



Quality of Teaching in Higher Education

valuing it and evaluating it

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13 October 2009

Presentation to the OECD IMHE Conference on Quality of Teaching in Higher Education,
Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey



National Development Plan 2007 - 2013

Overview of Presentation

- Valuing and evaluating the quality of teaching – global issues
- Quality Assurance – self-regulation and external regulation
- Evaluating the quality of teaching – European Standards and Guidelines
- Outcomes of European Quality Assurance projects
- Evaluating teaching quality – experience of Irish universities
- Valuing quality teaching – Sector-wide initiatives in Ireland

Valuing Teaching Quality

“Both research and teaching are central to the mission of universities, but most scholars are attracted to an academic career by the research. And it is through research that they get the kicks and the kudos”

“For many, teaching is just one of the pesky annoyances that they have to do as part of the real, more interesting job”

Although research and teaching are certainly complementary, the skills they often demand are not. The introspection of research sits uneasily with the extroversion teaching often demands”

Evaluating Teaching Quality

- The 2009 Times Higher Education QS World Rankings were released on 8 October last
- 20% of a university's score on the league table is for 'teaching quality', measured as a staff-to-student ratio

“we believe this ratio tells us something about whether a university has enough people to teach the students it admits.”

Evaluating Teaching Quality

“Staff-to student ratio is, at present, the only globally comparable and available indicator that has been identified to assess the stated objective of evaluating teaching quality.”

“Clearly, it is not satisfactory as a qualitative classroom evaluation as might be considered for a domestic teaching assessment, but it does speak to the notion of “commitment to teaching”, which ought to correlate strongly, if not completely with the level of teaching quality”

How will we ‘know’ quality when we see it?

“There is a growing public perception, that the traditional assumption of collective responsibility for quality by the members of any profession provides no guarantee that they will act with integrity”

“The practice of self-regulation embodies the principles of institutional autonomy and professional responsibility. By voluntarily adopting limits on its own behaviour and subjecting itself to the discipline of review by peers, a college or university can preserve its independence while assuring its stakeholders that established standards of academic quality are met.”

How will we ‘know’ quality when we see it?

“Members of the academy are the only ones who know what academic quality really looks like.”

“Government authorities may be quite competent to examine an institution’s finances, its organisational capacity or its compliance with the law”

“But unless they recruit academics or train a special inspectorate, they have no established competence to assess curricular quality, or acceptable levels of student learning outcomes”



Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

- One of the most important of the Bologna reforms has been the development of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) as adopted by the European higher education ministers in Bergen, Norway in 2005
- It is hard to overestimate the progress that has been made in this area in a relatively short time and the changes they have wrought in the structures (perhaps more so than in the practices) of European (particularly continental) Higher Education

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

“The EHEA is characterised by its diversity of political systems, higher education systems, socio-cultural and educational traditions, languages, aspirations and expectations. This makes a single, monolithic approach to quality, standards and quality assurance in higher education inappropriate”



Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

- The ESG is a compromise between principles-based systems (such as Ireland and the UK) and rules-based systems (more prevalent in continental Europe)
- ESG is a balance between the judgement against threshold standards of accreditation and the lighter touch audit/evaluation against autonomous institutional mission

Principles of ESG

autonomy

- Providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance
- There should be encouragement of a culture of quality within higher education institutions
- Quality for accountability purposes is fully compatible with quality assurance for enhancement purposes
- Processes used should not stifle diversity and innovation

Principles of ESG

accountability

- The quality of academic programmes needs to be developed and improved for students across the EHEA
- The interests of society in the quality and standards of higher education need to be safeguarded
- Processes should be developed through which higher education institutions can demonstrate their accountability
- Transparency and the use of external expertise in QA processes are important

3 Part of ESG

1. European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions
2. European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education
3. European standards and guidelines for external quality assurance agencies



Part 1 of ESG

Internal Quality Assurance within Higher Education Institutions

- Policy and procedures for QA
- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- Assessment of students
- QA of teaching staff
- Learning resources and student support
- Information systems
- Public information

EUA Trends V Report 2007

challenges

“External quality assurance systems need to demonstrate that they actually produce an improvement in quality”

“Considerable concern still remains about the increasing bureaucratic burden on institutions”

“Institutions need to continue to embed a responsible and responsive quality culture as a means of enhancing creativity and innovation in fulfilling their missions”

EUA Trends V Report 2007

strengths

“The link between institutional responsibility, accountability and autonomy, on the one hand, and the need for reliable and transparent quality assurance mechanisms, on the other, would now appear to be firmly established and understood”

“More constructive discussion between institutions, quality assurance agencies, stakeholders and public authorities appears to be taking place, and the involvement of students in quality assurance activities also seems to be gaining ground”

EUA Creativity Project 2009

Improving quality: enhancing creativity

“The most important condition for institutional creativity is the attitude of the institutional management and leadership”

“The moment of proceeding from innovation and piloting a new practice to its routine use is crucial. How to maintain the quality and innovative nature of a practice when it is no longer only conducted by committed and enthusiastic pioneers who are typical key factors of a successful pilot phase.”

“At this point, motivational support as well as proper resources allocated by the leadership is essential to the success and sustainability of the process.”



Quality Assurance in Irish universities

Universities Act (1997)

- Internal QA mechanisms
- External QA mechanisms



Periodic Public Mandatory Internal Quality Assurance

Universities Act (1997)

- A university must put in place quality assurance procedures aimed at **improving** the quality of education and related services provided by the university
- Evaluation must involve the assessment of every department and any service provided by the university
- Evaluation of each department must include an assessment by stakeholders availing of education, research and related services provided by the university



Periodic Public Mandatory Internal Quality Assurance

Universities Act (1997)

University-organised evaluations must comprise:

- Self-assessment followed by
- Evaluation by persons competent to make national and **international comparisons** of the quality of education and related services provided by the university
- Implementation of recommendations
- Publication of outcomes



Irish Universities

Internal quality reviews

under Universities Act (1997)

*“When systematic quality reviews were first introduced, the focus was on the **procedures** and preparation for the **review visits** and the **reviewers’ reports**. As these procedures became established and accepted by the university community, the emphasis and focus moved toward the **implementation of recommendations** and **quality improvement**”*



Irish Universities

Internal quality reviews

under Universities Act (1997)

*“Over the first few years certain **generic issues** were identified as being of particular importance and worthy of new investment, in particular **supports for teaching, institutional research and a focus on all aspects of the student experience.** This led to heightened awareness of the quality agenda among all staff (academic, research, administrative and support staff) and students”*



Periodic External Quality Assurance of Irish Universities

Institutional Review of Irish Universities (IRIU) 2009-12

- Every 5 years, each university is subject to a review of the effectiveness of its (internal) quality assurance procedures
- First cycle of reviews took place in 2004 (contracted to EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme by IUQB and Irish HE funding council)
- 2nd cycle of reviews is beginning in November 2009 (organised by IUQB)
- Evaluation by Irish (1) and international panel (5) of academics, stakeholders and students
- Reports published and followed-up



Sector-wide initiatives in Higher Education

Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) 2006-13

A multi-annual fund, amounting to €510 million over the period 2006-13, directed towards support for innovation in higher education institutions. It supports new approaches to enhancing quality and effectiveness within higher education and research, incorporating the use of existing resources more effectively, as well as new funding.



Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) 2006-13

some examples

- **Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance (DRHEA)** – collaboration between 4 universities and 4 institutes of technology in the Capital
- **Shannon Consortium** – collaboration between 1 university, 1 linked college and 2 institutes of technology including the establishment of a National Centre of excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and Learning
- **National Academy for the Integration of Research into Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL)** – collaboration between 3 universities and 2 institutes of technology

Valuing Teaching

Undergraduates must be reminded that:

“coming to university is like turning up for an appointment with a personal trainer. You are told how to get fit but you have to do the work yourself to get the desired results”

Valuing Teaching

University teachers must be reminded that:

“students have the right to expect their personal trainers to be motivated and inspirational and to focus their attention on the student and not on the trainer’s personal fitness plan”