



Introduction to a practical manual  
for internal quality assurance  
based on European Standards  
and Guidelines

Irish Institutes of Technology

# Background



- Bologna process
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
  - European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions

# Bologna process



- Create a European Higher Education Area by 2010, in which students can choose from a wide and transparent range of high quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures.
- The three priorities of the Bologna process are: Introduction of the three cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate), quality assurance and recognition of qualifications and periods of study.

# Objectives of the European Standards and Guidelines



- Improved consistency of quality assurance
- Common reference points for quality assurance
- Identify professional and credible agencies, enhance credibility
- Procedures for recognition of qualifications strengthened
- Exchange of viewpoints and experiences

# Principles of the European Standards and Guidelines



- Interests of students, employers, and society in good quality higher education;
- Central importance of institutional autonomy, tempered with recognition of heavy responsibilities;
- Need for quality assurance to be fit for purpose with only an appropriate and necessary burden on institutions for the achievement of its objectives.



- Principal responsibility is with the higher education institution
- Guidelines only – need to be expanded and adapted for individual institutions
- Operate at two levels – programme and institutional

# Higher Education and Training Awards Council



- HETAC was established under the *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999*, and is the national awarding body for higher education and training outside the universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology.
- HETAC is responsible for institutional-level and programme-level external quality procedures.
- HETAC was the first quality assurance agency to be reviewed based on the European Standards and Guidelines.



# Issues

- What are the expected levels of quality?
- Should the accepted level be defined by a minimum threshold standard or reference standards?
- What measurements can we make to show standards are achieved?
- What procedures should we have in place to address deficiencies?



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- 1.1 Strategy, policy and procedures are in place for the assurance of quality and standards of programmes and awards

# Implications



- Programme design - programmes have clear and explicit outcomes
- Staff – ready and willing to provide teaching and learning support to help learners achieve those outcomes

# Quality assurance strategy, policy and procedures



- How is quality assurance integrated with strategic planning and operational management?
- How does the quality assurance system evaluate the effectiveness of strategic planning and operational management processes?
- How has the QA system evolved ?
- How does the Institution manage its QA systems (including changes to the QA system)?
- How are the agreed procedures operating ‘on the ground’?
- How is feedback from the Institution’s stakeholders obtained and how does it inform decision making?
- How are staff engaged in quality assurance?
- How is the effectiveness of quality assurance reviewed? How is the performance of the QA system measured? What actions are taken as a result of these reviews?

# A practical manual continued...



- 1.2 There are formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards

# Implications



- Award design – quality assurance to include development and publication of specific learning outcomes
- Delivery modes – specific needs of different delivery modes, including full-time, part-time, distance, e-learning

# Programmes and awards



- How is the programme validation process undertaken? Has the effectiveness of this process been reviewed?
- How is the programmatic review process undertaken? Has the effectiveness of this process been reviewed?
- How are external examiners appointed? Has the effectiveness of this process been reviewed?
- How is national and international comparability of standards of its awards guaranteed?
- How does the Institution measure the destination of its graduates, viz a viz comparability with other similar Institutions?

# A practical manual continued...



- 1.3 Students are consistently assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures

# Implications



- Assessment procedures – designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and appropriate for their purpose
- Staff – understand the role of assessment, not rely on the judgments of a single examiner



# External examining



- Important for 1.2 and 1.3
- Independent expert with an advisory role in the monitoring and moderation of learner assessment
- Making comparisons in relation to standards and ensuring fairness in relation to students

# A practical manual continued...



- 1.4 Institutions have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent

# Implications



- Teaching quality and staff development – opportunities to develop and extend teaching capacity, poor teachers given opportunities to improve, ineffective teachers removed.

# Teaching and quality assurance



- Duties of academic staff in relation to quality assurance and enhancement
  - Course Development
  - Course Promotion
  - Course Committee Meetings
  - Course Operation
  - Examination Boards
  - Periodic Course Review
  - Facilitation and Interpretation of Academic Reviews
  - Facilitation and Interpretation of Student Review and Feedback
  - Institutional Review

# A practical manual continued...



- 1.5 Resources for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered

# Implications



- Library and information resources
- Physical resources
- Learner services
- Financial resources and management

# A practical manual continued...



- 1.6 Information is collected, analysed and used for effective management.

# Implications



- Performance metrics – collect and analyse information on student progression and success, employability, effectiveness of teachers



# A practical manual continued...



- 1.7 Up-to-date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, is published about programmes and awards.

# Implications



- Transparency and accountability – institutional publication of data

# Published information



- Strategic plans
- Annual Reports
- Institutional evaluation in relation to delegated authority to make awards
- Quality reviews
- First destinations reports of graduates
- Retention and completion reports
- Rankings?

# Thank you



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