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| Subject | External Quality Assurance |
| Module | Networks Of External Quality Agencies |
| Topic | 3.12 Network within Countries |

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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.

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1. Introduction



This topic discusses QA networks within countries. You will learn about the similarities and differences between in-country and multi-country networks. The topic also details the aims, purposes and mission of a major in-country professional accreditor, based in the US.

Objectives: Networks within Countries

Upon completion of this topic, you should be able to

- identify the role of in-country networks
- compare the features of in-country and multi-country networks
- provide examples of some in-country networks

2. Sharing Resources for a Common Cause

Most governments have established a single 'national QA agency'. In this circumstance, even if there are other agencies in the country, they are likely to be of a different type, or have a different emphasis, so the agency naturally looks to other countries for collaboration with kindred agencies.

Some countries have more than one agency, and that means that intra-national collaboration is possible. Instances of this include the following:

- Federal systems where each state has an agency, and together they form a QA system for the whole country.
- Professional accrediting agencies in different fields work together.
- Agencies responsible for different aspects of the same institution (eg, vocational and higher education) collaborate with each other.

Some examples of in-country networks, both general and professional accreditors, are given below:

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Examples of In-country Networks

General accreditors

- Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC, USA)
- Shanghai Educational Evaluation Association (SEEA, Shanghai, China)
- Australian state and territory and Federal 'government accrediting agencies' (GAAs), co-operating through the mechanism of the Joint Council on Higher Education (JCH)

Professional accreditors

- Association of Specialised and Professional Accreditors (ASPA, USA)
- Associations of Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC)

Networks within a single country share some features with multi-country networks. They may share evaluators, use each other's experts as trainers, collaborate on developing policies and procedures, encourage mutual recognition of academic credit and qualifications, and so on. They can do things not possible for multi-country networks, such as making joint approaches to the same government. For multi-country networks, on the other hand, a large amount of their attention relates to cross-border mobility of education, students and graduates.

The following information details the aims, purposes and mission of Association of Specialised and Professional Accreditors (ASPA), an in-country network based in the USA.



[Association of Specialised and Professional Accreditors \(ASPA, USA\)](#)

Association of Specialised and Professional Accreditors (ASPA, USA)

In the 1980s, the USA had a Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) whose purpose was to represent the accreditation community to both government and institutions. Questions emerged about the effectiveness of this organisation, and in 1993, the COPA Board decided that COPA would be disbanded. COPA had been structured with a number of assemblies, one devoted to specialised / professional accreditation. Members of this assembly made plans to pursue the formation of their own organisation, and the first meeting of ASPA was held in October 1993.

As with any new organisation, ASPA's primary challenge was how to implement its mission with limited resources. Volunteers kept ASPA going during its first year, assisted in year two by an association management company. ASPA's first executive director was appointed in mid-1995. It took several years to build a foundation for the organisation and it is still a challenge to sustain day-to-day operations while providing a timely response to current issues.

One of ASPA's most important roles has been to provide professional development for the specialised accreditation community. Training programs are usually linked to the ASPA-member Code of Good Practice, adopted in 1995. Let us learn about ASPA's mission and purposes in detail.

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ASPA's Mission and Purposes

ASPA's Mission

ASPA provides a collaborative forum and collective voice for the community of US agencies that assess the quality of specialised and professional higher education programs and schools. ASPA represents its members on issues of educational quality affecting institutions, government, students and the public. ASPA also advances the knowledge, skills, good practices and ethical commitments of accreditors, and communicates the value of accreditation as a means of enhancing educational quality.

ASPA's Purposes

- Promote quality and integrity in non-governmental specialised and professional accreditation of post-secondary programs and institutions.
- Provide a forum for discussion and analysis and a mechanism for common action for those concerned with specialised and professional accreditation.
- Address accreditation issues in educational, governmental, and public policy contexts and communicate with the public about accreditation.
- Facilitate collaboration among programs, institutions and accreditation organisations.
- Provide a mechanism for continuing education for individuals and organisations with accreditation responsibility.

Reading: ASPA-Member Code of Good Practice

For the Code and other documents, including the Core Values and the Principles used in reviewing policy and legislative proposals, visit the following website:

[Association of Specialised and Professional Accreditors \(ASPA\)](#)

3. Discussion

Discussion: In-country vs. Multi-country Networks

Select an in-country network, preferably in your country and investigate its effectiveness. Consider those aspects that distinguish it from a multi-country network, and note those aspects it shares with multi-country networks.

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4. Summary

This topic covered the following main points:

- Most governments have established a single 'national QA agency', and some countries have more than one agency, which makes intra-national collaboration possible.
- In-country networks may share evaluators, use each other's experts as trainers, collaborate on developing policies and procedures, encourage mutual recognition of students' credits and qualifications, and so on with multi-country networks.
- In-country networks can do things not possible for multi-country networks, such as make joint approaches to the same government. In contrast, multi-country networks focus more on cross-border mobility of education, students and graduates.