



# European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

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# Bologna context



- Bologna is not a treaty, but a voluntary commitment at political level to coordinate HE reforms to reach shared goals
- 10 action lines to reach European Higher Education Area by 2010
- QA is one
- Closely linked to qualifications framework which specifies the learning outcomes shared by higher education programmes



# Origins

- “Promotion of **European co-operation in quality assurance** with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies” (Bologna declaration *1999*)
- “Ministers call upon ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies” (Berlin communiqué *2003*)
- Adopted by ministers at Bergen *2005*

# Three layers of standards



- Internal quality assurance
- External quality assurance
- External quality assurance agencies

# Internal quality assurance



- Policy and procedures for quality assurance
- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- Assessment of students
- Quality assurance of teaching staff
- Learning resources and student support
- Information systems
- Public information



# External quality assurance

- Use of internal quality assurance procedures
- Development of external quality assurance processes
- Criteria for decisions
- Processes fit for purpose
- Reporting
- Follow-up procedures
- Periodic reviews
- System-wide analyses

# Quality assurance agencies



- Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education
- Official status
- Activities
- Resources
- Mission statement
- Independence
- External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies
- Accountability procedures

# Policy and procedures for quality assurance



- Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.



# Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards



- Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards

# Assessment of students



- Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently

# Quality assurance of teaching staff



- Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

# Learning resources and student support



- Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered

# Information systems



- Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities

# Public information



- Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering



# External QA

- Accreditation of programmes *or*
- Accreditation/audit of institutions *or*
- Combination of both
- The visible part of QA

# Review of HETAC (2006)



- Terms of reference agreed – a national review, addressing requirements of Irish law and ESG
- Self-evaluation report
- Panel (3 national, 3 international, neutral secretary) visit, 3 days
- Report of panel
- Action plan from HETAC





# Reflections on review

- Not just HETAC as an organisation but the system as a whole is doing its job
- Building up the capacity of the higher education institutions is central to improvement
- QA is an evolutionary process and a learning process
- Taking our own medicine – accountability is good for us!
- ESG provide a very workable benchmark



# Status of ESG

- Well established and well received
- Some critical reflection taking place (e.g. Nordic review)
- Standards and guidelines – not laws!
- Basis for ENQA membership
- Basis for membership of European Register for QA agencies proposed for London



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