

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND PROGRESS OF THE ASEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK (AQAN)

1. The Inaugural ASEAN Quality Assurance Agencies Roundtable Meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur from 6 to 8 July 2008. It was co-organized by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and the Bangkok-based SEAMEO-RIHED. It was attended by heads of Quality Assurance Agencies and, in cases where there is no formal quality assurance agency, by representatives of ministries responsible for quality assuring higher education from all ASEAN countries. As an Inaugural Roundtable, the country representatives presented a general overview of quality assurance in higher education in their respective countries. These presentations were compiled and published as proceedings, and distributed to all members.
2. The 2008 Roundtable Meeting agreed to adopt the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN).
3. The aims and purposes of the AQAN are:
 - i. To promote and share good practices of quality assurance in higher education in the Southeast Asia region;
 - ii. To collaborate on capacity building of quality assurance in higher education in the region;
 - iii. To share information on higher education and facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications throughout the region; and
 - iv. To develop a regional quality assurance framework for Southeast Asia.
4. The network is open to all quality assurance and quality assurance related agencies in ASEAN countries.
5. AQAN currently consists of 11 Members which are as follows:
 - i. Accreditation Committee of Cambodia, Cambodia
 - ii. Badan Akreditasi Nasional – Pendidikan Tinggi , Indonesia
 - iii. Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council, Brunei Darussalam
 - iv. Commission on Higher Education, the Philippines
 - v. Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Singapore
 - vi. Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Upper Myanmar
 - vii. Education Standard and Quality Assurance Center, Ministry of Education, Laos P.D.R.
 - viii. General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation, Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam.
 - ix. Malaysian Qualifications Agency, Malaysia
 - x. Office for National Education and Quality Assessment, Thailand
 - xi. Southeast Asian Ministries of Education Organization Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED), Thailand

6. The Kuala Lumpur 2008 AQAN Roundtable also agreed that the AQAN Roundtable will be held annually with specific theme related to quality assurance of higher education to allow for mutual learning, exchanges and sharing and to adopt good practices that have been implemented by others within or outside the region.
7. The 2009 AQAN Roundtable was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 20 to 22 March 2009. The Bangkok Roundtable elected Dato' Dr. Syed Ahmad Hussein, Chief Executive Officer of Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) as AQAN first President. It also agreed that the MQA acts as the Secretariat for AQAN.
8. 2009 Bangkok Roundtable -- themed **Assessors: Current Practices and the Next Steps** -- saw each country presenting their country's experience with regards to quality assurance assessors or auditors. The Roundtable agreed that assessors are crucial to quality assurance work and more attention must be given to assessment and the role of assessors. The Country Reports also showed much similar practices for with regards to assessor, such as in terms of methods of and sources for recruitment, criteria for selection training and training needs and assessment processes, as well as code of ethics for assessors.
9. They also face many similar problems and obstacles, including the lack of assessors, particularly in selected disciplines, insufficient number of quality assurance trainers, inconsistencies in the interpretation of guidelines and standards by the assessors, the degree of reliability of the assessment done by the assessors, as well as ethics-related issues.
10. The Roundtable agreed to the idea of organizing a training workshop for senior regional assessors as one of its capacity building program. MQA was chosen to organize the training workshop.
11. The Roundtable also agreed to explore the idea of organizing the roundtable meeting for young officers of quality assurance agencies in the region to strengthen their professionalism and to allow them to connect with and learn from each other. The roundtable also reflected on the idea of offering Masters program specializing in quality assurance by one of premier universities in the region.
12. Based on the commitment of each member, there are positive signs that the network is progressing in the right path and has already taken "a small step to a bigger future" in ASEAN higher education. The next Roundtable in 2010 will be held in Indonesia with a theme related to internal and external quality assurance (IQA and EQA) and the interface between them.

AQAN First Executive Meeting

13. The AQAN First Executive Meeting was held on 9 May 2009 in Manila, the Philippines. Based on the decision made during the meeting, AQAN shall operate as a voluntary regional network in association with other international quality assurance network, especially INQAAHE and APQN.
14. AQAN is made formal by having its own constitution. AQAN offers memberships to public organizations from respective Southeast Asian countries and SEAMEO-RIHED and organizations within the region with major interests in the quality of higher education.
15. On cooperation with other networks, the President of AQAN was invited to the INQAAHE-Regional Groupings meeting to be held in Paris in July 2009. The AQAN Executive Committee also looks forward to organize a formal meeting with INQAAHE and APQN Board Members in the future.
16. Under the collaborative umbrella of AQAN, its members enjoy the benefit of participating in activities organized by other member countries. The activities planned in the near future include a Senior Assessors Workshop to be organized by MQA in August, a proposed Junior Quality Assurance Officers Roundtable Meeting to be organized by Cambodia's ACC and the upcoming 2010 AQAN Roundtable Meeting in Jakarta by Indonesia's BAN-PT.
17. Other developments of AQAN activities include adopting ONESQA's E-Journal, a joint signing ceremony of AQAN member bilateral agreements, an ASEAN Internal Quality Assurance Award, an official website of the Network and an AQAN logo competition opened to all member countries.