

CHEA Surveys International Quality Assurance Agencies

In January of 2000 and 2001, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) organized an International Seminar in conjunction with its Annual Conference on accreditation and quality assurance. The seminars brought together leaders in accreditation and quality assurance in 12 countries to share ideas and to address key issues for international quality review such as the impact of distance learning and the growing importance of shared understanding of quality review practices and standards in various countries.

Following the 2001 Seminar, Elaine El-Khawas, Professor of Education Policy at George Washington University in Washington, DC, surveyed quality assurance agencies in 36 countries to learn more about their needs and interest in international information sharing and cooperation related to quality review. Leaders of these agencies were asked to respond to a three-item e-mail survey in Spring 2001. They were asked to comment on the usefulness of information sharing, the issues on which information sharing should focus and additional forms of cooperation among quality assurance agencies that might be useful. Leaders were also asked to share other thoughts that they might have about information sharing and cooperation. 20 quality assurance agencies responded.

Respondent Views: Is Information Sharing Useful Among Quality Assurance Agencies?

Most respondents indicated that information sharing was useful to address quality assurance procedures and practices such as:

- Devices to improve the evaluation and assessment system
- Methodology and good practice in quality review
- Output criteria for evaluation
- Standards and learning outcomes
- Rules and regulations about naming and nomenclature
- Actual results of institutional/program accreditation/evaluation
- Exchange of information on agency actions/background information about providers operating internationally.

Respondent Views: Key Issues For Information Sharing

Respondents identified a number of key issues for information sharing:

- “All issues concerning the evaluation and accreditation of higher education.”
- Transfer of credit
- Recognition (defined as “facilitating academic mobility through collaborative arrangements involving quality assurance agencies”)
- Distance learning
- New providers or “imported pro-

grams” and other new forms of delivery of higher education

Respondent Views: Other Types of Cooperation

Most respondents offered ideas about additional types of cooperation, including:

- An e-mail exchange on special topics several times a year
- A cooperative database of quality assurance experts
- Common training and common training materials for evaluators
- Cooperation among individuals engaged in quality reviews
- Staff exchanges
- Annual meetings or workshops such as the CHEA International Seminar
- Regional cooperation
- Closer cooperation with the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

Several people suggested that more formal types of cooperation be developed, such as “multi-lateral agreements about accreditation” or “mutual recognition”. One respondent advocated “joint projects on enhancing quality assurance.” Another suggested that each agency have a contact person who could address (or forward) specific questions from other quality assurance agencies. ■

Participating Countries: The twenty quality assurance agencies that participated in the survey were from Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India (two agencies), Israel, Japan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

CHEA Update: Government Relations

A piece of proposed legislation that may have a significant impact on accreditation, H.R. 1992—the Internet Equity and Education Act of 2001—passed the house of Representatives this fall. It is not yet scheduled for action in the Senate. The primary aim of the bill is to alleviate certain restrictions in student aid that affect distance learning while maintaining safeguards against fraud and abuse.

Under certain conditions, the bill eliminates the 12 hour rule (the requirement that, in order to receive federal assistance, students must be engaged in at least 12 hours of instruction a week), the 50% rules (limitations on the number of distance-based offerings an institution may offer or the number of students who may be enrolled in these offerings), and loosens restrictions on incentive compensation with respect to student recruiting. While it does not directly address accreditation, much of the discussion surrounding the bill turned on whether or not institutional accreditation is providing adequate scrutiny of distance learning to assure quality and thus diminish the likelihood of fraud and abuse of student aid dollars. (For a full description of the bill and floor action, please go to <http://thomas.loc.gov>.)

CHEA sent a letter to Representative Howard “Buck” McKeon (R-CA), chair of the subcommittee hearing the bill and Patsy Mink (D-HI), ranking democrat on the subcommittee, outlining the important work of accreditors in this area. U.S. Secretary of Education Roderick Paige also wrote to the subcommittee describing United States Department of Education

(USDE)’s recognition of accreditors and the careful attention to distance learning that is currently part of this review. The issues of what constitutes quality in a distance learning environment, what the federal government offers in federal financial assistance and the extent to which the federal government becomes involved in determining quality are intertwined in this debate.

USDE has indicated that it intends to hold negotiated rule-making sessions that will likely address the issues in H.R. 1992. CHEA will monitor and participate in these discussions as they move forward. In addition, the General Accounting Office (GAO) has been asked by some members of Congress to study distance learning in anticipation of higher education reauthorization. Accreditation has already emerged as a significant issue here and CHEA has been part of the initial conversations with GAO.

Just a few weeks ago, the President announced his intent to nominate Sally Stroup as the new Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education at USDE. Sally formerly served as top aide to Representative William F. Goodling, former chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and most recently as chief Washington lobbyist for the University of Phoenix.

The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) has six new members. Newly appointed Robert Andringa, president of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, will chair the committee. Presidents Larry DeNardis (University of New Haven), Laura Palmer Noone (University of Phoenix), and Ronald Mason, Jr. (Jackson State University) also were appointed, as was Lawrence Burt, Director of Student Financial Services at University of Texas, Austin and Steve McCullough, Executive Director, Iowa Student Loan Liquidity Corporation.

New Staff Join CHEA

Shirley Hall is CHEA’s office and data manager. Before arriving at CHEA, Shirley was a buyer for May Company and Macy’s for many years. She has also worked in government sales at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Fred M. Hayward has joined CHEA as executive vice president. Prior to coming to CHEA, Fred was Senior Associate at the American Council on Education (ACE). He has 25 years of experience as an educator and senior administrator.

Diane E. Rogers is CHEA’s new vice president for government and external relations. Diane formerly served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Student Financial Assistance and Chief of Staff to the Deputy Secretary of Education in the United States Department of Education (USDE).

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2002 CHEA Annual Conference and International Seminar



Please join us in San Francisco, CA, for the 2002 CHEA Annual Conference and International Seminar January 21-24. The preliminary program, conference registration, and hotel registration materials are available on the CHEA Website at www.chea.org. This important national forum on accreditation and quality assurance includes sessions on quality and distance learning, the market and accreditation, accreditation and the law, student learning outcomes and accreditation and, for the first time, a one-day seminar on international quality review.

CHEA PUBLICATIONS

Introducing the **CHEA Almanac of External Quality Review 2001**, the most comprehensive source of information about participants in external quality review of higher education in the United States. Contains information about accrediting organizations, state higher education offices, the U.S. government, and private ranking services. \$55, two or more, \$45 each.

Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes: A Proposed Point of Departure A thoughtful conceptualization of what we mean by "student learning outcomes" and the various means by which accreditors use evidence of outcomes when making judgments about institution and program quality. Prepared by Peter T. Ewell, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). \$24.95



2002 CHEA Conferences and Meetings

- **CHEA Board of Directors**
January 21, 2002, San Francisco, CA
- **CHEA Committee on Recognition**
March 17-19, 2002, San Francisco, CA
- **CHEA Board of Directors**
April 28-29, 2002, Washington, DC
- **CHEA Enhancing Usefulness Conference VI**
June 26-27, 2002, New Orleans, LA
- **CHEA Board of Directors**
September 23-24, 2002, Chicago, IL

CHEA

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