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NETWORK FOR THE MODERNISATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN LIBYA

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1st QUALITY ASSURANCE THEORETICAL SESSION:

EUROPEAN STANDARD GUIDELINES: A model for LY HEIs?

1st WHEEL Online Training

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University of Alicante

Content

1. Definitions: Quality & Quality Assurance
2. Quality Assurance within European Union – Bologna Process
3. European Standard Guidelines – an overview
4. Exercise

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1. Definitions: Quality & Quality Assurance

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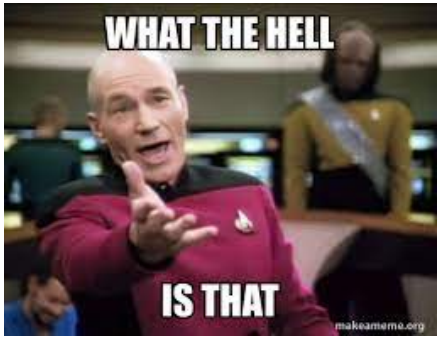
What the H€LL is quality? (Ball, 1985)



- **ISO 9000:** *"Degree to which a set of inherent characteristic fulfils requirements."*
- **Six Sigma:** *"Number of defects per million opportunities."*
- **Philip B. Crosby:** *"Conformance to requirements"*
- **Joseph M. Juran:** *"Fitness for use."*
- **Robert Pirsig**: *"The result of care."*
- **Genichi Taguchi**, *with two definitions:*
  a. *"Uniformity around a target value."*
  b. *"The loss a product imposes on society after it is shipped."*
- **American Society for Quality:** *"a subjective term for which each person has his or her own definition. In technical usage, quality can have two meanings:*
  a. *the characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs;*
  b. *b. a product or service free of deficiencies."*
- **Peter Drucker:** *"Quality in a product or service is not what the supplier puts in. It is what the customer gets out and is willing to pay for."*

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Why the hustle…?

- **Variety of interpretations** = Multiple stakeholders
- **Multidimensional** = research, learning, teaching, societal impact, all of the above.
- **Not static** = ever-changing pursuit of excellence embedded in dynamic context

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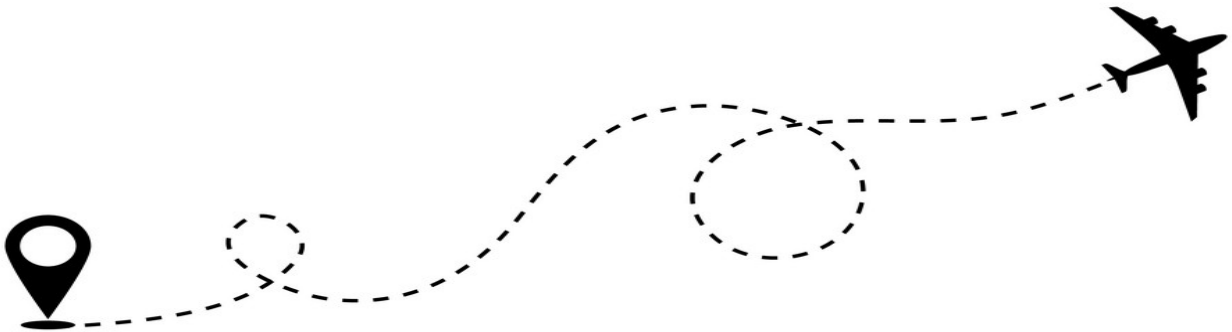
Revisit our own work on the padlet board…



padlet

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Multi-stakeholder view of Quality

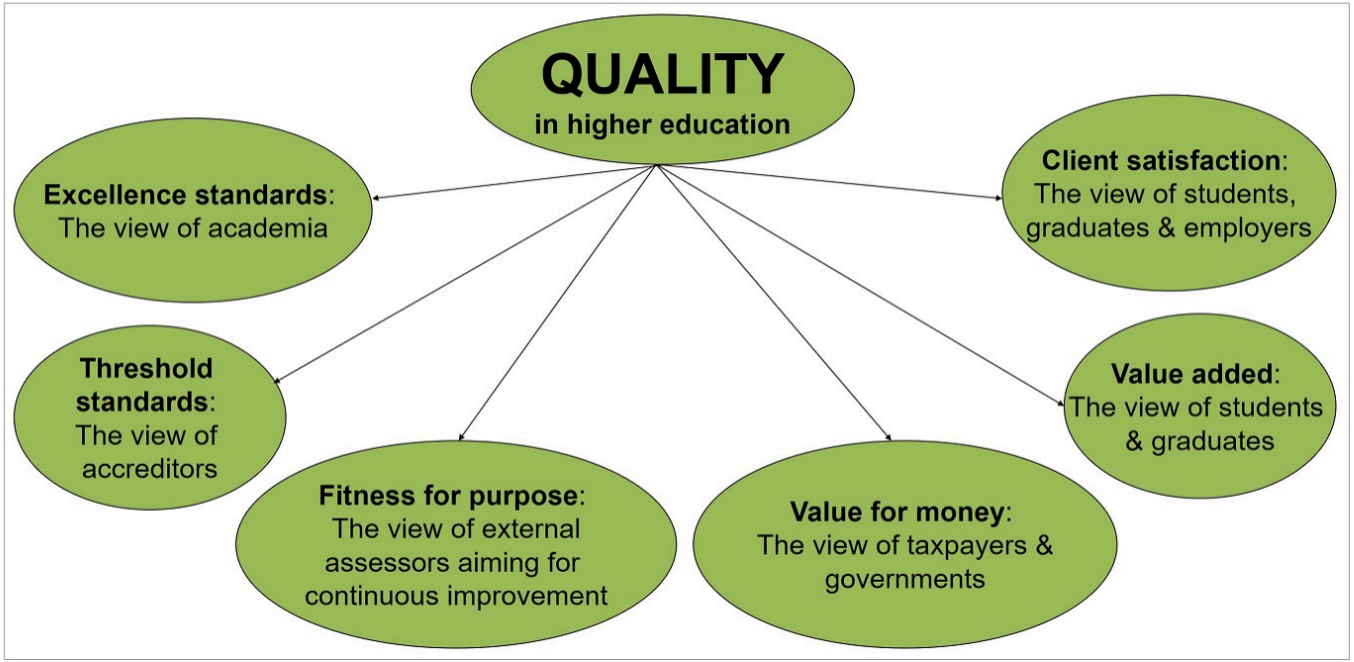

Figure 1: Multi-stakeholder view of quality *(Source: Green, D. What is Quality in Higher Education? Concepts, Policy and Practice 1994, cited in ASEAN Universities Network – Quality Assurance (AUN-QA)'s Manual for the implementation of the AUN-QA Guidelines, 2005)*

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A categorisation within HE…

Stakeholders driven

Standards-driven

Standards-driven

Stakeholders driven

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Quality Assurance and Higher Education

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- An **elusive term taken from business & management** sciences and applied into Higher Education (social cohesion, economic growth and global competitiveness).
- DEFINITION:
  - *"(...)an ongoing process by which the quality of a higher-education system, institution, or programme is assessed by the competent authority/authorities to assure stakeholders that acceptable* ***educational standards*** *are* ***continuously being maintained and enhanced.****"* (**UNESCO**, 2019).
  - "High quality – high quality is defined as quality which can consistently lead to credible and recognised positive outcomes for students. High quality is the minimum level of quality that is expected of all providers of UK HE." (**UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment**, 2018)
  - "(…) **planned and systematic processes** that provide confidence in the design, delivery and award of qualifications within an education and training system. Quality assurance **ensures stakeholders'** interests and investment in any accredited program are protected." (**ASEAN**, 2016)
  - *"Quality assurance encompasses anyactivity that is concerned with assessingand improving the merit or the worth of adevelopment intervention or its compli-ance with given standards."* (**OECD**, 2010)

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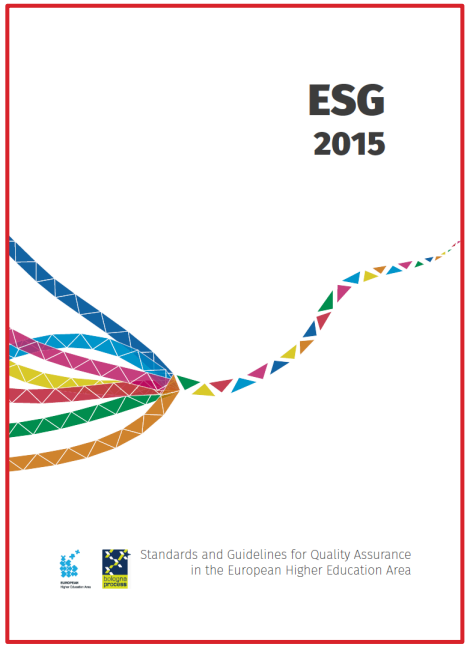
EUROPEAN STANDARD GUIDELINES: what is quality?



- *"Quality, whilst not easy to define, is mainly a result of the interaction between teachers, students and the institutional learning environment.* ***Quality assurance should ensure a learning environment in which the content of programmes, learning opportunities and facilities are fit for purpose."*** (ESG, 2015).

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Quality Assurance and Higher Education within EU

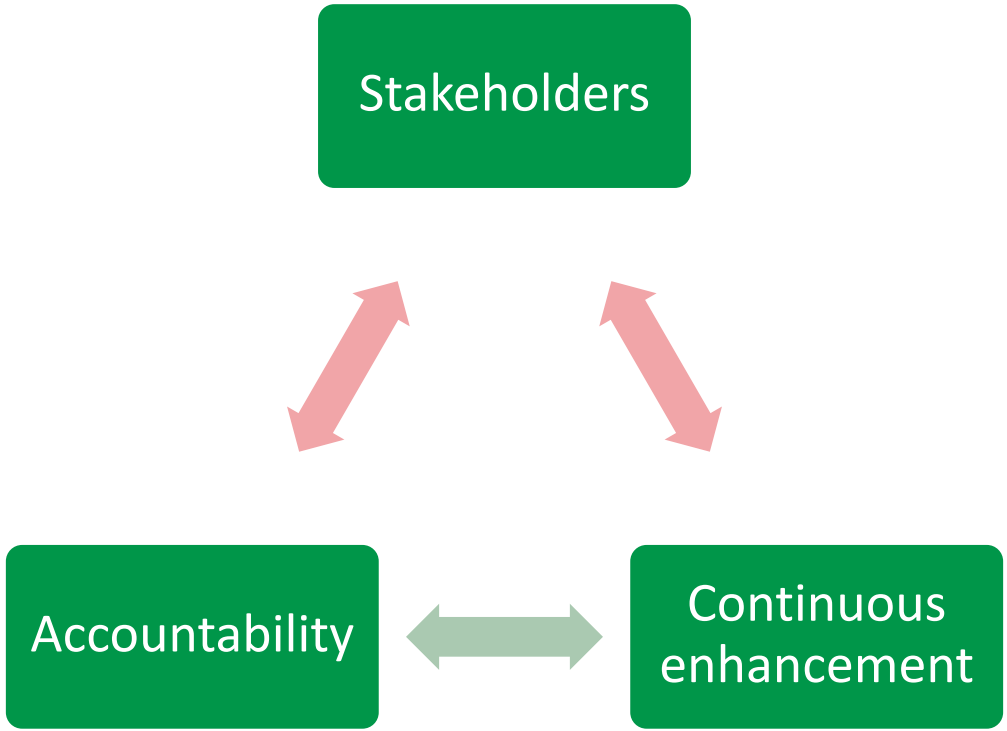
⊙ ELEMENTS:

- Purposes:
  1)Accountability &
  2) Continuous enhancement

- A result of interaction between 3) **stakeholders** (teachers, students and the institutional learning environment)

- ***"Fitness for purpose"***

(ESG, 2015)



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EU Core Principles for quality (I)

- **Contextual**. No globally-agreed definition
- Discussion or policy should start with **specific and contextual definition of quality**
- **Quality is responsibility of (**and should be assured by) the providers (HEIs)
- **Quality** not the same than **standards**

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EU Core Principles for quality (II)

- **Not a single operational definition:**

Accountability / Control / Resource Allocation / Improvement Public / Information / Ranking / International Acceptance

- **Not a single purpose**:

Programme: evaluation / accreditation / review

Institution: Evaluation / accreditation / audit / review

- **Not a single method:**

Peer review / External review / Inspection / Excellence models

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Quality culture…

- *Quality is not a concept that can be isolated; it is **an attitude and an approach that must infuse every activity carried out by an organisation**. In that sense, we cannot strictly speak of «the objectives of a quality-assurance policy at the HEI», but rather of how quality is present in the overall policy of university management, and how this permeates all the organisation from top to bottom, and viceversa.*

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Questions for quality

- What are you trying to do?
- Why are you doing it?
- How are you going to do it?
- Why will that be the best way to do it?
- How will you know it works?
- How will you be able to improve it?

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What is not quality? Rankings

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What is not quality? Rankings

"They serve many purposes: they respond to demands from consumers for easily interpretable information on the standing of higher education institutions; they stimulate competition among them; they provide some of the rationale for allocation of funds; and they help differentiate among different types of institutions and different programs and disciplines. In addition, when correctly understood and interpreted, they contribute to the definition of "quality" of higher education institutions within a particular country, complementing the rigorous work conducted in the context of quality assessment and review performed by public and independent accrediting agencies. "

BERLIN PRINCIPLES. International Ranking Expert Group (IREG)

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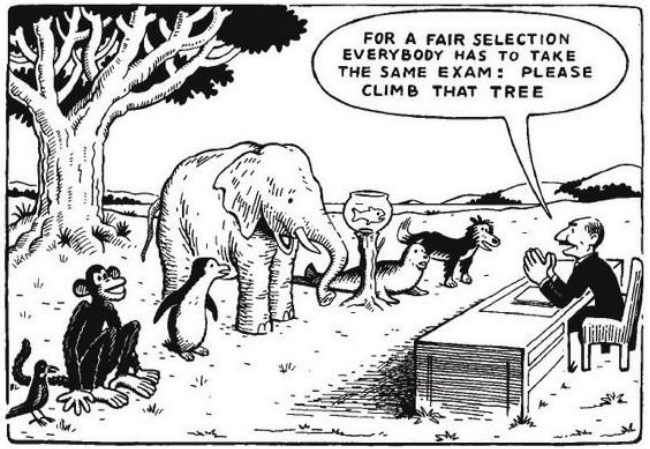
Rankings - Just another factor of quality

"(…)perceiving global university rankings as an ultimate instrument for assessing and/or assuring institutional quality is (undeniably) quite problematic. They only indicate that ***some higher education institutions or disciplines are cherished more than others*** *and for this reason, they foster* ***global hierarchical differe****ntiation and often acknowledge (only)* ***past achievements of old Western universities****."* (Hauptman Komotar,, 20)



An example….

"**Bielefeld University jumped from the position 250 to 166**. (Times Higher Education's (THE) World University Rankings 2019) (…) **They must have done something right, for sure, but what?** Aiming to get to the bottom of it, they decided to investigate. *(…)We were struck by the finding that ten articles alone brought as much as 20% of Bielefeld's overall citations in those two years. Each one could be linked to the Global Burden of Disease study. All but one were published in The Lancet and co-signed by hundreds of authors.* ***One of the authors—and one only—came from Bielefeld****.*

Bielefeld's rise in the ranking was, our analysis showed, ***clearly caused by one scholar****. This is how meaningful the relation between the "performance" of Bielefeld University—an entire institution—and its rank really was."*
https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2021/03/22/the-absurdity-of-university-rankings/

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2. Quality Assurance within European Union – Bologna Process

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BOLOGNA DECLARATION (1999)

Aim:

- A European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010 based on international cooperation and academic exchange that is attractive to European students and staff as well as to students and staff from other parts of the world.

Goals:

- Competitiveness
- Employability
- Mobility

Objectives:

- Readable and comparable degrees
- A common structure of based in two main cycles (now 3: B-M-D)
- A common system of credits (ECTS)
- Developing mobility programs
- Cooperation in quality assurance
- Promotion of the European dimension of higher education

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Elements - Bologna Process

Coordinated 2018 reforms – 6 structural pillars

- Quality assurance -**Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)**
- 3-cycle degree system (Bachelor, Masters, Doctorate) –**EHEA qualifications framework**
- **European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies (EQAR)**
- **European Diploma Supplement -** Mobility & Employability
- Recognition –**Lisbon Convention**
- ECTS – **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System** - Learning outcomes

EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area

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European Higher Education Area

INTERVENTION

- Building on our rich and diverse European cultural heritage, we are developing an European Higher Education Area based on
  - institutional autonomy,
  - academic freedom,
  - equal opportunities and democratic principles
- that will
  - facilitate mobility,
  - increase employability, and
  - strengthen Europe ' s attractiveness and competitiveness.

RESULTS

- **compatibility** among national higher systems
- quality & **international attractiveness**
- **Intergovernmental process** (2020: 49 countries + European Commission)
- **Partnerships** between ministries & sector organisations
- Only institution: **European Quality Assurance Register** (EQAR)
- Every 2-3 years: Ministerial Conference & **Communiqué**

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MAP EHEA – 49 countries

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BOLOGNA PROCESS – Unfinished business (I)…

Good goals, insufficient follow-up

- Mobility: 2009 benchmark 20% by 2020
- Data collection
- Social Dimension: access, equity and inclusion

Uneven implementation of key commitments

- Recognition
- 3 study cycles/ qualificationframeworks
- Quality Assurance across different HE systems

New Challenges: Support to sector development

- Innovative learning& teaching, digitalisation

Infringement of fundamental values

- University values: academic freedom, institutional autonomy, participation of students and staff

From top down reform to more sector participation

- Confirming the responsiblityof institutions & their members(e.g. Quality assurance, learning& teaching)
- Recognise the distance between the Bologna Process & the HE sector
- Emphasis on collaboration with the sector

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BOLOGNA PROCESS – Unfinished business (I)…

- *"Critics of the Bologna Process see it as part of a neo-liberal,* ***market-oriented approach to higher education****. (…) While the increasing focus on economic rationales has not changed in recent years, it has now collided with the more nationalist-populist trends in the global and European political climate.* ***Brexit, the refugee crisis, the emerging trade war, and the related growth of nationalist movements and governments****, as well as anti-global, anti-international, and anti-European sentiments in countries such as Hungary, Italy, Poland, and others are challenging the increased focus in higher education on internationalization and Europeanization—the key drivers of the Bologna Process.*

- *(…) the references to* ***academic freedom and anti-corruption in higher education*** *illustrate the rising concern in the higher education community and among ministers of education in the face of the current trends. Furthermore, the support—although with some reluctance from certain countries, such as the Netherlands—for the plans of the French president to create* ***European university networks****, can be considered one attempt to counter these developments. (…)*

- *In other words, there are both positive and negative signs with respect to the future of the European landscape of higher education and its internationalization. Much will depend on how countries and institutions respond to both the challenges and opportunities they face, how they envision their own future, and* ***how strong their beliefs in a European identity and commitment to a shared European project continue to be****."*

DE WIT, The European Higher Education Area (EHEA): Has It Lost Its Way?, 2018:
https://wenr.wes.org/2018/12/the-european-higher-education-area-ehea-has-it-lost-its-way

WHY QUALITY ASSURANCE?

The electric lightbulb did not come from the continuous improvement of candles Oren Harari

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Should the Bologna Process continue?

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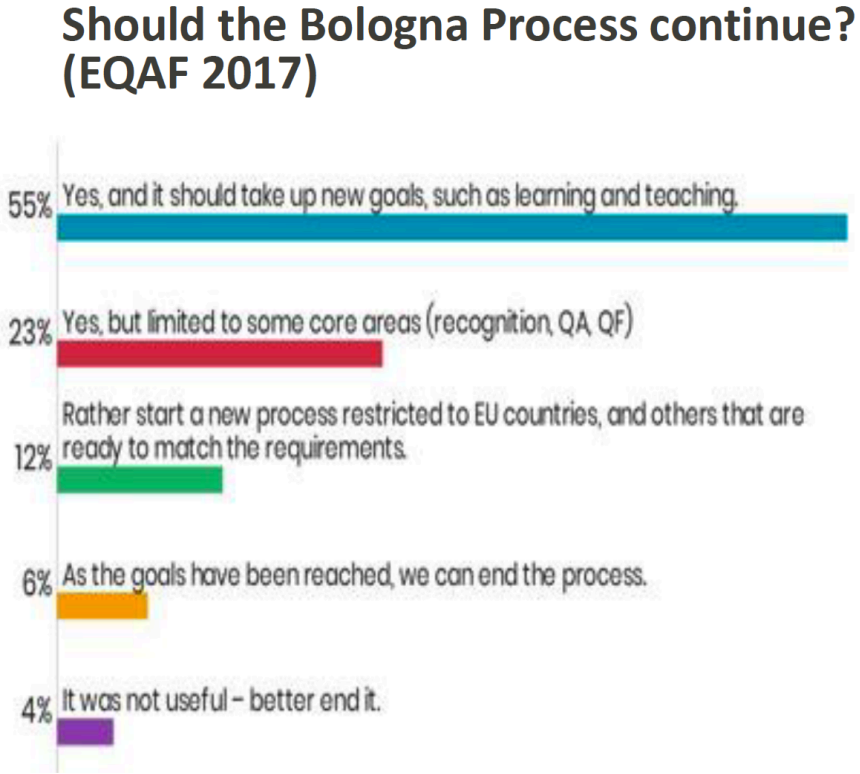
Let's see if we agree…



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What makes European QA different?

- Emphasis on student (and stakeholders at large) participation
- Regional collaboration (although increasing also in other parts of the world)
- Recognition of the role of internal QA
- Transparency of external QA reports

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3. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) – An overview

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Quality Assurance within the European Union

- As a part of the **Bologna Process (1999),** the **European Higher Education Area (EHEA)** was established in 2010 to increase the global competitiveness of higher education in Europe and promote the employability of its students.
- The main achievements of this initiative are:
  - Adoption of a common framework of easily readable and comparable degrees (at bachelor's, master's and doctoral level),
  - Launch of the Diploma Supplement, and
  - Implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).
- In order to enable the implementation of these goals, **European cooperation in the area of QUALITY ASSURANCE** became a central element of the Bologna process (2005 Bergen Communiqué).
- This process culminates with the adoption of the **"Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)"** in 2015.

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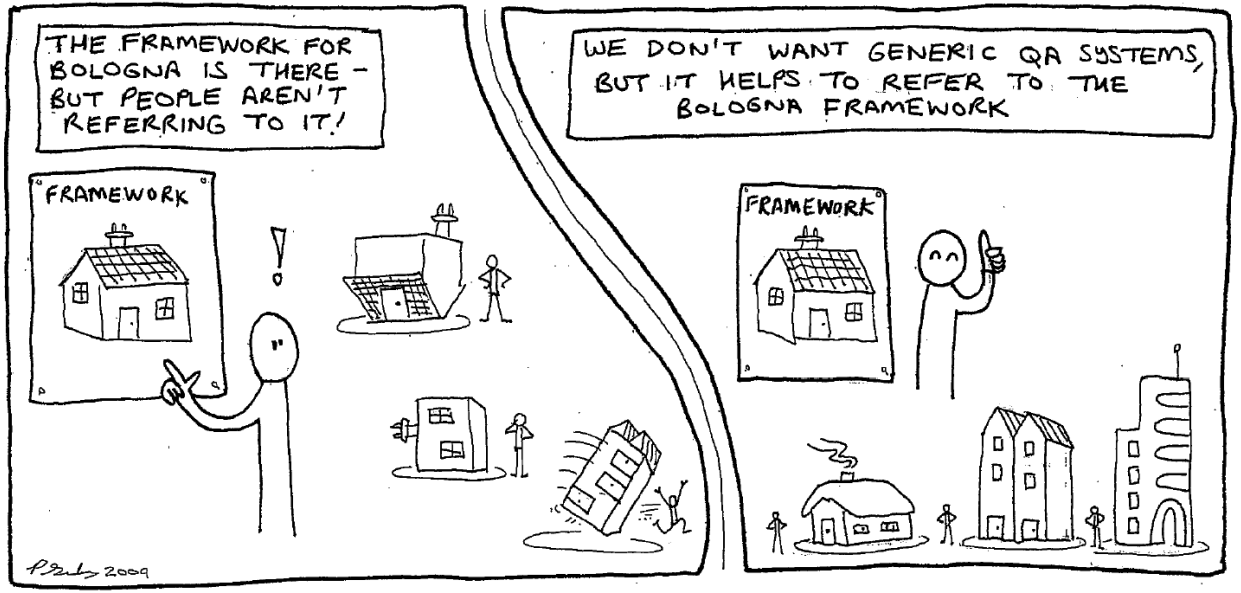
ESG 2015 – Common language

ESG and status of QA



©Patrick Sanders, EQAF 2009

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European Standard Guidelines for QA – 2015 (I)

- **Common understanding** for the development, implementation and ownership of quality assurance by the actors of national higher education systems. **ESG set out the minimum standards for quality assurance.**
- **Set of references and guidelines** for internal and external quality assurance in higher education.
- **Not quality standards** and **not prescriptive** regarding the implementation of quality assurance procedures.

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European Standard Guidelines for QA – 2015 (II)

- Based upon the following principles:
  - **Higher education institutions have primary responsibility** for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
  - Quality assurance responds to the **diversity of higher education systems**, institutions, programmes and students;
  - Quality assurance supports the development of a **quality culture**;
  - Quality assurance takes into account the **needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society.**

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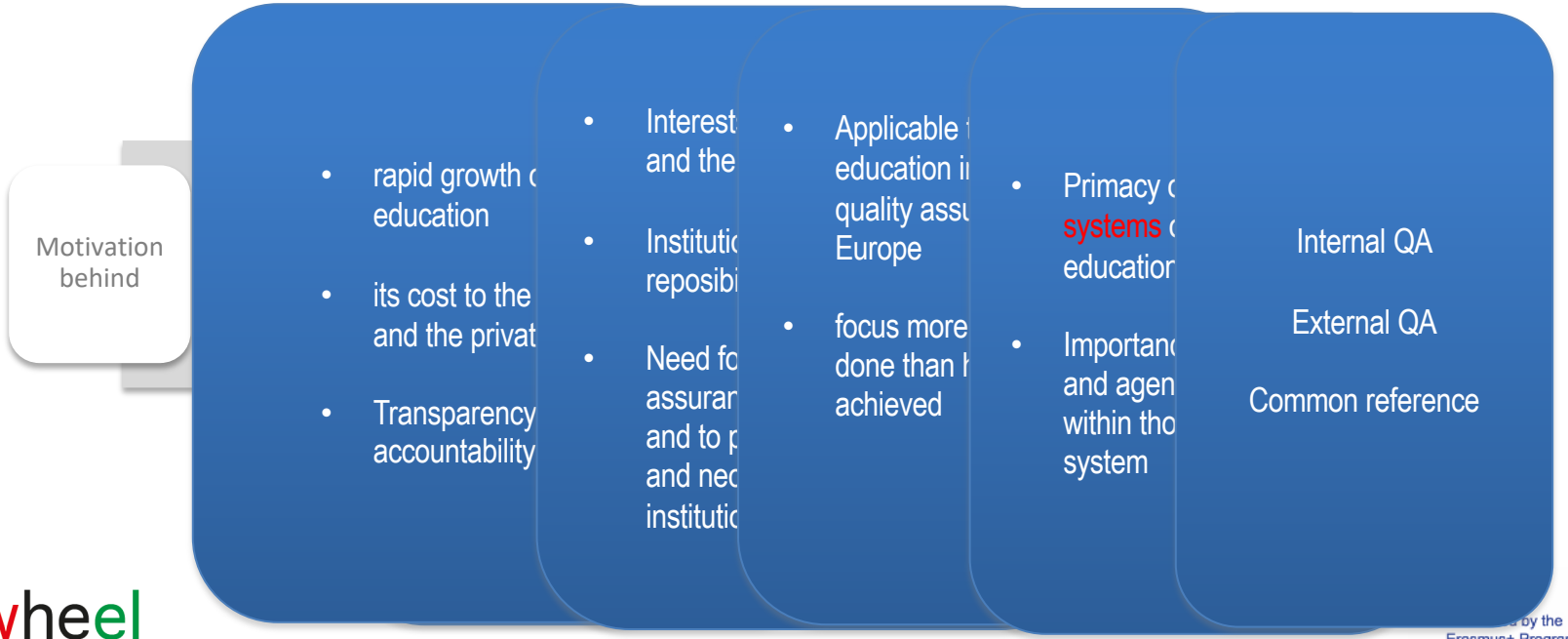
European Standard Guidelines for QA – 2015 (III)



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The ESG -still relevant ?

- Respect for **diversity and flexibility built into the ESG** themselves
  - Can be successfully used for QA of different types of provision**: e-learning, micro-credentials, university alliances**…
  - Can accommodate systems that allow for **experimentation and innovation** in T&L as well as in QA itself

- Require **contextualisation and appropriate implementation in different contexts**
  - **Stakeholder discussion** on how to use the ESG flexibly and meaningfully in each context

- **Use and interpretation** (and possible misunderstandings)
  - Can go **beyond the standards**
  - Can go **beyond the ESG** (system may be composed of different QA and development tools)
  - **Guidelines ≠standards**: to be taken as guidance, advice, suggestions and NOT as rules

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Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions

Part 2: European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education

Part 3: European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies

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Internal quality assurance

- Institutional responsibility for quality (assurance)
- Increased emphasis on internal QA: ESG Part1 & shift towards institutional external QA in some systems
- Two approaches to internal QA
  A. aligned with **strategic management**: QA as a means to support the achievement of institutional goals
  B. explicitly linked to **defining and assessing the learning outcomes** and ensuring these are aligned to the national qualification framework
- Novelty in the ESG 2015: **student-centred learning**
- **Quality culture** the aim, yet remains challenging

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1.1 Policy for quality assurance

1.2 Design and approval of programmes

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

1.5 Teaching staff

1.6 Learning resources and student support

1.7 Information management

1.8 Public information

1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

ESG - GUIDELINES

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A caveat…

- Not prescriptive
- Not a checklist
- Not a compendium of detailed procedures
- Not an EU Internal Quality Assurance system

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Structure

"The **STANDARDS** set out **agreed and accepted practice for quality assurance in higher education** in the EHEA and should, therefore, be taken account of and adhered to by those concerned, in all types of higher education provision. They are **short and general.** "

"The **GUIDELINES**, on the other hand only **explain why the standard is important and describe how standards might be implemented**. They illustrate **examples** in the relevant area for consideration by the actors involved in quality assurance. Implementation will vary depending on different contexts."

1.1 Policy for quality Assurance STANDARD

*Institutions should have a **policy for quality assurance** that is made **public** and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through **appropriate structures** and **processes**, while involving **external stakeholders***

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1.1 Policy for quality assurance GUIDELINE

- Main pillars for QA
- Relationship between **research** - **learning** - **teaching**
- **National** context & the **institutional** context & **strategic** approach
  - quality assurance system
  - departments, schools, faculties, units, leadership, staff members and students have their **responsibilities** in quality assurance
  - academic **integrity** and **freedom**
  - against **intolerance** of any kind or **discrimination**

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1.2 Design and approval of programmes STANDARD

Institutions should have **processes** for the design and approval of their programmes. The **programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives** set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the **national qualifications** framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

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1.2 Design and approval of programmes GUIDELINE

- Study programmes
  - at the **core** of the HEIS' teaching mission
  - provide students with both **academic knowledge** and **skills**
    - including the **transferable** (personal development & careers)

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1.2 Design and approval of programmes GUIDELINE

- Programmes are designed:
  - **overall** programme objectives in line with the institutional strategy and explicit intended learning outcomes
  - by **involving** students and other stakeholders in the work
  - benefit from **external expertise**
  - so that they enable smooth **student progression**
  - define the expected student **workload**
  - include well-structured **placement opportunities**
  - are subject to a formal institutional **approval process**

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1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment STANDARD

*Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that **encourages students to take an active role** in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach*

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1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment GUIDELINE

- Stimulate **motivation**, **self-reflection** and **engagement**
  - **diversity** of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths
  - different modes of **delivery**
  - variety of **pedagogical** methods
  - regularly **evaluates** and **adjusts** the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods
  - fosters a **sense of autonomy** in the learner (with adequate guidance)
  - promotes **mutual respect** within the learner-teacher relationship
  - appropriate procedures for dealing with students' **complaints**

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1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment GUIDELINE

- Criteria and method of assessment **published in advance**
- The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning **outcomes have been achieved**
- Students are **given feedback** (linked to advice on the learning process)
- Assessment is carried out by **more than one examiner**
- The regulations for assessment take into account **mitigating circumstances**
- Assessment is **consistent**, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures

 A formal procedure for **student appeals**

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1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification STANDARD

Institutions should consistently apply **pre-defined and published regulations** covering all phases of the student “life cycle”, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

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1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification GUIDELINE

- Fit-for-purpose **admission**, **recognition** and **completion procedures**
  - International students
- Institutions need to put in place both processes and tools to **collect**, monitor and **act on information on student progression**
- **Fair recognition** of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning

- Promoting **mobility**

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1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification GUIDELINE

- Graduation is the culmination of the students' period of study
  - Students need to receive **documentation explaining the qualification gained**
    - achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed

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1.5 Teaching staff
STANDARD

Institutions should assure themselves of the **competence of their teachers**. They should apply **fair and transparent processes** for the recruitment and development of the staff

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1.5 Teaching staff GUIDELINE

- **The teacher's role**: essential in creating a high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills

- The **diversifying student population** and stronger focus on **learning outcomes** require student-centred learning and teaching

- Higher education institutions have **primary responsibility** for the quality of their staff and for providing them with a **supportive environment** that allows them to carry out their work effectively

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1.5 Teaching staff GUIDELINE

- **Clear**, **transparent** and **fair processes** for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching
- Offers opportunities for and promotes the **professional development of teaching staff**
- Encourages strengthen the **link between education and research**
- Encourages **innovation in teaching methods** and the use of new technologies

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1.6 Learning resources and student support STANDARD

Institutions should have **appropriate funding** for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and **readily accessible** learning resources and **student support** are provided

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1.6 Learning resources and student support GUIDELINE

- Students rely on a **range of resources** to assist their learning
  - Physical resources such as libraries or computing facilities
  - Human support in the form of tutors, counsellors, and other advisers
- **Accessible** to students

- **Designed with their needs in m**ind and responsive to feedback from those who use the services provided

- HEIs should **monitor**, **review** and **improve** the effectiveness of the support services available to their students

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1.7 Information management STANDARD

Institutions should ensure that they **collect, analyse and use** relevant information for the **effective management of their programmes and other activities**

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1.7 Information management GUIDELINES

- **Reliable data** crucial for informed decision-making and self-knowledge
- **Effective processes to collect** and **analyse** information about study programmes and other activities **feed** into the internal quality assurance system

  Key performance indicators

  •Profile of the student population

  •Student progression, success and drop-out rates

  •Students' satisfaction with their programmes

  •Learning resources and student support available

  •Career paths of graduates

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1.8 Public information
STANDARD

Institutions should **publish information about their activities**, including programmes, which is **clear**, **accurate**, **objective**, **up-to date** and **readily accessible**

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1.8 Public information GUIDELINE

- HEIs should regularly publish:
  - **up to date**
  - **Impartial**
  - **objective information** (quantitative and qualitative)

about the programmes they offer

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1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes STANDARD

Institutions should **monitor** and **periodically review** their programmes to ensure that they **achieve the objectives** set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to **continuous improvement** of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be **communicated to all those concerned**

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1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes GUIDELINE

- The content of the programme ensuring that the **programme is up to date**
  - The students' workload, progression and completion
  - The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students
  - The student expectations, needs and satisfaction
  - The learning environment and support services
- **Regular review** and **revision** involving students and other stakeholders
- The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is **up-to-date**
- **Revised programme specifications are published**

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1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance STANDARD

Institutions should undergo **external quality assurance** in line with the ESG on a **cyclical basis**

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1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance STANDARD

- Verify the **effectiveness of institutions' internal quality assurance**, act as a catalyst for improvement and offer the institution new perspectives.
- Provide information to **assure the institution and the public of the quality of the institution's activities**.
- Takes into account requirements of the **legislative framework in which they operate**.
- May take **different forms and focus** at different organisational levels (such as programme, faculty or institution).
- Institutions ensure that the **progress made since the last external quality assurance** activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one.

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4. Exercise

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Exercise – 1st Practical session - Quality Assurance

- Each institution will prepare a **5 mins presentation** with ppt. slides with the following content:
- Choose a **unit of analysis**: University, Faculty or school
- **Select 1 STANDARD** of the ESG 2015
- Fully **develop necessary processes to implement the Standard** within your units of analysis as well as **describe indicators and metrics to monitor** and verify compliance.
- Pay attention to specific contextualisation and adaptation to the environment: **feasibility, innovation and realistic**
- **DEADLINE:** Each institution will present next **Friday 3rd December**

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Thank you!

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NETWORK FOR THE MODERNISATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN LIBYA

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