

Quality assurance – the European context

Peter Findlay
QAA UK



Overview

- Survey of QA approaches in Europe
- Trends in external quality assurance
- What's still to do?
- Summary



ENQA survey 2008

The analysis of the types of activities covered by agencies shows that, whilst two-thirds of agencies use programme level procedures, just less than half work at institutional level. Some agencies cover both...But changing patterns in the overall work of agencies appear to be emerging with, in several cases, a shift away from programme evaluation either being instigated or discussed.

External quality assurance in Europe – mainly institution focus

- EUA
- UK
- Ireland
- France
- Austria (AQA)
- Hungary
- Switzerland
- Italy
- Spain and Catalonia
- Norway
- Finland
- [Sweden]
- [Denmark]



External quality assurance in Europe – mainly programme focus

- Germany (the Agencies)
- Austria (FHR)
- Belgium
- Netherlands
- Bulgaria
- Cyprus
- Czech
- Slovak
- Estonia



Quality Assurance Life Cycle

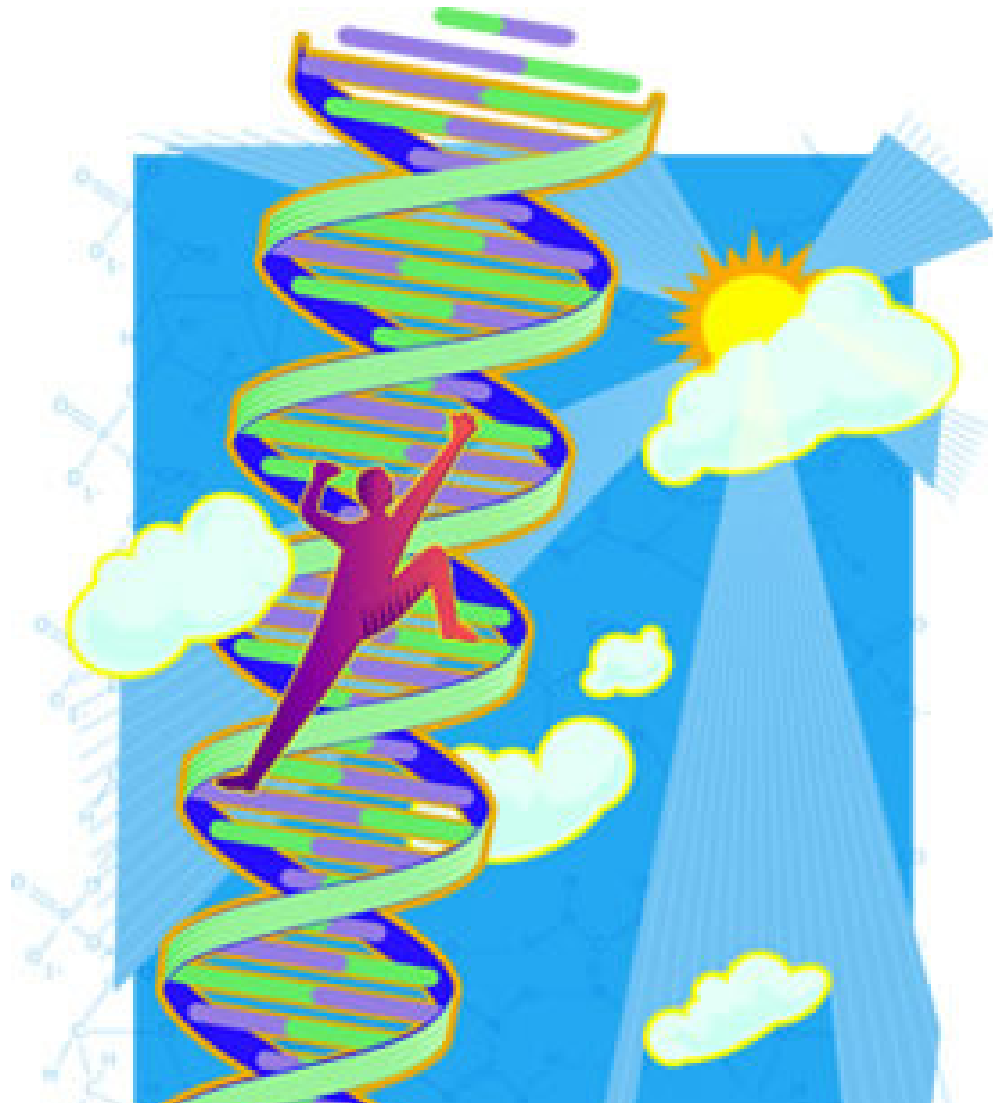
From assurance to enhancement

| Stage | Purpose | Method | Features |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| DEVELOPING | to establish QA systems | external review set agenda | prescriptive requirements Programme level |
| ESTABLISHED | to confirm systems are working effectively | external review + internal review | self evaluation external confirmation programme and institution |
| MATURE | to provide public assurance | external review + internal review | self evaluation external confirmation institution level |
| ADVANCED | to promote quality Improvement | Internal review + external Participation | self evaluation self reporting institution level |

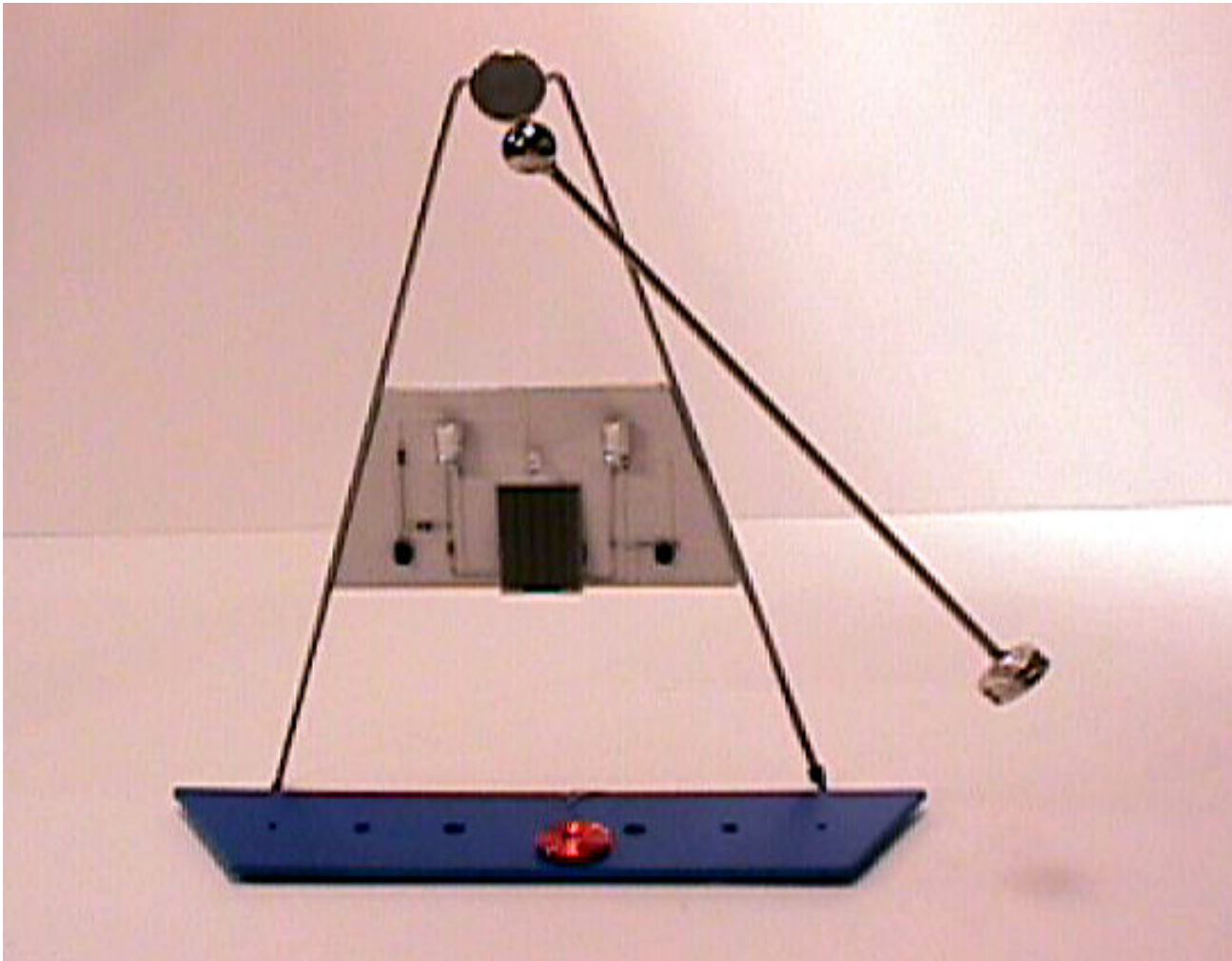


QAA

Onwards and upwards?



Or a political pendulum?



Some trends

- Development of qualification frameworks, national and international
- Growing consensus on quality assurance principles and approaches
- Inter-relationship of internal and external QA
- Student centred approaches to QA
- Linkage of assurance and enhancement



Qualifications Frameworks

- QF – designed to ensure equivalence and consistency of awards
- Define key knowledge and skills for awards
- Define levels of awards, some include intermediate levels
- European examples: Dublin descriptors; TUNING
- Support flexibility of study, national and international recognition and transfer
- An early stage of development, but clearly emerging

Emergence of qualifications frameworks

| | Qualifications framework type | Level of development | Number of countries | Percentage of total countries |
|--------|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Totals | NQF (National QFs) | 0 | 94 | 46.5% |
| | | 1 | 83 | 41.1% |
| | | 2 | 16 | 7.9% |
| | | 3 | 8 | 4.0% |
| | RQF (Regional QFs) | 0 | 122 | 60.4% |
| | | 1 | 68 | 33.7% |
| | | 2 | 12 | 5.9% |
| | | 3 | 0 | 0.0% |
| | TQF (Transnational QFs) | 0 | 168 | 83.2% |
| | | 1 | 34 | 16.8% |
| | | 2 | 0 | 0.0% |
| | | 3 | 0 | 0.0% |



Quality assurance methods - consensus

- Common core QA principles
 - National QA frameworks
 - published criteria for external QA evaluation
 - self evaluation document
 - external review with external experts
 - report (often published)



Quality assurance methods – emerging trends

- Programme and institutional accreditation for specified validity periods
- Quantitative quality requirements -MIS
- Varied extent of public disclosure
- Traditional peer review combined with employer involvement and student input
- Some inclusion of international peers



Quality assurance – trends in institutions

- Institutions internalise QA methods (e.g internal review processes)
- Extending and embedding staff ownership and involvement
- Professionalisation of quality assurance management
- Broader and deeper quality assurance approaches (quality management, quality enhancement, leadership initiatives, staff development)



Internal and external quality assurance - interdependence

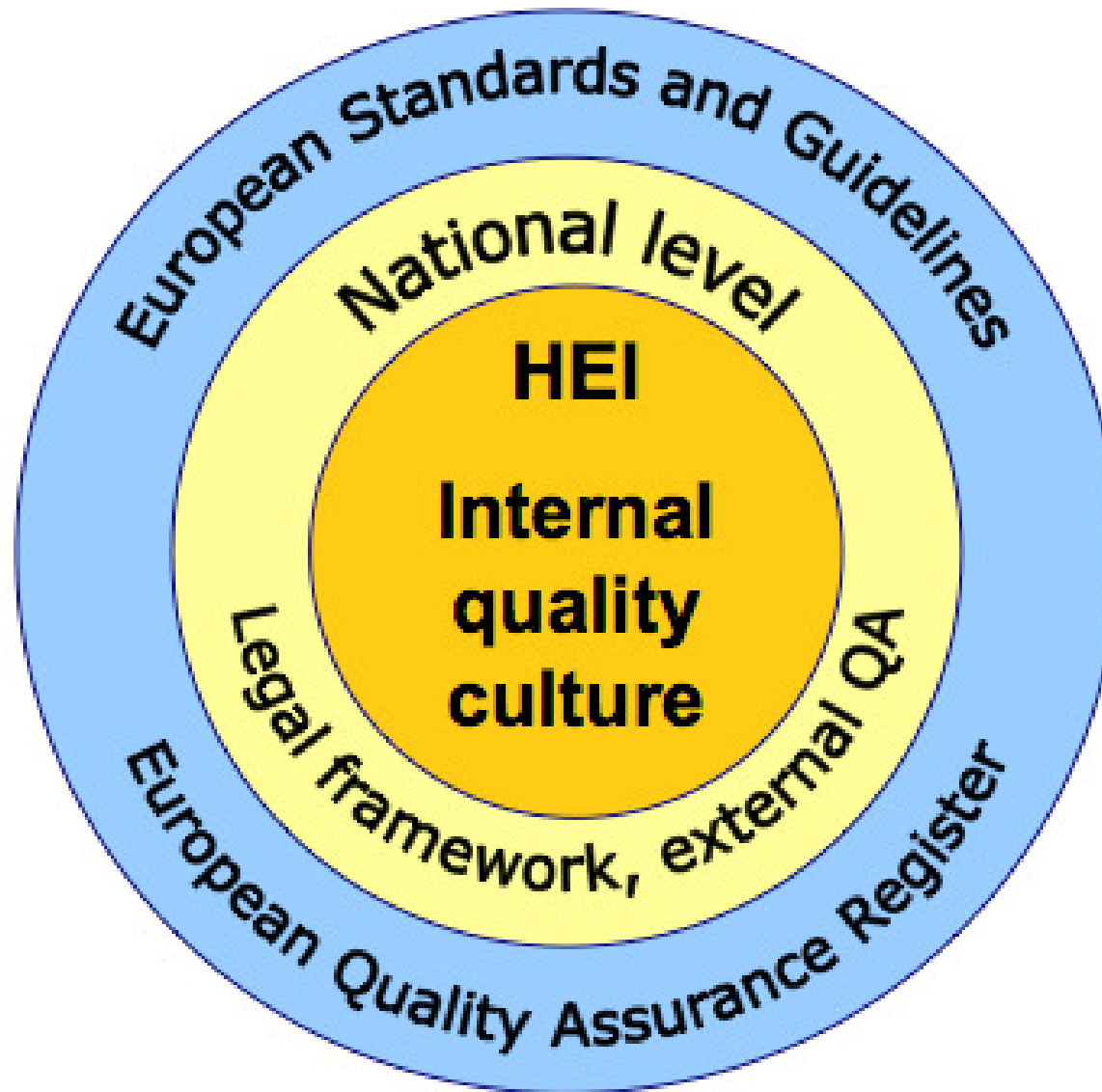
- Recognition of the linkage and relationships (knowledge/communication)
- Political dynamics – stronger internal justifies ‘lighter touch’ external
- External QA – slow shift movement from judgement to advice
- Working to common frameworks (e.g. European Standards and Guidelines)



ENQA survey

Agencies are changing their QA procedures in significant ways, with features of the Bologna Process being amongst the drivers. Of these, alignment with the ESG was shown in the survey to be particularly important. Qualifications frameworks are also becoming increasingly important reference points for QA procedures – with agencies often involved the development of their national qualifications frameworks and in time, no doubt, the self certification of these against the FQEHEA.





Student centred developments

- Learning outcomes driven curriculum design and assessment
- Information to students
- Student 'voice' in institution
- Student participation and input to review activity
- Staff quality – learning and teaching initiatives

Assurance and enhancement

Quality assurance as a part of a strategic management system

Information derived from QA informs planning and development, addresses gaps and weakness, stimulates innovation and development

Strengthening institutional level management of quality

QA is not separate but closely related to improvement



One definition of enhancement

λ 'the process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities'

Handbook paragraph 46

Some areas for attention?

- Staff support and development
- Post-graduate research
- Needs of international students
- Collaborative and trans-national programmes
- E-learning and blended learning approaches
- Employability and work-based learning



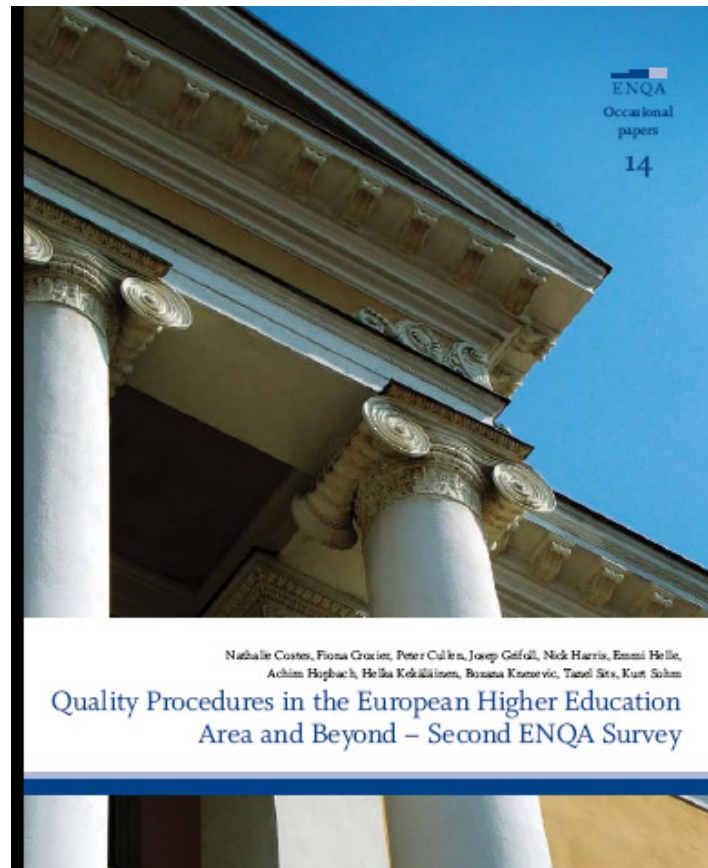
European quality assurance: the longer term

- Common concepts
 - Common language
 - Shared understandings and values
 - A European HE quality culture?
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- Qualifications recognition
 - Comparable academic standards
 - Useful information for stakeholders
 - Improved academic professionalism
 - Better higher education

In summary.....

- Growing internationalisation and cross-border sharing
- From programme to institution level
- Focus on the student experience
- More developed information and evidence demands
- Integration into management – professionalisation of QA

A source text



Thank you for your attention.....

