



13th European Quality Assurance Forum Broadening the scope of QA

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Paper abstracts

Internal QA Policies across the Full Spectrum of Institutional Activities

David O'Sullivan (National University of Ireland Galway), Orla Lynch (Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI))

Quality and quality assurance (QA) is everyone's responsibility. In a higher education institution (HEI) this includes all teaching, research and support staff. Students also play a key role mainly through feedback but increasingly as active participants in governance and quality review. QA in Europe is defined by the *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA* (ESG) that provide guidance to HEI's when developing their own internal policies and procedures. The scope includes mainly teaching, services and quality monitoring but in many HEIs this scope is now increasing to include activities such as research, gender and equality, collaborative partnerships and other processes. This paper studies the broadening scope of QA in HEIs from two perspectives - a national QA agency and a large HEI – both based in Ireland. Early findings suggest that broadening the scope of QA to new processes that staff and students value, enhances quality culture.

Designing a Framework for Internal Quality Assurance of Research in a Flemish University of Applied Sciences

Els Palmans, Koen Rymenants (University College Ghent)

Quality assurance in Flemish professional higher education has traditionally focused mainly on teaching and learning processes. Given the threefold mission of universities of applied sciences, however, their internal QA system should cover research and services to society as well as education. Up to now, QA for applied research has largely been a question of peer review of individual projects. In order to stimulate quality culture on the more encompassing level of research units, HOGENT (University College Ghent) is designing a new QA framework to be used by its departments. The framework is not an instrument for rating or ranking research activities, but seeks to stimulate reflection on research by adopting an appreciative approach. In this paper, we discuss the main features of the framework, the co-creation process leading up to it, and the preliminary findings of a pilot project.

Building QA Systems: The Engaged and Responsible Label (ERL)

Melpo Iacovidou, Andri Vrioni, Philippos Pouyioutas (University of Nicosia)

The growing importance of university engagement in the context of 21st century challenges in higher education has led to an increasing demand for university engagement, which calls for evaluation and validation. However, the development of effective assessment and validation tools is still at a formative stage. This paper presents a tool that can measure and evaluate a higher education institution for its engagement and social responsibility. The tool utilises 10 Thematic Areas with 10 Quality Indicators in each area for awarding a quality label (Pass, Merit, Distinction). Drawing on a review of the literature

and analysis of published engagement frameworks, the challenges of measuring and validating university engagement are discussed, the need for a new tool is justified, and the tool is presented. The authors are building a prototype tool in Excel to automate the evaluation of the process and results that will lead to a fully-fledged web-based tool.

Five-Star Student Involvement

Kevin Gønge, Sofie Bjerg Kirketerp (Danish Accreditation Institution)

It is generally accepted in Europe that students should be involved in the external QA of higher education institutions. Requirements for involving students are stated in the ESG, but student involvement in a meaningful manner is easier said than done. In many countries, including Denmark, the solution has been to include student representatives on various councils and panels. However, five years ago, the Danish Accreditation Institution (AI) outlined a vision for a more long-term, dynamic relationship with students to enhance student involvement throughout our external QA activities. This vision gave birth to STAR, the Students' Accreditation Council, a network for Danish student organisations facilitated by AI. The network provides a forum for dialogue with students about developing and ensuring the quality of education from a student perspective. Based on our positive experience of student involvement in external QA activities, AI invites participants to discuss opportunities and challenges in working with student involvement as a QA agency.

Bologna's Trojan Horse? Language Usage in the Netherlands as a Quality Issue

Michèle P. Wera (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO))

In this paper, the author gives a personal and somewhat critical view on language usage in Dutch higher education. In recent months, the increasing number of English-taught programmes in the Netherlands has become a topic of hot debate. Are universities in the Netherlands trendsetters or simply out of control? The author finds that concerns about English usage in higher education should be addressed from the perspective of quality assurance. And NVAO as the quality assurance agency in the Netherlands should be able to safeguard the quality of programmes within this increasingly internationally oriented setting.

Making the Move from Quality Assurance to Quality Culture Concrete: An Example from the Field of Music

Janneke Ravenhorst, Martin Prchal (Royal Conservatoire, University of the Arts The Hague)

The Royal Conservatoire has been testing and implementing a new quality culture with the aim of linking internal and external quality assurance cycles, as well as connecting educational quality and artistic standards. Experiences show that these concepts can reinforce each other instead of existing side by side. This point of departure forms the basis for a new view on quality and standards at the Conservatoire. As a result, the essence of the study programmes (artistic standards) is more explicitly tied to educational quality and its monitoring. This process is further reinforced by connecting the information gathered in both internal and external quality assurance processes, bringing both cycles into balance. The approach provides both the programmes and the Conservatoire as a whole with a tool for a future-proof and permanent form of quality enhancement. This way the Conservatoire moves from working with quality assurance to establishing its own shared quality culture.

Changes in the German Accreditation System: A New Equilibrium between Universities, Agencies and the German Accreditation Council

Barbara Michalk (German Rector's Conference (HRK)), Doris Herrmann (AQAS)

Caused by a ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court, the German accreditation system underwent considerable changes in 2018, which assigned new roles to the German Accreditation Council (GAC), agencies and universities along with new tasks, duties and responsibilities. The GAC is now the accrediting body while agencies carry out the procedures, requiring universities to deal with the GAC directly, without the agencies as arbitrators. These now have to be listed in EQAR, integrating the German QA system closer into the EHEA. In addition to changes in the legal basis, the role of academics in accreditation procedures and decisions has been strengthened. Expectations have thus been raised,

which will eventually lead to new ways of cooperation and communication. The developing relationship between the GAC, universities and agencies, as well as viewpoints on how a new equilibrium between them may be found will be discussed in this paper.

Quality Management of E-Courses – Process Supporting Development of Digital Culture in Higher Education – Estonian Case

Merle Varendi (TTK University of Applied Sciences), Anne Villems, Lehti Pilt, Toomas Plank (University of Tartu), Marge Kusmin (Tallinn University)

This paper focuses on quality assurance and recognition process of e-learning courses in Estonian higher education institutions. How this process has so far taken place, what are the bottlenecks and how to continuously improve the process.

Evaluation of the learning process is one of the most important parts of institutional accreditation. The focus was on effectiveness of teaching, study programme development, student assessment etc. until this year. From the point of view of learners, the development of digital teaching materials and their good quality are an important motivator for learning. From the point of view of educational institutions, digital teaching materials with high quality are important in the development of digital culture.

Implementation of the First National Survey to Measure the Experiences of Postgraduate Research Students

Sean O'Reilly, Jennifer Brennan (Technological Higher Education Association), Lucy Byrnes (National University of Ireland), Emer Cunningham, Suzanne Guerin (University College Dublin), Mary Deasy (Institute of Technology Tallaght), Michael Frain (University of Limerick), Rachel Keegan, Joseph Stokes (Dublin City University), Mary McNamara (Dublin Institute of Technology), Nicki O'Connor (Higher Education Authority), Lewis Purser (Irish Universities Association)

A collaborative partnership of higher education institutions, students' representatives and national agencies has developed and implemented a national survey for postgraduate research students. Data from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students (ISSE-PGR) complements the significant data set generated by a survey offered to students pursuing taught programmes, which has been in operation since 2013. Data from the established survey is increasingly used by institutions and national agencies in structured discussions of quality assurance and quality enhancement.

The partnership undertook research on a range of surveys offered to postgraduate research students nationally and internationally before developing an instrument that reflected the national policy context and facilitated some international comparison. Fieldwork took place in February-March 2018. This paper describes the approach taken to develop this additional evidence source for quality assurance / enhancement and poses a number of questions for further consideration.

Mapping New Territories – HEIs' Societal Objectives in External Quality Assurance

Frances Blüml, Manon Imer, Dietlinde Kastelliz, Michael Meznik (AQ Austria)

The external quality audit in Austria encompasses a broad range of HEIs' activities – alongside the basic duties, they include societal objectives which are supposed to be integrated into the internal quality management system of a higher education institution. This paper looks into the relevance of societal objectives in external quality assurance (QA) practice. The findings are based on an analysis of (1) QA agencies' procedure regulations and (2) audit reports on Austrian HEIs. In the first stage, we identify aspects of societal objectives found in the procedure regulations. Further analysis shows that equal opportunities and diversity and transfer of knowledge as examples of societal objectives receive little attention and that a genuine QA perspective on these topics is lacking. This is in contrast to the importance given to societal issues in higher education policy discourse and marks new territories to be explored.

The Wisdom of Students: Monitoring Quality via Social Media and Student Reviews

Alex Griffiths (Statica Research), Helen Cullis (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education QAA))

Many of the student feedback surveys at provider and sector level give a comprehensive insight into the student experience, but they offer only a snapshot at set points in time, often at the end of a term or year. Building on innovative research in the healthcare sector, where real-time patient feedback via social media and other online feedback sites has been shown to effectively predict the outcome of in-depth inspections, this paper explores the value of continuous monitoring of the student experience via social media and other sources. What insights can be gathered from year-round feedback, what do students actively feedback on, and what relation does this feedback have with other quality measures? Could this approach be used in higher education to broaden the scope of quality assurance and enhance quality assurance systems by encompassing a broader range of activities into those systems?

Looking Beyond Standard QA: Organisational Development for the University Administration

Harald Scheuthle (University of Würzburg)

After having established an integrated QA system for teaching & learning, the University of Würzburg now focuses on quality assurance for its science support services of the central administration. The initiatives carried out by the administration usually require the change of structures or processes. Therefore, in the wake of a major support infrastructure project, the unit for quality management designed a support approach for organisational development for the central administration. The approach uses three main tools, namely institutional analysis, project management and process development which are now tested and implemented in nearly all initiatives carried out by the administration to upgrade its support services for teaching and learning, and research. The paper presents the approach used by the University of Würzburg and illustrates with three current projects how the instruments were designed and applied.

Engaging Diversely: How Online Students, Postgraduates and Others Can (and Should!) be Full Partners in Quality

Simon Varwell (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs))

Even the most pioneering approaches to the student voice in quality can run the risk of over-dependence on a narrow perspective – one that is disproportionally full-time, on-campus and undergraduate. A major challenge for broadening the scope of quality assurance is to ensure that student engagement reflects the full experiences of an institution's student profile.

European higher education is challenged to engage all students regardless not just of their social background but also of their level of study and method of delivery. The Scottish experience, certainly, is characterised by a rise in online distance learning (ODL) and transnational education (TNE), and engagement practitioners are also exploring more deeply how taught and research postgraduates can also shape their individual and institutional experiences.

Drawing on practices across Scotland, including institutional work and sectoral tools, this paper will outline the methods and opportunities of engaging students regardless of what, how and where they learn.

Broadening the Scope of QA through Partnership with Students

Tina Harrison (University of Edinburgh)

The importance of student involvement, student engagement and the student voice to quality assurance and the enhancement of learning and teaching is widely recognised. However, whilst students are now included in mainstream quality assurance and enhancement processes, critics argue that their involvement is still predominantly driven by a student-as-consumer view, rather than treating students as equal partners. This paper discusses the notion of student partnerships, characterised by collaboration, joint decision-making, and joint ownership of the process and outcome. The paper outlines the University of Edinburgh's development of a Student Partnership Agreement, the basis of the

partnership working with students and the ways in which partnering with students achieves a broadening of the scope of quality assurance.

Academic Integrity

Ian Kimber (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education QAA))

Academic integrity as a concept is not new in higher education, but the manifestation of academic misconduct is increasingly complex, posing a challenge to the maintenance of quality and standards, and to the way in which agencies assure these. This paper looks at various forms of 'cheating' as academic misconduct, and identifies that a holistic approach, involving a range of stakeholders, is needed to tackle it. Quality assurance agencies can take the lead in working with the higher education sector to address academic misconduct, and the paper outlines some strategies QAA is employing to do this in the UK.

Beyond “Diminishing Resources” – Quality Enhancement and Student Engagement

Kay Taaffe, Elizabeth Noonan (University College Cork)

Since the establishment of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) in 2005, student involvement in quality processes has been viewed as integral and become more widely adopted across Europe (HEA, 2016). The level of student involvement and engagement can, however, vary on a continuum from students being informed (low-impact) to having decision-making roles (high-impact) (ibid.).

In the context of a policy and cultural shift towards an enhancement ethos of quality, this paper presents an institutional case-study at one Irish university, outlining processes to enhance student engagement and impact in academic quality review. The paper outlines initial observations from processes to date (which include training and credentialising students' participation in institutional quality peer review), plans for development based on these reflections, and the potential intended or anticipated institution-wide impact of increased support for student engagement in an enhancement-led quality environment.

The Arcu-Sur System: An Accreditation System for South America?

Gabriella de Camargo Hizume (University of São Paulo/Western Paraná State University)

This work aims to discuss the expansion of the University Degree Accreditation System for the Regional Recognition of the Academic Quality of University Degrees in the MERCOSUR and Associate States (the ARCU-SUR System) throughout South America. The ARCU-SUR System was designed to foster the circulation of academic personnel, and to improve quality assurance of higher education, especially in the MERCOSUR. However, this System has spread and currently covers almost all countries of South America. In addition, the actions predicted for the ARCU-SUR System within 2016 and 2020 have been connected to another regional organization that involves all the South American States, the Union of South America Nations (UNASUR). This study included interviews with regional actors from Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay as well as the analysis the ARCU-SUR System and the UNASUR documents. The study pointed out that the ARCU-SUR System development may result in a South American accreditation system.

The Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR) – Quality at your fingertips

Kathryn Máthé and Colin Tück (EQAR)

EQAR has developed DEQAR with the aim to contribute to the transparency of quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). DEQAR provides easy access to quality assurance reports and decisions on higher education institutions and their programmes by EQAR-registered agencies through a single portal. The public preview of DEQAR was launched in May 2018 and currently includes more than 4500 reports covering 807 higher education institutions in 37 countries. DEQAR serves a broad range of users, including recognition officers in higher education institutions and information centres (ENIC-NARICs), students, academics, managers and the leadership of higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies, national ministries and other authorities.

The session will include a brief presentation of the background, objectives and design of DEQAR, followed by an opportunity to use the public preview and give feedback from your own perspective.

DEQAR is co-funded by the EU's Erasmus+ programme.

Case Study of Coordinated Students' Representation in Quality Assurance at Vilnius University

Ignas Gaižiūnas (Vilnius University Students' Representation)

The paper describes and analyses a coordinated approach of students' representation at Study Programme Committees (SPC) of Vilnius University (VU). This approach was developed by Vilnius University Students' Representation (VU SA) with the aim to foster further discussion about empowerment of student representatives. After introducing the specific context of VU, the paper focuses on the activities which were developed for all student representatives at SPC. Also, the structure of student representatives at SPC coordination is briefly introduced by indicating key actors and their duties. These activities were developed in order to tackle problems related to inactive student representatives and performance of their duties. It can also be seen how these activities resulted in the cycle of representation at VU. Moreover, the paper explores challenges which VU SA is now facing in regard to students' representation in order to improve meaningfulness and effectiveness of student representatives in their work with SPC.

Assuring the Quality of Credentials to Support Learning Innovation

Anthony F. Camilleri (Knowledge Innovation Centre), Florian Rampelt (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft)

The credential-space is currently seeing significant innovation, driven by twin priorities, namely the unbundling of learning of micro-learning, and the drive to digitise credentials as prioritised by the Bologna Digital Agenda and the EU's Digital Education Action Plan. While traditionally students could depend on recognition of widely understood signals of experience and expertise such as university degrees, the same cannot be said for the creatures of MOOCs such as 'nanodegrees' and 'specialisations'.

While it is clear that degrees from accredited HEIs consist of the gold standard in terms of their recognition and portability, no clear set of comprehensive criteria exists to assess the quality of new forms of credentials, nor for standards and technologies which are applied to credentials. The authors therefore propose a framework for such analysis in the form of a set of quality characteristics for credentials, based on work conducted by the OEPass project.

Broadening the Scope of Quality Assurance Systems to Doctoral Education. The Case of the University of Aveiro

António Teixeira, Maria J. Rosa, Sofia Bruckmann (University of Aveiro)

Doctoral education is becoming part of quality assurance (QA) systems of European universities. The Bologna Process and the Salzburg Principles have provided the driver for reforms of doctoral education and from there of QA systems, which came to include doctoral education. This paper is a case study about extending the QA system of the University of Aveiro (UA) to doctoral education (SubGQ_PD). Considering doctoral programmes comprise both research work and doctoral courses, the SubGQ_PD focus on the strengths and weaknesses of these two components to answer the question: How to assure and improve doctoral education quality? The subsystem's design started in 2016, with a pilot test. Thereafter it was put in place, firstly only regarding the research work (2016/17) and then all of it (2017/18). Considering the results obtained so far, it is believed that such a subsystem may contribute to the quality of UA's doctoral education and its future sustainability.

Use of Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks in a Development of Study Programmes

Andrzej Żurawski, Katarzyna Trawińska-Konador (Warsaw School of Economics)

The paper discusses the opportunities to use sectoral qualifications frameworks in the development of study programmes in higher education. Sectoral qualifications frameworks are extensions of National Qualifications Frameworks, that are prepared in a cooperation with sectoral stakeholders in order to

make them more suitable to the needs of a given sector. Such tool has several potential advantages from a point of view of quality assurance policies at the universities: use of language that will be understandable by a huge variety of stakeholders, in particular employers, a better match with labour market needs, better comparability between universities and departments and better permeability between study programmes or institutions. Examples of use from four Polish universities and various sectors are to be presented in this paper.