

High Level Group on the  
**Modernisation  
of Higher Education**



REPORT TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON  
**Improving the quality  
of teaching and learning in  
Europe's higher education institutions**

JUNE 2013

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*'Were all instructors to realise that the quality of the mental process, not the production of correct answers, is the measure of educative growth, something hardly less than a revolution in teaching would be worked.'*

John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (1916)

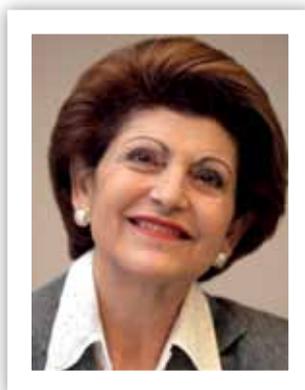
*'The path of least resistance and least trouble is a mental rut already made. It requires troublesome work to undertake the alteration of old beliefs.'*

John Dewey, *How We Think* (1933)

*'Education in our times must try to find whatever there is in students that might yearn for completion, and to reconstruct the learning that would enable them autonomously to seek that completion.'*

Allan Bloom (1930-1992)

Whenever I think about the people who have most inspired or motivated me during my life, I return, without fail, to my student days. I can still remember in particular the professor who inspired me in International and European affairs. His positive influence on me then continues to this day...



ANDROULLA VASSILIOU  
*European Commissioner  
for Education, Culture,  
Multilingualism,  
Youth and Sport*

This experience of learning from, and alongside, a good university or college teacher is one that should be shared by every one of the millions of students in Europe today. Not only because good teachers make one's student days challenging, motivating and rewarding; but because quality higher education teaching is absolutely crucial in enabling our higher education institutions to produce the critically-thinking, creative, adaptable graduates who will shape our future. And yet, while it should be the centre of gravity of higher education, the quality of teaching in our universities and colleges is often overlooked and undervalued.

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This is why, when I set up this High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe, I asked the group members to put the quality of teaching and learning at the top of their agenda for change.

Because we need change in Europe. We are facing considerable challenges – challenges too big to be dealt with by any one country acting alone: the economic crisis; unemployment, especially for young people; changing demographics; the emergence of new competitors; new technologies and modes of working. Europe can no longer rest on its laurels. We need to become more outward-looking, more innovative, and to put our societies on a sustainable footing for the future.

In response, we need more creative, flexible and entrepreneurial young people who are equipped for the challenges of today's ever changing work environment. This is the key message from the Europe 2020 strategy, and from the Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education that I put forward in 2011. This is why the EU has agreed that at least 40% of young people in the EU should have a university-level qualification by 2020. To achieve this, the Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education provides an overarching policy framework for national and EU policies

focusing on levels of attainment, quality and relevance, mobility, innovation, regional development and funding and governance. These are challenges for all Member States, whatever their starting point.

But alongside the quantitative target, the quality of teaching and learning should be at the core of the higher education reform agenda in our Member States – with a focus on curricula that deliver relevant, up-to-date knowledge and skills, knowledge which is globally connected, which is useable in the labour market, and which forms a basis for graduates' on-going learning.

Achieving this is no easy task. Therefore, I proposed a High Level Group to examine ways to enhance the quality of higher education while simultaneously catering for an increasingly diverse and numerous student body. I brought together experts with longstanding experience in different higher education systems and in policy making to address some of the most pressing issues in higher education today; to analyse these, taking into account expert views and practices; and to condense these findings into realistic and transferable recommendations for higher education institutions, national authorities and the European Commission.

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I would like to thank the chair, Mary McAleese, and all members of the High Level Group for their time, expertise and enthusiasm in producing this highly hands-on report for improving the quality of teaching and learning in our higher education institutions.

In such a time of crisis, Europe needs more investment in higher education, and especially in the quality of teaching and learning. Every Member State needs to invest as much as it can afford, and to maximise the return on every euro it spends. This report points the way.

When Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou invited me to chair the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, I, like the other members of the group, accepted without a second's hesitation because of the timeliness and importance of our 'mission'. Our economically troubled European Union is looking to its strengths and examining its weaknesses to help chart a surer and better future for its citizens. The future of Europe depends in a special way on our collective work and efforts to improve the quality of education generally, and a key component of that is the quality of higher education.



MARY McALEESE  
*Chair of the EU High Level  
Group on the Modernisation  
of Higher Education*

We believe absolutely that improving the quality of teaching and learning in higher education can bring about a sea-change for Europe's future. We have almost 4000 higher education institutions in Europe, of all shapes and sizes, from new universities of technology and arts colleges to ancient seats of learning and research; from metropolitan universities to small institutions in far-flung parts catering for specific local needs. These institutions, for all their differences, share a crucial task and a crucial responsibility – to teach our young (and also our not so young) people, and to teach them to the best level possible.

In our preparatory work and in our meetings the High Level Group encountered a very diverse picture of how quality in teaching and learning is approached in Europe and its higher education landscape. We tried to identify in the course of the last year what works best where, under which circumstances and contexts. We want to show to a wider public that improving the quality of teaching and learning is not magic and does not necessarily need huge amounts of additional funding; and yet, which is maybe harder to achieve, does need a change of culture. The High Level Group is aware that a wide range of excellent examples and comprehensive strategies on national and institutional level for improving the quality in teaching and learning exist in Europe. Unfortunately, this is not the case in all of Europe and not in all institutions.

With this report, we put quality of teaching and learning centre stage and show examples that can be applied elsewhere. To us it seems research as one important mission of higher education has often overshadowed the other core mission of higher education: teaching and learning. If we achieve a sound rebalancing of these two sometimes artificially conflicting but essentially complementary missions, the High Level Group will have served its purpose.

I would like to thank all members of the group and the support staff for their valuable contributions in the preparatory work, the discussions and in drafting this report. My special thanks to all presenters to the group: representatives from Member States, researchers in the field, higher education institutions and stakeholders who shared with us their in-depth knowledge and practices that enabled us – as we hope – to come up with a report that gives a sound analysis of the situation, a comprehensive sample of best practices across Europe and recommendations that are practical, realistic and transferable to improve the quality of teaching and learning, no matter from what starting point Member States and higher education institutions tackle this vitally important issue.



### Members of the Group

Mary McAleese (Chair)

Agneta Bladh

Vincent Berger

Christian Bode

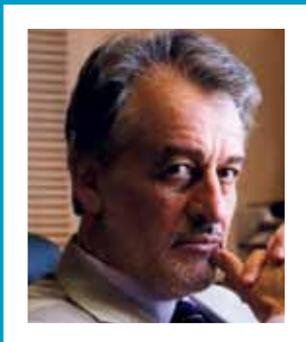
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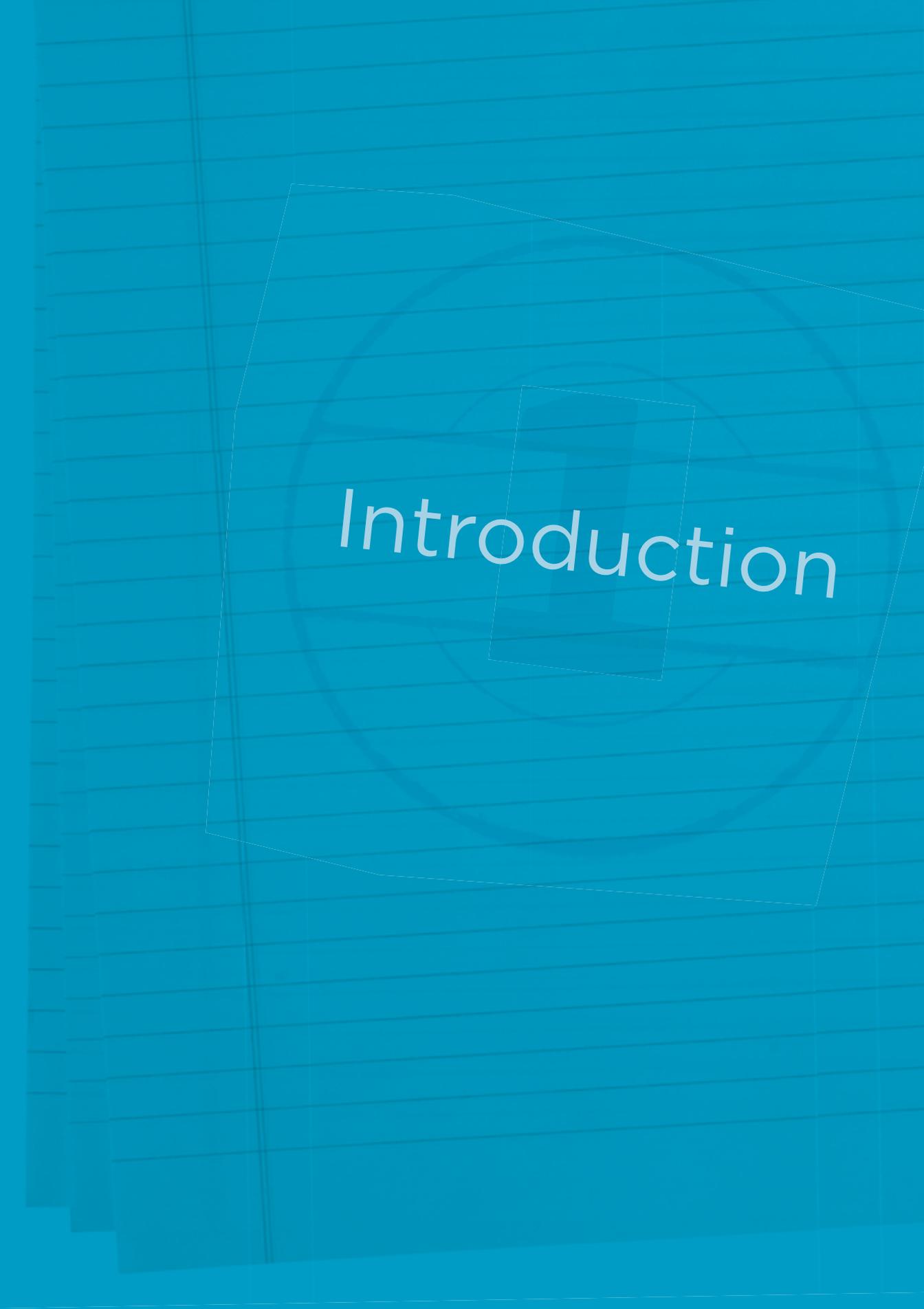






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# Introduction

## 1. Introduction

Europe has a long, strong and proud tradition of what we now call 'higher' education. It has deep roots beginning in the sixth century monastic schools, later developing into the medieval European University beginning in Bologna in 1088 and evolving into the modern higher education system of the present day. The biggest change over time has been access, for, until the 20th century, university education catered for tiny elites. The 19th century university saw the model cater for a system in which perhaps 2% of the population entered university. The European Union (EU) has as its stated ambition the goal of 40% of all young people having graduated from higher education by 2020. Already today, in some European countries, over 50% of young people progress to and through higher education, from a diversity of cultural, social and economic backgrounds. However, the ambition to greatly increase the numbers who enter and complete higher education only makes sense if it is accompanied by a visible determination to ensure that the teaching and learning experienced in higher education is the best it can possibly be. Given the pressure to use scarce resources effectively when many higher education institutions face significant underfunding, and in the light of a continuously diversifying higher education landscape, with the evolution of applied science institutions, research universities, Bachelor of Arts colleges, and higher education institutions actively involved in lifelong learning, this imperative becomes ever more urgent.

Our focus, therefore, is on the quality of teaching and learning for those who enter or who hope to enter higher education in the future. While widening and enhancing access to educational opportunity across the EU is essential, it is also crucial that European students have access to the best possible higher education learning environment. High quality teaching is the lynchpin of that. There are many inspirational exemplars of sustained and proven excellence in teaching. Regrettably they are not yet the norm and we find worrying systemic weaknesses in the sector that are maintaining experiential disparities are just plain wasteful and should no longer be regarded as acceptable. The essential challenge for the higher education sector, generally speaking, is to comprehensively professionalise its teaching cohort as *teachers*.

Michael Hooker argued in 1997 that the nineteenth-century model of teaching at higher level still holds sway and teaching 'has not changed much since. Fundamentally, higher education is still a process of imparting knowledge by means of lectures to those who want to acquire it.'<sup>1</sup> The last 15 years have seen progressive developments in many higher education institutions, but the basic model has not altered significantly, at least not in the majority of institutions. Yet the context in which higher education takes place has changed – and changed dramatically.

The core mission of higher education remains the same whatever the era, whatever the institution, that is, to enable people to learn. However, pedagogical models designed for small institutions catering to an elite few are having to adapt, often under pressure, to the much more varied needs of the many, to greater diversification and specialisation within higher education, to new technology-enabled forms of delivery of education programmes, as well as to massive changes in science, technology, medicine, social and political sciences, the world of work, and to the onward march of democracy and human and civil rights discourses.

<sup>1</sup> Hooker, M. (1997). The transformation of higher education. In Diane Oblinger and Sean C. Rush (Eds.) (1997). *The Learning Revolution*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.

That which is known is no longer stable. The shelf-life of knowledge can be very short. In many disciplines what is taught and how it is taught are both stalked by the threat of obsolescence. In a changing world, Europe's graduates need the kind of education that enables them to engage articulately as committed, active, thinking, global citizens as well as economic actors in the ethical, sustainable development of our societies.

The European Union's higher education institutions are the focal points for imparting what is known, interrogating what is not, producing new knowledge, shaping critical thinkers, problem solvers and doers so that we have the intellectual muscle needed to tackle societal challenges at every level necessary and advance European civilisation. Europe's graduates remain the most effective channels for transferring knowledge from universities and colleges into the broader society, enriching the individual, the family, the community, the workplace, the nation, the EU and the wider world.

Our higher education system is a key building block of our democratic societies. The best teaching and learning environments encourage students to develop confidence in their own creative abilities, strong community engagement and a sense of ethical responsibility allied to the humility that comes from understanding that learning is a lifelong phenomenon that demands a lifelong curiosity and commitment. The economic and social fallout from the recent financial crisis, originating with the pursuit of short-term profit at all costs, should be instructive in this regard.

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The citizens of Europe have a considerable collective vested interest in the quality of our higher education systems. The individual student has a huge vested interest in the quality of his or her higher education. The graduate who has received high quality teaching is more likely to be adaptable, assured, innovative, entrepreneurial and employable in the broadest sense of the term. The graduate who has received poor or mediocre teaching has wasted a lot of his or her time and money and in a competitive job market is at a disadvantage. In many cases, poor teaching also directly discourages students from staying on in higher education, and contributes to the high dropout rates and lack of student success we see in many countries.

There is no contradiction between the imperative of good teaching and the imperative of research which critiques, refines, discards and advances human knowledge and understanding. Good teaching, in many subject areas, is only good to the extent that it is informed by the latest research. A good teacher, like a good graduate, is also an active learner, questioner and critical thinker. The good teacher aims to help the student be confident in handling the subject as it has developed so far, to be courageous in openness to new ideas, curious enough to seek new solutions and opportunities, and insightful enough to work well with others so that the flow of information and effort is maximised.

The quality of teaching and learning in our universities and colleges determines how effectively they fulfil these demands. Teaching is a core mission and therefore a core responsibility. Quality teaching is a *sine qua non* of a quality learning culture. That teaching mission should appear as a resounding priority throughout every institution involved in the delivery of higher education – a daily lived priority and not just worthy words in a mission statement.

The truth about that daily lived reality, however, is an embarrassing disappointment. For research shows that serious commitment to best practice in the delivery of this core teaching mission is not universal, is sporadic at best and frequently reliant on the enlightened commitment of a few individuals. There are in the sector, both at institutional and governmental level, some outstanding beacons of good practice in their practical support for upskilling teachers, their recognition and rewarding of effective teaching and their support for students to become independent and active partners in the learning process<sup>2</sup>.

We in the European Union have a job to do to encourage and incentivise best practice in teaching and learning throughout the Member States' higher education sectors. If that job is done well, the benefits to the individual students, higher education staff and institutions and to the EU as a whole will give us a formidable new momentum, in fact a game-changing lift off that will fit us well for the journey ahead.

How to do that job well is the *raison d'être* of this report by the European Union High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education. In it we have attempted to do three things. Firstly, to provoke a broader discussion in all EU Member States about the quality of teaching and learning in every single university and college. Secondly, to identify a range of initiatives which can be applied taking account of the varied starting points of different countries and institutions, to shift our higher education teaching culture out of the doldrums and into a new and energetic gear. Thirdly, in an area where the prime policy responsibility lies with the public authorities responsible for higher education in the EU Member States, and with the institutions themselves, to propose ways in which the European Union can support governments and stakeholders in implementing new, more challenging and just plain better models of teaching and learning.

The High Level Group realises that there is no single definition for high quality in teaching and learning, as both are multi-faceted activities that depend largely on the context, such as the subject, the learners, the mode of instruction, resources, etc. Reaching a huge group of first year students in business studies poses a challenge that differs substantially from teaching a piano master class to one or two music students. Yet there are factors that are conducive to good teaching and learning, regardless of subject and context, and the High Level Group has tried to identify them in this report. Many of these factors have been, and are being, thought through and analysed in other fora. Thus, in this report, we have concentrated on what we see as the most promising avenues for promoting and producing best quality in teaching and learning.

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**2**  
The examples of good practices listed in the text show the variety of approaches for supporting quality in teaching and learning.

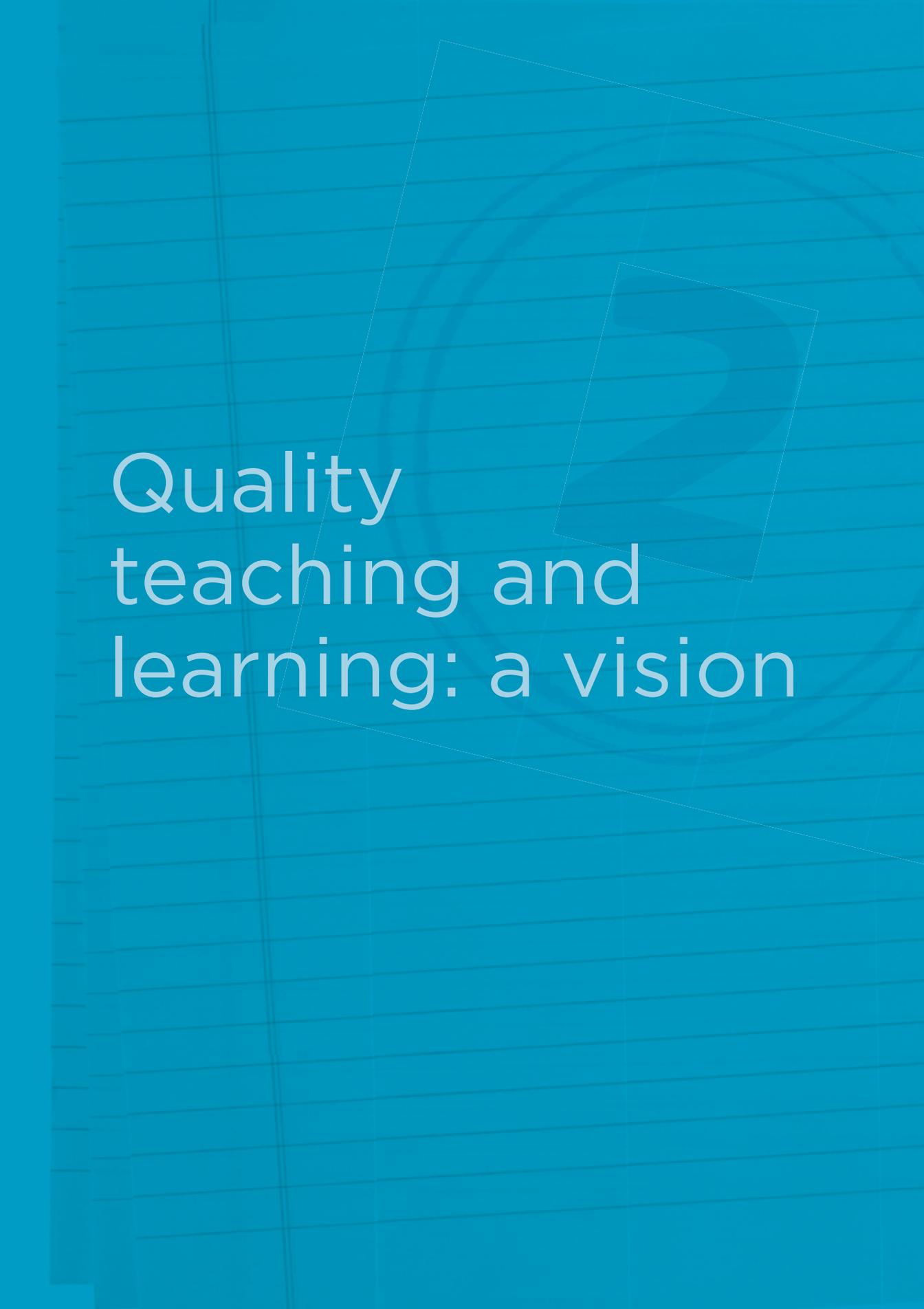
Our work is built around the guiding principles:

- ▶ that teaching and learning are fundamental core missions of our universities and colleges;
- ▶ that active student involvement is essential in governance, curricular design, development and review, quality assurance and review procedures;
- ▶ that the preference of research over teaching in defining academic merit needs rebalancing;
- ▶ that academic staff are employed not just to teach, but to teach well, to a high professional standard;
- ▶ that it is a key responsibility of institutions to ensure their academic staff are well trained and qualified as professional teachers and not just qualified in a particular academic subject;
- ▶ that this responsibility extends to ensuring new staff have a teaching qualification or equivalent on entry or have access to credible teacher training courses in the early years of their career;
- ▶ that this responsibility extends to providing opportunities for continuous professional career development as a professional teacher and not just as a subject/discipline specific academic;
- ▶ that it is a key responsibility of academic staff to ensure they are qualified to teach and able to teach well; and
- ▶ that this responsibility extends over their entire career from start to finish so that they remain up-to-date and proficient in the very best pedagogical practices and all that excellence in teaching requires.

This understanding of teaching as a high-priority contractual obligation to the students who are partners in the co-creation of knowledge underpins our report. More than that there is an obligation to the wider society to be the most effective centre of gravity, the best leavening agent that only a higher education institution can be.

Achieving these goals will require strong governance in our universities and colleges. And ensuring that we deliver high quality education also has a financial cost. The economic crisis, and the limited financial resources available, makes it even more essential to focus investment in areas which reap most returns. Public and private funders have an obligation to promote quality in teaching with the same commitment that they invest in research. Both are vital to the economic and social well-being of Europe.





# Quality teaching and learning: a vision

## 2. Quality teaching and learning: a vision

**N**obody would contest that we need high quality teaching and learning throughout our education and training systems. In our schools, public inspectorates are charged with ensuring exactly that. But what do we mean when we talk of quality teaching and learning in higher education, where there may be no set curriculum, training in pedagogical skills is rarely on the menu, and higher education institutions are so varied in their sizes, budgets, missions and objectives, not only between but within individual countries? A generic one size fits all standard of quality teaching and learning in higher education may be hard to define given the level of disparity in the higher education sector; but that hardly justifies the current reluctance to acknowledge the need for professional teaching skills for those who are already teaching or who intend to become career teachers in higher education.

The need for professional training as a teacher at primary and secondary school level is generally taken for granted but remarkably, when it comes to higher education there seems to be an all too common assumption that such professional teacher training is not necessary, as if it is somehow an idea unworthy of the professional academic. While the content of any such professional teacher training for the third level sector is not a matter for this report it is worth dwelling on some of the characteristics of quality teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning in higher education is a shared process, with responsibilities on both student and teacher to contribute to their success. Within this shared process, higher education must engage students in questioning their preconceived ideas and their models of how the world works, so that they can reach a higher level of understanding. But students are not always equipped for this challenge, nor are all of them driven by a desire to understand and apply knowledge, but all too often aspire merely to survive the course, or to learn only procedurally in order to get the highest possible marks before rapidly moving on to the next subject. The best teaching helps students to question their preconceptions, and motivates them to learn, by putting them in a situation in which their existing model does not work – and in which it matters to them that it does not work and in which they come to see themselves as authors of answers, as agents of responsibility for change. That means that students need to be faced with problems which they think are important. They need to engage with new questions which are bigger than the course itself, which have relevance to their own lives and which provoke a lively participation far beyond simply getting through assessment or exams.

Quality teaching and learning has broad horizons, taking place in a research-rich environment, where the subject matter is driven by the latest knowledge and research, delivered in a way which encourages students to develop academic literacy and both subject specific and generic skills which they can apply immediately in the real world, especially in the labour market. The best teaching encourages students to be aware of and to draw on the research not only of the teacher, but also of fellow academics within and beyond the university or college, including internationally. In this era of increasingly rapid globalisation, the teaching and learning experience for all students must be globally connected, enabling students to develop an understanding of how their subject is viewed and pursued in different parts of the world.

During the course of our deliberations we have been very impressed by the exciting leadership that is now available and which extends the boundaries of teaching and learning, albeit still on a relatively modest scale. We look forward to a time when the new ideas on models of learning, on interdisciplinarity, integrated learning, on team pedagogy, on deep learning etc. will be mainstreamed, inspiring a new generation of students to reach levels of intellectual literacy that stretch them beyond merely 'good enough' to 'excellent'.

A first step is to create the conditions in which the higher education sector gives parity of esteem to both teaching and research, so that the higher education teacher knows that he or she has to invest not simply in a command of his or her discipline, whether it is law, literature or science, but must invest in being a good teacher and will be rewarded appropriately for doing so. Some Member States and some higher education institutions have already taken substantial steps towards this goal, but even they would not claim that it is a universal experience throughout all their programmes. Their enthusiasm and successes to date encourage us to believe that while many barriers to the full professionalization of higher education teachers is some way off, it is a goal worth setting and a destination which is our best chance of achieving excellence in teaching across the EU's higher education sector. It is also an important vehicle for ironing out the vast disparities in educational outcomes which are not the best use of the resource that is the brain power of our people. It also makes the profession of higher education teacher an exciting one, more fulfilling, dynamically self-interrogating, and therefore self-updating and useful. It has the capacity to shift the learning environment into a very different and much more attractive kilter<sup>3</sup>.

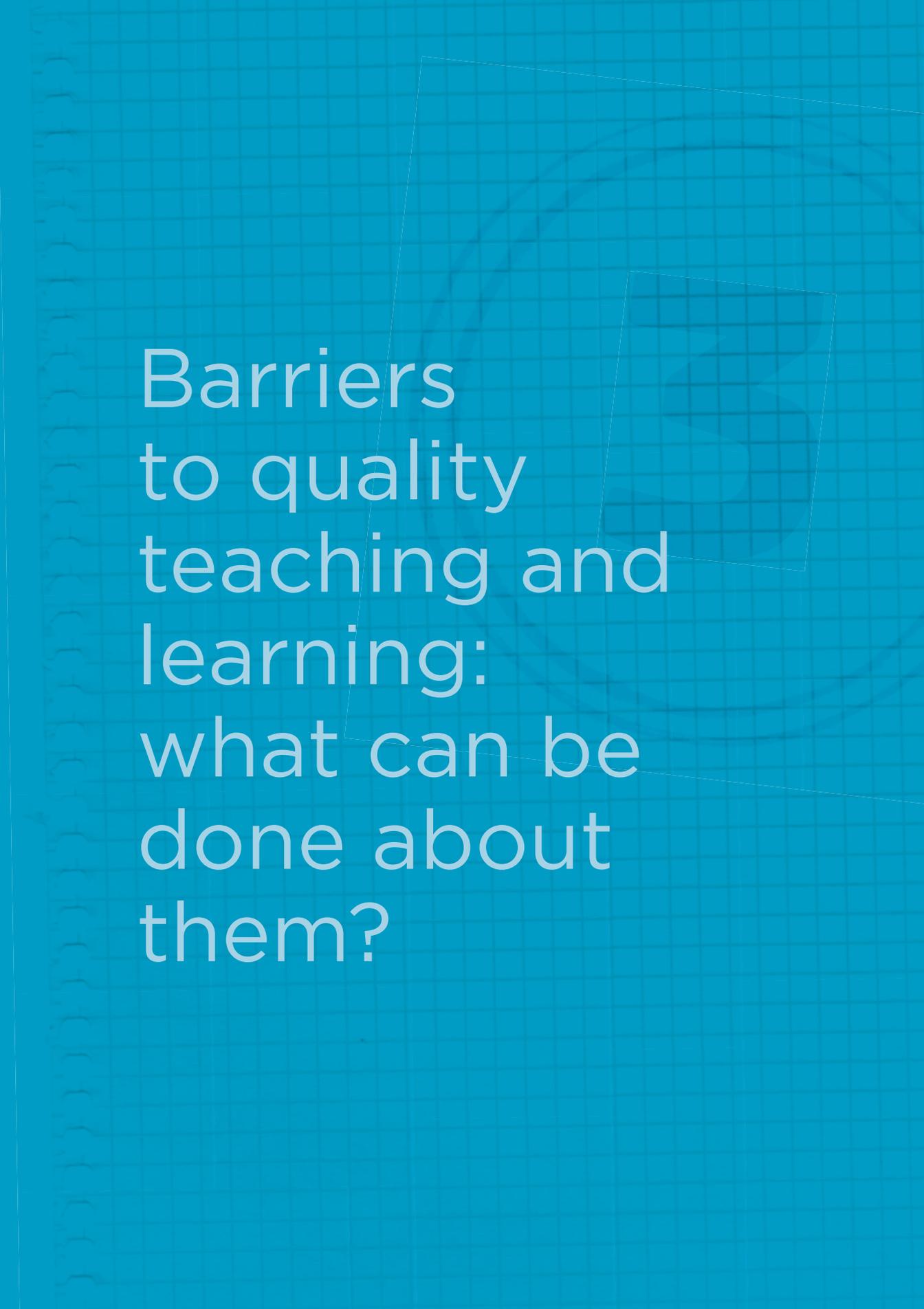
So how do we get there?

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**3**

A practical checklist for quality in teaching and learning is annexed to the report.





Barriers  
to quality  
teaching and  
learning:  
what can be  
done about  
them?

### 3. Barriers to quality teaching and learning: what can be done about them?

The discussion about the necessary shift from teaching to learning has been considerably boosted by the Bologna Process and related issues such as qualification frameworks, the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement. National student surveys and sometimes league tables have also helped to shift the gravitational pull of research to broader questions and realities, including the quality of the learning environment which embraces issues to do with teaching quality.

Nonetheless, across the European Union, there is a very diverse picture of how – if at all – Member States and higher education institutions promote quality in teaching and learning. These policies and initiatives range from national strategies and programmes, institutional missions, national and institutional awards and prizes, to reward systems, teacher training and centres of excellence in teaching, including, crucially, pedagogical research.

The High Level Group's task was to develop realistic and transferable recommendations taking into account the sundry nature of the starting points. In its meetings over the last year the group had the opportunity to listen to a wide range of experts and examples of good practices in Member States and in higher education institutions. Student and teacher organisations and European stakeholders in higher education presented their views on the subject and their respective initiatives and activities in the field of promoting quality in teaching and learning. As a result, the Group obtained a wide-ranging picture of the situation regarding teaching and learning across the EU that clearly highlighted the existing obstacles and deficiencies, but also identified beacons of good practice in various countries and institutions.

The Group hopes to galvanise a new momentum behind the higher education sector right across the EU, and across what is admittedly a wildly diverse sector both within and across Member States. If we are to do this, then we need to improve the delivery of the core activities of the institutions within that sector, whatever their circumstances. Sometimes it is important to advance, update, renew, innovate, create, develop, prune, graft, uproot, and plant anew. Sometimes the advances are achieved in giant steps and sometimes they are achieved by the stealth of simply doing the everyday things better. Europe needs both. The everyday things in teaching matter and innovation in teaching matters. Good teaching, it is axiomatic, is a lot better than bad or average or mediocre teaching. Good teaching is a leaven in the life of a student, an institution and a community. Poor teaching is a drag and a drain on all the above.

Our research shows a lot of worthy aspirations across EU Member States in relation to quality teaching in higher education but an actual base line of concern that is worryingly low. An over-focus on research has, it seems, overshadowed the core value and seminal importance of teaching. The truth is that we need to go back to that basic core value, to see again and clearly how important teaching is and how dangerously close we are to taking it for granted.

## Teaching and learning require full institutional and governmental support

The traditional lack of attention paid to higher education teaching is often reflected in mission statements, in particular those of research universities. Institutions need to ensure there is manifest and actual parity of esteem for teaching and research in their core identity and culture and expressed in their systems of rewards, incentives, promotions and priorities.

Frequently, above-average teaching engagement is left to individual academics who receive little or no institutional backing. Teaching and learning are not defined by the leadership as a joint endeavour of all teachers and learners that requires a holistic quality management. As a result, no exchange on these issues takes place within the institution which thus misses an important opportunity to improve its performance and sharpen its profile.

Higher education institutions need to define their teaching and learning objectives in relation to their study programmes and how they should be delivered and assessed. This can be the starting point for the development of a quality management scheme that involves the entire institution, from the governing board to teachers, students and administration.



- ▶▶ In **Estonia**, the Higher Education Strategy 2006-2015 includes several action lines focusing on the development of teaching skills. Thus, the transition to competence-based study programmes is supported by training for teaching staff, focussing on modern teaching and assessment methods.  
<http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Estonia/Estonia-Higher-Education-Strategy-2006-2015.pdf>



- ▶▶ In **Spain**, Strategy University 2015 is a government initiative to modernise universities through the coordination of the autonomous regional university systems and the development of a modern Spanish University System. One of its priorities is quality assurance in teaching, through the assessment, certification and accreditation of institutions, teachers and programmes, carried out by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (ANECA).  
<http://www.mecd.gob.es/dctm/eu2015/2010-eu2015-ingles.pdf?documentId=0901e72b804260c4>



Assessment of teaching and learning strategies can be sharpened through the interplay of internal and external quality assurance.

The methodological approaches in applying standards and standardised procedures of external quality assurance carry useful potential for contributing to quality-rich teaching and learning environments with dynamic programme design/ implementation.

The more the learning and teaching process moves into the limelight, the greater the stimulus to internal quality assurance and internal systems which are dedicated to achieving quality teaching.

Given the financial constraints under which most European higher education institutions are working, it may often be difficult to kick-start the process of institutional reflection and action on good teaching and learning. Higher education institutions should not be left alone in shouldering the burden of developing a culture of good teaching and learning. In some Member States public and/or private funders are providing support to this end.

Targeted properly, it is money well spent.



► In **Ireland** a National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning was established in 2012 to work structurally on improving teaching and learning. The National Forum uses different instruments for doing that, such as academic professional development tools and awards, a national digital platform and e-learning capacity development, and grants and fellowships.  
[http://www.heai.ie/files/files/DES\\_Higher\\_Ed\\_Main\\_Report.pdf](http://www.heai.ie/files/files/DES_Higher_Ed_Main_Report.pdf)



► In the **French Community of Belgium**, specific legislative provisions target teaching excellence. According to Article 83 of the Bologna Act (2004), university institutions should use at least 10% of their basic public funding for teaching excellence for success and were required to jointly set up 'higher education teaching centres' (centres de didactique supérieur).  
[http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/28769\\_005.pdf](http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/28769_005.pdf)



► Excellence in teaching is one aim of the **Slovene** National Higher Education Programme 2011-2020. To achieve teaching excellence, the Programme requires higher education institutions to develop activities of continuing pedagogical training and to provide support for their teaching staff. Mechanisms for promoting excellence in teaching shall include the development of centres for teaching competences.  
[http://www.arhiv.mvzt.gov.si/nc/en/media\\_room/news/article/101/6960/](http://www.arhiv.mvzt.gov.si/nc/en/media_room/news/article/101/6960/)





**RECOMMENDATION 1**

*Public authorities responsible for higher education should ensure the existence of a sustainable, well-funded framework to support higher education institutions' efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning.*



## Institutional leadership: top-down and bottom-up approaches have to go hand in hand

An improved performance in teaching and learning has to be embedded in an institution's culture and self-ideation. Human resource development is all-important here and requires a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches: appointing a vice-rector and vice-deans (an institute or department) for these issues is important to organise and sustain the in-house discussions, liaise nationally and internationally with like-minded institutions, become the conduits for promoting and disseminating pedagogical research and good practice, and become effective cheer-leaders for the institutional ambition around excellence in teaching. To develop a quality culture of good teaching and learning, academic teachers have to be convinced and fully involved in the project. Target agreements can help to structure and drive the process and also make it verifiable. The institution needs to support its teaching staff through various measures, ranging from continuing education and training offers to individual mentoring and coaching, and measures that strengthen the cooperation among the team of teachers, especially in the design, development and delivery of curricula and in the assessment of student performance. The senior management need to spread the message that effective, learning focused teaching is expected from all staff (not just the enthusiasts), and to promote this message systematically, connecting it clearly to institutional priorities.



► In **Germany**, more than 250 projects aim at improving study conditions and the quality of teaching, using a wide spectrum of measures, implementation strategies and interim goals. The quality pact for teaching foresees EUR 2 billion until 2020. At the same time, the Länder governments and a private donor funded 10 selected higher education institutions that jointly elaborated a Charter for good teaching which systematically deals with the different aspects of an institutional approach to the topic.

<http://www.qualitaetspakt-lehre.de/en/index.php>

<http://www.exzellente-lehre.de>



► The **Estonian** Ministry of Education and Research Primus programme (2008-2014) is supported by the European Social Fund. Primus has six major action lines, the most important one concentrating on the 'Improvement of teaching and supervising skills of teaching staff', providing training courses to enhance competences of academic teaching staff.

[http://issuu.com/primusprogramm/docs/primus\\_eng\\_issu](http://issuu.com/primusprogramm/docs/primus_eng_issu)





**RECOMMENDATION 2**

*Every institution should develop and implement a strategy for the support and on-going improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, devoting the necessary level of human and financial resources to the task, and integrating this priority in its overall mission, giving teaching due parity with research.*





► In **Norway**, the Ministry of Education and Research is funding a pilot project at the University of Oslo, in cooperation with University of Tromsø: Norway's first Centre for Excellence in Education, following the model of centres of excellence in research. The goal of the centre is to develop new knowledge about teaching, learning and research in teacher education.

<http://www.uv.uio.no/english/about/news-and-events/news/proted-cfee.html>



► In **Spain**, the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) has established a teaching performance assessment programme, DOCENTIA, in cooperation with all regional evaluation agencies. Participation is voluntary for universities. A university submits its plan for excellence in teaching to ANECA for certification. Assessment of the teaching staff based on the DOCENTIA programme plays a very important role in teachers' accreditation applications. The programme considers three dimensions in teaching: course design, development of teaching and results.

<http://www.aneca.es/Programas/DOCENTIA>



Often it is the students who are the first to notice whether teaching is good or not. How many institutions are geared to routinely listening to student insights in an atmosphere that is genuinely welcoming of such feedback or comment? In how many institutions are structures more likely to make students feel that they are unwelcome complainers whose judgment may be suspect?

Asking students for their feedback on their learning experience at the end of the semester has become common practice in many countries, but it is not always obvious that their views have any actual impact or conduce to desirable changes. Higher education institutions need to create environments and feedback mechanisms and systems to allow students' views, learning experience, and their performance to be taken into account. There needs to be annually published feedback to the students and university community, from the institutions concerned, indicating the ways in which the institution is responding to useful student insights.

Robust institutional data is needed at the entry and progression level, and after graduation of students (see 'Knowing your students') to monitor, evaluate and improve teaching and learning practices. Based on this data, higher education institutions can tackle obvious problems of specific courses and programmes and jointly work with the responsible teaching staff and students to improve the situation.



**RECOMMENDATION 3**

*Higher education institutions should encourage, welcome, and take account of student feedback which could detect problems in the teaching and learning environment early on and lead to faster, more effective improvements.*



## Acknowledging teaching as a skill

There is no law of human nature that decrees that a good researcher is automatically a good teacher, or that a first class honours student in biochemistry with a brilliant PhD will, by some mysterious process, automatically be a good teacher of biochemistry. Academics working as teachers in the higher education sector are professional teachers, just like school teachers; and just like school teachers they need and benefit from specific training to do a good job pedagogically. This is all the more true as the student body is not only growing rapidly but is also becoming ever more diverse – in terms of cultural, economic and social backgrounds – and more demanding in terms of what students expect from their courses and their teachers.

In most Member States, an academic career is still more strongly linked to research than to teaching in terms of initial selection at job interview and subsequent promotion and performance related reward. Doctoral students and those undertaking postdoctoral research quickly learn that academic laurels are to be gained by participation in ambitious research projects and through regular publications (indeed: that this is imperative in the sense of ‘publish or perish’). Teaching undergraduate students, on the other hand, is considered by many a task to be shouldered by those at the start of the academic career and less frequently done by well-established professors. Those under pressure to publish can come to regard teaching, assessments, and student contact hours as holding them back from what their employers truly prioritise. Students can easily be short-changed in such a culture, coming to see themselves as a nuisance to a busy tutor who has to meet a publication deadline for an article. The days of regarding a very long summer break as the prime time for research and the term time as student-time are long gone. A change of mind-set in many countries and their higher education institutions with regard to the prioritisation of academic teaching and learning in comparison to research is urgently needed.

The preference of research over teaching in defining academic merit, which is reflected in the lack of importance attached to teaching skills in selecting, hiring and promoting academic staff, results in remarkably little attention being paid to the preparation of future academic teachers in the sense of didactical training. Compared to teachers at first and second level, teachers in higher education often feel, and indeed are, left alone without proper or adequate preparation in the myriad tasks (communication, materials, methodology, technology, assessment, exams, course structure and pace, feedback, etc.) confronting any teacher.

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In the **UK**, the Higher Education Academy, in cooperation with British universities, has defined professional standards that support academic teachers in providing a high level learning experience to their students, using a range of different methods and formats. In particular it has developed the ‘UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education’ which, ‘fosters creative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning’.

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf>

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#### RECOMMENDATION 4

*All staff teaching in higher education institutions in 2020 should have received certified pedagogical training. Continuous professional education as teachers should become a requirement for teachers in the higher education sector.*

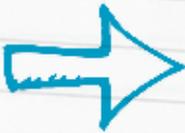


Under the pressure of growing student numbers and often dwindling public funding, some higher education institutions opt for the solution of offloading at least part of their teaching obligations to external lecturers. External lecturers who while they can, on the one hand, bring variety, may be less costly, and may create the opportunity for fine-tuned specialism, may also, on the other, be subjected to even less scrutiny with regard to their teaching skills (and their development). In institutions with strong research cultures the creation of a group of 'teaching only' staff may further widen the reputation gap between research and teaching.

Notwithstanding these and other problematic issues, the last years have, in some quarters, shown a growing appreciation of good teaching and good teachers in the EU. More and more universities require proof of teaching skills from job applicants and their agreement to continuously update those skills. Furthermore, some higher education institutions have established mentoring and induction systems for new teachers to improve their integration into the higher education institutions and their didactic and pedagogical skills. This may include self and peer evaluation, mentoring and job-shadowing. Academic staff are sometimes encouraged or obliged to have teaching portfolios which foster reflection on one's own teaching methods, successes and shortcomings, and students' needs and expectations. Some institutions voluntarily publish the extent to which their teaching staff are professionally trained or qualified as teachers. Others measure and evaluate teaching quality.

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Since 1999, the Bologna reforms have changed the higher education landscape enormously. For most countries participating in the Bologna Process, the restructuring of degrees, the introduction of a three-cycle system, and the on-going curricular reforms have meant a complete change of their respective higher education system and higher education mindset. Learning to 'speak Bologna' – qualification frameworks, learning outcomes, internal and external quality assurance, transparency tools – posed a considerable challenge for many. Today, there is a far-reaching – at least rhetorical – consensus that academic teaching should put the student at the centre by defining clear learning outcomes for the different programmes, courses and modules, and by attaching particular importance to counselling, monitoring and interactive modes of teaching. Consensus also exists on the development of assessment formats that take into consideration not only factual knowledge but farther reaching competences such as analytical capacity, critical thinking, communication and team-working, and intercultural skills. The profession of teaching is not likely to become less complex. In fact quite the reverse, and as it does so, there will be a need for greater investment in teaching the teachers, not only at the beginning of their careers, but by enabling them to update their skills throughout their academic life.



**RECOMMENDATION 5**

*Academic staff entrance, progression and promotion decisions should take account of an assessment of teaching performance alongside other factors.*



Quality teaching is not an optional extra. Higher education teachers should be trained as teachers. Europe already has a quantitative goal that 40% of its young people should achieve higher education qualifications by 2020. To ensure the quality of those qualifications, we need a stated goal that every teacher in higher education should be a trained professional teacher by the same date.

The scope and resources available to achieve that goal will vary from institution to institution and from Member State to Member State. Unless we start we will not reach our goal. The realities and expectations in terms of what is achievable will also vary greatly but, in each institution starting from wherever it is at – and in each Member State starting from wherever it is at – the inescapable truth is that they will benefit from starting somewhere and the sooner the better. They will discover the surging uplift to the individual, the institution and society that comes from the best quality teaching. They will also be honouring the moral and legal obligation they have to their students which is currently diluted by the untenable presumption that academic staff do not need training in professional skills.

Ideally, our aim should be towards having a cohort of higher education teachers for whom having a teaching qualification and access to continuing professional development is the accepted and expected norm, and by a medium to long-term target date given the economic realpolitik. Medium and short-term we need to prod institutions towards practices which move this goal forward, for example, through national or institutional commitments to publish annually the extent to which academic staff receive training in teaching skills. There are examples of both mandatory and voluntary quality teaching assessment (of systems rather than individual teachers) and accreditation practices which we have been appraised of and which have real merit. Publication of student surveys and credible ranking mechanisms all have a role to play in shifting us out of the existing torpor. The new U-Multirank initiative offers a promising way forward, using quality in teaching and learning as a key criterion for assessing institutions' performance.

The invigorating benefits of a fresh focus on and insistence on quality teaching will be felt widely and rapidly if effective. They will be felt in complex ways from increased teacher professional fulfilment and satisfaction, to increased student satisfaction and retention, to better knowledge and skills transfer, more efficient use of resources, better learning outcomes etc. The sum of the parts will be to harness a more confident, competitive and creative energy throughout the EU higher education sector, each institution giving its best, to the best of its ability, given its remit and conditions.

## Which skills must 21st century teachers have to promote high quality learning?

According to research published in the British Medical Journal (Gibson, 2009) – applicable also to other, non-medical domains – the ‘five Es’ of an excellent university teacher are: education; experience; enthusiasm; ease; and eccentricity.

Teaching students well obviously implies that teachers produce up-to-date and good quality material for their lessons. A teacher’s knowledge base should not be restricted simply to his or her own subject, but must also include an understanding of learning theories – such as adult learning theory, self-directed learning and self-efficacy – and how to incorporate them into practice.

Teachers must be aware that different kinds of teaching methods and educational settings can produce different kinds of learning. Teachers should be able to face rapidly changing demands, which require a new set of competences and call for new approaches to teaching and learning. They should also be able to stimulate open and flexible learning that will improve learning outcomes, assessment and recognition.

Since 2001, the ‘Dublin Descriptors’ have been adopted as cycle descriptors for the qualification framework of the European Higher Education Area. These are generic statements about achievements and abilities that are expected to be acquired by students at the conclusion of each Bologna cycle: knowledge and understanding; applying knowledge and understanding; making judgements; communication skills; and learning skills. Higher education teaching that focuses only on the first issue, that is, knowledge and understanding, misses the opportunity to help students engage with their learning on a deeper level. Thus, teachers should be able to plan for and deliver coherent learning which accelerates progress, deepens understanding and knowledge, and develops a range of skills and ‘learning behaviours’ such as problem solving, interaction with teachers and other learners, self-correction, critical reflection, competence improvement, meaning making, and experiential learning.

Furthermore, achievements, in all the subjects, should be driven by learning outcomes. While the learning outcomes approach is already the basis of the European Qualifications Framework and national qualification frameworks, this fundamental shift has not yet fully percolated through to teaching and assessment. Institutions at all levels of education and training still need to adapt in order to increase the relevance and quality of their educational input to students and the labour market, and to widen access to and facilitate transitions between different education and training pathways.

Once outside higher education, individuals should also be able to have their skills assessed, validated and recognised, providing a skills profile for potential employers.

## Focus on soft skills

Universities and higher education institutions, as part of the education system, should not educate students only in narrow, knowledge-based specialisations, but must go further, seeking the integral education of the person. They should consider offering students transversal majors or areas of specialisation. This perspective sees students themselves realising that they need to acquire broader knowledge and skills. Higher education should help students build a wider base on which they can build their future professional competences. Fast changes in technology, and generally in the way we work, make hard skills rapidly obsolete. Learning to learn – one of the seven competences of the European Key Competences Framework – is fundamental. Efforts need to be concentrated on developing transversal skills, or soft skills, such as the ability to think critically, take initiatives, solve problems and work collaboratively, that will prepare individuals for today's varied and unpredictable career paths.

An excellent teacher can enhance creative skills and learning outcomes such as:

- ▶ complex thinking – problem solving, reciprocal learning, experiential learning;
- ▶ social skills and participatory learning – interaction with tutors and other learners, active participation in learning, interdependence; and
- ▶ personal shaping of knowledge – progressive mastery, individual pacing, self-correction, critical reflection, active seeking of meaning, empowered self-direction, internal drive/motivation.

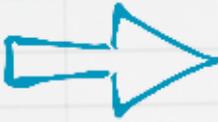
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In order to develop these skills, teaching is not enough: an appropriate environment is also required. For example, extra-curricular activities, whether organised in a university/college/institute environment or not, ranging from volunteering, culture and the arts, to sports and leisure activities, help develop soft skills and nurture talents.

## Rewarding teaching skills and engagement

Why should a professor dedicate an important part of his or her time and energy to improving students' learning experience when the continuing reputation gap between research and teaching and the lack of institutional backing are major disincentives to the development of a quality culture of teaching and learning? Career and salary structures in most national higher education systems still foresee no bonus for outstanding teaching engagement. Most of the international university rankings are biased heavily towards the more easily countable research publication citation indices, rather than looking at the wider university mission in areas as fundamental as teaching and learning which are less amenable to such head counts.

Good teaching, unlike good research, does not lead to easily verifiable results but consists rather in a process. Making it visible, and so improving its reputation and providing incentives to its protagonists, requires an extra effort on behalf of governments and higher education institutions. What is needed is a system of incentives and rewards that takes into account the variety of types of teachers and teaching styles.



**RECOMMENDATION 6**

*Heads of institutions and institutional leaders should recognise and reward (e.g. through fellowships or awards) higher education teachers who make a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning, whether through their practice, or through their research into teaching and learning.*



A particular incentive comes from prizes attributed to professors for their outstanding performance in teaching. A wide array of such prizes exists today in the EU. Some of them are offered at the institutional or even departmental level and range from unremunerated recognition and promotion to remunerated prizes. Others are sponsored by governments or private donors and link high visibility with substantial financial rewards, normally for the academic's own departmental work. Student-initiated prizes and awards have proved to be a very successful ice-breaker. Prizes can be a good starting point and can serve as an on-going reminder of the value of teaching, highlighting good practice and recognising exemplary, inspirational teachers, or a way of drawing attention to ground breaking research into quality teaching and learning. Such public recognition can help to attract the positive attention that quality teaching needs and lacks currently, both within academia and the wider public. But individualistic as prizes are by their nature they cannot replace the necessary long-term systemic training of all academics as professional teachers. They can however, help, especially for countries at the starting point of promoting quality in teaching and learning. Awards and prizes for excellent teaching have proved a viable tool for raising the awareness of the issue in higher education institutions and in national policy making, as the first element of a cascade of initiatives that lead to developing institutional programmes in teaching quality, and institutional and national strategies.



- ▶ The Central European University, **Budapest**, initiated its European Award for Excellence in Teaching in the Social Sciences and Humanities to draw attention to the importance of teaching excellence in higher education, and to promote a better balance between the focus on research and that on teaching. Their Centre for Teaching and Learning focuses on opportunities for doctoral students to develop as teachers, collaboration schemes with faculties that promote excellence in teaching and mentoring, and integrating blended learning into courses and seminars.  
<http://20.ceu.hu/teaching-award>



- ▶ In the **UK**, the annual National Teaching Fellowship Scheme of the Higher Education Academy holds awards to recognise excellence in individuals, intended for their professional development in teaching and learning or aspects of pedagogy.  
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ntfs>



- ▶ The **Norwegian** Ministry of Education and Research awards an annual prize for excellence in education. Higher education institutions present what they consider to be best practice in teaching and study programmes, a jury of researchers and professors assesses them, and the Ministry of Education and Research awards the prize of NOK 1 million, about EUR 130 000.  
<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd.html?id=586>

<http://www.nokut.no/no/Hendelser-og-frister/Hendelser-og-frister-2013/2013/Juni/Soknadsfrist-Utdanningskvalitetsprisen/>



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- ▶▶ The National Academy for Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL) in **Ireland** gives out five annual awards of EUR 5 000 each to individuals or groups. The awards recognise and celebrate teachers of undergraduate and postgraduate students who have demonstrated excellence and commitment to integrating their research with their teaching.

<http://www.nairtl.ie/index.php?pageID=68>

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- ▶▶ In **Germany**, the German Rectors' Conference and the *Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft* have been awarding an annual Ars legendi Prize for excellence in higher education teaching since 2006. With EUR 50 000, the prize is meant to act as a counterweight to the many research prizes and highlights the particular importance of excellent teaching.

[http://www.stifterverband.info/wissenschaft\\_und\\_hochschule/lehre/ars\\_legendi/index.html](http://www.stifterverband.info/wissenschaft_und_hochschule/lehre/ars_legendi/index.html)

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- ▶▶ The Fellowships in Teaching and Academic Development at University College **Dublin** are part of an institutional development structure to encourage a greater number of staff to focus on advancing university-wide enhancement in teaching and learning. The fellowships offer a mechanism to reward individuals for these contributions. The fellowship scheme aims to identify and develop key academic staff with both the pedagogic expertise and the leadership capacity to effect transformational change in teaching, learning and assessment practices both in discipline-specific areas and thematically, across the institution.

<http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/>

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- ▶▶ Linnaeus University in **Sweden** adopted an overall strategy for providing a highly attractive learning environment: Linnaeus University – a journey into the future, Strategy 2010–2015. The university strives to reach its goals through three main tools: a recruitment policy that takes into account the applicants' teaching skills, an action plan for developing the pedagogical skills of the existing staff, and guidelines for salary negotiations addressing teaching performance as one important criterion.

[http://lnu.se/polopoly\\_fs/1.54846!LNU-strategi\\_eng.pdf](http://lnu.se/polopoly_fs/1.54846!LNU-strategi_eng.pdf)

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- ▶▶ Uppsala University in **Sweden** provides opportunities for professional development in higher education teaching through the Division for Development of Teaching and Learning. The campus offers a wide range of courses from two to five weeks in length and support systems are open to all faculty members and graduate students with teaching responsibilities.

<http://uadm.uu.se/pu/?languageId=1>

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## Curriculum design: involving students as partners in teaching and learning

A greater emphasis on the teacher as a professional educator has to be accompanied by other profound changes in the design and delivery of programmes to create productive learning environments. Teaching and learning must become a team activity across disciplines but also within them. Quality programmes are designed – and student performance assessed, on the basis of agreed learning outcomes – as a team product by all the faculty involved in delivering them, rather than being simply an accumulation delivered and evaluated independently from one another. Effective student-centred learning means the student must be part of the team too. The notion of student-centred learning has been around for many years now but its implications are still not realised by many academics or, indeed, students. It is not yet widely understood – or at least, acted upon – that student-centred learning means that the teacher's role should shift from imparting knowledge to guiding the student in his or her own learning.

The research on human learning tells us that acquisition and application of knowledge are fundamentally social acts: social interaction is a key component of learning. For example, practitioners learn best from observing and interacting with other skilled practitioners. But formal learning too often discourages social interaction.

The Bologna reforms to introduce a two tier Bachelor/Master structure – a novelty to many continental European countries – gave an opportunity to restructure the curricula in a meaningful way and to put students and their learning experience in the centre. This opportunity has not always been carried through or, more generously, has not yet been carried through. Students are still widely seen as passive recipients of the knowledge the professors decide to share with them on terms set by individual professors without much internal faculty team discussion beyond timetabling classes and exams.

It is still the exception that students are deliberately and explicitly empowered by their teachers (and by the higher education institution in a wider sense, through suitable information and support activities) to manage their own learning. But new methods in teaching and learning are being developed in ever more higher education institutions. Examples that proved successful are cooperative teaching and learning methods as well as problem-based learning, exposing teachers and learners to real life situations, challenges and cases.



► **Maastricht University** has introduced student centred and problem based learning (PBL) in all faculties. The core elements of PBL are student-centred, small groups, interactive and case based. The students are in charge of the learning process. PBL is characterised by learning by doing, learning by teaching peers, activation of prior knowledge, and intrinsic motivation. <http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl>



► **Humboldt University** in Berlin created a *bologna.lab* that develops new modes of research based, student-centred teaching. Law students, for example, already work at bachelor level with law firms in Berlin on real cases in cooperation with the professors at the law school. <http://bolognalab.hu-berlin.de/>





**RECOMMENDATION 7**

*Curricula should be developed and monitored through dialogue and partnerships among teaching staff, students, graduates and labour market actors, drawing on new methods of teaching and learning, so that students acquire relevant skills that enhance their employability.*







**RECOMMENDATION 8**

*Student performance in learning activities should be assessed against clear and agreed learning outcomes, developed in partnership by all faculty members involved in their delivery.*



## Knowing your students

Some higher education institutions have started to require prospective students to pass self-assessments regarding their prior knowledge and affinity to specific subject matters. To smooth the transition from school to university some higher education institutions organise summer schools and preparatory courses in order to better inform prospective students about the variety of choices and the choice most apt for them. The benefits in terms of better preparation, wiser choices, student retention, and student satisfaction are self-evident.

Equally important is the active involvement of students in the development of counselling, guidance and mentoring systems. These systems lead to well-informed choices by students and better retention rates, especially in the early phase of studies for students from non-traditional backgrounds. Student guidance and counselling should support students on their way to successful graduation, strengthen their identification with the higher education institution and help students in the development of their individual and transversal competences. This is especially important for higher education systems which provide open access to higher education institutions for those students with a secondary school leaving diploma.

A still underdeveloped area in higher education in Europe is the tracking of students during studies and after graduation. It is in the higher education sector's interests to know how students made their way through their academic career and, where graduates managed to get a foot into the labour market, how they fared in employment and in the broader aspects of a rounded human life. These are the ultimate reality checks of the quality of education of an institution and they extend a lot farther than fund-raising alumni networks and the like, which can often seem to serve the economic interests of the institution more than the interests of the graduate student.

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► The **European University Association** 'Track it' project has surveyed tracking initiatives of students and graduates in Europe, and provides guidelines for higher education institutions which intend to develop or enhance tracking.

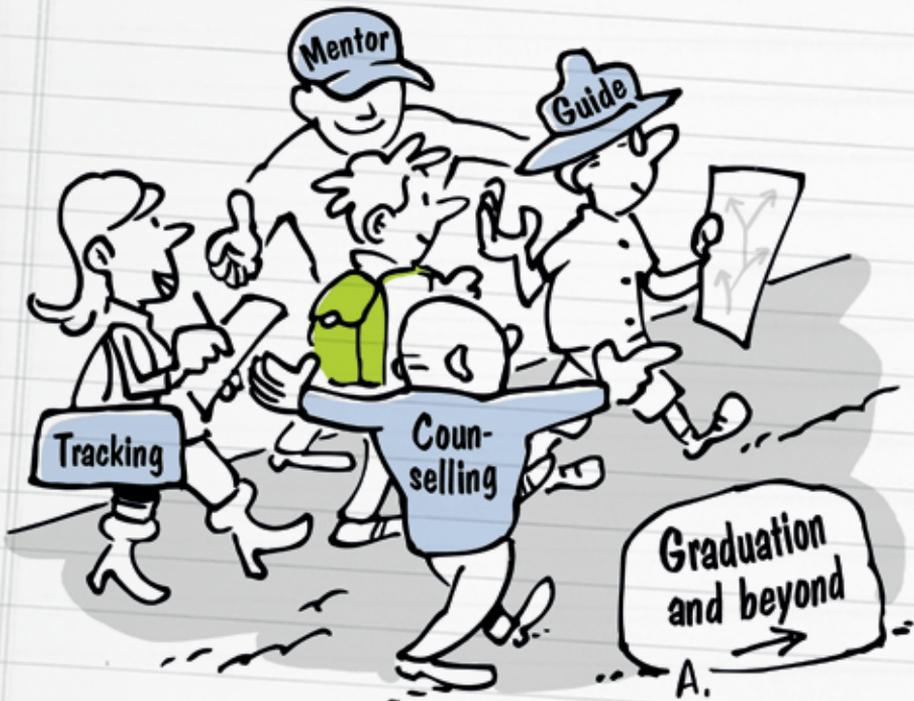
<http://www.eua.be/trackit>





**RECOMMENDATION 9**

*Higher education institutions and national policy makers in partnership with students should establish counselling, guidance, mentoring and tracking systems to support students into higher education, and on their way to graduation and beyond.*



## Multidisciplinarity<sup>5</sup> for better outcomes

All graduates face a world transformed by technology, in which those who can sort through and deal with information overload and understand the 'Big Data' phenomenon have a competitive advantage; and also a world in which people and businesses are so interconnected that global competition is inevitable. We live in a world that requires the combination of different skills and knowledge sets for increasing success and competitiveness. Therefore, our graduates can be introduced to this reality and set on the path to success starting at the university level, through higher education institutions across the EU whose teaching combines disciplines, or transcends disciplinary boundaries, and incorporates technology in learning.

Interdisciplinary teaching is already to be found in some universities in Europe, the USA and elsewhere. Some adopt the modern approach to industrial design where a multidisciplinary group of people advance through a process of defining a problem, brainstorming possible responses, and consolidate a solution by working through a series of rapid prototyping steps. In the process students and mentors test the solution for technical feasibility, business viability and human usability or desirability. Depending on the nature of the problem, methodologies of all disciplines involved are used, without any one discipline imposing its point of view on the others.

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Others adopt the so-called intellectual entrepreneurship approach, where entrepreneurial thinking is extended beyond the business curriculum to become a way of thinking, as a mode of learning through creating synergistic relationships across academic disciplines and involving universities and the public and private sectors. Intellectual entrepreneurship moves the mission of institutions of higher learning from 'advancing the frontiers of knowledge' and 'preparing tomorrow's leaders' to 'serving as engines of economic and social development'. The mission of intellectual entrepreneurship is to help students discover their discipline, use their expertise and become successful, highly academically literate professionals.



► Officially launched in September 2010, **Aalto University** merges three major Helsinki universities in technology, art and design, and economics. Aalto University's mission is a shift toward multidisciplinary teaching and learning, while placing a strong overall focus on technology. The university integrated technology, business and design to groom graduates for success in a world transformed by technology, information overload, and global competition.

<http://www.aalto.fi/en/>



► In 2006, the Faculty of Economics at the **University of Ljubljana** introduced 'design thinking', a multidisciplinary problem solving process in teaching entrepreneurship. This approach is gaining wider acceptance through elective courses at science and engineering schools.

<http://www.uni-lj.si/en>



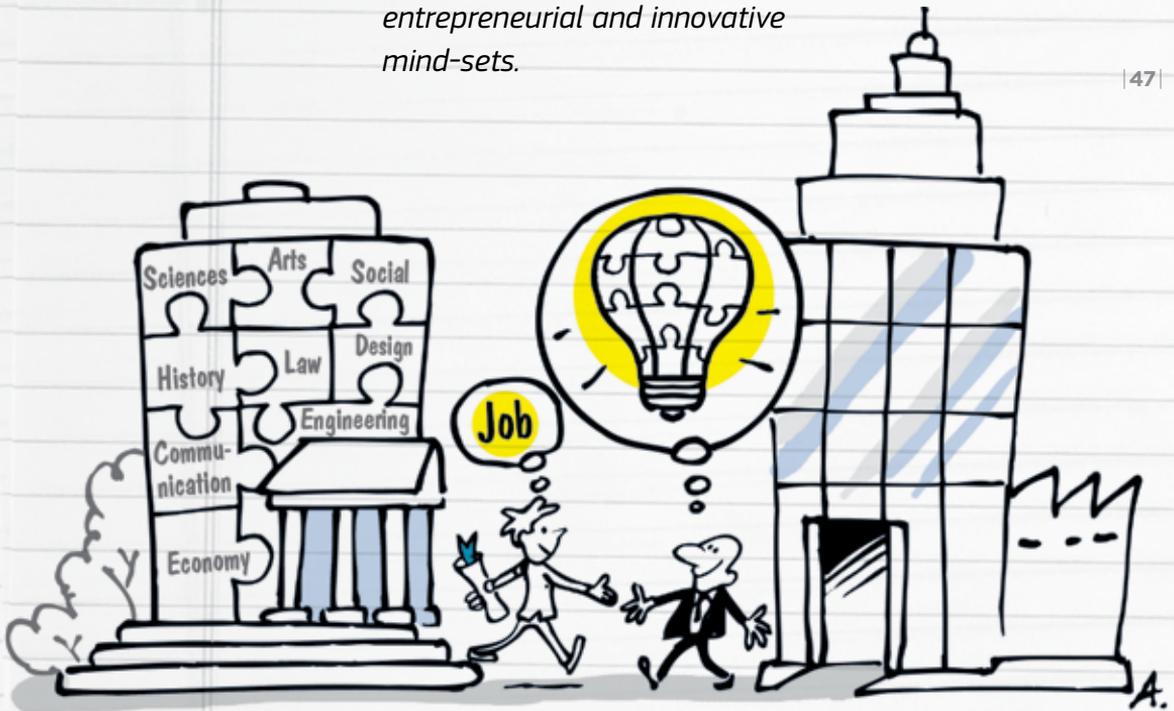
**5**  
**Multidisciplinarity** is associated with more than one academic discipline; **interdisciplinarity** refers to the knowledge that exists between academic disciplines; **transdisciplinarity** is based on the union of all interdisciplinary efforts; **cross-disciplinarity** explains aspects of one discipline in terms of another.



### RECOMMENDATION 10

*Higher education institutions should introduce and promote cross-, trans- and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning, helping students develop their breadth of understanding and entrepreneurial and innovative mind-sets.*

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## Technology and new pedagogical tools

Technology is increasingly offering us the possibility of the virtual faculty, the virtual college which scours the world for the very best teachers and makes them available online to students globally. Poor teachers beware! The Internet, cloud computing, live stream, and comparable technological developments create opportunities and challenges for formal education systems. Sheer knowledge is no longer a monopoly of the few; knowledge can be accessed by anyone at any time and any place at no or low cost. With the advancement of technology new forms of delivering education have evolved: open and massive open online courses (OOCs and MOOCs), blended teaching and learning, and using ICT to enhance 'traditional' ways of delivering education. Acquiring knowledge, skills and competences are not bound to time and space, redefining the role of teachers and students. As Michael Barber and his fellow authors put it, 'With world-class content available anytime for free, the ability of faculty to be present anywhere, and the rise of online learning as an alternative to in-person instruction, we need to reflect on the nature of teaching and learning in a higher education institution.'<sup>6</sup>

Since the next subject the High Level Group will examine is 'new modes of delivering quality higher education', reporting in 2014, we refrain from a detailed discussion and specific recommendations at this stage. However, the High Level Group sees revolutionary developments ahead, with the potential for a seismic impact on the higher education landscape.

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Online learning transforms how people access knowledge, and opens up higher education to people for whom it is now out of reach. While opportunities to rethink higher education will abound, this revolution will be challenging on many fronts: the role of the teacher will change radically, with online learning calling for completely new skillsets, and the teaching and learning process becoming increasingly individualised. We will witness teaching moving outside the institutions altogether and into virtual space. Who, then, will be the teachers? Will a university diploma continue to hold its value, or will employers and students give a higher rating to a portfolio of tailored and personalised learning achievements gained outside the traditional setting of a university or college? Online delivery is not only a challenge to the classroom. It is a challenge to our entire model of higher education. Governance, accreditation and quality assurance will all have to adapt.

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**6**  
'An avalanche is coming: Higher education and the revolution ahead', Michael Barber, Katelyn Donnelly, Saad Rizvi, IPPR, March 2013.



**RECOMMENDATION 11**

*Higher education institutions – facilitated by public administrations and the EU – should support their teachers so they develop the skills for online and other forms of teaching and learning opened up by the digital era, and should exploit the opportunities presented by technology to improve the quality of teaching and learning.*



## Internationalisation, globalisation, and mobility of staff and students

One major change in recent decades is the massive internationalisation and even globalisation of science, economics and politics. This development is likely to continue, accelerate and expand into ever more sectors of our public and private life – predominantly in the labour market – driven not only by the exponential growth of world trade, global capital investment and human mobility, but even more so by new media. This development will not only impact on the content of traditional subjects ('the international dimension') but also change the ways of delivery and reception. Any serious discussion about teaching and learning within the perspective of lengthening lifespans – most of Europe's students today will live to see the year 2080 – has to deal with the impact of globalisation on education, including higher education.

In this regard the High Level Group is looking forward to the Communication on Internationalisation of Higher Education which the European Commission will present in July 2013.

It is our view that, in spite of all the uncertainties ahead of us, there are two obvious consequences and educational requirements deriving from globalisation. Firstly, our graduates need to be competitive not only in a local or national, or even European, but in an increasingly global market. Secondly, in order to save our 'global village' from imploding under growing tensions of competition, our graduates as future leaders need a new kind of intercultural understanding, respect for common rules and fair play, an understanding of different interests, views and ways of thinking, and the ability to reconcile and to compromise.

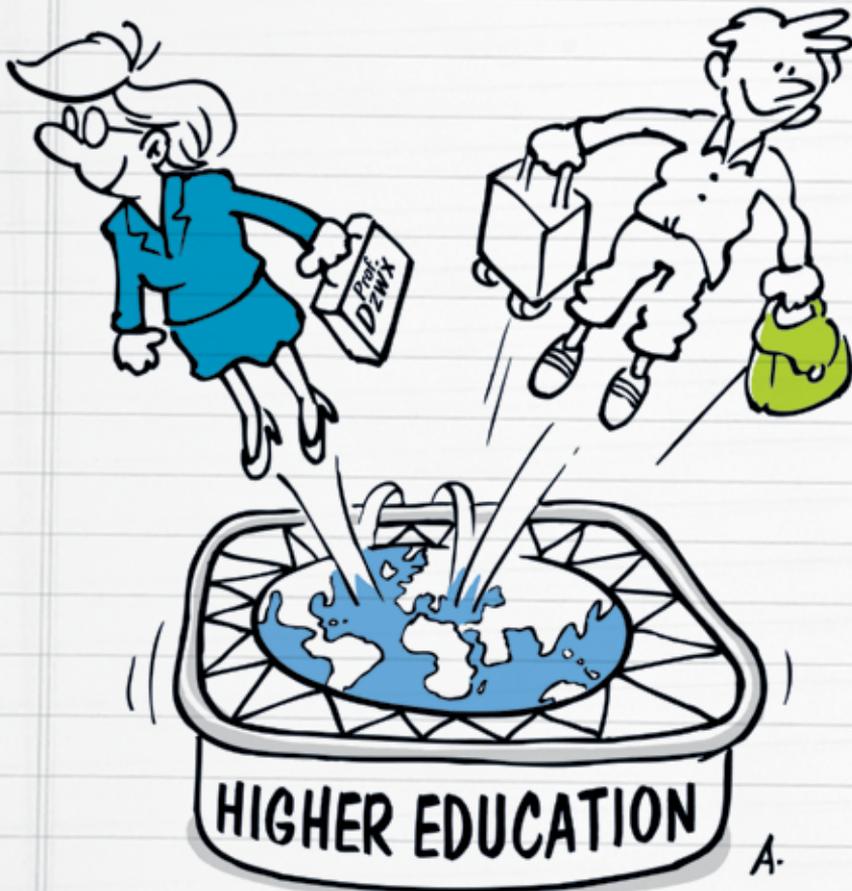
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In short, global competitiveness and global cooperativeness are core aims for teaching and learning which aim to equip students for peaceful and healthy lives in the 21st century. For our higher education institutions, that means that 'Internationalisation' – which has long been seen as a 'luxury add-on' – must move into the very centre of the university or college strategy and development. At the same time, the definition of 'internationalisation' which has often been limited to the recruitment of international students, must be extended into a new holistic approach, where its impact on the overall quality of programmes and graduates is reflected in the globally interconnected and intercultural learning outcomes. In practice, this means student and staff mobility (incoming and outgoing), the international dimension of curricula, the internationalisation of the campus, a positive and efficient approach to foreign language learning, transnational delivery of courses and degrees (offshore branches, distance education, MOOCs), international networks, alliances and partnerships and so forth. This should be put together to form an explicit 'Internationalisation Strategy' of universities and colleges, which in turn, must be an integral part of the overall mission and strategy of the individual higher education institution.



**RECOMMENDATION 12**

*Higher education institutions should develop and implement holistic internationalisation strategies as an integral part of their overall mission and functions. Increased mobility of student and staff, international dimension of curricula, international experience of faculty, with a sufficient command of English and a second foreign language and intercultural competences, transnational delivery of courses and degrees, and international alliances should become indispensable components of higher education in Europe and beyond.*







What can  
Europe do?

## 4. What can Europe do?

The organisation of education and the design of curricula are the responsibility of Member States and individual higher education institutions. These are intricately bound up in the culture and history of individual peoples and which are essential to the definition of national identities. The education systems of each country are also determining factors in both the sustainability of a nation's democratic systems and in its competitiveness in the global economy. Within Europe, the educational performance of one country inevitably impacts on the economic and social potential of its partners. Therefore, the European Union has a duty to help public authorities and education stakeholders in different countries to improve the effectiveness of their systems.

The European Union has a long history of providing such support. For over 25 years, the Erasmus programme has provided a space for higher education institutions to work together to learn from each other, to develop new curricula, and to agree on new ways of approaching programme design. It has introduced new pedagogical tools such as the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (ECTS) which have revolutionised the way in which learning is both constructed and recognised across borders. The Marie Curie Actions under the Framework Programme for Research and Development have provided opportunities for tens of thousands of junior researchers to obtain their first research and teaching posts and have supported them in their career development. The European Social Fund has been used by countries for the training of higher education staff in new pedagogical tools and techniques and in introducing cross-disciplinary approaches.

The new Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 provides even stronger opportunities for Europe to support the modernisation of higher education systems. The increased level of funding for education and research programmes and the new European Social Fund should be used by public authorities and stakeholders to invest in the quality of their teaching and learning. The High Level Group recommends that the following actions should be prioritised within the framework of the different initiatives.

### The European Education and Training Programme

The new European Education and Training Programme, which will begin in January 2014, proposes two key actions which are of particular interest in this area: Strategic partnerships and policy support.

**Strategic partnerships** will support structured and long-term cooperation among higher education institutions and with key stakeholders such as public authorities and enterprises. They will be able to support programmes of up to three years and will focus on reform issues such as the quality of teaching and learning. The High Level Group believes that the existence of many hundreds of such partnerships over the life of the programme, drawing on the recommendations of this group, has considerable potential to contribute to tangible improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across our higher education sector through a multitude of possible actions.



### RECOMMENDATION 13

*The European Union should support the implementation of these recommendations, in particular through promoting:*

- *innovative teaching and learning methodologies and pedagogical approaches;*
- *guidance, counselling and coaching methods;*
- *improved programme design, taking account of the latest research on human learning;*
- *the professionalization and development of teachers, trainers and staff;*
- *mobility and exchanges of academic staff for long term teaching assignments; and*
- *systematic and regular data collection on issues affecting the quality of teaching and learning.*



These actions could include, for example, joint projects on developing, testing or adopting innovative learning and teaching methodologies and pedagogical approaches, web-based teacher training courses and modules, guidance, counselling and coaching methods, tools for higher education teachers, and tools and methods for the professionalization and professional development of teachers, trainers and staff.

**Policy support actions** – underpinned by knowledge and evidence-gathering – can take many forms, from peer reviews and mutual learning activities involving policy makers and stakeholders, to thematic networks exploring particular aspects of higher education delivery and prospective initiatives consisting of large-scale experimentation by Member States or the development of new European tools, such as those necessary for the better exploitation and integration of online learning in our universities. Member State authorities, higher education institutions and other stakeholders can use these policy support actions to establish dialogue and cooperation, to disseminate experience, raise capacities and promote good practice in quality of teaching and learning, for example through public consultations, thematic platforms, surveys, publications, conferences, information campaigns.

The High Level Group believes that it is necessary to invest at the European level in the development of new pedagogies which are better adapted to the needs of a wider diversity of students and which enable them to respond effectively to changing labour markets and societies. Collective action involving partners from many EU Member States and beyond can help to draw on the most positive experiences and allow them to be adapted to local needs.

The High Level Group was particularly inspired by the activities of the Higher Education Academy in the United Kingdom and Ireland's National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, especially for their potential for networking and developing new pedagogical approaches. We recommend that the European Union supports the establishment of an Academy for Teaching and Learning led by stakeholders, building on existing initiatives to provide support to higher education institutions in developing their own teaching and learning strategies, and offering, inter alia, web-based teacher training courses and modules.

**RECOMMENDATION 14**

*The European Union should support the establishment of a European Academy for Teaching and Learning led by stakeholders, and inspired by the good practices reflected in this report.*



## Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

Marie Curie Fellowships are European research grants available to researchers regardless of their nationality or field of research. In addition to generous research funding scientists have the possibility to gain experience abroad and in the private sector, and to complete their training with competences or disciplines useful for their careers.

The support given to researchers under the Marie Curie Actions over many years has had a profound impact on Europe's research capacity and on its ability to attract and retain the best young researchers. Marie Curie Fellows have been involved in some of the most groundbreaking scientific research, from environmentally friendly cooling techniques and locust-inspired vision for car sensors, to the transmission patterns of Hepatitis C, to name just the most recent. One of our key priorities is to ensure that excellent research is fed back into excellent teaching and that young researchers are supported in developing both their research and their teaching skills. To respect the principle of the unity of teaching and research and their parity of esteem, we believe that the future Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions should also be designed to showcase this purpose.

**RECOMMENDATION 15**

*Researchers supported by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and who are intending a career in academia should be given the opportunity to gain professional teaching qualifications and be supported in teaching activities alongside their research.*



## European Structural Funds

The European Structural Funds have long provided a potential source of investment in national education systems, both for infrastructure spending through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and to support the costs of education and training for both learners and staff. Some Member States have made good use of this in the field of higher education, while others have preferred to target their investments on other areas.

In the context of the next generation of cohesion policy for the period 2014-2020, the European Commission has proposed a 'Common Strategic Framework' (CSF) to provide strategic direction in terms of the priority areas for funding. This CSF is intended to help guide regional authorities in drawing up their own investment priorities in 'Partnership Contracts', which will be signed with the Commission and provide a framework for Structural Funds spending until the end of the decade.

Member States have been invited to select a limited number of thematic priorities in which a certain proportion of total Structural Funds will be concentrated when developing their Partnership Contracts. The High Level Group welcomes the fact that two of the possible thematic objectives focus on 'Investing in Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning' and on 'Strengthening Research, Technological Development and Innovation'.

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The High Level Group believes that those Member States that face the biggest challenges in terms of their levels of higher education attainment, and of the rate of drop-out, should make use of this opportunity to invest in improving the quality, efficiency and openness of their higher education systems. As the quality of teaching and learning is a key determinant of the outcomes from higher education, we encourage Member States to focus EU funding in this area.

**RECOMMENDATION 16**

*Member States, in partnership with the regions, are encouraged to prioritise, in their Partnership Agreements under the Structural Funds, initiatives to support the development of pedagogical skills, the design and implementation of programmes relevant to social and labour market needs, and the strengthening of partnerships between higher education, business and the research sector.*







# Recommendations

## 5. Recommendations

In this report, the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education has mapped out pathways for improving quality in teaching and learning. Bearing in mind the different starting points of higher education institutions and countries, we have tried to offer a wide array of instruments, tools, and practical examples to show how different – and often quite straightforward – approaches can work. To come back to our starting point: teaching matters. Teaching matters as much as research matters. We must put the quality of teaching and learning centre-stage.

To this end we recommend:

### Recommendation 1

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Public authorities responsible for higher education should ensure the existence of a sustainable, well-funded framework to support higher education institutions' efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

### Recommendation 2

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Every institution should develop and implement a strategy for the support and on-going improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, devoting the necessary level of human and financial resources to the task, and integrating this priority in its overall mission, giving teaching due parity with research.

### Recommendation 3

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Higher education institutions should encourage, welcome, and take account of student feedback which could detect problems in the teaching and learning environment early on and lead to faster, more effective improvements.

### Recommendation 4

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All staff teaching in higher education institutions in 2020 should have received certified pedagogical training. Continuous professional education as teachers should become a requirement for teachers in the higher education sector.

### Recommendation 5

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Academic staff entrance, progression and promotion decisions should take account of an assessment of teaching performance alongside other factors.

### Recommendation 6

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Heads of institutions and institutional leaders should recognise and reward (e.g. through fellowships or awards) higher education teachers who make a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning, whether through their practice, or through their research into teaching and learning.

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### Recommendation 7

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Curricula should be developed and monitored through dialogue and partnerships among teaching staff, students, graduates and labour market actors, drawing on new methods of teaching and learning, so that students acquire relevant skills that enhance their employability.

### Recommendation 8

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Student performance in learning activities should be assessed against clear and agreed learning outcomes, developed in partnership by all faculty members involved in their delivery.

### Recommendation 9

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Higher education institutions and national policy makers in partnership with students should establish counselling, guidance, mentoring and tracking systems to support students into higher education, and on their way to graduation and beyond.

### Recommendation 10

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Higher education institutions should introduce and promote cross-, trans- and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, helping students develop their breadth of understanding and entrepreneurial and innovative mind-sets.

### Recommendation 11

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Higher education institutions – facilitated by public administrations and the EU – should support their teachers so they develop the skills for online and other forms of teaching and learning opened up by the digital era, and should exploit the opportunities presented by technology to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

### Recommendation 12

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Higher education institutions should develop and implement holistic internationalisation strategies as an integral part of their overall mission and functions. Increased mobility of student and staff, international dimension of curricula, international experience of faculty, with a sufficient command of English and a second foreign language and intercultural competences, transnational delivery of courses and degrees, and international alliances should become indispensable components of higher education in Europe and beyond.

### Recommendation 13

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The European Union should support the implementation of these recommendations, in particular through promoting:

- innovative teaching and learning methodologies and pedagogical approaches;
- guidance, counselling and coaching methods;
- improved programme design, taking account of the latest research on human learning;
- the professionalization and development of teachers, trainers and staff;
- mobility and exchanges of academic staff for long term teaching assignments; and
- systematic and regular data collection on issues affecting the quality of teaching and learning.

### Recommendation 14

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The European Union should support the establishment of a European Academy for Teaching and Learning led by stakeholders, and inspired by the good practices reflected in this report.

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### Recommendation 15

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Researchers supported by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and who are intending a career in academia should be given the opportunity to gain professional teaching qualifications and be supported in teaching activities alongside their research.

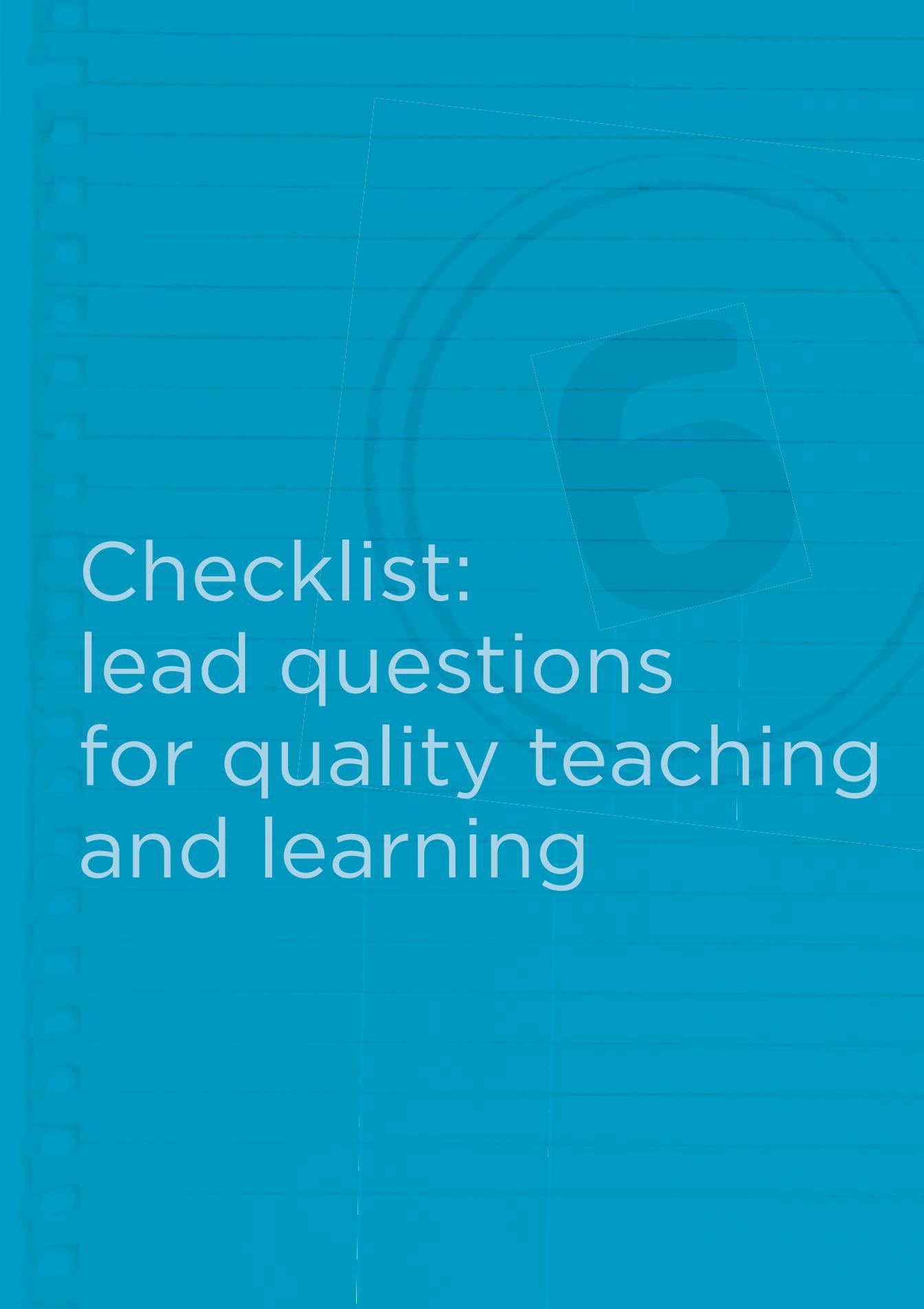
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Checklist:  
lead questions  
for quality teaching  
and learning

## 6. Checklist: lead questions for quality teaching and learning

### Questions for institutional leaders and managers

#### Teaching and learning as part of the institutional profile

- > What strategies or benchmarks do I use for enhancing the quality of teaching in my institution? How do I incorporate these into my institution's profile and mission, to make it clear to staff and students that my institution is affirming the importance of teaching and developing its quality?

#### Support to teaching staff

- > What steps do I take to ensure that an individual teacher feels empowered and supported in developing their teaching skills and making the most of new modes of teaching and learning?
- > Is there an in-house forum for enriching the teaching/learning experience, either at institutional or departmental level? Is there a distinct place or person within my institution to whom a teacher can address issues related to developing or improving his/her teaching skills, methods and outcomes?
- > How does the institution support its teaching staff in their efforts to cater for diversifying student needs, by offering flexible learning paths and speeds, e. g. through blended learning?

#### Support to students

- > How far does my institution offer transparent information on learning opportunities to prospective and actual students to help them choose the learning offer most appropriate to them?
- > How and through which structures (e. g. counselling and mentoring services, platforms for exchanges with teachers and fellow-students) does my institution support students during the entire student life cycle?
- > How does my institution monitor student success, i.e. dropout rates, time to degree, employment rates after graduation? How is the data collected, evaluated and used for constant quality enhancement?
- > How does my institution provide for and respond to real-time student feedback on the quality of teaching and learning, i.e. not just end of semester or course feedback but in-course feedback for early adjustment where necessary of programmes and methodologies?

## Questions for teachers

### General

- > How comfortable am I with recent teaching concepts, such as student-centred teaching and learning, competences and learning outcomes, etc.? Would my teaching benefit from professional training, mentoring or other support in this area?
- > Would a teaching portfolio allow me to better reflect on my own teaching methods, objectives and achievements and thus foster constant improvement of my teaching performance?

### Students as partners

- > How can I make sure that my teaching puts the students at the centre of the teaching and learning process?
- > How can I reach out to students to engage them actively and make them understand that successful teaching and learning at tertiary level requires strong personal commitment from both sides?
- > How can I offer adequate counselling to my students, throughout their studies, to help them map out their individual learning itinerary and assume responsibility for it?

### Orientation phase

- > How can I provide clear and transparent information on my study offers, including module descriptions, learning outcomes, and employment perspectives after graduation to prospective students, e.g. through the website of my institution?
- > How can I provide prospective students with any information on available self-assessment methods that would allow them to check their affinity and talent for the subject in question, the required previous knowledge, etc.?

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### Course design

- > How can I make sure that my course design encourages and requires the active involvement of students in the learning process, e.g. through innovative forms such as problem-based and research-based learning, self-organised working groups, team work on research projects, tutoring and mentoring activities for the students, etc.?
- > Is the course I am delivering part of an integrated curriculum which has been jointly designed by all members of staff involved in delivering the programme, based on a modular structure and agreed learning activities which will allow students to achieve clear and assessable learning outcomes?
- > How can I organise my teaching in such a way that it will not simply provide my students with facts and knowledge, but confront them with questions that are bigger than the course itself?
- > Will my teaching lead students to questioning their preconceived ideas and thus to a deeper understanding of the issue and to 'self-thinking'. Will it stimulate critical and inquisitive attitudes among my students?
- > In the spirit of seeing students not as passive recipients of knowledge, but as responsible partners in the teaching and learning process, how can I involve them in the permanent improvement of my course design?

### Course delivery

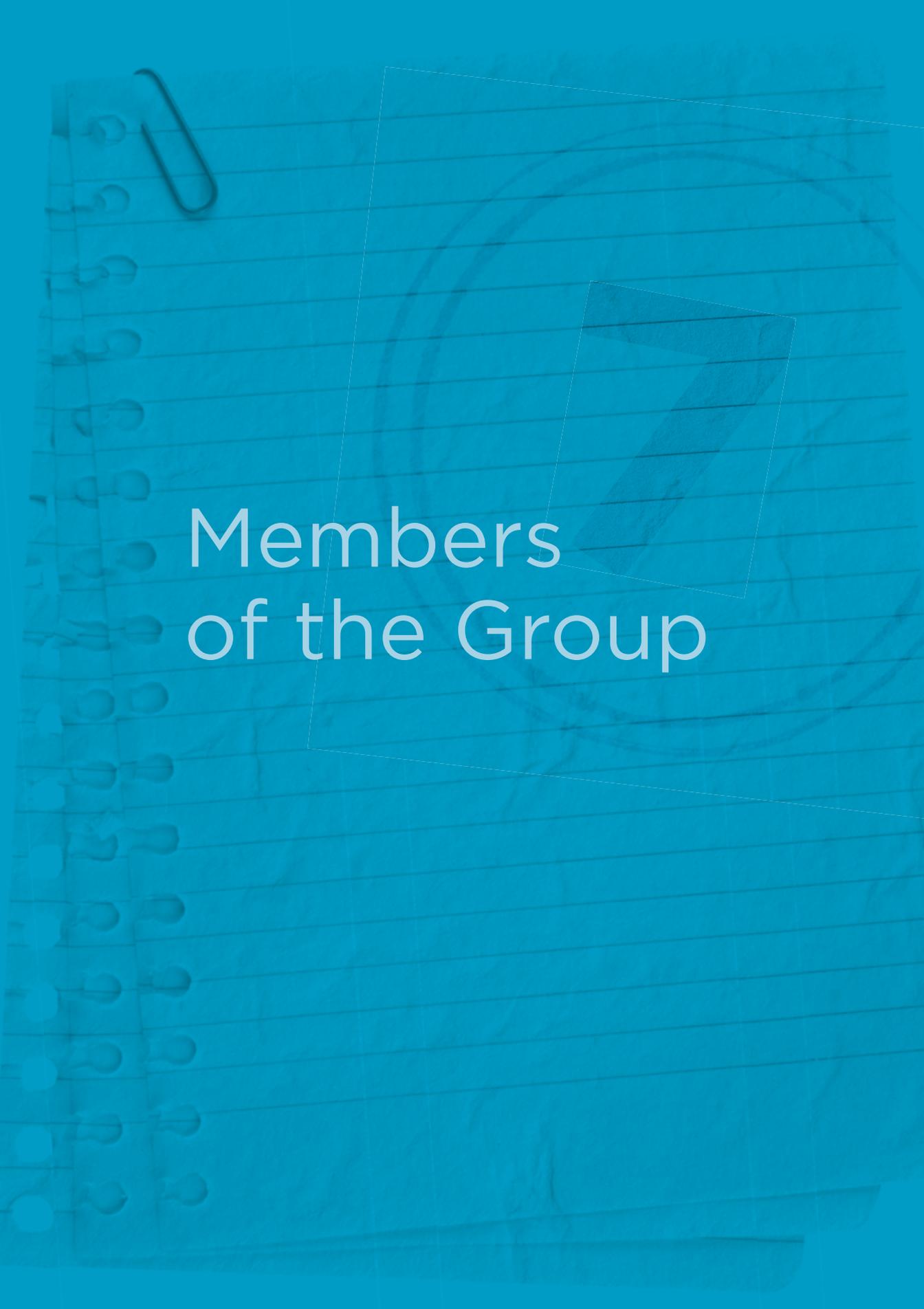
- > How can my teaching take into account the ever growing heterogeneity of the student body by using different methods, new media, new modes of delivery (such as blended learning), etc.?
- > How does my course encourage my students to be aware of and to draw not only on my own teaching and research, but also of fellow academics within and beyond my institution, including international academics?
- > How will my teaching impart, apart from the body of knowledge of the given discipline, generic and language skills and stimulate personal development ?
- > How does my teaching provide a research-rich and interdisciplinary environment to students?
- > How does my course provide my students with a sense of global connectedness and an understanding of how their subject is viewed in different parts of the world?
- > How does my course encourage community engagement and a sense of active citizenship among my students?

### Assessment

- > How can I adapt my assessment formats to reflect the new pedagogical approaches, such as problem-based and research-based learning? Would presentations, role plays and case studies help me to measure the individual student's progress in the acquisition of certain competences?
- > How can I make sure that the number of exams is kept to a reasonable minimum so as not to distract students from their learning and research?

### Quality enhancement

- > How can I systematically demand student feedback on their learning experience in my courses? How can I use this feedback to constantly improve my teaching performance?
- > Would I benefit from exchanges with colleagues on latest developments in curricular design, new modes of delivery and assessment, and from peer reviewing of my teaching?

The background is a blue-tinted image of a spiral-bound notebook. A silver paperclip is attached to the top left corner. A faint, hand-drawn smiley face is visible in the center of the page. The text 'Members of the Group' is centered in white.

# Members of the Group

## 7. Members of the Group

### Mary McAleese (Chair)

Mary McAleese was President of Ireland from 1997 to 2011. She graduated in Law from Queen's University, Belfast in 1973 and was called to the Northern Ireland Bar in 1974. In 1975, she was appointed Reid Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology at Trinity College Dublin and in 1987, she returned to her Alma Mater, Queen's, to become Director of the Institute of Professional Legal Studies. In 1994, she became the first female Pro-Vice Chancellor of Queen's University, Belfast.

### Agneta Bladh

Dr Bladh chairs the Governing Board of the Jönköping School of Health Sciences and Stockholm University Library Board. Former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kalmar, she is a member of Uppsala University governing board, the Board of Oslo and Akershus College of Applied Science (Norway) and a board preparing the merger between two universities in Norway. Dr Bladh is a member of the Danish Accreditation Council and the Advisory Board of the Swedish Higher Education Authority. Dr Bladh served as State Secretary at the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science and was responsible for higher education and research. Agneta Bladh holds a PhD in Political Science from Stockholm University (1988).

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### Vincent Berger

Vincent Berger is President of the University Paris Diderot. He joined the university in 2001 as Professor, and until 2006, was head of the 'Quantum Phenomena and Materials' laboratory at the university. He received the Fabry-De Gramont award and the MIT Young Innovator award in 2002. In 2012, he was nominated General Rapporteur of the National Assizes on higher education and research in France by the French Minister for Higher Education and Research.

### Christian Bode

Christian Bode was Secretary General of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for 20 years (1990-2010). Christian Bode studied law and received his PhD from the University of Bonn in 1971. Between 1972 and 1982 he held different senior positions in the Federal Ministry of Education and Science. From 1982 until 1990 he was Secretary General of the German Rectors' Conference.

### **Jan Muehlfeit**

Jan Muehlfeit is Chairman Europe at Microsoft Corporation. He is an ICT industry veteran with almost 19 years of experience at Microsoft. He served as Vice President of Microsoft's Public Sector team in Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) in 2005 and as Vice President, EMEA Corporate and Government Strategy in 2006. Mr Muehlfeit is Vice-Chair of the Academy of Business in Society (ABIS), board member of JA, Co-Chairman of the European e-Skills Association and board member of AIESEC. He graduated from Czech Technical University and has completed executive development programs at Wharton, the London School of Economics and Harvard.

### **Tea Petrin**

Tea Petrin is Professor at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Head of the Entrepreneurship Academic Unit at the Faculty of Economics, and a member of the Senate at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. Ms Petrin was a visiting professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and at the Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley. She is a renowned expert in entrepreneurship and innovation policies, and regional development programmes. From 1999 to 2004, she was Minister of the Economy for Slovenia. She is a member of the UN Committee for Development Policy, appointed by the UN Secretary General for the period January 2013 to December 2015.

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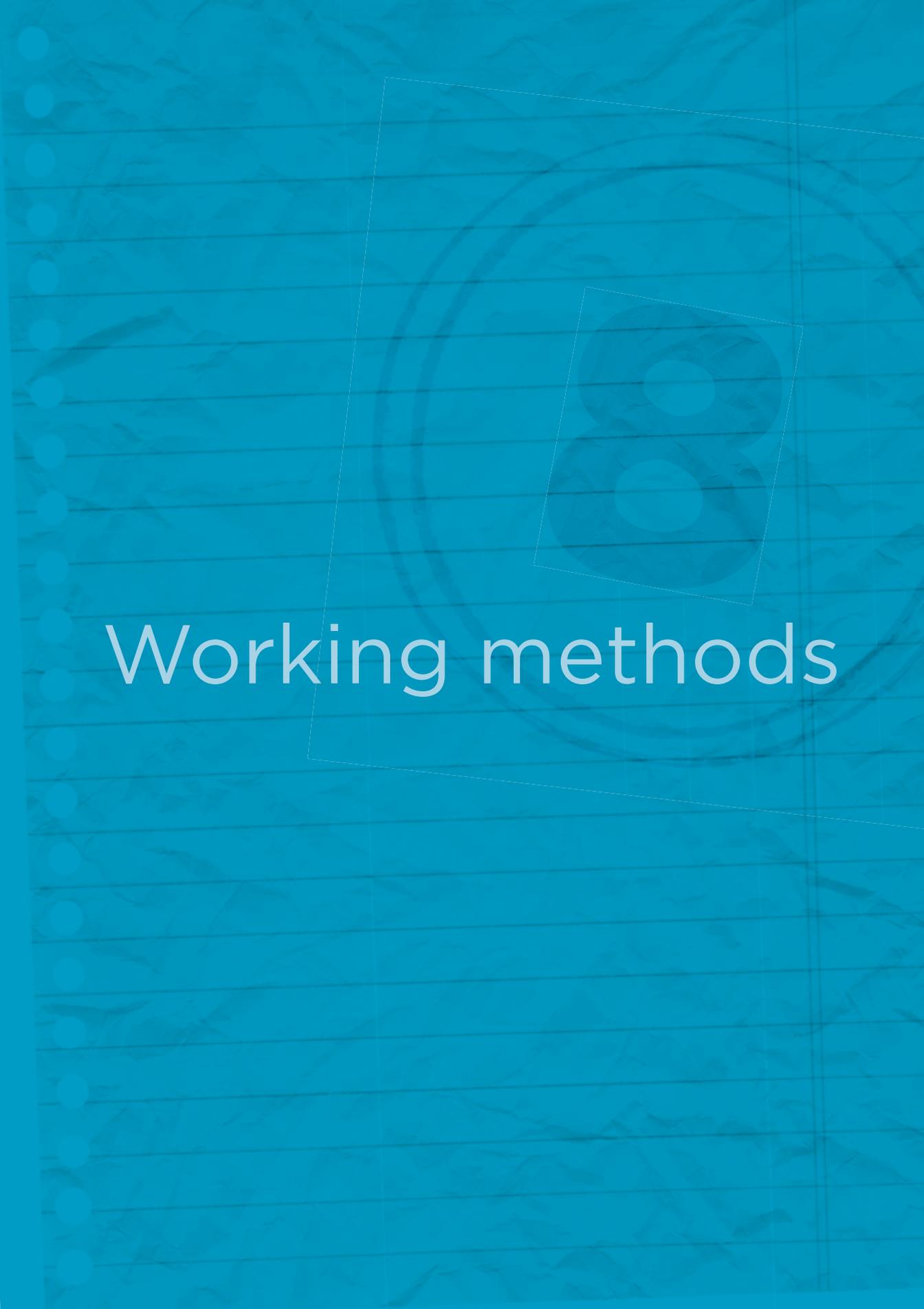
### **Alessandro Schiesaro**

Alessandro Schiesaro is Professor of Latin Literature at the University of Rome-Sapienza and Director of the Sapienza School of Advanced Studies. After studying in Pisa, Berkeley and Oxford, Alessandro Schiesaro lectured in the United States of America, including as Professor of Classics in Princeton, and in the United Kingdom as Professor of Latin at King's College London. He has chaired the Technical Secretariat of the Italian Ministry for Universities and Research since 2008.

### **Loukas Tsoukalis**

Loukas Tsoukalis is Jean Monnet Professor of European Integration at the University of Athens and Visiting Professor at the College of Europe in Bruges. He is President of the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, and has been Special Adviser to the President of the European Commission. He has taught at the University of Oxford, London School of Economics, Sciences Po in Paris, and the European University Institute of Florence. He has written many books and articles on European integration and international political economy translated into several languages.





# Working methods

## 8. Working methods

The mandate of the High Level Group during its first year was to explore the issue of quality in teaching and learning in European higher education, to identify examples of good practice and to formulate recommendations to national governments, higher education institutions and the European Commission. This report was developed between September 2012 and June 2013.

The starting point of our work was an overview prepared by the Eurydice network on the situation in Europe regarding four key aspects of quality teaching: national policy support to the promotion of excellence in teaching; the evaluation of excellence in teaching; the use of teaching performance in external quality assurance procedures and national rankings; and mechanisms to promote excellence in teaching at national and institutional level.

Based on this overview – and on desk research on national and institutional initiatives to support excellence in teaching and learning – the group identified the main topics it wanted to concentrate on and agreed on the working method during its first meeting in September 2012.

In all the High Level Group met four times. The major features of the work of the High Level Group were to:

- > listen to the most recent research results in the area of quality in teaching and learning;
- > hear from experts on good practices on institutional and national level;
- > listen to stakeholders' views on the subject; and
- > intensively discuss and exchange opinions in and between meetings, highlighting and examining the evidence to identify targeted recommendations.

## List of experts invited to the meetings

### 18 September 2012, Brussels

- David Crozier, Education and Culture Executive Agency EACEA

### 3 December 2012, Rome

- Peter Greisler, Director Higher Education, Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany
- Muiris O'Connor, Higher Education Authority Ireland
- Hildegard Schneider, University of Maastricht, The Netherlands
- Nijole Zinkeviciene, Kauno Kolegija, Lithuania
- Pedro Dominginhos, Setúbal Politechnic, Portugal
- Robert Santa, European Students Union
- Jens Vraa-Jensen, Education International

### 7 February 2013, Brussels

- Ken Bain, University of the District of Columbia, USA
- Paul Blackmore, King's College London, United Kingdom
- Torsten Fransson, KIC InnoEnergy, European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)
- Achim Hopbach, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
- Michael Gaebel, European University Association (EUA)

### 28 March 2013, Dublin

- Fabrice Henard, Strategy Consultant, formerly OECD, France
- Bairbre Redmond, University College Dublin, Ireland

European Commission

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Improving the quality of teaching and learning  
in Europe's higher education institutions**

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