2021 European Quality Assurance Forum

Building trust and enhancement: from information to evidence

Online event
18-19 November 2021

Draft programme *(29 October 2021)*

The European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) provides a platform for discussion, professional development and exchange of experiences among the main stakeholders in quality assurance (QA). The Forum will be of interest to rectors and vice-rectors responsible for QA, QA officers in higher education institutions, students, QA agency staff and researchers working in higher education or the QA field.

This year's Forum entitled **"Building trust and enhancement: from information to evidence"** will combine online sessions about European policies and trends, research, and practical case examples related to the Forum theme and more generally about current developments in quality assurance.

Forum objectives

To promote trust and serve as a basis for informed decision making and quality enhancement, quality assurance needs to be evidence-based. The amount of data on higher education and the performance of higher education institutions has increased in recent years and its nature is changing partly due to digitalisation. This makes it increasingly important to determine which information is meaningful and relevant for stakeholders in higher education, hence worth serving as evidence for robust quality assurance processes.

The Forum will address questions such as how to ensure an appropriate balance between qualitative and quantitative data and diverse sources of information. It will also focus on how to analyse and interpret the data, as well as how to ensure that it is used to enhance quality and promote trust. Notably, the 2021 EQAF will offer an occasion to analyse how to make the best out of the opportunities offered by digitalisation while avoiding pitfalls. The Forum will explore the evidence used in external and internal quality assurance and how to improve its use and impact.

All time indications are in CET.

Wednesday, 17 November

Pre-Forum session

16.00-18.00 **Meeting for student experts in quality assurance**
This session is organised by the European Students' Union (ESU). There is a separate registration process. Further details are available here.

Thursday, 18 November

The event platform will be open and accessible as of 9.00.

13.30-14.15 **Opening Session - The value of evidence**
This session will explore what constitutes useful and meaningful evidence in quality assurance, what big data, learning analytics, AI and open data mean for quality assurance, the link between evidence and quality, and the implications for measuring quality in higher education.

- Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive, Office for Students, the UK
- Dragan Gasevic, Professor, Monash University, Australia

Chair: Jens Jungblut, EQAF Programme Committee

14.15-14.45 Break

14.45-15.30 **Discussion Starter Session**

a) Indicators in learning and teaching and the social dimension

- Helene Peterbauer, the European University Association (EUA)
- Michał Goszczyński, the European Students' Union (ESU)

Chair: Joaquim Mourato, EQAF Programme Committee

b) Quality assurance and academic integrity

- Gareth Crossman, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the UK
- Karena Maguire, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Chair: Pegi Pavletić, EQAF Programme Committee

c) The road to meaningful standards and criteria in higher education institutions

- Esther Adot Giménez, AQU Catalunya, Spain
- Sonja Mikeska, Münster University of Applied Sciences, Wandelwerk, Germany

Chair: Gea van Zutven, EQAF Programme Committee

15.30-16.00 Break

16.00-17.00 **Paper Session**

a) Accreditation on the move

- Alexandre Wipf, Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes (AQAS), Germany
- Martin Prchal, Royal Conservatoire in the Hague, the Netherlands

Chair: Ulf Hedbjörk, EQAF Programme Committee

b) Quality assurance of joint programmes

- Josef Matoušek, Charles University, Czech Republic
- Tina Harrison, University of Edinburgh, the UK

Chair: Ronny Heintze, EQAF Programme Committee

17.00-17.10 Closing of day one

17.10 Networking drinks

Friday, 19 November

09.30-10.30 Paper Session

c) Trust and impact in higher education

- Elisabeth Haslinger, Vienna University of Economics and Business
- Angeline Aubert-Lotarski, University of Mons, Belgium

Chair: Liv Teresa Muth, EQAF Programme Committee

d) Strengthening external engagement

- Nicole Lassahn, Université Grenoble Alpes, France
- Eltjo Bazen, University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, the Netherlands

Chair: Geneviève Le Fort, EQAF Programme Committee

10.30-11.00 Break

11.00-11.45 Discussion Starter Session

d) Data and conversations: opposites or complementary?

- Gabriel Heinrichs, University of Groningen/Avans University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands
- Ailsa Crum, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the UK

Chair: Ronny Heintze, EQAF Programme Committee

e) Students – a rich source in quality assurance

- Renáta Hall, Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education
- Adrian Zontek, SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Poland

Chair: Geneviève Le Fort, EQAF Programme Committee

f) The potential of digitalisation in data management

- Tinatin Gabrichidze, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia
- Deniz Kozanoglu, Yeditepe University and GATE Lyon Saint-Étienne Research Center (CNRS)

Chair: Ruben Janssens, European Students' Union

11.45-12.15 Break

12.15-13.00 Closing Session - Building trust through quality assurance
This session will discuss what makes quality assurance and its results more convincing to and reliable for diverse stakeholders and how evidence-based quality assurance contributes to building trust.

- Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Head of Higher Education Unit, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission
- Mirek Pospisil, Senior Lead Manager EU Public Policy and Government Affairs, LinkedIn
- Martina Darmanin, President of the European Students' Union

Chair: Karl Dittrich, President of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

13.00-13.10 Closing of the event

The event platform will remain open and accessible for two weeks after the event.

Paper and discussion-starter abstracts

The use of indicators in external quality assurance
Helene Peterbauer, the European University Association (EUA)

In this session, participants will be invited to discuss the fitness-for-purpose of quality indicators related to higher education that are currently in use in external quality assurance external QA. The discussion will be based on a survey of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) members, the results of which were published in the EUA report "Exploring higher education indicators" (2020). Participants will jointly explore the usefulness and adequacy of the indicators in use, consider potential future developments and implications for data collection processes – especially following the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic – and contribute to further mapping the indicator landscape by sharing their own experiences with using indicators in quality assurance (QA). The session will also be an opportunity to envision alternatives – whether already in use or potential – to current approaches to using indicators in QA.

Social dimension of higher education – the use of meaningful indicators in quality assurance
Michał Goszczyński, the European Students' Union (ESU)

The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced inequalities in access to tertiary education and has disclosed the obstacles learners can face to entering, progressing in and successfully completing their learning path in higher education. In this regard, the social dimension of higher education is of the utmost importance and we believe that universities, together with national authorities, should take the lessons learned from the pandemic as an accelerator to work on increasing the chances for all learners – from new secondary education graduates to adult learners re-entering higher education – to participate in quality higher education.

The ESU therefore proposes a discussion on whether, and how, QA and its European and national frameworks could contribute to supporting an increased focus on the social dimension of higher education.

The Academic Integrity Charter: collaborative and proactive action to combat academic misconduct
Gareth Crossman, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Protecting academic integrity and combatting academic misconduct are priorities for QAA. Contract cheating presents a particular threat. Typified by the use of essay mills, this involves students engaging third parties to complete their academic assessments.

Demand for essay mill services is high. One comparison site currently lists over 1000 separate sites. Students who use contract cheating services risk their academic and professional careers and are increasingly vulnerable to blackmail.

QAA undertakes a range of activities to protect academic integrity, working closely with other agencies, including QQI. We also chair an ENQA working group on academic integrity. One innovation was to develop an Academic Integrity Charter. The Charter was designed in collaboration with the UK's Academic Integrity Advisory Group and with students. The Charter sets out seven principles that higher education signatories commit to and demonstrates the sector's proactive initiative in taking action. The Charter currently has 176 signatories.

New models of QA impact: using national developments on academic integrity to demonstrate successful QA collaborations
Karena Maguire, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Academic integrity is central to confidence in national qualifications, standards and quality enhancement. In 2019 new legislation empowered QQI to prosecute those who facilitate academic cheating.

QQI established the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN), a peer-driven higher education institution (HEI) network focusing on the nature of academic misconduct. This identifies measures to

prevent misconduct, develops awareness and supports enhancement initiatives with QQI to promote academic integrity.

NAIN has produced guidance in its publications "Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms" (2021) and "Academic Integrity Guidelines" (2021). Data gathered on detection support the development of a policy framework for academic misconduct, digital resources for students and professional development for staff. Working with QAA and other agencies, QQI provides connection to global trends, security alerts and circulars on digital challenges. The speed of these peer-driven national developments has engendered community commitment and will inspire HEIs and organisations in other jurisdictions.

Quality Indicators Scoreboard: useful, comparable, answering external evaluation requirements – is that possible?
Esther Adot Giménez, AQU Catalunya

The Structured Indicators for HEI Quality Systems Management (SMART-QUAL) project, in which AQU Catalunya is participating, aims to build a Quality Indicators Scoreboard (QIS) capable of providing three main elements:

- a comprehensive framework of quality indicators that allows benchmarking between similar HEIs;
- useful information capable of addressing quality criteria applied by external systematic assessments; and
- valuable data for the different levels of managerial decision-making.

The QIS has 50 indicators, each of which is classified according to three criteria:

- the three HEI missions;
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) compliance; and
- managerial decision-making levels.

All indicators are selected from mature internal QA systems and a comprehensive literature review.

Transparency and accessibility are fundamental for building trust. Mutually agreed indicators are essential to foster accessibility. Likewise, publication of the results enables benchmarks and good practices to be defined in order to enhance organisations and study programmes.

Agility and trust in quality management at HEIs
Sonja Mikeska, Münster University of Applied Sciences, Wandelwerk

Agile thinking has become crucial for managing projects in so-called volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) contexts. But what does it mean in the context of the management of quality in teaching and learning? Agility values individuals more highly than processes, results more highly than documentation and fast adaptability more highly than planned goals. This requires trust from all the involved stakeholders; is that thinkable or desirable in quality management at HEIs? What do we value more at our institutions: a lively quality culture or the meeting of criteria and regulations? Flexible processes or fixed standards? A holistic vision or minutely planned goals?

Questions like these will stimulate a "thinking outside of the box" discussion, in which participants reflect on the right balance between how much control is necessary for an effective QA system and how much trust is needed, or possible, in order to enable agile quality enhancement.

The mandatory use of performance indicators in programme accreditation – the German example and the experience from an accreditation agency
Alexandre Wipf, Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes (AQAS)

This paper presents an overview of the mandatory use of performance indicators in programme accreditation in Germany. The use of performance indicators in Germany is not new, but recent developments have made their use more prominent. The paper discusses how peer reviewers are to

use the indicators and how these are intended to contribute to more transparency, not only in the review process but also in the higher education system. The paper also presents the first lessons learned and the potential limitations that have been identified in the use of such indicators.

The session will use the German example to open a discussion with participants on the impact the use of performance indicators has had on accreditation and on the possible ways to use the gathered data in the future.

From quality assurance to a quality culture: four Dutch universities of applied sciences share their experiences with innovative approaches to programme review
Martin Prchal, Royal Conservatoire, University of the Arts in the Hague; Edwin Löring, LOI University of Applied Sciences; Anneke Vierhout, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS); Martin de Wolf and Anouschka van Eijk-Heitlager, Fontys University of Applied Sciences

This paper describes the experiences of four Dutch universities of applied sciences in the context of a pilot project organised by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. This development suggests an important shift in the Dutch accreditation system from programme accreditation to institutional accreditation. The institutions have been experimenting in the last few years with new approaches to QA at programme level as part of the pilot scheme, which offers considerable freedom and scope for the review of individual programmes within the framework of a broad and robust quality audit at institutional level. Preliminary findings show that these new approaches increase the ownership and involvement of teachers and staff in quality processes, which has a positive impact on the development of a quality culture at both programme and institutional levels.

Joint programmes – from international policy to national practice. Intertwining of typology and accreditation of international study programmes in (not only) the Czech Republic
Josef Matoušek and Vojtěch Tomášek, Charles University

Discrepancies in the terminology and overall conception of joint programmes are two of the most omnipresent issues in this area of higher education, often preventing fruitful collaboration or causing lapses in QA. This paper attempts to address this topic from two different but intertwined perspectives. First, it describes the milieu of policy making relevant to joint programmes and its development in recent years. It focuses predominantly on the ambivalence of the terminology commonly used to describe these programmes, while also comparing the practices that the terms generally label. Second, it describes an effort to address these issues on the national level in the form of a statewide ministry-funded project. By connecting both parts, it invokes policy making questions pertaining to the role of national legislation, accreditation processes and appropriate QA in these programmes.

Internal quality assurance in the context of a European University: a lean and trust-based approach for the joint programmes of Una Europa
Jef Cox, Piet Verhesschen and Agnetha Broos, KU Leuven; Gerd Helm, Freie Universität Berlin; Barbara Neri, Angela Ribeiro Cavazutti and Elena De Sanctis, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna; Tina Harrison, University of Edinburgh; Sonia Martin López and Begoña García Greciano, Universidad Complutense de Madrid; Päivi Aronen, University of Helsinki; Malgorzata Winiarska-Brodowska and Justyna M. Bugaj, Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie; Francisca Cabezas, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

This paper presents a QA approach for joint programmes that has been developed by the Una Europa alliance. The Una Europa partners have developed a lean joint internal QA strategy for the joint programmes that seeks to build on existing practices within the partner institutions to the maximum extent. Trust between the partners is the key aspect of the joint QA strategy.

The approach is based on the principles of verified trust, subsidiarity and core practices. From this follows a need for accountability and transparency. To ensure transparency, the partners share information on their internal QA methods in a “knowledge base”. Furthermore, the partners have agreed on core practices for the smooth operation of the joint QA system: involvement of stakeholders, timing, scope, tools and communication.

Based on this lean strategy, all Una Europa partners commit themselves to safeguarding the quality of joint programmes on a continuous basis.

Mapping impact through quality assurance: towards a more investigative QA paradigm
Oliver Vettori, Elisabeth Haslinger and Karl Ledermüller, Vienna University of Economics and Business

The relationship between QA and impact has been increasingly gaining attention during the last two decades. The focus, however, is usually on the impact of QA. In this paper, the authors want to shift the attention to how QA could contribute to assessing the impact of higher education (institutions) and what this implies methodologically. After presenting two current initiatives on monitoring "broad" and "deep" impact at their own institution, the authors thus argue for a more "investigative" approach in QA, which might also strengthen links to institutional decision-making.

Initiating a new external QA methodology: the key role of evidence to build trust. Three voices tell the lessons learned from a pilot phase
Angeline Aubert-Lotarski, University of Mons; Caty Duykaerts, Agence pour l'évaluation de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur (AEQES) and Jacques Lanares, independent consultant

This paper illustrates how HEIs, experts and a QA agency addressed the key challenges of building trust among stakeholders, and explores the role of evidence in fostering confidence in the experimental "learning by doing together" process.

AEQES was entrusted to design and implement a pilot phase. The conditions of trust (clear "rules of the game" of the long-running external QA activities and co-constructed project) were met before the pilot began. But uncertainty is intrinsic in any pilot scheme. We learned that the provision of evidence, as highlighted by the three stakeholders, is a critical foundation for confidence in transparency, relevance and fairness. We also learned that trust is a complex phenomenon that requires understanding and taking into account the various assumptions and expectations of all actors involved. The authors will invite participants to discuss the process and exchange experiences.

Transforming information into data: a use case at the Université Grenoble Alpes
Vincent Rauzier and Nicole Lassahn, Université Grenoble Alpes

In 2017, the Université Grenoble Alpes began the construction of a new database of relationships with its external partners, both local and international. The database has provided the university with its first global view of its external relations and some of its impact. This new database also provides university stakeholders with tools for evaluation and decision-making. Built from available information already present in a variety of university information systems, it also demonstrates how much can be accomplished with the information already collected and archived as a result of day-to-day university processes. However, the project also highlights some of the university's ongoing weaknesses with respect to assessment, quality management and data-driven decision-making, and the need for further, more strategic use of information.

Benchlearning: a Finnish-Dutch case study of an enhancement-oriented QA tool
Antonella Storti, Turku University of Applied Sciences (UAS); Eltjo Bazen, HU UAS Utrecht

In the Finnish accreditation system, the element of benchlearning was introduced in 2018. Turku UAS grabbed the chance to try out this new method and invited HU UAS Utrecht, a long-time partner from the Netherlands, to dive in and see how much the method could benefit both institutions. Focusing on the theme of managing societal engagement and impact, the two institutions had to invent how this process should actually work. After elaborate preparations by the coordinators on both sides, online sessions for knowledge-domain-specific groups (educational and research staff combined) took place, best practices were shared and their potential implementation in the other institution was explored. The method of benchlearning was deemed a very useful one by most of those involved, and it will be used more often as a tool for institutional learning.

Do assessment panels require spoken testimony to trust written evidence?
Gabriel Heinrichs, University of Groningen and Avans University of Applied Sciences

The ESG specifies that external assessment panels should include two classes of evidence. First, (written) self-assessments; second, observations made during site visits. Collecting spoken testimony

from students, staff and others, a site visit adds nuance and clarification to prior written reports. Moreover, a site visit provides an indispensable occasion for epistemic trust-building between participants. Without sufficient epistemic trust, it is impossible for panel members to accept information as evidence or reach a reliable collective judgement. In my research into accreditation review practices in the Netherlands, I explore the factors that influence epistemic trust during accreditation reviews and how they affect assessment panels' deliberations and verdicts.

In this conversation starter, I would like to discuss the ways in which a site visit might increase or reduce a panel's trust in the (prior) evidence, and to what extent the digitalisation of external assessments has impacted the trust-building process for assessment panels.

Empowering staff and students to use data effectively to improve the learning experience
Ailsa Crum, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Institutions are at different stages in their use of data, but are there characteristics of using evidence effectively that can be adopted by all institutions to underpin their decision-making?

In a three-year initiative, we explored the ways in which students and staff can be empowered to make more systematic use of evidence to improve the student experience, for example through the following:

- achieving greater understanding of key data sets;
- finding imaginative ways of hearing and responding to the student voice; and
- supporting programme leaders to make sense of apparently contradictory data.

This session will consider the value of using quantitative and qualitative data together to support the evaluation of impact and ask some key questions:

- Do we have the right information, and do we use it in the best way possible to support our decision-making?
- How do we support staff and students to understand potentially conflicting data?

Quarter to Quality Education – enhancing the quality of higher education with student voice
Renáta Hall, Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAHE)

Student-centred learning is key to increasing the quality of higher education for SAAHE. Students' needs can only be met if their views are incorporated. Hence, SAAHE launched a state-wide student survey, "Quarter to Quality Education", in 2021. Prior to the survey, we asked students what would motivate them to participate. They emphasised that the survey should bring about change, a call we would like to attempt to heed in several ways. First, HEIs should take the student perspective on services they provide into account. For external QA, the data will indicate strengths and weaknesses in education and services at the respective HEIs. We will also request interventions from the government and other stakeholders to tackle identified system-wide problems that prohibit the flourishing of an environment conducive to quality. In witnessing positive changes, the students will learn that their feedback can enhance the quality of their HEI.

From information to change – a bottom-up approach. Good practice in enhancement based on the case of SGH Warsaw School of Economics
Jakub Brdulak and Adrian Zontek, SGH Warsaw School of Economics

One of the many difficulties of managing academic society is introducing change in an effective way. Top-down management at the university level seems to be ineffective, while bottom-up processes play a crucial role as the best facilitators for creating an academic culture that embraces change.

Bearing in mind such tendencies, SGH Warsaw School of Economics introduced a new form of communicating with its stakeholders: the Rector's Proxy for Quality of Learning and Teaching team, together with a group of student representatives, has created a series of open-access webinars dedicated to learning and teaching processes. The common denominator of all events was that the evidence-based approach of different institutions translated into challenges at SGH. The results are promising – some of the ideas presented at webinars have been converted into strategic decisions at SGH, while all events are stored and accessible in the repository of articles and summaries of webinars.

Quantitative data, weighted indicators and data analysis software – tools for evidence-based decision making in higher education

Tinatin Gabrichidze, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

HEIs widely adopt evidence-based and output-driven QA mechanisms, increasing demand for quantitative data. Performance indicators and software tools are being utilised within institutions and systems. EUA's 2020 publication "Exploring higher education indicators" names three areas where the indicators are used for assessing higher education: external QA, rankings and funding mechanisms.

Tbilisi State University has developed an internal quality evaluation mechanism, evaluating institutional performance at the programme, faculty and institutional level, and covering three missions based on data collection and analysis through metrics, weighted indicators and electronic software.

The contribution describes the process and methodology of developing the metrics and indicators that best fit the institution, and also takes into account the regional context. That is, without performance-based funding and with no wide participation in rankings, the only external driver for universities in Georgia for collecting and analysing quantitative and performance-related data is the external QA system, or the internal QA itself.

Digital transformation of data in QA processes: the case of Turkish universities

Deniz Kozanoglu, Yeditepe University and GATE Lyon Saint-Étienne Research Centre (CNRS)

This contribution addresses the successful digital transformation experience of distinguished Turkish universities that digitalise and manage their QA processes through digital platforms. There is a relation of complementarity between the digital quality information management platforms used by Turkish universities and the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council's QA management platform. In the context of managing digital data in the QA processes of relevant universities, the presentation will reveal issues related to the primary functions and control of digital data in universities, what and whose interests are prioritised, and how the results are checked in terms of effectiveness and outcomes. At the end of the presentation, the key questions below will be addressed to the attendees following the results discussed in this contribution:

- Does digital data prevent some decisions and practices from being seen?
- Are there any elements that are lost with digital datafication compared to the previous bureaucratic methods?