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Module	External Quality Assurance Agencies Emerging Challenges
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1. Introduction

Many challenges have emerged in higher education over the past decade and many external quality assurance (EQA) agencies have been established or reorganized to deal with them. These emerging issues include the globalisation of education, the trend toward privatization of education, new technologies, and the growth of so-called 'degree mills' that sell bogus or sub-standard qualifications, often with the imprimatur of bogus accreditation agencies.

The scale of the work required to meet these challenges is reflected in the growth of EQA agencies. In 1991 when the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) was formed, 18 QA agencies joined the network but by 2008 that had grown to 180 member organizations, 100 of which were quality agencies. When one realizes that in most cases there can be only one or two agencies per country, it becomes evident how many countries have established QA agencies over two decades.

2. Module Overview

External Quality Assurance Agencies – Emerging Challenges – Overview.

In **Cross-border Higher Education (CBHE)** we will discuss the emergence of borderless education, commonly referred to as Cross-border Higher Education (CBHE). You will learn about the growth of CBHE in recent years and the challenges it poses to traditional forms of educational delivery. The topic also highlights the ongoing debate on the pro's and con's of CBHE.

The topic, **Degree Mills and Accreditation Mills**, discusses the growth of 'degree (diploma) mills' that sell bogus or sub-standard qualifications and the emergence of 'accreditation mills' that obligingly certify these degree mills. You will learn about the damage caused by this aberration and ways to spot and curb the growth of degree and accreditation mills. You will see a useful list of red flags that can help you to identify whether an online education provider is a diploma mill.

In **Private and Public Institutions** we discuss the trend to privatisation in higher education – a challenge that has emerged since about 1990. The topic highlights the debate between private and public higher education institutions, and traces the worldwide growth of private higher education.

A related topic, **For-Profit / Not-for-Profit Institutions**, discusses the role of for-profit institutions in worldwide higher education. The topic highlights the positive aspects of for-profit institutions and debunks the related myths. The topic moves on to discuss the application of existing standards to accredit for-profit institutions, and the factors that contribute to the success of these institutions. The topic closes with a detailed discussion on education as a commodity that can be traded and the challenges this poses.

Next in line, **Open, Distant, Flexible Learning** discusses the growth in new forms of education over the last three decades. You will learn about the emergence of 'flexible and distributed learning' (FDL) and the attendant issues for QA agencies. The topic details the guidelines, practices and approaches that QA agencies have developed to address these challenges.

Finally, **The Cost of Quality** examines the debate over the costs related to EQA agencies, no small concern for higher education institutions (HEIs). The topic considers both cost and effect and then looks at cost/benefit and value-for-money perspectives on quality.

3. Objectives

Objectives: External Quality Assurance Agencies - Emerging Challenges

Upon completion of this module, you should be able to
- discuss the issues of cross-border higher education
- recognise the features of degree and accreditation mills
- analyse the distinguishing features of public and private institutions and the issues around for-profit and not-for-profit provision of higher education
- explain the implications for quality of new teaching and learning methods based on the use of new technologies
- identify the financial implications of implementing QA systems

4. Readings

Reading: Readings and References

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Websites

- [CQUniversity Distance Education](#)
- [UNESCO/OECD guidelines on "Quality provision in cross-border higher education"](#)
- [Boston College Center for International Higher Education (CIHE)](#)
- [Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)](#)
- [Avoiding bogus degrees Directgov - Education and learning](#)
- [Going to Uni](#)
- [GetEducated.com](#)
- [Quackwatch](#)