

CARDS 2002

Higher Education Mobility: corporate responsibility for the quality of provision

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EU



HCG

QA of higher education in Europe (1)

- More national systems, networks and initiatives focused on quality assurance
- Scope and focus of activities of existing QA agencies are being extended
 - in response to new activities of higher education institutions
 - structural changes in higher education systems
- Purposes of existing agencies are evolving
 - changing balances between accountability and improvement agendas
 - new emphasis on provision and dissemination of information to government and wider public: transparency and disclosure

QA of higher education in Europe (2)

- Revision of external QA processes
 - improvement in the light of experience
 - to respond to new challenges
 - to place greater reliance on institutional QA systems
- Current predominance of programme evaluation/accreditation in Europe, but is it a trend or a phase of development?
- Is there any 'steady state' in quality assurance processes at national level?

QA of higher education in Europe (3)

- Slow and uneven emergence of new ‘standards and criteria’, external reference points for quality, focusing on learning outcomes and outputs rather than input standards
 - important to address new forms of provision and providers
 - potential of providing greater transparency at national level hence facilitating international mobility and recognition of qualifications
- Bologna national stocktaking report – good progress overall in national QA is apparently being made but there is a general need to improve student participation and international networking

Why ‘corporate’ responsibility for quality provision?

“the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself” (Berlin Communiqué)

“providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance” (ENQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance)

“Quality for strong institutions” (EUA Glasgow Declaration www.eua.be; Quality Culture project)

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

- Negotiated by E4 – ENQA/ESIB/EUA/EURASHE
- Endorsed at the Bergen Ministerial meeting, May 2005
- Are generic principles covering internal and external QA
- Focus on what should be done rather than how it should be achieved
- Leave procedural matters for national authorities and higher education institutions to determine and implement

Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA: key words

- Public confidence; stakeholders
- Involvement
- Externality
- Regular monitoring
- Feedback
- Consistency
- Accountability
- Improvement
- Information

ENQA standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions (www.enqa.net)

- 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

Why bother with internal QA if institutions do not have autonomy?

“External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal QA processes” (ENQA)

“Universities stress the link between a systematic quality culture, the scope of autonomy and funding levels, and call on governments to acknowledge that greater autonomy and adequate funding levels are essential to raising the overall quality of Europe’s universities (EUA)

Internal QA, institutional autonomy and accountability

“Institutions with the most systematic approach to quality are also those that benefit from the greatest institutional autonomy” (EUA: Trends IV; European Universities Implementing Bologna, and referring to Ireland, Finland, UK, Netherlands, Denmark and more recently Austria)

“There is a clear trend towards more institutional approaches (to QA) to exploit synergies, economies of scale and spread models of good practice at institutions which do not suffer from low degrees of autonomy” (EUA: Trends IV)

Stages in introducing quality management.....

- Creating the climate
- Establishing structures and frameworks
- Developing support or aligning people
- Building towards implementation

Good practice in quality management.....

- Identifying values and principles
- Defining the role of the quality manager
- Initiation and role of the quality management process
- Achieving quality management
- Checking and monitoring
- Reviewing

Initiating QA processes at institutional level

- Define roles and responsibilities of individuals
- Identify priorities
- Define indicators and targets: drill down from the institution's strategic plan and have 'rolling plan' for units and departments
- Develop monitoring and review processes - self-evaluation for external review is only a starting point not a substitute for regular internal activities
- Focus on curriculum development: content and delivery are important elements in programme/course design, credits are not a substitute for this nor an indicator of quality per se

And (almost) finally

- Timing and management of initiatives is important
- Beware of cosmetic and surface changes said to represent a fundamental shift
- Use resistance to change as a control mechanism to ensure changes are thought through
- Drop the rhetoric of quality in favour of honest appraisal of what you do, how you are seeking to do it and why, and how you strive to improve it.

By 2007.....

- Bologna participating countries will have to report on the implementation of the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA.....