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Quality Assurance and the Development of Course Programmes

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Preface

This publication is the fourth realization in a series of four publications on aspects of governance in higher education that are being produced as a partial outcome of the joint UNESCO-CEPES - European Commission project to create a Regional University Network on Governance and Management of Higher Education in South East Europe. The Programme was originally presented through Table One "Democracy and Good Governance" of the Stability Pact for South East Europe as part of its "quick-start package". It has been developed through the Task Force on Education and Youth, Enhanced Graz Process, a coordinating mechanism for educational co-operation with South East Europe.

The basic assumption of the Programme is that, when considering the overall situation in the countries of the region, education in general - higher education in particular - should play a key role in supporting the search for sustainable peace, reconciliation, and development of civil society.

Its wider objectives include the following:

- to integrate the universities and higher education authorities of Southeastern Europe into existing European networks;
- to develop higher education policies that are based on European standards and international best practice in the areas of strategic management, financial management, relations with civil society, and quality assurance;
- to develop national and institutional capacities and skills in higher education strategic management and policy making;
- to stimulate the establishment and/or consolidation of new structures and mechanisms of financial management, based on the principles of university autonomy and accountability, while encouraging the

establishment of links with civil society and local economies.

The anticipated outcomes of the programme are expected to include the following: *(i)* integration of the countries of South Eastern Europe into the European Higher Education Area as defined in the Bologna Declaration; *(ii)* the creation of a network of the authorities and institutions involved in higher education through which good practice in academic governance, policy making, strategic and financial management, and quality assurance in higher education can be exchanged; *(iii)* strengthened national institutional capacities and skills in regard to strategic management and policy making in higher education; *(iv)* the creation of new structures and mechanisms for financial management, based on the principles of university autonomy and accountability, while encouraging links with civil society and local economies.

This volume, that brings the series to a close, is both an extended essay and a source manual on the necessity for good quality assurance mechanisms in higher education. Its authors, Carolyn Campbell of the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom, and Christina Rozsnyai of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, are experts in the field.

Part I of the volume describes the origins and the concepts of the quality assurance systems that have been emerging in higher education throughout Europe, North America, and elsewhere. Examples are chosen from Western Europe and from Central and Eastern Europe. The question of programme assessment and evaluation *versus* institutional evaluation is discussed as is the question of one or several evaluation and assessment agencies for any one country.

Part II of the volume consists of a number of readings on topical issues drawn from a variety of mostly official sources illustrating how different quality assurance organizations in different countries operate. In addition, a glossary of frequently used terms is included as well as a set of short descriptions of the quality assurance institutions in fifteen Central and Eastern European countries.

In addition to listing the references cited in Parts I and II of the volume, Part III includes a set of specialized bibliographies on the subject of quality assurance in higher education. Some of the publications in one or more of the bibliographies are followed by short summaries. The Websites of the major quality assurance agencies in Europe and America are also listed.

In short, this publication will give the reader a very comprehensive overview of the phenomenon of quality assurance in higher education. It, along with the other volumes: No. 1, a survey of governance structures of higher education in several countries of South East Europe (with suggestions for improvement), No. 2, an extended essay on strategic planning and management of higher education, and No. 3, a study of financial management in higher education, particularly formula funding, provide a comprehensive set of suggestions as to how best to approach the global reform of governance in higher education.

The four volumes have been published in the UNESCO-CEPES series, Papers on Higher Education. Our hope is that they will contribute strongly to the anticipated goal of creating a successful Regional University Network of Governance and Management of Higher Education in South East Europe.

Jan Sadlak
Director of UNESCO-CEPES

Part I

Understanding the Phenomenon of Quality Assurance

Chapter 1

Background – The Changing Context of Higher Education

1.1. THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION - A DRIVER FOR THE EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

Quality assurance in higher education was until relatively recently an implicit activity. Arguments that quality could not be measured but could be recognized by academics when and where it existed were prevalent. However, over the last two decades, a number of factors have combined to challenge traditional views about quality in higher education and how it is assured. These factors have been elaborated by many commentators - individuals and organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank – and have led to the making of quality assurance in higher education "a central objective of governmental policies and an important steering mechanism in higher education systems worldwide" (Van Damme, 2002, p. 6).

In the rapidly changing environment of higher education, the maintenance of high quality and standards in education has become a major concern for higher education institutions and governments; thus, the demand for explicit quality evaluation and assurance processes has increased. The result has been the introduction of national quality assurance systems into many countries and the planned introduction of such systems into other countries.

The challenges facing higher education worldwide include the following:

– the need to assure quality and standards against a background of substantially increased participation – a

process often referred to as the massification of higher education. This process accelerated throughout the latter part of the Twentieth Century as many countries began to consider that their economic and social future was dependent, in part, on the availability of quality higher education for the majority of the population rather than for a small élite. However, expansion has not always been well planned or controlled;

- the expansion in student numbers with either constant or declining (public) funding resulting in a lower unit of resource per student. This position has been compounded by the inefficient use of available resources. Examples of inefficiencies include overly high staff-student ratios, programme duplication in many small institutions/units with high unit costs, and under-utilized facilities. Such inefficiencies divert resources from such objectives as quality and access (World Bank, 2002);
- increased demand for accountability in higher education institutions as a result of deregulation and the granting of increased autonomy in regard to such matters as curriculum design, the selection of students, and the appointment of staff. However, increased autonomy has not always been accompanied either by financial authority or by improved institutional management and strategic planning capabilities;
- the meeting of new expectations in terms of the "employability" of graduates in the knowledge society;
- the addressing of demands from a variety of stakeholders for increased and improved information about programmes and institutions and about the skills, competencies, and aptitudes which graduates possess;
- the contribution to the achievement of social and political agendas such as access, inclusion, and equity.

In addition to these factors, recent developments include the appearance of new providers of tertiary education, sometimes in competition with traditional public higher education, and new

modes of provision, such as on-line learning, resulting from the information and communication technology revolution. An example of this type of competition is reflected in the "new technologies" and the rise of the "Academies" of Microsoft, Cisco, and SAP, *et al.*, that have created a parallel universe of IT qualifications and standards with global coverage (Adelman, 2000).

Quality in higher education is not only a national concern but has become an international issue through academic, political, and commercial developments associated with globalization, such as the rise of market forces in tertiary education and the emergence of a global market for skilled professionals and graduates. In some countries, the traditional providers of higher education are facing competition from transnational education providers as well as from the emergence of local commercial providers. Through the internationalization of higher education national systems, qualifications and individual higher education institutions have become exposed to the wider world. This exposure has stimulated a demand for better information and transparency about quality and standards in order to attract and retain students and staff, both national and international students, and to secure the recognition of qualifications.

Quality assurance is a central thrust in the process of change in European higher education following the signing of the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué (<http://www.msmt.cz/summit/prague>), and has been highlighted as a policy implication in the discussions being sponsored by the Global Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) on the further liberalization of the trade in education services (<http://www.wto.org>).

Chapter 2

Concepts of and Approaches to Quality

2.1. CONCEPTS OF QUALITY

There are many different understandings of the term, quality, often reflecting the interests of different constituencies or stakeholders in higher education. Thus, quality is a multidimensional and often a subjective concept (PHARE Multicountry Handbook, 1998).

Conceptions of quality were categorized by Harvey and Green (1993), and were elaborated in the *PHARE Manual of Quality Assurance: Procedures and Practices* (1998). They include the following:

- *Quality as excellence*. This definition is considered to be the traditional academic view that holds as its goal to be the best.
- *Quality as "zero errors".* The idea of "zero errors" is defined most easily in mass industry in which product specifications can be established in detail, and standardized measurements of uniform products can show conformity to them. As the "products" of higher education, the graduates, are not expected to be identical, this view is not always considered to be applicable to higher education.
- *Quality as "fitness for purpose".* This view requires that the product or service meet a customer's needs, requirements, or desires. Learners (students) and prospective learners, those who fund higher education, the academic community, government, and society at large are to a greater or lesser extent all clients or users of higher education but may have very different views of both "purpose" and "fitness".

A major weakness of the fitness for purpose concept is that it may seem to imply that "anything goes" in higher education so long as a purpose can be formulated for it. This weakness is more likely to be exacerbated in large and diverse higher education systems in which a wide range of "purposes" at institutional level may be identified by individual institutions, generally through their mission statements, and at more precise academic levels through the learning outcomes of particular programmes. This diversity is often further complicated in transnational and distance education (situations in which educational provision crosses borders) as there is frequently a divergence of national views between "sending" and "receiving" countries as to both "fitness" and "purpose".

By complementing "fitness for purpose" with a notion of "fitness *of purpose*", an evaluation can consider and challenge the comprehensiveness and relevance of purposes in order to ensure improvements.

– *Quality as transformation*. This concept focuses firmly on the learners: the better the higher education institution, the more it achieves the goal of empowering students with specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes which enable them to live and work in the knowledge society. This notion of quality may be particularly appropriate when there have been significant changes in the profile of learners, for example, when changes in society or politics have enhanced access to higher education for large numbers of disadvantaged learners. It is argued that the delivery of a transformational quality approach involves five key elements (Harvey and Knight, 1996, p. 117):

  - envisioning quality as a transformational process designed to enhance the experience of students;

- a bottom-up approach to continuous improvement;
- responsiveness and openness as the means of gaining greater trust;
- an emphasis on effective action;

- external monitoring which is sensitive to internal procedures (and values).

While this notion is popular, it may be difficult to measure quality as transformation in terms of intellectual capital (Lomas, 2002).

– *Quality as threshold*. Defining a threshold for quality means setting certain norms and criteria. Any programme, department, or institution, which reaches these norms and criteria, is deemed to be of quality. The advantage of setting a threshold is that it is objective and certifiable. However, there are arguments that setting a threshold creates uniformity across the higher education system. This argument might well apply if institutions adopt a "compliance" mentality and only do what is sufficient to satisfy the minimum. There are significant disadvantages to this concept, especially when the criteria and standards are based on quantitative "input" factors enshrined in law. It cannot readily be adapted to changing circumstances or to stimulate change and innovation. In this respect, the "threshold" can mitigate against improvement. Neither does it take account of "output" standards, the actual level of achievement by graduates, the criteria used to assess these achievements, and how that assessment is verified. Nevertheless, in many European higher education systems, a "minimum standards" variant has been used if only as a starting point in the quest for quality.
– *Quality as value for money*. The notion of accountability is central to this definition of quality with accountability

being based on the need for restraint in public expenditure, (Lomas, 2000).

– *Quality as enhancement or improvement*. This concept emphasizes the pursuit of continuous improvement and is predicated on the notion that achieving quality is central to the academic ethos and that it is academics themselves who know best what quality is at any point in time. Disadvantages of this concept are that it is difficult to "measure" improvement and that the evidence of improvement may not be easily discernible to the outside world.

Some of these concepts of quality still hold true especially when explicit quality assurance and accreditation procedures are being developed and introduced for the first time either at system or at institutional level. But, notions of quality are evolving or merging, either as the result of the changing context in which higher education institutions are operating in some countries, or as a result of growing expertise within higher education systems and institutions in devising their own concepts of quality and models of evaluation and quality management. Mismatches between the requirements of the external quality assurance agency and institutional approaches to quality can be a cause of tension in relations.

2.2. APPROACHES TO QUALITY AND STANDARDS

Some interest has been shown in the application of quality processes and standards adapted from other sectors, for example, ISO 9001:2000 standards, to higher education institutions. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) <http://www.iso.ch/en> is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies from 140 countries. Established in 1947, it is a non-governmental organization with the mission to promote the development of standardization and related activities in the world with a view to facilitating the international exchange of goods and services and to developing co-operation in the spheres of intellectual, scientific, technological, and

economic activity. ISO has developed standards and a process for certifying that organizations have achieved them.

ISO has been described as requiring organizations "to say what they do, do what they say, then prove it to a third party" (Seddon, 2000). Universities have tended to seek this certification for aspects of their non-academic services such as conference facilities, such student services as accommodation and careers advice and individual academic departments, rather than for their internal quality monitoring or academic processes as a whole. One European Quality Assurance Agency (*Agencia per la Qualitat del Sistema Universitaria Cataluyna* (<http://www.agenqua.org>) has sought and gained ISO 9002 Certification for its own processes. A criticism of the ISO approach has been of its perceived focus on process rather than on outcomes. This criticism is apparently being addressed in the new process standards 9001:2000 which feature an increased focus on customer satisfaction.

The continuous quality improvement model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), the "Excellence" model, is another example of a standard for business and industry which has developed a variant to be applied to public sector services (<http://www.efqm.org/new_website/>). The model is being used by several universities in The United Kingdom, (<http://www.excellence.shu.ac.uk>), Germany, and Turkey, and the second round of institutional accreditation in Hungary will be based on this model adapted to local needs. The impetus to establish EFQM came from a desire to develop a European framework for quality improvement, based on Total Quality Management (TQM) principles, along the lines of the Malcolm Baldridge Model in the USA and the Deming Prize in Japan, (see <http://www.qpronline.com/baldridge/index.html> for further information).

The EFQM also supports benchmarking exercises that it views as a powerful tool in the quest for continuous improvement. The European Benchmarking Code of Conduct, a

guide intended to advance the professionalism and effectiveness of benchmarking in Europe, is published by EFQM. Higher education institutions in some countries are increasingly interested in benchmarking. This interest is reflected in the purposes and aims of some of the national evaluation agencies (see below) and has been the topic of recent workshops organized by the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA – see <http://www.enqan.net> for details).

Developments in new forms of provision in higher education such as on-line or "e"-learning and cross border or transnational education are prompting the articulation of new standards and criteria at both national and institutional level in higher education. Conflicting views exist as to whether or not the same standards and evaluation approaches can be used for different segments of the tertiary education system and whether they can be applied to traditional and new forms of higher education provision alike. For those for whom the answer is yes, the way forward is viewed as a focus on defining academic standards and qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and competencies rather than as a focus on traditional input and process factors. Arguments for embracing the same standards and qualifications include the desire to accommodate diversity and to facilitate lifelong learning without creating a confusing jungle of separate qualifications. Whatever view is taken, a consensus is emerging about the need for clearer standards and criteria as well as for better information and disclosure about institutional and student performance.

Whatever concept of quality is adopted by a national system, the evaluation procedures introduced by the external evaluation agency must match it. The same principle applies at institutional level as well, but all institutions within a system need not adopt the same approach to quality in any one system.

It has recently been observed that, "twenty years of operational expertise in quality assurance in higher education has not led to a consensus on how the concept of quality should be defined, rather the opposite" (Van Damme, 2002).

2.3. ESTABLISHING A REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITY: A ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT

The external evaluation of the quality of higher education provision began more than a hundred years ago, with the introduction of accreditation in the United States of America. However, accreditation in the United States was and still is organized by non-governmental organizations which either accredit institutions (the "regional" accreditors and some national accreditors) or programmes (the specialized accreditors and some national accreditors). While accreditation is voluntary and non-governmental, it is, nevertheless, a requirement for access to Federal government funding such as student loans (through recognition of the accreditors by the United States Department of Education), and may be a requirement for the licensing of professionals by authorities in individual States. Accreditation has facilitated – but not necessarily guaranteed - credit transfer between institutions and also student admission to graduate programmes. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA <http://www.chea.org>) is a non–governmental body which carries out the recognition of accreditation agencies in the United States and fosters research on aspects of accreditation and related quality assurance matters.

The American approach to quality in higher education contrasted with early approaches to quality in Europe which, in the main, were based on legislation and government control over higher education institutions and the design of programmes. However, many European governments have determined that traditional academic controls and legislation are not effective in dealing with the range of challenges faced by higher education and have either introduced or facilitated the establishment of explicit quality assurance systems. More detailed commentary on and analysis of the development of external quality assurance in Western and Central and Eastern Europe follows below.

2.4. THE PURPOSE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

At system level, the purpose of quality assurance has to be determined and communicated to higher education institutions. There is continuous debate as to whether the emphasis of external quality assurance should be on accountability or on improvement and how an appropriate balance between these two purposes might be struck. It might be appropriate in certain circumstances, for instance, if addressing the rapid growth of unregulated private education or the introduction of new types of institutions or qualifications, to put an emphasis on accountability and compliance. However, as institutions develop more effective and sophisticated internal quality assurance mechanisms, pressure will grow to move the balance from compliance to improvement. Moreover, if external requirements, for example, in respect of programme approval and design are very rigid, there may be limited scope to demonstrate improvement and institutions may not have the flexibility to respond either rapidly or in an innovative manner to new demands.

2.5. THE SCOPE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

The scope of quality assurance is often determined by the shape and size of the higher education system itself. The tendency is for a single national agency to evaluate all higher education provision (both university and non-university provision), but there are some notable exceptions of countries in which there are separate agencies that are responsible for different types of programmes, institutions, regions, or purposes. These exceptions reflect not only the different stages of development within higher education systems but also political and cultural preferences (World Bank, 2002). Definitions of the scope of quality assurance can be narrow or broad. An example of the latter, that is, a *broad scope***,** might include the following dimensions (Middlehurst, 2001; ENQA):

– *Regulation:* including legal frameworks, governance, responsibilities, and accountabilities;

- *educational process:* admission/selection of students, registration or enrollment, curriculum design and delivery, support for learning, assessment of students;
- *curriculum design and content:* approval and/or accreditation levels and standards;
- *learning experience:* user protection, student experience, complaints, and appeals;
- *outcomes*: qualifications, certificates, transcripts, the Diploma Supplement, transferability, recognition, and value.

The respective roles of the national system and institutions need to be addressed. While both may have a role in all of these dimensions of quality assurance, it may not be of equal weight.

2.6. THE COST OF EVALUATION

Cost may be an important consideration in determining factors such as the focus, scope, and purposes of an external evaluation system. Costs include not only those of the setting up of the agency and of the operation of the external process but also the hidden costs to institutions. The latter include staff time in preparing for external evaluation and the collection and collation of information for the self-evaluation and have to be taken into account in determining the type and amount of information to be provided by institutions to external agencies. The more such information can be drawn from that which already exists within institutions or which would be of use to institutions for their own internal quality systems, the better. Other factors, which might be taken into account in deciding on the focus and scope of evaluation, include:

- the number and types of institutions in the national system;
- whether or not institutions, individual programmes, or broader groupings of subject/disciplines are to be the focus. The costs of either evaluating or accrediting on a programme-by-programme basis may be substantial. It is

worth noting that countries such as The Netherlands and Germany are, or will be, using this basis for the accreditation of their new Bachelor's and Master's Degrees. This situation contrasts with that prevailing in the United States, in which accreditation of individual programmes only applies in areas such as business and management, health and medicine, technology and engineering, or for certain types of provision, *e.g.*, distance learning;

- the frequency of evaluations – a national cycle at programme level or on an *ad hoc*/on demand basis? The length of cycles of evaluation tends to vary but is never less than three years (unless a serious problem has been identified) and can extend up to ten years;
- the remuneration of experts. In many systems, experts are recruited on a "volunteer" basis and receive only reimbursement for expenses for travel and subsistence; however, in others, there may be some kind of honorarium or indeed some compensation paid to the expert's own institution for the time spent in activities as an external expert for the external agency.

These factors all have cost implications, but an advantage of smaller systems is that universal visiting at programme/discipline level is potentially more affordable than in large higher education systems.

The means by which the activities of evaluation agencies in Europe are funded vary from receipt of a direct subvention from the Ministry of Education to a mixture of subscription incomes from higher education institutions and from contracts or evaluation or accreditation fees. However, a common feature is that agencies have autonomy over the use of their funds.

2.7. WHAT MAKES A "GOOD" EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM?

A consensus is emerging as to what constitutes an appropriate system of external evaluation, the core process elements of which include:

- reliance on autonomous or semi-autonomous agencies. This reliance gives legitimacy to internal review processes (EUA policy statement 2001, in Annex 4.6);
- agreement on explicit standards and expectations;
- a self-evaluation study by the academic department, faculty, or institution;
- an external review conducted by visiting experts;
- a written report or recommendations;
- public reporting of the results;
- recognition that the evaluation process in itself is at least as important as the results (El Khawas, 1998).

Other success factors include consultation and dialogue with stakeholders and higher education institutions by the external agency when developing processes and criteria, that is, before setting a system in action. This type of dialogue is considered essential to achieving meaningful outcomes to the evaluation process (Franke, 2002). Programme accreditation/evaluation benefits from clarity and a focus on teaching and learning processes, practices, and performance (Genis, 2002).

A good system for quality assurance should meet its desired objectives without unnecessary bureaucracy or intrusion in the primary activities of an institution (Middlehurst, 2001).

Chapter 3

Key Terms

The vocabulary of "quality" is often jargon-ridden and arcane with the same words being used to describe different processes. A glossary of terms is included in Annex 3; however, an abridged version, expanding on certain key terms, follows:
Accreditation is defined in many ways. Three examples are:

- "Accreditation is a formal, published statement regarding the quality of an institution or a programme, following a cyclical evaluation based on agreed standards" (CRE, now EUA, 2001).
- "Accreditation is a process of external quality review used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and higher education programmes for quality assurance and quality improvement" (CHEA, 2000).
- "Accreditation is the award of a status. Accreditation as a process is generally based on the application of predefined standards. It is primarily an outcome of evaluation" (The European Training Foundation, 1998).

While accreditation has different definitions, forms, and functions, it generally has the following as characteristics:

- It provides [proof] (or not) that a certain standard is being met in a higher education course, programme, or institution. The standard met can either be a minimum standard or a standard of excellence.
- It involves a benchmarking assessment.
- Judgments are based solely on quality criteria, never on political characteristics, and are always yes/no.
- The emphasis is on accountability.

A *benchmark* **is** a reference point or criterion by which to measure something.

Benchmarking is a process of identifying and learning from good practices in other organizations.

(Subject) benchmark statements represent general expectations about standards (levels of student attainment) at a given level in a particular subject area. They are reference points in a quality assurance framework rather than prescriptive statements about curricula. (Examples of national subject benchmark statements are available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>, and international developments are available at <http://www.relint.deusto.es/Tuning>; also, see Annex 5.4.

A *binary system* is a dual system of higher education with a traditional university sector and a separate and distinct non-university sector.

Evaluation is a general term denoting any process leading to judgments and/or recommendations regarding the quality of a unit. (A unit is an institution, programme, discipline.) Evaluation can be an internal process – self-evaluation – or an external one conducted by external experts, peers, or inspectors.

An *institutional audit* is concerned with the processes whereby an institution assures quality assurance and quality enhancement. An underlying theme in quality audits is the question: how does an institution know that the standards and objectives it has set for itself are being met? On what evidence is the assessment of the quality of its work based, and are there procedures in place to ensure that the significant processes are followed up and continuously improved?

Institutional review addresses the ultimate responsibility for the management of quality and standards that rests with an institution as a whole.

Licensing is the awarding of permission to operate either a new higher education institution or a new course programme based on *ex ante* evaluation of plans.

Quality assessment, *quality measurement*, and *review of quality* are all taken here to be synonymous with evaluation, especially when there is an external element to the procedure.

Quality assurance is an all-embracing term covering all the policies, processes, and actions through which the quality of higher education is maintained and developed.

Chapter 4

Quality Assurance and Programme Design in Europe

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The changing context of higher education worldwide has been outlined above in general terms. Over the last century, many of the drivers, which prompted the development of external evaluation of higher education in Western Europe, had their counterparts in the Central and Eastern countries, even if the motives were, for the most part, dissimilar. The following sections describe aspects of existing quality assurance mechanisms in higher education in Europe. They deal, respectively, with Western Europe, mainly describing developments in the European Union, and with Central and Eastern Europe.

This division was not made to create a new barrier between East and West, but rather to allow space to describe and reflect on the different starting points, pace, and modes by which higher education systems and institutions are travelling towards the same destination – the European Higher Education Area. Although Sections 4.2 and 4.3 cover similar topics, the emphases are different. Section 4.3 on developments in Central and Eastern Europe is complemented by a detailed annex (Annex 2) describing the higher education systems of the region and a first, comprehensive, updating of information on the quality assurance agencies in Central Europe, based on a questionnaire (Annex 2.16.4) sent to members of the new regional network for quality assurance. Section 4.2 on Western Europe focuses more on developmental work being done at national and international level to establish external reference

points for quality including generic and subject specific descriptors for qualifications.

Many of the details in Section 4.2 concerning quality assessment and accreditation in the European Union were taken from published material, including questionnaires completed by members of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education (<http://www.inqahe.nl>), descriptions of their work, in English, provided by agencies on their websites and in publications, from contacts at agencies and other academic associations, and from recent seminars and workshops on quality and qualifications that have been held as part of the Bologna process. A separate questionnaire was not sent out to ENQA members as a survey mapping the similarities and differences in European quality assurance as practiced in the various countries is nearing completion. It is being managed by the Danish Evaluation Agency on behalf of the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) and comprises two phases:

- A survey of quality assurance in thirty-two countries, which will focus on the evaluation methods used in them, and country specific reports will be prepared.
- The second phase of the project is an analytical report on the state-of-the-art of evaluation procedures, which will be based on a number of identified themes and aspects of the evaluation methodologies and procedures identified in the first phase.

Both reports will be made available on the ENQA web-site <http://www.enqa.net>.

4.2. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROGRAMME DESIGN IN WESTERN EUROPE: THE EVOLUTION AND CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS - DESCRIPTION AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The drivers, that prompted the introduction of external quality assurance systems in the European Union, mirror many of the points made above concerning the changing context in which higher education was operating:

4.2.1. Increased Institutional Autonomy in Return for Greater Accountability

The grant of increased autonomy to higher education was paralleled by a rise in demands for accountability to re-assure authorities that resources were being well-spent, a value-for-money argument in certain Western countries, and to ensure that the expectations of interested constituencies - students, would-be-students, their parents, employers, and society at large would be met. Increased institutional autonomy, however, pointed up the need for enhancement and improvements in institutional leadership, information gathering and dissemination, and effective decision-making within institutions.

4.2.2. Diversification and Expansion

In addition to increased numbers of students resulting in increasingly large classes, the diversification of the student intake – including more adult learners – raised issues of teaching and learning methods and put strains on access to learning resources and support. In many countries, greater levels of participation in higher education were not always matched by a corresponding rate of increase in the number of graduates. Significant percentages of European students did not complete their studies raising issues such as the waste of human talent and potential and of public money. Reasons for high drop-out rates included the growing mismatch between the official length of studies and the actual time spent gaining qualifications – perhaps reflecting problems of overloaded curricula, out-dated teaching and learning methods, and the lack of intermediate or shorter qualifications in the higher education systems in question. The retention and progression of students remains a concern in many countries and has emerged as a performance indicator in several systems either for quality assurance or for funding purposes, *e.g.*, in Denmark, in Finland, in The United Kingdom, and in some *Länder* in Germany.

Diversity has meant not only the development of new types of higher education institutions such as polytechnics (*e.g.*, in Portugal and Finland) and other tertiary level institutions, but also the introduction of new disciplines and programmes, including shorter degree programmes in certain systems. The wider variety of types of higher education institutions and of course programmes has presented challenges for students, who have needed more and better information to help them make informed choices about the best study options for them, and to external evaluation agencies, the criteria of which were previously been predicated on traditional university provision. Diversity has also highlighted the number of barriers that remain in terms of mobility and progression as links and pathways between different types of higher education are not always defined.

4.2.3. Need for New Methods of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

The development and widespread use of ICT applications for education has created the need for new skills for teachers and has implications for curriculum design and the definition of new criteria for the quality assurance of delivery.

4.2.4. Internationalization

The mobility of students either in full programmes or in exchange schemes has increased demands for the recognition of qualifications, credits, and study periods abroad. This demand has prompted the need for greater transparency of curricula and assessment.

Not all of these factors have applied at one and the same time to all European countries, but they all have a common consequence, that is, the need for both institutions and governments to manage “change”.

4.2.5. Concepts of and Approaches to Quality

At the time of the production of the PHARE Quality Assurance Manual (1998), it was observed that all Western European evaluation procedures were based on quality as enhancement rather than on quality standards. This landscape, however, is a changing one, and work in individual national systems and within professional and discipline-related areas at national and international level is underway to refine standards, criteria, qualification descriptors, and other external reference points for quality. While this work still includes identification of certain quantitative input standards, it is now moving towards emphasizing the definition of learning outcomes and output standards and competencies in order to create academic qualification frameworks that accommodate diversity while securing a clear understanding of what academic qualifications mean and the associated knowledge and skills students should have. The focus is shifting to outcomes rather than process (see Annexes 5.1.-5.4. on the Joint Quality Initiative Project, the Tuning Project, QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, and ZEvA Standards for BAMA Programmes) and on providing clear external reference points for quality and standards. The organization of quality assurance at system level may be perceived as moving (slowly) towards defining "fitness of purpose" but with a strong accent on improvement. This latter emphasis is borne out by, for example, the articulation of more formal "follow-up" processes (Sweden, The United Kingdom, and the European University Association) to establish what improvements had been made following evaluation judgments and recommendations.

The origins of the majority of the external evaluation agencies in Western Europe were at the initiative of government (see the summary of the INQAAHE questionnaire responses in Annex 1). Exceptions include The Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders), in which the initiative was taken by the associations of higher education institutions, and Germany and The United Kingdom, in which initiatives have been taken jointly by higher education organizations and government. No two national agencies are

identical either in aims, focus of operations, coverage of the education sector, criteria, and standards used. This diversity reflects the different national and regional contexts in which national agencies operate and the constituencies which they serve. Even when countries have similar social, economic, and political backgrounds, for example, the Nordic countries, there is little apparent convergence (Smeby and Stensaker, 1999).

Although established mainly at government initiative, evaluation agencies in Western Europe operate as independent, autonomous organizations, free of control by government or universities. This principle was set out in the European Council Recommendation on Quality (1998)). In some countries, this independence is enshrined in law, *e.g.*, in France, where the *Comité Nationale d'Evaluation* reports to the President of the Republic; in others, it is a reflection of the nature of the evaluation agency, for instance, in The United Kingdom where the QAA is a charitable trust managed by a Board of Directors. What autonomy means in practice is that the agencies are mandated to carry out approved processes and to make their judgments and recommendations without interference or influence from government and or higher education institutions. This mandate does not mean that agencies are not accountable to governments, ministries, or other stakeholders or that their processes or indeed their very existence may not be subject to change in the light of modifications in government higher education policy.

4.2.6. Purposes of Evaluation

A summary of the responses to the INQAAHE questionnaire by members can be found in Annex 1. It appears to demonstrate that the purposes of existing agencies have evolved beyond the traditional quality improvement/enhancement/accountability continuum. Of the fourteen Western European evaluation agencies that responded in detail, nine (Denmark, Finland, Germany (AKK), Norway, The Netherlands (VSNU and HBO-Raad), Spain -(Catalonia), Sweden, and The United Kingdom)

indicated three or more purposes as important to very important:

- Quality enhancement was cited by all.
- Accountability was cited by eight; however, only *most* important by four (Austria (*Akkreditierungsrat* – private universities <http://www.bmbwk.gv.at>), Belgium (VLIR – university QA), The Netherlands (HBO-*Raad*), and The United Kingdom (QAA).
- Information provision was cited as important by six agencies (Denmark, Germany (AKK), The Netherlands (HBO-*Raad*), Norway, Spain (Catalonia), and The United Kingdom).
- Benchmarking was rated as important by six agencies (Austria Akk), Denmark, Finland, Netherlands (HBO-*Raad*) and (VSNU), and Spain (Catalonia). This criterion may be interesting to note, as all are smaller countries and/or a regional agency.

Accreditation as a purpose was mentioned, not unexpectedly, by the new, national accreditation agency in Germany (*Akkreditierungsrat*) but also as the sole purpose of the Portuguese evaluation agency for teacher education (INAFOP <http://www.inafop.pt>) and as one of the purposes of the two Austrian agencies. In contrast with the Central and Eastern European countries, it appears that accreditation as a purpose of evaluation is not yet a feature of most European Union systems. However, this conclusion belies the fact that in some countries, accreditation or homologation of degrees and/or institutions is undertaken by the Ministry of Education, *e.g.*, in France and Spain (ENQA, 2000, Institutional Evaluations). Accreditation-like practices occur in Nordic countries, mostly in relation either to professional programmes or to private institutions (ENQA, 2001). Accreditation activities of statutory and professional bodies as well as the granting of degree-awarding powers occur in The United Kingdom as an *ex ante* type of accreditation for institutions (for criteria see <http://www.dfes.gov.uk>). However, the majority

approach to external quality assurance in Western Europe remains either programme and/or institutional evaluation.

This extension to the purposes of agencies is reflected in their aims, tasks, or mission statements and is perhaps an indication that when new agencies are being established they should have the flexibility to adapt to changes without the necessity to have cumbersome legislation enacted.

In the case of agencies in the Central and Eastern European countries, the purpose of quality assessment is accreditation. The responses of agencies to the INQAAHE questionnaire were aimed at showing what they perceived as their most important purposes beyond the formal judgment of compliance with set criteria. The variety of replies very likely implies that the question allows for different levels of interpretation. Half of the eight Central and Eastern European agencies that responded to this question named accountability as well as improvement and enhancement as the first or second most important purpose of their activity (Albania, Hungary, Latvia, and Slovakia). But Bulgaria set benchmarking and provision of information first and marked accountability least important. For Slovenia, improvement and the provision of information were most important, while the Czechs focus on benchmarking and accountability. For the latter, improvement/enhancement and providing information are tied second. Estonia ranked accountability last, improvement orientation second, and benchmarking as moderately important, with nothing for "important" or "very important" (*i.e.*, 4 or 5), and it is possible that the reverse ordering was intended.

4.2.7. Scope of Evaluation: Institutional or Programmatic - Universities or Colleges

All the agencies in the Central and Eastern European countries conduct both institutional and programme assessment. Usually, the assessments are undertaken in separate processes, but Hungary, for example, in its first cycle, evaluated programmes so as to arrive at an accreditation decision regarding the given institution. The Hungarian Accreditation

Committee is planning on separating the two processes, to some degree, in its second round. Croatia focuses on institutional assessment but also looks at the quality of programmes at the evaluated institution. Slovakia seems to have introduced the combined approach in its new higher education law that went into effect in April 2002. Russia and Ukraine also evaluate programmes within their institutional accreditation procedure.

When evaluation agencies were first established in the European Union, they tended to focus either on programme or on institutional evaluation. The United Kingdom at the beginning of the 1990s was unique for a larger state in Europe because it covered both institutional and subject evaluation – a very expensive operation for a large and diverse higher education system. In Ireland, the former NCEA carried out validations and approvals at both programme and institutional levels. However, agencies in smaller countries or those which are regionally based generally began with a focus on programme or discipline evaluation on a national/regional basis (*e.g.*, The Netherlands – VSNU and HBO-Raad, Belgium (VLIR), Denmark, Spain (regional – Catalonia).

The evaluation of programmes as a focus has had potential benefits both for quality assurance at system and institutional level in:

- providing an opportunity for small-scale pilot exercises to test new processes before their wider implementation;
- providing an overall picture of the state of health of a discipline in a country at a particular time; highlighting overall matters for improvement at national level as well as in individual institutions;
- facilitating the planning of a cycle of reviews and developing and managing a programme of continuous engagement with institutions - which may be necessary to build up institutional capacity and familiarity with evaluation;
- potentially creating a multiplier effect by involving a wider range of actors as evaluators and creating a "critical" mass of actors (academics, administrators, and

students) in higher education institutions with experience of evaluation which may stimulate the development of internal, institutional quality assurance mechanisms at "grass-roots level";
- where the focus is on discipline or subject, rather than programme evaluation, offering the potential of internal benchmarking within higher education institutions, in which the same subject is offered in several faculties;
- potentially providing information which is of more direct value to students (especially international students) and employers;
- providing comparative information to institutional managers and leaders on issues such as teaching and academic standards across the institution;
- providing evidence of the effectiveness of institutional quality assurance practices.

Criticisms have been voiced that focusing on programme evaluation may place a considerable burden on institutions as they may have to manage multiple evaluation events in any one year. These criticisms were aired most recently in The United Kingdom at the conclusion of the first round of reviews of all subjects in England. By the conclusion of the eight-year period of review, less than 1 percent of provision had been judged to be failing. However, this result was evidence of the effectiveness of internal review processes and contributed to the development of a new external review process which will utilize information from internal evaluation processes (for further details, see Report 02/15, 2002 of the Higher Education Funding Council for England <http://www.hefce.ac.uk>) and focus, in the main, on institutional audits.

4.2.8. Institutional Evaluation

Evaluation of higher education institutions in Europe became common as of the mid-1980s. France was the first country to initiate comprehensive university evaluations in 1985. The *Comité National d'Evaluation* (<http://www.cne_evaluation.fr>)

was established by the Law on Higher Education of 1984. The Law also granted universities administrative, pedagogical, research, and financial autonomy. In addition to the evaluation of individual institutions, the possibility of organizing institutional reviews/evaluations based on a regional grouping of institutions exists in France. This possibility provides an opportunity to determine the extent to which a region is well served by its higher education institutions. The second series of institutional evaluations in France has a lighter process:

- Because the "legitimacy" issue was no longer critical, the academic community did not need a comprehensive report to be assured of institutional unity.
- Because the CNE wanted its recommendations to become more efficient for quality improvement and decision-making, only the main issues identified in the self–assessment and external evaluation were to be included in the recommendations.

Institutional evaluation is also a focus for quality evaluation or audit in Sweden, Finland, Norway, Ireland, and The United Kingdom. However, the new Swedish system is evolving from quality audit at institutional level to quality assessment of all higher educational provision for general and professional degrees. A full round of institutional audit was completed in 1998. The intention of the audit had been to assess the strategies, goals, plans, systems, methods, and organization used to secure and develop overall quality in each institution rather than on evaluating quality against set criteria. Criticisms of the process included the fact that institutional audit did not reach out within institutions to the core of activities at departmental level and that some of the audits were considered to be "toothless" (Franke, 2002).

An alternative to national institutional review is the institutional review process offered by the European University Association. This opportunity has often been taken up in countries that do not have a national evaluation system at university level, *e.g.*, Portugal and Greece, or when a given

institution is interested in adding an international dimension to the review (information on EUA quality policy and institutional review practices can be found in Annex 4.6 and at <http://www.unige.ch/eua>).

4.2.9. Thematic Reviews and Reports

Several agencies undertake thematic reports or evaluations either at the request of government or other authorities or on their own initiative. An example of the latter is the current programme of the Danish Evaluation Institute which includes evaluations on classroom observation and on methods of self-evaluation in the Danish education sector.

4.2.10. One Agency or Several

Within binary systems of higher education or when there is a mixture of private and state provision, decisions have to be taken as to whether there are separate focuses for different provision or one process with appropriate standards and criteria for different providers. Systems in smaller European countries have tended to take an inclusive approach. Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Norway each have a single evaluation agency to cover all higher education provision; indeed, the Danish agency covers all types of education from Kindergarten to research evaluation. Exceptions are Austria, The Netherlands, and Belgium (Flanders). The policy of inclusion has also been in effect in The United Kingdom and France in which all nationally recognized higher education institutions are subject to institutional evaluation by the national agency. In The Netherlands, Belgium (Flanders), and Ireland, there are separate agencies for university and non-university institutions; however, the proposed Dutch Accreditation Agency for Higher Education will cover both sectors of higher education. In Austria and Portugal, there are no evaluation agencies for public universities, but separate agencies exist in Austria for private universities and for *Fachhochschulen*, and in Portugal there is an accreditation agency for teacher training education (INAFOP).

The German accreditation system may appear to be evolving along the lines of the American system with a recognizing body (Akk in Germany, CHEA in the US) which accredits agencies operating at regional or professional/disciplinary area.

If a trend can be discerned in this aspect of evaluation, it is not only one favouring multiple purposes for agencies but also multiple focuses of evaluation for single agencies.

A further development is the existence of multiple purpose agencies which have responsibility not only for quality assurance or accreditation but also as the authority for the recognition of foreign academic and/or professional qualifications. Examples include Network Norway Council (<http://www.nnr.no>), the *Hogskoleverket*, Sweden (<http://www.hsv.se>), and the Lithuanian Center for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (<http://www.vu.lt>). To some extent, these national initiatives have anticipated the growth in networking and contact between the emergent QA networks and the academic recognition information networks – NARICs (in the European Union) and ENICs (for Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES).

4.2.11. Evaluation Criteria and Standards

What criteria and standards are set for external evaluations? Again, there is no one rule for Western European countries, and practice varies with approaches which include "an enabling legal framework with broad general guidance, *re.* purpose", to a strict legal framework or one which assigns responsibility for determination of standards to the Agency in co-operation with the constituencies (or stakeholders) to refine reference points. In Finland, the criteria are formulated by the agency in consultation with institutions whereas in Belgium, (Flanders), they are formulated by the universities. In The United Kingdom, the standards are the goals and objectives of the given institutions and the external reference points developed in agreement with the sector. In Denmark, the criteria used are those of the individual institution and "general criteria of good practice". In Germany (AKK), the standards are the "goals as formulated by the institution, the profession, and AKK".

In response to the INQAAHE questionnaire as to who had most influence in setting3 the criteria for an external evaluation, the indications were that the Agency (including for this purpose the external evaluation team) had the most influence in determining the focus of individual evaluations.

4.2.12. Evaluation Methods and Instruments

A strong consensus exists throughout Western Europe, irrespective of process and of the purpose of the external evaluation, as to the methods and instruments used. The elements common to all systems are:

- a self evaluation/study;
- an external review with an on-site visit;
- a report;

and increasingly, the use of other instruments such as

- statistical data provided either from national sources or individual institutions;
- qualitative information from the internal quality assurance processes of the institution itself;
- performance indicators;
- user surveys – labour market/students/employers (*e.g.*, in Denmark and Finland);
- external examiner reports (Ireland, The United Kingdom, and Denmark);
- structured follow-up processes.

Agreement on these common instruments does not, however, imply similar implementation practices. There are variations in the nature and coverage of the self-evaluation reflecting the purpose of evaluation; the criteria and standards of evaluation, the aspects of provision under evaluation; the duration and structure of visits; the identification, appointment, training, and role of experts; and the judgments made. Some examples are included in Annex 4.

4.2.13. The Self-Evaluation Study

The one common feature about the self-evaluation study is that unlike external evaluation reports, self-evaluation documents are not published by any existing evaluation agencies and remain confidential unless the institution chooses to release them. While self-assessment is a central element of all institutional evaluations, the prescriptiveness of the parameters for the self-study as set out by the evaluation agency – either in its handbook or through other guidelines - varies. Sometimes the self-evaluation document, especially for study programmes, will be predicated on legislation and will be designed to show how the programme achieves not only the aims and purposes established by the institution offering the programme but also provisions in appropriate legislation, *e.g.*, the FH Council, Austria (see Annex 4.1.1.). In Norway, the higher education institution may choose the methodology and organizational approach to suit its purposes and interests. The position in Finland is similar but with the proviso that the self-study reflect the interests of consumers (students, external stakeholders, the surrounding community, etc). In Sweden, in the new quality assessment process at programme level, institutions are encouraged to demonstrate "what is unique and especially characteristic about their programmes and by so doing highlight... good practice" (France, 2002).

The British and Irish models have shared a more directive approach. In Ireland under the former NCEA, there was concentration on organizational matters such as:

- mission and goals;
- governance and strategic planning;
- academic policies;
- the use of institutional resources;

all of which were to be reflected in the self-assessment.

The new institutional audit method which is being established in England will, in addition to self-evaluation documents at institutional and discipline level, also draw on information which all institutions are to be required to produce

annually from their internal quality assurance processes. An excerpt from the *Draft Handbook for Institutional Audit in England* (April 2002) - Annex C: "Guidelines for Producing Self-Evaluation Documents for Discipline Audit Trails" is reproduced in Annex 4.1.2. The institution being audited is also expected to demonstrate the extent to which it addresses the points of reference for quality and standards provided by parts of the "Code of Practice and the Higher Education Qualifications Framework" of the QAA.

No matter what model of self-evaluation is adopted, there must be clear and effective guidance to institutions as to what they can or must do. The guidance (which is normally in the form of a handbook or other written guidelines and is generally publicly available) should assist institutions to undertake reflection and analysis rather than directing them to focus on description. However, it has been recognized that merely providing a Handbook or other guidelines may not be sufficient preparation for external evaluation, especially when institutions have little capacity for, or experience of, conducting self-evaluations (Genis, 2002). A programme of orientation and capacity building exercises, such as workshops on writing self-evaluations and information sessions on new QA processes before they are introduced, may result in dividends in terms of the quality of self-evaluations which will in turn enhance the external evaluation process.

4.2.14. External Experts: Selection, Training, and Briefing

The success of peer review depends heavily on the training, experience, and professionalism of teams (Kells, 1993, p. 104). Practices in terms of the training and briefing of teams vary considerably in Western Europe, but a common feature is a briefing meeting before evaluation visits take place, as are guidelines or handbooks on protocol and evaluation procedures. The nature of training and briefing to some extent depends on the pattern of evaluations. It is easier to coordinate training and briefing activities if a pool of experts is selected and appointed either for the duration of the cycle or at least for a specified

period. Practice varies as to who selects the experts. In some cases, it is the agency, with either the professional staff or appropriate Committee making the decisions; in others, there may be nominations from other sources. The use of foreign experience is common in some of the smaller countries, particularly when there is a shared language, *e.g.*, The Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders) and in the Nordic countries, but is also a feature of the activities of the CNE (France) and of some of the German Accreditation Agencies. Examples of practices regarding the selection and training of experts are included in Annex 4.3.

4.2.15. Reports and Judgments

In all systems, some kind of public report is generated at the conclusion of the evaluation, but the nature and extent of this report varies. In those countries in which all provision is reviewed at the same time, subject reports may be produced: *e.g.*, the VSNU in The Netherlands (see <http://www.vsnu.nl> for examples in English). However, the VSNU also produces a confidential report for individual institutions on their programmes. Other agencies work entirely in the public domain and publish reports in full, reflecting their aim to inform stakeholders, *e.g.*, QAA (in The United Kingdom) <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>. In some countries, reports or summaries of reports are published in English even when it is not the national language, *e.g.*, Denmark (<http://www.eva.dk>) and the Swedish National Agency <http://www.hsv.se>. Making reports available on the Internet is a cost effective means of publishing, but alternative means must be available to ensure that those who do not have access to the Internet can still obtain the information.

Practices vary from agency to agency as to who drafts evaluation reports. Sometimes it is the agency staff (EVA, CNE); in other cases, the agency staff may comprehensively edit the report written by the experts but never alter the judgments, *e.g.*, QAA. In other cases, the experts may write the reports. In the latter cases, the training and briefing of experts should take

account of the need to assure consistency and quality in reporting.

The nature of judgments also varies depending on the purpose of the evaluation. There may be yes/no decisions concerning accreditation and a series of recommendations for improvement and/or commendations for good practice for evaluation. No Western agency "ranks" programmes or institutions, but evidence from published reports, especially when they include graded judgments, is often used by others to create ranking. Recently, commentators in the United States (Jones, 2002) have observed that different stakeholders in education are looking for different types of information from evaluation processes which present a real challenge for evaluation agencies to meet.

4.2.16. Aspects of Programme Design

Quality assurance agencies are not responsible for the design of individual programmes of study but may influence them either through the establishment of external reference points or standards of quality or through the recommendations or judgments made in the external evaluation of programmes.

In Western Europe, programme design has ranged from being either the sole responsibility of individual institutions (The United Kingdom and Irish universities are examples) to the responsibility of institutions within a fairly prescriptive legal framework which may, however, allow for a certain degree of flexibility, *e.g.*, in terms of optional courses in addition to a compulsory core curriculum (*e.g.*, Spain). In France, the Ministry of Education develops degree programmes leading to national awards according to its own guidelines and is in charge of the accreditation of degrees and institutions. This stipulation does not preclude institutions from designing and offering their own programmes, but such programmes do not lead to national awards. In other countries, institutions have autonomy over programme design and content but are provided with reference points such as national descriptors for qualifications and programmes either in terms of credits (Sweden for academic

degrees) and/or study hours and a broad subject outline. However, the impact of the Bologna Declaration and especially the desire to create greater transparency about qualifications for international purposes have set in motion a frenzy of rhetoric, reflection, and activity in re-structuring qualifications and higher education provision. Much of the activity is incomplete, and there is as yet insufficient evidence on which to base judgments as to the success of changes in enhancing the transparency of qualifications.

In some systems, the use of credits or credit points – either on the basis of a national system, *e.g.*, Sweden, Finland, and the Netherlands, or using ECTS (the European Credit Transfer System <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm./education>), *e.g.*, Denmark and Italy is a requirement in designing programmes. In others, use of a credit system is optional. However, credits, *per se*, while a useful tool to organize curricular frameworks, have no relationship to quality or standards.

4.2.17. Two Cycles of Education

As in Central and Eastern Europe, the Bologna process has set in motion a series of changes in relation to the definition of qualifications which in turn impinges on programme design. The changes include:

- measures to introduce qualifications based on two cycles of education – Bachelor's/Master's Degrees - in countries where these are "new" qualifications, *e.g.*, Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany. Sooner or later, depending on the country, these qualifications will replace the traditional long, first-degree programmes (See *Trends II Report* for more details at <http://www.oph.fi/publications/trends2>). Where binary systems of higher education exist, it appears that there will be two types of Bachelor's and Master's Degree programmes – academic and professional (The Netherlands). An example of different descriptors for two orientations of Bachelors/Masters degrees in Germany is given in Annex 5.2., *re.* the standards of ZevA).

– the redefinition or refinement of qualifications frameworks in which two cycles of higher education already exist. For example, in the United Kingdom, Higher Education Qualifications Frameworks were recently agreed upon and have been established as one of the reference points for external evaluation. In Ireland, there is currently consultation on a new national qualifications framework (<http://www.nqai.ie>. In this case, an interesting aspect of the proposal is for the inclusion of professional and international awards (that is, provision being offered in Ireland but not by Irish institutions) in the framework.

There are two Europe-wide initiatives in the framework of the Bologna process which may have an influence on programme design and curriculum content through the definition of subject specific learning outcomes and the generic definition of qualifications (Bachelor's and Master's Degrees) frameworks: the Tuning project (<http://www.relint.deusto.es>) and the Joint Quality Initiative (<http://www.jointquality.com>). They are described in Annex 5.

4.2.18. Emerging Trends in Quality Assurance and the Design of Programmes in Western Europe

– expansion and diversification of the scope and type of work that evaluation agencies are carrying out. Examples include the establishment of agencies with a comprehensive range of functions in relation to quality and the recognition of qualifications, especially in smaller higher education systems (the Nordic countries); a greater emphasis on enhancement activities such as the introduction of follow-up processes after evaluation; and the undertaking of thematic reviews on wider aspects of quality and standards.
– work on developing instruments to assure and evaluate the quality of new modes of provision and new providers of higher education. This work includes the development of codes of practice, both national (*e.g.*, The United

Kingdom Code of Practice on Collaborative Provision) and international (the Council of Europe/UNESCO-CEPES – <http://www.cepes.ro>), on transnational education.

– the review and updating of evaluation processes to take account of the experiences of both institutions and evaluation agencies after the completion of a full round of reviews. For example, the shift in emphasis from institutional audit to programme assessment in Sweden and from programme assessment to institutional audit in England.
– the development of new external reference points for quality and standards such as subject benchmark statements and new generic descriptors for BA/MA qualifications at regional, national, and international level based on student learning outcomes. While this work had already started in some countries before Bologna, the Declaration has had a catalytic effect as has the drive for international recognition of qualifications.
– the introduction or development of accreditation systems at national (Netherlands), regional and subject-based (Germany), and international (FIBAA, EQUIS) level.
– an increase in networking in quality assurance and enhancement activities:
  - at agency level - the development of international networks of quality assurance agencies (ENQA, CEENetwork, INQAAHE, CHEA) – all listed in Annex 6, bilateral links between agencies, *e.g.*, VLIR and VSNU, and the exploration of mutual recognition between agencies, *e.g.*, a recent project involving EVA (Denmark) and FINHEEC (Finland);
  - at institutional level – often on an international basis – the emergence of university networks and benchmarking clubs, such as Universitas 21 <http://www.universitas21.com/collaborative.html> and the Coimbra group <http://www.coimbra-group.be>;

  - at subject level, *e.g.*, Socrates thematic networks;
  - by the professions, *e.g.*, the mutual recognition activities in engineering by accreditation agencies through the Washington Accord (See, Annex 4.7.2. for information).
- greater involvement of stakeholders, especially students, in the external evaluation process. Examples of this involvement include the participation of the European Union of Students (ESIB <http://www.esib.org>) as members of ENQA, student representation either on the councils of agencies (*e.g.*, in The United Kingdom) or on visiting panels (Sweden). But, this involvement is more than "representational". Recent revisions of external evaluation have put the interests of students at their core. "Students are central both to the principal focuses of institutional audit and to the audit process itself. Audit teams scrutinize a range of matters directly relevant to students, including the quality of the information provided for them, the ways in which their learning is facilitated and supported, and the academic standards they are expected to achieve, and achieve in practice. In each audit, students are invited to participate in the key stages of the process...." (QAA, 2002). "The student perspective is also very important. They constitute one of the most important groups that the peer group team meets at visits and are always represented on the expert groups as well" (Franke, 2002);
- the provision of more and better information on quality and standards which is prompting:
  - debates about changes in the nature of judgments made by agencies; whether or how to make judgments without ranking. For many existing accreditation systems, such a shift would imply changing from summative to formative judgments;
  - debates about disclosure or wider publication of evaluation reports. In many existing systems,

"publication of reports" means only sending them to the institution that has been evaluated or making a summary of the report available more generally. Wider disclosure need not mean enormous publication costs but does imply the setting-up and maintenance of efficient Website and negotiations with institutions. The degree of expense has implications for both national systems and institutions. International students are becoming increasingly sophisticated in searching for information about study opportunities and frequently use the Internet to do so. Wider publication of reports may also provide an opportunity for the spreading of information about good practice, thus contributing to the enhancement aim of external evaluation;

- the need to improve the "language" about quality – for many agencies, the public is the ultimate constituent, and much of the language of quality and standards is jargon-ridden and not immediately useful to constituents such as government or students, (examples include publication by QAA of leaflets for students; the CHEA glossary of terms).

– closer links at national and international level between quality assurance agencies and bodies responsible for the recognition of qualifications for academic and professional purposes. At international level, an example of such a linkage is the co-operation between ENQA and the ENIC and NARIC networks (more information about ENICs from <http://www.support4learning.org.uk/education/narics.htm>). The outcomes of two meetings between representatives of the networks was the identification of specific issues for further work: improving the communications between the network members both at national/regional level as well as at network level and how to improve the definition of quality and recognition issues in non-formal education.

– the emergence of other "non-formal" commentators on quality and standards who "rank" institutions and programmes. Examples of this phenomenon are the rankings of universities by newspapers such as *Der Speigel* (Germany), the *Financial Times* (business schools around the world), *The Guardian* (British universities), *et al.*, even when national quality assurance agencies themselves make no rankings. While this trend may not be viewed as positive, it does, nevertheless, demonstrate an interest in and demand for information on quality and standards.

However, "a national evaluation system can only best be a supporter of the activities taking place in the educational process" (Franke, 2002), and there is a growing awareness of the need to strengthen internal quality assurance and management in higher education institutions in many Western European countries. There is still a perception in many institutions that quality assurance is an external activity or control imposed on them. A recent initiative in response to this perception is a proposed project, to be managed by the European University Association, to focus on the development of internal quality cultures in European Universities.

This initiative also brings into focus an issue which is not about quality management *per se*, but is closely related to it, *i.e.*, the perpetuation in some Western European countries of rigid governance and outdated management structures for higher education which mean that tertiary education institutions are not themselves in a position to exercise effective control over the principal factors affecting the quality and costs of their own programmes (World Bank, 2002). Matters such as granting institutions more freedom and authority over curricula, teaching methods, the appointment and promotion of staff, and the selection of students, as well as over the improvement of leadership and management are also essential in order to create institutions which will be able to deliver on the targets set by the Ministers of Education at Bologna and Prague.

4.3. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROGRAMME DESIGN IN THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: THE EVOLUTION AND CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS - DESCRIPTION AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

After the fall of communism in and after 1989-1990, all the Central and Eastern European countries began to restructure their higher education systems. Acts on higher education were introduced which gave tertiary education an autonomy it had not known for half a century or at all, allowing the respective systems to set up internal decision-making bodies (institutional and faculty senates, research committees, etc.), giving them hiring and firing powers, and involving students in institutional governance. At the same time, the acts and other legislation installed a number of control mechanisms.

The hiring and firing of academic and administrative staff, who are public sector (*i.e.*, government) employees, for example, is also regulated by public employment laws. The legislation, moreover, has outlined the minimum requirements for a higher education institution with regard to its functioning, structure and organization, finance and governance, activities and services, and has usually defined the types of institutions that may operate in a given country. The laws describe the requirements for study programmes with regard to structure and minimum content as well as to different levels of education. In many countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, and Ukraine), the laws stipulate the promulgation of national qualification requirements or subject benchmarks which establish the general content, examination schemes, and criteria for degree programmes.

In designing their study programmes, higher education institutions have thus had a high degree of autonomy to accommodate the needs of their stakeholders and environments. At the same time, they are bound by regulations as to both the way their programmes are made up and *ex ante* and/or *ex post* quality checks.

The establishment of democracy in the Central and Eastern European countries released tremendous energies and affected all walks of life, including higher education. The time frame coincided with such global trends in higher education as the sharp increase in the demand for study places, the emergence of a large variety and flexibility of study programmes and schemes, the entry of information technology into the market for educational provision, the increasing interest in quality assurance and government demands for accountability in the use of public monies, and calls for stakeholder protection.

Different movements were set in motion that gained momentum in Europe through various European Union programmes (*e.g.*, TEMPUS, SOCRATES-ERASMUS, PHARE, NARIC), the Council of Europe, and UNESCO/CEPES (*e.g.*, the Legislative Reform Programme, ENIC), OECD, and others. The Bologna Declaration is perhaps the most far-reaching of all European initiatives, which in turn has set into motion various movements to design the future of European higher education.

The Central and Eastern European countries have had to face the challenge of taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the various trends and to adapt them to their own historical, political, cultural, and social environments. Fifteen Central and Eastern European countries, all of them, with the exception of Serbia/Montenegro, have, in place, some sort of national-level quality assurance body for higher education. The mechanisms they assign to assessing quality are similar. The terminology is largely the same. The implementation and its ramifications are both similar and different in each country.

The question as to why all the Central and Eastern European countries chose accreditation as their mechanism of quality control in higher education, while the Western European model in the early 1990s was assessment/evaluation-oriented, has been analysed by various authors (Kristoffersen, *et al.*, 1998, pp. 21-22; Tomusk, 2000, pp. 175-185). The reasons cited include the need, with the emergence of democracy, to establish comparability with Western higher education; the necessity to re-evaluate the curricula to rid them of politically distorted

content; and the urgency to modernize programme content and approach as well as to introduce more flexible programme structures. "Before 1990, higher education was still an 'élite' sector with rigid entrance requirements and, in many places, semi-autonomous faculties. Everyone knew the "rank" of a college or university;... new rules of survival in the institutional hierarchy, a brain-drain... appeared" (Rozsnyai, 2001, p. 3). Answers, such as a steep rise in private institutions in some countries and in pressure to allow access for a large number of students to a previously élite sector, may also be part of the explanation; however, these trends were experienced in Western Europe as well, albeit more gradually.

There has been the blunt postulation that accreditation is the approach most suited to a region accustomed to an autocratic mentality (Tomusk, 2000, pp. 175-185). It appears that all of the above have been factors in the preference of the Central and Eastern European countries for accreditation over evaluation or assessment.

The systems of no two countries, East or West, North or South, are alike. All have evolved according to a handful of models, but have adapted these models to suit their own historical and cultural contexts. The fact that several Western countries are introducing accreditation as a form of quality control and accountability does not mean that the approaches there are the same as those in the Central and Eastern European countries, nor are they the same in any two Western countries. The fact that the political regimes changed — utterly — in the Central and Eastern European countries almost at the same time may also explain why almost all opted for accreditation.

The threat to close down institutions, which is inherent in accreditation, has rarely been used in the Central and Eastern European countries (even though more so where state accreditation is viewed as a tool to control the extensive proliferation of new private institutions, *e.g.*, Romania and Russia). Various forms of warning, giving institutions or programmes time to improve, were implemented everywhere. In

fact, a trend can be observed that quality assurance agencies and committees in almost all countries are increasingly stressing the importance of an improvement orientation and relying more on the internal quality control mechanisms in higher education institutions.

An interesting explanation for the function of accreditation was given for Poland, but it holds true for most of the Central and Eastern European countries.

> The reason why accreditation is proving itself so popular in Poland is that, like elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, it is probably the only known mechanism in the world with an element of certification, a classification of institutions into those meeting the set standards and those failing to do so.... On the other hand, the accreditation committees are not merely stating whether [or not] the various curricula meet the minimum requirements, but they also look at the degree to which these requirements are exceeded and compare this "excess" against the achievement of set goals (fitness for purpose). In this sense, the work of accreditation committees has got more to do with the kind of quality assessment carried out in many Western European countries, with accreditation being merely a form of utilizing the results of this assessment. The name, "accreditation committee", is thus misleading, with "assessment and accreditation committee" being a more apt designation (Wójcicka and Chmielecka, 2001).

The INQAAHE questionnaire was filled out by almost all the Central and Eastern Europe Network member countries. The responses show that in Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania, the initiative to establish the agencies came from the government (or from Parliament). The same is clearly true for Russia and Ukraine, which did not submit questionnaires. In all these countries, the government also holds ownership of the agency, except in Estonia (where it is a foundation). (Latvia marked both government and higher

education institutions as holding ownership, while the Czechs said that their agency was an independent body. Both presumably had an unclear understanding of the question - similar to Macedonia which indicated that both the government and higher education institutions established the agency. In these three cases, the government was the main driver, while clearly the higher education institutions were involved to some degree in most countries). In Macedonia, the ownership of the agency is an inter-university conference. Poland set up agencies initiated by higher education institutions in addition to the government one. The initiative in Slovenia also came from higher education institutions, but these indicated that the government holds ownership.

To understand the questionnaire correctly, however, it must be noted that many Central and Eastern European countries distinguish between "agency" and "council" (or "committee" or "commission"). The "agency" is understood as the office in charge of co-ordinating evaluations, which may mean anything from mere administrative activities (*e.g.*, the Czech Republic) to actually being involved with evaluation teams. The commission is the body of experts which approves accreditation decisions which may be based on the recommendations passed on by the agency. The two must be taken as a unit and, in fact, many countries responded with this understanding, even though the "agency" may play a quite active role in the process (*e.g.*, Hungary).

The degree of independence of quality assurance agencies or committees vis-à-vis the governments of their countries varies. In some countries, higher education institutions have taken the initiative to establish quality assurance bodies (Macedonia, the Polish agencies, the Slovenian QAC), but the governments in all of the Central and Eastern European countries have some control over quality assurance. Some agencies operate within their ministries (the Czech Republic, the Polish State AC, Russia, the Slovenian Council, Ukraine) or are situated, more or less loosely, under ministerial supervision (Croatia, the Estonian Council, the Latvian AC, Hungary, Lithuania,

Slovakia), or under that of the respective Council of Ministers (Albania, Bulgaria) or the parliament (the Latvian Council, Romania). The various jurisdictional arrangements are not a direct indication as to the degree of independence. The committees making decisions as to the quality of institutions, programmes, or other higher education issues are almost always guaranteed autonomy by law. In Hungary, the Minister of Education may take a decision opposed to the opinion of the Accreditation Committee only if he or she publishes his or her reasons for doing so. In the Czech Republic, the decision of the Accreditation Commission is even more binding. If it recommends not accrediting a programme, the minister may not override its judgement, and if the Commission adopts a positive decision, the Minister may refuse accreditation only on explicitly stated grounds. Likewise, in Slovakia, the Minister must publish dissenting decisions, and in Estonia, he or she may modify a decision made by the council or the commission only on legal grounds. In Romania, the Parliament or Government adopts decisions relative to the accreditation of institutions and programmes, respectively, and does not, as a rule, diverge from the decisions taken by the commission, even though it potentially could. In Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia (Council), Lithuania, Macedonia, and Slovenia (National Commission), on the other hand, assessment or accreditation decisions are advisory and not binding on the Minister. In Albania and Macedonia, moreover, one or more ministry or government delegates participate in commission meetings. In Russia and Ukraine, the accreditation body is located in the Ministry; however, particularly in Russia, an agency assists in the procedure (and some forms of education are accredited by local/regional authorities).

All commissions work with external pools of experts. Estonia recruits its experts from foreign countries, in part by approaching accreditation agencies to recommend them. The experts are scholars and researchers in the fields to be evaluated. They remain in Estonia for a week during which they visit all institutions teaching in the field and write their reports.

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee, on the other hand, selects peer reviewers on the recommendation of committee members and those of its subcommittees dealing with issues in individual study fields. Foreign reviewers are invited in fields in which there are no or only a limited number of experts in the country.

Higher education institutions in most countries have some form of internal quality assurance mechanisms. The provision is stipulated in the Higher Education Act in the Czech Republic, and higher education institutions must publish the outcomes. In Hungary, the higher education law decreed that institutions must set up quality audit commissions by mid-2000. The Slovenian Quality Assessment Commission was set up in order to assist institutions in implementing self-evaluation. Bulgaria has just completed a PHARE project to introduce internal evaluation at higher education institutions and may, in the future, revise its external assessment to include the internal results. The new higher education law in Macedonia lays great emphasis on institutional-level quality assurance. Certainly, self-assessment is part of the quality control process in all countries.

The procedures for evaluation/accreditation in the Central and Eastern European countries are in line with the predominant model, *i.e.*, they employ self-evaluations, external reviews with on-site visits, and written reports. The content of and approach to self-evaluation vary from mostly in-put oriented to analytical results (Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are examples for the latter). The focus of the evaluation/accreditation reports by the commissions also varies. All countries (no data available for Ukraine) stress the improvement orientation of their quality assurance systems, even though the degree and mode of achievement of this aim is interpreted differently within the various cultural environments. Reports may be published (Albania, Czech Republic, Hungary after 2002, Latvia, Macedonia); however, in some countries, whether or not publication occurs is conditional on permission being granted by the individual higher education institution

(Romania). In other countries, reports are intended for internal institutional and/or government use (Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary until 2001, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, the Slovenian Commission, and Ukraine), while the final decision and a brief explanation may be made publicly (Bulgaria, Hungary until 2001, Lithuania, the Slovenian Council, Ukraine).

In what follows, the conditions for programme design in various Central and Eastern European countries are described, followed by an overview of their approaches to quality assurance. Annex 2 offers a country-by-country review of higher education in fifteen Central and Eastern European countries with a focus on their quality assurance systems; and a subsequent set of tables provides an overview of accreditation/ quality assurance agencies, but first, a brief description of the methodology used to compile this information.

4.3.1. Methodology

Much of the information concerning quality assessment and accreditation in the fifteen Central and Eastern European countries studied was gathered by means of a questionnaire when the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies was established in 2000. This information, that is available on the Network Website, is updated regularly, the updating being based on information supplied by the country agencies. Most Central and Eastern European agencies have written short reports for the Central and Eastern European Network Website. These offer a brief description of the higher education of the countries and an overview of their quality assurance systems. A great deal of additional information was provided very generously and in great detail by contact persons in the respective countries, at quality agencies, research centers, and ministries. A set of questions was compiled for this purpose but answers were not limited to these. An exception is Ukraine, in which no contact could be established and which has not joined the Network. The information on Ukraine given in this publication comes mainly

from a study published by the German Rectors' Conference (see the Bibliography).

After the tables and country profiles on higher education and quality assurance systems had been completed, they were sent to the contact persons in the respective countries for checking. The replies made by these persons are incorporated in the pertaining sections.

One set of literature listed in the Bibliography provides descriptions of the higher education and quality assessment systems of certain countries. Another set concerns more than one country or general topics related to quality assurance and higher education. Much, but not all, of the listed literature was provided by the contact persons of the quality assurance agencies that are part of the Central and Eastern European Network.

4.3.2. Programme Design

Common to all higher education systems in Central and Eastern Europe is that the tertiary study programmes they offer:

- are defined in national legislation;
- are comparable within a given country and, for the most part, are compatible with those in other countries;
- issue closing documents which certify qualification in a given field and indicate the level of education achieved, and enable persons who have successfully completed the requirements to seek employment based on such documents;
- are subject to quality control.

Before opening a study programme, higher education institutions in most countries must submit applications for licensing or accreditation to their national quality assessment agencies or commissions (Albania, Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). Some systems are very flexible with regard to joint programmes among different institutions (*e.g.*, Slovenia), while

in others (*e.g.*, Hungary) such initiatives are less common, even though they exist.

4.3.3. Levels of Study

The stipulation in the Bologna Declaration that all higher education systems in Europe offer "a system of easily readable and comparable degrees [whereby] access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of the first cycle studies...." (Joint Declaration..., Bologna, 18 June 1999 <http://www.mab.hu/english/a_links.html>) has created a bustle in some countries in which the two-level or -tier (Bachelor's/Master's Degree) system was not applied. They have had to search for models in order to restructure their tertiary provision. The challenge is more pronounced in those countries with binary higher education systems in which higher education and degrees are offered in two distinct types of institution, either at universities or at non-university establishments.

Most prominently Germany, the home of the "Humboldtian university model" (pursuant to one of Wilhelm von Humboldt's main principles behind his university reform, the "unity of teaching and research"), has traditionally regarded universities as educational institutions with a strong link to (theoretical and methodical) research, while the relatively newer institutional types of the country, the *Gesamthochschulen* (comprehensive universities) and especially the *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences), were introduced to expand the provision toward more applied education and training. The binary system was introduced relatively late in Germany as compared to countries that had relinquished the unitary system much earlier in their — modern — history or had a more diverse structure essentially from the beginning. There was no provision for changing from one type of institution to another.

Under Soviet dominance, many CEE countries, which earlier had followed the German model, installed the Soviet-type binary system with so-called specialized higher education institutions, which were of the college level with an applied orientation in a particular general field. Under the Soviet model, pure research

was assigned to the national academies of sciences and their institutes. Universities provided theoretically oriented education while non-university institutions or colleges offered applied education. The possibility for students to move between the two types of institution was not built into the system. The systems of Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Russia, and Ukraine are of this type, as was Macedonia until the Higher Education Law of 2000 made provision for non-university professional institutions. Whereas under the Soviet model, doctorates were awarded by the academies of sciences, after 1990, all countries have (re)introduced Doctoral studies at universities.

Recently, a number of countries have adopted the two-level system of studies. In recognition of the importance of comparability, mobility, and the message of the Bologna Declaration, as well as the will to be part of the European higher education area, the sector is groping for ways to establish two-level study systems. While so-called Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree programmes are on offer in many countries, they often mean only that the former are short, usually practical-type programmes, and the latter, longer, research-oriented programmes, sometimes at different types of institutions. "Master's" studies may also designate two or three-year programmes offered for holders of Bachelor's Degrees and also one-stream, five or six-year programmes, depending on the field (usually medicine, some engineering programmes, and some social sciences or humanities programmes). Doctoral studies, offered at universities and often in collaboration with external research institutes, in fact, constitute the third level of higher education stipulated in the Bologna Declaration.

With respect to institutional types, the two-level higher education system also exists in Albania, but only the nursing school is non-university-level to date. At the same time, universities already offer many different levels and diplomas or degrees, with one to two-year Master's Degree level studies built on Bachelor's Degree qualifications, attained after four to

six years, followed by Doctoral studies. The implementation of a credit transfer system is impending.

In Bulgaria, the binary system predominates, with separate streams for Bachelor's and Master's Degree level studies. However, in some fields it is possible to earn a Master's Degree after one year of study after completion of a Bachelor's Degree (4 years). The Bulgarian higher education system includes the educational qualification degree, "Specialist in...", a degree of professional higher education attained after at least three years of studies at a college; the Bachelor's Degree (first degree) attained after at least four years of studies in a university or a higher school; the Master's Degree (second degree) attained after at least five years of training or at least one year after the Bachelor's Degree in a university. The training for the Doctoral Degree is provided along research specialties following an earned Master's Degree in a university or in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Agricultural Academy, or other research organizations.

For its polytechnics, Croatia has two-level higher education programmes offered at the undergraduate level (2-4 years) and at the graduate level (1-2 years). University degrees can be earned after four to five years; Science Master's Degrees, after six to seven years, altogether.

In the higher education system in the Czech Republic, Bachelor's Degree programmes require three to four years to complete, and most Master's Degree programmes require five or five-and-a-half years. It is also clear from the fact that in 1999, 71 percent of the programmes offered were Master's Degree programmes that these are one-level studies. A variety of choices are evident; however, most higher education institutions offer Bachelor's Degree Programmes (however, not in certain fields, such as medicine or law). Nevertheless, two or three-year Master's Degree programmes are accessible to holders of Bachelor's Degree diplomas. The Czech Parliament is elaborating a law to introduce the two-level system across the board.

The government of Estonia issued a regulation in June 2000, the "Higher Education Standard", which determines Bachelor's Degree (3-5 years) and Master's Degree (1-2 years) studies. Admittance to the latter is based on successful completion of the former. The regulation sets down the minimum requirements for the two levels, as well as the lower, vocational ("diploma", three to four years), and the higher, Doctoral level. Some fields, such as human and veterinary medicine or architecture, are covered in one stream of five to six years.

In Hungary, a clear division is made between "colleges" and "universities". The Higher Education Act defines college degrees as comparable to Bachelor's degrees and university degrees as comparable to Master's Degrees (Hungarian Higher Education Act LXXX/1993 [last amended in 2000], Section 24 § 95 (6)a) and b). So-called "complementary undergraduate" programmes, stipulated in the 1996 Amendment to the Higher Education Act, are university (or teacher training) programmes for college graduates. Yet with the exception of a limited number of bilateral agreements between specific universities to take on graduates from specific colleges, it is very difficult for a college graduate to enroll in university studies at a comparable year level. Various options for the introduction of two-level studies are being discussed. A preference is emerging for running both models together, which would retain full, five or six-year programmes in certain study fields (*e.g.*, medicine), and change the curriculum of others (*e.g.*, computer science) to two-level programmes. Hungary also has two-year vocational higher education programmes, one third of which may count toward college or university studies.

The Latvian Law on Higher Education Establishments lays down the three levels of higher education studies: Bachelor's Degrees, Master's Degrees, and Doctoral Degrees. The duration of a Bachelor's Degree programme may not be less than four years, while a Master's Degree can be attained after five to seven years, altogether. Some fields offer Master's-level studies in one stream.

In 1993, Lithuania introduced Bachelor's Degree programmes, which, as of 2002, are extended from three-and-a-half to four-and-a-half years, and one-and-a-half or two-year Master's Degree programmes, while some fields, such as medical studies, continue as six-year programmes. There are also vocational one- or two-year programmes. Ordinarily, in university-type institutions, there are three levels of studies: *(i)* undergraduate, leading to a Bachelor's Degree and/or professional qualification; *(ii)* graduate, leading to a Master's Degree and/or a professional qualification; and *(iii)* postgraduate, leading to a Doctor's Degree or residency (for medical doctors) or "*meno aspirantura*" for artists. In non-university type institutions, studies lead only to professional qualifications.

Macedonia also has the three levels of study: Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Doctoral Degree. Bachelor's Degrees (*diplomiran*) are issued after four to six years. The longer studies include fields such as medicine and are actually of the German-type university level. Master's Degrees (*magister*) are awarded after two years of study following a Bachelor's Degree.

Poland, while having a two-level Bachelor's Degree (*licencjat* or *inzynier*) and a Master's Degree system, retains one-level studies in certain fields. Universities offer professionally oriented programmes of between three and four years after which a two- to two-and-a-half years Master's Degree programmes may be entered. In fields such as law, pharmacy, or medicine, there is one stream of studies of five to six years.

Romania is undergoing a fundamental structural reform of education, begun in 1997. It soon introduced Master's Degree programmes, understood as post-graduate studies after a university degree, which is considered a Bachelor's Degree. The reforms also extended to the restructuring of PhD programmes. Traditionally, short, three-year programmes have been offered in some fields at university colleges, which lead to a university-college diploma. Graduates with a university-college diploma may take entrance examinations to enter the third year of long

programmes. *Licenta* diplomas are degrees awarded in certain fields after four to six years, at universities, academies, and conservatories. Graduates with *licenta* diplomas may continue their studies in one-year specialized programmes or one- or two-year Master's Degree programmes. One-year Master's Degree study may count toward study for the PhD degree.

Russian higher education may be of the non-university level, not leading to an academic degree, and of university level, leading to an academic degree. The former consists of "technical schools" (that offer courses in the humanities, the social and natural sciences) following three years of general education and two to three years following secondary education and colleges offering course programme running three-and-a-half to four-and-a-half years. The latter are offered at universities, academies (for one area of study), and institutes (independent or part of a university or academy, for post-graduate studies in any field). Russia has retained several levels of Doctoral degrees. These are not conferred by the Academy of Sciences but by the Academic Councils of higher education institutions. There is no course work, only independent research with a consultant followed by a dissertation and its defense.

The one-level system is also prevalent in Slovakia, with what is considered Master's Degree-level diplomas representing as much as 95 percent of the graduates to date. At the same time, Master's Degree studies that are based on Bachelor's Degrees, as well as programmes leading to independent Bachelor's Degrees, are gradually being introduced. The new Higher Education Act, in effect since 1 April 2002, defines Bachelor's, Master's, Engineering, and Doctoral levels. Bachelor's degrees are earned in three to four years; Master's Degrees generally require an additional two years, but depending on the field, programmes may be offered only at the Master's Degree level in four to six years. Engineers receive the title of "engineer in..." the particular field. Medical studies lead to the doctor's title with the speciality given. Both are "second grade", *i.e.*, Master's-level studies. The third level is the PhD and other Doctor's Degrees, usually requiring three years to complete.

Slovenia, on the other hand, already had a two-level system in 1995 (The Higher Education Act, *in*, Zgaga and Jurkovic, 1995) in its first higher education law (before Bologna). In fact, a statistic shows that "MSc"-designated programmes have been offered in this country since 1970 (Zgaga and Jurkovic, 1995). Bachelor's Degree-level programmes are in part offered by faculties of universities that were originally junior colleges that awarded professional diplomas after two years of study. Following their integration into the universities in 1995, they offer three-year studies.

Higher education in Ukraine has four accreditation levels: *(i)* junior specialist courses of a maximum of three years of duration (at vocational and technical schools); *(ii)* four-year Bachelor's Degree courses offered at colleges; *(iii)* specialist degree courses lasting an additional two to three semesters after a Bachelor's Degree, or five to six years as a full programmes offered at institutes, conservatories, academies, and universities; *(iv)* Master's Degree programmes, requiring the defense of a research thesis, of six years for secondary-school graduates, of two to three years for those with junior specialist diplomas, or of one-two years on top of Specialist or Bachelor's Degrees offered at institutes, conservatories, academies, and universities. In addition, there are three-to- four-year Doctoral programmes leading to "Candidate of Science" degrees. The subsequent "Doctor of Science" degrees are offered after completion of a dissertation following independent research and sometimes course work and are conferred by a High Certification Committee.

4.3.4. The Legal Setting for Programme Design

Quality assurance agencies are not directly involved in developing study programmes. Assessment does, however, check compliance with the legislative requirements regarding programmes. Indirectly, moreover, the assessment has an influence not only on the quality of programmes but their content as well, in that the evaluation report points out the strengths and weaknesses of a programme.

All of the Central and Eastern European countries have passed legislation governing higher education. This legislation describes, to varying degrees, the requirements and standards for study programmes, which is the condition for state recognition of programmes. Within the boundaries of the legal framework, the higher education institutions in all countries are free to design their own study programmes. Before launching them, however, the programmes must generally be passed by the respective accreditation body and approved by the Ministry or Higher Education Council.

In Albania, the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for approving new educational programmes. Institutions are redesigning their programmes and structures according to standards approved by the ministry.

In Bulgaria, new programmes must be approved by the Accreditation Council before they can be launched. In addition, various sections of the Higher Education Act describe the requirements for programmes, including examination procedures and the educational goals of programmes. Within this framework, institutions design their own programmes in accordance with their internal regulations.

In Estonia, institutions design their own study programmes in compliance with the general legal framework. A government regulation of June 2000 governs the levels of study and of study fields in eight categories. It also elaborates minimum duration, content, and staff qualifications as well as examinations.

In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Labour monitors the unemployment distribution of graduates so as to identify study fields in which prospects for finding work are positive or negative. Higher education institutions also conduct internal evaluation of their activities, including their programmes.

In Hungary, a government decree has grouped fifty-six disciplines into eight areas of science and the humanities under which all study programmes are categorized. This categorization has importance in that universities and colleges are defined by having the capacity to teach in a set number of areas, and Doctoral schools, for example, may be launched if the university

is accredited in the discipline to which the Doctoral school is assigned. Another set of government decrees concerns national qualification requirements. They set down the standards for the general content of a study programme, the examination schedule, and, in general, the knowledge to be transmitted by means of it. Qualification requirements for new study programmes, or programmes to be launched at a higher education institution are submitted to the Hungarian Accreditation Committee for a quality check.

In Latvia, institutions also design their own programmes, but separate legislation governs education, higher education establishments, and the general principles of accreditation, and hence programme standards. The 1998 Education Law and the Law on Higher Education Establishments provide the broad framework within which higher education institutions may develop their study programmes for all types and levels. A licensing requirement must be met before programmes can be launched.

The Lithuanian Law on Higher Education stipulates the development of subject area benchmarks describing the requirements for educational programmes, based on which higher education institutions develop their programmes and curricula. The studies in higher education institutions are based on the programmes included in the State Registry of Studies and Programmes, which was established in 1997. Studies are organized in accordance with the curricula prepared by institutions of higher education which abide by the regulations.

In Macedonia, the Accreditation (also translated as "Licensing") Board licenses new study programmes, which are developed by higher education institutions. The legislative framework for study programmes is laid down in the Higher Education Act.

Romania, in line with its education reform launched in 1997, revised its list of university specialization. Recent legislation, including two government decrees in 2000, assert the right of

universities to develop their own curricula. Curricular standards are regulated by a ministerial ordinance (1998).

Russia has state educational standards, which set down the minimum content of study programmes, student workload, and requirements students must meet to receive degrees. The state requirements are the core, to which regional requirements may be added. Based on these, higher education institutions develop their own study programmes.

As described in the new Slovak Higher Education Act, higher education institutions can develop and implement their own programmes. The Ministry of Education administers the system of study fields in which higher education institutions in Slovakia may provide education.

In Slovenia, the Higher Education Council of the Republic of Slovenia, founded in 1994, is responsible for defining the standards for the design of curricula.

The 1996 Law on Education in Ukraine sets down the general standards of education. The Ministry is in the process of developing individual standards for each level of education and speciality. Higher education institutions are awarded the right by law to design their own curricula in line with the respective legislation.

4.3.5. Quality Assurance

It appears that in the Central and Eastern European countries, the predominant choice of "fitness for purpose" as the quality standard has emanated from the understanding that the purpose of a higher education institution or programme is defined in the pertaining legislation and that fitness is measured against the degree of compliance with the legislated requirements. That the mission statements of higher education institutions have been factored into quality evaluations from the beginning of the quality assessment process (*e.g.*, in Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia) was an indication of awareness that autonomous institutions must become more proactive in designing their futures rather than in

checking up on how much they live up to their self-defined missions.

In all the Central and Eastern European countries, quality assurance was introduced with the following purposes:

- to protect stakeholders;
- to define quality standards and levels;
- to assure, to varying degrees, the comparability of study programme content and levels with those in Western Europe; and
- in many countries, to control the quality of education at proliferating private institutions.

The expansion in the number of private higher education institutions and consequently the concern for the quality of education provision were factors in introducing quality assessment, and specifically accreditation, at the system level in most Central and Eastern European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine). As an example, in the Czech Republic, twenty private institutions have been established since 1999; however, they only cater to 2.1 percent of the students in the country (Individual country reports: Czech Republic, 2002 <http://www.ceenetwork.hu>).

In Hungary, the movement to establish private higher education institutions has not been as pronounced as in many other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. A few initiatives were thwarted by the Hungarian Accreditation Committee on the grounds that the quality of provision was not up to standard. Slovakia has only one private higher education institution. At the same time, however, the country faces a problem of maintaining the standard of quality of education because of a rise, over the last ten years, in the number of public universities. Slovenia, with only two universities, had two "free-standing higher education institutions" in 1995, and seven, by 2001. However, the need for a methodical quality control mechanism is still under discussion.

But while the proliferation of private institutions has given cause for concern with regard to quality education, the Polish University Accreditation Commission deals only with research universities, which private institutions are not. The quality control of private institutions in Poland will likely be among the responsibilities of the newly established National General Accreditation Commission.

Steep increases in higher education enrollments have been registered in Poland and Hungary: a 3.5-fold increase between 1990 and 2000 in Poland (Wójcicka and Chwirot, 2001) from 10 percent to over 30 percent of the 18 to 23-year age cohort, and in the same period in Hungary (Statistical Yearbook of Hungary, 2000), from 112,000 students (Mokošin, 1999, p. 11) to 215,207 students (Individual Country Reports: Czech Republic, 2002 <http://www.ceenetwork.hu>). In Poland, however, there is an oversupply of study places so that higher education institutions must compete for new students.

The universities that are considered to offer the highest quality education are only beginning to face this problem as the age cohort decreases. In the Czech Republic, "the total number of students graduating from Master's degree study programmes has risen by about 62 percent since 1990" (Individual Country Reports: Czech Republic, 2002, <http://www.ceenetwork.hu>). Even so, the number of applications, at least in the public universities, still exceeds the number of openings.

In the other countries, the growth of student enrollments has had similar effects. It must be noted, however, that many expect the expansion to level off in the near future (*e.g.*, Estonia) in response to demographic development. While most countries still have an oversupply of applicants for available study places at system level, some higher education institutions or study programmes are competing for students. Generally speaking, however, accreditation is not yet viewed as a publicly recognized factor for choosing a higher education institution.

It is evident that the preference in all the Central and Eastern European countries for accreditation rather than quality assessment alone occurred because, at the time of

transition, a priority was to establish some sort of quality control for the higher education sector. This priority was defined by higher education policy makers and stakeholders, both in government and in institutions. The question of how much external stakeholders acceded to this approach deserves more analysis. It is likely that at a time when, with the start of a new political system, new structures in higher education were developing at an accelerated pace, those "close to the fire", *i.e.*, the policy makers and those near them, had more sway than external individuals.

Nevertheless, the quality assurance process as a whole is perceived as serving all stakeholders including those in the Central and Eastern European countries. The quality of higher education is of general concern. The methodology for assuring it continues to be debated and reconsidered.

4.3.6. Quality Assurance Co-operation between Central and Eastern European Countries

The Baltic States Co-operation for Quality Assurance in Higher Education was launched in 1994 within the Legislative Reform Programme for Higher Education of the Council of Europe. The project, which involved meetings between rectors and ministry officials of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, led to a co-operation agreement in the area of quality assessment between the ministers of education of the three countries. In accordance with the initial aim of the project, the three countries set up national quality assessment agencies in 1994 and 1995. The project has helped in clarifying criteria, standards, and questions of methodology. In 1996, the Baltic Higher Education Co-ordination Committee adopted its statute. The nine members of the Committee are nominated by the national quality assessment body of each country, the respective Rectors' Conference, and the respective Minister of Education (the nominee of the latter being the ENIC representative of the country). The objectives of the Committee are to stimulate co-operation in institutional and programme assessment (tools and procedures for international reviewers), stimulate student and

staff mobility, promote internationalization at higher education institutions, develop common higher education standards, publish assessment outcomes, and organize joint conferences and workshops. The Baltic co-operation has been successful in providing feedback into the quality assessment processes of the three countries and especially in the exchange of peer reviewers, which is ongoing.

The Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (a Central and Eastern European Network) was established in 2000, at the same time as the Regional Sub-Network of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. Although the link to INQAAHE was only an informal one, the members decided after a year to continue as an independent organization in name as well. The intention of Network member agencies is to mutually share experiences and to foster co-operation, to exchange information, to recommend experts, to serve as a clearing house for quality assurance issues in Central and Eastern Europe, and to assist each other in elaborating measures for harmonizing quality assurance activities within the European higher education area. Member agencies are from Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, The Russian Federation, The Slovak Republic, and Slovenia. The application for membership of the Austrian Accreditation Council will be the object of a decision at the Assembly of the Central and Eastern European Network in October 2002.

In 2001, the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA), an organization overseen by the European Commission, extended the possibility for membership to the associated countries of the European Union. Several Central and Eastern European Network member agencies were admitted to ENQA at its General Assembly in May 2002. As part of the application process for membership, a discrepancy regarding the concept of independence from government became evident between the European Union and the Central and Eastern European agencies. As described above, the Central and Eastern European agencies

vary in this respect, from operating directly under ministries to acting as advisory bodies to the respective minister on accreditation decisions but making quality judgments autonomously. It appears that the definitions behind the common terminology require clarification, without disregard for the social and historical context.

4.3.7. Expected Trends

It is very difficult to say in which direction the legislative process regarding higher education is going. It seems that in this sector, too, the initial feeling that "everything is possible", which pervaded public sentiment in the early days of democratic government in Central and Eastern Europe, was not able to shed the frame of mind ingrained both by decades of control and a more authoritative tradition relative to, say, northern Europe in general. Often, more autonomy in higher education is at once coupled with detailed regulation, which, with the inevitable amendments to the new laws, is becoming more intricate rather than more general. To steer higher education institutions towards "defining their own mission and establishing direct links to society and its changing needs," (Tomusk, 2000, p. 182) moreover to give them the financial independence that this objective requires is a prerequisite for the organic development of the sector.

An outlook on higher education developments and current trends in each CEE country goes beyond the scope of this example. Hungary may serve as a case study. Here, a financial reform project for higher education has been commissioned by the government, in which the weaknesses of the overly regulated system have been defined (Matolcsy, 2001, pp. 19-20). These weaknesses include low cost effectiveness and efficiency; no provision for an external board to oversee an institution while the main governing body, the academic senate, has a stake in upholding the status quo; educational provision decided by tradition and academic staff preferences; very limited own income and consequently little impact on society on the part of institutions; personal "entrepreneurship" on the part of the

academic staff using institutional facilities, such as running after-hours courses or teaching at several places with full pay from each; a frequently changing legislative environment making long-term planning difficult; and dependence on the national budget law which earmarks spending and precludes innovative financial strategies (Matolcsy, 2002, p. 22).

Another development in the arena of higher education in Hungary is a debate conducted in the commentary section of the weekly *Élet és Irodalom* [Life and Literature] (18 January 2002 *et seq.*), launched with the publication of a book by two Hungarian academics (Polónyi and Timár, 2001) on the state of higher education in the country. They cite an OECD (SIALS) survey on reading comprehension in twenty-two countries. While Hungarians generally are proud of the highly educated individuals they have given to the world of science, the study puts Hungarian 14-to-64-year-olds in last place. The analysis concludes that, on the one hand, a narrow élite is and was indeed well educated, but that, on the other hand, education in Hungary is geared toward cramming factual information rather than toward problem-solving and innovative thinking.

A similar trend, incidentally, may be observed elsewhere in the region (Tomusk, 2000, p. 183). Half a dozen education researchers, sociologists, economists, and others have joined the debate in the paper to reflect not only on the — commonly known — miserable state of the higher and public education infrastructure and the consequences of under-funding the sector overall, but on the structural distortions that have hardly been addressed up until now and certainly not as broadly as in the current discussion.

With regard to the higher education sector, it appears that there is a natural curve of development, from launching a new legislative system to "improving" it until it becomes saturated, to recognizing the failure of the model, to identifying its weaknesses, and finally, to restructuring the system. Hungary can be said to be approaching the peak of the curve. Legislation is still being "refined", but the core weaknesses of the model are already being identified.

With regard to programme design, a problem with the introduction of the two-level study system is that the employment market in the CEE countries is not ready to absorb graduates of the first level. This situation may, however, be a consequence of the fact that the outcome in content of the first-level degree has not been defined. So-called "Bachelor's" Degree holders, *i.e.*, college graduates in dual systems, are not faced with this problem. Therefore it can be expected that as curricula are revised to accommodate the two-level structure of studies and bachelor-level graduates of this type enter the employment market, it will be ready.

It is generally the case for the higher education sector in Central and Eastern European countries that the greatest problem continues to be the lack of adequate financial resources. While that problem is the object of prevalent complaints in the West, the funding in real terms is far higher there than in Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, the condition of the infrastructure and the cost-effectiveness of the sector overall lag far behind. In Central and Eastern Europe, the average salary of academic staff members is a fraction of that of their Western colleagues, which has far-reaching consequences on many aspects of higher education. It should be remembered, however, that enormous progress has been made in the last decade concerning structural developments in higher education, as has been described, accompanied by a steady rise in the GDP in many Central and Eastern European countries. Together, the two trends may provide the sector in the region with opportunities to define its future, both in the countries individually and as part of the European higher education area.

Part II

Annexes

Annex 1

Resources Chart from the December 2001 INQAAHE Survey

This chart summarizes published responses to two of the questions in the December 2001 INQAAHE survey of its members asking:

- At whose initiative the external evaluation agency was established?
- What, in the view of the Agency, was the relative importance of the purposes of their evaluations? (The replies were rated on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being most important?
- It indicates which providers of education are covered by the evaluation processes of the Agency.
- It only lists respondents (from European Union member states) who are full members of INQAAHE.
- They are also members of ENQA.

Agency: name and country/region	Established at	Constituency	Accountability	Accreditation	Enhancement	Benchmarking	Info
Austria - *Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat*	Government initiative	Private universities	5		3	4	2
Austria - *Geschehaftsselle Fachhochschulrat*	Government initiative	*Fachhochschulen*	5		4		
Belgium - *Vlaamse Hogescholenrad*	Government initiative	Hogescholen					
Denmark - *Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut*	Government initiative	All levels of education	3		5	5	5
Finland - Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council FINHEEC	Government initiative	Polytechnics and universities	3		5	3	
France - *Comité National d'Evaluation*	Government initiative	All higher education institutions			5		
Germany - Akkrediterungsrat National	Joint Government and institutional initiative	Accreditation agencies		5	4		3
Norway - Network Norway Council	Government initiative		3		5		4
Portugal - INAFOP	Government initiative	Initial teacher education programmes		5	3		
Netherlands - HBO-*Raad*	*Hogscholen* initiative	*Hogescholen*	5	Not until 2002-2003	5	3	4
Netherlands - VSNU	University initiative	Universities	3	Not until 2002-2003	5	4	1
Sweden - National Agency for Higher Education	Government initiative	Universities/ university colleges and professional accreditation			5		
United Kingdom - Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education	Joint government/ funding council and higher education institutions initiative	Universities, colleges of higher education, and higher education further education colleges	5		5		5

Annex 2

Descriptions of Higher Education Institutions and Quality Assurance in Central and Eastern European Countries

2.1. ALBANIA

Albania has eight universities, three of which are in Tirana, and five, in other parts of the country. There are also two academies, for art and for sports, and one "higher school" for nursing. In addition, there is a military and a police academy. There are no private higher education institutions, even though the legislation makes their establishment possible. A separate law on private institutions is foreseen. All institutions must have state recognition to operate. The number of applying students exceeds the number of study places overall; however, as everywhere in the world, there is little interest in certain subjects and an overabundance of applications for such popular subjects as economics and law. The government determines the number of study places as proposed by the institutions. Tuition fees have recently been introduced, of which the institutions can retain up to 90 percent with the balance going to the central budget. These fees are accompanied by a grant system that is based on family income and merit.

The Accreditation Agency of Higher Education, along with the Council of Accreditation, was formally established in 1999, with the passing of the higher education law and specifically a decision by the Council of Ministers. However, Albania is just launching the accreditation process with the assistance of a just-ending, three-year TEMPUS project. The aim is for the same evaluation team to assess similar programmes in the whole country. At programme level, the desire is to assess both educational and research activities. The scope of assessments is

very broad, encompassing both institutional and programme levels, and within these, an extensive number of factors, from goals and aims to the opinion of society at large. One can expect that once the agency has gained some experience the scope will become more focused. The Agency aims to evaluate institutions and programmes every four years.

The Accreditation Council has eleven members. They are distinguished academics, including two representatives from industry and one from the Ministry of Education and Science, who are named by the Council of Ministers on the proposal of the Minister of Education and Science. The Accreditation Council approves the criteria of self-evaluation and external evaluation and decides on the accreditation report. The Accreditation Agency has a staff of five, one director, three programme officers, and one administrator. The programme officers participate as secretaries in the review visit and contribute to writing the accreditation report. The report, which describes the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluated institution, is submitted to the Council of Accreditation, and the decision of the latter is presented to the Minister, who has the final decision on granting accreditation. The report is published but distributed only within the sector.

The Agency prepares the criteria for evaluation to be approved by the Council. The Agency issues two manuals, one for self-evaluation, used by the institutions, and the other for the review team. It is interesting to note that the Agency trains the self-evaluation team at the institutions prior to launching the self-evaluation exercise. Equally interesting is the provision in the law that the self-evaluation should create the basis for a development plan for the institution. The Agency also trains the external reviewers who, as stated in the law, come from the organizations of employers, industry, and other universities.

2.2. BULGARIA

Bulgaria has forty-nine higher education institutions that include thirty-seven state universities and specialized higher schools, four private universities, two state, and six private

colleges. All higher education institutions operating in Bulgaria must be recognized by the National Assembly. The training for Doctoral Degrees provided in connection with research specialities may also be offered by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Agricultural Academy, and the other research organizations in the country.

The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency conducts institutional and programme accreditation. The law stipulates that programme accreditation can only be conducted in institutions that have already been accredited. Programme accreditation is conducted for programmes leading to educational and professional degrees ("Specialist in..."), educational qualification (Bachelor's and Master's Degrees), as well as for education and research (Doctoral Degrees). The Agency also accredits new programmes to be launched in accredited institutions. Doctoral education may be conducted at universities and research organizations which have received the highest of four ratings in their accreditation of research specialities for Doctoral Degrees.

The Agency evaluates projects for the opening and transforming of a higher school, a faculty, an institute, a branch, or a college as well as for the opening of new specialities.

The Accreditation Council consists of nine recognized academics, including two representing the Minister of Education and Science. The Council Chairperson is also the Chairperson of the Agency. The Council is appointed for a six-year term. The Council sets up standing committees of three to seven members appointed by the Chairperson for a three-year term. The role of the standing committees is to review the reports of the expert groups that have conducted site visits. The Standing Committee evaluates the report on the strengths and weaknesses of the institution or programme described and proposes an accreditation grade.

The Agency has a full-time staff of twenty persons who have an administrative and coordinating role. They do not participate in the review visits, but do contribute to the accreditation

report. The Agency develops its evaluation criteria and procedures in accordance with the law and other legislation, both for institutional and programme reviews. It also organizes workshops for training its review teams. The results of accreditation are published annually in the State Gazette, while the reports are published periodically in the *Bulletin* of the Agency and are distributed to higher education institutions, research organizations, ministries, and other state organizations.

2.3. CROATIA

Croatia has four multi-faculty universities, which also include academies and polytechnic schools. In 2001, the Ministry of Science and Technology decreed that polytechnics might also be established as independent institutions. Consequently seven polytechnics and eight independent schools have been established.

The national system of quality assurance is set down in the 1993 Higher Education Act. It was amended in 1996 to separate the functions of assessment and accreditation. A new draft law is currently under discussion.

The Ministry initiates the accreditation of study programmes and makes accreditation decisions, based on the recommendations of the National Council for Higher Education. The Council has eighteen members and a President. On nomination by the Rectors Conference and higher education institutions, the members and the President of the Council are appointed by the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia for a four-year term. The role of the Council is to propose the experts, and following their assessment, to formulate a recommendation to the Ministry regarding accreditation. The same review team conducts the review of all programmes in the same general subject area in the country.

Higher education institutions are evaluated without a "formal" accreditation decision. Nevertheless, the Council may propose the closing of an institution that does not meet quality standards. The Council devises guidelines for self-evaluation

and the framework for review, but the Ministry approves the procedures. The Ministry has the function of a quality agency in that it provides the logistics for reviews. The review team is appointed by the Ministry on the proposal of the Council. It consists of academics, some of them (mostly of Croatian origin) are from abroad. It submits its evaluation report to the ministry, which forwards it to the Council. The Council then debates the content of the team's report, based on the self-evaluation report, the opinions of professional organizations and international experts, and may accept it as is or require additional information. The Council then formulates one of four proposals: from ruling that the institution meets the quality standards, to requesting the implementation of changes by a given date, to changing the status (funding) of the institution, or to closing it. The Ministry makes the final decision.

The tasks of the Council, in addition to quality assessment, also extend to commenting on higher education policy and strategy and proposing to initiate new or to abolish existing course programmes and higher education institutions.

2.4. THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Accreditation Commission of the Czech Republic was established by means of the Higher Education Act in 1990. Its twenty-one members, including two from business and three from foreign countries, are appointed by the Government, on the nomination of the Minister of Education, Youth, and Sports, from higher education institutions, the Academy of Sciences, and the Research and Development Council of the Government. The Minister must consult with representative bodies of the three groups. Commission members are appointed for four- or six-year renewable terms. Additionally, there are chairpersons of permanent working groups to cover disciplines not represented by commission members. ministry representatives may attend Commission meetings. A person from the applying institution or programme may be invited when the Commission discusses the application.

In 1999, a Secretariat was set up and has since expanded to include a staff of six, including the Secretary. It is technically a unit of the Department for Science and Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport. The Commission Secretary is appointed by the Minister on the proposal of the Chairperson of the Commission. The staff performs a coordinating and administrative function, while the Commission members, who meet to discuss and vote on applications and higher education issues "at least three times a year" (The Statute of the Accreditation Committee, Ministry of Education Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. Article 2 [1]. p. 1) but in fact more often, carry the full load of work in preparing the evaluations.

At the end of 2001, the Czech Republic had forty-eight higher education institutions of which twenty-four were public, four were state institutions (one police academy and three military institutions), and twenty were private institutions. The public and military institutions are universities with a research orientation and offer Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral programmes. The Police Academy and all the private institutions are non-university vocational institutions offering Bachelor-level degrees.

In 1998, the Higher Education Act was amended so as to greatly expand the mandate of the Commission. While earlier, only new programmes were accredited without provision for ongoing quality control, evaluation cycles were now introduced. The scope of the commission is to evaluate "applications for the accreditation of study programmes and... for the accreditation of procedures for obtaining *venium docenti* (habilitation) or procedures for appointment of professors in a given field, ...[the] establishment, merger, amalgamation, splitting, or dissolution of a faculty of a public or state higher education institution, granting the state permission for a legal entity desiring to operate as a private higher education institution, determining the type of higher education institution" (The Statute of the Accreditation Commission, Ministry of Education Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic. Article 2 [3] and [4b-d], pp. 1-2).

The Accreditation Commission also has an indirect influence on higher education policy in that it is asked to "assess other issues concerning the system of higher education presented to it by the Minister and express its standpoints [regarding] these issues" (The Statute of the Accreditation Commission, Ministry of Education Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, Article 1 [1] b, p. 1).

The commission and its working groups devise their own standards for evaluation and accreditation, based on the Higher Education Law and pertinent legislation.

While the denial of accreditation can lead to the closing of an institution or programme, the commission invokes this right only in cases in which no hope for improvement is perceived. It may also propose to restrict accreditation so that no new students are admitted, or withdraw accreditation so that no degree may be awarded until the programme is improved.

Reports include a description of strengths and weaknesses and contain a number of specific provisions for improving the quality of a programme or institution. Higher education institutions are required by law to have internal quality control mechanisms and to publish the outcomes of their reviews once a year (a provision in the 1998 amendment to the Law). In its external evaluation, the Accreditation Commission considers the capacity of the given institution to control its quality.

2.5. ESTONIA

Estonia has six public universities, seven state applied higher education institutions (polytechnics), six state higher vocational institutions, eight private higher vocational institutions, and twenty-two private higher education institutions. They are required to obtain a license from the Ministry of Culture and Education to operate and may issue state-recognized degrees only for study programmes that have been accredited.

The Higher Education Accreditation Center was established by the Government in 1997 as a foundation. Its primary activity is to organize the accreditation of course programmes; however,

it has also reviewed some institutions. The Center organizes research evaluation separately.

The Center functions as the coordinator for accreditation procedures with a staff of three: a Head and two Assistant Heads, one for research and the other for evaluation. The role of the Center is to identify experts and to organize their review visits. The review teams are made up of only foreign experts. The review team schedules are organized so that the team is able to review all the programmes in the broad given field in the country within the one week allotted to their visit, which includes writing the review report.

The Higher Education Quality Assessment Council of Estonia was established by the 1995 Law on Universities, to "operate under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Education". It has twelve members, including members from other Nordic countries, who are "representatives from amongst research and development institutions, state foundations that finance research and development activity, and from professional associations". They are appointed by the Government for a three-year term that may be renewed once. The Council votes on the review team reports and is responsible for devising the criteria and methodology for accreditation which are approved by the Minister. Government regulations set down the general standards for curricula and levels of study. The accreditation decision is either for full accreditation (valid for seven years), conditional accreditation (valid for two years), or not accredited. If over one-third of the programmes of a university are not accredited, its license is revoked. (For research evaluation the possible grades that are awarded are *excellent*, *good*, *satisfactory*, or *unsatisfactory*). The judgments of the Council are advisory to the Minister of Education, who makes the final decision regarding accreditation of a programme or an institution. The Minister has veto power over Council decisions but may not change them and is required to explain his or her reasons. Reports deal with the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluated programme or institution. They are

not widely diffused, but printed copies are distributed to universities and student organizations.

2.6. HUNGARY

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee was established as the result of the first Hungarian Higher Education Law in 1993. Its scope is to accredit higher education institutions, which, in the first round, that ended in 2000, it did by assessing all study programmes at given evaluated institutions. In the coming round of evaluations, the focus will be more on the institution as a whole, and only a selection of programmes will be evaluated. The evaluation of entire fields at one time and by expert reviewers from a consistent pool is also being considered, the purpose being the comparability of study programmes in the country. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee adopted a strategic plan in early 2002 and is proposing a new procedure in consultation with higher education institutions. The Committee conducts programme evaluation according to the standards devised by its expert committees for each discipline.

In addition, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee evaluates applications to establish and grant state recognition to higher education institutions and faculties, on new study programmes, and on national qualification requirements for all degree programmes taught in Hungary. The Committee also advises on habilitation regulations. According to the amendment of 2000 to the Higher Education Act, the Committee is also charged with evaluating applications for professorships.

Hungary has eighteen state universities, twelve colleges, five church-maintained universities, twenty-one church-maintained colleges, and six private colleges. Hungary has a dual tertiary system with universities providing research-based and research-oriented education and with colleges offering applied training. Student movement from one system to the other, although provided for by law, has been difficult and infrequent, except in the few cases in which bilateral agreements between certain institutions facilitate it. The sector is discussing a

number of options to introduce the Bachelor's/Master's model. The introduction of an ECTS- compatible credit system is underway.

In order to receive state recognition and to award degrees, private higher education institutions must undergo accreditation. Church-maintained higher education institutions receive state financing similar to state institutions and are accredited, but the mandate of the Committee only pertains to secular programmes.

The decisions of the Committee regarding doctoral schools is binding. All its other decisions are advisory, but in case the Minister of Education deviates from the assessment of the Committee, he or she must publish the reasons for his or her decision. The scope of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee is accreditation oriented toward improvement. Accreditation for higher education institutions is contingent on compliance with the Higher Education Act. In the first round of institutional accreditation, the evaluated programmes were graded on a four-level scale. Roughly one third of the programmes were awarded accreditation for a specified period with prescribed requirements to be met by that date. These requirements were reviewed in a monitoring procedure. In the next institutional accreditation round, programmes will be given one of three grades: "yes" (may be accredited), "conditional yes" (may be accredited but is required to meet stated requirements by a stated date), and "no" (may not be accredited).

In the first round, only the final accreditation decision was published along with a brief explanation. In the following round, the full report will be published.

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee consists of thirty full members delegated by higher education institutions, research institutes, and professional organizations. They receive their letters of appointment from the Prime Minister for a three-year term, which may be renewed once. There is one non-voting student member. Additional non-voting members are appointed in order to cover all the main disciplines. An International Advisory Board, mandated by law, reviews the work of the

Committee at an annual meeting and makes recommendations which are also sent to the Minister.

The Secretariat has a staff of sixteen programme officers, four of whom are part-time, and nine administrative staff. The programme officers are assigned several expert committees the work of which they prepare and guide from inception to completion of the report. In addition, they are responsible for several institutions; they prepare and participate in site-visits; and they assist in writing the accreditation report.

In 2000-2001, the Hungarian Accreditation Committee was evaluated by an international review team under the auspices of the European Rectors Conference (CRE, now the European University Association EUA). Its report, together with the reply of the Committee, have been published (<http://www.mab.hu/english/a_links.html>).

2.7. LATVIA

There are forty higher education institutions in Latvia, of which twenty-three are state institutions and seventeen are private. All five universities are state institutions.

The Higher Education Quality Evaluation Center, Ltd., is owned by shareholders. These are the Ministry of Education and Science and five higher education institutions. A five-member board supervises its activities. One member of this board is appointed by the Ministry. The shareholders elect the Director of the Center who hires the staff. The staff includes two academics and consists of four full-time equivalent positions, including the Director, which are filled by two full-time and four part-time employees.

The Center has a primarily coordinating function. It sets the timetable for reviews in consultation with higher education institutions and brings together the evaluation teams as required by the Council of Higher Education (for institutions) or the Accreditation Commission (for programme assessment), in consultation with the institutions or persons responsible for programmes to be reviewed. The staff of the Center does not participate in the visits. While there is no national-level

assessment of all study programmes in a field, the Center does attempt to use the same experts to evaluate similar programmes. The Center has guidelines for self-evaluation and external assessment, but the evaluation team has great autonomy in deciding on its own methodology and procedures, so long as they comply with the legislated standards. The teams are made up only of academics, one from Latvia and at least two foreign team members. Only for college-level professional education may all the experts be from Latvia. The review team reports are published without changes, and the teams are fully responsible for their content. The evaluation report is sent directly to the higher education institution as well as to the Council for Higher Education and the Accreditation Commission, and is published.

The Council for Higher Education is set up by Parliament, and the Accreditation Commission, by the Ministry. The two bodies approve the review teams set up by the Center and decide whether accreditation should be granted. The Council for Higher Education Institutions and the Commission for Study Programmes approve the reports of the independent evaluation teams organized by the Center. They submit their decisions to the Minister, who may refuse to grant accreditation simply on the grounds of a legal violation.

The Council of Higher education is an independent institution. It has ten members, including its full-time Chairperson who is prohibited from holding a leadership position elsewhere. They are delegated by bodies representing higher education, research, professional organizations, and industry. The Minister of Education and Science also attends the meetings. The members are approved by Parliament for four-year terms. In addition to adopting decisions on the accreditation of higher education institutions, the Council undertakes a wide range of duties regarding higher education strategy, quality, and financing.

The Accreditation Commission is set up by the Minister to assess study programmes and to propose an accreditation decision to him or her. Its members are delegated by higher

education institutions, research institutes, and the Ministry, as well as by unions, professional associations, and other ministries.

Institutions are granted permanent accreditation status except in cases in which improvement is needed. In such cases, accreditation is given for two years. New study programmes must receive accreditation within two years of starting activities. Study programmes are accredited for six years, but may receive a two-year accreditation once if they need to be improved. The Council or Commission may also decide that accreditation should be refused. After repeated negative accreditation, the institution or study programme must be reorganized or closed, depending on the severity of the problems. Negative as well as positive decisions are published.

New study programmes must be granted licenses before they can operate and must receive accreditation within two years. Study programmes must be accredited every six years, at the least.

2.8. LITHUANIA

During the 2001-2002 academic year, there were twenty-two state and thirteen non-state higher education institutions operating in Lithuania. They include nineteen university-type institutions (fifteen state and four non-state) and sixteen non-university-type institutions – colleges (seven – state and six non-state).

The Lithuanian Center for Quality Assessment in Higher Education was established, and is financed, by government, but the agency functions independently. The Minister for Science and Education appoints the Director of the Center on a competitive basis to serve a five-year term.

The Agency staff organizes institutional and programme assessment. In addition, it conducts research evaluation separately. The activities of the Center focus on quality assessment and improvement, even though the Center forwards its assessment reports to the Ministry.

The Ministry sets up a Council of Experts. The latter is responsible for summarizing the conclusions of the assessments. The external evaluation schedule for study programmes, institutions, and the subdivision is determined by the Center in consultation with the Rectors' Conference, the College Directors' Conference, the Directors' Conference of State Research Institutes, and the Science Council. The assessment plans are approved by the Minister. Institutional and programme accreditation decisions are taken by the Minister of Science and Education, based on the report of the review team, approved by the Council of Experts. Accreditation is mandatory.

The agency functions as the coordinator of reviews. It also organizes seminars for self-assessment. The regular assessment of education programmes began in 1999. The Agency appoints the review teams in consultation with the institution to be assessed. The review teams, which consist of academics and non-academics, prepare their reports for the evaluated institution. For the subject areas (especially the social sciences), international expert groups are formed. One or two local experts are included in each group. The review teams may or may not be the same for similar programmes. However, the same review team is used to evaluate all study programmes in the same general field in all higher education institutions. Programmes, which receive temporary or restricted assessment, are re-evaluated within two years. The teams hold responsibility for the report, and only a summary is published. The Center forwards the report to the evaluated institution and to the Council.

While assessing the research and development of research and higher education institutions (or their subdivisions), efficiency of research activity may be assessed considering not only quantity indicators, but also quality parameters for research efficiency. The most important research results are determined following a debate on their significance. After every assessment, the Agency publishes the research and development efficiency indicators of institutions of research and higher education taken from their self-assessment reports and

supplemented with corrections according to the results of external assessment.

The qualitative assessment of the whole institution of research and higher education embraces all its academic subdivisions as well as the whole combination of all its academic (educational and research) activities. Both an internal and external assessment of the whole institution are based on the previous assessment reports concerning the educational programmes as well as those of research in different subject areas, with the reports being summarized, and strategic matters, considered. Only in the case of a small institution may a general qualitative assessment of research and higher education coincide with an assessment of its research or study programmes. Summarized quality assessments include grading on a four-point scale.

It is interesting to note that the Agency shares its offices, administration, Director, and Deputy-Director with the National Recognition of Qualifications and Information Center, the ENIC/NARIC, which allows the organizations to share their pools of experts. The Agency works with a staff of eight, but shares its administration with the Recognition Center. The quality assessment unit has a staff of four, including its Head, an academic holding a part-time position.

2.9. MACEDONIA

Macedonia recognizes four types of higher education institutions: universities, faculties, art academies, and higher vocational schools. Currently, the country has two state-recognized universities. There is also one private, recognized, foreign university. However, altogether, there are thirty-five higher education institutions. All must have licenses to operate. For the most attractive programmes, there are more applicants than available study places.

Currently, a project with international co-operation, the involvement of the evaluation agency, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the two state universities, is underway to design the quality assessment landscape of higher education in

the country. The main focus is on introducing self-evaluation into higher education institutions.

After ten years of preparation, the Law on Higher Education was adopted in August 2000. It called for the international comparability of higher education and introduced quality assessment and accreditation. Both institutions and programmes are to be evaluated and accredited.

The Law set up two bodies for quality assessment, the Accreditation Board (also translated as "Licensing Board") and the Evaluation Agency. The Board is an independent body of fifteen academics delegated by the Inter-University Conference, the Academy of Science and Art, and the Government for a four-year term, renewable once. It is responsible for determining whether or not a higher education institution is complying with the general requirements set for it. It decides on the accreditation of new study programmes, keeps records on licensed higher education institutions, and assesses the quality of higher education in general. The Board may establish expert committees.

The Evaluation Agency has nine members who are academics proposed by the Inter-University Conference and elected for a four-year, once renewable term by the Board by secret ballot. They represent proportionally the number of faculties and scientific institutions involved in higher education at all levels. The Agency functions as an independent and separate body but is convened by the President of the Board. It is responsible for conducting external evaluations based on guidelines adopted on the proposal of the Inter-University Conference. It should also review the quality of the academic staff in the higher education institutions of the country. It must monitor the quality of work at higher education institutions. Once every five years, it assesses the quality of higher education institutions; it gives recommendations for improvement; it assesses the quality of the academic staff throughout the country and makes suggestions for improvement; it publishes its reports on assessment results which it transmits to the institutions, the Board, the Ministry, and the Parliament. Based

on its findings, it recommends the extension or the withdrawal of the accreditation of given institutions.

The law requires higher education institutions to conduct self-evaluations via committees set up for this purpose. General Guidelines for Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures at Universities have been published, and the Accreditation Board as well as the Evaluation Agency have issued their respective by-laws.

2.10. POLAND

In Poland, the proliferation of private higher education institutions has been enormous. Over 200 such institutions were established over the last decade (Wójcicka and Chwirot, 2001, p.7). This result, in part, contributed to the establishment of a number of accreditation bodies. Business Schools for Quality of Higher Education (FORUM) was set up in 1994. The Accreditation Commission of Higher Vocational Education was established by the Law on Higher Professional Schools in 1997 and by a ministerial decree of 1998. The Accreditation Commission for Medical Universities was set up in 1997; the University Accreditation Commission, in 1998; the Accreditation Commission for Schools of Physical Education and one for Pedagogical Schools, in 1999. The Accreditation Commission of Technical Universities, one for Agricultural Universities, and the Accreditation Commission of the Foundation of Promotion and Accreditation of Economic Studies were set up in 2001. The aim of these commissions is to control the standard of study programmes in their given fields.

The General Council on Higher Education was established as a result of the Polish Higher Education Law of 1990. One of its functions was to set the standards for new higher education institutions, faculties, and study programmes. But "deprived of... organizational support and adequate financial means [it] has not been able to conduct systematic quality evaluation of provision in the hitherto existing and newly established institutions of tertiary education" (Wójcicka and Chwirot, 2001, p. 7). In the 2001 amendment to the Higher Education Law, the

likely successor to the General Council, the National General Accreditation Commission, was established. It began to function in January 2002 and is expected to work out threshold standards for quality. "In this situation, it seems that one of the more important tasks of the State Accreditation Commission [now translated as "National General Accreditation Commission"] is, in addition to seeing to the authorization of activities undertaken by the academic milieu via its official certification and limited co-ordination role, also assuring the provision of certain minimal quality standards by each tertiary education establishment. Such activities will allow for *(i)* developing important social initiatives in the academic milieu possessing self-regulatory character, *(ii)* distinguishing and promoting institutions granting excellent provision, and *(iii)* accelerating the inclusion into the evaluation system of all higher education institutions in Poland" (Wójcicka and Chwirot, 2001, p. 8).

Following years of discussion about setting up a quality assurance system, the Conference of Rectors of Polish Universities (CRPU) took the initiative and established the University Accreditation Commission (UAC) in 1998. Its mission is the "enactment of quality standards in education comparable to those prevailing in the European Union; the upgrading of the quality of education; [and the] promotion of high-quality courses of studies and of schools offering them" (2001, <http://www.main.amu.edu.pl/-ects/uka/uka-eng.html>). The membership is made up of seventeen "Vice-Rectors or representatives of the schools-signatories of the Agreement appointed by the Rectors of their schools and one person designated by CRPU. CRPU appoints the President of the UAC. The tenure of UAC members is three years" (<http://www.main.amu.edu.pl/-ects/uka/uka-eng.html>).

The UAC specifically aims to set up a system of accreditation for degree programmes and to establish common standards of quality. Other institutions that are not members of the agreement may apply for accreditation of their programmes by the UAC but the UAC deals only with research universities.

Some private institutions have, in fact, undergone accreditation by UAC. In their evaluation, for which the application is voluntary, the UAC looks at the curriculum, the academic qualifications of the teaching staff, the student/teacher ratio, the adequacy of infrastructure, including library holdings and laboratories, as well as research or scholarly contacts, and the existence of student evaluations of the taught courses.

At least five universities must apply for the accreditation of a particular study field in order to launch the accreditation procedure. The university applying for accreditation proposes five experts with documented qualifications to participate in the evaluation (two from the university and three from another university). An expert group of six to twelve persons, whose task is to establish specific standards for evaluating the study field, and a three- to five-member evaluation team for each applying programme, that reviews the programme and writes an evaluation report, is set up. The evaluation team may recommend that the UAC grant accreditation (for two to five years), prescribe certain requirements before accreditation may be granted, or refuse accreditation. The expert group reviews and updates its standards at least every two years. The UAC employs two full-time and one part-time staff members. These perform coordinating and administrative functions.

The proliferation of accreditation commissions has galvanized their members into establishing an umbrella organization. It is currently developing. Its members are the chair people of the seven academic accreditation commissions. Its tasks are to co-ordinate the activities of its seven member commissions, particularly to observe that accreditation standards and procedures are correct and comparable, and that fields of study offered by different schools are accredited under the same standards and procedures. It should also represent the seven commissions *vis-à-vis* the National General Accreditation Commission and in international organizations. Finally, it is expected to speak out publicly on issues of accreditation and the ranking of higher education institutions.

2.11. ROMANIA

Romania has fifty-seven public and eighty-three private higher education institutions. Higher education institutions can be universities, academies, polytechnics, institutes, or colleges. Already in 1990, Romania had 101 private faculties, a number that more than doubled in the next decade, reaching 221 faculties by 2000, with over 30 percent of students in higher education attending private institutions. With tuition fees being charged in public institutions, the private sector is highly competitive. However, accreditation is mandatory and very rigorous, and the 1993 law on accreditation requires, among other things, that at least 51 percent of students at a private institution pass the state examination at a public university. By 2001, only eight private higher education institutions had been accredited, thus authorized to grant state-recognized degrees as well as to be eligible for state funding.

The National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation has nineteen to twenty-one members appointed for four-year terms. They are nominated by higher education institutions, the list of which is published in the daily press so as to invite public challenges. From the resulting short-list, the Minister of Education proposes the final membership list to the cabinet for approval by the Parliament. The members elect a president, a vice-president, and a secretary on the proposal of the Minister.

The Council sets up fifteen expert committees of seven to nine members, who are appointed for a four-year term. The expert committees cover the basic disciplines and include some foreign members. They may involve additional experts for reviews who may be non-academics and/or foreigners. The Council has a full-time staff of fifteen professionals and ten administrators and coordinators.

Standards and criteria for accreditation are set down in the 1993 Law on Accreditation. Quality assurance encompasses ongoing internal evaluation of higher education institutions and external assessment. The latter begins with the licensing of new

institutions, accreditation three years after licensing, and repeated assessment every five years.

New programmes also must be initially licensed. Accreditation is awarded after several assessments. The final decision on accreditation is a parliamentary decision, if it concerns a new institution, and governmental, if it concerns a new programme. The periodic institutional assessment covers all study programmes. The institutions that do not meet the requirements are given a year to improve.

The reports of the initial review team are confined to facts and are first given to the university for verification. The next stage of the report is written by the expert committee and is based on the self-evaluation report of the institution and the review team report. The final report is discussed and approved by the full Council and may include recommendations for the university. The report is then submitted to the Minister who may return it for review to the commission. The report of the Commission and the comments of the Minister are sent to the institution, and if the latter agrees, may be made public. The final decision on accreditation is made by the Government (for programmes at accredited institutions) or by the Parliament (for new institutions).

2.12. THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Russian Federation, embracing fifteen post-Soviet states with 89 regions, has over 1,100 higher education institutions. Of these, 431 are licensed non-state institutions providing 9 percent of the student population. State institutions were founded before 1990. There are also municipal and private institutions that were founded after that date. Higher education is offered at four levels: vocational, non-university, university, and postgraduate, including Doctoral level.

Quality assurance in Russia is based on three consecutive procedures, licensing, state accreditation, and attestation based on state standards. The process was made the object of legislation in the 1992 Law on Education. State standards describe minimum programme content, workload, and

requirements. Licensing, granted by state or local authorities, gives institutions the right to offer study programmes in the field and at the levels for which licensing is granted. The experts check whether or not the conditions for education have been met, whether the institution and its programmes meet legislative and infrastructural requirements, and whether staff qualifications are adequate. Licensing is an administrative process conducted by external experts and federal and local educational authorities.

Accreditation is the legislated product of a decree of the State Committee for Higher Education. It confers on both state and private institutions the right to issue state-recognized degrees. Accreditation testifies type of institution (professional school, technical school [also humanities and social sciences], college, institute, academy, university) and its level (general education, vocational education, non-university or university higher education), and whether or not the contents and quality of training comply with the State Educational Standards. The process of accreditation combines institutional and programme assessment and extends to all the programmes of the evaluated institution. Accreditation is granted for a maximum of five years for institutions and programmes and encompasses self-evaluation by higher education institutions and an external peer review. The review team, made up of academics and non-academics, writes a report, which forms the basis for accreditation. Non-universities are accredited by state authorities in the region in which the institution is located. Universities are accredited by the Ministry of General and Professional Education.

Attestation is the task of an expert commission, which also include non-academics. Its purpose is to assess the knowledge of graduates as compared to the State Educational Standards, and is regulated by the 1994 decree of the State committee for Higher Education on State Final Attestation of Graduates of Higher Education Institutions. Attestation is a rigorous exit examination procedure for graduates, which includes a final examination in the graduate's discipline, a final examination in

the specialization, and the defense of a thesis or project, conducted by a state attestation commission, involving academics and non-academics, set up by the body responsible for accreditation. Attestation is a precondition for the award of individual degrees as well as part of the process of accreditation at the institutional level.

The focus of the National Accreditation Center is to provide information to the Accreditation Council. The Council, established in 1997, is a unit of the Ministry of Education. It has forty-two members drawn from the Ministry and from various educational and non-state organizations. It organizes reviews and invites review teams. Review teams evaluate the institution and all its programmes and consist of five to fifteen experts in different fields, including management, education, and research. The role of the center is to compile documentation for the Ministry that makes accreditation decisions based on the report of the Accreditation Council.

The Center works with a staff of about fifty full-time and about twenty part-time employees. The permanent staff of the Center includes five academics and eight top managers with one director and three deputy directors. There are six departments at the headquarters in Yoshkar-Ola and one branch in Moscow. A major part of the work of the Center is to compile data on higher education institutions, their programmes, and the accreditation status of both. The Center also conducts research into accreditation and quality assessment. It designs assessment procedures and develops computer software for different stages of quality assessment. Another important service offered by the Center is to provide information on accreditation status and procedures. This information can be obtained via the Website of the Center <http://www.nica.ru>. The Center staff includes academics and professionals with academic degrees.

2.13. SLOVAKIA

Slovakia has twenty-three higher education institutions, of which twenty-two offer Master's Degree level and Doctoral

education, while one private institution leads only up to the Bachelor's Degree level. Ten of the higher education institutions, including the newly established Catholic university, are universities; three are technical universities with a range of fields; and three are professionally oriented universities. There are also three university-level academies of art, one police, and two military academies. The latter three are considered "state" institutions, while the other non-private ones are "public" institutions. All higher education institutions, whether public, state, or private, must have state recognition to operate.

More students apply for admission to higher education institutions than there are study places available. At the same time, institutions compete for students in less fashionable fields.

The first Slovak Law on Higher Education following the 1989 change of regime was introduced in 1990. A new Higher Education Act went into effect on 1 April 2002 reflecting two fundamental changes. Whereas in the past faculties were legal entities, nowadays it is the university that is a legal entity. It retains ownership of its properties, for the oversight of which, and some other strategic decisions, it must set up a Board of Trustees. The 2002 Law has changed some of the responsibilities of the Accreditation Commission. Moreover, the Minister of Education must now approve its regulations and standards.

The Commission has twenty-one members, including foreign ones, who are appointed by government on the proposal of the Minister following consultations with the higher education institutions, the research institutes of the Academy of Sciences, and other bodies, the latter possibly being recommended by various ministries. The Commission evaluates the capacity of institutions to implement programmes, including doctoral programmes, in non-higher education institutions, and to conduct habilitations and to nominate professors. In addition, it issues statements relative to proposed changes in a higher education institution (*e.g.*, on creating a new faculty), about the setting up of institutions, about defining its type (university,

non-university, or research university), about changing the structure of the study fields of given institutions, and about conducting the "complex" accreditation of an institution. It acts as an advisory body to government.

There is a distinct separation between programme and institutional accreditation. Programme accreditation grants the institution the right to award degrees at the level specified and to habilitate and nominate professors according to the procedures that are also accredited. If the accreditation is positive, it may be granted without a time limit, but will be re-assessed in the context of "complex" institutional accreditation. If problems were identified, accreditation is given for one or two years, depending on the severity of the problems in question. The evaluation aspect in this process is negligible, and accreditation is based on threshold criteria.

"Complex" institutional accreditation is conducted at six-year intervals. It encompasses the institutional level, including the procedures for habilitation and nomination of professors, as well as all programmes. The procedure should focus on improvement, with the Commission pointing out strengths and weaknesses. As part of complex institutional accreditation, the Commission also evaluates the performance of a given higher education institution in research and development (except in fields of art). As per the new law, the quality of research is no longer graded.

It is interesting to note that the same procedure for evaluating research is applied to the Academy of Sciences as well as to state and private research institutes. This fact implies that all of these institutions will vie for research funds from the state budget on the basis of accreditation.

The decisions of the Commission are formulated as opinions addressed to the Minister, or, in the case of certain specific tasks, to the Government or Parliament. However, if the decision of the Minister regarding accreditation is different from that of the Commission, he or she must, by law, publish his or her reasons.

Currently, the technical staff of the Accreditation Commission consists of one academic-professional person and one administrator. A government decree will lay down the basic conditions for operation.

2.14. SLOVENIA

In 1993, Slovenia had two comprehensive universities and two "free-standing professional higher education institutions". Today, the number of universities remains unchanged (with, altogether, thirty-seven faculties), but there are also seven private higher education institutions. The "free-standing" schools are required to have state recognition.

The Higher Education Act of 1993 set up a Council for Higher Education. Its standards are specified in the Act, and its criteria for evaluation, in its "Criteria and Procedures on Accreditation of Study Programmes and Higher Education Institutions" (*in*, Zgaga and Jurkovic, 1995).

Six of its fourteen members and its President are appointed by the Government, after nomination by the higher education institutions, for four-year terms. They are joined by the President of the Academy of Sciences and Arts and the rectors of the universities.

Among the responsibilities of the Council are those of establishing the criteria for assessing the quality of teaching and with approving study programmes. It is also expected to determine whether or not an institution is fulfilling the legal requirements to be established and operated, and whether new study programmes can be set up, as a precondition for funding. The criteria for assessing higher education institutions are also set down in the "Criteria and Procedures". Moreover, the Council is responsible for judging whether or not a faculty member may be awarded a title, based on the requirements of the law and the opinion of external experts.

In 1996, the higher education institutions took the initiative to establish the Quality Assessment Commission. It was restructured in 2000. Its main purpose is to develop a self-evaluation methodology and to assist higher education

institutions in setting up their internal quality control mechanisms. The Commission basically collects and disseminates information about evaluation at institutions. The Commission has eighteen members and a president. There is only one administrator and no programme officers.

The overall tasks of the Commission are defined in the 1997 amendment to the Higher Education Act as follows:

> The quality and effectiveness of teaching, research, art, and professional activities of higher education institutions shall be monitored and assessed by a Quality Assessment Commission created by higher education institutions in the Republic of Slovenia. The Commission shall be composed of representatives of all scientific and art disciplines and professional fields. The Commission shall also obtain the advice of students. The Commission shall conduct business according to the rules determined in co-operation with the senates of higher education institutions and criteria defined by the Council of Higher education in co-operation with the Council for Research and Technology. Once a year, the Commission shall report to the Senates of the higher education institutions, the Council for Higher education, and the Council for Research and technology. The report shall be publicly disseminated (Article 89, Higher Education Act of the Republic of Slovenia, amended in 1997).

With more students applying than there are places available for them, at least in some areas of study, there is competition among higher education institutions for students. Accreditation, however, is not yet mandatory.

The law in Slovenia has, in effect, established two bodies, one, which answers to the Government, and another, which answers to the higher education institutions (but, as a nationally legislated body, also to government), with the two expected to share criteria. With initially only a handful of higher education institutions the sector felt little pressure to organize its system of quality assurance. The sharp rise in the number of

institutions in the last two to three years is bound to speed up the process.

2.15. UKRAINE

In 2000, Ukraine had 809 state and 161 private higher education institutions. The Law on Education of the country was passed by Parliament in 1991 and amended in 1996, establishing the broad legislative framework for education. The elaboration of a higher education law began in 1996; however, no such law has yet been passed. In line with the ongoing reform, the Ministry of Education and Science was reorganized in 1997. It is responsible for over half the state higher education institutions, while the rest are under other ministries. The respective ministries are involved in setting the educational content and the accreditation of the higher education institutions under their authority, while the education ministry retains responsibility for the education process. It is also in charge of conducting the accreditation of higher education institutions, setting admission standards, and issuing licenses and certificates. The autonomous Republic of Crimea has a separate Ministry of Education, but it abides by the regulations of the Ukrainian ministry. A State Accreditation Commission, as a unit of the Ministry, is responsible for carrying out the accreditation procedures. Accreditation was introduced with the 1992 law and is currently regulated according to a Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers (No. 200, 12 February 1996).

The accreditation of higher education institutions is awarded up to one of four levels pertaining to the institutional type and diploma or degree offered. Level I is for technical and vocational schools leading to the certificate of "junior specialist". Level II is for colleges leading to a Bachelor's Degree. Levels II and IV are for institutes, conservatories, academies, and universities leading to "Specialist" and Master's Degrees.

The level of accreditation determines the degree of autonomy of the institution as well as its funding, with only the highest level receiving full financial support. Of the 809 state higher education institutions in 2000, 220 were of Levels III and IV,

while 589 were of Levels I or II. Of the 161 non-state higher education institutions, only forty-one were fully accredited. A shift to the higher levels is apparent (from 161 in 1995 to 220 in 2000).

New higher education institutions are first licensed by the State Accreditation Commission. *Licensum* does not represent a qualitative judgment but merely allows the institution to begin operations. The succeeding step is accreditation, which gives the institution the right to issue state-recognized degrees, issued after completion of education based on national standards. A course programme can be submitted for accreditation only after it has been offered for five years. Accreditation covers all study programmes and must be renewed every ten years. Institutions are awarded the level of accreditation that has been awarded to 75 percent of its programmes.

The Commission is regulated by the Constitution, by legislation passed by the Parliament, by the President of Ukraine, by the Cabinet of Ministers, and by the Ministry of Education. The Commission sets the criteria for accreditation and publishes accreditation results. The members of the Commission, including civil servants from the education and other ministries, as well as state executives, academics, and researchers, must be confirmed by the cabinet of Ministers. The Minister is the Chairperson of the Commission. The Commission has a network of local and regional expert councils who report on the individual programmes submitted for accreditation. The Commission adopts the final decision relative to the level of accreditation awarded.

2.16. COUNTRY OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT AGENCIES

2.16.1. Clarification of Terminology

NAME OF AGENCY/COMMISSION, YEAR ESTABLISHED: the official name of the agency or commission at present and the year the agency or commission was set up.

INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH AGENCY/COMMISSION**:** either the government or a group of higher education institutions

which joined to initiate quality assurance in the country or for members of the group.

OWNERSHIP OF AGENCY/COMMISSION: To whom does the agency and/or commission report?

MEMBERSHIP, STAFF: Who delegates/names, the members of the commission, their number, and their background; how many staff members and their role?

SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES, ORIENTATION: What are the main tasks of the commission/agency, what types of assessment/accreditation do they conduct, and the objective of the assessment?

CYCLE OF ASSESSMENT: For how many years is accreditation valid; how often is assessment repeated?

METHODS: The common approach would be self-evaluation, peer review, a report, but other methods may be possible.

GRADING: Is the evaluated institution or programme given a quality mark on a scale used by the agency/commission, or are there different levels of accreditation, yes or no?

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT**:** Who develops the criteria, standards, and methods to conduct assessment?

REVIEW TEAM TRAINING OR BRIEFING**:** Which or neither, perhaps only written information?

FOREIGN COMMISSION MEMBERS, REVIEWERS: Are foreign nationals members of the commission and/or are foreign nationals invited to participate in the evaluation; if yes, which of them?

REPORT PUBLISHED: Yes or no? Clarification if needed.

2.16.2. Schematic Presentation of Accreditation and Quality Assessment Agencies by Central and Eastern European Countries

ALBANIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Agency of Higher Education, and Accreditation Council, 1999
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government (independent decisions on quality but advisory to minister)
Membership, staff	11 Council members(academics); 5 Agency staff with collaborating, coordinating, administrative role
Scope of activities, orientation	Institutional and programme-level accreditation. Improvement oriented
Cycle of assessment	4 years
Methods	Self-evaluation according to Agency guidelines, review team with on-site visit after agency guidelines
Grading	Yes
Criteria for assessment	Set by Agency and expert team based on legislation
Review team training or briefing	Training
Foreign commission members, reviewers	No
Report published	Yes

BULGARIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, and Accreditation Council, 1996
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government (independent decisions on quality but advisory to minister)
Membership, staff	9 Council members (academics), 20 Agency staff with coordinating and administrative role
Scope of activities, orientation	Institutional, subsequently programme accreditation, with accountability and improvement orientation
Cycle of assessment	5 years, 1-3 years if assessed as "Satisfactory"
Methods	Self-evaluation according to Agency guidelines, review team with on-site visit according to Agency guidelines
Grading	Yes
Criteria for assessment	Criteria set down by Agency based on legislation
Review team training or briefing	Briefing
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Council no, review team sometimes
Report published	Yes

CROATIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	National Council for Higher Education, 1993, 1999
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government (unit in, and advisory to, Ministry, which organizes reviews)
Membership, staff	19 Council members (academics), 3 full-time, 1 part-time staff in Ministry department
Scope of activities, orientation	Evaluation of institutions, accreditation of programmes, with improvement orientation
Cycle of assessment	Not set
Methods	Self-evaluation according to Council guidelines, review team with on-site visit according to Council guidelines
Grading	Yes
Criteria for assessment	Criteria set down by Council based on legislation
Review team training or briefing	Briefing
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Council no, Review teams yes
Report published	No

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Commission,1990
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government (independent decisions on quality but advisory to Minister)
Membership, staff	21 members (11 academics and 10 professional experts); 6 staff with coordinating and administrative role
Scope of activities, orientation	Accreditation of programmes and institutions. Improvement orientated
Cycle of assessment	Max. 2 x length of programme (doctoral max. 10 years),
Methods	Institutions have independent internal evaluation. Self-evaluation according to agency guidelines, review team with on-site visit according to agency guidelines
Grading	Yes (i.e., 3 levels of negative decision)
Criteria for assessment	Elaborated by review team based on Commission criteria and legislation
Review team training or briefing	Written information
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Yes
Report published	Yes, both internal and external evaluation reports

ESTONIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	Higher Education Accreditation Center, Archimedes Foundation, 1997; Higher Education Quality Assessment Council, 1995
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government (Council); foundation (Center)
Membership, staff	12 Council members (academics); 3 Center staff with coordinating and administrative role
Scope of activities, orientation	Programme, some institutional accreditation. Improvement oriented (separate research evaluation)
Cycle of assessment	7 years for full, 2 years for conditional accreditation
Methods	Self-evaluation according to Agency guidelines, review team with on-site visit according to Agency guidelines
Grading	Yes
Criteria for assessment	Determined by Council based on legislation and approved by Minister
Review team training or briefing	Written information
Foreign commission members, reviewers	In Council no, Review team only foreign members
Report published	Not broadly but sent to institutions and to student organizations

HUNGARY

Name of agency/commission, year established	Hungarian Accreditation Committee, 1993
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government
Membership, staff	30 full members (academics and professional body representatives), non-voting members to cover spectrum of disciplines, 1 non-voting student; 26 staff with collaborating, coordinating, administrative role
Scope of activities, orientation	Accreditation of institutions including its programmes. Improvement oriented
Cycle of assessment	8 years
Methods	Self-evaluation according to agency guidelines, review team with on-site visit according to agency guidelines
Grading	Yes
Criteria for assessment	Set by agency, with national qualification requirements legislated
Review team training or briefing	Briefing
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Sometimes
Report published	Yes

LATVIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	Higher Education Quality Evaluation Center Ltd., 1994, Council for Higher Education, 1995, Accreditation Commission, 1995
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Ministry and 5 higher education institutions are shareholders of agency
Membership, staff	6 agency staff with coordinating, administrative role; 10 member Accreditation Commission; 10 member Council (academics and non-academics)
Scope of activities, orientation	Institutional and programme accreditation with improvement orientation
Cycle of assessment	Permanent or 2 years for institutions, 6 years (or 2 years only once) for programmes
Methods	Self-assessment based on agency guidelines, site-visit based on methodology by team
Grading	Recommended for programmes but rarely used
Criteria for assessment	Established by agency based on legislation
Review team training or briefing	Written information, sometimes training or briefing
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Yes (except for review of college-level vocational higher education institutions)
Report published	Yes

LITHUANIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	Lithuanian Center for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, 1995
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania; Lithuanian Science Council
Ownership of agency/commission	Government
Membership, staff	Expert evaluation division head (academic, part-time) + 3 full-time agency staff with coordinating role
Scope of activities, orientation	Institutional and programme assessment. Accreditation by Minister. (Separate research assessment also). Improvement orientation
Cycle of assessment	Not set, 8 years for first cycle for all study programmes, reassessment within 2 years after temporary or restricted assessment
Methods	Self-evaluation according to agency guidelines, review team with on-site visit according to agency guidelines
Grading	Foreseen
Criteria for assessment	Established by agency based on legislation
Review team training or briefing	Workshops and briefing
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Review teams for specific subject areas
Report published	Reviews yes

MACEDONIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	Evaluation Agency, and Accreditation Board, 2000
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Inter-University Conference
Ownership of agency/commission	Government
Membership, staff	9 Agency members with coordinating, administrative role; 15 Board members (academics)
Scope of activities, orientation	Institutional and programme accreditation. Improvement orientation
Cycle of assessment	Five years
Methods	Self-evaluation according to Agency guidelines, review team with on-site visit according to Agency guidelines
Grading	No
Criteria for assessment	Established by Board and by Agency-based on legislation
Review team training or briefing	Written information
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Sometimes
Report published	Yes

POLAND

Name of agency/commission, year established	University Accreditation Commission (UAC), 1998
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Rectors Conference
Ownership of agency/commission	Non-governmental
Membership, staff	18 members (academics, *i.e.*, 17 vice-rectors or representatives of signatory universities + 1 Rectors Conference delegate); 2 full-time and 1 half-time staff, coordinating, administrative role
Scope of activities, orientation	Accreditation of member and non-member university programmes at research universities, voluntary. Improvement orientation
Cycle of assessment	2-5 years
Methods	Self-study based on agency guidelines, external review with on-site visit
Grading	No
Criteria for assessment	Standards set by own expert committee, reviewed every two years, methodology worked out by commission
Review team training or briefing	Briefing
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Review team no, expert committee sometimes
Report published	No, only for evaluated unit

Name of agency/commission, year established	University Accreditation Commission (UAC), 1998
Name of agency/commission, year established	National General Accreditation Commission, January 2002. Expected to succeed General Council on Higher Education, 2000 (Law: 1990)
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government (unit in ministry)
Membership, staff	-
Scope of activities, orientation	Intention was to evaluate without formal accreditation at institutional and programme level, accountability, some improvement orientation (The General Council had a number of other tasks not directly related to quality control)
Name of agency/commission, year established	Business Schools for Quality of Higher Education (SEM FORUM) (private), 1993
Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Committee of Medical Schools (State), 1997
Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Commission of Schools of Higher Vocational Education (State and private), 1997
Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Commission of Schools of Physical Education (State), 1999
Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Commission of Higher Pedagogical Schools (State), 1999
Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Commission for Technical Universities (State), 2001
Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Commission for Agricultural Universities (State), 2001
Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Commission of the Foundation for Promotion and Accreditation of Economic Studies (State), 2001
Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Commission of the Rectors of Polish Academic Schools, 2001
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Rectors Conference
Ownership of agency/commission	Non-governmental
Membership	The 7 state academic accreditation commission chairpersons + a president , an umbrella organization

ROMANIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation, 1994
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Parliament
Membership, staff	19-21 council members (academics); 25 staff with coordinating and administrative role
Scope of activities, orientation	Institutional and programme accreditation with improvement orientation
Cycle of assessment	5 years
Methods	Self-evaluation according to agency guidelines, review team with on-site visit after agency guidelines
Grading	No
Criteria for assessment	Established by expert commissions based on legislation
Review team training or briefing	Training
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Reviewers sometimes
Report published	If institution agrees

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Name of agency/commission, year established	National Accreditation Center, 1995; Accreditation Council (Ministry for General and Professional Education), 1997
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government
Membership, staff	50 full-time and 20 part-time Center staff; 42 Council members (academics and non-academics)
Scope of activities, orientation	Institutional and programme accreditation. Improvement orientation
Cycle of assessment	Maximum 5 years for institution or programme
Methods	Developed by ministry
Grading	No
Criteria for assessment	Developed by evaluation team, based on legislation
Review team training or briefing	Written information
Foreign commission members, reviewers	No
Report published	Yes but not widely distributed

SLOVAKIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	Accreditation Commission, 1990
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government
Membership, staff	27 members(academics); old commission had 2 staff members with coordinating role and head contributes to report
Scope of activities, orientation	Institutional and programme accreditation, improvement orientation
Cycle of assessment	Programme accreditation without time limit, but 1-2 years if shortcomings observed, 6 years for institutional accreditation
Methods	Self-study based on agency guidelines, external review with on-site visit based on agency guidelines
Grading	No
Criteria for assessment	Established in law and by commission
Review team training or briefing	Briefing
Foreign commission members, reviewers	Commission yes, review team sometimes
Report published	No

SLOVENIA

Name of agency/commission, year established	Council for Higher Education, 1994
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government + Rectors Conference
Membership, staff	15 (academics)
Scope of activities, orientation	A government advisory body. Institutional and programme accreditation
Cycle of assessment	Not set
Methods	Self-study, external review with on-site visit based on agency guidelines
Grading	Yes
Criteria for assessment	Law + agency
Review team training or briefing	No
Foreign commission members, reviewers	No
Report published	Only decision and summary reason with negative decisions
Name of agency/commission, year established	Quality Assessment Commission of Slovenia, 1996, reorganized 2000
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Rectors Conference
Ownership of agency/commission	Government
Membership, staff	19 (academics + 2 students), 1 administrator
Scope of activities, orientation	No external evaluation, but advisory to Council for Higher Education. Improvement oriented
Cycle of assessment	Not set
Methods	Self-study based on institution's own approach, external review with on-site visit serves to advise on self-evaluation

Grading	No
Criteria for assessment	Agency, according to standards by Council of HE
Review team training or briefing	No
Foreign commission members, reviewers	No
Report published	No

UKRAINE

Name of agency/commission, year established	State Accreditation Commission (Ministry of Education and Science), 1992
Initiative to establish agency/ commission	Government
Ownership of agency/commission	Government
Membership, staff	Members from various ministries, academics, researchers, state executives, chaired by education minister
Scope of activities, orientation	Programme and institutional accreditation
Cycle of assessment	10 years for programme accreditation
Methods	Set by commission based on legislation
Grading	No data
Criteria for assessment	Set by commission based on legislation
Review team training or briefing	No data
Foreign commission members, reviewers	No
Report published	Outcomes yes

2.16.3. Internet Links for Quality Assurance in the Central and Eastern European Countries

- <http://www.ceenetwork.hu>
- individual agency links (access from <http://www.ceenetwork.hu>)
- information on CEE agencies also at <http://www.inqaahe.nl>

2.16.4. Questionnaire sent to Quality Assurance Agencies in Fifteen Central and Eastern European Countries

a) Could you please send me a bibliography on quality assurance and your schools' systems to list in the bibliography section of the book;

b) How many higher education institutions in the country? No. of universities: No. of others? No. of state institutions? No. of private institutions? Do they need state recognition to operate?

c) Do you see QA as a tool for controlling the proliferation of private institutions?
d) Do more students apply to higher education institutions than there is room for them?
e) Do you feel that there is competition among higher education institutions to enroll students? If yes, is evaluation/accreditation a publicly recognized factor for choosing a higher education institution?
f) Who is involved in making up study programmes, the higher education institution, the ministry, your agency?
g) Scope of your agency: accreditation, evaluation, or both? If accreditation, for institutions, or programmes, or both?
h) Do you evaluate institutions and/or programmes? If both, in separate procedures or in a single procedure? Is evaluation mandatory or voluntary?
i) By whom is the accreditation/evaluation commission nominated/appointed? By government (i.e., minister, prime minister) or higher education institutions (i.e., rectors conference)?
j) What is the size of office staff and what are the functions of the members (programme officers, administrators)? If you have programme officers, do they have coordinating roles, participate in visits, contribute to reports?
k) Do you use a grading scale (such as Excellent, Good, Satisfactory...) in your assessment? If yes, for institutional and/or programme evaluation?
l) Who devises the methodology and criteria for evaluation? Who devises questions for the institutional self-evaluation? What is the ratio of data requested and of the analytical part? How long is the self-evaluation? Are higher education institutions consulted?
m) What is the aim of the evaluation: accreditation? fitness of purpose? improvement? compliance with laws? (more than one possible)? Does your agency advise the Minister and how binding is a decision by your commission (does the Minister have to publish his reasons for not agreeing with the Commission)?

n) Do you prepare or train the review team? How?
o) Are its reports published? How detailed is your report (anything from "complies with the law" to detailed description of strengths and weaknesses)?
p) Do you include foreign members in review teams? Sometimes? Always?
q) Who decides on the schedule of the visit? When to visit an institution and/or a programme and the make-up of the review team? For how many years is the evaluation/accreditation valid?

The authors hereby wish to thank the contact persons of the CEE Network agencies, who contributed considerable time and effort to reply to the questionnaire and to do even more.

Annex 3

Glossary

The definitions appearing below have been derived from a number of sources. In particular, those marked with a single asterisk (*) are based on definitions appearing in *Quality Assurance in Higher Education – Manual of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Procedures and Practices* (Turin: European Training Foundation, 1998, p. 12). Those marked with a double asterisk (**) are derived from the questionnaire for a survey on quality assurance agencies conducted, in December 2001, by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). See <http://www.inqaahe.nl>.

Accountability: The assurance of a unit to its stakeholders that it provides education of good quality.

Accreditation: The award of a status which signals approval, recognition, and sometimes a license to operate and is based on pre-defined standards*. It is a formal, yes/no(sometimes also conditional) decision based on explicit minimum (threshold) requirements**.

Agency: Organization or office responsible for preparing, co-ordinating, and carrying out evaluation or accreditation procedures but not actually taking decisions on outcomes. The term, agency, is often used collectively, when in fact, a committee passes the final evaluation decisions.

Benchmark: A reference point or criterion by which to measure something.

Benchmarking: Setting levels against which quality is measured *or* a process of identifying and learning from good practice in other organizations.

Binary (or dual) system: When higher education in a country is offered in two separate and distinct types of institutions - universities and non-university establishments (*cf.*, unitary system).

Criteria: "Checkpoints, the benchmarks for assessing the quality of the input and process**. Often used synonymously with "standards".

Evaluation: Any process leading to judgments and/or recommendations regarding the quality of a unit*.

Evaluation team: Same as a review team.

Ex ante assessment/evaluation: Assessing/evaluating quality before a programme or institution is launched, often as a condition for granting a license to operate.

Ex post assessment/evaluation: Assessing/evaluating quality after a programme or institution has been in operation in order to establish strengths and weaknesses.

External evaluation: Evaluation of the quality of a unit carried out by a selected team of experts who are not connected to the unit evaluated.

External expert: Also: peer inspector. Member of a selected team evaluating a unit but who is not linked to it.

Fitness for purpose: One of the possible criteria for establishing whether or not a unit meets quality, measured against what is seen to be the goal of the unit.

Higher education: Part of tertiary education leading to a degree or equivalent diploma.

Improvement orientation: Evaluation or assessment describing the strengths and weaknesses of a unit to facilitate improvement, and possibly including suggestions as to how to achieve it.

Inspector: Also: peer, external expert. Member of a selected team evaluating a unit but who is not connected to it.

Internal evaluation: Same as self-evaluation, done by a unit as a form of quality management or in preparation for external evaluation.

One-level degree structure: Also: one-tier, or one-cycle, whereby one course of studies leads to one level of degree (either in unitary or binary systems) as opposed to a two-tier degree structure, which offers a shorter degree programme and a choice of post-graduate programmes.

Licensing: Award to operate a new unit granted if it meets established criteria for quality.

Peer: Also: external expert, inspector. Member of a selected team evaluating a unit but who is not connected to it.

Programme officer: Upper-level employee of an evaluation or accreditation agency coordinating, assisting, and carrying out the administration of evaluation or accreditation procedures.

Quality assessment: Same as quality review. Evaluation but including its external dimension*. The "evaluation of quality itself,"** either on the institutional or programme level.

Quality assurance: Policies, processes, and actions to maintain quality. The focus is on accountability to the stakeholders* of a unit.

Quality audit: Evaluation of an institution's processes for quality management*.

Quality commission, committee: Standing body of experts chosen by government or a group of higher education institutions for a specified term to establish the quality of institutions or programmes and frequently also to state its opinion on matters concerning higher education.

Quality control: Like evaluation, but stressing the internal measurement of quality of a unit. Often used synonymously with quality management*.

Quality control: Aggregate of measures taken regularly to assure quality of a unit, but the emphasis is on assuring that a prescribed threshold of quality is met.

Quality enhancement: Procedures taken to improve quality.

Quality management: Aggregate of measures taken regularly to assure quality of a unit. Emphasizes the goal to improve quality.

Quality review: Same as quality assessment. Evaluation but including its external dimension*.

Review team: Same as (external) evaluation team, expert committee, visiting team, or peer review team. A group of experts not linked to the evaluated institution, unit or programme, who report on its quality based on information provided by the unit and on-site visits.

Self-evaluation: Same as internal evaluation, done by a unit as a form of quality management or in preparation for external evaluation.

Staff: Employees of an evaluation or accreditation agency co-ordinating, assisting, and carrying out the administration of evaluation or accreditation procedures. Staff may consist of programme officers with coordinating and assistance functions and of office assistants or administrators with secretarial functions.

Stakeholder: Students, society, and government participating in or benefiting from the provision of education.

Standards: Expected outcomes of education, competencies expected from graduates. May be general standards for a degree level (*e.g.*, Bachelor's or Master's Degree) or subject specific standards.** Often used synonymously with "criteria".

(Subject) benchmark statement: Represents general expectations about standards (levels of student attainment) at a given level in a particular subject area.

Tertiary education: Any education entered after successful completion of secondary education, which may include vocational post-secondary education (leading to a certificate) and higher education (leading to a degree), even though the designation is often used synonymously with higher education.

Unit: An institution, a faculty, or programme of study*.

Unitary system: Higher education in a country offered in one type of institution, consisting of universities or university-like establishments (*cf*., binary system).

Annex 4

Quality Assurance: Aspects of Processes, Approaches, and Networking

There is no "one size fits all models" for a quality assurance system. Each existing system is adapted to the cultural, social, and political context in which it has been established. However, a small sample of information collated from published documents, project reports, workshop sessions, and Website, is included here to illustrate some aspects of external evaluation and current developments in quality assurance in Europe. The selection is limited by the availability of information in English and the ease of accessibility for follow-up as well as by the fact that many systems of quality assurance in higher education are, at the moment, in the process of development or change. Information has been included from quality assurance systems in small countries, from sector specific agencies, those in which legislation is a factor in setting standards and those in which it is not. Inclusion is not an indicator of best practice, neither is exclusion an indicator of less good practice.

Readers are advised to go to the Website of the networks for quality assurance (see Part III) and follow links to individual Quality Assurance and Accreditation agencies, where much more information, including details of contact persons, is available. While several agencies may not have their guidelines available on the Web they will make them available in hard copy on request.

The authors would like to thank all of those who have provided information or have agreed to allow it to be made available.

4.1. QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES: PRINCIPLES, VALUES, AND PROCESS STANDARDS

Some examples of statements concerning current and proposed principles, values, and process standards of Quality Assurance Agencies are presented below.

4.1.1. FH Conference/FH Council Austria: External Evaluation of Fachhochschulen in Austria <http://www.fhr.ac.at/english>

Principles

1. The scientific evaluation pursuant to Section 13 Paragraph 2 FH Studies Act as amended consists of a self-evaluation report of the FH study programme and the maintainer (provider), the peer report, and the statement of the maintainer.
2. In the preparation of the self-evaluation report (abbr. SE Report), the division of responsibilities between the FH study programme and the maintainer has to be taken into account in view of the autonomy of the FH study programme pursuant to Section 12, Paragraph 2, Sub-paragraph 5, and Section 12, Paragraph 4, Sub-paragraph 2, FH Studies Act as amended.
3. Prerequisite for the preparation of the SE report is the existence of an internal quality management system that should already be installed and documented in outline at the time of preparation of the SE Report.
4. The choice and design of the internal quality management system is the duty of each individual *Fachhochschule* study programme.
5. The quality system, FC Conference/FH Council, is based on the internal self-evaluation by the *Fachhochschule* study programme and the maintainer in accordance with the prescribed general conditions of the fifteen sections. Based on this evaluation report, an external peer group examines the activities of the FH study programme and the maintainer.

6. The peer group consists of four peers and an assistant. The peer group elects a group leader who nominates an assistant. The four peers are nominated jointly by the FH Council and the FH Conference and are appointed by the FH Council. The peers are assigned by the maintainer of the FH study programme to be evaluated.
7. The external evaluation takes place in a form that allows the assessment of the achievement of the goals and the fulfillment of the targets of the approved programme to be evaluated.
8. The assessments and the recommendations of the peers, after examination by the FH Council for their compliance with the FH Studies Act and the decisions of the FH Council, can be taken into account in the maintainer's application for extension of recognition.
9. The evaluation procedure is mainly founded on the quality concept, “fitness for purpose”, that is, the quality of a study programme is measured by the degree to which the prescribed and its own objectives have been fulfilled.
10. The main task of the evaluation is establishing and assessing the discrepancies between the prescribed aim or the intended quality of the application and the actual state of the FH programme. This does not rule out recommendations by the peers.

4.1.2. Denmark: Danmarks Evalueringsinsitut (EVA) <http://www.eva.dk>

CENTRAL VALUES

All EVA evaluations are based on the principles of improvement, visibility, and professionalism.

IMPROVEMENT

Evaluations must identify strengths and weaknesses and thus promote the improvement of teaching and learning based on the objectives of the field of education – not on already accepted standards.

VISIBILITY

Evaluations must make the quality of teaching and learning visible, highlighting what is already successful and what may be improved.

PROFESSIONALISM

Evaluations must be based on the expertise already available within the educational sector concerned. For this reason, experts familiar with the specialized field are always invited to participate in the evaluation. Evaluation officers from EVA contribute to the evaluation know-how.

4.1.3. Germany: Accreditation, Certification, and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN) <http://www.acquin.org/english>

The main characteristics of ACQUIN are independence, objectivity, and high quality. The agency is oriented towards the realization of academic principles and is neither influenced by the state nor by lobbyists. Academic freedom and academic autonomy are respected: higher education institutions may regulate their own quality and standards, but at the same time they must guarantee transparency of process and public accountability in discharging this self-regulation.

4.1.4. The United Kingdom: The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

Draft Handbook for Institutional Review: Annex J: The Agency's Operational Principles and Process Standards

BACKGROUND

1. The Agency's approach to undertaking institutional audits draws upon the practices and process standards developed and enhanced by its predecessor bodies. Since those bodies began their work, good practice in auditing (guided by published standards of auditing practice) and requirements relating to accountability and reporting have developed

considerably. The Agency recognizes that some of the process standards it has observed in the past have been implicit rather than explicit and that the institutional audit process should be underpinned by a more explicit statement on operational principles and process standards.

2. In developing its operational principles and process standards, the Agency has taken note of the principles underpinning the AA1000 series accountability standard and the "Seven Principles of Public Life" developed by the Nolan Committee.

PRINCIPLES

1. The Agency seeks to observe and promote several general principles within both the strategic and operational levels of its work. The principles are:

   INCLUSIVENESS - taking into account the needs of all stakeholder groups and facilitating their participation in aspects of the Agency's work.
   OPENNESS - transparency in the work and methods of the Agency, to build trust and confidence among stakeholders, and to provide information about the Agency's work to the wider public.
   ACCOUNTABILITY - demonstrating that the Agency is using its resources to good effect and with probity; conducting its work with integrity and impartiality; and ensuring that stakeholders are able to depend on the information provided.
   TIMELINESS - the need for regular, systematic, and timely action in all reporting processes to support the decision-making of the Agency and its stakeholders.
   COMPARABILITY - using experience drawn from within the Agency and other organizations as a means with which to inform future work.
   RELEVANCE - ensuring that the information provided by the Agency is useful to, and understood by, all stakeholders.

2. In due course, these principles will be used to develop explicit service standards for institutional audits.

QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

1. The Agency is committed to the regular monitoring and evaluation of its policies, procedures, and processes, to ensure their ongoing credibility, and to continuously improve its performance in response to the results. In respect of institutional audit, this commitment includes providing the opportunity for participants in the process, including students, to provide structured feedback on their experiences.

4.1.5. United States of America: CHEA <http://www.chea.org>

Statement on Good Practices and Shared Responsibility in the Conduct of Specialized and Professional Accreditation Review

(*Note*: specialized accreditors are those who accredit programmes only and on a national rather than a regional basis. Some of these accreditors also operate outside the United States)

Key issues addressed by the statement:

- clear and direct communication between specialized accreditors and institutional leaders;
- enhanced understanding by specialized accreditors of the larger context of institutional needs and direction;
- enhanced understanding by institutional leaders of the perspective and needs of specialized accreditors; and
- affirmation that the relationship between resources and accountability is grounded in meeting accreditation standards.

Full text on <http://chea.org/research/good-practices.cfm>.

4.2. QUALITY ASSURANCE: SELF-EVALUATION DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS

*4.2.1. United Kingdom: Guidance to Institutions on Producing a Self-Evaluation - An Example from the **Draft Handbook on Institutional Audit in England** (April 2001, full text of Handbook available on http://www.qaa.ac.uk)*

ANNEX C: GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCING SELF-EVALUATION DOCUMENTS FOR DISCIPLINE AUDIT TRAILS

11. 1. After the audit team has confirmed the discipline audit trails to be pursued during the audit visit, the institution is asked to provide a self-evaluation for each discipline to be trailed (the discipline SED). A recent internal review report (or similar) on the discipline, accompanied by the relevant programme specifications, may be provided instead of a discipline SED, providing that it covers the matters listed below, in Paragraph 2, or is supplemented with a note covering these matters.

LENGTH, STYLE, CONTENT, AND STRUCTURE

1. If the institution wishes to prepare a discipline SED specifically for the purposes of the audit trail, it is suggested that the document [be] about 3,000 words in length and cover the following:

   EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF THE PROVISION - a statement of the overall aims of the programme or cluster of programmes covered by the discipline audit trail;

   LEARNING OUTCOMES - evaluation of the appropriateness, to the educational aims, of the intended learning outcomes of the programme or of each of the clusters of programmes, making reference to internal and external reference points such as Subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications – England, Wales, and Northern Ireland);

   CURRICULA AND ASSESSMENT - evaluation of the ways in which programme content and methods of assessment support

achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s); how curricula and assessment together determine the academic level of the award(s) to which the programme(s) lead; the extent to which students achieve the programme aims and intended learning outcomes.

QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, which can be further divided into:

TEACHING AND LEARNING - evaluation of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategies employed by the programme(s) for providing students with good learning opportunities to support achievement of the intended learning outcomes and academic standards;

STUDENT ADMISSION AND PROGRESSION - evaluation of the ways in which student progression through the programme(s) is supported and monitored, from intake to completion;

LEARNING RESOURCES - evaluation of effectiveness of the deployment of the resources, human and material, that support the learning of students, and of the effectiveness of their linkage to the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s).

MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF STANDARDS AND QUALITY - evaluation of the effectiveness of procedures for maintaining and enhancing the quality of provision and the security of academic standards in respect of the programme(s).

ANNEX D - PROGRAMME SPECIFICATIONS FOR EACH PROGRAMME COVERED BY THE TRAIL.

1. The emphasis in the discipline SED [self-education document] should be on evaluation of student achievement of the appropriate academic standards, and of the learning opportunities offered to students to support their achievements. Description of the programme(s) should be the minimum necessary to enable the audit team to understand

the background of the self-evaluation. The programme specifications may be able to cover most or all of the descriptive material that is needed.

2. Discipline SEDs should:
   - be balanced and relevant;
   - be concise and accessible to the audit team;
   - be appropriately balanced between analysis and description.
3. Institutions will note the advantages of ensuring that their internal processes are capable of generating reports that can serve, with minor adaptation, as discipline SEDs.

SUBMISSION

1. The institution is required to submit discipline SEDs to the Agency seven weeks before the audit visit.

CONFIDENTIALITY

2. Discipline SEDs remain confidential to the Agency and the audit team; however, when appropriate they will be made available to specialist advisers who are asked to provide advice to the team, and to subject specialist reviewers undertaking reviews in the institution. It is likely that the audit report will refer to and include quotations from the discipline SEDs. The institution is strongly encouraged to involve students in the preparation of discipline SEDs and to make the completed documents available to them.

4.2.2. Germany: FH Conference/FH Council: Quality System <http://www.fhr.ac.at/english>

(In this example, reference is made to legislation, the FH Studies Act, so as to show how the agency is addressing the requirements of the legislation.)

FORM AND CONTENT OF THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT AND THE PEER REPORT

1. Mission and Goals

Main mission derived from the FH Studies Act and the application for a FH study programme and the goals derived there from:

- Normative concept with the "vision" of the study programme;
- Strategic concept with the short, medium, and long-term strategies and the definition of the core competencies;
- Operative concept with the implementation of the measures derived from points 1 and 2 as well as communication of the mission.

Section 3, Paragraph 1: "*Fachhochschule* study programmes are programmes at higher education level which serve to impart scientifically sound professional education". A prerequisite for the recognition as a FH study programme pursuant to Section 12, Paragraph 2, Sub-paragraph 1 is that the "goals and the guiding principles for the design of *Fachhochschule* study programmes (Section 3) are met.

2. Pedagogical Didactic Concept

- pedagogical didactic basic concept;
- description of forms of teaching and their implementation;
- balance between types of courses;
- measures for students from second chance education.

Section 3, Paragraph 2, Sub-paragraph 1: "*Fachhochschule* study programmes have to take into account the variety of scientific study methods". Section 3, Paragraph 2, Sub-paragraph 8: "The didactic concept of the courses has to correspond to their purpose and the educational level of the students".

Target group specific FH programmes (Compare information for applicants as amended). The use of distance study elements is obligatory for this special form of study programme: the presentation of a matching scientific and didactic concept as well as an appropriate quality assurance system is essential.

Section 4, Paragraph 2, Second sentence: "If the scientific concept of an FH study programme is based on professional experience, the access to this FH study programme may be restricted to an appropriate target group". If the access is restricted to a target group, "then the duration of studies is six terms; the FH study programmes have to be established as distance studies" (Section 3, Paragraph 2, Sub-paragraph 2).

3. Curriculum and Modification Procedure

- Teaching goals, teaching content, didactic structure per department and course;
- (Special impact of the required professional experience on the curriculum in target group-specific study programmes);
- How is the topicality examined, which body in the study programme decides on proposed modifications to the curriculum;
- Coordination of courses and teaching contents.

4. Evaluation of the Teaching

- To what extent will the general objectives (Point 1) and the detailed teaching goals (Point 3) be achieved?
- Self-evaluation by the teachers;
- Course analysis by the students and the study programme management (collegium);
- Consequences, measures, and their implementation;
- Results of current improvement processes;
- Evaluation of examinations.

5. Admission Procedure

- Application of the admission criteria according to the application for an FH study programme;
- Body of experts (team or individual person);
- Permeability of the education system;
- Admission statistics of the last years;
- Recognition of proven knowledge.

6. Analysis of Course of Studies

- Number of study applicants and admitted students, drop-out rate, marks, etc.;
- Measures in case of [for instance], a high drop-out rate, unsatisfactory analysis of graduates, unsatisfactory average mark;
- Measures to ensure that the prescribed duration of studies also corresponds to the actual duration. Analogous to the statistical analysis [for] the FH Council in accordance with the "Regulation on Making Available Information on the Studies as Amended".

7. Resources/Equipment/Finances

- Key data on facilities and physical assets according to the application for an FH study programme;
- Library [and] teaching aids... including EDP equipment, student guidance and infrastructure (guarantee in case of study programmes for working people?);
- Financial expenditure for teaching, administration, equipment;
- Costs per student.

8. Teaching Staff

- Selection of teachers;
- Compliance with minimum requirements according to the FH Studies Act;
- Qualification profile of teachers;

- Measures for personnel development and further education of teachers and employees;
- Number of full-time teachers.

9. Practical Training and Diploma Theses

- Evidence of practical training places relevant to study programme;
- Placing of trainees with regard to industrial law and social legislation;
- Documentation of practical guidance;
- Documentation and guidance of thesis and details of the thesis profile.

10. Analysis of Graduates

- Integration and success on labour market;
- Profession-related activity;
- Duration of job search;
- Salary;
- Doctoral programme.

11. R(esearch) & D(evelopment) Activities

- Publications;
- R&D projects (number and project volume from projects funded by third parties and project expenditure);
- Services (training and consultation);
- Conferences and events.

12. Activities at Home and Abroad

- Co-operation partners at home and abroad (number and name of institutions);
- Student mobility;
- FH lecturers mobility;
- International and national meetings, conferences, and events (both participation and organization);

- International and national projects and co-operation (*e.g.*, development of curriculum, ECTS, intensive programmes, etc.);
- Public relations (information and guidance by FH study programme).

13. Organization

- Structure and sequence (study programme, maintainer);
- Competencies and structure of responsibilities;
- Autonomy of the study programme according to the FH Studies Act.

14. Q(uality) M(anagement) System

- Characteristics of the quality control policy;
- Presentation of the applied quality management system (system description, control systems, responsibilities);

FH Studies Act Commentary
The achievement of the goals and the guarantee of the principles of *Fachhochschule* study programmes require internal measures for quality assurance which should be integrated into an extensive quality management system and linked with each other.

15. Self-Evaluation Report

Point 15 of the peer report should give its view on the quality of the self-evaluation report and assess the report.

4.3. THE SELECTION, APPOINTMENT, AND TRAINING OF PEERS: SOME EXAMPLES OF CURRENT PRACTICE

4.3.1. Austria: FH Conference/FH Council

<http://fhr.ac.at/english>

COMPOSITION OF THE PEER GROUP

1. The peer group consists of four peers and an assistant and is made up as follows:

- a representative from the pool of experts of the FH Council;
- a representative of the Committee for quality matters of the FH Conference;
- an expert of the professional field;
- a representative of a subject-related educational institution from abroad or with relevant experience abroad;
- an assistant of the administration/management of an Austrian FH study programme (with right of proposal but not of voting).

2. The guidelines for the nomination of the peers.
   - The peer of the FH Council should have a subject-relevant or pedagogical didactic qualification.
   - The FH study programme to be evaluated has a single, justified veto right concerning the peer from the Quality matters of the FH Conference. (An example would be the geographic proximity of a peer from a subject-related FH study programme.)
   - In order to guarantee the impartiality of the external evaluation, close relationships of peers with the FH programme to be evaluated have to be avoided. Explicitly excluded are teachers of the FH study programmes, members of the development team, and persons in contractual dependence.

WORKSHOP FOR PEER GROUPS

- Workshops are designed and commissioned for all members of peer groups.
- Two weeks before the workshop they receive comprehensive written documentation on the general statistical analyses and the regulatory and control mechanisms of the Austrian FH sector, the QS system FH Conference/FH Council, and the legal foundations.
- The workshop is carried out in discursive form and includes the experience of senior peers.

4.3.2. Denmark: Evaluation Group (EVA) <http://www.eva.dk>

For each evaluation, EVA appoints an evaluation group. The group is made up of individuals with special expertise in the field concerned. The quality and integrity of the members of the evaluation group are crucial. All members must be independent of the programmes/institutions being evaluated. As a general rule, EVA tries to recruit at least one Nordic member for each evaluation.

4.3.3. The United Kingdom: The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

All auditors, audit secretaries, and specialist advisors are selected by the Agency on the basis of published selection criteria and generally from nominations made by institutions. All are provided with induction and training to ensure that they are familiar with the aims, objectives, and procedures of the audit process and with their own roles within it. The qualities required in auditors, etc., are outlined in the QAA *Draft Handbook* for institutional audit, and every attempt is made to ensure that the cohorts of auditors and specialist advisors reflect appropriate sectoral, discipline, geographical, gender, and ethnic balance. Training for auditors, audit secretaries, and specialist advisers is undertaken by the Agency in collaboration with appropriate training providers. The purpose of the training is to ensure that all:

- understand the aims and objectives of the audit process;
- are acquainted with the procedures involved;
- understand their own roles and tasks, the importance of team coherence, the Agency's expectations of them, and the rules of conduct governing the process;
- have an opportunity to explore and practice the techniques of data assimilation and analysis, the development of programmes for visits, the construction and testing of hypotheses, the forming of judgments and statements of confidence, and the preparation of reports.

4.4. INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING AND EVALUATION: THE DANISH EVALUATION AGENCY (EVA) - AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES IN AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE

Introduction

This example presents an innovative project which could prove useful, particularly for co-operation among small higher education systems and especially when only one or two national institutions offer programmes in a particular subject area.

Although there have been some pilot projects on evaluating programmes according to a shared methodological framework, there have been few attempts to set up transnational evaluations with a comparative perspective.

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) decided in its action plan for 2001 to initiate an international comparative evaluation within the field of higher education. The scope of the evaluation is a pilot project involving BSc programmes in Agricultural Science in institutions in four countries – the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University of Denmark, Wageningen University in the Netherlands, the University of Hohenheim in Germany, and University College, Dublin, Ireland.

In developing the methodological framework for the pilot project, EVA has drawn on the lessons learned from the relatively few international evaluations which have been conducted during the past ten years and the substantial experiences gained by the cycle of evaluations of higher education programmes conducted by the predecessor of EVA, the Danish Center for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education. The criteria for selecting the institutions to participate were as follows:

- The institutions should have a record of commitment to the internationalization of higher education.
- The institution should be expected to be motivated to participate in the evaluation and accordingly to allocate the necessary time and human resources involved

primarily in the self–evaluation process and in the follow up on evaluation.
- The institutions should be able to appoint representatives for all relevant groups of stakeholders who are able and willing to communicate in English.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is two-fold. The project will partly support the development of a common framework for international comparative evaluations and partly provide the participating institutions with substantial reporting on the quality of their teaching and learning in the field of agricultural science. Following this [plan], the specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

- develop and test a common methodological framework and common quality criteria for comparative international evaluations of programmes within higher education;
- stimulate discussions on what constitutes good quality within higher education across countries;
- establish mechanisms for continuous quality improvement and co-operation between participating institutions.

Areas of Focus

In its evaluations, EVA usually covers a broad range of aspects related to the programmes being evaluated. As a pilot project with a strong methodological focus, the international evaluation will only include a few aspects. This choice reflects conclusions drawn from earlier international evaluations stressing the importance of limiting focus when conducting evaluations across different educational cultures. There will be three areas of focus:

1. CORE COMPETENCIES

The assessment will include the characteristics of methods related to competencies as well as to competencies specifically

related to agricultural science gained through the completion of a degree in agricultural science.

2. LEARNING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

The assessment will include three elements:

- the existence of mechanisms for quality assurance and monitoring of on-going activities;
- the existence of mechanisms and systems for documentation and dissemination of experiences and lessons learned;
- the capacity to transform gained experiences and lessons learned into changed practices and strategies.

3 INTERNATIONALIZATION

The assessment will include:

- the degree of internationalization in terms of the content of the programme [for] international co-operation, among other things, [and] the level and scope of international exchange of students and staff;
- existing procedures for exchanging best practices and benchmarks of quality.

4. ORGANIZATION

A team of evaluation officers from EVA will be responsible for the practical and methodological planning and implementation of the evaluation, while a panel of international experts (from Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Norway, as well as Denmark) will be responsible for the professional quality of the evaluation. The specific tasks of the experts include mainly involvement in the formulation of common quality criteria and responsibility for drawing conclusions and recommendations based upon the documentation from the institutions involved in the evaluation. The composition of the panel will thus involve persons with strong methodological

skills as well as persons with expertise within the field of agricultural science.

5. EVALUATION METHOD

This includes a number of different elements generally used by EVA.

I. Preliminary Study

EVA conducts a preliminary study (desk study) to collect and review existing materials relating to the field of education (agricultural science) in the countries involved. EVA also collects and studies the findings and methodological considerations of other international evaluations with a similar focus on comparative analyses. The preliminary study concludes with the formulation of the terms of reference and the appointment of the panel of experts.

II. Self Assessment

The participating institutions (programmes) conduct a self-assessment analysing and assessing their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to the three selected focus areas (core competences, learning and quality assurance mechanisms, and internationalization).

III. Visits

The international evaluation panel will visit the involved institutions. The visit will be planned in co-operation with the institutions and will, together with the self-assessment reports, constitute a substantial part of the background for the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

IV. Reporting

The analysis, assessment, and recommendations of the evaluation will be documented in a report. A draft report will be sent to the institutions involved prior to completion of the final report. The final report will be published.

v. Follow-Up

The follow-up process will be determined later together with the institutions concerned but will possibly consist of an international conference focusing on the methodological as well as the programme related outcome of the evaluation.

There will be no standard setting, and the assessment will not result in any ranking of the programmes or the institutions. Rather, the assessment will focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the priorities of the individual programmes in relation to the areas of focus in the evaluation. The intention of using the criteria in this way is to encourage and stimulate the development of the programmes involved in the evaluation. The EVA stresses that the methodological approach of the evaluation and application of common quality criteria must not be interpreted as an attempt to set up and to use an accreditation procedure. Although accreditation requires the use of common quality criteria, application of criteria does not, *per se*, imply accreditation.

Further details, including the final reports, in English, on the evaluations will be available at a later date from EVA; see <http://www.eva.dk>.

4.5. APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE: THE EXAMPLE OF AN AGENCY IN A CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY - THE HUNGARIAN ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE (HAC)

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (HAC) is preparing for its second eight-year cycle of institutional accreditation. In preparation for developing its new guidebook and to set down its general aims for the coming years, it has produced a strategic plan <http://www.mab.hu/english/a_regulations.html> (summary).

I. THE MAIN ISSUES

The *mission* of the HAC is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of Hungarian society through improving the quality of higher education.

The *general aim* of the HAC is the protection of the quality of Hungarian higher education. *Quality* is interpreted as fitness for purpose, which includes the capacity to meet stakeholder expectations.

The HAC has the following powers:

a. It makes *recommendations* in the field of educational policy based on discussions pertaining to general issues of the quality of Hungarian higher education.
b. It *issues opinions* to the Minister, to the Higher Education and Research Council, and to the higher education institutions on matters determined by the Higher Education Act (accreditation tasks).
c. It *advises* the institutions and programmes to assist them in their quality enhancement (as part of the accreditation processes). [This function has not been emphasized so far.]
d. It *issues decisions* on launching and operating doctoral schools and on the disciplines in which an institution may offer post-graduate and doctoral training.

II. INTERNATIONAL TASKS

The HAC will initiate *mutual recognition* with foreign accreditation and/or quality assurance agencies. The HAC initiates the harmonization of the work of CEE quality assurance organizations.

The HAC maintains and, as far as possible, develops its *research and information activities* concerning foreign quality assurance activities and organizations. The results of these activities must be utilized in updating quality requirements and procedures, in producing various guidebooks and documents, and in improving its operation.

III. INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

Institutional accreditation will have *four essential, interrelated components* in the future:

– public presentation of the *general and specific data* related to the quality of institutions (made by the institutions

themselves, on their homepages, updated yearly) [New feature].
- *self-evaluation report* by the institution based on its SWOT and constraints analyses, with special regard to the process and the outcomes of teaching and learning [Includes new features].
- *site visit* and formative *report* by *ad hoc* visiting committees.
- *user surveys* by the institutions to determine user satisfaction [New feature].

The HAC is determined to *streamline* the process of institutional accreditation. A new *Accreditation Guidebook* is being written. Fewer data will be asked for in the self-evaluation report, while the analytical, evaluative character of it will be strengthened (SWOT analysis). Institutions will be asked to name and evaluate their best and worst programmes and fields of operation in their self-evaluation. Institutions are asked to put quality-related data and information on their Website. The aim is to serve not only accreditation purposes but to provide information to students, other stakeholders, other (competing) institutions, and the general public. Moreover, easily accessible public data will improve the transparency and accountability of the system.

The HAC will evaluate the mission and goals of the institutions and also other factors determining the quality of the institution as a whole (*e.g.*, management, internal quality assessment system). Moreover, the HAC will lay more emphasis than before on evaluating the process and outcomes of teaching and learning.

As for programme accreditation performed within the framework of institutional accreditation[*], the HAC will not

[*]In the first cycle of institutional accreditation, all running programmes of the institution were evaluated in detail. By "*programme accreditation performed within the framework of institutional accreditation*", this type of activity is meant. By programme accreditation in itself we mean a separate activity, the accreditation of programmes to be established or launched (this is called "preliminary accreditation" according to the terminology of the new government decree on the HAC).

examine all programmes as was the case in the first cycle. The following programmes will be evaluated in detail:

- programmes judged in the first cycle to require monitoring;
- programmes launched after the first cycle institutional evaluation report;
- selected programmes from among best and worst named in the SER;
- programmes selected at random.

The institutional accreditation *report* will contain:

- an evaluation of the institution;
- discussion of the internal quality assessment system;
- detailed evaluation of selected programmes;
- discussion of data and information coming from users.

IV. PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

Programme accreditation continues according to earlier practice. An important new feature will be that the HAC will launch *pilot study programme evaluations* of programmes in the same disciplines at various institutions, probably in 2003. The procedure and the standards of excellence must be worked out by end of June 2003.

After the full accreditation of doctoral schools is completed, a *comprehensive report* will be produced by end of June 2002.

V. TASKS RELATED TO THE OPERATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE HAC

The most important tasks of the HAC for improving its operation are the following:

- creating an internal system of quality assurance (by the end of June 2003);
- yearly review of its operation;
- detailed analytical self-evaluation every three years, discussed with stakeholders (due in 2003);
- review of the current subcommittee structure (due in 2003).

VI. METHODOLOGY

The activities of the HAC will continue to have a double focus, in the future, from the point of view of methodology. On the one hand, the HAC performs accreditation, *i.e.*, it defines the quality of institutions, faculties, and programmes in relation to predetermined threshold quality requirements, *i.e.*, minimum standards (judgments: "yes", "conditional yes", and "no"). On the other hand, above the threshold level, the HAC gives a detailed assessment and recommendations as to the enhancement of the quality of the given institution, faculty, or programme. That means that beyond the so-called "control" function (giving opinions to the Minister), the HAC also performs an advisory function to promote quality enhancement. It is the definite intention of the HAC that in the future the latter function be more emphatic than the former.

An important change in this respect is that in the second cycle of institutional accreditation the HAC will no longer grade degree programmes. (In the first cycle we used the grades "Excellent", "Strong", "Adequate", "Inadequate".)

VII. PUBLICITY

The activities of the HAC should be publicized more widely and effectively in the future. The aim of the *communication strategy* of the HAC is to improve the image of the organization and to deliver the mission, the aims, and the outcomes of the HAC's operation to various target groups (higher education institutions, students, the Ministry of Education, and the general public).

4.6. QUALITY ASSURANCE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A UNIVERSITY NETWORK ASSOCIATION: A POLICY STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION (EUA)

1. BACKGROUND

This EUA policy paper on quality assurance arises from five key developments that have taken place in Europe over the past few years:

The *Magna Charta Universitatum* (1988, which upholds university autonomy, must be the precondition for fostering the adaptability of universities to the ever-changing requirements of today's society.

The meeting of Ministers at the Sorbonne's 800th anniversary (1998) referred to the central role of higher education in the development of Europe through the creation of a European Higher Education Area.

[Through] the Bologna Declaration (1999), ...the twenty-nine signatory states agreed to act in concert to increase the competitiveness of Europe through a range of measures aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area. These include the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees and a system of credits. The objectives of such tools are to promote mobility, European co-operation in quality assurance, inter-institutional co-operation, and integrated programmes of study, training, and research.

The Salamanca Convention (2001) of European higher education institutions considered quality as a fundamental building block of the European Higher Education Area and made it the underlying condition for trust, relevance of degrees, mobility, compatibility, and attractiveness.

Similarly, the recent Communiqué of the European Education Ministers (Prague, 2001) regards quality as a major factor in determining the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education.

In this context, the European University Association confirms the central role of quality in higher education and affirms that the evaluation of quality should:

- be based on trust and co-operation between institutions and evaluation agencies;
- take into account the goals and missions of institutions and programmes;
- consider the balance between tradition and innovation, academic excellence and socio-economic relevance, the coherence of curricula, and students' freedom of choice;

- examine teaching and research as well as management and administration;
- include responsiveness to the needs of students and the provision of non-educational services.

Quality assurance refers to a set of procedures adopted by higher education institutions, national education systems, and international agencies through which quality is maintained and enhanced.

Quality assurance is effective when it refers to the very core of the higher education activity and when its results are made public.

Quality assurance implies academic autonomy and is closely dependent on academic management that is based on the principles of efficacy, academic and scientific performance, as well as competitiveness.

Quality assurance can succeed only if it becomes inherent to the institutional culture. Such a culture generates the necessary motivation and ensures competence in implementing quality assurance mechanisms.

2. Benchmarking Quality Management

Various higher education systems have developed policies regarding quality criteria, quality assessment, quality assurance, and quality management. The quality of higher education can be defined in various ways as: excellence, "zero defects", "goal adequacy", capacity for ongoing improvement, minimum standard, marketability, or competitiveness. Every approach has its contextual justification.

Quality starts by ensuring minimum standards. It extends to the capacity of ongoing improvement and includes a competitive dimension at the national and at international levels.

The European University Association considers that it is important to identify common benchmarks for quality management and assurance to contribute to the creation of the European Higher Education Area. These quality benchmarks must focus on the multiple dimensions of academic activities, as follows:

a. academic autonomy as an instrument for improved performance and competitiveness;
b. explicit institutional mission and objectives of institutions and programmes;
c. transparent and non-discriminatory access and recruitment policies, the possibility of a second chance, and fair appeals policies;
d. curricular quality;
e. academic staff quality;
f. permanent feedback from the students and responsiveness to their suggestions, proposals, and critique;
g. flexible organization allowing credit transfer, interdisciplinarity, and studying within the framework of various programmes or institutions;
h. quality of infrastructure and availability of adequate equipment;
i. resource allocation with the capacity of obtaining extra-budgetary resources, motivating academic staff, and investing in buildings and equipment;
j. accountability with regard to the use of human and material resources, and systematic auditing;
k. feedback from stakeholders and the possibility of adapting degree programmes to labour-market needs;
l. international scientific competitiveness;
m. internal quality assurance mechanisms;
n. contribution to public debate and democracy;
o. innovation potential in technical, scientific, cultural, and artistic fields.

3. Accreditation Principles

Various countries have developed specific accreditation systems. The European University Association considers accreditation as one possible outcome of quality assurance and defines it as a formal recognition of the fulfillment of minimum, publicly stated standards referring to the quality of a programme or an institution. Accreditation is the adequate mechanism for assuring minimum standards of education and,

in some cases, can be seen as the first step toward quality. It must be used, however, in combination with robust institutional quality review.

Periodic self-assessment of each institution or programme is an important step in quality assurance. Self-assessment carries more weight; however, [only] if it is accompanied by an external assessment phase performed by independent assessment agencies. In turn, ensuring an international dimension will contribute to the quality of national assessments.

Communication among national systems is still poor, and there is a quality information gap. It is necessary that different national systems accept a univocal significance of accreditation.

The European University Association considers that the time has come to take steps towards making [the] accreditation standards of various European countries compatible with one another through bilateral or multilateral agreements. At present, however, there is no need to develop a single European accreditation system, but it is timely to think about criteria and mechanisms to validate the accreditation procedures applied in Europe.

Specifically, the European University Association regards the following principles as central to accreditation procedures. They must be:

a. geared at quality enhancement which means that the process will focus on the internal quality control mechanisms in the institution and insure that these are used for strategic planning;
– b. preserve institutional diversity and autonomy as well as foster innovation by evaluating institutions against their missions and strategic plans;
c. assure public accountability by *(i)* including stakeholders in the process, *(ii)* communicating the results to the public, and *(iii)* being independent of governments, interest groups, and higher education institutions;
– d. consist of a self-evaluation and an external assessment with a clear emphasis on self-evaluation as a formative step in institutional planning;

e. have guidelines that are transparent to the higher education institutions and the public;
f. set up a procedure that makes clear distinctions between conditions for accreditation and recommendations for improvement;
g. have a specified and fair appeals procedure;
h. be re-assessed on a cyclical basis in terms of the adequacy of an agency's resources and its impact on institutions.

The European University Association encourages institutions to ensure the internal review of their programmes and supports initiatives in Europe to promote defined and appropriate mechanisms for the accreditation of institutions.

4. European and International Co-operation

In the context of globalization and internationalization, quality assessment implies, more than ever, comparing approaches and results, as well as learning from good practice. It is necessary and beneficial to extend international co-operation among institutions in view of implementing quality assessment and assurance mechanisms, improving the assessment of academic programmes, sharing assessment methods, and exchanging experience.

The European University Association encourages the networking of institutions in matters of comparing organizations and results, ensuring co-operation in designing and improving quality assessment methods, comparing and developing quality assessment systems, making public examples of good practice, and sharing experience (*e.g.*, on the introduction of new degrees or ECTS) – these are effective means to consolidate the quality of higher education programmes. To this end, the European University Association will co-operate closely with ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance), ESIB, OECD, UNESCO-CEPES, and other international organizations and institutions concerned with the quality of higher education.

The European University Association supports the development of a database regarding higher education systems,

dissemination of information on innovation, and elaboration of comparative studies of systems and institutions.

5. CONCLUSION

In the present context of changes brought about by globalization and the internationalization of the academic sector, the European University Association and its members support steps taken by institutions, in partnerships with governments, towards:

a) operating changes towards the expansion of the European dimension of higher education and the creation of the European Higher Education Area;
b) curricular reform;
c) improving academic management, including the capacity for internal quality management;
d) developing universities as teaching, learning, research, and service-providing units;
e) expanding and consolidating scientific research in universities;
f) adopting compatible mechanisms for quality assessment;
g) achieving convergent education systems by rendering them comparable and compatible, based on common denominators with a European dimension.

(Approved by the EUA Council, Dubrovnik, 27 September 2001 <http://www.unige.ch/eua>)

4.7. ACCREDITATION AND RECOGNITION: SOME INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES BY THE ENGINEERING PROFESSION

4.7.1. The European Federation of National Engineering Associations (FEANI) <http://www.feani.org>

The European Federation of National Engineering Associations was established in the early 1950s and today brings together more than eighty national engineering associations from twenty-seven European countries. Through these associations, FEANI

represents the interests of approximately two million engineers in Europe.

The objectives of FEANI are

- to affirm the professional identity of the engineers of Europe;
  - by ensuring that professional qualifications of engineers of the member countries are acknowledged in Europe and worldwide;
  - by asserting the status and responsibility of engineers in society;
  - by safeguarding and promoting the professional interest of engineers and by facilitating their free movement within Europe and worldwide;
- to strive for a single voice for the engineering profession of Europe whilst acknowledging its diversity;
  - by developing a working co-operation with other international organizations concerned with engineering matters;
  - in representing the engineers of Europe in international organizations and other decision-making bodies.

The Federation established the designation, EurIng, to encourage the continuous improvement of the quality of engineers by setting, monitoring, and reviewing standards and to facilitate recognition and mobility.

FEANI is different from the Washington Accord (see below) in that not all of its member organizations have responsibility for national accreditation or quality assurance of engineering programmes.

4.7.2. The Washington Accord <http://www.washingtonaccord.org>

The Washington Accord is a multinational agreement signed in 1989 which:

- recognizes the substantial equivalency of accreditation systems of organizations holding signatory status and the engineering education of programmes accredited by them;

– establishes that graduates of programmes accredited by the accreditation organizations of each member nation are prepared to practice engineering at the entry level.

The member nations are: Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Japan (provisional status). The terms of the Accord state that the accreditation system, for which each signatory is responsible, shall be subject to a comprehensive review and report by representatives of the other signatories, at intervals of not more than six years. The review involves site visits. It is widely held as an example of good practice in the mutual recognition of agencies, and the Accord is now developing a number of quality assurance instruments such as draft principles for the signatories when they are operating outside their home territories.

To date, European attempts to become signatories to the Accord have not been successful perhaps in part because there are no real European counterparts which meet the criteria to becoming signatories other than in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

4.8. WHAT DO QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORKS DO? THE EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION (ENQHA)

The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was officially established in March 2000 to promote European Co-operation in the field of quality assessment among all the different actors operating in this arena. The idea for ENQA originated from a European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education that clearly demonstrated the importance of sharing information and developing experience in quality assurance. This concept was officially given momentum by the European Council Recommendation of September 1998 (98/561/EC) on European co-operation in quality assurance in higher education as well as by the Bologna Declaration.

The basic task of ENQA is to share experiences on a European level about good practices and methods of evaluation. This task is important as information about good practices and new methods and innovations should be available to everyone. The Network tries to disseminate information as much as it can through free reports and publications, newsletters, and the ENQA Website (<http://www.enqa.net>) which is updated on a regular basis. ENQA has, so far, published four reports. All the publications are available on the Website as well as in paper copies.

ENQA is also a European education network funded by the European Commission and helps to bring evaluation expertise to ministerial staff and to the evaluation experts of evaluation agencies.

ENQA arranges workshops of its own and participates in others to promote contacts between European experts. The members of the Network Steering Group travel frequently to various European and international conferences as guest speakers.

The membership of ENQA is open to quality assurance agencies, public authorities, and quality associations that work in one or more subject fields and that are external to higher education institutions. The Secretariat is often contacted by organizations willing to join the Network. While the organization welcomes new applicants, the most important issue is indeed transparency and delivering information. The network has detailed membership criteria (see its Website) which include evidence of the independence of the member institutions.

The annual General Assembly is the decision-making body for the network and includes representatives of all the European Ministries of Education and member organizations. The Network has a ten-member Steering Group that prepares issues for the General Assembly and plans current and future activities for the Network.

The European Commission pays a contribution annually to the activities of ENQA, but apart from that, the member organizations pay an annual membership fee.

The priority themes for ENQA for 2001-2002 are as follows:

- the quality assurance and assessment of new forms of delivery;
- the outcomes and follow-up of external assessment;
- the use of outcomes of assessment by other stakeholders;
- mutual recognition of the work of other quality assessment agencies;
- the European dimension in quality assurance;
- accreditation, European standards, and equivalence of programmes.

The themes of upcoming ENQA seminars, which are open to members and non-members and provide opportunities for staff from agencies and higher education institutions across Europe to interact and exchange views, include:

- benchmarking between agencies;
- staff development.

The ENQA Secretariat comprises two persons and is currently located in the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC), in Helsinki, Finland. Further details can be obtained from the Website or by contacting the Secretary,

Kauko Hämäläinen
ENQA Secretariat
P.O. Box 1425
Annankatu 34-36A
FIN-00101 Helsinki
Fax+358-9-1607-6911

VIII. OTHER NETWORKS

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education (INQAAHE) <http://www.inqaahe.nl>.

Annex 5

The Design of Study Programmes: Establishing External Reference Points for Quality and Standards

Quality assurance and accreditation agencies (QAAAs) are not involved in the design and delivery of programmes of study. This role has been that of either ministries and/or universities. However, quality assurance and accreditation agencies may indirectly influence the design and delivery of programmes through the external reference points they establish for quality and standards or through their evaluations and recommendations for action.

Here are some examples of current work on the development of external reference points such as generic descriptors for qualifications (Bachelor's and Master's Degrees) and for subject specific descriptors. Examples are from regional (Germany), national (UK), and international initiatives. They focus on establishing descriptors for BA/MA qualifications, sometimes when such qualifications are new awards and sometimes when they are existing ones but may not have been well defined in the past. Recent initiatives in relation to subject (or discipline)-specific descriptors are also evoked. This area is one the status of which is either "work-in-progress" or "being tested".

Advice is given as to where to go for further information.

5.1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF STUDY PROGRAMMES

5.1.1. Towards Shared Descriptors for Bachelor's and Master's Degrees: An International Approach – A Report from the Joint Quality Initiative Group

A Joint Quality Initiative group (JQI), established by the Flemish and Dutch Ministries of Education, has been considering the development of descriptors for Bachelor's and Master's Degrees (BaMAa descriptors) that might be shared within Europe and be available for a variety of purposes depending on particular national, regional, or institutional contexts and requirements. A group with members from several national or regional quality assurance organizations (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), for both university and non-university higher education, has discussed the diverse requirements for, and characteristics of, such BaMa descriptors and have developed descriptors that may now be tested and shared.

Several other national and regional projects have been or are currently working to identify the characteristics associated with particular higher education qualifications, and develop taxonomies and frameworks that clarify the relationships among qualifications. The work of the JQI has included detailed consideration of such projects and has additionally drawn on the outcomes of discussions in Helsinki on common characteristics of Bachelor's Degrees. The Helsinki discussions characterized Bachelor's Degrees by the extent of study (years [3 or 4] or ECTS credits [180 or 240]). The work of the JQI group has been concerned with identifying the academic and other requirements that, as the outcomes of study, characterize and distinguish between Bachelor's Degrees and Master's Degrees.

A survey was carried out amongst participants in the JQI project in preparation for discussions on the possible form, content, and application of BaMa descriptors. Responses indicated a variety of needs and potential uses for such descriptors and also the importance of having a shared

understanding of the terms used both within the descriptors and to describe the context(s) in which they applied.

There was agreement that each descriptor should indicate an overarching summary of the outcomes of a whole programme of study. The descriptor should be concerned with the totality of study and with the student's abilities and attitudes that have resulted in the award of the qualification. The descriptor should not be limited solely to describing the outcomes of units of assessment at the level of the qualification. Thus, the JQI group has developed a shared qualification descriptor not a shared level descriptor. However, it was noted that within some national, regional, and institutional contexts, there might also be a requirement for the local development of level descriptors.

The JQI group discussed the merits of seeking a single shared descriptor for the Bachelor's Degree and similarly, one for the Master's Degree rather than seeking a process to demonstrate "compatibility" between descriptors developed for national, regional, or institutional purposes and that reflect the detail of local contexts. In line with the spirit of the Bologna Declaration, the JQI group concluded that it should seek a single generic descriptor for all Bachelor's Degrees, and similarly, a single generic descriptor for all Master's Degrees. The development of these descriptors should not hinder any national, regional, or local requirements for additional descriptors.

There are a wide variety of programmes leading to Bachelor's awards, varying in content, delivery and process, and nomenclature. For example, a number of countries differentiate between Professional Bachelor's and Academic Bachelor's awards (see ZEvA criteria, below, as an example). Similarly, a wide variety of programmes leading to different types of Master's Degrees exists. It was agreed by the JQI group that the value of generic descriptors could be cross-referenced to more detailed programme profiles or specifications.

A programme specification or profile would identify the particular components of the programme leading to the qualifications; for example, it might include pre-requisites for entry to the programme, details of the components, their

delivery and assessment, and any requirements relating to the needs of the regulated professions. The form and components within the profile would reflect national, regional, or institutional contexts and be related to the needs and responsibilities of those awarding the qualification or accrediting the particular programme.

The JQI group agreed that the shared descriptors should be described in a language and style that is "readable" by all who would have an interest in them, in particular students, their sponsors, employers, higher education academics and their managers, and society at large.

The JQI group proposed the following as generic descriptors that might be useful as indicators or reference points for the abilities and qualities of holders of Bachelor's and Master's Degrees awarded within the European higher education area.

Shared Descriptors for the Bachelor's and Master's Degrees

Bachelor's Degrees are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and supersedes their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge at the forefront of their field of study;
- can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional[1] approach to their work or vocation, and have competencies[2] typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their fields of study;

[1] The word, "professional", is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, relating to those attributes relevant to undertaking work or a vocation and that involves the application of some aspects of advanced learning. It is not used with regard to those specific requirements relating to regulated professions. The latter may be identified with the profile/specification.

[2] The word, "competency", is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, allowing for a scale of abilities and skills. It is not used in the narrower sense identified solely on the basis of a yes/no assessment.

- have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their fields of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific, or ethical issues;
- can communicate information, ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.

Master's Degrees[3] are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research[4] context;
- can apply their knowledge and understanding and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their fields of study;
- have the ability to integrate knowledge, to handle complexity, and to formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments;
- can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;
- have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.

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[3] Some JQI representatives suggested that MBA programmes be specifically excluded; others consider that MBA programmes should reflect the attributes contained within the shared Master descriptors.

[4] "Research" is used to cover a wide variety of activities, with the context often related to a field of study; the term here is used to represent a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge.

Members of the JQI group have opened discussions about options of testing the BaMa descriptors in joint pilot studies that involve different approaches to quality assurance. Such studies will investigate the utility of the descriptors, and in particular their form, components, and levels of expectations. In addition to contributing to transparency concerning the nature of Bachelor's and Master's Degree qualifications, it is anticipated that such transnational investigations will also contribute to enhancing the understanding and recognition of the various purposes and characteristics of different evaluation systems.

Agencies and organizations which have participated in the discussions and drafting of the shared BaMa descriptors include:

Belgium (FL)	:Ministry of Education; VLIR (University QA)
Denmark	: EVA
Germany	: MKW *Niedersachsen*; ZevA Hannover
Ireland	: HETC; NQAI
Netherlands	: Ministry of Education; Inspectorate; HBO-*raad*; VSNU; Trailblazer Committee.
Norway	: Network Norway Council
Spain	: *Agenqua Cataluyna*; *Consejo des Universidades*
Sweden	: *Hoskoleverket*
UK	: QAA

For further details, visit the JQI website on <http://www.jointquality.com>.

5.2. THE DESIGN OF STUDY PROGRAMMES

An example of (DRAFT) Standards for BaMa courses when such qualifications are a new development is taken from an accreditation and evaluation agency that participated in the JQI process.

5.2.1. The Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, Hannover, Germany (ZevA)

ZevA is a common institution of all Lower Saxon universities. It was established in 1995, and as of 2000, it assumed an accreditation as well as evaluative role. It is accredited by the

Akkreditierungsrat and has participated in the Joint Quality Initiative group.

I. General Standards for the Accreditation of New Degree Courses

II. Bachelor's Degree – Master's Degree – Continuing Education

III. Contents

1. Guidelines
2. Research/Application Orientation
3. General key Qualifications
4. Internationalization
5. Co-operation Agreements/Teaching Imports
6. Student/teacher Ratios
7. Modularization
8. Additional general Standards of the Central Evaluation and Accreditation agency in Hannover

I. PREAMBLE

With this draft, the Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency in Hannover (ZevA) is attempting to develop central and general standards to be applied in the accreditation of new degree courses. They are initially aimed at Bachelor's and Master's Degree level courses, but can also be developed to other courses and degrees at a later stage, for instance for PhD programmes.

The general standards of ZevA do not intend to replace any framework examination regulations, nor are they to be understood as static markers. The traditions of the individual subjects and of the disciplines at the institutions of higher education, many of which vary greatly, make it necessary to deviate from certain standards here and there, for example concerning the question of compulsory field trips, the proportion of foreign languages in the degree course, study abroad, certain key qualifications, etc. What is important is that the totality of the general standards permit a general evaluation of the quality of teaching and studies against the background of

the requirements laid down by the Education Ministers' Conference (KMK), the Conference of Presidents and Rectors of Universities and Other Higher Education Institutions (HRK), and the Accreditation Council (AR), and that the trend is for at least these standards to be achieved. For this reason, the general standards of ZevA are also to be applied within the context of these general guidelines. Some examples of such application are the reference framework for Bachelor's and Master's Degree courses of the Accreditation Council and the recommendations of the KMK and HRK for modularization which, in their turn, are being developed further.

Where degree courses deviate from these standards, the faculties offering them ought to give their reasons.

Of course, the standards themselves must be continually re-examined, and they must be developed further. In order to do so, it is necessary to hold discussions with the institutions of higher education about their concepts, and also with the ministries of the *Länder*, the professions, the students, and the scientific and professional societies and associations. They are thus invited to participate actively in the discussions about the further development of general standards.

In the discussion about higher education policy, the professional qualifications represented by the degrees, and therefore the relevance to practice, will be stressed as far as the future Bachelor's and Master's Degree courses are concerned. Thus the question of the compulsory proportion of practical, field trips, projects, etc., required within a Bachelor's or Master's Degree course programme must still be answered. In this study, ZevA has, for the time being, omitted a quantitative determination, but it will discuss the matter in its committees.

An additional task will consist of relating the already developed standards for various disciplines with those drawn up here. In particular, the relationship between the cross-section qualifications and the specialist qualifications in the narrower sense will play a part. Another question that is still open is whether it is not already necessary at the level of general

standards to differentiate between the areas of Stage II studies, for instance between the humanities and the natural sciences.

1. GUIDELINES

The basic guidelines along which the degree programmes ought to be oriented if they are aiming at accreditation by ZevA are the following:

i. Graduates must meet the expectations of the higher education institution, the labour market, and society. The higher education degree awarded must be a reliable indicator that the relevant demands have been met.

ii. The examinations must reach a level and standard necessary for the completion of the degree course and the award of the academic degree – in accordance with the Diploma Supplement.

iii. The curriculum must be suitable for providing the necessary qualifications and imparting the appropriate knowledge for the examinations.

iv. The resources necessary for meeting the standards must be available. The organization of the course of studies, the teaching, and the examinations must fulfill appropriate conditions.

v. The concepts on which the curriculum is based with regard to the qualifications to be obtained, and to the educational goals determining the course offered, must be appropriate.

2. RESEARCH/APPLICATION ORIENTATION

3. GENERAL KEY QUALIFICATIONS (OF DIFFERENT TYPES DEPENDING ON THE PROFILE OF THE DEGREE COURSE)

i. knowledge of foreign languages;

ii. ability to communicate, ability to work within a team, ability to integrate, intercultural competence;

iii. presentation ability, ability to head negotiations, project management;

iv. ability to make use of modern information technologies, knowledge of electronic learning courses on the market;
v. basic economic and legal competencies, sustainability, ethics of economics;
vi. mastery of research standards, research ethics for the BF (research oriented Bachelor's Degree) and MF (research oriented Master's Degree) courses.

IV. General Standards

In the case of Bachelor's Degree courses, greater emphasis should be laid, in principle, on key qualifications (as long as they are designed consecutively). In Bachelor's Degree courses, the key qualifications (*ii)* and *(iv)* are the most important. In courses qualifying one for higher degrees, the key qualifications *(iii), (v)*, and *(vi)* are the most important. Knowledge of foreign languages is absolutely essential for all degree courses.

4. INTERNATIONALIZATION (FOR DEGREE COURSES WITH FOREIGN ORIENTATION)

a) Study abroad (with registration at a foreign institution of higher education);
- a total of two semesters as a rule; in the case of consecutive BF/MF;
- in each case, either one semester or a work placement abroad as a rule (under the supervision of the higher education institutions): BA/MA

b) Foreign language classes
- on the basis of appropriate standards, confident negotiation ability, understanding of technical/specialist terminology, TOFEL, etc.

c) Modules
- at least two modules (=between 12 and 20 hrs/wk per semester) must also be offered at a foreign partner institution of higher education.

5. Co-operation Agreements/Teaching Imports

The development of new Bachelor's Degree courses and, above all, Master's Degree courses, is already showing that innovative programmes frequently come into existence on the boundaries of classical subject canons. This phenomenon leads increasingly to so-called teaching imports from other teaching units of the same faculty, from the student's own institution or from another higher education institution, and from research and practical application. This phenomenon also raises the question of the minimum proportion of core competencies a responsible faculty must have at its disposal for the degree course.

Minimum	Curricular	Core competence
70%	60%	50%
BF	BA	
	MF	MA

Teaching imports must be covered by binding agreements. Organizational measures must be taken as a reaction to the increasing demands made on the coordination of teaching, studies, and examinations when there is a higher level of teaching imports.

6. Student/Teacher Ratios

The student/teacher ratios must take the individual profiles of the degree courses into account.

7. Modularization

Bachelor's and Master's Degree courses must be offered in a modularized form.

Modularization is the concentration of subject areas (input orientation) on thematically and temporally rounded off, examinable units which are complete in themselves and which are provided with credit points. Modularization is thus an organizational principle that leads to a reorganization of the structure of a course of studies. In the interests of enabling

students to complete a course, and of student international mobility, only in exceptional cases should modules last more than one semester.

Modularization demands mutual recognition among institutions of higher education. Modularization must be linked consistently with a credit point system (in accordance with ECTS) which takes into account the students' learning effort, and with an examination system involving continuous assessment.

Modules must impart definable abilities (output orientation). They can be comprised of various forms of teaching and learning. The descriptions of modules must include the effort required on the part of students and also the credit points to be awarded.

The description of a module must contain the following as a minimum:

i. The content and qualification targets of the module;
ii. Teaching forms;
iii. Requirements for participation;
iv. The usability of the module;
v. Requirements for the awarding of credit points;
vi. Amount of work required, credit points, and grading;
vii. How frequently the modules are offered;
viii. Duration of the modules;
ix. Teaching staff.

Eight (+/-two)hrs/wk per semester should be taken as a guideline for the quantitative extent of a module.

8. Additional General Standards of the Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency in Hannover

Obligatory courses must be offered each semester if the degree course is planned to begin each semester; otherwise annually.

Each semester, the faculty (departmental adviser) must publish a timetable (with details of classrooms) and a full description of the courses offered (module catalogue) for the students or provide it on the Internet.

The admission requirements as well as the selection criteria for admission must be laid down in (state-approved) regulations.

Modularization and the use of ECTS on the basis of differentiated and transparent criteria for the student workloads must be laid down in binding examination regulations.

At least one introductory event should be held each semester when students are admitted. Each module for which credit points are awarded must be examined in the course of the semester (with the possibility of retaking the examination at the beginning of the following semester).

The teaching staff must have a sufficient academic plurality. The profile of the course of study and the title of the degree must be clearly coherent.

Research and Application Orientation Complementing the Report of the AR (Reference Framework for Bachelor's and Master's Degree Courses):

	Bachelor's Degree	**Master's Degree**
Research Oriented	Teaching of Basic scientific principles (50%) Methods (20%) and Knowledge of the subject (30%) As generalist research orientated basic training for starting a professional career Ability to participate in research tasks Broad generalist basic knowledge Placement semester desired Subject orientated dissertation Ability to obtain further qualification in Master's programme BF(research-oriented Bachelor's Degree	Teaching of Knowledge of the subject and methods (40%) Special knowledge (30%) and research abilities (30%) For more highly qualified professional tasks Comprehensive ability to participate actively in research tasks Theoretical and analytical abilities Ability to obtain further qualification in PhD programmes MF (research-oriented Master's Degree)
Application Oriented	Teaching of Basic scientific principles (30%) Methods (20%) and Knowledge of the subject (50%) As generalist application-orientated basic training for starting a professional career	Teaching of Knowledge of the subject and methods (20%) Special knowledge (30%) and research abilities (30%) for more highly qualified professional tasks

	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree
	Ability to take on responsible tasks in the field of development, application, sales	Comprehensive ability to participate actively in research tasks
	Broad generalist specialist knowledge	Theoretical and analytical abilities
	Placement semester planned	
	Application-orientated dissertation	
	Ability to obtain further qualification in Master's programmes	Ability to obtain further qualification in PhD programme
	BA (application-orientated Bachelor's Degree)	MF (research orientated Master's Degree)

Note: Dependent on the previous degree courses, Master's Degree courses can be designed as

- Consecutive courses with regard to time and subject;
- Consecutive courses with regard to time, conversive courses with regard to subject, or complementary courses;
- Continuing education courses complementing a person's special field (usually while working) and taking place after a break following the first degree.

	Bachelor's Degrees	Master's Degrees
Relevant to All the Profiles	*Admission requirements:*	*Admission requirements:*
	As a rule, general university entry qualification (BF – research-orientated Bachelor's Degree)	Bachelor's Degree
	As a rule, restricted university entry qualification (BA – application-orientated Bachelor's Degree)	In the case of continuing education courses: Two years of job experience
	Course length as a rule, six to eight semesters	Course length: as a rule, two to four semesters in the case of continuing education courses: No restriction to course length
	Dissertation: 6 weeks to three months	Dissertation: three to six months In the case of continuing education courses: no dissertation required

V. Relevant to All the Qualifications

Research orientation must be guaranteed by the scientific profile and by research activities of the academic staff.

Application orientation must, in addition to the course contents and forms of study (placement semester, projects, application-orientated dissertations), be guaranteed by the scientific profile and by practice-oriented key areas as well as by development activities of the academic staff.

Information provided by ZevA as at 12 March 2002. For further details contact ZevA <http://www.zeva.uni-hannover.de>.

5.3. TOWARDS SUBJECT SPECIFIC DESCRIPTORS FOR QUALIFICATIONS: A NATIONAL APPROACH – THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

I. SUBJECT BENCHMARK STATEMENTS

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject. They also represent general expectations about the standards for the award of qualifications at a given level and articulate the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should be able to demonstrate.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject. Benchmark statements provide for variety and flexibility in the design of programmes and encourage innovation within an agreed overall framework.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to institutions in pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards.

Finally, subject benchmark statements may be one of a number of external reference points that are drawn upon for the purposes of external review. Reviewers, however, do not use subject benchmark statements as a crude checklist for these purposes. Rather, they are used in conjunction with the relevant programme specifications, that is, the internal evaluation documentation of the institution, in order to enable reviewers to come to a rounded judgment based on a broad range of evidence.

The benchmarking of academic standards for this subject area has been undertaken by a group of subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The work of the group was facilitated by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, which publishes and distributes this statement and other statements developed by similar subject specific groups.

In due course, but not before July 2005, the statement will be revised to reflect developments in the subject and the experience of institutions and others who are working with it. The Agency will initiate revision and, in collaboration with the subject community, will make arrangements for any necessary modifications to the statement.

More than sixty subject benchmark statements have been produced in this manner. They are all published on the QAA web-site <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/benchmark/index.htm>.

5.4. TUNING STRUCTURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: LESSONS LEARNED IN HOW TO ACHIEVE RESULTS

Tuning Educational Structures in Europe is a project funded by the European Commission and coordinated by the Universities of Deusto (Spain) and Groningen (The Netherlands). The pilot project has involved 105 university departments across Europe and has covered seven subject areas (five mainstream project participants and two "synergy groups"). The project differs from the Joint Quality Initiative in that it has a subject/discipline focus whereas the JQI is looking at the development of generic descriptors for BA/MA qualifications.

The project is taking place in the context of the Bologna process which has stimulated debate and action (in varying degrees) within signatory countries to the Bologna Declaration, on issues such as the re-structuring of qualifications, programme design, and quality assurance.

The aims of the Tuning project (see <http://www.relint.deusto.es/tuning> for further details) include:

- opening up the debate with a range of stakeholders in higher education (graduates, students, and employers) on the nature and importance of subject-specific and general competencies;
- identifying and exchanging information on common subject-based reference points, curricula content, learning outcomes, and methods of teaching, learning, and assessment;
- improving European co-operation and collaboration in the development of the quality, effectiveness, and transparency of European higher education by examining ECTS credits and other suitable devices to enhance progress.

There is no intention that Tuning should lead to a unified, prescriptive, or definitive European curricula or that it should lead to the creation of a rigid set of subject specifications which might restrict or direct the content, delivery, or nature of higher education in Europe or to damage local and national academic autonomy.

The final results of the project will be published by the end of 2002. The intention of this note is to focus on one of the objectives of the project – "to elaborate a methodology for analyzing common elements and areas of specificity and diversity in five subject areas: Business and Management, Educational Sciences, Geology, History, and Mathematics". The methodology was designed on the basis of four lines of analysis of degree programmes with the aim of making them "more legible and transparent". Such an approach would meet one of the objectives of the Bologna process that calls for the "adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees". The four lines are:

Line 1: General and academic skills;
Line 2: Knowledge, core curricula, and content;
Line 3: ECTS as an accumulation system;
Line 4: Methods of teaching and learning, assessment and performance, and quality.

The purpose of this note is not to summarize the findings in respect of the objective but briefly to describe the steps that the participants took in order to work towards defining level descriptors for the first and second cycle studies in five subject areas in terms of *knowledge, core curricula,* and *content* (Line 2). The project managers observed that there had been four phases of development:

Phase 1: Informing
Phase 2: Storming
Phase 3: Norming
Phase 4: Performing

In Phase 1, within their subject groups, members informed each other about the current situation in their institutions concerning the types of programmes of study being designed and of future perspectives. Various synergy groups that had not been involved in the "informing" session then added to this information.

Phase 2 was characterized by "questioning everything and anything". Hot discussions and long hours were necessary to "get the steam out!" This attitude was also carried forward into the plenary discussions of the project Steering Group.

In Phase 3, the subject groups identified what was common, diverse, and dynamic in their subject areas. They tried to find a common framework for those elements for which it was useful to have clear reference points. At the same time, differences were highlighted and tested to determine whether they were in fact useful divergences and as such an enrichment.

Finally, in Phase 4, the subject groups performed smoothly. Agreements were reached, ideas outlined, and everybody felt ready to take the project forward. There were strict deadlines to be met in the project, but all groups ended up able to present their results in a proper form and to make recommendations in regard to level descriptors in the five subject areas to a wider public at the final conference of the Tuning project on 31 May 2002.

Success factors for this project to contribute to aspects of programme design appear to have included:

- clear definitions of project aims and objectives;
- a tightly defined time scale;
- a small incentive for involvement of departments in terms of modest project funding;
- freedom for academics to exchange views on subject-related competencies in a developmental environment;
- cross-fertilization of ideas across the subject groups through plenary discussions and with stakeholders;
- dynamic subject group chairpersons who were not always from the subject group concerned thus not biased in terms of any particular approach to a subject;
- effective project management.

Similar projects have taken place at national level (*e.g.*, in the United Kingdom – to develop subject benchmark statements).

Part III

References, Bibliographies, and Web Resources

In addition to listing the references actually cited in the main text of this handbook, this section also includes several topical and thematic bibliographies as well as lists of Web resources. As an additional aid to the reader, some of the works listed are annotated. Given the overlapping of the topics and themes covered and the comprehensiveness of the references, a certain amount of repetition in the listing of resources was inevitable.

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[6] These lists of publications are illustrative of the issues of quality assurance in higher education and related matters. In some cases, short summaries are included, but only for purposes of information, and do not constitute any kind of recommendation.

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improve quality, lessons learned, and the experiences of each institution implementing the various quality principles associated with the TQM philosophy.]

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2.3.7. Open and Distance Learning

HARRY, K. *Higher Education Through Open and Distance Learning, World Review of Distance Education and Open Learning Series*. London: Farmer Press, 1999. [Open and distance learning has grown substantially in recent years across all levels of education, disciplines and countries. This book looks at the state of the art in open and distance learning and presents an educational culture in transition. The edited collection contains authoritative analyses of key issues together with current accounts of practice in each region of the world.]

HOPE, A. "Quality Assurance", *in,* G. M. FARRELL, ed. *The Changing Face of Virtual Education: The Commonwealth of Learning*. Vancouver, British Columbia, 2001 <http: //www.col.org/virtualed/>.

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LOANE, S. *Distance Education and Accreditation*. Washington D.C.: ERIC, 2001 <http://wwweriche.org/digests/2001-08.htm>.

OECD. *E-learning: The Partnership Challenge*. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001.

3. SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

- Central and Eastern Europe Network: <http://www.ceenetwork.hu> [individual agency links (access from <http://www.ceenetwork.hu>) [information on CEE agencies also at <http://www.inqaahe.nl>]
- European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA): <http://www.enqa.net> [This site is a comprehensive one having links to all member organizations. All ENQA publications, including the newsletter, are available on the site and can be downloaded free of charge. Also available are details of forthcoming workshops and seminars that are open to non-members as well as to members.]
- International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies of Higher Education (INQAAHE): <http://*www.inqaahe.nl*> [This site has links to all member organizations. The network newsletter can be downloaded from the site free of charge.]
- Council for Higher Education Accreditation - USA (CHEA): <http://www.chea.org> [This site has links to all CHEA - recognized accreditation bodies in the United States as well as a useful international database and glossary.]
- Akkreditierungsrat (Germany): <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de> [This agency is approximately the German equivalent of CHEA. It only accredits programmes itself on special request otherwise its main role is to accredit regional or subject specific accreditation agencies. It has links to other German accreditation agencies.]

3.1. INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Council of Europe: <http://www.coe.int>
- European Commission: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm./education/higher.html>
- OECD: <http://www.oecd.org>
- UNESCO: <http://www.unesco.org> and European Centre for Higher Education: <http://www.cepes.ro>

- World Conference on Higher Education: <http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche.index.html>
- Global Forum for Quality Assurance, Accreditation, and the Recognition of Qualifications: <http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad>
- World Bank: <http://www.worldbank.org>
- World Trade Organisation: <http://www.wto.org>

3.2. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

- American Association for Higher Education (AAHE): <http://www.aahe.org>
- American Council for Education (ACE): <http://www.ace.org>
- Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU): <http://www.acu.ac.uk>
- Center for Higher Education Research and Information CHERI: <http://www.open.ac.uk/cheri> [See information and new project "Universities and Their Role in the Transformation of Society".]
- European Universities Association (EUA): <http://www.unige.ch/eua>
- International Association of Universities (IAU): <http://www.unesco.org/iau>
- National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB): <http://www.esib.org/>
- Universitas21: <http://www.universitas21.com>
- Coimbra group: <http://www.coimbra-group.pt>

3.3. SUBJECT ACCREDITATION/RECOGNITION AGENCIES OPERATING ON AN INTERNATIONAL BASIS

3.3.1. Business and Management

- Association of MBAs (AMBA): <http://www.mba.org.uk> [Accredits MBA programmes in the UK and abroad]

- American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSBInternational): <http://www.aacsb.edu> [Accredits Business, Management, and Accounting Schools in the USA and in eleven other countries]
- European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD): <http://www.efmd.be> [Manages the EQUIS Programme and accredits business schools and beyond.]
- Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation (FIBAA): <http://www.mba-info,de> [This organization is accredited by the *Akkreditierunsgrat* (Germany) and accredits programmes in Business and Management in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.]

3.3.2. Engineering

- European Federation of National Engineering Associations (FEANI): <http://www.feani.org>
- The Washington Accord: <http://www.washingtonaccord.org/>

3.4. SOME OTHER RESOURCES ON ASPECTS OF QUALITY AND/OR EDUCATION

- Bized <http://catalogue.bized.ac.uk>
- European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) <http://www.efqm.org/new_website>
- Information on Malcolm Baldridge, TQM and EFQM: <http://www.qpronline.com/baldridge/index.html>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO) <http://www.iso.ch/en>
- National Institute of Standards and Technology (USA) <http://www.quality.nist.gov/>
- Observatory on Borderless Higher Education: <http://www.obhe.ac.uk>. [An international strategic information service tracking developments in on-line learning, transnational provision, and new providers (*e.g.*, for-profit universities). The service is designed to appeal to a wide range of organizations and individuals concerned with higher education policy.]

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