AUDIT Programme: An Initiative to promote Internal Quality Assurance System in Higher Education Institutions

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Context and Regulations

Since 1981 student surveys on the quality of undergraduate courses.

Since 90's, some HEIs have been developing IQAS on the EFQM or ISO models.

1996 - 2006 The University Quality Assessment Plan:

100% HEIs

1. Institutional self-evaluation processes.

2. Review by a QAA.

3. HEI designs and enhancement plan.

Since 2003 the quality assurance of teaching staff activities and doctorate programmes have been evaluated.

By the 2007 Spanish University Act, the design and implement of an IQAS for HEIs as a part of all their programmes was made compulsory.

Context and Regulations

2007 State of the Art

Lack of a systematic and structured approach to:

- ↚ Assurance of quality in teaching and learning.

- ↚ Enhancement of educational programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate courses in HEIs.

A mandatory regulation to introduce IQAS in the design of programmes.
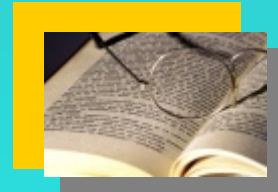
The AUDIT Initiative

ANECA, AQU-Catalunya and ACSUG (Galicia) promote The AUDIT Initiative:

- Voluntary participation of institutions (faculties/universities)

- Open to all Spanish Universities

- Limited number of faculties and institutions participating in this call for applications

- First call for applications in September 2007

2007. ANECA, AQU-Catalunya and ACSUG promote The AUDIT Initiative:

Aims

To guide and facilitate the process of IQAS design according to The 2007 Universities Act to HEIs and International Standards.
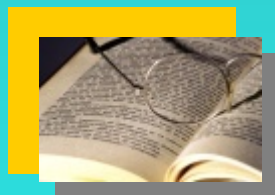
To follow-up IQAS implementation

The recognition of IQAS

HEIs freely **select** and develop their IQAS following one of two **approaches**:

a) IQAS is with regard to all undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

b) IQAS is with regard to a particular undergraduate or postgraduate course.

IQAS Evaluation Methodology

Focuses on teaching and learning processes

QAAs
- To draw up Criteria and Guidelines for IQAS.
- To evaluate HEI's IQAS design.
- To write an Interim and a Final Reports with an advisory function.

HEIs
- To design IQAS, according to Criteria and Guidelines.
- To improve their IQAS according to recommendations in the Interim and Final reports.
- To implement their IQAS.

IQAS Evaluation Methodology

Internal quality assurance guidelines

1. Quality policy and objectives

2. Design of educational offer

3. Development of studies and other actions directed to the students.

4. Teaching and support staff.

5. Material resources and services

6. Educational outcomes

7. Public information

IQAS Evaluation Methodology

1.0. How the HEI defines its quality policy and goals.

The HEI must consolidate a quality culture supported by a policy and goals for quality that are known and publicly accessible to the public.

1.1. How the HEI ensures the quality of its programmes.

The institution must have mechanisms to maintain and update its programmes and develop methodologies to approve, control, evaluate and periodically improve their quality.

1.2. How the HEI orientates its programmes towards the students.

The HEI must be provided with procedures to check that the fundamental purpose of its actions is to encourage student learning.

1.3. How the HEI assures and enhances the quality of its academic staff.

The HEI must have mechanisms to ensure that the recruitment, management and training of its teaching, service and administration staff are carried out with appropriate safeguards in order for them to carry out their corresponding functions.

IQAS Evaluation Methodology

1.4. How the HEI manages and improves its physical resources and services

The HEI must be provided with mechanisms so it can design, manage and improve its services and physical resources in order for student learning to develop appropriately.

1.5. How the HEI analyses and takes into consideration the outcomes.

The HEI must be provided with procedures to ensure that outcomes (learning, graduate employment and the satisfaction of the different stakeholders) are measured, analysed and used for decision-making and to enhance the quality of degree programmes.

1.6. How the HEI publishes information on degree programmes.

The HEI must be equipped with mechanisms to ensure that updated information on degrees and programmes is published periodically.

IQAS Evaluation Methodology

Table 2. Elements of Guideline 2
2.1. Existence of the **bodies able to manage the design, follow up, planning, development and review of degree qualifications**, their goals and associated areas of competence.
2.2. To have **mechanisms to regulate the decision-making process** relative to the provision and design of programmes and their goals.
2.3. Specification of the **stakeholders involved** in the design, follow up, planning, development and review of qualifications, their goals and associated areas of competence.
2.4. Presence of the **procedures involved** in the design, follow up, planning, development and review of qualifications, their goals and associated areas of competence

IQAS Evaluation Methodology

Table 2. Elements of Guideline 2
2.5. To have **systems to gather and analyse information** for assessing the maintenance, updating and renewal of its programmes.
2.6. Existence of **mechanisms developed to implement improvements stemming from the periodic review** of degree programmes.
2.7. To have **accountability mechanisms** for the main stakeholders regarding the quality of degree qualifications.
2.8. Define the criteria for the **eventual suspension of a particular study programme.**

IQA's Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation criteria

- Organisation and structure, with a well-defined scope and a meaning that is clear.

- All guidelines must be dealt with.

- Existence of a comprehensive process map (or similar) describing what the process is, who is involved, and how each process is carried out.

- Examples of procedures and indicators that are included in IQAS.

The review panels

- The same kind of review panel has been developed by the three QAAs involved in the AUDIT initiative.

- Panel members:
  - Three academic staff members with experience in QA.
  - An QA expert, staff member of a HEI.
  - An QA professional.
  - A staff member of QAA.

Participation in AUDIT

QAAs	Faculties and colleges	Universities
ANECA :	71	43
ACSUG:	35	2
AQU:	20	8

- 53 Spanish Universities are participating in the programme.

- Majority of these universities are public.

- For most universities, 2 or 3 faculties or colleges.

- 10 universities have designed an IQAS for all their faculties or colleges.

- 52 Universities have completed IQAS design.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

- High degree of involvement by the universities and a high demand from new universities to take part in the 2008 call.

- QA experts from different universities and regions of Spain set up workgroups to jointly learn about and draw up improved proposals for their universities.

- The AUDIT initiative is contributing to the updating of the QA culture in Spanish universities by encouraging the development of more systematic initiatives for QA.

- Universities have designed their IQAS following the criteria and guidelines laid down in AUDIT.

- Mutual recognition between agencies is an ongoing process.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned
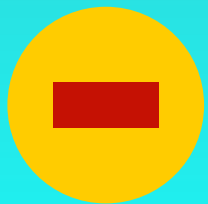
- Inadequate specification of the stakeholders and how they are involved in identifying the requirements of the IQAS;

- Imprecise aims for quality

- Incomplete definition of the bodies responsible for the management of quality in faculties and colleges

- Lack of specific accountability procedures

- Incomplete mechanisms for decision-making in the IQAS, especially in relation to decisions subsequent to self-evaluation processes.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

The AUDIT initiative **is very useful in HEIs, specially in HEIs without an IQAS** or where the internal quality assurance procedures and mechanisms have still not been systematised.

A university's mission, vision and values should serve as the basis for producing an IQAS, and consideration also needs to be given to strategic issues.

In an **initial stage** of the development of IQAS, **the agencies need to play an advisory role as well as that of external review** to encourage the growth of a true quality culture in the universities.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

It is necessary **to involve university QA experts,** professionals and academics to create synergies between those who play key roles in the design, development and enhancement of IQAS.

It is necessary **to develop standard procedures between the different peer reviews** that are carried out **to ensure** that results between the various review panels and committees **are coherent.**

Cooperation by the QAAs in joint projects is beneficial to the management of peer review processes.

Key Issues To Be Mastered

There are various issues that still need to be addressed:

Is IQAS recognition really an **added value for HEIs**? and for society?

Can the IQAS guarantee the **quality of degree programmes** in an external review?

What differences are there between the **IQAS design and the usual QA activities in HEI**s**?** Are they similar or not?

What is the **real involvement of HEIs** policy and decision-makers in a QA system such as AUDIT?

How can a QAA undertake a **follow-up process with the engagement of the university?** What is the effective **role of the QAA in this process?**

Thank you very much for your attention

Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya

Axencia para a Calidade do Sistema Universitario de Galicia

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