

**Quality Assurance and Accreditation – the
present state of the art and pointers to the
future**

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Structure of presentation

Brief history of external quality assurance and accreditation (EQAA)

Present state of the art

- Common features of EQAA
- Differences in approach

Emerging issues

A brief history

- 13th century

University of Paris

- 1885

New England Association of Schools and Colleges
Southern Association of Schools (USA)

- 1880

External examiners , Victoria University (UK)

Midway through the 20th Century

- USA

Regional accreditation; National and specialist accreditation;

- UK and some Commonwealth countries

External Examiners; Professional Accreditation

- Various

Government control; Specialist/professional accreditation

1945-1988

1947	Japan	Japanese Universities Accrediting Association
1957	Philippines	Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools Colleges and Universities
1958	Israel	Council for Higher Education
1964	UK	Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA)
1984	France	Comité National d'Évaluation des Établissements Publics à caractère Scientifique, Culturel et Professionnel (CNE)
1985	The Netherlands	VSNU

Why the growth in EQAAs?

The growth has been worldwide involving countries with different cultures and different stages of economic development.

Reasons include:

- Growth in HE
- Increased diversity in HE
- General recognition in many countries of the need for greater accountability for the use of scarce national resources
- In some countries a trade off for the reduction of direct governmental control of higher educational institutions
- Global factors

INQAAHE - growth

Number of countries represented

- 1991 11 countries
- 2004 61 countries

Shared characteristics

- Regulations and guidelines
- Self-evaluation
- Peer review (not inspectional)
- Site visits

Differences

- Ownership
- Institutional/programme/both
- Accreditation or assessment
- Publication of report or not
- Ranking (grading) or not

INQAAHE survey

Conducted in 1992, 60 responses.

Ownership

- Government 26%
- Independent but government initiative 29%
- HE 21%
- Mixture of above 12%
- Professional bodies 12%

INQAAHE survey 2

Scope of activity

- Institutional 17%
- Programme 37%
- Both 46%

INQAAHE survey 3

Reports

- Widely published 41%
- Public but not widely distributed 24%
- Confidential 35%

INQAAHE survey 4

Accreditation or assessment

Institutional

- Accreditation 65%
- Assessment 35%

Programme

- Accreditation 59%
- Assessment 41%

What is accreditation?

- A decision that has direct or automatic consequences
- A “clear decision”

INQAAHE

International Network of Quality Assurance
Agencies in Higher Education

www.inqaahe.org

INQAAHE Functions

- A community of quality assurance practitioners.
- Conferences every two years (meeting of members in the intervening years)
- Conferences preceded by training and technical workshops
- Electronic bulletin every two months and newsletter every six months
- Sponsors an academic journal *Quality in Higher Education*
- Issued *Framework of Good Practice for External Quality Assurance Agencies*
- Representation of views of EQAs
- But dominance of the English language

INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice 1

Mission statement; the agency should have an explicit statement

Resources

- Both human and financial, should be adequate and credible
- The agency should be economical and efficient

INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice

2

Decision-making

- Assessment should relate to institution's own self-analysis and external reference points
- Should be independent, impartial, rigorous, thorough, fair and consistent
- Rules should be transparent

INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice

3

Documentation

- Should be clear and publicly available
- Should make clear what is required from institutions

External committees, if used

- Adequate composition and briefing, no conflict of interest

INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice

4

Public Face

- In its work the QAA should inform and respond to the public
- Should report openly on its *decisions* (this does not necessarily imply the publication of the report)

INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice 5

System of appeal

- The agency should provide means for appealing against its decisions

QA of agency

- Should have in place a system of QA for its own activities

Collaboration

- The agency should collaborate with other agencies

INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice

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Relationship between agency and HEIs

The agency should :

- Recognise that quality is primarily the responsibility of HEIs
- Respect institutional autonomy and integrity
- Only apply standards that have been developed in consultation with stake holders
- Aim to contribute to quality improvement and accountability

New developments – methodology

- Move away from “big bang” event- USA
- More attention being paid to the dissemination of results
- Adoption of National Qualification Frameworks and Subject Benchmarks, but must ensure that it does not inhibit development
- Move from inputs to outputs including indirect ones (but be aware of process)
- Move to programme accreditation – Europe. (But others would move to institutional audit)

From inputs to outputs

- In the beginning a heavy emphasis on inputs, particularly numbers and qualifications of faculty
- But only a proxy as it is outputs that matter
- But beware, do not over concentrate on those outputs that can be easily measured.
- Qualification frameworks and subject benchmarks help but be aware that these might hinder development

QAA position on benchmarks and frameworks

When considering the institution's management of quality and standards, the review team draws upon a range of external reference points, including the FHEQ, Subject benchmark statements, the Code of practice and the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales. In so doing, it is not seeking evidence of compliance, but rather for evidence that the institution has considered the purpose of the reference points, has reflected on its own practices in the relevant areas, and has taken, or is taking, any necessary steps to ensure that appropriate changes are being introduced.

CHEA – Direct and Indirect Evidence of Student Outcomes

Accrediting agencies should place upon institutions the following expectation that they should:

- Regularly gather and report concrete evidence about what students know and can do as a result of their respective courses of study, framed in terms of established learning outcomes and supplied at an appropriate level of aggregation (e.g. at the institutional or program level).
- Supplement this evidence with information about other dimensions of effective institutional or program performance with respect to student outcomes (e.g. graduation, retention, transfer, job placement, or admission to graduate school) that do not constitute direct evidence of student learning.

Internally or externally organised programme review 1

Advantages of externally organised programme review

- More objective and more reliable
- Allows comparisons to be made across programmes
- Can be related to programme review for professional or licensure purposes

Internally or externally organised programme review 2

Advantages of internally organised programme review combined with institutional audit or review

- Minimises risk of compliance culture
- Emphasises need for the institution to take prime responsibility for quality assurance
- A more affordable system

New developments - regional

- Europe – Higher Educational Space – Bologna. Search for a common approach to EQAA but not a uniform approach, at least not yet. Common qualification frameworks and subject benchmarks
- Latin America – MERCOSUR- joint recognition of accreditation of academic programmes
- Various initiatives in Arab world, many sponsored by UNESCO

New developments - global

- Importing countries- checking quality of imports, e.g. Hong Kong, South Africa
- Exporting Countries- checking quality of exports. Compulsory in UK and now Australia, voluntary in the US
- Global players- programme level, Washington accord, work of UK professional bodies
- UNESCO/OECD guidelines in course of construction

Conclusions and the future

- Have come a long way in a short time, with some mistakes and false starts;

The future

- Move to institutional review, but not all would agree
- But importance of professional accreditation will increase
- Regional accreditation of EQAA agencies (as done by CHEA)
- Convergence of qualification frameworks and subject benchmarks
- Move from inputs to outputs will continue
- Globalisation will lead to a convergence in practice