

Invitation to academic directors of European master's programmes to join

## MASTERMIND Europe Focus Groups

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### Background

Various developments – including Globalisation and Bologna – have led to a huge diversity in both bachelor's and master's programmes in Europe. Increasingly, students seek their master's in a new place. Efforts to harmonize outcomes of bachelor's degrees – whether in subject content or competencies – do not come close to bringing automatic recognition. Instead, a conceptual framework (for comparable descriptors for master's admissions) and a toolkit (to define master's admission requirements) may help to create the diverse international classrooms that many programmes seek.

The "Mastermind Europe" project is developing and testing a toolkit for master's directors who want to change their admission of applicants from outside their own institutions: From a process of recognition of diplomas – as comparable with the preceding bachelor's from their own universities – to a process of assessment of the required competencies. Competencies in terms of the knowledge, skills and other characteristics, which they think relevant for their master's programmes.

Specific tools will help master's programmes to define:

- which substance-related knowledge and skills are required at entrance,
- which generic academic levels of competence are required,
- which additional personal and interpersonal characteristics are needed,
- which additional criteria, such as language requirements and group requirements, are at play, and
- which testing mechanisms are available to be used in and/or adapted to the context of specific programmes.

Participants will receive draft versions of the tools in preparation for the Focus Group meetings.

### Focus Group Meetings

The above tools will be tested in Focus Group meetings in Barcelona (21-22 April) and Helsinki (20-21 May), and in Amsterdam and Milano (later in 2015). The meetings are intended for academic directors of master's programmes who can expect to gain knowledge and ideas that will help them to design and implement improved master's admission for their own programmes. The Focus Group meetings will last one evening-plus-day: from 6 pm till 6 pm. The meetings will be coordinated and facilitated by Kees Kouwenaar and a trainer from the host university.

The overall objectives of the Focus Group meetings are:

- a. To test the format of an intensive workshop: does it help master's coordinators to reshape their admission? Participants will have concrete and valuable take-home outcomes of the workshop, notwithstanding the testing character of the event.
- b. To provide input for the development of the tools and reports, to tailor these to the needs of the wider target group of master's coordinators and directors.
- c. To help the participants to reshape the admission practices of their own programmes.

The meeting will offer expertise and allow for in-depth discussion in various settings on

- a) the rationale for the shift from diploma-recognition to competency-assessment,
- b) the different categories of admission criteria: substance related knowledge and skills, academic competencies, personal characteristics,
- c) stakeholder engagement, and
- d) nuts and bolts of tests, admission procedures and regulatory issues.

### How to get involved?

If you are interested in joining one of the Focus Group meetings send an expression of interest by

**March 20 for the Barcelona meeting** to [kees.kouwenaar@vu.nl](mailto:kees.kouwenaar@vu.nl), [alicia@acup.cat](mailto:alicia@acup.cat) or [nadja@acup.cat](mailto:nadja@acup.cat)

**April 20 for the Helsinki meeting** to [kees.kouwenaar@vu.nl](mailto:kees.kouwenaar@vu.nl) or [esko.koponen@helsinki.fi](mailto:esko.koponen@helsinki.fi)

As the mastermind Europe project is supported through the ERASMUS+ programme, we can subsidize participants who have to travel and stay overnight (max. € 450 altogether).

### Focus Group Facilitators

**Kees Kouwenaar**, facilitator in all the Focus Group meetings

Kees Kouwenaar is senior advisor international strategy at the *Vrije Universiteit* Amsterdam. He has over 30 years of experience in international diploma recognition as well as internationalisation of and capacity building in higher education. He initiated and now coordinates the Mastermind Europe project. He was one of the key experts for the Lisbon Recognition convention.

**Alicia Betts** and **Nadja Gmelch**, facilitators in the Barcelona meeting

Alicia Betts and Nadja Gmelch are project managers at the Association of Public Universities of Catalonia (ACUP). Their main areas of expertise and work are internationalisation of higher education (strategy, promotion and visibility of the university system) and university collaboration.

**Esko Koponen**, facilitator in the Helsinki meeting

Esko Koponen has worked in international higher education since 1990. His present position is that of International Education Adviser in the Rector's Office at the University of Helsinki. His areas of expertise and interest include programmes and teaching in English, and strategic management of graduate admissions.