

HE and Quality: Expectations, Quality Standards and Tools

What kind of information are we looking for?

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Some beliefs of what could make European HE systems understand each other when all countries:

- ratify the Lisbon Recognition Convention
- provide the information on institutions and qualifications (incl. introducing DS & ECTS)
- introduce three-cycle systems
- introduce quality assurance (accreditation)
- introduce qualifications frameworks,
- implement European Standards and Guidelines (agencies become ENQA members, join Register)
- introduce student - centred learning

What information do we need ?

3 groups of requests:

- Issues not completed in the first decade of the Bologna process,
- Recent issues (2009- 2010)
- Issues coming with the “transparency tools”

How reliable are the national QA agencies? Are they functioning according to the ESG?

- The main criteria being:
 - A) Full ENQA membership currently 24 of 49 Bologna countries (45 agencies)
 - B) Membership of the EQAR currently 9 countries, all also represented in ENQA, (overall 17 agencies)
 - C) Nationally organized peer review of national agencies - 28 in 2009
 - D) Recognition of the evaluation decisions by agencies in other countries

Internal QA systems inside HEIs are crucial.
Are they functioning to the extent we would like to?

- Policy makers should be happy if HEIs themselves put in place improvement-oriented quality measures to ensure quality of research, learning and student support
- How far have we got on this way?

Internal approval of programmes

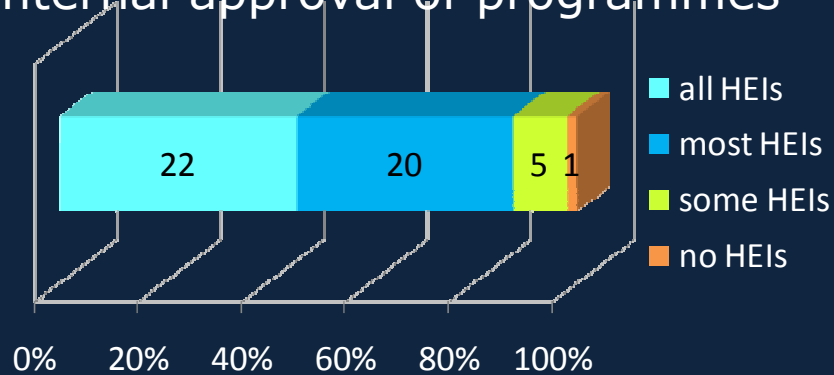


Diagram: Stocktaking 2009

Trends 2010 - Regular assessments of:
programmes: 70% universities

Individual staff: 63%,

Research: 63%

BUT – **less** than in Trends V (!)

Linking programmes to LOs

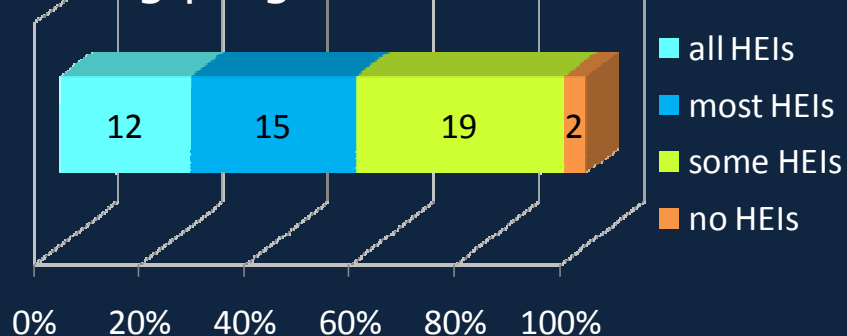


Diagram: Stocktaking 2009

Student assessment based on LOs

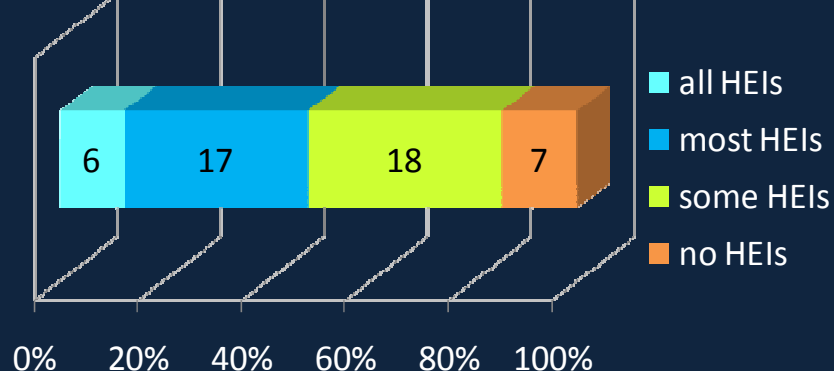


Diagram: Stocktaking 2009

Learning outcomes

learning outcomes are understood as important priority underpinning progress several other action lines – qualifications frameworks, student-centred learning, ECTS, recognition including recognition of prior learning, i.e. success of lifelong learning

Issues:

- LOs culture is new to many countries
- LOs are sometimes confused with overall goals of subject courses and programs
- LO's are often seen as a separate task and not in an integrated way

Some conclusions before suggesting new areas for quality assurance

- When assessing the QA systems against ESG, the main focus seems to be on the external QA and functioning of national agency(ies).
- Part I of the ESG on internal QA is often not considered as part of the review.
- Internal QA systems at HEIs are progressing slower than the external QA.
- In most countries HEIs have established internal QA procedures, although some are much more developed than others.

Suggestions of new areas to be covered by quality assurance

Student-centred learning

- Moving towards student-centred learning (SCL) is underlined in the 2009 Leuven communiqué.
- What are the characteristics of student-centred learning and how can quality assurance address these issues?

Characteristics of student-centred learning

- LOs are formulated for both study programme as a whole and for each study course
- Credits are demonstrably linked with LOs
- Learning outcomes of the programme demonstrably integrates those of the individual subject courses
- Students are aware of the expected learning outcomes and understand the LOs
- Reaching the expected learning outcomes (and relevance the learning outcomes themselves) are the core of the periodic internal review of the study programme

Characteristics of student-centred learning (II)

- Criteria for student assessment and grading are based on the learning outcomes (i.e. the grade reflects to what extent the LOs have been achieved)
- It is visible that students predominantly work independently: individually or in groups and teaching staff consults them in their studies
- Study materials prepared by teaching staff are visibly adapted to assist students in their independent learning
- Knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside the official programme can be assessed and credits allocated for them

Quality of institutional procedures used for recognition of degrees and credits

- Lisbon Recognition Convention sets clear recognition principles,
- yet the procedures and criteria used are too different
 - across the EHEA
 - between different HEIs of one country
 - between different departments inside one HEI.
- HEIs have the final word on the recognition of foreign credentials. Procedures and criteria used in different countries and at different HEIs within one country are not coherent. A way out could be including institutions' recognition procedures into the aspects evaluated at internal and/or external QA. How could that work in practice?

Quality of Diploma Supplements

- more HEIs issue Diploma Supplements,
- but quality of the DS issued is diverse.
- DS is often used incorrectly or customized
- ESG also cover the quality of information that HEIs send out. DS is very important piece of information on the qualification
- Taking up the quality assessment of the Diploma Supplements at both internal and external assessments would help improving the use of this important instrument.

Quality of lifelong learning

- LLL is among the important tasks of HEIs.
- there are just a handful of countries where flexible learning paths and the recognition of prior learning have become an active practice.
- Including those issues in internal and external quality assessments would stimulate action, improve quality locally but also help exchange experiences and share good practice nationally and internationally.

Quality assurance of joint degrees.

- The legal situation of joint degrees has improved in the recent years and
- joint degrees are explicitly mentioned in legislation in already 37 countries.
- However, all parts of the joint programme are quality assessed.

This requires joint action between the QA agencies of the participating countries.

Features of the most popular world rankings

- Strongly oriented towards research in natural sciences
- Social sciences and humanities underrepresented
- Book publications may be fully ignored
- Rankings usually talk about quality of studies but quite distant proxies are used (Nobel prize winners, student/staff ratio)
- The genuine quality of studies is not addressed
- In several indicators a university can gain points only if it is among the world elite.

Someone has to cater for some 95% of “normal” world universities simply producing employable specialists.

If we talk of autonomy...

- European universities suffer from poor governance, insufficient autonomy and often perverse incentives
- a survey of European universities found that research performance was positively linked to the degree of autonomy of the universities
- what world-class universities have that regular universities do not possess:
highly qualified faculty; excellence in research; quality teaching; high levels of sources of funding; international and highly talented students; academic freedom; well-defined autonomous governance structures; and well-equipped facilities for teaching

Thanks for your attention!