An analysis of topics addressed by recommendations in the reports of the Institutional Evaluation Programme

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Elena Cirlan
Anna Gover
The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP)

EUA’s quality assurance agency

- Listed on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)
- Full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
- Founded in 1994
- Conducted over 430 evaluations in 50 different countries
IEP methodology

Mission-driven and context-sensitive ➔ Fitness for (and of) purpose ➔ Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle

ESG part I
IEP Report

NAME OF THE INSTITUTION (In English)

EVALUATION REPORT

Month 2019

Areas

1. Governance and decision-making
2. Quality Culture
3. Teaching and learning
4. Research
5. Service to Society
6. Internationalisation

Set of Recommendations
Research question

What are the topics most frequently addressed by recommendations in the reports of the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP)?

an insight into the areas in which evaluated institutions face challenges and are advised to make changes
Recommendations from 25 most recent reports
19 first initial evaluations
6 second initial evaluations
2 special focus evaluations
13 different countries (including 3 non-EHEA)
Total number of recommendation: 580
Number of recommendations per report ranged from 11 to 44 (average: 23)
Significant variation in style of recommendations
Profile of institutions

68% public institutions

64% under 50 years old

Size ranging from 1-faculty to 23-faculty institutions
Methodology

Qualitative
- To identify and develop the topics
- To categorise the recommendations
- To interpret the results

Quantitative
- To determine the frequency of the topics
Data analysis

39 topics identified through content analysis of recommendations

Each topic allocated to one of the 6 areas of institutional activity covered by IEP

Each recommendation categorised under the relevant topic(s)

Frequency of topics determined

Content of recommendations further examined
Overview of findings

Areas of institutional activity

- Governance & decision-making: 58.8%
- Teaching and learning: 22.1%
- Quality culture: 20.3%
- Research: 17.8%
- Internationalisation: 14.5%
- Service to society: 8.5%

% of recommendations (n=580)
Cross-cutting theme 1

Focus on strategy

Topics covered:

- Bringing existing plans/activities into one coherent strategy
- Elements of a successful strategy and implementation plan
- How to develop a strategy

Why?

- IEP’s methodological focus on strategic leadership, whole institution, and institutional goals
- Profile of evaluation teams
- Motivation of the institution
Cross-cutting theme 2

Bologna Process policies

Topics covered:

- Student-centred learning and teaching
- Recognition of qualifications
- Quality assurance in line with the ESG
- Employability and internationalisation

Why?

- IEP as a European quality assurance agency
- Experience of the evaluation teams
- Specific European policies
Cross-cutting theme 3

Stakeholder collaboration

Topics covered:

- In particular strategy development, research, service to society and curriculum development
- When to use input from external stakeholders
- How to get input from external stakeholders
- Monitor and review partnerships

Why?

- Interviews with external stakeholders during site visits
- Collaboration not as goal in itself, but essential for institutional development
Governance and decision-making

Most frequently addressed topics:

- Academic staff (47)
- Strategy and implementation (42)
- Communication/marketing (27)
- Financial matters (27)
- Student involvement in decision making process (21)
- Governance structure (21)

Observations:

- Very broad area
- Reflects IEP’s mission and methodology
- Academic staff recommendations overlap with learning and teaching, research and curriculum development
Teaching and learning

Most frequently addressed topics:

- Curriculum development and delivery (78)
- Strategy (11)
- Teaching-Research links and balance (11)

Observations:

- References (explicit and implicit) to Bologna Process policies
- No recommendations about programme content (except for interdisciplinarity and transversal skills)
Most frequently addressed topics:

- Strategy and implementation (48)
- Collaboration (internal and external) (27)

Observations:

- Appropriateness of goals (more than in any other area)
- Focus on capacity building and reaching critical mass
Service to society

**Most frequently addressed topics:**

- Strategy and implementation (30)

**Observations:**

- Two types of recommendation:
  - Related to service that the institution can offer to society
  - Related to harnessing the benefits that offering these services can bring back to the institution

- Fewer topics due to:
  - Area most closely linked with local context
  - Broad understanding of what constitutes service to society
Quality culture

Most frequently addressed topics:

- Tools and processes (collecting feedback, KPIs, information systems, quality standards and handbooks) (51)
- Follow-up (closing the feedback loop) (27)
- Strategy (one coherent approach, covering all institutional activities) (26)

Observations:

- Quality culture as cross-cutting theme: reducing bureaucracy, balancing the need for monitoring with risk of evaluation fatigue, stakeholder engagement
- Very practical recommendations
Internationalisation

Most frequently addressed topics:

- Strategy (strategic approach instead of ad hoc activities) (24)
- Mobility (staff/student, incoming/outgoing, long term/short term) (23)
- Foreign language provision (language skills, programme delivery in foreign language) (22)

Observations:

- Internationalisation not as a goal in itself
- Mainstreaming internationalisation in other institutional activities
Conclusion

Three key factors that influence the recommendations

Mission and methodology of IEP

Mission and goals of the institution

Overall policy context
Questions
Comments
More information

IEP website: https://iep-qaa.org