EQUIP report: Themes arising
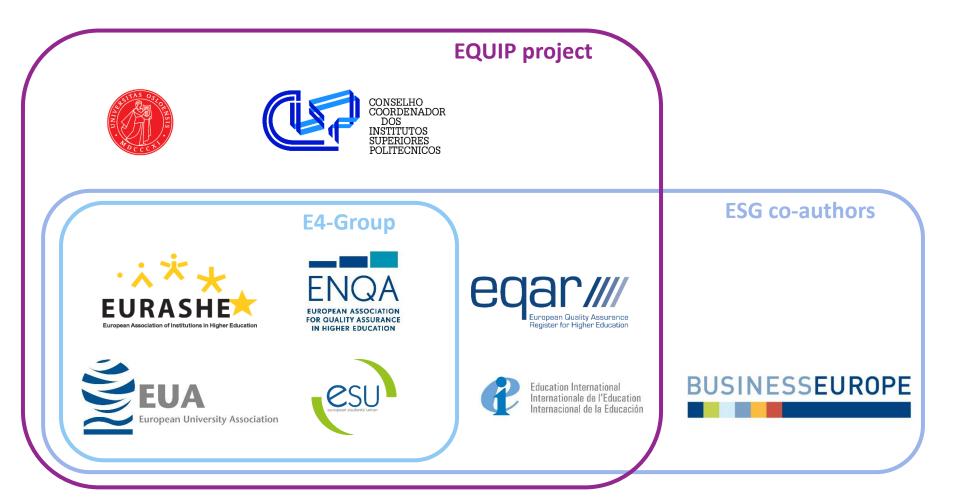
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EQUIP

- The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), 2nd edition adopted in May 2015

- The EQUIP project aims at Enhancing Quality through Innovative Policy & Practice in European higher education by supporting and promoting a consistent, efficient and innovative embedding of the ESG 2015 at grass-root level.

Partners

EQUIP project

E4-Group

ESG co-authors

Activities

The EQUIP project has:

- Produced an analytical report highlighting the innovative aspects of the ESG 2015;

- Published and promoted the ESG 2015 to the entire higher education community;

- Facilitated the use of the ESG 2015 through multi-level peer-learning groups with five training events including webinars;

- Identified and will promote innovative ways to apply the ESG 2015 by consulting all higher education actors through surveys and the organisation of focus groups for all stakeholders in the spring of 2017.

The project will:

- Highlight changes to be made in quality assurance at various levels with a study on implementation challenges, solutions and policy impact;

- Put forward European-level policy recommendations to stakeholder groups to feed into the discussions leading up to the 2018 EHEA Ministerial Conference.

www.equip-project.eu/activities

EQAR focus group

- Opportunity to
  - discuss challenges in QA and discuss good practices solving these challenges
  - Reflect on focus and approach to QA in different contexts
  - Provide feedback on the preliminary findings of the EQUIP study

Starting point

- QA in context, one tool/process among many

- Diversity of QA approaches and changing landscape

- Impact of the ESG2015?

"stakeholders, who may prioritise different purposes, can view quality in higher education differently and quality assurance needs to take into account these different perspectives. *Quality*, whilst not easy to define, is mainly a result of the interaction between teachers, students and the institutional learning environment."

ESG2015, p. 7

Concepts of quality

Four approaches to defining quality

- **Purposeful**: as something that conforms to a defined mission or purpose or a set of standards or criteria
- **Exceptional**: as something exceptional or achieving high standards
- **Transformative**: as something that leads to a positive change in student learning or personal growth
- **Accountable**: as being accountable to different stakeholders by using the available resources in an optimal manner

(Schindler & al., 2015)

Purposes of higher education

Four purposes of higher education

- Preparing students for **active citizenship**
- Preparing students for their future careers (contributing to their **employability**)
- Supporting students' **personal development**
- Creating a broad advanced knowledge base and stimulating **research and innovation**

(Council of Europe, 2007)

5 key themes

1. **Diversity of external contexts and legal frameworks**
   - Structure of national HE system including division of labour between different actors
   - Link between purpose of QA and chosen approach
   - Tensions between (legal) authorities and QA agencies? What will external QA look like in the future?

2. **Institutional responsibility for quality**
   - Increased emphasis on internal QA: ESG Part1 & shift towards institutional external QA in certain systems
   - The level of institutional autonomy in the design of internal QA varies, how much guidance is the right amount?
   - Two approaches to internal QA
     - aligned with strategic management: QA as a means to support the achievement of institutional goals
     - explicitly linked to defining and assessing the learning outcomes and ensuring these are aligned to the national qualification framework

5 key themes

3. Communication about quality assurance and quality
   - Pressures to communicate better about the purpose and outcomes of internal and external QA processes
   - Target group of the external QA reports? The link to the purpose of QA?
   - Communication on internal QA
     - When external QA focuses on institutional QA processes
     - Communicating about activities or quality

4. Quality culture vs. bureaucracy
   - Communication
   - Ownership
   - Sense-making

5. Student-centred learning (SCL)
   - Operational definition of SCL missing?
   - The role of QA: how is it expected to address the issue?
   - Link to the staff competences (ESG 1.5)

Conclusions?

- Still under preparation, this event is part of our study

- a shared understanding of QA in broad terms and between stakeholder groups, although some differences exist

- risk of doing QA just for the sake of it, or developing systems just to comply with the ESG?

World café exercise

- Institutional responsibility for QA

To what extent and how is the principle of institutional responsibility for QA applied in your system?

- Complying with the ESG in different legal frameworks

In your system is there a contradiction between the legal framework and the expectations   of the ESG? If so, what and how can that be overcome?

- Division of responsibilities for external QA

How are the responsibilities related to external QA processes divided in your system?

- External QA of joint programmes

Have there been discussions or changes in your system since the adoption of the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in May 2015? If so, what?

- Communication about QA and quality of educational provision

In your system, who do you expect to communicate to the public about what with regards to QA and the quality of educational provision?

More on EQUIP

ENHANCING QUALITY THROUGH INNOVATIVE POLICY & PRACTICE

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