

QUALITY INTERNATIONAL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHEA INTERNATIONAL QUALITY GROUP



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PUBLIC FORA: AWARENESS-RAISING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING TO PROMOTE INTEGRITY AND COMBAT CORRUPTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Universities Of Belgrade, Kragujevac, Novi Pazar
November 5-7, 2018**

As part of the Council of Europe/EU Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey, a series of public fora with students and staff was organized as a way of awareness raising and capacity-building to promote integrity and combat corruption in higher education.

In the framework of these activities, Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Senior Advisor in International Affairs, was invited to talk to students and staff of three universities in Serbia: the University of Belgrade, the University of Kragujevac and the State University of Novi Pazar, based on her experience as CHEA Senior Advisor, as former Head of Higher Education at UNESCO and as Secretary-General of the Association of Universities of the former Yugoslavia until its dissolution.

SERBIA: PUBLIC FORA WITH STUDENTS AND STAFF

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The program was implemented and organized by the Belgrade Council of Europe Office, from November 5-7, 2018. The title of the three presentations (similar in content but slightly adapted to each of the three universities and the audience thereof) was “*Are ethical principles attainable?*”

The three events were attended by some 150 participants, although the composition and the size of the audience varied at the three universities. At the *University of Belgrade*, the oldest and biggest university in Serbia, the participants were at the highest level: Rector and Vice-Rector, faculty deans, university professors and university staff. The University has adopted a Code of Ethics in 2016; has a public digital repository of submitted doctoral dissertations; some faculties have introduced “Academic Writing” as a compulsory course to provide guidelines to students and will be further developed; and a massive open online course (MOOC) on strengthening integrity at institutional level is in preparation in the Serbian language and will be offered to faculties to adapt and use. A clear commitment exists by the newly elected Rector and her staff to promote changes and introduce and monitor mechanisms. Greater transparency is key, advocates the rector.



At the *University of Kragujevac*, there was a good presence of students, professors and the media, with a majority of students. This university had especially been targeted by a corruption scandal some 10 years ago when a number of teaching staff were accused of issuing diplomas for money. The professors have not been sanctioned and the case is still in court. However, the disturbing situation is that apparently the whistleblowers were discredited.

The students expressed their concern about the ambiguity of the situation. Although a new Law for the Protection of Whistleblowers has recently been passed in Serbia, its implementation does not seem to be very effective so far, at least not at the level of higher education institutions (HEIs).

The lack of ethical awareness and behavior and the generally low economic standards leads many of the students to leave the country after finishing university, contributing to a massive brain-drain from Serbia and other countries of the Western Balkans.

The *State University of Novi Pazar*, situated in the South-Western part of Serbia, is the youngest public university in Serbia. It was founded in 2006 to cater for a multiethnic and geographically remote part of the country, with a majority Muslim population. The discussion after the presentation was lively with a wide-ranging spectrum of questions, from those relating to the role of students in promoting integrity at university level to more robust observations of how difficult this is to achieve in an environment where corruption seems to be thriving.

It is clear that a will exists at some universities to gradually introduce change from the top institutional level. There is a lack of trust by students in their own institution, practices varying between particular faculties and departments of the same university. One question particularly raised is the issue of whether there is a higher level of (academic) corruption in the so-called countries in transition and why that is so? Strengthening internal quality assurance seem to be a priority in all three institutions.

WORKSHOP ON THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND CROSS-BORDER QUALITY ASSURANCE

Hollings Center for International Dialogue
September 6-7, 2018–Istanbul

A workshop on Internationalization and Cross-Border Quality Assurance was co-organized on September 6-7, 2018 in Istanbul, Turkey, by the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the Hollings Center for International Dialogue. The objective of the workshop was to explore quality assurance of higher education in Malaysia, Oman and the United States but also more broadly in the Arab Region and South-East Asia.



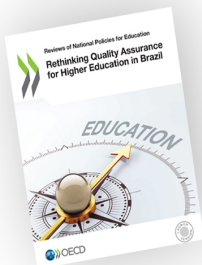
Members of the CIQG Advisory Council Concepcion Pijano, international consultant for accreditation, and Nadia Badrawi, Vice President of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE), presented the more regional approaches of cross-border quality assurance. Zita Mohd Fahmi, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Malaysian Qualifications Agency, Khalid Al Muharrami Senior Quality Assurance Expert, Oman Academic Accreditation Authority, Judith Eaton, CHEA President and Richard Ekman, CIC President, spoke of cross-border quality assurance efforts in their respective

countries and gave a snapshot of the activities of their own institutions. Desired outcomes included recommendations for policy and next steps.

The outcomes of the workshop were presented at the 2019 CHEA Annual Conference. The report, with recommendations, the list of participants, presentations, background papers and interviews from the meeting can be accessed at: <https://www.chea.org/workshop-cross-border-quality-assurance>

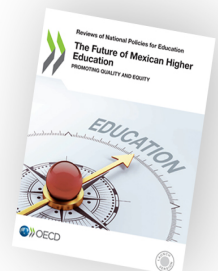
New OECD Publications on Higher Education Quality and Quality Assurance

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has issued two reports in its publication series Reviews of National Policies for Higher Education.



Rethinking Quality Assurance for Higher Education in Brazil assesses the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the quality assurance procedures in place in Brazil and provides recommendations for improvement to Brazil's well-established quality assurance activities.

The Future of Mexican Higher Education: Promoting Quality and Equity presents the findings of an OECD review team on higher education in Mexico and the team's recommendations for the future orientation of public policy for Mexican higher education, with a particular focus on quality and relevance of learning opportunities.



THIRD UNIVERSITY MISSION INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE MOSCOW

November 30-December 1, 2018

Forty speakers from 12 countries came together at Lomonosov Moscow State University at the end of November/early December 2018 to discuss the “third university mission.” Defined as “full engagement with their local intellectual and cultural environment,” the third mission speaks to how the university, in addition to education and research, further integrates with business, public institutions and a range of social groups. Approximately 150 people were in attendance, including university rectors, presidents and other delegates.



The conference included discussions of how universities are to frame their respective third missions and the choices that need to be made. Speakers addressed how well universities meet the expectations of, e.g., society, government or business. There was considerable conversation about the third mission and how success in this area might be reflected in various world or country-based rankings systems and how communications and digital technology play a role. Some speakers addressed the third mission and the implications for quality assurance, for emerging alternative providers of higher education and for commitments to diversity and equity in higher education.

The rich conversation culminated in a draft resolution calling for a continuation of this annual dialogue. Such future meetings were to include topics such as how to evaluate the effectiveness of the third mission in light of national significance and regional competitiveness. Suggested other topics included support for an expansion of ranking systems to embrace interaction between the university and the community and to urge national governments and others to take these evaluations into consideration. The conference leaders asked that participants provide any comments on the draft following the meeting.



The *CIQG Website* provides an outstanding resource for information about quality assurance internationally.

- *CIQG Policy Briefs*
- *The CHEA-CIQG Publication Series*
- *Issues of Quality International*, the CIQG Newsletter
- Translations of the *CIQG International Quality Principles* and other publications
- CIQG Annual Meeting presentations

Visit

the CIQG

Website

COUNCIL OF EUROPE ETINED SYMPOSIUM COUNTERING EDUCATION FRAUD

December 29-30, 2018–Strasbourg, France

Within its Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED), the Council of Europe (CoE) organized a Symposium on “Countering Education Fraud” on 29-30 November 2018 in Strasbourg. The objective was to discuss the need for a policy framework document on Education fraud and propose an integrated policy approach to prevention, participation, protection, prosecution and dealing more specifically with the following themes: contract cheating, fraudulent credentials, plagiarism the transnational dimension of education fraud and cross-border cooperation.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation International Quality Group (CHEA/CIQG) activities were presented by CHEA Senior Advisor on International Affairs Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić in a presentation entitled “The Role of Quality Assurance in Promoting Integrity and Combatting Fraud in Higher Education.” The presentation was based on the joint work of CHEA/CIQG and UNESCO in developing two international documents – the 2009 *Toward Effective Practice: Discouraging Degree Mills in Higher Education* and the 2016 *Advisory Statement for Effective International Practice, Combatting Corruption and Enhancing Integrity: A Contemporary Challenge for the Quality and Credibility of Higher Education*. Based on these two documents, the presentation further highlighted CHEA/CIQG’s activities in addressing this issue: through awareness-raising and advocacy through a series of webinars and articles, advocacy and capacity building activities such as seminars, presentations and networking and through research on the particular role of quality assurance and accreditation agencies throughout the world in countering corruption in higher education.

The Symposium was an interesting mix of experts on research on plagiarism, qualifications recognition centers dealing with diploma mills and legal experts on regulations and laws addressing the issue, especially dealing with contract cheating.

Quality assurance (QA) was very much absent from the discourse, although delegates from the Netherlands and Lithuania, in the discussion period, highlighted the need to involve more QA agencies in addressing the issue of education fraud.

A presentation was also made about the EU/CoE Horizontal Facility Projects in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo.¹ The focus of the project was supporting higher education institutions in the Western Balkans in developing ethical standards and raising awareness about the need to strengthen integrity and combat corruption in higher education.

One of the objectives of the Symposium was the development of a policy framework document and different options were discussed. A Convention, as a legally binding instrument, was explored as one of the most effective options. However, given that the process of elaboration, adoption and ratification of such a document would take several years to achieve, a subsidiary text to the Lisbon Convention in the form of a recommendation was proposed as a more efficient and timely solution.

¹ See *Quality International* Volume 14, August 2018 at <https://www.chea.org/sites/default/files/pdf/QI-newsletter-vol14-final.pdf>

DIGITAL CREDENTIALING: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF LEARNING ACROSS BORDERS

Review by Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić

A new study recently published by UNESCO¹ (2018) addresses the issue of digital credentialing, a topic that is increasingly at the heart of new developments across the globe. The study calls for a common international approach to the electronic documentation, authentication and access to all aspects of a person's learning. Qualifications frameworks and a focus on learning outcomes have emerged as tools to accompany and facilitate this international approach.

As the study notes, in addition to traditional “macro-degrees,” there is a growing move towards digital credentialing. The Open Education movement, with OER, MOOCs and Open Badges, has had critical implications for the recognition of “micro-degrees” and sub-degree certificates. Bologna Digital is one of the newer trends in Europe that promotes digital credentials. Recent developments such as the Groningen Declaration Network that relies on blockchain technology have taken the portability and security of credentials a step further with secure students' degrees repositories. Some examples are Higher Education Degree Check (HEDD) in the UK, Credential registry in France and My eQuals, an official platform of Universities in Australia and New Zealand.



These trends are underpinned by strong calls for developing adequate quality assurance structures. According to the Groningen Declaration, quality assurance agencies may need to make a shift from “program accreditation to a more modular accreditation” where individual credits can be checked for accreditation status.

The study calls for quality assurance and governance systems to be more responsive. There is a need to develop comprehensive frameworks for coordinating various initiatives at the international level in order to address the diversity of quality assurance and accreditation systems at the national level.

Digital credentialing is becoming a significant issue that requires a multi-stakeholder approach. UNESCO will continue playing a pro-active role in addressing this topic from an international perspective. In doing this, it is open to partnerships with other relevant organizations.

¹ April, 2018, available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000264428>

Presentations Now Available from the 2019 CHEA Annual Conference and CIQG Annual Meeting



A number of the presentations from the 2019 CHEA Annual Conference and the CIQG Annual Meeting (held January 28-31 in Washington, DC) are now available on the CHEA Website. The cover a range of topics including:

- The Internationalization of Higher Education and Cross-border Quality Assurance
- New Approaches to Quality Review, Student Learning Outcomes and Innovation
- Quality Assurance and Public Accountability
- Free Speech on Campus: What Is Changing and What Remains the Same
- Policies and Actions of Accreditation and Quality Assurance Bodies to Counter Corruption in Higher Education
- Sustaining Trust, Higher Education, Quality Assurance and the Political Environment

Click here for presentations from the 2019 [CHEA Annual Conference](#) and [CIQG Annual Meeting](#).

INTERVIEW WITH SONNY RAMASWAMY, PRESIDENT NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



Sonny Ramaswamy

Sonny Ramaswamy became President of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), one of the seven U.S. regional accrediting commissions, in July 2018. He has had an extensive career in higher education and government. We asked Sonny about his initial impressions of U.S. accreditation and what he envisions for the future.

You have had a significant and successful career as an highly regarded academic and government executive. What particularly attracted you to accreditation and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities at this time?

“Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.” This statement by Martin Luther King, Jr. has struck a particular chord in me as a scientist and educator. I thought I could potentially help mitigate ignorance and stupidity at a more global scale and, thus, the attraction of the presidency of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

As I wrapped up service in the U.S. government, I was recruited for various positions and the one that intrigued me most was the NWCCU, which as a regional accreditor is vested with the responsibility and authority to ensure student success. NWCCU’s mission of focus on student achievement and success speaks to me as one who has been the beneficiary of educators and mentors who invested time in me to succeed. As president of NWCCU, I have the opportunity to “pay forward” by promoting education and student success.

My passion for education stems from my being a first-generation college student, not unlike many of the students attending college today in the United States. Education is a democratizer and it offers possibilities. Throughout my academic and government career I have attempted to inculcate the love of learning, have helped create possibilities and pathways for opportunities, and have supported students and others to succeed in achieving their goals.

Our mother, with an eighth-grade education, inculcated the love of learning in us, which opened us to new ideas and created a passport to opportunities. I was privileged to have studied and worked at land-grant universities, which embody the vision for the United States articulated by Justin Smith Morrill in the 19th century. I have also been privileged to travel to all 50 states and over 35 countries where I have visited and learned firsthand the work of outstanding educators at the best colleges and universities focused on the fundamentals – inculcating cognitive and non-cognitive skills – to ensure student success.

My approach to accreditation is from the perspective of applying evidence-informed standards and processes to promote student achievement and success, and the NWCCU offers the perfect platform and opportunity.

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With the benefit of your fresh eyes and perspective, what do you see as the major challenges for accreditation to sustain its longstanding regard and credibility as the primary authority on quality in higher education in the United States?

As an accreditor, NWCCU's focus is on fostering excellence in education and promoting institutional effectiveness by supporting its diverse family of institutions to establish and achieve clearly defined, appropriate and locally relevant educational objectives. Delivering on this promise in America, however, is challenging because of the demographic changes, impacts of technological innovations, expectations of students and employers, escalating costs, low graduation rates, calls for accountability and, last but not least, questions about the value proposition of post-secondary education. In today's environment of public and political skepticism, higher education as a public good is becoming a hard sell. Eroding public support has contributed to rapidly rising costs of education—up almost 250 percent during the last three decades, and out of control student debt—projected to be \$2 trillion by 2022.

In addition, we see the value of accreditation and accreditors being questioned by various entities that represent the continuum of the U.S. political spectrum. Indeed, we have seen recent headlines trumpeting accreditors are “barriers to higher education reform,” that the key is to bring in “free-market principles” to reforming accreditation, that accreditation is the “work of Satan” and that accreditors are “missing the mark on student outcomes.”

In just the last few weeks we have also seen the U.S. Department of Education articulate a different vision and construct for accreditation, which could potentially upend the longstanding regard and credibility of accreditors as the primary authority on quality in higher education in the United States.

The bottom line is that higher education and accreditors have failed to demonstrate the value proposition of education to the U.S. public, which requires a reimagining and reengineering of both enterprises, laser-focused on student success, accountability and transparency.

Given the challenges you've identified, what is your early thinking about potential solutions?

College education continues to be worth the investment; indeed, college graduates earn about two times as much as high school graduates, have greater career mobility and realize a better quality of life. Development and application of effective, formative accreditation approaches that could contribute to tangible improvements in student performance and graduation rates, along with greater accountability and transparency, could help mitigate concerns about higher education and accreditors and provide the value proposition.

The value proposition—i.e., of success and reputation—for accreditation is promoting ways to enhance graduation rates, while reducing the cost of education, based on a renewed and vigorous commitment to student success.

In light of national conversations around the “failure” of higher education and accreditation, we need to reimagine and reengineer these enterprises by: promoting innovations, experimentation and risk taking at institutions; supporting development and deployment of a risk-based accreditation system; development and deployment of alternative reaffirmation processes; encouraging institutions to leverage technology in support of efforts to increase student achievement and success; developing policies to accommodate and recognize new and emerging educational models, including alternative credentialing, badges, competency-based education, certificate programs, etc.; promoting data and evidence-informed approaches for continuous improvement in educational outcomes; offering simplified reporting; helping create intrusive mentoring by staff liaisons and

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experienced evaluators; promoting strong and effective training on accreditation, assessment, student learning outcomes, etc.; improving communications; and enhancing transparency.

Educators and accreditors need to become knowledgeable about the potential changes coming down from the U.S. Congress and Department of Education and help inform the policy and decision makers to create the new construct for higher education and accreditation. During my stint in Washington, DC, I learned that engaging in informing policy and decisions is a contact sport.

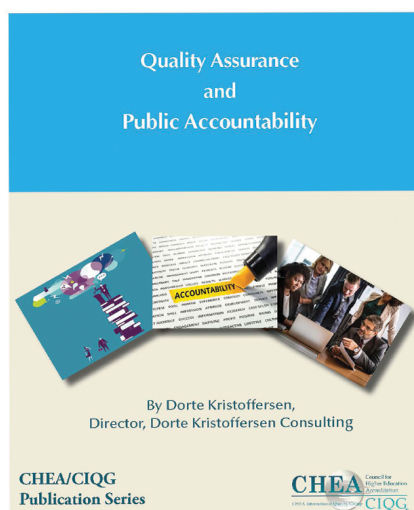
Without our active engagement in helping inform the process of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and the revisions being contemplated to the accreditors' "bible" – 34cfr602 (from the *Code of Federal Regulations*, addressing "The Secretary's Recognition of Accrediting Agencies") – we as educators, accreditors and, indeed, our nation may come to regret the outcome. Everyone with an interest in the outcome needs to be engaged.

What is your thinking about a future role for U.S. accreditation in the international quality assurance community?

The United States has been a beacon to the rest of the world because of its outstanding educational institutions and innovation ecosystem, attracting millions of students from around the world, including yours truly.

The pace of globalization continues unabated, and U.S. educational institutions and accreditation systems are being emulated, new partnerships are being created and branch campuses of some U.S. universities have even been established in other countries.

My sense is that U.S. accreditation—not just the process, but also the rationale—will continue to grow in importance and become more critical as a way to ensure and validate the quality of educational programs offered by institutions in other countries, which are a source of students for American institutions and for the global workforce that American multi-nationals need.



QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

BY

DORTE KRISTOFFERSEN

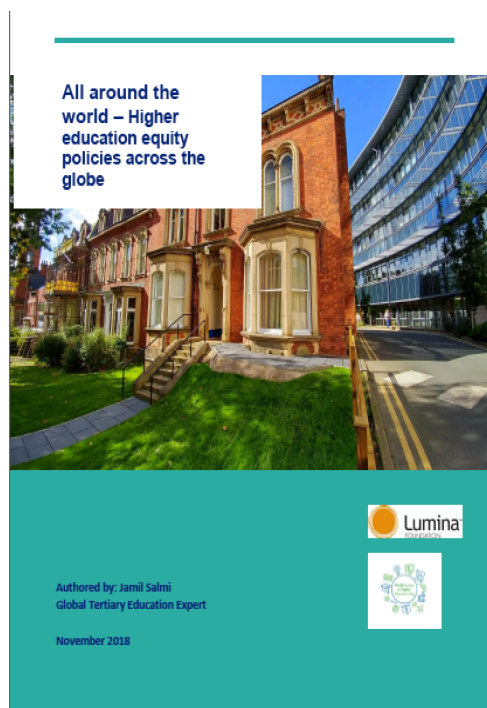


The latest in the *CHEA/CIQG Publication Series* is *Quality Assurance and Public Accountability* by international quality assurance expert Dorte Kristoffersen. This new publication provides an overview of how accrediting organizations and quality assurance bodies in various countries are responding to the need to further strengthen public accountability. The publication is part of CHEA's expanded research function, including the recent establishment of an office of research and policy analysis.

[Click here](#) to read or download a copy.

ALL AROUND THE WORLD – HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICIES ACROSS THE GLOBE¹

Jamil Salmi – Global Tertiary Education Expert



Available data show that participation in higher education continues to be unequal from a social background perspective. Furthermore, disparities in access are amplified by inequalities in success during the course of studies. Addressing these inequalities will require sustained policy commitment at the national, regional and global level. However, there is limited information available on the present state of policy focus on these equity aspects.

To address this challenge, the Lumina Foundation commissioned a study to assess the nature and extent of policy commitments of national governments to address inequalities in access and success in higher education. The study also analyzed the equity promotion policies of relevant multilateral and regional agencies involved in providing policy advice, technical assistance and financial support.

The survey conducted for the study showed clearly that, with the exception of a few fragile states recovering from a natural catastrophe or a major political crisis, equity is a priority theme in the higher education agenda of governments. This official commitment reflects

the fact that young people all over the world are keenly aware that opportunities for professional success and social mobility are directly linked to opportunities in higher education.

However, beyond the official statements about equity, which tend to reflect commonly shared principles of inclusion, the survey found a wide range of situations when it came to translating these principles into actual policies and interventions. A number of countries are still paying only “lip service” to the equity agenda, meaning that, beyond the general policy statements about expansion of access, governments do not spell out clear equity promotion strategies, define concrete targets to enroll and support students in vulnerable conditions, mobilize sufficient resources targeted to underrepresented groups and put in place actions to help students complete their degrees.

Many countries’ definition of equity policies is still traditional in focus, with a heavy emphasis on financial aid as principal instrument, and a tendency to look at access barriers instead of promoting interventions to boost the chances of success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are enrolled in higher education institutions. The survey did, however, identify two promising trends. First, a growing number of countries have realized the importance of combining both financial and non-monetary interventions to remove all barriers faced by students coming from disadvantaged groups in a comprehensive way. Second, a few governments have begun to complement the direct support offered to students with incentives for the universities themselves, as a means of pressuring the latter into taking a more proactive role in improving access and success opportunities. This is achieved by incorporating an equity indicator into the funding formula, setting up earmarked funds for equity interventions that universities can benefit from, and including equity-related criteria in the quality assurance process.

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This survey of national equity policies in higher education barely scrapped the surface of the issues and challenges involved in seeking to improve opportunities for access and success at the post-secondary level. By design, it focused on reviewing government strategies, policies and plans, but it did not touch upon the degree of effectiveness of the various policies formulated and implemented, nor did it attempt to measure their actual impact on the concerned equity target groups. This could perhaps be the main focus of the next phase of investigation of equity policies in higher education, looking at which interventions are most successful, and under what conditions.

¹ <https://worldaccesshe.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/All-around-the-world-Higher-education-equity-policies-across-the-globe-.pdf>

Are You a CIQG Member?

The CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) plays an essential role in advancing international quality assurance, whether as a thought leader, as a convener of colleagues to address higher education quality or as a reliable partner committed to working with organizations and individuals from all parts of the world to respond to the many challenges we all face.

CIQG addresses critical quality assurance issues such as the challenge of combatting academic corruption, to further our shared understanding of quality. CIQG's focus is on strengthening international understanding and cooperation through sharing of international experiences.

If you are not already a CIQG member and supporting CIQG's important work, please complete and submit the CIQG [membership application](#) and join us in the international conversation on quality assurance.



CHEA/CIQG Publication Series

- [*Advisory Statement for Effective International Practice – Combatting Corruption and Enhancing Integrity: A Contemporary Challenge for the Quality and Credibility of Higher Education*](#)
(published in cooperation with UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning)
- [*A Board Member's Guide to Accreditation: The Basics, The Issues, The Challenges*](#)
- [*CIQG International Quality Principles: Toward a Shared Understanding of Quality*](#)
- [*The Internationalization of Chinese Higher Education*](#)
- [*Is Big Brother Watching You? The Evolving Role of the State in Regulating and Conducting Quality Assurance*](#)
- [*The DNA of a Converging Diversity: Regional Approaches to Quality Assurance in Higher Education*](#)



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