

phexcel

***Briefing Paper on
Excellence***



PHExcel Briefing Paper

BRIEFING PAPER ON EXCELLENCE

Authors

Alexandre Wipf, Johan Cloet, Stefan Delplace

Contributors

Malene Dahl Jørgensen, Regitze Sparre Kristensen, Linda Messas, Jeremy Cox, Lars Ebert, Marek Frankowicz, Anthony F. Camilleri, Justin Fenech, Carol Hall

Layout

Alexandre Wipf

Document Title	Briefing Paper on Excellence
Project Title	PHExcel
Grant Agreement No	2013-3243 / 001-001
Part of Deliverable	D2.1.a/b/c – Briefing Papers on PHE Excellence
Work Package	WP2 – Measuring PHE Performance
Confidentiality Status:	Public

Revision	Date	Author	Comments
1.0	01/12/2014	PHExcel consortium	First edition

Copyright

2014, PHExcel consortium

The PHExcel Consortium

European Association of Institutions in Higher Education	EURASHE	BE
Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen	AEC	BE
The European League of Institutes of the Arts	ELIA	NL
European Federation of Nurse Educators	FINE	FR
SPACE Network for Business Studies and Languages	SPACE	BE
Knowledge Innovation Centre	KIC	MT
Jagiellonian University	UJ	PL
The University of Nottingham	UON	UK



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 2.0 Belgium License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/be/>

Contents

<i>Note</i>	5
1. Description of Professional Higher Education	6
2. Definition of Indicators for Professional Higher Education Excellence	13
3. Selection of a Methodology for Professional Higher Education Excellence Reviews	24
<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	27

Note

The PHEExcel project – testing the feasibility of a quality label for professional higher education excellence – is led by EURASHE, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education. Four sectors of professional higher education are involved in the initiative next to EURASHE: music (AEC), arts (ELIA), business and languages (SPACE), and nursing (The University of Nottingham/FINE). In addition Jagiellonian University and KIC are providing structural support to the initiative.

The main aim of the project is to test the feasibility of a quality label for professional higher education excellence. Yet, it is clear for the partners that it is not the goal of this project to propose a different quality assurance process for professional higher education; but rather to examine opportunities to promote quality, and excellence, within professional higher education. The activities of the project cover four phases: research currently used quality tools; create a quality framework; evaluate and validate said quality framework; propose recommendations. The outcome of the first phase is outlined in the report on *Quality Tools for Professional Higher Education Review and Improvement*. It shows that from the 46 surveyed tools, of which 19 were extensively studied, none are addressing *fully* the identified characteristics of professional higher education. The second phase of the project, the creation of a quality framework for excellence in professional higher education, aims at addressing and at filling this gap, in order to encourage, support, and promote the enhancement of quality in professional higher education through the concept of excellence in professional higher education. This is the task of the PHEExcel expert group. The present briefing paper served as the basis for discussions in the three meetings of the expert group.

Expert Group Composition

The expert group was composed of Guy Aelterman, Ghent University; Lucien Bollaert, NVAO; John Butler, Birmingham City University; Anthony F. Camilleri, KIC; Johan Cloet, EURASHE; Jeremy Cox, AEC; Stefan Delplace, EURASHE; Simona Dimovska, ESU; Cécile Dury, FINE; Lars Ebert, ELIA; Carol Hall, The University of Nottingham; Elfriede Heinen, SEGEC; Regitze Kristensen, SPACE; Linda Messas, AEC; Martin Prchal, Koninklijk Conservatorium/Royal Conservatoire; Danute Rasimavičienė, Vilniaus Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences; Isabel Rohner, BUSINESSEUROPE/BDA; Blazhe Todorovski, ESU; Alexandre Wipf, EURASHE.

Expert Group Meetings

The expert group met on three occasions, on 23-24 June 2014 in Brussels (Belgium), on 9-10 September 2014 in Brussels (Belgium), and finally on 1-2 December 2014 in Amsterdam (Netherlands), each time addressing a different topic in the development of the quality framework. Each part of the present briefing paper corresponds to one of the topics addressed in the different meetings.

1. Description of Professional Higher Education

The first stage in creating a quality framework for professional higher education excellence is the discussion on the ‘description of professional higher education excellence’.

Professional Higher Education

A look at professional higher education in Europe¹

The term professional higher education (PHE) cannot easily be defined. From the current absence of any categorisation we may conclude that PHE is just part of higher education and therefore operates within the same triangle of education, research and services to the community. PHE can occur in all kinds of institutions in the broad spectrum of academic, professional and vocational strands, in the same way as it can be offered in several modes of learning (including the traditional ones). Identifying academic institutions with ‘highly theoretical courses’ and professionally orientated institutions and programmes with ‘practical skills development or training’ means to disregard the fact that the comprehensive universities have offered and continue to offer vocational trainings such as for prospective physicians, dentists, veterinary surgeons and architects, which are all ‘professionals’ in their own right. In past decades, we could witness various *convergent and divergent processes* in higher education, which have had an influence on what is perceived as professional versus academic higher education.

On the one hand, an ‘academic drift’ pushed many ‘non-academic’ institutions to profile themselves as (near) equivalents to the traditional universities, often quite successfully (e.g. as was the case in Germany with the ‘*Fachhochschulen*’). On the other hand, the explosion of the technological and commercial education sectors dating back to as far as the 1970s, led to a steep rise in student numbers, which were (to be) trained in the newly established polytechnic-type of institutions (especially in west European countries). Soon a rationale for such type of institutions was then developed, in both government and employers’ circles, which was based on the ‘employability’ factor. Academic programmes would reluctantly in the beginning and then increasingly in the last decades adopt this reasoning, which meant that a ‘vocational drift’ became apparent in a large number of research universities. The shift of paradigm to learning outcomes-based programmes, with the right combination of technical or vocational and more general humanistic skills has only strengthened the concept and perception that PHE is just a ‘variety’ of higher education.

A second factor of influence is the *nature and status of the provider*. With ‘nature’ is meant the profile of the institution based on its mission, whereas the ‘status’ refers to the organising authority or awarding body (public institution, privately owned or a blend of this). PHE programmes are found in a variety of settings, which can be (and mostly is) an individual institution providing professionally orientated programmes. Other contexts exist where they are affiliated to or integrated into a ‘comprehensive institution’, which offers vocational programmes next to academic ones. The discussion

¹ Adapted from ‘A Look at Professional Higher Education in Europe’, in Gleichartig - aber anderswertig? Zur künftigen Rolle der (Fach-) Hochschulen im deutschen Hochschulsystem, 2014, Stefan Delplace

on the situation of 'Level 5' of the EQF in the different national qualifications frameworks is essential as it is in some countries the interface between higher vocational and higher education. Then come as well the so-called 'dual universities', with sometimes-mixed 'ownership' of the management, which provide a system of shared responsibilities between the public authorities and private companies.

A third important factor is the *terminology*, as reflected in the name of the *institutions*, the *programmes* and especially of the *degrees*. In a number of countries the degree name is linked to the professional or academic orientation of the programmes, with professional and academic bachelors respectively. Others are opposed to such a dichotomy, and prefer to call them qualifications with a certain 'orientation'. Countries with a binary system of higher education (in the same way as it exists on the level of secondary education, where we have the terms technical vs. general education) more often have the distinction than is the case for the countries with a unitary (university only) type of higher education.

A key part of the modernisation agenda for higher education, as advocated by the European Union (EU), is the reform of higher education in order to meet the requirements of the labour market. The European diversity within PHE itself creates a number of significant policy issues. Indeed the recognition of equivalent qualifications by employers is hampered by the fact that they are issued by different types of institutions. This is especially true in a cross-border context, where the status of a PHE institution in another country may not translate easily into the local situation. Moreover, a lack of a common definition for PHE means that it cannot be analysed transnationally as a sector, and this leads to a discrepancy compared to traditional universities. Finally, peer-learning and best-practice sharing on what PHE entails, are sporadic due to the same lack of uniform definitions in the different countries.

PHE may play an important role as an intermediary between higher education, vocational education and training and the labour market. In particular, PHE institutions are – in a way – "bilingual"; they speak both the academic and professional language, and can thus be key players in the process of a better understanding between higher education and the world of work. To attain this aim, it is important to elaborate multidimensional characteristics of PHE with adequate indicators of good practice or even excellence, and to make a comparative review of existing higher education structures in European countries, identifying also problems and weak points of present systems.

A tentative definition of professional higher education

Taking into account the situation described above, EURASHE, with its members and partners from 10 European countries, decided to have a closer look at what *is* professional higher education, and through the HAPHE project² have developed a definition of professional higher education:

Professional higher education (PHE) is a form of higher education that offers a particularly intense integration with the world of work in all its aspects, including teaching, learning, research and governance and at all levels of the overarching Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

² Further information on the HAPHE project at www.haphe.eurashe.eu

Its function is to diversify learning opportunities, enhance the employability of graduates, offer qualifications and stimulate innovation, for the benefit of learners and society.

The world of work includes all enterprises, civil society organisations, and the public sector. The intensity of integration with the world of work is manifested by a strong focus on the application of learning achievements. This approach involves combining phases of work and study, a concern for employability, cooperation with employers, the use of practice-relevant knowledge and use-inspired research.

It is accompanied by a set of characteristics that have been identified as core criteria of professional higher education. These have been used to study the coverage, or lack thereof, of quality tools currently used in (professional) higher education in Europe, as highlighted in the report on *Quality Tools for Professional Higher Education Review and Improvement*.

Excellence

Considering the concept of excellence has been largely used in literature and especially in policy debates, it might seem that the concept is well defined. At the same time, few of the models or labels researched in the aforementioned report are directly defining it or even addressing it. In our research two tools refer to it in a direct and straightforward manner: the EFQM Excellence Model and THE-ICE; others such as EPAS, EQUIS, CAF Education and the Baldrige National Quality Program refer to excellence in their components. Yet no clear and common definition of excellence in general, and of excellence in (professional) higher education appears.

The rise of excellence as a topic is linked, in most cases, to an international driver: either the rise of rankings, but also the Bologna Process, and the EU's Lisbon Strategy. These have in common the reference to a knowledge-based economy/society. As such it supports the development of higher education systems, but in an international competition/comparison context. For proponents of this view, globalisation is at the heart of the rise of excellence as a topic in higher education.

Excellence itself is deeply embedded in approaches to quality; authors identify 7 recognisable approaches to quality: excellence, zero errors, fitness for purpose, transformation, threshold, enhancement and value for money.

When browsing the available literature there is no common definition of excellence, some even do not define it when addressing it in entire publications. Several approaches to excellence are shown, either in a more quantitative way (e.g. some accreditation procedure, rankings) or in a more qualitative way (e.g. when related to customer experience, self-improvement models). One point seems however to become more and more accepted as a basis: excellence is not a static concept, it is a fluid construction.

When considering quality assurance matters however, possibly as achieving threshold levels, some have argued that the primary outcome of the spread of quality assurance processes, in Europe at least, has been to support mobility within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and not to support and lead institutions on the way to excellence in a world-wide context.

At the same time these concepts of excellence, and often quality assurance procedures, do not take into account the diversity of a given system. Very few schemes take into account the full width of an

institution's mission; either from the point of view of the Council of Europe (including citizenship), or from what we can consider as professional higher education (including an important role given to the world of work).

Excellence of what?

The first aspect of excellence that often comes to mind is excellence in research. This derives from the various schemes put in place by national and international authorities to recognise and promote world-class research institutions. This is first and foremost achieved through funding mechanisms. Some initiatives indeed link excellence in research to other fields of institutions' activities, at least in an implicit way. The German case of the *Exzellenzinitiative* is however telling of a certain bias regarding excellence. The full name is 'Excellence Initiative of the Federation and the States for the Promotion of Science and Research at German Higher Education Institutions' (*Exzellenzinitiative des Bundes und der Länder zur Förderung von Wissenschaft und Forschung an deutschen Hochschulen*). Yet the initiative is often referred to as only supporting research, and not science in general, also on official websites of the authorities – even though graduate schools of humanities have been recipients.

However apart from excellence in research, there is a so-called "traditional understanding of excellence as in teaching". Teaching excellence is one of the most developed sub-concepts of excellence in higher education. It is linked to similar, yet possibly different concepts of 'teacher excellence' and 'excellent learning'. This concept focuses on the primary mission of education institutions: the educational mission. Yet this concept faces similar issues than excellence itself, its definition and understanding is largely dependent on how each and every institution (if not institute and faculty within an institution) approaches the concept. It derives from academic performance management and is also facing the matters of quality thresholds. The concept of excellence of teachers is also addressed in literature, often through the 'professionalisation' of teachers' education itself. There, various stakeholders recommend recognising excellence in teaching in hiring and promotion decisions. This can also be achieved, they argue, by linking better the statuses of teacher and researchers; linking, by the same move, the emphasis on excellence in research to excellence in teaching.

Excellence is also sometimes seen as a way to uphold quality in changing times for higher education. One of the goals of the Kyoto University Center for the Promotion of Excellence in Higher Education is to "research the teaching and learning of higher education in Japan during this period of change and conflict between highly advanced knowledge and skills and ongoing massification".

Some concepts of excellence concentrate on very limited areas such as equity or diversity, without addressing other aspects of higher education. This is the case for example with the US 'Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award' – yet this aspect can be linked to a marketable concept of excellence (see *infra*).

The link between excellence in higher education and regional development is scarce in current schemes. The emphasis is given to world-class institutions, especially when considering research. Yet some schemes might offer a different picture. In the context of the Spanish initiative of the late 2000s, funding was made available for campuses of international excellence (CEI), but also for those with a regional orientation (CEIR).

Finally one important point often, if not always, mentioned when referring to excellence models, is the push for continuous self-improvement. As such it would safeguard the institutions from the potential future irrelevance of excellence characteristics once they become widespread. Some models directly link all of these topics together such as the American ‘Excellence in Higher Education (EHE): An Integrated Approach to Assessment, Planning, and Improvement in Colleges and Universities’, extending the Baldrige National Quality Program. It gives impetus to the continuous development of quality systems and of quality culture (without addressing it directly) in response to the critics’ views that change in higher education is often slow and episodic. In this view, leadership is seen as the cornerstone of excellence and continuous self-improvement.

Do different actors understand excellence equally?

It appears that excellence, in itself, is a *given* in higher education institutions, at least in their own view, so far that discussions shift in some cases to the governance of excellence in higher education and research (linked to national funding schemes in France for example).

The issue of rankings is indeed hotly debated in (European) higher education, and some critics see the development of the concept of excellence as an outcome of the popularity of rankings – national policies using them as basis. Yet, rankings for all their debatable features, offer an implicit model of quality; some rankings even being ‘excellence rankings’ (e.g. CHE Excellence Ranking/*Die Zeit*).

From the side of European Union policies, the use of excellence seems to be at the centre stage. The establishment of the European Institute of Technology (EIT) was described as the “new flagship for excellence in higher education, research and innovation”. Yet further positions by EU institutions concentrated heavily on the area research, including the promotion of a code of conduct in the recruitment process, and the promotion of gender diversity.

National authorities mainly address excellence in higher education through funding mechanisms – but also in education laws. The latest *décret* in French-speaking Belgium professes its wish to support the excellence of higher education, just as the laws on higher education in France. Regarding funding mechanisms, the subtleties of the various French systems (*Opération Campus*, *Investissements d’avenir*) either concentrate on infrastructure or on funding laboratories, equipment and initiatives of excellence (*Labex*, *Equipex*, *Idex*). Excellence is also professed in advertising statement by public organisations, such as France Campus promoting France as an education centre: ‘French higher education excellence is largely recognised throughout the world’ (*l’excellence de l’enseignement supérieur français est largement reconnue à travers le monde*). Yet they shy away from clearly providing an understanding of what is excellence.

The linkage between quality assurance procedures and excellence can be seen also from the point of view of quality assurance agencies. In surveying quality assurance agencies, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) found that the topic is gaining more and more importance in national debates and policies, yet it is highly linked, in their view, to their own processes: “excellence of higher education is, for some, seen as the overall goal of all external QA mechanisms”. They do not link excellence to internal quality procedures, and some of them also do not see the provision of support to institutions to achieve excellence as part of their missions. At the same time, agencies link the understanding of excellence within institutions as a way for continuous self-

improvement. Finally as for other actors, when asked to define excellence, quality assurance agencies do not seem to have a common position on excellence, but very few actually have (officially/publicly) thought of considering the topic.³

Accreditation organisations might operate in a different setting as regards excellence. Some consider that accreditation by itself is a proof of, not only quality, but official recognition of excellence by authorities – as it is linked to the general policies of excellence and therefore being authorised to operate in this setting implies excellence. Yet some frameworks such as the one in Norway developed by NOKUT might lead to a ‘hierarchy of excellence’: the accreditation system operates within three different categories (universities, specialised universities, university colleges), institutions having to fulfil specific requirements to ‘move-up’. This might imply that excellence doesn’t exist in professional higher education. At the same time accreditation criteria can be described themselves as being of excellence, as it is the case for one regional accreditation organisation in the USA with the ‘Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education - Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation’. Yet a deeper look at the criteria themselves tends to reveal a somewhat basic interpretation of excellence present in all quality assurance systems not referring to excellence directly. This can show a trend towards the marketable use of the concept of excellence (see *infra*). This approach is also visible in the National Council of Accreditation in Columbia (NCAC), focusing on excellence and using 66 characteristics; yet with a rather quantitative assessment of excellence in this case.

Finally, sectorial approaches to quality, with sectorial quality assurance/enhancement programmes, subject-specific accreditation, and quality labels – the three being often mixed – seem to indicate a push for excellence in a specific domain. This is especially the case for internationally developed quality labels pushing forward specific programmes within a specific discipline.

Is excellence a marketing tool?

As suggested previously, few quality labels/models directly address the concept of excellence; yet based on their selective processes, excellence can be implied in its award to a specific programme/institution.

Apart from the use of labels of (implied) excellence in the area of quality assurance and accreditation, several awards of excellence have been developed. Most concentrate on excellence in teaching (e.g. European Award for Excellence in Teaching in the Social Sciences and Humanities), other have a more generalist approach in various areas.

In this context some consider the rise of “marketable excellence” as a “betrayal” of institutions’ original educational mission; institutions competing for the best students (and for funding) profess themselves as excellent.

Governments are not the last to push the use of ‘excellence’ in their policies – and the EU is also part of this development through for example the ‘High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher

³ For a comprehensive view on the link between excellence in higher education and quality (assurance) process, from the point of view of quality assurance agencies, one can expect the report of the ENQA working group on excellence, which should be published in the coming weeks – it should cover different approaches to excellence, different definitions, case studies, criteria for excellence and the link between QA and excellence. More information at www.engq.eu/index.php/working-group-v-on-excellence/ [Note: the report was published in August 2014, after the first part of the briefing paper was written, it is available at www.engq.eu/index.php/publications/papers-reports/occasional-papers/]

Education’, or the ‘Erasmus Charter for Higher Education’. In the latter though, excellence is linked to regional development, which is not always the case as seen before.

Is excellence only present in Western education?

The concept of excellence is also present in the field of education in development policies in international aid. Governments (e.g. USAID, DAAD), and international organisations (e.g. World Bank) not only support the development of excellence in higher education at home, but also abroad with initiatives in link with the Millennium Development Goals for example. It thus may appear that ‘the West’ considers excellence to be an exclusive feature of their national systems.

Yet, regional groups for excellence also exist in Africa for example (*Réseau pour l'excellence de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique de l'Ouest (REESAO)*). However the basis for the advocated excellence may still be western in essence: one of the pushed goals of the REESAO is to implement the Bologna three-cycles structure (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate) in western Africa.

Who is afraid of excellence?

If the goal of recognising excellence in higher education is considered as such, and therefore its link to funding initiatives by national (and international) authorities, critics show the potential for a two-tier system between institutions labelled as excellent with access to larger pools of funding and other institutions. It is argued that this “legitimizing argument” creates a hierarchical differentiation between institutions, which in turn reshape the national education system. Yet this fact may already be observed between different types of institutions in various national settings.

Another point being raised is that, if one considers the concept of excellence as an outcome of the rise of rankings, then the outcome in this international comparison/competition is also the reshaping of national systems, submitting institutions to a kind of higher education global standardisation pressure.

When considering the award of an excellence title, another issue appears: the loss of this title. This is especially true when confronted with national schemes put in place by authorities, for example in the case of the German *Exzellenzinitiative*.

In the end, excellence itself should be afraid of excellence. Even though it is stated that “quality assurance and quality assurance management should be aiming at making itself unnecessary once the prevailing culture is orientated towards continuous improvement and strives towards excellence that is recognised and appreciated by the external stakeholders in an almost natural way”, excellence itself may then in turn become irrelevant. When all institutions strive for excellence, none of them actually do, and therefore “excellence standards become threshold standards in due time”. It seems though that some excellence models are not affected in this way. Indeed some models considered as “non-prescriptive frameworks” offer a setting in which reaching excellence, being defined as exceptional, is unknown, and therefore not realistically attainable.

2. Definition of Indicators for Professional Higher Education Excellence

The second step in the creation of the quality framework for professional higher education excellence concentrates on the indicators for professional higher education excellence.

Descriptors and Indicators in Quality Tools

In researching how quality tools currently used in (professional) higher education in Europe reflect the specificities of professional higher education, 19 specific tools were selected for further study, 7 models and 12 labels.⁴

As these tools responded (at least) in parts to the specificities of professional higher education a closer look at their criteria for excellence can reveal ways in which excellence is assessed currently.

The first table underneath presents the way in which selected models and labels address the issue of descriptors and indicators. It shows for example what form descriptors and indicators take, and in turn reveals how each tool understands and approaches the assessment of excellence by showing either a prescriptive approach or a guiding approach – it displays categories and subcategories, but also the form descriptors and indicators take. The examples have been shortened for comparability's sake and do not necessarily refer to professional higher education excellence.

These selected models and labels have undergone a further selection, as some tools, such as the Euro-Inf Quality Label (#24) and Euro-Ages (#25) are very similar in their approach. Notwithstanding the overarching character of the ESG (#1), these have been included to provide an overview of various methods adopted in approaching the assessment.

Table 1: Examples of categories, sub-categories, descriptors and indicators of excellence of selected models and labels

Tool	Category	Subcategory	Descriptor	Indicator
ESG #1	Part		Standard	Guideline
	Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality	1.1 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	[...] The policy statement is expected to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the relationship between teaching and research in the institution; • the institution's strategy for quality and standards;

⁴ For more information see (PHExcel) Jørgensen M. D., Kristensen R. S., Wipf A., Delplace S., (2014), Quality Tools For Professional Higher Education Review And Improvement, Brussels, ISBN: 978-99957-843-0-0, available at: www.phexcel.eurashe.eu/publications

Tool	Category	Subcategory	Descriptor	Indicator
	assurance within higher education institutions		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. [...]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the organisation of the quality assurance system; • the responsibilities of departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units and individuals for the assurance of quality; [...]
Baldrige National Quality Program #3	Category Category 1: Leadership	Item 1.1 Senior Leadership: How do your senior leaders lead?	2) How do senior leaders personally promote an organizational environment that fosters, requires, and results in legal and ethical behavior?	Notes N2. A sustainable organization (1.1a[3]) is capable of addressing current organizational needs and possesses the agility and strategic management to prepare successfully for its future organizational and market environment. In this context, the concept of innovation includes both technological and organizational innovation to succeed in the future. [...]
CAF Education #4	Criterion Criterion 6: Learner-oriented and other key stakeholder-oriented results	Sub-criterion Sub-criterion 6.1 Perception measurements	[...] It is important for all education and training institutions to directly measure the satisfaction of their learners and other stakeholders, for example with regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the overall image of the institution; • the level of academic qualifications and attainments; • the matching of qualification profiles to the requirements of educational and socioeconomic environments; [...] 	Examples 1. The overall image of the education and training institution (e.g. its results and outcomes, ability to innovate and improve itself, reputation, levels of requirements, clarity of provided information, conviviality, attitude of teaching staff, openness, willingness to listen and offer guidance, etc.). 2. Involvement and participation of learners and other stakeholders in the learning processes, working and decision-making of the institution. [...]
Quality Code #10	Part Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality	Chapter Chapter B1: Programme design, development and approval	Expectation Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of	Indicators Indicator 1 Higher education providers maintain strategic oversight of the processes for, and outcomes of, programme design, development and approval, to ensure processes are applied systematically and operated consistently. [...]

Tool	Category	Subcategory	Descriptor	Indicator
			programmes.	
AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11	Areas of enquiry 3. Student profiles	3.1 Admission/ Entrance qualifications	Criteria/Questions to be addressed 3.1. In what ways do the entrance requirements assess the artistic, technical, academic and mental capacities of the applicants to accomplish the various aspects of the study programme within the expected timeframes?	Supporting materials Formal admission requirements Audition procedures Reports of any evaluations of the admission requirements and procedures
ECBCheck #16	Area A Information About and Organization of the programme	A.1 General Description, Objectives and Organization	Description Objective and clear information is available to orient/facilitate decision making of interested candidates: Course/programme goals and overall learning objectives; methodological approach; target group; prerequisites for participation; selection process (if applicable); technical requirements; and fees . Information on knowledge assessment tests, timetable and workload is also available. [...]	Guidance on how to evaluate Does the description of the programme/course (brochure/flyer/webpage etc.) provide all relevant information for potential learners? Documentation Programme/course description (printed or digital)
EAALS Label #22	Categories 1. Needs, Aims, and Learning Outcomes	Benchmarks 1.1 Mission Statement	General Indicators Is there a Mission Statement for the degree programme which defines the context and concept of the degree programme? Specific Indicators for the International Orientation of the Degree Programme Does the mission statement reflect an international perspective for the degree programme? Why should international students be attracted to enrol on this Master degree programme delivered by the partner universities in these countries?	Key Verifiers - There is Evidence to Show that: The mission statement defines the context and concept of the Master degree programme, and indicates an international mission for the degree programme.
Euro-Inf	Guidelines	Criteria to be	Requirements	What the Self-Assessment

Tool	Category	Subcategory	Descriptor	Indicator
Quality Label #24	for Assessment	Assessed		Report (cf. Section 3.1) Should Give Evidence of and the Auditing Team Should Check
	2. Educational Process	2.3 Learning Assessment	Have examinations, projects and other assessment methods been designed to evaluate the extent to which students can demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes of individual modules and programme outcomes throughout the programme and at its conclusion?	Examination papers and coursework (exam. papers and samples of assessed coursework, continuous assessments, project reports, to be presented during the visit). Written examinations / final theses (to be presented during the visit) Transparency and publicity of the standards and rules concerning the assessment of student performance.
EAPAA #26	Accreditation standards 5.9 Faculty	5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities	Commentary and/or explanation The programme strives for a balanced percentage of men and women among their (professional) staff, which is in accordance with the principles of gender equality as specified by the higher education institution hosting the programme. When this is an issue in the wider society or when the institution or programme wishes so, the programme strives for a percentage of persons among their staff, which is in accordance with the societal targets.	One or more checkpoints The last sentence above is aimed at specific groups like minorities, disabled persons and the like.
E-xcellence #33	1 Strategic management	1.1 Policies and plans	Benchmarks 1 The institution has an e-learning strategy that is widely understood and integrated into the overall strategies for institutional development and quality improvement. E-learning policies conform to legal and ethical frameworks. [...]	Indicators The institution has an identified group of key staff responsible for formulating, evaluating and developing institutional policies and plans relating to e-learning. [...] At excellence level There is institution-wide engagement with the development of policies and plans for the achievement and enhancement of e-learning.

Considering the specific question of descriptors, often referred to as assessment criteria or requirements in the above tools, they support the understanding of excellence for each tool. To facilitate the use of their respective tools, authors tend to use questions in their descriptors; this is especially true for subject-specific assessments. From the above examples, a descriptor is therefore a feature describing or identifying a subject.

Regarding the specific question of indicators, these are often qualified as suggestions for the interested parties to justify the corresponding descriptor, and by extension, to prove the presence of excellence in the assessed unit. Yet they do not appear to be always very direct in their formulation. From the above examples, an indicator is therefore a tool showing the state of a subject.

The SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely) method used to qualify the development of objectives and indicators reflects five attributes to achieve clear and implementable data collection and further use. Criteria should be *specific* and relate to the field in question. They should be *measurable* and therefore rather quantifiable to allow for data analysis; qualitative criteria are however not excluded. Criteria should be *achievable* taking into account the real and actual practical situation in the field. They should be *relevant* to the public concerned to allow for a proper and actual use of the data. Criteria should be *timely* to allow for continuous improvement opportunities.

In this sense most tools appear to adhere to this method, yet some tend to be much more wide in the use of their indicators. This would lead to a rather time-consuming exercise and probably decreasing the achievability of the analysis and collection of data. This is especially true for tools requiring the completion of descriptions and summaries in several categories, including sometimes also a history of the developments in this category.

The following table takes a look at how selected models and labels reply to the characteristics of professional higher education. It includes specifically the assessment criteria headings of each tool related to each characteristic of professional higher education. It helps revealing how excellence itself is viewed and achieved in the respective tools. For example, the involvement of external stakeholders in various activities of higher education institutions is seen in separate characteristics of professional higher education (in curricula development, in curricula update, in research agenda, in policy, in regional integration); yet the involvement of external stakeholder can also be seen as one unique characteristic and therefore its mention can be limited in some tools – it can, for example, be included in a larger aim of ‘customer engagement’.

Further the table can also be of support when referring to indicators of specific tools for a particular characteristic of professional higher education, identifying, in a way, best practices in assessing excellence.

Table 2: Assessment criteria headings of selected models and labels related to characteristics of professional higher education

PHE Characteristics Framework
Teaching and Learning
Methods of curriculum development

<p>Curricula are developed in cooperation with internal and external stakeholders integrating evidence research outcome with focus on future needs, practice and employment</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3: Strategy development; Strategy deployment; Customer engagement; Voice of the customer</p> <p>CAF Education #4: Identify, design, manage and innovate processes; Develop and deliver learner/stakeholder-oriented services and products; Coordinate processes across the education and training institution; Develop, manage and implement partnerships with other organisations and learners</p> <p>ELIR #5 Maintain strategic oversight of the processes and outcomes of programme design; Define processes, roles and responsibilities; Make use of reference points and expertise; Collect and analyse information</p> <p>EFQM Excellence #6 Constructing the curriculum; Designing the study components; Designing assessment; Exercising steering and control</p> <p>ISO 9004 #7 Needs and expectations of interested parties; Management review; Planning of product; Processes related to interested parties; Design and development</p> <p>Quality Code #10 Maintain strategic oversight of the processes and outcomes of programme design; Define processes, roles and responsibilities; Make use of reference points and expertise; Collect and analyse information</p> <p>AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11 Interaction with the profession</p> <p>ECBCheck #16 Key stakeholders are involved in the programme design through participatory process</p> <p>EPAS #17Involvement of the corporate world in programme design; Programme objectives meeting needs of stakeholders; Is the design up-to-date and/or innovative, and does it draw on current research in the field of study</p> <p>EQUIS #18How the school ensures that programmes meet the needs of the market; Steps to keep up-to-date with best practice; Identify the school's principal stakeholders and their impact; How is the stakeholder's importance reflected in the development of strategy; Formal processes for involving stakeholders in programme and curriculum design</p> <p>EQ-arts #19: Programmes and award standards; Recruitment, progression, achievement, employability; Curriculum development</p> <p>EAALS Label #22 Needs of stakeholders; Curriculum planning; Employability</p> <p>Euro-Ages #25 Educational objectives; Partnerships</p> <p>EAPAA #26 Curriculum development</p> <p>E-xcellence #33 Time and pace; Connectivity with non-campus professionals and professionals</p> <p>THE-ICE #37 Professional advisory board</p>
<p>Content for teaching and learning</p>	
<p>Learning elements are integrating theory and practice</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Voice of the customer: How is information from stakeholders obtained and used</p> <p>CAF Education # Develop and deliver learner/stakeholder-oriented services and products; Coordinate processes across education and training institutions and with other institutions</p> <p>EFQM Excellence #6 Designing the study components; Designing assessment; Exercising steering and control</p> <p>AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11 Interaction with the profession; Delivery; Facilities</p> <p>AISHE #12 Educational methodology; Education contents; Traineeships, graduation; Professional field</p> <p>ECBCheck #16 The programme offers a learning experience relevant to professional practice</p> <p>EPAS #17 Appropriate blend of theory with practice</p> <p>EQUIS #18 Does the content embrace a range of theory linked to the practical world; Are students provided with opportunities to carry out practical project work and practical experience</p> <p>EQ-arts #19 Teaching, learning, assessment</p> <p>Euro-Ages #25 Planning;</p> <p>EAPAA #26 Relation to practice and internships</p>
<p>Learning element</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Voice of the customer: How is information from</p>

<p>are renewed based on research outcome with focus on future needs, practice and employment</p>	<p>stakeholders obtained and used CAF Education #4 Develop and deliver learner/stakeholder-oriented services and products; Coordinate processes across education and training institutions and with other institutions EFQM Excellence #6 Designing the study components; Designing assessment; Exercising steering and control AISHE #12 Research and external services EPAS #17 Is the design up-to-date and/or innovative, and does it draw on current research in the field of study EQUIS #18How the school ensures that programmes meet the needs of the market; Steps to keep up-to-date with best practice; Identify the school’s principal stakeholders and their impact; Adjustments to programme design have been made in the light of feedback from stakeholders EQ-arts #19 Teaching, learning, assessment Euro-Inf Quality Label #24 Planning; Educational objectives Euro-Ages #25 Planning; Needs of the stakeholders EAPAA #26 Relation to practice and internships</p>
<p>Learning methodology</p>	
<p>The world of work is strongly represented in the learning design</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Voice of the customer: How is information from stakeholders obtained and used CAF Education #4 Develop and deliver learner/stakeholder-oriented services and products; Coordinate processes across education and training institutions and with other institutions EFQM Excellence #6 Designing the learning environment (supporting services); Student activities; Teachers activities AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11 Interaction with the profession; Delivery ECBCheck #16 The programme offers a learning experience relevant to professional practice EQUIS #18 Adjustments to programme design have been made in the light of feedback from stakeholders; Formal processes for involving stakeholders in programme and curriculum design EQ-arts #19 Teaching, learning, assessment Euro-Ages #25 Planning; Educational objectives EAPAA #26 Curriculum content; Curriculum development E-xcellence #33 Connectivity with non-campus professionals and professionals THE-ICE #37 Industry advisory board</p>
<p>Formative and summative assessment</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Voice of the customer: How is information from stakeholders obtained and used ELIR #5 Students monitor their progress and development EFQM Excellence #6 Designing the learning environment (supporting services); Student activities; Teachers activities Quality Code #10 Students monitor their progress and development AISHE #12 Educational methodology ECBCheck #16 The learning methodologies motivate learners to actively participate in the learning process; Assignments and knowledge assessment tests are aligned with learning objectives; Learners progress and achievements are monitored and evaluated; Assignments and/or knowledge assessment tests and tasks are designed using different approaches EPAS #17 Appropriate range assessment methods EQUIS #18 The assessment system for students’ work and progression; Identify processes by which the school helps students to develop both personally and professionally EQ-arts #19 Teaching, learning, assessment Euro-Inf Quality Label #24 Learning assessment E-xcellence #33 Assessment procedures; Formative assessment; Summative assessment</p>
<p>Virtual and blended learning</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Voice of the customer: How is information from stakeholders obtained and used</p>

an option	<p>CAF Education #4 Develop and deliver learner/stakeholder-oriented services and products; Coordinate processes across education and training institutions and with other institutions</p> <p>EFQM Excellence #6 Designing the learning environment (supporting services); Student activities; Teachers activities</p> <p>ECBCheck #16 The blending of learning methods is adequate and meets the needs of learners; Technology supports the learning strategies, e.g. virtual learning</p> <p>EPAS #17 Diverse range of teaching method; Technologies and interactive learning platforms</p> <p>EQUIS #18 Does the school employ a diverse range of learning method; Appropriate balance between intellectual development and practical work; Computing facilities available in programme delivery</p> <p>EQ-arts #19 Teaching, learning, assessment</p> <p>E-xcellence #33 Blended learning</p>
Learning environment	
Learning takes place in the HEI and in practice (e.g. internships, final thesis in cooperation with world of work)	<p>CAF Education #4 Coordinate processes across the education and training institution and with other institutions</p> <p>ISO 9004 #7 Infrastructure in the educational organisation</p> <p>AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11 Delivery; International perspectives</p> <p>AISHE #12 Traineeships, graduation</p> <p>EPAS #17 Links to the corporate world in terms of internships and career placement; Opportunities to make practical project work, work based learning and/or internships</p> <p>EQUIS #18 Does the school employ a diverse range of learning method; Appropriate balance between intellectual development and practical work; Does the content embrace a range of theory linked to the practical world; Are students provided with opportunities to carry out practical project work and practical experience</p> <p>EQ-arts #19 institutional approach to engage and support students; Availability and ability to support the learning and teaching goals</p> <p>Euro-Ages #25 Planning</p> <p>EAPAA #26 Relation to practice and internships</p> <p>E-xcellence #33 Connectivity with non-campus professionals and professionals; Educational approach</p> <p>THE-ICE #37 Approaches to teaching and learning</p>
Programme team	
The lecturer team shows an appropriate balance of academia and practice background	<p>AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11 Artistic and scholarly activity and qualifications; Qualifications as educators; Size and composition of the teaching staff body</p> <p>EQUIS #18 Profile of the faculty in terms of expertise, academic qualification and business (= practical) experience; Ensuring that faculty are aware of latest developments and of modern practice</p> <p>EPAS #17 Expectations of faculty teaching and the ability to blend theory and practice</p> <p>EAALS Label #22 Staffing; Staff development</p> <p>EAPAA #26 Faculty qualifications</p> <p>E-xcellence #33 Technical training; Educational; Educational support; Educational innovation</p>
Research	
Agenda	
Informed by the world of work to meet the needs of society and enterprise	<p>AISHE #12 Research and external services</p> <p>EQUIS #18 How the school engages in knowledge development with business and other stakeholders; How the school's overall research production is relevant to its corporate market; Research project initiatives run in collaboration with companies</p> <p>EQ-arts #19 Main objective of research agenda; Alignment with strategic and academic goals; How is research embedded; Rationale for theoretical and practice based research</p> <p>EAPAA #26 Curriculum content</p>
Process	

Based on input from the world of work with a special focus on innovation/entrepreneurship	<p>AISHE #12 Educational methodology - Apply theory to practice</p> <p>EQUIS #18 How the school engages in knowledge development with business and other stakeholders; How the school's overall research production is relevant to its corporate market; Research project initiatives run in collaboration with companies.</p> <p>Application Do students receive training in research and consultancy skills; Research activities that contribute to the quality of programmes and to its markets</p>
Apply theory to practice	<p>EQ-arts #19 Main objective of research agenda; Alignment with strategic and academic goals; How is research embedded; Rationale for theoretical and practice based research. Application</p> <p>Main objective of research agenda; Alignment with strategic and academic goals; How is research embedded; Rationale for theoretical and practice based research</p> <p>EAPAA #26 Application Relation to practice and internships</p> <p>E-xcellence #33 Connectivity with non-campus professionals and professionals</p> <p>THE-ICE #37 Courses/programmes, curriculum and graduate outcomes and attributes; Approaches to teaching and learning</p>
Output and outcome	
Aims to be relevant to the world of work	<p>EFQM Excellence #6 Professional field's satisfaction</p> <p>AISHE #12 Education contents</p> <p>EQUIS #18 How the outcomes of research has contributed to the quality of teaching and learning; How the school's overall research production is relevant to its corporate market</p> <p>EQ-arts #19 Main objective of research agenda; Alignment with strategic and academic goals; How is research embedded; Rationale for theoretical and practice based research</p> <p>EAPAA #26 Relation to practice and internships; Core components</p>
Policy and Strategy	
Policy and strategy integration	
Integration of the world of work into policy and strategic frameworks	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Strategy development; Customer engagement</p> <p>CAF Education #4 Provide direction by developing mission, vision and values; Effective relations with political authorities and stakeholders; Gather information on needs of stakeholders and develop strategy and planning on the basis hereof</p> <p>EFQM Excellence #6 Policy plans and documents; Policy development</p> <p>ISO 9004 #7 Needs and expectations of interested parties; Management review; Design and development</p> <p>EPAS #17 Involvement of the corporate world in programme design; Programme objectives meeting needs of stakeholders;</p> <p>EQUIS #18 Identify the school's principal stakeholders and their impact; How is the stakeholder's importance reflected in the development of strategy;</p> <p>EQ-arts #19 Strategic management; Academic management</p> <p>EAALS Label #22 Interactions with external organisations, e.g. industry and professions</p> <p>Euro-Inf Quality Label #24 Partnerships</p> <p>Euro-Ages #25 Educational objectives</p> <p>EAPAA #26 Curriculum development</p>
Institutional policies and strategies are defined in collaboration with the world of work	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Strategy development; Customer engagement;</p> <p>CAF Education #4 Provide direction by developing mission, vision and values; Effective relations with political authorities and stakeholders; Gather information on needs of stakeholders and develop strategy and planning on the basis hereof</p> <p>EFQM Excellence #6 Policy plans and documents; Policy development</p> <p>ISO 9004 #7 Needs and expectations of interested parties; Management review; Design and development</p> <p>AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11 Interaction with the profession</p> <p>EPAS #17 Involvement of the corporate world in programme design; Programme objectives meeting needs of stakeholders</p> <p>EQUIS #18 Identify the school's principal stakeholders and their impact; How is the</p>

	<p>stakeholder's importance reflected in the development of strategy; EQ-arts #19 Strategic management; Academic management Euro-Inf Quality Label #24 Partnerships</p>
<p>Staff and staff development strategy and policy focuses on competencies needed to train for future needs, practice and graduates further study and employment possibilities</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Strategy development; Customer engagement CAF Education #4 Provide direction by developing mission, vision and values; Effective relations with political authorities and stakeholders; Gather information on needs of stakeholders and develop strategy and planning on the basis hereof EFQM Excellence #6 Policy plans and documents; Policy development AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11 Interaction with the profession EQ-arts #19 Strategic management; Academic management E-xcellence #33 Connectivity with non-campus professionals and professionals</p>
<p>Objectives and outcomes</p>	
<p>Main objectives in relation to the outcome of PHE</p>	<p>EFQM Excellence #6 Professional profile, educational end terms and vision on education EQUIS #18 Mission, vision and values translated into strategic direction EQ-arts #19 Strategic management; Academic management Euro-Ages #25 Educational objectives EAPAA #26 level E-xcellence #33 Educational strategy; Educational approach</p>
<p>Especially focuses on enhancing job related skills and competencies to raise employability</p>	<p>CAF Education #4 Provide direction by developing mission, vision and values; Effective relations with political authorities and stakeholders; Gather information on needs of stakeholders and develop strategy and planning on the basis hereof AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11 Delivery; Curriculum; Employability AISHE #12 Vision; Policy; Profile of the graduate EPAS #17 Use of corporate links to enhance practical relevance and to facilitate employability; Have graduates developed the qualities expected; Potential employer's view on the programme and the extent of recruiting from here EQUIS #18 What opportunities are provided for students to apply the targeted skills; Services provided to help students identify job opportunities, interviews and define their career objectives EQ-arts #19 Strategic management; Academic management EAALS Label #22 Aims and learning outcomes of the degree programme; Employability Euro-Inf Quality Label #24 Graduates; Needs of the stakeholders; Educational objectives Euro-Ages #25 Needs of the stakeholders; Graduates; Partnerships EAPAA #26 Relation to practice and internships; Core components; Curriculum content E-xcellence #33 Professional and vocational; Knowledge and skills; Transferable skills THE-ICE #37 Industry advisory board</p>
<p>Emphasis on learning outcomes and profession oriented research</p>	<p>AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11: Delivery; Curriculum; Employability AISHE #12: Vision; Policy; Profile of the graduate EQ-arts #19 strategic management EAPAA #26 level E-xcellence #33 Research involvement</p>
<p>Regional integration</p>	
<p>Engagement with its regions</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Strategy development; Customer engagement CAF Education #4 Provide direction by developing mission, vision and values; Effective relations with political authorities and stakeholders; Gather information on needs of stakeholders and develop strategy and planning on the basis hereof ISO 9004 #7 Needs and expectations of interested parties; Management review; Design and</p>

	<p>development</p> <p>EAALS Label #22 Interactions with external organisations, e.g. industry and professions</p> <p>Euro-Inf Quality Label #24 Partnerships</p> <p>Euro-Ages #25 Partnerships</p> <p>EAPAA #26 Relation to practice and internships; Curriculum development</p> <p>THE-ICE #37 Industry advisory board</p>
<p>Strongly embedded in regional partnerships with world of work</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Strategy development; Customer engagement</p> <p>CAF Education #4 Effective relations with political authorities and stakeholders; Gather information on needs of stakeholders and develop strategy and planning on the basis hereof</p> <p>AEC Quality Enhancement Process #11 Interaction with the profession</p> <p>EQUIS #18 How the school ensures that programmes meet the needs of the market; Steps to keep up-to-date with best practice; Identify the school's principal stakeholders and their impact; How is the stakeholder's importance reflected in the development of strategy; Formal processes for involving stakeholders in programme and curriculum design</p> <p>EQ-arts #19 Strategic management; Academic management</p> <p>Euro-Inf Quality Label #24 Partnerships</p> <p>THE-ICE #37 Industry advisory board</p>
<p>Programmes developed and renewed based on research in cooperation with the regional partnerships</p>	<p>Baldrige National Quality Program #3 Strategy development; Customer engagement</p> <p>CAF Education #4 Effective relations with political authorities and stakeholders; Gather information on needs of stakeholders and develop strategy and planning on the basis hereof</p> <p>ISO 9004 #7 Needs and expectations of interested parties; Management review; Design and development</p> <p>EQUIS #18 reflected in the development of strategy; Formal processes for involving stakeholders in programme and curriculum design</p> <p>EQ-arts #19 Strategic management; Academic management</p> <p>EAALS Label #22 Interactions with external organisations, e.g. industry and professions; Aims and learning outcomes of the degree programme</p> <p>Euro-Inf Quality Label #24 Partnerships; Educational objectives</p>

3. Selection of a Methodology for Professional Higher Education Excellence Reviews

The third step in the creation of the quality framework for professional higher education excellence concentrates on the methodology to assess excellence.

Aims, Goals and Achievements

Recognising excellence in professional higher education can take several forms. From the research conducted in quality tools currently in use in (professional) higher education in Europe, two approaches can be identified: models for quality development and/or enhancement, and quality labels. Two further approaches can also be identified: rankings of programmes and/or institutions, and specific awards. It seems that the main feature of each tool is that models concentrate on supporting the internal development of organisations, that labels show recognition within one specific field, that rankings compare organisations one to one, and that awards celebrate one organisation's achievement. Yet, the differences can be blurry at times.

Excellence being a contextual and inherently dynamic approach, the most appropriate and relevant outcome of the initiative is to support the enhancement of excellence in professional higher education. An ideal tool should comprise, it seems, several of these aspects. It should, first and foremost, support the internal development of a unit aiming at excellence. Yet, if it wishes to, the unit should also benefit from its achievement. In this sense the approach that seems to respond to these aspects combines the development of an excellence enhancement tool for professional higher education with the possibility of a certification process. Excellence being not limited to an institution or a programme, or to a type of institution within a specific country context, the access to the excellence enhancement model and certification process should also not be limited.

In this sense it would ensure a multi-faceted potential use of the initiative's outcome within professional higher education. It can take the form of an internal capacity building exercise, but also of a larger system-wide push for excellence in professional higher education. Alternatively it can also be used as a way of showcasing one's own excellence in professional higher education. As such it would respond to a wide range of needs and usages.

Typology of Quality Tools

In researching how quality tools currently used in (professional) higher education in Europe reflect the specificities of professional higher education, a typology was developed, identifying commonalities and disparities between the tools. A part of this typology addressed the methods of administration.



The report on *Quality Tools for Professional Higher Education Review and Improvement* states: “all models and labels presented in the typology include self-assessment as a core feature, and the institution itself has a significant role in the whole process by virtue of conducting this internal review”. Further, one of the main characteristics of the tools is “the thorough task of assessing respective areas of the organisation as a fundamental requirement of quality assurance”. Peers or an external body then review this self-evaluation. The third step proposes a site visit. There the typology begins to differ. Indeed there is for example one tool, ECBCheck, that doesn’t require a site visit in view of the possible administrative burden. Further, some “term the visit an ‘audit’, which could be construed as making it a visit of control”. This difference might reflect more than semantics since the award of a label follows control procedures. Finally a decision is made on the award of a label, depending naturally on the purpose of the tool.

Selected Bibliography

AEC (2010), Handbook, How to Prepare for an Institutional or Programme Review in Higher Music Education: Guidance for Participating in an AEC Quality Enhancement Process, Amsterdam: AEC, <<http://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/aec-handbook-how-to-prepare-for-an-institutional-or-programme-review-in-higher-music-educationen.pdf>>

AEC (2010), Framework Document, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Music Education, <<http://www.aec-music.eu/userfiles/File/en4b-aec-framework-document-quality-assurance-and-accreditation-in-higher-music-education.pdf>>

American Society for Quality (ASQ) (2011), Quality Approaches in Higher Education, vol. 2, no. 2, Milwaukee: American Society for Quality (ASQ), <<http://rube.asq.org/edu/2011/12/best-practices/quality-approaches-in-higher-education-vol-2-no-2.pdf>>

Baaken, Thomas & Schröder, Carsten (2008), The Stairway Model to Strategic Partnership in: Science-to-Business Marketing Research Centre, Münster University of Applied Sciences, Germany (2011): The State of European University-Business Cooperation, Final Report - Study on the cooperation between Higher Education Institutions and Public and private organisations in Europe

Baldrige National Quality Program (2009-2010), Education Criteria for Performance Excellence

Bollaert, Lucien (2014), A Manual for Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education – with a special focus on professional higher education, Brussels: EURASHE

CAF Education (2013), Improving Public Organisations through Self-Assessment, <http://www.eipa.eu/files/File/CAF/CAF_Education_web.pdf>

Cobb, Andrew; Heath, Simon and Steen, Jan (2012), EAALS Handbook for the Quality Assurance and Accreditation of International Master Degree Programmes in the Life Sciences, <http://www.eaals.eu/images/stories/EAALS/EAALS-documents/EAALS_Hanbook_for_Quality_Assurance_and_Accreditation_2012_12-02-08.pdf>

Delplace, Stefan (2014), A Look at Professional Higher Education in Europe, in: Gleichartig - aber anderswertig? Zur künftigen Rolle der (Fach-) Hochschulen im deutschen Hochschulsystem, Stuttgart: Baden-Württemberg Stiftung, <<http://www.wbv.de/artikel/6004361>>

EAPAA (2013), Accreditation Criteria, <<http://www.eapaa.org/index.php/component/joomdoc/Accreditation%20Documents/EAPAAAccreditationCriteriaVersion9Jan2013.pdf/detail>>

EFMD Programme Accreditation System (2013), The EFMD Accreditation for International Degree Programmes in Business and Management, EPAS Standards & Criteria, Document Version January 2013, <<http://www.efmd.org>>

EFMD Quality Improvement System (2013), The EFMD Accreditation for International Business Schools. EQUIS Standards & Criteria, Document Version January 2013, <<http://www.efmd.org>>

EFQM (2012), <<http://www.efqm.org>>

Ehlers, Ulf (2010), Open ECBCheck, Low cost, community based certification for E-learning in capacity Building. Bonn: InWEnt (Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung GmbH),
<http://cdn.efquel.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/4/files/2013/01/Open-ECBCheck_handbook.pdf>

ENQA (2014), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Proposal for the Revised Version, February 2014

EQUANIE (2011), Euro-Inf Frameworks Standards and Accreditation Criteria for Informatics Degree Programmes, Version June 2011,
<<http://www.eqanie.eu/media/Quality%20Label/EuroInf%20Framework%20Standards%20and%20Accreditation%20Criteria%20V2011-06-29.pdf>>

EQ-arts (2013), Principles and Guidelines, Birmingham: EQ-arts Steering Group

Euro-Ages (2011), Euro-Ages Qualification Framework and Accreditation Criteria for Geology Study-Programmes in Europe, <http://www.euro-ages.eu/media/final_conference/presentations/EuroAges_-_Presentation_of_the_Framework_Standards.pdf>

European Commission (2013), Report to the European Commission on Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions, Luxembourg: European Union,
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/modernisation_en.pdf>

European Science Foundation (ESF) (2012), The Professionalisation of Academics as Teachers in Higher Education, Strasbourg: European Science Foundation (ESF),
<http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/professionalisation_academics.pdf>

E-xcellence Associates Label (2012), Quality Assessment for E-learning: A Benchmarking Process, Second Edition, <<http://e-xcellencelabel.eadtu.eu>>

Federkeil, G. (2008), Rankings and Quality Assurance in Higher Education, in: Higher Education in Europe, 33: 2, 219-231, London: Routledge,

Grifoll, J., Hopbach, A., et al. (2012), Quality Procedures in the European Higher Education Area and Beyond – Visions for the future, Third ENQA Survey, Brussels: ENQA,
<http://www.enqa.eu/indirme/papers-and-reports/occasional-papers/ENQA_op18.pdf>

Gunn, V., Fisk, A. (2013), Considering teaching excellence in higher education: 2007-2013, A literature review since the CHERI report 2007, York: The Higher Education Academy,
<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/Research/considering_teaching_excellence_he>

Hammersley, Martin & Atkinson, Paul (1995). Ethnography, Principles in Practice, London and New York: Routledge

HAPHE (2014), HAPHE EU Validation Seminar PHE Definition and Characteristics Framework February 2014

HAPHE (2014), HAPHE: Definition and Characteristics of PHE, Final Version September 2014

Higher Education Commission (HEC) (2013), Regulating Higher Education – Protecting Students, Encouraging Innovation, Enhancing Excellence, London: Higher Education Commission (HEC),

<http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/hec/sites/site_hec/files/report/333/fieldreportdownload/hecommission-regulatinghighereducation.pdf>

International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) (UNESCO) (2007), Understanding and assessing quality, Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), <http://www.unesco.org/iiep/PDF/TR_Mods/HE_Mod4.pdf>

ISO (year unknown), About ISO, <<http://www.iso.org>>

ISO 9004 (2000), International Standard ISO 9004, Quality management systems – Guidelines for Performance Improvements, <http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue_detail?csnumber=28692>

Marshall, P. M. (2010), Share the dream and state the case, Times Higher Education, <<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/share-the-dream-and-state-the-case/413757.article>>

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2006), Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education – Requirements of Affiliations and Standards for Accreditation, Twelfth edition, Philadelphia: Middle States Commission on Higher Education, <<https://www.msche.org/publications/CHX-2011-WEB.pdf>>

Pol, Patricia (2012), La passion de l'excellence dans l'enseignement supérieur en Allemagne, en Espagne et en France, in: Repères, n° 14 – Mai 2012, Paris: Campus France, <http://ressources.campusfrance.org/publi_institu/agence_cf/reperes/fr/reperes_14_fr.pdf>

QAA (2014), QAA – Safeguarding Standards and Improving the Quality of UK Higher Education, <<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-B.aspx>>

QAA Scotland (2012), Enhancement-led Institutional Review Handbook, May 2012, Third Edition, <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/ELIR_Handbook_3.pdf>

Roorda, Niko (2001), AISHE, Auditing Instrument for Sustainability in Higher Education, Dutch Committee on Sustainable Higher Education, <http://www.eauc.org.uk/file_uploads/aishe-book1_5.pdf>

Rostan, M., Vaira, M. (eds.) (2011), Questioning Excellence in Higher Education - Policies, Experiences and Challenges in National and Comparative Perspective, Higher Education Research in the 21st Century Series, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, <<https://www.sensepublishers.com/media/821-questioning-excellence-in-higher-education.pdf>>

Ruben, B. (2007), Excellence in higher education guide: an integrated approach to assessment, planning, and improvement in colleges and universities, Washington: National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), <<http://oirap.rutgers.edu/msa/documents/eheguide5-29.pdf>>

Sattler, Christine (2013), Assessment of Quality Cultures in Higher Education Institutions – First Results from the heiQUALITY Cultures Project, Paper from the 8th European Quality Assurance Forum 21 - 23 November 2013, University of Gothenburg, Sweden – Working together to take quality forward

Schleicher, A. (2014), Equity, Excellence and Inclusiveness in Education, Policy Lessons from Around the World, Paris: OECD, <http://www.istp2014.org/assets/OECD_Report_-_Equity_Excellence_and_Inclusiveness_in_Education.pdf>

THE-ICE International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (year unknown), <<http://www.the-ice.org/accreditation/about-accreditation>>

Westerheijden, D. F. (2008), Excellence in European Higher Education, Bologna, and Beyond?, Paper for the Conference 'Internationalization and the Move Towards Excellence in Higher Education', Taipei, 2008-03-28,
<<http://doc.utwente.nl/89216/1/Excellence%20in%20European%20higher%20education%201a.pdf>>

PHEExcel aims at supporting institutions offering professional higher education across Europe to improve their PHE performance. It plans to achieve this by providing them with a Quality Framework that defines excellent practice in the professional elements of their processes.

The present briefing paper served as the basis for discussions in the expert group that developed the draft quality framework for professional higher education excellence.