



European Council of Leading Business Schools

ECLBS

ECLBS Accreditation Handbook — Master Programmes

**Second Cycle · QF-EHEA Cycle 2 · EQF Level 7 · Including MBA
and Executive MBA**

To be read together with the ECLBS Accreditation Handbook (General)

1. How to use this Handbook

This Handbook contains the **assessment criteria** applied by ECLBS to Master programmes and equivalent second-cycle provision, including MBA and Executive MBA programmes. It is the drafting template for the institution's self-assessment report (SAR) and the reporting template for the review panel.

Procedure, eligibility, membership, decision rules, appeals and publication are governed by the **ECLBS Accreditation Handbook (General)**. This Handbook does not repeat them.

Each criterion is presented in three parts: **The institution is asked to** (what must be described and evidenced), **Meets quality requirements** (threshold benchmark) and **Exceeds quality requirements** (enhanced benchmark; *n/a* where none is defined).

****Essential criteria are marked with an asterisk (*). Criteria 1.1 and 3.1.1** are non-negotiable: conditions may never be imposed on them, and failure of either results in refusal.**

Rating scale: Exceptional · Exceeds quality requirements · Meets quality requirements · Does not meet quality requirements · Not relevant.

2. Second-cycle reference points

Reference	Expectation
QF-EHEA	Second cycle; Dublin Descriptors for the second cycle
EQF	Level 7
Volume	Normally 60–120 ECTS credits at second-cycle level; other national credit volumes accepted where ECTS equivalence is demonstrated
Combined volume	The first and second cycle together normally comprise not fewer than 300 ECTS credits; where the master programme carries fewer than 90 ECTS, the institution must justify how the second-cycle outcomes are reached
Workload	25–30 hours of total student workload per ECTS credit, consistently applied
Final work	A master thesis or equivalent major independent work, normally carrying not fewer than 15 ECTS, demonstrating originality of application, methodological command and critical judgement
Outcome	A second-cycle qualification giving access to doctoral study and to advanced professional or managerial roles

Second-cycle graduates must be able to apply knowledge and problem-solving in new or unfamiliar environments within broader or multidisciplinary contexts, integrate knowledge and handle complexity, formulate judgements with incomplete data including reflection on ethical responsibilities, communicate conclusions and the underpinning rationale clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and continue to study in a largely self-directed or autonomous manner.

2.1 MBA and Executive MBA provision

Where the programme is designated MBA or Executive MBA, the following apply in addition:

- the contents must be in line with the **EQUAL MBA Guidelines**;
- the programme must be **general management** in orientation, integrating the core management functions, rather than a specialised master in a single management discipline;
- **admission requires documented, verified professional experience** (see criterion 2.4);

- the programme must include a substantial proportion of structured contact (**e.g., a defined minimum threshold such as 120 hours**), appropriate to the didactic approach, which the institution must quantify and justify;
- the cohort's professional experience must be treated as a **learning resource** and be explicitly built into the didactical concept.

A programme designated “MBA” which does not satisfy these expectations will normally receive a condition under criterion 3.1.2 (rationale for degree and programme name).

Chapter 0 — General information

Descriptive; not rated.

0.1 Programme identification

Item	Entry
Higher education institution (HEI)	
Awarding institution(s), if different	
Programme name (English and original language)	
Title/degree awarded	
Type of programme	Master degree / MBA / Executive MBA
Qualifications framework reference (EQF / NQF level)	
Projected study time; credits (national and ECTS); hours	
Credits required for admission (first-cycle volume)	
Mode of study	Full-time / Part-time
Didactic approach	On-campus / Blended learning / Distance learning
Double or joint degree	Yes, with: / No / Optional, with:
Delivery location(s) and any partner or franchise arrangement	
Professional experience required for admission	Yes (specify years) / No
Initial start of the programme	
Type of accreditation sought	Interim / Initial / Re-accreditation
For re-accreditation: last accreditation period	
Language(s) of instruction	

0.2 Institutional context

Describe the institution, its legal status and state approval or authorisation, its mission, and the portfolio of programmes offered. Explain how the programme fits within the portfolio of the department and the institution, and how it relates to any first-cycle programme feeding into it. Attach an organigram.

0.3 Development of the programme and implementation of previous recommendations

For initial accreditation where students have graduated, and for re-accreditation, describe the evolution of the programme; supply three years of statistical data (applicants, admitted, enrolment, percentage of international students, success rate, graduation rate, average duration of study, average final grade, attrition, and for MBA/EMBA the average years of professional experience and average age of the intake); present evaluation outcomes and the measures taken; and, for re-accreditation, the measures taken to implement the recommendations of the last ECLBS accreditation.

Chapter 1 — Objectives

1.1 Objectives of the study programme * (*non-negotiable*)

The institution is asked to enumerate and substantiate the qualification objectives, establish their relevance to the intended qualification, and align them with the national qualifications framework and the second-cycle descriptors.

Meets quality requirements. The qualification objectives are clearly articulated and persuasively justified in relation to the target group, the professional field addressed and the societal context of the discipline. They encompass academic competence, holistic employability and the personal development of each student. Subject-specific and extra-curricular objectives and the intended skills correspond to the proficiency level intended on graduation at second-cycle level, and to the specifications of the national qualifications framework. The objectives are clearly differentiated from those of any related first-cycle programme.

Exceeds quality requirements. The institution systematically grounds the objectives in the identified needs of the target group. They are documented, reviewed regularly for relevance and currency, and adjusted accordingly.

1.2 International orientation of the programme design *

The institution is asked to describe the international orientation of the programme concept and the international elements incorporated in its design. (Implementation is assessed in section 3.4.)

Meets quality requirements. The design takes due account of the necessary international elements, and graduate employability is addressed appropriately.

Exceeds quality requirements. Through a deliberate emphasis on internationality in teaching and study components — curriculum content, academic staff, practical experience abroad — the programme imparts both knowledge and the skills enabling graduates to handle international responsibilities at management level.

1.3 Positioning of the study programme

1.3.1 Positioning in the educational market

The institution is asked to explain and justify the positioning strategy in the educational market, in its regional, national or international context, and to identify the comparator programmes against which it competes.

Meets quality requirements. The rationale for the positioning is convincing.

Exceeds quality requirements. The institution has conducted a comprehensive market analysis and has used the findings to craft a distinctive and competitive profile.

1.3.2 Positioning in the job market for graduates (“employability”)

The institution is asked to explain how the qualification objectives facilitate graduates in securing or advancing employment at the level addressed. (Implementation is assessed in section 3.6.)

Meets quality requirements. The rationale for graduate employability, grounded in the stated objectives, is convincing. Prospective employment opportunities, including career progression for experienced entrants, are plausibly outlined.

Exceeds quality requirements. The institution has thoroughly analysed the graduate job market and systematically integrated the findings into the programme.

1.3.3 Positioning within the institution’s overall strategic concept

The institution is asked to explain how the programme is positioned within the institution’s overarching framework.

Meets quality requirements. Integration into the institution’s overall strategic concept is persuasively demonstrated. The objectives align with the institution’s mission and strategic planning.

Exceeds quality requirements. The objectives form a cornerstone of the institutional or faculty strategy and are implemented sustainably.

Chapter 2 — Admission

2.1 Admission requirements *

The institution is asked to specify where the admission requirements are defined and to justify them, including the first-cycle qualification and credit volume required for entry.

Meets quality requirements. The admission requirements are defined and comprehensible. National requirements for entry to second-cycle study are presented and taken into account. The required prior qualification is appropriate to the level and field of the programme.

Exceeds quality requirements. In addition, the admission requirements are oriented towards the strategic goals of the programme.

2.2 Counselling for prospective students

The institution is asked to describe the counselling services offered to applicants.

Meets quality requirements. Applicants can turn directly to a student counselling service or another helpdesk for clarification of specific questions, personal aptitude and career perspectives. Personal dialogue is provided through defined office hours, telephone and e-mail.

Exceeds quality requirements. The institution ensures constant availability and responds quickly to enquiries. Counselling options are based on the target group's needs, including the needs of working professionals.

2.3 Selection procedure (*if relevant*)

The institution is asked to describe and justify the selection procedure.

Meets quality requirements. The selection procedure is transparent and ensures that qualified students are admitted.

Exceeds quality requirements. The procedure was developed on the basis of the programme's objectives, is periodically reviewed for effectiveness and adapted in line with the results.

2.4 Professional experience (*essential criterion for master programmes that require professional experience, including all MBA and Executive MBA programmes*)

The institution is asked to describe and give reasons for the professional experience required for this programme, and to explain how it is verified.

Meets quality requirements. The required professional experience corresponds to the defined qualification profile of entrants and to the programme's objectives. Certified proof of the experience is presented at the time of admission and is retained on file.

- For an **MBA** programme: at least **two years** of professional experience after the first higher education qualification.
- For an **Executive MBA** programme: at least **seven years** of professional experience after the first higher education qualification, some of it at a leadership level.

Exceeds quality requirements. The quality and duration of the required professional experience are systematically derived from the programme's objectives and go beyond the level normally required.

2.5 Recognition of prior learning and prior qualifications (*if relevant*)

The institution is asked to describe how prior qualifications, periods of study and, where applicable, prior experiential learning are recognised for admission and advanced standing.

Meets quality requirements. Recognition is regulated in binding rules, applied consistently and documented. Where the state has ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention, recognition of foreign qualifications is conducted in accordance with it; otherwise an analogous approach is applied. Decisions are reasoned and open to appeal. Any credit awarded for prior learning is limited and justified against

the second-cycle outcomes.

Exceeds quality requirements. The rules also provide for validation of non-formal and informal learning, with defined evidence requirements, assessment methods and credit limits; the procedure is periodically reviewed.

2.6 Ensuring foreign language proficiency *

The institution is asked to describe the measures taken to ensure that students can successfully complete courses taught in a foreign language.

Meets quality requirements. The admission requirements — a required proficiency level or a required result in a concrete language test — or preparatory language courses ensure that students can successfully complete the programme, including coursework, additional literature, counselling services and extracurricular activities.

Exceeds quality requirements. *n/a*

2.7 Transparency and documentation of the admission procedure and decision *

The institution is asked to describe how the admission procedure and decision are communicated within the institution and to the public.

Meets quality requirements. The procedure is described, documented and accessible. The admission decision is based on transparent criteria and communicated in writing.

Exceeds quality requirements. In addition, the decision contains detailed information on the results of the admission procedure.

Chapter 3 — Contents, structure and didactical concept

3.1 Contents

3.1.1 Logic and conceptual coherence * (*non-negotiable*)

The institution is asked to describe how the qualification objectives are implemented in the curriculum.

Meets quality requirements. The curriculum adequately reflects the qualification objectives. Module and course contents are well balanced, logically connected and oriented towards the intended learning outcomes. Specialisations or optional electives enable students to acquire additional competences. The curriculum demonstrates second-cycle progression: advanced, research-informed and, where appropriate, research-based content that builds on and clearly exceeds first-cycle study.

For master programmes requiring professional experience, additionally: the contents take the students' prior professional experience into account and refer to it.

For MBA programmes, additionally: the contents are in line with the EQUAL MBA Guidelines and cover the core general-management functions in an integrated manner.

Exceeds quality requirements. Modules and courses consistently reflect the strategic orientation of the programme. They clearly meet the requirements of the job market. Additional electives enhance graduate employability.

3.1.2 Rationale for degree and programme name *

The institution is asked to give reasons for the chosen programme name and awarded degree.

Meets quality requirements. The degree and programme name correspond to the contents of the curriculum and to the programme objectives, and are not misleading as to level, field or professional entitlement. Use of the designations “MBA” and “Executive MBA” is justified against the expectations in §2.1.

Exceeds quality requirements. *n/a*

3.1.3 Integration of theory and practice *

The institution is asked to describe how theoretical and practical contents are linked, including any consultancy project, company project, internship or applied capstone and its regulation, supervision and assessment.

Meets quality requirements. Theoretical questions are, where possible, explained by means of practical examples. Practical components are regulated, supervised, assessed and credit-bearing.

Exceeds quality requirements. Theory and practice are systematically interrelated throughout the curriculum. Theoretical discourse and practical application complement each other in developing the qualification profile. Live organisational problems are used as vehicles for advanced analysis.

3.1.4 Interdisciplinary thinking

The institution is asked to describe how students are qualified for interdisciplinary thinking, with examples.

Meets quality requirements. There is evidence that the programme qualifies students for interdisciplinary thinking.

Exceeds quality requirements. The programme emphasises preparation for occupations requiring trans- or interdisciplinary knowledge.

3.1.5 Ethical aspects, responsibility and sustainability

The institution is asked to describe how ethical aspects are communicated in the programme.

Meets quality requirements. Ethical implications — including those of economic and juridical ways of thinking and acting — are appropriately communicated. Students are required to reflect on the ethical responsibilities attaching to judgement under incomplete information.

Exceeds quality requirements. Identification and reflection of ethical aspects are strongly promoted,

treated as key competences, and form an integral part of the programme's qualification objectives, including responsible management and sustainability.

3.1.6 Methods and academic practice *

The institution is asked to describe how the programme ensures the acquisition of methodological competence and the ability to work academically.

Meets quality requirements. Students acquire methodological competences and are enabled to work academically at second-cycle level, including research design, quantitative and qualitative methods appropriate to the field, and critical engagement with the literature. Rules on academic integrity, plagiarism, **and the acceptable use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)** are taught, published and enforced.

Exceeds quality requirements. Methodological competences and academic practice are thoroughly trained. Students are equipped with the skills necessary for research-oriented work and for applying those skills in their vocational fields, to a standard supporting progression to doctoral study.

3.1.7 Examination and final thesis *

The institution is asked to describe the type and level of examinations and of the master thesis or final project, including supervision arrangements, credit volume, assessment criteria and the second-marking or moderation arrangement.

Meets quality requirements. All examinations defined for the modules or courses are suited in format and content to ascertaining the intended learning outcomes. Requirements accord with the intended qualification level. Examinations are characterised by a wide variety of test formats. The master thesis or final project is supervised, carries an appropriate credit volume, and is evaluated on the basis of previously published and coherently applied criteria, rules and procedures, with independent second assessment. Students demonstrate, particularly in the thesis, their ability to work academically and their achievement of the qualification objectives.

Exceeds quality requirements. The concrete test items are particularly suitable for ascertaining the defined learning outcomes and examine the ability to reflect deeply on academic problems and apply academic methods. Students receive feedback linked, where necessary, to advice on the learning process. Final theses and projects comply with the standards for international publication.

3.2 Structure

3.2.1 Modular structure of the programme *

The institution is asked to provide an overview of the curriculum:

Item	Entry
Projected study time	
Number of credits (national and ECTS)	
Workload per credit (hours)	
Number of modules/courses	
Time required for the master thesis/project and credits awarded	
Number of contact hours (<i>for MBA programmes: describe how the substantial proportion of structured contact required by the EQUAL MBA Guidelines is ensured</i>)	
Compulsory / elective ratio	
Credits allocated to practical or project components	

Meets quality requirements. The structure supports smooth implementation of the curriculum and helps students reach the defined learning outcomes. The programme consists of modules or courses with credits assigned on the basis of necessary student workload. Practical components, where they exist, are designed and integrated so credits can be acquired. Module and course descriptions state intended learning outcomes and the information defined in the ECTS Users' Guide.

For MBA programmes: depending on the didactic approach, the programme includes a substantial proportion of structured contact.

Exceeds quality requirements. *n/a*

3.2.2 Study and examination regulations *

The institution is asked to specify where the regulations are defined and to supply them.

Meets quality requirements. There are legally binding study and examination regulations containing all necessary rules and procedures and taking account of national requirements. The programme is designed so that students can study for a period at another institution, or undertake an internship, without extending overall study time. Recognition of degrees and periods of study at other institutions is regulated in accordance with, or analogously to, the Lisbon Recognition Convention where ratified; recognition of periods of practical work, where intended, is clearly defined. The final grade is supplied with an ECTS grading table. A Diploma Supplement is issued, where applicable, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language.

Exceeds quality requirements. *n/a*

3.2.3 Feasibility of the study workload *

The institution is asked to describe how it is ensured that the programme can be completed within the projected study time, having particular regard to part-time and executive delivery alongside employment.

Meets quality requirements. Feasibility is ensured by suitable curriculum design, plausible workload calculation, an adequate number and frequency of examinations, appropriate support services, and academic and general counselling. Where the programme is delivered to students in full-time employment, the compatibility of the delivery pattern with working life is demonstrated.

Addendum for initial accreditation where the programme has been completed once, and for re-accreditation: the institution takes into account evaluation findings, including student feedback and the success rate.

Exceeds quality requirements. *n/a*

3.2.4 Equality of opportunity

The institution is asked to describe how gender equality and equality of opportunity are ensured.

Meets quality requirements. The institution ensures gender equality and non-discrimination. Students with disabilities receive affirmative measures concerning time and formal standards throughout the programme and its examinations. Students in special circumstances — single parents, international students, students with a migration background or from non-academic backgrounds — receive particular assistance.

Exceeds quality requirements. The measures are periodically reviewed and adapted in accordance with the results.

3.3 Didactical concept

3.3.1 Logic and plausibility of the didactical concept *

The institution is asked to describe the didactical concept.

Meets quality requirements. The concept is described, plausible and oriented towards the programme objectives. It allows for different teaching and learning methods, such as case studies or practical projects. Students are encouraged to take an active role in shaping the learning process.

For programmes requiring professional experience, additionally: the concept deliberately mobilises the participants' professional experience as a learning resource.

For blended-learning and distance-learning programmes, additionally: the methods are suited to distance learning and include independent work with course materials, lectures, business games and case studies. The selection and kind of didactic materials correspond to the programme objectives.

Exceeds quality requirements. The methods are systematically derived from the objectives and oriented towards the intended learning outcomes of each module, for instance through regular use of

case studies or practical projects.

For blended-learning and distance-learning programmes, additionally: the approach is innovative and can stimulate the further development of distance learning.

3.3.2 Course materials *

The institution is asked to describe the preparation and further development of course materials.

Meets quality requirements. Materials are oriented towards the intended learning outcomes and correspond to the required qualification level, including current research literature. They are up to date, digitally accessible, user-friendly and encourage independent study.

For blended-learning and distance-learning programmes, additionally: specific didactical requirements are taken into account; materials are well designed and neatly reproduced.

Exceeds quality requirements. Materials familiarise students with different problem-solving approaches from various academic perspectives and enable them to develop their own theory-based problem-solving strategy. They are continuously developed in line with new didactical concepts.

For blended-learning and distance-learning programmes, additionally: materials are systematically designed according to the didactical preferences of the students.

3.3.3 Guest lecturers

The institution is asked to describe how guest lecturers contribute to learning.

Meets quality requirements. Guest lecturers are invited and contribute with their particular experience from professional practice, academic work, or fields such as culture and politics.

Exceeds quality requirements. Guest lecturers are invited regularly and their contribution forms an integral part of the didactical concept. They come from a variety of occupations, enhancing students' employment prospects.

3.3.4 Lecturing tutors and student assistants

The institution is asked to describe how tutors or assistants contribute to learning.

Meets quality requirements. Lecturing tutors or student assistants support students and help them develop competences and skills.

Exceeds quality requirements. They contribute significantly and are systematically integrated into teaching activities.

3.4 International outlook

3.4.1 International contents and intercultural aspects *

The institution is asked to describe how international contents and intercultural aspects are implemented in the curriculum.

Meets quality requirements. International contents are an integral part of the curriculum, preparing students for an international working environment. Through practical examples students are enabled to act in an intercultural environment.

Exceeds quality requirements. Intercultural competences lie at the core of the programme's learning objectives and are strongly promoted, including the leadership of culturally diverse teams.

3.4.2 Internationality of the student body

The institution is asked to describe the international composition of the student body and the measures taken to promote it.

Meets quality requirements. The composition corresponds to the programme concept. Measures taken are goal-oriented.

Exceeds quality requirements. A significant proportion of students come from various language areas and cultural backgrounds, so classroom discussion and group work constantly reflect international perspectives. Measures show a clear and sustainable effect.

3.4.3 Internationality of the faculty

The institution is asked to describe measures taken to promote faculty internationality.

Meets quality requirements. The international composition of the faculty promotes the acquisition of international competences. Measures taken are goal-oriented.

Exceeds quality requirements. Faculty internationality is a fundamental element shaping the programme profile and is actively promoted.

3.4.4 Foreign language contents and student mobility

The institution is asked to describe how the foreign language component is realised and what mobility opportunities exist.

Meets quality requirements. The proportion of foreign language courses and required materials corresponds to the qualification objectives. Where mobility windows exist, they are structurally embedded and supported by Learning Agreements.

Exceeds quality requirements. Lectures and materials in foreign languages predominate. Internationality is clearly a key element of the profile. Mobility is measured, supported and reflected in curriculum development.

3.5 Multidisciplinary competences and skills *

The institution is asked to describe how communication and public-speaking skills, and cooperation and conflict-handling skills, are acquired.

Meets quality requirements. Students acquire these skills in accordance with the module descriptions, supported by suitable didactical and methodological measures. The acquisition of further multidisciplinary competences, such as leadership, negotiation, digital and data literacy and broad contextual knowledge, is ensured.

Exceeds quality requirements. These skills are key elements of the programme's profile and are assessed as such.

3.6 Skills for employment / employability *

The institution is asked to describe how the programme ensures graduate employability in the professional field envisaged.

Meets quality requirements. The promotion of employability runs as a common thread through all modules and courses.

Exceeds quality requirements. In addition, the programme enables students to apply acquired skills actively in new areas of work and develop them further. It is systematically oriented towards the anticipated requirements of a dynamic job market and makes use of graduate evaluation results, including career progression data for experienced entrants.

Chapter 4 — Academic environment and framework conditions

4.1 Faculty

4.1.1 Structure and quantity of faculty in relation to curricular requirements *

The institution is asked to describe the structure (full-time and part-time) and number of faculty, attaching an overview of teachers, subjects taught, curricula vitae, module assignment and responsibilities.

Meets quality requirements. The structure and number correspond to programme requirements and ensure students reach the intended objectives. The composition of full-time and part-time (visiting) lecturers guarantees that both academic standards and professional field requirements are satisfied. *For blended-learning and distance-learning programmes, additionally:* in attendance periods a sufficient number of lecturers is available; course materials have been created by qualified staff; ongoing student support is ensured.

Exceeds quality requirements. *n/a*

4.1.2 Academic qualification of faculty *

The institution is asked to describe the academic qualification of the faculty.

Meets quality requirements. The academic qualification corresponds to the requirements and objectives of the programme. Teaching at second-cycle level is delivered predominantly by staff holding a doctoral qualification or equivalent standing in the professional field, and the balance is justified. The institution verifies qualifications through an established procedure and implements measures for further qualification.

Exceeds quality requirements. The faculty's outstanding academic qualification is underlined by academic publications and by research active in the field of the programme.

4.1.3 Pedagogical and didactical qualification of faculty *

The institution is asked to elaborate on the pedagogical and didactical qualification.

Meets quality requirements. The qualification corresponds to the requirements and objectives of the programme. The institution verifies it through an established procedure, ensures assessors are familiar with testing and examination methods and receive support in developing those skills, and implements measures for further qualification.

For blended-learning and distance-learning programmes, additionally: the faculty is qualified for distance education.

Exceeds quality requirements. Outstanding qualification is underlined by excellent evaluation results or teaching awards.

4.1.4 Practical business experience of faculty

The institution is asked to describe how faculty business experience contributes to the integration of theory and practice.

Meets quality requirements. The practical business experience corresponds to the requirement to integrate theory and practice, and is credible before an experienced cohort.

Exceeds quality requirements. Faculty members have above-average business experience and use it in teaching.

4.1.5 Internal cooperation *

The institution is asked to describe how faculty members cooperate.

Meets quality requirements. Faculty cooperate to tune modules towards the overall qualification objectives. Meetings of all those teaching in the programme take place regularly and are minuted.

Exceeds quality requirements. In addition, projects or courses are conducted cooperatively.

4.1.6 Student support by the faculty *

The institution is asked to describe how students are supported by faculty, including thesis supervision capacity and supervisor-to-student ratios.

Meets quality requirements. Student support is an integral part of faculty services, offered regularly to help students study successfully. Thesis supervision is allocated, capped at a defensible load, and documented.

Exceeds quality requirements. Faculty are available outside specified office hours. Students are fully content with the support received.

4.1.7 Student support in distance learning (*essential criterion for blended-learning and distance-learning programmes*)

The institution is asked to describe the specific support provided in distance learning.

Meets quality requirements. A flexible methodology of individual study counselling is used. Methods for enhancing individual learning processes are introduced and demonstrably applied.

Exceeds quality requirements. Indicators are used to identify learning success and difficulties at an early stage.

4.2 Programme management

4.2.1 Programme director *

The institution is asked to describe the programme director's function and tasks.

Meets quality requirements. The programme director coordinates all those involved and ensures the programme runs smoothly. Role, authority and time allocation are formally defined.

Exceeds quality requirements. The director successfully takes initiatives to promote the systematic development of the programme, including all relevant groups.

4.2.2 Process organisation and administrative support for students and faculty

The institution is asked to describe the administrative support offered.

Meets quality requirements. Faculty and students are supported by the administration. Sufficient administrative staff is available. Decision-making processes, authority and responsibilities are clearly defined. Teachers and students are included in decision-making where their areas are involved. Electronic service support supplements one-to-one counselling. Administrative staff have continuous professional development opportunities.

Exceeds quality requirements. Administrative staff act as service providers for students and faculty.

4.3 Cooperation and partnerships

4.3.1 Cooperation with higher education institutions and other academic institutions or networks (*essential criterion for cooperation programmes — double, joint, and programmes with a compulsory stay abroad*)

The institution is asked to list agreements and explain their significance for the conception and implementation of the programme.

Meets quality requirements. Scope and nature of relevant cooperation are plausibly presented and documented in agreements. Cooperation is actively pursued and has a clear impact on conception and implementation, contributing to students' qualifications and skills. Where partners deliver parts of the programme, the institution ensures quality standards are met, and the division of responsibility for admission, assessment and award is unambiguous.

Exceeds quality requirements. Cooperation is aligned with programme strategy and actively promoted through regular joint meetings; it has a formative impact on curricular content and graduate profile, and contributes significantly through exchange, shared materials and joint electives.

4.3.2 Cooperation with business enterprises and other organisations (*essential criterion for educational and vocational programmes and franchise programmes*)

The institution is asked to list agreements and explain their significance.

Meets quality requirements. Scope and nature are plausibly presented and documented. Cooperation is actively pursued, has clear impact and contributes to students' qualifications. Where other organisations conduct parts of the programme, the institution ensures quality standards are met.

Exceeds quality requirements. Cooperation is actively promoted through regular joint meetings, has a formative impact on content and graduate profile, and contributes significantly through project cooperation, traineeships, appointment of professionals in teaching, and to the quality of final theses.

4.4 Facilities and equipment

4.4.1 Quantity, quality, media and IT equipment of teaching and group rooms *

The institution is asked to describe facilities with regard to the needs of the programme.

Meets quality requirements. Quantity, quality, media and IT facilities meet the standards required. Rooms are properly equipped for students with disabilities and give barrier-free access. Free wireless internet access is provided. A sufficient number of group rooms is available for team-based work.

For blended-learning and distance-learning programmes, additionally: technical equipment is adequate and well documented, satisfies modern multimedia requirements, and technical support with acceptable waiting times is offered during normal working hours. Support services are documented and home workstation requirements listed.

Exceeds quality requirements. Rooms and laboratories are equipped with state-of-the-art technology. For special content — business games, simulations, role-play, virtual elements — appropriate rooms with the specific technical components are available.

For blended-learning and distance-learning programmes, additionally: support is offered outside normal working hours.

4.4.2 Access to literature and data resources *

The institution is asked to describe library resources and access to specialist literature, including online access and, where relevant, financial, market and statistical databases.

Meets quality requirements. Library opening hours take students' needs sufficiently into account. Access to literature, journals and digital media is ensured. Literature expressly required for the programme is available and kept up to date. Where the curriculum requires empirical or applied work, appropriate data resources are accessible.

Exceeds quality requirements. The library is accessible during most of the day; relevant digital media are available from home; qualified library staff advise students.

4.5 Additional services

4.5.1 Career counselling and placement service

The institution is asked to describe career counselling and placement services.

Meets quality requirements. Career counselling and placement services are offered to students and graduates to promote employability; sufficient resources are provided.

Exceeds quality requirements. Services are offered individually, planned long-term, performed regularly and actively marketed, with sufficient staff. Students have access to the institution-wide corporate network, and the institution brings graduates into contact with business representatives at regular events.

4.5.2 Alumni activities

The institution is asked to describe the activities of the alumni organisation.

Meets quality requirements. An alumni organisation has been established with the aim of developing an alumni network.

Exceeds quality requirements. Alumni activities are planned long-term, performed regularly and actively used for assessing and evolving the programme, with sufficient staff resources.

4.6 Financing of the study programme *

The institution is asked to describe how financing is ensured and to supply a multi-year budget covering at least the intended accreditation period.

Meets quality requirements. Programme-related income ensures that each cohort starting within the accreditation period can complete the programme.

Exceeds quality requirements. *n/a*

Chapter 5 — Quality assurance and documentation

5.1 Quality assurance and quality development with respect to contents, processes and outcomes *

The institution is asked to describe how the quality assurance concept and procedure are applied to this programme.

Meets quality requirements. A quality assurance and development procedure systematically and continuously monitors and develops the quality of the programme in respect of contents, processes and outcomes. It takes into account evaluation results and the analysis of student workload, success rate, graduate employment and the student population. Faculty and students participate in the relevant committees. Responsibilities are clearly defined.

Exceeds quality requirements. In addition, graduates and business representatives are included in the relevant committees and participate in the regular review process. Controlling of implementation ensures that measures are (a) implemented, (b) reviewed and evaluated for quality and faithfulness to the original objective, (c) modified and adapted where necessary, and (d) documented.

5.2 Instruments of quality assurance

5.2.1 Evaluation by students

Meets quality requirements. Evaluation by students is carried out regularly under a prescribed procedure; outcomes are communicated to students and feed the quality development process.

Exceeds quality requirements. Results are translated into a list of measures, published appropriately, and controlled through the four-step cycle set out in 5.1.

5.2.2 Evaluation by faculty

Meets quality requirements. Quality control by faculty is carried out regularly under a prescribed procedure; outcomes are communicated and feed the quality development process.

Exceeds quality requirements. As under 5.2.1.

5.2.3 External evaluation by alumni, employers and third parties

Meets quality requirements. External evaluation is carried out regularly under a prescribed procedure; outcomes are communicated and feed the quality development process.

Exceeds quality requirements. As under 5.2.1, with employer input demonstrably influencing curriculum revision.

5.3 Programme documentation *

The institution is asked to describe how the programme is documented.

Meets quality requirements. Content, curriculum and examination scheme are suitably documented and published — for example the course plan and examination regulations. Public information is accurate as to level, credit volume, admission requirements, mode, language, duration, delivery locations and the awarding body.

Exceeds quality requirements. The programme is described in detail; documentation is constantly updated and easily accessible in print and digital form, ensuring a high level of transparency.

5.4 Information on activities during the academic year

Meets quality requirements. The institution regularly publishes current quantitative and qualitative news and information about the programme.

Exceeds quality requirements. Press relations and network communication are actively maintained; the annual report presents a summary of the academic year's activities.

Part II — Guidance on evidence and common shortcomings

This Part tells the **institution** what evidence normally satisfies each criterion and the **panel** what to examine. It adds no requirements; the benchmarks in Part I are the criteria.

Second-cycle assessment differs from first-cycle assessment in three respects, and most avoidable findings arise from them.

Level differentiation is the recurring problem. Where an institution offers a Bachelor and a Master in the same field, the panel places the two curricula side by side. Modules that appear in both, reading lists that overlap substantially, and assessment tasks that differ only in length are the standard evidence that second-cycle level has not been achieved. The institution should perform this comparison itself before submission and present the result.

Prior experience must actually be used. Where admission requires professional experience, the panel tests whether the didactical concept mobilises it or merely tolerates it. A programme admitting seven-year managers and teaching them by lecture and closed-book examination does not meet 3.3.1.

Thesis quality is the visible outcome. More second-cycle conditions arise from criterion 3.1.7 than from any other. Panels read theses.

G1. Chapter 1 — Objectives

Criterion	Evidence normally examined	Tested at the visit by
1.1	Programme specification; outcome statement; NQF/EQF level 7 mapping; side-by-side comparison with any related first-cycle programme	Asking staff to state what a graduate can do that a Bachelor graduate cannot
1.2	International content; mobility; staff profiles	Asking how internationality changes what a student does
1.3.1	Market analysis; comparator programmes and their fees, format and duration	Asking who the programme competes with
1.3.2	Labour-market analysis; employer engagement; career progression data for experienced entrants , not only first destinations	Asking employers or sponsoring organisations what they expect
1.3.3	Strategy; portfolio map	Comparing management's account with the programme team's

Common shortcomings. Objectives that would equally describe a first-cycle programme. Employability evidence limited to first-destination data where most entrants are already employed — for this cohort the relevant measure is progression, role change or scope of responsibility. Positioning claims (“the leading MBA in the region”) unsupported by any analysis.

G2. Chapter 2 — Admission

Criterion	Evidence normally examined	Tested at the visit by
2.1	Admission regulation; required first-cycle volume and field	Checking that admitted students met the stated requirement
2.4	Professional experience rules; verification records — employer letters, contracts, CVs on file	Asking to see the file evidence for three admitted students
2.5	Recognition rules; sample decisions; credit limits	Asking for two recent recognition decisions and the reasoning
2.6	Language requirement or test; support provision	Asking students taught in a second language whether they can follow

Criterion	Evidence normally examined	Tested at the visit by
2.7	Published procedure; specimen decision	Comparing published criteria with those applied

Common shortcomings. Professional experience stated as a requirement but **not verified or not documented** — the most frequent finding under 2.4, and one that goes directly to whether an MBA designation is justified. Experience counted from before the first degree. “Equivalent experience” admitted without a defined equivalence rule. Recognition of prior learning granting large credit blocks without assessment against the outcomes.

G3. Chapter 3 — Contents, structure and didactical concept

Criterion	Evidence normally examined	Tested at the visit by
3.1.1	Curriculum; outcome-to-module map; for MBA, the mapping against the EQUAL MBA Guidelines	Tracing an outcome through modules to assessment; comparing with the first-cycle curriculum
3.1.2	Rationale for the title; national rules; comparator titles	Asking whether the designation would mislead a prospective student
3.1.6	Research methods provision; integrity policy	Reading theses for methodological command
3.1.7	Thesis regulation; assessment criteria; supervision allocation; second-marking records ; sample theses at three grade levels	Reading theses against the published criteria; checking that marks track the criteria and that a second assessor genuinely assessed
3.2.1	Module descriptions; credit table; for MBA, quantification of structured contact	Adding up the credits; testing the contact-hour claim against the timetable
3.2.3	Workload calculation; delivery pattern against working life for part-time and executive cohorts	Asking working students how many hours the programme actually takes and when they do them
3.3.1	Didactical concept; how prior experience is mobilised	Asking students whether their experience is used or ignored

Common shortcomings.

- **Thesis credit too low** for the claimed level, or theses that are extended literature reviews with no independent contribution.
- **No independent second assessment** of theses, or a second marker who signs without a separate report.
- **Supervision load undocumented** — a supervisor carrying twenty theses cannot supervise them.
- **MBA structured contact asserted but not quantified**, or quantified in a way the timetable contradicts.
- **Curriculum overlap with the first cycle** unexamined and unexplained.
- **Executive delivery incompatible with working life** — a pattern requiring midweek daytime attendance from a cohort in full-time employment, with the resulting attrition visible in the data.
- **Prior experience treated as a marketing feature** rather than a didactical resource.

G4. Chapter 4 — Academic environment

Criterion	Evidence normally examined	Tested at the visit by
4.1.1	Staff list with module assignment, contract type, FTE	Checking every module has a qualified teacher
4.1.2	CVs; proportion of teaching by doctorally qualified staff ; verification procedure	Checking qualification against level and field
4.1.4	Business experience; currency	Asking an experienced cohort whether teaching is credible in practice
4.1.6	Thesis supervision allocation and caps ; office hours	Asking students how much supervision they actually received
4.3.1	Signed agreements; monitoring records; division of responsibility for admission, assessment and award	Asking what monitoring was performed and seeing the report
4.4.2	Subscription list; financial, market and statistical databases where the curriculum requires empirical work	Searching for three items and one dataset
4.6	Multi-year budget covering the accreditation period	Asking what happens if intake falls short

Common shortcomings. Teaching delivered predominantly by staff without a doctorate or equivalent professional standing, with no justification. Supervision capacity unaddressed. Databases required by the curriculum not subscribed. Visiting practitioners teaching whole modules with no academic coordination.

G5. Chapter 5 — Quality assurance and documentation

Criterion	Evidence normally examined	Tested at the visit by
5.1	QA regulation; committee terms of reference and membership; minutes; action lists	Asking for two documented decisions that changed this programme
5.2.1	Instrument; response rates; results; published actions	Asking students whether they heard what happened to their feedback
5.2.3	Employer and alumni instruments; evidence that employer input changed the curriculum	Asking employers what came of their input
5.3	Published curriculum, regulations, examination scheme	Comparing the website with the SAR

Review of public information

The panel reviews the institution's public information as a prospective student encounters it, and checks in particular **whether the institution represents itself, rather than the programme, as ECLBS-accredited**. The sources examined include website footers and "about us" pages, letterhead and email signatures, social media bios and profile descriptions, prospectus and brochure copy, and material published by recruitment agents, partners and franchisees.

ECLBS offers programmatic accreditation only. A statement that the institution is ECLBS-accredited, or an ECLBS seal displayed without reference to the accredited programme and delivery locations, misrepresents the accreditation and is a finding under 5.3, whatever the accuracy of the SAR. Material published by an agent or partner is within the institution's responsibility. Where the programme is

designated MBA or Executive MBA, the panel applies the same test to the way the designation and the accreditation are presented together.

Common shortcomings. Employer advisory boards constituted but not convened. Evaluation results filed without consequence. Public information overstating accreditation status, professional recognition or salary outcomes. The institution described as ECLBS-accredited in a website footer, on letterhead, in a social media bio or in agent material, where only a programme is accredited.

G6. Additional matters examined in MBA and Executive MBA procedures

- the **mapping against the EQUAL MBA Guidelines**, module by module;
- whether the programme is genuinely **general management** or a specialised master carrying an MBA label;
- **verification records** for the professional experience of a sample of admitted students;
- the **quantification of structured contact** and its reconciliation with the delivered timetable;
- the **average years of experience and age** of recent intakes, against the admission rule;
- how the **cohort's experience is used** in teaching, evidenced in module design rather than asserted;
- **progression outcomes** for graduates, not merely employment.

Annex A — Index of Master criteria

No.	Criterion	Essential
1.1	Objectives of the study programme	* (non-negotiable)
1.2	International orientation of the programme design	*
1.3.1	Positioning in the educational market	
1.3.2	Positioning in the job market (“employability”)	
1.3.3	Positioning within the institution’s strategic concept	
2.1	Admission requirements	*
2.2	Counselling for prospective students	
2.3	Selection procedure	
2.4	Professional experience	* where required (all MBA/EMBA)
2.5	Recognition of prior learning and prior qualifications	
2.6	Ensuring foreign language proficiency	*
2.7	Transparency and documentation of admission	*
3.1.1	Logic and conceptual coherence	* (non-negotiable)
3.1.2	Rationale for degree and programme name	*
3.1.3	Integration of theory and practice	*
3.1.4	Interdisciplinary thinking	
3.1.5	Ethical aspects, responsibility and sustainability	
3.1.6	Methods and academic practice	*
3.1.7	Examination and final thesis	*
3.2.1	Modular structure of the programme	*
3.2.2	Study and examination regulations	*
3.2.3	Feasibility of the study workload	*
3.2.4	Equality of opportunity	
3.3.1	Logic and plausibility of the didactical concept	*
3.3.2	Course materials	*
3.3.3	Guest lecturers	
3.3.4	Lecturing tutors and student assistants	
3.4.1	International contents and intercultural aspects	*
3.4.2	Internationality of the student body	
3.4.3	Internationality of the faculty	
3.4.4	Foreign language contents and student mobility	
3.5	Multidisciplinary competences and skills	*
3.6	Skills for employment / employability	*
4.1.1	Structure and quantity of faculty	*
4.1.2	Academic qualification of faculty	*

No.	Criterion	Essential
4.1.3	Pedagogical and didactical qualification of faculty	*
4.1.4	Practical business experience of faculty	
4.1.5	Internal cooperation	*
4.1.6	Student support by the faculty	*
4.1.7	Student support in distance learning	* if applicable
4.2.1	Programme director	*
4.2.2	Process organisation and administrative support	
4.3.1	Cooperation with HEIs and academic institutions	* if applicable
4.3.2	Cooperation with enterprises and other organisations	* if applicable
4.4.1	Teaching and group rooms, media and IT equipment	*
4.4.2	Access to literature and data resources	*
4.5.1	Career counselling and placement service	
4.5.2	Alumni activities	
4.6	Financing of the study programme	*
5.1	Quality assurance and quality development	*
5.2.1	Evaluation by students	
5.2.2	Evaluation by faculty	
5.2.3	External evaluation by alumni, employers, third parties	
5.3	Programme documentation	*
5.4	Information on activities during the academic year	

Total: 55 criteria (54 shared with the Bachelor set, plus criterion 2.4 on professional experience). 29 essential in every procedure; a further 4 essential where applicable (2.4, 4.1.7, 4.3.1, 4.3.2).

Annex B — Appendices to be submitted with the SAR

Appendix	Reference
Organigram	0.2
Statistical data table	0.3
Evidence of state approval/authorisation and ECLBS membership	Eligibility
Admission regulations, including professional experience verification rules	2.1 / 2.4
Curriculum overview and course timetable	3.1 / 3.2
Module descriptions / syllabi	3.1 / 3.2
Study and examination regulations, including credit transfer and recognition rules	3.2.2
Thesis regulations, assessment criteria and supervision allocation	3.1.7 / 4.1.6
Diploma Supplement (specimen)	3.2.2
Learning Agreement, where applicable (specimen)	3.2.2
Regulations for practical training, consultancy or company projects	3.1.3
Curricula vitae of lecturers with module assignment	4.1.1
Cooperation, partnership, franchise or validation agreements	4.3
Multi-year programme budget	4.6
Quality management regulations	5.1
Evaluation instruments (including a specific student workload verification survey) and sample results	5.2
For MBA/EMBA: mapping of the curriculum against the EQUAL MBA Guidelines	2.1 / 3.1.1

Annex C — Second-cycle level reference

C.1 Dublin Descriptors — second cycle, in summary

Dimension	Expectation
Knowledge and understanding	Knowledge and understanding founded upon and extending that of the first cycle, providing a basis or opportunity for originality in developing or applying ideas, often in a research context
Applying knowledge	Can apply knowledge, understanding and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader or multidisciplinary contexts
Making judgements	Can integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, including reflection on the social and ethical responsibilities linked to those judgements
Communication	Can communicate conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning them, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously
Learning skills	Have the learning skills to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous

C.2 EQF level 7 descriptors, in summary

Dimension	Level 7
Knowledge	Highly specialised knowledge, some at the forefront of the field, as the basis for original thinking; critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between fields
Skills	Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and innovation to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields
Responsibility and autonomy	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and for reviewing the strategic performance of teams

C.3 First-cycle / second-cycle differentiation table

Submit this comparison under criterion 1.1 where the institution offers a related first-cycle programme.

Dimension	First-cycle programme	This second-cycle programme
Depth and currency of knowledge		
Autonomy expected in study		
Complexity of problems addressed		
Research or methodological demand		
Nature and scale of the final work		
Assessment demand		
Overlapping modules, and how they are differentiated		

Annex D — EQUAL MBA Guidelines: mapping template

Required for MBA and Executive MBA submissions under criteria 2.1 and 3.1.1.

EQUAL expectation	Where met in this programme	Evidence
General management orientation, integrating the core functions		
Admission requiring verified professional experience		
Substantial proportion of structured contact		
Strategic and integrative capstone element		
Development of leadership and interpersonal capability		
International dimension		
Ethics, responsibility and governance		
Use of participants' experience as a learning resource		
Personal development and career progression		

Annex E — Module description template

As Annex D of the Bachelor Handbook, with the following additional fields required at second cycle:

Field	Notes
Research or methodological demand	What the module requires beyond application of established knowledge
Relationship to any first-cycle module of similar title	State how it differs in level, not only in content
Use of participants' professional experience	Where the programme requires professional experience for entry
Currency of reading	Proportion of the reading list published within the last five years

Annex F — Thesis assessment: minimum content of the criteria

Published criteria under 3.1.7 should address at least:

Dimension	Indicative expectation at second cycle
Problem formulation	A researchable question, justified in relation to the literature and, where applicable, to practice
Literature	Critical engagement with current scholarship, not summary
Methodology	Design justified, limitations acknowledged, ethics addressed where relevant
Execution	Methods applied competently; data handled and reported transparently
Analysis	Interpretation supported by evidence; alternative explanations considered
Contribution	Something added — to knowledge, to method, or to practice
Structure and presentation	Coherent argument; academic conventions observed
Referencing and integrity	Consistent, complete, and free of plagiarism

The criteria must state the **pass standard** for each dimension and how the dimensions combine into the grade. Marking must demonstrably follow them: panels compare marks to the criteria and to the written justification.

Annex G — Definitions of the statistical indicators

As Annex G of the Bachelor Handbook, with the following additional indicators for programmes requiring professional experience:

Indicator	Definition
Average years of professional experience at entry	Mean years of post-first-degree experience of the admitted cohort, verified from admission files
Average age at entry	Mean age at first enrolment
Percentage employer-sponsored	Students whose fees are met in whole or part by an employer
Percentage in employment during study	Students in paid employment at the census date
Career progression at 12 months	Graduates reporting promotion, role change or increased scope within 12 months of award, as a percentage of those responding, with the response rate stated

Annex H — Interview guide for the visit

As Annex H of the Bachelor Handbook, with these additions:

Group	Additional lines of enquiry
Students	Whether their professional experience is used in teaching; whether the delivery pattern is compatible with their employment; how much thesis supervision they received and from whom
Teaching staff	How this programme differs in level from the institution's first-cycle provision; how theses are supervised, marked and moderated; supervision loads
Graduates	Career progression since award; whether the thesis was useful; what was missing
Employers and sponsors	What they expect from a graduate of this programme; whether they were consulted; whether sponsored staff returned with the intended capability

Annex I — Panel assessment report template (Master)

As Annex I of the Bachelor Handbook, with:

- a summary table covering all **55 criteria**, including 2.4 where applicable;
- an express statement on criteria **1.1 and 3.1.1**;
- a distinct section recording the findings of the public-information review, including whether the institution represents itself, rather than the programme, as ECLBS-accredited;
- for MBA and Executive MBA submissions, a distinct section recording the panel's findings on the EQUAL MBA expectations and on the justification for the designation under criterion 3.1.2;
- a distinct section recording the panel's findings from reading theses, identifying how many were read and at what grade levels.