ESG: how to understand them, how to use them in practical. IQA in Europe - some experiences

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1 December 2016

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Outline of the presentation

- European QA framework

- The ESG 2015

- Challenges in internal QA in Europe

European quality assurance framework

- QA: one action line in the Bologna Process
- 2005: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
  - Proposed by the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE)
- 2006: 1st European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF)
- 2008: European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)
- 2015: ESG 2015 adopted
  - Proposed by the E4 Group, EQAR, Education International and BUSINESSEUROPE

The ESG 2015 basics

- Three parts covering
  - Internal QA within HEIs
  - External QA carried by QAAs
  - Internal QA within QAAs

- Focus on learning and teaching in HE, including
  - Learning environment
  - Links to research and innovation

- Applicable to all types of HE; irrespective of mode of provision or place of delivery

- Focus on quality assurance, not quality as such

Purposes of the ESG

- **Set a common framework** for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national and institutional level

- **Enable the assurance and improvement of quality** of higher education in the European higher education area

- **Support mutual trust**, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders

- **Provide information on quality assurance** in the EHEA

Use of the ESG in practice

- Usually not direct reference framework for HEIs

- QA agencies more likely to use as reference

- QA agencies' practices and criteria influenced by the ESG

- Part 1 of the ESG embedded in the agency criteria, but not usually copied as such

- Allows use of other QA models – flexible enough

The principles for QA in the EHEA

- HEIs have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance

- QA responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students

- QA supports the development of a quality culture

- QA takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society

Part 1: Internal QA

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

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Part 2: External QA

2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

2.3 Implementing processes

2.4 Peer-review experts

2.5 Criteria for formal outcomes

2.6 Reporting

2.7 Complaints and appeals

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Part 1 incorporated in the external QA

- Survey to QA agencies in 2016
- Standards listed as criteria, least used
- Elements of ESG standards incorporated in the national criteria
  - Reworded, rearranged
  - The most common way
- In most cases no immediate changes due to the ESG 2015

Part 3: QA of quality assurance agencies
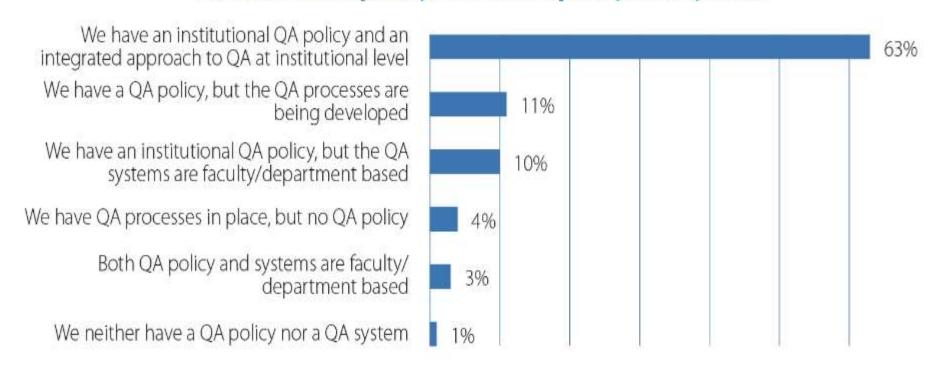
3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

3.2 Official status

3.3 Independence

3.4 Thematic analysis

3.5 Resources

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Internal QA systems in place

Institutional quality assurance policy and system

We have an institutional QA policy and an integrated approach to QA at institutional level	63%
We have a QA policy, but the QA processes are being developed	11%
We have an institutional QA policy, but the QA systems are faculty/department based	10%
We have QA processes in place, but no QA policy	4%
Both QA policy and systems are faculty/department based	3%
We neither have a QA policy nor a QA system	1%

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Need to link quality assurance to institutional strategic management

- Standards 1.1, 1.4, 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9

- Analyse how this happens in its own context and whether the link could be strengthened through a re-design of the QA system

- Case example: the results of internal evaluations discussed in yearly performance discussions between the rector and the deans

Ability of the QA system to generate information that is valuable for both internal decision-making and external stakeholders

- Standards 1.7 and 1.8

- Collect the information that is useful and makes sense for their own context and purposes

- Do this through a variety of information sources and methods in order to ensure a comprehensive and objective view of institutional activities

- Case example: departmental evaluations combine different sources of information and an action plan is prepared after the evaluation

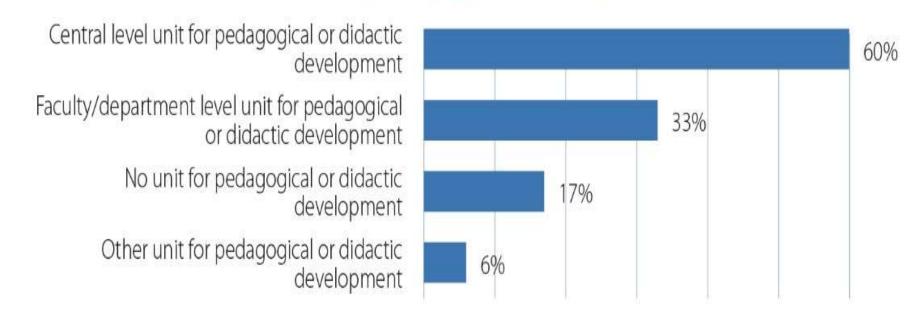# Ensure the quality of student experience and success

- Standards 1.4, 1.5, 1.6
- Measures such as student tracking, supporting teaching staff in improving their skills and acknowledging good teaching, and student services and learning support need continuous attention

- Case example:
  - pedagogical training and support for teachers available following student surveys
  - Individual study plans for all students - progress monitored on yearly basis

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Figure 8: Trends 2015 Q14 - At your institution, is there a unit for pedagogical or didactic development? (Respondents could choose multiple answers) (Trends 2015 data)
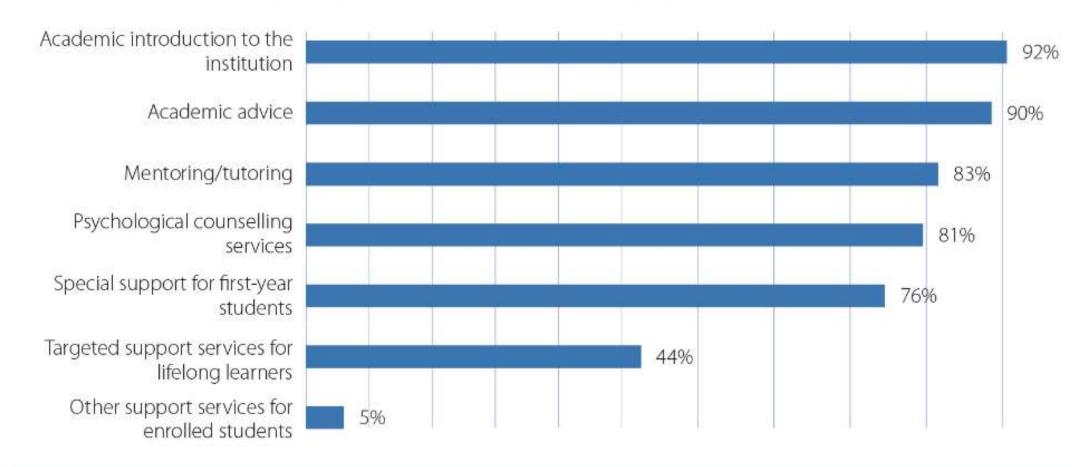
Units for pedagogical development

Unit	Percentage
Central level unit for pedagogical or didactic development	60%
Faculty/department level unit for pedagogical or didactic development	33%
No unit for pedagogical or didactic development	17%
Other unit for pedagogical or didactic development	6%

Support services offered to enrolled students

Service	Percentage
Academic introduction to the institution	92%
Academic advice	90%
Mentoring/tutoring	83%
Psychological counselling services	81%
Special support for first-year students	76%
Targeted support services for lifelong learners	44%
Other support services for enrolled students	5%

Link QA and the academic quality of learning and teaching (1)

- Standards 1.2 and 1.3

- Look at how programmes are designed and delivered; how to demonstrate to external reviewers and stakeholders that aspects covered by these standards are addressed

- Requires expertise typically located outside the QA unit; important to strengthen co-operation among different institutional actors
  - Learning outcomes and national qualification framework
  - Student-centred learning and teaching

Link QA and the academic quality of learning and teaching (2)

- Standard 1.3
  - 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.

- How to demonstrate this?
  - Learning outcome approach to developing programmes
  - Pedagogical development of staff
  - Diversity of teaching and assessment methods (as described in the curriculum)

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Demonstrate that HEIs have put in place robust measures to review their programmes

- Standard 1.9

- Increasing importance with the rise of institutional external QA?

- Lack of data at European level on how this is done in practice

- Put in place clear mechanisms for linking programme review to strategic management and decision-making

- Case example: all study programmes evaluated each 6 or 8 years by a panel set up by the university consisting of external experts

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Conclusions

- Consensus on the most important changes being in Part 1

- Focus on quality culture

- Mainstreaming quality assurance within HEIs and creating links to other tools

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Time for discussion