



International guidelines: Similarities and Criticisms

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International Guidelines...

- Variation in contexts
- Pluralities in interpretation
- Outcome: diversities in implementation

Can we build on commonalities?

Why and how?

To understand...

To learn from each other...

By sharing good practices and lessons learnt...



International Guidelines...

- Benchmarking project between ACQUIN (Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute), AUQA (Australian Universities Quality Agency) and HETAC (Higher Education and Training Awards Council) – INQAAHE GGP & ESG 2006-07
- Mapping of three QA agencies – QAA (UK), NZUAAU, AUQA – INQAAHE GGP - 2008



Purposes of the project...

An opportunity to share experience and learn from each other

Transnational guidelines such as ESG and GGP of INQAAHE offered a framework within which such experiences could be shared.

While the national systems, organisational contexts and operational environments are different for ACQUIN, AUQA and HETAC, it is possible to identify some common strands in the conduct of their own self-reviews and the external evaluations.



1. Governance – INQAAHE GGP

- Clarity in objectives
- Systematic approach to achieving them
- Ownership and governance structure appropriate for the objectives



Governance - ESG

- 2.2 Development of external QA processes...aims and objectives of QA should be predetermined
- 2.4 Processes fit for purpose
- 3.2 Official status: Formal recognition as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance
- 3.3 Activities: Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities on a regular basis.
- 3.5 Mission statement: clear and explicit goals and objectives contained in a publicly available statement



2. Resources

- Adequate human and financial resources

3.4 of ESG



3. Quality of QA

Ensuring continuous quality assurance of the activities of the agency itself through internal self review and external reviews at regular intervals

3.8 Accountability procedures



4. Reporting public information

- Informing and responding to the public; demonstrating public accountability by reporting openly on review decisions; and reporting on its own performance.

3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies: ... These processes will normally be expected to include:...publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;



5. Role of HEIs

- Respecting the autonomy, identity and integrity of HEIs.
- Applying standards, which have been subject to consultation with stakeholders and contributing to both quality improvement and accountability.

2.1 Use of internal QA procedures

2.2 Development of external quality

assurance processes: The aimsbe determined...by all those responsible (including higher education institutions)



6. Documenting Requirements

- Documenting clearly what the agency expects of the institution

2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes:and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

2.7 Periodic reviews:the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.



7. Requirements for self evaluation

- Documenting clearly guidelines for the self evaluation process

2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures

2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes: The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, ...and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.



8. Evaluation Process

- Constituting review committees in accordance with the guidelines of the agency, and including at least one external reviewer from another country or jurisdiction

3.7 External QA criteria and processes used by the agencies ...pre-defined and publicly available...include self-assessment, external assessment by experts, and site visits...publication of a report, and a follow-up procedure.



9. Decisions

- Evincing independent, impartial, rigorous, thorough, fair and consistent decision-making, and making consistent decisions.

2.3 Criteria for decisions: Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

3.6 Independence: ...that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties



10. Appeals

- Providing an appropriate method for appeals against its decisions

3.7 ...conclusions which have formal consequences should have an appeals procedure



11. Collaboration

- Collaborating with other agencies
- Exchange of good practices
- Capacity development
- TNE
- Joint projects
- Staff exchanges



12. CBHE

- Establishing policies relating to both imported and exported higher education that are the same as those for domestic providers and domestic provision
- Considering relevant guidelines issued by international agencies and other associations on CBHE
- Consulting appropriate local agencies in the exporting or importing countries, where possible



GGPs 11 & 12 and UNESCO-OECD Guidelines

- CBHE in all modes in the scope of QA
- strengthening the network initiatives
- collaboration between sending and receiving countries
- information dissemination
- adherence to 'Code of Good Practice'
- mutual recognition agreements
- cooperation with other stakeholders
- international orientation of the QA processes



Commonalities...

- inspire good practice
- provide common denominators of good practice
- aim to promote mutual trust
- aspire to improve transparency
- applicable to all QA agencies
 - irrespective of their structure, function and size
 - the national system
 - all stages of development



Commonalities...

- recognise diversities
- recognise the primacy of national systems
- central place to institutional autonomy
- QA is the responsibility of HEIs
- acknowledge that QA is a generic term
- do not include detailed procedures
- provide only examples



Emphases on...

Clarity in aims, processes, procedures

To be determined in advance

In consultation with the sector

Publicly available

Transparency, consistency

Objectivity, independence

Documenting and reporting



Criticisms...

- Expressed at extremely high levels of generality
- Do not provide specific tools to take action
- Too broad and ambitious (not realistic) to help practitioners convince the governments
- Do not adequately empower the policy makers to implement good practice in the sector
- In the long run might lead 'trade language' to creep into academic discussions
- First steps to regulation?
- Towards a compliance culture? (eg link with EQAR)



Criticisms

Some comments are from non-supporters of QA and they question the central role to QA agencies

- Lack of understanding of the spirit and consequent counter questions
- Networking and cooperation – who will bear the cost?
- Variation in definitions
- Some terms are not understood (eg joint assessments)
- Some problems are not specific to QA
- Some are philosophical questions...



Big Questions?

- What is our understanding of the purposes of the international guidelines? (provide broad principles vs specific tools)
- Have those purposes been achieved?
- What are the gaps? (eg stakeholder involvement, mutual understanding)
- What is the next stage?



Thank You
