

Guidance documents to those producing diploma supplements

I GENERAL GUIDELINES:

It is strongly recommended that supplements should conform with the following principles and practices:

1. The brief explanatory note (at the head of the sample supplement) should be reproduced as part of each completed Diploma Supplement, in order to guide universities, employers and other potential users of the information.
2. Institutions should follow the structure and sequence of information carefully developed and tested by the pilot project. Various customised versions were tested and found not to be as clear and user-friendly. In the cases where sections were omitted altogether, these supplements were invariably found to be ineffective. Great care needs to be taken in compiling supplements in order to avoid imprecise, missing or confused information. Over-long and over-complicated supplements should be avoided. They irritate those who receive them. Avoid information overload and present information as concisely as possible. The examples of good practice supplements show how this can be done. The use of a transcript clearly helps provide detailed information in a concise way.
3. In combination with the credential itself, the supplement should provide sufficient information to enable the reader to make a judgement about the qualification and whether it is appropriate for the purpose for which the holder seeks to use it (e.g. for access to an academic programme, exemption from part of a programme, employment/right to practise a profession, etc.). It is not designed to replace a curriculum vitae but to provide additional information.
4. The supplement should always be accompanied by the original qualification as supplements normally have no legal validity. The existence of a Diploma Supplement does not guarantee the status of an institution, its awards, or whether it is recognised as part of a national higher education system. However, it should contain information on these aspects.
5. The supplement should always have the name and title of the qualification, the name and status of the institution awarding/administering it, and the classification of the award all presented in the original language. Incorrect translations mislead those making judgements about qualifications. Transliterations are permissible in the case of scripts other than the Latin alphabet.
6. Supplements should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.

7. The production of supplements is best done centrally and not devolved to different parts of academic institutions. This keeps costs down and minimises variation in content and approach.
8. Institutions should take appropriate action to minimise the possibility of forgery and misrepresentation of their supplements.
9. Information on the higher education system (section eight) should be kept to a two-page maximum. Where possible, information could include diagrams and charts to aid clarity. As a part of the pilot diploma supplement project, finalised versions of this information are to be produced for each country with the help of national ENICs/NARICs (national information centres), Ministries and Rectors' Conferences.
10. It is best to issue supplements automatically at the time the qualification is completed. This is preferable to retrospective issue which becomes more difficult as programmes and educational awards are subject to continuous evolution and change. It is particularly important that section eight of the supplement describes the national higher education structure in force at the time the qualification was awarded.
11. Great care should be taken with translations and terminology as many problems exist in this area. In order to overcome these, it is essential that the original language is used where indicated in the supplement. In addition, the glossary of terms associated with the supplement has been specifically produced to overcome linguistic confusions. Supplements should be produced in whatever language(s) institutions think appropriate.
12. Where they exist, institutional, regional and national quality assurance systems should include Diploma Supplements in their activities. This will help ensure the quality of supplements.
13. Supplements are designed to be used with sensitivity. The evaluation of qualifications from another country should concentrate on the competence, experience and knowledge acquired, recognising that "fair recognition" and not exact equivalence should be sought.