Accreditation Report

Master's Programme

"Operation of Ship Power Plants"

offered by

Kherson State Maritime Academy/Ukraine

University of Plymouth/United Kingdom

22nd Meeting of the ZEvA Commission on the 5th of November 2024

Agenda Item Nr. 04.05

Study Programme	Degree	Programme Duration	Type of Programme	ECTS
Operation of Ship Power Plants	Master/ Master of Science	3 semesters	Full-time	90

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I. Findings of the Expert Panel and Decision of the Accreditation Commission

1. Decision of the ZEvA Accreditation Commission (5th of November, 2024)

The ZEvA Commission follows the experts' report and recommendations and takes note of the universities' statement in response.

In accordance with the experts, the Commission arrives at the conclusion that the conditions proposed by the experts have to be upheld, but as the underlying deficiencies are considered substantial, the Commission concludes that the ZEvA quality label cannot be awarded prior to the fulfilment of all conditions and thus changes them into preconditions.

In particular, no convincing programme concept has yet been presented which integrates the contributions of both partners in a transparent, coherent and feasible way. The overall student workload entailed by the programme still clearly exceeds the general standards for a programme directed primarily at working professionals, notwithstanding the option of studying based on an individual curriculum.

Furthermore, the Commission recommends choosing a more general title for the programme. The present title suggests a very narrow focus on ship power plants which is not actually given in the curriculum.

The ZEvA Commission decides to accredit the Master's programme "Operation of Ship Power Plants" offered by Kherson State Maritime Academy and the University of Plymouth for a period of six years.

The accreditation is subject to the following five pre-conditions:

1. *The partner institutions either need to provide further proof that the dual degree programme can be studied in full-time mode, or introduce the part-time mode as a general standard.*
2. *The partner institutions need to present a convincing concept for the monitoring of student workload within the programme.*
3. *A study plan needs to be developed which transparently integrates all modules of the dual degree programme, including the UoP modules. The study plan should be included in the official regulatory documents for the programme wherever appropriate. Also, it needs to be made transparent in the collaboration agreement and the programme descriptions how the mutual recognition of credits works within the scope of the programme.*
4. *The module handbook needs to be completed to include descriptions of the pre-diploma practical phase, the elective modules and the UoP research module. The existing descriptions should also be revised to include more information on the type of module (compulsory or elective), the responsible lecturers and the chosen methods of teaching and assessment.*

5. *A Diploma Supplement that is in line with the standards of the European Higher Education Area needs to be generated. The dual degree should be adequately highlighted in the sample document.*

The preconditions have to be fulfilled within a period of 18 months. Written proof of the fulfilment of conditions may be provided at any time in that period at the universities' convenience. Upon fulfilment of the pre-conditions, the accreditation period will start and the accreditation certificate will be issued.

This decision is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and the recommendations of the ECTS Users' Guide as referred to in the ZEvA Manual for the External Assessment of Study Programmes.

2. Key Findings and Final Vote of the Expert Panel

2.1 Executive Summary: Key Findings

The experts have come to the overall conclusion that the Twinning partnership with the University of Plymouth has a very positive overall effect on the Master's programme in "Operation of Ship Power Plants". The double degree option increases the attraction of the programme and creates further international career prospects for graduates. The partnership also contributes to enhancing the scientific research element of the programme, which had hitherto been underrepresented in favour of a strongly professional-vocational profile. A good working relationship has already been established between the partners, although the University of Plymouth should take on a more active role in teaching. Students benefit from the digital resources provided by the UoP, as well as close supervision and comprehensive support in both academic and non-academic matters.

The peers are not yet convinced that the programme is feasible in full-time mode, as most of the students are already working. Further proof is required that the workload is manageable, or the part-time mode should be made standard. In addition, a concept for the monitoring of student workload needs to be developed.

The experts have found room for improvement as regards the transparency and documentation of the programme. Most importantly, a study plan needs to be developed which correctly reflects the dual degree option, and the module descriptions need to be completed and further enhanced. A sample Diploma Supplement also needs to be generated which is in line with the standards of the European Higher Education Area.

2.2 Final Vote of the Expert Panel

2.2.1 Recommendations for Enhancement:

- The experts recommend modifying the intended learning outcomes by putting a stronger focus on scientific research elements and employment prospects for graduates beyond seafaring.
- The University of Plymouth should take on a more active role in teaching within the programme.
- The experts recommend enabling a more frequent exchange between the Ukrainian students and students enrolled at the UoP.
- The experts recommend making the applied methods of teaching and assessment more transparent in the module descriptions.
- The experts recommend taking a more integrated, joint approach to the quality assurance of the dual degree programme.

- The experts recommend establishing a comprehensive website especially for the dual degree programme.

2.2.2 Conditions:

- The partner institutions either need to provide further proof that the dual degree programme can be studied in full-time mode, or introduce the part-time mode as a general standard.
- The partner institutions need to present a convincing concept for the monitoring of student workload within the programme.
- A study plan needs to be developed which transparently integrates all modules of the dual degree programme, including the UoP modules. The study plan should be included in the official regulatory documents for the programme wherever appropriate. Also, it needs to be made transparent in the collaboration agreement and the programme descriptions how the recognition of credits works within the programme.
- The module handbook needs to be completed to include descriptions of the pre-diploma practical phase, the elective modules and the UoP research module. The existing descriptions should also be revised to include more information on the type of module (compulsory or elective), the responsible lecturers and the chosen methods of teaching and assessment.
- A Diploma Supplement that is in line with the standards of the European Higher Education Area needs to be generated. The dual degree should be adequately highlighted in the sample document.

2.2.3 Recommendation to the ZEvA Commission:

The expert group recommends the accreditation of the dual degree programme "Operation of Ship Power Plants" for the duration of six years with the conditions given above.

II. Evaluation Report of the Expert Panel

1. Introduction: Purpose and General Context of the Accreditation Procedure

In December 2023, ZEvA was commissioned with the international accreditation of six Master's programmes that had been developed and launched within the framework of the EU Twinning initiative, an institution-to-institution partnership framework to support Ukrainian higher education, both through short-term aid and long-term activities that help sustain and rebuild Ukrainian universities, the economy and society.

The initiative is coordinated by Cormack Consultancy Group with the support of University UK, the President's Fund of Ukraine for Education, Science, and Sports and different private and state organisations.

Each of the six Master's programmes is jointly offered by one Ukrainian university and one partner institution in the United Kingdom. All programmes are fully taught in English and award a double degree, whereas the exact roles and responsibilities of the partners vary with each programme. At present, all programmes are primarily directed at Ukrainian students, but are, on principle, designed to be open to both international and domestic applicants.

As the programmes belong to a wide spectrum of different academic disciplines, they were assessed in six separate procedures across the year 2024. Each assessment procedure was organized as a peer review, involving an expert panel composed of two university professors in the discipline, one professional from outside academia and one student.

The quality assessment was based on the criteria laid out in the "ZEvA Manual for the External Assessment of Study Programmes". This framework is in turn fundamentally based on the "European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)" (ENQA 2015), the "Framework for Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area" (2005) and the "ECTS Users' Guide" (European Communities, 2015).

For the purpose of the assessment, the universities were asked to submit a written self-report in English for each study programme. Each self-report contained detailed information on the higher education institutions and the programme and included an appendix of key documents, as e.g. the course syllabi, curricula, CVs of the teaching faculty and relevant regulatory documents (cooperation agreements, regulations for student assessment, graduation and recognition, quality assurance policies etc.). The main responsibility for the reports lay with the programme coordinators in Ukraine.

Due to the travel restrictions imposed by the ongoing war in Ukraine, the experts conducted online talks with the representatives of the universities instead of on-site visits. In addition, they were provided with concrete impressions of the premises and infrastructure on campus by means of picture and/or video material.

This assessment report refers to the Master's programme "**Operation of Ship Power Plants**" offered by **Kherson State Maritime Academy/Ukraine** in cooperation with the **University of Plymouth/United Kingdom**. It reflects the outcomes of the experts' assessment of the written self-report and their impressions gained during the online talks with the students, the faculty and staff of both universities, Ukrainian industry representatives and the Twinning project coordinator.

The report serves as a key document for the ZEvA Accreditation Commission to decide on the accreditation of the study programme with the ZEvA quality label. As ZEvA is a registered agency in Ukraine, the accreditation decision can be recognized as equivalent to Ukrainian national accreditation. In the United Kingdom, no external accreditation decision is required at programme level.

2. Outline of the Study Programme

The Master's programme "Operation of Ship Power Plants" has been in existence at Kherson State Maritime Academy (KSMA) for many years. The application-oriented programme comprises 90 ECTS credits in the course of three semesters (16 months) and is aimed at Bachelor's graduates of nautical science, marine engineering and related fields. As a general rule, the Master's students have already started their professional careers and are already in service on vessels while studying.

Since September 2024, students have the option of obtaining a dual award based on a collaboration with the University of Plymouth (UoP) in the United Kingdom. UoP awards its degree (Master of Science in Marine Engineering) based on the partial recognition of KSMA modules and contributes one additional compulsory module on Research Methods and Professional Skills. This module is developed by the UoP, but taught by KSMA, with support from the UoP faculty if required. In addition to that, the UoP is involved in the supervision of MA theses.

Presently, the dual degree option is primarily aimed at Ukrainian students, but is also open to students of other nationalities.

It is a general goal of the dual degree programme to combine the professional skills imparted at KSMA with the strong research focus of the UoP programme in order to make students benefit from the individual strengths of both partners. At present, about 50% of the students enrolled in the programme (23 out of 49) aim for the dual degree option.

The dual degree is expected to open a wide variety of career prospects to students. This includes positions both on vessels and on shore, as e.g. chief engineers, superintendents at shipping companies or in teaching and research.

3. The Partner Universities and their Framework of Collaboration

Profile of the Universities

The history of Kherson State Maritime Academy started in the 1830s with the establishment of a School of Merchant Shipping. This institution underwent various transformations throughout the years and has existed under its current name since 2011. After the events of February 2022, the Academy was relocated to the city of Odesa.

KSMA is a higher education institution that educates maritime professionals in different specialities, including maritime transport and nautical science, shipbuilding and marine engineering. Graduates may find employment on river and sea vessels, in shipping companies or in science and research. The Academy currently enrolls between 5.000 and 6.000 students.

The University of Plymouth is a public university that was founded in 1992. It enrolls around 18.000 students within a wide range of subjects in Arts and Humanities, Business, Science, Engineering, Medicine and Health. The university also offers a wide range of Marine degree programmes, research and education at its Marine Institute, which is the largest of its kind in the UK.

The partnership between the two institutions began in May 2022 with the launch of the Twinning programme and the joint funding application, although there had been some collaboration in research contexts before that.

Framework of the Cooperation and Distribution of Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the two universities within the framework of the study programme were explained to the experts in the context of the online talks in June 2024. Furthermore, they are formally stipulated in a written collaboration agreement between the partners (cf. Appendix 21 to the self-report). This agreement was set up upon the successful Twinning funding application and relates to the 2023 cohort of students only, i.e. the agreement will automatically terminate in the summer of 2024. During the online talks, the representatives of the universities confirmed that an extension of the agreement beyond that point in time was aimed at, but could not yet be definitely confirmed due to the insecure political and financial conditions under which the programme is currently operating.

It is clearly outlined in the agreement that KSMA acts as the provider of the programme, i.e. all modules (including those contributed by UoP) are delivered by KSMA staff, with guidance and supervision from the partner institution wherever necessary. However, as a general rule the dual degree students are enrolled at both partner universities.

The selection and assessment of students are the responsibility of KSMA, with some additional monitoring as regards marking from the side of the UoP. In line with general UK regulations, an External Examiner (from the University of Cambridge) has been appointed in order to ensure that the university's general assessment standards are met throughout the programme.

KSMA is also responsible for providing advice and support to students in all non-academic matters.

According to the agreement both partners are jointly responsible for the quality assurance and enhancement of the dual degree programme. For this purpose, a joint Board of Studies has been established which is composed of representatives of both institutions and meets at least once per semester. In addition, each party has assigned a senior manager and a programme manager to oversee the overall academic planning, management, quality assurance and delivery of the programme.

4. Assessment of the Study Programme

4.1 Intended Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes of the Master's programme are described in detail in Annex 11 of the self-report. To the experts' knowledge, there is no difference between the ILOs of the dual degree programme as opposed to the "standard" Master's programme "Operation of Ship Power Plants".

According to the self-report and the attached documents, the general objective of the Master's programme is

to prepare specialists in demand in the labour market for the maritime industry through the acquisition by higher education students of knowledge, understanding, skills and other competencies and learning outcomes required in the field of marine engineering (in particular, the acquisition of competencies in accordance with the requirements of regulation III/2 of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended):

- *to hold positions of officers of sea and river vessels for the operation of ship power plants;*
- *to work at enterprises, institutions and organisations engaged in operation and/or research activities and/or providing training of specialists for river and sea transport;*
- *to continue their studies at the third level of higher education.*

In terms of employability, the students are to be prepared especially for positions related to the management of the operation of ships and their systems, to the management of ship operations, and to ensuring safety of navigation. In particular, graduates are to be qualified for positions as second-class mechanics ("second engineer"), first-class mechanics ("chief engineer"), superintendents at shipping companies; chief mechanics, research engineers, engineers for scientific and technical information, as well as for positions in research and teaching. Also, graduates may continue to do research at Ph.D. level.

In detail, the following intended learning outcomes have been defined for the study programme:

***LO1**. Specialised conceptual knowledge in the field of marine engineering at the level of innovative achievements.*

***LO2**. Knowledge of the procedures for managing the processes of conversion, distribution and use of thermal, mechanical and electrical energy generated on ships of maritime and inland waterway transport.*

***LO3**. Ability to evaluate the efficiency of work, monitor the condition of the main engine and maintain the safety of the power propulsion system and auxiliary machines and mechanisms during operation.*

***LO4**. Knowledge of technology for diagnosing the technical condition, assessing the level of reliability and managing the repair process of river and sea vessels, their technical complexes and systems.*

***LO5**. Knowledge of methods for determining the optimal parameters of automatic control systems and remote control of power plants of maritime and inland waterway transport vessels.*

***LO6**. Ability to control electronic and electrical equipment of power plants, mechanisms and devices of maritime and inland waterway transport vessels.*

***LO7**. Ability to monitor compliance with the requirements of international and domestic regulations governing the safety of human life at sea and environmental protection.*

***LO8**. Ability to manage and ensure the functioning of systems and auxiliary equipment of maritime and inland waterway transport vessels in accordance with the requirements of international conventions and classification societies.*

***LO9**. Knowledge and understanding of technical measures to ensure unsinkability, stability and buoyancy of the ship.*

***LO10**. Ability to organise firefighting drills, conduct abandonment drills and handle life-saving personal protective equipment, lifeboats, rafts and rescue boats, devices and means for their launching, as well as equipment for them.*

***LO11**. The ability to make optimal decisions in the management of production activities, taking into account the requirements of quality, reliability and cost, as well as deadlines, life safety and environmental safety.*

***LO12**. Ability to organise the collection of information, summarise and analyse it regarding the technical condition, environmental and thermal performance characteristics of ship power facilities, and develop recommendations for their improvement.*

***LO13**. Knowledge of the methods of development of information support for power plants as objects of control of complex ergatic systems.*

***LO14**. Ability to carry out simulation modelling, research and optimisation of object parameters on the basis of developed and available research and design tools, including standard and specialised application packages.*

***LO15**. Knowledge of the tools of the European Higher Education Area and the basics of pedagogical activity.*

***LO16**. Ability to use the state and English language for communication, drafting business letters, technical and reporting documentation, describing research results and preparing scientific reports.*

Experts' Appraisal

The experts have come to the overall conclusion that the formulated intended learning outcomes are adequate for a Master's programme in the discipline and integrate all the parameters of the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. In this sense, the requirements of accreditation are regarded as fulfilled.

However, the experts still see room for optimization as regards the intended learning outcomes. By and large, the ILOs are dominated by strongly operative, practice-oriented knowledge and skills that are required on vessels, whereas the academic profile of the graduates is not yet clearly drawn out. As the dual degree programme is especially meant to enhance the students' research skills (in comparison to the standard programme), it seems advisable to amend the ILOs for the dual degree option accordingly. From the experts' point of view, this "enhanced" graduate profile should also include

interdisciplinary elements that go beyond the professional context of working on board ("thinking outside the box").

Furthermore, the employment prospects for graduates outside seafaring (as e.g. in engineering companies, classification societies or public authorities) should become more palpable in the descriptions of the study programme. In accordance with that, the curriculum should allow students to develop their individual academic profiles, as e.g. by introducing several elective tracks in the technical realm).

4.2 Programme Concept and Curriculum

Student Admission: Process and Criteria

The selection and admission of students is entirely up to KSMA, as stipulated in the collaboration agreement. The application process and the admission criteria are described on the KSMA website.

Applicants to the programme need to have obtained a Bachelor's degree (or equivalent) in " Maritime and Inland Waterway Transport" with a specialization in "Ship technical systems and complexes operation". Graduates of similar programmes with equivalent competences may also be accepted.

All applicants undergo a professional entrance examination following a Unified Entrance Exam at national level that all applicants to postgraduate programmes need to sit. The selection of students is based on the applicants' score in the two exams. Those applicants who wish to take the dual degree option need to pass an additional English language test.

It was confirmed during the online talks that KSMA recruits most of the Master's students from among its own Bachelor graduates.

Curriculum

The standard KSMA Master's programme "Operation of Ship Power Plants" is designed as a full-time course (90 ECTS credits in the course of three semesters/16 months), but may also be studied part-time or based on an individual curriculum. As a general rule, the students are already working aboard vessels, where they may also conduct some research or practical exercises in the context of their Master's studies.

During the first two semesters, the programme mainly consists of theory-based compulsory modules in several core areas (maritime transport and maritime technology, esp. operation, maintenance and optimization of power plants and other technical equipment on ships), as well as modules on scientific research methods, mathematical modelling and information systems for technical support on ships. In line with Ukrainian national requirements for Master's programmes there are also modules on higher education methodology and pedagogy and philosophy of science, complemented by a 2-semester module in Business English and three elective modules to be selected from two blocks of disciplines

(one module from Block 1 and two from Block 2). Block 1 consists of the modules "Technical Management of Shipping Companies" and "Management of Ship Power Plants", while Block 2 includes the following disciplines to choose from:

- Fleet Technical Operation Management
- Marketing and Management of Maritime Complex Companies
- Optimisation of Steering Machines and Ship's Hydraulic Drive
- Organisation and Regulatory Support of Ship Security
- Quality Management
- Project management / Project management

All theory-based modules comprise between three and six ECTS.

During the third semester, students absolve a practical phase (12 ECTS), either on board a vessel or in an industrial company. Also, they finish and defend their Master's thesis.

The experts are not yet certain about the differences in curricular design between the standard KSME Master's programme and the dual degree option, which is the actual subject of this assessment procedure. It was reported both in writing and during the online talks that the UoP contributes one module on "Engineering Research Methods, Skills, and Professional Development" to the dual degree programme and is also involved in the supervision of the students' final theses/dissertations. However, the module on research methods (200 hours of learning) does not appear in the study plans given in the self-report and the official regulatory documents, and no module description was submitted for it.

During the online talks and afterwards the experts received contradictory information on whether the module is studied as an add-on to the standard curriculum (and if so, at which point in time) or actually replaces parts of it by way of recognition. The collaboration agreement does not clarify this aspect either. Neither is it clear how the UoP dissertation module relates to the final Master's thesis in the KSMA standard curriculum.

In response to the experts' final feedback during the online talks, KSMA submitted additional written information on this aspect. The experts have learned that the UoP module is compulsory for all students and replaces part of the following compulsory modules in the standard curriculum: RCm1 (*Business English*), RCm2 (*Labor Protection in Maritime Transport*), RCm6 (*Ensuring the Seaworthiness of Vessels*), RCm12 (*Organization and Technologies of Ship Repair*) and RCm15 (*Reliability of Ship Technical Systems and Complexes*). The students still absolve these modules, but with a slightly reduced amount of self-study time.

Recognition and Student Mobility

Physical mobility is currently not possible for students and faculty, even though the partners are planning to realize it as soon as the general situation allows for that.

To the experts' knowledge, there is no pre-defined "mobility window" in the curriculum. However, the

final semester might be the best choice here, as it foresees the pre-diploma practical phase and the final thesis only.

There is automatic mutual recognition of credits within the scope of the dual degree programme. In addition to that, KSMA students may also apply for the recognition of learning outcomes obtained in formal or non-formal education. To this end the Academy has developed several formal regulations for recognition and credit mobility which describe the recognition procedure and criteria in detail (cf. self-report, Appendices 25, 33, 35).

Experts' Appraisal

From the experts' point of view the standard KSMA curriculum is well aligned with the intended learning outcomes defined for the Master's programme. The programme is strongly practice-oriented and tailored to the specific needs of the profession and hence clearly qualifies students for leading positions on vessels or as engineers in related fields.

Students who choose the dual degree option are to benefit from a more intense scientific and methodological training, which the experts fully support with a view to the fact that the programme is to provide a qualification at Master's level. In this regard, the University of Plymouth is a very good match for KSMA. However, in order to make the most of the partnership, the UoP should be more intensely involved in teaching and contribute its scientific expertise to the programme more actively. At present, the contribution of the UoP is limited to general advice and support in teaching and the supervision of theses.

To the experts' knowledge, there is not yet any official document that formally describes the dual degree programme completely and accurately. In particular, there is no study plan (or other illustration of the curriculum) that transparently integrates the two UoP modules. This needs to be done as quickly as possible to create full transparency for students and potential applicants. Otherwise it does not become clear how the dual degree programme is organized, as e.g. when exactly the UoP module on research methods is actually studied. Also, it needs to be made transparent in the collaboration agreement and the programme descriptions how the recognition of credits works within the programme, i.e. how the mapping of credits works between the two institutions.

The experts have strong concerns about the general feasibility of the programme for students. As most of the students are further pursuing their professional careers while studying, the experts find it hard to believe that it is possible for them to absolve the programme in full-time mode, even if certain synergies may be created through research or practical exercises on board. This also depends to a certain extent on the time resources that the students are given for study purposes on board, which to the experts' knowledge is not regulated in any way by the Academy, but is up to the decision of the students' superiors on board.

All in all, the experts conclude that the two partner institutions either need to provide further proof that the dual degree programme can be studied in full-time mode, or introduce the part-time mode as a general standard.

The experts regard the process and criteria for the selection of students as adequate and sufficiently transparent. The prerequisite of an additional English language test for the dual degree students is also considered appropriate. Even though students pointed out during the interviews that they already had good knowledge of English due to their service on board, they also reported that more in-depth competences were required especially in the context of research at Master's level.

The Academy has developed several detailed and comprehensive regulations for the recognition of achieved learning outcomes. To bring these regulations fully in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, it should be stipulated that in case an application for recognition is denied, the Academy bears the burden of proof that there are substantial differences between the ILOs of the programme and the applicant's obtained learning outcomes.

4.3 Teaching Faculty

As already explained above, the delivery of the programme is up to the teaching faculty of KSMA, with continuous assistance and support from the UoP staff wherever necessary. CVs of the faculty members involved in the Master's programme were submitted to the expert panel as part of the self-report. The staff selection criteria of the Academy are also described in this document.

As stipulated by Ukrainian national law, the KSMA faculty have to undergo further professional training on a regular basis. The Academy has established its own lifelong learning centre that offers various classes for teaching faculty. Also, lecturers may undergo further training via internships or mobility periods at other universities.

In addition, UoP is planning to provide additional online training in English for the colleagues of KSMA in the near future.

Experts' Appraisal

Based on all oral and written information provided, the experts conclude that the dual degree programme benefits from excellent human resources. The teaching faculty is composed of highly experienced senior lecturers, scholars and practitioners who possess all academic and practical expertise required for the programme. The experts also commend the faculty of both KSMA and UoP on their joint efforts to increase the attraction and quality of the programme by identifying and integrating topics of future relevance. This process of continuous development and co-operation should be continued and further intensified.

The experts also appreciate the plans to further intensify the online training of KSMA lecturers in the context of the study programme. In particular, English language competencies should be further enhanced among the KSMA teaching faculty, and the members of faculty should continuously familiarize themselves with future topics and technologies in the context of professional training.

Provided that the dual degree programme continues to exist beyond the 2023 cohort, the experts recommend increasing the teaching input on the side of the UoP. There should be more cooperation and joint activities in teaching beyond the arrangements for the mutual recognition of credits.

4.4 Infrastructure, Resources and Student Support

Financial Resources and Funding

The dual degree programme is supported by funds out of the Ukraine Twinning initiative. As the experts learned during the online talks, funding has already been secured for a second cohort of students, and the partners expressed their strong commitment to continuing their cooperation beyond that point in time. Also, the cooperation agreement stipulates that in case the programme needs to be closed, all students still enrolled will be given the opportunity to obtain their degree or, in case this is not possible, to be transferred to similar programmes – as, for example, the "standard" Master's programmes that the dual degree is based on.

Learning Infrastructure and Resources

Due to the recent relocation of KSMA to the city of Odessa, the Academy does not have access to its usual infrastructure, resources and facilities, as, for example, simulators. Some, but not all of the equipment could be transferred to the new location. Hence, on-board practical training has further increased in importance for students, as they may use the equipment on board for study and research purposes. KSMA has also closed several agreements with local training centers which dispose of the required equipment.

In addition to that, the UoP provides the KSMA students and faculty with access to its cloud-based simulators and other online databases and learning resources, including the library. Students may also take advantage of the services of the UoP English language center, which may, for instance, support them in writing their final thesis in the foreign language.

The learning platform Moodle is used for the exchange of information and documents and other study-related purposes.

Student Support Services and Equal Opportunities Policies

The students who were interviewed online confirmed that they received very comprehensive support from both KSMA and the UoP. This includes continuous close exchange with the responsible members of faculty on academic matters, but also advice on non-academic issues, including psychological counselling.

The Academy supports students in contacting potential employers, as e.g. by organizing regular career days. A special department at KSMA is there to arrange and manage the practical training phases that students undergo in the course of their studies. Students may also reach out to the academy administration or to the head of their study programme for all individual questions.

The Academy has also established regulations for the support of students with disabilities or restricted mobility (cf. Appendix 29), which equally apply to the students of the dual degree programme. These regulations are to be extended to include special provisions for disabled students during examinations.

Experts' Appraisal

Even though the financial funding of the dual degree programme is not yet secure for the entire accreditation period, the experts see a high chance for the cooperation to continue. Both partner institutions are highly committed to the cause of the programme. Even more importantly, the dual degree is based on programmes/modules that are already established and strongly relies on mutual recognition instead of joint teaching activities. Hence, it is relatively efficient as regards staff resources and also enables students to continue their studies in the standard Master's programme in case the dual degree option ceases to be available. The experts therefore do not insist on further proof of the financial sustainability of the programme.

As for the physical resources and infrastructure, the partners have found very pragmatic solutions which enable the realization of the programme in spite of the ongoing war in Ukraine. This is made possible by a combination of digital tools and technology, practical training on board and close supervision of students during self-study phases. The experts commend the partners on their intense, continuous dialogue with the students and the comprehensive support they provide to them both on board and on shore. This includes psychological counselling tailored to the needs of seafaring students. The large-scale access that students have to the learning resources of the UoP should be especially highlighted.

Responsibilities as regards linguistic and technical student support are well-divided between the partners. The online talks have shown that there is close dialogue and exchange between KSMA and the potential future employers of its graduates, too.

The experts come to the overall conclusion that the programme fulfils the requirements as regards infrastructure, resources and student support, in spite of the current restrictions caused by the general external conditions.

The experts appreciate that KSMA is planning to introduce special examination conditions for students with impairments and disabilities. Such regulations should be introduced as quickly as possible.

4.5 Methods of Teaching and Student Assessment

The educational process within the programme is based on a variety of teaching formats, as outlined in the self-report. As a general rule, the theory-based modules combine (online) lectures and seminars with laboratory and practical classes or projects and independent self-study time, amended by frequent consultations with lecturers. Practical exercises or research tasks may be absolved on board if necessary.

Applied forms of continuous and final assessment include oral and written examinations, projects and practice reports, as well as the final Master's thesis.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts find that the applied methods of teaching and assessment are well in line with the intended learning outcomes and the contents of the dual degree programme. The current lack of relevant equipment, especially as regards simulators, is compensated by means of cloud solutions, on-board practice and by resorting to infrastructure provided by external partners.

In spite of the fact that teaching and assessment are currently conducted in an online mode only, a close and effective supervision of students during the study process is still made possible.

Following the wish expressed by the students during the online interviews, the experts recommend enabling a more frequent exchange between the Ukrainian students and students enrolled in related programmes at the UoP, as e.g. in the context of mixed working groups.

Furthermore, the experts recommend making the applied forms of assessment and the teaching format more transparent in the module descriptions.

4.6 Quality Assurance

As already described above, the collaboration agreement between the two institutions stipulates that the partners share the responsibility for the quality assurance of the dual degree programme. To this end, a partnership handbook has been developed which, according to the agreement, serves as a general guideline and reference document for the management and quality assurance of the dual degree programme. Nevertheless, the handbook largely reflects general UoP regulations and procedures for quality assurance, whereas the general quality assurance policies of KSMA also apply to the programme.

The partnership handbook stipulates that a Joint Board of Studies is to be established in order to discuss the general development and quality assurance of the dual degree programme on a regular basis. Board meetings are to be held at least once a year based on a standard agenda.

In line with general procedures at UoP, there is also a Programme Committee which meets three times a year to discuss the general strategic development of the programme. In addition, there is to be an annual review of the programme based on a written review report. Each annual report is to include data on student recruitment and student success, student feedback on the modules and the study experience, as well as an action plan. The Annual Review Report also contains a written report by the External Examiner for the programme, which focuses on the quality of student assessment.

In addition to that, there are regular subject-based assessment panels focusing on the quality of individual educational units.

The KSMA policy and guideline for quality assurance were submitted to the experts along with the self-report (cf. Appendices 22 and 23). There is also a separate guideline that regulates the different types of quality surveys conducted at the Academy. These include surveys on the students' satisfaction with the quality of teaching (at module level), the quality of their study process and their study programmes, as well as graduate surveys to gain a clearer picture of the graduates' employment situation. In addition, surveys are conducted among employers and the teaching staff. There are also surveys on special topics, as e.g. distance learning.

Based on the results of the surveys the responsible KSMA staff (programme guarantors, Academic Council, Rectorate) decide upon measures to be taken in response.

Experts' Appraisal

Based on the documents provided and their talks with the programme coordinators the experts conclude that both KSMA and the UoP have developed comprehensive and adequate tools for the quality assurance of teaching and learning. However, it has not become fully comprehensible to the experts which of these instruments actually apply to which parts of the dual degree programme. As already mentioned, the partnership handbook very much seems to reflect UoP regulations rather than a joint quality assurance approach, and it is not clear whether the handbook applies to the entire dual degree programme or only to the two modules contributed by the UoP. The online talks also confirmed that both institutions seem to apply their own quality assurance procedures (surveys etc.) without exchanging relevant data or taking joint actions in response, even though the Joint Board of Studies seems to have been established already.

Based on these impressions the experts recommend developing a more integrated approach to the quality assurance of the dual degree programme. It is fully acceptable that both partners apply their own instruments based on their internal quality assurance systems, but there should be more exchange of quality-relevant data and joint action-taking if necessary.

In addition to that, the experts have noticed that there seems to be no systematic monitoring of student workload within the programme so far. The sample survey questionnaires of KSMA (cf. Appendix 16) do not refer to this topic at all, and it is not mentioned in the partnership handbook either. As the experts have concerns about the general feasibility of the programme (cf. Chapter 4.2),

they regard the aspect of student workload as crucial for its quality. Hence, they see the necessity to integrate workload monitoring as a standard feature into the quality assurance tools at module and programme level. From the experts' point of view this needs to be done as a condition to the accreditation of the dual degree programme.

4.7 Transparency, Documentation and Public Information

All relevant formal regulations applying to the students are published on the KSMA website. Students have access to all study materials and information relevant for them via the Moodle platform.

To the experts' knowledge, a separate website for the dual degree programme has not yet been set up by KSMA. There is some information on the dual degree on the UoP website, which, however, contains only very little information. The given links to the KSMA website do not help to gain a clearer picture of the programme profile, the organization of the dual degree programme, or the exact role and contribution of the partners.

Module descriptions have been submitted to the experts along with the self-report. However, the experts are missing a description for the pre-diploma practical phase and for the elective modules. The descriptions should also include more detailed information on the chosen forms of teaching and assessment and should name the responsible member of the teaching faculty. It should also become clear whether the module is compulsory or an elective. Also, the descriptions need to reflect the amount of credits awarded for them correctly, as there are some differences in this regard to the standard KSMA curriculum (cf. Chapter 4.2).

The module description for the UoP module on research methods (KSMA7000) is not yet included in the module handbook either.

A sample graduation certificate is included in the self-report (cf. Appendix 15), but no Diploma Supplement in line with the standards of the European higher education area has been provided yet.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts have found that the students have unlimited access to all information relevant to them via the KSMA website or the Moodle platform.

As far as general public information is concerned, however, the peers still see the need for improvement.

The experts recommend establishing a website especially for the dual degree programme which contains at least all relevant information on admission and enrolment, as well as a complete and accurate description of the programme profile and contents, the programme title(s), the degrees awarded and the intended learning outcomes. The module descriptions may also be published there.

Furthermore, the module handbook needs to be completed to include descriptions of the pre-diploma practical phase, the elective modules and the UoP research module. The existing descriptions should also be revised to include more information on the type of module (compulsory or elective), the responsible lecturers and the chosen methods of teaching and assessment.

A Diploma Supplement that is in line with the standards of the European Higher Education Area needs to be generated. The dual degree should be adequately highlighted in the sample document.

As already described above, a study plan that accurately depicts all modules of the dual degree programme still needs to be developed and integrated into the official regulatory documents.

Appendix

1. Statement of the University in Response to the Expert Report

Feedback on the key findings and final vote of the Expert Panel

The working group of KSMA and the University of Plymouth are sincerely grateful for the highly professional experts' work, and the recommendations and remarks advanced. We believe that taking them into account will improve the study programme, and create conditions for enhancing its integration into a single solid dual degree programme that will successfully combine both practical and scientific elements, thereby training a highly qualified Master of the field.

At the same time, we consider it necessary to comment on the aspects as follows:

The dual degree programme is implemented for full-time students only. This fact is confirmed by:

- relevant orders for enrolment of students for the full-time studies;
- organisation of the study process in full-time mode, which is confirmed by an approved timetable of classes conducted full-time;
- recording of classes / forms of control by lecturers, as well as students' attendance noted in the academic group record.

It should also be noted that according to the 'Regulation on the Individual Study Curriculum for the Full-Time Students of Kherson State Maritime Academy, QMS 04-156-2024 (Edition No. 2)', https://ksma.ks.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/04_156_2024.pdf full-time students have the right, if there are valid reasons, to study under an individual curriculum. They mainly exercise this right during undergraduate practical training, an element of the study programme. As a rule, this happens in cases when the partner company's call for the shipboard training does not coincide with the student's study curriculum, which is due to the specific character of the crew change carried out by international shipping companies.

The Regulation reveals the specific features of student's fulfilling the individual study plan, terms and peculiarities of recording and monitoring the individual plans completion.

We agree with the recommendations to modify the intended learning outcomes by putting a stronger focus on scientific research element and employment prospects for graduates beyond seafaring.

The working groups of KSMA and the University of Plymouth are constantly cooperating to further deepen the integration between two educational institutions within the study process.

Furthermore, as part of the ongoing integration and development of the project, we agree with the need to revise the applied methods of teaching and assessment in the module descriptions, as well as introduce a more integrated, joint approach to the quality assurance of the dual degree programme.

Teaching faculty

Starting from the academic year 2024-2025, lecturers of the University of Plymouth will be more actively involved in teaching, i.e., KSMA 7000 and KSMA 7001 Modules are planned to be taught and supervised by the UoP lecturers; consultations for students; involvement in the university research activities, etc. Teaching faculty of the University of Plymouth will also carry out the external and internal examination of research.

Holding several methodical seminars for the KSMA faculty by the UoP colleagues is also planned. Within the long-term perspective of cooperation between the educational institutions, an increase of the activities for both students and lecturers is planned. Their goal lies in creating more effective communication between students and teachers, and establishing effective educational and scientific cooperation.

Infrastructure, Resources and Student Support

KSMA and the University of Plymouth are actively seeking to create a procedure for conducting examination for students with impairments and disabilities. The institutions plan to implement it in 2025.

Methods of Teaching and Student Assessment

In view of the military situation in Ukraine, the mobility implementation is quite challenging, given the fact that the students involved in the programme are mainly men of service age. Since April 2024, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has amended the legislative acts on exercising the students' academic mobility right. In accordance with the legal requirements, KSMA is preparing a procedure for exercising the academic mobility right, and joint mobility programmes to enhance exchange opportunities. In this regard, KSMA collaborates with the University of Plymouth and other maritime higher education institutions in Europe and beyond.

As for the transparency of applied forms of assessment and the teaching format in module descriptions, this issue will be worked up by the KSMA Higher Education Quality Assurance Council and the University of Plymouth to develop a joint strategy in this field.

Quality Assurance

The Joint Board of Studies is working to improve the integrated procedure for the quality assurance of the learning process. We have considered the experience gained during the first year of the dual degree programme implementation, therefore we have the grounds to develop a more advanced procedure, taking into account the experience of both educational institutions and the legislative requirements of both countries.

The remark regarding the need to integrate workload monitoring as a standard feature into the quality assurance tools at module and programme level is of the utmost importance. The working group of the dual degree programme completely agrees with this remark, and it will direct all efforts to solve this problem as quickly as possible.

Transparency, Documentation and Public Information

The programme website has already been established, and is gradually being uploaded with the relevant information and documents.

https://ksma.ks.ua/?p=21341

The comments and recommendations are quite pertinent regarding the need to complete the module handbook to include descriptions of the pre-diploma practical phase, elective modules and the UoP research module. The existing descriptions will be revised to include more information on the type of module (compulsory or elective), the lecturers responsible, and the methods of teaching and assessment chosen.

A study plan (curriculum) of the dual degree programme is being regulated, taking into account all programme modules, and in accordance with the implementation of the programme specific features into the official regulatory documents.

Overall, we consider the conditions proposed for the programme implementation to be relevant for the further quality development of the study programme.