

EPIC – The Student Guide January-July 2020

Preface:

This document describes the course content and practical information for students who want to apply for participation in the project, and for those who already signed up. Further information can be found on the website: epic.agu.edu.tr.

The EPIC project is funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. EPIC is an abbreviation for “Improving Employability through Internationalisation and Collaboration”, and the basic idea is to create a framework for making international student projects in collaboration between students from different European universities and industrial partners.

This is the first version of the student guide for 2020, and it will be updated and improved continuously. If you feel some questions are not answered, or if you are missing some information, please contact Jens Myrup Pedersen (jens@es.aau.dk) with suggestions for improvement. We appreciate it!

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1. EPIC summary

EPIC is an innovative teaching project, funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

As mentioned in the preface, the basic idea behind the project is to develop ways, where students can work together on projects across countries and disciplines – based on real-life problems from companies. We know from the previous project COLIBRI (www.erasmus-colibri.eu) that this international dimension was highly valued by the students.

EPIC comprises several international projects involving students, universities and companies. During the spring semester we experiment with how it is possible to create such international student projects – and each year we evaluate the experiences from both students, teachers and companies, and use the evaluations to further advance and improve. The EPIC project is running for three years: September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2020. So this is the last year.

If you want to know more about the background (and gain more understanding) you might want to visit the Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/ErasmusEPIC>

2. Project work in EPIC

EPIC offers students from the participating universities to partake in joint student projects. The local student projects (contributing to the joint projects) can be very different in terms of duration, work load, and timing during the education: As such it can range from 5-ECTS elective courses to semester projects, bachelor thesis and master thesis projects. So, as such, participation is not limited to specific semesters.

Working on a project in the framework of EPIC comes with the following conditions:

- Each project should involve students from at least two different countries and involve either a company or a research project.
- Students must submit their own project documentation to their home university, and the examination and grading takes place according to home university guidelines. It is also depending on the study regulations of the home university how many ECTS credits are awarded (this depends on what kind of project is carried out).
- Moreover, for each of the joint projects, the students also create a joint product in terms of a description of their joint results, as well as the reflections and evaluations of the joint group work. Based on this, an EPIC certificate is issued on top of the normal recognition. This is introduced in further detail during the seminar in Barcelona.
- For each project, there is an *EPIC supervisor* with responsibility for supervision of the project overall, a *local supervisor* from each of the universities with participating students, and sometimes also an *academic supervisor* from the participating university (if the project is outside the field of the local supervisor). There will also be a *company supervisor* or contact.
- All participating students are required to attend the seminar that takes place in Hamburg on February 10-14 (described in further detail below).

While students are expected to work together mainly virtually, participating in a project within EPIC also offers some possibilities of meeting each other in person. This is taking place during:

- The mandatory seminar, which takes place in Hamburg on February 10-14. It is a requirement that all students participate throughout the full academic programme. It is therefore highly recommended to travel to Hamburg on February 9 and return on February 15.
- Moreover, students can apply for funds to visit each other within the projects offered. For example, if students from Kayseri, Riga and Hamburg are working on the same project they can apply for one additional visit in one of these places. For such meetings, it is also a formal requirement that the academic programme has a duration of at least five full working days, and that all participants take part in the full programme.

3. Preparation: Online modules

Before attending the seminar in Hamburg all students are required to go through the e-learning preparations that are part of the course. In order to access the material, you need to do the following:

For the first time:

- **Create new account** at <https://eduspace.lv/login/index.php?lang=en>
- **Confirm** the account from your e-mail and **enroll** in the course “**EPIC materials for students 2019/20**”, by pushing **Enroll** button beneath it
- **Fulfill Mandatory tasks in section “Materials for preparation phase”**
When you already have an account and are enrolled in the course, you will see the course after logging into the system at (not relevant anymore).

The material will be ready by January 20, 2019.

In addition to the mandatory material, we will also update this platform with additional learning resources that can be helpful for your projects.

4. Preparation: Student Catalogue

Based on our experience from previous year, it is important to achieve as much background information about the project theme before the seminar. But knowledge about the other students in the team, other students in EPIC, and the available assistance from supervisors is also crucial.

We are therefore collecting information about you, which we will distribute among all students (both electronically in Eduspace and in a hardcopy version you will receive in Hamburg). Please send this information to Marcus (not relevant anymore) as soon as possible, and no later than January 15, 2020.

When we collect this information, we will also collect your consent that we can use the information you give us for the student catalogue, as well as a consent that we can make the use of photos and videos from the seminars in order to promote the EPIC project (promotion is an important part of the Erasmus+ grant we receive). If you have any concerns with respect to this, please let us know.

5. Course schedule

The course schedule is flexible because students from the different universities are working along different schedules. This means that even for students working on the same project, some students might start earlier – and some might finish later – than others. This is also illustrated below:

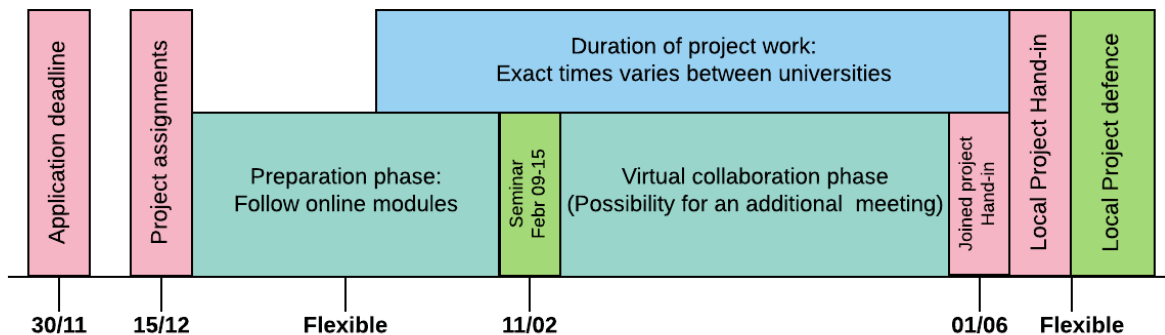


Figure 1. Course timeline. Note: Local defenses only takes place in universities with this tradition.

It is important to note that the virtual collaboration between the groups will usually start during the seminar in February (but it is fine to be in touch earlier when it makes sense), and last at least until the hand-in of the joint project materials on June 1. The local project hand-ins can be either before or after this date. Based on our experience from previous years, it is important that everyone is well prepared for the seminar, also in terms of the project topic – because this allows you to make a good project plan.

It is also important to observe that the project is a test/experiment, so things might change along the way if we learn that something must be different.

Please note that the online modules should be finished before attending the seminar in February.

6. Project requirements – collaboration between students and with supervisors

The projects are all different, so the nature of the collaboration will also be different.

- Each group will get in touch with the company contacts either before or during the seminar in Hamburg. This is coordinated by
- We expect that all groups are establishing a plan on their collaboration and interaction during the seminar in Hamburg.
- We also expect that the students within each project will meet virtually at least every second week throughout the semester.
- Each group delivers a joint product in terms of a description of their joint results, and how these contribute to solve the initial problem.
- Each group also deliver their reflections and evaluations of the joint group work.
- All groups are expected to communicate through the provided collaboration platform (see section 7).

7. Project seminar in Hamburg: Practical information

The seminar in Hamburg takes place on February 10-14. Since there is a full program all days, it is highly recommended to arrive on February 9 and leave on February 15 (if you need to leave on February 15 in the evening, this might be possible if agreed upon beforehand).

The participants are supervisors and students from all the involved universities – we expect a total of around 50 students and 10-15 teachers/supervisors.

In order to create a good international experience, we are organizing all activities jointly, so you will spend the week together as a group. This also includes:

- Accommodation, which is close to campus.
- Academic activities each day 9-17.
- Joint lunches and dinners.
- Social activities in the evenings.

Participation is free of charge, and through the grant from Erasmus+ we cover the following expenses for the seminars:

- Flights/long distance trains (we will take care of booking this and contact each of you in this regard)
- Accommodation in Hamburg (we will book this from Feb 9 – Feb 15)
- Meals during the course (Monday to Friday)
- Expenses related to visa for students from Turkey
- Jointly organized social activities are also covered by the project.

You might need to pay minor expenses yourself such as local bus tickets, transport to/from airports, meals before/after the course, and additional spare-time activities.

Important: You are also required to take out proper insurance for the trip. This is important, as the conditions differ from country to country. If you have any doubts, your local coordinator is happy to assist you in this regard. However, you will need to cover these expenses yourself.

The academic programme for the seminar is still in preparation, but includes among other things the following aspects:

- Learning about group work and teamwork, with the focus on working together across cultures and backgrounds.
- Project management, time planning and coordination – with a special focus on projects carried out via virtual collaboration channels.
- Technical sessions, with expert guidance and discussions.
- Time to work in the groups, so you can get started with the project work and develop a plan for the virtual collaboration phase.

After the seminar, you should have the tools, knowledge and plans to be prepared to make a good project together afterwards.

A detailed program for the seminar will be available approximately two weeks before the seminar.

8. Blended learning seminar: Practical information

The Blended Learning Seminar is an optional possibility for an additional meeting among the students who consider it beneficial for their project work. We have funding for some such additional visits only, so in order to participate your group need to apply by (not relevant anymore) no later than March 1. The application should contain:

- Description of the purpose and motivation for the meeting
- A draft program (5 full working days)
- The time, location and name of the hosting partner (an EPIC university of company)

It is required that the meeting takes place among the institutions participating in the project, to reduce travelling expenses. Moreover, a program of 5 full working days is required by Erasmus+.

You are expected to do most of the planning among you as a group, including finding accommodation (but the host organization will assist as needed). The grant you receive from EPIC covers:

- Flights and/or long distance trains
- Accommodation
- Meals

The exact amount of the grant will be specified on beforehand and depends on local regulations as well as on whether the local institutions have some additional funding available.

9. Communications and platforms

In addition to the learning platform, we are establishing a platform for communication for this years' EPIC community. This communication platform will be hosted on Slack. There will be both a public channel for general communication, private channels for each project group, announcements chat for important updates from the EPIC administration and more. To access the platform, please follow this link: (Link removed as it is not relevant anymore).

When signing up, please use your real name so we can assign you to the right groups 😊

10. Quality Assurance

A quality committee will be formed with student representatives from each university and each project. More information will follow. If you observe any issues, please report this to the course coordinator or to one of the local coordinators.

11. FAQ

This section will be updated with questions and answers.

12. Additional information and contacts (not relevant anymore)