

International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

Strategic Plan 2008 – 2012

Background and purpose

Established in 1991, INQAAHE is a global network of higher education quality assurance agencies. In mid-2007, there were some 136 organisations from 74 countries in full membership of INQAAHE. Higher education in the 21st century is increasingly global in two major respects. Firstly, higher education is a national matter and governments plan for, provide for, provide for and allow for higher education, both public and private. This gives the quality assurance of higher education a national, domestic character. However, many aspects arise independently in many different countries, and therefore many governments are facing similar issues with respect to higher education. In this sense, quality assurance in higher education becomes a global issue in which a global organisation and international interchange of information can play a vitally useful role. In addition, there are other aspects that occur at the global or international level, such as the increasing flow of higher education across national borders. In this case too, global and regional systems and structures are needed to address these aspects satisfactorily.

The need for secure and respected national arrangements for managing the quality of higher education provision and the standards of qualifications is now widely acknowledged. Higher education is universally recognised as a major driver of economic and social development, in both more and less affluent countries. The assurance of quality and standards of higher education is now widely recognised as a fundamental prerequisite requirement if we are to be confident that the huge potential benefits of higher education for individuals, economies and societies will be achieved: if provision is to be fit for purpose. All quality assurance agencies, more and less experienced, have much to gain from sharing internationally expertise and experience in the management of quality and standards.

In addition, the higher education market itself is becoming increasingly global. Global, for example, on the demand side in terms of the mobility of undergraduates studying in full or in part abroad; students moving between countries and continents as they move between undergraduate and postgraduate study; and lifelong learners moving between countries and continents as their careers and personal and professional lives develop. Global, for example, on the supply side as the trend increases in the borderless provision of much IT-based learning and the growth of institutions offering provision in other countries through the establishment of branch campuses or through arrangements with local providers. There are many variations on these themes round the world today. A lack of effective, transparent and internationally respected quality assurance arrangements will act as major brake on such international mobility and transferability of qualifications, to the detriment of all concerned. In this context also, INQAAHE, along with regional bodies and other networks of quality agencies, acts as the international forum for the support of good practice.

It is in these two very broad contexts that INQAAHE has a unique role in sustaining an active international community of quality assurance agencies, providing a global intelligence and support service to encourage:

- the development of knowledge and understanding of the practice of quality assurance in higher education;
- global information exchange between individual practitioners, agencies and, regional networks.;

- the further reflection and refinement of the practice and policy of individual agencies
- the support of new agencies;
- international benchmarking;
- global recognition of qualifications; and
- international mobility of students and lifelong learners.

INQAAHE recognises that some of these issues confronting institutions and agencies in higher education also affect and are relevant to other parts of the tertiary (postsecondary) education sector. Some institutions offer both higher and vocational education, and some agencies have both universities and other tertiary institutions within their mandate. INQAAHE therefore accepts as members quality agencies whose primary responsibility is not for higher education but for other areas of tertiary education.

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### **Mission**

INQAAHE is the global network of quality assurance agencies in higher education. It exists to

- enable quality assurance agencies to share information and experiences;
- lead the theoretical and practical foundations of the profession;
- develop and promote standards of professional practice in QA; and
- encourage and assist continuous improvement in member agencies, including professional development and capacity-building

for the benefit of HE institutions, their students and their societies.

### **INQAAHE values**

There are a number of key values that underpin the policy and practice of INQAAHE. Fundamental to our work is the explicit recognition of the diversity contained within the international community of quality assurance agencies, and the countries and societies in which they are located. Higher education systems are deeply rooted in the wider education and training structures, and the broader societies in which they are located. The policy and practice of quality assurance must be fit for purpose in each particular context. INQAAHE values and celebrates this diversity. There is not, and will not be, a single 'INQAAHE recommended' model for external quality assurance. That is not to say, however, that there are not commonalities and fundamental principles that underpin good practice. Where these exist, these will be highlighted.

In addition, the strategic plan of INQAAHE also reflects its belief in the primacy of academic freedom and the fundamental importance of external quality assurance being conducted in such a way as to promote academic freedom and intellectual and institutional integrity. Related to this, the work of INQAAHE will continue to be based on the fundamental premise that quality and quality assurance are primarily the responsibilities of the institutions themselves. It follows from this that INQAAHE recognises that external quality assurance arrangements should respect institutional integrity, and that all agencies should ensure the independence and validity of their approach, and the evidence-based nature of their methodologies.

Working in partnership is also fundamental to INQAAHE. Beyond the partnerships with member agencies, the Network will continue to work very closely with a range of bodies

active in supporting international good practice in quality assurance in higher education. Of particular importance in this planning period will be our relationship with UNESCO (to build on INQAAHE's NGO status) and our continuing close relationship with the regional and other networks of quality assurance agencies (for enhanced mutual understanding and support). These networks are increasingly important in providing member support, guidance and information within their regions and other communities of interest. INQAAHE will continue to add value by providing the global dimensions to support and supplement more local activities and outcomes. In doing this, envisaged collaboration with and support from the World Bank will be extremely valuable.

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The Strategic Plan 2008-12 and related documents

The Strategic Plan 2008-12 is intended to provide an overview of the strategic priorities over this period with some illustration of how these priorities will be taken forward. The Plan will be reviewed annually, and detailed arrangements for taking forward the work of INQAAHE will be made, usually within the context of working groups on particular topics or areas, supported by financial allocations to underpin these operational activities.

High-level strategic direction 2008-12

INQAAHE's strategy has four (inter-related) dimensions for the period 2008-12, namely political, theoretical, developmental and informational. For each dimension, illustrations are given of the activities that will be undertaken over the period. These will be fleshed out and extended in the operational plans.

Political: Relating to governments, world bodies and regional bodies

- INQAAHE will liaise and collaborate with world bodies, such as UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, WTO;
- INQAAHE will develop and strengthen its links with other communities of quality assurance agencies, including regional networks and similar bodies concerned with other sectors of education;
- INQAAHE will promote and publicise the contribution of quality assurance to education;
- On request from a member, INQAAHE may support the member in its relations with its government or other bodies; and
- In countries where an agency does not exist, INQAAHE will on request assist the government in developing quality assurance agencies.
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[Implementation activities:

- INQAAHE is actively working with the regional and other networks of quality agencies, including through MoCs with several other networks;
- INQAAHE has a working group on matters relevant to small states and supports the creation of a small states network;
- INQAAHE is working with RIACES on the ALPHA project on the effect of quality agencies; and
- Some of these goals are achieved through the conferences and fora.]

Theoretical: Using global intelligence to extend knowledge on external quality assurance

- INQAAHE will generate research, discussion and position papers; and
- INQAAHE will lead discussions among members.

[Implementation activities:

- INQAAHE will continue to provide its journal, Quality in Higher Education, as one of its services to members. This refereed journal provides information and analysis on new aspects of quality assurance in higher education;
- The biennial conferences, open to members and non-members, will continue to target key expert contributions from individuals leading developments in theory, policy and/or practice in quality assurance in higher education;
- Targeted support for professional association members;
- Targeted support for institutional members; and
- Assistance to agencies and other in identifying and dealing with degree and diploma mills.]

Developmental: Using global intelligence to support practice development

- INQAAHE will support agencies in their structural design, policy formulation and decision-making;
- INQAAHE will support the development of good practices in quality assurance agencies through several mechanisms;
- INQAAHE will offer to its members a review service linked broadly to its Guidelines of Good Practice and also other objectives identified by the commissioning member agency;
- INQAAHE will arrange for experts to contribute to developmental workshops and conferences organised by individual members, regional networks, the World Bank, UNESCO or any other appropriate organisation;
- INQAAHE will identify experts to contribute to external quality assurance exercises of member agencies;
- INQAAHE will provide professional development for QA staff and technical assistance to agencies and practitioners; and
- INQAAHE will continue to promulgate the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for quality provision in cross border higher education and assist members to form cross border agreements between their respective agencies, including assistance with mutual recognition.

[Implementation activities:

- Within the website will be a comprehensive Clearinghouse (QAHEC) as a repository of information on policies, procedures and practices and activities of agencies around the world;
- The Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance (GGP) highlight fundamental principles of good practice in the external assurance of quality and will be used to encourage and support good practice in member agencies;
- The biennial members' fora and the biennial conference pre-conference workshops are designed to support continuing practice development;

- A Manual will be developed to assist INQAAHE and its members with INQAAHE reviews of members;
- Good Practice Database (GPQA): The development of a good practice data base drawing on validated good practice, as an on-line resource for member agencies;
- Rapid answer Query Service;
- Database of consultants to provide advice, carry out evaluations, etc;
- Graduate qualification in QA (QAP);
- INQAAHE will develop processes for identifying accreditation mills and alerting agencies and others to their existence; and
- The Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity-Building (GIQAC) is a World Bank-funded project in which INQAAHE is working in collaboration with UNESCO and the regional networks to support some of the activities set out in this Plan. Supported activities have a particular focus on new agencies and agencies not currently part of any regional networks.]

Informational: Global information dissemination and exchange

- INQAAHE's basic role is the communication of information, between and about members, with other agencies, and about developments in QA;
- INQAAHE collects, shares and disseminates information and knowledge on the practice of assessing, improving and maintaining quality in tertiary education worldwide;
- INQAAHE will promote world-wide dialogue on QA among all QA agencies and other bodies, not solely among members of the Network;
- The members register will be enhanced over the period of the plan to provide members with easy access, not only to the contact details of all member agencies, but also to the main elements of their policies and practice, and to identify members whose practices are in alignment with INQAAHE's Guidelines of Good Practice; and
- The website will provide easier access to reference materials;

[Implementation activities:

- The biennial conferences and the publications associated with them will continue to provide a major platform for global information exchange, both formal and informal;
- The annual report will continue to be designed to provide annual updating on the activities of INQAAHE and those of regional and other QA networks;
- The Clearinghouse (QAHEC); and
- INQAAHE will highlight and publish reference to new initiatives and developments in the INQAAHE quarterly electronic bulletin.]

Last Revised June 2009

INQAAHE Performance Measurement

1. What is INQAAHE trying to do? (HKS Question 0).

- Help in the creation of external quality agencies (EQAs)
- Help its member agencies to do their jobs better.
- To this end, it creates and provides member services (including information-sharing)

2. Success is

- Creating these services
- Members using them
- Improvement – of EQAs and of their QA activities – as a result of this use

3. Stakeholders

- Member EQAs and potential members
- Other QA networks
- Governments and others establishing EQAs
- Recognition authorities
- HE institutions and networks of institutions
- Sponsors / supporters (WB, UNESCO, UMelb, NYU, etc)

4. Components of a performance measurement system

i. General

- Number of new agencies created (where INQAAHE has been involved)
- Number of new members
- 'In-kind' support given (our time, our staff time, any of our agency resources put into INQAAHE work)
- Work done by Secretariat in advising, contacting, supporting, answering questions, etc

ii. Are the systems/services in place – yes/no

- Website for information dissemination
- Good practice database (GPQA)
- Clearinghouse of policies, procedures and practices in QA (QAHEC)
- Graduate program in QA (QAP)
- Query Service
- Consultants database
- Conference
- Forum
- Support for Regional and other QA networks
- GGP alignment
- Reviews
- Journal
- Online bulletin
- Comparative studies among EQAs
- Mechanism for addressing accreditation mills
- Support system for small states
- Development Fund

iii. Use

Survey members on

- extent of use of the services

Website

- number of presentations
- number of publications
- Number of hits

Good Practice database (GPQA)

- Number of good practices on the database
- Number of hits on the GPQA

Clearinghouse of policies, procedures and practices (QAHEC)

- Number of agencies catalogued (target: 50)
- Number of hits on QAHEC

Quality Assurance Program (QAP)

- Number of (known) implementations (target: 4)

Query Service

- number of queries to Query Service

Reviewers/Consultants

- Number on the database
- Number used

Conference

- number of participants

Forum

- number of participants

Workshops

- Number of workshops
- Number of participants

Regional and other QA networks

- Number of participants in meetings of networks
- Number of participants supported to participate in conferences, fora, etc

Mutual recognition

- Number of cooperative projects between INQAAHE members
- Number of mutual recognition agreements between INQAAHE members

Accreditation mills

- Extent of use of mechanism

Small States

- Use of services provided

Development Fund

- Number of member personnel sponsored to conference, forum, etc
- Number of staff secondments / attachments with another agency

iii. Value

Survey members on

- Nature of use of the services
- Effect of using the services

including:

GPQA

- GPs used, and their value

QAHEC

- Information used, and its value

QAP

- Graduate outcomes / satisfaction

Query Service

- Satisfaction with Query Service

Reviewers/Consultants

- Feedback on value

Conference

- Evaluations

Forum

- Evaluations

Workshops

- Workshop evaluations
- Reports from workshop organisers and sponsored participants
- Later feedback on effect, especially how it has increased agencies' capacity

Mutual recognition

- Effects / value of mutual recognition agreements and other collaborations

Regions/Networks, including small states

- Regional satisfaction with INQAAHE services

iv. Funding

- fund-raising agents hired
- money committed to this (expenditure)
- number of donors/sponsors/funders
- how much support: money, other (income)
- stakeholder survey (eg UNESCO, World Bank, IMHE, development bodies)