



EUA

European University Association

Kvalitetssäkring av högre utbildning i Europa

Högskoleverket

Systematiskt kvalitetsarbete vid högskolan - en grund för bra utbildningskvalitet

Hanne Smidt

EUA Senior Advisor

HANNE SMIDT CONSULTING

Context setting: Some international and European developments

- OECD-AHELO project: comparing the attainment of students
 - UNESCO Communique: Guidelines for HEIs
 - International rankings: THES, Shanghai
 - A European ranking system
 - A European HE typology
 - Bologna Process: A new stress on institutional performance indicators
- ⇒ **It is urgent to develop internal quality processes in institutions and design an external information strategy** ...2...

EUA QA activities

- **Institutional Evaluation Programme:**
 - ✓ Over 250 evaluations in 40 countries
 - ✓ Focused on enhancement
 - ✓ A strategic tool for institutional change
 - ✓ Member of ENQA, INQAAHE
- **A number of projects focused on quality (over 300 HEIs involved):**
 - ✓ Joint masters
 - ✓ Doctoral Programmes
 - ✓ Quality Culture Project
 - ✓ Creativity Project and QAHECA
- **Member of the E4, with ENQA, ESIB and EURASHE:**
 - ✓ European standards and Guidelines
 - ✓ Register of QA agencies working in Europe



EUA

European University Association

The three levels

- **Institutional:** Primary responsibility for quality
- **National:** A diversity of procedures that must be accepted and the point of departure for the European QA framework
- **European:** A set of principles (European standards and guidelines) and a register of QA agencies

Institutional level:

The growing importance of internal quality processes

- On QA issues the point of departure is a robust internal quality culture => EUA Quality Culture Project
- The project title: The signpost of a specific philosophy and approach, i.e., a carefully-chosen title: Quality culture vs. quality control or quality management
- To indicate:
 - The importance of a change in attitudes and behaviour within the institutions
 - The importance of a grass-root development of quality rather than a top-down approach

Institutional level:

The growing importance of internal quality processes

Central philosophical tenet: Quality is contextual

- An institution must develop quality measures that are congruent with its **internal environment**
- An institution must develop quality measures that are congruent with its **external environment**
- An institution must take into account the **time vector**: e.g., “quality champions” might be useful at the beginning of the internal quality developments but not necessarily later

Institutional level:

The growing importance of internal quality processes

Project results: **In terms of process**

- The “exceptionalism” of higher education institutions
- A two-fold challenge:
 - ✓ To systematise standards and operations across an institution while taking into account the professional concentration of expertise at the grass roots.
 - ✓ To develop a set of standards in line with the institutional mission, without stifling individual initiatives, creativity and departmental diversity.

Institutional level:

The growing importance of internal quality processes

To meet these two challenges, it is essential to:

- **Engage the whole community** – including students and administrative staff who are often forgotten – in a process of reflection about missions and goals
- Develop a **communication strategy** that combines top-down, bottom up and horizontal communication channels, written documents and formal and informal meetings

Institutional level:

The growing importance of internal quality processes

- Identify and empower “**quality culture champions**” to contribute to the development and implementation of a quality culture strategy
- Create **teams** across the institution in order to ensure cross-fertilisation
- Address the issue of **fears** by developing a coherent staff development scheme
- Support the development of an effective quality culture with appropriate **human and financial resources**

Institutional level:

The growing importance of internal quality processes

Project results: **success factors:**

- The success of the **first steps** in introducing a quality culture is essential for an effective development along that path
- The importance of **institutional governance** and **community building** (vs. management) for an effective quality culture
- The importance of **strategic thinking**, based on an appropriate institutional analysis (SWOT or similar analytical instruments)

Institutional level:

The growing importance of internal quality processes

- The integral causal link between strong **institutional autonomy** and the effective development of a quality culture
- The link between quality development and appropriate **financial and human resources**, including staff development schemes
- Do not rest on your laurels: Avoid the bureaucratisation of QC (i.e., proper staffing of QC unit)

Institutional level:

The growing importance of internal quality processes

Project results: **impact**

- On the **European QA Community**: An increased recognition that quality culture is key to improving quality levels
- On **Berlin and Bergen Communiqués**: Ministers recognised that “ the primary responsibility for QA in HE lies with each institution itself”
- On **participating institutions** through their individual action plan. These types of processes exist now in a growing number of institutions (Trends V and European QA Forum show progress in commitment)

Institutional level:

The growing importance of internal quality processes: Lessons from Trends V visits (2006)

- Importance of quality, and high level of activity confirmed
- But effective mechanisms to secure quality improvement still a major challenge
- Concern that some external systems are over-intrusive, resulting in bureaucratic procedures that are counter-productive to institutional responsibility
=> In these cases, institutional action is driven more by external system than by institutional goals & objectives
- Confirmation that the link between functional institutional autonomy & effective quality is essential

European level: The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

■ **Main principles:**

- ✓ Self-evaluation is the cornerstone of the process
- ✓ To be credible, the external evaluation must be independent
- ✓ QA agencies must be evaluated

■ **Standards:**

- ✓ Identify the objectives to reach
- ✓ Are not prescriptive regarding the means of reaching the objectives

■ **Guidelines:**

- ✓ Provide and explanation of the standards
- ✓ Supply (non-prescriptive) examples of good practices



EUA

European University Association

Main objectives

Increase trust between HE systems & institutions

- Facilitate recognition of qualifications and periods of study
- Promote mobility

Inform (potential) students and employers

- Identify credible quality assurance agencies, and programmes/institutions they reviewed
- Prevent “accreditation mills” from gaining credibility

European dimension

- Allow HE institutions to choose a suitable QA agency
- Fulfil external QA requirements, if national rules permit



EUA

European University Association

European practices

- Diversity of practice in the ownership of quality assurance
- Form and content
- Assurance, Autonomy, Accountability
- No one size fits all – but important to be aware of different concepts
- Leadership
- - in a state of flux

Switzerland

- The purpose of the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ) is to assure and promote the quality of teaching and research at the universities in Switzerland. It operates independently, and bases its work on international practices and research findings. It organizes and manages its own affairs under the terms of its bylaws and has its own budget.
- Established 2001: Based on a legal act; independent body
- Mission: assure and promote the quality of education and research of the Swiss Universities
- Tasks: carry out quality assessments, both at institutional and programme level



EUA

European University Association

Ireland

- 2004: Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB)
- Perform regular external reviews of how effective quality procedures are in Irish universities
- Provide information on QA to stakeholders
- Promote QA in Irish universities and partners with the universities on QA/QI initiatives
- Publish and promote national guidelines of good practice on various Higher Education themes (e.g. doctoral education)
- Operate in line with national legislation and agreed European standards and guidelines
- Co-operate with national and international organizations.



EUA

European University Association

Ireland

- “Qualifications in the NQF are quality assured whereby the programme that a student is undertaking, and the provider offering the qualification, is reviewed internally and externally”.



EUA

European University Association

Ireland



Ireland

■ How is the NFAQ 'enforced'?

- ✓ All Irish universities have placed their major awards (B, M, D) in the Framework by agreement with the NQAI
- ✓ Involved (re-)framing all programmes in terms of **learning outcomes**
- ✓ This must involve an ongoing process of internal and external quality assurance

■ Internal QA (university organised)

- ✓ Ex ante accreditation of new programmes
- ✓ Annual monitoring (by external examiners)
- ✓ Periodic review of programmes at academic unit level

■ External Review (NQAI)/QA Audit (IUQB)

- ✓ Review of Framework Implementation currently taking place
- ✓ Will also be considered in IUQB institutional audits

V. Conclusion: Bringing it all together

- Take into account European developments
- Keep developing internal QA processes
- Be clear about their purposes and the purposes of external evaluation procedures: support the development of institutions in an increasingly competitive environment
 - ⇒ Internationalise the QA processes
 - ⇒ Promote a partnership: HEIs and their national QA agency must work together to define the evaluation criteria and procedures as well as their respective roles and responsibilities



EUA

European University Association

EMPLOYABILITY

INNOVATION

RETENTION

QUALITY?

RESEARCH

EDUCATION

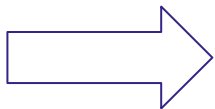
ACCESS



- the uniqueness of the Swedish higher education system

- The transparency and flexibility, programmes and free floating courses
- credit accumulation and transfer to facilitate both vertical and horizontal mobility, and
- General understanding of the higher education system in society - as envisaged in BP
- Seems to have led to a culture of:

Lifelong Learning



BUT also to a complexity that is much more difficult to quality assure and be accountable for