Insight from stakeholders involved in cross-border EQA: University of Ljubljana

EQAR Seminar on Cross-Border External Quality Assurance
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Overview of presentation

- Brief insight of UL
- Brief insight of the national QA context
- Cross-border QA at UL
- Rationale for choosing cross-border EQA
- Added value
- Challenges
Brief insight of UL

- 46 000 students, 6300 employees
- 23 faculties, 3 academies
- 154 programmes (1st cycle), 193 (2nd cycle)

University of Ljubljana Strategy 2012-2020:

- Encouragement of international evaluations, programme, and institutional accreditations in the relevant areas.
- By 2020 increase the number of outgoing students by one third, the number of incoming students, foreign teachers, and researchers by one fourth.
- Increase the number of joint study programmes and provision of programmes abroad
Brief insight of the national QA context

SQAA:

- Institutional re-accreditation every 7 years
- Programme re-accreditation every 7 years

HE law currently under revision:

- From programme eval. to institutional eval.
- Institutional eval. every 5 years
Cross-border EQA at UL

Institutional evaluations:
• at the level of faculties: 5 faculties (ASIIN, AHPGS; currently in the progress)

Programme evaluations:
• 15 study programmes at 3 faculties (ASIIN; 13 in the progress)

Sectoral QA:
6 faculties obtained programme and/or institutional accreditations by 8 different international qa agencies/organisations
Focus of this presentation

- EQAR listed agencies
- Experience from past evaluations and ongoing ones.
Rationale for choosing cross-border EQA

- Strategies (university, individual faculties‘)
  - Strengthening quality
  - Added value experience from cross-border EQA
  - International context (also to balance the effects of small size country by taking into account international trends, developments, practices)
  - International recognition / attractiveness (for students, staff)
Rationale for choosing cross-border EQA

- 2, 5 years long project (funded by ESF and ministry) provides funds for cross-border EQA
  - QAA listed in EQAR
  - for some faculties evaluation of programmes represents the preparation phase for their future accreditation (smaller scope and costs of eval. for the next 2 years)

- In the case of institutional/programme evaluations the motivation of HEI is slightly more focused at strengthening the quality, as national accreditations have been already obtained.
Added value

• Specific learning experience:
  – Faculties are leading their own institutional self-evaluation in connection to cross-border EQA.
  – Faculties involved in cross-border EQA are sharing their experience on a regular basis
  – Staff involved in cross-border EQA is strengthening the competences as evaluators of national QAA
  – Many evaluations taking place during the same period of time by the same agency: deeper insight into HEI
Added value

• Thinking from new perspective on „well-known“ issues, e.g.:
  – strengthening the awareness and efforts to improve students’ progression rates;
  – perception of having free education – is it really free?

• Different emphasis of the same criteria, e.g.:
  – learning process,
  – evaluation of HEI’s effects on an environment in a much broader context
  – Cultural dimension of each evaluated criteria (for example – how are the conflicts handled?)
• Peers feedback:
  – International angel of objectivness
  – Based on diverse knowledge of international practice (e.g. faculty find cross-border EQA very helpful when enhancing its strategy)
  – Specific for a discipline
Added value

- Improved international recognition/attractiveness
- Re-positioning of HEI within international and national area (knowing where HEI is strong and what could be improved)
What were our challenges when UL was choosing the agency from EQAR:

• Institutional evaluation at the level of faculties (2 examples)
• Conducting more evaluations than accreditations
• Understanding of the term „evaluation“ (conducting solely evaluation, without obtaining accred. decision)
• Publicity of reports
• Peers with international experience
Challenges

• Understanding of criteria, e.g.:
  – A substantial period of time in the self evaluation process was dedicated to a common understanding of the evaluation criteria. „not familiar with the wording used to describe them“

• It takes time and additional effort for cross-border QAA to understand the national/institutional context
Challenges

• General guidance in the manuals for self-evaluation reports emphasises the importance of reflection compared to description. However, the concrete guiding questions for self-evaluation reports are often interpreted as leading to description, rather than reflection.
Thank you for your attention!