

**President's Report to INQAAHE General Assembly, April 2011**  
**20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

I am pleased to be able to report to members that the last year has been one of action, progress and success for INQAAHE, with continued and new services to members. Activities have included the following:

- the graduate program in quality (QAP) was offered for the first time (by two universities) and some scholarships to the program were provided;
- members had the use of the Clearinghouse (QAHEC) which was launched at the Namibia Forum;
- the consultants database was extended and used (in conjunction with APQN and ANQAHE);
- interns from small states were hosted by various members;
- interaction with regional networks continued;
- the Query Service was offered throughout the year;
- a meeting of professional accreditors was held in Europe;
- members have been reviewed against the GGP;
- there was intensive study of how best INQAAHE can assist its members in identifying accreditation mills;
- in conjunction with some organisations and institutions in Australia and New Zealand, INQAAHE won an ICDE contract to map the regulations on open and distance education in the Asia-Pacific region (a task to be replicated in other regions);
- work began on studying mutual recognition of accrediting agencies globally;
- work has also begun on studying the transnational impact of quality agencies;
- Conference 2011 was planned;
- Forum 2012 venue was decided; and
- agencies have been reviewed against the Guidelines for Good Practice.

Many of these work items have benefited from a second year of funding from the World Bank via the GIQAC scheme.

A very significant piece of work carried out in the final months of the period is the production of a 'chronology of INQAAHE'. During the 20 years of INQAAHE's existence, records have been directed at the Network activities, not maintained with an eye to writing a history one day. This publication cannot therefore be called a history: rather, it is a first attempt to gather together some data and dates of people and activities. A formal and interpretative history might come later.

All this work is made possible by the dedicated work of many people, including the Board Directors, the Secretariat, members of many project and working groups, and member agencies.

The following is a report on the work of some of the working groups / project groups.

## Reports from Project Groups

### **1. Database of Good Practices in Quality Assurance (GPQA)**

The INQAAHE Good Practices in Quality Assurance Database (GPQA) continues to grow very slowly. So far only 12 practices have been published on the INQAAHE website and only two new practices were submitted in 2010. This is only a fraction of the rich pool of practices which undoubtedly exists among INQAAHE members, and members are encouraged to share more of their good ideas with their QA colleagues.

Early in 2010, the INQAAHE Board considered the lack of activity and took a number of initiatives to attract more attention to the GPQA. Firstly, the Manual was revised with respect to the requirements for submissions. Previously it was a requirement that a practice had been externally reviewed prior to submission, but the Board now considers evidence from the applicant on the added value of the practice to be sufficient. Secondly, submissions in any of the UNESCO official languages are now accepted, provided only that there is a brief introduction in English.

The definition of a Good Practice is: “an activity that is clear and coherent and that has been documented as adding significant value to the policies or practices of a quality assurance agency and/or its stakeholders” and when submitting an application applicants are required to:

- provide a clear and coherent description of the practice and the rationale for the introduction of the practice, and
- provide evidence and/or examples that the practice has added value to its QA activities.

In June 2010, the INQAAHE Secretariat was invited to make a presentation about the GPQA to the participants in the ENQA workshop on Internal Quality Assurance. At the ENQA General Assembly held in September 2010 an important part of the program was dedicated to the sharing of practices among the participating members. Following the workshop under the remit of the ENQA-INQAAHE Memorandum of Cooperation a message has been circulated to ENQA members altering members to the GPQA and the possibility to have practices published. Following this event INQAAHE has discussed with the ENQA presidency possible means of engaging ENQA members more actively in the submission of practices.

INQAAHE intends to organize one or two workshops in cooperation with APQN and RIACES in the coming year. The purpose of the workshops is for the participants to share good practices and have the opportunity to discuss the purpose and value of the practices. Sponsored participants will be required to submit their practices to INQAAHE for review. The workshops may also produce and/or review relevant manuals. INQAAHE has sought funds from GIQAC to support the project. The amount allocated by the GIQAC Steering Committee will permit some funding of this activity.

The Board hopes that these initiatives will have a positive impact on the number of applications being submitted so that the GPQA can develop into a truly useful tool for members.

All members are encouraged to submit applications for good practices. More information is available on <http://www.inqaahe.org/gpqa/about-gpqa>.

Dorte Kristoffersen

## **2. Specialized and Professional Program Areas**

The Working Group of QA in Higher Education for Specialized and Profession Program Areas was established three years ago. Its primary goal was to find ways to engage QA agencies whose primary standards-setting work was with professional and specialized program areas, such as engineering, nursing, or geology. The INQAAHE Board had determined that this group of agencies and the staff and other personnel engaged in QA review of programs within institutions was both underrepresented and underserved by INQAAHE current activities.

Progress has been made. In both 2009 and 2010, INQAAHE scheduled half-day meetings for programmatic accreditors to determine their interest in INQAAHE and to survey ways that INQAAHE might address their needs for networking and professional development opportunities. Two meetings were held in Washington, DC in conjunction with the annual conference of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, and one in Paris in conjunction with INQAAHE meetings with UNESCO. The first two meetings were well attended, primarily by programmatic accreditors from the North America, with only a few other regions of the world represented. Attendance at the third meeting was good considering that the notice given was short.

Some of the key recommendations made during these first two meetings included the following:

- the development of pages within the INQAAHE website dedicated to the issues and needs of the programmatic accreditors
- the development of a survey that looks at what the various programmatic accreditors are doing internationally
- the continued offering of programs for programmatic accreditors that examine issues related to training issues for agencies involved in global accreditation activities, the development of global or international standards, and the importance of understanding cultural differences.
- the development of a searchable database on who are the regulators in different countries; that is, who has granted the authority for higher education institutions and programs to be offered and who authorizes reviews by QA agencies?

INQAAHE, as an organization, immediately followed-up with the development of web pages for the specialized and professional accreditors, but interest in populating these pages has been minimal. Information for what should be included in a survey has also been gathered, but the Working Group still has this on its to-do list.

The European meeting, on December 7, 2010 in Paris, drew interest from European agencies involved in review of programs, with 11 participants that included representation from the INQAAHE Board and the Secretariat. Key areas of discussion included:

- mutual recognition issues related to accreditation decisions in the disciplines

- global consortiums in certain professions and their role in developing global standards and competencies
- the importance of using similar terminology and vocabulary in order to facilitate recognition

Suggested actions included:

- the development of an online forum to discover what labels were being used in different regions for the same discipline or profession
- a focus on ways for the accreditors – professional to professional; professional to nations/regional – to interact and collaborate and perhaps arranging a pilot study around this
- consideration of mapping exercises to find the common elements in the way professions are reviewing programs in different countries
- have accreditors from different regions share their experiences of accrediting within the disciplines.

The next meeting of the QA Agencies Working with Specialized and Professional Programs in Higher Education will be held in conjunction with the INQAAHE Biennial Conference in Madrid, Spain on Thursday, April 7, 2011.

Carol L. Bobby

### **3. Targeted support for Small States**

INQAAHE got funding under the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC) to provide internship opportunities for quality assurance professionals and policy makers from small states. INQAAHE added more resources to the GIQAC funds and supported six internships. The following agencies from different regions (Asia, Arab, South Pacific, Africa and the Caribbean) benefitted from the internships:

- Higher Education Council, Rwanda
- National Commission for Academic Assessment and Accreditation Council, East Timor
- Quality Assurance Division of the Tertiary Education Commission, Mauritius
- Samoa Qualifications Agency, Samoa
- Accreditation Council of Trinidad & Tobago
- Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission, Palestinian Authority

The host agencies were the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education (NAQAAE) of Egypt and the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU). Although the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) of UK kindly came forward to host the intern from Mauritius, due to visa related issues, the internship did not materialise. Visa restrictions prevented or hindered other intended internships also.

At the end of the internship the interns filled a feedback questionnaire that provided information about the benefits they gained and how the program can be improved further. The feedback acknowledges that the internships had been organised in a very professional manner. The interns mentioned that the exposure they received would help them to do

better in their current job and that they would use the QA policies and procedures they had experienced in the host agency to make improvements back in their agencies. There was a desire among the interns for a longer period of internship and they wanted to observe more QA activities of the host agencies.

INQAAHE recognises that it would be very difficult to find a perfect host who would be able to provide all that the interns would like to experience in a limited period of time, given that the QA activities of any agency would be spread over a period of many months. With limited funding, the internship can achieve only some priority objectives and from that point of view the internships have been very successful. However, there is scope to plan for continued mentorships after the interns return to their agencies. A forum to facilitate sharing of experience of the interns after a year or two may be considered. The internship program will be continued in 2011.

#### **4. Working with Other Networks**

INQAAHE works not only with and for its member agencies but also with and for the networks of agencies. Accordingly, Marie-Odile Ottenwaelter and I have co-ordinated networking among regional networks. INQAAHE annual forum and biennial meetings have been used as the platform to promote networking among global QA committees.

Prior to the forum in Namibia, networks were contacted and given the opportunity to make presentations. During the meeting, networks presented their project reports and this was followed by open discussions on challenges they face in implementing their projects and solutions that they embarked upon. Networks also discussed how they have been setting up performance indicators, and interacting with GIQAC and other networks.

Supportive of working together with networks, this forum has been an opportunity for INQAAHE to present its website, granting unlimited access to networks who can tap into the numerous resources. INQAAHE has also presented its memorandum of cooperation containing a description of mutual support.

In December, GIQAC convened meetings in Paris where the networks described the work supported by GIQAC and its impact. These meetings were intended to feed into GIQAC's decisions on 2011 funding, and to encourage other donors (in addition to the World Bank). On the third day, the networks shared information about current issues and possible collaboration. Planned at this meeting, and implemented in March, was a workshop to train network nominees to lead training sessions using the IIEP material that has already been successfully used in several regions.

The next biennial meeting coming up in Spain (April, 2011) is yet another opportunity to concretise and stage follow-up plans for networks. This time the meeting will be focussed on fostering active collaboration and support of networks. Networks would be asked to identify a main goal or challenge that might best be carried out (or led by) the global network. This international dimension allows for in-depth dealing with issues that cannot be adequately addressed by country-wide initiative. The meeting could produce an action plan assigning network members with responsibility for mutually agreed tasks.

Theresa Okafor

## **5. QA Program for QA Professionals**

In 2008 and 2009, a large team of INQAAHE volunteers wrote a graduate diploma program in quality assurance. This was launched at the European QA conference in November 2009. It is now available as open-source software on the INQAAHE website. In 2010, two universities, the University of Melbourne, Australia, and New York University, USA, offered the whole program as a credit-bearing qualification, available on-line by distance education. At the beginning of 2011, NYU decided to discontinue the program (due to logistical difficulties), but the University of Melbourne considers it a great success. Great interest has been shown by a range of participants from all round the world, and student feedback has been excellent. In addition to the scholarships offered by GIQAC and INQAAHE, Melbourne itself has given some scholarships. A two-day workshop in April will review and revise the program.

INQAAHE would be keen to support at least one other university to offer the whole program.

Individual modules and units are being widely used by institutions and agencies.

David Woodhouse

## **6. Accreditation Mills**

The existence of fake or fraudulent HE institutions and accrediting agencies, often called 'mills' is a constant problem for quality agencies. A number of methods exist to alert the unwary to these, including lists of mills (black lists), lists of bona fide agencies / institutions (white lists), and widespread advertising of the need for 'caveat emptor'. Some years ago, UNESCO developed a 'portal' linking to bona fide institutions and INQAAHE has more recently been looking at addressing the bogus agency issue.

Wanting to go beyond simply urging people to be cautious ('caveat emptor'), INQAAHE considered the relative merits and demerits of black and white lists. Black lists are relatively simple, but can provoke legal action. There already exist a number of white lists (INQAAHE's own list of Full Members is one, and the Council for HE Accreditation (CHEA) has a long list), and much study was carried out through 2010 to see if we could create a definitive and comprehensive white list. Eventually, the Board decided that this would be expensive, barely practical, and subject to analogous legal problems to black lists.

The Board therefore decided to provide a descriptive page on the INQAAHE website with links to as many known valid white lists as possible. This is now under construction.

David Woodhouse

## **7. Mutual Recognition**

The working group started slowly in 2010. The first step was to put together an international working group of experienced and committed members, representing regional networks / organizations. As a result of personal talks the following, highly esteemed QA professionals showed interest to participate in the mutual recognition working group: Badr Aboul-Ela (United Arab Emirates, ANQAHE), Luis Fernando Chaparro (Columbia, RIACES), Judith Eaton (US ,CHEA), Rolf Heusser (Switzerland, ECA), Stephen E. Hunt (US, Recognition Authorities), Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic (France, UNESCO), Antony Stella (Australia, APQN). The working group might be expanded over the course of the work.

Second step is to agree on a road map for the further procedure of the foreseen project work. A draft concept has been handed out to all members of the working group. Feedback is expected until end of March 2011.

Third step is to open an interactive discussion forum among the WG members. This step has already been accomplished with the kind support of the INQAAHE secretariat in the Netherlands. A protected discussion point has been established on the INQAAHE website that allows us to deposit material about MR initiatives from the different regions in the world and to discuss their methods and results (SWOT analysis).

The systematic collection and analysis of existing information about MR initiatives will be accompanied in 2011 by trans-regional pilot studies in the domain of MR. The members of the working group will identify potential candidates for trans-regional QA/recognition projects. One of the examples will be to achieve a simplified accreditation process for joint programmes between Columbia and Spain, on the base of mutual recognition activities and mutual trust. Other initiatives will follow in due time.

Rolf Heusser

## **8. Institution Members**

INQAAHE is looking to provide targeted support for members that are themselves higher education institutions, analogous to the targeted support from professional accreditors. To do this, it was planned to firstly do a survey of aspiration of the institution members. However, the Board decided during the INQAAHE Forum May 3-5, 2010 in Windhoek, Namibia, to survey the members of INQAAHE on their desires more generally, and to include the needs of institution members in this broader survey. The survey is going on now and the questionnaire is expected to be completed by all members in March 2011. Based on this survey, a needs assessment and strategic mapping will be carried out to arrange the common needs and pursue further specific needs of Institution members. These common and specific needs will be addressed with more appropriate strategy and strategy prioritizing techniques and be matched with the resource availability to address the relevant needs. Budget or funding for the programs implementation derived from this survey will be adjusted according to the nature of the strategy.

Some programs potentially relevant to the institution members (in terms of enabling, empowering and facilitation), in addition to the pursuance through providing a global intelligence and support services, are, e.g., :

1. Global information exchange
2. International Benchmarking
3. Global recognition of qualifications
4. International mobility of students and life-long learners
5. Development of knowledge and understanding of the practice of QA in HE.

These generic or common programs will be underpinned with the 2008-2013 operational plans directives as prescribed in the INQAAHE strategic plan 2008-2012.

Adil Basuki Ahza

### ***9. The Alfa Project III "Quality Assurance: Public Policies and University Management"***

This project has three main objectives:

1. measure the relative efficiency and relevance of the various quality assurance mechanisms in use in Latin American countries;
2. contribute to the design of public policies aimed at improving the management of higher education quality ;
3. improve the expertise of the persons in charge of quality assurance at the government, agency and institution level.

Two lines of action are pursued: the development of a methodology to evaluate the impact of the establishment of quality assurance processes and the design of courses to improve the competency of persons in charge of quality assurance.

During the last year, a methodology to evaluate the impact of quality assurance processes was developed and tested in two countries that had well established quality assurance systems: Chile and Colombia. The results were first analysed in Bogota by the teams in charge of the test in those two countries to check for consistency and make preliminary adjustments. They were later presented and discussed in a meeting of all participants in the Alfa project held in Panama July 19 and 20. At the end of this meeting, some minor adjustments were made to the instruments and rules were set up to assure consistencies of the results. The Panama meeting participants being satisfied with the results of the tests, they selected seven countries for the final impact evaluation: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Spain, México and Portugal. This choice was made taking into account the degree of development of their quality assurance system.

Part of the Panama meeting was dedicated to the review of a proposal of courses to improve the competencies in quality assurance of three categories of persons: those in charge of public policies in higher education, those in charge of QA agencies and those in charge of QA at the institution level. The process for determining the content of the modules started with an analysis of the potential learners, the functions they would have to carry out and the competencies associated with them. Next, the WG on the modules analysed a number of offerings, including the INQAAHE QAP program and the UNESCO IIEP distance learning materials. Combining these elements (the needs and the available materials) they came up with a proposal for four modules. These are

similar to the INQAAHE modules (with attribution). However, there is more instructional design, with the aim that the end product will be relatively self-sufficient for anyone to use. Each course will be designed in two formats, a short one and a more involved one, and will be available in Spanish and in English.

Work is actually continuing: the data necessary for the impact evaluation are being collected. They will be analysed and it is expected that at the end of the project, that is at the end of 2011, a manual for the application of the methodology will have been developed and a comparative analysis of the results of the impact evaluation in the seven countries will be available. It will then be possible to make policy recommendations for those in charge of quality assurance in various countries. The outcomes will be disseminated through two international seminars to be held one in Latin America and the other in Europe.

Jacques L'Écuyer

During the year, elections have been held for the Board that have seen a great change in membership of the Board. I am sure that the incoming directors will continue the excellent work, and I hope that the outgoing directors will continue to be involved in INQAAHE's work through its projects and working groups.

David Woodhouse  
President  
March 2011