

Introduction to the work of ENQA and the QACHE survey for HEIs

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Paula Ranne, ENQA

QACHE

Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education

Structure of the presentation

1. Introduction to the work of ENQA
2. The European Standards and Guidelines for the Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ESG)
3. QACHE outputs including a survey to European higher education institutions

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education –ENQA

- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
- Network in 2000; association in 2004
- Move from Finland to Belgium in 2011
- Umbrella NGO for European QA agencies
- 43 Full Members in 25 countries (Oct 2014)
- 48 Affiliates in 27 countries (Oct 2014)

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education -ENQA

- Structure: Board, General Assembly, Secretariat
- Cyclical external reviews of ENQA members
- Co-operation within E4 (European University Association, European Students Union, EURASHE)
- Consultative member in the Bologna Follow-up Group (QA as one pillar of EHEA since the beginning in 1999, ENQA consultative member of the BFUG since 2005)
- Founding member of EQAR, register for trustworthy agencies in Europe

Objectives

ENQA's purposes are essentially threefold:

- **to represent its members** at European level and internationally, especially in political decision-making processes and in co-operation with stakeholder organisations;
- **to function as a think tank** for the further development of quality assurance processes and systems in the EHEA;
- **to function as a communication platform** for sharing and disseminating information and expertise in quality assurance among members and towards stakeholders.

Activities

- **Dissemination of information** on experience, good practice and new developments in the field of quality assessment and QA in HE to members, affiliates and stakeholders
- Organisation of **events**
- Participation in transnational quality assurance projects
- Publication of reports
- Coordination of **external reviews** of QA agencies
- Internal **working groups**

Some focus areas for 2015

- Dialogue with the VET sector on links between QA of HE and VET
- Development of the ENQA reviews and their revision to ensure their usefulness for all agencies appropriate to their state of development (revision of the review process).
- Cross-border related quality assurance activities:
 - ENQA Quality procedures project on internationalisation
 - Guidelines of good practice for international reviews
 - QA and recognition
 - QACHE project

European Standards and Guidelines for the Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)

Introduced **internationally accepted standards** for quality assurance in higher education

- Part I: for internal QA within HEIs
- Part II: for the external QA of HEIs
- Part III: for the external QA of agencies (almost identical to ENQA membership criteria)

Introduced a **peer review system for quality assurance agencies**

- Cyclical reviews, based on ESG, every 5 years for (reconfirmation of) full ENQA membership and/or for being (re)listed in EQAR

European Standards and Guidelines for the Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)

- 2005: adopted at the Bologna ministerial conference in Bergen
- “Standards” are **statements of basic good practice**; short and general
- “Guidelines” are meant as **illustrations** of the standards in action; → Standards and guidelines –no procedures!
- Prepared by **stakeholders** (not by governments): EUA, ENQA EURASHE and ESU. All key actors in European QA.
- Give the basis for a **common understanding** of QA and what it stands for at European level, while supporting diversity
- Cover a multitude of contexts (all types of QA procedures, all types of agencies..) → **generic principles**

European Standards and Guidelines for the Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)

- **They set a common framework** for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national and institutional level
- **They enable the assurance and improvement of quality** of higher education in the European higher education area
- **They support mutual trust**, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders
- **They provide information on quality assurance** in the EHEA

Revision of the ESG

Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué April 2012:
“We will revise the ESG to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope. The revision will be based upon an initial proposal to be prepared by the E4 in cooperation with Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), which will be submitted to the Bologna Follow-Up Group.”

Revision of the ESG

- The revised version of the ESG is expected to be adopted by the Yerevan Ministerial Conference in May 2015.
- More focus on:
Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment
Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

QACHE Project outputs during summer 2014:

- **Survey of QA agencies in Europe** (information on how the QA agencies address QA of cross-border education)
- **Survey of QA agencies members of ANQAHE & APQN** (information on the “host country” perspective)
- **Country reports** (national framework, laws, guidelines etc.) & case of good practice in the provider countries in Europe in QA of cross-border higher education
- **Survey of cross-border education in Europe** to assess the current situation (sample of institutions active in CBHE)

What next?

- Toolkit on QA of cross-border higher education for QA agencies and higher education institutions.
- Common criteria for QA of cross-border higher education for QA agencies and higher education institutions.
- Format of pilot testing (of the principles and approaches suggested by the toolkit) to be applied voluntarily by identified cross-border higher education initiatives.
- Final project report and dissemination conference **November 2015**.

QACHE Survey of European HEIs

- Survey of selected HEIs in the core countries (DE, ES, FR, UK) known to be active in CBHE
- Questions asking about the extent and type of activities, target countries, the IQA and EQA systems in place, specific national support schemes and policies, collaboration with the host country authorities, well as any eventual good practice (by the national agency, or collaboration with the foreign agency)
- Challenging survey despite careful selection of respondents
- 21 responses, but most questions completed by less than half
- Misunderstanding of terminology and the phenomenon

General observations

- In most of the countries CBHE is not a well known phenomenon and terminology is difficult to understand
- People know of their own case, but not beyond that → not able to put their own case into a larger framework (e.g. analyse the typology of the provision, or the wider national context)
- National strategies, policies, guidelines and requirements are in most cases not well known (“yes”, “no”, and “I don’t know” from HEIs in the same country) → no mainstreaming (sharing of good practice at the national level?)
- But neither is the institutional framework → Unclear whether there is none, or it is not just properly communicated to the programmes → strategic approach or individual initiative?

Key challenges to CBHE:

1. Risk to reputation (83%);
2. QA procedures (conflicting criteria, lack of coordination between systems, etc.) (75%);
3. Recognition issues and balance of responsibility between home and host authorities (both 50%)

QA in a central role (adequate QA, and systematic cooperation with local authorities will protect reputation and support recognition).

Some findings:

- Branch campuses for institutional mobility and joint programmes for programme mobility the most common forms of CBHE of the HEIs surveyed
- Target countries mentioned include 5 in the Gulf/Arab region (topped by UAE and Egypt) and 9 in East-Asia (topped by China)
- National legislation (77%) and the ESG (54%) are the most important frames of reference (also) for CBHE IQA. OECD/UNESCO guidelines were mentioned by two respondents
- Regulatory framework is mostly the same as for programmes “at home”, with some cases of additional criteria

Expectations on QA agencies

- Be aware of the different regulatory framework in the host country → work with local QA agencies to match requirements, and to ensure recognition
- Enable for more flexible approaches that can be adapted to different situations and cases (international ventures, joint programmes, etc.)

Expectations on QA agencies

- Provide information on the regulatory framework in different countries (Is this a feasible task? For main target countries only?)
 - Provide information on the (exporting) national HE system and its specific features to be used in discussions with the host countries
 - Develop guidance on how to deal with (I)QA of CBHE
 - Use peers with a good understanding of the regulatory framework, cultural context etc. in the host country in the CBHE related assessments
- Dissemination and sharing of information is crucial!



Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education

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