The project
"Open Food Innovation University" - OFINU
No.101128855

Report on the implementation of the project
Quality assurance plan (D5.3)

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Executive summary

The report refers to the project "Open Food Innovation University" – OFINU, No.101128855, being implemented with financial support of the European Union Erasmus+ Programme. The period of the Grant agreement covers the period 01/02/2024 till 31/01/2027.

The report provides detailed information on core results of the project and evaluates each in terms of legal validity, operational processes, staff performance, and results achieved. Analysis is provided on the methods and tools employed to uphold quality, including internal supervision, monitoring, and risk mitigation. Roles and responsibilities of project partners, with detailed descriptions of how quality responsibilities were in practice distributed across institutions. The report concludes that the OFINU project is on track to meet its goals, demonstrating strong institutional cooperation, high-quality outputs, and promising sustainability prospects.

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1. ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN

Quality within the OFINU project, according to the D5.3, means (a) compliance of created and achieved results, and implemented measures value and validity with a project plan, being part of the Grant Agreement, (b) relevance of the deliverables and outputs to the needs of respective groups of stakeholders, and (c) their sustainability.

During the reporting period from February 1, 2024, to July 31, 2025, substantial work has been done and progress has been made. All targeted milestones and most of the deliverables were produced, experiencing a high commitment and coordination of partners throughout the implementation of all phases of the project.

The Open University was successfully established and integrated according to all legal formalities within five higher education institutions in Central Asia, fulfilling the objective of adoption in the study processes. Administrative capacity was strengthened with the training of 15 staff members, ensuring the development and effective management of the newly created study form. Seven innovative study modules, including each module description, workbooks, and accompanying study materials, were developed and adopted, as well as included in particular study curricula, enhancing academic content with contemporary, food industry-relevant knowledge. These results were supported by the launch of the Digital Learning Platform, which the P1 LBTU hosted until the end of the project. The quality assurance plan effectively guided all phases, as reflected in the deployment of teaching and learning materials, training of academic staff, and the launch of procurement of specialized pilot equipment. All planned study visits and training activities planned in the project have been completed. In total, 60 teachers have been trained. See detailed description of work done, results achieved, and outputs produced in D7.1, and detailed description of communication and dissemination measures held and impact created in D6.2.

Feedback mechanisms and internal assessments demonstrate a high level of satisfaction among stakeholders, affirming the value, applicability, and sustainability of the project's outputs. Furthermore, visibility and outreach activities were implemented, significantly raising awareness and engagement across targeted audiences. The achievements of the project demonstrate that the project is not only on track according to the defined indicators but is also delivering quality results that are in close interlinkage with the overarching goals of modernizing food technology education in Central Asia partner countries.

Diverse and well-targeted communication measures have helped to raise awareness of the project in general and of the Open University and food technology and innovation-related content. Communication with public authorities and the management staff of our universities ensured all necessary support for the establishment and adoption of the Open University. Addressing the business sector and gathering their feedback and opinions helped develop effective teaching mechanisms and study tools that will respond well to the business sector's knowledge needs. This also created preconditions for their participation in the piloting process and the further use of the Open University as a knowledge base. Addressing other target groups increased visibility and recognition of the OFINU.

2. MAIN RESULTS

Main results, as defined in the D5.5 "Project quality assurance plan", have already been created. Quality aspects relevant and reviewed with regard to each main result till the end of the reporting period are described below.

Main result No.1: Open University as a novel study form*:*

- **Legal Issues:** The Open University has been formally adopted by all the involved Central Asia universities. Each institution has approved and integrated the new study form into its structure through official decisions, backed by legal and operational documentation. The legal framework defines supervision and management mechanisms, as well as admission rules, quality assurance protocols, and institutional support.

- **Process:** Mechanisms are created to ensure that external learners can efficiently study courses of the Open University. Registration procedures are set up and user-friendly. Admission requirements are appropriately communicated.

- **Visibility and recognition:** Awareness-raising efforts have been effective, reaching key stakeholders, including universities, ministries, and industry partners, as well as to some extent the general public, interested in the project's activities. The target groups understand well the purpose, benefits, and access conditions of the Open University. Promotional materials and public events have played a significant role in ensuring visibility and awareness raising.

Main result No.2: Food technology and innovation-related study modules

- **Novelty and relevance:** The seven newly developed study modules introduce modern food processing concepts and teaching methodologies. Those represent a significant advancement over existing curricula and align with current food industry needs.

- **Capacity to sustain:** Trained academic staff are capable of delivering the new content using innovative methods tailored to mixed audiences, including and paying special attention to the external learners.

- **Visibility and recognition:** Efforts of the stakeholder engagement have ensured awareness of the new modules created. Food industry partners recognize the Open University and study modules relevant to their needs and targets, and have shown interest in future participation and collaboration.

Main result No.3: Digital platform for teaching and learning:

- **Applicability and relevance:** The Digital Learning Platform is user-friendly and inclusive, featuring multilingual content (English, Uzbek, and Tajik). It hosts study materials necessary for blended and online learning.

- **Visibility and recognition:** Through dissemination activities, relevant stakeholders are informed of the Digital Learning Platform. It is recognized as a significant tool.

3. ASSESSMENT AGAINST EACH QUALITY EVALUATION CRITERION

In this section, the assessment of progress and quality against predefined evaluation criteria (D5.5) is provided.

Criterion No.1: Timely Implementation of Activities

Most planned tasks have been successfully implemented over the past 18 months. Several slightly exceeded their respective timeframes, where delays were caused by the need to invest more efforts to ensure development and quality of the main deliverables (described in the section No.2). Very few larger deviations were recorded, such as the postponed T1.5 Contact burse event in Tajikistan, now rescheduled for October 2025. T3.3 Acquisition of equipment is in progress, with the task expected to be completed by October 2025.

Criterion No.2: Achievement of Planned Results and Production of Deliverables

The project has achieved a high rate of deliverable production according to the plan outlined in the Grant Agreement. Key deliverables such as D1.1 (legal documents), D1.2 (administrative staff training), D1.3 (approval decisions), and D2.1 and D2.2 (study modules, workbooks) have all been completed and validated. D2.3 Digital Online Learning Platform has been created and is fully functional. Capacity building measures of the academic staff have been completed (T2.2, T2.3, T3.1, T3.2). 60 trained teachers demonstrate solid progress. The piloting of modules and involvement of external learners are planned for the next phase, aligning with D4.1.

Elaboration of D5.1 and D5.2 was initially postponed due to the focus on higher-priority tasks, including study visits, training, developing study modules, and preparing equipment purchases. Afterwards, during the winter-spring period of 2025, the project manager responsible for drawing up the documents had limited conditions to carry out the tasks. Documents were elaborated immediately after the situation changed. These delays did not hinder the project's overall progress or the achievement of results. Only one deliverable, D3.2 Equipment, has not been created yet.

Results align with the set milestones and reinforce the overall and specific project's objectives. The table below provides an overview of planned and actual dates of deliverables.

WP/D	Deliverable name	Due Date	Actual date when deliverable was produced /date when submitted to the EACEA
WP1			
D1.1	A set of Open University legal documents.	Mo.9	Mo.11/Mo.16
D1.2	At least 15 administrative staff have been trained and upskilled.	Mo.10	Mo.6 / Mo.9
D1.3	Decision on approval of the Open University study form.	Mo.9	Mo.11/ Mo.16
WP2			
D2.1	7 innovative study modules (74 ECTS in total).	Mo.6	Mo.10
D2.2	Set of teaching/learning materials.	Mo.6	Mo.10
D2.3	Digital OFINU online platform.	Mo.11	Mo.9 / Mo.17
WP3			
D3.1	Training of the academic staff has been done.	Mo.18	Mo.13 / Mo.18
D3.2	Five sets of pilot food production and quality evaluation equipment.	Mo.12	In progress
WP4			
D4.1	Study modules piloted.	Mo.28	To be done at the 2nd reporting period

WP5			
D5.1	OFINU Quality assurance methodology.	Mo.9	Mo.17
D5.2	OFINU Sustainability Plan.	Mo.14	Mo.18
D5.3	Report on the Implementation of the Project Quality Assurance Plan.	Mo.18	Mo.19
D5.4	Report on the Implementation of the Project Quality Assurance Plan.	Mo.36	To be done at the 2nd reporting period
D5.5	Project Quality Assurance Plan.	Mo.3	Mo.4
WP6			
D6.1	Dissemination strategy.	Mo.3	Mo.4
D6.2	Report on the implementation of the Dissemination strategy.	Mo.18	Mo.19
D6.3	Report on the implementation of the Dissemination strategy.	Mo.36	To be done at the 2nd reporting period
WP7			
D7.1	Progress report.	Mo.18	Mo.19
D7.2	Documentation of the kick-off meeting.	Mo.4	Mo.4
D7.3	Project management plan.	Mo.4	Mo.4

Criterion No.3: Satisfaction of stakeholders with achieved results

Feedback from external stakeholders, including ministries and industry partners, has been received and **is positive**. Validation workshops (T1.5) highlighted high appreciation for the Open University model, contents of the study modules, and their relevance to food industry needs. Enterprises emphasized the value of integrating practical expertise and suggested enhancements, which have been incorporated. Ministries have supported the institutionalization of the Open University, and this indicates strong policy-level engagement and preconditions for the sustainability of a new form of studies. This stakeholder satisfaction reinforces the project's societal and economic relevance.

The *satisfaction of administrative and academic staff participating* in *the study visits-training* and the OFINU project has been high. As evidenced by consistent positive feedback from the study visit and training sessions. Administrative staff appreciated the usefulness and clarity of the Open University's operational mechanisms and legal frameworks, which enhanced their ability to manage new study formats efficiently. The training provided them with applicable tools and knowledge, enabling them to develop and adopt a new study form in their home universities.

Academic staff expressed intense *satisfaction with the training sessions* that enhanced their knowledge and pedagogical skills in food technology and innovation. They reported increased pedagogic competence during training in innovative teaching methods in delivering content to diverse learners, including external learners. The practical and problem-based approach embedded in the new study modules was well received. Teachers also valued the opportunities for collaborative development of materials and a cross-institutional approach used in learning. Participants appreciated the knowledge and skills acquired during the study visits to the P1 LBTU and P7 SUA. *Both groups highlighted the quality and relevance of the content of the training* and highlighted the multilingual materials provided. The support from project coordinators and clear guidelines were also mentioned, and a further contribution to a positive experience. As a result, staff are more confident and motivated to implement and sustain OFINU's initiatives after the projects end.

Rating of main capacity building events is provided in the table below.

No of task	Title of activity	Average satisfaction rate*
T1.2	Open University action demonstration – study visit at P1 LBTU	5.0
T2.3	Study visit - thematic master class at P1 LBTU	4.94
T3.1	Training of academic staff in innovative teaching methods	4.9
T3.3	Study visit of the involved Central Asia HEIs' academic staff at P7 SUA	4.75

*According to the individual assessment provided by participants, the five-grade rating

Criterion no.4: Applicability of produced deliverables

Deliverables created under OFINU are directly applicable within the context of Central Asia's higher education institutions and the food industry needs. Study modules address specific food processing sectors and have been embedded or will be embedded in the following months into each involved Central Asia university's curricula.

The Digital Learning Platform is fully functional and hosts learning materials, ensuring accessibility for the project's administrative and content-related personnel. Training of the Central Asia academic staff on the use of the Digital Learning Platform has been completed. The structure and governance mechanisms of the Open University are adaptable and facilitate application across partner institutions.

Criterion No.5: Sustainability of results and deliverables

Measures to ensure sustainability are firmly integrated into the project. Legal integration of the Open University within university structures and ministries' support ensures institutional sustainability. Academic staff training and the availability of teaching tools ensure human resource readiness. The placement of the Digital Learning Platform on partners' servers is envisioned for December 2026. It will provide technical continuity throughout the project's implementation. Furthermore, stakeholder interest, especially from the business sector, confirms future use and the potential for the development of this platform. The sustainability plan (D5.2) of the project outlines steps for the ongoing use of the platform, including updating content and attracting new clients, while also expressing a willingness to learn.

Criterion No.6: Sufficient visibility of the project and its results

Partners have implemented an extensive dissemination strategy, including participation in large-scale fairs, providing media coverage, issuing publications, regularly communicating via their own websites and social accounts, and presenting the project in stakeholder meetings. Dissemination activities have reached a large number of stakeholders, including students, food enterprises, and government bodies. See chapter No.4 in this report, and D7.1, WP6. Promotional events in both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have raised awareness and built recognition of the Open University.

Criterion No.7: Approval of reports by the EACEA

The approval has not been received yet, as the reports have been submitted recently and are under review.

Criterion No.8: Availability and quality of documentation

The OFINU project has maintained good standards in the preparation and archiving of documentation. Legal documents, training records, deliverables, study visits, training, validation workshops' minutes, and dissemination materials are available in the joint Google Drive-based document storage folder. Deliverables are submitted on the project website. Content-related documentation is available on the Digital Learning Platform Moodle. Documentation aligns with the visibility requirements, defined in the Grant Agreement and Partnership Agreements, supporting project accountability and external verification.

4. ACTUAL RESULTS MEASURED AGAINST INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

The table at the end of this section outlines the actual results achieved for the indicators of progress defined in the D5.5 project Quality assurance plan. Except for the equipment, all results, measured against the indicators, have been achieved to the full extent.

The establishment of Open Universities across five Central Asian institutions has been fully achieved and integrated both legally and operationally. Administrative and academic staff training targets have been met and even exceeded the planned expectation. 15 administrative and 60 academic staff were trained, outperforming the original target of 50 people trained. Satisfaction of stakeholders has been a key focus of the OFINU project, and the indicators demonstrate substantial success in this area.

Feedback mechanisms reveal high satisfaction levels. Specifically, 95% of trained academic staff expressed complete satisfaction with the knowledge and skills obtained, indicating the relevance and quality of the training. Quality and sustainability documentation has been produced and adopted as planned, and internal assessments rate project management as "very good."

Public outreach has been especially effective. The project has exceeded its publicity goals, conducting 84 measures (well above the target of 48) and reaching over 3 million individuals across Uzbekistan and Tajikistan—surpassing the target of 500,000.

WP number	Indicators of progress	Target value	Value achieved till 31.07.2025
WP1, IP1.1	Number of the OFINUs (Open University as a new study form) established, legally and practically integrated in the involved Central Asia universities.	5	5
WP1, IP1.2	Administrative staff are trained.	15	15
WP2, IP2.1	Innovative study modules prepared; workbooks elaborated.	7	7
WP2, IP2.2	Availability and recognition of the Digital platform.	1	1
WP3, IP3.1	Number of academic staff capacity building measures (training and upskilling) held.	3	3
WP3, IP3.2	Number of academic staff trained and upskilled (10 per involved Central Asia HEI).	50	60
WP3, IP3.3	Satisfaction of trained academic staff with the knowledge and skills obtained.	90 % delighted	95 % fully satisfied
WP3, IP3.4	Number of sets of equipment acquired.	5	In progress
WP4, IP4.1	Number of students and external learners trained.	100 students 60 external learners	Not applicable for the reporting period
WP4, IP4.2	Satisfaction of students and external learners with the knowledge and skills obtained.	90% delighted	Not applicable for the reporting period
WP5, IP5.1	Number of quality and sustainability documents elaborated and adopted.	3	3
WP5, IP5.2	Rate of the project management quality (rated by the staff of partners).	Very good	5 (very good)
WP5, IP5.3	Rate of the OFINU quality and efficiency (rated by students and external learners).	Very good	Not applicable for the reporting period
WP6, IP6.1	Number of publicity measures held in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.	At least 48	84
WP6, IP6.2	Number of target audiences reached via publicity measures.	At least 500,000	At least 3 million
WP6, IP6.3	Forum held.	1	Not applicable for the reporting period
WP6, IP6.4	Rating of the forum participants' results of the project.	90% delighted	Not applicable for the reporting period.

5. PROCESSES AND ACTIONS APPLIED TO ENSURE QUALITY

The OFINU project partners have implemented a comprehensive quality assurance framework. All the processes of the project are implemented by structured approaches and actions, designed to keep the highest standards throughout project implementation. The actions reported demonstrate the consortium's strong commitment to maintaining quality across all project components and to ensuring that results and outputs are relevant, qualitative, and sustainable. These include:

- Adherence to agreements: Project partners followed the commitments outlined in the project's documentation, meaning - Grant Agreement, Partnership Agreement, monitoring, ensuring that tasks and deliverables are implemented in line with outlined standards and project tasks.

- Partner involvement in quality decisions: Each partner's coordinator actively participated in decisions concerning quality assurance measures and tools, ensuring shared responsibility and alignment across the consortium.

- Engagement of Top-Level Management: Senior management at each institution is involved in approving and endorsing key quality tools and measures, ensuring institutional support and strategic oversight.

- Development and use of quality assurance tools: Standardized quality assurance and monitoring tools, including templates and agreed procedures, were used throughout the project to maintain consistency.

- Monitoring Processes: Regular monitoring mechanisms are in place, including guidelines for documentation and report preparation. These are provided to support partners in meeting quality requirements.

- Reviewing procedures: deliverables before formal approval and submission undergo internal review by consortium partners. This served the goal of ensuring that outputs meet agreed quality standards.

- Risk Management: Risk assessment procedures have been implemented to identify and mitigate potential challenges promptly, safeguarding project continuity and effectiveness.

- External evaluation: The external quality evaluation of the OFINU project, originally intended to be conducted earlier, has been strategically rescheduled to launch in August 2025 (Month 19). Decision was made to ensure the completion of all tasks in the project, including training and study visits. This will ensure the production of the mid-term report. Evaluating the project at this stage ensures that the external expert will have a whole variety of project results and operational processes to assess, thereby creating a more accurate and comprehensive analysis of the project's implementation. This approach aligns with the project's overall quality assurance strategy, which emphasizes thoroughness, relevance, and stakeholder inclusivity. The consortium remains committed to transparency and continuous improvement. The consortium believes that the external evaluation will significantly contribute to reinforcing the quality of OFINU's results.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISKS

Main key risks, such as lack of synergy among partners, limited staff capacity, or insufficient stakeholder engagement, were addressed through regular communication, joint planning, and capacity-building measures. For example, to ensure coherence in developing the Open University content, content-related teams and sub-teams were formed early, supported by frequent partner meetings. Training and individual guidance were provided to enhance administrative capacity, and awareness-raising measures increased the engagement of academic staff and industry stakeholders.

The project coordinator and coordinators at partners' institutions closely supervised risk-prone areas, ensuring the timely resolution of issues. Where academic staff lacked necessary capacity, targeted training and selection processes ensured that only qualified and motivated individuals were involved. The perceived resistance of administration to new tools was managed by involving top management team members in the development of tools, engaging them from the very start of the process, and creating personal commitment.

To counter potential delays and financial risks, the consortium applied financial monitoring mechanisms and started task implementation accordingly. Challenges of public outreach, such as media reluctance to report on the project or ineffective information distribution, were addressed through strategic channel selection and the development of tailored project messages.

Throughout the implementation of the project, partners reported regularly on risk status and their efforts to mitigate these risks. This dynamic and coordinated approach ensured that all identified risks were managed correctly and that the project stayed on track. As a result, the OFINU project has demonstrated strong risk resilience and adaptability, contributing significantly to the quality and sustainability of its outcomes.