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Quality Assurance in *(postgraduate
programmes)* Doctoral Education in
Europe:

The perspective of EUA

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Quality Assurance and Doctoral Education

Doctoral education: A vague and diverse structure/process.

- Doctorates, carried out either through traditional structures (Faculties/Departments) or through “new” structures (Graduate/Doctoral/Research Schools)
- Doctorates, either including a component of structured study programmes or being strictly research-centred
- Doctorates, aiming or not at generic/transferable skills development

Doctoral education does not relate to a single educational structure.

Doctoral education can not be considered as a “programme”, in the sense of the first or second cycle programmes.

Quality Assurance and Doctoral Education

Quality assurance in doctoral education is a new concept, in the sense that the existing methodologies are not easily applicable:

- Institutional evaluation (including audits too)?
- Faculty or Department evaluation?
- Programme evaluation?
- Programme accreditation?

However, we do need “quality doctoral education”, to be monitored and to be improved in a systematic way.

Therefore, we have to develop new adequate methodologies; and this is a new challenge.

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY
ASSOCIATION (EUA)
AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

EUA and Quality Assurance

EUA's philosophy for quality assurance builds upon four principles:

- Internal: Full responsibility to the institutions
- Institutional: Related to strategy and capacity for change
- For enhancement purposes (and not for judgement or ranking)
- Emphasis on building a quality culture within the institution community

The EUA's perspective and the Bologna Process

- In the Berlin Communiqué (2003), after EUA's proposal, the European Ministers stressed that "consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework".
- In the Bergen Communiqué (2005), the European Ministers furthermore urged higher education institutions "to continue their efforts to enhance the quality of their activities through the systematic introduction of internal mechanisms and their direct correlation to external quality assurance".
- In the London Communiqué (2007), the European Ministers stressed that "Since the main responsibility for quality lies with higher education institutions, they should continue to develop their systems of quality assurance".

Quality Assurance in the Bologna Process

In the Bologna Process, two approaches regarding quality assurance:

- The approach focusing on external quality assurance (e.g. ESG, European Register, accreditation)
- The approach focusing on internal quality assurance

The two approaches can be considered supplementary, but the key issue is where emphasis is put.

- If emphasis is put on the external quality assurance, then we consider internal quality assurance as supportive to the external ⇒ External QA based on internal QA (ESG).
- If emphasis is put on the internal quality assurance, then we consider external quality assurance as supportive to the internal ⇒ External QA of audit type that aims at improving internal QA and fostering quality culture.

EUA's main initiatives on Quality

- Institutional Evaluation Programme (since 1994), providing (to European universities) external evaluation at institutional level of audit type (as a membership service).

So far (academic year 2007-08 included):

206 evaluations plus 24 follow-ups

- in 185 Higher Education Institutions from 34 European countries (22 of them with follow-up evaluation as well)
- plus 8 Higher Education Institutions from 5 non-European countries (2 of them with follow-up evaluation as well)

Since 2001: "coordinated evaluations" at the national or regional level: Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Catalonia, Slovakia, Portugal

- Quality Culture Project (three rounds, 2002-2006), focusing on internal quality assurance (networking / best practices).

134 Higher Education Institutions from 36 European countries

EUA's other initiatives on Quality

➤ Creativity in Higher Education (2006-2007)

32 Higher Education Institutions from 20 European countries

Creativity must be at the centre of QA processes, and hence

- QA forward looking rather than retrospective
- QA enhancement oriented
- QA primarily qualitative rather than purely quantitative

➤ Quality Assurance for the Higher Education Change Agenda (QAHECA) (2008-2009)

23 Higher Education Institutions and 7 Quality Assurance Agencies from 18 European countries

Developing and testing institutional quality mechanisms for teaching and learning – Strengthening creativity and innovation in higher education

➤ EMNEM - European Masters New Evaluation Methodology

Guidelines for internal QA of joint master programmes (2006)

Aspects of the Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) of EUA matches with the second Bologna approach (focusing on internal QA). It is an external procedure which supports the internal one. This means that in practice IEP is an audit carried out at institutional level and focusing on the enhancement of the internal quality assurance of the reviewed institution and the development and further strengthening of quality culture.

The four strategic questions:

- What is the institution trying to do (and why)?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve? ➡

Aspects of the Institutional Evaluation Programme

Analysis of the four strategic questions set by the audit

- What is the institution trying to do (and why)?
 - Vision, mission, aims, strategic goals
 - The context: constraints and opportunities
- How is the institution trying to do it?
 - Organisation and structures
 - Academic activities
 - Academically related activities (e.g. libraries, ICT, student support)
 - Finance
 - Governance and management
- How does the institution know it works?
 - Quality monitoring
 - Quality management
- How does the institution change in order to improve?
 - Strategic management and capacity for change

Lessons learned from the Quality Culture Project

A carefully chosen Project title: A signpost of a philosophy and a method.

Quality Culture instead of Quality Control or Quality Management

- The importance of a change in attitudes and behaviours within the institutions.
- The importance of a grass-roots development and a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down one. Engage the whole community.
- The importance of strategic thinking, based on an appropriate institutional analysis (SWOT or similar analytical instruments).
- The integral causal link between strong institutional autonomy and the effective development of a quality culture.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN
DOCTORAL PROGRAMMES
(The EUA's perspective)

EUA and Quality Assurance

Summarising what has already been mentioned:

EUA/IEP does not evaluate institutions

EUA/IEP does not deal with programmes

However, EUA/IEP does deal with issues affecting quality of programmes (at all levels).

In the IEP procedures, these issues are approached in two ways:

- a) Integrated/consolidated into the overall institutional review (as part of the strategic and quality management of the institution, e.g. quality tools and processes in the various programmes)
- b) Through the visits to Faculties (during the site visits), when meeting the various actors

EUA and Doctoral Education

In the Berlin Communiqué (2003) the two Bologna cycles split into three cycles.

Introduction of doctoral (third) cycle determining the interface between higher education and research. Role of EUA.

EUA's initiatives on doctoral education (analysed at the Conference by Sandra Bitusikova):

- Doctoral Programmes Project 2004-2005
- Report on Doctoral Programmes (2007)
- EUA Council for Doctoral Education (2008)

EUA's initiatives on Doctoral Education and on Quality Assurance intersect in the sense that a) quality is a key-issue in all initiatives regarding doctoral education, and b) issues affecting quality of doctoral education are considered an integral part of the IEP.

EUA and Doctoral Education

The five key priority areas for improving the quality of doctoral education (launch conference of EUA-CDE in Lausanne, 1-3 June 2008)

1. Supervision requirements and conditions
 - Requirements for becoming a supervisor
 - Workload
 - Code of conduct
 - Training of supervisors
 - Multiple/joint supervision
2. Institutional cooperation
 - Joint doctoral programmes, double degrees
3. New structures
 - Doctoral/Graduate/Research Schools
4. Skills training
 - Generic/transferable
 - Teaching training; pedagogy
5. Quality control/evaluation and review
 - Programme assessment
 - Quality criteria for doctoral programmes

EUA and Doctoral Education

Other priority areas for improving the quality of doctoral education (launch conference of EUA-CDE in Lausanne, 1-3 June 2008)

1. Student progress
 - Time limits
 - Interruption of studies
 - Student log book
 - Termination policies
2. Structured programmes
 - Curriculum design
 - Assessment, methods, scoring
3. Doctoral candidate mobility and travel
 - Study periods abroad
4. Careers and personal development

Bridging Quality Assurance and Doctoral Education from the EUA's perspective

Two major issues: Quality criteria/standards and methodologies/tools

Quality criteria/standards

The priority areas (and sub-areas) can be used interchangeably as quality criteria/standards.

Methodologies/tools

One question:

How to apply institutionally tailored audit methodologies and tools on doctoral education?

Bridging Quality Assurance and Doctoral Education from the EUA's perspective

Five possible answers:

- a) Determining the scope of the audit, in relation to the existing structure of doctoral education, and defining quality enhancement as the aim of the audit
- b) Assessing the internal quality structures of the institution regarding doctoral education
- c) Assessing the extent to which a quality culture has been built within the institution regarding doctoral education
- d) Putting emphasis on issues affecting quality rather than on quality as such
- e) Approaching doctoral education as an integral part of the institution; or, in technical terms, conducting institutional audit with special focus on doctoral education