Challenges in QA/accreditation

in the EHEA

CHEA, San Francisco
26 January 2006

Guy HAUG
The HE landscape in Europe: diversity or chaos?

- 45+ national systems:
  - fragmentation, incompatibilities
  - mostly state-run, state-funded, state-certified
  - horizontal systems, not much deviation
  → no tradition of external QA/accreditation

- EU and subsidiarity:
  - insulated national systems (until 1985)
  - mobility in spite of incompatibility (since 1985)
  - convergence of structures/policies (since 1998)
  → EHEA is a zone of work in progress
A common priority of Bologna + Lisbon

• The 1998 Recommendation on QA in HE (EU)
  - mandate: Commission to support and report
  - 2004 report: much progress, many agencies

• Bologna process: 45 countries (+ unis + EU)
  - QA issue first marginal, now a core priority
  - Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005, role of ENQA+ ECA
  - concern: feasibility with 45 countries ??

• Lisbon Strategy: Education & Training 2010 (EU)
  - Objective 3.5: compatibility in QA/accreditation
  - 2004: « acute need for modernisation of HE »
  - Commission Communications on EHEA/ERA
  - New Recommendation on QA (Nov 2005)
Challenge 1: 
enhance the value of QA/accreditation

PURPOSE:

• to demonstrate existing quality
  - in support of attractiveness, recognition
  - rejection rate among public univ = low
  - quality vs. excellence

• to indirectly enhance quality
  - setting broad standards to be met
  - respect diversity of systems, HEIs, orientation and the right to be different, better, innovative
  - allowing some time to meet standards
  - working positively: not a system to penalise avoid rankings (≠ scaling)
Challenge 1: enhance the value of QA/accreditation

METHODS:

• QA/Accreditation is based on **evaluation(s)**
  - evaluation ≠ measurement
  - not an automatic process: no simple ticking-off using a list of indicators)
  - it requires judgment, respect, tolerance

• QA/Accreditation is a **statement** (≠ **decision**)
  - it may entail consequences
  - consequences depend on actors: administrative status, finance (government) prestige, image (students, employers, teachers)
Challenge 1: enhance the value of QA/accreditation

FOCUS:

- QA/accreditation applied **where most needed**
  - new,
  - private, small,
  - foreign (imported),
  - ODL, etc.
- compulsory vs. strategic QA/accreditation
- accreditation of basic quality vs. of «excellence»
  (first cycle vs. postgraduate)
Challenge 2: set in place European articulation

First stage: from scratch to chaos
• all types of aims, criteria, methods, agencies

From chaos to cooperation and system (?)
• no supra agency, a horizontal network instead
• no additional layer of QA bureaucracy
• no standardisation of standards
  (yet, natural trend towards convergence)
→ trustworthiness in Europe is essential
  - credibility at home and abroad
  - agencies must be able to convince peers
→ multiple accreditation (no monopoly)
Challenge 2: set in place European articulation

Work in progress: Bologna process

• 3 series of common standards of reference
  - for internal QA within universities
  - for external QA/accreditation by an agency
  - for QA/Accreditation agencies themselves

• Register + Register Committee

• a new ENQA, + ECA
Challenge 2:  
set in place European articulation

Work in progress: EU

• new 5-step Recommendation on QA in HE
  - QA within HEI: quality radicates in universities
  - trustworthy agencies: criteria
    agency review
  - European Register: categories and structure ?
    control (stakeholders ?)
  - choice of agency by HEI
    (for strategic accreditation only ?)
  - acceptance of all agencies in Register by MS
Challenge 2: set in place European articulation

Foreseeable consequences:

- Bologna + Lisbon agenda coincide on QA
- progress in QA linked to progress on EQF
- differentiation EU25+, other countries will grow
- clusters/mergers of agencies
  - regional
  - linguistic
- more sectoral QA/accreditation at EU level
- European « quality seal »?
  - for joint degrees
  - for external visibility (Erasmus Mundus)
Challenge 3: interface with other world regions

• internal coherence of European response
  - treatment of imported courses?
  → avoid new source of chaos

• acceptance of European degrees in the world
  - treatment of exported courses?
  - Bologna/EU countries’ external cooperation
    North America, Latin America
    Mediterranean Area
    Southeast Asia
  → much work to do together with CHEA
Key documents

2005 Recommendation on QA

Standards / Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
http://www.enqa.net/bologna.lasso

Internal quality culture in European universities
http://www.eua.be

ECA project of mutual recognition of QA outcomes
http://www.ecaconsortium.bet

ENQA website
http://www.enqa.net
THANK YOU

for your kind attention