

BUILDING A COMMON CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SAFEGUARDING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Introduction

Though their focus are distinct, safeguarding and quality assurance in higher education institutions (HEI's) are interrelated. While safeguarding concerns itself with protecting the health, well-being, and human rights of individuals at risk, enabling them to live safely, free from abuse and neglect, quality assurance is all about ensuring that the requisite standards are in place to enhance the delivery of services. Several HEI's are plagued with issues of abuse, neglect and harassment; hence the need for safeguarding. For organisations to buy into the principles of safeguarding and quality assurance, there must be collaboration among individuals, groups, and the organization itself. To effectively roll-out safeguarding, organisations must go through the psychosocial processes of “intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalizing”, the 4I's.

Why is it important to build a framework with safeguarding and quality assurance?

Processes	Safeguarding Focus	Quality Assurance Focus
Risk management	Identifying risks to individuals well-being	Identifying risks to the quality of services
Policies and Procedures	Providing guidelines for acceptable behaviours and for reporting cases of abuse, exploitation and harassment	Establishing standards for maintaining and improving service.
Training and awareness	Providing involved stakeholders with the knowledge and skills required to identify and respond to abuse, exploitation and harassment	Increasing awareness about quality standards and procedures

Safeguarding and quality assurance like any other initiative requires organisational learning at different levels. The 4I's.

1 INTUITING

This process involves the the institution doing the leg work for example conducting risk assessments to get an understanding of the skills, capabilities and gaps

2 INTERPRETING

At this stage institutions tend to reflect and analyse the roll out of the initiative

3 INTEGRATING

Individuals are mobilised into groups as they seek ways to integrate the new knowledge and skills gained. An effective way to do this is through the creation of policies and procedures.

4 INSTITUTIONALISING

Involves embedding the knowledge and skills gained. Unembedded policies and procedures is like a figurine. Hence training and awareness building is used to cement the initiative.

Quality Assurance can be applied at the micro, meso, and macro levels to include safeguarding. We propose a dualistic relationship between safeguarding and quality assurance. HEIs should explore this synergy to enhance quality outcomes.