

BACKGROUND PAPER: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE: MALAYSIA, OMAN AND THE UNITED STATES

NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE BODIES

MALYSIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE



The Official Portal of
MALYSIAN QUALIFICATIONS AGENCY
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION



MQA At A Glance

The establishment of a new entity which merges the National Accreditation Board (LAN) and the Quality Assurance Division, Ministry of Higher Education (QAD) was approved by the Government on 21 December 2005. This entity is responsible for quality assurance of higher education for both the public and the private sectors.

The new entity, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), was established on 1 November 2007 with the coming in force of the [Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007](#). The MQA was officially launched by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Dato' Mustapa Mohamed, on 2 November 2007.

The main role of the MQA is to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) as a basis for quality assurance of higher education and as the reference point for the criteria and standards for national qualifications. The MQA is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the quality assurance practices and accreditation of national higher education.

The establishment of the MQA saw LAN dissolved and its personnel absorbed into the MQA.

With the vision to be a global authority on quality assurance of higher education and the mission to put in place a system of quality assurance that is recognised internationally, the MQA is set to chart new boundaries in higher education quality assurance.

Functions

As a quality assurance body, the functions of MQA are:

1. To implement MQF as a reference point for Malaysian qualifications;
2. To develop standards and credits and all other relevant instruments as national references for the conferment of awards with the cooperation of stakeholders;
3. To quality assure higher education institutions and programmes;
4. To accredit courses that fulfil the set criteria and standards;
5. To facilitate the recognition and articulation of qualifications; and
6. To maintain the Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR)

Source: http://www.mqa.gov.my/portalmqav3/red/en/profil_MQA.cfm. Accessed 6/11/18.

Assuring Quality

Best practices for quality assurance require clearly defined, transparent and fair criteria and standards that serve as references for evaluations and reports of programmes offered by higher education providers.

MQA has developed a code of practice on criteria and standards for higher education in Malaysia. This code of practice is benchmarked against international good practices and nationally accepted by stakeholders through various consultations.

The code provides a guideline of general requirements in the following areas:

1. Vision, mission and learning outcomes;
2. Curriculum design and delivery;
3. Student selection and support services;
4. Assessment of students;
5. Academic staff;
6. Educational resources;
7. Programme monitoring and review;
8. Leadership, governance and administration; and
9. Continual quality improvement.

In general, MQA quality assures programmes through two distinct processes:

1. **Provisional Accreditation** - is an exercise to determine whether a programme has met the minimum quality requirements preliminary to Full Accreditation.
2. **Full Accreditation** - is an assessment exercise to ascertain that the teaching, learning and all other related activities of a programme provided by a higher education provider has met the quality standards and in compliance with the MQF.

The MQA Act 2007 also provides for the conferment of a self accrediting status to mature higher education institutions that have well established internal quality assurance mechanisms. To be so conferred, the higher education institution needs to undergo an institutional audit, and if successful, all qualifications it offers will be automatically registered in the MQR.

The processes above are further supported by continuous monitoring to ensure the programmes offered by the institutions are always quality assured.

Source: Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

<http://www.mqa.gov.my/portalmqav3/red/en/qa.cfm>. N.D. Accessed 6/11/18

OMAN QUALITY ASSURANCE



الهيئة العمانية للاعتماد الأكاديمي
Oman Academic Accreditation Authority

Establishment of Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA)

In 2010, a Royal Decree was issued establishing the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) and replacing the former Oman Accreditation Council (OAC). The OAAA is an entity with legal status and financial and administrative independence, which reports to the Education Council. The OAAA was established to continue the efforts initiated by the OAC in the dissemination of a quality culture and accreditation of institutions and their programs. This is in order to enable Omani graduates to compete in the job market, and to contribute effectively to the sustainable development of the country.

The OAAA's Roles and Responsibilities

The Royal Decree stated that OAAA is responsible for regulating the quality of higher education in Oman to ensure the maintenance of a level that meets international standards, and to encourage higher education institutions to improve their internal quality, through the following:

- Establishment of a system that includes the standards and procedures for quality audit and institutional and program accreditation of higher education institutions, in addition to establishment of the procedures for recognizing foreign higher education academic programs offered in Oman.
- Conduct of quality audits of higher education institutions.
- Accreditation of higher education institutions against relevant standards established in this regard;
- Accreditation of higher education academic programs against relevant standards established in this regard;
- Development and update of the National Academic Qualifications Framework in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and other relevant authorities;
- Collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education regarding the development and upgrading of the procedures of quality audit and institutional and program accreditation of higher education institutions;
- Signing of mutual recognition memorandums of understanding with relevant authorities of quality assurance in higher education in other countries;
- Preparation of an annual report regarding the quality of higher education institutions and their programs that are reviewed, and presenting the results and recommendations to the Higher Education Council;
- Publication of quality audit and institutional and program accreditation results;
- Any other issues assigned by the Education Council related to the OAAA's responsibilities.

Source: <http://www.oaaa.gov.om/About.aspx#Establishment>, 6/22/18

The OAAA's Vision and Mission

Vision

The OAAA aspires to provide efficient, effective and internationally recognized services for accreditation in order to promote quality in higher education in Oman and meet the needs of the public and other stakeholders.

Mission

The OAAA guides and supports the Omani higher education sector to meet international standards; maintains the national qualifications framework; and, through a transparent and rigorous system of institutional and program accreditation, provides reliable information to the public and other stakeholders on the quality of higher education in Oman.

Source: <http://www.oaaa.gov.om/About.aspx#Vision>, 6/22/18

U.S. QUALITY ASSURANCE (ACCREDITATION)



Accreditation is a process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. Accreditation in the United States is more than 100 years old, emerging from concerns to protect public health and safety and to serve the public. Accreditation is a trust-based, standards-based, evidence-based, judgment-based, peer-based process.

In the United States, accreditation is carried out by private, nonprofit organizations designed for this specific purpose. External quality review of higher education is a nongovernmental enterprise. The U.S. accreditation structure is decentralized and complex, mirroring the decentralization and complexity of American higher education. The higher education enterprise is made up of degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions. These may be public or private, two- or four-year, nonprofit or for-profit. As of 2017-2018, degree-granting institutions spent more than \$600 billion (US), employed approximately 4.0 million people, full- and part-time, and had a total enrollment of credit students estimated at 27 million.

U.S. accreditors review colleges and universities in 50 states and 125 other countries. They review many thousands of programs in a range of professions and specialties, including law, medicine, business, nursing, social work, pharmacy, arts and journalism.

Both federal and state governments consider accreditation to be a reliable authority on academic quality. The federal government relies on accreditation to assure the quality of institutions and programs to which the government provides federal funds and for which the government provides federal aid to students. Most state governments will initially license institutions and programs without accreditation. However, states will subsequently require accreditation to make state funds available to institutions and students. States often require that individuals who sit for state licensure in various professions have graduated from accredited institutions and programs.

There are four types of accrediting organizations:

- **Regional accreditors.** Accredit public and private, mainly nonprofit and degree-granting, two- and four-year institutions.
- **National faith-related accreditors.** Accredit religiously affiliated and doctrinally based institutions, mainly nonprofit and degree-granting.
- **National career-related accreditors.** Accredit mainly for-profit, career-based, single-purpose institutions, both degree and non-degree.
- **Programmatic accreditors.** Accredit specific programs, professions and freestanding schools, e.g., law, medicine, engineering and health professions.

Eighty-five recognized institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations operate in the United States. Accrediting organizations derive their legitimacy from the colleges, universities and programs that created accreditation, not government. In 2014–2015, accrediting organizations employed 789 paid full- and part-time staff and worked with 16,138 volunteers.

Accreditation carries out the following roles:

- Assuring quality
- Accessing federal and state funds

- Engendering private sector confidence
- Easing transfer

U.S. accreditation is built upon a core set of traditional academic values and beliefs:

- Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for academic quality; colleges and universities are the leaders and the key sources of authority in academic matters.
- Institutional mission is central to judgments of academic quality.
- Institutional autonomy is essential to sustaining and enhancing academic quality.
- Academic freedom flourishes in an environment of academic leadership of institutions.
- The higher education enterprise and our society thrive on decentralization and diversity of institutional purpose and mission.

Accrediting organizations are funded primarily by annual dues from institutions and programs that are accredited and fees that institutions and programs pay for accreditation reviews. In some instances, an accrediting organization may receive financial assistance from sponsoring organizations. Accrediting organizations sometimes obtain funds for special initiatives from government or from private foundations. Accrediting organizations report that they spent more than \$154 million (US) in 2014–2015.

Source: Council for Higher Education Accreditation, An Overview of US Accreditation, 2015. Edited and updated.

https://www.chea.org/4DCGI/cms/review.html?Action=CMS_Document&DocID=48&MenuKey=main. Accessed 6/11/18.

REGIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORKS

ARAB NETWORK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION



The Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ANQAHE has been established in June, 2007 as a nonprofit nongovernmental organization.

The purpose to establish the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education is to create a mechanism between the Arab countries to:

- Exchange information about quality assurance
- Construct new quality assurance agencies or organizations
- Develop standards to establish new quality assurance agencies or support the already present one
- Disseminate good practice in quality assurance
- Strengthen liaison between quality assurance bodies in the different countries

Mission of the Network:

To ensure and strengthen quality assurance in higher education institutions of the Arab region; and to enhance cooperation between similar quality assurance bodies or organizations in the Arab region and other regional and international quality assurance organizations.

Excerpted from Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, <http://www.anqahe.org/>. 6/11/18.

Challenges of an Emerging Quality Assurance Network*

Internationalization and globalization of higher education have underlined an increasingly urgent need to establish robust frameworks for quality assurance in different countries. External quality assurance and accreditation systems have been adopted in many countries. Most of these countries are developed countries that already have established systems as well as financial and human resources. European and international networks for quality assurance have provided support to many developed countries in establishing organizations for quality assurance. In the Arab countries the situation is different: The definition of quality, the system of quality assurance or accreditation as well as the methodology, scope and function of the quality assurance bodies are diverse.

While respecting this diversity, the international organizations dealing with quality assurance and accreditation such as UNESCO; the World Bank; the INQAAHE; the British Council; and the DAAD recommend a co-coordinated effort among the regional quality assurance bodies to tackle the challenges raised by the growth of quality assurance culture in higher education.

The UNESCO recommendation is to sustain and strengthen the existing regional and international networks and to establish regional networks in regions that do not already have one. The idea is that these networks serve as platforms to exchange information; disseminate knowledge; increase the understanding of international developments and challenges; and improve the professional expertise of the agencies' staff and quality assessors. These networks should be used to improve awareness of degree and accreditation mills and to develop monitoring and reporting systems that would lead to the identification of dubious degrees and dubious quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

According to these recommendations and in addition to the support of the World Bank, there is a need to initiate a development mechanism between the Arab countries to:

- Exchange information about quality assurance
- Construct new quality assurance organizations
- Build up institution and academic standards
- Disseminate good practice in quality assurance
- Strengthen liaison between quality assurance bodies in the different countries

The idea of establishing an Arab network was conceived in July 2004 at a conference in Cairo. Many Arab countries were invited to address issues of quality assurance in their respective countries. A round table discussion on how quality assurance bodies in the Arab States might work together took place. The brain storming produced three possible scenarios: The first was to create a network; the second to start an NGO for Quality Assurance; and the third to develop a commission for quality assurance and accreditation for Arab HEIs. A final consensus to establish an Arab network for quality assurance and accreditation was agreed upon in Abu Dhabi in 2005.

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Source: www.unesco.org/education/hed/quality/Nadia_Badrawi.pdf. N.D. Accessed 6/11/18.

ASEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE (AQAN)



Message from The President

July 8, 2008 saw the coming together of 11 quality assurance authorities and ministries responsible for higher education of ASEAN member countries in an effort to embrace a common language of quality and work together towards harmonization of higher education policy in the region. With the adoption of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) was officially established to serve and complement the strategic needs of this effort.

As the great compression of our world continues to accelerate, the degree of integration in higher education including in this region, becomes more significant and crucial. This creates a constant challenge for regional efforts to cope with the free movement of knowledge and massification of higher education. In addressing the impact of this globalization, the issue of quality and quality assurance and the need for policy shifts towards a flexible and integrated system has raised concerns among governments in this region.

Realizing this, efforts have been made in this region to promote further collaboration and networking among various authorities responsible for higher education. Thus, the idea of a regional network has become the key theme in many academic discussions and meetings. AQAN, as one of the potential outcomes of the ongoing discourses, seeks to connect ASEAN member countries and create a common ground in the area of quality assurance of higher education.

AQAN certainly cultivates the sharing and enhancement of quality assurance best practices and national capacity building among its members. Subsequently, as AQAN continue to develop, it will perhaps map its way towards an ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework, which will facilitate the recognition of qualifications and cross-border mobility. It is, of course, our ultimate goal to share in the successes of other international networks such as the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

Though AQAN is relatively young and still growing, it is progressively driven by an ambitious, committed and passionate group with great understanding of each other's systems. With these, we look forward for a promising future for AQAN.

History of Establishment

The Inaugural ASEAN Quality Assurance Agencies Roundtable Meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur from 6 to 8 July 2008. It was co-organized by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and the Bangkok-based SEAMEO-RIHED. It was attended by heads of Quality Assurance Agencies and, in cases where there was no formal quality assurance agency, by representatives of ministries responsible for quality assuring higher education from all ASEAN countries. As an Inaugural Roundtable, the country representatives presented a general overview of quality assurance in higher education in their respective countries. These presentations were compiled and published as proceedings, and distributed to all members.

The main objectives of the Inaugural Roundtable were to promote networking among ASEAN QA agencies, to learn about each other's system of assuring quality in higher education and to consider the establishment of an ASEAN QA network.

The 2008 Roundtable Meeting (RTM) agreed to adopt the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN).

In 2011, the RTM meeting in Brunei decided to develop the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF). It was fully endorsed at the 2013 RTM in Hanoi. In 2016, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration for Harmonization in Higher Education Implementation Framework encouraged the alignment of QA systems to AQAF. It was also in 2016 when the AQAF was officially launched in Jakarta and AQAN was accredited as an entity associated with ASEAN.

Mission

The aims and purposes of the AQAN are:

- To promote and share good practices of quality assurance in higher education in the Southeast Asia region;
- To collaborate on capacity building of quality assurance in higher education in the region;
- To share information on higher education and facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications throughout the region; and
- To develop a regional quality assurance framework for Southeast Asia.

Source: Excerpted from <http://www.aqan.org/>. 6/11/18.