EU CONEXUS
European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability

Co-funded by the European Union

General Alliance QA Policy

D1.3

WP1 Alliance Management, Coordination and Support

Contractual due date (from GA): 31 October 2026 (M48) Final delivery date: 30 September 2026 (M47)
WP leader: La Rochelle Université Contributors: LRUniv, AUA, UCV, KU, UNIZD, UTCB, SETU, UROS, FredU, EU-CONEXA
Dissemination level : public

DISCLAIMER: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

EU-CONEXUS Quality Policy

Quality assurance and continuous enhancement across all Alliance activities

1. Purpose and commitment

EU-CONEXUS commits to assuring and continuously enhancing the quality of all its activities in pursuit of its shared mission, values and strategic objectives. Quality is a collective responsibility, embedded in the way the Alliance takes decisions, develops cooperation, delivers activities and services, and learns from its results.

For EU-CONEXUS, quality means pursuing relevant and ambitious objectives, fulfilling agreed standards and commitments, responding to the needs of its communities and partners, and demonstrating the value created through cooperation. It requires consideration both of how effectively activities are delivered and of whether they remain appropriate to the Alliance's mission and changing circumstances.

This Policy establishes a common basis for quality assurance and enhancement throughout EU- CONEXUS. It combines accountability with learning, supports informed decisions and fosters a participatory quality culture. Its purpose extends beyond compliance with funding requirements or the completion of project deliverables.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to the Alliance's governance, strategy and management; education and lifelong learning; research and innovation; knowledge exchange and service to society; mobility, internationalisation and community development; and the services, resources, partnerships and communication supporting these activities.

It covers activities formally undertaken within the EU-CONEXUS framework, whether jointly delivered, coordinated centrally or entrusted to one member institution on behalf of the Alliance. It also covers Alliance activities undertaken through EU-CONEXUS aisbl. Relevant expectations apply to associated partners and external providers through the arrangements governing their participation.

The Policy applies irrespective of funding source and continues beyond individual projects. It does not extend Alliance oversight to unrelated activities of member institutions, determine eligibility for funding, or replace their statutory responsibilities, institutional quality systems or applicable legal and contractual obligations.

3. Relationship with other frameworks

Implementation is guided by the EU-CONEXUS Joint Mission Statement, the Strategic Plan 2026–2030 and subsequent approved strategies. This Policy provides an overarching framework for the Alliance's specialised policies, agreements, quality procedures and project-level arrangements, rather than replacing them.

EU-CONEXUS draws on the European Framework for the Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European Universities developed through EUniQ. Educational provision follows the applicable Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes used where appropriate and legally available. Research, innovation, engagement and support activities are assessed against standards and professional expectations relevant to their respective purposes.

4. Principles

- **Mission-led quality and public value.** Quality objectives are connected to the Alliance's strategic priorities and its contribution to Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability. Evaluation considers the value of cooperation for students, staff, member institutions and society, alongside the responsible use of resources. The Alliance's purposes and priorities are themselves open to critical reflection.
- **Shared responsibility and meaningful participation.** Students, academic and professional staff, researchers and relevant external stakeholders contribute to the design, delivery and review of activities. They are partners in quality enhancement, not merely sources of feedback. Participation is supported by timely information, accessible processes and opportunities to influence decisions.
- **Mutual trust, subsidiarity and complementarity.** The Alliance builds on the expertise and quality systems of its members. Responsibilities are exercised at the level best placed to fulfil them, and existing assurance and evidence are used wherever adequate. Alliance-level attention focuses particularly on shared objectives, coordination between institutions, the overall participant experience and issues that cannot be resolved locally.
- **Proportionality and purposeful assurance.** Quality arrangements reflect the nature, scale, maturity and risks of each activity. Common expectations do not require identical procedures in every institution or field. Additional controls or data collection must address a clear need and provide value proportionate to their burden. Reliance on institutional assurance does not remove responsibility for identifying gaps in joint provision.
- **Academic freedom, integrity and fairness.** Quality processes uphold academic freedom, institutional autonomy, research and academic integrity, ethical conduct and fair treatment. Decisions and reviews are conducted transparently, with appropriate independence, management of conflicts of interest and respect for confidentiality. Open discussion and good- faith reporting of concerns are supported without retaliation.
- **Inclusion, diversity and sustainability.** Equality of opportunity, accessibility, respect

for diversity, intercultural dialogue and multilingualism inform the design and assessment of activities. The Alliance seeks to identify and remove barriers to participation and considers environmental, social and organisational sustainability as dimensions of quality, including staff capacity and the continuity of essential services.

- **Evidence-informed judgement and continuous learning.** Quantitative information is interpreted alongside qualitative evidence, professional judgement and the experiences of those involved. Evaluation recognises differences in context and the time needed for outcomes to emerge. Responsible experimentation, peer learning and reflection on unsuccessful initiatives are encouraged. Findings lead to decisions, follow-up and assessment of whether improvements have worked.

5. Quality commitments across Alliance activities

- **Governance, strategy and management.** EU-CONEXUS reviews the clarity of responsibilities, the effectiveness and inclusiveness of decision-making, implementation of decisions, strategic alignment and institutional engagement. Planning is supported by realistic resources, risk management and arrangements for continuity. Accountability includes consideration of the added value of the Alliance and the effectiveness of its own governance and quality processes.
- **Education and lifelong learning.** The Alliance promotes student-centred, research-informed and inclusive learning across all cycles and formats, including joint programmes, minors, micro- credentials, doctoral education and lifelong learning. Quality arrangements address design and approval, learning outcomes, assessment, recognition, admission and progression, learning resources, support and the overall learner experience. Specialised educational procedures provide the necessary detail and link the contributions of participating institutions into coherent provision.
- **Research, innovation and knowledge exchange.** Quality arrangements support rigorous, ethical and responsible research, constructive collaboration, appropriate supervision and researcher development, and reliable access to shared infrastructures and support. They address research integrity, responsible data management, open science where appropriate, and transparent arrangements for intellectual property and knowledge exchange. Assessment recognises diverse disciplinary contributions and forms of impact, rather than relying solely on publication counts, funding income or commercial outcomes.
- **Societal engagement and partnerships.** Activities with public authorities, businesses, schools, civil society and communities are developed around identified needs and reciprocal expectations. Relevant partners participate in defining objectives and assessing usefulness, accessibility and outcomes. Attention is given to mutual benefit, ethical partnership practices, continuity and the contribution of cooperation to societal challenges, including Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability. External engagement is assessed as a substantive mission, not only as dissemination or visibility.
- **Mobility, internationalisation and community development.** Physical, blended and virtual mobility, internationalisation at home, student-led initiatives, cultural activities and staff development are reviewed in terms of their accessibility, support, learning and professional value, and contribution to an inclusive Alliance community. Quality assurance considers the entire participant journey, including information, selection, preparation, participation and

follow-up, with recognition where relevant. It also considers people who face barriers to participation or remain insufficiently reached.

- **Shared services, resources and communication.** Administrative and digital services, staffing arrangements, financial management, procurement, facilities and communication supporting Alliance activities are subject to proportionate review. Expectations include reliability, accessibility, interoperability, information security, data protection, service responsiveness, responsible resource use and accurate public information. The use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, must retain appropriate human responsibility, verification and safeguards.

Activities spanning several domains are reviewed coherently, without requiring separate, duplicative evaluations for each domain.

6. Responsibilities and participation

Responsibility for quality follows responsibility for the activity. The following arrangements operate within the competences established by the Alliance's governing agreements and the statutes and rules of its member institutions and legal entity; they do not transfer statutory powers.

The Governing Board approves this Policy, provides strategic oversight and considers the Alliance's consolidated quality findings. It agrees strategic improvement priorities and promotes the institutional commitment and resources necessary for implementation through the competent bodies.

The Executive Council supports coherence between governance bodies and addresses cross- cutting quality issues within its remit. **The Management Board** oversees operational implementation, coordinates institutional contributions, follows up agreed improvements and refers matters requiring strategic decisions to the appropriate body.

The Executive Director, supported by the Alliance coordination team and designated quality expertise, coordinates the common quality framework, facilitates cooperation with institutional quality services, consolidates evidence and maintains oversight of follow-up. Coordination supports activity owners; it does not replace their accountability.

The Academic Council, Research Council and other competent bodies guide and review quality within their respective areas. They ensure that specialised requirements are addressed and that findings inform Alliance-wide reflection and decisions. Joint services and relevant expert groups contribute according to their mandates.

Member institutions assure the quality of the activities for which they are responsible, connect Alliance commitments with their internal systems and provide relevant evidence. Institutional coordinators work with academic, research, professional and quality services to resolve local issues and identify matters requiring a joint response.

Programme, project, work-package, task and service leaders integrate quality into planning and delivery, involve relevant participants, monitor performance and risks, and implement agreed improvements. Each significant activity or service has an identifiable responsible lead and a clear route for reporting and escalation.

Students, through the Student Board and other representative arrangements,

participate in developing this Policy, reviewing relevant findings and shaping improvement priorities. Academic and professional staff and researchers contribute through representative bodies and appropriate consultation and review processes. Relevant external stakeholders contribute expertise and perspectives on the activities that concern them.

The External Advisory Board provides independent perspectives and advice on the Alliance's development and performance within its mandate. Its contribution complements, but does not substitute for, periodic independent external evaluation.

EU-CONEXUS supports these responsibilities through access to appropriate information, induction, professional development, shared tools and peer learning. Participation in quality work must be planned realistically in relation to available staff time and expertise.

7. Quality assurance and enhancement in practice

EU-CONEXUS applies a common improvement cycle, adapted to the activity concerned and integrated into existing planning and management arrangements.

Plan. Before an activity is approved or significantly changed, its objectives, intended beneficiaries, expected results, responsibilities, resources and principal risks are clarified. Appropriate quality expectations, evidence sources, feedback arrangements and review points are agreed. Relevant users and partners contribute to its design.

Implement. Activities are delivered through agreed responsibilities and procedures. Responsible leads maintain sufficient records, monitor emerging issues and arrange proportionate support and quality checks. Concerns affecting safety, integrity, rights or continuity are referred promptly to the competent authority and are not deferred until a routine review.

Review. Activity owners and relevant bodies assess delivery and outcomes against agreed objectives and expectations, drawing on monitoring information, participant feedback, peer assessment and other relevant evidence. Review examines strengths, shortcomings, unintended effects and the effectiveness of coordination between institutions, rather than simply recording completion.

Improve. Findings are translated into recorded decisions and prioritised actions, with responsible owners, timescales and appropriate resources. Decisions may include continuing, adapting, extending, redesigning or discontinuing an activity. Follow-up checks whether actions have been completed and whether they have addressed the issue. The response to feedback is communicated to those concerned.

Routine monitoring feeds an annual consolidated quality and enhancement review, integrated with strategic monitoring and existing reporting. A more comprehensive Alliance self-evaluation is undertaken at least every two years. These exercises inform work plans, resource decisions and strategic review, without replacing any additional contractual or regulatory requirements.

8. Evidence, feedback and concerns

EU-CONEXUS uses a limited and purposeful set of indicators, supported by qualitative evidence. Measures are linked to objectives, use clear definitions and identify responsibilities for collection and interpretation. Baselines and targets are established where meaningful. Existing institutional and project information is reused where suitable, avoiding unnecessary reporting and survey duplication.

Assessment distinguishes activities and outputs from outcomes and longer-term impact. Participation numbers and satisfaction results are considered alongside evidence of effectiveness, inclusion, cooperation, institutional change and public value. Evidence limitations, uneven participation and uncertainty about attribution are made explicit.

Accessible channels are maintained for feedback, suggestions and concerns. Information explains whom to contact, which body is competent to respond, and the applicable handling and escalation arrangements. Cross-institutional cases are coordinated so that responsibility is clear. Existing complaints, appeals, safeguarding, research-integrity and employment procedures remain applicable; this Policy does not create a substitute adjudication process.

Information is collected and used for defined purposes, with appropriate data protection, confidentiality and access arrangements. Aggregated learning from feedback and concerns informs improvement without exposing individuals unnecessarily.

9. External evaluation and shared learning

EU-CONEXUS undertakes periodic independent external evaluation of the Alliance as a whole, according to a cycle approved by the Governing Board. Evaluation considers mission, strategy, governance, activities, the effectiveness of quality arrangements and the Alliance's capacity to improve. It includes relevant student, staff and stakeholder perspectives and safeguards the independence of reviewers.

Alliance-wide evaluation complements programme-specific reviews, institutional quality assurance and project evaluations. Existing findings and evidence are used wherever appropriate to reduce duplication. Participation in such evaluation is not presented as programme accreditation or as replacing decisions reserved to competent authorities.

External recommendations receive a documented response and are incorporated into the improvement process. EU-CONEXUS also uses peer learning, benchmarking and cooperation with other alliances and relevant bodies to test assumptions, identify effective practices and support development.

10. Implementation, transparency and policy review

This Policy is implemented through a coordinated set of existing and, where necessary, updated quality arrangements. The operational framework identifies the procedures applying to each activity, responsibilities, the review calendar, core evidence requirements and the arrangements for tracking improvement. New procedures are introduced only where existing arrangements leave a substantive gap.

The Executive Director coordinates a maintained map of the relevant policies and procedures, in cooperation with the Management Board, competent councils and institutional quality

services.

Project-specific quality plans contribute to the common framework while retaining the requirements of their respective funding agreements.

Following approval, the Policy is published on the EU-CONEXUS website and communicated to Alliance bodies, member institutions and relevant partners. Public information includes the current version, approval and review dates, principal responsibilities and an appropriate contact point. Accessible summaries of significant evaluation findings and improvement priorities are published, subject to legitimate confidentiality and data-protection requirements.

The Governing Board reviews this Policy at least every three years, and earlier where significant changes in strategy, governance, applicable requirements or evaluation findings warrant it. Review is coordinated by the Executive Director and includes the Management Board, Academic and Research Councils, Student Board, relevant staff and institutional quality services, and appropriate external perspectives. The review considers both the effectiveness and proportionality of the quality framework.

By adopting this Policy, EU-CONEXUS affirms that quality is demonstrated not only through the results it achieves, but also through the integrity of its processes, the participation of its communities and its capacity to learn and improve together.

Related reference documents

- EU-CONEXUS Joint Mission Statement.
- Strategic Plan 2026–2030 and subsequent approved strategies;
- Governing agreements and relevant statutes;
- Applicable educational quality arrangements; Research and Innovation Code of Conduct regarding Research Integrity; and other relevant Alliance policies.
- European Framework for the Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European Universities (EUniQ); Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG); and European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, within their respective scopes of application.