

NEWS & INFORMATION

QALSPELL Project: Quality Assurance in Language for Specific Purposes – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

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With the help of ELTeCs Tallinn Technical University of Estonia started a pan- Baltic quality assurance project in LSP.

The project will seek to establish with the help of the Common European Framework of Reference unified criteria for quality assurance and assessment in learning and teaching Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes at tertiary level educational institutions of the Baltic States with the aim of contributing to mutual recognition of university degrees and credit transfer systems, thereby promoting mobility of students and professionals in Europe. It will make use of the experience gained by the teams of teachers from higher educational establishments in the British Council ESPELL project (ESP-Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania:1998-2000), which dealt with English for Specific Purposes syllabus and materials design and also the expertise of the testing project groups who designed the Year 12 exam for secondary school leavers of the three Baltic States carried out by the initiative and with the help of the British Council. Experts from PROSPER ASE language Centre (affiliated member of EQUALS) and Switzerland (Nick Bell, who is involved in the OPEN SESAME Project), as well as Aniko Tompos from Hungary, who was involved in writing tertiary- level ESP exams on a national level, will act as consultants to the project.

In the course of the project tertiary-level teachers will have to re-think their assessment and evaluation practices. They will learn from each other's and their partner institutions' experience. The unified process-oriented skills-based exams will inform their teaching methodology and improve the quality of foreign language tuition in all its aspects.

In the long term the unified exams will contribute to the students' and professionals' mobility and make the graduates of our universities and vocational establishments more competitive in the labour market.

The university authorities and policy-makers will have to comply with the set examination

requirements recognised on the national level, which will render it impossible for them to incessantly lower the standards and reduce the number of hours for language tuition.


The project will start with ESP and then be extended to other languages.

In the first Tallinn Technical University (TTU), British Council and ELTeCS funded workshop of the project held in TTU on 29.11-03.12.2001 the three main national project teams were finalised. Each project team will consist of a number of institutional work groups. Similarly to the project team each work group will have a leader, a contact person and a disseminator. The disseminator will keep the institutional authorities and the teachers of other languages informed of the progress of the project and involve the latter in the work of the project at each stage. The project team disseminator will be responsible for keeping the work groups' disseminators informed and will take care of promoting the project on the national and international levels. The long-term and short-term objectives of the project were set. At the end of the project a Handbook for ESP Exams will be published.

The workshop was attended by 37 language specialists from the major universities and some vocational institutions of the Baltic States, the PROSPER Ase Language Centre of Rumania, Zurcher Hochschule of Winterthur, Switzerland, and the Estonian State Exams and Qualifications Centre.

The participants from the Baltic States spoke about the assessment procedures and examinations in their institutions and shared their experience and feelings about assessment and evaluation. A needs analysis was supposed to be carried out on the basis of their contributions, but that seemed an impossible task, as the practices employed in different institutions varied from the most basic multiple choice tests to quite sophisticated skills-based and 'can-do' examination procedures.

The main presenters were Anca Codreanu from PROSPER, ASE Language Centre and the English Department of the Economic Studies in Bucharest, Romania, Nick Bell from Zurcher Hochschule of Winterthur, Switzerland, Ülle Türk from the State Exams and Qualifications Centre, Estonia, Hele Saar and Mare-Anne Laane from TTU Language Centre. Mari Uibo from TTU LC acted as facilitator of the seminar. Aniko Tomposa from Istvan College, Hungary, who could not attend the seminar, sent her contributions by e-mail.

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