

**Subproject 12SUB05**

Training Secretaries / coordinators ANQA on writing HEI quality audit reports, 13th September 2012

**Assignment: Draft Accreditation Report Amsterdam University (just for exercise)**

Amsterdam University (AU)

**Principle 10: The institution has a set infrastructure for internal quality Assurance which promotes establishment of a quality culture and continual development of the institution**

10.1	<i>The institutions has internal QA policies and procedures in line with the ESG standards.</i>
10.2	<i>The institution allocates sufficient time, material, human and Financial recourses to manage internal quality Assurance processes.</i>
10.3	<i>The quality Assurance strategy, policy and procedures have a formal status, are publicly available and include a role for students and other stakeholders.</i>
10.4	<i>The internal quality Assurance system is periodically reviewed.</i>
10.5	<i>The internal quality Assurance system provides valid and sufficient background for the success of the external QA processes.</i>
10.6	<i>The internal quality assurance system provides for the transparency of the processes unfolding in the institution through providing valid up to date information on the quality of the latter.</i>

CRITERION 10. INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

*The institution has a set infrastructure for internal quality Assurance which promotes establishment of a quality culture and continual development of the institution*

*10.1 The institutions has internal QA policies and procedures in line with the ESG standards.*

*Findings*

The Amsterdam University (AU) argues that it has a long standing experience with some instruments for internal quality assurance for education. Several elements of quality assurance such as: student surveys, teaching staff development programmes, public information etc., have been in use since 2003. From 2007 onwards AU builds on a integrated and coherent internal quality assurance system that meets the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Development of this integrated internal quality system is a formal goal in the strategy of AU. In the "AU Strategic Development Plan for 2010-2014" under Goal 1. Quality Education, Objective I.b, it is stated that the AU has the ambition: "To introduce an internal quality assurance system in line with the requirements of European Standards".

AU presents a detailed strategy to accomplish this strategic goal. This includes implementation of a new policy for continues enhancement of quality; develop assessment criteria; undertake self-evaluation; introduce learning outcomes based on the European and National Qualification Framework; create mechanisms for the publication of procedures and criteria; improve professional competences and teaching skills of faculty; ensure transparency, etcetera.

*Considerations*

The panel was pleased by the detailed description and planning of the internal quality assurance strategy. The strategy was well informed by the European Standards and Guidelines and developed in cooperation with European partners . It includes important principles of the European Standards and Guidelines.

The principles and the implementation policy is well designed. AU also identified several important IQA procedures and mechanisms for the improvement of study programmes and teaching staff.

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The panel found it difficult to establish which procedures are in place. According to the information provided, the following instruments are in use:

- Student Surveys on effectiveness of teaching and learning (since 2003)
- Graduate Satisfaction Survey (since 2008)
- Publication of Key Performance Indicators (since 2009)
- Yearly reports of academic units on performance in relation to the strategic plan
- Annually report of rector to board

AU presents evidence that there are procedures in place to provide transparency and overview.

Also a network is in place to implement the QA procedures on faculty level. Students have the opportunity to participate in the decision making and quality assurance process.

The introduction of the envisioned integrated internal quality assurance system is however not yet accomplished. This is observed by the institution itself. The AU encounters difficulties in the participation of faculty and students in the QA processes. In addition to that the implementation is in need of additional financial, human and technical resources. AU also faces the problem that the professional job market and the employers are not yet very articulated on the required qualifications for the jobs. For graduates, finding a job depends on different factors than the qualifications acquired during the studies.

AU shows to be sufficiently self critical. It presents relevant challenges. An example is the observation that, even in the case of quality assurance instruments that are in place, the quality cycle is not yet closed. However results of evaluation are discussed, there is lack of monitoring and supervision mechanisms to follow up on measures for improvement. This is an area for improvement.

Although AU has achieved a lot in the design and development of a strategy for an integrated internal quality assurance system that is in line with the principles of the ESG, only few of these procedures are already in place. The existing instruments and procedures are flawed since the follow up process on the results is not systematic.

The panel decides that the AU should have the opportunity to show that it is capable to implement the designed strategy. However there are serious obstacles and challenges to overcome.

### *Conclusions*

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### *Difficulty*

The policy is formalized and partially implemented, but it is difficult which procedures are actually in place.

## *10.2 The institution allocates sufficient time, material, human and Financial resources to manage internal quality Assurance processes.*

### *Findings*

The panel confirms that the AU structurally allocates resources for the management of internal quality assurance. In the self evaluation report AU presents the formal decisions taken concerning the structures, responsibilities and resources available for internal quality assurance.

These resources include:

- 1) The Quality Assurance and Control Unit (QACU) having five full time employees and sufficient technical resources.
- 2) A permanent committee of the Academic Council on Quality Assurance.
- 3) A QA committee in each of the 19 faculties.
- 4) Definition of the role of the Faculty development department in QA including 3 full-time employees
- 5) the establishment of a Department of Information Technologies under the Education and Research Centre including 7 full-time employees
- 6) Implementation of a clear overall responsibility and executive structure for QA.

AU concludes that it allocates considerable resources to QA. In the light of the ambitions and the difficulties of implementing QA based on European principles it faces some challenges.

### *Considerations*

The available resources for QA should be sufficient considering the size of the institution. Lack of expertise and experience in QA makes it difficult to use the resources effectively. An additional difficulty is the lack of participation by the students and faculty in the QA processes. Effective quality assurance is a natural part of delivery of teaching. The panel again faces the difficulty that, however the institution allocates considerable

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resources for QA and implements coordination structures and a clear policy for the implementation of the QA system, this system is not yet established. The ambitions of AU are high and very detailed including many actions and goals. The process of implementation will cost considerable additional effort and requires the development of expertise and experience. Interesting is the role of the Faculty Development Department which carried out study and comparative analysis of advanced international and especially European educational systems experience and trends of development.

The panel considers that the resources should be sufficient in the case of an established QA system. The difficulties of building a quality culture might take leadership, building capacity and time for the necessary changes.

### *Conclusions*

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Difficulty: sufficient in the light of: Ambitions? efficient and effective QA?

*10.3 The quality Assurance strategy, policy and procedures have a formal status, are publicly available and include a role for students and other stakeholders.*

### *Findings*

The panel observed that the procedures and policy on quality assurance are widely published. These procedures do have a formal status. Participation of all stakeholders is promoted. Students are involved through the surveys each semester on teaching quality. Students furthermore participate in decision making processes. This participation could improve. The same counts for the staff of the institution. Participation is still too low.

### *Considerations*

Procedures are well available and published. The panels confirms that the policies and procedures includes a role for all stakeholders. Students and graduates involved by students. The possibilities for the participation by representatives of the future employers of graduates are however rather limited. External experts are included in the approval procedure of new programmes and as a member of the examination committees. This will provide relevant feedback for the curriculum but the involvement might be more structural through a specific advisory board.

### *Conclusions*

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Difficulty: lack of information on the actual involvement next to the formal possibilities

*10.4 The internal quality Assurance system is periodically reviewed.*

### *Findings*

The institute argues that it is too early to review the internal quality assurance system since it is still in the process of being worked out. The components of IQA that existed earlier haven been subject to review and improvement. This includes the student' survey which is annually reviewed and has been subjected to several changes.

### *Considerations*

The panel considers that compliance with this standard cannot be demonstrated based since the IQA system is still in the stage of development. The fact that the institutions has reviewed existing instruments of QA gives trust in the future developments. Negative on the other hand is that there is a lack of follow up on the existing evaluation procedures.

### *Conclusions*

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Difficulty: very little insight into the actual working of IQA.

*10.5 The internal quality Assurance system provides valid and sufficient background for the success of the external QA processes.*

### *Findings*

The AU presents a self evaluation report and additional information to the panel based on the results of the internal quality assurance process. The self evaluation report remains rather descriptive, giving a detailed account

of policies, documents and procedures. The actual implementation and evaluation of the results of these policies is meager. Only the strengths and weakness section gives some insights in this aspect. It might also be helpful to become more analytical and present additional normative and cultural aspects of quality.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers the self evaluation report and the other information provided by the institution as main evidence for the prove of compliance with this standard. The panel is slightly disappointed that the emphasis in the body of the text dealing with the standards is mainly based on plans an prospects. The institution argues that several instruments an mechanisms are in place. The bottom-up reporting on quality in yearly reports could offer sufficient material for self evaluation since the assessment reveals problems, difficulties and identifies still undiscovered opportunities . The part discussing the achievements and shortcomings however demonstrates a genuine self critical attitude discussing both the achievements and the shortcomings and dilemma's. The vision on the new integrated internal quality assurance system and the related plans that are not yet implemented. This seems to hinder presentation of available achievements. The Self evaluation report is not a photo of the current house but a discussion of the design of a new building. This obstructs the perspective on the current quality somewhat. And if one makes the choice to concentrate on the new plans it might be helpful to discuss progress and achievements more.

#### *Conclusions*

#### *Difficulty*

No demonstration of the achievement of policies in a more concrete way. Substantiation of achievements lacking. For the panel it is not easy to distinguish between what is already in place and what still has to be accomplished.

*10.6 The internal quality assurance system provides for the transparency of the processes unfolding in the institution through providing valid up to date information on the quality of the latter.*

#### *Findings*

The AU does publish an Annual report. The Annual Report does contain relevant information on the achievements of the institution for the stakeholders. The information concerning all spheres of AU activities is presented in Annual reports of AU. Here the main results of activities of AU academic, research and administrative units during previous years are summarized.

These reports comprise data on particular faculties of University as well Information on AU annual activities is also presented by University Rector in his annual report submitted to AC. Here, particularly, performance of AU Strategic Development Plan for 2010-2014 is presented yearly.

There is a system of periodic peer review in place that leads to relevant recommendations. Also the use of Key Performance Indicators results in relevant information.

The panel found evidence that the for AU providing information to internal and external stakeholders is of paramount importance. This is a formally accepted goal of the strategy of the institution. Reporting to stakeholders is already part of the normal workings of the institution.

Publication on the learning outcomes of the programmes is still lacking.

The University defined concrete steps for the next step to come to a centralized information system. A centralized information system is of paramount importance to gather necessary information on important aspects of quality.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the most important information on the performance of the institution is presented in the Yearly Reports. The Yearly Reports contain valid information since they are the result of a bottom up process of data gathering. The Gathering of information will be professionalized further by the introduction of an information system.

The ESG require the HEI's: "In fulfilment of their public role, higher education institutions have a responsibility to provide information about the programmes they are offering, the intended learning outcomes of these, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, and the learning opportunities available to their students (ESG guidelines)". The information on the programmes and related intended learning outcomes still has to be developed. Also information on the achievement of these learning outcomes is not yet available.

The panel considers it central for compliance on this standard that transparent and public reporting on intended learning outcomes is available. The introduction of an information system in the future will improve this.

*Conclusions*