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Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms Applied by EU Universities

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ASEM Conference
Quality Assurance and Recognition in Higher Education: Challenges and Prospects
6-7 December 2010, Limassol, Cyprus

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Presentation Topics

1. Intended Learning Outcomes of the Presentation
2. The University Education Process
3. Considerations/Points of Reference for Quality Assurance in EU Universities
4. Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms Applied by EU Universities
5. Conclusions

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1. Intended Learning Outcomes of the Presentation

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Intended Learning Outcomes of the Presentation

1. Relate Quality Assurance to the University Education Process and its Sub-Processes
2. Discuss EU Policies/Directives related to University Education
3. Re-engineer University Internal Quality Assurance Models, Frameworks, Policies and Mechanisms by considering state-of-the-art developments in the European Higher Education Area

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2. The University Education Process

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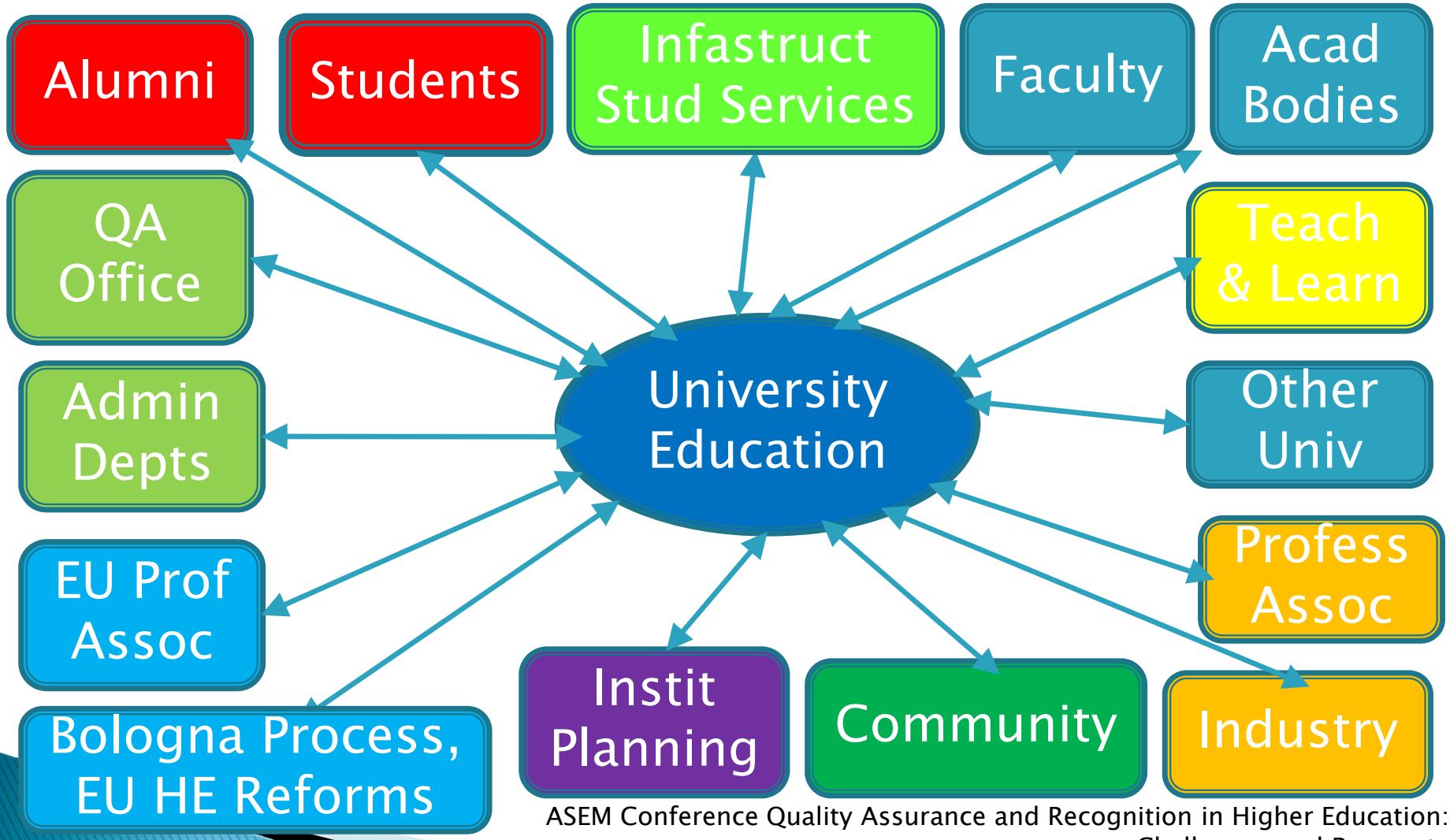
University Education



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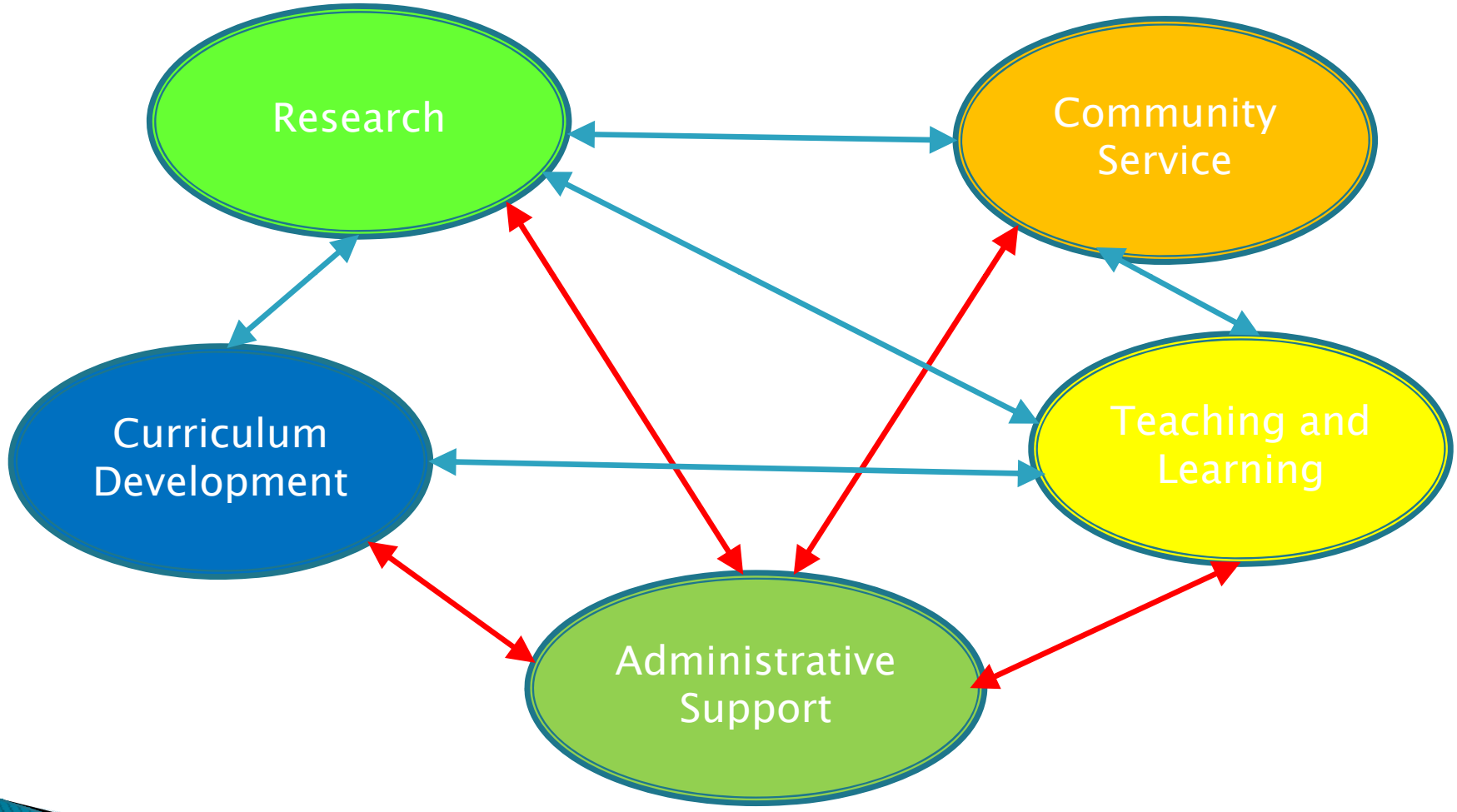
University Education Sub-Processes



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3. Considerations/Points of Reference for Quality Assurance in EU Universities

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Considerations/Points of Reference for Quality Assurance in EU Universities

1. Bologna Process and Reforms in the European Higher Education Area
   a) Learner-Centre Educational Approach
   b) Social Inclusion, Widening Access and Recognition of Informal and Prior Learning
   c) Academia/Industry Collaboration
   d) University Service to Society/Community
   e) Emphasis on Applied Research
2. ECTS
3. Learning Outcomes

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Considerations/Points of Reference for Quality Assurance in EU Universities

4. European Qualifications Framework
5. National Qualifications Framework
6. European Standards in Disciplines
7. European University Association
8. Tuning Methodology
9. European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance for EHEA
10. European Quality Assurance Agencies
11. National Quality Assurance Legislation
12. National Quality Assurance Agencies

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ECTS and QA

- ECTS forces you to re-think carefully of the programme structure (plan yearly load to 60 ECTS, semester load to 30 ECTS)
- ECTS forces you to re-think carefully the content of the programme from the point of view of the student (Learning Outcomes (LOs) vs. Aims and Objectives)
- ECTS forces you to re-think carefully the delivery methods of the programme (Teaching and Learning and Assessment of Learning Outcomes)

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Learning Outcomes (LOs)

- *"Learning outcomes describe what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning."*
- *"Learning outcomes statements are typically characterised by the use of active verbs expressing knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, etc."*

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf

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LOs should be SMART

- Specific (clear and unambiguous, clearly communicated to and understood by students)
- Measurable (objectively assessed)
- Achievable (at the right level and possible to be achieved by students)
- Realistic
- Time Specific (possible to be achieved within the timeframe of the programme/course)

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Usefulness of LOs

- Provide a common platform for Transparency, Comparability, Transferability and Recognition of Programmes
- Students become aware of what they will be able to do after completion of the courses and the programme
- Faculty are forced to rethink of the curriculum and make sure that each LO is assessed
- Employers know what graduates are able to do

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Usefulness of LOs

- Careers Officers can match employers requirements to graduates knowledge, skills and competences (L0s)
- Erasmus co-ordinators and Academic Departments are facilitated when developing exchange agreements for students and faculty
- Professional Associations can map Programmes to their requirements
- Quality Assurance Agencies are facilitated when conducting audits of programmes and when evaluating European awards (through the EQF-NQF mapping)

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Quality Assurance and LOs

- QA accreditation/validation rules and procedures must incorporate L0s. QAA audits will be looking at evidence that
  - all stakeholders were involved in the formulation of a programme's LOs
  - there is consistency of LOs according to their level (e.g. 1st Cycle LOs match EQF and NQF corresponding level)
  - there is consistency of a programme's LOs with the LOs specified in European Standards/Sector frameworks, benchmarks, etc.)
  - a programme's LOs comply with technical qualifications frameworks at National Level
  - there is consistency and comparability among LOs across the institution and its programmes
  - the institution provides all resources so that LOs are SMART, are assessed and are met by students

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European Qualifications Framework

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/rec08_en.pdf

THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

DESCRIPTORS DEFINING LEVELS IN THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (EQF)

	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCE
Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications.	In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.	In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).	In the context of EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.
LEVEL 1 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 1 are	basic general knowledge	basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
LEVEL 2 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 2 are	basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	work or study under supervision with some autonomy
LEVEL 3 The learning outcomes relevant to Level 3 are	knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems
The learning outcomes	factual and theoretical knowledge	a range of cognitive and practical	exercise self-management within

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National Qualifications Frameworks

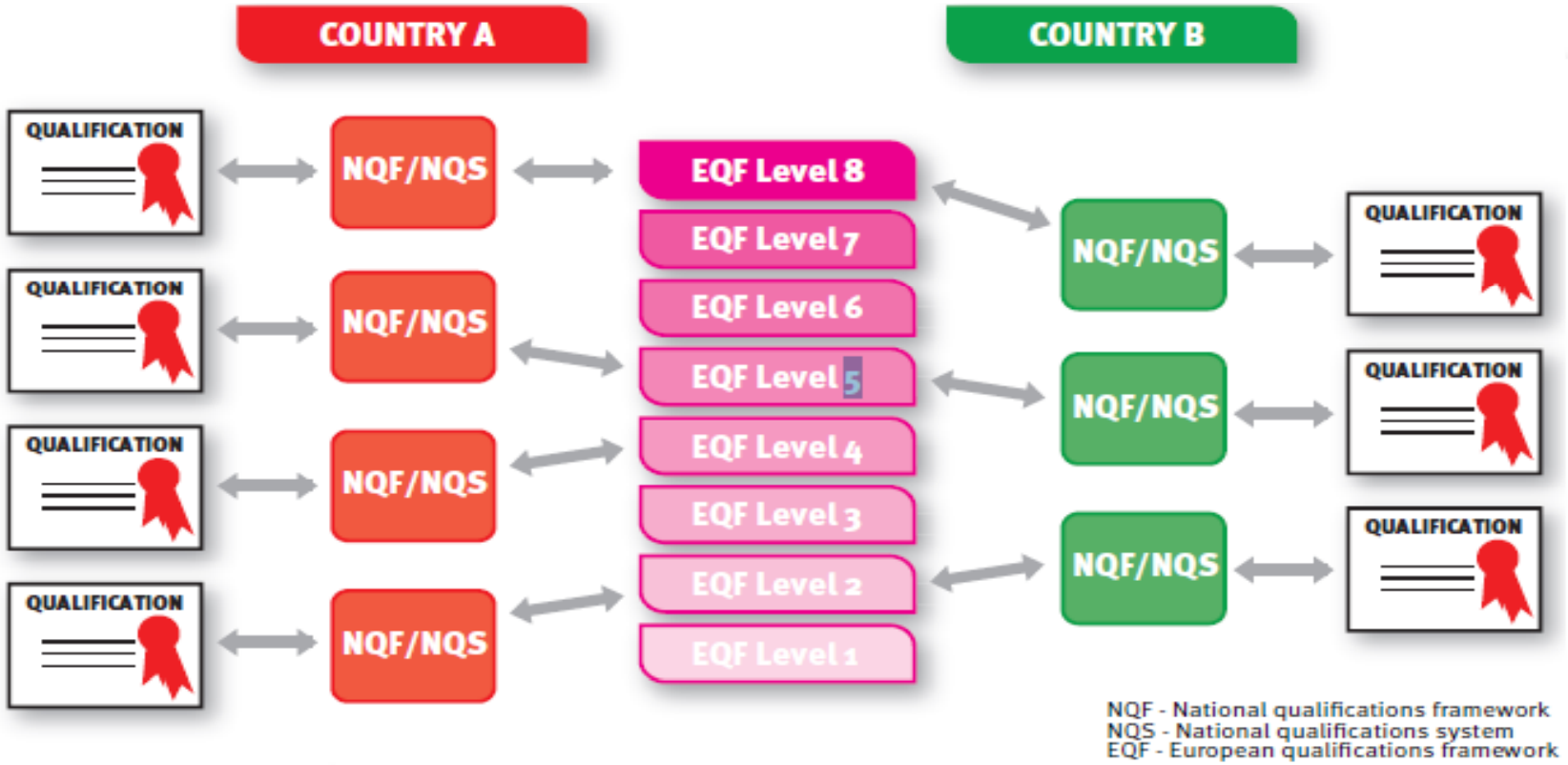

Figure 1 : Mapping NQFs to EQF (adopted from EQF Newsletter April 2010 eac-eqf-newsletter@ec.europa.eu)

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4. Quality Assurance Mechanisms Applied by EU Universities

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QA Structure

- QA Strategy/Policy/Procedures/Guidelines (National, University level)
- QA National Legislation for University Internal Quality Assurance
- QA Office (Administrative Dept)
- QA Committee(s) at University, School, Department Level (composition?)
- Student Participation in QA Committees?
- Industry/Employers, National Professional Associations participation?

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QA Structure – University of Nicosia

- Quality Assurance Office
- Institutional Planning Office/Academic Affairs Office – key performance indicators, statistics
- Internal QA Committee– structure is based on pending national QAA Legislation
  - Vice Rector (Chair)
  - 4 Faculty Representatives (1 from each School)
  - 1 Staff Representative (University Registrar)
  - 2 Student representatives (1 undergraduate, 1 post-graduate)
  - Director of Quality Assurance Office
- School Quality Assurance Committees

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QA Institutional Evaluation

- Adopt External Academic QA Evaluation as an Internal QA model and perform simulations of an external evaluation
- Adopt models and procedures from Business type QA evaluation/accreditation such as the Investors in People model
  - University Vision
  - Strategic Pillars
  - Departmental Aims and Objectives (SMART)
  - Key Performance Indicators

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QA Curriculum Development

- Policies and Procedures specifying
  - Who initiates and carries out curriculum development
  - Which stakeholders are involved
  - Which offices provide input
  - Which academic bodies approve the curriculum
  - How Learning Outcomes at the Programme and Course Level are developed
  - How Courses support Programme Learning Outcomes
  - How Learning Outcomes are Assessed
  - What Resources are needed
  - How the Internal QA office/procedures provides QA for the development process and the end product

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QA – Curriculum Development/Review

- Many EU Universities are adapting their Curriculum Development mechanisms and procedures to the Bologna Process and the reforms in the European Higher Education Area
- Many EU Universities have adopted the Tuning Methodology for curriculum development

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QA – Teaching and Learning – Faculty

- Certificates/Diplomas in Teaching and Learning
- Training/short courses offered by a Teaching and Learning Center or the Department of Education
- Faculty Mentors
- Course Leaders
- Self Evaluation
- Peer Evaluation
- Teaching Observations
- Peer Review of Exams

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QA – Teaching and Learning – Students

- Student Mentors/Advisors
- Student Success Centre
- Student Lead Tutorials
- Language and Teaching and Learning Centres
- Student Questionnaires
- Board of Studies Meetings
- Student Representation in Academic Bodies
- Student Representation in QA Committees
- Complaint and Appeals Procedures
- Intranet facilities for feedback

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QA – Final Examinations – UK Example

- Faculty member writes exam, model answers and marking scheme midway the semester (version 1)
- Exam, model answers and marking scheme are reviewed by an internal examiner (peer review); feedback is provided
- Faculty member amends exam, model answers and marking scheme based on the feedback (version 2)
- Version 2 exams and model answers are reviewed by an external examiner; feedback is provided
- Faculty member prepares version 3

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QA – Final Examinations – UK Example

- Students take Version 3 exam
- Exam scripts and marks are reviewed by Internal Moderator
- Sample of Exam scripts is sent to the External Examiner
- Exam Board (all faculty members + external examiners) review exam results and discuss special cases

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QA – Institutional Planning – Statistics

- Number of Applicants
- Number of Students
- Rejection Rates
- Gender, Entry Grades, Nationality %s
- Number of Faculty
- Student: Faculty Ratio
- Grade %s
- Grade vs. Entry Grades
- Attrition Rates
- Graduation Rates
- Employment Rates
- Utilization of Resources

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QA – Utilizing IT

- On-line student questionnaires
- Faculty and Student Intranet
- On-line feedback/complaints facilities
- Recording of workload by students and calculating the average student workload and comparing with workload calculated by faculty member
- Calculation of ECTS
- 30 ECTS per semester, 60 ECTS per year
- Support research
- All Programme LOs are supported by the courses

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QA – Research

- Internal Research Assessment Exercises
  - Periodic evaluation of University, School, Department Research
    - Publications
    - Grants
    - Ranking of Journals/Conferences
    - Impact Factor
    - Citation Indices
- Research Seminars
- Research Statistics and Comparison Analysis (Year, School, Department)
  - Number of grants
  - Amount of funding
  - Number of books, journal, conference proceedings articles

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QA – Research – University of Nicosia

- School Research Committee (SRC)
  - Evaluates on an annual basis the research output of faculty members and approves research time release
  - University Research Committee reviews the decisions of the SRCs
  - Appeals Committee
- Research Office
  - Publishes statistics for the research output of the University
  - Provides information regarding ranking and impact factor of journals
  - Monitors the key performance indicators
  - Provides peer review for grant applications

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QA – Student Services

- Semester/Yearly Questionnaires conducted by Student Affairs/General Administration
  - Library
  - IT Facilities
  - Restaurants/Cafeterias
  - Specific Laboratories
  - Advising Support
  - Complaints Procedures
  - Service by Various Departments
  - Intranet

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5. Conclusions

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Conclusions

- University Education is being re-engineered taking into consideration state-of-the-art developments in the European Higher Education Area
- Quality Assurance Models (both External and Internal) should adapt to these changes
- EU Universities implement a variety of QA mechanisms
- EU Universities should harmonize their QA models and mechanisms accordingly

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Conclusions

- More learner/student feedback and participation is needed
- More industry/employers feedback and participation is needed, especially for programmes whose graduates need professional accreditation/certification
- QA mechanisms should address amongst others
  - Social Inclusion
  - Informal and Prior Learning
  - Distance Learning / E-Learning

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Thank you!

Questions?

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