Agència
per a la Qualitat
del Sistema Universitari
de **Catalunya**

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IMPROVING INTERNAL QUALITY LEARNING FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

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INDEX

PRESENTATION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

IDENTIFICATION OF GOOD PRACTICES

OUTCOMES

PRESENTATION

The aims of the Support *Programme* are to disseminate knowledge amongst Quality Units' sections devoted to quality management and to promote both awareness and the sharing of good management practices amongst universities in the European area.

- It is strategically important that, in this global world, there is a constant flow of information between teams involved in similar situations and who have to face similar problems. A good professional network promotes innovation and more creative approaches to similar problems while modifying solutions to meet each institution's particular needs.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

| INFORMING THE EUROPEAN AGENCIES | CHOOSING EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES | CARRYING OUT VISITS AND DELIVERING REPORTS | SHARING OUTCOMES |

During November 2010 AQU Catalunya informed a number of European quality agencies about *SUPORT PROGRAMME*, and requested information about suitable universities for this project.

AQU Catalunya then recommended to each Catalan university the suitable European university relevant to their needs and characteristics.

During the period, February to June, a member or a team from the Quality Unit spent a minimum of two days in a European University.

As a result of this stage they reported back on the most important aspects of the quality assurance system of the university they visited.

AQU Catalunya intends to pursue a variety of activities to develop relationships between European universities and to establish a forum to exchange experience and good practices.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

EUROPEAN AGENCIES CONTACTED:

UK

QAA - Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Denmark

EVA - Danish Evaluation Institute, Copenhagen

Germany

EVALAG - Stiftung Evaluationsagentur Baden-Wuerttemberg

Netherlands

NVAO - Accreditation Organization of the Netherlands and Flanders

Norway

NOKUT - The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

Sweden

HSV - Swedish National Agency for Higher Education

Finland

FINHEEC - The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council

13 European universities were asked to join the SUPORT PROGRAMME

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Main objectives of the Quality Units to achieve during the visit

Objective I:

Learn about stakeholders' quality training, awareness and motivation and how they participate in the quality process.

Gain knowledge of training procedures and structures to involve academic staff and students.

Understand how external stakeholders participate in quality process.

Gauge resistance from stakeholders.

Objective II:

Learn about the organization and management of Quality Units.

Observe the operation of Quality Units and the organization of Quality Assurance processes.

Learn how the IQAS is organized.

Objective III:

Evaluation process.

Auditing process / Institutional evaluation process

Functions of external evaluations.

Learn about the experiences and procedures for follow-up training programs.

Objective IV:

Identify and learn about the management of committees and other bodies involved in quality management consultation and decision making.

Understand the information flows necessary for monitoring tasks and the role of different stakeholders.

Objective V:

Information systems.

Learn about the quality management information systems used to support quality processes and data.

Objective VI:

Students' evaluation.

Gain knowledge in the evaluation of students' skills and knowledge.

Engage with new views about student assessment, tuition, etc.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Every University team submitted a report about their experience, which has three main sections:

▪Brief description about the University visited, description of the Quality Unit visited, main objectives planned, main activities undertaken.

▪IQAS description

▪Good practices analysing

✓ Innovative approach to consider practice.

✓ Data on which to evaluate it as a good practice

✓ Consideration of why the implementation of this good practice may bring benefits in the medium and long term.

✓ Degree of Transferability: to what extent can the practice be implemented in their university to ensure similar results. Consideration as to whether this practice is applicable in short, medium or long term

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

Support programme experiences were disseminated through AQU Bulletin

http://www.aqu.cat/elButlleti/butlleti51/index.html

In the near future the AQU Catalunya website will publish a description of the good practices and most interesting aspects of IQAS

IDENTIFICATION OF GOOD PRACTICES

Evaluation and mechanisms for teaching support

Peer to peer observation. It is considered a good practice because it enables the exchange of experiences and knowledge between teachers, besides it is not considered as an examination system, but rather as an opportunity for improvement.

Teaching staff's involvement in quality process through evaluation programmes. Teachers have to evaluate programmes by completing a questionnaire. The results of this survey are commented on and analysed by the staff themselves in particular meetings. These special meetings become a place to share experiences and learn from one another.

Involvement of students in quality management processes and student evaluation

Training of student representatives. It seeks to promote students' acquisition of knowledge about the university structure, university outlooks and aims, the different roles within the university, and how the quality follow – up and control (internal and external mechanisms) are undertaken.

Teaching the students which professional skills they have to achieve, and how they should communicate these skills in an intelligible manner to employers in professional interviews.

A guide created by students which explains the evaluation process. At the end of every module each student is requested to take part in its evaluation by completing a questionnaire. Each module's tutors analyse this information to prepare a suitable action plan.

IDENTIFICATION OF GOOD PRACTICES

Quality systems & follow–up

The involvement of the different stakeholders in the quality control system. The aim to promote innovation between university stakeholders. To achieve this involvement, there are two mechanisms, one based in budget increase when the centre accomplishes its strategic objectives. The other is to share an information system that provides strategic indicators to the management team and allows the benchmarking between centres.

Also, there are committees in which all stakeholders are represented. These committees evaluate the quality of teaching delivered and present proposals for the study programme in relation to the skill profile demanded by the professional market. The student and professional points of view are taken into account. It is considered a good practice because the committee analyses every result of the programme.

External evaluation of study programmes is considered a good practice because it implies recommendations based in standards' accomplishment. The rigour of evaluations by external evaluators is guaranteed by their being contractually committed by the university.

The study programme follow-up established in three stages: post –launch, annual review and the six yearly review. The post-launch has to review deviations in study programme objective. The annual review's main goal is to analyse whether the results achieved match study programme objectives. The six yearly review evaluates issues like: learning experience, learning outcomes, curriculum design, learning resources, quality assurance system.

IDENTIFICATION OF GOOD PRACTICES

Quality Information systems

To manage all the information generated by the quality management system efficiently. The information systems have been designed to collect all information necessary for the follow-up of study programmes, thus it is capable to give the management team strategic information.

Participation of society

Wider social participation This good practice is intended to include social interaction in the University strategic plan.
There are different approaches to interaction: consideration of how the university services social needs and how to channel research into more economic and socially applicable purposes. There are a number of areas of work: social interaction leadership, establishing terms of collaboration, developing a follow- up and review system, analysing stakeholders; community responsibility strengthened and improved through communication within society and promotion of the importance of higher education; and university associations, strengthening university relations with business environment.

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OUTCOMES

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▪The programme is based on a win-win situation.

▪The experience has an impact in Quality Units day-to-day work because it gives the opportunity to learn about new ways to confront the most pressing concerns.

▪ Most of the good practices have to be adapted to each university situation and needs, but all of them were inspiring.

OUTCOMES

The peer to peer evaluation. The Quality unit is designing its process, defining responsibilities and outcomes. Next year they will start a pilot project in one programme. They plan to extend this practice to the whole university in the midterm.

Students' involvement. The Quality Unit is designing a training activity that will be compulsory to all student representatives. It will be an optional activity for all students. The content of this activity will be: basic knowledge about university organisation and structure, awareness of quality management and the importance of follow up procedures and the methods and channels of participation.

Prioritization of quality actions. The Quality unit is designing a set of activities to involve stakeholders in quality management issues by showing them the impact of quality activity in their day-to-day work, and how improving processes implies greater efficiency for them in the mid term.

OUTCOMES

Decentralisation of quality management. The Quality Unit is visiting and having meetings with every management team of every university or institution in order to inform them about what is expected from them. Also, the Quality Unit is launching a project to train study programme coordinators and academic staff in quality management issues.

Simplifying Follow-up process. The Quality Unit is leading a project to simplify all follow-up processes, analysing which data and actions have an added value and so should be collected and implemented.

To re- design the process to design a study programme. The Quality Unit is analysing the stages, actors involved and their functions and responsibilities in the process of study programme design.

To define a student data model. The Quality Unit is developing a project to integrate all student data. The main purpose is to have a database which integrates completed studies, student itineraries and additional personal data for every student.

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Thank you for your attention