

**Quality Assurance and  
Accreditation:  
A Glossary of Basic Terms  
and Definitions**

compiled by  
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## Preface

The present publication is a revised and updated version of the *Quality Assurance and Accreditation: Glossary of Basic Terms and Definitions* which was published in 2004. The initiative to produce such a glossary was undertaken in the context of the Invitational Roundtable on “Indicators for Institutional and Programme Accreditation in Higher Education/Tertiary Education” (3-8 April 2003, Bucharest), that was organized in the framework of the UNESCO-CEPES project “Strategic Indicators for Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century.”<sup>1</sup> The need to improve the quantitative assessment of higher education at system and institutional levels, the main objective of the project, has been complemented by this effort to compile in a succinct and easily accessible format main terms and definitions in the areas of quality assurance and accreditation in higher education.

Even if its elaboration required a thorough analysis and diligent search of appropriate sources, the main purpose of this glossary is a pragmatic one – to facilitate understanding of various terms applied in the fields of quality assurance and accreditation. It may also be used as a reference tool to understand the connotations of the terms in circulation. This revised and updated version also reflects new developments in quality assurance and accreditation. Thus the present version as such includes:

- a series of new terms and sub-terms have been introduced, such as: Code of professional ethics; Competencies; Typology of higher education institutions; National and European Qualification

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<sup>1</sup> The project was implemented within the Japanese-Funds-in-Trust for the Promotion of International Co-operation and Mutual Understanding, with assistance offered by the German Academic Exchange Service – DAAD, Bonn, Germany. More details are available at [www.cepes.ro](http://www.cepes.ro).

Framework; European Register of External Quality Assurance Agencies, European standards; Study programme, etc.;

- a number of entries has been revised taking new developments and due attention to clarity of description;
- new documents that were published since 2004 (mainly linked to the implementation of quality assurance and accreditation within the Bologna Process) have been used and introduced as definition sources;
- the list of accreditation and quality evaluation bodies in Europe, the United States and Canada has been updated.

This project being the result of teamwork I would like to thank all UNESCO-CEPES staff members who have contributed to its realization, particularly, Lazăr Vlăsceanu, Laura Grünberg, and Dan Pârlea.

Like its earlier version, it is my conviction that even more so this revised version of the glossary will be found by its user a very useful tool facilitating dealing with a very complex, very pertinent but increasingly complex – that of quality assurance and accreditation, which is one of the underlying principles of the Bologna Process and developments in higher education in general.

*Jan Sadlak*

Director of UNESCO-CEPES

## Introduction

There has always been an individual and social need to improve the quality of life of people, including the quality of what they learn over many years of organized schooling, how they learn it, and why they learn it. Concerns about the quality of higher education are also not recent, being an intrinsic part of any discussion on the subject. Over the years, various developments have taken place relative to the assessment, monitoring, and improvement of the quality of different components of higher education (its governance, its contents, its forms of pedagogy, the services offered, etc.). What is new refers to those developments which are related to quality assurance and its management. Concepts such as “quality assessment”, “quality evaluation”, and “quality assurance” are widely used today within the wider processes of managing quality. Frequently used, these concepts are also frequently misused.

Many other attempts have been made to prepare such glossaries, as the references listed for the present glossary indicate. Among these, most are national, sub-national, or regional, with only few of global relevance. To propose a glossary meant to include a more universal set of meanings, while preserving a certain level of national and regional relevance, has thus been a challenging and risky task. We nevertheless embarked on such an endeavour, convinced of the need to compile not so much a diversity but a commonality of meanings. The implication was that of observing how specific meanings are shared and how they operate in different contexts.

We have encountered many expected and unexpected difficulties in producing this glossary. The task proved to be challenging as we discovered many contradictions and paradoxes in the literature surveyed for this purpose, thus

we decided to reveal and publicly share some of the problems encountered in the preparation of this glossary.

In exploring the vocabulary of the field, we were confronted with a domain called “Quality Assurance”, which was inflated with concepts, terms, and definitions. It was clear, however, from what we found, that this domain is also seeking a language of its own, not simply one substituting for a number of national, sub-regional languages. Indeed, in order for a domain to exist, to have identity and autonomy, to be fully respected and recognized, it needs a language of its own so as to express itself as widely and efficiently as possible. It needs a revolution of the dictionary.

It seemed to us that we were in the midst of such a revolution. The “paradox of density”, as described by M. Dogan and R. Phare (1990), that the more “crowded” a given academic/scientific domain is, the less creativity one will find in it and the more confusion and repetition will be present, seems all too applicable to the field of quality assurance. Following the “infancy stage”, during which creativity and innovation could be described as “over-productive”, the domain then presented itself as mature, as living “its adulthood”, and as being surrounded by an overwhelming diversity of terms and concepts. This evolution justifies the need of the domain for some stability, coherence, order, and certainties. Thus, the field is seeking, or should be seeking, a more general/collective language of expression and operation.

In the context of the domain's need to create its own language, the following questions arise: What is the present state of affairs? Has the "dictionary revolution" ended? Are the main terms and concepts about the quality of education consistently defined? How are their meanings shared? Is there a minimal consensus among specialists as to what they are discussing? How are they using terms and concepts within particular on-going educational reforms? It seems that the answer to all these questions, for the time being, at least, is a resounding "no". As Dirk Van Damme said, "despite the widespread use of the term [quality], a more or less agreed upon definition has not yet materialized. Rather, a multitude of meanings and conceptual confusion are the result" (Van Damme, 2003). There are, of course, others who might have a contrary view and they would not refrain from asserting their point of view as the one universally valid.<sup>2</sup>

The "revolution" has not yet run its course owing to a set of problems that we discovered when surveying major specialized literature. A 'linguistic baroque world' exists in the field of quality assurance. There are many flowery ingredients, a very rich linguistic creativity without an "edifice" into which they can be incorporated. In the following we will address a number of issues, based on a

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<sup>2</sup> Lee Harvey in 'Understanding Quality', in FROMENT, Eric, KOHLER, Eric, PURSER, Jürgen, and WILSON, Lesley, ed. *EUA Bologna Handbook. Making Bologna Work*, Berlin: Dr. Josef Raabe Verlag, 2006, Chapter B4.1, p. 15.

selection of surveyed literature, that illustrate (not demonstrate) the process of identification of certain trends:

*Confusion:* There is an obvious lack of consensus in the specialized literature. Many authors mention various meanings for the same concept, and, at the same time, indicate that certain terms lack any consistent definition. One regularly reads statements such as:

- “In much contemporary discourse on education, the word, quality, is frequently mentioned, although it is rarely defined”;
- “Assessment has many meanings and uses”;
- “Standards and criteria [are among] the most confusing terms”;
- “A performance standard is a specific result or level of achievement that is deemed exemplary or appropriate. But confusion abounds. The word is sometimes used in education as a synonym for high expectations; at other times, ‘standard’ is used as a synonym for benchmark.... Often one can also hear standards discussed as if they were general guidelines or principles.... Often speakers confuse content standards with performance standards. Finally, standards are routinely confused with the criteria for judging performance”;
- “Quality assessment, quality measurement, and review of quality are all taken here to be

synonymous with evaluation, especially when there is an external element to the procedure”.

**Ambiguity:** It is difficult not to question the abundance of terms and concepts and to avoid thinking about the need to “restrict” the vocabulary, allowing it to be more coherent and consistent. Linguistic proficiency seems to be more prolific than the creative generation of practices of improvement.

Quite frequently, several terms are used within same sense. “Standards” are in fact interchangeably related to “criteria” in the United States, and these are very different from criteria as defined in Europe. “Quality control” is often used interchangeably with “quality assurance” and “quality management”. Quality assurance is often considered part of quality management of higher education, while sometimes both are used synonymously. An “evaluation report” is also called “audit report” or “assessment report”. An “Institutional audit” is considered to be the same as an “institutional review”, and a “peer review” the same as a “external review”.

One may also find ambiguities in sentences such as: “The criteria provide a framework to enable an institution to demonstrate that it is worthy of the status that it seeks”.

**Circularity:** Sometimes circular reasoning is used in defining terms, (e.g. “indicators indicate” or “standards standardize”); nevertheless, avoiding circularity is a basic requirement for a good definition.

*Poetical/Lyrical Approaches:* Possibly, one should simply accept being postmodern in a postmodern world, thus accepting ambiguity and a sort of deconstructivist perspective, like that of “mapping without routes” – as is suggested in a quote selected. What we have labeled as “poetic approaches” are enjoyable, subtle readings, with regard to the topic; however, we felt that they might also act as serious impediments in any attempt to clarify meanings. The following quotations may illustrate this point:

- “If we all think alike we are not thinking. We need to create a constructive ambiguity, or... provide [ourselves] with a map rather than a route”;
- “Institutional audits are the reasonable ways in which we can assure reasonable accountability while maintaining reasonable institutional autonomy”;
- “Benchmarking is the practice of being humble enough to admit that someone else is better at something and wise [enough] to learn how to match and even surpass [us] at it”;
- “Quality assurance is a matter of awareness and commitment which one might call quality culture”;
- “Quality assurance is, at best, a matter of mind, hence pertaining to quality culture”.

*Flowery language:* Here is a sample of what we mean by “flowery” ways of treating the topic:



“Assessing minimum standards of quality is a matter of empiricism in that they are defined by what relevant stakeholders-academics [have said] so far as academic quality is concerned, and potential employers, for questions of subsequent employability, more or less unanimously agree on as being an utter and evident requirement that has to be met by any academic study programme launched under that self-proclaimed name, purpose, and ambition”.

Of course, the passage in question is not a definition and should not be judged as such. But such “essayistic” ways of writing about quality assurance may have various impacts on audiences and are more likely to induce a sense of uncertainty than one of stability. There is also the question of balance. If isolated, such baroque language is “harmless” and definitely charming. If overused, it can leave one out of breath. It certainly cannot be helpful in inducing any coherent meaning or understanding of the domain.

Tendencies like these are consequences of certain already acknowledged major problems that are dealt with in the specialized literature. They are evoked for further reflection.

*Definitions:* As there are many types of definitions for a given term or concept (descriptive, with focus on genesis, origins, implicit/explicit, real/nominal, structural, etc.), there are also many operational meanings in use. Options in defining a term are made

taking into consideration the operational necessities. Often the contextual meaning attributed to the term is not clear, and the impression is that of a general definition. Normally, and from the start, there should be both a theoretical and a technical or operational option for defining any concept. Such is not always the case when surveying the literature seeking appropriate definitions.

***New Bureaucracy:*** One should be reminded of the numerous examples of how institutions found their way out of the bureaucratic system by window dressing while hiding away the “litter”. As the American sociologist, E. Goffman (1959), described the matter, the front stage was dressed in such a bright light that the back stage remained hidden in an impenetrable darkness. No doubt, the opposition of glaring luminosity to pitch darkness is not necessarily the most appropriate metaphor when dealing with gray areas. Bureaucracy has entered into the field of quality assurance in many ways: with its advantages in terms of control, predictability, and efficiency, but also with its constraints, imposing hierarchies of power in terms of language or influences for the adoption of one definition and not another. Bureaucracy has developed institutions and networks that work for the creation of a ‘language of its own’ for the field. Over time, an overspecialized jargon has been created, surrounding the topic with a certain mystic, and separating communities of research and practitioners in the field

of higher education into sub-domains, thus making communication between fields increasingly difficult.

***Linguistics:*** Linguistic problems are present within the general context of the globalization of higher education. As far as the quality assurance field is concerned, translation is a serious barrier to the creation of a truly shared vocabulary. For instance, the distinction between “assessment” and “evaluation” has no linguistic equivalence in the Latin languages, particularly French, Italian, Spanish, and Romanian. So, the various different definitions of such English terms are if not meaningless, at least not applicable in the national contexts in question.

***Borrowing of terms:*** Numerous terms and concepts have been borrowed from outside the educational area. Their adaptation and use in higher education is problematic, as they were mainly framed for a specific sector and then adapted to another, radically different one. Benchmarking, for example, had roots, first in geology, and then in certain private industrial companies, being used first by the Xerox Corporation. The term was subsequently taken into the field of education as a means of comparing and assisting universities in becoming competitive. More recently, the concept has been used at the level of a single discipline or subject. The same could be said for other terms.

***“Technical” Problems:*** Defining quality is a question of measuring human achievement, technically a

problematic task. Those involved in the definition of terms, and thus in making decisions, should be aware of and sensitive to the difficulties and implicit subjectivity in defining and measuring achievement.

**Politics:** Assessment is in itself a socio-political activity. Defining assessment procedures, extracting information from the process, and then taking decisions – all these processes have social and political implications and may have far-reaching personal and social consequences, intended and unintended, positive and negative.

These are some examples of problems many of the shareholders in the field of higher education should be aware of. In our attempt to eliminate some of them, we tried to introduce a certain systematization.

When compiling the terms and definitions included in this glossary a distinction was made between key terms and associated terms. The key terms are those that, in our opinion, open a wider area for theoretical and practical exploration in the fields of quality assurance and accreditation (e.g. benchmarking, recognition, etc.), while associated terms are derived from the key terms and, it is hoped, contribute to further clarifications of their meanings. It is also worth noting that most of the key terms are closely related to one another and should thus be viewed as parts of the same integrated system.

This glossary should be viewed as the result of a process of comparing developments in the fields of quality assurance and accreditation. It may also be viewed as an

attempt to integrate meanings that are, more often than not, context bound. Cutting across the boundaries between the contexts of a cultural or academic type proved to be a difficult task, but it has become clear that only by agreeing on specific core definitions of the most important terms genuine dialogue and substantive comparisons can become possible.

The definitions proposed in this glossary have been compiled from some of the most recent and representative sources; nevertheless, much attention has also been paid to the history of specific developments and applications.

There were several reasons for compiling this glossary. The first was to put some order into the meanings attached to various frequently used terms in the field of quality assurance. The second was to open up new possibilities of relating the terms. Then, too, the hope was to reflect the complexity but also the weaknesses of certain existing conceptual frameworks. Last, but not least, the attempt was made to point out certain boundary meanings that might lead, when and if considered thoroughly, to the elaboration of a more consistent discourse in the field.

However, the completed glossary, as it stands now, leads to the feeling that both accreditation and quality assurance are, at this stage, too heavily loaded with context-bound practices. How global a glossary on accreditation and quality assurance can really be remains a question for the future. At present, all that can be done is to reflect on a more integrated conceptual model that may

provide for improved dialogue and compatible developments.

This glossary is structured to present key terms (in alphabetical order), each one associated, when the case arises, with specific, derived terms. Each key term presentation is followed by certain related terms (the meanings of which assist in its further clarification) and by the specific sources of information. The list of terms and definitions is followed by a list of national accreditation and quality assurance bodies.

As stated above, we compiled this glossary with an eye to commonalities, rather than to differences, in a search for a more universal approach to the domain of quality assurance. Its intention is not to contribute to the "MacDonaldization" of the field, as George Ritzer (1995) might say, but to contribute to efforts underway to create a basis of shared language (that will allow diversity to better express itself).

We are aware that any definition is simply a working tool of the mind and that defining a term does not prevent the underlying concepts from further development. We understand that quality assurance concepts will continue to develop presenting a permanent challenge for experts and practitioners. We hope that throughout this process, the vocabulary of quality assurance will become increasingly shared and less disputed.

Last but not least, we would like to thank our colleagues from the Documentation Unit, in particular

Elisaveta Buică, for their contribution to this revised version.

*Lazăr Vlăsceanu, Laura Grünberg, and Dan Pârlea*

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## Terms and Definitions

### ACCREDITATION

1. The process by which a (non-)governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or of a specific educational programme in order to formally recognize it as having met certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standards. The result of this process is usually the awarding of a status (a yes/no decision), of recognition, and sometimes of a license to operate within a time-limited validity. The process can imply initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by external peers. The accreditation process generally involves three specific steps: (i) *a self-evaluation process* conducted by the faculty, the administrators, and the staff of the institution or academic programme, resulting in a report that takes as its reference the set of standards and criteria of the accrediting body; (ii) *a study visit*, conducted by a team of peers, selected by the accrediting organization, which reviews the evidence, visits the premises, and interviews the academic and administrative staff, resulting in an assessment report, including a recommendation to the commission of the accrediting body; (iii) *an examination by the commission* of the evidence and recommendation on the basis of the given set of criteria concerning quality and resulting in a final

judgment and the communication of the formal decision to the institution and other constituencies, if appropriate.

2. The instrument by which one institution, without its own degree awarding powers or choosing not to use its awarding powers, gains wide authority to award, and/or gains recognition of its qualifications from another competent authority, and to exercise powers and responsibility for academic provision. This authority might be the State, a government agency, or another domestic or foreign higher education institution.

***Institutional Accreditation:*** The terms refer to the accreditation of an entire institution, including all its programmes, sites, and methods of delivery, without any implication to the quality of the study programmes of the institution.

***Regional Accreditation (USA):*** Accreditation granted to a higher education institution by a recognized accrediting association or commission that conducts accreditation procedures in a particular geographic area (usually that of three or more states). The United States has six regional accrediting commissions.

***Specialized Accreditation:*** The accreditation of individual units or programmes (*e.g.* professional education), by “specialized” or “programme” accrediting bodies applying specific standards for curriculum and course content.

***Duration of Accreditation:*** Accreditation decisions are limited in time. The duration of validity of the accreditation license is established by the accrediting body, which generally holds the right to suspend or to renew the license, upon the satisfactory resolution of any identified issues.

***Accreditation of Prior Learning:*** The process by which individuals are awarded credit toward qualifications based on their prior learning and (sometimes) experience (also called experiential learning). The credit is awarded upon clear evidence that the respective learning has resulted in the student having achieved the appropriate learning outcomes.

***Accreditation Status:*** The formal recognition benefiting an institution or specialized programme for meeting the appropriate standards of educational quality established by the accrediting body at a regional, national, or specialized level.

***Accreditation Survey:*** The evaluation of an institution to identify its level of compliance with the applicable standards of the accreditation body and to make determinations concerning its accreditation status. The survey includes an evaluation of documents and information (evidence) provided by the personnel of the higher education institution, following on-site observations by mandated visitors.

***Portfolio for Accreditation:*** An accumulation of evidence (record of achievement) about specific

proficiencies and the characteristics of an institution in relation to a specific type of activity, especially to learning standards. This operation can be performed either by the concerned institution or by an external assessor.

**Accreditation Body:** A (non-)governmental or private educational association of national or regional scope that develops evaluation standards and criteria and conducts peer evaluations and expert visits to assess whether or not those criteria are met. It is entitled to accord formal status and sometimes a license to operate to individual higher education institutions or programmes, following the successful examination of the application and evaluation of the respective educational unit. There are different types of accreditation bodies (*e.g.* agencies, councils, commissions, etc.), focused on general accreditation, specialized accreditation, professional accreditation, regional accreditation, national accreditation, distance education accreditation, etc. Also, one of the OECD-UNESCO recommendations requests agencies to sustain and strengthen the existing regional and international networks.

**RELATED TERMS:** Assessment, Criteria, Evaluation, Quality, Quality Assurance, Recognition, Standards.

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## ASSESSMENT

1. The process of the systematic gathering, quantifying, and using of information in view of judging the instructional effectiveness and the curricular adequacy of a higher education institution as a whole (institutional assessment) or of its educational programmes (programme assessment). It implies the evaluation of the core

activities of the higher education institution (quantitative and qualitative evidence of educational activities and research outcomes). Assessment is necessary in order to validate a formal accreditation decision, but it does not necessarily lead to an accreditation outcome.

2. A technically designed process for evaluating student learning outcomes and for improving student learning and development as well as teaching effectiveness.

*Assessment of Individual Qualifications:* The formal written appraisal or evaluation of qualifications of an individual by a competent authority in order to grant him or her recognition for future academic and/or professional development.

*RELATED TERMS:* Evaluation, Accreditation, Outcomes, Quality Assessment.

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## AUDIT

The process of reviewing an institution or a programme that is primarily focused on its accountability, and determining if the stated aims and objectives (in terms of curriculum, staff, infrastructure, etc.) are met. In the United Kingdom, when an audit is an institutional process carried

out internally, the process is described (since 2002) as an “institutional review” process.

***Institutional Audit/Institutional Review:*** An evidence-based process carried out through peer review that investigates the procedures and the mechanisms by which an institution ensures its quality assurance and quality enhancement. When it specifically addresses the final responsibility for the management of quality and standards that rests with an institution as a whole, the process is called an institutional review.

***Audit Report/Evaluation Report/Assessment Report:***

(i) The document prepared following a quality assessment peer review team site visit that is generally focused on institutional quality, academic standards, learning infrastructure, and staffing. The report about an institution describes the quality assurance (QA) arrangements of the institution and the effects of these arrangements on the quality of its programmes. The audit report is made available to the institution, first in draft form for initial comments, and then in its final, official form. It contains, among other things, the description of the methodology of the audit, the findings, the conclusions of the auditors, and various appendices listing the questions asked. In Europe, the document is often called an “evaluation report” or an “assessment report”. (ii) Such a report may also be prepared about an accreditation agency, describing its quality assurance arrangements and the effect of these arrangements on the quality of the programmes in the institutions for which it is responsible.



**Internal Audit:** There are currently three main modes for the provision of internal audit within higher education: (i) in-house teams employed as staff members by the respective institutions; (ii) audit consortia (which may provide services to a number of clients both within and outside the sector); and (iii) accountancy firms that undertake internal audits.

**Management Audit:** A management audit reviews the general management, policy, and policy-making of a given institution.

**RELATED TERMS:** Quality, Quality Audit, Peer Review.

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## BENCHMARK

A standard, a reference point, or a criterion against which the quality of something can be measured, judged, and evaluated, and against which outcomes of a specified activity can be measured. The term, benchmark, means a measure of best practice performance. The existence of a

benchmark is one necessary step in the overall process of benchmarking.

**Benchmark Information:** Explicit national statements of academic standards or outcomes for individual subjects. Some countries (e.g. the United Kingdom) develop benchmarks of this type with regard to a certain group of subjects as part of their quality assurance process.

**Subject Benchmark/Subject Benchmark Statements:** Subject benchmark statements provide means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject and the general expectations about standards for the award of a qualification at a given level in a particular subject area. They are reference points in a quality assurance framework more than prescriptive statements about curricula.

**Course Development Benchmarks:** Guidelines regarding the minimum standards that are used for course design, development, and delivery.

**RELATED TERMS:** Criteria, Evaluation Indicators, Quality Assessment, Standards.

**SOURCES:** See **BENCHMARKING**

## **BENCHMARKING**

A standardized method for collecting and reporting critical operational data in a way that enables relevant

comparisons among the performances of different organizations or programmes, usually with a view to establishing good practice, diagnosing problems in performance, and identifying areas of strength. Benchmarking gives the organization (or the programme) the external references and the best practices on which to base its evaluation and to design its working processes.

Benchmarking is also defined as:

- a diagnostic instrument (an aid to judgments on quality);
- a self-improvement tool (a quality management/assurance tool) allowing organizations (or programmes) to compare themselves with others regarding some aspects of performance, with a view to finding ways to improve current performance;
- an open and collaborative evaluation of services and processes with the aim of learning from good practices;
- a method of teaching an institution how to improve;
- an on-going, systematically oriented process of continuously measuring the work processes of one organization and comparing them with those of others by bringing an external focus to internal activities.

Benchmarking implies specific steps and structured procedures. Depending on what is being compared or the type of information an institution is gathering, there are different types of benchmarking: strategic benchmarking (focusing on what is done, on the strategies organizations use to compete); operational benchmarking (focusing on how things are done, on how well other organizations perform, and on how they achieve performance), or data-based benchmarking (statistical benchmarking that examines the comparison of data-based scores and conventional performance indicators). There is also internal/external and external collaborative/trans-industry/implicit benchmarking. Within different types, benchmarking may be either vertical (aiming at quantifying the costs, workloads, and learning productivity of a predefined programme area) or horizontal (looking at the costs of outcomes of a single process that cuts across more than one programme area). Some examples of benchmarking programmes are:

1. The USA was the first country to introduce benchmarking activities into higher education in the early 1990s. The NACUBO (National Association of Colleges and University Business Officers) Benchmarking Project has been established longer than any other project in the field. It started in 1991-1992 and has had a statistical and financial approach to benchmarking.
2. In the United Kingdom, benchmarking, as a quality assurance tool in higher education, came to the

forefront only after the 1997 Dearing Committee Report:

- The History 2000 Project, led by Paul Hyland, School of Historical and Cultural Studies, Bath College of Higher Education (example of benchmarking of academic practice, [www.bathe.ac.uk/history2000/index.html](http://www.bathe.ac.uk/history2000/index.html));
  - The RMCS (Royal Military College of Science) Programme at Cranfield University (example of benchmarking in libraries);
  - The Higher Education Funding Council for Higher Education (HEFCE). Value for Money Studies (VfM), launched in 1993, [www.hefce.ac.uk/current/vgm.htm](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/current/vgm.htm);
  - “The Commonwealth University International Benchmarking Club”, launched in 1996, by CHEMS (Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service), as an example of international benchmarking, [www.acu.ac.uk/chems/benchmark/html](http://www.acu.ac.uk/chems/benchmark/html).
3. In Europe, benchmarking in higher education is not common, but a series of initiatives has been developed:
- The Copenhagen Business School (CBS) benchmarking analysis of twelve higher education institutions, 1995;

- The German Benchmarking Club of Technical Universities (BMC), 1996;
- The Association of European Universities (CRE) “Institutional Quality Management Review” based on peer reviews and mutual visits among universities participating voluntarily in a cycle, each time focusing on a specific issue, is an example of implicit benchmarking [www.unige.ch/eua](http://www.unige.ch/eua) (details in CHEMS, 1998).

***Internal Benchmarking:*** Benchmarking (comparisons of) performances of similar programmes in different components of one higher education institution. Internal benchmarking is usually conducted at large decentralized institutions with several departments (or units) conducting similar programmes.

***(External) Competitive Benchmarking:*** Benchmarking (comparisons of) performance in key areas, on specific measurable terms, based upon information from institution(s) that are viewed as competitors.

***Functional (External Collaborative) Benchmarking:*** Benchmarking that involves comparisons of processes, practices, and performances with similar institutions of a larger group of institutions in the same field that are not immediate competitors.

***Trans-Institutional Benchmarking:*** Benchmarking that looks across multiple institutions in search of new and innovative practices.

***Implicit Benchmarking:*** A quasi-benchmarking that looks at the production and publication of data and of performance indicators that could be useful for meaningful cross-institutional comparative analysis. It is not based on the voluntary and proactive participation of institutions (as in the cases of other types), but as the result of the pressure of markets, central funding, and/or coordinating agencies. Many of the current benchmarking activities taking place in Europe are of this nature.

***Generic Benchmarking:*** A comparison of institutions in terms of a basic practice process or service (e.g. communication lines, participation rate, and drop-out rate). It compares the basic level of an activity with a process in other institutions that has similar activity.

***Process-Based Benchmarking:*** Goes beyond the comparison of data-based scores and conventional performance indicators (statistical benchmarking) and looks at the processes by which results are achieved. It examines activities made up of tasks, steps which cross the boundaries between the conventional functions found in all institutions. It goes beyond the comparison of data and looks at the processes by which the results are achieved.

***RELATED TERMS:*** Criteria, Evaluation Indicators, Quality Assessment, Standards.

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## BEST PRACTICE

A method or an innovative process involving a range of safe and reasonable practices resulting in the improved performance of a higher education institution or programme, usually recognized as “best” by other peer organizations. A best practice does not necessarily represent an absolute, ultimate example or pattern, its application assures the improved performance of a higher education institution or programme; rather, it identifies the best approach to a specific situation, as institutions and programmes vary greatly in constituencies and scope.

*RELATED TERMS:* Benchmarking, Code of Practice.

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HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND. *Best Practice in Collaboration between Higher Education Institutions and the Training and Enterprise Council*. Bristol: HEFCE, 1997. [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/1997/m7\\_97.htm](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/1997/m7_97.htm).

TAIT, FRANK. “Enterprise Process Engineering: A Template Tailored for Higher Education”, in, *Cause/Effect Journal* 22 1 (1999). [www.educause.edu/ir/library/html/cem9919.html](http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/html/cem9919.html).

## CERTIFICATION

The process by which an agency or an association acknowledges the achievement of established quality standards and usually grants certain privileges to the target individual (student or teacher).

*RELATED TERMS:* Assessment, Standards.

## SOURCE

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR QUALITY. *Quality Glossary*.  
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## CODE OF PRACTICE

A Code of Practice is a non-binding document that describes the minimum audit requirements and those that are considered to reveal a practice worthy of consideration. A Code identifies a comprehensive series of system-wide expected conduct covering matters relating to the management of academic quality and standards in higher education. It provides an authoritative reference point for institutions as they consciously, actively, and systematically assure the academic quality and standards of their programmes, awards, and qualifications. A Code assumes that, taking into account nationally agreed upon principles and practices, each institution has its own systems for independent verification both of its quality and standards and of the effectiveness of its quality

assurance systems. In developing a Code, extensive advice is sought from a range of knowledgeable practitioners.

Examples of Codes:

- UNESCO-CEPES AND COUNCIL OF EUROPE. *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education*. Riga: 2001. <http://mail.cepes.ro/hed/recogn/lisbon/riga/code.htm>.
- MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION (MSACHE). *Code of Good Practice in Accrediting in Higher Education*. Philadelphia, 2001. [www.msache.org/code\\_prac.html](http://www.msache.org/code_prac.html).
- THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (QAA): *Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education: Career Education, Information, and Guidance*. [www.qaa.ac.uk/public/COP/codesofpractice.htm](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/COP/codesofpractice.htm).
- Code of Good Practice for the Members of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) [www.eaconsortium.net/index.php?section=content&id=1](http://www.eaconsortium.net/index.php?section=content&id=1)

*RELATED TERMS:* Best Practice, Quality Assurance, Standards.

## SOURCES

HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND. *HEFCE Audit Code of Practice*. Bristol, 2002. [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2002/02\\_26/02\\_26.doc](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2002/02_26/02_26.doc)

### **CODE OF (PROFESSIONAL) ETHICS CONCERNING QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

A public document establishing a framework for ethical behaviour and decision making in the conduct of quality assurance and accreditation activities in higher education. As useful instruments for achieving transparency and comparability of internal and external quality assurance of higher education, codes of ethics usually consist of a set of basic principles, values and rules of conduct to be considered as reference points in quality assurance and accreditation work together with a set of procedural regulations for observing compliance with the Code. Tailored to the needs and values of the respective organization, codes of ethics may include references to issues such as conflict of interest, confidentiality, intellectual property, permanent development, trust, etc.

*RELATED TERMS:* Code of practice, Quality culture

## SOURCES

INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL ETHICS. [www.globalethics.org](http://www.globalethics.org).

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<http://onlineethics.org/glossary.html>.

QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education. [www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/fullintro.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/fullintro.asp).

UNESCO-CEPES Ethical and Moral Dimensions for Higher Education and Science in Europe. Collection of Texts and Selected Bibliography. Bucharest, 2004.  
[www.cepes.ro/September/reader.pdf](http://www.cepes.ro/September/reader.pdf).

## COMPETENCIES

A specific and measurable pattern of behaviors and knowledge that generates or predicts a high performance level in a given position or context of responsibilities. They account for the identification and application of ideas and solutions in order to solve problems with maximum efficiency and minimum use of resources.

*Cognitive competencies:* Skills that contribute to the objectives of individual knowledge development, also serving as individual protective factors contributing to successful adaptation. These may include competencies like: reasoning, information-gathering, information analysis, systems-thinking and pattern recognition, theory building, problem-solving, decision-making, planning and goal-setting.

**Attitudinal competencies:** Actions, values and norms that indicate and generate high performance, and also show that the different types of knowledge have been effectively developed by the subject.

**Professional competencies:** An individual's specialized knowledge of information sources, access, technology, services, and management, and the ability to critically and effectively evaluate, filter and use this knowledge in order to successfully accomplish specific assignments and obtain results.

*RELATED TERMS:* Efficiency, Outcomes, Recognition

## SOURCES

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## CREDITS

A credit is an agreed upon quantified means of expressing the level of learning based on the achievement of learning outcomes and their associated workloads. Generally, once gained, credit cannot be lost. Credit may have a relative value (as the case when they were first introduced) or absolute value (when they made the shift to an accumulation system - no longer calculated on an *ad hoc* proportional basis but on the basis of officially recognized criteria - that is the official length of a degree programme or unit).

*Accumulation of Study Credits*. Set credits gained by a student in a given higher education institution may be recognized in another institution, depending upon the commonality in terms of level and context, considered as transferable.

*ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System)*. The main transparency tool for the recognition of

study periods, ECTS is a student-centered system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme of study specified in terms of learning and competencies to be acquired. As a European Community project initially established under the ERASMUS Programme (1988-1995) ECTS was developed more broadly between 1995-1999 under the higher education component of the SOCRATES Programme, ERASMUS, and proved to be an effective tool for creating curricular transparency and facilitating academic recognition. The activity of ECTS is two-fold: on the one hand, it guarantees academic recognition to students of studies completed abroad and simultaneously enables studies abroad; on the other hand, it provides higher education institutions with curricular transparency by offering detailed information regarding the respective curricula and their relevance for earned degrees and by enabling higher education institutions to preserve their autonomy and responsibility for all decisions regarding student achievement. The Bologna Declaration takes ECTS as the common framework for curriculum design and student mobility within the envisaged European Higher Education Area.

*RELATED TERMS:* Descriptors, Outcomes, Recognition.



## SOURCES

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## CRITERIA

Checkpoints or benchmarks determining the attainment of certain objectives and/or standards. Criteria describe to a certain degree of detail the characteristics of the requirements and conditions to be met (in order to meet a standard) and therefore provide the (quantitative and qualitative) basis on which an evaluative conclusion is drawn.

*Performance Criteria:* Checkpoints or benchmarks that are used to judge the attainment of performance standards. As qualities, characteristics, or dimensions of a standard for student performance, they indicate how well students meet expectations of what they should know and

be able to do, as expressed by varying gradients of success by (scoring) rubrics or by grades.

*RELATED TERMS:* Benchmarks, Performance Standards.

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## CULTURE OF EVIDENCE

As it relates to institutional quality culture, the culture of evidence is a mindset acquired in a higher education institution and based on clear ethical values, principles, and rules, which consists of the self-evaluation of its learning outcomes, engaging the teaching staff and the academic administration in a thoughtful, regular

collection, selection, and use of relevant institutional performance indicators, in order to inform and prove, whenever (and to whomever) necessary, that it is doing well in specific areas (e.g. institutional planning, decision-making, quality, etc.) and for the purpose of improving its learning and teaching outcomes. The “culture of evidence” (as opposed to “a culture of professional tradition and trust”) is the empirical basis for the quality culture of a higher education institution. As formulated within the new WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) standards, the culture of evidence requested from a higher education institution implies that the institution is encouraged to be able to provide empirical data proving the consistency of its own mission.

*RELATED TERMS:* Indicators, Outcomes, Quality Culture.

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## DESCRIPTOR (LEVEL)

Level descriptors are statements that provide a broad indication of learning relevant to the achievement of a particular level, describing the characteristics and context of learning expected at that level. They are designed to support the review of specified learning outcomes and assessment criteria in order to develop particular modules and units and to assign credits at the appropriate level.

*Descriptors (Qualification)*: Qualification descriptors are statements that set out the outcomes of principal higher education qualifications at given levels (usually of an awarded degree) and demonstrate the nature of change between levels. At some levels, there may be more than one type of qualification. The first part of a qualification descriptor (of particular interest to those designing, approving, and reviewing academic programmes) is a statement regarding outcomes, *i.e.* the achievement of a student that he or she should be able demonstrate for the award of the qualification. The second part (of particular interest to employers) is a statement of the wider abilities that the typical student could be expected to have developed. Upon periodical review of the existing qualification descriptors and in light of the development of

other points of reference, such as benchmark statements, additional qualification descriptors at each level are elaborated.

In view of the creation of the European Higher Education Area, a set of descriptors known as the 'Dublin Descriptors' was developed by an international group of higher education experts (*Joint Quality Initiative*) and serves as reference for a number of national quality assurance agencies, policy makers and specialists throughout Europe. The Dublin Descriptors seek to identify the nature of a qualification as a whole, without being prescriptive or exhaustive or imposing a specific threshold.

*RELATED TERMS:* Qualifications, Outcomes, Assessment, Benchmark, Credit.

## SOURCES

BOLOGNA WORKING GROUP ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS.

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## EFFECTIVENESS (EDUCATIONAL)

An output of specific analyses (*e.g.* the WASC Educational Effectiveness Review or its Reports on Institutional Effectiveness) that measure (the quality of) the achievement of a specific educational goal or the degree to which a higher education institution can be expected to achieve specific requirements. It is different from efficiency, which is measured by the volume of output or input used. As a primary measure of success of a programme or of a higher education institution, clear indicators, meaningful information, and evidence best reflecting institutional effectiveness with respect to student learning and academic achievement have to be gathered through various procedures (inspection, observation, site visits, etc.). Engaging in the measurement of educational effectiveness creates a value-added process through quality assurance and accreditation reviews and contributes to building, within the institution, a culture of evidence.

*RELATED TERMS:* Quality Assurance, Indicators, Accreditation, Culture of Evidence.

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## **EFFICIENCY (EDUCATIONAL)**

An ability to perform well or to achieve a result without waste of resources, effort, time, or funds (using the smallest quantity of resources possible). Educational efficiency can be measured in physical terms (technical efficiency) or in terms of cost (economic efficiency). Increased educational efficiency is achieved when the same amount and standard of educational services are produced at a low cost, if a more useful educational activity is substituted for a less useful one at the same cost, or if unnecessary educational activities are eliminated. A programme or a higher education institution may be efficiently managed, but not effective in achieving its mission, goals, or objectives.

*RELATED TERMS:* Quality, Effectiveness, Standards.

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WIDEMAN, MAX. *Glossary of Project Management Terms*. 2003. [www.maxwideman.com/pmglossary/PMG\\_E01.htm](http://www.maxwideman.com/pmglossary/PMG_E01.htm).

## EVALUATION

The general process of a systematic and critical analysis leading to judgments and recommendations regarding the quality of a higher education institution or a programme. An evaluation is carried out through internal or external procedures. In the United Kingdom, evaluation is also called review.

*External Evaluation:* The process whereby a specialized agency collects data, information, and evidence about an institution, a particular unit of a given institution, or a core activity of an institution, in order to make a statement about its quality. External evaluation is carried out by a team of external experts, peers, or inspectors, and usually requires three distinct operations:

- i. an analysis of a self-study report;
- ii. a site visit;
- iii. the drafting of an evaluation report.

*Internal Evaluation/Self-evaluation:* The process of self-evaluation consists of the systematic collection of administrative data, the questioning of students and graduates, and the holding of moderated interviews with lecturers and students, resulting in a self-study report. Self-evaluation is a collective institutional reflection and an opportunity for quality enhancement. The resulting report further serves to provide information for the review team in charge of the external evaluation.



*RELATED TERMS:* Accreditation, Audit, Quality Assessment, Review.

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## **EXTERNAL REVIEW** (See also **PEER REVIEW**)

### **HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION/ORGANIZATION (HEI)**

An educational body which carries out higher education activities based on legally approved study programmes. Any higher education organization must follow an external evaluation procedure in order to assess its quality and to acquire the provisional functioning authorisation, followed by its official accreditation, as well as the accreditation of its study programmes. Generally, this requirement is compulsory for all higher education institutions (HEI) or organisations providing higher education programmes and activities and entitles HEIs, upon successful completion, to use the name 'university' or other similar legally recognized names. Also, HEIs have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision

and its assurance. Higher education institutions may differ in size, quality, resources, number of teaching staff and students, etc., as successful HEIs generally have to find a balance between often conflicting stakeholder demands and institutional values. HEIs can therefore be either local or global; elite or mass-oriented; specialized or trans-disciplinary, and may foster either an academic culture (characterized by knowledge creation, scientific excellence, academic freedom and freely shareable results) or a business culture (characterized by profit creation and individual appropriation of social wealth).

*RELATED TERMS:* Accreditation, Evaluation, Ranking, Study Programme

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## INDICATORS

Operational variables referring to specific empirically measurable characteristics of higher education institutions or programmes on which evidence can be collected that allows for a determination of whether or not standards are being met. Indicators identify performance trends and signal areas in need of action and enable comparison of actual performance with established objectives. They are also used to translate theoretical aspects of quality into procedures, a process known as operationalization. An indicator must be distinguished from a *measure*, which is data used to determine the level of performance of an attribute of interest, and from a *standard*, which is the level of acceptable performance in terms of a specific numeric criterion. Another distinction is made between the different types of indicators: (i) indicators of economy (following and respecting budgets); (ii) indicators of efficiency (actual productivity or output per input unit); and (iii) indicators of effectiveness (degree of attainment of objectives). A third and relatively consequent distinction is made between: (i) context indicators, that relate to the specific environment of a higher education institution or programme (social, economic, political, geographical, etc.); (ii) input indicators, that relate to the logistical, human, and financial resources used by a higher education institution; (iii) process indicators, that refer to the use of

resources by a higher education institution, to the management of the inputs, and to the functioning of the organization; and (iv) output indicators, that concern the actual achievements or products of the higher education institution. This latter framework is also known as the CIPO-model (*i.e.* Context, Inputs, Process, Outputs), frequently used in evaluation studies.

***Performance Indicators:*** A range of statistical parameters representing a measure of the extent to which a higher education institution or a programme is performing in a certain quality dimension. They are short-term or long-term qualitative and quantitative measures of the output of a system or programme. They allow institutions to benchmark their own performances or allow comparison among higher education institutions. Performance indicators work efficiently only when used as part of a coherent set of input, process, and output indicators. As higher education institutions are engaged in a variety of activities and target a number of different objectives, it is essential to be able to identify and to implement a large range of performance indicators in order to cover the entire field of activity. Examples of frequently used performance indicators, covering various institutional activities, include the number of applications per place, the entry scores of candidates, the staff workload, the employability of graduates, research grants and contracts, the number of articles or studies published, the staff/student ratio, institutional income and expenditure, and institutional and departmental

equipment and furniture. Performance indicators are related to benchmarking exercises and are identified through a specific piloting exercise in order to best serve their use in a comparative or profiling analysis.

*Simple Indicator:* A more general type of indicator, expressed in the form of absolute figures, intends to provide a relatively unbiased description of a process. Simple indicators are less relative than performance indicators as they exclude any judgments or points of reference (e.g. a standard, an objective, or an assessment).

*RELATED TERMS:* Standards, Evaluation, Assessment.

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## LICENSING

The process by which a governmental agency grants official permission (i) to persons meeting pre-determined qualifications to engage in a given occupation and/or use of a particular title; (ii) to programmes, based on the evaluation of appropriate plans, to operate before obtaining accredited status, and (iii) to institutions to perform specified functions. Licensing (in the case of

persons) is usually obtained through examination or graduation from an accredited institution. In some countries, a period of practical experience may be required. In such a case, state licensing should not be confused with institutional or specialized accreditation.

*RELATED TERMS:* Accreditation, Certification.

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## OUTCOMES

Anticipated or achieved results of programmes or the accomplishment of institutional objectives, as demonstrated by a wide range of indicators (such as student knowledge, cognitive skills, and attitudes). Outcomes are direct results of the instructional programme, planned in terms of learner growth in all areas. An outcome must be distinguished from an objective, which is a desired result. Generally, each outcome statement should describe one effect of the instructional programme, and not accumulate several into one statement. Also, the statements should be clearly detailed and easily understandable by all teaching staff and students in the given area or department.

**Outcomes Assessment:** The process of evaluation and improvement of specific results of a higher education institution in order to demonstrate its institutional effectiveness. Assessment may concern the performance of teaching staff, the effectiveness of institutional practices, and the functioning of departments or programmes (e.g. programme reviews, budget reviews, etc.). It is a formative procedure used for institutional self-study, financial retrenchment, programme evaluation, and improved understanding of the current needs of students.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand, and be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning as well as the specific intellectual and practical skills gained and demonstrated by the successful completion of a unit, course, or programme. Learning outcomes, together with assessment criteria, specify the minimum requirements for the award of credit, while grading is based on attainment above or below the minimum requirements for the award of credit. Learning outcomes are distinct from the aims of learning in that they are concerned with the achievements of the learner rather than with the overall intentions of the teacher.

**Student Outcome Assessment:** The act of assembling, analyzing, and using both quantitative and qualitative evidence of teaching and learning outcomes, in order to examine their congruence with stated purposes and educational objectives and to provide meaningful feedback that will stimulate improvement.



***Measurable Outcomes:*** Results that can be quantified; all measures of student outcomes (except certain subjective learning achievements), including executive function skills, and affective-related measures. Examples of measurable outcomes include: numbers of persons who gain employment, numbers of people who register to vote, and numbers of people who achieve a graduate education degree. Learning achievements concern speaking, listening, reading, writing, and numeracy. Executive function skills include problem-solving, critical thinking, and meta-cognition. Affective-related measures include self-esteem, self-confidence, and interpersonal communication.

***RELATED TERMS:*** Accreditation, Assessment, Indicators, Quality Assurance.

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## PEER REVIEW/EXTERNAL REVIEW

Assessment procedure regarding the quality and effectiveness of the academic programmes of an institution, its staffing, and/or its structure, carried out by external experts (peers). (Strictly speaking, peers are academics of the same discipline, but in practice, different types of external evaluators exist, even though all are meant to be specialists in the field reviewed and knowledgeable about higher education in general.) For a review, the source of authority of peers, types of peers, their selection and training, their site visits, and the standards to be met may vary. A review is usually based on a self-evaluation report provided by the institution and can be used as a basis for indicators or as a method of judgment for (external) evaluation in higher education.

*RELATED TERMS:* Accreditation, Evaluation, Quality Assessment, Site Visit, Standards.

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## QUALIFICATION

Any higher education award (degree, diploma, or other type of formal certification) issued by a competent, registered authority attesting to the successful completion of a course programme. It covers a wide variety of higher education awards at different levels and across different countries (e.g. the Bachelor's and Master's Degree, the Doctorate, etc.). A qualification is important in terms of what it signifies: competencies and range of knowledge and skills. Sometimes it is equivalent to a license to practice. It is often synonymous with credential.

**Qualifications Framework:** A comprehensive policy framework, defining all nationally recognized qualifications in higher education in terms of workload, level, quality, learning outcomes, and profiles. It should be designed to be comprehensible through the use of specific descriptors for each qualification covering both its breadth (competencies associated with learning outcomes) and its depth (level). It is structured horizontally in order to cover all qualifications awarded in a system, and vertically, by

level. Its purpose is to facilitate: (i) curriculum development and design of study programmes; (ii) student and graduate mobility; and (iii) recognition of periods of study and credentials. While certain higher education systems have their own qualification frameworks, others allow for the development of a wide variety of qualifications without providing an explicit framework. The emerging European Higher Education Area, envisaged by the Bologna Declaration, is regarded by many as needing a pan-European Qualification Framework.

Among recent output-focused systems approaches and techniques used to classify and explain qualifications and qualification frameworks are: the Bachelor's/Master's Degree generic descriptors (*e.g.* The Joint Quality Initiative (or Dublin Descriptors); the Bachelor's/Master's Degree subject-specific benchmarks (*e.g.* The Tuning Project); the International Credit Framework (*e.g.* ECTS for transfer and accumulation); The Integrated National Credit Framework (*e.g.* Ireland, Denmark); or, Learning Outcomes and Competencies – General and Specific (*e.g.* United Kingdom, Denmark).

***National Qualifications Framework:*** Generally, a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is designed to provide nationally recognized and homogeneous standards and qualifications, as well as recognition for all learning of knowledge and competencies and a basis for further review, articulation and development of existing and impending qualifications. Also, among other

purposes, it should facilitate curricular change and allow for the improvement of access and social inclusion, as well as the integration of changing societal needs. A National Qualifications Framework is primarily developed through a medium-term process of policy development and public consultation. The NQFs in the European Higher Education Area are expected to be convergent by taking as reference the European Qualifications Framework.

*European Qualifications Framework:* A new development in higher education, the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) is the targeted result of a European Commission initiative to be enacted by the European Parliament and Council in 2007. It focuses on a set of eight general reference levels or learning outcomes that cover the whole range of qualifications and are valid on a trans-systemic basis. The EQF should provide stakeholders and employers with a global reference tool (or 'translation device') allowing them to clearly compare and relate qualifications and education and training systems.

*RELATED TERMS:* Assessment, Learning Outcome, Recognition, Validation.

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## QUALITY (ACADEMIC)

Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multi-level, and dynamic concept that relates to the contextual settings of an educational model, to the institutional mission and objectives, as well as to specific standards within a given system, institution, programme, or discipline. Quality may thus take different, sometimes conflicting, meanings depending on (i) the understanding of various interests of different constituencies or stakeholders in higher education (*e.g.* students; universities; disciplines; the labour market; society; a government); (ii) its references: inputs, processes, outputs,

missions, objectives, etc.; (iii) the attributes or characteristics of the academic world worth evaluating; and (iv) the historical period in the development of higher education.

A wide spectrum of definitions of academic quality has been used:

- *Quality as excellence*: a traditional, elitist academic view, according to which only the best standards of excellence (usually meaning a high level of difficulty and of complexity of a programme, the seriousness of the student testing procedures, etc.) are understood as revealing true academic quality.
- *Quality as fitness for purpose*: a concept that stresses the need to meet generally accepted standards such as those defined by an accreditation or quality assurance body, the focus being on the effectiveness of the processes at work in the institution or programme in fulfilling its objectives and mission. Sometimes quality in this sense is also labeled as: (i) *a value for money approach* owing to the (implicit) focus on how the inputs are effectively and efficiently used by the processes and mechanisms involved or (ii) the *value-added approach* when results are evaluated in terms of changes obtained through various educational processes (e.g. teaching and learning processes). A variation of the latter is the *quality as transformation approach*, which is strongly student-centered. It considers quality as a process of change, adding

value to students through their learning experience.

- *Quality as fitness of purpose*: a concept that focuses on the defined objectives and mission of the institution or programme with no check of the fitness of the processes themselves in regard to any external objectives or expectations. *Fitness of purpose* evaluates whether the quality-related intention of an organization are adequate. Within this approach, one may distinguish alternative approaches developed in the 1990s: (i) *quality as threshold* whereby certain norms and criteria are set, which any programme or institution has to reach to be considered to be of quality. In many European higher education systems, a variant defining quality as a basic standard, closely linked to accreditation, is used. In this case, the starting point is the specification of a set of minimum standards to be met by an institution or programme and to generate the basis for the development of quality-improvement mechanisms; (ii) *quality as consumer satisfaction*: quality perceived as closely linked to the growing importance of market forces in higher education, that focuses on the importance of the external expectations of consumers (students, families, society at large) and other stakeholders.
- *Quality as enhancement or improvement*: focusing on the continuous search for permanent improvement, stressing the responsibility of the higher education



institution to make the best use of its institutional autonomy and freedom. Achieving quality is central to the academic ethos and to the idea that academics themselves know best what quality is.

Each approach has advantages and disadvantages, being more or less suitable for a specific period of time or national context. In terms of evolution, there are permanent movement and oscillations between relative versus absolute, internal versus externally oriented, and basic versus more advanced and sophisticated notions of quality. However, common to all of these quality approaches is the integration of the following elements: (i) the guaranteed realization of minimal standards and benchmarks; (ii) the capacity to set the objectives in a diversifying context and to achieve them with the given input and context variables; (iii) the ability to satisfy the demands and expectations of direct and indirect consumers and stakeholders; (iv) the drive towards excellence (Van Damme, 2003).

*Quality Assessment/Quality Review:* The actual process of external evaluation (reviewing, measuring, judging) of the quality of higher education institutions and programmes. It consists of those techniques, mechanisms, and activities that are carried out by an external body in order to evaluate the quality of the higher education processes, practices, programmes, and services. Some aspects are important when defining and working with the concept of quality assessment: (i) the context (national, institutional); (ii) the methodology (self-assessment,

assessment by peer review, site visits); (iii) the levels (system, institution, department, individual); (iv) the mechanisms (rewards, policies, structures, cultures); (v) certain quality values attached to quality assessment such as academic values, traditional values (focusing upon the subject field), managerial values (focusing on procedures and practices); pedagogical values (focusing on staff and their teaching skills and classroom practice); employment values (emphasizing graduate output characteristics and learning outcomes).

**Quality Assurance:** An all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programmes. As a regulatory mechanism, quality assurance focuses on both accountability and improvement, providing information and judgments (not ranking) through an agreed upon and consistent process and well-established criteria. Many systems make a distinction between internal quality assurance (*i.e.* intra-institutional practices in view of monitoring and improving the quality of higher education) and external quality assurance (*i.e.* inter- or supra-institutional schemes assuring the quality of higher education institutions and programmes). Quality assurance activities depend on the existence of the necessary institutional mechanisms preferably sustained by a solid quality culture. Quality management, quality enhancement, quality control, and quality assessment are means through which quality

assurance is ensured. The scope of quality assurance is determined by the shape and size of the higher education system. Quality assurance varies from accreditation, in the sense that the former is only a prerequisite for the latter. In practice, the relationship between the two varies a great deal from one country to another. Both imply various consequences such as the capacity to operate and to provide educational services, the capacity to award officially recognized degrees, and the right to be funded by the state. Quality assurance is often considered as a part of the quality management of higher education, while sometimes the two terms are used synonymously.

***Quality Control:*** The process of quality evaluation that focuses on the internal measurement of the quality of an institution or a programme. It refers to a set of operational activities and techniques (monitoring activities and a structured internally planned and implemented policy) elaborated and used to fulfill requirements of quality. Often used interchangeably with quality management and quality assurance, it refers to an aggregate of actions and measures taken regularly to assure the quality of higher education products, services, or processes, with an emphasis on the assurance that a prescribed threshold of quality is met. It aims both at monitoring the process and at eliminating certain causes generating an unsatisfactory functioning. Sometimes a minimal quality control (mostly in the shape of some kind of certification) exists serving as a filtering mechanism in confirming that a higher education institution is fulfilling minimal agreed upon

quality requirements and has appropriate quality monitoring procedures in place.

**Quality Management:** An aggregate of measures taken regularly at system or institutional level in order to assure the quality of higher education with an emphasis on improving quality as a whole. As a generic term, it covers all activities that ensure fulfillment of the quality policy and the quality objectives and responsibilities and implements them through quality planning, quality control, quality assurance, and quality improvement mechanisms.

**Total Quality Management (TQM):** A particularly influential comprehensive approach to quality management that places emphasis on factors such as continuous improvement, customer focus, strategic management, need for explicit systems to assure quality of higher education, and a view of leadership and supervision that stresses employee empowerment and delegation. Such an approach to quality management emphasizes assessment that is undertaken of: (i) defined objectives or standards (set internally or by external funding bodies); (ii) measures of customer satisfaction; (iii) expert and professional judgment; and (iv) comparator organizations. TQM is considered to have a close conceptual and philosophical link with benchmarking methodologies. Such an approach has been mostly applied in the economic sector, being less used in the academic world.

**Quality Audit:** The process of quality assessment by which an external body ensures that (i) the institution of programme quality assurance procedures or (ii) that the overall (internal and external) quality assurance procedures of the system are adequate and are actually being carried out. Quality audit looks to the system for achieving good quality and not at the quality itself. A quality audit can be performed only by persons (*i.e.* quality auditors) who are not directly involved in the areas being audited. Quality audits are undertaken to meet internal goals (internal audit) or external goals (external audit). The results of the audit must be documented (audit report). (See also Audit).

**Quality Culture:** It refers to a set of shared, accepted, and integrated patterns of quality (often called principles of quality) to be found in the organizational cultures and the management systems of institutions. Awareness of and commitment to the quality of higher education, in conjunction with a solid culture of evidence and with the efficient management of this quality (through quality assurance procedures) are the ingredients of a quality culture. As quality elements change and evolve over time, so must the integrated system of quality supportive attitudes and arrangements (quality culture) change to support new quality paradigms in higher education.

**Quality Planning:** It consists of the set of actions that establishes the objectives and the conditions referring to the quality of higher education and to the application of the mechanism of the quality system. Quality planning

includes product planning (identification, classification, and determination of the importance of the features referring to quality as well as to the establishment of the objectives, the conditions referring to quality, and its restraints), managerial and operational planning (including its organization and programming), an elaboration of quality plans, and the provision of quality improvement measures.

*RELATED TERMS:* Accreditation, Audit, Culture of Evidence, Evaluation.

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## **RANKING/LEAGUE TABLES**

Ranking and league tables are an established technique for displaying the comparative ranking of organizations in terms of their performance. They are meant to supply information to interested stakeholders, consumers, and policy-makers, alike on measurable differences in service quality of several similar providers. Even if somewhat controversial, especially concerning the methodological aspects, they are quite popular and seen as a useful instrument for public information, while also providing an additional incentive to quality improvement. Ranking/league tables are generally published in the popular press and magazines, specialized journals and on the Internet. The ranking process starts with the collection of data from existing data sources, site visits, studies, and institutional research. Following collection, the type and quantity of variables are selected from the information gathered. Then, the indicators are standardized and weighted from the selected variables. Finally, calculations are conducted and comparisons are made so that institutions are sorted into "ranking order". Ranking/league tables make use, in the process of evaluation of institutions or programmes, of a range of different indicators. The results of ranking/league tables

(the “scores” of each assessed institution) may thus vary from one case to another, depending on the number of indicators used or on the indicators themselves. Ranking indicators or criteria usually take into consideration scientific, pedagogic, administrative, and socio-economic aspects: student/staff ratio, A-level points (held by first-year students), teaching and research (as marks received in teaching and research assessments by individual departments), library and computer spending, drop out rates, satisfaction, study conditions, employment perspectives, etc. In accordance with the latest international conventions on ranking (*i.e.* ‘Berlin Principles’), rankings should offer comparative information and a better understanding of higher education, but should not be considered and used as a primary method for the assessment of academic quality. They should also clearly inform consumers with regard to all the indicators and factors used to rank higher education institutions or programmes, allowing the public to independently decide upon their respective weight.

*RELATED TERMS:* Assessment, Criteria, Evaluation, Performance Standards.

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## RECOGNITION

Formal acknowledgement of (i) individual academic or professional qualifications; (ii) programmes of a higher education institution; and/or (iii) quality assurance agencies, by a competent recognition authority that acknowledges certain standards and values with respect to

special purposes that indicate the consequences of recognition. Recognition is usually of a cross-institutional or cross-border nature. As regards recognition of individual qualifications, learning experiences (*e.g.* degrees, diplomas, or periods of study) are validated with a view to facilitating the access of holders to educational and/or employment activities. Here, at least two kinds of recognition, those for academic and those for professional purposes, should be distinguished (see below). Programme recognition generally refers to the recognition of a specific programme of study of one higher education institution by another. It functions on the basis of a peer-acknowledgement procedure and is meant to allow a student to engage in continued study at the latter institution or to exempt him or her from studying again subjects and materials which are not significantly different in different higher education institutions. With regard to institutions, recognition refers to the acknowledgement of quality assurance agencies or accrediting organizations, deemed to be trustful, efficient, and accountable institutions of quality assurance, following particular recognition standards set by the competent (usually foreign) recognition authorities.

***Academic Recognition:*** Approval of courses, qualifications, or diplomas from one (domestic or foreign) higher education institution by another for the purpose of student admission to further studies. Academic recognition can also be sought for an academic career at a second institution and in some cases for access to other

employment activities on the labour market (academic recognition for professional purposes). As regards the European Higher Education Area, three main levels of recognition can be considered, as well as the relevant instruments (as suggested by the Lisbon Convention and the Bologna Declaration): (i) recognition of qualifications, including prior learning and professional experience, allowing entry or re-entry into higher education; (ii) recognition of short study periods in relation to student mobility, having as the main instrument the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System); (iii) recognition of full degrees, having as the main instrument the Diploma Supplement.

***Mutual Recognition:*** Agreement by two or more institutional bodies to validate each other's degrees, programmes, or institutions and affirmation by two or more quality assurance or accrediting agencies that the methodology of the agencies are sound and that the procedures are functioning accordingly.

***Professional Recognition:*** Refers to the right to practice and the professional status accorded to a holder of a qualification. Owing to different regulations for the recognition of degrees or titles, a differentiation of two groups should be made: 'de Jure Professional Recognition' applies to the right to work in a specific country in a legally regulated profession (e.g. as a medical doctor). In the European Union, for instance, those regulations exist in both home and host countries and are subject to various European Union Specific Directives. 'De Facto Professional

Recognition' refers to situations of unregulated professional recognition, such as situations in which no national legal authorization exists or is required.

*Recognition of Prior Learning:* The formal acknowledgement of skills, knowledge, and competencies that are gained through work experience, informal training, and life experience.

*RELATED TERMS:* Accreditation, Certification, Evaluation, Licensure, Peer Review.

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE. *Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process*. [Final Report of [the] ENIC-NARIC.] Strasbourg: 2001, [www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural\\_Cooperation/education/Higher\\_Education/Activities/Bologna\\_Process/ENIC\\_Report\\_on%20Rec\\_Issues.asp#TopofPage](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/education/Higher_Education/Activities/Bologna_Process/ENIC_Report_on%20Rec_Issues.asp#TopofPage).

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NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS IN EUROPE (ESIB). *Recognition of Qualifications*. Brussels, 2003. [www.esib.org/policies/recognition.htm](http://www.esib.org/policies/recognition.htm).

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## **REGISTER OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES (REHEQA)**

The idea and implementation of the Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies (REHEQA) is directly related to the Bologna Process and its objective of promotion of the European cooperation in quality assurance. In line with the decision of the Conference of the European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in Bergen (May, 2005), the following four organizations and Consultative Members of the BFUG – ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESIB (the E4 Group) have developed a project which should lead to the operationalization of the

Register. This work has been finalized and the relevant document presenting the structure, legal status, organization and financing of the Register will be submitted at the ministerial conference in London in May 2007.

The purpose of the Register is to collect in a transparent way and provide generally accessible relevant information (through access to open website) about reliable and trustworthy quality assurance agencies operating in Europe. In order to be part of the Register, respective agencies and bodies need to comply with their national legislation as well as meet criteria set by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

*RELATED TERMS:* Criteria, Culture of Evidence, Indicators, Outcomes, Quality Assessment

## SOURCES

- BOLOGNA WORKING GROUP ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS.  
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- Code of Good Practice for the Members of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA).*  
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## **SELF-EVALUATION** (See **INTERNAL EVALUATION**)

### **SITE VISIT**

A component of external evaluation that is normally part of an accreditation process. It may be initiated by the institution itself. It consists of external experts visiting a higher education institution to examine the self-study produced by the institution and to interview faculty members, students, and other staff in order to assess quality and effectiveness (and to put forward recommendations for improvement).

*RELATED TERMS:* Accreditation, Evaluation, Peer Review.

### **SOURCE**

COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION (CHEA): *Glossary of Key Terms in Quality Assurance and Accreditation*, [www.chea.org/international/inter\\_glossary01.html](http://www.chea.org/international/inter_glossary01.html)

KRISTOFFERSEN, D. et al. *Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Manual of Quality Assurance: Procedures and*



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## STANDARDS

Statements regarding an expected level of requirements and conditions against which quality is assessed or that must be attained by higher education institutions and their programmes in order for them to be accredited or certified. The term standard means both a fixed criteria (against which an outcome can be matched) and a level of attainment.

Standards may take a quantitative form, being mostly the results of benchmarking, or they may be qualitative, indicating only specific targets (*e.g.* educational effectiveness, sustainability, core commitments, etc.). When quantitative, the standards include threshold levels that have to be met in order for higher education institutions or programmes to be accredited. More often than not, the thresholds or the “basic standards” are defined at the level of minimally acceptable quality. On other occasions, the standards refer to the highest level of quality, thus being considered as “standards of excellence”. These may result from a benchmarking exercise or be asserted implicitly, being so recognized by the peers in a collegiate way. Standards may have different reference points: (i) inputs (*e.g.* content standards); (ii) outputs (*e.g.* performance standards), (iii) processes. Standards can be general (for a degree level, *e.g.* a Bachelor’s or a Master’s Degree) or subject-specific (*e.g.* discipline benchmarking statements in the United

Kingdom). Standards may also vary by different types of standard setting methods (such as criterion-referenced, minimal competency, or objective setting methods). In order to judge properly whether or not a particular standard of quality is met, it has to be formulated clearly and explicitly and related to specific criteria which can be further divided into (more operational) indicators.

Standards are thus related to a specific (institutional programme) culture of evidence. In the context of the growing diversity of higher education, the translation of academic quality into standards and indicators has become complex. Often, a more dynamic approach to defining and assessing standards is visible (a mixture of reality-based components and potentiality-focused ones). The challenge is threefold: (i) to diminish the number of reference standards; (ii) to relate them to appropriate performance indicators while also making use of specific criteria within a consistent culture of evidence; and (iii) to provide for sufficient flexibility in the formulation of standards in order to allow for innovative academic developments. Standards are often used synonymously with criteria, as in the United States, while in Europe, standards are becoming increasingly distinct from criteria. A distinction between quality and standards (similar to the difference between process and outcomes) is also made, the term “quality standards” that is sometimes used being equivalent to the notion of standards as criterion.

In higher education standards are frequently set and assessed in four main areas:

- *Academic standards* (related to the intellectual abilities of students)
- *Standards of competence* (related to the technical abilities of students),
- *Service standards* (refer to the standards of service provided by the organization to the student)
- *Organizational standards* (principles and procedures by which the institution assures that it provides an appropriate learning and research environment)

**Content Standards:** Level of core competencies, relevant knowledge, and skills within a subject area, *i.e.* everything a student should know and be able to do. Content standards shape what goes into the curriculum and refer to required inputs.

**Educational Standards:** Level of requirements and conditions regarding different stages of the educational process and the relationship between those stages, such as inputs, processes, and outputs. Various types of educational standards exist with regard to learning resources, programmes, and results, in general, and student performance (content standards, performance standards, proficiency standards, and opportunity-to-learn standards).

**Performance Standards:** Levels of achievement that are deemed exemplary or appropriate, *i.e.* specifications of the required level of quality of a student's work to meet the

content standards. Performance standards shape expectations for educational outcomes.

***European standards:***

*(i) for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions*

Policies and procedures for quality assurance; approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards; assessment of students; quality assurance of teaching staff; learning resources and student support; information system; public information (as identified by ENQA)

*(ii) for external quality assurance of higher education*

Use of internal quality assurance procedures; the development of external quality assurance processes; criteria for decision; processes fit for purpose; reporting; follow-up procedures; periodic reviews; system wide analysis (as identified by ENQA)

*(iii) for external quality assurance agencies*

Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education

Official status; activities; resources; mission statement; independence; external quality assurance criteria and processes used by agencies (as identified by ENQA)

**RELATED TERMS:** Criteria, Culture of Evidence, Indicators, Outcomes, Quality Assessment.

SOURCES: See **CRITERIA**, and

*Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education*, [www.qaa.ac.uk/academic\\_infrastructure/codeOfPractice/default.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academic_infrastructure/codeOfPractice/default.asp).

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WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES. *Handbook of Accreditation*. Alameda, California: WASC, 2001.

## **STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHERS**

The process of using student inputs concerning the general activity and attitude of teachers. These observations allow the overall assessors to determine the degree of conformability between student expectations and the actual teaching approaches of teachers. Student evaluations are expected to offer insights regarding the attitude in class of a teacher (approachable, open-minded,

entertaining, creative, patient, etc.), and the abilities of a teacher (to explain things, to motivate students, to help students think, to correct mistakes in a friendly manner, to offer information efficiently, etc.).

*RELATED TERMS:* (Academic) Quality, Assessment, Evaluation, Student Survey.

## SOURCES

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## STUDENT SURVEY

An assessment method that uses surveys and interviews to ascertain the satisfaction of enrolled students with programmes, services, and different other aspects of their academic experience. Students are usually asked to respond to a series of open-ended, close-ended, or telephone questions. The survey may include in-class questionnaires, mail questionnaires, telephone questionnaires, and interviews (standard, in-person, or focus group). Student surveys are relatively inexpensive,

easy to administer, and can reach participants over a wide area. They are best suited for concise and non-sensitive topics, being able to give a sense, from the student perspective, of what is happening at a given moment in time, in the respective higher education institutions. Some observers may question their validity or reliability, as well as their relevance to academic policy.

*RELATED TERMS:* Assessment, Evaluation, Culture of Evidence.

## SOURCES

STASSEN, MARTHA L.A., DOHERTY, KATHERYN AND POE, MAYA, *Program-Based Review and Assessment Tools and Techniques for Programme Improvement*, 2001, pg 46  
[www.keele.ac.uk/depts/aa/regulationshandbook/pdfs/glossary.pdf](http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/aa/regulationshandbook/pdfs/glossary.pdf).

## STUDY PROGRAMME

A core, modular component of higher education including all the activities (design, organization, management, as well as the process of teaching, learning and research) carried out in a certain field and leading to an academic qualification. Study programmes are established by higher education institutions or organizations and may differ by level of academic qualification (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate); study mode (full-time, part-time, distance learning, etc.); and field of knowledge specialization, in accordance with academic and professional division of

labour. A study programme is accomplished through: (i) *a curriculum*, including all disciplines leading to an academic qualification, distributed by year of study, their weight being expressed in ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) type of study credits; (ii) *syllabuses* or course programmes, containing a description of the teaching and learning themes and practices associated with teaching, learning and evaluation; (iii) *the organizational chart of students and teaching staff* covering the period of implementation of the study programme; (iv) the system of academic quality assurance for all activities necessary for the completion of the study programme.

*RELATED TERMS:* Accreditation, Benchmark, Credits, Evaluation, Higher Education Institution/Organization, Quality

## SOURCES

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VILNIUS GEDIMINAS TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY, INTERNATIONAL STUDIES CENTRE. *Academic Glossary*. [www.vgtu.lt/english/students/?id=18](http://www.vgtu.lt/english/students/?id=18).



VLĂSCĒANU, LAZĂR and BARROWS, LELAND C. (Eds.) *Indicators for Institutional and Programme Accreditation in Higher/Tertiary Education*. Bucharest: UNESCO-CEPES, 2004.

## **VALIDATION**

The process by which a programme is judged to have met the requirements for an award by a relevant institution with degree-awarding powers (institutional self-evaluation) or by a relevant examining board (validation by an outside examining body).

*RELATED TERMS:* Accreditation, Evaluation.

## **SOURCE**

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX [STUDENTS' UNION]. *Glossary of Higher Education Terms*. Brighton: University of Sussex at Brighton, 1999. [www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/haug6/glossary.html/](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/haug6/glossary.html/)

## **WORKLOAD**

A quantitative measure of the learning activities that may be required for the achievement of learning outcomes (*e.g.* lectures, seminars, practical work, private study, information retrieval, research, examinations)

*RELATED TERMS:* Credit.

## SOURCES

BOLOGNA WORKING GROUP ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS.  
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## **APPENDIX**

### **Accreditation and Quality Assurance Organizations in Europe, the United States, and Canada**

#### **I. National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Organizations in European Countries**

##### **Albania**

Accreditation Agency of Higher Education

"Lek DukagjinI" Nr. 5

Tirana

Phone: + 355 (42) 579 54

Fax: +355 (42) 579-54

E-mail: aahe\_aaal@adanet.com.al

##### **Austria**

Austrian Accreditation Council

Teinfalstrasse 8

A-1010 Vienna

Phone: +43 (1) 531-205-673

Fax: +43 (1) 531-208-15673

E-mail: akkreditierungsrat@bmbwk.gv.at

Website: [www.akkreditierungsrat.at](http://www.akkreditierungsrat.at)

Austrian Quality Assurance

Liechtensteinstraße 22a.

A-1090 Vienna

Phone: +43 (1) 319 445- 500

Fax: + 43 (1) 319 445 -020

E-mail: [office@aqaa.at](mailto:office@aqaa.at)

Website: [www.aqaa.at](http://www.aqaa.at)

FHC Council  
Liechtenstenstrasse 22  
A-1090 Vienna  
Phone: +43 (1) 319- 503 - 416  
Fax: + 43 (1) 319- 503- 4 30  
E-mail: kurt.sohm@fhr.ac.at  
Website: www.fhr.ac.atw

### **Belgium**

#### *Flemish Community*

Council of Flemish Institutions of Higher Education  
Wolvengracht 38 - 2e verd.  
1000 Brussels  
Phone: + 32 (2) 211 - 4190  
Fax: + 32 (2) 211 - 4199  
E-mail: luc.vandevelde@vlhora.be  
Website: www.vlhora.be

#### VLIR - Flemish Interuniversity Council

Egmontstraat 5  
1000 Brussels  
Phone: +32 (2) 512- 9110  
Fax: +32 (2) 512 - 2996  
E-mail: secretariaat@vlir.be

#### *French Community*

Ministère de la communauté française  
Cité administrative de l'Etat  
19 Boulevard Pacheco, Boîte 0  
1010 Brussels  
Phone: +32 (2) 210-5577  
Fax: +32 (2) 210-5992  
E-mail : chantal.kaufman@cfw.be  
Website: http://cfwb.be

**Bulgaria**

National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency

125 Tzarigradsko Chaussée

Bldv. Bl. 1113 Sofia

Phone: +359 (2) 971-2102

Fax: +359 (2) 971-2068

E-mail: [info@neaa.government.bg](mailto:info@neaa.government.bg)

Website: [www.neaa.government.bg](http://www.neaa.government.bg)

**Croatia**

National Council for Higher Education

41 Savska Street

HR-10000 Zagreb

Phone: +385 (1) 4594-183; 4594-466, 4594-484

Fax: +385 (1) 4594-186

E-mail: [nvvn@mzt.hr](mailto:nvvn@mzt.hr)

**Cyprus**

Council for the Recognition of Higher Education,  
Qualifications

Department of Tertiary Education

Ministry of Education and Culture

Thoukididou and Kimonos Streets

1434 Nikosia

Phone: + 357 (228) 001- 896

Fax: + 357 (228) 305- 513

E-mail: [sekap@cytanet.com.cy](mailto:sekap@cytanet.com.cy)

Website: [www.moec.gov.cy](http://www.moec.gov.cy)

**Czech Republic**

Accreditation Commission

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Karmelitská 7

CZ-118 12 Prague 1

Phone/Fax: +42 (2) 5719-3457

E-mail: [vins@msmt.cz](mailto:vins@msmt.cz)

Website: [www.msmt.cz/\\_DOMEK/default.asp?CAI=2856](http://www.msmt.cz/_DOMEK/default.asp?CAI=2856)

**Denmark**

The Danish Evaluation Institute  
Ostbanegade 55, 3rd Floor  
2100 Copenhagen  
Phone: +45 (35) 550-101  
Fax: +45 (35) 331- 001  
E-mail: [eva@eva.dk](mailto:eva@eva.dk)  
Website: [www.eva.dk](http://www.eva.dk)

**Estonia**

Estonian Higher Education Accreditation Centre  
Koidula 13a  
10125 Tallinn  
Phone: +372 6 962-425/ 962-423  
Fax: +372 6962 427  
E-mail: [heqac@archimedes.ee](mailto:heqac@archimedes.ee)  
Website: [www.ekak.archimedes.ee](http://www.ekak.archimedes.ee)

Higher Education Quality Assessment Council  
Kohtu 6  
10130 Tallinn  
Phone: +372 (6) 962-424  
Fax: +372 (6) 962-427  
E-mail: [heqac@archimedes.ee](mailto:heqac@archimedes.ee)  
Website: [www.ekak.archimedes.ee](http://www.ekak.archimedes.ee)

**Finland**

Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC)  
Annakatu 34-36a  
00101 Helsinki  
Phone: +358 (9)1607-6913  
Fax: +358 (9)1607-6911  
E-mail: [finheec@minedu.fi](mailto:finheec@minedu.fi)  
Website: [www.kka.fi](http://www.kka.fi)

**France**

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Website: [www.akkreditierungsrat.de](http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de)

Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute  
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Website: [www.acquin.org](http://www.acquin.org)

Foundation for International Business Administration  
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Website: www.pka.edu.pl

**University Accreditation Commission**

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Website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

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E-mail: [ouvs-recep@open.ac.uk](mailto:ouvs-recep@open.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.open.ac.uk/validate/](http://www.open.ac.uk/validate/)

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European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher  
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Website: [www.enqa.net](http://www.enqa.net)

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B-1050 Brussels

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Website: [www.efmd.be](http://www.efmd.be)



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The Network of Central and Eastern European Quality  
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### III. Accrediting and Quality Assurance Bodies in the United States of America and Canada

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Fax: +1-202-955-6126

E-mail: [chea@chea.org](mailto:chea@chea.org)

Website: [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)

Commission on Colleges Southern Association of Colleges  
and Schools

1866 Southern Lane

Decatur, GA 30033

USA

Phone: +1 (404) 679-4500

Fax: +1 (404) 679-4558

Website: [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org)

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE)

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

209 Burlington Road, Bedford Massachusetts 01730-1433

USA

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Fax: +1 (781) 271-0850

E-mail: [cihe@neasc.org](mailto:cihe@neasc.org)

Website: [www.neasc.org/cihe/cihe.htm](http://www.neasc.org/cihe/cihe.htm)

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC)  
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools  
30 North LaSalle Street,  
Suite 2400 Chicago  
Illinois 60602-2504  
Phone: +1 (312) 263-0456  
Fax: +1 (312) 263-7462  
Website: [www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org](http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org)

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Middle  
States Commission on Higher Education  
3624 Market Street, Annex 2nd Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
Phone: +1-(267) 284-5000  
Fax: +1 (215) 662-5501  
E-mail: [info@msache.org](mailto:info@msache.org)  
Website: [www.msache.org](http://www.msache.org)

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities  
(NWC UU)  
8060 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue N.E., Suite 100  
Redmond, WA 98052  
Phone: +1 (425) 558-4224  
Fax: +1 (425) 376-0596  
Website: [www.nwccu.org](http://www.nwccu.org)

Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC-ACSU)  
Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities  
985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100  
Alameda, CA 94501  
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Fax: +1 (510) 748-9797  
E-mail: [wascsr@wascsenior.org](mailto:wascsr@wascsenior.org)  
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Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada  
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