

CHEA/CIQG Memorandum of Affiliation: Promoting Partnerships in Quality Assurance

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation and its International Quality Group (CHEA/CIQG), at the CIQG Annual Conference in January 2016, put forth a [Memorandum of Affiliation \(MOA\)](#). The purpose of the MOA is to establish and promote partnerships with quality assurance/accreditation bodies worldwide, with a view to encouraging the use of the [International Quality Principles](#) as a foundation of shared understanding about quality in an international context.

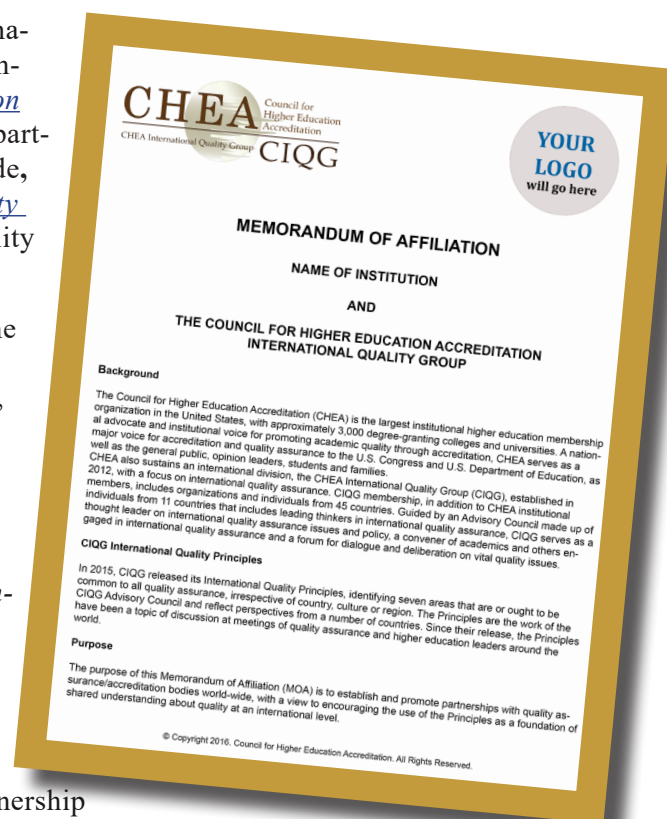
The MOA is based on adherence of the future signatories to the CHEA/CIQG *Principles* released in 2015, identifying seven areas that are or ought to be common to all quality assurance, irrespective of country, culture or region.

Quality assurance and accreditation bodies from around the world that are considered as competent bodies in their countries are invited to become signatories to the MOA, provided that they are members of CIQG and agree to promote the *Principles*. These bodies can reflect the *Principles* in their standards, reviews and processes, working with higher education providers and other higher education stakeholders to promote a shared understanding of quality and by sharing information regularly on the promotion and implementation of the *Principles* through examples of good practice, newsletters, etc. Partnership may also include engaging in joint activities such as workshops and seminars, when feasible.

The commitments are intended solely as a collegial agreement, an informal set of guidelines to serve and bring together academic professionals. They represent the desire of the signatories to promote cooperation and partnerships in the pursuit and strengthening of academic quality in higher education world-wide.

A final version of the MOA and an invitation letter has been issued by CHEA in the first week of March 2016. A few days later, on 11 March 2016, the *Memorandum* was announced in a CHEAmail.

In the week following the invitation and the announcement, a dozen requests for becoming signatories of the MOA have already reached CHEA. CHEA will make public the signatories of the MOA. ❖



DeTao Masters Academy in China Awarded CHEA/CIQG Quality Platform Certificate



The Council for Higher Education Accreditation/International Quality Group (CHEA/CIQG) developed a “Quality Platform” in 2012 as a form of external quality review of nontraditional, innovative providers of higher education for their performance and quality that can be used nationally and internationally. The Platform is designed as a response to an emerging new sector of higher education, offerings from private companies and other organizations, often online, now available alongside traditional colleges and universities. The primary intent is to assure and improve quality as this sector serves more and more students.

The Quality Platform is an outcomes-based review using standards established by the Platform, a self-review by the provider and peer (expert) review. If successful, the provider is designated as a “Quality Platform Provider” by CHEA/CIQG for a three-year period. (See [Quality Platform Fact Sheet](#).)

The Shanghai DeTao CCIC GROUP (DeTao) agreed to undertake a piloting of the Quality Platform offerings and sent in an application to CHEA/CIQG in April 2015 to become a Quality Platform provider. DeTao is a private company set up in 2012 with the aim of developing innovative educational programs which go beyond conventional education approaches and are not part of the traditional higher education system in China. The programs are designed and implemented with the guidance of teaching staff, from both China and around the world (designated as “Masters” by DeTao) with distinguished academic or industry backgrounds in a variety of disciplines. The focus of the review was the DeTao Advanced Classes offerings.

Following the application by DeTao in April 2015 and its acceptance by CHEA, a self-evaluation was carried out by DeTao during June - September 2015, based on the standards of the Quality Platform. After the self-review, an external review team was set up for the site visit consisting of experts knowledgeable in quality assurance processes, learning outcomes and the Chinese evaluation system. The members of the expert team were Axel Aerden, Coordinator, Quality Assurance Flanders & Senior Internationalisation Policy Advisor, Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders; Dorte Kristoffersen, Executive Director, Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, Hong Kong and Jianxin Zhang, Chief Expert of Yunnan Higher Education Evaluation Center in China, and Professor & Director of Research Section of the Research Institute of Higher Education in Yunnan University, China.

The expert team reviewed the DeTao Advanced Class offering in November 2015 and interviewed different stakeholders; these included the DeTao self-review team led by Professor Yan Jin, DeTao Master and Professor of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering at the University of Southern California, and other Masters, teachers, coordinators, students and administrative staff.

The expert team produced a report with recommendations to CHEA. After reviewing the report in December 2015, CHEA awarded DeTao Masters Academy, represented by Sir John Daniel, DeTao Education Master, a Quality Platform Provider certificate at a ceremony during the CHEA Annual Conference on 26 January 2016. (See the [CHEA/CIQG news release](#).) ❖

CHEA Council for
Higher Education
Accreditation
CHEA International Quality Group **CIQG**

QUALITY
PLATFORM
PROVIDER



The 2016 CHEA Annual Conference and CIQG Annual Meeting in the Press

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Annual Conference and the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) Annual Meeting are typically held during the last week of January in Washington D.C. This year, the CHEA Annual Conference (25-27 January) with the challenging title “*The Future is Now: Where is Accreditation?*” opened with a keynote by David Gregory, journalist and former moderator, *Meet the Press*. Gregory’s talk focused on the upcoming elections in the United States and how they may impact higher education. His presentation was much appreciated by the 250-person audience, not least by international participants who found it most elucidating and made it to Washington despite the historical snow blizzard.

Other sessions addressed issues such as the CHEA/CIQG *International Quality Principles*, competency-based education, technology and higher education and the recently introduced Minerva Schools that offer a curriculum of cultural immersion and small interactive online seminars. A *Quality Platform* Provider certificate was awarded to the DeTao Masters Academy in China as an alternative provider of higher education and the *CHEA Award for Outstanding Institutional Practice in Student Learning Outcomes* also was presented.

The CIQG Annual Meeting (27-28 January) followed the CHEA Conference, approaching quality assurance trends from an international perspective. It began with a keynote by Dirk Van Damme from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, who argued for the need

to develop new and better ways to compare learning outcomes, and an opening discussion panel focused on the major subject of the meeting: *Quality Assurance and Accreditation: Multiple Challenges; Multiple Demands*. Other sessions discussed a range of issues including quality assurance and academic corruption, the results of the Quality Platform pilot for alternative providers with the DeTao Masters Academy in China (mentioned above) and accreditation going global. A *Memorandum of Affiliation*, based on adherence to the *International Quality Principles*, was put forward for interested quality assurance (QA) bodies around the world as a form of partnership with CHEA/CIQG (also mentioned above).

University World News (UWN) provided comprehensive coverage of the CHEA Conference and the CIQG Annual Meeting. *UWN* is an online publication that reports news and developments from a global perspective. Established in 2007, it is published as a free weekly e-mailed newsletter by correspondents and authors from around the world, as well as on the *UWN* Website.

In its issue of 30 January 2016, *UWN* reporter Mary Beth Marklein devoted a series of articles to the CHEA Conference and CIQG Meeting: *New mechanisms are needed to improve transparency; Shared principles of HE quality are gaining global support; Quality assurance cannot solve corruption on its own; and Revolutionary delivery meets traditional standards*. The *UWN* package was published as [*Transparency Under Mounting Pressure*](#). ❖

2016 CIQG Advisory Council Meeting: Highlights



Peter Okebukola, President, Global University Network for Innovation-Africa and Chair, CIQG Advisory Council

This 2016 meeting of the Advisory Council of CIQG, chaired by Peter Okebukola from Nigeria, was enriched by new members Concepcion Pijano (Philippines), Badr Abou-Ela (UAE) and Anthony McClaran (Australia), and attended by a number of observers.

The Advisory Council noted the impressive number of activities CIQG conducted throughout the past year, including the development and launch of the [*International Quality Principles*](#), the successful pilot of the Quality Platform with the DeTao Masters Academy in China and a two-week capacity-building Quality Assurance Institute for higher education leaders from eight countries jointly hosted with the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the U.S. State Department. In addition, CIQG publications have continued to thrive

with three *Policy Briefs* (*Do Rankings Measure Quality?*, *Corruption in Higher Education: Can Quality Assurance Make a Difference?* and *Accreditation Going Global*); three issues of the *Quality International Newsletter* (January, June and December 2015) and the continuation of the CIQG publication series (*The Internationalization of Chinese Higher Education*, *Is Big Brother Watching You? The Evolving Role of the State in Regulating and Conducting Quality Assurance* and *The DNA of a Converging Diversity: Regional Approaches to Quality assurance in Higher Education*), some of which were also translated into Chinese and Arabic.

After a dynamic exchange about new policy developments and emerging issues in quality assurance, several ideas were put forward for CIQG future activities. Topics were proposed for *Policy Briefs* such as a focus on accreditation and taking a risk-based approach to quality review and additional activities to implement the *Principles*. Furthermore, the increasing challenges with refugees' education initiated some discussion of potential collaborative projects in the future. CIQG was invited to work with Institute of International Education to explore the use of the Quality Platform as Universities in Exile may emerge to assist refugees with higher education and to explore complementary activities with the European University Association's global map on refugees.

Advisory Council members supported the CIQG *Memorandum of Affiliation*, the setting up of an expert group for the development of an advisory statement on Quality Assurance and Academic Corruption and continued work on cooperation between Mexico and the United States.

Discussing the results of the Fourth Annual CIQG meeting, the Council urged a March or April 2016 survey on critical issues for international quality assurance, that could inform the focus of the 2017 Annual Meeting. In addition, CIQG was invited to explore changes in the format and duration of the CIQG annual meetings and the Advisory Council meetings. The Advisory Council deems both meetings as significant in bringing together the international community for exchanges on forward-looking quality assurance developments and challenges. ❖



An Interview With Peter J. Wells, Chief of Higher Education Section, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHEA/CIQG offers a warm welcome to Peter Wells, newly appointed Chief of Section for Higher Education at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić interviewed Mr. Wells in February and March 2016.

What are the priorities of the Section for the 2016/2017 biennium?

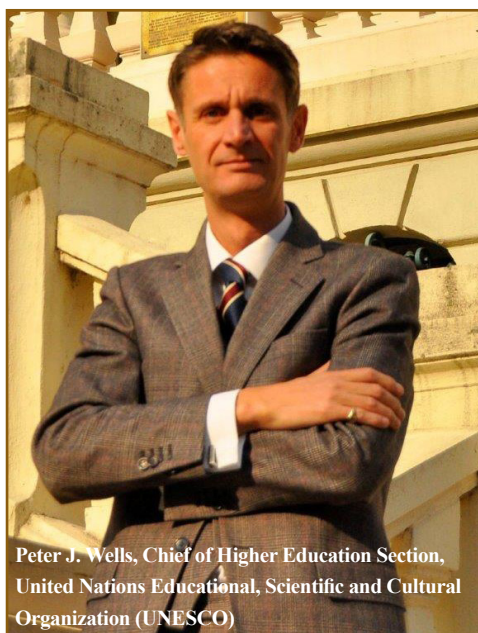
While it is true that there is near-universal agreement on the reform agenda of modern higher education (HE), achieving this is in many ways a decathlon of *inter-linked priorities* to be understood and approached differently, depending on the contextual needs at local, national, regional or global levels. The role of UNESCO's Higher Education Section is therefore to promote and support priority initiatives in all of these contexts.

At the global level, there is understandably an international call by all stakeholders of higher education for enhancing the quality of higher education and this is clearly a major line of activity for our work. It is within this dimension that we are now in the planning stages of an "International Conference on Quality Assurance (QA) in Higher Education" to take place in 2018 to share best practices, strategies, structures and methodologies for monitoring QA in higher education.

Similarly, the *UNESCO Regional Conventions on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications* play a wider regional and inter-regional role in supporting not only the mobility of learners, researchers and labour, but also on the credibility of quality higher education systems and their constituent institutions. In response to this, we are working together with quality assurance bodies, networks and governments on the revision of the *UNESCO Convention on HE Qualifications in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Equally, we are working intensively on the implementation of the 2014 "Addis Convention" in the Africa region to strengthen their QA bodies and infrastructures.

At national and institutional levels, we continue to offer grassroots support and technical assistance to reflect "glocal" priorities, particularly in the areas of widening

access to higher education through reforms of admission policies and procedures, the diversification of higher education learning spaces, the internationalization of learning, learners and research, and the continuous professional development of academic faculty and teachers focused on the effective use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for learning and teaching in higher education.



Peter J. Wells, Chief of Higher Education Section, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

As the lead agency for higher education within the United Nations system, our work is also guided by the new Sustainable Development Goals, particularly that of Goal 4 which calls for the international community to "ensure inclusive quality education for all and to promote lifelong learning," reinforced by the *Incheon Declaration on Education 2030* which emphasized the importance of access, inclusion, gender equality and quality education.

The 2015 General Conference approved the Global Convention on the Recognition of High Education Qualifications. Could you tell us more about the process?

The 2015 General Conference of UNESCO's 194 member states endorsed the recommendation to establish a representative group to draft a preliminary text of a *Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications* to be considered by the next General Conference in November 2017. We have recently established the Drafting Committee of 18 member states from each of UNESCO's five regions (Africa, Arab States, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean) and the first meeting will take place in May this year.

This Global Recognition Convention spearheaded by UNESCO's Higher Education Section represents a major undertaking by the international community and a game-changing moment in the commitment of nation states and HE systems around the world to a common acknowledgement that a quality HE system of institutions is an integral element not only of local economic growth,

but also of national sustainable economic development and the primary generator of innovative and creative talent for the global public good.

You authored for CIQG a much-appreciated publication The DNA of a Converging Diversity: Regional Approaches to Quality Assurance in Higher Education, published in English and Chinese. What are your personal views on global trends and regional developments in quality assurance?

What we are witnessing now all over the world is not only a greater appetite for quality assurance in HE but also the emergence of clear policies and procedures for measuring and assuring the value of higher education at the national and regional levels. It is true, however, that in some contexts and in some HE systems, quality assurance mechanisms in or of higher education systems are perceived as an outside interference in the function and mandate of higher education's institutional autonomy and academic freedoms. Clearly neither of these perceptions is true and we must promote a more harmonious and collaborative consensus of what we mean by "quality" in higher education, insomuch that quality is fundamentally about trust, collaboration, inclusivity, dynamism and creativity.

Finally, what are your personal areas of interest in higher education and activities you would like to see UNESCO focus on?

On a professional-personal level, I see that there is still a huge amount of work to be done on curricular reform

in higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In many HE systems, we continue to see curricula that have by and large remained unchanged for a generation, despite the unimaginable changes to the societies and the very people that higher education curricula and institutional research are charged with serving. And, in many situations, we are not talking about adapting old curricula but creating entirely new study programs and courses that reflect realities beyond the artificial walls of learning. We often debate on the need for more student-centered learning in HE and of a need to move away from judging HE in terms of teaching inputs to "learning outcomes."

I was an early adopter of this momentum and remain a firm believer in this as an essential paradigm shift in the focus of HE learning. I also, however, appreciate how difficult it can be for many systems and institutions of learning to make this leap. I would like to see a collective effort worldwide by the talented teachers and researchers in HE, and of governments and policy makers, students and employers, to take a more active role in demystifying curricular reform and to encourage the evolution and elaboration of new programs, courses and curricula as an integral part of HE quality enhancement processes.

On a more personal level, I see our UNESCO Higher Education Section as a compass for bringing together the vast diversity of stakeholders with their inspirational knowledge, skills and experiences both formal and informal, to build dynamic and robust higher education systems that mirror sustainable equity, security and educational opportunities for all. ❖

Books from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Reviewed by Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić

The OECD published two books in 2015 that may be of interest to Quality International readers.

Ensuring Quality in Cross-Border Higher Education: Implementing the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines (Vincent-Lancrin, S. et al., OECD, 2015)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) jointly developed *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education* in 2005. The *Guidelines* address major higher education stakeholders: governments, higher education institutions/providers, student bodies, quality assurance and accreditation bodies, academic recognition bodies and professional bodies, with recommendations on how to sustain quality in cross-border higher education (CBHE). Their aim was to provide an international framework for quality provision in CBHE based on the principles of mutual trust and respect among countries and stakeholders, recognizing the importance of national authorities and the diversity of higher education systems.

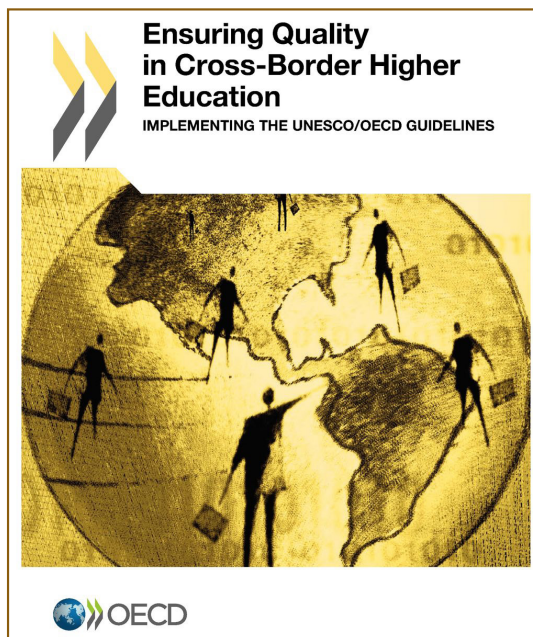
The *Guidelines*, though voluntary and non-binding, have been issued as a recommendation



reviewed by STAMENKA UVALIĆ-TRUMBIĆ

by the OECD, that therefore monitors their implementation on a regular basis with some input from UNESCO. This new publication, by Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin and his colleagues, reviews the degree of compliance of the different stakeholders and countries with the *Guidelines*' recommendations. It reports that OECD member countries complied on average with 76 percent of the guidelines from a stakeholder perspective (excluding student bodies for which information is difficult to obtain). The countries themselves complied on average with 75 percent of the recommendation's key objectives (e.g., inclusion of CBHE in countries' regulatory frameworks, coverage of all forms of CBHE, student and customer protection, etc.).

The publication asks whether, ten years after their adoption, the *Guidelines* need revising. It identifies six new trends that could stimulate such a revision. These include foreign campuses becoming part of regional clusters (e.g., the Knowledge Village in Dubai or the Education City in Qatar); changes in financing models of campuses increasingly funded by local partners whether government or industrial companies; research objectives increasingly translated into cross-border objectives as part of capacity development strategies; the rise of cross-border higher education activities between emerging countries with the



aim of attracting international students and sending their educational programmes and institutions abroad; a steady increase in the trade dimension of cross-border higher education in OECD countries and the increased use of agents by both students and institutions as intermediaries, with the potential risks this carries.

The book concludes, however, that the recommendation (i.e. the *Guidelines*) is still relevant and does not need revision. Nonetheless, it mentions the new initiatives that have emerged. Of particular relevance are the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)

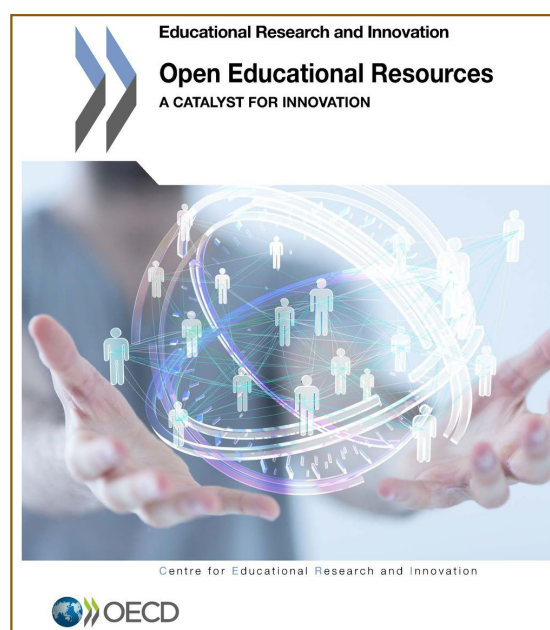
report on *Recognizing International Quality Assurance Activity in the European Higher Education Area* (2014) and the project of the European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) on *Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education* (2015), which provides information on current practices in Europe, Asia and the Pacific and Arab States.

As someone who had an active role in the development and adoption of the *Guidelines* as the responsible programme officer at UNESCO, I am gratified to note the sustained interest in quality issues in CBHE and the more recent developments they have stimulated.

***Open Educational Resources: A Catalyst for Innovation* (Van Damme, D. et al., OECD, 2015)**

This book follows earlier work by the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) and UNESCO that aimed to raise the issue of Open Educational Resources (OER) to a policy level. It provides a review of OER practices and impacts before assessing the remaining challenges to be faced for OER to enter the mainstream of educational practice.

The eleven chapters are each structured to address a) potential policy challenges, b) policy solutions and c) understanding the potential for impact. The publication analyzes, for example, how OER can be a catalyst for innovation, the role of OER in fostering teachers' professional development and the potential for containing educational costs and securing the sustainability of OER initiatives, to give some examples.



This review, however, will focus only on Chapter 6: Improving the quality of educational resources, an issue much debated in different contexts and still a significant challenge at both institutional and system levels.

The chapter begins by quoting Wiley (2013) to the effect that the open licence does not necessarily guarantee that an OER will be “fit for purpose.” The decentralised nature of OER creation remains a major challenge. Key issues are how to make the process more transparent and how quality can be maintained over time. The openness and flexibility of use, modification and re-use of OER further exacerbate this challenge.

Different institutions and networks have tried to address the quality assurance of OER. A key requirement seems to be the development of relationships of trust between the producers and the users. Another solution, used by the UK Open University, is to release “beta content” and revise the OER after feedback. Others argue that creating collaborative communities to improve quality and relevance of OER is an efficient way of assuring quality through peer review. The need to adapt learning materials to specific educational contexts is also proposed as a quality requirement.

Aligning OER with common learning standards used in educational systems is another approach used by institutions. One example is the Dutch repository of educational materials, Wikiwijs, which is aligned to learning outcome plans. Another example from the United States at the elementary/secondary level, is the Common Core State Standards which refer to the expected outcomes in mathematics and English, used, among others, by the Khan Academy’s repository for educational resources. A project at the University of Leicester uses fixed quality criteria for OER as does, more comprehensively, the Tidewater Community College in Virginia. The College’s policy is based on the requirement that academic staff cannot develop or teach an OER-based course unless they have undergone training and learning outcomes have been specified. Furthermore, any changes of up to 10 percent of the content of an accredited course require a new quality assurance review.

The authors agree, however, that despite the practices noted above, concerns about quality remain a barrier to using OER. The chapter concludes with calls to rethink quality assurance mechanisms so as to make them more open and to apply standards for ensuring that what is learnt using OER is recognised in formal education. ❖



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