

EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package - Higher Education Programme (SCOPE-HE)

TERMS OF REFERENCE 07/SCOPE-HE/TOR/IX/2024

CALL FOR TENDERS

Comparability Study of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)

<p>ABOUT THE PROGRAMME</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>The EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Package – Higher Education Programme (SCOPE-HE) is a joint initiative funded by the European Union (EU). It aims to support, among others, interconnected and dynamic higher education research clusters as well as technical and vocational education and training between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the EU. Implemented by Nuffic, in collaboration with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), this programme will run for 48 months.</p> <p>SCOPE-HE aims to achieve the following objectives, leveraging the success and experience of the EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region Programme (SHARE) and the Erasmus+ Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of students and higher education institution (HEI) staff, including disadvantaged groups, participating in virtual and physical inter-ASEAN student scholarship and staff exchange programmes. • Support mobility between EU and ASEAN HEIs, notably at the staff level. • Support the implementation of the ASEAN Higher Education Space. • Develop the comparability of reference systems between ASEAN and EU frameworks.
<p>DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>Sustainable connectivity has emerged as a cornerstone of EU cooperation with ASEAN, as highlighted in pivotal strategies such as the EU Global Gateway Joint Communication and the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (2021). Enhancing intra-regional mobility and people-to-people connectivity, as outlined in the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, is vital for community building in Southeast Asia.</p> <p>Academic and student mobility reinforces people-to-people connectivity for both regions. For the EU, cooperation in mobility programmes with ASEAN streamlines access to its rapidly growing economy and talent pool, fostering cultural exchange and cooperation. Students from ASEAN countries can bring fresh perspectives and expertise to EU institutions, while students from the EU can gain valuable insights into the region’s diverse cultures and economies. Conversely, for ASEAN, academic mobility can facilitate knowledge transfer, innovation and capacity building in various sectors. Through increased collaboration and exchange, both regions can strengthen their global</p>

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		<p>competitiveness, enhance research capabilities and promote people-to-people ties. However, there remain challenges in the mutual understanding of educational systems in the EU and ASEAN as well as insufficient funding opportunities for students and staff.</p> <p>In response to these mobility challenges, SCOPE-HE aims to conduct a series of comparability studies of reference systems, and capacity-building workshops with relevant ASEAN bodies and national authorities.</p> <p>This SCOPE-HE call for tenders is to commission a comparability study of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). Experts, scholars and/or practitioners in this field are welcome to participate in this call.</p> <p>The purpose of this comparative analysis is to contribute to mutual trust between the two regions, and improve the understanding of the AQRF in Europe and of qualifications linked to the EQF in ASEAN, via the referencing of national qualifications systems and frameworks. It is expected that the mutual understanding, transparency and trust generated by the process would be able to facilitate qualification recognition, support the mobility of learners and staff, and enhance opportunities for future cooperation between ASEAN and Europe.</p> <p>The selected research team, in close coordination with the SCOPE-HE team, will produce a study that is expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compare the level-to-level criteria, components and standard procedures between the AQRF and the EQF via the referencing of AQRF qualification levels to the EQF. - Provide a detailed comparative analysis to determine the relationship between the AQRF and the EQF in terms of their purpose, structure, levels and underpinning quality assurance mechanisms. - Include a specific example of an ASEAN member state's (e.g., Malaysia) national qualifications framework, comparing it to both regional frameworks (AQRF and EQF), and indirectly to a national qualifications framework in a EU member state (e.g., Ireland). - Identify gaps in the framework alignment, risks and challenges in the implementation of cross-border qualifications. - Provide recommendations on how to further enhance the frameworks' alignment to improve mobility, recognition of qualifications and recognition of mobility periods (especially in higher education) between the two regions.
<p>ELIGIBILITY</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<p>This call for tenders is eligible for organisations or individual entities who meet the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Lead Researcher should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferably reside in ASEAN or the EU. • Be an academic (professor/lecturer/researcher/administrator), preferably with a background or have experience in education reference systems in the EU and ASEAN or other related areas. • Have a PhD or equivalent qualification (essential). • Demonstrate research expertise through relevant publications and/or projects.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an established network of relevant professional and academic contacts in the EU and ASEAN. <p>(optional) up to THREE junior experts / research assistants with the following qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's (preferable) or bachelor's degree in education, management, public policy or other areas related to the research. • Relevant knowledge and prior research or work experience on the topic. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The researcher(s) must have a proven track record in implementing projects and/or producing research and publications on qualifications frameworks. 3. The applicant organisation/individuals must have a solid and extensive professional and academic network in the EU and ASEAN, including policymakers, educational agencies or HEIs.
<p>EXPECTED OUTPUTS & SERVICES</p>	<p>4</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct desk research and interviews to understand the current state of regional reference systems and the implementation of qualifications frameworks at the regional level (focused on ASEAN). 2. Serve as resource person at consultations and provide recommendations to EU and ASEAN policymakers to enhance mutual understanding on applicable qualifications frameworks (AQRF and EQF) to support cross-regional mobility schemes in higher education and the recognition of qualifications. 3. Provide a research report of approximately 40–60 pages (excluding annexes) addressing the abovementioned objectives and comprising the following: executive summary; background of the research; purpose and scope; methodology; literature review; analysis of interviews with key stakeholders; conclusions; and suggestions for follow-up actions or research (medium and long term). 4. Commit to support the dissemination of the study's results to key EU and ASEAN stakeholders, in collaboration with the SCOPE-HE team, during the entire duration of SCOPE-HE (Feb 2024–Jan 2028). <p>All documents and other materials produced as a result of the services rendered under these terms of reference, including strategies, reports, application forms, report forms, etc., are considered transferable deliverables. Intellectual property rights of the aforementioned items belong to SCOPE-HE (specifically, the DAAD as implementing partner) without exception. The results, however, can be used for further research to contribute to the publicly available body of knowledge.</p>

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PROVISIONAL TIMELINE	5	Indicative Timeline¹	Activity
		17 September - 13 October 2024	Call for tenders
		13 October 2024	Proposal submission deadline
		14 - 18 October 2024	Proposal shortlisting (including interviews)
		4 th week of October 2024	Announcement of selection result and contract starting date (1st payment)
		November- December 2024	Desk research
		1st week of December 2024	Present preliminary findings at a SCOPE-HE policy dialogue.
		4 th week of December 2024	Submission of first draft of final report
		1 st week of January 2025	Proofreading and editing
		3 rd week of January 2025	Final report submission (2nd payment)
		4 th week of January–1st week of February 2025	Publication and dissemination of report to key ASEAN and EU stakeholders in collaboration with SCOPE-HE project team (3rd payment)
BUDGET & INDICATIVE PAYMENT SCHEDULE	6	Anticipated Budget	Up to EUR19,990
		Team Setup	One lead researcher and (optional) up to three research assistants
		Indicative Payment Schedule	1st payment: 35% of the offer (upon submission of the final proposal and agreed timeline)
			2nd payment: 35% of the offer (upon submission of the final report)
3rd payment: 30% of the offer (upon publication and dissemination of the final report)			

¹ The final timeline will be agreed upon signing the contract.

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<p>APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCEDURE</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>Interested applicants should apply as a research team comprising ONE Lead Researcher and (optional) up to THREE junior experts / research assistants.</p> <p>The application should comprise the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CV of the Lead Researcher and, if applicable, CV of each junior expert / research assistant. All CVs should indicate that eligibility criteria are fulfilled. 2. A comprehensive proposal to address the expected outputs as listed above, comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the research design and methodology, including potential ethical issues/anticipated difficulties relating to data collection. • Preliminary bibliography for literature review (if available). • Proposed work plan and timeline, including an indicative date for the start of the research. • Detailed cost breakdown (including daily rates for each participating researcher). <p>The selection committee will send an invitation letter to shortlisted applicants.</p> <p>The proposals will be evaluated as follows.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white;">Composition</th> <th style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white;">Item of Evaluation</th> <th style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white;">Weightage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2" style="background-color: #e6e6e6;">Researcher Profiles</td> <td>Researcher CVs</td> <td rowspan="2" style="text-align: center;">30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Track record of past relevant projects</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #e6e6e6;">Cost Efficiency</td> <td>Submitted budget (cost breakdown)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="3" style="background-color: #e6e6e6;">Research Proposal</td> <td>Research design</td> <td rowspan="3" style="text-align: center;">50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bibliography</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Feasibility of the work plan and budget plan</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; text-align: right;">Total Score</td> <td style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; text-align: center;">100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Successful applicants will receive a formal selection statement to initiate the tender process. 	Composition	Item of Evaluation	Weightage	Researcher Profiles	Researcher CVs	30%	Track record of past relevant projects	Cost Efficiency	Submitted budget (cost breakdown)	20%	Research Proposal	Research design	50%	Bibliography	Feasibility of the work plan and budget plan	Total Score		100%
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<p>DEADLINE & CONTACT</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>Please send your application (in one PDF) to scope-he@daad.de The deadline for the submission of application is Sunday, 13 October 2024, 12.00 PM (GMT+7)</p>																		