

CHEA International Quality Group Inaugural Meeting Report

The CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) held its first annual meeting in January 2013. What follows are excerpts from an insightful and comprehensive report of this meeting prepared by Peter A. Okebukola, President, Global University Network for Innovation – Africa and member of the CIQG Advisory Council. The [full report](#) and a [report summary](#) may be found on the [CIQG Website](#).

At its inaugural conference attended by 375 participants from 37 countries, the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) went from reflections on current global practices to telescoping into the proximal future of quality assurance in higher education. A broad spectrum of contemporary and emerging issues was covered in the pursuit of these twin goals. At one end, the quest for world-class institutions; university rankings; youth unemployment; cross-border higher education; quality assurance in central and eastern Europe; and academic corruption stoked the flame of lively conversations. At the other end, the conference narrowed its gaze on some emerging issues notably open education resources, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and open badges. As the pendulum swung from current practice to future directions, participants came to the increasing realisation of the challenges and opportunities that will continue to unfold in the coming years in the quest to improve quality in higher education across the world.

From the beginning of the conference chaired by Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, CHEA Senior Advisor on International Affairs, and general superintendence by



Participants meet at the opening reception of the CIQG Annual Meeting.

Judith Eaton, President of CHEA, it was clear that participants shared one troubling concern – depreciating quality in higher education in the face of increasing student numbers and the urgent need to strengthen quality assurance. At the close of the conference, the need for national, regional and global action became evident.

(continued)

Four key messages emerged from the conference. The important role of CIQG in fostering conversations and action around topical issues in quality assurance in higher education was one. Such CIQG intervention will complement on-going efforts by other agencies and institutions in increasing awareness of the complexities of quality assuring global education and for pushing an agenda for reform. On this count, the CHEA Board of Directors was applauded for setting up CIQG, for the rich menu of its inaugural conference and for enrolling such a large number of members within a few months of its establishment. The message urging CIQG to make a difference in the niche it is carving for itself in promoting quality in higher education globally, was stressed.

The second message is networking and partnership among national quality assurance agencies, especially members of CIQG, to form a coalition against degree mills, academic corruption and to tackle other global challenges to quality in higher education. The third message is the need for stakeholders to deepen their understanding of international quality issues in higher education in today's competitive and international world with graduate unemployment rising steeply across the world. This is more so given the mobility of students and faculty across national boundaries with varying quality demands. In this connection, it becomes important to agree on a set of conditions that will guarantee mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas. The fourth message is that technology will drive the future of higher education but how to address this future remains uncertain.

On the strength of the key messages arising from the conference and the reflections of members of the CIQG Advisory Council who met informally during the course of the conference, the next steps are to initiate and sustain the momentum of action proposed in the key messages and to get the membership to share their concerns regarding quality and the directions to which CIQG should turn, via the medium of the CIQG questionnaire. The development of CIQG policy briefs and other resources on quality assurance in global higher education as well as partnership with national and regional groups to run capacity building workshops on quality assurance were some of the other next steps.

One of the prime aims of organising the conference was to let people learn about quality assurance practices from each other, from other national perspectives and other cultures. Informal feedback from the conference was very positive. Participants greatly enjoyed the chance to meet like-minded people from so many countries, the opportunity to network and the chance to explore ideas.

We thank everyone who attended for giving so freely of their time, enduring the hardship of international travel and for making the conference a memorable and successful first outing for CIQG. What we have here is a framework to inform our future conferences and we look forward to continuing the dialogue we started in Washington DC in the second CIQG conference in 2014. All of us made new friends and contacts and this can only contribute to the ever-growing efforts to improve quality in higher education.



Kai-ming Cheng from the University of Hong Kong addressed the CIQG Annual Meeting.

CIQG Survey of Higher Education Policies and Practices

In 2012, the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) Advisory Council decided to survey CIQG membership to help set priorities for CIQG's work. What follows are some key observations from these responses. The geographical distribution of responses was fairly even, with 44 percent coming from countries other than the US. Although replies were naturally context-specific, a number of general conclusions emerged. This summary has been prepared by Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, CHEA Senior Advisor for International Affairs.



Observations

There is general agreement that quality is a policy issue. Some question how much social and economic considerations should influence intellectual pursuit. Preparing students for successful careers and productive lives is, however, critically important. Institutional autonomy needs redefining such that independence should not mean the neglect of national priorities.

Tools for quality assurance are constantly improving towards a stronger focus on learning outcomes.

International developments in quality assurance are encouraging quality improvement at country level. Some note more openness to international peer review and accreditation, especially for professional studies. Respondents report that particular challenges to quality assurance are: government intervention; economic recession; provider diversity (including cross-border provision); online learning; the growth of private institutions; the entry of foreign accrediting agencies; inadequate legislation; the barrage of international concepts and systems; changing demographics and the difficulty of recruiting highly qualified faculty.

While there is a widespread agreement that technology is changing students' learning habits, there is less consensus that these new developments have a significant impact on higher education. Some feel that these changes are unstoppable because they are driven by market forces, but they promote collaboration among institutions. Others report that online learning is so new in their countries that it is not yet accepted for obtaining credentials. Quality assurance is adapting somewhat painfully to these emerging challenges. Neither faculty training nor methods of certification are yet adequate for online courses. The emergence of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Open Badges are, so far, of little concern for quality assurance outside the United States. If innovation is not to be stifled, quality assurance must adapt to these changes.

Cross-border higher education is increasing and poses a challenge for quality assurance, especially where national regulation and legislation are absent or inadequate. Some private sector marketing techniques, making promises

that are not fulfilled, present a dilemma. But there are mechanisms for fighting degree mills, such as state requirements for higher education institutions' registration, consumer protection legislation, withholding accreditation and "white" lists of accredited institutions.

There are new regional harmonization initiatives emerging. As is the case with the Bologna Process in Europe and the African Higher Education and Research Space (AHERS), these new initiatives are often part of geo-political and economic associations between countries. Examples are the Asian Quality Assurance Network (AQAN), which is developing a regional quality assurance framework within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Other regional initiatives include quality assurance networks such as the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE). In the United States, some consider that CHEA is playing a role in harmonization of quality assurance.

(continued)

Outside the United States, there are increasing links between quality assurance and qualifications frameworks. Qualifications frameworks are developed at regional, sub-regional and country/province levels. In some countries, external quality assurance procedures require that descriptors of learning outcomes fit the National Qualifications Framework generic descriptors. In the United States, the Lumina Foundation degree framework may be the only example comparable to a qualifications framework.

Both private for-profit higher education institutions and public-private partnerships are increasing in number. “Profitability” is seen by some to be a major quality challenge for private for-profit higher education as is size, diversity, rapid growth and expectations of transparency. Some respondents call for additional government regulation of private for-profit higher education institutions as well as effective quality assurance mechanisms for them.

Rankings are not widely accepted as part of quality assurance, although they affect the behavior of institutions

and students. A number of respondents do not view rankings as reflecting quality and some universities view rankings as a public relations exercise. Governments’ attention to rankings varies across the world.

Respondents commented on the importance of international collaboration in approaching quality assurance issues, whether to develop international standards, to create formal agreements for mutual recognition or to clarify fuzzy terminology. They expressed appreciation to CIQG for creating a space for this.

Urge Your Colleagues To

JOIN CIQG!

As a member of the CIQG, you know the value of being a part of the international conversation on accreditation and quality assurance. Membership provides benefits including:

- The members-only CIQG newsletter, *Quality International*, and other CIQG publications
- Invitations to CIQG meetings and special activities
- A discounted rate for consultation services

Equally important, members are active participants in addressing the challenges facing quality assurance.

In addition to CHEA’s 3,000 member institutions, that automatically become CIQG members, recognized U.S. accrediting organizations, quality assurance bodies, higher education institutions, associations and businesses from around the world are eligible to join the CIQG. This diversity of membership helps to ensure that the issues CIQG addresses are considered from a variety of perspectives, deepening and enriching the conversation.

We ask that you urge your colleagues who would benefit from being a part of this important new venture to join the **CIQG**. They can learn more about the CIQG and its activities by visiting the CIQG Website at www.cheainternational.org.

Quality Assurance is Going Global

by Karen MacGregor

Global Editor, *University World News*

Note: Quality International invited University World News Global Editor Karen MacGregor to provide a short article offering her views on the growing importance of quality assurance internationally.

In the past decade, global forces such as growth of the knowledge economy have buffeted universities and colleges around the world, and much of the action and innovation in higher education has been at the international level.

Rising student mobility, internationalisation of the curriculum and learning outcomes, world university rankings, branch campuses and joint degrees, international research partnerships, and more recently massive open online courses, are just some of the developments that increasingly connect higher education institutions, systems and people across borders.

Issues of quality – and of quality assurance – are at the heart of these and other trends.

It has become increasingly clear to *University World News*, the weekly international e-paper that is both a reflection of and witness to higher education's internationalisation, that quality assurance is going global.

Universities, quality assurance agencies, staff and governments are engaging ever more internationally – and in new and different ways. Students are more mobile and more demanding, and regulatory environments for institutions operating across borders are hardening, resulting in increased expectations around quality assurance.

There are clear needs for international benchmarking and comparisons in higher education, and for a common 'language' or understanding to evolve for those undertaking quality assurance, even as they retain priorities and practices that are locally appropriate.

There are other, fundamental reasons why international cooperation around quality assurance is imperative.

One is that there are lessons to be learned from all around the world, including where quality assurance systems are still evolving. Another is that some developments – such as rankings and MOOCs – are by nature global, will change quality assurance and call for a common approach.

And another is that quality assurance approaches may offer ways to transcend the quantitative, mechanistic approaches that characterise international comparative and ranking exercises and sideline what is at the heart of higher education – teaching and learning processes and outcomes that enable students and academics to thrive in a global society.

Karen MacGregor is Global Editor of University World News, an online publication reporting on higher education news from a global perspective. For more information, visit the University World News Website at www.universityworldnews.com.



CIQG Membership Update



Since the CIQG was launched in September, 2012, 90 institutions and organizations have joined. CIQG members include higher education institutions, accrediting and quality assurance organizations, governmental agencies and businesses, as well as CHEA's 3,000 member institutions that become CIQG members as a benefit of their membership in CHEA.

The CIQG membership represents colleagues from 32 countries, including Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Ecuador, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Switzerland,

Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

“Each new member and country expands the international conversation on quality assurance and its future,” said CHEA President Judith Eaton. “It is a message about the importance of the international dialogue on quality assurance and its future.”



The CHEA 2013 Summer Workshop

The CHEA 2013 Summer Workshop will take place June 25-26 at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC. Each year, the workshop brings together representatives from colleges and universities, accrediting and quality assurance organizations, higher education associations, government and media to address a range of accreditation-related issues.

This year's Summer Workshop will include a session focusing on quality assurance in an international setting, as well as sessions on issues ranging from competency-based education and accreditation to how innovation will affect accreditation and quality assurance internationally.

CIQG members will receive the CHEA member discount for workshop registration. More information and a registration form for the CHEA 2013 Summer Workshop is available on the [CHEA Website](#).



Research Corner

Following are links to recent articles and papers addressing the issue of Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs, and their impact on higher education.



- ***“MOOCs: Massive Open Online Courses,”*** by Michael Gaebel, Head of the European University Association (EUA) Higher Education Policy Unit. An EUA Occasional Paper.



- ***“Mission, MOOCs, and Money,”*** by Kenneth C. Green, Founding Director, the Campus Computing Project. From the January-February 2013 issue of *Trusteeship* magazine, published by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.



- ***“Making Sense of MOOCs: Musings in a Maze of Myth, Paradox and Possibility,”*** by Sir John Daniel, Fellow, Korea National Open University and Education Master, DeTao Masters Academy, China.



- ***“The Professors Who Make the MOOCs,”*** by Steven Kolowich, Staff Reporter for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Published in the March 22, 2013 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

THE CHRONICLE
of Higher Education

- ***“Globalizing MOOCs,”*** by Kris Olds, Professor and Chair, Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin – Madison. Published in the March 17, 2013 issue of *Inside Higher Ed*.



CIQG Advisory Council

- **Nadia Badrawi**, President, Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Egypt)
- **Barbara Brittingham**, President, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges (USA)
- **Sir John Daniel**, Education Master, Beijing DeTao Masters Academy (China)
- **Mark Darby**, Counselor, Australian Education International (Australia)
- **A. Lee Fritschler**, Professor, School of Public Policy, George Mason University (USA)
- **Allan Goodman**, President, Institute for International Education (USA)
- **Madlyn L. Hanes**, Vice President, Commonwealth Campuses, Pennsylvania State University (USA)
- **Maria Jose Lemaitre**, Director, Centro Interuniversitario de Desarrollo and President, International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (Chile)
- **Michael Milligan**, Executive Director, ABET (USA)
- **Judy C. Miner**, President, Foothill College (USA)
- **Deane Neubauer**, Senior Fellow, Globalization Research Center, University of Hawaii – Manoa (USA)
- **Michal Neumann**, Deputy Director General for Quality Assessment, Council for Higher Education (CHE) (Israel)
- **Peter Okebukola**, President, Global University Network for Innovation – Africa (Nigeria)
- **Ved Prakash**, Vice Chairman, University Grants Commission, New Delhi (India)
- **Jamil Salmi**, Consultant, Global Tertiary Education Expert, Global View on Tertiary Education (USA)
- **Craig Swenson**, Chancellor, Argosy University (USA)
- **Lesley Wilson**, Secretary General, European University Association (Belgium)
- **Richard Yelland**, Head of Division, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (France)
- **Jianxin Zhang**, Director, Research Institute of Higher Education, Yunnan University (China)

Ex Officio Members

David G. Carter, Chair, Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Board of Directors

Judith Eaton, CHEA President

Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, CHEA Senior Advisor on International Affairs

Launched in September, 2012, the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) serves as a U.S.-based international forum for quality assurance and accreditation. The CIQG provides services to CIQG members intended to advance understanding of international quality assurance, assist institutions and accreditation/quality assurance organizations in their expanding international engagement and further enhance capacity for academic quality in international higher education.

