Introduction to the European quality assurance framework

Maria Kelo
Tia Loukkola
21 November 2019

#EQAF
For WiFi access

- use Eduroam or
- connect to TUB-Guest, open a browser and use login data on your participant badge
Key milestones

• QA: one action line in the Bologna Process

• 2005: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
  • Proposed by the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE)

• 2006: European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF)

• 2008: European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)

• 2015: ESG 2015 adopted
  – Proposed by the E4 Group, EQAR, Education International and BUSINESSEUROPE
ESG and status of QA

THE FRAMEWORK FOR BOLOGNA IS THERE - BUT PEOPLE AREN'T REFERRING TO IT!

WE DON'T WANT GENERIC QA SYSTEMS, BUT IT HELPS TO REFER TO THE BOLOGNA FRAMEWORK

©Patrick Sanders, EQAF 2009
ESG in short

• Reference framework for agreed practice in QA in Europe

• Three parts covering
  – Internal QA within HEIs
  – External QA carried by QAAs
  – Internal QA within QAAs

• Focus on quality assurance of higher education

• Principles for QA in the EHEA
  – HEIs have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance
  – QA responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students
  – QA supports the development of a quality culture
  – QA takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society
• In your opinion, which is the most important principle?
  
  – HEIs have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance
  – QA responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students
  – QA supports the development of a quality culture
  – QA takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society

Go to: www.menti.com
Code: 42 77 54
Diversity of external context and approaches

- Different cultural contexts, history, and traditions
- Different levels of autonomy and capacity of HEIs for IQA
- Different levels of independence and capacity of QAAs for EQA

Different types of agencies and methods
- Evaluation, audit, accreditation...
- Programme level and / or institutional level
- Subject specific / multidisciplinary
- European, national, and regional agencies

Outcomes of quality assessments vary
- Permission to operate/award degrees
- Impact on funding
- Recommendations for improvement

Yellow snow is also snow.
• In your view, what should be the main purpose of EQA?

– Guarantee minimum standards of higher education quality
– Provide reliable and independent information on quality of education
– Support constant enhancement/improvement of higher education
– Support development of internal quality assurance
– Allow institutions to demonstrate their quality externally

Go to: www.menti.com
Code: 42 77 54
Frequent reforms in external QA approaches, motives varied

- National and/or European requirements
- Expectations of stakeholder (more HEI autonomy, enhancement orientation, role of students etc.)
- “to keep the momentum”, going beyond minimum standards (excellence)
- Profiling and specialisation of agencies
- Internationalisation and cross-border activities
- Changes in HE and in HE policies
  - elearning, SCL, work-based learning
  - European University networks
  - research and T&L

→ The challenge of keeping standards without impeding innovation
What is EQAR?

• Founded 2008 by E4 organisations at Ministers’ request

• Mission: enhancing trust and confidence in EHEA

• Main role: to manage a register of QA agencies that comply substantially with the ESG
  – Currently 48 registered agencies from 27 countries

• Complementary activities to maintaining the Register:
  – Monitoring status of legal frameworks for external QA in Europe
  – Monitoring cross-border QA developments
  – Database of external QA results by the registered agencies
### ENQA or EQAR?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENQA</th>
<th>EQAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENQA or EQAR?

Has QA agencies as members
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENQA</th>
<th>EQAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Members:</strong> EHEA QA agencies</td>
<td>Members: National governments and European stakeholder organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts in the interests of its members</td>
<td>Acts in the “public interest”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activities: Representation and</td>
<td>Main activity: manage a public official register of ESG compliant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support to members, policy making,</td>
<td>agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>projects, development of QA, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENQA or EQAR?

Founded by main European stakeholder organisations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENQA</th>
<th>EQAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members: EHEA QA agencies</td>
<td>Members: National governments and European stakeholder organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founded by the QA agencies (2000)</td>
<td><strong>Founded by the E4, within the Bologna Process (2008)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts in the interests of its members</td>
<td>Acts in the “public interest”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activities: Representation and support to members, policy making, projects, development of QA, etc.</td>
<td>Main activity: manage a public official register of ESG compliant agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grew alongside the BP; a consultative members of the BP</td>
<td><strong>Born out of the BP (the first legal entity)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENQA or EQAR?

Uses the ESG as criteria for agencies
## ENQA or EQAR?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENQA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members: EHEA QA agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founded by the QA agencies (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts in the interests of its members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activities: Representation and support to members, policy making, projects, development of QA, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grew alongside the BP; a consultative members of the BP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESG as membership criteria (ENQA reviews)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members: National governments and European stakeholder organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founded by the E4, within the Bologna Process (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts in the “public interest”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main activity: manage a public official register of ESG compliant agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born out of the BP (the first legal entity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESG as registration criteria (mostly ENQA reviews)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Institutional responsibility for quality (assurance)

• Increased emphasis on internal QA: ESG Part1 & shift towards institutional external QA in some systems

• Two approaches to internal QA
  – aligned with strategic management: QA as a means to support the achievement of institutional goals
  – explicitly linked to defining and assessing the learning outcomes and ensuring these are aligned to the national qualification framework

• Novelty in the ESG 2015: student-centred learning

• Quality culture the aim, yet remains challenging
Small, peripheral change is not enough...

...it must be a big cultural change!

But this takes time!

...and all this should be rooted in the context of the specific community it comes from.
Some newer policy additions

©Patrick Sanders, EQAF 2009
Cross-border QA

- Cross-border QA = QA agencies operating across borders
- Will to promote this mentioned in the Ministerial Communiqués
- HEIs could choose an agency that suits their profile among EQAR-listed agencies

- According to EQAR web-site today
  - In 15 systems all HEIs can choose a suitable EQAR listed QA agency
  - In 13 systems can choose EQAR-listed agency, but need to follow national requirements
  - 21 countries do not recognise foreign agencies as part of their national external quality assurance systems at all

- If interested, check Key considerations for Cross-border Quality Assurance developed by the E4 Group and EQAR
• Developing joint programme a policy goal at European level

• Challenges identified include external QA, in particular in programme accreditation countries

• European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes adopted in 2015
  – External QA based purely on criteria derived from the ESG Part 1
  – One exercise carried out by EQAR listed agency - all countries involved recognise the results of this exercise

• Relatively limited impact so far
  – In 20 systems use of European approach is not permitted and external QA is based on programme-level accreditation
  – In 13 systems all HEIs can use the European Approach
EQAF’s role then?

• EQAF has been organised by the E4 organisations since 2006

• Fosters dialogue and exchange of practice between QA actors

• Biggest QA event in Europe bringing together wide-range of QA stakeholders

• Relies on participant contributions
  – Keep an eye on the Call for contributions
  – Provide feedback after the event
  – Engage in discussions during and outside the programme
Conclusion

• What makes European QA different?
  – Emphasis on student (and stakeholders at large) participation
  – Regional collaboration (although increasing also in other parts of the world)
  – Recognition of the role of internal QA
  – Transparency of external QA reports

• Is QA a success story?
  – For you tell us...
WHEN PEOPLE FIND A WEAKNESS IN THEIR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME...

...DO THEY...

...SAY NOTHING AND HIDE IT?

...FIND A QUICK, SUPERFICIAL SOLUTION?

...LOOK DEEPER TO FIND THE REAL CAUSE?

©Patrick Sanders, EQAF 2009
Some useful links

- **ESG 2015**
- **European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes**
- **Key considerations for cross-border QA**
- **www.enqa.eu** (external QA)
- **www.eqar.eu** (external QA, Register, DEQAR)
- **www.eua.eu** (internal QA, quality culture etc)
- **www.eurashe.eu** (internal QA with focus on professional HE)
- **www.esu-online.org** (student participation in QA)