Working with Governments and Higher Education Institutions: A Balancing Act for QA Bodies?

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Joint Quality Review Committee
Hong Kong
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Hong Kong

• An independent **Quality Assurance (QA) body** formed by the eight UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong

• Major remit is to provide for and implement a framework for peer review capable of assuring the quality of self-financing, sub-degree programmes of member institutions

• Funded by the institutions and independent of government

• Conducts Institutional Reviews and assessment of programmes
Working with Governments
Support/Influence of Governments on QA Agencies

• Structural Influences
• Financial Influences
• Influence on Standards and Criteria
• Influence on Methodology and Outcomes
Structural Support / Influence of Governments

• Statutory body - legal role of the QA Body
• Recognition of functions of the QA Body
  -- status of programmes
  -- status of graduates
Financial Support/ Influences of Governments

Examples of financial support:

- Total direct funding of the QA Body
- Subsidy / refund for accreditation fees
- Loans to accredited course providers
- Loans to students on accredited programmes
- Regular project funding to QA Body
- Ad-hoc project funding
- Ad-hoc project funding on competitive basis
Financial Support / Influence of Governments

- Government
- HEI
- students
- QA Body
- Other organizations
Influence of Governments in Standard Setting

- Standards set by QA Bodies and HEI
- Role of governments in standard setting
  eg. Qualifications Framework
  Qualifications Descriptors
  Statutory requirements
- Consultation with QA Bodies and HEI
- Interpretation of standards by QA Bodies
# Hong Kong Qualifications Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Masters, Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Associate Degree, Higher Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Diploma (HKAL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Certificate (HKCEE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Certificate (below F.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Hong Kong Qualifications Framework: Generic Level Descriptors – Level 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Knowledge &amp; Intellectual Skills</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Application, Autonomy &amp; Accountability</th>
<th>Communication, IT and Numeracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4     | - Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base, with some specialist knowledge in selected areas  
- Present and evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies  
- Deal with well defined issues within largely familiar contexts, but extend this to some unfamiliar problems  
- Employ a range of specialised skills and approaches to generate a range of responses. | - Operate in a range of varied and specific contexts involving some creative and non-routine activities  
- Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, selecting or presenting information, methods or resources  
- Carry out routine lines of enquiry, development of investigation into professional level issues and problems. | - The ability to perform skilled tasks requiring some discretion and judgement, and undertake a supervisory role  
- Undertake self-directed and a some directive activity  
- Operate within broad general guidelines or functions  
- Take responsibility for the nature and quantity of own outputs  
- Meet specified quality standards  
- Accept some responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others. | - Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced skills associated with the subject/discipline — for example:  
- Present using a range of techniques to engage the audience in both familiar and some new contexts  
- Read and synthesise extended information from subject documents; organise information coherently, convey complex ideas in well-structured form  
- Use a range of IT applications to support and enhance work  
- Plan approaches to obtaining and using information, choose appropriate methods and data to justify results & choices  
- Carry out multi-stage calculations. |
Influence of Governments on QA Methodology

• The professional role of QA Bodies in devising QA methodology
  
  eg. Audit vs. accreditation
  
  Institutional review vs. programme review
  
  Information requirements from HEI

• Policy and other considerations of governments
Influence of Governments on QA Outcomes

- Determining Outcomes
  - The professional role of QA Bodies in determining outcomes
    
    *e.g. approval vs. non-approval; period of approval*
  
    - The policy and other considerations of governments

- The application of outcomes, *e.g. recognition of graduates*

- The announcements of outcomes
Other stakeholders

HEI

government

policies

budget

HEI

QA Body

Regulations/remit

QA considerations

finances
• Where QA bodies are created by governments, the continued support of government is essential for the recognition, exercise of authority/ functions, and sustainability of the QA body
Working with Higher Education Institutions
Common Descriptors of Associate Degrees

• Admission requirements
  2 year programmes – 1 A-level pass plus 5 passes in HKCEE
  3 yr programmes – 5 passes in HKCEE

• 60% generic content (languages, IT, general education)

• Exit level comparable to 1st year of 3-year degree
Influence of HEI on QA Bodies

**HEI may try to influence QA Bodies on**

- Standards and criteria of review/accreditation
- Methodology and timeframe
- Documentation to be submitted
- Choice of experts
- Outcomes
- Fees
Where QA Bodies are established/owned by institutions, independence may be maintained by:

- Independent representation on the governing body
- Not directly funded by the units reviewed
- Diversifying source of income
Influence of HEI on QA Bodies

**QA Bodies may also resort to the following:**

- Consultation before setting standards, timeframe, fees, and methodology
- Briefing to HEI
- Post-review consultation / evaluation
- Involvement of HEI / consultation
  - eg. on choice of experts
  - on choice of submission of documentation
- Formuating outcomes : respecting autonomy & characteristics of HEI
  - inviting institutions to offer solutions to problems identified
- Obtaining support of senior management of HEI
- Obtaining support / collaborating with governments
- Reporting on good practices
• QA Bodies also need the support, recognition, and cooperation of Higher Education Institutions for their continued and successful operation, and sustainability.
Concluding Remarks

• **QA Bodies** need to work closely with both governments and HEI

• QA Bodies need to maintain **independence** in carrying out their roles

• QA Bodies often have different **objectives** and agendas from those of governments and HEI

• The common agenda is quality and **quality assurance** in higher education

• The **community expectation** for QA Bodies to be independent – but working in partnership with governments and HEI

• **Need for collaboration, compromise, negotiation, mutual support and understanding**
THANK YOU

Joint Quality Review Committee
Hong Kong

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(Views expressed in the presentation are personal views of the author)