

# ESSA PROJECT

# European Students Sustainability Auditing

[www.essaproject.eu](http://www.essaproject.eu)

#essa\_usr

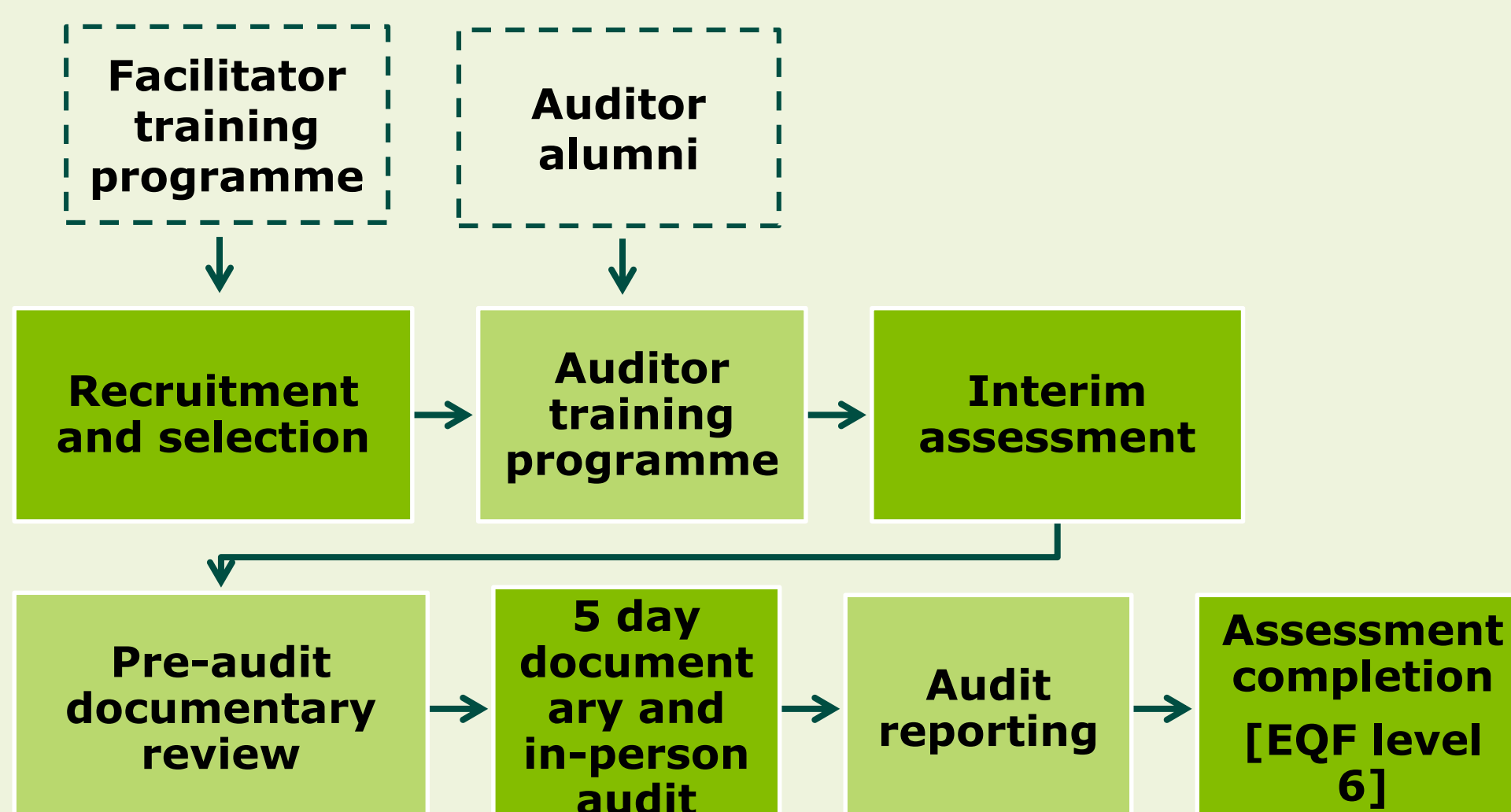


Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This three year Erasmus+ project has aimed to help us learn more about social responsibility and sustainability in universities across Europe, in a way that will enhance the student experience and enhance graduate attributes. Students are trained to audit universities against the Benchmark Standards for University Social Responsibility across the European Higher Education Area and receive a Certificate in Social Responsibility Auditing. The project, established in 2016, uses university social responsibility as a focus for creating a more flexible approach to student learning, assessment and certification.

## THE ESSA STUDENT JOURNEY

Students are recruited into the project before completing a **training programme in blended-mode** at their home institution, delivered by trained facilitators. The training covers key concepts such as. Following training, the auditors travel to another partner university to deliver a **5 day audit, encompassing documentary review, interviews and focus groups**. At the end of the week, auditors present their findings to university stakeholders, developing these initial findings into a report following the audit week. Alongside the audit, students complete the interim and final assessment required to achieve **the Certificate in Social Responsibility Auditing** (5 ECTS Credits EQF Level 6).



## OUR IMPACT

### ✓ Students:

- 78% feel very confident to act as a social responsibility auditor and 30% feel fairly confident
- 92% feel that their university could learn from the approach taken in the project to student learning
- 92% of students said their participation in the project exceeded their original expectations
- Valued the opportunity to practically apply learning in a real-world situation
- High satisfaction scores of the student experience, especially in relation to the cross-cultural setting
- Enhanced employability skills

### ✓ Higher Education Institutions:

- Opportunity to engage with a wide range of senior management, professional and academic staff
- Useful and relevant set of recommendations, reinforcing opportunities for improvement
- Great opportunity for collaboration between different departments to support the student experience
- Added benefit of cross-cultural, national and European collaboration.

"This has been the best experience of my university education, the learning approach was practical and very beneficial!"

## BENCHMARK STANDARDS FOR UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

### ✓ Research, teaching, support for learning and public procurement:

The institution's core academic activities are underpinned by the values and principles of social responsibility.

### ✓ Governance:

The principles of social responsibility are respected throughout institutional policy, strategy, procedures and processes. They permeate all levels, as an integral element of management accountability and stakeholder engagement.

### ✓ Environmental and societal sustainability:

The institution is committed to environmental sustainability and biodiversity in all aspects of its operations, including in its use of goods, services and works and in its evaluation of decisions. It takes appropriate action to ensure that its commitments are realised.

### ✓ Fair practices:

The institution ensures equality and fairness for its staff, students and others as appropriate and its policies and procedures are intended to avoid discrimination or inequity.

## FUTURE PLANS

In autumn 2019, a package of Open Educational Resources will be published for use by HEIs, extending the benefits of participation to a wider group of students including:

- Facilitator training programme and manual
- Auditor training programme and manual
- Audit manuals providing guidance for delivery of an audit
- Assessment and Certification framework

## GET IN TOUCH

The project is delivered by a partnership of the National Union of Students (UK), European Students' Union, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Students' Association, Kaunas University of Technology, Kaunas University of Technology Students' Union, University of Porto, Association of Students of the Faculty of Psychology (University of Porto).

**For more information about the project please get in touch with the project co-ordinator, Rachel Drayson at NUS (UK): [rachel.drayson@nus.org.uk](mailto:rachel.drayson@nus.org.uk)**