

ELLS Meeting Warsaw: QA Workshop, 25-26th, 2006

Proceedings

0. Participants

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1. ELLS Call 2006: Quality criteria project

Explanation of process-orientation and terms

The QA group decided to focus within the quality criteria project on the following issues on joint programmes, at the moment with special emphasis on point **1a and 1b**. Point 4 could be a future ELLS project, e.g. development of questionnaires.

1. Curriculum development

Result: degree programme description (=curriculum)

Process of curriculum development:

The QA group recommends to use the EUA guidelines for programme development as a basis for curriculum development. Further amendments will be made to the EUA guidelines.

Eventually the criteria developed under point b, will then provide the guidelines for the curriculum development.

a. Degree programme description (= curriculum)

Definition of criteria for assessing essential elements of a Master degree programme, e.g. admission, learning outcomes, thesis evaluation, description of the self assessment QA process.

Criteria are defined as standards which programmes are judged against, examples for such criteria were discussed during the workshop:

- i. The QA group recommends using and adapting the TUNING aspects, especially the findings of TUNING 3 should be interesting. TUNING has adapted and further defined the Dublin descriptors, which are very general. Further documents will be reviewed, too.

- ii. For admission the QA suggests to take the highest language level from the ELLS universities
2. **Curriculum approval** at different levels
 - a. within the institution (=implementation)
 - b. at national level through a national agency where appropriate.
3. **Curriculum delivery** (realisation of programme)
4. **Final programme evaluation**

Once the programme is delivered, it is evaluated.
The programme coordinator has to write a self-evaluation report and the report is evaluated by the QA group after the first two cycles (usually 3 years).

Review of new ELLS curricula through the QA group.

The QA group decides that from now on new curricula will have to be submitted to the QA group before final approval. Therefore the following steps will have to be followed:

1. SA group submits its degree programme description to the board#
2. The board sends it to the QA group
3. The curriculum is reviewed by each member of the group
4. The QA group deals with the curriculum in its next meeting.
5. The QA group then elaborates a joint recommendation which is submitted to the Board.
6. The Boards finally decides on the approval of the Master programme.

One of the advantages of this procedure is that the QA group will not become involved in the process of curriculum development and remains independent.

ELLS QA group sees itself as an internal quality assurance group, but besides there are also external quality assurances (e.g. accreditation agencies).

In reference to the above the group also discussed whether a central ELLS quality enhancement unit shall be set up. On the one hand, the group still supports this suggestion strongly and agreed also on the other hand, that there is very little chance to obtain funds for a central ELLS quality enhancement unit.

Further comments/explanations

- Difference between supervisor and examiner:
An independent examiner is assessing the thesis report and assures thereby that certain standards are met, whereas a supervisor guides the student during his/her work
- What is the indicator for the effectiveness of a programme?
- In this session also a comparison between the realised activities and the proposal for the 2006 project and the suggested outcomes was made.

2. Degree programme description of “ENVEURO”

Evaluation of the programme is difficult as there are no quality criteria at the moment. Therefore it is suggested not to give any feedback to the group. As it seems to be a good degree programme description, the QA group may use it as another basis for developing criteria.

It was also discussed that the programme could be judged according to formal criteria – but this idea will not be further pursued.

3. Core curriculum on staff development in teaching and learning

The proposal is very important for the quality of teaching, but at the moment should not be presented to the board, as it is poorly developed, e.g.

- Missing need of the course
For example the following introduction could be added:
It is recognised that there is variation in provision among ELLS universities. It is import that the teaching staff at ELLS universities have the opportunity to develop their expertise in the delivery of education.
- Missing length of the course and ECTS.
- The document has to be restructured, as two different types of learning outcomes are defined.

Suggestions

- The QA group recommends the board that there is a need to develop a benchmark course. As the second joint Master will start soon, it is important to ensure the quality of teaching.
- Learning outcomes of the course should be described and not the course content.
- Each university should provide such a course, although at some universities due to lacking expertise this could be a problem and external experts are necessary.

Further comments:

- Two years ago, a situation analysis on staff development in teaching and learning was carried out.
- Which university has experts, who can develop a course-outline?

4. ELLS Summer Schools 2006

Some findings of the evaluation of the summer schools:

- Overall very good ratings
- Students´ expectations not always met

- Language skills not always appropriate (students and even lecturers)
- Uncertain recognition within home university degree programme
- Mid term evaluation as a valuable exercise, was not carried out by each summer-school.
- External examiners only involved in 1 out of 6

Further discussion:

- QA members should ask for discussion with the programme coordinators.
- External examiners should be part of the summer schools, it is the task of the coordinators to look for them.

Organisational procedures for the evaluation of a summer-school:

1. The course coordinator is responsible for carrying out the evaluations and other QA measures.
2. The questionnaires are sent to the respective QA member of the home university
3. The questionnaires are evaluated in a first step by students under the supervision of the QA member.
4. The QA group member elaborates on the basis of this a first summary.
5. The results and comments are sent to course coordinator, who fills out the summer school report form and sends it back to the QA member.

→ **A standardized report form for summer schools has to be elaborated by the QA group.** Simon recommends to take the evaluation form of the University of Aberdeen as basis therefore, see: www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/download.hti.

Quality label

The QA group plans to award a label for ELLS summer schools in 2007. Summer courses need to demonstrate their quality for several (at least 3) years otherwise it is quite superficial. The label is awarded for the moment - if the standards are not maintained, the summer-school loses the label.

The label should be awarded rather on terms of course delivery than on outcomes: this process is reflected in the course-coordinator's report.

Further comments

- It is difficult to assess the academic outcome; this would only be possible through an external examiner.
Task for external examiner: Whether the course content relates to the learning outcomes.
- Master students shall be the first target group for ELLS and summer schools?

Action:

- **Language skills – to ensure a certain level small test shall be developed**
 - Uli asks language centre at UHOH and
 - Thomas asks CIR for admission exams for advanced English courses
 - Daniela will ask programme co-ordinators for an appropriate language skills.
- → **Standard procedures and Quality criteria for the ELLS label have to be elaborated.**

5. Proposal 2007

Difference between ICA “QUALITY” project and the ELLS QA project 2007:

- The ICA “QUALITY” project seeks to develop an accreditation process which goes beyond national boundaries. On an inter- or transnational level it tries to find benchmarks and has also included a feasibility study for setting up an international accreditation agency.
- The ELLS proposal intends to stay within the national systems and to fit into the national accreditation systems. ELLS does not plan to set up an international accreditation agency: Already established and approved accreditation agencies should accredit ELLS joint degrees. Benchmarks are already defined here.

Further comments

- National accreditation agencies only award national labels
- A focus should be that Master degree of ELLS have quality
- It is necessary to develop procedures so that each accreditation agency trusts another national agency.
- Number of diplomas (double,..) could be a problem for accreditation, it would be better if only one diploma is issued, as it fits better into the national accreditation systems.
- Work/results of ELLS would be helpful to the QUALITY project
- There are no special criteria for accrediting applied life sciences, they are accredited according to general accreditation framework or according to criteria for natural sciences or engineering sciences.
- It is a very important point for the students that their diplomas are accepted in other countries.

Next Meeting

Envisaged: March 8-9th in Hohenheim, Simon cannot come and asks for a change of the date.