REPORT STUDENT AND TEACHERS EVALUATION HARMONISED CURRICULUM

WP 3 Curricula Design and Educational Development Date: 31st August 2023

lmeu

European Universities Alliance for **Film and Media Arts**

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1. Introduction

After outlining the FilmEU Joint BA program together with 4 partner universities, part of WP3 was to also present and review this proposal with people who would potentially be interested in studying or teaching in the program. Their feedback can help in the next stage of FilmEU JointBA development, so these comments could be reviewed, discussed and changes made before the program starts.

2. Data gathering

At the second critical moment of data gathering it was aimed to question three different target audiences: 1st year students who have recently started their studies (similar target group for students of Joint BA), Students who are graduating (3rd or 4th year students) and teachers. In each of these groups both focustalks as well as a survey were administered in order to gather **both qualitative and quantitative data**.

3. Focus talks with teachers and students

Timing and cast:

When: 1st and 2nd week of October 2023 18th October 2023 Dublin, October 11, 12, 17 Tallinn

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Focus talks method.

A **focus talk** is a qualitative method in which small groups of participants are approached for short conversations with an impartial interviewer. It is a more informal, more accessible form of a focus group, that allows for more spontaneous interactions. The main principles of the focus group-method do still apply though.

The students and teachers were informed of what would happen with their feedback and that everything they said would be handled anonymously and confidentially.

Targeted

interviewees:

1) 1st year BA students - students who have started their studies (have studied up to 1 month) like students in future Joint BA program. Possibly having questions about



academia, pathways and choices that lay ahead as they haven't made all of them yet.

2) Graduating year BA students (3rd or 4th year) - students who can look back on their experience and reflect with the knowledge of 4 or 6 semesters of experience, also evaluate and give feedback to Joint BA from a more analytical point of view.

3) Teachers from fields of Film, Audiovisual, Arts and Media - potential future staff who have valuable feedback and insight into the proposed structures.

All participants were given a more detailed document they are asked to read about the program in advance. At the interview, the students were encouraged to intervene and ask any time.

Participants were asked about the following topics:

- 1. Student interest in the program
- 2. Appeal of the program
- 3. Expectations for the program
- 4. Potential issues and questions regarding the program
- 5. Curriculum content
- 6. Sustainability

Guidelines for the talks with teachers and students were as follows:

- 1. The interviewers introduced themselves as someone who wants to know more about the target group's experiences in order to gather feedback and improve the program by doing so.
- 2. The target group was informed of how the data collected will be processed anonymously and without judgment. If anyone decided to record the conversation they had to announce this.
- 3. The interviewees were asked if they understood and agreed to talk about these topics. This is called <u>oral consent.</u>
- 4. The teachers were asked about their experiences; what did they like, what would they like to change. It was predictable that they probably need to vent about frustrations and the elements of the BIP/FilmEU program that are on their mind the most. While they talked, the interviewers were going deeper into any of the elements they deem interesting or that were on the list of things they wanted to know.
- 5. The interviewees were asked about the other elements, if they had not talked about them yet.
- 6. The interviewers were asked to be aware of their role as an interviewer and how they might have influenced the answers.



7. This process was repeated with a few groups of students until the interviewers felt they had had a good sample. The number of interviewees was supposed to be marked down.

4. Results

4A Student feedback takeaways

Results are organized into question blocks and relevant subtopics.

4A.1 Overall

Overall most students showed great interest in the program and found the idea of Joint BA program with different universities, where students are traveling and can engage in different cultures and colleagues, very appealing. Lots of questions remained regarding the logistical and financial planning, structure and pathway of the courses. The whole issue of criteria for allocating students to projects was questioned. Creating a degree which is very focused on exchange and traveling without considering the selection criteria can be a bit tricky. And the same goes for the entry criteria for the degree.

4A.2 Student interest in the program

Students saw a big potential in the program. The idea of traveling and studying in different countries was the most appealing part, as students get to see, learn and experience more. It also could offer a novel perspective to the world of cinema.

Students showed interest in the semester in the scheme, which has many options. The wide offer was a plus but also deemed confusing on the other side if you do not know what you want from your education, especially when you are just starting out in 1st year BA. For some, it also seemed too broad compared to courses in their respective universities. Then again it was pointed out that modules of Joint BA Course seem different to courses offered at their universities.

The pathway was interesting but also there were questions of how it would be organized and as there are so many different modules, students may feel they are missing out on some important modules by going to one university over another.

There were a large number of students who said they would have an option to choose Joint BA instead of the programs they are studying in but there were also some who would rather prefer their current curriculums.



4A.3 Appeal of the program

The program had a clear interest to those who had experience with Erasmus exchange programs and saw the value in meeting other cultures, different cities and campuses. They did bring out that some destinations are more appealing than others and. Having the possibility to curate their own education was appealing as well.

Networking during the studies and for the future was a highlight. Possibility to have international friends of the same interests for the whole life was considered as a plus.

Exchange of teachers would be an added value because of the gradual onboarding within different (teaching) cultures. The prospect of engaging with educators from diverse backgrounds was appealing.

The mix with animation and gaming, another aspect of filmmaking beyond the classic approach was appealing as well.

Some questioned if similar things to Joint BA could not be just achieved with a regular Erasmus exchange programme.

4A.4 Expectations for the program

The idea that the student is in control - to build their own course structure, a choice to select the subjects during 2nd and 3rd year - seemed interesting. Less mandatory subjects than in the fixed classic system could be more engaging to the students.

Most schools pointed out the importance of connecting and/or studying together with students from different curricula at each school as a crucial part of the learning environment.

Multiple culture experience was brought out as important - the possibility to gain as much film and media education and knowledge as possible from different European universities during one study program. Students would like to get basic filmmaking skills in the 1st year and after that focus on making contacts and professional connections worldwide.

It was suggested that in the first two semesters there should be introductions about next semesters for students to have a deeper understanding about what is going to happen in each location. Possibly some directions about where to go next. It was stated that some core subjects and projects could be the same at different locations so that they repeat and students do not have the fear of losing and missing out on something if they choose wrong. Different examples of possible pathways were asked, and some suggestions for those who do not want to or can create their own pathway of studying.



Students would like to see and experience how the industry works in different countries.

4A.5 Potential issues and questions regarding the program

Degree

Questions about degree and speciality that's written in the diploma were asked. Students pointed out that a lot of programs have become broad and diplomas are vague and not clear for their future in the job market. Some also felt that modules on offer are not film oriented enough, especially lacking in narrative film. Questions of focus and what each pathway would lead to were asked.

Some film students who are in 4th year BA courses raised concerns that 3 years may not be enough and not on the same depth.

There were students who did not sense it being a proper degree but more like a postgraduate programme. Also it was noted that a complex program of that kind is not really meant for people who just graduated from high school as they lack maturity.

Logistics

Concerns were raised about equality in terms of housing, prices and teaching in different universities. How can the program guarantee that students are treated equally in those matters? Also if and how much financial support there would be within the program besides potential Erasmus+ mobility.

Students were not sure about the quality of film education and/or the creative industries in all the countries of choice. There was some apprehension towards certain countries and cultures and whether universities have the capacity to accommodate such a program while also maintaining their previous film courses at the same if not higher level.

Visa situation, housing and extra costs for mobility can be a burden and present significant barriers for prospective students, impeding their participation. Some students pointed out that housing should be guaranteed by the program.

There was also a worry that the program is too exclusive because of strict admission criteria but also due to (higher) tuition fee and extra costs, connected to mobility (travel and lodging).

The students were asking about the possibilities to work part time during studies (either locally or online) regarding potential study load and hours per week.



Semester Student Groups

A key question was how to get the feeling that you are a part of a community and not alone? Questions like "How to get to know all students of the same intake?", "How quickly will the sense of group form and how will the program coordinators contribute to it?" were asked. As a director you rely on other people, a student said. But how to get to know who these people are? Summer schools were offered as a potential help with networking. Students wanted to know about the possibility to plan the relocations in certain groups and considered everyone going their own paths individually not that appealing. It was discussed how to keep those found relationships and connections during studies if the groups are not traveling together. Concerns were about the group dynamics - how would the program keep that? Also, as the dynamics most probably changes when people change locations, how to keep up the group feeling? Stress was pointed out in relation to choosing between different locations and changing groups.

There were a lot of questions about specializations and how working groups will be divided in 2 and 3 years. Also, how will the roles be shared in projects? Questions yet unanswered are the ones of specializations - when it will happen and whether the program is about a 6-pack or 2-pack (technical and creative)? Students were interested in whether everyone would have their individual main speciality and if so, how it will be chosen or given.

It was pointed out that in case of admitting everyone without an area of specialization, the candidates mostly would want to be directors and when they are cast in other roles later, it definitely can be demotivating.

What was also brought out is that as some countries are more appealing than others, how will the program assure that the groups are always full and fully distributed. It came to the conclusion that the pathways are in fact not that free to choose.

In addition to capable study counselors / course coordinators / mentors it is crucial to have mental health specialists available for students who need them.

Joint Modules

There were questions raised about the jointly taught modules of Joint BA.

Students, some having gone through COVID hybrid and online teaching, emphasized that online classes really do not work and very few people would want to have classes online. Some said it can only work if that module or class is specifically developed for it to be online and still teach effectively and in an engaging way.



They were also skeptical of how and if the modules are controlled and harmonized so that every school teaches core subjects on the same level and structures. How can universities guarantee that the study quality is really equal among universities or at least similar?

How much will the Joint BA students be integrated within regular classes, taught at the local institutions? Students felt that it's important to have contact with the rest of the students in the universities.

There were also questions on how the staff mobility would be organized. How to avoid the situations where you meet the same teachers wherever you move? If the program is all about relocating, students would rather see as many teaching staff as possible.

Then again some students said that they may like to stay with one teacher/mentor for a longer time and not change them all the time. Some students said that they chose their universities and programs based on the teachers that teach there but while moving around there can also be a lack of proper mentors. In some cases students would be happy to study with the same teacher/professional for more than just one semester.

Pathway

Pathway posed a lot of questions. It is yet unclear, at what point the students are asked about their wishes on pathways - is it going to happen in the beginning of the program or will it be looked at during each semester? It can also be during admission but if so, based on what will the students be picked out and accepted? Will there be gender balance? was one of the interesting questions.

The students suggested that pathways should be more on the curation part and less on the student. If the student knows what he/she wants to do (i.e chooses a documentary path) then it is easier. But for those who don't know - they should not be left alone in this.

One that significantly differed when comparing older and younger students - graduating students feel that when having enough information in advance, students will be able to focus on that and create their own pathway. 1st year students thought they would need help designing it.

There were opposite feelings about student choice with some wanting for a clear path and not making mistakes and others who would embrace the freedom as a plus.

The idea that you can choose the interchange depending on the project was interesting but there was fear that sometimes the selection of students is not so disparate and



several students want the same project. What are the criteria for those who get the first choice and those who do not get the one they chose? Students wanted to have some guarantees, a greater certainty of being able to go on the projects and pathways they wanted. If they get stuck on a project you do not like, it can be demotivating. We wonder if having similar projects in different countries would give them a better sense of security?

Sometimes students may like the name of the project, they like the proposal they have been presented with, but when they see it in practice, they do not like it as much and having to change it will involve other costs, another faculty, another competition they will have to go through and it may not be accepted.

Students pointed out that they would not like having boundaries on their mobility and also proposed rather to have 1 mandatory school change move instead of 2.

It was also flagged up that possibly some students will quit the program if they find a better study program at one of the partner universities. How would the program keep students motivated so that they do not quit? And what if they do - how will the program deal with the loss of group members?

Will there be mentorship for different specialities or are there individual mentors? Students stated the necessity to have mentors helping to choose between locations.

The residence permit for non-EU students is questionable. I.e Estonia is more strict in this regard than other European countries. How will the program assure that people are dedicated and come to study for the program itself, nor for the residence permit, that is not yet certain.

Elements that are unclear

The main question for everyone was about funding and support as they see it as an expensive program due to traveling and mandatory change of countries. The tuition fee and travel costs may be an issue if there will be no scholarships.

Also unclear were the application criteria. Questions like "Based on what students are selected?", "What are the admission exams about and what are the requirements?" were raised multiple times.

Some needed clarity regarding the language of instruction - whether English will serve as the lingua franca or if local languages will be primarily utilized.

Students thought there would be major problems with communication. A common platform/software for all schools to use is initial to ensure proper flow of information, and at least two contact persons from each school to reach with all kinds of questions.



It was pointed out that gathering feedback from students after the first year and possibly after each semester is crucial.

4A.6 Program's offer of modules and structure

Students said the program's setup and the modules offered do make sense when you look at it on paper but in practice we need to find out if all is feasible. There is a wide range of subjects and projects to dive into, which is great but that is also a concern. Too many options can be overwhelming for students.

First year (basic filmmaking skills) was more clear but more questions and hesitations were regarding year 2 and 3. There were questions on specialization skills and if there really just one technical class per semester?

The strength of the program for many was entrepreneurial and industry skills together with artistic research. Those could benefit students in their future.

Modules students feel are missing

Overall students wanted to have more in-depth specializations and modules for example script writing, narrative fiction, business side of film, media, tv and felt that practical side of filmmaking was not that much covered. On paper, the first year especially seems too theoretical, and many students find practice pace learning more appealing. Not having these conventional film school components could be a problem for some students.

Although 1st year was overall pointed out as a logical one with a solid base there was also a feeling that having too much theory and lack of practical exercises and projects plus no mobility could be one reason for some to quit.

Questions were also raised about technology that can advance so fast that sometimes the syllabus can lag behind. There was an offer that some modules could be repeated or be taught at 2-3 universities so that students would not be afraid of missing out.

Modules were not appealing to some students with many pointing out subjects that seemed a bit abstract. Quite a lot of modules were confusing, for example Research Methodology, Audio-Video Sustainability, Entrepreneurial Thinking, Fringe Dialogues, 21th Century Gaze, Short Fiction Reverse Blow Up.

Proposals for changes in content

Students were asked to propose changes and questions in content. Some pointed out that the content is maybe more inclined towards creative disciplines and suggested adding something production-related. The Artistic / Practice Based Research Methodology course seemed not necessary in the first year.



It was suggested that students could swap the order of modules, for example Semesters 3 and 4. Short fiction for example was considered quite late, in semester 4. Students who'd like to avail of it definitely will but for students who get homesick easily or just find something that they like and want to stick with it'd be hard for them if they have to keep moving throughout semesters.

It was unclear why there is only one module about transmedia and visual anthropology but more than one about multi-camera. Also some emphasized that the internship module should be better described. There are language issues that may rise in some countries for internships.

Students do not feel confident about applying for an internship and asked if the program would offer help regarding this. And furthermore, will they be taught how to sell themselves, how to make a portfolio?

4A.7 Mobility scene structure

The whole idea of being on the move within the program is good but we should think about the students' well-being and how they adapt to constantly changing environments during those 3 years. Special personnel for support and assistance was offered as a possible solution.

The number of mobilities was pointed out as being quite a lot and timing seemed a bit tight, with additional stress of different costs of rent and living.

If students would be paying for the education, all locations should be chosen by themselves and not be restricted to going to partner universities that are their first or maybe only choice.

It would be more natural if all students would have to be at all schools and they would just decide in what order. Doing so, the program could avoid people choosing based on weather for example. A worse geographical location could maybe be compensated with cooler courses and activities.

4A.8 Sustainability

Students valued sustainability as a concept as there needs to be more attention for the topic, due to the climate crisis but remained skeptical of its use and implementation within the Joint BA framework. The Joint BA program idea itself is not sustainable with all the staff and students traveling and they find it a bit ironic. There is no point in talking about how to be sustainable if we do not implement this.

If planned, sustainability should be baked into the whole flow of 3 years and embedded into the projects and assignment, not just a one-shot module. Filmmaking should just be sustainable filmmaking in the first place. There was a question if there needs to be a



module dedicated to it separately, as it should rather be entwined into the whole curriculum.

For students who are starting out, this concept is still quite unknown and first they emphasized the importance of understanding the whole (classic) flow of film production.

Those students who participated in the FilmEU pilot mentioned that in the pilot it was implemented poorly. There was no clear connection between teaching and practice of sustainable filmmaking. Also, they are afraid student projects do dot have the budget to go green, despite producers actually trying to be green. They referred to the professional industry where green filmmaking is not implemented as a good way to see if a student would go on an internship and see how they work sustainably. It does not work the other way.

4B Teachers feedback takeaways

Results are organized into question blocks and relevant subtopics.

4B.1 Overall

Based on the interviews teachers overall saw the possibilities and benefits of the program but also felt there was some more revision and work needed to be done. The biggest concerns were about joint courses and the importance of students to integrate to each school more broadly and not letting them be isolated in this kind of complex system. Related to this, the question of student maturity, in the age target of the program was also something to consider.

4B.2 Benefits

Teachers brought up the benefit of mobility - both for the teachers and students and the student ownership and choice that can bring out a sense of responsibility and motivation. But the question is, how would that be organized - choice can create chaos in BA level and there need to be some clear pathways. The need to define clear and objective criteria for the mobilities was one of the main concerns.

4B.3 Programme

On one hand, it was brought out that many domains and fields of interest within the universe of Film and Media art are represented with a good balance between fiction, non-fiction, and the genres to come and showcases a broad spectrum of knowledge.



On the other hand, it was brought out that for students learning filmmaking is about filmmaking and the idea of uniqueness in the field is questionable.

Aligning the course content with the viewing experience of most novice students, who are more familiar with fiction through streaming services, can facilitate a smoother onboarding process. Students are less in touch with the non-fiction component (less interest in documentaries and human-interest stories on TV). So, it would be preferable to change the order 1.4 non-fiction and 2.4 fiction for easier onboarding. The lack of projects within the thematic of serialized content was identified as something worth considering.

4B.4 Harmonization and Joint Classes

Question of how to harmonize the costs with other universities so that all students pay equally as countries will have vastly different expenses.

Questions about joint lectures and hybrid, online classes and how to plan the mobility of the teachers within 6 universities. Joint BA needs to have the mobility of teachers, but those same teachers need to also teach in their own universities. Also, if a joint module would be taught by 6 institutes, coordination of these lectures is pivotal.

Some teachers brought up that it is a pity that the harmonization of partner universities overall has been overshadowed in the light of the new joint program. It would have been better to first harmonize curricula in partner universities and then move to Joint BA, not vice versa.

Questions were raised if there would be internal competition for programs in the school and if schools have the capability to add another, quite complex program.

4B.5 Language issue

Based on past Erasmus+ experience, incorporating a module to enhance the English language and communication module was suggested so they could fully engage with the curriculum and effectively communicate in an academic and professional context.

Question about how all schools can offer high-quality education in English, especially with new partners. How to guarantee high-level English proficiency for both teachers, staff, and students.

4B.6 Potential Student Issues

It was pointed out that the isolation of students will be an issue if they do not come into contact with students from other curricula as the cohort per country is relatively small.



If the program is not allowed to teach together with other film, media and art students in the institutions, it can be detrimental to both the students and the universities themselves.

Regarding thesis project questions about who would support the graduation project as crew, or production assistants. Specifically, identifying whether a local team or local workshop/class can provide support is pivotal in defining the project dynamics and logistics.

The question of admission requirements was also brought up.

The question of scholarships is a fundamental one. A degree with this programmatic design and mobility scene would have sustainability issues if just dependent of student fees or typical Erasmus modalities.

4B.7 Mobility scheme

The concept of mobility over a three-year period was clear, however, the potential risk of falling behind or dropping out during mobility periods should be addressed. Clear policies and support systems should be in place to assist students who face challenges during mobility, such as failing a module or semester. Would there be a way of retaking the course, or exam at the next location?

Some teachers discussed the motivation for mobility, stating that projects might not be the main drive for mobility, but instead school or country. Criteria for addressing the eventual imbalance in student mobility selection was considered one of the main concerns.

Impact on schools non-teaching staff, like mobility offices and coordination offices, is also a concern.

4B.8 Sustainability

Insights gained from a pilot on sustainability indicate that sustainability is now a fundamental aspect of regular film and TV production, affecting funding and decision-making processes. This is something schools need to embrace. This aspect of the educational component to prepare students for their future career will be an integral part of the entire filmmaking process going forth.



5. Conclusion

Based on the conducted research and having analysed the results of the interviews organized by all 4 schools, it can be concluded that the idea of a Joint BA is undoubtedly interesting and necessary, but work still needs to be done on a number of issues - pathways, logistical issues, the tuition and/or possible scholarships, admission requirements and organizing students into groups while studying as repeatedly pointed out above. Both students and teachers felt that focus on narrative fiction, the reason why most students want to study in the field, was either minimal or came too late in the program.

Program seemed clearer for students who had finished their studies or had previous studying experience and teachers who can value the choice and opportunities of the program. First year students did tend to look at it as a more daunting task.

Both teachers and students were worried about the psychological state and isolation students may feel and the stress constant traveling, cost differences and bureaucracy can bring.

According to different universities, the opinions and assessments of students and teachers were not remarkably different. Somewhat different were fears and doubts of younger students and graduating students.

Annex A

STRUCTURE - STUDENTS

PART 1

Introduction and Flow of the Focus Talks

Planned time



	 Introduction of people conducting the interview Purpose of the interview - to get feedback and proposals about the design of the FilmEU program and how to improve it. Informing how the data collected will be processed anonymously and without judgment. If conversation is recorded they need to be notified. All people will remain anonymous. Only the number of people interviewed (8) will be marked down. Will ask if they understand and if they agree to talk about this with us. This is called oral consent. Introduction and role of the minute taker. 	10 min
PART 2	Overview of FilmEU program	10 min
	Using a Presentation file to go over the key aspects of the Program. All participants are given a more detailed document they are asked to read about the program in advance.	10 min
PART 3	Questionnaire Q & A	45 min
PART 3.1	Expectations with the program	
	Would you be interested in this program? What makes this program appealing to you? What would be your expectations for the program? What do you really like about the program? What issues do you might have with the program? What elements remain unclear with the program?	15 min
PART 3.2	Curriculum content and learning environment	
	Does the program's offer of modules and structure seem logical? Are there any areas or modules you feel are missing? Is the mobility scene understandable? Is there anything about the curriculum/ content you would change?	20 min
PART 3.3	The FilmEU program subject: Sustainability	
	How do you feel about learning about sustainable filmmaking? How well understandable are the essence and objective of sustainable filmmaking to you?	10 min
PART 4	Other Questions	20 min
		20 min

Annex B

STRUCTURE - TEACHERS



PART 1	Introduction and Flow of the Focus Talks	Planne d time
	 Introduction of people conducting the interview Purpose of the interview - to get feedback and proposals about the design of the FilmEU program and how to improve it. Informing how the data collected will be processed anonymously and without judgment. If conversation is recorded they need to be notified. All people will remain anonymous. Only the number of people interviewed (8) will be marked down. Will ask if they understand and if they agree to talk about this with us. This is called oral consent. Introduction and role of the minute taker. 	10 min
PART 2	Overview of FilmEU program	
	Using a Presentation file to go over the key aspects of the Program. All participants are given a more detailed document they are asked to read about the program in advance.	10 min
PART 3	Questionnaire Q & A	
PART 3.1	Expectations with the program	
	What do you really like about the program? What issues do you might have with the program? What elements remain unclear with the program?	15 min
PART 3.2	Curriculum content and learning environment	
	Does the program's offer of modules and structure seem logical? Are there any areas or modules you feel are missing? Is the mobility scene understandable? Is there anything about the curriculum/ content you would change?	20 min
PART 3.3	The FilmEU program subject: Sustainability	
	Have you gained any interesting insights on teaching/coaching about sustainable filmmaking so far? How well understandable are the essence and objective of sustainable filmmaking to you? How do you feel about teaching sustainability?	10 min
PART 3.4	Other Questions	20 min
		20 min





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