



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

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 more 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.

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.

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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