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# Online course catalogues and databases for transparency and recognition (OCTRA)

## CONCLUSIONS AND GUIDELINES

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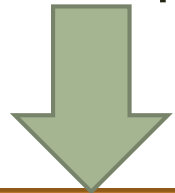
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Peer-learning seminars, 2022

# Sources of conclusions

- Comparison and analysis of seven country reports:
  - ✓ Desk study
  - ✓ Survey of HEIs
  - ✓ In-depth case studies
- Results of interviews with credential evaluators
- Discussions between the project partners



**Guidelines** on the improvement of course catalogues  
for the use in credential evaluation

# Purposes of course catalogues

HEIs develop course catalogues:

- For keeping **track of study courses** by making a digital catalogue
- **Advertisement** tool for attracting new students
- **Information exchange platform** for present students and/or academic personnel

 **Perspective of credential evaluators** 

# Concept of course catalogue

Legal framework in the partner countries stipulating HEIs to elaborate publicly available course catalogues is **poorly developed**

Lack of **national level recommendations or guidelines** about online course catalogues

The **ECTS User's Guide** does not ensure sufficient methodological support in terms of designing online course catalogues



**Poor understanding or varied understanding** of the concept of course catalogue among HEIs (and ENIC/NARIC centres)



**Diverse course catalogues** at institutional and national level as regards content, functions, design, layout, availability etc.

# Data fields in course catalogues

## Most HEIs publish:

- Title of the course
- Short description of the course
- ECTS and/or other credit points
- Learning outcomes
- Field of study

## HEIs do **NOT** (or rarely) publish:

- Information on external quality assurance
- Legal status of the HEI
- Formal rights of graduates

# Definition of online course catalogue

**Online course catalogue** is a **publicly available data system** developed and maintained by higher education institution, which includes organized, detailed and descriptive information on higher education institution and study components that form study programmes offered by the higher education institution

Course catalogues may include information on **various conceptual layers**:

- institutional
- study programme
- course/module

The type and detail of provided information varies by the conceptual layer

# General principles of course catalogues

*(proposed by the interviewed credential evaluators)*

- Public availability
- Availability online
- Availability in commonly used language

# National level recommendations for development of course catalogues

## **Proposed by four partners:**

- To harmonise terminology, templates of course catalogues and format of information presentation at the national level
- To promote availability of course catalogues in English (or other commonly used foreign language)
- To provide guidance for HEIs (setting national methodology and recommendations)
- To promote discussion (peer learning) among HEIs on the purpose, layout, content and development of course catalogues
- To ensure availability of online course catalogues to general public
- To facilitate development of user-friendly and qualitative online course catalogues



# NQDs and other information sources

NQDs may be considered as a good practice example of promoting transparency and comparability of qualifications

**If** NQDs and other sources\* ...

- Have similar (clear) purpose
- Have similar structure and data fields (methodology) → to describe awarded qualification
- Use national and English language
- Ensure public access to the essential information

*\* National level recommendations proposed by three partners*

# GUIDELINES

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**on the improvement of course catalogues for the use in  
credential evaluation**

# Minimum information elements on study programmes/courses

- Full title of qualification
- Level of the study programme/course (Bologna cycle, NQF level)
- Workload
- Nominal length of the full-time programme
- The composition of the programme
- Profile – speciality or field of study
- Access requirements to the programme
- Graduation requirements
- Function of the qualification (formal rights of graduates)
- Status and recognition of awarding institution in home country
- Information on external quality assurance of institution and study programme/ programme group

# General features of course catalogues

Course catalogues should:

- be easy to **find** on HEIs main website
- be easy to **navigate** (interlinked)
- provide information in commonly used **terminology**
- available in commonly used international **language**

# Steps for improving course catalogues (or databases)

## Self-evaluation of the course catalogue

- Consider information/aspects (layout, design, language) important for the staff of HEI or are required by law
- Create a **checklist** including important features OR use **fiche of OCTRA**
- Conduct an in-depth study of the existing database

## Users' survey

- Understand the needs of users and the purpose of database
- Design a short online **questionnaire** (posted on the website)
- Conduct online survey of frequent database users

## Analysis of gathered data

- Compare reality and needs of users
- Draw conclusion

## Practical measures to improve the course catalogue

# Fiche for self-evaluation

- **General information** on course catalogue
  - ✓ Overall availability of information
  - ✓ Location (access to)
  - ✓ Languages
- Information on **institution** (7 elements)
- Information on **study programmes / study fields** (23 elements)
- Information on **study courses** (17 elements)
- Other information

# Study programmes / study fields

Content	Yes / No	Description
Qualification awarded (and professional qualification if applies)		
Workload in ECTS / other credit points		
Level of qualification (NQF, EQF or/and Bologna cycle )		
Field(s) of study (main field)		
Type of study (academic or professional study program)		
Quality assurance / accreditation		
Admission requirements		
Information on recognition of prior learning		
Graduation requirements		
Learning outcomes		
Matrix of learning outcomes		
Programme structure diagram with credits (ECTS or other)		
List of obligatory courses		
Mode of study (full-time/part time/e-learning etc.)		
Mode of teaching		
Examination regulations and grading scale		
Obligatory or optional mobility windows		
Obligatory or optional course windows		
Work placement(s)		
Work-based learning		
Programme coordinator		
Occupational profiles of graduates		
Length of study programme (minimum time required to receive qualification)		
Other...		

# Questionnaire of users

1. What is your role? (multiple choice)
2. Why do you use this database/course catalogue? (multiple choice)
3. How often do you use this database? (multiple choice)
4. Can you find the information you need on the database? (multiple choice)
5. Please evaluate from 1-4 points (1 – strongly agree, 4 – strongly disagree) the following statements:
  - Information on database is clear
  - Layout of database is visually attractive
  - The database is easy to navigate
  - The database is interlinked with other information sources
6. What aspects should be improved in the database? (open q.)
7. What are the advantages of the database? (open q.)





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will be published on the project website: <https://aic.lv/en/par-aic/projects/octra>

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