Submission API v2

A. Breaking changes

The following changes are planned with a new version of the DEQAR Submission API and are not fully backwards-compatible.

A.1 Required fields

Two programmes-related fields were designated to become required in the future, which will be the case with API v2:

- Degree outcome (programme[n].degree_outcome)

- Programme Qualification Level according to the QF-EHEA (programme[n].qf_ehea_level)

This will ensure that all programmes/micro-credentials are formally classified systematically according to type and level. The level is already indicated for 95% of programmes in DEQAR.

A.2 Separation of report creation and update (POST / PUT)

API v1 allows to either create or update a report by making a POST request to /submissionapi/v1/submit/report. Whether this will create or update a report depends on whether an existing DEQAR report ID or local_identifier are provided, and if they exist. The current design is not very clean, as the intention is only implicit and the request might lead to a different than the intended effect.

API v2 will clearly distinguish between creation (a POST request) and update (a PUT request) of a report. For updates, reports can still be identified either by their DEQAR report ID or the agency's local identifier provided at creation.

A creation request with a duplicate local identifier will lead to an error. Likewise, an update request will yield an error if the report does not yet exist. Hence, the intention of the request will be clear and it will either lead to the intended effect or an error. This is also in line with the HTTP protocol, where PUT is an idempotent method while POST is not.

To facilitate synchronisation we will also provide an additional endpoint (a GET request) that can be used to query whether a specific local identifier is already known in DEQAR.

A.3 Only one report creation/update per request

API v1 allowed the submission of several reports in one HTTP request. This feature was rarely used, but created some difficulties. Very large requests sometimes lead to timeouts. More importantly, internal server errors in the middle of a package sometimes left the calling implementation without a response for the entire package.

The API v2 will only support the creation/update of a single report per request to make requests more stable and "atomic".

Implementations that currently submit packages of several reports should do the iteration over the package client-side and make separate requests.

When running bulk uploads/updates you might be requested to throttle request not to exceed a rate limit.

A.4 Institutions managed separately

While the API v1 allowed for it technically, the creation of institution records together with a submitted reports has been deprecated for several years already. This will be fully removed and reports can thus only be submitted for existing institutions.

Institutions are synced from OrgReg, additions beyond OrgReg can be requested manually.

Other providers can be requested for addition manually, too.

B. Other changes

The following additional non-breaking changes are planned.

B.1 Activities & European Approach

Currently, one report belongs to one and only one ESG activity. This has sometimes led to intentional duplications, e.g. where two or more quality labels, represented by distinct ESG activities, where evaluated in a single procedure.

Moreover, there have been some instances where European Approach-aligned joint programme accreditations have been uploaded under another joint programme ESG activity.

Two options are under considerations:

- Introducing an additional (boolean) field indicating whether a report is a European Approach report. This would be required for all joint programme reports. That is, a European Approach could either be uploaded linked to the designated European Approach ESG activity, or under another activity but marked as European Approach.

- Enabling that one report is linked to several activities. That is, if necessary, a European Approach report could be linked to both the designated European Approach ESG activity as well as a "regular" joint programme activity. Moreover, this could be used for other cases, e.g. multiple labels.

Question for webinar discussion: Which of the two options is more suitable for your agency?

One additional consideration is whether the same ESG activity could be linked to several agencies at once. Currently, where several agencies implement identical activities these are internally duplicated, i.e. they are two (or more) separate records with different IDs. Examples of this are:

- European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes (duplicated for dozens of agencies)

- Programme and system accreditation in Germany

- Spanish country-wide harmonised external QA frameworks, e.g. DOCENTIA

B.2 File upload

Currently, report files can be submitted as a URL or uploaded via a separate API endpoint.

In addition, API v2 will allow submitting a file "inline" as a Base64-encoded string.

B.3 Duplicates

Currently, DEQAR does not include an automated check for possible duplicate reports. (The recent large-scale duplicate check was a semi-automated, one-time exercise.)

In the future, a warning email might be sent to the agency concerned if a new report is created that appears to be a duplicate of an existing one.