

8th ENQA Members' Forum 19-20 April 2018 Zaragoza, Spain

Social dimension in quality assurance – towards framing the key challenges

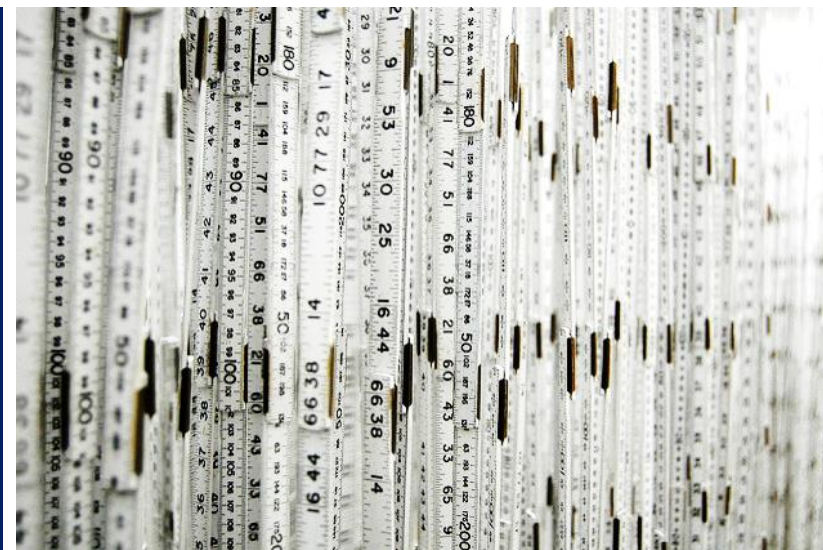
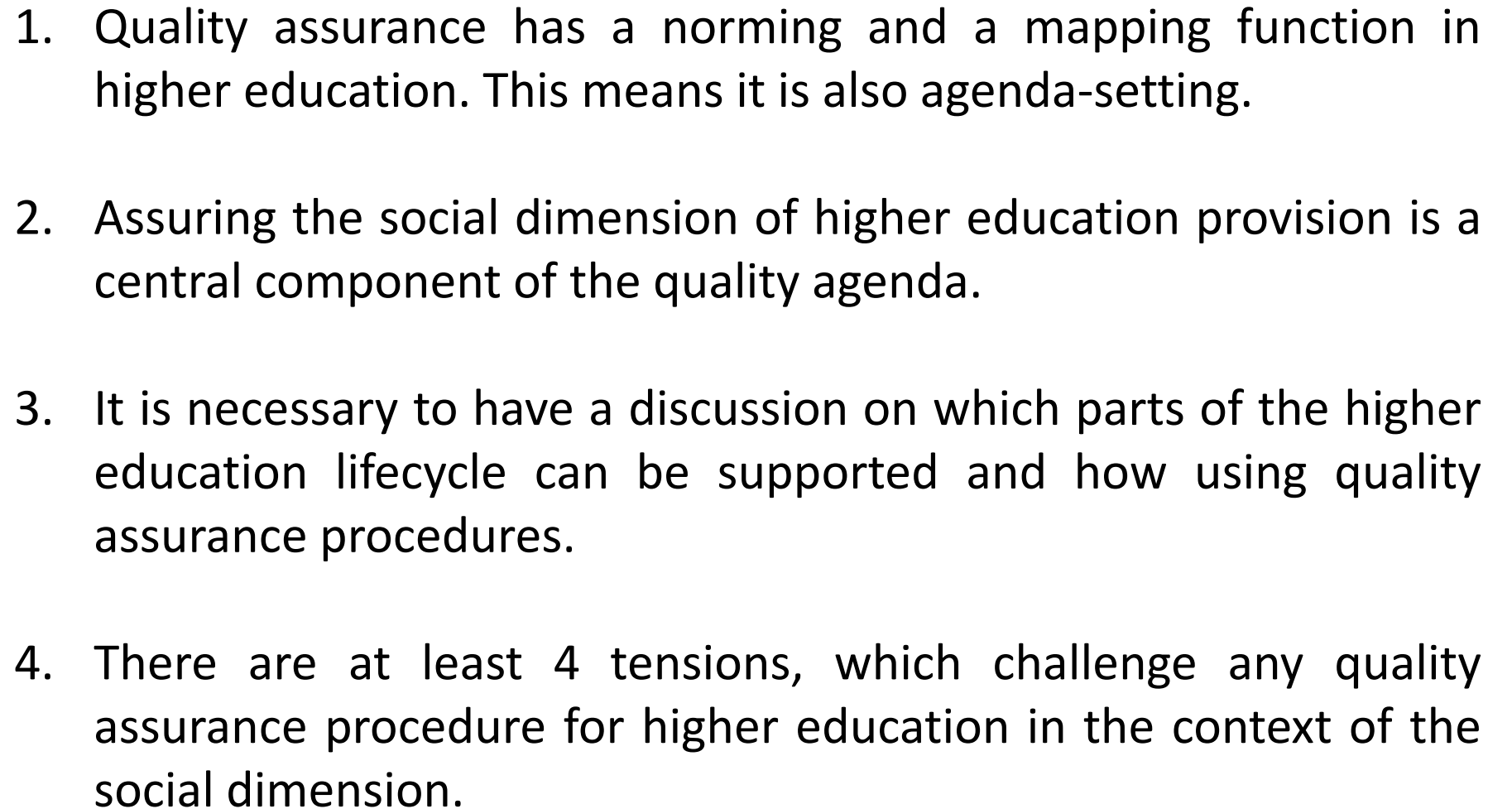


Photo: Antony Mayfield CC BY, Flickr



What is the social dimension?

Yerevan Communiqué:

Making our [higher education] systems more inclusive is an essential aim for the EHEA as our populations become more and more diversified, also due to immigration and demographic changes.

UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.3:

By 2030 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

- **Link:** access to tertiary education for all also requires quality secondary education
- **Equality of outcomes:** not just access, but completion and successful skill acquisition
- **“Equal”:** In some cases, unequal treatment (i.e. special support for vulnerable groups) is the only way to achieve more equal outcomes.

What is quality assurance?

Part of the governance instruments for ‘steering at a distance’, which recognise that higher education institutions are ‘hybrid institutions’ with multiple goals and multiple stakeholders.

In a system of autonomous HEIs, quality assurance should:

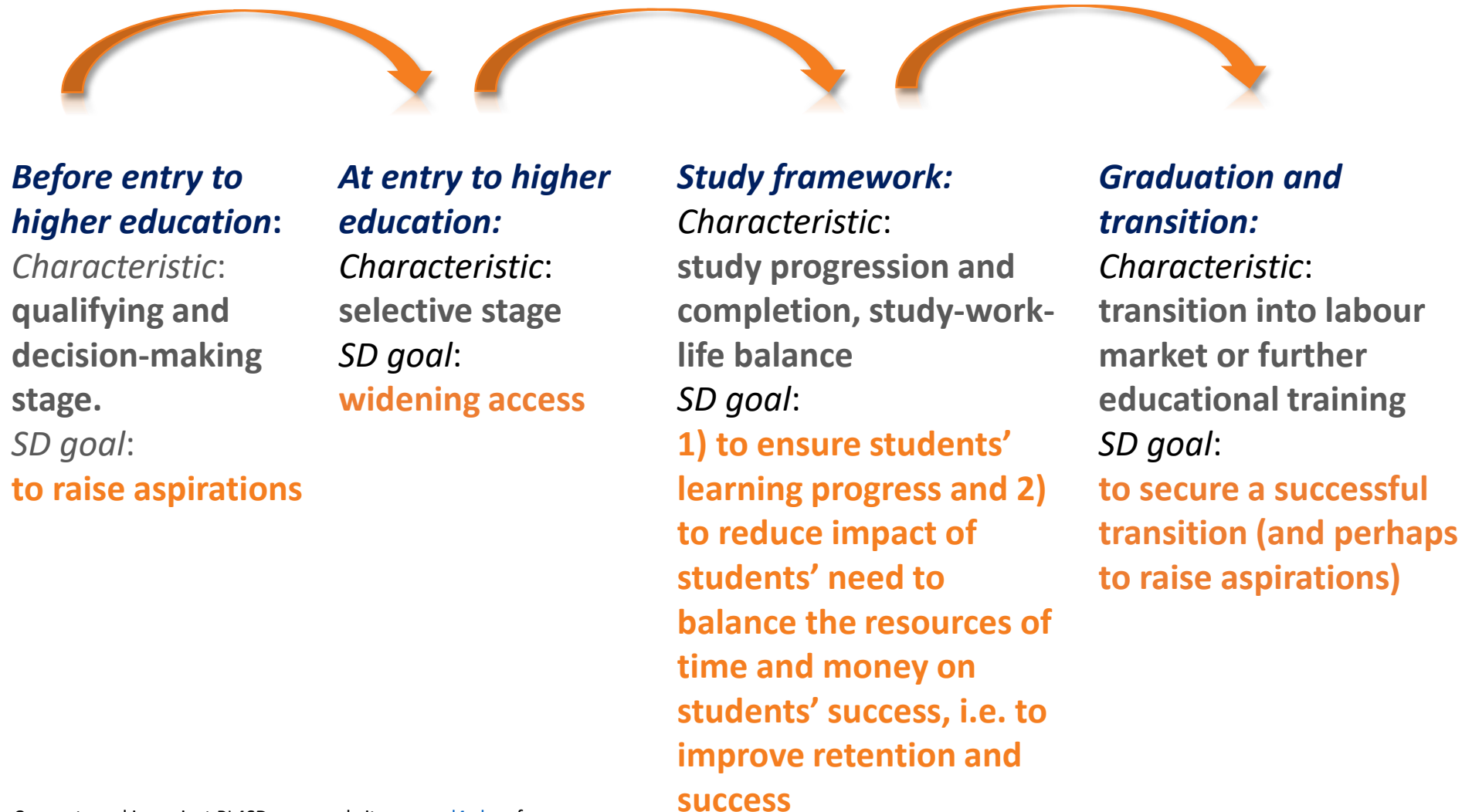
- Assure transparency of provision
- Set some (minimum) norms, which must be fulfilled by higher education providers for the learning experience

Quality assurance systems were seldom in 1999, when the Bologna Declaration was signed. Today, there is a consensus that quality assurance is necessary to ensure accountability and support enhancement.

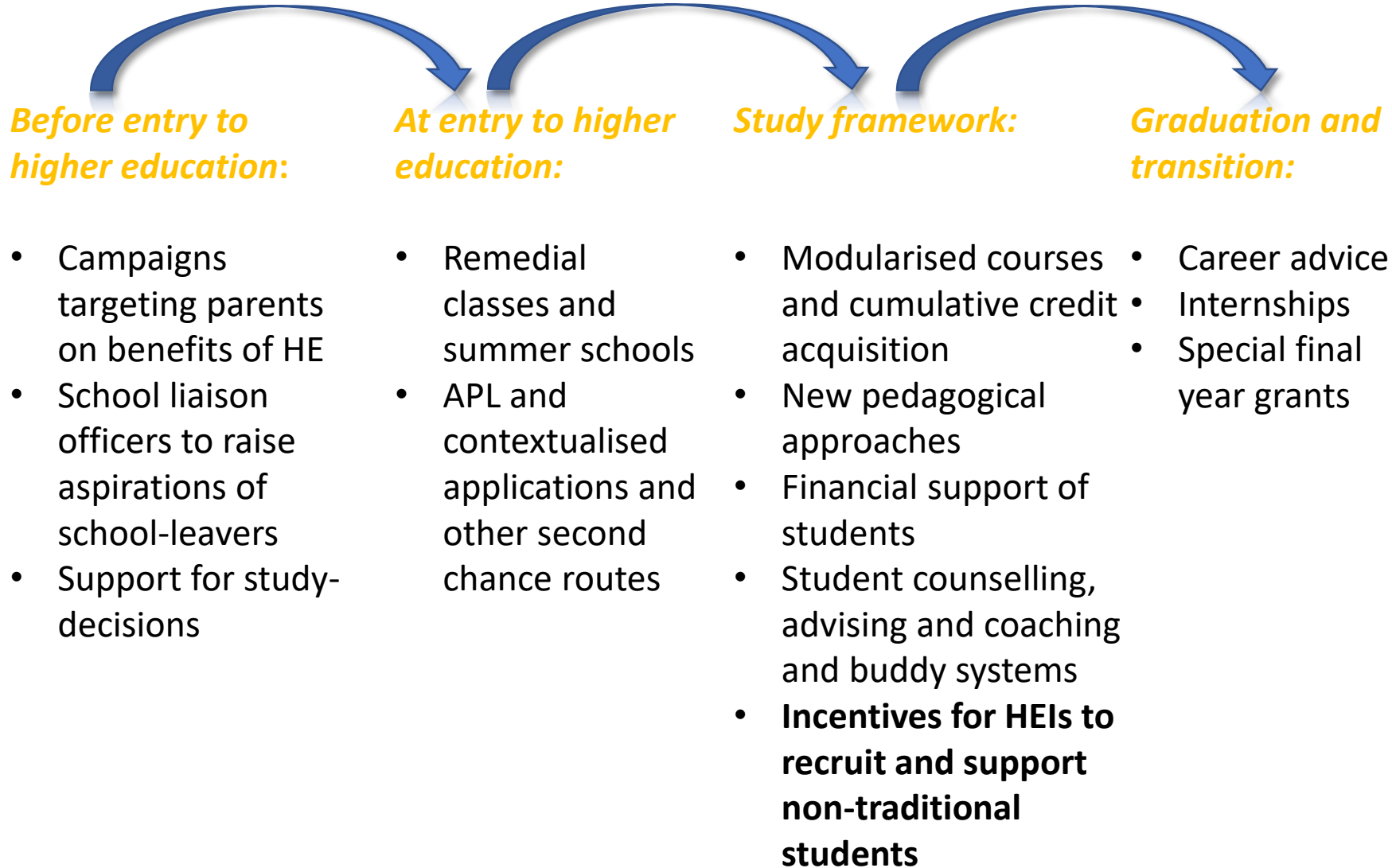
Improving the quality and relevance of higher education, and establishing trustworthy quality assurance systems have been high priorities for almost all countries, and developments have been fast moving. 22 countries have established external quality assurance agencies since the Bologna Process was launched.

Ref: Bologna Process Implementation Reports (new forthcoming May 2018)

Social dimension and four key phases in higher ed



Interventions used to improve participative equity



1. University within society

There should be a greater osmosis between HE and society.

With reference to both refugees and working students there is a tendency for HE to try and make these groups fit the university and not adapt the university to these groups.

Reference: see also Salmi, J. (in press). Social dimension within a quality-orientated higher education system. Bologna Process Researchers' Handbook. Springer

Different students – different expectations & needs

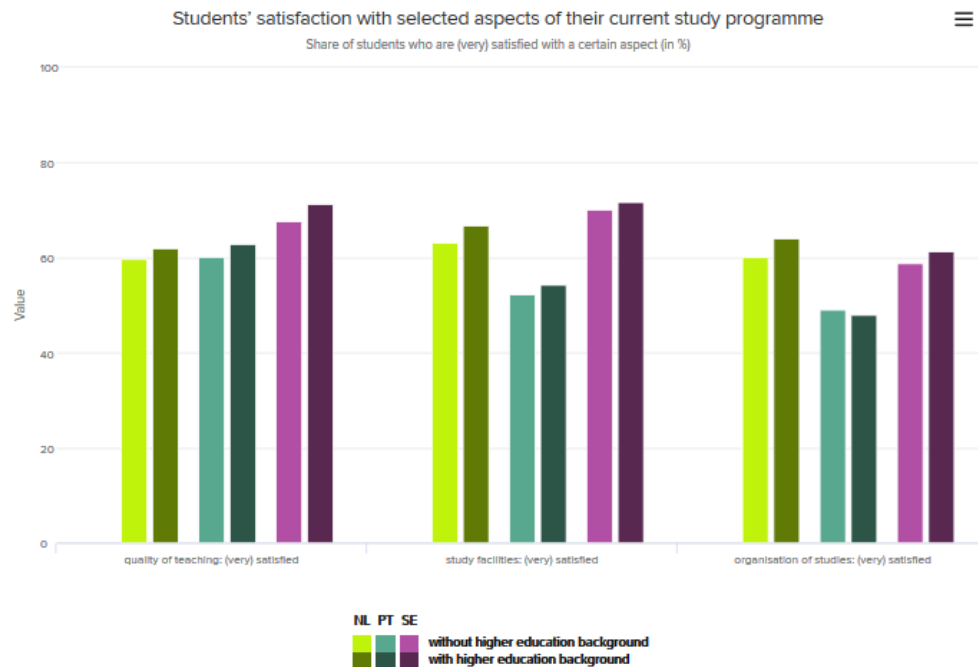
J. Assessment of studies > Satisfaction with studies > All aspects (aggregated)

XLS

Students' satisfaction with selected aspects of their current study programme

Data source: EUROSTUDENT VI, J.29 - 31

Next indicator >



Share of students who are (very) satisfied with a certain aspect (in %)

	without higher education background			with higher education background		
	NL	PT	SE	NL	PT	SE
quality of teaching: (very) satisfied	59.8	60.1	67.6	62.1	62.9	71.3
study facilities: (very) satisfied	63.1	52.3	70.1	66.7	54.4	71.8
organisation of studies: (very) satisfied	60.1	49.2	58.9	64.1	48	61.2

- The most recent wave of the EUROSTUDENT study published in March 2018 has again shown European higher education to be better at recruiting students from well-educated families.
- In many cases, first generation students (i.e. those whose parents have not graduated from higher education themselves) tend to be less satisfied with their study programmes – see examples
- The same study shows that first gen students tend to enter higher education later, study in short programmes at universities of applied science and rely on paid employment.

Source: <http://bit.ly/eurostudentdata18>

2. Different definitions of success

Rankings, performance-based funding and indeed individual students (inter alia) have different definitions of success.

The former determine, at least to some extent, how HEIs behave, whilst the latter should be our main orientation. More work needed here.

9 Qualities of student success from the student perspective

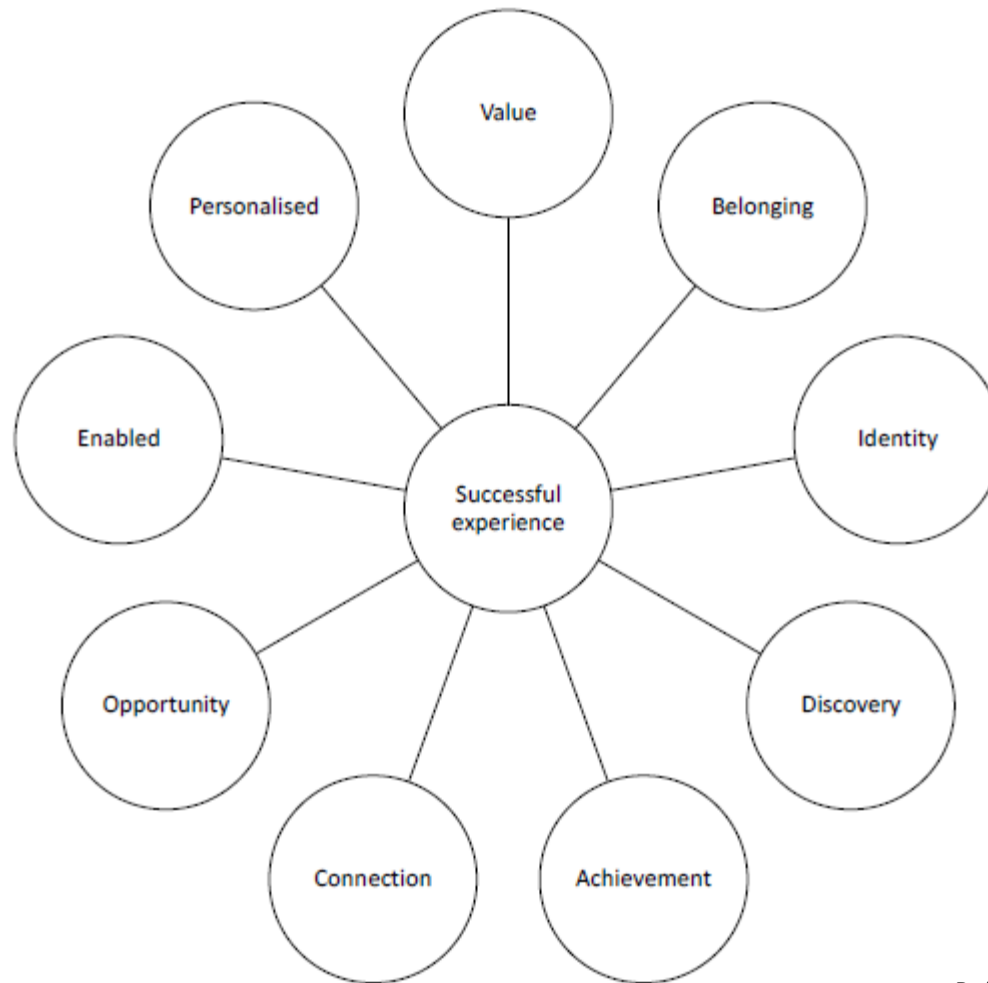


Figure 2: Nine Qualities Model (9Q): Defining student success

Student formations
value, belonging, identity

Student outcomes
discovery, achievement,
connection, opportunity

Student supports
enabling, personalised

Ref. Coates, H., Kelly, P., Naylor, R., & Borden, V. (2016). Innovative Approaches for Enhancing the 21st Century Student Experience. Australian Government, Department of Education and Training.

3. Quality assurance and recognition

- Digital solutions offer new forms of learning and new modes of learning delivery; however, they also present new challenges to existing quality assurance procedures.
- QA agencies should work together and identify a set of quality criteria (rubrics) and quality indicators that would help higher education institutions, students and accreditors gauge the quality and relevance of online learning provisions and alternative learning credentials.

For instance, open educational resources (**OER**) present a challenge in that they allow all users to modify and adapt learning content, whilst Massive Open Online Courses (**MOOCs**) present a challenge since they are often open entry and do not always monitor progress.

4. Benefits of technology and digitalization

- The social dimension can benefit from new technologies. More intensive teaching and learning support and also counselling could be made possible through smart applications of new technology. The AI revolution is likely to focus more on this aspect.
- However, this may go against traditional definitions of staff-intensity and student support and may further challenge quality assurance procedures and standards.

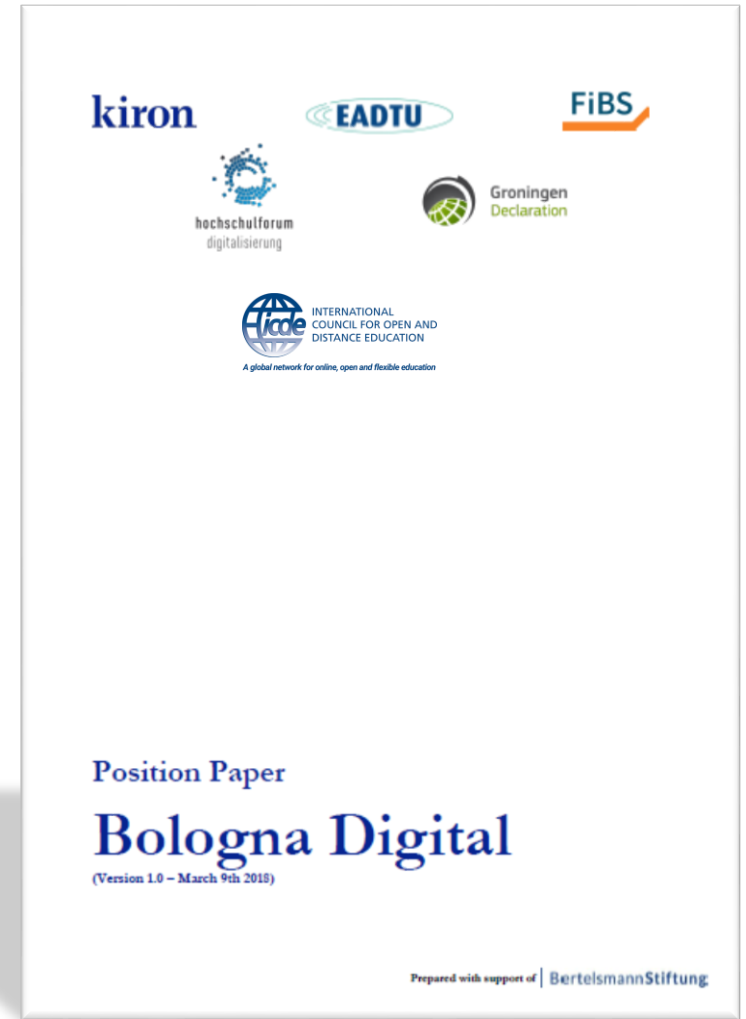
For instance:

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Inspector General has released the results of a much anticipated high-stakes audit of **Western Governors University**, with negative findings that could threaten the large online university and, more broadly, the growing field of competency-based education.

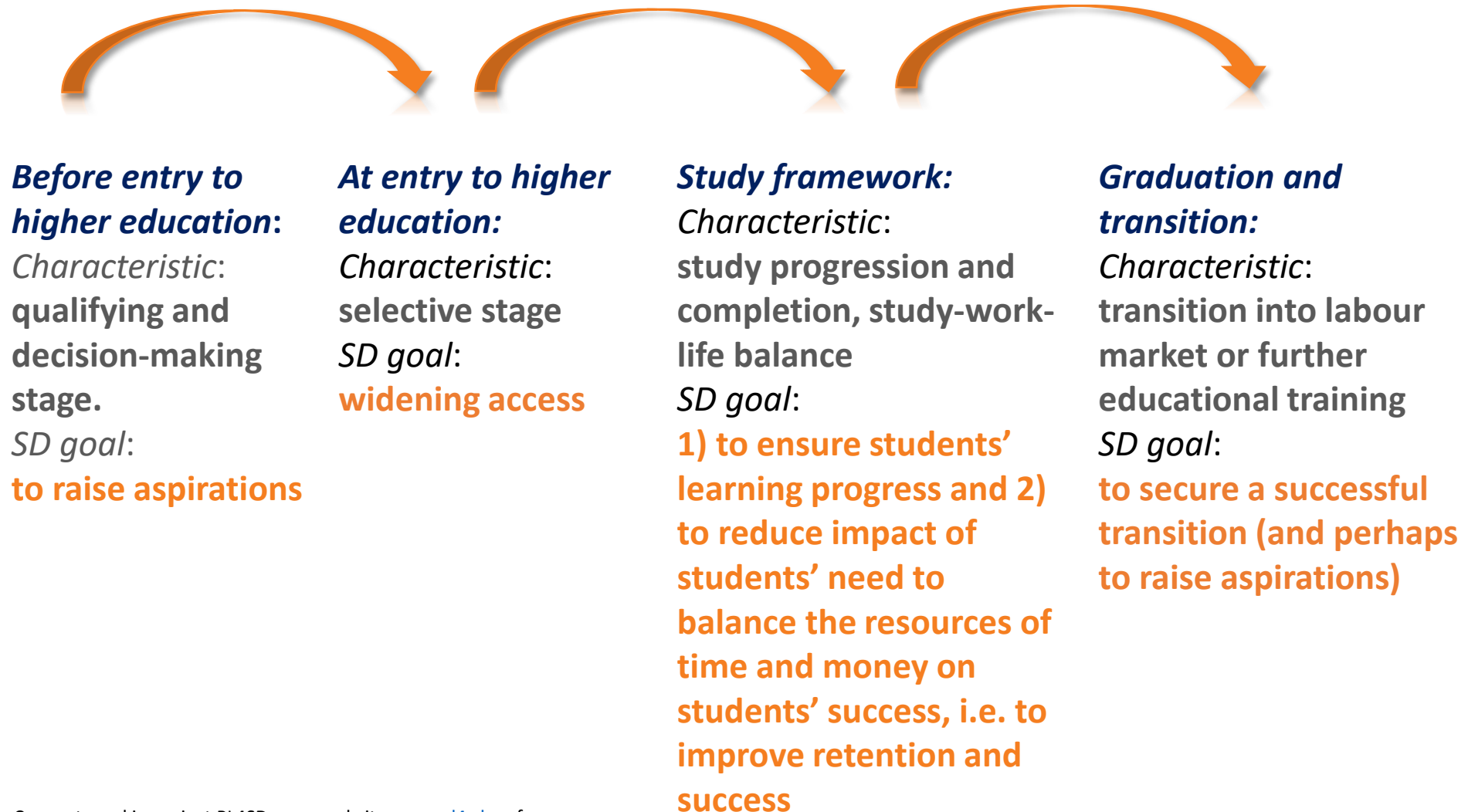
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/22/education-depts-inspector-general-calls-western-governors-repay-713-million-federal>

Does digitalization add new challenges?

- **No! Digitalisation should be viewed as a powerful means to meet existing challenges in higher education.**
- See position paper from an author collective which has published a more detailed position paper with recommendations on harnessing the power of digitalisation.
- The paper has been endorsed by the Bertelsmann Foundation, Kiron Open Higher Education, the German Higher Education Forum for Digitalisation (HFD), the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN), FiBS Research Institute for the Economics of Education and Social Affairs and the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE).



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www.fibs.eu

FiBS, Michaelkirchstr. 17/18, D-10179 Berlin, Germany
Tel: +49 (0)30 8471 223-0 · Fax: +49 (0)30 8471 223-29