ENQA GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2015
Dublin, 22-23 October 2015

Breakout sessions

Thursday, 22 October 2015

10.45-12.45

Group 1: La Touche room (ground floor [across from reception desk], Level 1 in lift)
    Facilitator: Steffen Westergard Andersen and (following 11:45 switch) Niamh Lenehan
Group 2: Presidents room (1st floor, Level 2 in lift)
    Facilitator: Axel Aerden and (following 11:45 switch) Heli Mattisen
Group 3: Chesterfield Room (gound floor, Level 1 in lift)
    Facilitator: Niamh Lenehan and (following 11:45 switch) Steffen Westergard Andersen
Group 4: Main Conference Hall (lower ground, level 0 in lift)
    Facilitator: Heli Mattisen and (following 11:45 switch) Axel Aerden

Topic 1. The approach to student centered learning (SCL) and learning outcomes (LO) in quality assurance agencies' work

Questions for discussion:

- • How can agencies support institutions through external quality assurance in achieving compliance concerning SCL and LO?
- • How should agencies' methodologies be developed to better recognise SCL and LO during external reviews?
- • What can agencies expect from institutions in terms of SCL and LO in the first years of the new ESG?

ESG on SCL and LO:

1.2 Design and approval of programmes

Standard:

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Guidelines:

Study programmes are at the core of the higher education institutions' teaching mission. They provide students with both academic knowledge and skills including those that are transferable, which may influence their personal development and may be applied in their future careers.

Programmes are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes; are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work; benefit from external expertise and reference points; reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (cf. Scope and Concepts); are designed so that they enable smooth student progression; define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS; include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate; are subject to a formal institutional approval process.

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Standard:

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Guidelines:

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes. The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths; considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate; flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods; regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods; encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher; promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship; has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints. Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:

Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field; The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance; The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process; Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner; The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances; Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures; A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.

Furthermore, SCL and LO are mentioned in the following parts of the ESG (extracted from full text):

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Guidelines: Graduation represents the culmination of the students' period of study. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed.

1.5 Teaching staff

Guidelines: The teacher's role is essential in creating a high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing (cf. Standard 1.3).

1.6 Learning resources and student support

Guidelines: The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

1.8 Public information

Guidelines: Information on institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public. Therefore, institutions provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer and the selection criteria for them, the intended learning outcomes of these programmes, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information.

Topic 2: Quality assurance and recognition

Questions for discussion:

- What measures can be taken to create a closer linkage between QA and recognition (recognition of foreign academic qualifications, recognition of study periods abroad, and credit transfer)?
- What are the main dimensions a QA agency should take into account when assessing recognition practices conducted by HEIs during external reviews?
- What could ENQA do in this respect?
- Cross-border higher education, QA and recognition, whose responsibility?

Background to the new ENQA working group on QA and recognition initiated in 2015:

The vision of ENQA, as stated in its new strategic plan 2015-2019, is closely linked to the recognition of qualifications; its reads: "A European Higher Education Area where students have access to high quality education and can achieve qualifications that are respected world-wide." The new strategic plan breaks down ENQA's work in three main goals:

- *Representation*
- *Services*
- *Contribution to Quality Enhancement*

How do these missions relate to ENQA's vision, and particularly, to the recognition of academic qualifications? What is the contribution of the ESG and the quality assurance community to the academic and professional recognition of qualifications? How can QA agencies improve their impact in terms of recognition without drifting away from their essential missions?

In the past, previous ENQA working groups have analysed the overall impact of QA. In characterising and quantifying this impact, the group has faced significant methodological challenges.

Based on these previous studies, this new working group, of a more limited scope (as it would only focus on recognition and not in the overall impact), should try to contribute to the question of "meaning". How meaningful is the work conducted by the QA sector and how does it translate into specific benefits for the higher education community? What is relationship between quality and recognition in general?

Some interesting elements to this debate are provided by the Bologna Process implementation report of 2012; this report encourages to incorporate the analysis of local policies and practices of recognition when conducting "normal" and regular external assurance processes in higher education institutions. Furthermore, this same report notes that:

"Quality assurance would then have the task to assess the level of compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Involvement of quality assurance as a solution to this problem is logical because the quality of the recognition procedures within a higher education institution can be covered by the internal quality assurance system in the same way as any other academic or administrative procedure. Secondly, higher education institutions have accepted external and internal quality assurance, and therefore introducing the LRC principles through the quality assurance system, and especially through internal quality assurance, should be easier than through directive measures."

In theory, according to the new ESG, all HEIs should include recognition practices within their internal quality assurance systems; consequently, all agencies should include this issue in their EQA systems.

However, this is presumably one of the challenges of the transition to the new version of the ESG as, according to the 2012 BFUG report, recognition policies were regularly evaluated by external quality assurance in only 14 countries while in the majority of countries recognition at higher education institutions is not evaluated at all.

Based on the elements enunciated above, this working group will be devoted to the analysis and improvement of external quality assurance practices of academic recognition within higher education institutions.

An extract from article "Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE) – moving towards strengthened cooperation" (Fabrizio Trifiro', 2014):

"All surveyed [quality assurance] agencies in the three regions [Europe, Arab and Asia-Pacific regions] saw strengthening cooperation as the best way to enhance the quality assurance of CBHE, by promoting mutual understanding of the respective approaches to CBHE in their countries, and the sharing of good practice. In particular, agencies pointed out how enhancing current information sharing about national approaches to CBHE is key to addressing current regulatory gaps, conflicts, or duplication, and improve the recognition of qualifications obtained through CBHE programmes, two of the main obstacles identified by the agencies surveyed. Absence of coordination between the systems of sending and receiving countries' agencies was indeed reported as the main challenge to the quality assurance of CBHE across the three regions. In this context regional networks such as ENQA, APQN and ANQAHE were seen as potentially playing an important role in promoting policy dialogue and cooperation between their constituent agencies, and thus supporting the implementation of the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines."

The homepage of the QACHE project: https://qache.wordpress.com/