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Campus Asia symposium
Tokyo, 4 November 2025

Quality assurance: building trust and confidence in Cross Border Higher Education, a perspective from Europe

ABOUT ENQA

- 62 full members and likely to grow as agencies align with European Standards and Guidelines
- 42 affiliates with some likely to become full members
- The policy body for external quality assurance in Europe
- Represents member quality assurance agencies in policy dialogues in the European Higher Education Area
- Provides services to members to support development and for stakeholders in developing QA policy
- Works with members to drive the development of policy & practice in quality assurance & enhancement

**ENQA's
members &
affiliates
safeguard
quality for 32.9
million students
in the European
Higher
Education Area**

THE COMPLICATED WORLD OF CROSS BORDER HE

- Opportunities: international collaboration; widening access; graduate mobility
- Challenges: multiple forms; little shared language or understanding; guaranteeing quality

A simpler focus for today:

- Transnational education – an institution from one country delivering programmes in another country
- Cross border collaboration - joint/dual programmes delivered in partnership by institutions from more than one country
- Cross border accreditation - a ‘market’ approach whereby institutions choose an accrediting body from another country to suit their purposes. 3

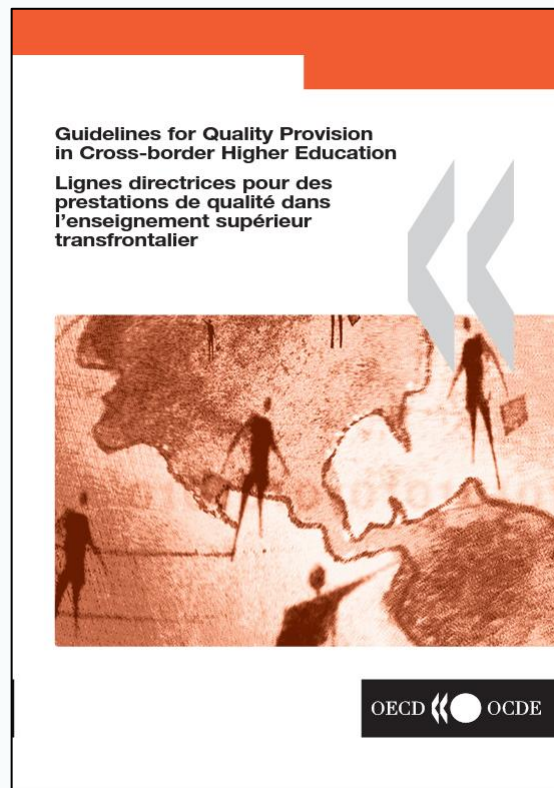
A SIMPLIFIED VIEW OF CROSS BORDER QA

QA of TNE: When an agency from the ‘sending’ country verifies the quality of the provision of an institution based in its country in the ‘receiving’ country

QA of joint and dual degrees: When a single exercise is conducted to verify the quality of a partnership of two or more institutions, conducted by a single or multiple agencies

Cross border accreditation: When a QA agency from one country accredits an institution in another country to replace or supplement national rules, for brand reputation or quality enhancement

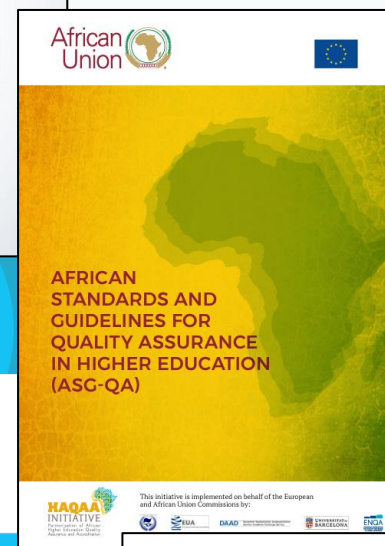
EXISTING QA TOOLS & FRAMEWORKS



Andorra | Argentina | Bolivia | Brasil | Colombia | Costa Rica | Cuba | Chile |
República Dominicana | Ecuador | El Salvador | España | Guatemala | Honduras |
México | Nicaragua | Panamá | Paraguay | Perú | Portugal | Uruguay | Venezuela

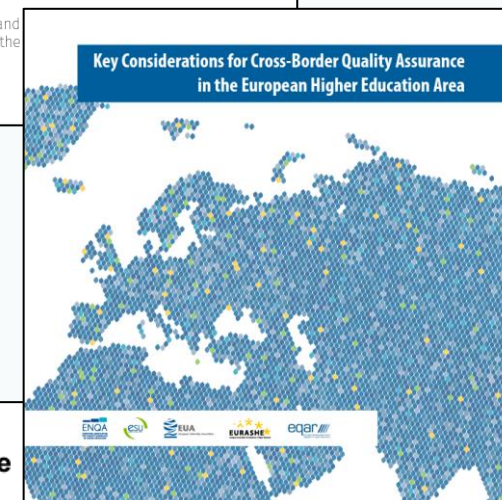
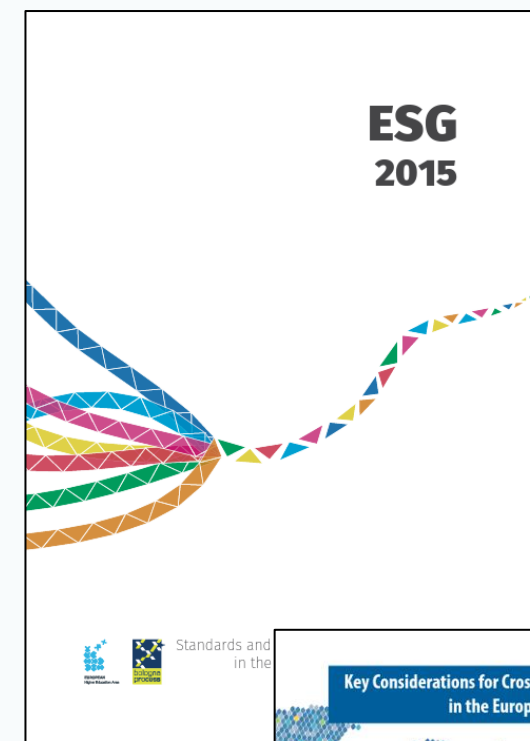
Secretaría General
Iberoamericana
Secretaría-Geral
Ibero-Americana

THE GOOD PRACTICES IN QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS




European Approach for Quality Assurance
of Joint Programmes

October 2014
approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015



TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION



A word cloud illustrating various models of transnational education. The words are arranged in a circular pattern around a central point. The colors of the words are: blue for 'Branch campuses', orange for 'Distance learning', 'Joint programmes', 'Online education', and 'Degree validation'; light blue for 'Franchise programmes', 'Partnerships', 'Independent HEI', and 'University networks'; and dark blue for 'TNE' and 'CBHE'. The words 'TNE' and 'CBHE' are the largest and most prominent in the cloud.

Franchise programmes

Branch campuses

Distance learning

Joint programmes

Online education

Independent HEI

TNE

CBHE

University networks

Degree validation

Joint ventures

Partnerships

CONCERNS ABOUT QUALITY OF TNE



Is the education the same standard as in the home country?



What adaptations should be made to the local context?



Will qualifications be recognised in the home country?



Are students receiving value for money?



How are stakeholders involved?

BACKGROUND AND POLICY CONTEXT (I)



2013-16 QACHE project

‘Quality Assurance of
Cross-border Higher
Education’

Toolkit with principles and
recommendations for
agencies and networks of
agencies

2023 ENQA paper

Highlighted lack of
transparent implementation
of existing guidelines, need
for clear roles and
responsibilities, and for
individual agencies/countries
to take the lead

2024 Tirana Communiqué

EHEA Ministers committed
to promoting a...

*‘more robust and transparent
quality assurance of
transnational education
delivered worldwide, in line
with the ESG, to protect the
interests of students.’*

BACKGROUND AND POLICY CONTEXT (2)

Lisbon Recognition Convention

- 2022 monitoring report includes TNE
- Council of Europe and UNESCO are working on the new Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education in the framework of the LRC Committee

Global Recognition Convention

- the Operational Guidelines, include provisions and guidance on TNE
- 2025 agreement to develop a draft subsidiary text on quality assurance, including that of transnational education

OECD/UNESCO Guidelines

- 2025 monitoring report concludes patchy awareness and implementation
- Recommendation to focus on strengthening use rather than updating the guidelines

SOME VIEWS OF TNE FROM OUTSIDE EUROPE



香港學術及職業資歷評審局
Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of
Academic & Vocational Qualifications

Albert Chow, HKCAAVQ
(Hong Kong)

“Key benefits include broadening of educational experiences in terms of quality, pedagogies and domain of programmes, especially when they are not available locally. Key risks include monitoring, adaptation of TNE to local context, especially where statutory or professional requirements exist.”



Martin Strah, CONEAU
(Argentina)

“Ensuring the quality of programs within Argentina is an unavoidable public policy and is related to the national recognition of degrees and subsequent professional practice. Foreign institutions wishing to offer their programs within the country must undergo a rigorous evaluation process...”



Olusola Oyewole, AAU
(Africa)

“The expertise needed for ensuring the quality of transnational education is quite different from that of internal institutions... Protection of the learners is an issue that needs to be the concern of all but now, the learners are open to the exploitations of various institutions.”

BROADER CHALLENGES FOR TNE

Lack of data is a real problem

Even where regulatory frameworks do exist, the definition of TNE varies

Additional guidelines are in development for QA and TNE under the Lisbon and Global Recognition conventions.

OECD surveyed their states and confirmed that awareness and implementation of the OECD/UNESCO guidelines is patchy.

ENQA has concerns about the various initiatives to produce more guidelines etc, without real tools to ensure implementation.

ENQA's ROQA-TNE activities will focus on encouraging transparency and information provision.

ENQA'S ROQA-TNE PROJECT

Led by ENQA, the Robust QA of TNE project will focus on TNE delivered by sending institutions in the EHEA to receiving countries outside the EHEA

The project will:

- Explore and map current approaches to the QA of TNE by EHEA
- Facilitate the exchange of experience and peer learning, and share examples of good practice,
- Extend, update and disseminate guidance on QA of TNE for QA agencies
- Support QA agencies in reflecting on their own policies and methodologies

QA OF JOINT AND DUAL PROGRAMMES

Opportunities: for students to learn in different cultures and environments, and for institutions to share expertise and draw on expertise



Challenges: funding for students, and institutions operate within constraints of their own national contexts, legal and regulatory requirements



The 'European approach' to QA of Joint Programmes was developed to make this simpler, but systems do not often 'talk to each other' due to national requirements.



Ministers have asked that the European approach to QA of Joint Programmes will be updated as the ESG are revised.



QA agencies as enablers - ENQA work with the European Commission on QA for the 'European degree label' for joint programmes offered by European University Alliances

CROSS BORDER QA BY AGENCIES

‘...cross-border QA refers to external QA activities of a QA agency carried out in a country other than the one in which it is based or primarily operates. For higher education institutions, this may be a voluntary process or part of the national mandatory external QA’

- Key Considerations for Cross-Border Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area



THE EUROPEAN POLICY COMMITMENT

In the framework of the Bologna Process, cross-border QA is supported, and in the Yerevan Communiqué (2015) ministers in charge of higher education in the EHEA committed to allowing :

“higher education institutions to use a suitable EQAR registered agency for their external quality assurance process, respecting the national arrangements for the decision making on QA outcomes”

BENEFITS OF CBQA (I)

Offers HEIS the possibility to

- identify an agency that best suits their own mission and profile, and which can in turn best meet their own needs
- strengthen the institutions' internationalisation policies and develop their collaboration with other foreign institutions
- help improve the recognition of their qualifications
- increase stakeholder engagement, strengthening the institutions' own responsibility for quality and the external acknowledgement of the institutions' efforts

as identified in 'key considerations'

BENEFITS OF CBQA (2)

For QA agencies, cross-border QA may provide

- a possibility to expand their national and international profile and gain prestige
- an increase in income
- learning opportunities to improve their own processes and methodologies
- the ability to promote continuous improvement within their specific field

as identified in 'key considerations'

BUT THERE ARE ISSUES

- Not all countries have opened-up their systems to the possibility
- Even where countries have, there are practical/administrative barriers
- Open markets makes agencies financially unstable
- Some agencies have not accounted for the local context
- Concerns that the 'market' undermines emerging national agencies
- Are agencies using the ENQA & EQAR 'brands' for non-ESG activities
- Marketing activities that seek to discredit fellow agencies
- Are HEIs choosing for quality, or simply on price- the risks of 'accreditation shopping' are agencies cutting corners to win on price
- Desk based accreditation across continents

ADDRESSING CONCERNS

- The ESG are under review for adoption by Ministers in 2027
- There are proposals to have a stronger standard on professional conduct
- As part of the Bologna 'Thematic Peer Group' on QA, ENQA is developing a 'code of conduct' on CBQA
- ENQA will strengthen its guidelines for review of agencies in relation to lines of enquiry on CBQA and to operate in line with the revised ESG

IN SUMMARY



Cross border higher education offers huge opportunities for students, institutions and broader stakeholders in HE



Quality assurance is central to ensuring it is trusted by students, governments, employers, and the public at large

SELECTED FURTHER READING

ENQA paper to European Quality Assurance Forum on protecting interests of students in TNE.

[Gover_Blackstock-TNE-paper.pdf](#)

ENQA (ed). 2015. Cooperation in Crossborder Higher Education: A Toolkit for Quality Assurance Agencies. Brussels, Belgium. https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/QACHE-Toolkit_web.pdf

ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, EQAR. 2017. Key consideration for Cross-border Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Brussels, Belgium. [www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Key Considerations-CBQA-EHEA.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Key_Considerations-CBQA-EHEA.pdf)

European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. Approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015. [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/European-Approach-QA-of-Joint Programmes_Yerevan-2015.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/European-Approach-QA-of-Joint-Programmes_Yerevan-2015.pdf)

OECD and UNESCO. 2005. Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education. Paris, UNESCO. <https://web-archive.oecd.org/2012-06-15/147238-35779480.pdf>

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