



center of accreditation and quality assurance
of the swiss universities

**2nd OAQ/CRUS Conference on Internal Quality Assurance at Higher Education
Institutions**

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Brief summary of the interventions

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1 Conference Part I: Swiss focus

1.1 Intervention by Mr Hans Weder

Mr Hans Weder, Rector of the University of Zurich and President of the CRUS

Internal QA at the University of Zurich

The University of Zurich offers the full range of disciplines and is successfully active in scientific research, teaching and community service. In 1998 it got the autonomy and since then is operating with a global budget. This is a relevant fact for the QA-management.

There are several instruments of quality assurance at the University of Zurich:

- carefully recruit staff: "the" key point
- competitive allocation of funds
- periodical evaluation of the academic and administrative units
- promotion of upcoming young academics
- supervision of the students.

Appointments

10 to 12% of the professors is changing every year. Appointments are therefore a good instrument to improve quality. At the University of Zurich a high percentage of the engaged professors are first place candidates.

The evaluation system

The University of Zurich developed an evaluation system which aims at control and quality improvement. There was to find an instrument which would be accepted and used by a majority of the professorial staff. The development of this instrument took 5 years including several steps in which the project underwent some changes. At the end the final version found a broad consensus. The evaluation system was established in the university law. On the basis of the university regulations an evaluation office was created. The director had to be a scientist in evaluation. The evaluation office is independent from the university's Executive Board and is connected directly with the Board of the University. In 6 years 115 evaluation procedures are carried out. Most important is the scientific approach.

- Procedure: international known structure
 - Self-evaluation report: looking in the past and into the future
 - Experts report
 - Scientific validated evaluation report written by the evaluation office: based on documents and on bibliometrical analysis
- Follow-up:
 - Executive Board is proposing measures
 - Follow-up meeting
 - Agreement on objectives
 - Evaluated unit is working out concepts according to agreement on objectives

- Executive Board is accepting it
- Monitoring by the evaluation office

- Focal point of objectives in the past evaluation procedures:
 - To intensify research
 - Promotion of young researchers
 - Improvement of internal and external cooperation
 - To clarify structures
 - Performance contracts

- Strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation procedures:
 - Evaluations are accepted and strengthen the identity. They stimulate communication and transparency.

Evaluation procedures and implementation of measures are time consuming. Financial means to eliminate weaknesses in the staff is not always available.

(see as well the published corresponding presentation – Power Point document)

1.2 Intervention by Mr Markus Hodel

Mr Markus Hodel, Rector of the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (FHZ) and President of the Rectors Conference of the Universities of Applied Sciences Switzerland (KFH)

Internal QA at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – FHZ

The FHZ is a quite autonomous university with a big variety of disciplines and different cultures in their departments. Due to legal requirements and changes in the market a quality management was developed. It was decided to adapt the “EFQM-Model” as the quality management system. The implementation followed a five-step procedure:

1. Defining and unifying the processes under the consideration of having a transparent and flexible system across all schools.
2. Introducing the EFQM model as a general framework, because it is an efficient and effective tool and a good basis for quality improvements and comparability with other schools.
3. Getting an overview by finding out what are the strengths and where are the areas of improvement. This was achieved by internal and external assessments.
4. Determining measures by using the outcome to define, prioritize and select projects.
5. Launching projects. Four different projects have been carried out
 - FHZ Staff Job Satisfaction Survey
 - Update Intranet QM Platform

- Define common key performance indicators for the FHZ as a whole
- Coordinated strategic management of the FHZ / Controlling

The objectives out of this assessment are to implement a comprehensive quality management system over all institutions under the consideration of respecting the different cultures of the schools, keeping up the orientation to the strategic goals and motivating every single employee to be part of the system. The next steps will be to enhance the quality management culture and to prepare the next assessment.

(see as well the published corresponding presentation – Power Point document)

1.3 Intervention by Mr Jacques Lanarès

Mr Jacques Lanarès, Vice-rector for Quality Assurance at the University of Lausanne

Internal QA at the University of Lausanne: developing a quality culture

The commitment for quality is not new in universities, but the formalism linked to quality assurance is a recent trend. These concerns should be integrated into the institutional culture, otherwise any QA system can turn into some kind of punctual, bureaucratic process.

Everybody is in favour of quality enhancement. But a consensus about what quality actually means is somewhat difficult to achieve, because it has to do with adhesion to values. A genuine quality culture may arise when shared values sort of “percolate” through people in their everyday activities. Should one start with a quality assurance system and let it evolve towards a quality culture, or let a quality assurance system grow from the ambient quality culture? The latter was observed at University of Lausanne, where a group of professors sharing the opinion that good teaching, compared to good research, did not get appropriate recognition, thought about means to foster learning and teaching processes as a whole through the institution.

Which are the main values carried on by the quality assurance system? Fitness for purpose, increased responsibility (avoid paternalism and give constructive feedback), participation and reflexivity, balance between autonomy and accountability. As far as teaching is concerned, our quality assurance process is meant to regulate tensions, reduce the gaps, between different expectations and priorities of teachers, students, and professional fields.

Implementation of these concepts at University of Lausanne is under the responsibility of a committee named Cover, including professors, assistants, students and the vice-rector in charge for quality assurance. Every Faculty goes through an evaluation process every four years, in connection with the global strategy at institutional level. The goal is to ask the right questions, and to react adequately on the basis of the

gathered answers. The Cover committee produces a reflexive canvas for a self-evaluation document to be produced by the Faculty (30 pages including the profile of the Faculty, answers to questions, synthesis and action plan). The questions refer to main dimensions (for more details please refer to the hand-out): What are the objectives?, How do you know where you are?, What are the results?, What are the next steps? A group of appropriate external experts is set up by the Faculty and the Rectorate together. These experts investigate the plausibility of the report, check if the main issues have been addressed, and that possible weaknesses are taken into account by the action plan proposed in the self-evaluation report. They also suggest possible improvements. The Cover committee sees all the results and the process ends up with a discussion about the action plan, together with the Deanship of the Faculty and the Direction of the university.

Two such evaluations have been completed so far and two others are in progress. Surveys show that these processes stimulate global reflection, new discussions, and help to identify priorities and actions to be undertaken. It should be pointed out that they are time consuming and that the active participation of everybody, especially students, is both important and not very easy to achieve.

This past year, University of Lausanne asked the OAQ for a voluntary evaluation of its own quality assurance system, which will help to further improve on internal mechanisms. Some simplification is required, as well as perseverance in convincing that such processes are worth the burden, and that pertinence is more important than conformity.

(see as well the published corresponding presentation – Power Point document)

2 Conference Part II: International focus

2.1 Intervention by Mr Séamus Puirseil

Mr Séamus Puirseil, Vice-president of ENQA and Chief executive of HETAC (Higher Education and Training Awards Council, Ireland)

European Standards and Guidelines

The European Higher Education Area is characterized by a social and cultural diversity. The European Standards and Guidelines were formulated according to the generic principle and not the specific. They take into account that every country and every system is different. The European Standards and Guidelines have to be adjusted to the country they are applied in.

Since the approval of the European Standards and Guidelines it showed that four points are for the universities and agencies the most difficult to fulfil.

– The Appeal System

Some countries have a constitutional difficulty to have an appeal system. The legal prerequisites to have such an appeal system are very different in the different countries.

– Student participation

The Students have to be part of the whole process (internal and external quality assurance). The Student participation is very different in the different systems.

– Publication

Publication of reports is also dependent on national legislation.

– Independence

An external view can often give a false impression of the independence of an agency and the decision-making process. What is important is the reality and accountability of the system. Can the results be influenced by anybody?

2.2 Intervention by Mr Colin Tück

Mr Colin Tück, member of the Bologna process Committee of ESIB (the National Unions of Students in Europe)

Student participation in internal QA

The aims and purposes of quality assurance in the student perspective are the

- improvement of quality: Quality assurance must go beyond a mere checking if a minimum threshold is achieved, but always include a continuous further development of quality
- transparency of quality: The quality of higher education must be transparent and visible to students, the labour market and the society. By creating transparency on their quality, HEIs ensure their accountability.
- comparability of qualifications: The implementation of coherent quality assurance systems ensures that qualifications can be compared both nationally as well as across national boundaries.

The added values of student participation in quality assurance

Including students as full and equal partners means including an important additional perspective in quality assurance processes. Students can contribute with their experience on both the social and academic conditions of a study programme. They possess specific experience with the design of programs, regarding issues such as flexibility and feasibility. Being involved in quality assurance, students also become experts on quality issues.

Involving students, hence a broader perspective, leads to more sound and better accepted conclusions and results. Last but not least, students ask the questions, others do not ask!

Internal quality assurance takes place on program level, in the faculty and on the level of the whole institution. The students have to be involved on every level of internal quality assurance. This includes, for instance, quality assurance committees as well as the faculty board and the senate of the institution.

Involving students as equal partners on all levels also means that students must be involved at all stages of a quality assurance process: this starts with setting up procedures and criteria and continues with the work actually carried out, i.e. reflecting on the quality, drafting evaluation reports, etc. Internal training possibilities, the participation in external seminars and conferences are important measures to build capacity of students to be fully involved and for preparing students for their role in quality assurance.

The student role in the external quality assurance is linked with the internal quality assurance. Students of the reviewed institution should be involved in the steering group or coordination body which prepare the external quality assurance assessment, in the drafting of the self-evaluation report and in the kick-off session with the peer group. For sessions between the peer group and (local) students it is vital that the students are a balanced selection, and not only those who did never experience any problems – this would not be helpful for the reviewers, neither for the institution itself in the long run. External students must be involved as members of the peer group and in the decision-making bodies of the respective agency. The European Standards and Guidelines give a reference to that.

Conclusions: Students should really be treated as full and equal partners in quality assurance and decision making in higher education. In many case, this means a change of culture in the HEIs. Capacity building within student unions/organisations facilitates a fruitful involvement as equal and responsible partners. Successful participation of students in internal and external quality assurance of HEIs also requires an active collaboration of students unions/organisations, institutions, governments and QA agencies/bodies. And last but not least: the QA agencies are asked to offer more assistance and cooperation in training of student peers.

(see as well the published corresponding presentation – Power Point document)

2.3 Intervention by Ms Dorte Kristoffersen

Ms Dorte Kristoffersen, Audit Director of AUQA (Australian Universities Quality Agency)

Internal QA in Australia as seen through External Audit

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) is the independent, non-profit national quality assurance agency of Australia. AUQA is responsible for conducting quality audits of Australian higher education institutions. Quality Audits are defined as systematic, independent determinations whether an organisation's planned arrangements are suitable to achieve its goals, the actual practice conforms to the planned arrangements, the arrangements achieve the desired results, the organisation is learning and improving form its self-evaluation of its approach, deployment and results. The scope of the Audits covers all academic activities of the institution.

The Quality Audits look at all these activities with the help of the ADRI Model. ADRI stands for: Approach, Deployment, Results and Improvement. The ADRI Model can be applied at all organisational levels of an institution. For the Audit visits the Experts talk to all relevant people (per visit about 300 – 400 persons). Experts can also talk to people at random. The approach of the visit is evidence based. Experts have to assess whether the information given in the self-documentation reflects the reality in the institution. The Audit reports have three parts containing commendations, affirmations and recommendations. The reports of the Audits are public and are meant to contribute to the quality enhancement of a University.

AUQA has a good practice database that is publicly available. In this database good practices are identified via the commendations in the audit reports and are reviewed. The Good Practice Database has been accessed 34'000 times since 2003.

(see as well the published corresponding presentation – Power Point document)

2.4 Intervention by Mr Bo Sundqvist

Mr Bo Sundqvist, former Vice-chancellor of the Uppsala University (Sweden)

You have to make sure it is getting better all the time – QA at Uppsala University

Internal quality is a key issue for a huge 500-years old research university such at Uppsala university, which counts 6000 employees, 9 faculties, 43000 students, 4000 teachers and researchers , 400 doctorates per year. 60% of the 0,43 Million Euro budget go into research, which is one the main strengths of the university, with 5000 academic publications per year.

Quality assurance of research is entirely an internal issue dealt with mainly by the “Vice-chancellor Seminar”, as the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education does not undertake quality assessments of research. The Seminar is composed by the university management and rectors’ advisors.

Decisions for quality enhancement in education and research are made by the University board on a long-term policy. An action plan for central quality initiatives is decided each year by the rector. However, the nine faculties are self-responsible for quality assurance in education and research. Examples of quality projects at the various levels in the university:

Central level	Alumni evaluations Course evaluations Evaluation of PhD studies External IT-audit On-line publication documentation system (OPUS)
Faculty level	Follow up of Evaluation of PhD studies Follow up on national education program evaluations Analysis and development of new resource allocation models

Dept level Program and subject-course evaluations
Assure that faculty further develops their skills as teachers, researchers and managers

As far as research is concerned, the personal impact of Mr Sundqvist has been decisive, thanks to an experience from 1995, when he was dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology and was faced with a cut of 10% in the public grants for research. Departments were asked to propose cuts of 15% and proposals for new initiatives on a basis of competition on the 5% level. Panels of 10-15 scholars from Cambridge and Caltech evaluated the proposals. The dean then decided on savings and reallocations based on the external advice six months later.

This experience brought to the SAUNA project, very controversial but highly effective. Its extensive name suggests what was it all about: Strategic Austerity at Uppsala for New Advances! In other terms it consisted in planning savings for research and re allocation of funds. The process included: feedback from the external advisory panels, comments from the students, consultations with the university management and finally the rector's proposal and the approval by the university Board.

Other measures of continuing quality enhancement in research include: Reallocate faculty funding so that promoted professors can devote at least 10% of their time to pursue their own research; in recruiting teachers and researchers, outstanding individuals are better than persons with the "exact" credentials; strategic publication policies; reallocation of funds in multidisciplinary research.

Field for improvement: undergraduate and PhD education should be benchmarked with other international research universities; the follow up processes should be further developed (i.e. bibliometry should be used to follow the production of scientific papers); the coupling of research and teaching should be further developed and monitored; a more active quality work still needs to be developed at the department level.

(see as well the published corresponding presentation – Power Point document)

2.5 Intervention by Mr Chris Haslam

Mr Chris Haslam, Dean of Corporate Planning and Development at the University of Chester (UK)

QA in the UK: Internal and External QA – a healthy tension?

The UK external QA framework: There are some 186 higher education institutions in the UK and responsibility for assuring the quality and standards of academic awards resides with each institution. There is an external-institutional level review system, based on: programme specifications (publication by the institutions of a detailed specification of each study program), a national agreed qualifications framework (fixed for each award level, what students are expected to learn), subject benchmark expectations and a code of practice for quality assurance (which has 10 sub-sections). Every external review report is published and institutions are required to produce an action plan in response to the report. This system has enabled a

dialogue to take place between the external review agency and the institutions. Higher education institutions working with the external review body seek to disseminate good practice happening across the sector, and in this way the quality assurance/quality enhancement loop is closed.

Some real effects of external review: It has provided public reassurance and students and others stakeholders have a much stronger voice than before and have more opportunities to provide feedback. Study programmes are designed more carefully, and the number of academic peers who are involved in programme design has increased (providing a more robust product).

Some important points for an external QA: A detailed QA framework should take care not to constrain the creativity of institutions and the academic staff who work in them. The balance between freedom and "control" has to be carefully managed. External QA must seek to test how institutions actually operate and to offer value for money. It is important that institutions get something back from the external review process. Published review reports should be accessible and cater for the variety of audiences that may read them.

Some important points for an internal QA: The ownership of internal quality assurance processes is very important: institutions and their staff have to be able to demonstrate the benefits of quality assurance and enhancement systems. Systems should not be overly bureaucratic and need to be able to quickly disseminate poor and good practices.

Conclusions: There is strong evidence in the UK that external review makes a positive difference to institutional quality assurance and enhancement practice. Institutions have become more transparent and self-critical in their operations. However, it is important to recognise that the cost/benefit balance of external and internal review has to be correct and that students' interests come first.

(see as well the published corresponding presentation – Power Point document)

3 Workshops

3.1 Intervention by Ms Dorte Kristoffersen

Ms Dorte Kristoffersen, Audit Director of AUQA (Australian Universities Quality Agency)

Internal QA from a QA agency point of view

First, the definitions of the terms quality assurance (QA) and audit, which are used by the external quality assurance agencies but with different meanings or interpretations, were compared. Then, the assessment methods in different countries were pointed out including the self-review models, the audit scope and the expectations to a successful QA.

In the second part of the workshop, the following questions were discussed in groups:

1. What are the appropriate links between internal and external quality assurance and how can they be effectively achieved?
2. Does effective internal QA require a QA framework?
3. Who are the relevant stakeholders and how should their involvement be organised?

The first question was summarised with the following main points: Quality involves everyone; the agency plays an important role for the transparency of the continuously changing processes and in particular for the quality of the experts.

The conclusions of the second question were that the ethical aspects play an important role in QA, there should be a balance between the autonomy and the responsibility of the institutions, the framework includes the aspects of cooperation and communication. The frameworks were differentiated in three levels: the European (represented by the European Standards and Guidelines), national and institutional level. All levels are influenced by the market situation and the differing interpretations of the Bologna-concept in the European countries.

The third group determined the internal and external stakeholders as well as the possible activities, for example regular questionnaire surveys, participation in committees or interdisciplinary communication. Clear information and communication were viewed as the basis for effective dialogues and learning processes.

Finally, the following points were outlined: QA lies within the responsibility of the institutions themselves, QA is a requirement for accountability, clear expectations are very important in QA (the agency needs to clarify the expectations of QA to the institutions and experts), internal QA is a continuous process within the institution and leads to the external QA.

(see as well the published corresponding presentation – Power Point document)

3.2 Intervention by Ms Annika Lundmark

Ms Annika Lundmark, Head of the Quality and Evaluation Unit at Uppsala University

Internal QA from a HEI point of view

The unit for Quality and Evaluation at the University of Uppsala is an office of the central university administration, directly linked to the Vice-Chancellor and indirectly to all of the organisational layers of the institution. It does not substitute the quality management at each of the 9 faculties and other subunits. It complements these internal quality mechanisms by collecting centralized data and in making surveys at institutional level. Having a general overview on quality issues at the different levels of the university, whenever a weakness or a problem is identified the central unit has the opportunity to intervene by informing the interested bodies and persons.

The central unit exists since 2001, when the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (created in 1995) changed its policies from institutional quality audits to quality assessment of all subjects and programmes. The central quality groups created beforehand needed a more stable representation and organisation, the unit, which turned to be essential, also in view of the

new round of assessments that the National agency will undertake between 2007 and 2013 with both quality audits and quality evaluation of programmes.

The Unit is very well interlinked with both internal and external quality assessments, both perceived as means to improve quality. Its main work is to act as internal catalyst in the phases preceding an external assessment. Ex: alumni evaluations of all subjects and programmes, throughout a survey with 70% response rate. Other activities: interfaculty quality projects, teacher training, action-oriented evaluations.

An action plan for central quality enhancement is decided each year, bearing in mind that the institutional strategy comes first, and quality policies must be adapted accordingly. Some stable values, however, represent the basis for any quality activity:

- quality is created and shaped in faculties and departments by teachers and students;
- the central strategies and actions must reinforce a culture of quality enhancement;
- the Vice-chancellor's engagement is essential for a well-functioning quality system;
- an active student union enhances work with quality issues;
- some external demands are good for enhancing the internal quality work.

Concluding, it is important to make the quality work visible in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the system; everybody should participate in the system and find the quality work useful.

(see as well the published corresponding presentation – Power Point document)