

Final report GIQAC

Additional funding for INQAAHE members from developing countries to attend the 10th biennial INQAAHE conference

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INQAAHE

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

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1. Learning outcomes Pre-Conference Workshops

Eight INQAAHE members that received financial support did attend the pre-conference workshops. Six of them agreed or strongly agreed that these workshops were a useful learning experience for their own agencies. The same number also confirmed that the needs of quality assurance agencies in developing countries were taken into account. For five of the participants the workshop created opportunities to network with other INQAAHE members.

The members that attended the pre-conference workshop 'preparing institutions for self assessment' indicated that the workshop provided them with:

- greater insight into strategies for checking institutions' readiness for self-assessment
- advise on how to encourage the institutions to prepare them for self-assessment thereby using the institution's mission
- a self-assessment checklist
- suggestions on how to use the strengths and weaknesses to develop an action plan that focuses on quality improvement within the institution
- interesting case studies from Australia and Bahrain

The members that attended the pre-conference workshop 'effective site visits' indicated that the workshop provided them with:

- advise on how to engage the various stakeholders
- suggestions on how to optimize the results of the site visit
- new insights on how to structure the interviews that are part of the site visits.
- new criteria on how to select people for interviews

The members that attended the pre-conference workshop 'effective report writing' indicated that the workshop provided them with:

- comparative and analytical materials on report writing
- examples of the different methods that can be used
- examples of 'good practices'
- suggestions on how to write relevant and meaningful reports that are in line with the continuous improvement approach

The members that attended the pre-conference workshop 'evaluating QA Agencies' indicated that the workshop provided them with:

- raising awareness of the importance of evaluating QA Agencies and creating frameworks for this type of evaluation
- information about how to ensure competitive corporate governance
- knowledge on how to formulate the terms of reference for external reviews
- general considerations for an external review (administrative arrangements, panel compositions, self-evaluation process, effective site visits, report requirements etc)

2. Learning outcomes Main Conference

Thirteen out of fifteen participants agreed or strongly agreed that the key-note sessions contained sufficient useful elements for people from developing countries.

The kind of new and useful information received by the members and how they might apply this to their own work varied strongly. However there are also some common elements. In the first place the information received can be disseminated through various stakeholders; both institutions and QA agencies can be informed about the new trends in quality assurance. Some participants indicated that (a second step) would be to take into account the information received when revising their accreditation framework.

Sharing good practices with institutions and perhaps even the development of a framework to ensure the internal quality at an institution is also mentioned.

One of the participants, Dr. Manuel Rodriguez is involved in establishing a new QA agency in Peru, especially for him, the presentations of the different QA models were extremely useful.

The following scheme provides an overview of the common elements.

Useful and new elements from the key-note sessions	Suggestions of how to apply them to their own work
Overview of current developments towards institutional versus programme accreditation	To organize a discussion with the staff at home on how to apply new models and approaches into the accreditation process
The importance of using flexible and more informal standards rather than using formal and rigid standards. There's no 'right' model in QA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newly established QA Agencies can take this into account when setting up an accreditation framework 2. Existing QA agencies can take this into consideration when undertaken a revision of their standards and procedures
The impact of different approaches to quality assurance and how these can optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of QA agencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To assist emerging QA systems to decide which QA approach works best in their situation 2. Existing QA agencies can use this information for enhancement
The distinction between a focus on internal quality assurance and a focus on creating a (generic) quality culture within the institute	This seems to be quite a new concept for the participants and the concepts and definitions need to be explored more in depth.
The importance of internal quality assurance mechanisms at institutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. QA's can work together with universities in terms of assisting them with their internal quality management systems 2. Developing a framework for an internal quality structure
Developing QA techniques for Distance Education	To cooperate with Distance Education Institutions to evolve a new set of norms for flexible learning institutions providing 'virtual class room' facilities
Sharing of good practices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adapting the lessons learned with some modifications to the needs of a QA agency in a developing country 2. Good practices will be disseminated to the university community through training programs, workshops and seminars

The emphasize on the shift from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach	Adapting the standards in a QA framework in such a way that they focus on expected outcomes, rather than on prescribing actions
The influence of (global) social changes on the Higher Education	To establish a research and development section in a QA agency that can respond to the changing needs of a society

3. Learning outcomes “Challenges for newly developed agencies”

Seven out of fifteen participants attended the workshop “Challenges for newly developed agencies” within the main conference. Some participants indicated that they didn’t attend the workshops because they already went to the pre-conference workshops. Some of them preferred to attend one of the other paper sessions.

Four of them strongly agreed that attending the workshop was a useful learning experience. Six out of seven participants agreed or strongly agreed that during the workshop the needs of QA agencies in developing countries were taken into account. The same number agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop provided them with opportunities to network with other INQAAHE members.

The main remarks can be summarized as follows:

Useful and new elements from the workshop “Challenges for newly developed agencies”	Suggestions of how to apply them to their own work
To gain insight on the INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practices	Reviewing the current QA processes in such a way that they apply to the guidelines
Steps for developing a new QA agency thereby taken into account, for example legislation, policy issues, review processes	These steps be used when planning how to create an QAA
To identify how QA agencies might assist professional accreditation bodies	During the conference cooperation has been reached between a ‘regular’ QA agency (Barbados Accreditaion Council) and a professional accreditation body (Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and Other Health Professions): staff members from both organisations will act as observers in each other’s accreditation site visit teams.
The importance of creating a culture of quality within the institution	Creating a culture of quality will be taken into account when implementing institutional accreditation in addition to program accreditation.
Preparing the institution for internal assessment and on-site visits	QA agencies can assist the institution to create, enhance and sustain the “culture of quality”

4. Learning outcomes “The paper-break out sessions”

The majority of the people agreed that the paper-break out sessions offered sufficient useful elements for people from developing countries.

Various participants do mention the same aspects that were presented during the key-notes and (pre-conference) workshops. However the following sessions contained some new elements.

Name of the paper-break out session	Suggestions of how to apply the information to their own work
Web-based Quality Improvement System	Using this system as a new method for self-assessment
Student involvement in the work of ENQA	Involving students in quality assessment
Internal systems and quality culture	To apply the measures mentioned to improve the internal quality culture
Performance indicators for evaluating academic quality	To implement these indicators in the framework of the agency
Quality assurance as an Empowerment Tool for Women: A case from Saudi-Arabia	To adapt the procedures and practices to increase women empowerment and obtain gender equality in the HE in India.
A new way of evaluating overseas providers	To pay more attention to the quality assurance of overseas providers of HE.

5. Evaluating the paper presentations

Five participants presented a paper. The majority of the participants received positive feedback. The audience confirmed the information of the speakers by giving them examples that related to their own situation. Also additional questions were asked and compliments about the interesting content of their presentation.

Due to a lack of time one participant didn't receive any feedback.

All participants indicated that their paper presentation provided an opportunity for networking. Two members even had the opportunity to talk and liaise with representatives from the Chinese and United Arab Emirates' government.

6. General remarks

Almost all participants mentioned the exchange of ideas, methods , strategies in the field of QA and the networking as the core value of this conference.

One participant outlined the fact that the conference remained focused on the theme and keynote-speeches. Another participant complained about the lack of time to ask questions during paper-break sessions.

Suggestion for future conferences are that attention needs to be paid to mutual recognition and/or to the comparability of QA systems and Qualifications.

Also a workshop that addresses the specific needs of small states would be useful. This shows the value of INQAAHE's GIQAC-supported project on Small States.