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International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

SUMMARY OF THE INQAAHE MEETING FOR SPECIALIZED AND PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITORS

Location: Washington, DC

Date: January 25, 2010 from 2-3:30 PM EST

This was the second annual meeting for specialized and professional accreditors hosted by INQAAHE. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a continued forum whereby programmatic accreditors could discuss issues of mutual interest around the globalization of the professions and the call for transnational quality assurance review processes. The meeting was facilitated by INQAAHE Board Members David Woodhouse, Carol Bobby, and Dorte Kristoffersen.

A total of twenty-eight (28) individuals attended the meeting, representing 25 different agencies.

The agenda for the meeting included the following items:

- 1) Review of information gathered by INQAAHE at the January 2009 meeting and actions taken by INQAAHE to address some of the expressed needs of the specialized and professional accreditors
- 2) Updates from attendees regarding their current international QA activities
- 3) Presentation of a new model for international review of counseling training programs – International Registry of Counselor Education Programs (IRCEP)
- 4) Group Discussion of scenarios
- 5) Update on current and future INQAAHE workshops and conferences
- 6) Final Q & A time or summary

David Woodhouse, INQAAHE President, reviewed the summary of last year's meeting and provided a handout of INQAAHE's actions on the suggestions received. The actions included the launch of the INQAAHE Consultant Database in January 2010, which offers a database of QA personnel who can serve as contacts for information in specific countries or regions, the soon to be launched INQAAHE Clearinghouse (QAHEC) the INQAAHE Query Service which allows questions to be posed by members, and the pages on the INQAAHE website dedicated to information pertinent to the specialized and professional accreditors. It was noted that this section of the website is waiting to be populated with information from agencies that wish to share information and insights. David also noted that if the accreditors wished to have a listserv, this could be done if there is sufficient demand.

Carol Bobby, President and CEO of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), presented information on the creation of a new international registry of counselor education programs being launched by her agency. Carol focused on reasons why a Registry was considered more appropriate for the counseling program at this point in time than either setting international standards or calling CACREP an international accrediting agency. Three primary reasons include 1) counseling does not have standardized entry-level degree expectations that are consistent across countries, 2) counseling is a very culturally-influenced process, and 3) counseling is a very new profession in many countries. A copy of the power point slides is attached to this summary.



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Three scenarios were created for group discussion. One scenario was assigned to each table for discussion and participants were asked to discuss the assignment in depth.

Below is a synopsis of each scenario and the discussion notes generated by the participants.

Scenario #1

Your organization has made the decision to become a “global” accreditor.

1. What does this mean? How will you determine the appropriateness of this decision?
 2. What standards will you use?
 3. How will QA reviews be conducted and by whom? What will be included in the training?
 4. How will you relate to other accrediting bodies in the same profession that might be operating in other countries? How would you interact with a “local” accrediting body if you were to operate in their region or country?
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The group did not cover the questions asked in relation to scenario 1 in detail, but started listing the pros and cons of being a global accreditor. The notes listed cover the discussions as they took place.

Parameters to consider before becoming a global accreditor:

- Whether global accreditation would be valuable depends on the characteristics of the profession. It may work for some professions but not all.
- Differences in legal frameworks and culture need to be taken into serious consideration before embarking on global accreditation. In some countries global accreditation may not have any value due to the local licensing rules. If the latter is the case then requiring of graduates to sit an exam would solve a problem when dealing with credentials recognition.
- The discussions also found it important to distinguish between global accreditation with standards adapted to the global context for the profession and American accreditation done globally on the basis of American professional standards.
- The value of global accreditation for local graduates was questioned. A majority was of the view that the efforts of the accreditors would be better spent in the local context and that would also be to the benefit of the professional constituency. The most important role of professional accreditation is to protect the public.
- Participants agreed that there was an important conceptual difference between global work for development purposes and global accreditation. The former could be of valuable benefit and could eventually lead to global professional accreditation.

Scenario #2

Your governing board is exploring the pros and cons of becoming a “global” accreditor for your profession. You believe this is important to pursue.

1. What reasons will you outline to convince your board to move in this direction?
2. Anticipating arguments against this, what responses will you provide to counter the concerns?



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3. What models will you present to the board for ways that they might pursue this direction?

The group determined that the scenario was missing a question #0, namely, why does your agency want to become a global accreditor? Answers include

- You think it will earn money for your commission
- You receive requests for accreditation from abroad
- You believe that other countries need improvement in your field and this is an altruistic move
- You believe it will raise the reputation of your commission (presumably you think raising the reputation is important)
- This will represent collegial outreach to colleagues in other countries
- Everyone is doing it (the world view is global – the world is moving this way).

Another prior question to consider is what do you mean by being a 'global accreditor'? Possibilities include

- Carrying out accreditations abroad exactly as in the USA (same standards, etc)
- Accrediting abroad using adapted standards (maybe the same for all institutions, or maybe different for different countries)
- Implementing, for any institution world-wide, a set of global standards, possibly developed in collaboration with accreditors in other countries

It was noted that the answers to questions 1-3 will depend on your reason(s) and your meaning.

For questions 1 & 2, there is a need to consider the following questions and/or considerations:

- Do you have the capacity?
- Is there a market?
- Is it economically sustainable (or are you doing it for non-financial reasons)?
- Need to be clear about requirements for 'candidacy' and clear on the level
- Might be easier if the standards are more oriented to input ones, as judging the comparability of output standards might be harder
- What are the threats if you don't do it?
- Need for site visit means high costs
- Given the different milieu, maybe 2 visits will be necessary, the first to gain an understanding of the context

For question #3 the model could be US, US adapted, or global, specially created

- Need decisions in respect of all the facets of the usual accreditation – materials, visits, decision-making, reports, etc.
- Make more use of surveys
- Make use of trusted people physically nearer (geographically) to the accredee

Scenario #3



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You are designing a survey to determine what your QA colleagues in other professions are doing across countries and cultures.

1. What information will you wish to include on the survey and why?
 2. What questions will you ask and how will you ask them?
 3. What other considerations will be important in designing the survey?
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In order to develop a survey, the group decided it should define the questions and issues that were most important and oftentimes most troublesome for accrediting agencies that were operating internationally. Listing these issues could assist in development of survey questions. The following list represents the areas that might assist in developing survey questions.

- **Permission to operate:** Different countries have different regulations. Who or what agency/ministry in a country provides legal authority to operate? How do you find this out? It was noted that some countries have more than one avenue for obtaining this authority.
- **Secondary School Structure:** Often the higher education degree system is built upon the secondary school structure? Different countries have different foundations for moving into higher education. How would an accrediting agency take this into account?
- **Country-specific information:** This can be important before any accreditation activity takes place. How does the agency get this information? How do they use it to train visitors, board members, make decisions? How does the agency maintain current information on the country?
- **Preparing the programs for seeking accreditation from an “international” accreditor:** Is the agency doing anything different to assist the institution/program in preparing for the accreditation review? Has the agency determined what its thresholds for eligibility are (e.g., everything done in English, regional accreditation required)?
- **The Influence and Impact of Culture:** Professions that are not based on the hard sciences may find it difficult to create culturally neutral standards that can apply across different regions. However, all accrediting agencies will feel the impact of culture when it comes to standards that are not curriculum focused. For example, faculty governance structures and decision-making processes are often impacted by the societal and cultural norms of the country. How does an accrediting agency take these differences into consideration?
- **Finances:** What is the philosophy of the agency in setting its fees, if it is doing international accreditation? Is the agency merely trying to cover its costs or is it hoping to make money?
- **Training:** What special training is being offered to peer reviewers before going on an international visit? What training does the governing body of the accrediting agency need?
- **Standards Development or Revisions:** How do agencies approach standards development and revisions issues? Is there one set of standards for all programs around the world or are there different standards being used just for international purposes? Does the agency grant any waivers for meeting certain standards that the home country institutions would be required to meet? If international standards are developed, how was this done and how will revisions occur?
- **Decisions:** Is accreditation granted equally regardless of location or is an equivalency granted?



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To close the meeting, David thanked everyone for participating, provided some information on upcoming INQAAHE events, and encouraged the participants to contact Carol Bobby or him with questions or suggestions regarding how INQAAHE could continue to serve the specialized and professional accrediting community.