

# AESOP Quality Recognition (QR)

## Introducing the Standard Phase

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Lisbon, Portugal

10 July 2017

### Introduction

This kit is directed to AESOP's Excellence in Education Board and its aim is to introduce the AESOP Quality Recognition (QR) Standard Phase. The following documents are enclosed:

- AESOP Core Curriculum
- Madrid 2015 HoS Workshop Report on AESOP QR (By Anna Geppert & Maros Finka)
- AESOP QR Standard Phase Application Form

### AESOP QR Standard Phase

- AESOP's mission is to promote excellence in planning education and research. By quality recognition (QR), we understand making the best of the plurality and diversity of approaches of our schools, in a process based on the cooperation between our schools. Consequently, the AESOP QR has not a competitive 'ranking list' approach.
- In its standard phase, a Certificate of Quality will be awarded to single programmes (i.e. undergraduate and graduate) that fulfil the European standards of quality for planning education recognised by the AESOP charter and supplemented by an effective internationalisation of the teaching (see enclosed AESOP Core Requirements for a High Quality European Planning Education i.e. AESOP core curriculum).
- The application and the procedure will be arranged continuously based on single programmes' recognition initiated by the AESOP school members on voluntary basis.
- The characteristics, aims and scope remain those already discussed and approved, also considering the valuable feedbacks during the work of the pilot phase (refer to Madrid HoS report).
- The issued Certificate of Quality awarded for each individual planning programme will place emphasis on the quality of the programme's specialisation (refer to Madrid HoS report).
- As done in the Pilot Phase, the recognition itself will be displayed on the AESOP website in order to promote a proactive and cooperative process of collective improvement of the quality in planning education among the AESOP member schools.
- The application of AESOP members is done on a voluntary basis.
- Each application will be evaluated by three members of the Excellence in Education Board assigned by the EEB Chair.
- The QR Certificate will be valid for a period of 6 years.

Daniel Galland  
Chair of AESOP EEB  
Lisbon, July 2017

## Core requirements for a high quality European Planning Education

### AESOP Working Group on the Curriculum of Planning Education, 1995

This statement was written in 1995 by the working group on Planning Education at the time established by AESOP with the aim of defining a set of common principles suitable for a high quality planning education all over Europe. These “core requirements” have been adopted by the AESOP community.

Since 1995, these guidelines are used to assess the applicants for AESOP full membership. These are the common principles and values shared by our member schools.

#### I. Preamble

Stimulated by the process of the unification of Europe, which recently got even more memorandum due to the tremendous changes in the former countries of middle and eastern Europe, the 1980's saw two important initiatives to bring the various European planning traditions together in European wide organisations working on the international level. 1985 saw the foundation of the European council of Town Planning (ECTP), representing the planning profession. 1987 saw the foundation of the Association European Schools of Planning, representing planning education. Ever since their foundation both organisations have been working on the development and formulation of core requirements for planning education and planning professionals.

Common to both initiatives was a deep concern with planning education and professional standards in a situation in which national borders between the European countries were soon to become really permeable. Common to both was also the awareness European countries to a large extent face the same kinds of planning problems concerning the future of their urbanised and metropolitan areas, their infrastructure, their rural areas, their in general and their economic development, whereas at the same time these European countries are becoming more and more aware that exactly their different in cultural heritage, in their built up areas and in their countryside, are perhaps the most important assets of the continent. Thus the need was felt, not only to combine forces, but also to start discussion on the development of a common paradigm for European planning as such: both at the national levels taking account of specific variations and '*couleur locale*' - and at the international, i.e. European, level.

#### II. The core of planning education

Being an organisation of planning schools, AESOP's main concern is the advancement of planning education throughout Europe.

Planning in Europe has developed in a great variety of institutional settings and involves many disciplinary backgrounds. The ECTP already indicated in appendix A of its charter for

town planners, that the activity of (town) planning is the work of researchers, practitioners, of proposers of policies and programmes for action, of designers of projects and of implementers. But whatever these varieties and whatever the different in purpose, style, content and methods of planning in real life circumstances, planning as a generic activity is concerned with the advancement of optimal physical conditions for the needs of society giving due account to both the long-term socio-economic developments and environmental conditions. Planning's ultimate goal is to ensure sustainable development of society and environment.

Planning education then involves the scientific study of and training in creative conceptual and practical thinking on the relation between society and environment at various territorial levels and in the search, development and advancement of opportunities for purposeful intervention in that relation to ensure sustainable development.

The core of the curriculum of planning education is threefold:

- Theoretical and practical knowledge on the desirability of legitimacy of and conditions for purposeful planning intervention;
- Theoretical and practical knowledge on the preparation and advancement of such interventions and on judging the effects thus generated;
- Technological knowledge and skills to actually engage in planning activities in real life situations.

### III. Core curriculum requirements

As planning education varies so much over Europe, reflecting each country's specifics in planning practice, in dominant disciplinary backgrounds and in their understanding of the essential requirements of the planning profession, any statement on the core curriculum of European planning education must pay due respect to these variances, and can not and should not be elaborated in too much detail. However, there are common requirements to which every planning school should adhere. These concern the main fields to be covered and the length and intensity of the course.

As for the main fields to be covered, any planning education should be organised in such a way, that its students will get the opportunity to:

#### A. Acquire due knowledge for:

- the nature, purpose, theory and method of planning
- the history of planning as an institution and a profession]
- the cultural different in planning on a European and international level
- developments in the natural and man made (economic and social) environment and knowledge of the impact of men's exploitation, i.e. possibilities for sustainable development

- the political, legal and institutional context of planning practice both at the national level and at the (evolving) international i.e. European level
- the instruments and performance of instruments for implementing planning policies
- specialised fields in planning
- relationships across and between these fields

**B. Develop practical competence in:**

- methods for problem definition and collaborative problem-solving in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary settings
- thinking in terms of concepts, instruments and measures and management of knowledge for practical application
- techniques for data collection, for data analyses and synthesising, including modern information technology
- valuing and managing the built and natural environment
- anticipating future needs of society, including the appreciation of new trends and emerging issues in planning
- methods for generating strategic planning proposals and the advancement of implementation
- integrating aesthetic and design dimensions in planning proposals
- devising plans, programmes and measures and guiding the implementation policies
- written, oral and graphic communication

**C. Develop an attitude i.e. a feeling for:**

- planning to be basically oriented towards solving the needs of society within the framework of sustainable development
- the cultural embedding of the man-made environment
- the value dimension of planning
- the ethical implications of planning

Next to these any planning education should offer its students opportunities to specialise in particular fields of planning such as housing, infrastructure and transport, recreation, land development and building, design and international i.e. European affairs.

In order to give due attention to the threefold core of the curriculum as elaborated in the above mentioned fields of knowledge, competence, attitude and specialisation, the education and training of future professional planners implies a rather lengthy and intensive programme.

A full time programme (undergraduate and graduate) will require a duration of at least 4 of education and training. If the programme is at graduate level a 2 year course will be acceptable, provided the undergraduate programme is supportive to a planning education.

In case of a part time education a 3 year course on graduate level will be necessary, with the same provision on the undergraduate programme and provided the students are actually working in planning.

As for the intensity of the programme, the technological part of the core curriculum in particular requires regular exposure to and interaction with planning practice. Project work-, confrontation with real life planning problems, preferably/if possible with the participation of professional planners in the programme, multiple laboratory exercises in developing planning solutions, a period of intensive in- practice-training i.e. apprenticeship or placement and "learning-by-doing" are distinguishing marks of a fully fledged planning education.

#### **IV. Advancement of planning education**

AESOP and especially its individual members will try to ensure that planning education in the European member states follows the core curriculum, giving due account to local and national differences in cultural and institutional setting.

AESOP will develop and maintain a directory of planning schools in member states that adhere to the curriculum and will promote the dissemination of planning thought on the European level.

AESOP will look for any opportunity to advance the requirements of the core curriculum to become the European standard and will take any step necessary to reach this end. Of special importance in this respect is the future accreditation of planners in the various member states. On this special topic AESOP will seek the collaboration of the ECTP to ensure that future European regulations will take account of their joint proposals.

## **AESOP HOS meeting in Madrid.**

### **Report from the Workshop on AESOP quality recognition for planning programs.**

#### **1. Context**

The workshop was well attended with 45 participants. Anna Geppert and Maros Finka introduced the discussion, presenting the pilot phase of the AESOP quality recognition process:

- A working group on AESOP quality recognition (WG) has been established in 2014 in order to test the interest and feasibility of an AESOP procedure (and related certificate) of quality recognition of planning programs. This WG consists of: Maros Finka, Anna Geppert, Francesco Lo Piccolo and Kristina Nilsson.
- After defining a methodological framework, a pilot phase offered AESOP schools the opportunity to apply for such certificate, on voluntary base and without cost. As many as 22 AESOP member schools participated in the pilot phase.
- The WG has met in Bratislava in January 2015 in order to evaluate the submissions and to test the procedure of evaluation itself.
- Globally, the experience appears quite positive. Also, the WG asked the community to discuss the results of the experience and possible next steps in the AESOP HoS meeting – and CoRep meeting – in Madrid, March 2015.

#### **2. Discussion**

The following questions have been addressed by the community.

##### **Shall AESOP continue the process and deliver a certificate of quality recognition for planning programs?**

The answer was by majority very positive. Such certificate will support the schools in their national contexts as well as set a milestone in the European recognition of the planning profession, a common endeavour of AESOP and ECTP.

- *Consequently, the proposal of establishing an AESOP quality recognition standard phase will be addressed to the CoRep at its next meeting in Prague, in order to pass from the pilot phase to the standard phase of the already approved Quality Recognition Project.*

##### **Are the criteria satisfactory and sufficient to ensure a convincing and fair assessment?**

Globally, they are. However, from this first round, it appears that some elements were unclear to the participants, in particular many schools submitted several programs in one application. In addition the discussion underlined the necessity to avoid criteria discriminating the schools acting more nationally/regionally than European/internationally.

- *Consequently, the WG will clarify and re-edit the application form before entering the standard phase.*

## **How should the certification be expressed?**

The discussion showed the necessity to find the balance between two elements:

1/ a single standard of certificate rather than categories, because creating categories could lead to misinterpretations and AESOP has only one definition of quality expressed by core curriculum

2/ the effort to express the diversity of our planning programs and recognize the quality of specialisations offered by different programs.

- *Consequently, the certificate will consist of two parts:*
  - *A standard section certifying the quality of the planning program according to the European standards expressed by AESOP Core curriculum.*
  - *A specific section highlighting the quality of the programs specialisation. In the application, schools will be invited to indicate this specialisation and demonstrate its quality.*
- *Additional remarks:*
  - *One specialisation only can be highlighted for each program already in self-evaluation application.*
  - *The list of specialisations will be developed progressively but shall remain short and clear in order to ensure the visibility of the certificates.*

## **What should be the next steps ?**

When a certification process is established, a large number of applications may be expected. The WG suggests that in the next phase, a larger number of colleagues contribute to the assessment.

- *Consequently, the WG will propose to ExCo and CoRep to transform AESOP Pool of Experts to AESOP Quality Board as AESOP responsible unit for certification*
- *Consequently, the CoRep will be asked to propose up to 3 experts per country for the AESOP Quality Board:*
  - *They should be people who are/have been in charge of a planning program, preferably with an experience in evaluation*
  - *They will sign an ethical commitment*
  - *The WG will propose a simple set of guidelines to the CoRep*

The composition of the expert panel created from the AESOP Quality Board members for each evaluation must combine the knowledge of the national context, an international footprint, and the relation with planning practice.

- *Consequently, each application will be reviewed by a panel of:*
  - *One academic from the same country*
  - *One academic from another European country*
  - *One practitioner, nominated in coordination with associations such as ECTP.*

The AESOP Quality Board as a group of experts will also be the guardians of the process.

- *Consequently, they will be collectively responsible for :*
  - *Harmonizing the evaluations, updating the list of specialisations.*
  - *Improving the evaluation process, keeping in mind that it needs to avoid time-consuming bureaucracies and remain simple.*
  - *The CoRep remains the decisional body with regard to any important evolutions in the quality recognition.*

While members of the working group wish to retire from the next phase, they are aware that a transition needs to be done and therefore suggest that :

- one joint meeting is performed with the WG and all panel members (autumn 2015)
- one member from the WG acts as chair for the first mandate of the experts.

### **What about the first applicants of the pilot phase?**

The discussion suggested that they should benefit of the quality recognition certificate as soon as it is established.

- *Consequently, the WG will :*
  - *Before July, return to the applicants asking for complementary information and/or clarifications, if relevant.*
  - *If the CoRep agrees on the certification, prepare the mock-up of certificate so that it can be delivered to the members.*



## Information for the AESOP Quality Recognition Report Standard Phase Application 2017-2018

### I - GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of the school	
Name of the programme	
Address	
Website	
Official representative of the school	
Contact person	

### II - OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

Level of university education/degree	
Duration of the study in the programme	(semesters/years)
Profile of graduates	(max. 200 words)
Scientific objectives/knowledge offered	(max. 300 words)
Professional objectives/skills offered	(max. 300 words)
Requirements for entering the programme (previous education profile)	(max. 200 words)
Standard presentation (optional)	(if applicable)

### III - CONTEXT and CONTENTS

Position in the academic environment: country, university, department	(max. 100 words)
Accreditation obtained (if applicable)	(accreditation body, date and validation period, awarded rights)
Team	List, qualifications and engagement of the staff members
Programme structure	1. Curriculum
	2. Number of credits
	3. ECTS if applicable
Teaching pedagogy: Methods of teaching and their relationship to professional skills	(max. 300 words)
Title(s) awarded (single, double, multiple degree)	Title/ universities involved in case of joint diploma
Students in the programme	1. Number (total/per year)
	2. Percentage of international students
	3. Examples of countries of origin

IV -TEACHING SPECIALIZATION	
In the courses (max. 50 words each)	1. Main areas highlighting the specialization of the programme
	2. Main courses justifying the specialization of the programme
	3. Teaching pedagogy in relation to the main courses
In the practical activities (max. 50 words each)	1. (localities, length, percentage of students)
	2. Workshops (localities, length, number of students)
	3. Study tours (localities, length, percentage of students)
	4. Other
In other activities (max. 50 words each)	
In the final thesis and/or project	1. Planning topics for the thesis
	2. Thesis topics in connection to research projects
	3. Other
Involvement of foreign teachers	1. Visiting professors relating to the specialization of the programme
	2. Guest lecturers
	3. Other forms of involvement (reviewers, evaluators, jury members ...)
Language(s) of tuition	(monolingual / which languages, multilingual/which combination of languages)

V - RESEARCH SPECIALIZATION	
Main research programmes/projects in relation to the teaching specialization	(max. 50 words)
Research specialization of the staff teaching in this particular programme	(in case of Master's degrees)
Research-based teaching	(if applicable)

VI - NETWORKING DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME	
International institutional collaborations (max. 50 words each)	1. Active cooperation agreements (specify type of cooperation)
	2. Erasmus (specify number of agreements, institutions, number of incoming and outgoing students)
	3. Joint courses
	4. Joint diplomas
	5. Mobility of students (capacity)
	6. Mobility of staff (capacity)

**VII - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HIGHLIGHTING  
DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME**

*Required (max. 300 words)*