

Progress Report Quality Agenda Erasmus School of Economics (HOKA) including proposals for new activities.

Progress Report 9

24-5-2022

Introduction

In this Progress report, we want to inform you about the developments in the HOKA project in recent months (January-May 2022), but above all we would like to make some proposals for new and/or adjusted activities.

The HOKA programme started in 2019 and will end in 2024. Since the start of the programme the world has changed considerably. We had to deal with the Corona Pandemic which led to a sharp increase of online teaching and learning but, on the other hand, to lower levels of student involvement and wellbeing. Recently EUR has formulated a new Strategy which impacts our educational choices, ESE is also working on a new strategy.

With the ministry of OCW It was agreed that a mid-term review of the HOKA programme would take place in early 2022. As part of this review, we took a critical look at our original plans, keeping in mind the HOKA objectives, consequences of the Corona pandemic and the new strategic goals.

Table 1 Overview strategic objectives¹.

The HOKA objectives of the Ministry of OCW	Strategic themes EUR	ESE HOKA objectives
1. More intensive and small-scale education 2. More and better guidance of students 3. study success 4. Education differentiation 5. Appropriate and good educational facilities 6. Further professionalisation of teachers.	1. Personal and professional development 2. Investing in innovation capacity and educational careers 3. Investing in personalised online learning 4. Student wellbeing 5. design-oriented thinking to address societal challenges	1. Continuation of the tutor academy 2. Tutorial differentiation 3. Hiring additional lecturer support 4. TA professionalisation 5. Continuation of the innovation Hub 6. Introduction of a course "Health check" 7. Development of ESE policy on learning tools and blended learning methods

¹ The various objectives are described in such a way that it is difficult to link the ESE objectives to just one of the OCW objectives or just one of the EUR strategic themes. Most activities contribute to several OCW or EUR goals. Therefore, we have decided to refrain from further detailing.

The OCW and EUR objectives are described in the "Samenwerken aan onderwijs van wereldklasse". For further information about the EUR and the ESE education strategy, I would like to refer you to my.eur.nl and previous documents on this subject that have been sent to you by ESE management.

	6. provide space for education research and innovation	8. Educational innovation projects, including the further development of personal online learning and blended learning methods 9. Deployment of additional skills staff and further development of the skills programme 10. Introduction of a Career skills programme 11. Offering more electives 12. More differentiation in bachelor courses 13. Develop a new Master specialisation Economics of Sustainability 14. More attention for SDG in the bachelor
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The original HOKA plan describes 14 general objectives (see table above). For each objective, the original plan describes the activities needed to be carried out in order to achieve these objectives. Our conclusion is that the HOKA Objectives are as valid as they were in 2019, but that some adjustments to the activities as described in the original plan are advisable. Furthermore, it is possible to start some new activities.

Proposed new activities

Building upon the objectives of the original HOKA plan, we propose the following new or adjusted activities:

1. Improving the availability of planning and quality information on education by investing in the development of an “Education Dashboard”
2. Organising additional teacher support under the direction of the Bachelor Programme Managers to reduce the workload for teachers in the Bachelor
3. Developing new activities to intensify the “Student Journey”, further development of MentorMe
4. Developing new educational activities for students regarding Societal impact, SDG and interdisciplinary cooperation
5. Realising more electives by using lecturers from other faculties
6. Improving the quality of education by investing in the further professionalisation of lecturers.

Ad 1. Improving the availability of planning and quality information on education by investing in the development of an “Education Dashboard”

One of the goals of the original HOKA plan is to introduce a regular course “health-check”, which reviews course design and execution “to ensure that continuous development of education is a regular part of our quality assurance framework and that courses do not suffer from deferred maintenance”.²

In February 2020, just before Corona, a first draft of a design for a periodic ‘course Health check’ was discussed with representatives of the Programme Committees. Because of Corona, a second draft for the design of this ‘course health check’ process was never completed.

During Corona the interaction between teachers in the various bachelor and master programmes has increased considerably, resulting in more alignment of courses and course organisation and more shared knowledge about the teaching methods in other courses. This has made us realise that it seems much more meaningful to discuss courses in their context, rather than in isolation. This is also reason to reconsider the earlier design of the Health Check.

In addition, when preparing the draft for the health check in 2019, we realised that the available management and control information on courses (e.g. student evaluations, number of students, exam results, etc) is currently very fragmented and not easily accessible.

We would therefore like to propose the realisation of an “Education Dashboard”; an (online) overview of the development over time of certain key indicators for courses and for programmes. The aim of this dashboard should be to provide lecturers and management with up to date and relevant information on which they can base future decisions, whether on the didactic design of the course, the content of the course or the organisation of the course (or programme).

In order to realise this, it will be necessary to hire temporary additional expertise. Simultaneously and in conjunction with the development of the dashboard, a new proposal for the design of the Health Check will also be developed.

Ad 2. Organising additional teacher support under the direction of the Bachelor Programme Managers to reduce the workload for teachers in the Bachelor

According to the original HOKA plan, more organisational support of academic staff is needed.³ Therefore, we have made ample provision in the budget for additional teacher support and have asked the departments to hire additional staff for this purpose. Unfortunately, this seems not to be working as planned; the current labour market makes finding the right people difficult, moreover, the tasks are fragmented and the position in the organisation of additional staff members is unclear and therefore

² Quality Agenda Erasmus School of Economics, An outline of projects to be financed by HO-KA funds, Version 28-03-2019, page 8-9

³ ³ Quality Agenda Erasmus School of Economics, An outline of projects to be financed by HO-KA funds, Version 28-03-2019, page 7

ineffective. On the other hand, teachers are increasingly faced with all kinds of organisational tasks and procedures. Some of them can be handled by the secretariats, but others cannot. In all cases the teacher remains responsible and must therefore instruct the assistants. In addition, support from the support staff is not very clearly organised either.

In other faculties, such as RSM, ESHPM or ESL, organisational tasks are often assigned to special officers. Teachers can concentrate on the course content, others take care of the organisation and solving daily (or structural) organisational matters.

Our proposal is to investigate whether something similar will work for ESE. To start with, we suggest appointing two (temporary) organisational bachelor officers who report to the Bachelor Programme Managers of Econometrics and Economics and who will work for all the bachelor courses. The tasks of these organisational bachelor officers can be based on the experiences of the other faculties and the needs of the teachers and Bachelor Programme Managers involved.

Ad 3. Developing new activities to intensify the “Student Journey”, further development of MentorMe

ESE aims to be a vibrant academic community of students and lecturers offering a network for life. Building (academic) careers will remain the primary task of any university, but we also need to share the importance of critical thinking and the ability to understand different points of view.⁴ This requires an active involvement of students and a sense of commitment to their programme.

Especially in the first two years of the Bachelor, personal interaction with lecturers is relatively limited. There are few extracurricular activities and even then, they are often more sober than we would like.⁵ Many students limit their study activities to what is necessary for the exams and are not actively involved in the academic community. As a result, these students will not be very positive about their studies at our school; their “student Journey” is not as we would like it to be.

Of course, the study associations are also involved in organising extracurricular activities, but it seems advisable that the Erasmus School of Economics as such should develop more activities to increase student involvement and well-being and develop their academic profile, other than by simply following the compulsory courses. Therefore, we propose to include this in the HOKA plan. Our current thoughts to realise this are:

- Developing and organising activities during the year aimed to increase student engagement with the school, e.g. Meet and Greets with alumni, small guest lectures, discussions, games.
- Making the MentorMe programme available for Master students

⁴ See ‘Becoming an Erasmian’ on <https://my.eur.nl/en/eur-employee/organisation/strategy-2024/about-strategy-2024/strategic-themes/future-oriented-education>

⁵ For instance, recently Bachelor students asked to be allowed to invite more friends and family to the bachelor graduation day. Something that is currently not possible for financial reasons.

- Investigate how we can engage Bachelor 1 students, preferably from Block 1 onwards, by introducing the various fields of economics/econometrics and current and relevant research themes of our school.

To achieve this, it will be necessary, among other things, to recruit additional expertise in our communications department.

Ad 4. Developing new educational activities for students regarding Societal impact, SDG and interdisciplinary cooperation

ESE (and the EUR) seeks a firm link with practice and relevant and timely problems in the field. As a university we aim at strengthening our society by creating an environment where students feel engaged and challenged by societal challenges from the Rotterdam region as well as international contexts during their studies.⁶

This is easier said than done. The inclusion of real-world cases in courses and the cooperation with external parties is time-consuming and requires considerable organisation effort on the part of lecturers. This is even more the case when these assignments take place over several blocks, as will be the case in the new Master specialisation Economics of Sustainability.

Therefore, we propose to hire an additional staff member to organise this type of activities for lecturers. This new officer can not only assist in the development of practice cases, the recruitment of organisations, and maintain contact with clients but can also facilitate in the organisation, coordination, and guidance of the student teams. The job profile for this new officer will be developed in close coordination with the Academic Directors and major coordinators.

Ad 5. Realising more electives by deploying lecturers from other faculties

One of the goals of the HOKA plan is to develop more 4-credit electives for the Bachelor. Funding is available to compensate for the development time and even for the teaching time of the new electives. The departments have been asked repeatedly if they have ideas, but so far only two new electives have been developed. The main reason for this is the workload of our teaching staff.

Akin to the Career skills course, we therefore suggest deploying teachers from other EUR faculties to realise more electives for our students. For instance, prof. dr. Lucas Meijs of RSM teaches a Career skills course on management of volunteer organisations and EUC lecturer dr. Gera Noordzij teaches a Career skills course on Inclusive Leadership. We think it is worthwhile to investigate if lecturers from other EUR faculties are available to develop and teach electives for our students.

⁶ See <https://my.eur.nl/en/eur-employee/organisation/strategy-2024/about-strategy-2024/strategic-themes/future-oriented-education>; Engaged and challenged by societal changes.

Ad 6. Improving the quality of education by investing in the further professionalisation of lecturers.

ESE aims to offer high-quality academic education by highly qualified teachers. For ESE it is important to constantly develop and enhance the didactical skills of our teachers. Therefore, all teachers are obliged to follow the Basic University Teaching Qualification course (UTQ, in Dutch BKO) and encouraged to proceed with the Senior Teaching Qualification course and/or microLabs organised by Risbo and the Community of Learning and Innovation. However, improvement of the training programme for our teachers is possible.

First, new teachers do not always receive the support they need when they start teaching. For instance, there is currently no introduction programme for ESE teachers on how to organise a course, what procedures to follow or how the several education systems (Sin, Canvas, Osiris etc.) work.

Secondly, the Basic University Teaching Qualification course, which new teachers are required to take, is not always appreciated. Many teachers find the current course less suitable as preparation for teaching economics and mathematics.

Finally, it could be instructive for both new and experienced teachers, to regularly discuss recent educational developments with colleagues from inside and outside the school. At the moment, this is not something that is organised in a structured way.

Therefore, we propose to add the following activities to the current HOKA Plans:

- a. Developing an onboarding course for new ESE lecturers
- b. Developing a teacher development programme for ESE lecturers
- c. Realising improvements in the current BKO programme for ESE teachers.

Financing of additional HOKA activities

Recently the HOKA funds for EUR, and therefore also for ESE, for the years 2022-2024⁷ were redetermined resulting in a considerable increase in the available HOKA funds for ESE (see Table 2).

Table 2 Increase available HOKA funds

In k€	2022	2023	2024
Original funds	2.251	2.376	2.376
Increase	92	190	664
New	2.343	2.566	3.040

⁷ According to the coalition agreement of the current cabinet, the HOKA funds would be continued after 2024. However, we have not yet received a final decision on this, so for the time being we are assuming that these are temporary funds.

Furthermore, the expected expenditure on the current HOKA plans is lower than budgeted resulting, with unchanged policy, in underspending. The most important reasons for these lower expenditures are:

- Lower personnel costs than estimated; a lot can be done with the help of student assistants instead of (more expensive) external capacity or teaching staff capacity.
- Fewer innovation projects than could be because the workload of our academic staff leaves little time for the development of education. Especially during the Corona pandemic.
- Difficulties in hiring additional teaching and additional support staff in the current labour market, especially as we can only offer temporary positions due to the temporary nature of the HOKA funds.
- Some budgeted costs were unexpectedly paid by the CLI (e.g. studio costs, part of the Sowiso development costs).

The increase in the available budget in combination with the current underspending makes it possible to finance the proposed new activities. If you agree with the proposals, an adjusted budget will be made on the basis of the further elaboration of the plans. We will send you the adjusted HOKA budget this autumn.

Other HOKA activities in the period January-May 2022

Besides making new plans for HOKA activities, we have also worked on implementing the original plans.

As always, the staff of the TAc, the Skills teams and the Learning and Innovation team (including the Career Skills coordinator) have continued their work, these are ongoing HOKA activities. We also continued with the development and introduction of the learning menu in bachelor 2 and with the preparations for the new master specialisation Economics of Sustainability. The first evaluation of the learning menu will be complete at the end of this academic year. The new Master specialisation will start in September.

New and completed Innovation Projects

New projects

The following innovation projects were started in the months January-May 2022:

1. **2022.B3.15 Improving engagement in tutorials for FEB12004(X) International Economics;** improving engagement in the tutorials International Economics by, among other things, introducing quizzes, separating basic knowledge and higher-level questions and improving the instructions for TAs.
2. **2022.B3.6 Further development Sowiso online practice platform;** E.g. Translation of Sowiso exercises (word sequence, prepositions, articles, etc.), consistency of the definitions of accounting terms in Dutch and English, bilingualism in definitions of

accounting terms (NB all books are in English, as such Dutch students will benefit from extra explanations for the terms), minimization of errors either in exercise formulation or its solution either in Dutch or English version of the exercises.

3. **2022.B3.17 Development Online Premaster Course Programming (SPOC)**
Development of an online version of the course Programming. The new course is primarily intended for Premaster students of Econometrics, but may also be taken by other students as an extra curricular Course. SPOC (Small Private Online Course)
4. **2022. C2.11 Development of (online) self-study modules for master students**
Development of (online) self-study refresher modules Mathematics, Statistics and Skills. For new Master students without an ESE background. The modules can also be used as refresher courses for former ESE bachelor students. The aim is to reduce differences in prior knowledge among Master students.
5. **2022.E3.2 Adding sustainability in the course Fixed Income securities and Portfolio Management (FEM11094)**
More sustainable finance elements will be included in the course e.g topics such as SRI bonds, Does a green premium exist? The liquidity of green bonds, Incorporating ESG into passive strategies, Financial and sustainable returns of a bond portfolio, Modelling climate risk in bond portfolios etc.

Evaluations

The HOKA project team received and discussed the evaluation reports of the following projects:

1. **2020.B4.8 Flipped classroom Privaat- en Ondernemingsrecht (FEB43010)**
35 knowledge clips have been developed to replace the traditional lectures. An online formative assessments has been developed, to provide students with insight into their learning process. The lectures are now more interactive, discussing real world situations. This also results in a better understanding of the theory. The changes have been evaluated with the student members of the Programme committee and through the course evaluation. Result course evaluation is 7.3 (N=26 uit 159) and several positive remarks about the knowledge clips. 2019.B1.9 9 Redesign Tutorials Microeconomics; Introduction of new assignments in the tutorials; students must write an essay based on a (re-written) scientific article. This project is currently being evaluated.
2. **2021.B3. 11 Developing online practices for Microeconomics (FEB11001(X))**
Exercises for the online learning tool Sowiso have been developed to replace the previous book-related exercises. This allows the students to get immediate feedback when practicing independently at home and creates space to discuss the difficult topics in the tutorials. The

Sowiso exercises have been better used by the students than the book-related exercises (an increase from 79% to 95%).

3. 2021.B1.13 **Simulation game UPT Port Constructor**

Together with a consortium of TU Delft, Shipping and Transport College, Port of Rotterdam and a software company MProof a serious game has been developed consisting of a specific 'Mission' for the Energy Transition, both in Industry as well as in Port Logistics (into the hinterland of Europe). The objective is to give students a deeper learning experience of key decisions which are needed to make the transition to a zero-emissions port industry and logistics. A large majority of the students who played the game reported that the game helped them in understanding the technical complexity of the energy transition. The game also resulted in an increased motivation to learn the subject matter.

Career skills

As we near the end of the academic year, we have begun to evaluate the current content and format. In the previous progress report we already informed you about our plan to reschedule the Career skills course as of the coming academic year. In the new structure the obligatory Career skills course 'Your Future Career' will be scheduled for all students in Bachelor 3 block 3 and 4, most elective courses will be scheduled in Bachelor 3 block 5.⁸

As this is the first year many of the Career Skills courses are taught, the evaluation and quality assurance is a key point. In addition to the course evaluation surveys and the input of student representatives, focus groups were organised to gain more qualitative feedback on the programme and its courses. Furthermore, the course coordinator Career Skills has visited the various courses personally to assess the quality of teaching and has scheduled evaluation meetings with the teachers after each block.

At this time we can already share some preliminary results from the course evaluation from the total of 264 surveys filled in in blocks 2, 3, and 4:

On a scale from 1 to 10, what grade would you give this course?	7.43
I developed my skills in this course. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	4.19
I gained new insights about myself in this course. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	3.69
This course was useful for my career preparation. (1 strongly disagree – 5 strongly agree)	3.91

⁸ Exceptions are some of the career skills courses hosted by the study associations and maybe some language courses.

Given the low response rate tot the evaluations of some of the career skills courses, not too much importance should be attached to the individual surveys, but the average of all courses shows that students feel they have developed their skills and thus contributed to their career preparation.

A few outliers from the surveys worth mentioning are 'Personal Effectiveness' which scored an 8,7 and 'Introduction to Python' an 8,0. Both courses received very positive evaluations and were very popular in the registration period.

Also worth mentioning is the MentorMe programme, i.e. the possibility for ESE students to meet and learn from ESE-alumni. This has been embedded in the 'Your Future Career' course as of January 2021. This year a total of 255 ESE-alumni have signed up as mentors. The students participating in 'Your Future Career' can match with an alumni mentor and schedule a consultation. In March a total of 139 consultations between student and mentor have already taken place.

After concluding the block 5 Career Skills courses and collecting more qualitative feedback in the focus groups, from student representatives and in meetings with the instructors of the courses, this will be summarised in an evaluation report of Career Skills 2021-2022. Based on this, we will assess whether the requirements for the career skills courses were sufficiently met and whether we want to offer the individual courses for a longer period.