

EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package - Higher Education Programme (SCOPE-HE)

TERMS OF REFERENCE 09/SCOPE-HE/TOR/IX/2024

CALL FOR TENDERS

Comparability Study of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

<p>ABOUT THE PROGRAMME</p>	<p>1</p> <p>The EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package – Higher Education Programme (SCOPE-HE) is a joint initiative funded by the European Union (EU). It aims to support, among others, interconnected and dynamic higher education, research clusters, and technical and vocational education and training between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the EU. Implemented by Nuffic, in collaboration with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), this programme will run for 48 months.</p> <p>SCOPE-HE aims to achieve the following objectives, leveraging the success and experience of the EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region Programme (SHARE) and Erasmus+ Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of students and staff of higher education institutions (HEIs), including disadvantaged groups, participating in virtual and physical inter-ASEAN student scholarship and staff exchange programmes. • Support mobility between EU and ASEAN HEIs, notably at the staff level. • Support the implementation of the ASEAN Higher Education Space. • Develop the comparability of reference systems between ASEAN and EU frameworks.
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**DESCRIPTION
OF THE
STUDY**

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Sustainable connectivity has emerged as a cornerstone of EU cooperation with ASEAN, as highlighted in pivotal strategies such as the EU Global Gateway Joint Communication and the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (2021). Enhancing intra-regional mobility and people-to-people connectivity, as outlined in the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, is vital for community building in Southeast Asia.

According to the final conclusions of SHARE, a long-term commitment to exploring common ground and developing joint principles to achieve regional alignment is necessary in ASEAN. However, harmonising educational systems is a complex endeavour, particularly for higher education, which is characterised by a high degree of institutional autonomy and self-responsibility.

The ASEAN Quality Assurance Network developed the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) to respond to this regional challenge. It comprises a set of international quality assurance core principles as benchmarks for national quality assurance bodies or external quality assurance agencies to ensure the quality of higher education.

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, or European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders. They play an important role in the development of national and institutional quality assurance systems across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and cross-border cooperation. Engagement with quality assurance processes, particularly external ones, allows European higher education systems to demonstrate quality and increase transparency, thus helping to build mutual trust and better recognition of their qualifications, programmes, and other provisions.

SCOPE-HE aims to conduct a series of comparability studies as well as capacity-building workshops with relevant ASEAN bodies and national authorities to support the implementation of regional quality assurance to tackle mobility challenges.

This SCOPE-HE call for tenders is to commission a comparability study of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) and the ESG. The purpose of this comparative analysis is to contribute to mutual trust between the two regions and improve the understanding of the AQAF in Europe and of the ESG in ASEAN. It is expected that the mutual understanding, transparency, and trust generated by the process would be able to facilitate qualification recognition, support the mobility of learners and staff, and enhance opportunities for future cooperation between ASEAN and Europe.

Experts, scholars and/or practitioners and administrators knowledgeable on this topic are welcome to participate in this call. The research team, in close coordination with the SCOPE-HE team, will produce a study that is expected to:

- Compare the ESG and the principles and processes of the AQAF (and its review guidelines).
- Conduct a series of expert consultations in ASEAN and the EU to identify challenges in the implementation of the AQAF in its regional context and draw on similar experiences in the EHEA to suggest how to address this situation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide recommendations on a way forward for further ESG–AQAF alignment and coordination that would enhance the international recognition of learner qualification as well as inter- and intraregional mobility. - Suggest concrete actions to be undertaken by SCOPE-HE in a three-year period to address the challenges identified above and implement the recommendations. <p>This study will be beneficial for key stakeholders in higher education, including but not limited to HEIs in ASEAN and the EU; the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network; the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education; national and regional quality assurance agencies; and other relevant regional and national organisations.</p> <p>The objective of this comparative analysis is to promote mutual understanding and interactions between ASEAN and European experiences, as well as lessons learnt for quality assurance policies and processes. SCOPE-HE hopes to build mutual understanding between the two regions to support regional integration, enhance global competitiveness and facilitate more (inter)regional student mobility.</p>
<p>ELIGIBILITY</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<p>This call for tenders is eligible for organisations or individuals in the EU or ASEAN region who meet the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Lead Researcher should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reside in ASEAN or the EU; • be an academic (professor/lecturer/researcher/administrator), preferably with a specialisation in higher education, higher education reference system in the EU and ASEAN, public policy or other related areas; • have a master’s degree, a PhD (preferred) or an equivalent qualification; • demonstrate research expertise through relevant publications and/or projects; and • have an established network of professional contacts in the field within the EU and ASEAN. <p>(optional) up to THREE junior experts / research assistants with the following qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • master’s (preferable) or bachelor’s degree relevant to the areas of research; and • relevant knowledge and prior research/project/professional experience on the topic. 2. The researcher(s) needs to have a proven track record in implementing projects and/or producing research or publications on the recognition of qualifications framework. 3. The applicant organisation/individuals must have a solid and extensive professional and academic network in the EU and ASEAN with key stakeholders, agencies or HEIs.

EXPECTED OUTPUT & SERVICES	4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct desk research and qualitative interviews to understand the reference systems and implementation of quality assurance frameworks at the regional (EU and ASEAN) level. The main focus is on existing regional Quality assurance frameworks, i.e., AQAF and ESG. 2. Serve as a resource person at consultations and make recommendations to EU and ASEAN stakeholders in terms of aligning the quality assurance frameworks to support long-term connectivity within ASEAN and between the EU and ASEAN. 3. Provide a research report of approximately 40–60 pages (excluding annexes) addressing the abovementioned objectives. This should contain an executive summary; research background; purpose and scope; methodology; literature review; analysis of the interview results with key stakeholders; conclusions; and suggestions for follow-up actions or research (medium and long-term). 4. Commit to support the dissemination of the study's results to key EU and ASEAN stakeholders, in collaboration with the SCOPE-HE team, during entire duration of SCOPE-HE (Feb 2024–Jan 2028). <p>All documents and materials produced as a result of the services rendered under these terms of reference, including strategies, reports, application forms, report forms, etc., are considered transferable deliverables. Intellectual property rights of the aforementioned items belong to SCOPE-HE (specifically, the DAAD as implementing partner) without exception. The results, however, can be used for further research to contribute to the publicly available body of knowledge.</p>																						
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¹ The final timeline will be agreed upon signing the contract

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APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCEDURE	7	<p>Interested applicants should apply as a research team comprising ONE Lead Researcher and (optional) up to THREE Assisting Experts / Research Assistants.</p> <p>The application should comprise the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> CV of the Lead Researcher and, if applicable, CV of each junior expert / research assistant. All CVs should indicate that the eligibility criteria are fulfilled. A comprehensive proposal to address the expected outputs listed above, comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the research design and methodology, including potential ethical issues or anticipated difficulties relating to data collection. Preliminary bibliography for literature review (if available). Proposed work plan and timeline, including an indicative date for the start of the research. Detailed cost breakdown (including daily rates for each participating researcher). <p>The selection committee will send an invitation letter to shortlisted applicants.</p> <p>The proposals will be evaluated as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="440 1554 1394 1966"> <thead> <tr> <th>Composition</th> <th>Item of Evaluation</th> <th>Weightage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Researcher Profiles</td> <td>Researcher CVs</td> <td rowspan="2">30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Track record of past relevant projects</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cost Efficiency</td> <td>Submitted budget (cost breakdown)</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3">Research Proposal</td> <td>Research design</td> <td rowspan="3">50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bibliography</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Feasibility of the work plan and budget plan</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Total Score</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Composition	Item of Evaluation	Weightage	Researcher Profiles	Researcher CVs	30%	Track record of past relevant projects	Cost Efficiency	Submitted budget (cost breakdown)	20%	Research Proposal	Research design	50%	Bibliography	Feasibility of the work plan and budget plan	Total Score		100%
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		3. The successful applicant will receive a formal selection statement to initiate the tender process.
DEADLINE & CONTACT	8	Please send your application in a single PDF to scope-he@daad.de The deadline for the submission of applications is Sunday, 27th October 2024, 12.00PM (GMT+7)

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