



INQAAHE

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

**GIQAC Final Report
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INQAAHE Secretariat
Parkstraat 28
P.O. Box 85498
2508 CD The Hague
The Netherlands
T +31 (0)70 312 2300
F +31 (0)70 312 2301
inqaahe@nvaio.net

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Education and Training Program

A brief comment on the development of two units¹

1. Carrying out the activities: Basic Details

A. Obtaining International Experts

Attached is a chart setting for the 16 writers from 8 countries who agreed to write one or more units of the program. The names of the unit(s) assigned to each are also described in the chart.

B. Writing First Drafts

This project is a good deal more advanced than is required by the GIQAC contract. The contract requires 'If possible, draft of development of two units of the course'. [Note on terminology: instead of 'course' we speak of 'program'; 'units' have become 'modules'; and 'units' are now the sub-parts of the modules.]

All four modules were planned together to ensure that the program is a coherent whole, and authors have been sourced for relevant topics as possible. Therefore, the writing is not going entirely sequentially, but more in parallel.

All of the 5 units of Module 1 (Higher Education In A Global World: The Context Of Quality Assurance) and all of the 5 units of Module 2 (External Quality Assurance) are close to completion, and the units are being reviewed for overlaps and any gaps. The final version of Module 2 is submitted with this report, and a close to final version of Module 1.

Module 3 is partly written, and the writing on Module 4 has just started. (Some of the funds requested in 2009 will support the completion of these before the end of the year.)

C. Editing for Content and Consistency

Because of the large number of unit authors, it has been necessary to add a step of overall review and editing of each module as a whole for consistency and attention to omissions or duplication, together with a reformatting as needed for further consistency. (Some of the funds requested in 2009 relate to this step.)

Module 1 is ready for editing and formatting.

¹ The most current drafts of Module 1 and Module 2 are attached

Module 2 has been edited and formatted.

Modules 3 and 4 will be edited and formatted in the next stage, once the writing is complete.

D. Universities Offering the Certificate and Degree

The University of Melbourne has already advertised the certificate, and will offer the first module starting September 2009. An additional module will be offered each following semester.

New York University has agreed to both offer the on-line certificate and to create a new Master's Degree specialty in quality assurance that will be offered on site. It hopes to begin offering the course in March 2010.

Each institution will tailor the materials for on-line delivery by its own faculty. Other universities have expressed interest in offering the program in the future.

E. INQAAHE Certification

INQAAHE will review the final product before certifying the programs.

F. Scholarships

In order to ensure that students from developing countries have access to the program, INQAAHE has applied to the World Bank (GIQAC) for \$US10,000 in scholarships. INQAAHE would match that with an equal amount from its development fund. NYU has given in principle agreement to providing scholarships.

2. Variations from the Original Workplan

The main variation is that the work is well ahead of schedule. The University of Melbourne had an existing course that covered the same material as Module 1, so it will use its own course rather than the module written for the project.

For its Master's program, NYU is creating courses based on the project materials, existing course materials, and new work by its faculty. The on-line certificate will be based on the project materials.

3. Problems and Issues

The benefit of using many different writers has been considerable, but one result was that extensive editing and reformatting is needed to eliminate duplication and

standardize format and content. INQAAHE has contributed some funding for this work, as has the Australian Universities Quality Agency. As mentioned above, INQAAHE has requested additional funding from GIQAC in its second year of operation of US\$20,000 to complete the writing and editing.

Some of the original writers were unable to write their units for personal reasons. It was necessary to locate new writers who were willing to work on a tight deadline.

4. Supporting Information

Annex 1: Table of all writers, their contact information, and units assigned to them.

Annex 2 and 3: The most current drafts of all units of Modules 1 and 2.

5. Conclusions

This project has taken much more time than anticipated, and has required persistence in seeking volunteer writers, but it has been successful far beyond our expectations. The writers have done an exceptional job of creating complete, interesting, and useful materials with an international scope. The diversity of their viewpoints and national situations has enriched the final product.

We look forward to receiving the requested GIQAC funding in order to complete the last two modules of the program – Operating an External Quality Assurance System, and Maintaining Quality with a Higher Education Institution. These are needed in order for universities to offer the full certificate or degree. They are an important part of the original contributions that this project will make, because they enable the academic program to combine both theory and practice. Market surveys indicate interest in both modules, and even interest in individual units within the modules.

The biggest challenges after completing the writing and editing will be to keep the materials current, to review the programs created by universities to determine whether they qualify for INQAAHE certification, and to publicize the program after the materials are complete - both to potential students and potential providers. INQAAHE will review all modules for revision in 2011.

Clearinghouse

Progress report on the implementation of the development plan

1. Carrying out the activities: Basic Details

QA agencies publish a lot of information on their websites. The cataloguing of this information is important to bring together several resources and data from the agencies, particularly those data concerning the processes and results associated with the quality assurance of the higher education.

An important aspect of the cataloguing is that it has to give visitors not only the possibility to obtain, but also to compare different data. Therefore the website will include an advanced search option where visitors have for example the option to select publications from non-governmental or governmental agencies. Visitors can also choose the country where the agency is established, so people from developing countries can compare details with agencies from other developing countries. In general it will allow those interested (students, employees, political decision makers/politicians, etc.) to localise the specific information they need.

Creating the database

During this period the information available on 17 sites from QA agencies was mapped. In order to do this the standards for the databases have been developed and this resulted in a model catalogue of the resources of the quality assurance agencies. Various features were used to describe the characteristics of the links to online publications.

In order to create the standards for the database, four references have been used:

1. The concepts of the "INQAAHE Glossary". 66 terms of the glossary have been selected and denominated "primary conceptual descriptors". These are the most important, common used definitions. The other definitions from the glossary have not been rejected. These constitute synonyms have been *linked* to the denominated primary descriptors and together they form a list of associated terms. This means that for each primary descriptor used to catalogue the resources from a site of an agency (document; data, information, etc.) the associated descriptors presented in the glossary are also included.
2. Regionalisation of the countries used by INQAAHE
3. The agency type: Functions (different kind of accreditations, programs and/or institutional accreditation); Route (more or less than 10 years of experience) and Origin of financing (governmental or non-governmental)
4. The type of publication according to the categories used by ERIC-NARIC (reports, books, speeches, dissertations etc).

It needs to be pointed out that, the 17 (web)sites which were analysed included different languages. It was necessary to catalogue the resources on these sites in English and in the languages in which the agencies presented themselves. Thereby taken into account the aim of creating a clearinghouse that appeals to an ever wider public.

System for management and searching

For the management of the Clearinghouse the following components were developed:

- A component for services, giving INQAAHE members access to the Clearinghouse, instructing them how to use it and taking into account their feedback.
- A component for development that gives users the possibility to use the database standards. Agencies who's online publications are not included yet will also have the possibility to include their links in the system and classify them according to the database standards.
- A component for administration that makes the monitoring of the development of the clearinghouse possible so the QAHEC administrators can view the amount of visitors etc.

For the design of the system, the system by ERIC-NARIC was considered as reference due to that it constitutes a system of classification and search (with a wide reach/aim) in matters of higher education. This design allows three search types:

1. The basic search by the inclusion of a word by the user;
2. The advanced search by the inclusion of a word by the user, as well as the references which further define the search (countries, type of agencies, dates, language, etc.)
3. The search by means of a Thesaurus. In this case, the user includes a term, and upon clicking, a list of related terms appears from which a specific search can be made according to the term or terms which come closer to the purpose of his search.

Summarizing it may be stated that through the analysis and catalogization of the resources from 17 (web)sites from QA agencies, the following has been tested:

- Standards for the database, in order to organise, structure and describe the information and data from the agencies (including primary and secondary descriptors derived from the INQAAHE Glossary; the type of agencies; and the types of documents by ERIC-NARIC).
- A system that associates, organises and brings into contact users, generators of information (agencies) and administrators bound electronically through the internet.

2. Variations from the original work plan

Early in 2008, it was foreseen to have 50 (web)sites included on the QAHEC website by April, 2009. However, although the INQAAHE website had been re-built late in 2007, it was found to be still insufficiently robust for all the new member services planned. The QAHEC project was therefore put on hold for about four months while the INQAAHE website was redesigned again. Therefore, we currently have only 17 (web)sites and two intermediate requests analyzed for evaluation and validation according to the international standards/norms for the clearinghouse development.

To facilitate and ensure the future catalogue of information by the agencies the system has to work as smooth as possible. With the aim of, in the future, taking maximum advantage of the clearinghouse and its adequate standard of databases, it was necessary to include a request for evaluation of the standards of the database, the components and the search system.

The current revised plan, as outlined below, envisages 50 or so sites catalogued by the end of July. This further work will be funded by INQAAHE. (No request for support for QAHEC has been made from the second year of GIQAC funding.)

2.1 Proposed development plan

The evaluation resulted in the following proposals for improvement:

- To diminish the amount of primary descriptors
- Revision of the detailed list of terms linked to the terms being used as primary descriptors
- Detailed revision of the translation of all the terms/descriptors used to classify

In the second place, to act in accordance with the rules for the operation of the clearinghouse in the international field, a manner to validate the completed cataloguing of the resources of the 17 analysed (web)sites is being developed. This will be done by consulting an ample group of experts with respect to:

- The list of descriptors considered as primary
- Identification of the terms linked to each of the primary descriptors
- The catalogue obtained from these descriptors
- The quality of the analysed resources
- The translation made

In the third place, as a result from the manner of validation, a manual will be developed, including:

- The database standards: descriptors for the catalogue and basic standards of the quality of the resource so that it can be included in the Clearinghouse.
- The rules for operation of the system.

The manual will be used to classify another 30-35 agencies and incorporate their resources in the system (in order to reach the amount of 50 agencies).

Also after finishing the manual a request will be sent to the 17 agencies, whose resources are already analysed, to apply the rules of the manual and to implement changes where needed.

This request will constitute a second request for evaluation/validation as well as an adjustment to the protocol.

These steps will create a mechanism that assures:

- maintenance of the application of standards to describe the available information (standards of databases) and to assist the agencies with the incorporation of their databases
- maintenance of using the manual for the general operation of the system (including the links to the data and enhancing the disposition of the website to the INQAAHE members)

The development of including the websites of 50 agencies will also create:

- the adaptation of a formal Register of information on QA (for an individual agency or group of agencies)
- specific projects which will enhance the quality of the information on QA of the Higher Education

3. Problems and Issues

From the analysis and categorization of the resources from 17 quality Assurance agencies, derives that it is necessary:

- To diminish the amount of terms from the glossary used as primary descriptors
- To revise the list of terms associated with the terms used as primary descriptors
- To revise the translation of the totality of the descriptors used to catalogue
- To include fixed minimum standards on the quality of the information in the clearinghouse
- To define the rules for the operation of the system, addressed to the producers of the information as well as to users and administrators of the clearinghouse
- To include a request for validation with the participation of an ample group of experts

- To foresee the constitution of a formal register for information, with permissions to incorporate information in the clearinghouse
- To foresee projects focusing on the improvement of the quality of the information from agencies (individual or groups of agencies) so that they can convert into crossroads of information on QA of the higher education

4. Conclusions

The development of the initial clearinghouse with links from 17 QA agencies stressed the necessity to incorporate a request for evaluation and validation which postponed the incorporation of information from other agencies.

The existence of both requests is considered as indispensable in order to assure the correct exploit of the clearinghouse. It's also needed to comply with the rules and good international practices associated with the development of this resource.

Aiming at including the links of 50 quality Assurance agencies by the end of the month of July, a launch of QAHEC on 1 August is envisaged.

Small states

Part A: Update since last report

During the past six months, the INQAAHE Task Force on Small States has been working on the survey development and administration. The spread of small states to be surveyed indicated that a region-wise approach to collect data may be helpful. The region wise spread of small states is: Arab States (3); East Asia and the Pacific (20); South and West Asia (2); Latin America and the Caribbean (21); Central and Eastern Europe (4); North America and the Western Europe (5); Sub Sahara (14).

For each region, the Task Force identified a regional person to advise on customising the survey to suit the context of the targeted states and for identifying country specific contacts to answer the survey questionnaire. The composition of the Task Force drawn from various regions was also helpful in identifying the regional coordinators.

An online survey was also developed and sent to the identified contacts. The response rate so far has been around 30%. Follow-up continues to ensure the completeness of the surveys. Parallel work to analyse the data is in progress.

In addition to the paper based and online surveys, the case studies commissioned by UNESCO in 2007, inputs received from the IIEP online Forum for QA in Small States that is being conducted during April-June 2009, the reports of COL and World Bank etc have been considered for the analysis.

What has been achieved?

Both paper based and online surveys have been developed. The online survey gives the flexibility to extend the survey to more groups as and when the contacts are identified. It helps to integrate the data well to sharpen the analysis. Subsequently, a lot of data has now been collected on QA developments in small states, good practices and challenges.

Challenges

Responses have been very slow. A lot of follow up is required.

Current Status

Data analysis has just started. Some more time is needed to present a meaningful analysis with corresponding recommendations. The enclosed report is a limited analysis on some sections, without any quantitative data, since surveys are still coming in. (The survey instrument has been constructed so that returns can be collated as they are received and the analysis continually updated.) The Task Force was under the impression that survey administration can go up the end of April. May and June had

been allotted for final analysis of data and report writing. Reviewing and finalising the report will need time. The final version of the report will be available by the end of June.

Part B: Overview of Whole Project to Date

INQAAHE undertook a situational analysis on the quality assurance developments of small states, in collaboration with partners already active in this area (e.g. UNESCO, COL, ACU and others). The implementation of the project was carried out in four stages.

Stage 1: INQAAHE Task Force

The first stage of the project was the 'Establishment of an INQAAHE task force to collaborate with partners already active in this area (e.g. UNESCO, COL, ACU and others)'. The membership of the Task Force (**Attachment 1**) is diverse and it brought together valuable expertise from the backgrounds of small states, quality assurance, and partners who have been working on issues of small states regionally and internationally. While the Task Force provided leadership to this project, to accommodate inputs from certain other backgrounds, many more experts from small states were involved in broader consultations.

Stage 2: Draft Strategy

The second stage of the project was the 'Establishment of a draft strategy for this situational analysis. Members of the Task Force who attended the INQAAHE Members Forum in Argentina during 14-16 May 2008 had a face to face discussion on the establishment of the draft strategy and identified the following four elements of the draft strategy:

Firstly, it was agreed that the project should identify a specific definition for 'small states' it would follow in the initial phase and in later phases can extend the analysis to a broader spectrum of small states.

There is no single definition of a small country agreed by the international community. Indicators such as population, geographic size or GDP are often used, but population is most commonly used. Depending on the objectives, international partners who worked on small states have used different combinations of these criteria. Discussions are also going on about finding a common or comprehensive definition. In phase 1, the INQAAHE Task Force agreed to develop its initial strategy based on the definition of small states according to population size. At a later stage, the Task force may be able to consider how the small and weak systems might benefit from those efforts. To allow this to happen, care was taken to involve the weak and small higher education systems in the discussions from the beginning.

Secondly, it was agreed that the study should focus on groupings and clusters of small states that have similar characteristics and analyse the QA developments within those groupings.

There are small states where the QA models build on the QA leadership of their higher education institutions and this project should analyse those models.

There are small states in every geographic region, but most countries in the World Bank list fall into three main groups: twelve states are in the Caribbean region, fourteen in East Asia and Pacific, and twelve in Africa. Of the remaining seven countries, two are in South Asia, two in the Middle East, and three in Europe. While considering issues related to regional groupings, to prioritise efforts, the Task Force decided to focus on the two big regional groupings of the Caribbean and the East Asia and Pacific. But care has also been taken to consider the issues relevant to small states that do not fall into any regional groupings.

Thirdly, the Task Force decided to ensure that the small states that have developed significant QA capacity should be included in the analysis so that good practices that have worked well in one context might be disseminated.

There are countries that are small according to the population size but have developed significant QA capacity. Some of them are well resourced (Brunei, Bahrain etc). The World Bank data indicates that The Bahamas, Brunei, Cyprus, Malta, and Qatar have the per capita GNP of more than \$9,000 and the QA models that have been implemented in this context are based on a different set of factors. However, not all factors are related to availability of resources for QA and to ensure sharing of good practices in QA and to explore the models that might work well in the context of small states, this project will give attention to involving the well resourced states as well.

Fourthly, the Task Force agreed that, to identify the needs of the small states a survey has to be conducted and that the case studies and synthesis reports developed by UNESCO and other international partners such as COL and IIEP will be included in the analysis.

The overall strategy was to classify the survey respondents into categories that share common patterns and identify the existing strategies that have worked well, the gaps that need to be bridged and the challenges within those groupings.

Stage 3: Survey development and administration

The third stage of the project was the survey. Based on the agreement to consider the population criterion for the phase 1 survey, more than 60 small states were identified (**Attachment 2**). A few more countries which were only slightly above the cut off size were also included. The spread of small states region-wise is:

1. Arab States (3)
2. East Asia and the Pacific (20)

3. South and West Asia (2)
4. Latin America and the Caribbean (21)
5. Central and Eastern Europe (4)
6. North America and the Western Europe (5)
7. Sub Sahara (14)

For each region, the Task Force identified a regional person to advise on customising the survey to suit the context of the targeted states and for identifying country specific contacts to answer the survey questionnaire. The composition of the Task Force drawn from various regions was also helpful in identifying the regional coordinators. The paper based survey (**Attachment 3**) was developed by a working group of four members of the Task Force.

Stage 4: Situational Analysis

Both paper based and online surveys were developed and sent to more than 60 small states. The response rate so far has been around 30%. Follow-up continues to ensure the completeness of the surveys. Parallel work to analyse the data is in progress. Some more time is needed to complete the follow-up and present a meaningful analysis and corresponding recommendations. Final version of the interim report should be available by the end of June. Reviewing and finalising the report will need time.

For the current report, the following section provides the beginning of the survey analysis.

PART C: Initial Analysis of Data

1. Organisational Structure and Governance

Dedicated QA unit

Nearly one third of the respondents of the online survey indicated that their countries have dedicated QA agencies. Another one third mentioned that they have a specific QA unit within the ministry. The remaining indicated that QA is considered through other ministerial functions.

Comments from the respondents indicate the developmental stages of dedicated QA units. In countries where the ministerial functions cover QA, efforts are in progress to establish new dedicated QA mechanisms and they are in different stages of implementation. Comments from the respondents include:

1. We do not have a QA Unit but the Directorate of Higher Education under the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology carries out QA activities as part of its functions. The Ministry is currently in the process of establishing a Higher Education Observatory that will have regulatory functions.

2. There is no unit dedicated to quality assurance per se. Legislation has been enacted to establish a National Accreditation Council but so far the legislation has not been operationalized.

Ownership and funding

All the respondents of the online survey mentioned that the QA initiatives of their countries have been established by the governments during the last ten years. Except for one unit that was established in 1999, all the others have been established in the 21st century and the year of establishment varies from 2000 to 2009. All the respondents mentioned that the QA initiatives are being funded by the governments.

Majority of the submissions of the IIEP course too reported that, either very recently or only some years ago, a specific structure for external QA has been created or decision taken that one will be created.

Scope of EQA

HEIs under the purview of the QA unit varies from 'none directly' to 55. When all post secondary institutions are included, one country reports of around 90 institutions under its purview. There is a mix of private and public.

Two thirds of the respondents said that other sectors of education are also under the purview of the same QA unit. One third said that it was not the case in their countries. Comments on what is covered by the QA unit include:

1. Technical and Vocational Education programs.
2. Recognition and equivalence of qualifications, registration of private institutions, providing awarding status to private institutions etc.
3. The registration of privately managed primary, all-age and secondary schools.
4. National institutions offering secondary, technical-vocational, and enrichment programs.

Governance

In all small states governments have a major role in quality assurance, but the precise role and the level of involvement vary between countries and over time. Historically, ministries of education have had a national regulatory role in respect of higher education, and sometimes the role has been much stronger, involving micro-management, may be due to the small size of the system. Some governments have increased their control, but through incentives for quality improvement rather than more punitive regulation; some governments regulate public higher education, some regulate private education, and some do both. In this process of evolution, quality assurance has become more devolved, with the emergence of independent and autonomous quality assurance bodies. Quality assurance is now often a multi-agency operation but the role of the governments in the QA developments is very explicit in small states.

A QA agency/unit needs a basis for its authority and a system for controlling and directing its activities. The basis may be a legal instrument (e.g. a law or statute) or simply an agreement between various parties. The system of control is usually a board (of directors) or commission (of trustees), supported by management and/or administration. Among the small states that were surveyed, apart from the professional accreditation and ministerial regulations, QA functions operated in three types of ownership models:

- Established by the government and operates as a unit in the ministry (Cyprus, Saint Lucia)
- Established by the government as an independent or semi-autonomous body (for instance in Barbados, Jamaica, Namibia Qualifications Authority, Seychelles Qualifications Authority)
- Established under a tertiary education buffer organization (such as in Botswana and Mauritius).

Composition of the governing body and line of reporting vary accordingly. For instance, one of the respondents stated that according to the legislation, the National Accreditation Council would be governed by its own board but with oversight from the Minister of Education who appoints its members. In Maldives, the QA unit has its own Executive Director and there is a board that acts more at a strategic and decision making level. It reports to the State Minister of Education, who looks after the higher education sector of MOE. In Mauritius, the Quality Assurance & Accreditation Division (QAAD) is a division of the Tertiary Education Commission and it is responsible for quality assurance in public and private institutions, registration of private institutions and the accreditation of their programs.

In Bahamas, the ministry of education has a unit for the registration of HEIs as mandated by the education Act. The Act for the establishment of the national accreditation and equivalency council of the Bahamas was passed in the house of assembly in 2006 and it will become functional shortly.

Composition of the governing body varies. In Mauritius, they are drawn from Government, private sector, tertiary institutions, the community, academic community and students. In another country, there are plans to have the governing body in a tripartite form with representation Industry, Labour, and Government. Yet another agency has employers' representatives, employees' representatives, and public sector representatives in the Board.

The appointing authority in most cases is a government authority. Comments received from the respondents include: the Minister of Education and Skills Development, MOE and civil service commission, Cabinet, the minister of education, the Prime Minister, Minister Responsible for Education and Training. Other Members shall be appointed by their different constituencies.

Most respondents indicated that they report to a ministry or a high official in the ministry.

2. QA purposes and processes

Purpose of QA varies a lot. The purposes include:

- Funding of public tertiary institutions
- Registration of tertiary institutions
- Accreditation of private institutions
- Advice to government on the development of tertiary institutions
- Approval of Academic Programs
- Validation of Academic Credentials
- Disseminate information related to QA
- Register foreign-based institutions that offer education and training in the country
- Advice on the recognition of institutions and their awards (including equivalency of qualifications)
- Develop and maintain a unified system of credits for institutions
- Provide advice on the conferral on institutions of titles such as "university", "college" etc;
- Issue Certificates of Recognition of CARICOM Skills Qualification to eligible CARICOM nationals and verify Certificates issued to CARICOM nationals from other Member States
- Receive complaints relating to prospectuses
- The registration of primary, all-age, secondary and post-secondary institutions
- Establishment of criteria for registration and regulation of private training providers
- Assessment and regulation of training providers at the national level.

One fourth of the respondents have indicated that it is a voluntary process. The rest have indicated that it is mandatory.

Most respondents (87.5%) indicate that they cover both public and private funded HEIs. Some of them (75%) include non-university level institutions as well including the training institutions.

There appears to be an emphasis on regulating the private providers through QA checks. For instance, in one of the small states, the Tertiary Education Act specifically restricts the process of institutional and programmatic accreditation to private institutions only. Some states operate two different QA processes – one for the public and the other for the private. In one of the small states, publicly-funded institutions are subject to quality audits, while private institutions have to be registered, their programmes have to be accredited and they are subject to quality assurance follow-ups. In yet another small state, some public institutions are given more autonomy when it comes to academic supervision.

(The other sections are about selecting and training reviewers, conducting the reviews, challenges they face in HE, challenges to QA, QA of CBHE, UNESCO-OECD Guidelines etc.)