



Agreed European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

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Christian Thune

President of ENQA

Executive Director of the Danish Evaluation Institute

The Bologna Process – challenge and catalyst



Bologna 1999 – Prague 2001 – Berlin 2003
– Bergen 2005 – London 2007

- Increasing focus on quality assurance
- Important themes: the transparency, compatibility, comparability, and flexibility of European higher education
- Central stakeholders: universities, students, teachers, employers, and society.

Quality assurance in the EHEA



Top 5 approaches:

- Accreditation of programmes
- Evaluation of programmes
- Audit of institutions
- Evaluation of institutions
- Accreditation of institutions.

The Bergen Communiqué, May 2005



”Almost all countries have made provision for a quality assurance system based on the criteria set out in the Berlin Communiqué and with a high degree of cooperation and networking.

However, there is still progress to be made, in particular as regards student involvement and international cooperation. Furthermore, we urge higher education institutions to continue their efforts to enhance the quality of their activities through the systematic introduction of internal mechanisms and their direct correlation to external quality assurance.

We adopt the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area as proposed by ENQA.”

The Berlin mandate, September 2003



“At the European level Ministers call upon ENQA, through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, **to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies**, and to report back through the Follow-Up Group to Ministers in 2005.”



ENQA and its partners

ENQA:

- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- Established in 1999
- 41 member agencies
- Knowledge and practice sharing
- Increasing political role.

E4 partners:

- EURASHE - The European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
- EUA - The European University Association
- ESIB - The National Unions of Students in Europe
- (EC – the European Commission)

Other players:

- BFUG – Bologna Follow-Up Group
- Enic/Naric networks
- Other networks.

Main points in the ENQA report



Title: “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (www.ENQA.net). The report was fully endorsed by ENQA members and E4 partners and approved at the Bergen ministerial meeting last week.

The basic premises: This is the beginning, not the end, of a process, and one size does not fit all.

Results and recommendations:

- There will be European standards for internal and external quality assurance, and for external quality assurance agencies.
- European quality assurance agencies will be expected to submit themselves to a cyclical review within five years.
- There will be an emphasis on subsidiarity with reviews being undertaken nationally where possible.
- A European register of quality assurance agencies will be produced.
- A European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will be established.



Intended outcome

- The consistency of quality assurance across the EHEA will be improved by the use of agreed standards and guidelines.
- Higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies across the EHEA will be able to use common reference points for quality assurance.
- The register will make it easier to identify professional and credible agencies.
- The exchange of viewpoints and experiences amongst agencies and other key stakeholders will be enhanced through the work of the Consultative Forum.
- Procedures for the recognition of qualifications will be strengthened.
- The move toward mutual recognition will be assisted.

Standards for higher education



Scope: The standards cover internal as well as external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

Target group: The standards are applicable to all higher education institutions in Bologna signatory states irrespective of their size, structure, and the national systems in which they are located.

Purpose:

- to improve the higher education available to students in the EHEA;
- to assist higher education institutions in managing and enhancing their quality and, thereby, to help to justify their institutional autonomy;
- to form a background for quality assurance agencies in their work;
- to make external quality assurance more transparent and simpler to understand for everybody involved.

Challenges: Governments, institutions of higher education and students often have quite different interests - e.g. high level of autonomy versus frequent inspections.

Standards for internal quality assurance



- Policy and procedures for quality assurance
- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- Assessment of students
- Quality assurance of teaching staff
- Learning resources and student support
- Information systems
- Public information

Standards for external quality assurance



- Use of internal quality assurance procedures
- Development of external quality assurance processes
- Criteria for decisions
- Processes fit for purpose
- Reporting
- Follow-up procedures
- Periodic reviews
- System-wide analyses

Standards for external quality assurance agencies



Background: The growth of European external quality assurance agencies has been expansive since the early 1990s.

Target group: The standards cover external quality assurance agencies operating in one or more Bologna signatory states.

Purpose: The standards must ensure that the professionalism, credibility and integrity of the agencies are visible and transparent to their stakeholders and must permit comparability to be observable among the agencies and allow the necessary European dimension.

Challenges: There are some quite fundamental differences of view of the appropriate relationship that should be established between governments, higher education institutions and external evaluators.

Standards for external quality assurance agencies



- Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education
- Official status
- Activities
- Resources
- Mission statement
- Independence
- External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies
- Accountability procedures

From decision to implementation



- How far will national and/or regional governments be prepared to go to change their existing systems in order to meet the Berlin and Bergen expectations?
- Can subsidiarity be maintained as a central principle?

The European Register – a future challenge



Bergen mandate: "We welcome the principle of a European register of quality assurance agencies based on national review. We ask that the practicalities of implementation be further developed by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB."

Purpose: To help higher education institutions, governments, and students identify professional and credible quality assurance agencies. It is not a ranking instrument, but should become a very useful instrument for achieving transparency and comparability of external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

Scope: The register will be open to all quality assurance agencies operating in Bologna signatory states. It will cover public, private and professional agencies operating on a national, regional, European or extra-European basis.

The European Register Committee: The ERC will consist of 11 members from ENQA, EUA, ESIB, EURASHE, representatives of European employers, labour organisations, professional bodies and possibly ministries. The ERC decides on admissions to the register, however, it will generally not itself appraise applicants, but will base its decisions on the reviews done by other organisations.



PROPOSED REGISTER STRUCTURE		Reviewed		Not reviewed
		Compliance with European Standards	Non-compliance with European Standards	
European national agencies	National operators			
	Cross-border operators			
European non-national agencies				
Extra-European agencies in Europe				



The vision

A European higher education area with strong, autonomous and effective higher education institutions, a keen sense of the importance of quality and standards, good peer reviews, credible quality assurance agencies, an effective register and increased co-operation with other stakeholders, such as employers.