ENQA GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2010
Helsinki, 23-24 September 2010

Pörssitalo
Fabianinkatu 14
00100 Helsinki, Finland

Thursday, 23 September 2010, 11:30-13:00

Breakout session - **Examples of Good Practice in External Quality Assurance**

1) ACSUCYL

SATISFACTION SURVEYS, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION OF RESULTS. REPORTING TO SOCIETY.

ACSUCYL has worked towards developing and improving surveys which furnish the organisation firstly with an understanding of how satisfied users are with the services provided to them and secondly with an awareness of the organisation's internal functioning and the work it carries out.

Staff participation in developing and defining these surveys is key to furthering quality in the organisation. To achieve this, the specialists in charge of each process have been involved in drawing up the surveys, adapting in each case the questions to the specific assessment process in hand as well as to the respondents.

Sending satisfaction surveys to all of those involved in the procedure once the assessment has concluded is seen as a further stage within the assessment process, this leading to a keen awareness amongst all staff of the importance thereof.

Having decided the various groups to whom the survey will be sent, mainly users of the services provided by ACSUCYL, university and collaborators, as well as the content of each of the surveys, the latter are loaded into a computer application which handles the forwarding, receipt, creation of results reports and analysis of the data obtained.

The responses from the satisfaction surveys are stored on the database anonymously. Using the data obtained, the computer application automatically generates the results reports with graphs for each of the questions together with a brief analysis of the data obtained, providing information concerning the level of satisfaction with a particular process, such as the mean, median, standard deviation and size of the sample. This rapidly provides the Agency staff with information regarding the progress of a specific process.

In addition to receiving the results in the form of a report (previously described), they are also stored on the computer application in Excel tables. Together with the graphic report, this information is then sent to the specialist in charge of the process who may then carry out a more thorough analysis.

All of this information is analysed by the specialist in charge and by the corresponding Assessment Commission. It is also presented to the Director of the Agency and is dealt with in ACSUCYL's Quality Committee, with a view to including improvements in the process or pinpointing strengths and weaknesses.

Publication of the results from these satisfaction surveys has recently begun with a view to promoting transparency in the processes being conducted and to informing society regarding user satisfaction with the service provided by the Agency.

These reports are published at the conclusion of the assessment process and are made publicly available on ACSUCYL's webpage, in the section corresponding to the outcomes of the specific assessment process as well as in the general section dealing with ACSUCYL's publications.

These reports are structured into various sections; a short introduction concerning the process followed, number of surveys sent, response rate, information regarding the issues addressed in the questionnaire, etc., graphical representations of the outcomes organised by the major areas into which the survey carried out is structured, together with brief notes concerning the results to emerge.

By publishing these reports, the stakeholders involved in ACSUCYL's activities, universities, those applying for evaluation, society at large, etc., are given an insight into the outcomes of the surveys in which they have been requested to participate and into the areas where ACSUCYL needs to improve in order to consolidate and enhance the quality of the work it is carrying out with a view to ultimately improving the overall quality of ACSUCYL.

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2) Distinctive Quality Feature Internationalisation
    NVAO

Context

The international dimension of higher education has become more central on the agenda of European and national governments, institutions of higher education and their representative bodies, student organisations and quality assurance agencies. Increasing competition in higher education and the commercialisation and cross-border delivery of higher education, have challenged the value traditionally attached to international cooperation (exchange and partnership). At

the same time, internationalisation of the curriculum and the teaching and learning process (also referred to as 'internationalisation at home') has become as relevant as the traditional focus on mobility (both degree mobility and mobility as part of your home degree).
Internationalisation has indeed become an indicator for quality in higher education, and at the same time there is more debate about the quality of internationalisation itself.

The diversity of approaches, activities and strategies towards internationalisation together with its increasing significance justifies an external assessment of the quality of internationalisation.

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) and the Dutch and Flemish higher education institutions are convinced of the importance of internationalisation for education. In order to underline this, NVAO has developed a specific assessment procedure for the quality of internationalisation. Within the NVAO's accreditation system this procedure can result in the award of a distinctive (quality) feature regarding internationalisation for a programme.

The distinctive quality feature for internationalisation aims to:
- Enhance the level of internationalisation in HEIs
- Provide transparent information to teachers and HEIs about potential partner programmes & institutions
- Be used as an additional information tool for students
- Give an incentive to those concerned with internationalisation
- "Reward" good and excellent forms of internationalisation

In December 2009, the distinctive (quality) feature's assessment framework and the proposed procedure were presented to NVAO's international partner agencies. When developing the framework, it was deemed necessary to develop it in such a way that it could be used by other quality assurance and accreditation agencies in Europe.

Procedure

To test the assessment framework and procedure, NVAO organised a pilot project for which more than twenty programmes volunteered. Since participation in the pilot requires quite some effort (project fee, writing a self-evaluation report, one day site visit, etc.), the huge number of programmes willing to take part clearly demonstrates the demand and interest for having the quality of internationalisation externally assessed and certified.
The framework takes the ambition level as stated in the policy statement as a starting point. By doing this all types of internationalisation can be assessed. Even a teacher training programme with a strong focus on the local multicultural situation can participate, as long as this type of internationalisation has an impact on the quality of the programme.
The assessment of the intended and achieved international and intercultural learning outcomes are the key elements of the framework. In addition, the

international component should also be visible in the staff, the services and the composition of the student population. An experienced and authoritative international panel assesses the quality of the internationalisation. For the assessment of the standards a four-point grading scale is used (unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent). The overall decision of the expert panel is also on this four-point scale. A certificate or a distinctive (quality) feature can only be awarded if a programme's internationalisation is considered to be either good or excellent.

Guiding principles

The Distinctive (Quality) feature for Internationalisation follows the following principles:
1. The assessment takes place at programme level
2. Starting point is the programme's ambition level as defined in a policy statement
3. Internationalisation must have an impact on the quality of the programme
4. Internationalisation needs to be reflected in the intended and achieved learning outcomes;
5. Other elements to be assessed: teaching and learning, staff, services and students
6. Assessment takes place by experienced and authoritative experts
7. Four-point grading scale (unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good, excellent) at standard & programme level

The assessment framework

The framework consist of 6 standards and each of these standards consists of one or more criteria. You can download the framework here: www.nvao.net/download.php?id=707.

More information: a.aerden@nvao.net or m.frederiks@nvao.net

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3) QAA

When QAA was reviewed for re-confirmation of ENQA membership in 2008, one of only two areas where we were found to be substantially, rather than fully, complaint was the use of student reviewers. Student reviewers have been successfully working in Scotland since 2003, and they were fully introduced in England and Wales at the beginning of 2010. All the feedback and evaluation available indicates that they play a crucial role in safeguarding the student interest, and are treated as equals within the audit team.

Use of student reviewers is only one aspect of QAA's student engagement strategy; we have now pushed our student interaction well beyond the formalised review processes. Students have always been able to feed into the audit and review processes through written submissions and meetings with the

audit teams, but our intention now is to facilitate a fully integrated 'student culture' in quality assurance by working with the students themselves, and the National Union of Students (NUS), to prepare students for quality assurance roles in their own institutions. This will help them participate effectively as student representatives on committees and contribute fully to debates on the quality of the experience they are receiving.

We work closely with the NUS to achieve this, including joint training programmes which have been running since 2002, and we also have a dedicated student engagement officer. QAA recognises the importance of students' experience in their own institutions whilst they are studying on programmes, and we are therefore going beyond engagement with student representatives to reach the wider student body. This has included:

• The commissioning of students to write a series of dedicated student guides to our audit processes.
• Development of a series of short films about QAA.
• The introduction of podcasts, Twitter, iTunes and YouTube.

Most importantly, it has required us to evaluate the language that we use in our communications to ensure that it is more easily understandable to a wider range of non-specialists. We have approached student engagement from both sides, by publishing a series of case study videos based on students' own experiences, as well as a separate series promoting student engagement to academic staff. QAA has been instrumental in leading the thinking on effective student engagement, for example commissioning papers such as 'Rethinking the values of higher education - the student as collaborator and producer?'.

We have also fully integrated students into the strategy and development of our organisation:

• We have had a full student member of the Board since 2008 who also chairs a student sounding board.
• This student sounding board aims to inform the thinking of QAA's Board of Directors, and ensure that the student perspective is fully considered in QAA's planning.
• We have also established a series of student discussion forums to gain an insight into students' views on some of the key issues facing UK higher education.

Our role is evolving to include a greater focus on the protection of student interests. We participate in the Student Charter Group, which has been established to articulate a national set of expectations that students can rightfully have of their institutions. And in a wider sense, we have reviewed our Causes for Concern complaints system to help students when they identify a potential widespread problem with either quality or academic standards.

Student engagement is therefore a whole package at QAA that goes well beyond

just using students as reviewers, and is much than just the sum of its parts. Our approach has been very successful and has received excellent feedback. Our complete commitment to the student experience is demonstrated by the activities outlined above, and further illustrated by the dedicated student area on QAA's website.

By building student engagement into the way that QAA works, we have ensured that our activity is fully sustainable. Although we recognise that it might not be possible for other agencies to replicate such a holistic approach, we hope that the information provided about individual activities proves helpful, and believe that many of the individual elements are still transferable.

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4) FINHEEC

FINHEEC organises audit follow-up seminars to support the development of the HEIs' QA systems three years after the audit. The participants prepare for the seminar by submitting short self-evaluations on the development work of their QA systems since the audit. HEIs pair up in the seminar and conduct a public benchmarking. The seminar is open to participants from all HEIs and stakeholder organisations.

One purpose of the seminars is to provide feedback on the QA system development work to the HEIs after the audit. The occasion also provides an excellent opportunity to assess the impact of the audits and of quality assurance in Finnish higher education in general. Another purpose is to exchange experience and best practice in QA among the HEIs. It also helps to maintain the impetus for QA development work so that passing the audit does not mark end to HEI development.

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5) EKKA

Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency is currently reviewing its external quality assurance activities. The new system is going to be in place in year 2011. In 2009-2011, we are conducting a so called 'transitional evaluation' of study programme groups in all HEI-s. Transitional evaluation is not our regular activity – it is initiated by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, but it has provided us several learning experiences which we can use also in our future regular activities, i.e. institutional accreditation and assessment of study programme groups. For example, the objects of transitional evaluation are quality of studies, resources and sustainability. In the latter case we have requested the institutions to present among other things the financial and demographic projections for next three to five years. This has given the institutions an impulse to develop their capacity for strategic planning.

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6) Accredited institutions and institutions with candidate status submit annual monitoring reports. The reports are concerned with student progression, programme and staffing changes, and progress on recommendations from the last evaluation visit. The annual report gives continuity to the accreditation procedure.

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7) NAA

Administration and management of external evaluation teams by NAA (Russia)
Selection of experts for external evaluation panels became NAA's full responsibility only in October 20009. Since that time NAA has organized and provided information and methodological support for over 1000 site visits by external experts in HEIs, secondary eVET institutions and institutions of further education and training. NAA has a pool of experts comprising over 2300 people. NAA's database of experts contains information on their areas of expertise, their teaching and research credentials, work experience, participation in previous evaluations, relevant training, and geographical area (which is important in view of Russia's vast territory and the number of educational institutions).Administrating and managing such a database is a daunting task, which NAA performs with the help of specially developed software. The program helps to manage the selection of expert teams and provide methodological, information and technical support of their work in an efficient and effective manner throughout entire period of their work under contract with NAA. The work of the evaluation team is co-coordinated by a member of NAA's staff by phone, e-mail, and fax. The system helps to coordinate the work of up to 10-15 evaluation teams by one member of the staff at any given moment.
The agency offers a two-day training course for experts, conducts briefings of experts and provides them with detailed manuals and instructions.

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8) Good Practice of ACQUIN (Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance-Institute), Germany

Implementation of the system accreditation procedure in Germany

Successful
Since the foundation of ACQUIN in 2001, all members were convinced, that the procedure of program accreditation – as it was implemented by the German Rectors' Conference and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) in Germany in 1999 – will be one possible way but not the ultimate and only model for quality assurance in future. They decided to get involved into areas of quality assurance related to but also beyond program accreditation national and international. When founding the agency it was already defined in its statues that ACUIN gives impulses for a constant enhancement and for new procedures of quality assurance within higher

education. This openness is also reflected in the agency's name, which is not only restricted to accreditation.

In line with the aforementioned purpose ACQUIN extended its activities beyond program accreditation when launching a project together with European University Association (EUA) in 2003 analysing 60 Universities, which passed the Institutional Evaluation Programme. The results were published by the EUA in 2005 (Stefanie Hofmann: 10 years on: Lessons Learned from the Institutional Evaluation Programme).

Innovative
In 2005 ACQUIN initiated the pilot project "Process Quality in Teaching and Learning" together with its partners, the German Rectors' Conference, the Universities of Bayreuth and Bremen, the Universities of Applied Science of Erfurt and Münster. The project was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany. The project aimed at optimising process quality for teaching and study programs as well as to develop and implement new means and methods of quality assurance as an alternative to program accreditation. The aim was also to strengthen the autonomy of higher education institutions (HEIs), to reduce bureaucracy in accreditation and to promote and assure the quality of a whole HEI rather than accrediting each single study program.

Within the project the partners defined central process steps, which became finally core elements of the new accreditation approach in Germany, the so called system accreditation. This was one of the central contributions of ACQUIN towards a change of the German quality assurance system towards system accreditation.

The system accreditation was officially introduced by the KMK and the German Accreditation Council in 2008. After the aforementioned pilot project had been successfully finished in 2006, the Karl-Franzens-University Graz and the University of Leoben (both Austrian Universities) decided to run a project together with ACQUIN in testing the findings and simulated a real system accreditation process.

The Technical University Ilmenau and the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz were the first universities in Germany preferring a system accreditation procedure for their study programs to program accreditation. For this purpose both universities run pilot projects for setting up their internal quality assurance systems. During that process ACQUIN informed regularly both universities about new criteria and proceedings. After having implemented their internal quality management systems both universities started with the process of system accreditation in 2008.

The implementation of the procedure of system accreditation follows the desire of many stakeholders to reduce the quantitative expenditure, to stop isolated views on study programs and their quality assurance mechanisms, and to help universities setting up their own integrated systems of quality assurance along with the promotion of institutional quality culture.

Possible multiplying effect or transference to other areas
Due to the obligation for HEIs to have their programs reaccredited within a period of five years after the first accreditation HEIs increasingly come to the

conclusion that it is more useful not to submit all their programs to program reaccreditation processes. Instead system accreditation or varieties of it would help to set up an own institutional quality assurance system that replaces program accreditation activities of agencies and have this internal quality assurance system accredited to the benefit of saving money, increase institutional autonomy, reduce bureaucracy and strengthen the self-governance of HEIs.

As peer assessments of a small number of study programs is integrated in the system accreditation procedure, this allows an in-depth analysis of the quality of teaching and learning. This feature seems to be unique in the quality assurance procedures, particularly in accreditation in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) when looking at institutional quality assurance mechanisms.

The procedure of system accreditation or similar procedures, which focus on the HEI as a whole, are the road to success for nearly all types of universities in the EHEA and beyond. At the moment ACQUIN carries out the first system accreditation procedures and experiences made could be used by the relevant stakeholders (e.g. the German Rectors' Conference, the German Accreditation Council, the German Students Union, ACQUIN's member-universities) for the further development of this new quality assurance approach. In Germany the procedure is principally restricted to quality processes in teaching and learning. On the way to a strongly connected EHEA and European Research Area (ERA) ACQUIN believes that it is necessary and possible to modify the procedure and integrate the areas of research and university services.

Sustainable

Instead of carrying out program accreditation procedures for every single study program of HEIs, system accreditation takes into account the HEI as a whole. In special cases it is possible to apply for a system accreditation procedure only for separated parts of a university. This might be useful for independent parts of HEIs (e.g. Medical Faculties in Germany)

It can be said, that if there are problems within the system of quality assurance in the area of teaching and learning, they will get obvious during the process. Answers for problems, like less student mobility, can be shared on a broad basis, and institutional solutions come to the fore instead of individual or personalised solutions.

The effect of reducing the quantitative expenditure seems to be less: External costs will be reduced, but the universities have to invest internally: a sustainable quality assurance system needs sustainable internal structures and resources.

In system accreditation procedures a stronger and more comprehensive emphasis than in program accreditation lies on sustainable structures and processes of HEI. The mission statement of the HEI should integrate the own definition of quality culture and sustainability, this should be reflected within the quality assurance system. For the further development of the HEIs this will have a deep impact.

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9) FIBAA

Quality Assurance in the Quarternary Education

The demographic change makes the steady refreshing of knowledge an inevitable necessity for all those who want to stay competitive in the future. As a consequence, further education has become an important instrument for businesses and their employees. Thus, academic offers in the quarternary education sector grow steadily and quickly.

The international quality assurance agency FIBAA (Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation, located in Bonn, Germany) has recently developed the "Certification" procedure for quality assessment of academic further education and lifelong learning programmes and courses. Experiences and results of the first Certification procedures have been now available from both sides, FIBAA and HEI and could be presented as a good practice in external quality assurance.

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10) Example of Good Practice in External Quality Assurance:
The evaluation process of Doctoral Schools in France used by
the Agency for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (AERES)
Alain Menand, Claude Cassagne et Jean-François Dhainaut. AERES, 2 rue Vivienne, 75002 Paris, France.

Introduction

Until recently, quality culture was not a focus for the elaboration and follow-up of programmes and degrees in France. As soon as it was created, the AERES endeavoured to develop and evaluate the implementation of the quality standards defined within the Bologna Process. As a consequence, the AERES implemented a quality management for all of its activities and organised active exchanges for each evaluation campaign to encourage higher education institutions to develop quality assurance procedures.

On the other hand, the AERES organised all of its procedures in a way that incorporated the three aspects of evaluation in successive steps: research units, then programmes (bachelor, master, doctoral schools) and lastly, institutions.

In each case, it was decided that the evaluation would be carried out in three stages: preparation, review (based on applications for bachelor's and master's degrees, and on applications and on-site visits for the other evaluations), drafting and publishing the report.

This short contribution will briefly present the quality procedures developed for the evaluation of doctoral schools from existing grids and how the ESG helped to increase their overall quality and develop the communication with the different stakeholders.

French Doctoral schools: an overview

The organization of PhD programmes in France depends on doctoral schools. These schools belong to one or several universities and/or other higher education institutions. They gather the research teams or laboratories where the students are preparing their PhD under the supervision of a university professor or a habilitated researcher.

The doctoral schools are directed by a professor assisted by a council who participate in the student selection, the verification of the good processing of the research work during the thesis and the organization of additional lectures and seminars aimed to facilitate the future professional insertion of the doctors. From a formal point of view, the doctoral schools give permission to defend the thesis when the scientific level is considered as sufficient by external referees.

Stages of doctoral schools evaluation
The evaluation of doctoral schools comprises three stages including an on-site visit by the expert committee.
Preparation stage
Under the authority of the director of the AERES department of programmes and degrees, the scientific delegate appoints the members of the expert committee. The experts must have proven experience in doctoral training. Preparatory meetings are organised by the scientific delegates with a view to presenting the AERES' method and the main principles of the review to the experts. An initial examination of the applications takes place during the meetings which are scheduled a few weeks before the review.
The evaluation management officer contacts the on-site correspondent(s) and organises the visit logistics. The experts committee studies the application and fills in the review form.

On-site visit by the expert committee
After an overview of the site's doctoral schools, the experts committee visits those schools under its responsibility to interview the doctoral school director, the board members and, in camera, doctoral students. The scientific delegate ensures that the procedure is smoothly and correctly implemented during the on-site visit.

Post-evaluation stage: report and scoring
The committee chairman draws up the draft report from the experts' contributions. After reading by the scientific delegate, the report is submitted for review to the whole committee. It is then validated by the director who signs it along with the AERES President.
The AERES attributes scores to doctoral schools, taking into account the AERES criteria. The director of the AERES department of programmes and degrees checks that the score and the report correlate.
The report, with the score attached, is sent to the doctoral school director and to their supervising bodies for comments. The final document including the comments is then published on the AERES website.

Compliance of the evaluation of doctoral schools to ESG

1) How well the evaluation of doctoral schools by the AERES complies with ESG?
The agency has adopted the ESG. With a view to meeting a challenge which involves assembling a lasting quality management system, the AERES has chosen to draw up its own quality management standards. These standards are published on the AERES website and encompass all of the ESG requirements as well as the specific criteria corresponding to its status, missions and the organisation of the French research and higher education system.
The process approach developed by the agency applies to all of its activities, and, particularly, to the evaluation of the doctoral schools. This process has been described and is reviewed on an annual basis. The evaluation forms are then prepared and explained to the higher education institutions and the heads of doctoral schools before the evaluation begins, and lastly to the experts.

Briefly,
• The AERES has defined evaluation processes and means for following up their effectiveness on the basis of all the ESG standards stipulating how evaluations should be conducted and the points to evaluate in institutions.
• Quality assurance at the AERES has been designed to guarantee the conformity and effectiveness of the evaluation activity.
• Evaluations of doctoral schools are organised per campaign on a four-yearly basis – in keeping with the contractual calendar defined by the French Ministry of Research and Higher Education.
• Management and support processes ensure that resources meet the needs of doctoral schools evaluation and are adequate for developing the procedures.
• The AERES has a list of experts who are included for four years. The pertinence of this list is ensured by a selection process within a pool formed at the recommendation of the stakeholders.
• The AERES organises training sessions for its members of staff. These sessions are in-house as regards the direct missions and office automation. The AERES has set up training schemes for newcomers so that they can learn about their missions and targets.
• The AERES has an information system through which its staff, experts and stakeholders may exchange and implement the necessary processes for carrying out their respective missions.

2) How well the doctoral schools comply with ESG: use of internal quality assurance procedures?
The evaluation procedures take account of the processes described in Part 1 of the ESG. The AERES gathers the findings of institutions' self-evaluations. The analysis of these findings is covered in the review forms for the evaluation of doctoral schools.
The AERES takes into account:
- The quality guarantee mechanisms set up by the institution
- The institutions' internal procedures and policies
- The compliance with the ESG part 1 criteria
- The conformity of findings and practices to the internal procedures and policies
- The achievement of the objectives.

3) Specific items evaluated by the AERES

Evaluation of policy and procedures for the quality management of the doctoral schools
- The formal status and the diffusion of the strategy, policy and procedures
- The contents of the policy statement
- The aim of the doctoral school to produce top-quality researchers & competent experts in the several fields of science
- The crosstalk between teaching and research in the institution, assessed by
- The top-quality research units involved within an international & multi-disciplinary research environment
- The supervisors who should be both excellent teacher & researcher
- The quality assurance of programmes which are expected to include development & publication of explicit intended learning outcomes and to pay attention at curriculum, programmes & supervision.

Evaluation of the quality assurance of teaching staff:
Besides the points described above, the institutional application forms for each doctoral school, as well as their self-evaluation, are carefully examined to determine the quality of PhD supervision by professors and researchers accredited to supervise research. Moreover, during their visit to the doctoral school, experts interview in camera the doctoral students' representatives. These elements result in a score on four levels of the quality of supervision.

Evaluation of the admission of students
- The transparency of the criteria (website), the equity of the procedures in the different higher education institutions involved in the doctoral school,
- The nature of the admission criteria:
1. applicants' education background and research plans,
2. possible previous experience in research,
3. recommendation letters,
4. in-person interviews (personal motivation & the applicant's willingness to devote her/himself to doctoral education…)

Assessment of students
The evaluation checks whether the assessment of students:
1. is designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes & other program objectives,
2. has clear & published criteria for marking,
3. is undertaken by top-teacher & researchers,
4. has clear regulations covering student absence, illness & other mitigating circumstances,
5. ensures that assessments are conducted in accordance with the institution's stated procedures: permission of thesis examination,
6. is subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the procedures.

Learning resources and student support

The resources that institutions make available to students in accordance with ESG 1.5 are evaluated .Training seminars for researchers who have obtained doctorates to improve their employment opportunities are also considered.

Evaluation of managing information on institutions' activity results and public information:
1. Student progression & success rates - students' satisfaction;
2. Profile of the student population - employability of graduates;
3. Effectiveness of teachers - learning resources available;
4. Doctoral school's own key performance indicators.
5. Programs - the intended learning outcomes of these,
6. The qualifications they award - the profile of the current students,
7. Teaching, learning and assessment procedures,
8. Learning opportunities available to their students,
9. Views and employment destinations of past students.

Conclusion
The AERES has now evaluated all the French doctoral schools. The methods have greatly evolved from empiric grids to evaluation processes sustained by a global quality management policy and a process approach. The analysis of the evaluations conducted by the AERES in four evaluation campaigns shows the sustainability of the quality approach and of the resulting evaluation procedures. The self-evaluation, the visit including the hearing in camera and the report publication with the scoring, has led to visible changes in the policy of the doctoral schools with a clear improvement in their quality assurance policy.

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11)   The common framework for the evaluation of the teacher competence at the Catalonian universities:

Developing an adequate methodology to assess teaching activities of the academic staff in the universities of Catalonia has been one of the main objectives of AQU since 2002. The context in which the project was initiated was outlined by two main streams at the Catalan universities: a) external assessment of teachers, mainly based on the results of research and using international standards, and b) internal evaluation using certain tools such as the students surveys (not very well developed) in order to recognise teaching activities. This second instrument had a very low impact as the general practice was to reward the 100% of the teachers (with a salary bonus). The reason for that relaxed use of the internal assessment mechanism is, among other elements, the insufficient development of the internal assessment tools.

Taking into account that situation, the purpose of AQU was to combine the rigour of the external assessment for the performance of research activities with the value of the internal evaluation in terms of autonomy of institutions and quality assurance development for the universities.

This objective was undertaken by setting up a General Framework for the evaluation of teaching staff at the Catalan universities. A tool that considers 3 dimensions (planning, classroom activities and learning outcomes) and the implication of 3 different groups of stakeholders with their evidences (Teachers: teacher portfolio; Academic Managers: report; Students: survey).

With that predefined background universities drew up their own teaching staff evaluation guidelines. Those proposed guidelines were assessed by AQU for a pre-accreditation and after the introduction of some recommendations they were certified by AQU and implemented by the institutions.

For the period 2003-2007 the guidelines were used experimentally. In that round the majority of teachers who applied passed the assessment (96%) but, at the same time, that phase showed that approximately 25 % of the potential number of teachers chose not to apply, taking into consideration that the assessment was not compulsory. Various reasons were given by teachers for not applying but it is important to state that the method is setting up the required merits to pass the assessment in the Catalan universities and this is expected to generate changes in the forthcoming years. In the short term the framework has provided a more equitable and consistent distribution of the public bonuses for teachers based on their performance.

After that experimental cycle AQU has accredited the use of the evaluation guidelines by the universities. That accreditation encouraged the autonomy and responsibility of the universities in their tasks of assessing teaching activities. By developing at first the framework, then accrediting the guidelines and finally by implementing following up mechanisms on the use of the guidelines, AQU is raising trust among the stakeholders, and this is expected to generate a greater participation in the coming years.

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12)   AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE GALICIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM (ACSUG) ACTIVITY: LABOUR MARKET INSERTION STUDIES

When it was created, one of ACSUG first activities was the preparation of labour market insertion surveys for Galician University System (SUG) graduates for which a project to monitor their labour market situation was set up.

The project first started with the study of graduates from the 1996-1997 to 2000-2001 academic years which meant the survey covered a five-year period. Later surveys covered bi-annual timescales (2001-2003 and 2003-2005,) although later reviews were subsequently conducted on an annual basis. In this moment we are carrying out the study about the graduates of the 2007-2008 academic year.

The main objectives of these studies are to know the current labour situation of the SUG graduates and to compile and analyze information about their period in the university. Thus, the graduates' situation in the labour market is studied in

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order to observe any strengths and weaknesses. These studies include indicators such as the level of labour market insertion, the most popular job-seeking methods, the most highly valued factors in finding employment, the competences gained through the degree qualification and many others of no less importance than the ones mentioned.

With all this information, the Galician universities can design up-to-date university degrees in relation with the requirements of the labour market situation.

Currently, the SUG universities are in the process of adaptation to the European Higher Education Area and as shown in the figure in the Royal Decree 1393/2007 "the new organization of university teaching will increase employability" showing the commitment and the responsibility that universities acquire in terms of "employability". This fact emphasizes the need to perform studies on labour market insertion of university graduates that show how this integration is produced in the employment world, knowing the reality existing between the training acquired in the university and the training demanded in the employment world.

Because of this, the Galician Government is going to include the labour insertion rate in the indicators taking into account to establish the universities financing.

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13)   HETAC Institutional Review Process – Good practice

Unique attributes
• Review focussed on enhancement balanced with accountability underpinned by evidence
• One model designed to adapt to over sixty diverse providers of higher education and training
• International panel members have provided valuable insight and comparative analysis with other international reviews systems.

• Programme of planning with each institution is compulsory.

o each institution's terms of reference (TOR) is customised and fit-for-purpose
o planning ensures proportionality for diverse capacity within institutions
o dynamic change encountered by each institution is facilitated in the TOR
o HETAC policy framework implications for institutional review are communicated

Background

This model of institutional review combines value added enhancement with accountability. The process is not designed to be a rigid audit type process, but it is evidenced based (an audit trail) and requires accountability in a developmental context. The provider is encouraged to approach the process in an evaluative, reflective and self-critical way, the avoidance of description is emphasised. The

process may be customised to each individual provider through the Terms of Reference (TOR). Additional provider objectives and special considerations for both HETAC and the provider are optional additions to the TOR. The HETAC objectives (1-6 set out below) are prescribed for all providers (core objectives are established in the legislation (3: Is QA effective?; 4: Has National Framework of Qualifications been implemented?; 5: Has Delegated Authority worked? (as appropriate)). The model promotes an innovative approach to institutional review and the Chairperson and Secretary are encouraged to take a lead in the design of the site visit (new model). The time involved in the process from the initial planning stage is on average 18 to 20 months.

Review Objectives

The HETAC prescribed objectives for institutional review are set out below. Special considerations under the prescribed objectives and additional HETAC and provider objectives have been included in the reviews carried out to date. An up-to-date status report on each individual review circulated previously highlights any special recommendations or additional objectives. The prescribed objectives are set out below:

• Objective 1 : To enhance public confidence in the quality of education and training provided by the institution and the standards of the awards made
• Objective 2 : To contribute to coherent strategic planning and governance in the institution
• Objective 3 : To review the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements operated by the institution
• Objective 4 : To confirm the extent that the institution has implemented the national framework of qualifications and procedures for access, transfer and progression
• [Objective 5 : To evaluate the operation and management of delegated authority where it has been granted] Institutes of Technology only.
• Objective 6 : To provide recommendations for the enhancement of the education and training provided by the institution

Provider engagement:
• planning with HETAC – up to 6 meetings
• develop and set the Terms of Reference (TOR)– provider initiates the initial TOR
• provider internal review process;
• SER submission organised around the TOR – (20-30 pages, 8,000 to 12,000 words);
• Advance meeting with HETAC chair & Secretary of panel and provider senior team
• Site visit at 3 days for Institutes of Technology (2.5 days on site) and 2 days for other providers (1.5 days on-site).

HETAC engagement in summary:

• Planning meetings with each institution is a crucial part of the IR process.
• Develop and set the TOR up to 6 months in advance - Critical document – forms basis for panel composition; site visit; self evaluation report; panel report; timeframe.
• Engage with and appoint panel members
• Desk review of provider SER
• Additional documentation sought from provider following desk review
• Panel members document individual initial impressions to HETAC - review chair & secretary
• Initial Agenda – set at advanced meeting
• Additional documentation sought from provider following advanced meeting
• HETAC issues agenda and plan and one page collated feedback report for site visit to Institution
• Panel induction on day 1 of the site visit – HETAC providing induction to date but this was initially envisaged as the role of the review secretary
• HETAC observation during site visit – for initial phase only December 08- May 09
• Final agenda is approved (and supported) by HETAC
• HETAC administrative support on site – experimental for initial phase
• HETAC consider draft IR report prior to issuing it to the provider
• Factual accuracy check with provider
• Final report to provider as HETAC report based on the recommendations of an expert panel.

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14)   ENQA 7th General Assembly - workshop on good practice in external QA (Helsinki, 23.09.2010)

OAQ-AEC cooperation in the accreditation of Swiss music Masters courses

Both intergovernmental and supranational political processes in Europe highlight the importance of the promotion of cooperation between agencies in view of a stronger impact of quality assurance and accreditation assessments such as the recognition of qualifications for the purpose of study or work in another country. More particularly, in a specific discipline, a national ordinary programme accreditation might be carried out in parallel with a European discipline-specific accreditation, offering a precious added value thus minimising the resources invested in order to quality assure a programme at all levels.

It is in this context that the OAQ (the Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities) and the EAC (European Association of Conservatories) underwent a project representing the most advanced degree of cooperation and common understanding between assessment bodies, resulting in the joint accreditation procedures having for object 15 programmes (14 Masters and 1 Bachelor) offered by the Swiss Conservatories of Lucerne, Basel, Geneva/Lausanne and Lugano.

Programme accreditation at the universities of applied sciences (UAS) in

Switzerland is obligatory and the Conservatories or higher education music schools under review are today affiliated to or incorporated into specific Swiss UAS.

As a precondition for engaging in a joint accreditation the compliance by the OAQ and the AEC with the European Standards and Guidelines was of crucial relevance.

A comparative analysis of the procedures and criteria for the assessment applied by the two organizations has been carried out in a first feasibility phase. The comparison enlightened the high degree of compatibility of the procedures and criteria for the assessment applied by the two organizations. No substantial differences were found, preventing to carry out the procedure jointly.

In the implementation phase, a main instrument has been developed: an ad hoc set of standards integrating the European-level discipline-specific AEC standards with the national OAQ general standards. This integrated version of quality standards served as basis for both the self-evaluation report and the external evaluation report.

A mixed panel of experts was appointed, with some members recruited by the OAQ and some identified by the AEC. Four jointly coordinated site-visits of three to four days each took place, resulting in four common external evaluation reports.

Under the point of view of the OAQ the benefits of the experience with working with the AEC as described above could be outlined in five main points:

1. Selection of experts – The OAQ could access to and benefit from the rich pool of outstanding international experts working within AEC assessments. They are highly experienced persons in quality assurance processes and true professionals of the field. Not only, their international profile guaranteed intercultural competencies, essential when evaluating a foreign system in relative terms, being able to give valuable recommendations. The quality of the experts and their preparation can be considered as outstanding.

2. Added value for the institution – With an ad hoc set of standards, adapted to the music higher education, and a panel of experts with international renown, the institution could add specific value to the programme accreditation mandated nationally, optimizing the resources invested for an accreditation procedure and maximizing the potential benefits (national plus European accreditation). Not only, the involvement of the AEC in Swiss national procedures strengthened the OAQ approach to quality assurance based on quality development, one of the milestones of the OAQ mission. This resulted in an increase of motivation from the institutions involved, which had an impact in the work of the agency as well.

3. Visibility – The work underwent in cooperation with AEC increases the visibility and image of the accredited programmes internationally, implying by

consequence an impact on the reputation of the OAQ and its versatility to serve HEI's purposes thus respecting the highest procedural quality with an approach always oriented towards quality improvement.

4. Learning Outcomes oriented approach – Being able to work with the AEC Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Higher Music Education – which is based on learning outcomes to be acquired at completion of the 1st and 2nd cycles in music and is fully compatible with the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education – and with experts well informed about this sectoral framework, the OAQ could benefit from expertise on how to address the assessment of intended learning outcomes when evaluating the quality of a programme. This is particularly fruitful in view of current European developments towards this type of assessments.

5. Respect of the national legal framework – Thanks to the highly cooperative approach and flexibility of the AEC the jointly-coordinated work could be carried out in a creative and enriching atmosphere, in full respect of the Swiss accreditation system, allowing such a deep cooperative project to take place.

Although exceptional, it is not the first time that the OAQ undertakes joint accreditation procedures with foreign discipline-specific quality assurance or accrediting bodies. Once again, this proves to be a successful formula particularly in programme accreditation, minimizing the bureaucratic burden and maximising the potential benefits for the unit under accreditation, although implying some extra work – highly rewarding! – for the organizations involved.

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15)   EVALAG - Enhancing competences

These activities concern the wider context of quality assurance procedures and concern the competencies of members of HEI as well as of the agency. Through diverse activities (internship of members of the agency at HEI and vice versa, information/consultation activities, workshops, handouts etc.) we want to achieve a better understanding of the institutional and working conditions, a better cooperation within the procedures and better results of quality assurance procedures. Better results do mean that they are more reliable and valid and will be (better) accepted by the HEI. And that they lead to enhancing the quality culture.

evalag
Dr. Anke Rigbers

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16)   Introducing Quality Assurance in an Adverse Environment-case study Greece.

The quality assurance process is twofold. The continuous internal self -evaluation or internal and the periodical external that assesses the objectivity of the internal process and weighs it against best international practices.

The presentation will deal with the simultaneous introduction of the first external evaluations (in a hostile environment) by five teams of experts from abroad that each visited one Department of the two Universities (Physics, Environmental Engineering) and one for the three Technological Institutions Departments (Food Technology, Informatics and Mechanical Engineering) in four different cities in Greece.

An approach that broke the resistance to the quality assurance culture that was presented by faculty and students opposing reforms in higher education in the 2007s and '08s.

By professor Spyros Amourgis,AIA,
President Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency

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17) FHR - External accreditation and curriculum design by the institutions

1. Introduction

In the Austrian FH sector (Universities of Applied Sciences), two procedures of external quality assurance are carried out: programme accreditation and institutional evaluation. While programme accreditation is primarily committed to the purpose of accountability, the institutional evaluation procedure is mainly adjusted to serve the purpose of quality enhancement.

Our example of good practice refers to the question how the institutions are required by the Accreditation Guidelines of the FH Council to design their programmes.

2. The educational mandate

According to the FH Studies Act the educational mandate is to provide a scientifically sound and practice-oriented professional education at a higher education level and particularly to provide their graduates with the skills to solve the tasks of the respective professional field in accordance with the latest scientific developments and the requirements in the professional practice. This educational mandate focuses in particular on the employability of FH students. The suitability of the acquired qualification in a particular occupation plays a central role. Hence the curricula are to be designed in such a way that the graduates will stand a reasonable chance of finding a job that matches their qualification.

In conjunction with the educational mandate, demand and acceptance surveys are a legal prerequisite for the accreditation and re-accreditation of programmes. It shall be demonstrated with such a survey that there is a sustainable pool of applicants available for the proposed study programme and that there is a sustainable demand for graduates on part of business / society / industry. In the case of an application for accreditation, the analysis must be performed by a suitable institution that is independent of the applicant, and it shall correspond to the latest quantitative and qualitative social research while taking account of gender distinctions. In the case of an application for extension of the accreditation, the analysis may be carried out by the applicants themselves.

3. Involvement of professionals

This specific educational mandate implies a strong involvement of people with professional expertise and experience in the system of external quality assurance. It takes place at four main levels: the design of new programmes requires at least two people with professional background; the performance of the programmes includes part-time teaching staff from business and industry; the institutional evaluations expert panel has to include one member holding a management position in a company or non-profit organisation; the FH Council as the decision-making body has to comprise at least eight members with professional background.

4. Curriculum design

With reference to this educational mandate, the basic concept for an FH degree programme has to describe the connection between the vocational fields of activity, the related qualification profile and the curriculum, which is a reflection of the qualification profile, and these connections have to be demonstrated in the teaching concept as well. When drawing up the concepts for the degree programmes, degree programme profiles, which have been defined on the basis of the Dublin Descriptors and describe the characteristics of practice-oriented Bachelor's, Master's and diploma degree programmes, shall be taken into account.

An application for (re-)accreditation has to contain a description of vocational fields of activity, which means that the main industries and examples of types of enterprises or organisations where graduates find employment shall be named. Additionally, the positions which graduates may fill as well as the jobs and tasks which graduates can realistically carry out shall be specified.

Furthermore, such an application has to include a qualification profile of the future graduates. The knowledge and skills required to fulfil the jobs and tasks at higher education level shall be specified. In doing so, technical and methodical skills as well as inter-disciplinary qualifications shall be taken into account.

In conjunction with the qualification profile, since 2003 the modularisation of the curricula is a requirement for obtaining accreditation from the FH Council. The modularisation of the curricula entails a fundamental change of perspectives, which goes from an input focus (Which content do I want to teach?) to an output focus (Which qualifications and/or competences should result from the teaching and learning process?).

5. Research project on learning outcomes orientation

Although the outcome orientation has been applied by the FH sector for many years the FH Council experienced difficulties when checking applications for accreditation. Against the backdrop of a lack of understanding when applying a learning outcomes based approach in the development of curricula by the institutions as well as a kind of uncertainty regarding the role of learning outcomes orientation in the accreditation procedures, the FH Council commissioned a research project („Strengthening of learning outcomes orientation in the development of curricula and in the accreditation in the Austrian FH-sector") in autumn 2008 on this topic.

The goals of the project are strengthening and improving the learning outcomes orientation in the development and design of curricula and qualification profiles, providing means to strengthen the learning outcomes in the accreditation and evaluation procedures and promoting the knowledge and understanding of the relevance of learning outcomes to all relevant stakeholders in the FH-sector.
An important part of the project is conducting pilot projects including higher education institutions, based on previously conducted research on national and international good practice examples and an analysis of terms and definitions as well as of up-to-date studies.

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18)   EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE FROM AGAE (the Andalusian Agency of Accreditation and Evaluation)

Within the basic principles for Internal and External Quality Assurance of Higher Education, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) clearly establishes on page 14 that "institutions should be able to demonstrate their quality at home and internationally." It is understood from here that demonstrating quality is an example of good practice. One way in which institutions and, obviously, quality assurance agencies can demonstrate their quality at home and at an international level is by way of networking, which implies harmonization of practices as well as acknowledgment of diversity. For some time now, AGAE has been collaborating in evaluation programs and data exchange with other Spanish agencies through the REACU (Network of Spanish Quality Assurance Agencies), composed of 11 agencies out of which 3 are full ENQA members. In the last year our international involvement has increased. We have signed agreements with accreditation agencies in Chile and we are currently contrasting good practices through joint activities with agencies in Egypt and Russia. Also, we have been contacted to assist other agencies in Central and Eastern Europe in developing quality assurance models and undertaking one external evaluation.
Our experience so far is demonstrating that national and international networking enhances good practices inasmuch as it (a) provides good results in the field of HE, (b) permits transference of ideas from one context to another, (c) and promotes communication.

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19)   Dr. Torsten Futterer
      ZEvA, Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency Hanover
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      (futterer@zeva.org)

Institutional Evaluation by ZEvA

In 2006 ZEvA has implemented a new system of institutional evaluations for higher education institutions. Since then 4 very different projects were carried out with this method.
ZEvA created the institutional evaluation of the quality management system of

higher education institutions in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and the Code of Good Practice by ECA. Using 23 distinct criteria, the quality management system can be analyzed in the areas of strategic orientation, teaching and learning and research, promotion of young researchers and knowledge transfer.

Small groups of external experts, especially from management positions in higher education institution – completed by experts from the labour market and students – formulate individual profiles of strengths and weaknesses for every single institution. Following this, recommendations for the further improvement of the quality management system of those institutions are given.

The ZEvA evaluation system was tested with different types of institutions within the field of higher education: a bigger technical university with several autonomous faculties, a mid-size university of applied sciences with several regionally widespread campuses, a medical university and a medical faculty within a bigger university.

As a conclusion of those successful projects, it can by pointed out, that the ZEvA system of institutional evaluations is easily adaptable to different kinds of institutions as well as different specific problems depending on the culture of a scientific community. In that way it seems to be a valuable tool for the future development of autonomous universities with special focus on the optimization of the quality management system.

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20)   The example is the certificate of internationalisation by which NVAO is rewarding those programmes that deliver good or excellent results in internationalisation, especially in the intended and achieved learning outcomes. The certicificate is awarded to those programmes that get the judgment of "excellent" or "good" after a site visit by an international panel.
The evalauation framework consists of six topics and 13 standards.

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21)   AAC

Purposes achieved by, or objective of, the good practice

Ensures the independence of the accreditation decision from the influences of national conflicts of interests.

Ensures the consideration of a broader non-national perspective in accreditation decision and the orientation towards European and international developments for standards and procedures.
Context

The Austrian Accreditation Council (ÖAR) is a state authority responsible for the accreditation (= state recognition) of all Austrian private universities. Accreditation, at both the institutional and the programme level, is compulsory for private universities in Austria. This applies to existing non-university educational institutions aspiring to obtaining university status, and to newly

founded institutions. The ÖAR is assigned the statutory task of carrying out the corresponding accreditation processes. In addition, the ÖAR has the task of supervising accredited private universities.

The eight members of the Council responsible for accreditation decisions are experts in the field of higher education in Europe. Furthermore they set up guidelines and quality standards for accreditation and develop adequate instruments for the reviews of institutions and programmes.

The external experts in the review teams evaluate the different scientific areas and write independent opinions on which the Council bases its decision.

Practice

The independence of quality assurance agencies from the government, from business, industry and professional bodies and from national conflicts of interest is a commonly agreed-on principle (cp. European Standards and Guidelines 3.6). Austria is a rather small country with only 8 million inhabitants and 250,000 students at 21 state universities and 13 private universities. In order to avoid conflicts of interest within the relatively small Austrian scientific community the ÖAR practices a deliberate policy aiming at satisfying the independence criterion. One effective approach – among others – proved to be the inclusion of non-Austrians in a twofold way: On the one hand the Council itself consists of only four Austrians; the other four members are foreigners from other European countries. Given the current composition of the Council (together with the simple majority decision rule), no accreditation decision can come about with Austrian votes only. This safeguards the decision from the influence of national conflicts of interests.

On the other hand, more than 90% of the experts in the review teams are non-Austrians. Since the ÖAR accredits private universities – which are considered to be strong competitors to the public universities – it would often result in conflicts of interest to recruit the evaluating experts from Austrian public universities. Therefore the ÖAR committed itself to appointing international experts as often as possible.
This approach is of course facilitated by the fact that experts from neighbour countries like Germany and Switzerland don't have to overcome the language barrier. If there are no sufficiently qualified German speaking experts available, the procedures are conducted in English.

The ÖAR considers the value of this practice to be not only relevant to small states (even though the benefits may be more obvious for smaller states). For national higher education systems which exceed a "critical mass", an international composition of the decision-making body as well as the appointment of non-national experts do not only guarantee the independence from national conflicts of interest but also broaden the review perspective. Especially with regard to the Bologna Process, i.e. the creation of the European higher education area, a restriction on national views only would not be

adequate.

Most of the Council members are active not only in the Austrian Accreditation Council but in other European accreditation bodies as well. Thus expertise and know-how can be acquired, reassessed and exchanged constantly.

The Austrian Accreditation Council believes in "quality" to be an international concept, not an exclusively national one. But as higher education systems are usually established within a national framework in terms of political, legal and financial issues, the national context has to be taken into consideration as well. To provide the foreign experts with sound information on national issues, the Council has a twofold approach: On the one hand, the panel members receive an up-to-date documentation on the Austrian higher education system (with special reference to national characteristics/terminology etc.) and right before the site-visit they are briefed on national specifics face-to-face. On the other hand, there is not only a member of the Council's office accompanying the panel, but always one of the Council members as well, the so-called rapporteur. He has an in-depth knowledge of the Austrian system. He ensures that there is sufficient consideration of national issues (if necessary).
If study programmes which lead to a profession with regulated access (as for example in the medical sector) are being assessed and the Council does not have adequate specific expertise, then a national expert with a profound knowledge of the corresponding legal aspects will be consulted as well.

Taking into account the busy schedules of international experts and their longer travel time, one organisational challenge is scheduling. Early preparation is crucial for smooth procedures.
Evidence of success, impact or realization the objectives

Considering the evidence, this practice was commended by the independent external review panel of ÖAR: "The Council and its members have manifested themselves as professional, independent, competent and resistant to intervention."

http://www.akkreditierungsrat.at/files/downloads_2007/OeAR_Review_Report_final_version_190907.pdf

The latest report (September 2009) of the EU-Commission on the progress in quality assurance in higher education explicitly refers to this practice of ÖAR: "Increasing objectivity: the Austrian Accreditation Council uses almost exclusively foreign evaluators and Austrians are not in a majority in the decision-making Board. This adds to international credibility by preventing suspicions that vested interests may distort accreditation decisions."
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0487:FIN:EN:PDF

Resources required

Financial resources: no additional costs for Council members. Only the travel expenses are slightly higher than if using only national experts.

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22) ARACIS

Innovative elements in ARACIS activity

1. Improved link between QA in HE and stakeholders.
A new Standing (permanent) Commission of the agency was established, **representing the employers,** together with a pool of external evaluators representing different categories of employers and professional domains, which were invited to take active part in program and institutional evaluations. This Commission of Employers has also the task to develop new standards an up-date them in accordance with the evolution of the economy and labour market.

2. First Report on „The State of Quality in the Romanian Higher Education – 2009"
This transversal report deals with **academic quality and quality assurance mechanisms** of higher education (HE), namely the relations between HE system objectives, academic activities and their corresponding results and proposes an **analysis of the state of quality** (*ergo*: not yet an analysis of its dynamics) in the higher education as a system[1], so that any reference to the HE institutions or to their relations are merely implicit. The Report is based on **statistical distributions of perceptions, opinions, beliefs and representations** of students, academic staff and employers about the system's activities and results, as well as on other **data and information** about system inputs, processes and outputs. This report proposes a **contextual framework** for further analysis and discussion. It intends to remain open to interpretation and in particular to generate new information and data to ground further rigorous arguments. For instance, next year we will focus on an institutional approach and on a new set of data and information in order to later have available longitudinal analyses, all associated to benchmarking procedures. Gradually, the references to contextualisation will not only be national and static, but increasingly dynamic and explicitly European.

3. New „Manual of Procedures " for the QA evaluators.
A complex „Manual of Procedures" for QA evaluators in HE was published and made available, based on the ESGs and the ARACIS Methodology and Guides, to be used as courseware for regular periodic training of evaluators. This came as the result of more than four years of activity of the Standing Committees and of the ARACIS evaluators, after the evaluation process of some thousands of study programmes, both at bachelor and master level, which allowed to determine some general procedures and evaluation techniques, as well as some generic

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[1] The word „system" as it is used in association with „higher education" in this report, should be considered restrictively. It is no more than a way to refer to the higher education sector in Romania as a whole, and it is not intended to promote a „systemic" understanding of the education sector.

problems to be solved, thus allowing a better evaluation process via a better training of the evaluators, as well as the development of new and more adequate mechanisms of evaluation. Consequently, this Manual was published in order to allow all interested stakeholders, especially the evaluators, to know the latest methods and techniques used in the evaluation process, as well as the specific aspects for each study domain, based also on practical „study-cases".

4. Bilingual (Romanian-English) Glossary of terms for higher education

This glossary of terms for higher education is intended to be a useful tool for those who relate frequently with specific terminology in both languages in activities related to higher education, such as teaching, management and research. This glossary is an updated selection and adaptation of terms in motion in a evolving field. It can therefore be continuously updated and improved. The composition of the glossary was intended to keep the balance between specific academic terminology and the one that is customary used by international relevant bodies, with priority given new terms of teaching vocabulary used in higher education, in particular, terms related to the Bologna Process.

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23)   IUQB – example of good practice

Following the principle outlined in the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) that the primary responsibility for quality assurance lies with the higher education institutions themselves, IUQB and the Irish universities have developed a quality assurance system that encourages each university to develop their own robust internal quality assurance processes but whereby a common framework is agreed for these processes. This common framework is outlined in a 2007 handbook termed *A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities* which was jointly published by IUQB and IUA (the Irish rectors' conference).
The external institutional-level periodic review system developed by IUQB, (following extensive consultation with the universities) is termed *Institutional Review of Irish Universities* (IRIU) and the current cycle of reviews is taking place over the period 2009-12. This process operates as a combination of: (a) 'mission-based' evaluation of the effectiveness of each university's internal quality assurance procedures and (b) 'standards-based' evaluation against the ESG.
The IRIU process is only one of three elements to the external quality assurance process. Each university submits an Annual Institutional Report to IUQB outlining the outcomes of the internal quality assurance evaluations that they have conducted in the previous year and IUQB (following a practice pioneered by QAA Scotland) undertakes an Annual Dialogue Visit to each university to discuss these outcomes. Following this annual series of university visits, IUQB produces an overall sector-level analysis of the quality reviews organised by the universities which is then published each year as an important component of the IUQB Annual report.

Although it is the responsibility of each university to conduct its own internal evaluations of its academic and administrative units and to publish the outcomes of these evaluations: so as to facilitate the availability of such information to external and internal stakeholders, IUQB has developed an online portal termed the IUQB *Quality Reviews Catalogue*, where these internal evaluation reports are available for each of the universities. The interested reader can therefore access, on a single site (http://reviews.iuqb.net) both the university-organised internal reviews of academic and administrative departments and the IUQB institutional-level reviews conducted under the IRIU process.