# arQus

## European University Alliance

**D06.1 - GUIDELINES FOR THE AWARD OF THE ARQUS LABEL TO DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMMES OF ALL KINDS**

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Work Package: 06 - **Arqus Learning Pathways**

Arqus II - Arqus Erasmus + Work Plan 2022-2026

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## PREAMBLE

In its Mission Statement 2022–32, the Arqus Alliance has committed to educating critical and socially engaged European citizens equipped for lifelong learning. The Alliance aims to ensure no-one is left behind and to co-create an attractive, flexible, challenge-based and research-driven academic offer. Similarly, Arqus commits to attain excellence in student-centred innovative teaching and learning[1] and to create the conditions for quality and impactful professional and learning mobility for all.

To promote these goals, the Alliance has set up the Arqus Label that can be awarded to all types of joint degree and certificate programmes[2] fulfilling a series of criteria designed to guarantee excellent learning environments and experiences for students and professionals. Programmes distinguished with the Arqus Label will have a highly integrated curriculum that draws upon partners' collective strengths, resources, and expertise; they will also align with the vision and mission of Arqus by actively promoting Arqus values. The rigorous criteria applied for awarding the Arqus Label, explained under Paragraph 1, mean that programmes holding this seal of excellence are jointly designed and delivered by at least two Arqus partner universities. They must offer flexible curricula and innovative teaching and learning methodologies, introduce flexible mobility pathways in accordance with clearly defined quality assurance (QA) procedures and provide access to support services for students and staff at all universities involved. In addition, these programmes and courses must fulfil at least one further distinctive feature such as relevance to grand societal challenges, multilingualism and interculturality, interdisciplinarity, European identity, inclusiveness or the issuing of a single joint, double or multiple degree or certificate.

Degree and certificate programmes awarded with the Arqus Label can proudly display this seal of excellence in their information and promotional materials. Additionally, students who complete a degree programme (or a sufficient number of Arqus courses or modules as detailed in the **Framework of awarding Arqus Mention**) will be awarded the Arqus Mention to highlight their international experience, professional performance, and skills, serving as a testimony to their active and successful participation in innovative learning experiences within Arqus.

The Arqus Label initiative fully aligns with the European Commission's initiative to establish a European Degree Label for joint international programmes. Nevertheless, it goes beyond and extends its scope to certificate programmes of all kinds such as lifelong learning courses and modules, micro-credentials[3],

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[1] Innovative teaching methods allow teachers to engage students in an interactive and dynamic way, improving their motivation. Innovative teaching tools may include digital technologies, gamification, or project-based learning (source: https://plus-project.eu/benefits-using-innovative-teaching-methods-erasmus-plus-programs/).

[2] A certificate programme is a specialised education designed to develop or strengthen specific career skills. A certificate programme is considered continuing education in some cases because it builds on your knowledge of a particular career or industry. In other cases, it requires no prior education and can help to learn about a subject, career, or industry to pursue related jobs. They may include lifelong learning courses and modules, micro-credentials, MOOCs and other quality-assured short-term learning experiences leading to a certificate of achievement (source: https://www.coursera.org/articles/certificate-programs).

[3] Micro-credentials certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences, such as a short course or training, providing a flexible and targeted approach to help individuals develop the knowledge, skills, and competences required for their personal and professional advancement. The term is still new in education and is used in various contexts, often referring to both the certification unit awarded upon completion of a course and the course itself (source:https://arqus-alliance.eu/arqus-teaching-innovation/guidelines-for-curricular-enhancement/) .

MOOCs and other quality-assured short-term learning experiences[4] leading to a certificate of achievement.

## 1. ARQUS LABEL DISTINCTIVE FEATURES FOR DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMMES OF ALL KINDS

### MANDATORY DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

**1. Jointly developed degree and certificate programmes delivered by at least two Arqus partner universities**

The Arqus Label can be awarded to degree and certificate programmes that involve academics and staff from at least two Arqus partners who combine their expertise to jointly design, develop and deliver them. Certificate programmes of all kinds may be considered, including lifelong learning courses and modules, micro-credentials, MOOCs and other short-term learning experiences. All programmes must be approved by the participating institutions and lead to a degree or a certificate of achievement issued by at least one of them. Nevertheless, awarding joint diplomas and certificates is highly recommended. If accreditation is required, the use of joint procedures is also strongly encouraged (see: Section **2. Quality Assurance Procedures** and the corresponding section in the **Internal *Quality Assurance System of the Arqus Alliance***).

**2. Flexible curricula and innovative teaching and learning components**

The curriculum of the programmes may cover any academic discipline or respond to interdisciplinary challenges. The curriculum should be flexible and foresee the use of innovative teaching and learning components such as student-centred methodologies, including challenge-based or research-driven activities.

**3. Flexible mobility pathways**

The learning experience must include a compulsory mobility component, which may take any of a wide variety of forms: physical and/or blended mobility, including short-term mobility for summer/winter schools, (blended) intensive programmes (BIP's), Virtual Exchange[5], work experience mobility, Twinning, criss-cross mobility, etc.

**4. Access to the partner universities' support services for students and staff[6].**

The support services of the host institutions will be fully available to students and staff from the Arqus partners and help them to succeed during their physical, blended, or virtual mobility there. They will do so by providing the same information and support as for their own students and staff, including social and academic support, psychological support, career counselling, information about dormitories, student organisations and extracurricular activities.

### SUPPLEMENTARY DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

**1. Relevance to grand societal challenges**

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[4] Short-term learning experiences can be understood as Erasmus+ exchanges, summer schools and language courses. Opportunities are available for students at Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels. Students can also combine studying abroad with a traineeship. To be eligible, students need to be studying at a higher education institution in a country that is participating in the Erasmus+ programme (source:
https://education.ec.europa.eu/fr/study-in-europe/planning-your-studies/short-term-study-opportunities).

[5] The term 'Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)' can be also used in other documents as the USA definition.

[6] Only applicable for jointly developed and delivered degree programmes.

The programme addresses at least one of the three overarching interdisciplinary priority areas identified by the Arqus Alliance: Climate Change & Sustainable Development, Artificial Intelligence & Digital Transformation, or European Identity & Heritage.

**2.        Multilingualism**

The programme offers learning experiences in more than one language and covers intercultural aspects if they are relevant for the treated topics.

**3.        High level of interdisciplinary**

Interdisciplinarity is included in courses, modules and/or other activities comprising, among others, the following elements: knowledge of different disciplinary paradigms and recognition of interdisciplinary perspectives, focused and innovative thinking, critical reflection, collaboration and communication skills in an interdisciplinary team.

**4.        Promotes European Identity**

The curriculum of the programme includes activities that promote European identity and citizenship.

**5.        Inclusiveness**

The programme commits to wide participation by fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in its admission policies and processes, and by adopting tailored measures to support disadvantaged students and staff.

**6.        Awards a joint, double or multiple diploma or certificate**

After the completion of the programme, successful learners will receive a joint diploma or certificate issued by one of the partner universities on behalf of all participating institutions, or several diplomas or certificates issued separately by all institutions involved.

**To be awarded the Arqus Label, an eligible degree and certificate programme must fulfil all mandatory distinctive features and at least one of the supplementary distinctive features from the list above.**

## 2. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

Quality assurance procedures play a crucial role in maintaining and ensuring the quality of study programmes awarded with an Arqus Label. To be awarded with the Arqus Label, an eligible programme should meet the established standards of excellence and quality  established by the **Internal Quality Assurance System for the Arqus Alliance.**

## 3. AWARDING THE ARQUS LABEL

As mentioned before, the Arqus Label may be awarded to any degree or certificate programme that fulfils all mandatory distinctive features and at least one of the supplementary distinctive features mentioned above as well as the standards of excellence and quality. Arqus Working Group Arqus Learning Pathways (WG06) will be responsible for managing the corresponding evaluation and awarding process. The final approval of the selected programmes corresponds to the Arqus Education Board.

**The University of Granada, as the coordinating university of the Arqus Alliance, will issue the corresponding Arqus Label certificates for all successful programmes.**

**All degree and certificate programmes that are selected for funding in any Arqus call for the development of joint degree programmes will automatically be awarded the Arqus Label.** Applications of sufficient quality or those submitted outside the call period, may also be considered and approved ex officio by WG06 and the Arqus Education Board.

**All Joint Programmes developed within Arqus before the guidelines for the label were adopted will automatically receive the label without the need to apply.**

The following sections describe the steps to be followed by all programmes wishing to be distinguished with the Arqus Label.

<div align="center">APPLICATION PROCESS</div>

The application process will be coordinated and managed by WG06 and the Arqus Education Board in accordance with the following guiding principles:

1. **Information and promotion:** Information about the Arqus Label and the corresponding award criteria and application procedures will be publicly available on the Arqus website and recalled in any Arqus joint call for relevant activities. WG06 will also liaise with the Arqus Communications Team in order to promote the Arqus Label within and outside the Alliance.
2. **Advice and support:** WG06 will ensure sufficient advice and the necessary support for all preparatory groups and teams working on joint degree and certificate programmes within the Alliance.
3. **Application package:** The application package for the Arqus Label will be publicly available on the Arqus website and consistently published along with any Arqus joint call for relevant activities. A complete application will provide at least the following information:
   a. A short summary of the programme applying for the Arqus Label.
   b. A short but explicit description of the programme.
   c. Information about the type of diploma or certificate to be issued.
   d. A commented checklist showing compliance with the Arqus Label criteria.
4. **Calls and deadlines:** The application and awarding of the Arqus Label is an ongoing process with no set deadlines. However, deadlines may apply when submitting applications for relevant activities through joint Arqus calls.
5. **Evaluation and decision-making:** The Arqus Alliance guarantees the absence of any conflict of interest, transparency, and equal treatment of all applications. WG06 will coordinate the collection and assessment of applications. The Arqus Education Board will be in charge of the decision-making process within the Alliance and approve or reject the applications. Once approved, the corresponding Arqus Label certificates will be issued by the University of Granada as a coordinating university of the Alliance.
6. **Publication of the results:** WG06 will inform the applicants about the results in writing. Unsuccessful applicants will receive a short summary of the reasons for the refusal of the Arqus Label and suggestions for improvement.
7. **Appeals and complaints:** WG06 will set up and manage an appeal and complaint procedure which will be published on the Arqus website. The appeals and complaints will be treated according to the procedure described in point 5.

## AWARDING PROCESS

**The University of Granada, as the coordinating university of the Arqus Alliance, will issue the awarding certificates of the Arqus Label.** Online tools will be deployed within the Alliance[7] to facilitate the issuance of (digital) certificates for successful applicants. The certificates will state that the programme fulfils the awarding criteria and is entitled to use the Arqus Label wherever deemed appropriate. The Arqus Communications Team will provide the corresponding branding material (batches, logos, etc.) and include the programme in a comprehensive list of Label-bearing programmes published on the Arqus website.

The Arqus Label will be awarded to the programme and may be used as long as the programme remains substantially unchanged. Should substantial changes become necessary, the coordinators of the programme will inform WG06 about these changes, if they lead to full or partial incompletion of the awarding criteria. Following the procedure described in point 5, the Arqus Education Board, assisted by WG06, will decide whether the Arqus Label should be revoked or not.

According to the Arqus Mention issuing rules, learners successfully completing a Label-bearing degree programme or a sufficient number of Label-bearing certificate programmes are entitled to receive the Arqus Mention. The procedure for awarding Arqus Mentions is defined in the ***Framework for Awarding Arqus Mention*** and the ***Internal Quality Assurance System of the Arqus Alliance.***

NOTE:

*After consideration of this deliverable by the Education Board of the Arqus Alliance, the Working Group 06 has incorporated the feedback requested by the Board in this document, which will be considered for final approval by the Education Board on 2nd October 2024.*

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[7] Tools will be deployed and coordinated by the Arqus IT Team.