



## Theme

Assessment and multilingual competence

### Relevance of the theme

The creation of the European Higher Education Area as a result of new needs related to socio-political and economic changes and internationalisation processes at different levels (European integration, economic globalisation on the European and international labour market, new communication technologies, internationalisation of education and research) introduces major changes in the European higher education sector and implies increasing interaction in multilingual and multicultural environments and the need for mutual comprehension in a context of diversity. On the one hand, an adequate multilingual and multicultural communicative competence is now to be considered as a key competence for all students. It is a necessary resource for students and graduates who study, live and work in multilingual and multicultural Europe and the world and have to manage a diversity of multilingual and multicultural situations in academic, professional and social contexts. On the other hand, the Bologna process defines new European reference points applicable to all study programmes which take into account stakeholders' needs in order to develop social relevance in discipline-specific knowledge and expertise and competencies for sustainable employability, citizenship, personal development and lifelong learning. Another reference point is the application of transparency instruments (ECTS, competence-based discipline specific and generic descriptors) to ensure international readability.

For academic language and communication studies, this means redefining learning outcomes with the objective of developing adequate multilingual and multicultural student profiles aiming at competent use of this repertory in relation to the specific needs of students and graduates and the perspective of lifelong learning. Another point is the need for multilingual and multicultural competences to be demonstrated and assessed in order to indicate to the different stakeholders what students are able to do in this domain and how well they can do it.

### Issues to be addressed

- Needs and aims specific to the higher education context
  - o relevant learning outcomes for academic study and in different cycles
  - o relevant learning outcomes for future career and employability
  - o relevant learning outcomes for mobility and social integration
- Assessment procedures: relevance and balance
  - o different purposes of assessment (learner proficiency, learner development, etc.)
  - o integrated approaches and alternative forms of assessment (self-assessment, peer assessment, portfolio assessment, learning diary, continuous assessment, assessment of informal learning, etc.)
  - o multilingual models of assessment
  - o testing (accredited versus in-house)
- Transparency, transnational comparability, reliability
  - o *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (reference levels and comparison of different systems, programmes, skills, languages, etc)
  - o common assessment criteria for specific purposes
  - o common assessment criteria for specific communicative competences (different types of oral and written texts)
  - o common assessment criteria for intercultural competences
  - o common assessment criteria for study skills (learner awareness skills, meta-cognitive skills, language learning strategies)
- Lifelong learning and documentation of the development of the multilingual profile
  - o European Language Portfolio (Council of Europe) for the higher education sector
  - o e-portfolios, career portfolios
  - o Diploma supplement
- Teacher development
  - o in-service training related to all categories
  - o transnational training and coordination

## Activities foreseen

Thursday, 18 and Friday, 19 of August 2010 at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland: 2-day event combining an international workshop with members of the ELC and the launch seminar of the ELC Special Interest Group (SIG) on Assessment and multilingual competence

- workshop: short presentations and discussions: "Multilingual and multicultural competence and its assessment in the European Higher Education Area: the need for innovation: how and why"?
- launch seminar: common elaboration of an action plan in relation to the urgent issues to be addressed. ELC members declare their interest in joining the SIG, each taking over responsibility for a particular area of the action plan.

## Outcomes envisaged

- map innovative assessment initiatives in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- map the challenges of broad approaches to assessment and for different stakeholders (students, teaching staff, employers, other universities in the context of mobility)
- suggest future joint development projects, eg:
  - o create a general framework for integrated approaches to assessment for developing multilingual and multicultural action-oriented competence linked to relevant learning outcomes for higher education
  - o create complementary tools to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFRL), which are both specific to the needs and aims of higher education and enhance transparency and comparability

## Composition of the SIG

Expertise and experience sought:

- practitioners using different forms of assessment in order to demonstrate and enhance the development of multilingual competence and/or involved in the establishment and implementation of different models or concepts of assessment and assessment criteria in line with the Bologna requirements
- those being involved in research and development projects in integrated approaches to assessment and assessment and multilingualism

## Contributions expected of SIG members

All SIG members contribute actively to the realisation of the action plan. Every member takes responsibility for an area within the action plan.

Coordinators:

- Brigitte Forster Vosicki, CH-University of Lausanne (Brigitte.ForsterVosicki@unil.ch)
- Anne Räsänen, FI-University of Jyväskylä (anne.e.rasanen@jyu.fi)

Brigitte Forster Vosicki  
Université de Lausanne  
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