INQAAHE Principles for Crisis Management

APRIL 22, 2020

The major disruption caused by COVID 19 has utterly changed the learning experiences of millions of students worldwide. In this unprecedented situation, INQAAHE is keen to find solutions to support our members and the Higher Education community at large. During these highly disruptive and unsettling times impacting global public health, it is crucial to remain close to our members and the wider HE community to support them in dealing with the emergency situation that we all find ourselves in.

The INQAAHE Board presents the following set of principles to guide QA agency action during crisis periods.

1. INTEGRITY

It is more critical now than any time before to adhere to integrity and make the best use of technology to support it. Remaining vigilant to the challenges that can undermine integrity whilst remaining compassionate to each other is key in assuring quality in HE provision;

2. STUDENT PROTECTION

Of utmost importance is protection of students and student experiences during these times to minimize negative consequences of the pandemic on their performance and engagement;

3. EQUITY AND ACCESS

Where there is great potential for panic and rash behavior and the negative consequences that flow from this, an adherence to the principle of zero tolerance to discrimination should guide the work of QA providers, ensuring that equity and access remain at the top of the list of their priorities;

4. FASTER AND BETTER COORDINATION

Responsive QA and accreditation approaches as part of a wider national reaction is a must and it is crucial to clearly set a policy, strategy or set of guidelines to support the HEIs in framing their work to manage the crisis. In the case of managing safe QA and accreditation site-visits, and all QA activities more widely, there should be clear guidelines for all parties for the hosting of virtual site visits and other online activities;

5. BE THERE FOR YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

QA bodies should make extra efforts to remain close to HE providers, guiding them through their actions, including, where possible the development and implementation of a specific pandemic response plan;

6. CLEAR COMMUNICATION PLANS

In the times of social isolation the publication and transparency of newly adopted policies, procedures, guidelines and any special arrangements prior to enactment is especially important.

Essentials tools for building confidence and maintaining reputation, press releases, public statements, media pieces, or official communiqués from the leaders of the QA bodies highlighting the newly adopted policies related to managing the pandemic should be delivered to all stakeholders using a variety of accessible channels.

7. ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP

The role of enhanced partnership and sharing good practice can never be overestimated in formulating the best responses to unprecedented crises. Limitations in the ability to meet during a protracted pandemic should provide scope for the development of more widely accessible partnership structures and these in turn will generate solutions that are more widely applicable for all stakeholders.

8. RESILIENCE AND AGILITY

Moving from safety to business continuity by ensuring security-critical operations and rebounding back by adapting to unforeseen circumstances will provide a needed path forward.