


[www.the-scientist.com](#)

[Home](#)
[This Issue](#)
[About](#)
[Res](#)



Daily News

in association with BioMed Central

April 21, 2004
 [Previous](#) | [Next](#)

Search

☒ News from *The Scientist*
☐ BioMed Central

Daily News

Top news stories


- [Columbia grad student strike](#)
- [PhD quality network adopted](#)
- [Quick peer review \\$125](#)
- [US postdocs report progress](#)
- [Call for bioengineering](#)
- [MDC still seeking chief](#)
- [US postdocs happy](#)
- [Eastern concerns science](#)

Elsewhere today

- [Soyuz docks with Pravda](#) Apr 21
- [Science could boost security](#) BBC Apr 21
- [Federal oceans commission finds along coasts](#) New York Times Apr 21


Other ways to read Daily News

- [By email](#)
- [On your handheld device](#)
- [RSS news feed](#)



Other pages

- [News and Comment Archive](#)
- [More from The Scientist](#)



PhD quality network adopted

Top-level European universities adopt a common quality assurance system [By Rossella Lorenzi](#)

Daily News [▶](#)

Upfront [▶](#)

Feature [▶](#)

Research [▶](#)

Technology [▶](#)

Profession [▶](#)

Supplements [▶](#)

Archives [▶](#)

Print Renewals [▶](#)

A new agreement between 39 European universities has decided that it will adopt a joint quality assurance mark for PhD qualifications with the aim of harmonizing standards across Europe, rectors of the Coimbra Group meeting in Siena last Friday (April 16).

Fourteen of the universities including Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Louvain, Montpellier, Göttingen, Heidelberg, Dublin, Bologna, Siena, Pavia, Leiden, Coimbra, Barcelona, and Granada.

"The aim is to foster inter-university cooperation. We are focusing on the development of a common area of European doctoral studies," Piero Tosi, chairman of the Conference of Italian University Rectors and Coimbra's newly appointed president, told *The Scientist*. "We need to define quality standards and harmonize teaching paths."

Starting next year, PhD students of the Coimbra Group universities will be able to attend courses of other institutions of the group without paying taxes, Tosi said.

In order to make the student's choice easier, the Coimbra Group will put on the Internet the contents of the PhD courses of all its universities. Moreover, a database of the theses being done in various academic institutions will help exchange information among doctoral students working on similar topics.

The aim is to encourage mobility and "the exchange of experiences and forms of quality assurance in the field of doctoral studies," the Coimbra Group said in a statement.

European cooperation in educational quality assurance began in the early 1990s, but it wasn't until the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 and the Prague and Berlin meetings in 2001 and 2003 that analysis of the different higher education systems began.

"It is difficult to codify a Europe-wide approach. The greatest value at

present would be to share and disseminate the various concepts of quality which currently coexist in Europe, with the view to creating a common vocabulary and understanding of the topic," Peter Williams, chief executive of the [European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education](#), told the conference.

"Top-down imposition of standards, procedures, and guidelines is unlikely to have much of a convergent effect if the words used are interpreted in quite different ways by different readers," Williams said.

The Coimbra quality mark will be the first tangible effort toward a common European framework for quality assurance, according to Tosi.

To make it a symbol of the highest academic level, the rectors of the group established that "the methodologies and evaluation system by which young researchers are trained shall be subject to a continuing analysis by members of the Coimbra Group and that ethics should become an integral part of the education of researchers."

Links for this article

Coimbra Group

<http://www.coimbra-group.be>

Piero Tosi

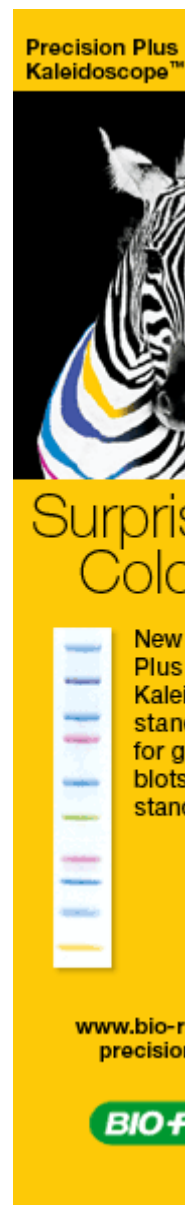
http://www.unisi.it/english/rettore_en.htm

Conference of Italian University Rectors

<http://www.cruil.it/englishsite/?Arg=202>

European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

<http://www.enqa.net/>



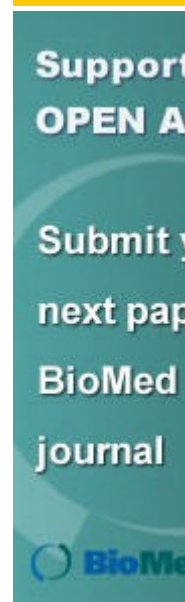
Precision Plus Kaleidoscope™

Surprise Color

New Precision Plus Kaleidoscope stand for gel blots stand

www.bio-rad.com
precision

BIO-RAD



Support
OPEN ACCESS

Submit your
next paper
BioMed Central
journal

BioMed Central