a one-on-one basis directly with the Orientation Office staff upon enrolment in the university. After a student submits his or her enrolment application, the Orientation Office staff:

- Supplies academic and career oriented information to student
- Analyses and confirms student's entry requirements for chosen course or program
- Offers administrative and technical support to Committee of the relevant College for the elaboration of student's individual study plan
- Communicates and explains to student the approved individual study plan
- The main objectives of the Orientation Office are to:
  1. Increase the quality of student orientation according to Italian Ministry of Education standards;
  2. Proactively transform pre-enrolment requests in enrolled students;
  3. Evaluate the abilities and capabilities of the incoming students in order to create a personalized action plan that supports his or her academic and professional development.

As concerns the Academic Services Office, different academic services made available to students as part of the teaching-learning process through the individual branches of Orientation, Admissions and Enrolment, and Student Services. It is focused on Planning academic issues, managing students' enrolment process, organising, supporting and following up students' exams' process (drawing up the final degree examination, thesis assignment, commissions' issues).

As concerns it Technical Assistance Office, it offers 24-hour technical classroom support to answer any technical questions students might have. Presently this service is available from 9 am to 5 pm EST by chat, phone and email, and 24 hours a day by email (allowing international students in different time zones to have access to the University self-help facilities at all times, such as the Frequently Asked Questions service). Students can reach technical support at helpdesk@unimarconi.it or phone.

As concerns Internship and Placement Office, the area provides the following educational, professional and career services for USGM students and graduates:

- Support, facilitation, information and follow-up regarding undergraduate and graduate internships as part of student's program curriculum;
- Access to job postings among a network of Italian and international companies and organizations;
- Career Services events and activities, such as Creating a CV and Cover Letter, and job interview preparation.

2. SELECTION CRITERIA: THE BEST AND GOOD PRACTICES
2.1 WHY A PRACTICE IS THE BEST OR GOOD?

The most important reflection come from experience and documentary research is that don't exist overall *Best* practices, absolutely *Best* for any international scenario. What is the *Best* asset of an area or a kind of institution is not *sic et simpliciter* the best for other contexts? Thus the model strictly depends on territory as well as kind of institution and the needs that come from there.

Thus the first criterion on which the selection has been carried on is that that Practice do works in that context for that institution.

We decided then to slightly change the core objective name of the document from *Best* to *Good Practices* in order to transfer the idea that the presumption to be the absolutely Best is not necessarily proved.

Besides that, we can definitely point out general criteria that could contribute to settle down a good practice and later on select practices that provide an example on that.

Criteria are based on *SWOT* analysis we have stated before. The good practices have to be able to exploit the strengths and the opportunities of e-learning with particular attention the Quality Assurance requirements. As an example, the e-learning course has to ensure high flexibility and independent accessibility, a significant customization of learning pathway connected to the of the learners' needs, the written text and audio should be combined in a kinesthetic way to effectively show the lessons. Colors, images, simulations, 3D effects, videos, graphics, animation should enrich and facilitate a curriculum that would otherwise be very difficult to learn only from book. Besides a collaborative learning should be encouraged as well as the focus on the learner should be guaranteed. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the learning process, innovativeness of e-learning requires modernization of infrastructure and organizational systems, the process and the management vision should be both focused on merging Pedagogy, Technology and Research. Serious attention should be paid on Quality

indicators, such Policy Report, Institution's aims and purposes, Quality management systems, Review mechanisms, Implementation of policies and monitoring, Lessons delivery, how e-learning offer is developed, delivered, assessed and reviewed, Staff and Learner (selection/assistance) policies, Management system and Assessment policies as well as Financial, administrative and physical resources of the organization.

2.2 STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTION

E-learning methodology is increasingly used by higher education institutions to support learning in different subjects, some of them are quite comfortable with that trend, others not, i.e the most resilient we can mention are for example the healthcare and engineering subjects. Important funds are invested at local level into e-learning. Although the most innovative technologies represent the core part of both teaching or learning approaches, they are not nowadays globally accepted by academic staff. In order to set the Best Practices' Manual and as a consequence the guidelines for the following transfer of best practices' models, we need to take into consideration the stakeholders' perceptions that is what the main actors involved in the e-learning management, assessment and delivery think about e-learning strengths, weaknesses and potential. They can provide a comprehensive perspective of what is really needed and what is unnecessary, what already exists, what are the expectations and the lessons learnt about the past experiences.

Stakeholders perceptions' relevant for e-learning quality improvement are firstly the academic staff perceptions engaged into the design, development and delivery of the e-learning courses.

Research results about stakeholders' perceptions on e-learning are few and limited to specific category of stakeholders. As concerns the teaching staff our research highlighted that many staff show positive attitudes towards technology in both teaching and learning particularly by means of blended pathways.

Nevertheless, important barriers and obstacles still exist. Hindrances can be connected to e-learning tools and their potential applicability, aid and resources requested. It is thus important to increase staff awareness on positive features of e-learning methods that can integrate and maximize traditional teaching methods, or replace them when it is possible to reach the same learning goals.

It is also essential ensure the necessary ongoing support for learning development and delivery, new technologies training as well as is necessary to provide incentives for the involved staff (management and academic ones).

Perceptions will provide staff training needs, the impact of technological training initiatives on perceptions of e-learning, and it will investigate the implications of e-learning for different subjects.

Perceptions of academic staff coming from different disciplines help to identify the specific barriers connected to the various disciplines and then overtake them with different approaches.

E-learning training and e-learning confidence can be identified as statistically significant *predictors* (variables in an experiment that affect the response and that can be set or measured by the experimenter) of both e-learning adoption and e-learning readiness. Moreover, academic staff is currently making progress, but more efforts and strategies are necessary to overcome hindrances, in particular related to infrastructure and lack of personal staff academic capability.

3. GOOD PRACTICES IN EQTEL PROJECT FOR JORDAN
3. 1 MAIN FEATURES OF JORDANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Recent quality assurance (QA) bylaws for higher education have placed particular emphasizes on the creation of an internal quality assurance process in each university with appropriate infrastructure to oversee standards, implement proper guidelines and manage procedures within each institution. Accordingly, a new model for internal QA management to guide universities through the process of identifying priorities, determining principles, and implementing procedures across the different context of QA and stakeholders is proposed. The model is based on comparing current QA policies and practices of Jordanian universities with European experience and then sharing experiences in terms of variation and extent of applicability.

The challenge for all higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide is how best to meet both national and international standards whilst still retaining their uniqueness and personality. Whilst a number of HEIs in Jordan enjoy good reputations for their quality, the new national approach represents both a challenge and an opportunity for all HEIs to publically demonstrate how good they are and how they are improving. In line with global trends, Jordanian HEIs will, from now on, be evaluated through a consistent set of criteria and procedures,

resulting in judgments that could lead to ranking. Consequently, HEIs in Jordan will be subject to a new regime of external quality assurance undertaken through the Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC).

The Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC) was established in 2007 on the basis of the law issued in March 2007. This Commission replaced the Accreditation Council, which lasted from 1999 to 2007. The Commission is autonomous, from the financial and administrative points of view. The 2007 Accreditation Commission Law was amended in 2009 to make the Commission report to the Prime Minister instead of the Minister of Higher Education. The Commission aims at enhancing the quality of higher education, provides quality control and encourages Jordanian higher education institutions to be open and interact with international institutes and organisations in charge of accreditation and quality control. It also aims to develop higher education using international norms and standards.

According to the Accreditation Law, the HEAC develops accreditation and quality control criteria, ensures that higher education institutions abide by such criteria and other relevant laws and regulations, accredits institutes and their programmes and ensures that institutions conduct self-assessment. Both public and private universities fall within the mandate of the HEAC.

HEAC worked on the formulation of its vision, mission and strategic goals in an institutional methodology to promote higher education into world-class levels. In 2008, the National Centre for Tests was established by Law No. (75) under the umbrella of HEAC to conduct tests and utilize tools to measure activities of HEIs in terms of their inputs, processes, and outputs aiming to the ultimate goal of ensuring quality.

To attain the purpose of establishing HEAC, a strategic plan has been drawn by Jordanian expert that consists of goal and objective to achieve these goals. The main goals of this plan can be summarized as follows:

1) Developing program accreditation standards and institutionalize procedures of implementation and follow up.

2) Ensuring development and updating procedures and mechanisms of quality assurance and applying it in HEIs.

3) Determining and measuring outcomes of academic programs offered by HEIs and set criteria and assessment tools that indicate the achievement of objectives.

4) Openness of HEIs on regional and international institutions that are responsible for development of higher education and quality assurance.

5) Competitiveness among Jordanian HEIs based on ranking in line with international standards and criteria.

6) Implementation of quality standards in all HEAC departments and units.

The challenge for all higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide is how best to meet both national and international standards whilst still retaining their uniqueness and personality. Whilst a number of HEIs in Jordan enjoy good reputations for their quality, the new national approach represents both a challenge and an opportunity for all HEIs to publically demonstrate how good they are and how they are improving. In line with global trends, Jordanian HEIs will, from now on, be evaluated through a consistent set of criteria and procedures, resulting in judgments that could lead to ranking. Consequently, HEIs in Jordan will be subject to a new regime of external quality assurance undertaken through the Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC). In order to help HEIs prepare for the new external evaluations and also ensure a commitment to on-going quality improvement and enhancement, many universities have already begun developing their own Quality Assurance Bureaus (QABs) which have similar roles to the valuable 'quality offices' developed within many European HEIs over the past decades, most recently stimulated by the very successful quality assurance action line within the Bologna Process. These QABs are at the 'hub' of the relationship between each university and HEAC and is therefore crucial to the success of both national ambitions for (internationally) transparent QA outcomes and also for HEI's efforts to enhance their own activities, and have their advances recognized.

European experience in the development of good practice is founded on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The three parts of the ESG identify the key aspects of: internal QA within and by HEIs themselves; the external evaluation of HEIs and the effectiveness of their internal QA; and also the external evaluation of the external QA agencies themselves. Such European experiences, and the development of good practices, could contribute strongly to establishing increasingly effective internal QA within Jordanian HEIs and the development of good working relationships between the HEAC and Jordanian HEIs and their QABs, to their mutual benefits.

HEAC has recently adopted 12 standards for the external quality assurance of higher education institutions, including one on the "Management of Quality Assurance" within each HEI. These standards will need to be applied within the contexts of the different visions, missions and objectives of the individual HEIs, and how they manage their different approaches to the delivery of their programmes and research.

As concerns internal QA system, QA in higher education institutions (HIEs) in Jordan has become a strategic key issue in recent years. A series of measures have been undertaken by HEAC to ensure proper implementation of QA guidelines and processes in the higher education system. This is manifested in the recently issued bylaws which focus only on external evaluation and assessment of academic programmes. The bylaws have, however, placed particular emphasizes on the creation of Quality Assurance Bureau (QAB) in each Jordanian university without giving any proper details for internal QA management, and left the manner to oversee guidelines and manage procedures open for each university to decide and without going into details.

It is possible to say that internal QA has little interest among Jordanian universities while interest in international QA seems to super passes that of the national HEAC QA standards and that the infrastructure of QABs is still poor. Furthermore, although QABs were established with clear mission/vision/objective, they do not get the weight they deserve in HEIs. This is clear from the mechanism employed in assigning staffs, their number and infrastructure. QAB regulations should therefore be written and implemented to reflect the look-for purpose. Academic and non-academic staff should be employed according to certain qualifications and measures and should be trained continuously according to a well-drafted plan designed by experts.

It is in particular interesting to point out New HEAC QA Criteria as a profitable framework to start from.

No.	Criterion	Items
1	Strategic Planning	a) Vision, mission, objectives, and values b) Strategic plan
2	Governance	a) Legislation b) Leadership and management c) Institutional Integrity
3	Academic Programs	a) Teaching and learning policies b) Curricula (Study Plans) c) Assessment of teaching outcomes
4	Scientific Research, Scholarships and Creativity	a) Scientific research b) Scholarship (to pursue Master and PhD) c) Creativity (patents,)
5	Financial, Physical and Human Resources	a) Financial Resources b) Physical Resources c) Human Resources
6	Students Service	a) Students orientation and counseling b) Supporting Services c) Communications with Graduates (alumni)
7	Community Services and External Relations	a) Community service b) External relations
8	Quality Assurance	a) Institution commitment of improving quality b) Scope of work of QA c) Indicators, criteria and benchmarking d) Autonomous verification of assessment

Many universities have already begun developing their own Quality Assurance Bureaus (QABs) which have similar roles to the valuable 'quality offices' developed within many European HEIs.

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TEL QA Practices

3. 2 LIST OF PRACTICES – PROJECT PILOT COURSES

One of the objectives of the eQTeL project was to improve the quality of higher education institutions in Jordan through assimilating a number of e-learning courses and put them into practice. Also, as part of WP3 - deliverable 3.1, three e-Learning courses of varying complexity were developed during the activities of the EQTeL project. The courses were chosen in such a way as to accommodate all levels of the courses organized within the higher education system in Jordan that are usually divided into university, faculty and department requirements. The English skills course was selected from amongst the university requirements in all Jordanian universities, renewable energy from the engineering faculty requirement and communication lab from electrical engineering department requirements.

Students' evaluated the E-Learning courses in terms of content, design, use of technology, and technical assistant as moderate with an average of (70.25%) for the English course and (63.05%) for the renewable energy course.

Students in both the e-learning method and the traditional method evaluated their instructors positively in both courses. There were no statistical differences in instructors' evaluations between the e-learning method and the traditional method in both courses.

There were no statistical differences between students' grades in the e-learning experimental method and the traditional control method in the English course. However, there were statistical differences in grades of the Renewable energy course in favor of the e-learning method.

Students' attitudes toward learning English were better in the E-Learning classes compared to traditional method in learning.

General positive experiences and feedback by faculty members and students.

The extremely positive pilot results are witnessed by Yarmouk University that has managed to offer 49 classes of English completely online, an experiment that has been achieved for the first time in Jordan under the EQTeL umbrella. Yarmouk University has also designed the Arabic language course as an added extra course to the objectives of the project. All Jordanian partner universities are actually piloting the English and Renewable Energy online courses, and the remote communication engineering lab.

In the last part of the pilot project phase the English course has been offered as follows: 3 classes at PSUT, 6 at Al Hussein Bin Talal University, 8 at Hashemite University, 1 the University of Jordan and 40 Yarmouk University.

As concerns the Hashemite University, at a first stage 26 students have benefited from Renewable Energy course and 24 students were enrolled in English course. It has been a great success to teach these courses in a complete online format using the eContent materials that were developed as part of EQTeL project activities.

Hashemite University has, in a second stage, managed to offer 5 classes of English language courses completely in online format. They have also been able to offer 5 classes of Arabic language course completely online together with one section of renewal energy course delivered online.

Hashemite University has also managed to offer all sections of National Education completely online (This is a compulsory course offered to all academic disciplines in HU and other Jordanian Universities; That means a total of around 28000 students will benefited from this course).

They have also been able to offer Computer Skills courses (20 sections each semester) in synchronous teaching method (i.e. The instructor teaches more than one classes at the same time). Students attended a live web stream of a class, while simultaneously they joined discussions among students and instructors. These synchronous experiences have been designed and developed to strengthen instructor-student and student-student relationships, which should be a challenge in all distance learning programs.

Moreover, University dean council decided to have one course from one department to be delivered in online format (The university have 54 departments). Finally, the possibility of teaching the remote communication engineering lab to conduct 3-5 experiments as part of piloting experience have been discussed with the Dean of Engineering.

4. GOOD PRACTICES IN THE ARABIC AREA

4. 1 MAIN FEATURES OF THE ARABIC HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

E-learning depends mainly on the use of information technology system based on networks and telecommunications to make knowledge accessible at a time and place that you need, and using principles and techniques of distance education as the environment of learning.

The term e-learning is used interchangeably with the terms: virtual learning, online learning, computer Based Learning, and distance learning through electronic channels Distance Education via electronic channels.

In Jordan, there are two institutions that deliver e-learning. The first one is Arab Open University, Jordan Branch and the second is EDRAAK.

4. 2 LIST OF PRACTICES

4.2.1 Arab Open University (AOU), Jordan Branch

4.2.1.1 General Features

AOU Vision is to be a pioneering Arab Open University dedicated to building the science and knowledge society. The concept of the Arab Open University (AOU) was formally presented to a UNESCO regional conference held in Beirut in March 1998 and subsequently to a UNESCO international conference in Paris, in October of that year. The headquarters of the university is located in Kuwait. At the same time, branches were established in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia and a seventh branch, which started operating in September 2007, was opened in the Sultanate of Oman. A new branch was opened in the Republic of Sudan in September 2013. As part of its long-term plans, the AOU intends to open two more branches in Palestine and Yemen, in collaboration with local authorities, and hopes to establish further branches, particularly in Syria and Mauritania.

Teaching at the AOU started in early October 2002 in the Kuwait, Jordan and Lebanon branches. Instruction in the Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Egypt branches commenced in the fall semester of the academic year 2002/2003, while it started in the second/spring semester of the academic year 2007/2008 in the Oman branch. And in the Republic of Sudan in second semester of the academic year 2013/2014.

This initiative developed to a full pledged Arab Open University in 2002 in a strategic partnership with the Open University in the United Kingdom. The AOU headquarter is located in the state of Kuwait.

The AOU has more than 28,460 students in eight countries and has celebrated graduation of more than 20,690 students, more than 50% of which are females.

The AOU is unique in the Arab world by virtue of its partnership with The Open University (UK), where its graduates receive two degrees, one from the AOU and a validated award from the OU UK.

AOU mission statement is to develop and disseminate knowledge, and build expertise according to international quality standards without time or geographical barriers for the sake of contributing and preparing manpower for development needs, and to build science and knowledge society in the Arab countries.

Accreditation and validation of all AOU academic programs are conducted through CICP of the Open University UK.

The external quality assurance procedures across the eight branches vary in terms of the number of external bodies monitoring them.

In some branch countries, AOU has to comply with the rules and regulations of the local Quality Assurance Agency or Ministry of Higher Education together with those of the Arab Open University.

However, all branches are primarily and uniformly governed by the OU's quality assurance measures.

The University complies with the monitoring requirements of local Ministries of Higher Education and/or local quality assurance agencies without compromising on its underlying philosophy of teaching and learning.

Research is deemed as an integral and necessary component of creating and maintaining a robust and dynamic academic environment within AOU.

AOU aims to promote Scholarly Research and develop and become a Center of Excellence in Open and Distance learning through:

- Supporting Branches and Deanships;
- Allocating Research Grants;
- Encouraging Team-based & Institutional Research.

Furthermore,

- The learning system of the AOU is a blend of face-to-face tutoring and a self-instructional textbook designed for distance learning by the OU UK, and uses the latest applications of electronic technology in teaching and learning (e-learning);
- High quality academic programs are carefully selected and designed to meet the needs of both local and international markets;
- Only 25% student attendance is required, compared to traditional modes of higher education which helps students who have time constraints, and other commitments such as family obligations (e.g. children), or who have disabilities;
- Courses are designed to accommodate working students and those commuting from remote areas;
- High quality interactive educational materials are employed;
- Mobility and opportunities for credit transfer across branches are possible.

The AOU encourages its students to become independent learners whereby self-learning is emphasized throughout their studies. This enables students to become lifelong learners beyond graduation.

Courses are designed to accommodate working students at those communities from remote areas.

High quality interactive educational materials are employed.

The language of instruction at the AOU is English, which not only improves students' proficiency in the English language, but also ensures better job opportunities after graduation.

Learning is facilitated through a university-wider electronic learning Management system (LMS).

The branch in Jordan is equipped with multimedia and computing laboratories to support students.

For every 20 students, a course-specialized tutor is assigned. The tutorial sessions are designed to provide a forum for interaction between tutors and students on the one hand, and between the students themselves on the other.

The Learning centres are connected by an integrated satellite network supported by a host VSATS.

The learning media applied includes printed material, audio and videotapes, CD-ROMs, and Internet-based support.

To ensure a high quality learning experience for students, the university monitors and evaluates its procedures, practices and student services on a systematic and regular basis.

External assessors from other universities are involved in the process to ensure that the courses produced are of a high academic standard.

Since the undergraduate programs based on courses licensed from the OU UK are taught in English, therefore, the AOU has developed a number of language competency courses such as:

- The English Orientation Programme which comprises three non-credit courses.
- The English Communication Skills Programme which comprises two three-credit hour courses.

In order to provide the students with a broader perspective on life in general, and enriching personal development, the university offers students a range of largely skills-based compulsory and selective courses. The courses are Compulsory and are considered as general University requirements for all its programmes.

4.2.1.2 University Education System

AOU recognizes that its open learning platform is mainly a blended education approach with quality standards as top priority. AOU open learning platform relies heavily on the tutoring process, thus promoting proactive learning. AOU's delivery methodology is based on programmed and progressive course lectures, besides other supporting forms of delivery, such as internet – based learning, blended with various components that aim to offer an environment of supported blended learning. Library and computer-based resources are also deployed throughout AOU's operations. These are augmented by a number of Learning Centres (LCs) in all our various regional branches. This approach is starkly different from the traditional education by correspondence concept. Admission criteria for undergraduate programs at the Arab Open University revolve around student's providing an official general secondary school certificate. Other criteria, AOU will consider for admission Community College (CC) graduates seeking to earn additional credits to complete the requirements to graduate from the CC. The AOU will also consider students who have successfully completed "relevant" courses at a recognized higher learning institution.

As concerns **media** of learning the AOU fosters a diversified number of appropriate and latest learning media including printed material, audio and videotapes, CD-ROMs, and Internet-based support. In addition, further instructional support is provided by the Learning Centres (LCs) via a dedicated integrated satellite network that includes a host of VSATs. A mixture of independent study and scheduled tutor-assisted sessions is provided to comprise the generic format of the learning platform at the AOU.

Learning Centres are deployed in each participating country as integral components of the University branch. These LCs will be well equipped with local networks of personal computers, multimedia workstations, and multimedia facilities.

As concerns **tutoring**, the philosophy of blended learning systems revolves around the idea of tutored independent learning. Typically, a student registered in a course would receive a package that contains printed material, audio-visual aids (video tapes, audio cassettes), and perhaps, compact discs (CD-ROM). The printed material comprises a comprehensive content of readings and a schedule of term assignments. Thematic term projects are programmed over the entire term in order to gauge and monitor the students' progress. Each course culminates in a final exam weighted against other elements in the course. Exams are held at all University branches at the same time, and centrally controlled by the University Head Offices in Kuwait. Exams are weighted at 50% of the total grade for the course, with the remaining 50% assigned to term work including TMAs and quizzes.

Major component of self-learning at AOU revolves on tutorials held regularly and according to pre-announced schedules. Tutorials aim at establishing communication between students and teachers/tutors. They provide platforms for exchanging experience on the different aspects of self-learning and distance education, as well as fostering ties among students themselves.

Because **tutors** are the interface between the University and its student body, care is taken to ensure that they deliver a high quality experience to students. Upon appointment, tutors are trained both in the generic skills necessary for them to teach effectively in the AOU system and in the specifics of the courses they will be tutoring:

- Each tutor is assigned 25-30 students
- Their face-to-face tutoring is monitored by a full-time course coordinator in the branch
- The grading and the quality of the feedback given to students on Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) are also monitored
- Students have the chance to evaluate the performance of their tutors on a semester basis via a specially designed questionnaire
- The branch director will take appropriate action when inadequate performance is detected.

4.2.1.3 University Quality Assurance

To ensure a high quality learning experience for students, the AOU monitors and evaluates its procedures, practices and student services on a systematic and regular basis. The AOU will ensure that its materials are of the highest quality.

The **design** of course learning materials is the direct responsibility of the deans of the respective faculties. Academic teams from inside and outside the AOU are usually tasked with producing the required learning materials for newly designed courses.

The production of required learning materials is achieved in accordance with certain specifications and methodologies of implementation. External assessors from other universities are involved in the process to ensure that the courses produced are of a high academic standard, comparable to those taught in campus-based institutions.

At present, the three programmes, namely English Language Studies, Business Studies, and IT and Computing Studies, which are all taught in English, use courses produced according to the very high standard of the OU UK. Wherever necessary, such courses are adapted to ensure that the learning materials, in written and audio-visual forms, adhere to the Arab-Islamic values.

The Faculty of Education programmes have also been developed to meet local accreditation requirements.

In addition, some of the programmes have been subjected to validation through the Open University Validation Services.

As concerns the **assessment**, the academic staff of the relevant faculty sets all assessment material. However, before a given assignment or examination is approved for use, the questions and model answers must be approved by external assessors (external examiners in the case of the programmes validated by the OU UK.

The AOU adopts a rigorous policy for the assessment of student achievement in courses and programmes of study. The policy aims to create a robust and fair system of evaluation of achievement. Each component of the system of assessment is also intended to serve a learning need within the overall learning process.

Each course requires students to complete a number of **Tutor Marked Assignments TMAs** during a given semester; the number depends on the level and credit rating of the course. These assignments are spread out over the duration of the course. At higher levels of study, some TMAs are set as thematic projects and require students to read widely and assemble rational arguments from many information sources. TMAs are marked by the student's subject tutor and contribute to the total grade for the course.

Submission and Marking of Tutor Marked Assignments

- TMAs are submitted to the (LMS) on the specified dates according to the approved course calendar
- The numerical mark of zero (0) shall be recorded for each TMA not submitted by the cut-off date unless the student provides within three days of the cut-off date evidence of a medical report or extraordinary circumstances which are beyond his/her control. The reason for non-submission of the assignment has to be reported to the relevant course coordinator based on a recommendation by the student's tutor
- If the case is approved then, depending on the circumstances, the TMA may be submitted within seven days after the cut-off date

Mid-Term Assessments MTAs are another means of monitoring the progress of students during the course. They are unified across all branches and are prepared by the General Course Coordinators and submitted by the dean to the External Examiners for final approval.

According to the AOU rules and regulations, a student's grade in the continuous assessment (TMAs and MTAs) of each course should be entered in the Student Information System (SIS) of the respective branch without delay so that the student's grade record is completed at most one week before the beginning of the final exams.

Final Examination is the third component of student assessment. These exams are designed under the direct supervision of the dean of the faculty and are approved by the external examiners. The same examination is given at the same time in all AOU branches.

- The AOU adopts various methods to assess the rate of students' progress towards achieving the program's objectives. Assessment and Examination Policy may vary from one course to another, but usually includes the following elements:
- 50 of the final total mark is allotted for continuous assessment during the semester (TMAs 20 marks and MTAs 30 marks)
- The other 50 marks is allotted for the final exam - this is held at the end of the semester.

I. For a student to pass a course, he/she must achieve an overall score of 50 marks in the final course result (final examination and continuous assessment, combined i.e. he/she should score a minimum of 15 marks in the continuous assessment and 35 marks in the final examination.

II. The classification of the degree award for the programmes validated by The Open University (UK) is calculated on the basis of the student's average grade in his/her best 32 credit hours of courses in Level 5 and the best 32 credit hours in Level 6 (corresponding to levels 5 and 6 in according to the new framework -for-higher -education-qualifications in the UK)

III. All students taking a course (across the AOU branches) must sit for the same final examination, and must present identification in order to enter the examination room:

- Students' final examination scripts are marked at the relevant branch under the supervision of the branch director in coordination with the dean concerned
- Students' final examination scripts shall be anonymous during the marking process.

IV. A student unable to sit the final examination due to an acceptable medical report or a force majeure, will be given a grade of "Incomplete" (I), and shall be allowed to sit for a make-up final examination in the nearest semester when that course is offered; otherwise, he/she shall receive a grade of Fail (F).

As concerns the **BA (Honours) in English Language and Literature**, the English Language and Literature (ELL) Programme has been validated through a process of external peer review by OU UK as being of an

appropriate standard and quality to lead to the Open University validated award of: BA (Hons) in English Language and Literature, ELL (OUVA).

As concerns **Degree Requirements**, the English Language and Literature with Business Studies (ELL with BS) Programme has been validated through a process of external peer review by OU UK as being of an appropriate standard and quality to lead to the Open University validated award of: BA (Joint Hons) in English with Business Studies, ELL with BS (OUVA)

The **BSc programme in Information Technology and Computing, BSc (Hons) ITC**, has been developed and will be delivered by the AOU. It has been validated through a process of external peer review by the OU UK as being of an appropriate standard and quality to lead to the Open University validated award of BSc (Hons) ITC (OUVA).

4.2.2 EDRAAK
4.2.2.1 General Features

Edraak, is a massive open online course (MOOC) platform that is an initiative of the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF). QRF is determined to ensure that the Arab world is at the forefront of educational innovation. As such, QRF has capitalized on regional Arab talent to leverage technology developed by the Harvard-MIT consortium, edX, to create the first non-profit Arabic MOOC platform.

The new MOOC platform will present the Arab world with unique and vital opportunities that can be part of a necessary revolution in education and learning.

First, the platform will broadcast the best Arab professors to the region, offering original Arabic courses - developed by QRF - to further enrich Arab education. Through its partnership with edX, the platform will also give Arab learners access in Arabic to courses taught and developed at top tier institutions like HarvardX, MITX, and UC BerkelyX. All courses are delivered at no cost to the learner.

Second, QRF envisions the use of the platform to showcase Arab role models by broadcasting short online courses by practitioners and professionals from a variety of fields spanning the arts and sciences.

Finally, QRF believes that the platform will enable the Arab world to take advantage of the international interest in regional affairs to tell its own story to the world. Arab university professors and regional experts can use the platform to give courses in English about the region and its history. This will serve to inform a global audience that is interested in the region's development.

From its inception, Edraak has been a Pan-Arab effort meant to serve the entire Arab region. As such, the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF), has sought support from visionary leaders across the Arab world, as founding partners. Therefore, His Highness General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, has been the first Founding Partner of Edraak.

The Queen Rania Foundation also recognizes the Mikati Foundation as a sponsor of the Edraak platform and to acknowledge its commitment to increasing access to quality education for Arab learners.

The Mikati Foundation is an international non-profit founded by the brothers Taha A. Mikati & Najib A. Mikati. The Foundation works to improve the welfare and prospects of people in the developing world, particularly in the Arab World and Africa. Its projects encompass many of the determinants of the quality of life, including education, scientific research, access to community development services, as well as the cultural areas of traditional handicrafts, architecture, art, music & sports.

Also QRF recognizes the sponsorship of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (the Arab Fund), based in the State of Kuwait, is an Arab regional financial institution focused on funding economic and social development by financing public and private investment projects and providing grants and expertise. The Arab Fund's activities are characterized by a number of important aspects that make it a model of cooperation and Arab economic integration, and a reflection of outstanding joint Arab action.

4.2.2.2 Education Offer

EDRAAK offers the best regional expertise and original Arab content. Sample courses include socio-political analysis of the economic underpinnings of the recent challenges in the Arab World and an exploration of citizenship and human rights across the region, as well as skill-based courses.

For international course, Edraak translates and localizes existing English edX programs into Arabic and delivers them on its own platform. This gives Arab learners access to courses taught at top global universities like Harvard, MIT and UC Berkeley at no cost.

Edraak promotes lifelong learning and makes high quality education more accessible.

Edraak expects to impact the employment outcomes and world outlook of those who complete the courses.

Since its launch, Edraak has reached over 450K learners from the region, with almost 40,000 learners completing courses.

Examples of Courses offered by EDRAAK:

1. Innovations in the Government;
2. Communications Skills;
3. Project Management for Life;
4. Entrepreneurship;
5. Introduction to Entrepreneurship;
6. Business Communication;
7. Introduction to Autism;
8. Maternal and Child Health;
9. Parenting;
10. Healthy heart;
11. Statistics and Epidemiology;
12. Health Quality Management;
13. Healthy Hearts;
14. Child Mental Health;
15. Nutrition and health;
16. Citizenship in the Arab World;
17. Introduction to python programming;
18. Remedial Math and life;
19. Introduction to energy solar cells part I;
20. Introduction to energy solar cells part II;
21. Circuits and Electronics;
22. Intro to computer science and programming;
23. Calculus I;
24. Calculus II;
25. Calculus III;
26. Calculus IV;
27. Your Guide to mathematics- the secondary stage;
28. Introduction to Java Programming series;
29. Calculus course series;
30. Problems solving and decision making skills;
31. Six steps to success;
32. Interviewing skills;
33. Essential Career Development Skills;
34. Introduction to Human Resource management;
35. CV writing;
36. Job Hunting Strategies;
37. Personal Branding;
38. Introduction to Graphic Design;
39. Planning your Personal Finance;
40. Arab Economies – Status Quo and Trajectory;
41. Arab Contemporary City;
42. Conversational Skills I;
43. Conversational Skills II;
44. Teach Like a Champion.

4.2.3 Virtual University of Tunis
4.2.3.1 General Features:
The UVT - Virtual University of Tunis, is a public institution, established in January 2002, its main mission is to develop Web-based and Internet-based courses and university curricula. The UVT is, by its own definition, a multidisciplinary university; its mission is to provide its students with opportunities for professionalizing courses tailored to the needs of the scientific and socio-economic environment as well as to the needs of the Tunisian and international labour market; and are divided into 14 training programs acknowledged by the Tunisian Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and technology.

Tunis Virtual University represents the first true experience of public distance university in Africa based on the use of the new teaching and learning technologies.

The main objective of the Virtual University of Tunis (UVT) is to offer good quality online training programs, using pedagogical learning methods adapted to modern technologies and e-learning.

The (UVT) aims at providing a wide range of high quality courses and curricula which meet the expectation of Tunisian Universities in particular:

- Promoting the production of high quality and innovative pedagogical resources and making them available to a wide range of teachers and learners;
- Improving the abilities and skills of teachers, learners and authorities involved in using Information and Communication Technology for Education (ICTE) in the learning process;
- Providing assistance to Tunisian Universities for the use of modern technologies and virtual pedagogical resources;
- Diversifying and multiplying the training provision; providing online high quality innovative degree trainings; Promoting professionalizing trainings.

4.2.3.2 University Education Offer:
The Educational Platform at VUT utilizes Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment), characterized by:

- a very large community of users, very active, scalable;
- not content portability problems;
- compatible with various operating systems;
- is managed by module with the possibility of delegation of administrative rights;
- Is Free Software.

Usages: Various spaces are used in Moodle, including:

- a documentary space
- a communication space,
- a collaborative space
- an evaluation space or self-assessment,
- sharing a space.

As concerns the **Academic Programs** offered by UVT:

License

LAM: Degree in Applied Management
LAMESN: Degree in Applied "E-marketing and digital strategies"
LASTIC: Degree in Applied Sciences and Technologies of Information and Communications
LGC: Basic Degree in Accounting
EOLES: Basic License (L3) in "Electronics and optics eLearning for Embedded Systems"

Masters

MPQSE: Professional Master in Integrated Management: Quality - Safety - Environment
MOME: Professional Master in Business Optimization and Modernization
N2TR: Professional Master in New Technologies of Telecommunications and Networks
MP2L: Professional Master in Free Software
MP3: Professional Master in Physical Preparation

M2P2: Professional Master in Mental Preparation
MP2ND: Professional Master in Neuro-radiology and diagnostic neuroimaging
MODECO: Professional Master in ecotourism
AGDRA: Research Master in Valuation and Sustainable Management of Animal Resources

4.2.4 Saudi Electronic University
4.2.4.1 General Features

As concerns the underpinnings of a proposal to establish Saudi Electronic University, the Rulers' assertive will to achieve the global leadership and excellence of the kingdom in higher education. This aim will be accomplished by providing high quality educational programs in higher education based on information and communication technology, and applications of e-learning and distance education.

The university will effectively contribute to constructing a society of knowledge and the economy by using education techniques.

It will also seek to activate the international communication and the national identity universally through what the Kingdom does specialize on such as religious sciences, Arabic language and history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

It will make a qualitative change in Higher Education path to provide a more capable and efficient e-learning model to deal with new developments, through distinct programs and overseas professors.

It will provide a higher education based on learning theories in a virtual environment characterized by affordability and highly efficiently, with student-centred and overcome the lack of staff and reduce the differences between them.

It will offer more educational opportunities, flexibility and bypass the borders of space and time.

It will provide more distinct educational opportunities for people with special needs, and promote the principle of self-learning and lifelong learning.

The desire to fulfil the needs of the labour market, and enabling employees without dropping out of work.

SEU will be a model to be followed in distance education and e-learning, integrated with other Saudi universities but not a substitute for it.

Participation in programs, contents and experiences with other interested Saudi universities will be one of its goals. Also it will contribute to increasing using potentials of Saudi universities and take advantage of their real possibilities such as hospitals, labs… etc. In future, SEU would be an interface for distance education for universities.

SEU is different from other universities because it has centres spread among several areas. These centres have flexibility that enables it to communicate easily with students and staff. In fact, they are education centres not branches of the university and they will be in areas where many people want to belong to the university.

The university aims to provide a high education in significant majors to support other universities. Also, it objects to develop skills, to activate international communication and to take advantage of best programs and global experts. It targets those who want to study by this model of education whether they are employees, new graduates, or others who have not had the chance to enrol in regular education. Also new branches will be opened in Qassim, Al-Jouf and Asir.

The future vision of SEU is to be a leader in e-learning, contributes to building the economy and a society of knowledge locally and globally and to increase the efficiency of higher education institutions production, provides a role-model, high quality and affordable higher education, conveys the Kingdom's cultural message and national identity, applies means and standards of best local and global universities, fulfils the needs of labour market, offers the chance for employees to combine between learning and employing by developing their skills without dropping out of work, provides long-life learning, solves the community problems, finally interfaces national and international challenges. These goals will go side to side with principles of quality, efficiency, profession, student-centred, and having international partnerships as well as promotion of Islamic identity.

4.2.4.2 Education Offer

Study system at the university is subject to the rules of study and test for the undergraduate within the Higher Education Council and Universities. The direct personal attendance percentage is 25% and the rest is through the e-learning and distance education.

There are two ways to contact the faculty members, either through direct meetings or through virtual classrooms and educational forums.

Also there is a direct attendance, and the other one is through using the university's e-learning system.

Duration of study is Four or five years, according to the academic program and the studying language is English.

The Testing system varies according to each course in the academic program.

Academic Programs Presented by the University

College of Financial and Administrative Sciences, and it includes:

- Business Administration Department;
- Finance Department;
- Accounting Department;
- E-commerce.

College of Computing and Information, and it includes:

- Computer Sciences Department;
- Information Technology Department;
- IT Computing Department.
- College of Health Sciences.
- Department of Health Informatics.
- Department of Public Health.

The certificate of Saudi Electronic University is certified by the ministry of Health, Ministry of civil service, and Ministry of Labor as well as relevant directions.

- Studying environment:
- Blackboard Learning Management System
- E- Lectures.
- Interactive virtual Lectures
- Electronic material.

Partnerships developed by the university:

- Franklin University
- Ohio University
- Colorado State University
- Florida Institute of Technology
- EF Institute
- Blackboard Inc.
- Saudi Digital Library.

4.2.5 Egyptian E-Learning University

4.2.5.1 General Features

In September 2005, the Ministry of Higher Education prepared a preliminary study for starting the project of the Egyptian E-Learning University (EELU), consequently a feasibility study was developed. These studies were presented to the Board of the Education Development Fund and then to the Cabinet. Finally, the Egyptian Government issued an initial approval to start and implement the EELU project.

In November 2006, an action plan was prepared for the University establishment project's activities, phases and tasks included implementation schedule and estimated budget.

In June 2007, The Cabinet approved the establishment of the Egyptian E-Learning University. The presidential decree was issued in August 16, 2008 No,233 to be the First ever qualified Egyptian university for distance learning running by system and technology based on E-Learning.

In October 2009 the university started its educational activities with two programs: "Computer and Information Technology and Business Administration" in three centres inside Ain Shams University, Tanta University and Assiut University.

In October 2010, E-learning program was added which awarded the Post-Graduate Diploma in this discipline. The University signed several co-operation agreements with: Ain Shams, Tanta and Assiut Universities. In addition, EELU has started co-operating with European universities in Italy and France, which resulted in establishing the Master of International Business Administration (MBA) program, affiliating us with the Graduate School of Science Business Applied in Paris, France (ESLSCA).

In February 2011, the University opened the Continuing Learning Centre (CLC), which offers professional training courses to a wide variety of different Egyptian society sectors. The University is aimed:

• To enhance the quality of higher education by using modern technologies, creating a broad information technology base using modern e- Learning modalities and managing university with a modern technological manner.

• To participate in improving Egypt's higher education ratio by increasing total student enrolment.

• To provide its graduates with the knowledge and skills required for industry, therefore ensuring high employability, whilst continuing to provide opportunities for professionals to enhance and further their careers.

• To Offer distinguished education in modern and inter-disciplinary educational areas to cater for the future needs in human resources at both local and regional levels.

• To provide alternative opportunities for employed students to attend lectures intensively as in traditional higher education universities.

• To create an advanced research base in technology areas and linked it with Centres of Excellence abroad.

4.2.5.2 Education Offer

As concerns **distributed education**, it occurs when the teacher and student are situated in separate locations and learning occurs through the use of technologies (such as video and internet), which may be part of a complete distance educational program or supplementary to traditional instructions.

As concerns **Resource Based Learning**, is defined as an integrated set of strategies to promote student centred learning in a mass educational context, through a combination of specially designed learning resources, interactive media and technologies.

As concerns **Continuing Education**, it implies any program of study award bearing or not, that's beyond compulsory education or post compulsory education of a short-term nature, which does not lead directly to a major higher educational qualification.

As concerns **E-Learning,** the delivery of learning, training or educational programs by electronic means. E-learning involves the use of a computer or electronic device such as a mobile phone, to provide training, educational or learning material. E-learning involves online training or education. A CD-ROM and DVD can be used to provide learning materials.

4.2.5.3 University Quality Assurance

As concerns **Accreditation,** EELU plans to set up a unit of quality assurance and accreditation that reports directly to the University Vice President for academic affairs. The role of this unit is to develop the quality assurance process, procedures and measures and to make sure that they are applied in the EELU. This unit is working in co-ordination with the national organization for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. International Accrediting Organizations e.g. the Quality Assurance Agency, QAA and also those dealing with e-learning and distance education will be approached e.g. Open University Validation Services, OUVS.

As concerns **Partnerships of the University,** the Egyptian e-Learning University (EELU) is interested in developing and delivering joint programs with recognized international universities as it believes that partnership is a channel for experience and knowledge transfer, it is also an instrument of recognition. EELU is pursuing to sign protocols of academic co-operation and partnership with several leading universities all over the world.

EELU is currently having discussions with the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Ryerson University in Canada, concerning a possible collaboration to offer a joint certificate in Project Management as a post-graduate professional diploma.

EELU is also looking for collaboration with the BBC World Service Trust to provide on-line courses in journalism by collaboration with the media faculties of leading European universities. It also can offer training courses in distance education and e-learning.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

E-learning is an *open system* which exposes the teaching and learning process to vast amounts of information. Consequently, one perspective on e-learning is the convergence of the internet and learning.

Within this broad perspective, a number of different approaches can be identified. All these approaches, which have accompanied e-learning delivery, have contributed, in the experience of EQTEL project, to achieve amazing results during the piloting project phase.

Blended Learning consists in merging the benefits of face-to-face/classroom lessons together with online learning. A key challenge for this approach is how to design courses so that the best elements of classroom learning and the strengths of online learning are harnessed to provide an enhances learning experience.

Besides that, *Learning Communities* are comprised of people who share a common purpose and who collaborate to support mutual learning and development. Their number is quickly increasing in the Higher Education Institutions that exploit e-learning methodologies. Learning communities can benefit from e-learning technologies and pedagogies to achieve their learning goals. A learning community with fluid and fluctuating membership may form around an area of mutual interest, contributing to the development of knowledge within that particular field.

Additionally, the *Virtual Learning Environments (VLE)* have been usually characterized by reference to a suite of technological tools used to support a range of pedagogical approaches. Typical elements include: email, notice board, asynchronous conferencing tools, synchronous collaboration tools, multimedia delivery, document exchange and repository, calendar, search tools, tutor/facilitator tools. Designers of a VLE must take into consideration of issues such as learning needs, and learner motivation. Priority must be given to identification of educational goals and pedagogical approaches.

Project Pilot experience has especially showed what is necessary to design effective e-Learning Experiences.

While the internet is a vast repository of information, the foremost concern for contemporary education is not access to more information. Rather it is the development of critical thinking skills, engendering personal and collective reflection, and supporting knowledge creation and distribution. One of the most powerful concepts associated with deep learning – and one which is closely aligned with the e-learning model – is that of *constructivism*. All the successful experiences of EQTeL pilot project courses have been an example of how it is essential for the learning process.

Constructivist approaches allow learners to use what they know to interpret new information and construct new knowledge. The learner does not assimilate new knowledge without reference to prior experience. Therefore, the act of learning is an interactive one. Learning is a social activity and is enhanced by collaborative enquiry. Students play a greater role in determining what is to be learned, how it is learned, and how learning is to be evaluated.

The pacing of the educational experience influences both group cohesion and the timeframe for the achievement of educational objectives. Allowing the learner to influence pacing requires both planning and balance in the planning of the e-learning experience. Interaction develops connections between new knowledge and prior understanding. Feedback –from learner to learner, or from teacher to learner – reinforces the acquisition of new skills. Navigation guides the way in which learners interact with each other and with content. Suitable navigation models are important given the many possible divergent information path presented by the internet. The interconnected and accessible nature of the internet provides for greater opportunities for personal enquiry. The opportunity to pursue personal interests may have a significant motivating dimension. The constructivist learning context, therefore, gives rise to the concept of computers as *mindtools*. Potential of computers will support student learning and thinking.

On the other side project experience witnessed how necessary is to make a re-evaluation of the teacher/student relationship. The model of the teacher as a subject expert is not feasible, in particular in the longer term, in e-learning environments. Fostering skill in learning, assessment and critical thinking with respect to the increasing amount of information presented to learners becomes key educational goals.

Best Practices Manual represents a core outcome for project dissemination since it outlines what kind of resources are necessary to settle and implement e-learning environment and later on as soon as e-learning process has started, the document outlines strategy mission and necessary tools to assess and measure the quality

of all educational offer. The final aim will be to contribute to e-learning *mainstreaming* that is fostering the widespread use, standardization and legitimization of distance educational pathways.