

This project is exploring the possibility of establishing a certificate/masters degree to train quality assurance professionals. A task force has been created, and it has held its first meeting and will meet again on May 30. Next steps are to conduct market research, to create a timeline, and to create courses.

The members of the task force are:

- John Brennan, from Open University
- Michaela Martin conducts the UNESCO training for quality assurance agencies.
- Marjorie Penn Lenn, hed of CQAIE
- George Peterson is the head of ABET
- David Woodhouse is the president of INQAAHE.
- Jean Morse is the head of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education
- representatives from NYU and the University of Melbourne, the two universities that have already agreed to pursue this, are included as special invitees

The notes of the first task force meeting are attached.

Before the May 30 meeting, e-mails exchanges are being exchanged on questions such as the following:

1. Did we identify the correct target group (experienced professionals, those on campuses, and students)? Was it a mistake to omit new agencies?
2. Will it be possible to include a segment that can be used separately to train evaluators?
3. WHAT SHOULD THE CONTENT BE? Who might create it?
4. How should we do the market research?

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE/DEGREE

TASK FORCE TELEPHONE CONFERENCE MEETING, MAY 6, 2008

Present: John Brennan (Open University), Marjorie Peace Lenn (Center for Quality in International Education), Susan Kinsey (NYU), and Jean Morse (Middle States Commission on Higher Education)

The perspective of the group was to “brainstorm” on how to establish a new professional category – quality assurance professional – through the creation of a new degree/certificate.

TARGET MARKETS

It was agreed that the most likely users would include persons familiar with general quality assurance issues who want training in contextualizing quality assurance within larger higher education issues, management, and change. These would include:

- University personnel, including institutional researchers, faculty, administrators, and trustees
- Staff and Commissioners of existing quality assurance agencies
- Students seeking specialization in the quality assurance field as preparation for future employment

New Quality Assurance Agencies: It seems that perhaps such agencies are already well-served by the UNESCO training materials, intergovernmental agencies such as OECD, World Bank (including regional quality assurance groups working with INQAAHE), Asia Development Bank, Organization of American States, etc.

Although the program is most likely to appeal initially to established quality assurance agencies, it is hoped that as the courses will develop practical approaches and applications that will be attractive models for all quality assurance agencies.

Visiting Team Members and Other Evaluators: There is a substantial demand for better training of more evaluators, but they would not be candidates for a full certificate. It is possible that one unit of the certificate could be geared to this group for separate use, preferably by distance learning.

CONTENT

A “core” set of courses would be developed that could be offered by universities as a certificate or as a specialization within Master’s degrees such as international education or higher education administration. INQAAHE would certify certificates and degrees that include the core. Existing university courses in international higher education, higher management, statistics, etc. might be used to complement the core.

All courses should include an international perspective and practical applications. There should be emphasis on assessing for the purpose of improvement in core areas such as learning and institutional performance, vs. a “checklist” approach. Alternative approaches should be considered in each area.

Students may enter the program with particular areas of expertise (e.g. institutional research). The goal of the program will be to broaden their perspective to consider each area within the context of policy, the whole university, possible national goals, etc.

The course suggestions in the original proposal were: world overview, types of QA systems, establishing a QA agency, and ensuring quality inside institutions. The UNESCO materials include modules on: choices for QA systems, conducting the process, setting up an agency, understanding quality, and cross-border education.

Clearly, some of these will be less relevant to the current target audience.

SPECIFIC COURSES and CONTENT were not discussed. WHAT SHOULD THEY BE?

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

It will be important to determine who/how/when courses will be developed. It was suggested that UNESCO might allow use of its existing materials and that INQAAHE would reciprocate. Reference was made to materials developed by

DELIVERY

This was not discussed except peripherally. The project proposal suggested e-learning, which may be especially important for reaching working adults (and especially faculty) on campus and within agencies.

To the extent possible, courses should be structured to encourage students to learn from each other.

MARKET RESEARCH and TIMELINE

These will be more explicitly discussed after the content and audience for the program are determined.

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