Striving for Excellence with
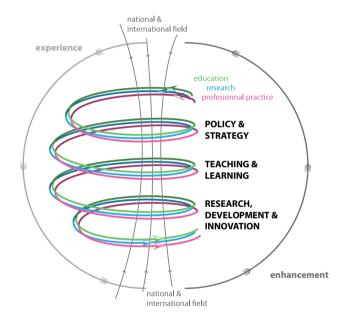
phexcel

What is PHExcel?

PHExcel is a consultancy service for higher education providers that strive to excel at integrating with the world of work. Through PHExcel, participating organisations can analyse their relationship with the world of work, and through a process of active-learning, identify areas for enhancement and develop appropriate actions.

What is it about?

PHExcel recognises that excellence is the exceptional capacity of an organisation and its members to add relevant value to input within a given context, surpassing set standards of quality. Excellence is a fluid, dynamic and highly contextual matter. While PHExcel addresses the intense integration with the world of work, excelling in this domain means using in an outstanding manner (taking into account the national and international field) the systematic and circular relationship between education, research and professional practice.

national & international field

experience

education
research
profesionnal practice

POLICY & STRATEGY

TEACHING & LEARNING

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

enhancement

national & international field

Who is it for?

PHExcel is open to all higher education institutions and units within them (school, institute, faculty, department, programme etc.).

What is the aim?

PHExcel supports organisations in their ambition to develop excellence in their integration with the world of work by providing them a roadmap for further enhancement.

What is the outcome?

Organisations taking part in PHExcel receive a report by expert coaches containing reflections on their ambition to develop excellence together with recommendations.

Who are the coaches?

A team of international peers with expertise in their fields, in quality enhancement and in the integration with the world of work provide the consultancy. Each expert has been specifically trained to support and coach organisations.

Who are the creators?

PHExcel is backed by representatives of institutions in higher education and institutions of higher education. They are: EURASHE, AEC, ELIA, The University of Nottingham/FINE, SPACE, with Jagiellonian University and KIC Malta and represent different subject areas and types of institutions throughout the EHEA.

What is the basis of the process?

PHExcel uses a peer-review methodology involving self-reflection and assessment. It is based on the PHExcel framework and methodology.

What is the framework?

The PHExcel framework presents three domains where the integration with the world of work takes place. The domains are broken down into a set of criteria. An organisation's excellence is underlined by how far the organisation goes above and beyond these minimum requirements.

What does PHExcel involve for participants?

PHExcel is a 3-stage process, including a 'definition of needs visit' followed by a consultancy visit and finally a longer-term follow-up.
An organisation participating in PHExcel first arranges with one of the organisers a 'definition of needs visit'. This first visit aims at identifying with the organisation its vision on excellence and at discussing the basis on which PHExcel can support the organisation's ambition. After defining together which area of the organisation's activities should be consulted on, the team of experts joins the organisation during a consultancy visit to reflect and provide coaching support on how to (further) develop excellence. In the longer-term, during the follow-up stage, PHExcel continues to interact with the organisation to further reflect on its enhancement and developments towards excellence.

What is the format of the visit?

The visit follows the format of a collaborative exercise, based on an open mutual exchange and an open atmosphere.

Why creating PHExcel?

The importance of excellence has risen in recent years (through accreditation, rankings, funding) and higher education providers increasingly strive to be excellent. At the same time, higher education in Europe has also been engaged in a process of continuous quality enhancement across educational programmes and organisational structures. The integration with the world of work is a condition for the completion of higher education's mission. Over the years, many have specialised in this aspect, from universities of applied sciences to subjects falling under professional legal requirements (e.g. nursing). Yet, in recent years it has become more widespread and all providers of higher education are, in one form or another, aiming to integrate with the world of work.
PHExcel has been created to provide organisations with advice and guidance in their process of striving for excellence in the integration with the world of work.

Is PHExcel an accreditation process?

PHExcel is not an accreditation process, nor a quality assurance (or 'excellence assurance') agency. It proposes a reflective consultancy service. It does not recognise or judge excellence as such.

Is PHExcel a label of excellence?

No, participating organisations do not receive a label of excellence. Next to the report for enhancement, organisations receive a letter confirming their participation and a visual mark stating that they have been coached by PHExcel.

How does higher education benefit from it?

PHExcel proposes to support the enhancement of the whole of higher education by sharing excellent practices, collected by the coaches in participating organisations.

www.phexcel.org/process

THE **ph**excel FRAMEWORK

The intense integration with the world of work is the basis of the PHExcel framework. The framework identifies three domains where this integration takes place; each is divided in sub-domains and criteria for the integration with the world of work.

The use of the framework within the process

PHExcel proposes an approach that stimulates organisational reflection on the concept of excellence and that empowers organisations to critically analyse their own situation. The framework serves as a set of minimum standards for the integration with the world of work. Organisations should use the framework as a reference point during their continuous process of enhancement.

The development of the framework

The framework is based on 3 years of research into the nature of higher education's integration with the world of work. The research included a vast survey of higher education institutions and stakeholders as to their understanding of this factor. The three domains and ensuing criteria were indicated by this research, and further developed in an iterative process involving experts in the field from around Europe.

www.phexcel.org/framework

An intense integration with the world of work is the core focus of PHExcel. As such, this aspect should be a transverse strategy, an element embedded within an entire organisation, and offering illuminative exemplars throughout. However, while an intense integration with the world of work may be the ideal, it does not disqualify a stand-alone strategy feeding into all aspects of the provision of higher education. Therefore, the first domain to be considered is that of policy and strategy.

In this domain, the criteria of an integration with the world of work are:

Policy and strategy integration:
- Institutional policies and strategies are defined in collaboration with stakeholders and through engagement with relevant professional regulatory bodies and political authorities.
- The policy and strategy is driven by structural involvement with the world of work and wider society.
- The policy and strategy is driven by an active and long-term engagement with the community.
- The policy and strategy is supportive of research and innovation and rewards these wherever they emerge in the institution.

Objectives and outcomes:
- The objectives and outcomes of the policies on teaching and learning, and research, development and innovation are focused upon the needs and future developments of the world of work and wider society.
- Objectives and outcomes focus on the development of skills and competences that enhance employability, the societal contribution and personal development of graduates.
- There are structural ways in which the world of work is included that have an impact on teaching and learning, and on research, development and innovation.
- Institutions set up, maintain and constantly develop structural community partnerships.

Teaching and learning is the second domain of the framework. The mix of theory and practice is at the centre of the criteria of teaching and learning. The positions of organisations engaged in this integration with the world of work do vary; from those with little engagement with stakeholders to those achieving a full cooperation, where academia and the world of work participate equally in e.g. curriculum development.

In this domain, the criteria of an integration with the world of work are:

Teaching and learning strategy:
- The world of work is structurally integrated into the learning design and its implementation.
- The learning and its assessment are attuned to the nature and practices of the professional environment.
- Learning outcomes and the assessment and teaching methodologies are aligned with the diverse professional and personal needs of different profiles of learners, including lifelong learners.
- Students, teachers and practitioners contribute collaboratively to the future development of professional practice.

Approaches to curriculum development:
- Curricula are developed, reviewed and sustained in a strategic collaboration with stakeholders, such as with the world of work, students and staff members, taking into consideration local and international contexts, and future trends.
- Curricula and the world of work inform and enhance each other mutually and dynamically.
- Curriculum development is informed by research in collaboration with the professions.

Content for teaching and learning:
- The content for teaching and learning develops graduates well prepared for the professional field by achieving a range of transferable competences and by responding to the changings needs for skills of the professions.
- The learning content is facilitating the realisation of the programme vision, aims and objectives in its link to the professions and is recognised as such by stakeholders.
- The learning content integrates theory and practice, the latest research, trends and references the world of work and academia.
- The learning experience is challenging academically and professionally, enabling students to achieve their learning outcomes.

Learning environment:
- The learning environment is congruent with the programme vision, aims, objectives, methodologies and contents.
- The learning environment enables learners to move in and out of the professional setting.
- The learning environment stimulates learning in, and for, practice including robust processes for preparation, participation, assessment and evaluation.
- The team creates the conditions for all students to achieve the learning outcomes.

Programme team(s):
- At the programme level, the team demonstrates a blend of academic and professional expertise recognised by both parties.
- The team engages with and is informed by international research, trends and references from the world of work and academia.

Research is a fundamental component of all higher education; in the PHExcel context it may emphasise, but is not necessarily confined to, applied research. Research, development and innovation (RDI) in certain subject areas, such as the humanities, social sciences or the arts, may take different forms and be manifested in different types of output, from scientific, medical or technological disciplines. Yet its importance in ensuring that higher education does not merely follow professional needs but helps to shape them is every bit as relevant.

In this domain, the criteria of an integration with the world of work are:

RDI agenda:
- Research, development and innovation agendas and those of the world of work inform and enhance each other mutually and dynamically to meet their strategic needs and those of wider society.

RDI process:
- Researchers, developers and innovators work creatively at the interface between theory and practice and collaboratively with stakeholders.
- The process of research, development and innovation incorporates knowledge co-creation and transfer in a sustainable manner, which is recognised by stakeholders.

RDI outputs and outcomes:
- Research, development and innovation outcomes have a sustained track record of local, regional, national and/or international impact.
- Research, development and innovation outcomes have an impact that challenges the practice of internal and external stakeholders.

THE **ph**excel METHODOLOGY

The PHExcel process is an international, external, supportive development process. The approach taken relies on the definition of one's own contextual excellence and its effective implementation.

The role of the team of international peers

The team acts as
- a coach, to support the organisation in implementing future continuous improvement
- a mirror, to facilitate self-reflection
- an adviser, to suggest alternatives and enhancement
- a peer, to recognise excellent practices.

The composition of the team of international peers

To achieve this role, the team should be composed of 3-4 experts upon the identification of the specific needs of the organisation; with the profiles of
- a programme/institution manager
- an administrator
- an academic expert
- a representative of the world of work
- a recent graduate
- a student
- a chair.

Team members may represent more than one of the abovementioned profiles.

Cross-sectorial participation

The majority of the team remains from the subject area of the participating organisation. However, PHExcel believes that the cross-participation of experts from different subject areas can be an added value to the process.

International factor

The majority of the team is made of international peers.

The PHExcel report

The organisation taking part in PHExcel receives a coaching report by the team of international peers, including recommendations.
Recommendations contain prescriptive actions, that can support the development process of the organisation towards excellence in its integration with the world of work.

Case study report

The teams of international peers are always on the lookout for examples of excellent practice. When they find examples of these in organisations, they write them up as a case study report. These case study reports are published and benefit to the whole of higher education for continuous improvement.

www.phexcel.org/methodology

How to take part?

To take part in PHExcel contact us through our website: www.phexcel.org

One of the PHExcel organisers will be in charge of carrying out the process with you based on your subject area.

All PHExcel coaches are specifically trained for the process.

More on the PHExcel website

Visit the PHExcel website for the full details.

It includes the history and origins of the process, the full PHExcel framework and methodology, as well as information on the creators and coaches.

www.phexcel.org

The PHExcel project is an initiative of the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC), the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), The University of Nottingham and the European Federation of Nurse Educators (FINE), the SPACE Network for Business Studies and Languages (SPACE), with Knowledge Innovation Centre (KIC) Malta, and Jagiellonian University.