Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education: a UK Perspective

Dr. Fabrizio Trifiro’, Deputy Head International, QAA

AACCUP Annual Conference, 17 February 2016, Manila
Structure of the presentation

- The UK regulatory context and QAA’s role
- The internationalisation of UK HE and QAA’s approach to cross-border HE
- International developments in the quality assurance of cross-border HE
The regulatory context

There is no general legislation governing higher education (HE) in the UK – HE is a devolved matter.

However, UK degrees must be awarded by legally approved degree-awarding bodies (Recognised Bodies).

*Degree-warding bodies* are recognised, but not owned by Government. They are autonomous and independent:

- They are self-accrediting
- They retain the ultimate responsibility for the quality and standards of their degrees.
The Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFCs) have the statutory responsibility for the quality of public funded HE.

The HEFCs contract QAA to deliver their statutory responsibility.

**Co-regulation**: Degree-awarding bodies and the HEFCs work together through the QAA to ensure the quality and standards of UK HE.
QAA

• QAA was established in 1997, as an independent registered charity, through the merger of pre-existing agencies:
  ▪ The evaluation body established by universities and colleges themselves.
  ▪ the quality assurance divisions of the funding councils

• Funded through:
  ✓ subscriptions from universities and colleges
  ✓ contracts with the higher education funding councils
  ✓ …and increasingly services to UK private providers, non-UK providers and international agencies/governments
## QAA subscriber profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscriber type</th>
<th>Number of subscribers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institutions/universities</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education colleges/colleges</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative providers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>388</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- 2 million students in HEIs
- 180,000 students in FECs
- 600 alternative providers
QAA’s mission and remit

Mission: to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK HE wherever it is delivered

✔ We develop reference points setting out expectations for UK HE providers
✔ We undertake institutional peer-reviews to check HE providers meet those expectations

Note:
✔ QAA does not assess the quality of research
✔ QAA does not accredit programmes
Academic standards

“Academic standards are the standards that individual degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of their academic credit or qualifications.”

“Threshold academic standards are the minimum level of achievement students have to reach to succeed in their courses and achieve the qualification.”
Academic quality

“How well a higher education provider supports its students in their learning: making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning resources are provided.”

“Enhancement is the process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported.”
Quality assurance

“The process of checking that the standards and quality of education provision meet agreed expectations.”
The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards
- A1: Qualifications Frameworks
- A2: Characteristics Statements
- A3: Credit Frameworks
- A4: Subject Benchmark Statements

Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality
- B1: Programme design, development and approval
- B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education
- B3: Learning and teaching
- B4: Enabling student development and achievement
- B5: Student engagement
- B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning
- B7: External examining
- B8: Programme monitoring and review
- B9: Academic appeals and student complaints
- B10: Managing higher education provision with others
- B11: Research degrees

Part C: Information about higher education provision
### Different review activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review of</th>
<th>On behalf of</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publicly funded providers</td>
<td>Funding Councils / Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNE</td>
<td>Own mission / Sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providers wishing to enrol non-EU students</td>
<td>Home Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private providers wishing to have courses designated for publicly funded student loans</td>
<td>BIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers wishing to apply for degree awarding powers and university title</td>
<td>Privy Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulate the Access to HE Diploma Concerns Scheme</td>
<td>QAA’s own mission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Typical review process

Evidence → Analysis → Review visit → Report → Action plan
Key features of QAA’s approach

- Peer review
- Evidence-based
- Risk based
- Student centred
- Enhancement oriented
- Transparent and accountable
- Collaborative
QAA and the internationalisation of UK HE
Internationalisation of UK higher education

• Second most popular destination for students wishing to pursue their higher education studies overseas
  - 10% after the United States (19%)
    (OECD 2012-13 / 2014)

• Second highest percentage of international students in higher education enrolments in the world
  - 16% after tiny Luxemburg (44%)
    (OECD 2012-13 / 2014)
Students in UK HE

- UK: 1,829,195
- Other EU: 312,010
- Non-EU: 124,575
Students in UK HE

Chart 3 - HE student enrolments by level of study, mode of study and domicile 2014/15

Percentages in this chart have been rounded and may not sum exactly to 100%

- **Undergraduate**
  - Part-time: 95% (UK), 2% (Other European Union), 3% (Non-European Union)
  - Full-time: 85% (UK), 5% (Other European Union), 10% (Non-European Union)

- **Postgraduate**
  - Part-time: 88% (UK), 5% (Other European Union), 7% (Non-European Union)
  - Full-time: 42% (UK), 12% (Other European Union), 46% (Non-European Union)

- **All student enrolments**
  - 81% (UK), 5% (Other European Union), 14% (Non-European Union)

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## Top 10 sending countries

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>67325</td>
<td>78715</td>
<td>83790</td>
<td>87895</td>
<td>89540</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>39090</td>
<td>29900</td>
<td>22385</td>
<td>19750</td>
<td>18320</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>17585</td>
<td>17620</td>
<td>17395</td>
<td>18020</td>
<td>17920</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>13900</td>
<td>14545</td>
<td>15015</td>
<td>16635</td>
<td>17060</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>15555</td>
<td>16335</td>
<td>16235</td>
<td>16485</td>
<td>16865</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>10440</td>
<td>11335</td>
<td>13065</td>
<td>14725</td>
<td>16215</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>16265</td>
<td>15985</td>
<td>14520</td>
<td>14060</td>
<td>13675</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>13325</td>
<td>12835</td>
<td>11725</td>
<td>11500</td>
<td>11955</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>16855</td>
<td>15075</td>
<td>12620</td>
<td>11490</td>
<td>10905</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>7095</td>
<td>8010</td>
<td>8320</td>
<td>9550</td>
<td>10525</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top 5 sending countries

**First year non-UK domicile students**

- China
- Total EU
- Other Asia
- Africa
- North America
- Middle East
- India
- Other Europe
- South America
- Australasia

Source: HESA Student record
Transnational Education

‘education in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based’

(UNESCO/Council of Europe 2001 Code of Good Practice in the provision of transnational education)
Cross-Border Higher Education

Cross-border mobility of students, academic staff, professionals, programmes and providers

Over 80% of UK universities are involved in some form of TNE, delivered all over the world.
The Landscape of UK TNE

In 2014-15 there were 665,000 TNE students

- a 32% increase from 2010-11 (4% from 2013-14)
- 436,500 international students in the UK – roughly constant (+2% from 2010/11 - +1% 2013/14)
- total students in the UK (2,226,000), 9% decrease from 2010/11 (-1% from 2013-14)
TNE is the main area of growth
TNE is the main area of potential growth...not only in the UK

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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internationally mobile students (m)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global tertiary enrolment (m)</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>181.7</td>
<td>198.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationally mobile as % of total</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The growth of internationally mobile students, though dramatic since 1980, mirrors the growth in global tertiary enrolments.

98% of students are not internationally mobile and can only be exposed to foreign provision through TNE

(courtesy to Nigel Healey, *Enhancing the value of TNE*, 18/01/16, London)
### Top 10 TNE host countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Students number (2014/15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>79131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>56886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>48522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>42525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>32409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)</td>
<td>29707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>18998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>16922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>16672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>16568</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top 5 UK TNE host countries

- Malaysia
- China
- Singapore
- Pakistan
- Hong Kong (SAR of China)
How does QAA respond to the internationalisation of UK HE?
Supporting and enhancing the experience of international students in the UK – a Guide for HE Providers

- Supplements the UK Quality Code
- Consolidates existing good practice, facilitating the sharing of good practice.
- Developed in consultation with the sector.
- Signals that the UK HE sector takes the experience of international students very seriously
- It reminds providers that the quality of the student experience should be at the heart of international student recruitment
The quality assurance of TNE

Institutional review processes in the UK are comprehensive

A dedicated TNE review process supplements UK reviews

A country-based approach
India (‘09), Malaysia (‘10), Singapore (‘11), China (‘12), the UAE (‘13), the Caribbean (‘14), Greece/Cyprus (‘15); 16/17 Hong Kong & Ireland?

Informed by international guidelines
QAA liaises regularly with counterpart agencies to ‘facilitate the QA of TNE while respecting the QA systems of receiving countries’ (UNESCO/OECD Guidelines)
Managing Higher Education Provision with Others:

degree-awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, *regardless* of where these opportunities are delivered and who provides them
Chapter B10 - indicators

- Strategy and governance
- Developing, agreeing and managing an arrangement to deliver learning opportunities with others
- Responsibility for, and equivalence of, academic standards
- Quality assurance
- Information for students and delivery organisations, support providers or partners
- Certificates and records of study
Consultation on strengthening the quality assurance of TNE

Responding to the call in the 2013 UK Government’s International Education Strategy:

‘to make it possible for people to access a wide choice of UK education in their own countries – and to do so with confidence that they are getting a quality product and a recognised qualification’
Consultation on strengthening the quality assurance of TNE – final report

*Developing a Strategic and Coordinated Approach to the External Quality Assurance and Enhancement of UK Transnational Education (QAA 2015)*

- Strengthen links between TNE review and domestic institutional reviews
- Strengthen cooperation with counterpart agencies in key UK TNE host countries
The QACHE project (2013-15)

- Funded by the European Commission
- Undertaken by a project consortium led by ENQA:
  - ANECA (Spain), GAC (Germany), HCERES (France), QAA (UK), TEQSA (Australia)
  - APQN and ANQAHE
- Main aims:
  - enhance international practice in the QA of CBHE
  - raise awareness in Europe about CBHE
Key findings

- Diversity of approaches and regulatory frameworks for CBHE (in/out-bound)
- Lack of information and knowledge of other agencies’ frameworks/approaches
- A ‘trust gap’ between home and host countries about the quality of CBHE
- Lack of cooperation in the QA of CBHE
The QACHE vicious circle

- Lack of information
- Lack of trust
- Lack of cooperation

= Inefficient QA of CBHE
The QACHE virtuous circle

Information \[\Rightarrow\] Trust \[\Rightarrow\] Cooperation

Efficient QA of CBHE = Networks

Quality Assurance of Cross-border Higher Education

Erasmus Mundus
The Toolkit

Offers practical guidance on:

(1) *Information sharing*: how QAAs can improve the sharing of information on CBHE

(2) *Cooperation in quality assurance*: how QAAs can enhance cooperation in its quality assurance

(3) *Networks of agencies*: how networks of QAAs can facilitate information sharing and cooperation
The scope of the Toolkit

- It is directed exclusively at QAAs (and networks)
- It does not issue guidelines for the QA of CBHE
- It is not prescriptive

- It acknowledges that QAAs don’t operate in isolation
- It recognises and respects the diversity of QAAs
Key (preliminary) findings:

• Build trust through regular engagement
• Engage all key stakeholders for implementing the Toolkit
  • with governments to enable policy/legislatival change
  • with institutions to tell us where synergies could be
  • with students to tell us about their expectations for TNE
Quality Beyond Borders Group

Informal group of agencies in key sending and receiving countries of TNE aimed at facilitating information sharing and trust building around TNE and its QA

Led by KHDA (Dubai), it includes QAA, TEQSA (Australia) NEASC, WASC (USA), CPE (Singapore), HKCAAVQ (Hong Kong), and MQA (Malaysia)

Currently working on developing:
• a shared understanding of the equivalency of the TNE student experience
• protocols for sharing information on cross-border provision and global providers
TNE UAE 2013-4: cooperation with KHDA

✓ KHDA briefed the QAA review team
✓ KHDA shared its annual census data with us
✓ KHDA engaged in the QAA review visit
✓ KHDA and QAA coordinated the communication strategy
✓ KHDA relaxed criteria for programme approval
QAA’s international engagement

Membership in international networks
✓ ENQA, INQAAHE, APQN, CHEA-IQG, CBQAN, QBBG

Strategic links with partner agencies worldwide
✓ CDGDC, CEAIE, HKCAAVQ, CPE, MQA, KHDA, TEQSA

International services
✓ Consultancies, training, reviews of foreign providers.
Round Table - good practices in the quality assurance of TNE

Dr. Fabrizio Trifiro’, Deputy Head International, QAA

AACCUP Annual Conference, 17 February 2016, Manila
Challenges: a QAA’s perspective

• Striking a balance between desk-based analysis and overseas visits

• Better aligning UK institutional review and TNE review

• Improving the information base

• Striking a balance between risk-based scrutiny and quality enhancement
Good practices: a QAA’s perspective

Collaborate with sending/host country QA bodies to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of review process
• share information, cooperate in QA activities (QACHE Toolkit)

Listen to the providers’ and students’ perspective about challenges and benefits of TNE provision
• strict equivalency vs. relevance of provision
• duplication of regulation
Challenges: the QACHE project

- Diversity of approaches and regulatory frameworks for CBHE (in/out-bound)
- Lack of information and knowledge of other agencies’ frameworks/approaches
- A ‘trust gap’ between home and host countries about the quality of CBHE
- Lack of cooperation in the QA of CBHE
QACHE Toolkit: Information sharing

QAAAs should share information about their respective QA systems and about cross-border providers, *with a view to facilitating mutual understanding and building mutual trust*

1.1. have clear and accessible policies for the QA of CBHE

1.2. make easily accessible a list of those institutions they have quality assured, including any eventual list of quality assured CBHE provision, and associated reports

1.3. seek to establish regular channels of communication to facilitate information sharing, strengthen mutual understanding, and explore ways in which to cooperate in the QA of CBHE
QACHE Toolkit: Cooperation in quality assurance

QAAs should seek to coordinate and cooperate in their review activity of cross-border higher education, *with a view to avoiding regulatory gaps and duplication of efforts, and to lessening the regulatory burdens on providers.*

2.1. Contact the counterpart agency whenever undertaking review of inbound or outbound CBHE

2.2. Seek ways to make use of or rely on each other’s collected information or quality assurance decisions

2.3. Seek ways in which review activity of CBHE could be undertaken jointly
Challenges and good practices: a provider’s perspective

✓ Cultural distance
  • induct UK and partner’s staff – reciprocal clarity about the nature of a partnership

✓ Geographical distance
  • invest in IT and be prepared to travel

✓ Adequate and specialist staff capacity
  • train staff and plan resources from the start

✓ Regulatory jungles
  • understand local contexts – keep abreast of changes
Top tips for providers

- Due diligence and thorough planning
  - Get it right from the start
- Have a clear strategy and prioritise
  - Do not overstretch
- Communicate well and visit often
  - Clarify expectations and monitor regularly
- Central oversight of all TNE provision
  - Allows for a more strategic approach, consistency, and mainstreaming of processes
Challenges and good practices: a student’s perspective

✓ Relevant programmes
  • Contextualised

✓ Different delivery models
  • Block-teaching, fly-in/fly-out / full-time branch campus/partner delivery / blended learning,

✓ Recognition of qualifications
  • Clear information on the value of qualifications

✓ Feeling part of the degree-awarding body
  • Regular communication & support services
Thank you

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