

Subject	External Quality Assurance
Module	Introduction
Topic	Syllabus

This text version is for your personal study only. Reproduction and/or redistribution is not allowed.

Please note that this is a text-only version. All links and animations are not activated in this version. It is recommended that you view the topic online for an interactive learning experience.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Subject Description
3. Objectives
4. Subject Design
5. Subject Resources

1. Introduction

This topic contains the syllabus of *External Quality Assurance*, along with descriptive information about the subject, the intended learning outcomes, and useful resources. Read this information carefully and revisit it whenever necessary.

2. Subject Description

This subject considers the different approaches to quality assurance (QA). It will show the complexity of the concept of quality and the frameworks that attempt to define and measure it. Case illustrations will be used to set forth the roles and responsibilities of EQA providers in different national settings and the way in which they approach their policy objectives. You will learn about the rationale behind the choices made by EQA agencies.

While QA practices differ, there is agreement on the essentials needed for a credible QA framework. Most QA schemes emphasise the importance of self-assessment based upon predetermined criteria, and an external review conducted by experts. Students should make note of the different ways in which these elements are applied. Of particular importance are the approaches that agencies take toward 'standards' and the measurement of achievement.

One cannot over-emphasise the need for strong internal quality systems or IQA at the institutional level. This subject provides a foundation for those who choose to work in QA, within government, EQA agencies, professional bodies or institutions.

In recent years, the educational and quality assurance policies of various nations have been affected by cross-border educational ventures. This subject will explore the phenomena of cross-border education and providers, and the implications for national regulation and QA policy. QA is challenged in other ways, including degree mills, bogus QA agencies, blurred boundaries between public and private institutions, and the impact of open and flexible learning technologies.

Another significant development in EQA is the emergence of networks of EQA agencies and organisations, some with global reach. As a result there is a measure of convergence in QA concepts and practices. Even so, it is important for students to consider why outwardly similar frameworks obtain different results from one nation to the next.

In summary, you will learn about the various approaches to EQA in different policy contexts, and perhaps more important, their evolutionary direction.

Subject	External Quality Assurance
Module	Introduction
Topic	Syllabus

3. Objectives

Objectives: External Quality Assurance

This subject will enable you to:

- explain the various approaches to QA mechanisms
- explain the various roles and responsibilities of EQA agencies
- describe the ways of developing criteria and reference points for QA
- identify the emerging challenges to higher education and QA, e.g., flexible learning, the blurring of the public and private spheres, and the emergence of degree and accreditation mills
- explore the role of networks of QA agencies and organisations and their impact on the convergence of QA policy and practice
- analyse the significance of cross border education for HE institutions, government regulators, and quality agencies
- analyze the contextual factors that account for the QA approach used by different countries
- evaluate, through case studies, the suitability of a particular QA model for a specific national context
- apply general principles to a specific situation to determine which system or modifications of existing systems would be feasible and effective, given the chosen objectives

4. Subject Design

The subject is divided into five modules. To provide a wider view and to stimulate critical thinking, additional articles are embedded in the content, or may be supplied by your facilitator or mentor. In general, our goal is to help you to develop understanding and skills that can be applied in your national context.

You are expected to communicate with your fellow students and to participate in discussions using the communication tools provided. The Subject facilitator will monitor student contributions to the Discussion Board, offering comments to clarify or reinforce important concepts. Your postings are, in particular, a way to demonstrate analytical skills which are among our learning objectives.

Here are some useful [tips](#) to help you collaborate with other students. Interaction among group members enhances the learning and understanding of the concepts and cases presented.

Guidelines for Online Interaction

- Written contributions to the Discussion Board should be **topical, concise, analytical and to the point**. It is important to identify an issue or problem, analyse HOW and WHY the problem exists, and to recommend a partial or full solution.
- Make reference to any original message to which you are responding.
- Be constructive when discussing others' ideas and comments.
- Post responses in a timely manner.
- Private comments should be confined to personal email.
- Choose words carefully and consider how the reader might interpret them. 'Plain English' may be preferable to technical jargon. Remember that written text can sometimes seem more harsh or critical than the spoken word.

Subject	External Quality Assurance
Module	Introduction
Topic	Syllabus

Assessment

You will be informed of the approach to assessment and your assessment tasks at the start of the subject.

5. Subject Resources

Reading lists, full texts and useful websites will give you the sources that you need to consult as general reading or support for specific learning activities and assessment tasks.

The perspective is international with examples drawing on a range of selected national, regional, and program-level QA agencies. Our selections reflect the value of certain EQA agencies as models for the application of major QA concepts. This will give you a wide exposure to global practices and to the ideas of leading QA practitioners. But inevitably, there will be variation in the underlying assumptions or use of terms in different parts of the subject, and you may find yourself more or less comfortable with particular perspectives and practices depending on your own situation and context. This is entirely normal and will only enhance the quality of the learning experience when you share your views and insights in the discussion board postings and webinars.

We have attempted to make clear the meaning of terms in the relevant context. Even so, you may need to adapt to the variations as you work through the course. As you do further reading, you will find that adaptation is also needed when you move beyond national and regional boundaries into the QA literature of agencies in other places.