

Improving Institutional Quality in Europe:

The role of the European University Association

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Tor Vergata, 27 November 2003



EUA – starting points

- Birth of association, Salamanca 2001
- “Guiding principle for European universities”: autonomy with accountability
- Fundamental building block: Quality

European starting points

- Bologna Declaration: “the promotion of European co-operation in QA”
- Prague Communiqué: all partners “to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference and to disseminate best practice”
- Berlin Communiqué: “the primary responsibility for QA in HE lies with each institution itself...”

Implications for EUA:

Action at two levels:

1. University-level (internal quality)

- develop Quality culture inside Higher education institutions
- develop the EUA Institutional Evaluation programme

2. System-level

- think and discuss how co-operation concerning external quality assurance might be organised at European level

Quality Culture project: 2002 – 2003 (round one)

- 137 applications
- Fifty institutions selected in 29 countries:
 - 40 universities
 - 7 technical universities
 - 3 non-university institutions
- Six thematic networks

Quality Culture Project: Aims

- Increase awareness of the need to develop an internal quality culture in universities,
- Promote the introduction of internal quality management to improve quality levels,
- Ensure the wide dissemination of existing best practices,
- Help universities to approach external procedures of quality assurance in a constructive way

Quality Culture: Results I

- Quality as a multi-faceted concept, difficult, if not impossible, to define
- Performance indicators identified - but no agreement on common priorities
- Common obstacles and gaps in university provision (e.g, research management, international offices and student support services not well integrated etc)
- **Implication: shouldn't aim for common, rigid standards – as quality depends on institutional goals, context and conditions**

Quality Culture: Results II

Identified conditions for success, including importance of:

- institutional governance and **leadership** (vs. management) for effective quality culture
- **strategic thinking**
- strong culture of **autonomy and accountability**
- **staff development** schemes and **appropriate resources**

Quality Culture: 2003-2004 (round two)

Selected themes:

- Research management
- Academic career management
- Implementing Bologna reforms
- Student support services
- Internal programme evaluations
- Service to the community (industrial partnerships, public service activities, cultural activities, etc)

Institutional Evaluation Programme: 2004 - tenth anniversary

- At the end of 2004, 117 evaluations in 35 countries, including 5 system-wide evaluations
 - Tor Verdata in 2002
- Plus around 20 follow-up evaluations
- All institutional evaluations are done at the request of the universities
- Recognised and integrated into national systems: e.g. Finland, Ireland, Portugal
- Programme itself also subject to evaluation (4 times in 10 years)

Institutional Evaluation Programme: Philosophy

- **Institutional approach** focused on developing **capacity for change** through:
 - Internal quality
 - Strategic leadership
- Evaluation in terms of fitness for purpose(s)
- What is/are the purpose(s)? (mission and aims)
- Mutual learning: peer evaluation in a supportive yet critical context
- Improvement orientation
- European rather than national perspective

Characteristics of EUA programme

- Strong emphasis on self-evaluation
- European and international dimension to quality assurance
- Independent of national agencies or government evaluation
- Geared towards the interests of the university
- Strengthens long-term strategic management, organisation of change, capacity for development

Methodology

- i) **Self-evaluation report** prepared by the University
 - Descriptive and analytic
 - Process as important as outcomes
 - Success requires willingness to face strengths, weaknesses and problems
- ii) **Two site-visits** by Review Team
- iii) **Oral and written reports**

Overview of EUA approach

- Emphasis on institutional internal enhancement
- Importance of external evaluation at institutional level, not programme
- Need for programme evaluation by university (with external input)

EUA goals at European level I

Given:

- Lessons from EUA QA activities: institutions are interested in development quality provided this is done in a supportive, peer-to-peer environment that respects academic values
- EUA members' expression of interest in an EUA quality label for institutions and joint degrees

EUA goals at European level II

- Promote innovative and dynamic institutions in a context characterised by diversity of missions, goals and curricula
- Preserve and extend institutional autonomy while meeting the demands for accountability
- Develop a European dimension to achieve trust and greater compatibility while managing diversity of QA procedures

EUA's Code of Principles

- QA procedures must **promote institutional autonomy** and diversity and foster innovation by evaluating institutions against their mission and strategic plans.
- QA procedures must **promote cultural and organisational quality**, rather than commercial quality
- QA procedures – whether evaluation or accreditation – must be **geared at enhancement**

EUA's Code of Principles II

- QA procedures must **assure public accountability**
- QA procedures must follow **guidelines that are transparent to the public and higher education institutions** and must have specified and fair appeals procedures.
- **QA agencies, where they exist, must be evaluated themselves**, on a cyclical basis, in terms of the adequacy of their resources and their impact on institutions.

Next steps for EUA

- Berlin Communiqué:
Ministers call upon ENQA through its members, in **co-operation** with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB:
 - to develop an agreed set of **standards, procedures and guidelines** on quality assurance,
 - to explore ways of ensuring an adequate **peer review** system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies
- EUA will:
 - Continue to help members improve quality culture
 - Develop our international expertise
 - Ensure wide debate in Europe within the EUA and between the QA community

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