



center of accreditation and quality assurance
of the swiss universities

Workshop on Institutional Quality Audits Zurich, 1/2 December 2003

Abstract

On 1/2 December 2004 the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ) organised an international workshop on Institutional Quality Audits in Zurich, Switzerland in collaboration with NOKUT, Norway and CNE, FRANCE. The workshop stood under the umbrella of ENQA and targeted at national evaluation and accreditation agencies throughout Europe. Its aim was to exchange information about institutional quality audit concepts and to work towards a consent on auditing procedures and the required properties of quality assurance systems of HE institutions. The event was attended by more than 40 persons from all over Europe and showed that the interest in quality audits is increasing.

A comparison of the different audit programmes presented in Zurich revealed many procedural similarities. A three to four step procedure including a self-evaluation, external evaluation, publication and some form of follow-up is common.

Reference points or criteria describing the requested properties of a QA-System in HE are used in most countries which apply quality audits. QA-Systems in HE ought to be transparent, well structured, integrated into the university's overall strategy, linked to governance, cover all areas and levels of the institution and foster quality control as well as improvement. All stakeholders should be involved when quality measures are developed and applied. Information about the results of quality assurance should be disseminated and measures to test the effectiveness of QA be taken.

A comprehensive documentation provided by a university reporting system, including basic statistical data and data on quality assurance measures down to programme level, is considered vital to the audit process.

The participants of the workshop decided to create an informal working group "Quality audits" under the umbrella of ENQA to further develop the aims of the Zurich workshop. Topics of interest will be: Work towards common procedures / a common framework of reference for quality audits in HE and identify possible combination strategies with other methods of external quality assessment such as evaluations and accreditations.

For further details please consult the final summary of the workshop at:
http://www.enqa.net/texts/workshop_material/summary_zurich.pdf