Presentation outcomes line 1

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<u>**Facts**</u>
Three seminars(3 days of training) on IQA

IQA
- Tools IQA:
  Evaluation matrix on IQA
  Procedure evaluation matrix on IQA
  Workshop on evaluation matrix and procedure
- Workshops and training on criteria framework institutional accreditation
  Criteria 3, 5 and 10
- Start making handbook on IQA (tool making handbook)
- Questionnaires: student satisfaction and personell satisfaction (tools to make fit for purpose)

- Tools writing ser (ambition, facts and findings, conclusion and swot)
- Workshops and training on writing Ser
- Writing SER in 10 steps
- Feedback session on first drafts SER
- Feedback panel and feedback session on second drafts SER
- Training on analytical skills
- Training on analytical skills and asking questions in role playing game

Outcomes panel on SER
General affirmations
- Ambitions to meet European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) en National Qualification Framework (NQF)
- In several cases formal policy is demonstrated to be in line with accreditation requirements
- Process of implementing policy (different stages of development)
- Serious efforts to gather relevant data
- Demonstration of drive to introduce appropriate Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

General comments
- Some SERs definitely need a revision on English
- Give more context on the institution and the process of writing of the SER
- Formulate clear and realistic priorities
- Emphasis too much on vision, plans and future policy (policy documents)
- Affirmation of compliance is not substantiated by facts
- Lack of a self critical approach/attitude in text criteterium (swot is oké)
- Top down: involvement of lecturers?

Some detailed comments
- Need for more information on the institution
- Too much policy documents and future plans
- Concrete information on the realisation/assimilation in teaching is lacking
- SWOT analyses show the appropriate self-critical attitude
(SWOT Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and threats)

Short summary of the seminars

At the first seminar in March with all stakeholders a good practice was presented in IQA from both Europe and Armenia. The focus of this seminar was on tools for IQA such as an evaluation matrix. It appears that most HEI have already several ongoing activities regarding quality assurance. Less clear is how to fit these into a system and to what level the QA in already present throughout the organisation. The evaluation matrix as a basic QA is instrument that helps to clarify aims and objectives of QA, and to further develop a system. Students and working field seem to be not involved enough yet. It is Important to consult all relevant stakeholders on this.

In concurrent sessions, the Armenian framework at both institutional and programme level was looked at in more detail. HEI worked on criterion 1 of the ANQA framework for institutional accreditation and criterion 6 of the programme level. Following the seminar with stakeholders, some 40 key persons of 8 HEI attended the first day of the three-day training session on IQA. During this first training, participants were guided through the various steps of writing a self-evaluation report (SER). To conclude, a tool was presented: SER in 10 Steps. ANQA staff members attended the seminar as observers. During the training of HEI on writing a self-evaluation report, a beginning is made with the further professionalising of ANQA staff. (Line 3)

Observations

− At present, QA seems to focus on documents and legal commitments (self-evaluation reports, handbook, accreditation decision etc.) rather than on QA itself i.e. enhancement of the quality of educational programmes. Reports and formal decisions are certainly important and necessary steps in the process of QA but not the only steps

− Stakeholders participate in QA but not in a systematic way. Especially the labour market and alumni lag behind.

− Financial means to appoint and equip a QA team are not abundant. Even so HEI made a start with setting up QA units. A major point of attention is the position of this unit within the HEI structure given the history of a top-down approach in management. Another issue is the further professionalization of the QA staff.

− HEI make use of the PDCA-cycle for improvement purposes but in a rather fragmental way. The main obstacles seem to be the lack of data and of clearly defined responsibilities.

− It is good to notice that some HEI explore far-reaching ambitions regarding the quality of their programmes (e.g. centre of excellences). A good functioning QA system will certainly contribute to achieve these goals.

Recommendations

− Students need to be considered as the most important stakeholders. It is therefore crucial to involve students in all QA activities, and therefore in all ARQATA It is a positive sign that some student bodies are in contact with sister organisations abroad.

The second seminar at the end of March During this training the feedback on the first drafts on the SER's written by 8 HEI's was the most important activity. Two experts from the Hanze Hogeschool studied the drafts SER. The feedback was given on a general level and on het individual level. There were trainings sessions to elaborate more criteria of the framework as well. Guidelines for quality handbooks were presented and some evaluation tools on student satisfaction and personnel satisfaction were discussed.

Observations
HEI did not write a full text per criterium but only a summary. Writing a summary was not according to the 'Assignment Writing SER'. Apparently, the institutions did not have enough time to write a full text, and so in consultation with ANQA they decided to write a summary per criterium. Furthermore some HEI did not write a SER for all three criteria (criteria 1, 3 and 10). So although HEI involved in the pilot are more than willing to work hard and thorough, they seem to lack the time to complete the work.

Despite the fact that the SER were written in the form of summaries, the documents provided enough information for the trainers to give feedback in a more general way. Feedback in detail was less obvious given the limited amount of text available.

Feedback was given by the trainers in sessions with two HEI at the same time. In retrospect, the number of institutes involved in the workshop on IQA, writing SER was too large for the number of training experts. A small number of institutes would have been more effective as was the original plan (3 instead of 8 HEI). Other institutes had to work independently during the feedback sessions, which proved to be inefficient and ineffective.

The workshops have been helpful to introduce the concepts of IQA within institutes. The workshops have given insight in existing IQA good practices in HEI in the Netherlands. These are the major evaluation tools for assessing programmes and IQA. Institutes seemed to be satisfied with the outcomes of this workshop.

Recommendations
- The workshops have demonstrated that the main target for the institutes is to develop an internal quality system at a short time. This internal quality system should focus on the ANQA standards and criteria for institutional and programme accreditation. The ultimate goal should be that programmes at HEI are in line with the ambitious level of the Armenian qualification framework. This framework sets the standards at a high European level.

The third seminar in September
During this seminar the feedback of the panel was discussed with the HEI. There were workshops on analytical skills on writing SER with text from Amsterdam University. The last training session on analytical skills was with parts of text of the Chatham University. In a role play analytical skills were practised in a interview experts-board university.

In may a panel of experts received draft SERs (on three of ten criteria) of eight HEI. These SERs have been reviewed by three experienced experts on from the

Netherlands (Leiden, Delft) and Flanders (Brussels). The experts have been asked to scrutinize the SERs, and to come up with general observations and three positive and three less positive aspects. The outcomes of this exercise have been discussed during a panel meeting in The Hague. In the review, two questions have been addressed:

- Does the SER provide sufficient information at an appropriate level for the assessment committee?
- What are the strong and weak points of the individual SERs?

Observations

The panel encountered some difficulties in fully understanding the draft SERs. Some texts were rather difficult to comprehend as a result of the poor translation to English. In addition, there is the difficulty to translate concepts form Armenian to English. Also the SERs tend to put too much emphasis on details and procedures. And lastly, evidence in the SERs is scarce.

As such, it was not really possible for the panel to give feedback on the individual level of each SER. HEI should improve the text starting from the general observations and recommendations of the panel as these are applicable to all draft SERs.

HEI should also keep in mind that their internal quality assurance systems are not fully operational yet. On the level of documentation there are bits and pieces of quality assurance but it is not a system.

The draft SERs and the various training sessions also made clear that many HEI think and write on a rather detailed level. Thinking and writing need to start at the concept level in order to result in a good SER. The text of the draft SERs is much too detailed, and a general conclusion on the basis of these details is often missing. As such, the sequence concept > details > is missing

In order to improve the skills in writing SER, ANQA is developing an additional training as a follow-up on the ARQATA training.

Recommendations

Improve the participation in the internal quality assurance of the HEI by students and teachers and involve all stakeholders , including working field, in Internal quality assurance. No External Quality Assurance without Internal Quality Assurance.

Improve the text of criteria 1, 3 and 10 on basis of the general feedback. The text has to be improved from the level of the concept and not from the remarks on the level of the text. The text of the SER for the Institutional- and the programme accreditations have to meet the standards of the international experts.

It is a suggestion to write a SER on the level of a criterium not on level of the individual standards. Explicit substantiation of compliance at the level of each standard brings the SER on a far too detailed level. Also many redundancies occur in the text. As a result the text does not provide the necessary context, makes it very difficult to follow the general argumentation and the text is less readable as well. Make the pdca in each criterium visible by writing in facts and findings and conclusion. The 'foundations' and regulations and how the 'foundations' and regulations are established is part of an annex.

Overall conclusions

Activities in Line 1 of the project resulted in various tools for implementing quality assurance such as an evaluation matrix and an outline for a self-evaluation report. HEI have been working with concepts making them fit for purpose. Also a beginning has been made with a quality assurance handbook for HEI. Additional training is given to students as to better prepare them for their specific tasks.

The workshops showed that institutes invested substantially in developing internal quality assessment but they are still far away of the set targets. No institute seem to have an actual system of internal quality assurance (IQA). The documents worked out for the self-evaluation reports (SER) are encouraging and demonstrate the will of the HEI to succeed but they still have a long way to go. Institutes will have to work hard to fulfil the ambitions set by the Armenian government and ANQA.

The present situation makes the position of HEI both crucial and vulnerable. On the one hand, HEI need to adapt to a rapid changing society with more openness, more autonomy, more demands;
on the other hand, HEI need to comply with (inter)national quality assurance standards they cannot yet fully meet. The ARQATA project, therefore, will focus on the further development and implementation of an internal quality assurance system.

The internal quality assurance will always be the leading principle. External quality assurance will always follow and refer to the internal processes. Especially the teaching staff and the students have a vital role in these internal quality processes. The ownership of quality lies with them, not with the quality assurance professionals. Without the commitment and input of teaching staff and students, an important opportunity for improvement will be missed.