

CHEA

International Commission

San Francisco

26 January 2006

International Trends in the Quality Assurance of Higher Education

Richard Lewis

President of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) – the “Network”

Co Director of the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, the Open University

Structure of Presentation

A very brief introduction to INQAAHE

A report on an analysis of INQAAHE's data base containing information about the ownership and mode of operation of quality assurance agencies

A more anecdotal discussion of current trends in quality assurance

INQAAHE 1

The network was set up in Hong Kong in 1991

It has three grades of members, full, associate and affiliate

Full Members are organisations responsible for assuring the academic quality of post-secondary institutions or education programmes other than their own, such as: accrediting agencies, universities that accredit other institutions, evaluation agencies and similar organisations; and those bodies responsible for the external quality assurance of such agencies.

INQAAHE 2

At its first meeting there were representatives from about ten countries

INQAAHE now has about 170 members, including over 100 full members from over 60 countries.

INQAAHE 3

Historically its main purpose - to help create a community of those concerned with external quality assurance in higher education. This is achieved through:

INQAAHE 4

A biennial conference with a members' workshops in the intervening years

The provision of technical workshops before these meetings

The establishment of a development fund to assist in attendance at these meetings

The publication of a Newsletter and a bimonthly electronic bulletin

The sponsorship of an academic journal *Quality in Higher Education*

The issue of a set of *Guidelines of Good Practice for Quality Assurance Agencies*

The review (on a voluntary basis) of an agency's operations

INQAAHE 5

Resources

Annual subscription 300 euros

Recently appointed the Higher Education and Training Awards Council of Ireland to act as the secretariat (approximately 0.5 of an administrator)

Otherwise relies on the voluntary endeavours of its members, especially those elected to its board

INQAAHE 6

Important Recent Developments

The growth of regional associations of quality assurance agencies as ENQA in Europe and the Asia Pacific network. INQAAHE has recognised that much of its members' international activities are now taking place at regional level.

INQAAHE has recently been recognised by UNESCO as an international non-governmental organisation

INQAAHE – the final plug

2006 Workshop will be hosted by the
Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
(NVAO) and held in the Hague, 17-19 May

2007 Conference will be hosted by the
Postsecondary Education Quality
assessment Board (PEQAB) of Ontario and
held in Toronto, 2-5 April

See www.inqaahe.org

The INQAAHE members' survey

In 2004/2005 members were asked to complete a questionnaire dealing with issues such as ownership, remit, mode of operation etc

An analysis of the returns was made in 2005

Agencies included in the analysis of the INQAAHE database

	No of full members shown on INQAAHE website	No of questionnaires used in this analysis	Percentage used
Europe	37	28	76%
Asia and Australasia	31	15	48%
Africa and the Middle East	13	8	62%
North America	17	11	65%
South and Central America and the Caribbean	12	5	42%
TOTALS	110	67	61%

Ownership of agencies

	Public Agencies Supported by Govt	Parts of Ministries or similar agencies	Mixed Ministry and HEIs	HEIs	Units within Rectors' Conferences	Proff and others	TOTALS
Europe	17	2	2	4	1	2	28
Asia and Australasia	7	1		4	1	2	15
Africa and the Middle East	5	1				2	8
North America	2			3	1	5	11
South and Central America and the Caribbean	3	1			1		5
TOTALS	34	5	2	11	4	11	67
Percentages	51%	7%	3%	16%	6%	16%	

Remit of Agencies

	Public/Private			University/non university			Remit extend beyond HEIs	TOTALS
	Both	Public only	Private only	Both	Univ only	Non univ only		
Europe	23	3	2	20	5	3	5	28
Asia and Australasia	8	5	1	10	3	1	2	14
Africa and the Middle East	6	1	1	8			1	8
North America	8	1	1	6	3	1	2	10
South and Central America and the Caribbean	3	1	1	3	2		1	5
TOTALS	47	11	7	47	13	5	11	65
Percentages	72%	17%	11%	72%	20%	8%	17%	

Scope of agencies' activities

	TOTAL	Total % ages
Both institutional and programme	42	63%
Institutional only	11	16%
Programme - general	8	12%
Programme - specific	6	9%
TOTALS	67	

The “traditional” four stage quality assurance model is alive and well

Virtually all agencies stated that used the following approach

- A self evaluation prepared by the institution
- The appointment of a peer group whose review of the institution or programme would start with a review of the self evaluation
- Site visits by the peer group.
- The publication of a report or, in some cases, only the decision

But is becoming to be applied rather differently

The questionnaires did not indicate that there are differences but it does appear that the basic approach is being applied differently across the world. This demonstrated by differences in the self study or self evaluation. In some countries, particularly Asia and the Middle East, the self studies consist largely of answers to closed questions, many of which are quantitative. The whole approach seems more inspectorial than peer review. This may in part be due to the point that external quality assurance has only recently been introduced

Non academic peers

% age of non-academic members of review teams

	100%	75-99%	50-74%	25-49%	1-24%	0%	No inf	TOTALS
Europe	0	1	1	7	10	5	4	28
Asia and Australasia	0	0	0	3	7	2	3	15
Africa and the Middle East	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	8
North America	0	0	0	1	4	4	2	11
South and Central America and the Caribbean	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	5
TOTALS	0	1	1	13	26	13	13	67
Percentages of those who provided information		2%	2%	24%	48%	24%		

Overseas peers

% age of reviewers from overseas

	100%	75-99%	50-74%	25-49%	1-24%	0%	No inf	TOTALS
Europe	2	3	2	5	11	2	3	28
Asia and Australasia	0	0	1	1	2	8	3	15
Africa and the Middle East	0	1	1	0	2	1	3	8
North America	0	0	0	0	4	5	2	11
South and Central America and the Caribbean	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	5
TOTALS	3	4	4	7	21	17	11	67
Percentages of those who provided information	5%	7%	7%	12%	38%	30%		

Agencies that accredit

	Make yes/no decisions	Do not make yes/no decisions	Total
Europe	18	10	28
Asia and Australasia	11	4	15
Africa and the Middle East	3	4	7
North America	10	1	11
South and Central America and the Caribbean	4	1	5
TOTALS	46	20	66

But what does accreditation mean?

Essentially a binary decision- of two types

A statement is made- this programme (institution) is operating at acceptable standards (or quality) and as a result of the decisions consequences will follow

As above but consequences do not follow

But term is sometimes used when binary decisions are not involved

Agencies that grade

	Comprehensive Grading	Grading implied by period of accreditation	Grading confined to weaker progs or instit.	Details not given	No Gradings	TOTALS
Europe	1	1	1	1	24	28
Asia and Australasia	4			1	10	15
Africa and the Middle East					8	8
North America			1		10	11
South and Central America and the Caribbean		1			4	5
TOTALS	5	2	2	2	56	67
% ages	7%	3%	3%	3%	84%	

Publication of reports – contrasting policies

Europe

“Reports should be published and should be written in a way which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership”

(ENQA 2005)

The United States

“In most cases, the Commission will not make reports public without the permission of the college or university.”

(HEC 2003)

Publication of Reports

	Publishes Reports	Does not Publish Reports	Unknown	TOTALS
Europe	17	11		28
Asia and Australasia	4	11		15
Africa and the Middle East	4	3	1	8
North America	3	8		11
South and Central America and the Caribbean	3	2		5
TOTALS	31	35	1	67
% ages	46%	52%	1%	

Recommendations for improvement

Only three agencies did not confirm that they made recommendations for improvement

INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice 1

- ***Relationship between agency and HEIs***
- *The agency should:*
- *Recognise that quality is primarily the responsibility of HEIs*
- *Respect institutional autonomy and integrity*
- *Only apply standards that have been developed in consultation with stake holders*
- *Aim to contribute to quality improvement*
- ***Decision-making***
- *Assessment should relate to institution's own self-analysis and external reference points*
- *Should be independent, impartial, rigorous, thorough, fair and consistent*
- *Rules should be transparent*

INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice 2

- ***Public Face***
- *In its work the QAA should inform and respond to the public*
- *Should report openly on its decisions (this does not necessarily imply the publication of the report)*
- ***Documentation***
- *Should be clear and publicly available*
- *Should make clear what is required from institutions*

INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice 3

- ***System of appeal***
- *The agency should provide means for appealing against its decisions*
- ***Quality Assurance (QA) of agency***
- *Should have in place a system of QA for its own activities*
- ***Collaboration***
- *The agency should collaborate with other agencies.*

Compliance with Guidelines

	Reviewed practice against Guidelines and believe in compliance	Reviewed practice against Guidelines and believe, but with some reservation, in compliance	Reviewed practice against Guidelines but not in compliance	Not yet reviewed practice against guidelines	TOTALS
Europe	16	3		9	28
Asia and Australasia	7	1	1	5	14
Africa and the Middle East	2	1		5	8
North America	6			4	10
South and Central America and the Caribbean	3			2	5
TOTALS	34	5	1	25	65
% ages	52%	8%	2%	38%	

How agencies review their own practice

	Reviewed by a specialist agency	Used external consultants compliance	Consulted with stakeholders	None of these	No of agencies who responded
Europe	3	4	3	9	19
Asia and Australasia	1	2	1	6	9
Africa and the Middle East	1	4	1	1	5
North America	2	0	0	4	6
South and Central America and the Caribbean	0	0	0	3	3
TOTALS	7	10	5	23	42
% ages	17%	24%	12%	55%	

Policies and procedures for exported higher education

	Same procedures as for local provision	Modified procedures	No procedures or no answer	TOTALS
Europe	6	2	20	28
Asia and Australasia	2	1	12	15
Africa and the Middle East	0	2	6	8
North America	4	1	6	11
South and Central America and the Caribbean	2	0	3	5
TOTALS	14	6	47	67
% ages	21%	9%	70%	

Policies and procedures for imported higher education

	Same procedures as for local provision	Modified procedures	No procedures or no answer	TOTALS
Europe	8	5	15	28
Asia and Australasia	0	4	11	15
Africa and the Middle East	2	2	4	8
North America	4	0	7	11
South and Central America and the Caribbean	1	1	3	5
TOTALS	15	12	40	67
% ages	23%	18%	60%	

Emerging Trends

From quality assurance for accountability to quality assurance for enhancement (particularly relevant in systems as external quality assurance systems mature)

From inputs to outputs (but never entirely ignoring process as a proxy for important outputs that are difficult to measure)

More explicit statements of expectations of capacities to be demonstrated by graduates, e.g. in Europe Dublin and Tuning

More attention to cross border issues

Development of regional qa activities

Increased professionalism in the quality assurance movement (may not be an entirely a good thing!)

From accountability to enhancement

Newly established agency, especially if HE system not previously controlled	QA for accountability, closure of institutions and programmes not infrequent
System becomes more established	QA for accountability but moving to enhancement – closures of existing provision infrequent but new programmes and institutions quite often not approved
Most institutions clearly above the threshold level	QA for enhancement for most – closures only in rare cases virtually all new programmes approved albeit with conditions
Well established system	QA for enhancement for most – in some countries move to institutional audit. But still need accountability for new types of institutions and provision.

Importance of Learning Outcomes

CHEA policy

Accrediting agencies should place upon institutions the following expectation that they should

- Regularly gather and report concrete evidence about what students know and can do as a result of their respective courses of study, framed in terms of established learning outcomes and supplied at an appropriate level of aggregation (e.g. at the institutional or program level).
- Supplement this evidence with information about other dimensions of effective institutional or program performance with respect to student outcomes (e.g. graduation, retention, transfer, job placement, or admission to graduate school) that do not constitute direct evidence of student learning

Source Statement of Mutual Responsibilities for Student Learning Outcomes: Accreditation, Institutions and Programmes, CHEA September 2003

Conclusion

External quality assurance is growing and maturing but it is important to ensure that it does not evolve into mechanistic bureaucratic form filling.

Possible current weaknesses

- The training (or induction) of the academic reviewers
- Many agencies do not have a policy for dealing with cross border education
- Only a few agency's remit extends outside HEIs (related issue quality assurance of credit transfer)
- The quality assurance of quality assurance agencies

My thanks for your attention