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Enhancement of Quality Assurance Systems in Higher Education in APEC Member Economies

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Prepared for DEST by the Australian Universities Quality Agency

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A REPORT

A report on quality assurance systems in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies based on a survey of these economies conducted by the Australian Universities Quality Agency and funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training.

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Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation

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Abbreviations

AACCUP	Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines
ACICS	Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (US)
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APMC	Association of Philippine Medical Colleges
APQN	Asia Pacific Quality Network
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
BAN-PT	Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi (Indonesia)
BDNAC	Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council
CASE	Consumers Association of Singapore
CBHE	Cross-border Higher Education
CDGDC	China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Development Center
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation (US)
CHED	Council for Higher Education (Philippines)
CNAP	Comision Nacional de Acreditacion (Chile)
CONAEVA	Comisión Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior (Mexico)
COPAES	Consejo para la Acreditación de la Educación Superior (Mexico)
COU	Council of Ontario Universities (Canada)
C-RAC	Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (US)
DE	Distance Education
DETC	Distance Education and Training Council (US)
EMB	Education and Manpower Bureau (Hong Kong)
EQA	External Quality Assurance
GB	Governing Board
GDETA	General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation (Vietnam)
GGP	Guidelines for Good Practice
HEEACT	Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan
HEEC	Higher Education Evaluation Centre (China)
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HKCAA	Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation
INQAAHE	International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ISO	International Standards Organisation
ITP-Q	Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (New Zealand)

JQRC	Joint Quality Review Committee (Hong Kong)
JUAA	Japan University Accreditation Association
KCUE	Korean Council for University Education
KEDI	Korean Educational Development Institute
LAN	National Accreditation Board (Malaysia)
MoC	Memorandum of Cooperation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Authority
NAA	National Accreditation Agency (Russia)
NIAD-UE	National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (Japan)
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZUAAU	New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit
OCGS	Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (Canada)
ONESQA	Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Thailand)
PAASCU	Philippines Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities
QA	Quality Assurance
QE	Quality Enhancement
SHEAC	Singapore HE Accreditation Council
SPRING	Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (Singapore)
UGC	University Grants Committee (Hong Kong)
WECT	Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications

Executive Summary

At the Third APEC Education Ministers Meeting in April 2004, Ministers stated that 'economies need … transparent, accountable, regulatory, accreditation and quality assurance systems'. Because of this national need, in all economies governments have a major role in quality assurance, but the precise role and the level of involvement vary between economies and over time.

However, there have been radical changes in higher education over the last 20 years that have required consequential changes to the approaches to regulation and quality. Massive increases in student numbers, total cost of higher education, the cross-border mobility of students and graduates, and the cross-border mobility of education have all combined to force the changes.

Economies have responded to these changes in many different ways and consequently, the QA processes of the APEC region have many variations mainly to serve the unique national contexts. In many economies modes of quality assurance are exercised by both the traditional government bodies such as ministries and funding councils, and by a new crop of quality assurance agencies.

Professional accreditation is also well established in areas such as medicine, nursing, law, engineering and accounting. Considering the role of government and professional councils as given, this survey intentionally gives more emphasis to the newer and emerging quality assurance developments beyond the ministries and professional councils. A light attention to the role of governments and professional councils does not mean that their roles have not been considered. It only means that they have well established systems in place for achieving what they intend to do. It is the emerging QA systems that need to look for practices and successful models elsewhere. This report addresses those needs.

Diversities and Commonalities

The establishment, ownership, legal basis, governance, funding and the level of independence of the QA agency vary among the economies. Correspondingly, the scope and objectives of the agency and the characteristics of its Quality Assurance Framework differ. Variations are seen in aspects such as:

- Unit of Quality Assurance: Institution vs Programs
- Nature of the QA Process: Mandatory vs Voluntary
- Aspects considered for QA
- Role of Institutions in Constituting the Review Team
- Role of Agency Staff in On-site Visit
- Disclosure of QA Outcomes
- Implications of QA Outcome
- Appeals Mechanism
- Post-QA Follow-up

At the same time, whatever their approach to quality assurance in terms of the aspects listed above, the quality assurance systems of the APEC region have the following common critical core elements:

1. Review based on pre-determined criteria;
2. QA process based on a combination of self-assessment and external peer review; and
3. Final decision by the quality assurance agency.

In this scenario of diversities and commonalities, many practices that are useful to emerging QA systems can be identified. There are many examples of activities that are helpful to the agencies in aspects such as preparing the higher education institutions (HEIs), training reviewers, ensuring the professionalism of the process, and eliminating any conflict of interest. The survey also brings to light good practices in terms of quality enhancement activities of the QA agency, the manner in which the QA agencies ensure quality of quality assurance, and the good principles of cooperation and collaboration with other players.

An analysis of these practices indicates a favoured set of characteristics that include a central place for the objective of quality enhancement and self-improvement of HEIs, considering both private and public institutions and applying the same standards to both, having a reporting strategy that provides more public information, and attention to emerging areas such as cross-border education and distance education.

Also, the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) has promulgated Guidelines for Good Practice for quality assurance agencies. Examples of these Guidelines observed in the APEC region include that the EQA Agency: recognises the central role in quality assurance of the higher education institutions themselves and consults with them at various stages of the QA process and makes the QA process an exercise in partnership involving the institutions; aims to contribute to both quality improvement and accountability; is independent in relation to its QA decisions; has procedures that provide for the selection and training of high quality reviewers; ensures that reviewers avoid conflicts of interest and make consistent judgements; has a system of appeal against its decisions; collaborates with other agencies; and pays attention to the quality assurance and improvement of its own activities.

The issue of quality assuring cross-border operations – exports and imports – is in the initial stages of development in many economies. Quality assurance of distance education and online education is also still developing, although some economies have good models to look at.

One can conclude that the quality assurance frameworks of the APEC region, with respect to traditional operations of the traditional providers, are reasonably well developed. But the issue of quality assuring cross-border higher education (CBHE) and online education warrants serious attention in most of the economies. A brief about the various aspects of the QA systems of the region is given in the following pages.

Legal Basis and Governance

Establishment

Among the 21 APEC economies, currently there are about 25 major national quality assurance initiatives beyond the ministerial functions. A couple of them are very old, established in the 1940s and 1950s, a few have been in existence since the 1980s, and most of them have been set up in the nineties or since then.

Many of the recent initiatives are revised forms of earlier bodies, or were preceded by other bodies, and the current forms are outcomes of the changing higher education scenario. The situation is changing constantly. To meet the demands of the changing higher education landscape/scenario, more initiatives are emerging and some of them are yet to be implemented. In the next few years, many of these initiatives will become fully operational and many more new initiatives might emerge.

Ownership

The quality assurance systems in the region have been established in different ways. There are four types of affiliation or ownership found among the APEC economies in establishing the quality assurance system:

1. Established as a governmental agency, may be as a unit in the ministry.

2. Established as a body fully independent of the government, without any role of the government in its establishment or functioning. A group of HEIs establishing a quality assurance agency is a typical example.

3. Established as a buffer body or established under a local buffer organisation where the government may have a role in its initiation to serve governmental functions but its control is independent of the government.

4. Established as a body without any role of the government or the HEIs in its establishment or functioning. Professional accreditation is a typical example.

In economies where the system of higher education itself is undergoing reforms, emerging quality assurance initiatives are being developed as a part of the reform strategy by the government. In higher education systems where quality assurance has a longer history, the HEIs take a leading role by providing external reviewers, or by taking part in different stages of the process, and thus are in a position to shape the important developments of the quality assurance system.

There are also organisations established and managed by groups external to both the HEIs and the governments that perform quality assurance functions. This is how accreditation of programs in professional areas of studies evolved. The quality assurance decisions of these agencies have implications for practitioners at national and international levels to practice their profession.

Legal Basis
In almost all cases, the basis for the QA agency and its authority is a government law, or its equivalent in the respective jurisdictions. In some cases, the authority is governmental but not through means of a law. In only a few cases does the authority come directly from the institutions themselves.

As the rest of this survey shows, there are some variations that may be detected as correlated with the legal ownership, but these are very slight. Distinctions between agencies relate primarily to other dimensions.

Governance
The survey confirms that in all the QA initiatives there is a governing body/board at the policy-making level that steers the policies and objectives of the quality assurance exercise and there is another level of staff structure with responsibilities to translate the policies into action. The governing board has members appointed or nominated or elected according to the rules of the organisation.

The governing boards usually have representation from a cross-section of the various stakeholder groups of higher education who bring in different backgrounds and expertise to the governing board. The composition of the governing board is generally indicative of the relative power that the different stakeholders wish to maintain in the oversight of QA.

The terms of reference of the governing board indicate that they assume a variety of administrative, oversight and decision-making functions. It is the governing board that has the overall responsibility for the policies and functioning of the quality assurance agency and for the decisions taken.

Some quality assurance systems of the APEC region have international experts in the governing board to bring in new and international perspectives to steer their policies.

Funding
There are different funding schemes, which involve either one or a mixture of the following, and all the variations are found in the APEC region:

- *Governmental funding.* In government-initiated systems, government at least provides the initial funding, and pays at least for part of the expenses related to the running of the agency. Even HEI-owned systems may get subsidies and occasional grants from the government.

- *Fees from HEIs.* In many systems, government-established or HEI-owned, institutions pay for the services received. This payment normally covers all expenses related to the external review, plus the cost of training activities.

- *Fee for services.* Income received by the agency for services rendered to institutions or organisations other than those applying for accreditation. These other sources of income may be conferences, workshops, consultancy, etc.

Overall, most of the QA systems follow a 'cost recovery' or 'fee for service' principle and charge the HEIs for the QA exercise related to them, irrespective of their ownership.

Independence
The survey indicates that independence means 'Taking QA decisions based on the QA activity without any interference from third party'. In both cases - government-established or HEIs-owned - there is a need to ensure independence from the interests that are inherent in these groups. Some systems have their independence written in the legislation or Constitution. What usually emerges is a system of checks and balances, and QA systems are successful in ensuring their independence by balancing the involvement of various stakeholders in the governing body. Not many have a clear policy on paying attention to the risk of conflict of interest of these representatives, but there are some good practices found in the APEC economies.

Characteristics of the QA Framework

Size of the System and Unit of Quality Assurance
The size of the system to be covered by the QA process varies from a few thousand HEIs (programs) to only a few. The size of the system does not seem to influence the choice of unit for quality assurance. But it does influence other aspects of QA such as policies and practices related to participation of agency staff in site visits, selection of reviewers and constituting the review team, and the place given to training of reviewers. In large systems, there is a heavy reliance on external reviewers with limited support from the QA body. Consequently the review requires reviewers who are competent enough to adhere to the QA framework but with minimum direct guidance from the QA staff while on the responsibility. Identifying external reviewers may not be a big challenge in big systems but training them to adhere to the quality assurance framework in a consistent manner, putting in place appropriate safeguards to minimise inter-team variances and ensuring professionalism in such large operations may become very challenging. The survey indicates that except for a couple of systems, the others have training programs and attendance in workshops compulsory for reviewers which will be discussed later.

Major Functions of QA Systems
Quality assurance systems of the APEC region have recorded different objectives and functions as their priority. For some, the predominant objective is accountability; for others, it is quality enhancement and providing public information on quality of the institutions and programs; for some others the predominant aim is helping in self-improvement of institutions. In most cases, the objective of quality assurance is a combination of all of the above, but the emphasis on each varies in different economies, depending on the characteristics of the higher education system and the degree of accountability required by various authorities. It is important to note that quality enhancement finds a mention as one of the top few objectives in all the economies. Depending on the purpose of establishment although some have accountability as the priority agenda, quality enhancement, self improvement and providing information to public also find a notable mention.

Mandatory vs Voluntary Nature of QA
The survey indicates a variety of approaches, and objectives to quality assurance. To a large extent, whether QA is mandatory or voluntary depends on the objectives the QA body is set to achieve. In general, when quality assurance is meant as an accountability or quality control mechanism, and thus refers to minimum standards, it is made mandatory, at least for the set of institutions or programs that need quality control (that need to demonstrate accountability).

The quality assurance processes that go beyond regulatory purposes, and have self-improvement or quality enhancement of the HEIs as their primary objective tend to have a voluntary approach to quality assurance.

The APEC economies actually have a mixed approach: there is mandatory quality assurance for certain programs or institutions, and voluntary quality assurance for others. The main difference in these cases is the absence of sanctions applied to those institutions or programs that voluntarily apply for QA.

The mandatory options are exercised mostly in situations where, based on the quality assurance outcome, there is direct decision-making, such as access to certain substantial funds or recognition to function as a higher education institution or approval to offer a program. In voluntary systems, HEIs themselves might be able to determine whether they have the potential for achieving criteria set for the QA exercise, and therefore the published criteria become implicit eligibility requirements.

Scope of QA

Mostly the quality assurance initiatives include both university and non-university post-secondary operations. The exceptions seem to have roots in the way quality assurance developed in the national context.

Quality assurance mechanisms of the APEC region tend to consider both private and public players, again with a few exceptions influenced by the national context. For example, there are economies where the emergence of private sector institutions resulted in the need for a quality assurance mechanism. While the ministries and funding related mechanisms had systems in place to quality assure the publicly funded institutions and programs, the need for a parallel mechanism to assure quality in the private sector that did not demand / have access to public funds resulted in the establishment of QA structures that paid attention only to the private sector. In general, the same standards are applied to both private and public HEIs. Some surveys mention that the standards are different. But the difference lies in the differential nature of the HEI, and the way QA developed in the economy.

Aspects considered for QA and Indicators of Quality

The areas and aspects considered for the quality assurance exercises by the QA agencies of the APEC region are similar, even though some cover QA at the institutional level and some mechanisms are at program level. Irrespective of the unit of quality assurance there are many overlapping areas, with the differences relating to the focus. When the institution is the focus of quality assurance, the standards or criteria would be about how well the institution is fulfilling its responsibility as an educational institution, with some variations depending on the quality assurance framework. If the program is the unit of quality assurance, the educational delivery and quality of the particular program and its graduates become the focus.

With respect to the identified areas, QA systems have drawn up various guidelines to steer the QA process. Some have developed a set of basic quantitative indicators which HEIs must meet. Such systems seek to ensure compliance with a basic set of requirements, in a relatively simple approach. While the use of these indicators seems to provide an objective and relatively inexpensive way to measure compliance with threshold standards, they may not pay attention to the more substantive elements involved in quality assurance. Acknowledging this, some systems have developed benchmarks and statements of standards to guide the QA process.

The more common approach found in the APEC economies is a combination of quantitative and qualitative criteria that are developed by the QA agency but which normally involve some measure of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Considering Complaints Handling of HEIs

As a part of the areas considered for quality assurance, QA systems in general do pay attention to the way HEIs handle complaints from various stakeholders, especially the complaints related to students. Some have a specific standard which explores whether the institution recognises the needs of students, faculty and administrative staff. Others take care of it through interaction with campus groups.

Internal QA Processes

All quality assurance practices of the APEC region emphasise and recognise the value of an analytical and self critical process being undertaken by those who undergo the external QA process. Usually, a set of standards and criteria, pre-determined by the quality assurance system, forms the basis for the self-assessment report. There are generally national consultations to ensure wide participation of the stakeholders in evolving the standards and criteria. The institution (or program) undergoing the process is asked to do a self-assessment and report on how it meets the standards set or criteria identified for the quality assurance procedure.

The level of detail and analysis provided by the institution/program varies. Some systems offer a lot of flexibility to design their self-assessment and the consequent report. Many agencies assist HEIs by organising training programs that guide the preparation of a good self-assessment report.

The QA agencies follow a multi-pronged approach to disseminating the QA policies and practices. They publish manuals, guidelines and booklets on QA procedures. Many of them run training programs, organise fora for discussions, offer consultancy services, and arrange for briefing/ explanatory/ orientation programs.

Only in a few systems, preparation of the self-assessment reports is solely an activity of the administrative staff. In most systems, teaching staff are involved. Mostly the self-assessment report is the major input to the external QA process, although many QA agencies consider government reports and reports of professional organisations. Some consider the media reports and a few others consider information received from the public. Survey results are also used.

External QA Processes

External review is one of the critical elements, similar to self-assessment that has evolved as an integrated component of quality assurance in the APEC region. When the institution submits the self-assessment report, a team of external reviewers is constituted to analyse the report of the institution and to validate the claims made therein, generally by visiting the institution.

Profile and Responsibilities of Reviewers

The survey indicates that the predominant profile of reviewers is subject specialisation and expertise in general higher education. Some systems consider representatives of employers and industry. A few others consider representatives from professional organisations. Involving students in review panels does not seem to be in practice. A couple of the QA systems involve graduates or alumni of the institution.

Most QA systems maintain a register or pool of reviewers from which to choose the panel for a specific review. A couple of the QA units that carry out specific QA functions for the ministries do not maintain a register but develop a list of reviewers depending on the need of the review.

Identifying the Reviewers

To identify people who have the necessary abilities, the quality assurance agencies of the APEC region seem to rely heavily on nominations and informal ways of identifying the reviewers but supplement them with training and evaluation. For the nominations, by self or by others such as the QA staff and governing board, some QA systems have thorough procedures in place to ensure the academic credibility, integrity and skills of the nominees. The survey indicates that in most cases the reviewers are appointed to the panel by the governing board or by the Executive of the QA system.

Training Reviewers

The professionalism with which the review panel can function is very important to uphold/maintain the credibility of the QA process. Even the most highly qualified team can be thwarted in its work if the review panel is not oriented properly to its tasks. To address these concerns, many quality assurance systems have in place, various safeguards and protocols

for training and supporting the reviewers – some have very elaborate and rigorous training programs and the others offer simple briefings before the review begins.

Composition and Size of the Review Team
The survey indicates how composition and size of the peer team depends on the nature of the unit to be quality assured, its size, clientele, funding, etc. Three to six seems to be the size of the review panel in many cases, but some QA systems use larger panels.

There is no magic/right number for the size of the team, but the QA agencies acknowledge that teams should be big enough to have reviewers who can bring in the necessary background to understand the institution/program being reviewed and be able to give adequate time to assess the institution/program. International presence in review teams is becoming more prevalent and quality assurance agencies tend to have a favourable attitude towards it due to the growing importance of regional dialogue among the quality assurance agencies and internationalisation of HEIs.

Eliminating any conflict of interest
The QA systems of the region in general consider that any factor that might reasonably seem to have the potential to affect the reviewer's ability to render objective judgement about the unit being reviewed is a conflict of interest. Some systems require a certification that the reviewer has no involvement with the proposed institution, directly or indirectly through any close relatives, in the past or at present, as either an employee or a member of any official body as a consultant or a graduate.

Role of HEIs in Constituting the Review Team
Consultation with the HEI on the review panel membership takes place at different levels in the APEC region. There are agencies where the register of reviewers consists of nominations from the HEIs only and the quality assurance agency has to necessarily choose reviewers from this pool of nominations. As a result the QA agency does not consult the HEIs on the panel composition.

In some systems, where reviewers are identified from many sources, the quality assurance agency checks with the HEI to be assessed for any objection it might have for any of the reviewers selected. When objections are reasonable, the quality assurance agency may make changes in the team composition but would reserve the right to take final decisions about the team composition.

Role of Agency Staff in On-site Visit
In general, QA staff have administrative functions such as notifying the institutions, developing the register of reviewers and publication of the final quality assurance outcome. In many cases, staff are also involved in the development of the quality assurance framework, taking responsibility for monitoring the major phases of quality assurance, training the reviewers, and orienting the institutions for institutional preparations. There are many systems where the QA staff joins the review team either as a full member or as the Coordinator or Secretary to the review panel. If a QA staff member joins the review panel, it affects the reporting strategy of the panel. Often one member of the review team is made responsible for the drafting of the report in close cooperation with the other members of the team. When the staff member of the quality assurance agency joins the review team, (s)he takes the responsibility for the team's report, in consultation with the other members of the review team.

Activities during Site Visit and Duration
The major purpose of the site visit is to look for evidence to arrive at a collective judgement about the quality of the institution (or program) with respect to the QA framework. To facilitate "gathering of evidence", the visit schedule usually incorporates three types of activities:

1. interactions with various constituents of the institution;
2. visiting some or all of the important facilities of the institution;
3. verification of documents.

The number of days for a typical visit schedule may vary depending on the size of the unit to be visited, the depth of assessment to be done, and the approach to the visit. If the institution is big or if the visit schedule requires the reviewers to visit all the departments of the institution and their facilities, the visit may need more days. In general the visit may take 3 to 5 days.

Review Panel Reporting the Outcome

Generally, the reviewers report to the QA system, their assessment providing evidence they saw during the visit or in the self-assessment. In some QA systems, the recommendations of the review team are approved by the agency and declared as the final outcome. Some agencies require the reviewers only to advise the agency or report to the agency their impressions of the institution (or program) with reference to the assessment framework. The governing body of the QA agency or a body appointed for this purpose considers the observations as one of the inputs to decide on the outcome.

Whatever option is selected there is a major role for reviewers, and QA systems have checks and balances in place to ensure the credibility of the review outcome. The survey indicates that experience of the reviewers, balanced composition of the panel, presence of the agency staff in the panel, emphasis on panel consensus, emphasis on evidence-based judgement, consulting the HEIs on the facts and emphasis of the report etc serve as checks and balances.

Decision-making by the QA System

There are systems where the final decision depends on the review team's recommendation only. The assumption here is that the team has analysed all relevant information, and therefore, their recommendation is sufficient as a basis for decision-making.

Some systems consider not only the review team's report but also the self-assessment report of the institution or program. The assumption here is that while the external review report is an important input, the report prepared by the institution is also important enough to be considered on its own by the quality assurance agency or its board.

Yet another variation is that the final decision depends on the review team's report, the self-assessment report, and other relevant information. The quality assurance agency may consider other relevant information such as general data on the institution or the program, other survey reports, government reports, reports of the professional bodies, submissions by the other stakeholders or data regarding other institutions or programs that may help put the decision in perspective. Some systems consider the review team's report, the self-assessment report and other relevant information, and an institutional response as well.

Outcomes and Implications of the QA Processes

Reporting the Outcome

When the purpose of quality assurance is to certify whether an institution (or program) qualifies for a certain status such as recognition as an institution of higher learning or approval for offering degree-granting programs or eligibility for public funding, the outcome may be a simple yes/no or accredited/not-accredited. This is the outcome of most licensing and accreditation models. Some agencies declare this formal status only.

Some agencies provide the final outcome on a multi-point scale. If the quality assurance exercise asks: "how good are your outputs?" the typical outcome of such an exercise would be in a multi-point grade - numeric or literal or descriptive. This would be suitable if the quality assurance agency wishes to focus on outcomes and levels of attainment. A different way of looking at a 'multi-point scale' is to use a binary decision (accredited/not accredited) but specify different durations for the accredited status.

Some QA activities result in reports only. If the quality assurance exercise is clearly focused on the processes by which an institution monitors its own academic standards and acts to assure and enhance the quality of its offerings, it might result in a report, as in the case of a typical quality audit. Systems that intend to strengthen their internal processes for quality may also benefit from this.

In practice, a quality assurance system may use a combination of the above. Choosing an option for the reporting strategy calls for attention to many factors. Each of the options given above is based on one of many different considerations that affect the choice.

Who is Responsible for Writing the Report?
There are two major approaches to report writing found among the APEC economies. Some QA systems indicate that all panel members take specific responsibilities and report writing becomes a shared responsibility. The other approach is to let the QA staff member take the major role. When the staff member joins as a full member or chairs the panel, s/he does a major part of report writing in consultation with the panel.

Whenever the quality assurance exercise results in a report, the report summarises the conclusions and recommendations based on self-assessment and the site visit. Some reports present only the judgement of the experts in the form of conclusions or recommendations. In other reports, the expert judgements are presented in the relevant analytical context together with the argumentation and documentation why a specific recommendation is offered. The general pattern is to highlight commendations as well as areas that need improvement.

Disclosure of Outcomes
'What part of the final outcome is made available to whom' is an issue that has a lot of variation in the region. Some agencies maintain that the reports are for the HEIs and what the public needs is only the knowledge of the status such as 'accredited' or 'not-accredited' (recognised/not recognised or approved/not approved). There are agencies that make only the summary of the report public. Some agencies make the report available to key stakeholders like the government or the funding agencies. Some others make the summary alone available to the public. Quality assurance agencies that believe in full public disclosure place the full report on their web sites. Publishing the outcomes of the quality assurance process and making more information available to the public are seen, and these are recognised as good practices by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

Implications of Outcome
Depending on the ownership, clientele and leaning towards accountability or improvement, the quality assurance outcome has different implications. In some systems where the accountability concern dominates, the quality assurance outcome may be linked to direct funding. Many who do not support linking substantial funding with quality assurance outcome do recognise that linking a small percentage of funding can have a high influential value but low perverse consequences. In economies where the quality assurance outcome is not linked to direct funding, so institutions do not experience funding sanctions or rewards immediately, the recommendations of the quality assurance agency might feed into shaping the later funding polices and improvement plans of the government. The influence need not be linear, in the sense that it need not result in good HEIs getting more funding and the low quality ones getting less. If the cause of low quality is traced to an improvement plan that deserves the support of the government, it might even result in the government allocating more for improvement purposes.

Appeals Mechanism
Most of the well established quality assurance agencies have a clear policy on appeals mechanism which allows an institution to express its reservation for/objection to/lack of confidence on the QA outcome. Especially the agencies that have a formal accreditation function that has consequences for the survival of HEIs and programs, such as recognition as a HEI or approval to offer a program, need to have a well-defined appeals procedure.

There are wide variations in the composition of the body/committee that deals with the appeals and the powers of the committee. Some QA systems have standing committees that act as appellate authorities and in some cases the governing body of the QA agency may act as the appellate authority. A few others do not have a designated appellate authority and the executive head of the QA body itself might review the appeals. In some cases the QA agency or its governing board sets up ad hoc sub committees case by case. But in all cases, the

appeals committee is expected to function independently and provide fair judgement about the appeal.

Follow-up

In some economies, the responsibility and formal role of the quality assurance agency ends with the review. The institutions are responsible for the planning and implementation of follow-up measures. Depending on the nature of the recommendations, the ministries of education or other stakeholders may react on the review. Some quality assurance agencies have built-in follow-up procedures with varying levels of rigour; some require binding actions to be taken by the HEIs and in other cases it may be left to the professional commitment that can be expected of the HEIs.

Yet another approach is to link the follow-up to the subsequent reviews. In this approach, follow-up is the responsibility of the institution, but QA decisions are valid for a specific duration and follow-up is a strong consideration at the next review. This option links the quality assurance cycles in various ways. The agency may choose to check on earlier recommendations and base its subsequent QA decisions on how the institution or program has acted on those recommendations.

There is an increasing acknowledgement in the region that follow-up should be added to the essential methodological principles.

Quality Enhancement

Quality assurance is a resource intensive exercise for the HEIs as well as the QA systems and to benefit optimally from such an exercise it is essential that the HEIs are helped further to build on the QA outcome and enhance the quality of their provisions. Many QA systems of the APEC region consider the participatory QA process itself as the main quality enhancement (QE) activity. Over and above helping HEIs to benefit from the QA exercise per se, a suite of initiatives are also being attempted by the QA systems. Some have incentives and funding schemes to support quality enhancement initiatives.

Some QA systems steer the post-QA process follow-up strategies towards quality enhancement. They facilitate continuous interaction with the HEIs through seminars and various academic fora. Supporting projects that would enhance certain aspects of quality education, running select projects and doing research on areas that need attention to enhance quality, involving a cross-section of institutional members in consultations and discussions on quality enhancement, and supporting networking among HEIs are a few initiatives found among quality assurance agencies that contribute to QE of HEIs.

The publication program of quality assurance agencies can have a significant impact through publication of guidelines, handbooks and resource materials for the use of HEIs. Training programs for quality managers or steering committee coordinators and reviewers and involving them in quality assurance exercises develops an academic community who are sensitised to quality-related issues and who in turn contribute to QE of their own HEIs.

Quality of Quality Assurance

Monitoring QA

Quality assurance agencies have the obligation to demonstrate that the quality assurance process as implemented by them achieves the desired objectives effectively. To this end, they become accountable to many stakeholders to prove the credibility of the process and to ensure the objectivity of the outcome. Networking, information sharing with international counterparts, participation in international events and discussions and self-monitoring, most of which are either internal or informal or ad hoc, are the predominant ways QA systems follow to ensure their quality. A few good examples of systematic, external reviews are also seen. Good practice identified by INQAAHE indicates that QA systems should be able to practice what they preach and demonstrate their quality to the stakeholders in a more systematic manner.

Effective Quality Practices

QA bodies judge the effectiveness of their quality practices in different ways and depending on their perception, what they consider as 'effective quality practices' varies. Some QA systems consider the salient features of the QA framework as good practices; some pay attention to the success towards intended change in the higher education sector; some look at the immediate impact and a few others see the long term benefits.

International Benchmarking

Although some QA bodies have indicated that they do 'international benchmarking' much of what is being done by them is internal and informal. Rapport with professional bodies and QA bodies in other economies, considering the standards and procedures of other QA bodies while developing their own system, considering the various international guidelines and good practices and study visit to other QA bodies are seen in the region. Overall, there seems to be very little external formal benchmarking done by the QA bodies. This is an area that needs further attention.

Review

In general, QA systems constantly review their policies and standards and update their procedures and guidelines. QA bodies of the APEC economies have these reviews as a part of their internal monitoring mechanisms. Annual performance review, input from stakeholders and suggestions from international scholars feed into the reviews. Very few have taken up external reviews.

Monitoring Efficiency and Effectiveness

The QA systems have a suite of measures to monitor their efficiency such as reviewing the outcomes of operation against the costs, and developing strategic plans and reviewing against them. Overall, the picture that emerges is heavy reliance on internal and ad hoc measures.

QA of Distance Education (DE) and Online Education

Most QA systems of the region do not have policies and practices in place to look into the quality of distance education provisions when offered purely through distance education including online delivery. Some consider DE as an integrated part of other means of educational delivery when there is some amount of face-to-face teaching and learning. Some agencies indicate that they are yet to determine their stand on dealing with DE and online delivery.

National and International Cooperation

UNESCO-OECD Guidelines

Most QA systems have indicated that they have considered the UNESCO-OECD guidelines on quality assurance of cross-border higher education (CBHE) but that they are yet to take specific actions related to that. Networks of QA bodies such as the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) have promoted discussions on the UNESCO-OECD guidelines among their member agencies. To help governments put systems in place in-line with the guidelines, UNESCO-Bangkok and APQN have jointly developed a Tool Kit and that has resulted in awareness-building among the QA bodies of the region. Some QA bodies feel that they already fall in line with the UNESCO-OECD guidelines and a few more are initiating action to build on the guidelines. There are also a few responses that indicate that either the agencies are yet to become familiar with the guidelines or feel that the guidelines may not be useful to them. This is still a developing area and a lot of discussions are going on.

Cooperation

There are only a few examples of cooperation between economies and they are in the form of Memoranda of Understanding. Within the economy, levels of cooperation among the QA bodies is highly variable. Some have indicated that they work with the professional bodies. Working together on issues of common interest, sharing reviewers, organising joint meetings

etc can be seen in a few other agencies. Networking and coming together as federations or councils is also found.

QA of Import

The type of import in the APEC economies is mostly through partnership, twinning and articulation arrangements. Foreign university campuses operate in Australia, China, Malaysia, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam. Some amount of purely online and distance education has also been reported although those operations are difficult to monitor.

Most QA systems apply the same standards for both domestic and foreign providers. One or two instances of not applying same standards are related to the type of procedure in place. In most cases, the home economy accreditation status is considered by the QA systems of the host economies. Ensuring equivalence in the programs is well in place in some economies whereas a few others do not look into the equivalence per se but have other rigorous mechanisms in place to ensure the comparability of standards.

Equivalence is also checked through formal declarations by overseas HEIs, comparability assessment between the onshore and off-shore programs, reciprocal arrangements for recognition of degrees, validation arrangements and credit transfer arrangements.

QA of Export

Some survey respondents have indicated that quality assurance or regulation of export of higher education programs by domestic HEIs is not applicable to them, meaning that the HEIs do not have any export operations in higher education services. Some QA agencies consider the twinning programs and articulation arrangements they have with foreign HEIs as export of higher education services. The bodies and agencies that regulate imports pay attention to export as well.

Some economies have an integrated approach to the QA arrangements of exports and HEIs must show that their teaching complies with the quality criteria that have been defined for them, both for their onshore and off-shore offerings. In other places, attention is paid to the accreditation status of the programs as approved in the home economy before they can be delivered overseas. QA standards for off-shore delivery include the requirement that local regulations are also met. Quality Audits examine the QA arrangements of the off-shore operations of the domestic HEIs.

Conclusion

The information in this report, drawn from the APEC member economies, should increase transparency of, understanding of and confidence in quality assurance systems and processes throughout the APEC region. It is hoped that the availability of this very detailed information will lead to the creation of stronger links within the region and increased cooperation between agencies. The report also analyses regional issues in relation to quality assurance, and identifies characteristics and activities of quality assurance agencies and systems that contribute to their effectiveness. Finally, it identifies some areas that need special attention all over the region, and areas where good practice can be shared and how this can be done.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Survey

At the Third APEC Education Ministers Meeting in April 2004, Ministers identified 'Governance and systemic reform in education' as a priority area. The Ministers stated that 'economies need … transparent, accountable, regulatory, accreditation and quality assurance systems'. This project, proposed by Australia and endorsed by APEC, was undertaken to assist in addressing this need by administering a survey questionnaire. Member economies have shown great willingness and commitment in providing full and detailed responses to the survey (see tables 1 to 4 in Appendix 3, p. 60). This analysis therefore provides a very comprehensive picture of the state of the quality assurance systems in the region. It also permits the identification of trends, practices that have worked well under certain contexts and opportunities for improvement. This knowledge will assist national quality assurance regimes to become more effective, and will facilitate strengthened liaison between national and regional organisations working on quality assurance in higher education. This liaison will in turn assist in the mobility of students, graduates, and professionals, and in the cross-border recognition of qualifications and prior learning, to the benefit of individuals and economies in the region.

Although the survey responses form the bulk of the information input to this report, other data sources have also been tapped. Firstly, some of the survey responses were clarified through telephone queries. Secondly, the internet has yielded further details through focused browsers and specific searches. Thirdly, data available with the regional network of the quality assurance agencies – Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) – was used. In 2003, the Asia-Pacific Quality Network of quality assurance agencies in the Asian and west Pacific region was formed. 16 of the 21 APEC economies are in the APQN region, and the APQN database was also consulted. Finally, there is a similar world-wide network of quality assurance agencies (the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, INQAAHE) whose database also contributed to the data that forms the basis of this report.

1.2 The Roles of Governments and Agencies

In all economies governments have a major role in quality assurance, but the precise role and the level of involvement vary between economies and over time. Historically, ministries of education have had a national regulatory role in respect of higher education, and sometimes the role has been much stronger, involving micro-management. However, there have been radical changes in higher education over the last 20 years that have required consequential changes to the approaches to regulation and quality. Massive increases in student numbers, total cost of higher education, the cross-border mobility of students and graduates, and the cross-border mobility of education have all combined to force the changes. Some governments have increased their control, but through incentives for quality improvement rather than more punitive regulation; some governments regulate public higher education, some regulate private education, and some do both. In this process of evolution, quality assurance has become more devolved, with the emergence of independent and autonomous quality assurance bodies. Quality assurance is now often a multi-agency operation. Still in many economies modes of quality assurance are exercised by both the traditional government bodies such as ministries and funding councils, and by a new crop of quality assurance agencies.

Professional accreditation is also well established in areas such as medicine, nursing, law, engineering and accounting. Considering the government and professional roles as given, this survey intentionally gives more emphasis to the newer and emerging quality assurance developments beyond the ministries and professional councils. A light attention to the role of governments and professional councils does not mean that their roles have not been considered. It only means that they have well established systems in place for achieving what they intend to do. It is the emerging QA systems that need to look for practices and successful models elsewhere. This report addresses those needs.

1.3 Diversity

In a vibrant region such as the APEC region, with linguistic, political, economic and cultural differences, the higher education systems and policies of the various economies and the developmental stage that they have reached are very diverse, and correspondingly the quality assurance practices vary widely.

In fact, the term `quality assurance' is used to denote different practices in the APEC economies and quality assurance is exercised through many modes. While the approach to quality assurance has variations to serve unique national contexts, there is agreement on the essentials. Whatever the basic approach to quality assurance, the survey indicates that most quality assurance systems have certain common features. The institution (or program) that undergoes the quality assurance process provides relevant information to the agency. In most cases, this is part of a self-assessment which provides a critical analysis of the institutional/program data. This is followed by a site visit of an external review team that results in the report / recommendation / observations about the quality of the institution / program. The final step in this evaluation process is the decision on the review team's recommendations / observations, and the disclosure of all or part of the outcome.

While the survey reveals that all quality assurance processes follow this common framework, there is a lot of variation in the way the processes are implemented. This is not unexpected, since the APEC economies themselves are very varied. They vary in size from a few million people to over a billion, in stages of both general and educational development, in systems of culture and government, and in national and international aspirations. The next few pages of this report provide an overview of the commonalities and variations observed among the APEC economies related to various aspects of quality assurance. Drawing on the commonalities and variations, this report provides some insights into what quality assurance agencies consider has worked well in their experiences.

1.4 Number of Agencies

Many of the economies have several quality assurance agencies (and the number does not correlate with the size of the population). Therefore, this report does not cover all quality assurance efforts, although from several economies there are two or more responses. When responsibilities are shared, there are differences in the specific objectives and clientele. However, in general the multiple agencies within the same economy do have a lot of commonalities, as they are driven by the same national context, so some inferences may be drawn. Care has been taken to get a national view from the agencies that participated in the survey. Also, in economies where quality assurance is implemented by multiple agencies, the agencies that were surveyed provided information about other players at the national level and that was helpful for understanding the national scenario.

2. Legal Basis and Governance

A QA agency needs a basis for its authority and a system for controlling and directing its activities. The basis may be a legal instrument (e.g. a law or statute) or simply an agreement between various parties. The system of control is usually a board (of directors) or commission (of trustees), supported by management and/or administration.

2.1 Establishment of the Quality Assurance Systems

Among the 21 APEC economies, currently there are about 25 major national quality assurance initiatives beyond the ministerial functions. A couple of them are very old, established in the 1940s and 1950s, a few have been in existence since the 1980s, and most of them have been set up in the nineties or since then. The year of establishment / initiation of the agencies that participated in the survey are as below (Full contact details are given in Appendix 1):

1. **Australia**: Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) 2000

2. **Brunei Darussalam:** Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council (BDNAC) 1990

3. **Chile:** Comision Nacional de Acreditacion (CNAP) 1999

4. **China:** China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC); Higher Education Evaluation Centre (HEEC) of Ministry of Education (MoE), 2004

5. **Hong Kong**: Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) 1990, University Grants Committee (UGC) (established in 1965 and assessment initiatives started in 1993)

6. **Indonesia:** Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi (BAN-PT) (in English: National Accreditation Board for Higher Education - NABHE) 1994

7. **Japan:** National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) 1991, Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) 1947

8. **Malaysia:** Malaysian Qualifications Authority (MQA) 2006

9. **New Zealand:** New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) 1989/1990; Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITP-Q) 1991; New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU) 1993

10. **Philippines:** Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP) 1987, Philippines Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) 1957

11. **Russia:** National Accreditation Agency (NAA) of the Russian Federation, 1995

12. **Singapore:** Quality Assurance Unit of the MoE; Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (SPRING) 1981

13. **South Korea:** Korean Council for University Education (KCUE) 1982

14. **Chinese Taipei:** Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) 2005

15. **Thailand:** Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) 2000

16. **Vietnam:** General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation (GDETA) 2003

Many of the recent initiatives are revised forms of earlier bodies, or were preceded by other bodies, and the current forms are outcomes of the changing higher education scenario. The situation is changing constantly. Therefore, the year of establishment of the quality assurance agency given above has to be interpreted with caution. For example, the current national quality assurance agency of Australia for the higher education sector was established in 2000. Prior to that, Australia had a national quality committee in 1993–1996, and then the quality assurance system was an integrated framework where quality assurance responsibility was exercised by many agencies and strategies. A similar situation is observed in Malaysia

and Singapore. The National Accreditation Board (LAN) established in 1996 to quality assure the private providers merged with the Quality Assurance Division of the Ministry of Education to form the Malaysian Qualifications Authority (MQA) in 2006. Singapore launched the Singapore Higher Education Accreditation Council (SHEAC) in 2004 to offer voluntary endorsement / accreditation to private higher education institutions, but this has already been dissolved (in June 2006) and a different approach is being designed. Papua New Guinea is one of those small economies with one (leading) university in which the quality assurance function rests with the university itself and external QA is still under development. In a few other economies, the quality assurance strategy is in the developmental stage.

Apart from the above efforts, several economies have national qualifications frameworks. Some merely provide a mapping of levels of qualifications (e.g. Australia) while others have a role in quality assurance as well (e.g. New Zealand). Some also embrace the qualifications offered in their economies by overseas providers. Although they have not always been established as quality assurance bodies, the complementary role they play at the qualifications level, with the national quality assurance bodies following the institution-wise approach, is significant. In Malaysia (where the quality assurance units for private and public institutions have been merged to form a single quality agency), the qualifications framework responsibility and the quality assurance are with the same agency. Hong Kong has a qualifications framework and the law is to be enacted soon to establish the register of qualifications. It will function under the authority of the HKCAA.

To meet the demands of the changing higher education landscape/scenario, more initiatives are emerging and some of them are yet to be implemented. In Hong Kong, there are two developments that need a mention. The eight UGC-funded local institutions of Hong Kong have formed the `Joint Quality Review Committee' (JQRC) with the support of the University Grants Committee (UGC) and the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) to oversee the quality of their self-financing sub-degree programs. Although these institutions have internal quality assurance mechanisms in place to ensure the quality of the programs they offer, the rapid development of sub-degree programs in recent years and the implementation of the qualifications framework have called for the establishment of JQRC. The other development in Hong Kong is the decision of the UGC to establish a semi-autonomous, non-statutory body to be named as the Quality Assurance Council of the UGC. The new body is likely to come into operation by mid-2007 and a preparatory committee has been formed to look into issues related to the setting up of this new body.

In Vietnam, external QA processes have been approved by the Ministry and GDETA is progressing to conduct the reviews.

It should be noted that some of the initiatives described in this report might undergo further changes and take new forms. For example, CNAP, Chile has just been reviewed and in the near future, it will be superseded by a new body to take account of the changes in the Chilean higher education system.

In the next few years, many of these initiatives will become fully operational and many more new initiatives might emerge.

2.2 Ownership

The quality assurance systems in the region have been established in different ways. There are four types of affiliation or ownership found among the APEC economies in establishing the quality assurance system:

1. Established as a governmental agency, may be as a unit in the ministry.
2. Established as a body fully independent of the government, without any role of the government in its establishment or functioning. A group of HEIs establishing a quality assurance agency is a typical example.

3. Established as a buffer body or established under a local buffer organisation where the government may have a role in its initiation to serve governmental functions but its control is independent of the government.

4. Established as a body without any role of the government or the HEIs in its establishment or functioning. Professional accreditation is a typical example.

In economies where the system of higher education itself is undergoing reforms, emerging quality assurance initiatives are being developed as a part of the reform strategy by the government. In higher education systems where quality assurance has a longer history, the HEIs take a leading role by providing external reviewers, or by taking part in different stages of the process, and thus are in a position to shape the important developments of the quality assurance system.

The role of the government in the establishment as well as in the functioning of the quality assurance system is very explicit in the case of Brunei Darussalam, China, Mexico and Vietnam and QA development is a national initiative. In contrast, in Canada, QA is a provincial (state) initiative and for example, in the province of Ontario, the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) has been developed by the universities of Ontario. The Philippines have chosen a system where higher education institutions are members of private accreditation agencies, organised according to various segments of the higher education system. And finally, the quality assurance agency in Australia, although an initiative of the State, Territory and Federal governments, has been set up as a national body with independence from governments and HEIs.

Overall, USA, Canada, Philippines, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea have major quality assurance systems that are the initiatives of the HEIs. In these economies, overall quality assurance becomes a multi-agency effort, governments paying attention to certain other aspects such as qualifications framework, linking quality assurance outcomes to government decisions on funding, incentives, approval to function as HEIs, approval to run higher education programs etc. For example, in New Zealand, ITP-Q and NZUAAU are initiatives of the institutions whereas the NZQA established by the government looks into program approval and registration of institutions according to the qualifications framework of New Zealand.

In Peru, the Consortium of Universities owned by the universities of Peru works towards improving the quality of higher education, although it does not function as a quality assurance agency.

There are also organisations established and managed by groups external to both the HEIs and the governments that perform quality assurance functions. This is how accreditation of programs in professional areas of studies evolved. Known as specialised accreditation or professional accreditation, this type of accreditation was born out of the concern of a profession about the quality and relevance of educational programs that were preparing its practitioners and the quality of the practitioners. The survey results indicate that most economies have some amount of well-regulated quality assurance practices for professional areas of studies such as medicine, nursing, engineering, law and accounting. The professional bodies in these areas of studies exercise quality assurance through licensing or registration procedures. The focus of assessment of these agencies is the quality of graduates – future practitioners of the profession - and the procedures are developed and monitored by current practitioners of standing. Protecting public interest and safeguarding the standards of professional practice are central to these agencies. The quality assurance decisions of these agencies have implications for practitioners at national and international levels to practice their profession. But this overview does not intend to go into those details. The discussions in this report touch upon professional accreditation whenever necessary but the focus is on general quality assurance systems.

The rationale behind the different ways in which QA systems are established needs a mention here. There are three situations where governments seem to have a major role. If the quality assurance system is expected to play a central role in the higher education system of the economy such as recognising institutions as higher education institutions, conferring the

power to award degrees, and approval to offer programs, the initiative to establish such a quality assurance system would come from the government. When it is expected that other countries or governments or states will recognise and accept the quality assurance decisions, the government will have a much greater say in the establishment, organisation and operation of the quality assurance system. Sometimes the national context may require that QA outcomes serve specific governmental functions and in such cases governments have a major role in the establishment as well as the functioning of the QA system. For example, in the case of Brunei Darussalam, the survey indicates that 'Accreditation in the context of Brunei Darussalam is solely for the purpose of employment within the government sector. This is indeed significant since Brunei government is a major employing authority amounting to 60–70% providing employment.' That, and the fact that Brunei has a small system of higher education, explains to some extent the direct role of government in the functioning of BDNAC.

Serving government functions does not mean that the quality assurance system has to be solely governmental. The QA body may be a public organisation, independent from the government, but part of the public system as in the case of CNAP, HKCAA, AUQA and BAN-PT. There are other quality assurance systems that are not a part of the public system but recognised nationally, and internationally. The accreditation system of the USA is an example. When the main purpose of quality assurance is the academic activities of an institution, HEIs tend to play a central role. When the purpose is to ensure that professionals are trained in accordance to the norms of the guild, professional associations come to the fore.

2.3 Legal Basis

In almost all cases, the basis for the QA agency and its authority is a government law, or its equivalent in the respective jurisdictions. In a few cases, the authority is governmental but not through means of a law. There are examples of an ordinance (HKCAA), a statute (SPRING), government recognition or mandate (JUAA, HEEACT, AACCUP, PAASCU), a government committee (UGC), governmental agreement (AUQA), delegation from a legislated body (ITP-Q), and Royal decree (BDNAC). In only the US regional accreditors, the NZUAAU and CUAP, and the OCGS does the authority come directly from the institutions themselves.

As the rest of this survey shows, there are some tendencies that may be detected as oriented towards the legal ownership, but these are very slight. Distinctions between agencies cluster primarily along other dimensions.

2.4 Governance

The survey confirms that in all the QA initiatives there is a governing body/board (GB) at the policy-making level that steers the policies and objectives of the quality assurance exercise and there is another level of staff structure with responsibilities to translate the policies into action. The governing board may have members appointed or nominated or elected according to the rules of the organisation.

The governing boards usually have representation from a cross-section of the various stakeholder groups of higher education who bring in different backgrounds and expertise to the governing board. MQA states that its board has a 'Chairman and nine members representing government, employers, the professions and public and private HEIs, and five from amongst persons with experience and shown capacity and professionalism in matters relating to higher education or employment, or to be otherwise suitable for appointment because of their special knowledge and experience in higher educational or professional programs and qualifications'.

Comisión Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior (Conaeva), established by the government of Mexico does institutional evaluation of the public universities and technical institutes. It is a 10-member commission with both government and universities represented in its governing board.

Some agencies have specifications on appointing members of the governing board who will represent various sectors such as HEIs, government, employer groups and the public. When the members represent their sectors, in some systems, if the member loses his/her position in the sector, as in the case of the president of a university who completes his tenure, the membership to the governing board ceases. There are also systems where the board members do not represent their sectors although the balance in representation is considered while appointing them.

The composition of the governing board is generally indicative of the relative power that the different stakeholders wish to maintain in the oversight of QA. In systems that are established by the governments, the representative of the government either sits on or chairs the governing board and the governing board reports to the Ministry of Education. In some systems, the Minister of Education might chair the governing board and this is the case in Brunei. Usually, in the government-established systems, the members of the governing board are appointed or nominated by the government as in the case of Hong Kong, NZQA of New Zealand, Indonesia, Russia, Vietnam and many others. In Thailand, the Prime Minister / Cabinet appoints the GB of ONESQA.

Systems established by HEIs have different arrangements. For example, JUAA Board members are elected from the representatives of member universities. The same is the case with AACCUP and PAASCU of Philippines. The case of NIAD-UE established by HEIs is different. The President of NIAD-UE who is its executive head appoints the Board of Councillors and NIAD-UE reports to the Ministry of Education of Japan. Similarly, in Singapore, where SPRING is responsible for the voluntary Singapore Quality Class – Private Education Organisations (SQC-PEO) business excellence scheme, the Chief Executive of SPRING Singapore appoints the GB. The parent body of ITP-Q namely ITP New Zealand established by HEIs appoints the GB of ITP-Q. A similar situation is found in NZUAAU.

In some agencies the balance between the role of the government, the HEIs and other stakeholders is considered while making nominations to the GB. In Chile, the new QA body proposes to have the Chair and three members appointed by the government, seven members appointed by HEIs, two members appointed by the other eleven, to represent the employers and professional or disciplinary associations, and two student representatives. It can also be a combination of nomination, election and selection. For example, the governing board of AUQA has twelve members of whom six are nominated by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers, five are elected by institutions, and the Executive Director of AUQA appointed by the other eleven members.

The terms of reference of the governing boards indicate that they have the range of powers usually associated with such bodies. These include a variety of administrative, oversight, decision-making and delegatory functions. In many systems, it is the governing board that appoints the head of the QA agency. The governing board is expected to ensure that the quality assurance process results in thorough, informed and independent judgements.

QA governing boards are also like other boards in being expected to maintain a balance between `oversight' and `micro-management'. While the board steers the policies of the QA body, implementation of the policies is at the responsibility of the staff of the agency. The organisational structure that translates the policies and responsibilities into various activities may have many or a few levels of staff structure depending on the complexities of its activities. It may be a structure where every staff member participates in every activity of the agency or there might be dedicated sections and staff with functional specialisations like liaising with HEIs, training the reviewers or material development.

Some quality assurance systems of the APEC region have international experts in the governing board to bring in new and international perspectives to steer their policies. For example, the HKCAA of Hong Kong, the UGC of Hong Kong, and NZUAAU of New Zealand have international members serving on their boards. Over a quarter of the HKCAA Board membership is international. The HKCAA web sites states that the `non-local members from the United States, Europe, Australia and the Mainland (China) provide external professional views and advice, and keep the Council updated on the latest developments in their countries'. International presence in review teams is more common than membership in the

governing body and the governing bodies of quality assurance agencies tend to have a favourable attitude towards it due to the growing importance of regional dialogue among the quality assurance agencies and the internationalisation of HEIs.

2.5 Funding

The survey indicates a broad pattern of funding that is closely related to the affiliation of the QA initiative, especially for initial funding. When the quality assurance agency is a governmental initiative, to serve governmental functions, in most cases, significant funding is derived from the government itself. In a quasi-governmental structure where the agency has a close relationship with the government but is administered by autonomous governing structures, the initial funding and some operational cost may come from the government, while the cost of the actual quality assurance activity is mostly derived from the HEI concerned. In the case of Consejo para la Acreditación de la Educación Superior (COPAES) established by the Mexican government to confer official recognition to program accreditation agencies the operational costs come from the government and the agencies that undergo the assessment for recognition pay for the service they receive.

In Hong Kong, HKCAA operates on self-financing principles. Some quality assurance initiatives of the HEIs such as in Philippines receive occasional grants and subsidy from the government.

There are also quality assurance agencies where the QA process expenses are covered by the government and therefore the HEIs are not charged, as in the case of BAN-PT. If the agency is owned by the higher education institutions themselves, the funding for the accrediting body and process is derived from the institutions themselves. The quality assurance bodies that are free from both governmental initiatives and the HEIs, such as the professional accreditation bodies, have to depend on the fees they charge for the assessment services.

Considering these different cases, and the expenditures involved in running the agency, there are different funding schemes, which involve either one or a mixture of the following and all the variations are found in the APEC region:

- *Governmental funding.* In government initiated systems, government at least provides the initial funding, and pays for at least part of the expenses related to the running of the agency. Even HEI-owned systems may get subsidies and occasional grants from the government.

- *Fees from HEIs.* In many systems, government-established or HEI-owned, institutions pay for the services received. This payment normally covers all expenses related to the external review, plus the cost of training activities.

- *Fee for services.* Income is received by the agency for services rendered to institutions or organisations other than those applying for accreditation. These other sources of income may be conferences, workshops, consultancy, etc.

Overall, most of the QA systems follow the 'cost recovery' or 'fee for service' principle and charge the HEIs for the QA exercise related to them.

2.6 Independence

The survey indicates that the understanding of 'independence' of the QA systems is almost the same in the APEC economies. Independence means 'Taking QA decisions based on the QA activity without any interference from third party'.

Affiliation or ownership has implications for understanding how independence in the functioning of the QA system has to be ensured. As discussed earlier, when initiated by governments, government is likely to nominate the members of the governing board, and governmental officials such as a representative from the Ministry of Education sit on, and

perhaps chair, the quality assurance units. When owned by the HEIs, quality assurance depends on the voluntary acceptance of the procedures by the member institutions and the HEIs shape the nature and the framework of the quality assurance process. This "bottom-up" orientation is found in the economies where accreditation agencies are non-governmental membership agencies of HEIs. In this case, QA system is independent of government but the issue is the level of independence the agency can claim with regard to the HEIs themselves.

The important thing to note is that in all cases - government-established or HEIs-owned - there is a need to ensure independence from the interests that are inherent in these groups. Therefore, what usually emerges is a system of checks and balances. The survey indicates a variety of ways in which the QA systems of the APEC economies ensure their independence. In the US, the HEIs-owned regional accrediting agencies have to be recognised by the government Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

In most systems, representatives of various stakeholder groups act as members of the board and as external reviewers and this brings a balance in the interplay of various interests of the stakeholder groups. Further, QA systems ensure that conflicts of interest are taken care of.

In general, QA systems are successful in ensuring their independence by balancing the involvement of various stakeholders in the governing body. But only a few have clear policy on paying attention to the risk of conflict of interest of these representatives. The INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practices recommend that the EQA agency has systems in place to ensure that its decision-making is 'independent, impartial, thorough, fair and consistent'. INQAAHE considers policies and procedures such as 'Codes of Ethics' to avoid conflict of interest as evidence for this practice. In line with these guidelines, there are examples of good practices found in the APEC region. In Chile, the CNAP which is a government initiative is governed by a 15-member board appointed by the Minister of Education. The members come from different types of institutions and provide a good representation of the higher education system and ensure a balance with regard to `independence from the government'. At the same time, since all members of the board are linked to some HEI, there is a risk of conflicts of interest. To avoid this, members declare their involvement and interest with HEIs and CNAP periodically updates the statements of the interests of the Board members. A similar practice is followed by AUQA. It maintains a Register of Conflicts of Interest for the Board members and when issues related to the institutions where members have an interest is taken up by the Board, members who have conflict must leave the discussions and do not take part in the decision or discussion leading to it.

Some systems have their independence written in the legislation or Constitution. The independence of NZUAAU is written in the Constitution adopted by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee which states that NZUAAU acts as a fully independent body in the conduct of its audit activities. NZQA's independence is embedded in legislation—The Education Act 1989. Quality assurance decisions of NZQA relating to individual providers or programs are independent from ministerial direction and from funding decisions. BAN-PT ensures its independence from HEIs by not receiving any funding from HEIs; it ensures its independence from government by receiving only non-binding funds from the government. The agency decisions are taken by the governing board and they are free from external intervention.

In all cases discussed above, an analysis of the implications or consequences of quality assurance decisions, that will be discussed later, indicates that irrespective of ownership/affiliation, support of the government and HEIs for the quality assurance effort without affecting its autonomy and functioning has worked well in many economies.

3. Characteristics of the Quality Assurance Framework

Quality assurance has a variety of meanings world-wide. For the purpose of this questionnaire, an inclusive interpretation was used. It covers the processes used by quality agencies, such as accreditation, assessment, audit and registration, and also their quality improvement and enhancement activities. Whichever processes and activities are carried out, they need to be coordinated in a structured fashion so the agency achieves its goals. This coordinated structure can be called a 'quality assurance framework', and this section describes the frameworks in the APEC economies.

3.1 Size of the System and Unit of Quality Assurance

The size of the system to be covered by the QA process varies from a few thousand programs to only a few institutions. The size of the system does not seem to influence the choice of unit for quality assurance. For example, NZUAAU (8 institutions), UGC of Hong Kong (8) and MoE of Singapore (11) have very small systems to oversee. But they primarily take the institution as a whole for review. (Even in the case of thematic reviews by the UGC of Hong Kong, the themes cut across the whole institution.) It is also important to note that in all economies there are both institutional- and program-related QA mechanisms in place. These responsibilities are sometimes shared by multiple agencies and at times the same agency may do both. For example, the Malaysian Qualifications Authority proposes to do both. NAA of Russia, HKCAA of Hong Kong, BDNAC of Brunei, and CNAP of Chile are a few other examples where a single QA agency does both institutional and program review.

Although the size of the education system to be covered does not seem to have a direct relationship with the choice of the unit for QA, size does influence other aspects of QA. Policies and practices related to participation of agency staff in site visits, selection of reviewers and constituting the review team, and the place given to training of reviewers are shaped partly by the size of the system. For example, in large systems, there is a heavy reliance on external reviewers with limited support from the QA body. Consequently the review requires reviewers who are competent enough to adhere to the QA framework but with minimum direct guidance from the QA staff while on the responsibility. Identifying external reviewers may not be a big challenge in big systems but training them to adhere to the quality assurance framework in a consistent manner, putting in place appropriate safeguards to minimise inter-team variances and ensuring professionalism in such large operations may become very challenging. The survey indicates that except for a couple of systems, agencies have training programs and compulsory attendance in workshops for reviewers. These will be discussed later.

3.2 Major Functions of QA Systems

Quality assurance systems of the APEC region have different objectives and functions as their priority. For some, the predominant objective is accountability; for others, it is quality enhancement and providing public information on quality of the institutions and programs; for some others the predominant aim is helping in self-improvement of institutions. In most cases, the objective of quality assurance is a combination of all of the above, but the emphasis on each varies in different economies, depending on the characteristics of the higher education system and the degree of accountability required by various authorities. It is important to note that quality enhancement finds a mention as one of the top few objectives in all the economies. Depending on the purpose of establishment although some have accountability as the priority agenda, quality enhancement, self improvement and providing information to public also find a notable mention.

Next to accountability, quality enhancement, self improvement and providing information to public, the APEC economies seem to have ensuring more 'transparency' in the higher education system through the QA process as one of their major functions. A couple of the QA

systems have international comparability of the HEIs and benchmarking among their top priorities.

In relation to the purpose or major function of quality assurance, affiliation of the quality assurance system can become a debatable issue. It is obvious that for many quality assurance initiatives, the major function is decided at a higher level when the QA mechanism is established. The survey indicates that there is no simple and direct relationship between ownership of the quality assurance agency and the balance between quality enhancement and accountability. The survey brings to light that many government-owned systems have an emphasis on quality enhancement (such as AUQA, HKCAA, BDNAC, BAN-PT, SPRING and NAA) and some institution-owned agencies tend to act as gatekeepers, preventing the entrance of low-quality programs to the higher education market. For example, the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS), an affiliate of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) strives to ensure quality graduate education and research across Ontario. In order to achieve this, OCGS reviews, and approves or rejects, graduate (master's and PhD) programs that have been proposed for implementation in Ontario's universities. It also performs quality reviews of existing programs on a seven-year cycle. In Quebec, all universities wishing to offer a new programme leading to a bachelor, master or doctor degree must submit a proposal to the Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec Universities. The Commission comprising of eight members representing different fields of study and different universities is in charge of evaluating the academic quality of the proposed program. The Committee on University Academic Programs in New Zealand carries out a similar role in respect of programs proposed by the New Zealand universities.

3.3 Nature of the QA Process: Mandatory vs Voluntary

The survey indicates a variety of approaches and objectives to quality assurance, and to a large extent, whether QA is mandatory or voluntary depends on the objectives the QA body is set to achieve. In general, when quality assurance is meant as an accountability or quality control mechanism, and thus refers to minimum standards, it is made mandatory, at least for the set of institutions or programs that need quality control (that need to demonstrate accountability). The quality assurance processes that go beyond regulatory purposes, and have self-improvement or quality enhancement of the HEIs as their primary objective tend to have a voluntary approach to quality assurance.

The APEC economies actually have a mixed approach: there is mandatory quality assurance for certain programs or institutions, and voluntary quality assurance for others. The main difference in these cases is the absence of sanctions applied to those institutions or programs that voluntarily apply for QA.

The mandatory options are exercised mostly in situations where based on the quality assurance outcome, there is direct decision-making such as access to certain substantial funds or recognition to function as a higher education institution or approval to offer a program. In voluntary systems, HEIs themselves might be able to determine whether they have the potential for achieving criteria set for the QA exercise, and therefore the published criteria become implicit eligibility requirements.

It should also be noted that the line that distinguishes the mandatory and voluntary nature of the QA process is becoming blurred, due to the direct and indirect consequences the QA outcome may have. The system of accreditation in the USA is an example of how influential the voluntary mechanism can be if implemented well. In the USA, the state and federal governments rely heavily on accreditation to allocate student aid funds. Many other federal funds and billions of dollars in state funds are allocated, based on the accredited status. State certification of professionals is heavily dependent on whether or not students have completed accredited programs.

3.4 Scope of QA

Mostly the quality assurance initiatives include both university and non-university post-secondary operations. The exceptions seem to have roots in the way quality assurance

developed in the national context. For example, HKCAA considers non-university level HEIs as well as operators in the private sector and training sector. Since the UGC of HK was already adequately paying attention to publicly funded universities of HK, what was needed in the national context was a mechanism to look into the areas where there were gaps and HKCAA pays attention to those areas. Thus the scope of HKCAA has been dictated by the national context and it is true for any other QA initiative.

AUQA is another example where the national context influences the scope of the agency. Australia is a federation of six States and two Territories. State and Territory Governments and the Australian Government have responsibility for managing cooperatively all higher education approval processes. The State and Territory Accrediting Authorities carry out some approval processes in their respective jurisdictions and ensuring national consistency in these processes is a key issue for Australia. Consequently, as the overarching body for quality assurance in the higher education sector, in addition to auditing the Australian universities, AUQA audits the QA responsibilities of the State and Territory Accrediting Authorities.

Quality assurance mechanisms of the APEC region tend to consider both private and public players, again with a few exceptions influenced by the national context. For example, there are economies where the emergence of private sector institutions resulted in the need for an explicit quality assurance mechanism. While the ministries had control (often funding-related) over the publicly funded institutions and programs, the need for a parallel mechanism to assure quality in the private sector that did not demand / have access to public funds resulted in the establishment of QA structures that paid attention only to the private sector. Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong are typical examples. In Singapore, SPRING covers the private institutions and it is only more recently that the Ministry of Education has introduced an explicit QA system for the publicly funded universities and polytechnics. It should be noted that the trend is towards a convergence. This is likely in Singapore, and Malaysia has already merged the two systems it had. The Quality Assurance Division of the ministry for publicly funded HEIs and LAN for the private institutions have been merged into the Malaysian Qualifications Authority (MQA) to cover both public and private HEIs.

In general, the same standards are applied to both private and public HEIs. Some surveys mention that the standards are different. The difference may relate to the differential nature of the HEI or to the way QA developed in the economy. For example, in Singapore the publicly funded institutions are expected to describe their performance in specified academic areas, no accreditation hangs on the result, and there are some government funds to assist with quality improvement after the review. The private providers, on the other hand have a compulsory quality assurance mechanism that protects foreign students' fees, and an optional system that is based on a business excellence model.

3.5 Aspects Considered for QA and Indicators of Quality

The areas and aspects considered for the quality assurance exercises are given in Appendix 2. It should be noted that some cover QA at the institutional level and some mechanisms are at program level. Irrespective of the unit of quality assurance there are many overlapping areas. It is reasonable to assume that the difference is in the focus. When the institution is the focus of quality assurance, the standards or criteria would be about how well the institution is fulfilling its responsibility as an educational institution, with some variations depending on the quality assurance framework. If the program is the unit of quality assurance, the educational provision and quality of the particular program and its graduates become the focus.

Some QA systems have considered different emphases for different cycles of QA. For example, in New Zealand, NZUAAU has done three cycles of QA. For Cycle 1 (1995–1998), it considered all institutional aspects. For Cycle 2 (2000–2001) it gave an emphasis to research related aspects (policy and management, support for postgraduate research students, the research-teaching nexus) and for Cycle 3 (2003–2006) the focus is teaching related aspects (teaching quality, programme delivery, the achievement of learning outcomes).

Some more mature systems have an emphasis on quality audit and the "fitness-for-purpose" approach. They may indicate only the scope of QA in broad areas such as Organisational

leadership, Learning Resources, and Financial Management. But most quality assurance agencies in the initial stages of development provide detailed descriptions. Mid-way between these two approaches are the Standards of the regional accrediting agencies of the US. The Standard statements explain what is expected of an institution and what kind of evidence is needed but they do not go into micro details.

With respect to the identified areas, QA systems have drawn up various guidelines to steer the QA process. Some survey respondents have indicated that they have developed a set of basic quantitative indicators which HEIs must meet. These are generally found in systems which want to ensure compliance with a basic set of requirements, in a relatively simple approach. While the use of these indicators seems to provide an objective and relatively inexpensive way to measure compliance with threshold standards, they may not address the more substantive elements involved in quality assurance. Acknowledging this, some systems have developed benchmarks and statements of standards to guide the QA process.

The more common approach found in the APEC economies is a combination of standards and qualitative criteria that are developed by the QA systems but which normally involve some measure of consultation with relevant stakeholders. It is also found that QA systems that consider 'fitness for purpose' may not have explicit statements or indicators of quality. This approach lets HEIs develop according to their priorities and principles and it is useful where `fitness of purpose' and `minimum threshold level of quality' are well developed or ensured by other mechanisms that coexist in the system, thus allowing quality assurance to focus on how well the HEIs or programs achieve their stated purposes. In Singapore there are two schemes, one that is compulsory for providers that enrol foreign students, run by the Consumer Association of Singapore (CASE) and addressing the protection of student fees, and one that is optional, run by SPRING, and addressing organisational excellence.

It is very difficult to identify which approach is most helpful. In more mature systems, there is emphasis on consulting the sector to identify the core areas to be covered by the QA process. In those systems the QA framework is developed as a joint effort by the QA body and the HEIs. In other cases more prescriptive indicators and requirements are imposed.

3.6 Considering Complaints Handling of HEIs

Within their broad scope, QA systems in general do pay attention to the way HEIs handle complaints from various stakeholders, especially the complaints related to students and staff. NIAD-UE, ITP-Q, NZQA, and SPRING look into this issue explicitly and the scope of QA has specific standards related to this aspect. NIAD-UE has a standard which explores whether `the institution recognises the needs of students, faculty and administrative staff'. ITP-Q also has a specific standard to examine the complaint handling of HEIs. Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) emphasises student fee protection of the private institutions and from that perspective, complaints handling is given adequate attention in the QA process. There is provision for students to lodge complaints about the SQC-PEO organisations. PAASCU looks into the minutes of meetings and probes how the HEIs have dealt with the complaints.

Most QA agencies pay attention to this aspect through interaction with campus groups. For example, the audit panels of AUQA interview student associations and possibly complaints committees of the HEIs as a part of the audit program. Student surveys and how HEIs act on the survey outcomes also helps in understanding how HEIs deal with complaints.

4. Internal QA Processes

All quality assurance practices of the APEC region emphasise and recognise the value of an analytical and self critical process being undertaken by those who undergo the external QA process. The published materials and the web sites regarding the QA initiatives of the region indicate that a number of terms are frequently used to refer to similar phenomena, e.g. self-study, self-evaluation, self-analysis, self-assessment and Performance Portfolio. The term self-assessment is used in this report.

4.1 Preparation of Self-assessment Report by the Institution/Program

Usually, a set of standards and criteria, pre-determined by the quality assurance system, forms the basis for the self-assessment report. There are generally national consultations to ensure wide participation of the stakeholders in evolving the standards and criteria. The institution (or program) undergoing the process is asked to do a self-assessment and report on how it meets the standards set or criteria identified for the quality assurance procedure.

The level of detail and analysis provided by the institution/program vary. Some systems require institutions to provide only basic data and information regarding each of the standards or criteria, with marginal expectations on the 'assessment' part of the report. Others require a more evaluative or analytic report. The QA systems of the region recognise that capacity to prepare an evaluative report is the desirable stage in the development of quality assurance capacity among institutions. The underlying assumption in insisting on the self-assessment is that an institution that really understands itself—its strengths and weaknesses, its potentials and limitations—is likely to be more successful in carrying out its educational mission and more committed to addressing shortcomings revealed than one without such self-awareness.

The survey indicates that the QA systems guide HEIs to prepare a meaningful self-assessment report and the level of guidance varies. This is in recognition that a thorough quality assurance exercise needs a good set of information on the pre-determined criteria and standards to sustain quality judgments. This may pose a significant new challenge to HEIs (even to the 'good' ones), especially in the initial phase of introducing external quality assurance in a system. Over a period of time HEIs might have developed reporting systems for other purposes which may be totally different from what the self-assessment process requires. If HEIs are not helped to develop their capacity for conducting the self-assessment process, and for reporting that process in a way that will facilitate the QA exercise, it might result in incomplete/insufficient reporting. Realising this, the quality assurance bodies of the region provide guidelines to facilitate the HEIs in the self-assessment process. There are considerable differences in the level of detail of the guidelines, however.

Most quality assurance systems provide guidelines about what is expected of a self-assessment report and help HEIs appreciate the spirit of introspection. Some quality assurance systems provide only brief guidelines as to how the self-assessment report could be organised and how to present themselves within the broad framework given by the quality assurance agency. However, when HEIs must adhere to more specific criteria, detailed guidelines and manuals that include a list of questions to be answered and tables to be presented with data in a particular way, are developed. Such specific formats can be centred on quantitative data. In this approach, one added bonus for institutions is that it could help them to develop information systems, which may be used not only for supporting self-assessment but also for management and institutional decision-making. Brunei, Chile, Hong Kong, Japan, Philippines and Vietnam have QA initiatives that require the institutions to fill up pre-structured formats.

Some systems offer a lot of flexibility to design their self-assessment and the consequent report. Partly in response to the growing diversity of institutions, and partly also in response to complaints from institutions about the burden of repeated accreditation visits, some regional accrediting agencies in the US offer different options for how a self-study could be conducted. For example, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education has four major models for self-study: Basic Comprehensive, Comprehensive with Emphasis, Selected Topics and

Collaborative. Each of these models has a slight variation in emphasis and the HEIs choose the model that is most appropriate to their context and needs.

Many agencies assist HEIs by organising training programs to guide the preparation of a good self-assessment report. These cover orientation to the process, raising issues, clarifying doubts and sharing experiences. The official statements about the various aspects of QA, and standards are also discussed thoroughly in these workshops. Training activities for HEIs include workshops, study visits, invitation to international experts to work with groups of institutions and consultancies.

The QA agencies follow a multi-pronged approach to disseminating the QA policies and practices. They publish manuals, guidelines and booklets on QA procedures. Many of them run training programs, organise fora for discussions, offer consultancy services, and arrange for briefing/ explanatory/ orientation programs. A lot of interaction with the HEIs is observed. In addition to publishing material on QA processes as hard copies many of them make all the information available through the web sites.

In only a few systems does preparation of the self-assessment reports end up as an activity of the administrative staff. In most systems, the involvement of teaching staff is observed. In fact involvement of a cross-section of the campus community such as staff, management, students and external community groups is encouraged by the QA agencies.

4.2 Inputs Considered other than the Self-assessment Report

Mostly the self-assessment report is the major input, but many QA agencies also consider government reports and reports of professional organisations. GDETA of Vietnam and MoE of Singapore indicate that they do consider the media reports. BDNAC, CNAP, HKCAA, BAN-PT and AACCUP consider information received from the public. HEEC of MoE of China, HKCAA, BAN-PT, MQA, AACCUP, NAA, ONESQA, SPRING Singapore, and HEEACT consider survey results.

5. External QA Processes

External review is one of the critical elements, similar to self-assessment, which has evolved as an integrated component of quality assurance in the APEC region. When the institution submits the self-assessment report, a team of external reviewers is constituted to analyse the report and to validate the claims made therein, generally by visiting the institution. The visit by the review team gives the institution an opportunity to discuss and find ways of consolidating and improving the academic environment.

5.1 External Reviewers

External reviewer is the term generally used to describe an expert taking part in the quality assurance process. External reviewers share the language, the categories, the rationale,and the codes that belong to the discipline or the profession of the program (or institution) being assessed, and therefore are peers to the people they are visiting. At the same time, they are external to the program or the institution, and therefore they provide an outsider's perspective that enriches that of the institution. Many agencies use the terms "external peers", and "peers" in this sense. In the survey questionnaire, the term "external reviewers" was used.

In Australia and New Zealand, the quality assurance agencies have significantly extended the interpretation of 'peer', and the Audit Manual of AUQA explains the reasons as below:

> *The term 'peer' means "a person or group with similar knowledge, skills, experience and status in the relevant context". In academia, it often means simply 'another academic', and more generally it often denotes someone in the same professional field. However, this can engender public suspicion of peer review, and a feeling that peer review does not result in independent objective judgements, but that the reviewers are more inclined to conceal their colleagues' defects.*

> *To avoid both this effect and the suspicion of this effect, AUQA has extended the interpretation of 'peer' and, in addition to people from within Australian universities, audit panels always include people from outside Australian academia who have knowledge of or expertise in some aspects of what is being reviewed, but who have applied it in a different context and/or with different underlying assumptions.*

5.2 Profile and Responsibilities of Reviewers

To implement the quality assurance processes effectively, it is essential to be clear on the role of the reviewers and the profile that will match this role and the responsibilities to be performed. The reviewers also need clarity about the extent of `professional or peer evaluation/ judgement' required of them and how their evaluations will be used for further decision-making. This is because most QA mechanisms have at least one more level of processing of the outcome of the site visits (see Section 5.11, p. 22) and there is a wide variation in the way this is done.

Some systems rely heavily on the outcome of the review team's site visit. Some systems require the reviewers to only report their impressions of the institution (or program) with reference to the QA framework. The QA agency staff may take a leading role in compiling the review team's observations and in facilitating the process to reach the quality assurance decision.

Each option has implications for the roles and responsibilities of the review team. The survey indicates that some systems have developed very clear guidelines on the responsibilities of the reviewers and the type of reviewers they require in terms of background, professional experience, knowledge and skills and others are still following ad hoc measures to choose the right type of reviewers. The web sites and online materials such as the handbooks, manuals and training materials of the QA systems of the APEC region provides some amount of information on the skills the QA systems look for.

In general, during the assessment visit, the reviewers interact with the various constituents of the institution, hold discussions, ask for relevant documents and arrive at inferences. In some cases they observe the classroom teaching. All this requires interpersonal abilities such as holding face-to-face interactions effectively, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and being objective and open-minded in taking decisions. Sometimes they may lead a sub-group, or may work independently and assist the chairperson of the team. This can be done in a professional manner only if the reviewers have the ability to work in as well as lead a small sub-group. This also calls for the ability to work in tight time schedules and under strict deadlines, ability to write clearly and effectively, and record evidence systematically. Acknowledging the challenges involved in the skills mentioned above, the QA systems take care to select those experts who are known for their knowledge of a varied range of reality in higher education.

The survey indicates that the predominant profile of reviewers is subject specialisation and expertise in general higher education. Some systems consider representatives of employers and industry. A few others consider representatives from professional organisations. Involving students in review panels does not seem to be in practice. A couple of the QA systems involve graduates or alumni of the institution.

Most QA systems maintain a register or pool of reviewers from which to choose the panel for a specific review. A couple of the QA units that carry out specific QA functions for the ministries do not maintain a register. They develop a long list of reviewers depending on the need of the review. The ones that develop and maintain a register of reviewers identify the reviewers in many different ways that are explained below.

5.3 Identifying the Reviewers

To identify people who have the abilities discussed above, the quality assurance systems of the APEC region seem to rely heavily on nominations and informal ways of identifying the reviewers but supplement them with training and evaluation. The following practices are observed in the APEC region:

- Reviewers are selected by nominations from HEIs. Some quality assurance agencies have developed the guidelines for nominations and within that framework, the HEIs can make nominations.

- The governing board of the QA agency makes nominations.

- The government makes nominations.

- Reviewers are identified informally by the QA staff and after the first review only those who have performed well are asked to join new teams.

- Applications are called for from those who might fit into the profile developed by the agency and reviewers are selected after screening.

- Potential reviewers are called for rigorous training programs and only those who clear the training program successfully are inducted into the review teams.

- Review teams are first constituted and then each team is provided training of varying degrees of rigour (intensive to just a briefing or orientation).

For the nominations, by self or by others such as the QA staff and governing board, some QA systems have thorough procedures in place to ensure the academic credibility, integrity and skills of the nominees. For example, AUQA requires referrals, and based on the recommendations of a screening committee (which is a sub-committee of the governing board) that considers the CVs and referee comments, the governing board appoints the reviewers.

The survey indicates that in most cases the reviewers are appointed to the panel by the governing board or by the Executive of the QA system. In a couple of systems where the role of government is very explicit such as Vietnam, the government appoints the reviewers.

5.4 Training Reviewers

The professionalism with which the review panel can function is very important to uphold/maintain the credibility of the QA process. Even the most highly qualified team can be thwarted in its work if the review panel is not oriented properly to its tasks. To address these concerns, many quality assurance systems have in place, various safeguards and protocols for training and supporting the reviewers – some have very elaborate and rigorous training programs and the others offer simple briefings before the review begins.

Training programs for reviewers are extremely useful for making clear the expectations of the agency, and for showing future reviewers how to do the work they are expected to carry out. But they are also very useful opportunities for looking over the prospective reviewers, and identifying those that would be best in specific circumstances (or those who would be inadequate in any circumstance).

Overall this seems to be an area that needs more attention in the APEC region. When the review feeds into a governmental function such as the assessments conducted for the ministerial decisions, there seems to be less emphasis on training of reviewers whereas the QA systems that have developed as explicit external mechanisms insist on training. AUQA, CDGDC, BAN-PT, JUAA, MQA, NAA, KCUE, HEEACT, GDETA and the QA bodies of New Zealand and Philippines insist on training. There are a couple of systems that do not insist on compulsory training for the reviewers and they might find this problematic in the long run when inter-team variances become difficult to control. Within the same economy, depending on the type of review, agencies follow different approaches. For example while SPRING Singapore uses only trained reviewers, MoE of Singapore does not insist on training. NIAD-UE offers training after the review panel is constituted.

5.5 Composition and Size of the Review Team

From the pool of experts or register of reviewers, the quality assurance agency has to constitute the team, balancing many considerations. The survey indicates how composition and size of the peer team depends on the nature of the unit to be quality assured, its size, clientele, funding, etc. Three to six is the size of the review panel in many cases. Some QA systems such as PAASCU (Philippines) use larger panels with 7–8 reviewers. In Japan 3–5 reviewers are involved for each faculty and depending on the number of faculties to be reviewed the size of the panel may have 30 or more reviewers in total.

There is no magic/right number for the size of the team, but the QA systems acknowledge that teams should be big enough to have reviewers who can bring in the necessary background to understand the institution/program being reviewed and be able to give adequate time to assess the institution/program. As no individual reviewer can be acquainted with all aspects of functioning of a HEI or offering of a program, the QA systems ensure a team composition that will result in good collective team assessment. It is reasonable to expect that the aggregate of team skills will render greater fairness to review as a result of agreement between multiple points of view.

As mentioned earlier, international presence in review teams is becoming more prevalent and quality assurance agencies tend to have a favourable attitude towards it due to the growing importance of regional dialogue among the quality assurance agencies and internationalisation of HEIs. AUQA (Australia), NZUAAU (New Zealand), NIAD-UE (Japan), CNAP (Chile), HKCAA and UGC (Hong Kong), MQA (Malaysia), NAA (Russia) and MoE (Singapore) use international members in the review panels.

5.6 Eliminating any Conflict of Interest

Most quality assurance systems check whether the reviewers have any conflict of interest with the institution or program to be assessed. "Conflicts of interests" are private interests and circumstances that may compete with one's official actions or duties. Sound policies on conflict of interest are essential to uphold the credibility of the process. The survey responses

indicate that many quality assurance agencies have similar understandings about potential conflicts.

The QA systems of the region in general consider that any factor that might reasonably seem to have the potential to affect the reviewer's ability to render objective judgement about the unit being reviewed is a conflict of interest. Some systems require a certification that the reviewer has no involvement with the proposed institution, directly or indirectly through any close relatives, in the past or at present, as either an employee or a member of any official body as a consultant or a graduate.

The policy of the AUQA spells out three types of conflicts - personal, professional or ideological (between which there may be some overlap). Personal conflicts could include animosity, close friendship or kinship between the reviewer and the executive head or other senior manager of the institution, or if the reviewer were excessively biased for or against the institution to be assessed due to some previous event. That is why normally graduates of the institution are not taken into the team for that institution. Professional conflicts could occur if a reviewer is a failed applicant for a position in the institution, were a current applicant or prospect for a position in the institution, were a senior adviser, examiner or consultant to the institution, or were with an institution that is strongly competing with an institution being assessed. An example of an ideological conflict would be a reviewer's lack of sympathy to the style, type or ethos of an institution. NZUAAU and SPRING follow the same classification.

There are also systems where elimination of conflict of interest is not considered as essential, perhaps due to the fact that reviewers are nominated by HEIs, as in the case of JUAA and NIAD-UE. Some ministry-run reviews do not have an explicit mechanism to eliminate conflict of interest as in the case of the quality assurance unit of the Ministry of Education, Singapore. However, the need to choose the right type of reviewers who will not have conflicting interests is given due attention while constituting the review panel. Good practice endorsed by INQAAHE indicates that to enhance the credibility of the QA outcomes, an explicit policy on dealing with conflict of interests and clear procedures to implement the policy are essential.

5.7 Role of HEIs in Constituting the Review Team

Consultation with the HEI on the review panel membership takes place at different levels in the APEC region. There are agencies where the register of reviewers consists of nominations from the HEIs only and the quality assurance agency has to necessarily choose reviewers from this pool of nominations. For example, JUAA chooses the reviewers only from the list of 'candidates' submitted by the HEIs and as a result it does not consult the HEIs on the panel composition.

In some systems, where reviewers are identified from many sources, the quality assurance agency checks with the HEI to be assessed for any objection it might have to any of the reviewers selected. When objections are reasonable, the quality assurance agency may make changes in the team composition but would reserve the right to take final decisions about the team composition. This is the case in most of the QA systems of the APEC region with very few exceptions, such as Vietnam where the QA process is still evolving.

In Hong Kong, the review conducted by UGC did not have the provision for the HEIs to comment on the panel membership, perhaps due to the sector-wise focus of the review and the international composition of the review team.

Consulting the institutions in constituting the team is generally followed by QA agencies to uphold the spirit of partnership and mutual trust in the QA exercise.

In some cases, especially when the focus of quality assurance is quality control, the agency decides who the external reviewers will be, without consulting with the institution. This may be necessary, especially when quality assurance mechanisms are being introduced, and when the assessment of institutions or programs is mainly intended to ensure compliance with threshold standards. However, most QA agencies that participated in the survey have indicated that they consult the institutions. It helps to develop the feeling of ownership and participation among the HEIs and ensures receptivity to the recommendations of external

reviewers which may play an important role in the improvement of the institution or program. If the institution or program does not have respect for the reviewers, or considers them not to be reliable, for whatever reason, their opinions will be dismissed, and an important part of their contribution will be lost.

5.8 Role of Agency Staff in On-site Visit

In general, QA staff have administrative functions such as notifying the institutions, developing the register of reviewers and publication of the final quality assurance outcome. These functions do not require a big staff complement or many staff of high academic standing. With a small core group of competent professional staff these responsibilities can be organised well and discharged effectively. In many cases, staff are also involved in the development of the quality assurance framework, taking responsibility for monitoring the major phases of quality assurance, training the reviewers, and orienting the institutions for institutional preparations.

There are many systems where the QA staff joins the review team either as a full member or as the Coordinator or Secretary to the review panel. Having QA staff on the review panel affects the reporting strategy of the panel. Often one member of the review team is made responsible for the drafting of the report in close cooperation with the other members of the team. When the staff of the quality assurance agency joins the review team, (s)he takes the responsibility for the team's report, in consultation with the other members of the review team.

Whether this option is adopted depends on the size of the national systems of higher education, the size of the quality assurance agency, the amount of quality assurance work to be done and, consequently, whether it is possible to send a staff member for each of the review teams. For example, in AUQA, the writing of the audit report is the responsibility of the AUQA staff person who is a full member of the audit team. This is possible since the AUQA has to cover only 51 entities in a period of 5 years. The NZUAAU of New Zealand also follows the same pattern. In Canada, the College Education Evaluation Commission (CEEC) takes an active role in its assessment exercises. The teams are headed by one of the commissioners of the commission.

When the QA staff does not join the team at all in any capacity, the review team chair or one of the members would take the responsibility to prepare the report. Even if the QA staff joins the team as a coordinator, the policy of the QA system may be such that the staff does not take an active role in drafting the report.

This is the option followed in some of the regional accrediting agencies of the USA. While the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools does not send its staff to join the review team, the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) of the USA sends a staff member to join the team but s/he does not have a role in the assessment decisions. It describes the role of the agency staff as below:

> *"During the visit, the primary role of the staff is to interpret the ACICS Accreditation Criteria. Staff will provide team members with guidance in understanding and applying the Criteria and may assist team members with gathering information as time provides. Staff is not to be assigned sole responsibility for the writing of any section of the team report with the exception of the publications section. Staff also will ensure that all areas of the institution's operation are properly reviewed by the team members."*

This option also makes it very clear both to the HEIs and the external reviewers that the responsibility for evaluation rests with the external review team and not with the staff of the agency. In this approach, the QA staff members are experts on procedural aspects, but they do not fulfil the requirements to act as peers. Therefore, the QA staff may provide secretarial or clerical or procedural support to a team, but the responsibility for the contents of the report lies with the team.

The emerging pattern is that of quality assurance becoming a profession by itself, and to maintain professionalism the QA staff are seen as peers in QA. The survey indicates that

except for a couple of cases, the QA staff tend to play substantive roles in the QA processes. Increasingly, QA staff are involved in the QA activities directly, including participation in site visits and taking a role in report-writing. Senior staff at times chair the review panel. Some of these functions are central to the professionalism of quality assurance and can be quite challenging. Accordingly the QA system needs staff of appropriate competencies to shoulder these responsibilities and who can cope with challenging situations.

5.9 Activities during Site Visit and Duration

The major purpose of the site visit is to look for evidence to arrive at a collective judgement about the quality of the institution (or program) with respect to the QA framework. To facilitate gathering of evidence, the visit schedule usually incorporates three types of activities:

1. interactions with various constituents of the institution;
2. visiting some or all of the important facilities of the institution; and
3. verification of documents.

During the site visit, in addition to the meetings with the executive body and the management teams of the institution (or program), the reviewers interact with groups of teachers, staff and students. In many cases there are also discussions with alumni, employers and the public. These interactions help the reviewers to get a feel of the academic ambience of the institution and seek information on the issues that need further clarification. The reviewers may ask for relevant documents to verify the institutional claims made in the self-assessment report. In some cases they observe the classroom teaching as in the case of BAN-PT of Indonesia, NIAD-UE of Japan, AACCUP and PAASCU of Philippines, NAA of Russia, SPRING of Singapore, KCUE of South Korea and HEEACT of Chinese Taipei.

The number of days for a typical visit schedule may vary depending on the size of the unit to be visited, the depth of assessment to be done, and the approach to the visit. If the institution is big or if the visit schedule requires the reviewers to visit all the departments of the institution and their facilities, the visit may need more days. In general, visits take 3 to 5 days.

5.10 Review Panel Reporting the Outcome

Generally, the reviewers report to the QA agency, their assessment providing evidence they saw during the visit or in the self-assessment. In some QA systems, there is heavy reliance on the reviewers, and the review team's recommendations become the only consideration for the agency's decision. In the normal course of events, if there are no complaints about the objectivity of the team or the conduct of the team visit (and unless the agency has great misgivings), the recommendations of the review team are approved by the agency and declared as the final outcome. There may be mechanisms for appeal and further review but the review team's assessment is the basis for the agency's decision-making. If the quality assurance agency follows this model, it is essential that the reviewers are competent enough to take appropriate decisions. This becomes all the more crucial in large systems of higher education, and in quality assurance models where the agency staff do not join the site visit.

In the region, some agencies require the reviewers only to advise the agency or report to the agency their impressions of the institution (or program) with reference to the assessment framework. The governing body of the QA agency or a body appointed for this purpose considers the observations as one of the inputs to decide on the outcome. For example, in many accrediting bodies in the USA, the institution routinely appears before the accrediting commission to argue its case. This approach might help in reducing the inter-team variance since the agency will be able to weigh the evidence presented for a number of similar institutions or programs. At the same time, it might be criticised as a very direct intrusive role in the process where peer assessment is central.

Whatever option is selected there is a major role for reviewers and QA systems have checks and balances in place to ensure the credibility of the review outcome. The survey indicates

that experience of the reviewers, balanced composition of the panel, presence of the agency staff in the panel, emphasis on panel consensus, emphasis on evidence-based judgement, consulting the HEIs on the facts and emphasis of the report, etc. serve as checks and balances. AACCUP of Philippines indicates that the review reports undergo a technical review before a final QA decision is taken based on the report.

5.11 Decision-making by the QA System

The report or recommendation by the review team is an important input to the quality assurance decisions of the agency. There are at least four different ways in which the APEC economies use the review team's report/observations to take a final QA decision.

There are systems where the final decision depends on the review team's recommendation only. The assumption here is that the team has analysed all relevant information, and therefore its recommendation is sufficient as a basis for decision-making. The QA agency only checks whether the site visit was carried out objectively, whether there is adverse feedback from the institutions or programs that were assessed or from the QA staff who coordinated the visit, and if found appropriate, the recommendations of the review team become the quality assurance outcome.

Some agencies consider review team's report and self-assessment report of the institution or program. The assumption here is that while the external review report is an important input, the report prepared by the institution is also important enough to be considered on its own by the quality assurance agency or its board.

Yet another variation is that the final decision depends on the review team's report, self-assessment report, and other relevant information. In this case, the quality assurance agency considers other relevant information such as general data on the institution or the program, other survey reports, government reports, reports of the professional bodies submission by the other stakeholders or data regarding other institutions or programs, that may help put the decision in perspective.

Some systems consider review team's report, self-assessment report, other relevant information and institutional response. This is a variation of the process mentioned above where the institutional response receives specific consideration in the decision-making process. Here the institutional response is more than just a feedback about the site visit and the review team. Before the decision is made, the institution may be asked to respond on certain aspects which would feed into the final decision making. For example, as already mentioned, in the US, the HEIs appear before the regional accrediting commissions to explain their case. Similar to the self-assessment report, the institutional inputs through these meetings are also considered while taking the QA decision.

"Who takes the final quality assurance decision?" depends on the role the various parties are expected to play in the quality assurance process, e.g. whether the reviewers can only advise the agency or make judgements about the quality as discussed earlier.

6. Outcomes and Implications of the QA Processes

An external QA system is a significant undertaking for any government and its HE sector, in terms of time, cost and consequences. This is why, as described above, close attention is paid to the structure and planning of the QA processes. It is also why QA decisions must be reported appropriately, and why the processes should have positive effects. We turn now to these aspects of the QA process.

6.1 Reporting the Outcome

The quality assurance outcomes by the agency is a crucial element in the eventual impact of the quality assurance processes. When the purpose of quality assurance is to certify whether an institution (or program) qualifies for a certain status such as recognition as an institution of higher learning or approval for offering degree-granting programs or eligibility for public funding, the outcome may be a simple yes/no or accredited/not-accredited. This is the outcome of most licensing and accreditation models. Some agencies declare this formal status only.

When quality assurance is expected to check a threshold level of quality or when the quality assurance outcome is used for simple decisions, the binary scale outcome again serves the purpose. The two-point scale (Accredited/Not accredited) is generally found in systems where quality assurance serves the purpose of regulation or approval or recognition. It states whether the institution or program meets basic conditions, but it is unable to recognise different levels of quality among those that do.

Some agencies provide the final outcome on a multi-point scale. If the quality assurance exercise asks: "how good are your outputs?" the typical outcome of such an exercise would be in a multi-point grade - numeric or literal or descriptive. This would be suitable if the quality assurance agency wishes to focus on outcomes and levels of attainment. For example, if the quality assurance outcome is to be used by the government or funding body to decide the funding levels, the binary state of accreditation outcome may not be enough. In such cases, the agency might opt for assessment where the levels of quality are expressed on a multi-point scale. Large systems with a lot of variation in quality might opt for the multi-point outcome. The accrediting agencies of Philippines state that "Due to the variations of quality, it was decided to offer accreditation at four different levels, each entailing specific benefits both in terms of administrative autonomy and access to incentive funds. The higher the level of accreditation, the more the autonomy granted to the institution."

A different way of implementing a 'multi-point scale' is to use a binary decision (accredited/not accredited) but specify different durations for the accredited status. This may be a good way of dealing with diverse institutions. If they are perceived to be reliable, and to be able to ensure the quality of their work, accreditation may last for a longer period of time (5 to 10 years). If, on the other hand, they need closer supervision, they may be accredited for as little as two to three years. This is in practice in the US among the regional accreditors. In Chile the QA outcome is valid for a period between one and seven years.

Some QA activities result in reports only. If the quality assurance exercise is clearly focused on the processes by which an institution monitors its own academic standards and acts to assure and enhance the quality of its offerings, it might result in a report, as in the case of a typical quality audit. The objectives of the institution or program are taken as the starting point for the audit and the audit report explains how successful the institution is in trying to meet its stated objectives by placing appropriate processes in place. Due to the emphasis on internal processes of the institution or program, this method might be more useful for mature systems with well-established internal processes. Systems that intend to strengthen their internal processes for quality may also benefit from this.

In practice, a quality assurance system may use a combination of the above. Choosing an option for the reporting strategy is not as simple and straightforward as has been presented

above. It is a much more complex process that calls for attention to many factors, whereas each of the options given above is based on one of many different considerations that affect the choice. It should also be noted that the distinction between these options are not very sharp. An agency may have a combination of these options, often taking the binary scale of accredited/not-accredited as the base and adding one or more dimensions to the outcome.

For example, the outcome of the quality assurance procedure of BAN-PT in Indonesia is a combination of different approaches. BAN-PT declares a formal accreditation decision along with a grade on a four-point scale, grade A to grade D. Grade A indicates that the course of study conforms to international standards, grade B indicates that the course is of good quality, grade C indicates that the course fulfils minimal requirements and grade D means not accredited.

One of the main reasons for variation in the combinations is probably the difference in the national educational systems – in terms of structure, policies, developmental stage and other players in higher education - and hence the difference in the focus or objective of the quality assurance mechanism. The combination depends on international developments also.

6.2 Responsibility for Writing the Report

There are two major approaches to report writing found among the APEC economies. Some QA systems indicate that all panel members take specific responsibilities and report writing becomes a shared responsibility. The other approach is to let the QA staff take a major role. When the QA staff joins as a full member or chairs the panel, a major part of report writing is done by the agency staff in consultation with the panel. This is the case of AUQA, NZUAAU, HKCAA, and NZQA. In other cases, the Chair of the panel takes the lead and writes the report. In CNAP and BAN-PT the report writing is a shared responsibility of the agency staff and the chair of the panel.

Whenever the quality assurance exercise results in a report, the report summarises the conclusions and recommendations based on self-assessment and the site visit. But there are considerable national variations as to how the conclusions and recommendations are formulated. Some reports present only the results of the analysis, i.e. the judgement of the experts in the form of conclusions or recommendations. In other reports, the expert judgements are presented in the relevant analytical context together with the argumentation and documentation why a specific recommendation is offered. The general pattern is to highlight commendations as well as areas that need improvement.

6.3 Disclosure of Outcomes

'What part of the final outcome is made available to whom' is an issue that has a lot of variation in the region. When it comes to providing more information to the public, "public disclosure vs confidentiality" of the outcome is a bone of contention in many economies, and there are valid arguments in favour of either strategy. Some agencies maintain that the reports are for the HEIs and what the public needs is only the knowledge of the status such as 'accredited' or 'not-accredited' (recognised/not recognised or approved/not approved). The argument against full disclosure of the reports is that both HEIs and external reviewers may be much more cautious in describing the actual weaknesses of a program or an institution if they know that the report will be published. Those who support this point of view argue that at least at the introductory stage of quality assurance processes, it may be better to have honest and complete but confidential reports, than to have 'bowdlerised' but published reports.

COPAES, the recognition agency for program accreditors in Mexico discloses the recognition status as well as the programs accredited by the recognised agencies. CHEA, the recognition body for accreditors in the US also follows a similar strategy.

There are agencies that make only the summary of the report public. MQA of Malaysia proposes to follow this strategy. ITP-Q and NZQA of New Zealand, NAA of Russia, ONESQA of Thailand and KCUE of Korea make the summary of the report public.

Some agencies make the report available to key stakeholders like the government or the funding agencies. Others make the summary alone available to the public. Quality assurance agencies that believe in full public disclosure place the full report on their web sites. Feedback and comments from users and readers may also be encouraged. The need to provide 'opportunities for readers and users of the reports (both within the relevant institution and outside it) to comment on their usefulness' is increasingly being recognised. AUQA, CNAP, NIAD-UE, JUAA, and NZUAAU make the full report public.

Publishing the outcomes of the quality assurance process and making more information available to the public are practiced by many quality assurance agencies. Nevertheless, it is important to balance the level of public disclosure with the effectiveness of the process, taking into account national and local conditions.

6.4 Implications of Outcome

In the APEC region the outcome of quality assurance is used by stakeholders for various purposes. Depending on the ownership, clientele and leaning towards accountability or improvement, the quality assurance outcome has different implications.

In some systems where the accountability concern dominates, the quality assurance outcome may be linked to direct funding, as in the case of UGC of Hong Kong. Many who do not support linking substantial funding with the quality assurance outcome do recognise that a small percentage of funding, if linked to quality assurance outcome, has a high influential value but low perverse consequences. That leads to the next option where the quality assurance outcome is linked to incentives. Rewarding excellence and linking positive quality assurance outcome to funding for at least specific schemes has been accepted as a useful factor to motivate institutions. In the United States, millions of dollars of federal funding and student aid funds are linked to accreditation. In Philippines, as discussed earlier, quality assurance outcome is linked to levels of autonomy. BAN-PT, MQA, ITP-Q and NZQA also link the outcome to levels of autonomy, among other implications. For example, NZQA will allow for longer audit cycles and more autonomy for good QA outcomes. There are systems where quality assurance outcome provides prestige only.

In economies where the quality assurance outcome is not linked to direct funding, institutions may not experience funding sanctions or rewards immediately, but the recommendations of the quality assurance agency might feed into shaping the funding polices and improvement plans of the government. The influence need not be linear, in the sense that it need not result in good HEIs getting more funding and the low quality ones getting less. If the cause of low quality is traced to an improvement plan that deserves the support of the government, it might even result in the government allocating more for improvement purposes. Singapore's MoE is adopting this approach with the public institutions.

6.5 Appeals Mechanism

Most of the well established quality assurance agencies have a clear policy on appeals mechanism which allows an institution to express its reservations about/ objections to/ lack of confidence in the QA outcome. Especially the agencies that have a formal accreditation function that has consequences for the survival of HEIs and programs, such as recognition as a HEI or approval to offer a program, need to have a well-defined appeals procedure. In fact, the appeals procedure helps the quality assurance agencies to pay careful attention to their declared principles and ensure that their processes are managed professionally. It also keeps a check on the way peer assessment is facilitated so that the QA framework is applied consistently, minimising the inter-team variance.

The survey indicates that the QA systems of the APEC economies acknowledge the need to have an appeals mechanism that "provides for those under evaluation an opportunity to express opinions and contest conclusions and decisions resulting from the evaluation outcomes". In general, when the quality assurance agency makes its decisions known to the HEI and if an unsuccessful candidate wants to appeal after being notified by the agency about the outcome, notice is given of the intention to appeal within certain days of receiving the

outcome. Following that, the HEI submits the application (some agencies charge a fee), which sets out the grounds for the appeal against the quality assurance outcome. There are wide variations in the composition of the body/committee that deals with the appeals and the powers of the committee.

Some QA systems have standing committees that act as appellate authorities and in some cases the governing body of the QA agency acts as the appellate authority. A few others do not have a designated appellate authority and the executive head of the QA body itself might review the appeals. In some cases the QA agency or its governing board sets up ad hoc sub committees case by case. But in all cases, the appeals committee is expected to function independently and provide fair judgement about the appeal.

The power vested in the appeals committee and the action that can be taken after the appeals committee's decision varies among agencies. It varies from the appeals committee making final decisions on the appeal to giving recommendations and impressions to the quality assurance agency for its consideration. Some agencies specifically provide for an appeal to the court of law, as in the case of NAA. INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice recommends that depending on the context in which the QA body operates, it has to evolve an appropriate appeals mechanism right in the beginning and make it known to all those involved in the process. However, this remains an area that needs further attention.

6.6 Follow-up

After the disclosure of the quality assurance outcome, it is expected that the institution will take whatever actions are necessary in relation to the recommendations or issues noted in the review. While funding links, incentives and sanctions may be a motivating factor for many HEIs to act on the review outcomes, in most systems it is mainly the professional commitment of the HEIs that leads to actions and improvement.

BAN-PT, NIAD-UE, NAA, SPRING and KCUE do not have any specific follow-up mechanisms. The responsibility and formal role of the quality assurance agency ends with the review. The institutions are responsible for the planning and implementation of follow-up measures. Depending on the nature of the recommendations, ministries of education or other stakeholders may react on the review.

Quality assurance agencies have built-in follow-up procedures with varying levels of rigour. Some require binding actions to be taken by the HEIs and in other cases it may be a "soft touch" based on the professional commitment that can be expected of the HEIs. In Thailand, Office of Higher Education Committee and Minister of Education monitor the action taken on the report of ONESQA including the timeframe. ITP-Q requires institutions to act on the report within 3 months or according to the agreed timeline for corrective actions. NZQA requires institutions to provide an Action Plan and if this is not carried out satisfactorily within the timeframe, legislation allows for compliance action. NZUAAU requires the Panel Chair and the Director of NZUAAU to visit the HEI, 3 months after publication of the report. During that visit, a timetable for a follow-up report is decided. AACCUP does the follow-up through the agency staff. If monitoring is needed, PAASCU asks for a progress report after 2–3 years and arranges an interim visit.

Yet another approach is to link the follow-up to the subsequent reviews. In this approach, follow-up is the responsibility of the institution, but QA decisions are valid for a specific duration and follow-up is a strong consideration at the next review. This option links the quality assurance cycles in various ways. The agency may choose to check on earlier recommendations and base its subsequent QA decisions on how the institution or program has acted on those recommendations. In Australia, AUQA follows this approach and proposes to build the subsequent audits on the outcome of the previous audits where institutions will have to substantiate how they have acted on the audit outcomes. The HEIs audited by AUQA are required to make public "a progress report" approximately 18 months after the publication of the audit report and this progress report will become one of the key inputs for the subsequent audits. CNAP follows a similar approach.

As more and more external QA systems are established the issue of appropriate and efficient follow-up procedures suitable to the national context is becoming more critical. There is an increasing acknowledgement in the region that follow-up should be added to the essential methodological principles.

7. Quality Enhancement

Quality assurance is a resource intensive exercise for the HEIs as well as the QA systems and to benefit optimally from such an exercise it is essential that the HEIs are helped further to build on the QA outcome and enhance the quality of their provisions. Many QA systems of the APEC region consider the participatory QA process itself as the quality enhancement activity. Over and above helping the HEIs to benefit from the QA exercise per se, a suite of initiatives are also being attempted by the QA systems. Some have incentives and funding schemes to support quality enhancement initiatives.

Some QA systems steer the post-QA process follow-up strategies towards quality enhancement. They facilitate continuous interaction with the HEIs through seminars and various academic fora. NZQA conducts annual road-shows to provide information to HEIs on quality enhancement and it holds monthly forums with HEIs for representatives of different sectors.

Supporting projects to enhance certain aspects of quality education, running select projects and doing research on areas that need attention to enhance quality, involving a cross-section of institutional members in consultations and discussions on quality enhancement, and supporting networking among HEIs are a few initiatives found among quality assurance agencies that contribute to QE of HEIs. The Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (USA) is one such effort. Under this program, instead of the routine self-assessment, HEIs that have to undergo re-accreditation can opt for participation in this project.

Most QA systems support the QE efforts by recognising practices that have demonstrated value addition to the institutional activities and by providing a platform to HEIs to share those practices and experiences. AUQA has an online database of good practices known as AUQA Good Practice Database which is a searchable collection of Good Practices found in the Australian and New Zealand HE sectors that are potentially transferable within, and of benefit to, other institutions within the sector. These are the practices that have been verified through audit by either AUQA or the NZUAAU. This database serves as a reference source for HEIs in their QE efforts. ITP-Q compiles the best practices of the polytechnics and institutes of technology.

The publication program of quality assurance agencies can have a significant impact through publication of guidelines, handbooks and resource materials for the use of HEIs. Training programs for quality managers or steering committee coordinators and reviewers and involving them in quality assurance exercises develops an academic community that is sensitised to quality-related issues and which in turn contribute to QE of their own HEIs.

The web sites of the QA bodies, meetings and conferences, publication programs and online discussion strategies help in information dissemination regarding quality enhancement activities.

8. Quality of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance agencies have the obligation to demonstrate that the quality assurance process as implemented by them achieves the desired objectives effectively. To this end, they become accountable to many stakeholders to prove the credibility of the process and to ensure the objectivity of the outcome. Networking, information sharing with international counterparts, participation in international events and discussions and self-monitoring, most of which are either internal or informal or ad hoc, are the predominant ways QA systems follow to ensure their quality. A few good examples of systematic, external reviews are also seen. QA systems should be able to practice what they preach and demonstrate their quality to the stakeholders in a more systematic manner.

8.1 Monitoring Quality Assurance

In general QA systems monitor their operations through internal controls (such as internal audits, annual reporting requirements etc), monitoring against targets and feedback from the sector. Next to internal checks, self evaluation against set targets and action plans is the most prevalent practice. Feedback from the HEIs, reviewers and other stakeholders is also a major means for the QA systems to monitor their performance. Some agencies collect feedback from the HEIs and reviewers systematically in a structured way and act on the feedback analysis. For example, after every audit, AUQA collects feedback from its auditors and auditee through structured questionnaires. Questionnaires are sent to all those who meet the audit panel during the audit program. The Chair of the Board of AUQA has a telephone interview with the chief executive of the auditee. The feedback is analysed – quantitatively and qualitatively – reported to the Board of AUQA, and acted on as appropriate.

Keeping pace with international developments in the field of quality assurance, participation in international conferences and workshops have been indicated by a few QA systems. Information exchange with the other QA systems, discussion with international and intergovernmental organisations that have an interest in quality assurance are other initiatives that contribute to the quality assurance of QA bodies.

Voluntary coordination in regional networks and adherence to their standards and criteria also serves as a measure of quality assurance of QA bodies. Quality assurance agencies may voluntarily join together as networks such as INQAAHE and APQN and follow the commonly agreed principles or practices. They may join as associations such as Association of Specialised and Professional Accreditors (US) and agree to adhere to the code of practice of the association. Although they may not have the accountability concern as the main driver for joining networks, adherence to common standards and criteria does serve to demonstrate the accountability of the agency.

Carrying out comparative studies has been cited by BAN-PT. JUAA considers UNESCO-OECD Guidelines to understand how its practices are aligned to international expectations. MQA implements ISO processes and cooperates with international QA bodies as ways to monitor quality of QA, among other things. Some agencies conduct impact studies and mid-cycle correction reviews that contribute to understanding the progress towards realisation of objectives.

Some amount of externality is found in some instances, such as hiring foreign and local consultants to advise on performance. CNAP periodically gathers what is called Technical Committees (where academic staff, representatives from professional associations and employers of graduates come together) to assess and review the procedures and standards for program accreditation. Inviting international experts to observe assessment visits to give feedback is done by some agencies.

When the functions of HKCAA were expanded so as to meet the needs of a much wider clientele and a more diverse range of courses, HKCAA conducted a self-review in conjunction with an external consultant in 2003 to assess HKCAA's readiness for the expanded role under the Qualifications Framework. Based on the recommendations arising from the self-review,

HKCAA took steps to reform its operating and financing models, as well as its accreditation approach and procedures.

To review the arrangements for the provision of higher education in Hong Kong and the direction UGC has to take in advising the institutions, UGC conducted a review in 2001. The Review was led by a senior member of the UGC and was assisted by a Steering Committee, composed mainly of local UGC members who were directly involved in, or were familiar with, higher education in Hong Kong.

Some QA systems have undergone external reviews to ensure their own quality. NZUAAU has undergone reviews in 1997 and 2001 and had a detailed discussion with each of the universities in 2002. CNAP and AUQA have undergone external reviews in 2006. CNAP requested a detailed external review by INQAAHE and in preparation for that it carried out a self assessment exercise. An international team appointed by the Board of INQAAHE visited the agency, interviewed a selection of stakeholders and wrote a report.

While CNAP opted to be reviewed against the Guidelines for Good Practice (GGP) for Quality Assurance Agencies developed by INQAAHE, AUQA chose both its own objectives and the GGP of INQAAHE for its review.

In the US, the US regional accreditors owned by HEIs demonstrate their quality by seeking recognition either by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or by the US Department of Education. Although seeking recognition by these bodies is voluntary, federal funds such as student aid is are allocated only to institutions that are accredited by the US Department of Education. Accrediting bodies that seek recognition by the CHEA must demonstrate that they meet the CHEA recognition standards. Accrediting organisations are expected to advance academic quality, demonstrate accountability, encourage improvement, employ appropriate procedures, continually reassess accreditation practices and possess sufficient resources. The recognition review has an evaluation procedure similar to the accreditation exercise of the HEIs with self-study and external review. In that process (of every six years), there are even sessions that are open to the public.

In Australia, AUQA is responsible for conducting quality audits of State and Territory Government higher education accreditation authorities on a five-yearly cycle. Action taken in response to audit reports is the responsibility of the relevant Department and Minister. Audit by the AUQA serves as an accountability check for the State and Territory Government higher education accreditation authorities.

In Mexico, COPAES has a similar function. Established as a civic association, it has been recognised by the Public Education Ministry of Mexico to confer official recognition to qualified program accreditation agencies in México. Agencies recognised by COPAES grant program accreditation at specific subject areas and/or disciplines, at undergraduate and graduate level. COPAES has conferred recognition to ten program accrediting agencies. It uses the general framework of self evaluation and external review with on-site visit. It has developed statistical data/performance indicators to guide its assessment. It also considers inputs from student surveys. The specific areas considered by COPAES for its assessment are given in Appendix 2. COPAES publishes the names of those that merited recognition and the names of the programs accredited by them, in newspapers and Internet, mentioning the valid period for this recognition

There is a growing awareness among the QA agencies and their networks about the benefits of meta-evaluation or 'evaluating the evaluation itself' as a critical measure to ensure quality of quality assurance.

8.2 Effective Quality Practices

QA bodies judge the effectiveness of their quality practices in different ways and depending on their perception, what they consider as 'effective quality practices' varies. Some QA systems consider the salient features of the QA framework as effective quality practices; some pay attention to the success towards intended change in the higher education sector; some look at the immediate impact and a few others see the long term benefits. The following

list captures various practices considered as effective quality practices by the QA systems. (An attempt has been made to group them without adding any priority to them.)

Good methodological elements:

- Professionalism in the audit

- Public nature of the audit

- Quality enhancement function of the QA body

- Participation of different stakeholders in the definition of quality criteria for programs and institutions

- Emphasis on evidence based decision making

- Training provided to those involved in self assessment and external review

- Emphasis on quality enhancement, self-improvement of HEIs, and benchmarking

- The process of self-assessment

- Emphasis on progress reports

- Comprehensiveness of the process and its scope

- Ensuring an objective, fair & transparent review

Implementation-related:

- The orientation seminar for HEIs as they begin the self-study.

- Being able to do both program and institutional accreditation in one Team visit.

- Attention to institutional diversity by following a classification of HEIs into various levels which steers the HEIs towards continuous quality improvement.

- Attention to the use of information technology, training courses, and developing criteria and benchmarks.

Impact-related:

- Impact QA has made on the quality awareness of the HEIs

- Impact of QA leading to establishment of Internal QA Units in the HEIs

- Public attention to QA related issues

- Impact on the level of achievement of the mission and goal of the university

- Promoting quality enhancement

QA systems have identified the above-mentioned as effective quality practices mainly based on two reasons – feedback from various sources and impact on the HEIs. They include responses as below:

- Feedback from national and international peers

- Impact made on the sector

- Through the opinions of HEIs representatives and of reviewers

- The external peer review report

- Stakeholder's feedback

- Increase in the participation rate in the QA exercise

- Improvements in the activities of the institutions based on the result of the evaluation.

- Customer survey & feedback on QA processes

- More consistent audit outcomes

- Positive feedback from sector representatives

- Research studies on good QA practices

What are the results?

- Impact on the sector

- Increased public confidence on quality assurance

- Increased interaction between the QA body and the sector

- Legitimacy and acceptance of criteria followed by the QA body among HEIs

- Establishment of robust information systems within HEIs to support self-assessment reports

- Capacity development in most HEIs related to the preparation of self assessment reports

- Development of a large number of trained reviewers

- Increase in the number of internal quality assurance units in HEIs

- Use of QA outcomes as the base of the recruitment of civil servants and industrial employees by the government

- Improvements made by the HEIs on the organization, method, contents and other points for educational and research activities

- Quality of the progress reports of the HEIs

- Positive impact on the objectivity and fairness of the evaluation by the reviewers in evaluating HEIs comprehensively, especially in the case of large institutions

- Impact on quality enhancement & public confidence

- Improvement in quality delivery over a number of years

- Lower rate of closure among privately owned HEIs

- Indications of more effective educational outcomes identified through audit reports

- A more robust assessment mechanism

- Attention to all the recommendations by the external reviewers and action plans to address them

- Reliable and valid QA outcomes

8.3 International Benchmarking

Although some QA bodies have indicated that they do 'international benchmarking' much of what is being done by them is internal and informal. Rapport with professional bodies and QA bodies in other countries (UK, Malaysia, NZ) is seen as a move towards international benchmarking by Brunei. HKCAA views involvement in international network of QA agencies such as INQAAHE and APQN as contributing to international benchmarking. Many QA bodies indicate that considering the standards and procedures of other QA bodies while developing their own system itself is an international benchmarking activity. Some mention the use of various international guidelines and good practices and study visit to other QA bodies.

NZQA requires all audit staff to be certified through an international quality assurance agency (namely RABQSA International) and stay current with international trends and issues in quality assurance. AUQA has embarked on an international benchmarking study with a few similar QA bodies in Europe.

PAASCU's accreditation of medical schools has been recognised by the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education Accreditation under the US Department of Education. In the process of recognition, policies, standards and procedures of PAASCU have been scrutinised to determine comparability with the medical education program being offered in the US. In 2004, PAASCU was given a 5-year accreditation by the US Department of Education,

Overall, there seems to be very little external formal benchmarking done by the QA bodies. AUQA is currently benchmarking with agencies from Germany and Ireland. This is an area that needs further attention.

8.4 Review

In general, QA systems constantly review their policies and standards and update their procedures and guidelines. QA bodies of the APEC economies have these reviews as a part of their internal monitoring mechanisms. Annual performance review, input from stakeholders and suggestions from international scholars feed into the reviews. Some have added more structure to self-reviews, although this is an internal exercise. HKCAA did a self-review in 2003 which it states that helped to find its position.

Some, such as CNAP, AUQA, and NZUAAU have taken up external reviews. The predecessors of MQA have undergone Internal Quality Audits and ISO 9002:2000 audit. ITP-Q is audited by the government body NZQA. NZQA in turn has undergone three reviews. The Board commissioned an internal review in 2005, conducted by a Committee of the Board with external advice provided. The major findings of this related to the governance of the organisation and a new committee structure was established as a result. The second one was by an external audit panel for the Approvals, Accreditation and Audit Group and ITP-Q which has delegated authority from NZQA. The major findings of this audit were about strengthening document and information management. An internal audit team is now monitoring this. Also, the external audit identified some policy gap that was addressed by a major in-house project. Thirdly, NZQA also has an internal audit function. As noted earlier, NZUAAU has been reviewed in 1997 and 2001.

PAASCU underwent an external review in 2006 that resulted in improvements on the review instrument, retraining of accreditors and review of the accreditation manual. NAA underwent an external evaluation by a team of HEI representative, regional bodies and the heads of Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science in 2004.

8.5 Monitoring efficiency and effectiveness

The QA systems have a suite of measures to monitor their efficiency such as the following:

- reviewing the outcomes of operation against the costs

- organising site visits in such a way that travel costs are minimised

- setting target regarding operating costs, and at the end of the fiscal year, reviewing whether actual performance met the initial target

- developing strategic plans and reviewing against them

- monitoring against key performance indicators such as number of assessments handled per assessor and staff, process cycle time, budget allocation and utilisation rate

- monitoring against internal evaluations of operations

- weekly management meetings

- consistency checks and meetings at the operational level

- adhering to INQAAHE Guidelines, Regional Convention in QA, ISO 9001:2000

- evaluations made by clientele

- discussion with the HEIs and the external reviewers after each external review

- capacity building in terms of in-house training of the Board personnel
- involvement of staff where possible in international quality assurance meetings and conferences

Overall, the picture that emerges is heavy reliance on internal and ad hoc measures.

9. QA of Distance Education (DE) and Online Education

Most QA systems of the region do not have policies and practices in place to look into the quality of education provisions when offered purely through distance education, including online delivery. Some consider DE as an integrated part of other means of educational delivery when there is some amount of face-to-face teaching and learning. Hong Kong UGC does not require registration for DE without any face-to-face teaching and learning. BAN-PT of Indonesia considers the DE operations of the HEIs and visits the regional centres of the universities spread through out the country, but it does not consider the purely online delivery. ITP-Q and NZUAAU also fall in line with the majority and indicate that they will not consider the purely online but will follow the standard method for the integrated approach of teaching and learning.

Some agencies indicate that they are yet to determine their stand on dealing with DE and online delivery. MQA proposes the same methodology for online education but a special focus on issues such as entry criteria, student support for online learning, training of academic staff for online delivery, integrity of online student assessment, access to ICT etc are given special attention. PAASCU is developing guidelines for DE and SPRING follows the same method irrespective of mode of delivery. KCUE is developing a handbook to evaluate DE.

Developments in the US in terms of standards, good practices, benchmarks and guidelines in QA of DE need a mention here. The Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) based at Washington DC is a National Accreditation Agency of the US and it undertakes accreditation of distance education institutions world over. It has developed standards for its QA process. The Institute for Higher Education Policy has 24 benchmarks considered essential to ensuring excellence in internet-based distance learning. With the increasing interest of the federal and state governments to ensure the quality of the distance education modes, the regional accreditation agencies in dialogue with the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) have revised their standards to include the distance education offerings into their assessment procedures. The regional accrediting commissions have agreed to the `Statement of Commitment by the Regional Accrediting Commissions for the Evaluation of Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs'.

The regional accreditors of the US have also agreed to a set of best practices in DE. Several years ago, each accrediting commission adopted and implemented a common statement of Principles of Good Practice in Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs developed by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET), resulting in a shared approach to distance education. More recently, desiring to complement these efforts, the regional commissions collectively, through the Council of Regional Accrediting Commission (C-RAC), contracted with WCET to fashion a more detailed elucidation of those elements which exemplify quality in distance education. The resulting statement, Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs, provides a comprehensive and demanding expression of what is considered current best practice. It is being used by each commission, compatibly with their policies and procedures to promote good practice in distance education among their affiliated colleges and universities.

Both CHEA and US Department of Education while undertaking recognition reviews of accreditors, include their distance learning activities, on a periodic basis. In addition, accreditors that develop new standards or policies for distance learning may undergo a special review. Institutions like the Jones International University, the Phoenix University and the US Open University (now dissolved) have been accredited by the US accrediting commissions.

Overall, there are three different approaches to QA of distance and online learning in the region. Some agencies consider all types of educational provisions in an integrated way. Some have additional emphasis on areas unique to distance and online learning. Others are yet to take a stand or are in the process of developing procedures to consider distance and

online learning. Most QA agencies consider distance and online provisions only if there is some amount of face-to-face learning integrated to it and do not monitor purely online delivery of programs.

10. National and International Cooperation

10.1 UNESCO-OECD Guidelines for Quality Assurance of CBHE

Most QA systems have indicated that they have considered the UNESCO-OECD guidelines and the implementation is at various levels of achievement. The UNESCO-OECD guidelines address six different stakeholders. The guidelines addressed to the quality assurance agencies recognises the diversity found in the various aspects of quality assurance among the national systems and calls for a coordinated effort at regional and/or global level, in order to tackle the challenges raised by the growth in new forms of cross-border delivery of higher education. In general, QA agencies have indicated that they found the guidelines useful.

The key recommendations of the guidelines are about including foreign and for-profit institutions/providers as well as other non-traditional modes of educational delivery in the scope of quality assurance, strengthening the network initiatives for the quality assurance agencies to discuss cross-border education issues, information dissemination on the quality assurance mechanism and its implications, adherence to 'Code of Good Practice', mutual recognition agreements with other agencies, and making the assessment procedures open to international peers. As the discussion so far indicates these are the areas where a lot of changes and mew practices are emerging in the APEC region.

Networks of QA bodies such as INQAAHE and APQN have promoted discussions on UNESCO-OECD guidelines among their member agencies. To help governments put systems in place in-line with the guidelines, UNESCO-Bangkok and APQN have jointly developed a Tool Kit and that has resulted in awareness building among the QA bodies of the region.

Some QA bodies have stated that they already fall in line with the UNESCO-OECD guidelines and a few more are initiating actions and projects to build on the guidelines. In the coming year NZQA will lead a coordinated approach among government agencies, quality assurance bodies and other key stakeholder groups in a project 'Improving the Quality Framework for Off-shore Cross-border Education' which will include most of the guidelines. The Transnational Quality Strategy of Australia gives due recognition to the UNESO-OECD guidelines and the national quality assurance agency of Australia states that its QA practices are already in accordance to the UNESCO-OECD guidelines.

There are also a few responses that indicate that either the agencies are yet to become familiar with the guidelines or of the opinion that the guidelines are too general to be of any use to them.

This is still a developing area and a lot of discussions are going on.

10.2 Cooperation

There are only a few examples of cooperation between economies and they are in the form of Memoranda of Understanding. For example, the New Zealand government has a memorandum of understanding with the Malaysian government, whereby any local qualifications delivered in Malaysia must meet Malaysian as well as NZ quality assurance standards. The government of Australia has agreements with Malaysia, Thailand, New Zealand and Japan.

AUQA has memoranda of cooperation (MoC) with a number of other QA agencies of the region. In each case the general purpose is for further mutual understanding and trust, but each also has one or more specific purposes. As mentioned above, the focus of the MoC with NZUAAU is the contribution of New Zealand good practices to AUQA's Good Practice Database. With the HKCAA, the objective is sharing information about Australian institutions operating in Hong Kong. Discussions are under way with the MQA on a MoC that would emphasise joint audits of Australian campuses in Malaysia; and with the Shanghai Education

Evaluation Institute (China) on combining audits of Australian operations with Shanghai partners with SEEI reviews of the partner operations. HKCAA has signed a MoC with AUQA and SEEI.

Within each economy, levels of cooperation among the QA bodies is highly variable. Some have indicated that they work with the professional bodies. Working together on issues of common interest, sharing reviewers, organising joint meetings etc can be seen in a few other agencies.

In Hong Kong, UGC, JQRC and HKCAA cooperate with each other. HKCAA is represented in the Academic Board of JQRC. When MQA sets standards for QA and qualifications framework, it works with professional bodies. Cooperation with professional bodies is ensured through Joint Technical Committees on accreditation. In Japan, JUAA, NIAD-UE, Japan Institution for HE evaluation, Japan Association for College Accreditation, Japan Law Foundation, and JABEE cooperate with each other.

In New Zealand, the Committee on University Academic programs of NZVCC, NZQA, and ITP-Q cooperate and they share auditors. Professional bodies can have representation on quality assurance panels for new degrees. Industry Training Organisations are involved in accreditation of HEIs to deliver courses. NZ Teachers' Council and NZ Nursing Council both have direct input into quality assurance of relevant courses. The same criteria for course approval and accreditation are used by both these agencies and NZVCC. In the case of the Educational Review Office (which is responsible for school reviews), the only overlap is through a shared monitoring standard for the pastoral care of foreign students in schools.

In the US, the regional accrediting agencies come together as the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) to discuss issues of common interest. It meets once a year. The specialised accrediting agencies have joined together as an association. All accrediting organisations holding membership in this Association of Specialised and Professional Accreditors have agreed to a code of practice.

In Philippines, the major players such as Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation, and the accrediting agencies of the private sector work in collaboration. The Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines coordinates the activities of the three private accrediting agencies while the National Network of Quality Assurance Agencies coordinates the accrediting agencies that serve the public sector. PAASCU has partnered with the Association of Philippine Medical Colleges (APMC). The Commission on Medical Education is composed of four representatives from the APMC and four from PAASCU. Officers and active members of the various professional associations in the economy are used by PAASCU as evaluators.

In Singapore, SPRING works with Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) to avoid overlaps in the requirements on providers who offer programs to overseas students. For example the quality assurance scheme administered by CASE looks at the student fee protection and welfare. This scheme serves as the pre-requisite for the quality assurance scheme of SPRING.

In Korea, KCUE collaborates with Korean Council for College Education, Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) and the professional bodies. Institutional evaluation for the universities of education is jointly managed with the KEDI, and program evaluations are jointly managed with the Accreditation Board for Engineering Education of Korea, Korean Accreditation Board of Nursing, etc. KCUE uses members of professional bodies in developing criteria for program evaluation.

In general, cooperation among major players in higher education in different economies is still evolving. Much of the interaction seems to be happening through participation in meetings and in informal exchange of information. There are also good practices of working together within the economies. Compared to cooperation among economies, within country interaction is more common and more structured.

11. QA of Import

The type of import in the APEC economies is mostly through partnership, twinning and articulation arrangements. Foreign university campuses operate in Australia, China, Malaysia, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam. Some amount of purely online and distance education has also been reported although those operations are difficult to monitor.

In Brunei, import of higher education is regulated by BDNAC. The foreign provider has to comply with the rules and regulations of BDNAC and must have a local partner.

In Chile, QA of imported education depends on the type of provision. Professional degrees are highly regulated, especially in those fields where a valid degree is necessary (medicine, teaching, architecture, accounting, law, etc.). In these cases, the institutions offering them must be licensed in Chile, and have to undergo a strict and lengthy licensing process (which takes between 6 and 11 years of close supervision). Graduate degrees or degrees offered in non-professional fields (such as design, the arts, sciences and humanities, or other similar areas) are not regulated, and may be offered under any of the arrangements mentioned above. All HEIs seeking to operate in the Chilean economy must be established following the same rules, whether they are national or foreign. The Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges of Ministry of Education regulates imports in China.

In Hong Kong the non-local courses are regulated by the Registrar of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. The Education and Manpower Bureau of the government has a legislation to regulate non-local courses. Assessment of the registrability of non-local courses is in accordance with the Non-local Higher & Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance. There is a code of practice for non-local courses rather than accreditation.

The Directorate General of HE of Ministry of National Education on behalf of the Minister of NE has the regulatory power in Indonesia. Foreign providers have to meet all the standards of the national accreditation system.

MoE has the regulatory power in Malaysia. The regulations are same as for locals but foreign programs need not comply with the MQA. Imported programs are assessed for equivalence. Branch campuses that have attained self accreditation are exempted from program evaluation but are subject to an audit of institutional arrangements for course delivery.

Any foreign provider can operate in New Zealand. However, the term university is protected by law. The provider must set up as a Private Training Establishment and meet NZQA's quality assurance requirements if it: wishes to access student component funding and wishes students to be eligible for student loans, or enrols international students (except if courses are less than three months and are exempted), or it wishes to grant degree and degree related awards, or it wishes to provide courses that have been approved by NZQA.

Council for Higher Education (CHED) is the designated body to regulate in Philippines and the CHED Order is still being worked on.

Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science regulates in Russia. Regulations and expectations are the same such as quality of facilities, staff and resources.

Singapore does not regulate twinning and articulation arrangements. The MoE regulates the establishment of foreign university campuses. Multiple agencies (MoE, EDB, SPRING) share the responsibility for QA arrangements. Accreditation under SQC-PEO (optional) is implemented by SPRING and CASETrust for Education, while a Student Protection Scheme, for providers that admit foreign students is under CASE.

In Chinese Taipei, Government has the regulatory power and imports have to comply with relevant regulations such as Private School Law. In Vietnam, the Ministry of Education and Training regulates imports.

Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei and Australia make the information on regulations available on web site. In addition to web site information, they

also make publications and booklets available to the higher education sector. Indonesia publishes the accreditation guidelines which are essentially the same for both local and import programs.

Most QA systems apply the same standards for both domestic and foreign providers. The list of economies includes Australia, Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore and Chinese Taipei. One or two instances of not applying same standards are related to the type of procedure in place such as the registration procedure for non-local courses in Hong Kong. In most cases, the home economy accreditation status is considered by the QA systems of the host economies.

Ensuring equivalence in the programs is well in place in some economies whereas a few others do not look into the equivalence such as Indonesia, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore and Chinese Taipei. But these economies either apply the same standards for quality assuring the educational delivery of both domestic and foreign providers or have rigorous processes in place that will lead to comparability of standards.

If foreign providers want to operate in Chile and have their programs recognised, they must also recognise the degrees granted in Chile in their home country. Thus, the providers are responsible for the equivalence.

In Hong Kong, equivalence is ensured through a declaration by overseas HEIs / comparability assessment between the onshore and off-shore programs. Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) seeks advice from HKCAA to ensure that the non-local course to be operated in Hong Kong is comparable with that offered in the home country.

Malaysia ensures equivalence through (a) written and documented material (MoUs etc) from main campus (b) validation arrangements (c) teaching by staff from the main campus (d) students can transfer credits or spend some time in the main campus.

When programs are offered fully online or in distance education mode, most QA bodies state that they do not consider them for quality assurance or regulation. With some amount of physical presence, the programs are considered. In Malaysia, if the online provider is registered as a foreign provider of educational services, the same QA process applies as in the case of face to face delivery, but with special attention to the features of the online delivery mode.

Vietnam has rules to deal with DE which could be applicable to online delivery with physical presence of the provider - "Procedural Rules Governing Distance Learning at the Junior College and Higher Levels". However, the QA system is still developing.

12. QA of Export

Some survey respondents have indicated that quality assurance or regulation of export of higher education programs by domestic HEIs is not applicable to them, meaning that the HEIs do not have any export operations in higher education services. This includes Brunei, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

Some QA agencies consider the twinning programs and articulation arrangements they have with foreign HEIs as participation in the export of higher education services. The bodies and agencies that regulate imports pay attention to export as well.

In Chile, there are no specific QA arrangements for off-shore operations of Chilean HEIs. Nevertheless, when a domestic HEI that operates off-shore applies for institutional accreditation, it must show that it has formal and adequate QA arrangements that apply to its off-shore offerings in a manner consistent with its national offerings. Quality assurance of domestic and off-shore operations are dealt with in an integrated way where HEIs must show that their teaching complies with the quality criteria that have been defined for them, both for their onshore and off-shore offerings.

In New Zealand, where a course has been approved by NZQA, it can only be delivered overseas if the standards for accreditation continue to be met for those sites. QA standards for off-shore delivery include the requirement that local regulations are also met. QA of off-shore and domestic operations is done together but there is also provision for a special audit of off-shore activities if needed. NZQA ensures that the providers achieve equivalence between their domestic and off-shore operations in relation to outcomes, student experience and standards of delivery. The students' expectations must be met regardless of delivery mode or whether or not the delivery is off-shore. Quality Audit includes site visits and interviews with students.

In Australia, universities and other institutions operating overseas are required by law to ensure the off-shore programs are of a standard at least equivalent to the same or similar programs provided in Australia. Adherence to this requirement is checked in different ways depending on the education sector. For universities and some other institutions, the check is undertaken as part of AUQA's five-yearly audits. Some smaller private institutions, and those vocational institutions offering higher education programs, are registered and accredited by the States and Territories.

13. Conclusion

'Quality assurance' is a term that was not often heard in higher education circles only a few years ago. This is not because higher education was of poor quality, but more because it was a very small operation. The small size had many consequences, such as simplicity, lower total cost, greater ability to do things through informal networks, and so on. However, massive changes, alluded to in the Introduction, have now taken place. There are more students, higher costs, greater complexity and globalisation, and governments now see the higher education sector as central to economic development and prosperity.

As a result, quality assurance systems have been created right across the APEC region, and this report graphically indicates the growth in quality assurance systems to match the change in the higher education systems. This details the extensive range of activities, indicating the similarities and differences in the systems, and highlighting areas for emulation, improvement and cooperation.

It is hoped that this report will be of value to all the APEC economies in their further development, and that it will contribute to the continued improvement of higher education and the quality assurance systems for higher education.

Appendix 1: Contact Details of the Participating Quality Assurance Agencies

Australia

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Brunei Darussalam

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China

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Indonesia

6	Name of Agency	Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi (BAN-PT) or in English: National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (NABHE)
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Japan

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Appendix 2: Areas Considered for Quality Assurance – Some examples

AUQA

Indicative scope of an institutional audit includes:

- organisational leadership and governance, planning;

- teaching and learning (all modes); processes for program approval and monitoring; comparability of academic standards in onshore and offshore programs;

- research activities and outputs, including commercialisation;

- community service activities;

- internationalisation, including contracts with overseas partners;

- support mechanisms for staff and students;

- communication with internal and external stakeholders;

- systematic internally initiated reviews (e.g. of departments, themes), including the rigour and effectiveness of the review mechanisms employed; and

- administrative support and infrastructure.

BDNAC

For Institutional Review: financial stability, professional resources/teaching resources, legal status, academic and professional.

For Course Review: process and development of curriculum, course entry requirement, content and duration.

CNAP

For institutional Review: Management and teaching, as common areas for all institutions. Each institution may add other areas if they are a significant part of their mission statement (graduate teaching, research, other).

HKCAA

Teaching and learning, research, human resources, institutional governance, academic plan, quality assurance mechanism, staff development, facilities, etc.

UGC, HK

Teaching and learning, governance and management, performance related to core areas/aspects considered in the various review exercises conducted by the UGC.

BAN-PT

1. Integrity, Vision, Mission, Targets and Objectives
2. Student and student services
3. Human resources
4. Curricula

5. Infrastructure and facilities
6. Funding
7. Governance
8. Program management
9. Learning processes
10. Academic Atmosphere
11. Information System
12. Internal Quality Assurance Unit
13. Graduates
14. Research, Publications, student's research-based academic writings, and community service

JUAA

Mission and goals, educational program and instruction, and faculty.

MQA

Mission & goals, Objective & learning outcomes, curriculum design, delivery & assessment, student entry criteria & selection procedures; teaching staff, educational resources, student support services, program monitoring & evaluation, research & its links to education, community engagement, internationalisation; governance & administration.

ITP-Q

Institutional Academic Quality Management, Development and Review of qualifications and educational programmes, staff selection, appraisal and development, student information and admission to programmes, student guidance and support, programme delivery, off-site practical/workplace components, assessment and moderation, reporting and certification, research, internal audit and review.

NZQA

Course approval covers: the title, aims, learning outcomes and coherence; the delivery and learning methods; the assessment; the acceptability of the course to the relevant academic, industrial, professional and other communities; the adequacy and appropriateness of regulations, for example, on admission, course length and structure; resources including academic staffing, teaching facilities, physical resources and support services; evaluation and review.

Quality Assurance Standard for registration of providers covers: definite goals and objectives; systems to achieve the goals and objectives including governance and management, personnel, physical and learning resources, learner information entry and support, development delivery and review of programmes, assessment and moderation, notification and reporting on learner achievement, research; demonstrating the achievement of goals and objectives by performance indicators, collecting feedback and internal audit processes.

AACUP

Faculty, curriculum and instruction, support to students, research, extension (community service), library, physical facilities, laboratories, and administration.

PAASCU

Faculty, Instruction, Administration, Community Involvement, Student Support Services, Library, Laboratories and Facilities.

NAA

1. Content and level of teaching
2. Quality of teaching
3. Community service
4. Variety of educational programs
5. Furthering education
6. Research and its effectiveness
7. Methodological work
8. Academic staff

SPRING Singapore

There are two core areas – Business Excellence and Academic Support Systems.

The seven business excellence categories are Leadership, Planning, Information, People, Processes, Customers and Results.

The academic support systems consist of requirements for the delivery of quality education. The eight academic support system categories are Institutional Integrity, Governance & Administration, Resources, Faculty, Student Admission and Support, Assessment of Student Learning, Student Outcomes and Educational Programmes.

MoE, Singapore

Governance, Management, Teaching, Research, Service.

KCUE

Research, teaching, curriculum, financial status, welfare service etc.

ONESQA

Teaching, research, academic services, cultural conservation, human resources, administration, budgetary

GDETA

Mission and purposes, Organisation and management, curriculum, academic activities, staff, learners, Science research and technology, infrastructure and library, finance, international cooperation

Aspects Considered by COPAES (Mexico) for the Recognition of Accrediting Agencies

- the goals and aims of the program
- the content of the program

- the organisation of the program

- the didactic concept, didactic philosophy

- teaching methods

- the curriculum design

- student-work, research project and/or practical training

- student assessments/examinations

- the student population (selection, recruitment, preliminary education)

- quality of the staff

- the quality of the facilities

- internal quality assurance procedures

- the achieved standards

- pass rate and drop out

- average graduation time

- cost per student

- opinion of the students about the program

- opinion of the staff about the program

- opinion of the alumni

- accordance to institutional mission, relationship with other academic instances, relationship with the social and economic sectors, opinion of employers, under-graduate follow-up

Areas Considered by CHEA for its Recognition of Accrediting Agencies

CHEA has `eligibility standards' and `recognition standards'.

Eligibility Standards: To be eligible for CHEA recognition, the accreditation organisation:

1. demonstrates that the organization's mission and scope are consistent with the CHEA *Institutional Eligibility and Recognition Policy* (Appendix B), including that a majority of the institutions and programs accredited by the organization grant higher education degrees. The *Policy* provides, in part, that the recognition process will place increasing emphasis on the effectiveness of accrediting organizations in assuring academic quality of institutions or programs;

2. is non-governmental;

3. accredits institutions that have legal authority to confer higher education degrees;

4. accredits institutions or programs at generally accepted higher education levels;

5. has written procedures that describe, officially and publicly:

   - the organisation's decision-making processes, policies, and procedures that lead to accreditation actions; and

   - the scope of accreditation that may be granted, evaluative criteria (standards or characteristics) used, and levels of accreditation status conferred.

6. has procedures that include a self-evaluation by the institution or program and on-site review by a visiting team, or has alternative processes that CHEA considers to be valid;

7. demonstrates independence from any parent entity, or sponsoring entity, for the conduct of accreditation activities and determination of accreditation status; and

8. is operational, with more than one completed accreditation review, including action by the accreditation decision-making body at each degree level, or for each type of program, identified in the statement of proposed recognised scope of accreditation.

Recognition Standards: The following six standards are applied to accrediting organizations seeking CHEA recognition:

1. advances academic quality;

2. demonstrates accountability;

3. encourages, where appropriate, self-scrutiny and planning for change and for needed improvement;

4. employs appropriate and fair procedures in decision making;

5. demonstrates ongoing review of accreditation practices; and

6. possesses sufficient resources.

Appendix 3: Tables

Table 1: Scope and Functions of the QA Agencies

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Year of Establishment	Established by	Funded by	HEIs under its Purview	Nature of the Process	Major Functions	Scope	Public vs Privates	Unit For QA
1	Australia	AUQA	2001	Govt	Both. Operational cost from govt and cost recovery for audits from auditees	40 HEIs + 9 State Accrediting Agencies	Voluntary but mandatory for federal funding	Quality Enhancement, Self Improvement, More Public Information	Both private and public. Both university and non-university level HEIs. Includes state accrediting agencies.	Applies same standards.	Institution
2	Brunei Darussalam	BDNAC	1990	Govt	Govt	2 (1 university + 1institute)	Mandatory	Quality Enhancement, International Comparability, More Public Information	University level only	Applies same standards.	Institution and program
3	Chile	CNAP	1999	Govt	Govt	56 universities, 22 professional institutes, 12 technical training centres (90)	Voluntary	Accountability, Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs also	Applies same standards.	Institution and program
4a	China	CDGDC	–	Govt	Govt	About 1000 Universities and HEIs	Voluntary	Quality Enhancement, More Public Information, Transparency	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs also.	Applies same standards.	Institution and program
4b	China	HE Evaluation Centre - MoE	2004	Both	Both	–	Mandatory	Accountability, Quality Enhancement, Transparency	Public funded HEIs only. Includes non-university level HEIs also.	Applies same standards.	Institution and program
5a	Hong Kong	HKCAA	1990	Govt	Self financing	13	Voluntary	Quality Enhancement, Benchmarking, National Comparability	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs also + private education and training operators	Applies same standards.	Institution and program
5b	Hong Kong	UGC	1965	Govt	Govt	8	–	–	Public funded HEIs only	Covers Public universities only	Institution

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Year of Establishment	Established by	Funded by	HEIs under its Purview	Nature of the Process	Major Functions	Scope	Public vs Privates	Unit For QA
6	Indonesia	BAN-PT	1994	Govt	Govt	3500	Voluntary	Quality Enhancement, Accountability, Self Improvement	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs also	Applies same standards.	Program till 2006, Institution from 2007
7a	Japan	NIAD-UE	1991	Govt	Govt	1277 (726 universities,488 junior colleges, 63 colleges of technology)	Voluntary and Mandatory	Accountability, Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs also.	Applies same standards.	Institution and in some cases graduate school of a particular field
7b	Japan	JUAA	1947	HEIs	HEIs	321	Voluntary & Mandatory	Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement, Accountability	Both private and public. University level HEIs only	Applies same standards.	Institution including program evaluation
8	Malaysia	MQA	1997	Govt	both	554 private HEIs+ 20 public HEIs + 24 poly techniques+ 34 cc + >1000 training institutes	Mandatory	Accountability, Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs also	Applies same standards.	Institution, faculty, program, themes, aspects
9a	New Zealand	ITP-Q	1991	HEIs	HEIs	19	Mandatory	Accountability, Quality Enhancement, Self Improvement	Public funded HEIs only	Applies same standards.	Institution
9b	New Zealand	NZQA	1989/90	Govt	Govt + fee for services	1200	Voluntary and mandatory	Accountability, Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs also	Standards differ depending on the type of institution and on public vs private.	Approval of Programs, Registration of Institutions
9c	New Zealand	NZUAAU	1993	HEIs	HEIs	8	Mandatory	Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement, Accountability	Universities only All are publicly funded.	Applies same standards.	Institution
10a	Philippines	AACCUP	1987	HEIs	HEIs. Occasional govt. subsidy	112 State universities and colleges	Voluntary	Quality Enhancement, Accountability, Self Improvement	Public funded HEIs only. Includes non-university HEIs also	Applies same standards.	Program

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Year of Establishment	Established by	Funded by	HEIs under its Purview	Nature of the Process	Major Functions	Scope	Public vs Privates	Unit For QA
10b	Philippines	PAASCU	1957	HEIs	HEIs	More than 100 colleges.	Voluntary	Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement, Accountability	Both public funded and private HEIs	Applies same standards.	Institution and program
11	Russia	NAA	1995	Govt	HEIs	1338 HEIs	Voluntary	Quality Enhancement, National Comparability, approval	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs and vocational and professional education institutions	Applies same standards.	Institution and program
12a	Singapore	SPRING	1981	Govt	Govt	102	Voluntary	Quality Enhancement, More public information, Benchmarking	Private HEIs only	Different schemes cover publics and privates. Publics are not covered under Case Trust or SQC-PEO.	Institution
12b	Singapore	MOE	–	Govt	Govt	11	Mandatory	Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement, Accountability	Public funded HEIs only	Different schemes cover publics and privates.	Institution
13	South Korea	KCUE	1982	HEIs	Both	201	Mandatory	Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement, Accountability	Both private and public. Includes University level HEIs only	Applies same standards.	Institution and Program
14	Chinese Taipei	HEEACT	2005	Both	Both	160+	Mandatory	Accountability, Self Improvement, More Public Information	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs also	Applies same standards.	Program
15	Thailand	ONESQA	2000	Govt	Govt	264 universities 747 vocational institutes	Mandatory	Accountability, Quality Enhancement, Self Improvement	Both private and public Includes non-university HEIs also	Applies same standards.	Institution
16	Vietnam	GDETA	2003	Govt	Govt	97 universities, 150 colleges, 256 secondary professional schools	Mandatory	Self Improvement, Quality Enhancement, Transparency	Both private and public. Includes non-university HEIs also	Applies same standards.	Institution and program

Table 2: Review and the Reviewers

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Self-assessment Report (SAR)	Guidance to prepare SAR	Who participates in the preparation of SAR	Inputs considered other than SAR	Involvement of international experts	Register of Reviewers	Reviewer profile	Identifying Reviewers (N - Nomination)	Who appoints reviewers?	Role of HEI in review panel composition	Panel size	Policy on Conflict of Interest
1	Australia	AUQA	Yes	Detailed Guidelines, Training	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students	Government reports and reports of professional organisations	Membership in review panel, observer, joint development of procedures, meetings, formal information exchange	Yes	Experts in general HE, international members, QA staff	N from HEI, N from Govt, N from GB, Identified by agency staff, advertisement	Governing Board (GB)	HEIs are consulted. They can record reservation.	3–5	Yes
2	Brunei Darussalam	BDNAC	Yes	Format	Administrative staff	Reports of professional organisations, inputs from the public and students	Joint development of procedures, meetings	No	Varies	–	–	–	–	–
3	Chile	CNAP	Yes	Detailed Guidelines, Format, Advice & support	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni, Representatives from external environment	Government reports, other accreditation outcomes, general info, public info	Membership in review panel, meetings, formal information exchange	Yes	Subject experts, international members, employers/ industry representatives, Representatives of professional organisations	N form HEIs, Identified by staff, N form GB and qualified expert Reviewers	GB	HEIs are consulted on panel membership	2 national + 1 international for programs, 4–6 for Institutional (includes 1 international)	Yes
4a	China	CDGDC	Yes	Detailed Guidelines	Administrative staff	Reports from professional organisations	No	Yes	Subject Experts	N from HEIs	GB	HEI s are consulted	Varies according to type of program	Yes
4b	China	HE Evaluation	Yes	Brief	Administrative staff	Surveys, Government	Meetings, formal information	Yes	Subject Experts, QA staff,	N from HEIs, identified by	Executive of	HEIs are consulted.	Varies according	–

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Self-assessment Report (SAR)	Guidance to prepare SAR	Who participates in the preparation of SAR	Inputs considered other than SAR	Involvement of international experts	Register of Reviewers	Reviewer profile	Identifying Reviewers (N - Nomination)	Who appoints reviewers?	Role of HEI in review panel composition	Panel size	Policy on Conflict of Interest
		Centre - MoE		Guidelines		reports,	exchange		Representatives of professional organisations	agency staff	the agency	They can record reservation.	to size of the university	
5a	Hong Kong	HKCAA	Yes	Brief Guidelines, Format	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni, External advisors	Surveys of stakeholders, government reports, reports of professional organisations, inputs from the public	Membership in GB, Membership in review panel, joint development of procedures, meetings, formal information exchange, Attachment to agency	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, international members, employers/ industry representatives, QA staff, Representatives of professional organisations, Officers of government departments/ authorities	Identified by agency staff, Advertisement, referral by relevant bodies	Executive of the agency, GB	HEIs are consulted. They can record reservation.	4–9	Yes
5b	Hong Kong	UGC	Yes	Brief Guidelines, Briefing sessions	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff (varies among institutions)	Data collected during site visit	Membership in GB, Membership in review panel, joint development of procedures,	No	Subject to need	N from HEIs, N from government, identified by agency staff	GB	HEIs have no say in the panel membership	Varies	Yes
6	Indonesia	BAN-PT	Yes	Detailed Guidelines, Training	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni	Surveys of stakeholders, government reports, reports of professional organisations, inputs from the public	No	Yes	Subj Experts, Employers/ Industry representatives, Representatives of professional organisations	N from HEI, N from Govt, Identified by agency staff, advertisement	Executive staff and GB of the agency	No say in panel membership. Rights to state objections on panel composition.	2–3	Yes
7a	Japan	NIAD-UE	Yes	Detailed Guidelines, Format, Training for those in	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff	Any other data the agency investigates or collects by itself	Membership in review panel, joint research, meetings	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, QA staff, Representatives of professional	Identified by agency staff, recommendation from HEIs or expert	Executive staff of the agency	HEI can record reservation	20–30	No

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Self-assessment Report (SAR)	Guidance to prepare SAR	Who participates in the preparation of SAR	Inputs considered other than SAR	Involvement of international experts	Register of Reviewers	Reviewer profile	Identifying Reviewers (N - Nomination)	Who appoints reviewers?	Role of HEI in review panel composition	Panel size	Policy on Conflict of Interest
				charge of SAR					organisations, experts from various field of society	organisations of the subject				
7b	Japan	JUAA	Yes	Detailed Guideline, Format	Management staff, Administrative staff, knowledgeable persons other than uni faculty	Data and material which are the basis for the SSR	No	Yes	Subject Experts, Experts in general HE	N from HEIs	GB	HEIs submit the candidate list and therefore they are not consulted.	3–5 for one faculty. According to number of faculties 15 or more review panels	No
8	Malaysia	MQA	Yes	Detailed Guidelines	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Involvement of others is encouraged	Surveys of stakeholders, government reports, reports of professional organisations	Membership in review panel, joint development of procedures, meetings, formal information exchange	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, international members, students, employers/industry representatives, QA staff, Representatives of professional organisations	N by the government, Identified by agency staff, advertisement	GB	HEIs are consulted. They can record reservation.	2–5	Yes
9a	New Zealand	ITP-Q	No	–	–	Reports of professional organisations	No	Yes	Experts in general HE, employer/ industry representative	N from HEIs, government and identified by agency staff	GB	HEIs are consulted. They can record reservation.	4	Yes
9b	New Zealand	NZQA	Yes	Brief Guidelines	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff	Government reports, reports of professional organisations	No	Yes	Experts in HE, QA staff	Identified by agency staff	Executive of the agency	HEIs are consulted.	Program monitoring : 1 or 2; degree approval:	No

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Self-assessment Report (SAR)	Guidance to prepare SAR	Who participates in the preparation of SAR	Inputs considered other than SAR	Involvement of international experts	Register of Reviewers	Reviewer profile	Identifying Reviewers (N - Nomination)	Who appoints reviewers?	Role of HEI in review panel composition	Panel size	Policy on Conflict of Interest
													6–8; sub degree: 1–3	
9c	New Zealand	NZUAAU	Yes	Detailed Guidelines	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni	None	Membership in review panel, joint development of procedures, meetings	Yes	Experts in general HE, international members, employers/ industry representatives, QA staff, Representatives of professional organisations	Identified by agency staff	Executive staff of the agency, GB	HEIs can record reservation.	5+Audit Director of the unit	Yes
10a	Philippines	AACCUP	Yes	Detailed Guidelines, Consultancy to HEIs	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni, Parents, Community covered by the community service program of the HEI	Conducts survey of stakeholders, input from public	Inviting international experts as observers and consultants, joint development of procedures, meetings, formal information exchange	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, employers/ industry representatives, Graduates/Alumni, QA staff, Representatives of professional organisations	N from HEIs, identified by agency staff, self applications	Executive staff, GB	HEIs have no say on panel's membership. They can record reservation.	5	Yes
10b	Philippines	PAASCU	Yes	Detailed Guidelines, Format	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni, Parents	Government reports, reports of professional organisations	No	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, employers/ industry representatives, QA staff,	N form HEIs, identified by agency staff	Executive of the agency	HEIs are consulted. They can record reservation.	7–8	Yes
11	Russia	NAA	Yes	Detailed Guidelines, Format	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff	Surveys of stakeholders, reports of professional organisations, inputs from the public	Membership in review panel, observer, joint development of procedures, meetings, formal information	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, QA staff	N from HEIs, Govt, identified by agency staff	GB and Govt	HEIs are consulted.	About 10. Depends on size of HEI	No

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Self-assessment Report (SAR)	Guidance to prepare SAR	Who participates in the preparation of SAR	Inputs considered other than SAR	Involvement of international experts	Register of Reviewers	Reviewer profile	Identifying Reviewers (N - Nomination)	Who appoints reviewers?	Role of HEI in review panel composition	Panel size	Policy on Conflict of Interest
							exchange							
12a	Singapore	SPRING	Yes	Detailed Guidelines, training	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff	Surveys of stakeholders, government reports	Joint development of procedures, formal information exchange	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, QA staff, Representatives of professional organisations	N from HEIs, govt, identified by agency staff	GB	HEIs can record reservation.	3	Yes
12b	Singapore	MoE	Yes	Brief Guidelines	Management staff	Government reports, reports of professional organisations, media reports	Membership in review panel, joint development of procedures	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, international members, employers/ industry representatives	N from HEIs, govt, identified by agency staff	Govt	HEIs can record reservation.	6–8	No
13	South Korea	KCUE	Yes	Detailed Guidelines	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff	-	No	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, Representatives of professional organisations	N from HEIs, identified by agency staff	Executive of the agency	HEIs are consulted.	4–6	Yes
14	Chinese Taipei	HEEACT	Yes	Detailed Guidelines	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff	Surveys of stakeholders, reports of professional organisations	Observer, joint development of procedures, meetings	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, employers/ industry representatives,	N from govt, N from senior experts	Executive of the agency, GB	HEIs can record reservation	Varies: 5–7	Yes
15	Thailand	ONESQA	Yes	Brief Guidelines	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff	Surveys of stakeholders, reports of professional organisations, input from the public	Observers, inviting for meetings	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, employers/ industry representatives, Graduate/ Alumni, QA staff, Representatives of professional organisations	N from HEIs, Identified by agency staff	GB	HEIs are consulted. They can record reservation.	5–10	Yes

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Self-assessment Report (SAR)	Guidance to prepare SAR	Who participates in the preparation of SAR	Inputs considered other than SAR	Involvement of international experts	Register of Reviewers	Reviewer profile	Identifying Reviewers (N - Nomination)	Who appoints reviewers?	Role of HEI in review panel composition	Panel size	Policy on Conflict of Interest
16	Vietnam	GDETA	Yes	Detailed Guidelines, Brief Guidelines, Format	Management staff, Administrative staff, Teaching staff	Media reports	Joint development of procedures, meetings	Yes	Subject experts, experts in general HE, employers/ industry representatives, QA staff, Representatives of professional organisations	Identified by agency staff, advertisement	Govt	HEI has no say	7–9	Yes

Table 3: Aspects of the Site Visit

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Site visit	Duration	Site visit activities	Groups that meet the review panel	Role of agency staff in the panel	Ensuring skills mix of the review panel	Use of only trained Reviewers	Checks and balances to ensure objectivity of the QA process	Dissemination of QA policies	Checking complaints Handling of HEIs
1	Australia	AUQA	Yes	3–5 days	Meeting with various constituents, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/ Alumni, Employers/ Industry representatives, Community representatives	Full member writes the report.	Selection and training of reviewers	Yes	Training, panel composition, presence of agency staff	Manual, publications, training	Yes
2	Brunei Darussalam	BDNAC	No	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3	Chile	CNAP	Yes	2–3 days for program review. 3–4 days for Institutional review	Meeting with various constituents, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/ Alumni, Employers/ Industry representatives	Coordinator	Training, panels include experienced members, Assessment of new members, noting attitudes	No	Panel composition, agency staff presence	Web site, workshops, published booklets and newspaper attachments	No
4a	China	CDGDC	Yes	Varies	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Graduates/Alumni, Community representatives	Writes the report.	Expertise and experience of reviewers	Yes	Expertise and experience of the reviewers	Issues information	Yes
4b	China	HE Evaluation Centre - MoE	Yes	5–6 days	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Meetings with experts	Coordinator writes the report.	Experience, reputation and headship	No	–	–	–
5a	Hong Kong	HKCAA	Yes	Varies: 1–2 days or 3–4 days.	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students,	Yes All except chair	Training and briefing	No	Review of criteria and processes, consensus by panel, `no surprise'	Workshop, publications and consultations	Yes

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Site visit	Duration	Site visit activities	Groups that meet the review panel	Role of agency staff in the panel	Ensuring skills mix of the review panel	Use of only trained Reviewers	Checks and balances to ensure objectivity of the QA process	Dissemination of QA policies	Checking complaints Handling of HEIs
					documents	Graduates/ Alumni, Employers/ Industry representatives, Community representatives				principle		
5b	Hong Kong	UGC	Varies	1–2 days	Meeting with various constituents, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni, Employers/ Industry representatives	Coordinator/Secretary	Background material, discussion, expertise of members	No	consultation	Documents made available prior to the review	Subject to scope of review
6	Indonesia	BAN-PT	Yes	3–4 days	Meeting with various constituents (interview sts, trs and other related personnel), classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni	Does not join the team	Leader dependent	Yes	Wrap up meeting, contact with HEI, appeals procedure	Guidelines and training	No
7a	Japan	NIAD-UE	Yes	1–3 days: depends on the type of HEI	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni	Coordinator or Secretary and full member.	Review CV and choose the right expert	No. Training is provided after selecting people for review	Sharing tentative evaluation with the HEIs, opportunity for HEIs to appeal, Ensuring objectivity of the process	Publication, web page, orientation to HEIs, orientation to reviewers	Yes. One of the standards asks 'Does the institution recognise the needs of students, faculty and ad staff or…?'
7b	Japan	JUAA	Yes	1–2 days	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students	Coordinator or Secretary	Universities that nominate experts make sure of the skills of nominees. Training by JUAA.	Yes	Panel confers, check by higher committee that compares the panel report with those of other applicant universities	Web, guidebook, handbook, seminar, explanatory meeting	Yes

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Site visit	Duration	Site visit activities	Groups that meet the review panel	Role of agency staff in the panel	Ensuring skills mix of the review panel	Use of only trained Reviewers	Checks and balances to ensure objectivity of the QA process	Dissemination of QA policies	Checking complaints Handling of HEIs
8	Malaysia	MQA	Yes	3–4 days	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students	Coordinator, Chair	3-day hands-on training on QA process	Yes	Use of documented criteria. HEIs' role in panel selection, report validated by the accreditation committee, HEIs comment on the report, HEIs evaluate the panel	Printed guidelines, web site, refresher course, seminar, circulars	Yes Student feedback on teaching and learning, facilities, welfare etc is considered.
9a	New Zealand	ITP-Q	Yes	3–4 or 5–6 days. Varies	Meeting with various constituents, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Employers/ Industry representatives, Community representatives	Does not join the team	Training, expertise of members	Yes	4-member panel, peer review, decision by Board on recommendations of the panel	Web site, workshops, training sessions	Yes There is a standard for dealing with student complaints
9b	New Zealand	NZQA	Yes	1–2 days	Meeting with various constituents, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Employers/ Industry representatives	Full member	Training, consistency meetings, use of advisors in specialist areas, experience of panels	Yes	Monitoring, feedback from HEIs, peer review of audit reports by a team leader and externally, team decision, peer review, internal audit, external audit of the agency, sign off by manager	Web site, consultation, e-mail and mail communications, annual regional road-shows	Yes. HEIs are expected to have a system in place and the audit checks that
9c	New Zealand	NZUAAU	Yes	3–4 days	Meeting with various constituents, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/ Alumni, Employers/ Industry representatives, Community representatives	Full member. Writes the report.	Training reviewers	Yes	Director's presence in all panels, HEIs comment on report, Approved by Board as having followed procedures	Audit manual	–
10a	Philippines	AACCUP	Yes	3–4 days	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students,	Coordinator or Secretary and Full member. Can be the	Expertise of panel, selection, training and re-training,	Yes	On-site visits are supervised by agency senior staff, reports are subject to technical review,	Manuals, newsletter, seminars, conferences,	Yes Interview with students and guidance

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Site visit	Duration	Site visit activities	Groups that meet the review panel	Role of agency staff in the panel	Ensuring skills mix of the review panel	Use of only trained Reviewers	Checks and balances to ensure objectivity of the QA process	Dissemination of QA policies	Checking complaints Handling of HEIs
					documents, meeting with communities served by HEIs	Graduates/ Alumni, Parents, Employers/ Industry representatives, Community representatives	Chair.	evaluation of members		complaints are always attended to	consultancy visits	counsellors during the on-site visit checks this issue.
10b	Philippines	PAASCU	Yes	3–4 days	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni, Community representatives	Coordinator /Secretary	Training, Commission members as Chairs, evaluation of trainee auditors	Yes	Workshop for team chairs, selection of chairs, agency staff's presence in panels, reports are sent to the various the Board.	Manual for HEIs, reviewer handbook	Yes. Minutes of meetings are checked and interaction with campus groups
11	Russia	NAA	Yes	3–5 days – depends on size of HEI	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Employers/ Industry representatives, Community representatives	Full member	Expertise of panel, training	Yes	Annual information collection and cross checking with that. The report is made public.	Web, special editions, manuals, software, training, journal	Yes
12a	Singapore	SPRING	Yes	1–2 days	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students	Coordinator and full member	Training	yes	Eliminating CoI, Presence of agency staff, appeal procedure	Web, information sharing sessions	Yes. Examples of case management are examined. Unresolved ones are forwarded by HEIs to CASE Trust.
12b	Singapore	MoE	Yes	3–4 days	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/ Alumni, Employers/ Industry representatives	Coordinator and writes the report.	Selection criteria for reviewers	No	Same chair for all reviews of a particular round. Eliminating CoI	Guidelines and documents	No

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Site visit	Duration	Site visit activities	Groups that meet the review panel	Role of agency staff in the panel	Ensuring skills mix of the review panel	Use of only trained Reviewers	Checks and balances to ensure objectivity of the QA process	Dissemination of QA policies	Checking complaints Handling of HEIs
13	South Korea	KCUE	Yes	1–3 days; 2 days for UG institution, 3 for UG and graduate institution, 1 for program	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students	Coordinator and writes the report	Compulsory participation in two workshops. HEI nominate the reviewers and they ensure the right skills.	Yes	Panel confers, discusses with HEI, each core area is covered by two reviewers	Handbook for reviewers and HEIs	Yes. Survey and interviews with students, staff and faculty with look into this issue.
14	Chinese Taipei	HEEACT	Yes	1–2 days	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni	Coordinator	Training and experience	Yes	Panel selection, CoI elimination, comments from HEIs on draft rep	Public hearings about the process, documents on the process	–
15	Thailand	ONESQA	Yes	Varies. 3–5 days	various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students, Graduates/Alumni, Parents	Agency staff does not join the review panel.	Training, workshop and certification	Yes	Standard criteria, standardised process, peer review, meta evaluation	Agency Web site, publications, workshop, broadcasting via various media	Yes
16	Vietnam	GDETA	Yes	3–4 days	Meeting with various constituents, classroom observations, visiting facilities, examining documents	Management, Administrative staff, Teaching staff, Students	Full member	Training	Yes	Yet to reach this stage.	–	–

Table 4: QA Outcome and its Implications

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Outcome	Implication	Who decides on final QA outcome	Inputs considered for final QA outcome	QA outcome given to Institution	QA outcome given to Public	Who is responsible for the report	Report conclusions	Follow-up	Validity of Outcome	Appeals
1	Australia	AUQA	Report	Federal funding, prestige	Panel makes recommendations and GB decides	Panel report, Institutional response to report	Full report	Full report	The agency staff who joins the panel, in consultation with the panel	Commendations, Affirmations, and Recommendations for further attention	In general will be done in the next audit. The institutions provide a progress report 18 months after the publication of the audit report.	Five years	Yes. AUQA Board will handle formal appeals and take appropriate steps. No appeal during past five years.
2	Brunei Darussalam	BDNAC	Report, Formal Status	Formal status	GB recommends based on review report and govt authority decides	Panel report and SAR	Formal Status and part of the report	Formal Status	All panel members	–	–	–	Yes. The Council is the appellate authority. Three appeals in the past five years and all three were granted.
3	Chile	CNAP	Report, Formal Status	Prestige	Panel gives observations and the agency decides.	Panel report, SAR, relevant info, institution's response to report	Report and Formal Status	FS and full report	Panel report is by the Chair – Agency report is by agency staff. It is the agency report that goes to the institution.	Agency views on meeting criteria. In some cases, specific areas for improvement to be addressed before re-accreditation.	Yes. Sometimes a progress report. Chair checks on progress and a short report is sent to the institution. General follow-up is at the next visit	2–7 years Depends on degree of consolidation of the institution/ program, time needed for verification of actions, reliability of processes in place	Yes. No dedicated appellate authority. Agency considers requests for review. May lead to new report and site visit. 4 inst 6 prg appealed. 1in each were granted. 3+4 denied.
4a	China	CDGDC	Report, Formal Status	Formal status or approval	Panel makes recommendations and GB decides	Panel report, SAR and other relevant info	Report and Formal Status	Formal Status	Chair	Recommendations, Commendations, suggestion for corrective action	No	Varies	Yes. MoE. Investigates and writes a report. No appeals in the past five years. No post-

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Outcome	Implication	Who decides on final QA outcome	Inputs considered for final QA outcome	QA outcome given to Institution	QA outcome given to Public	Who is responsible for the report	Report conclusions	Follow-up	Validity of Outcome	Appeals
													QA reports.
4b	China	HEEC, MoE	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
5a	Hong Kong	HKCAA	Report, Formal Status	Approval, direct funding, incentive	Panel makes recommendations. GB decides.	Panel report, SAR, evidence gathered before and during site visit	Report and Formal Status	Formal Status	Agency staff	Recommendations, Commendations, suggestions for improvement	Yes. Fulfilment of pre-conditions and requirements	2–6 years. Depends on stage of devt of HEIs and readiness and track record of delivering prg accredited.	Yes. HKCAA Council will handle formal appeals and take appropriate steps (eg forming a review com). No appeal during past five years. Post QA reporting – varies.
5b	Hong Kong	UGC	Report, Formal Status	Approval, direct funding, incentive	Panel makes recommendations and GB decides	Panel report and SAR	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies – normally recommendations, suggestions, observations etc	Varies	Varies	NA
6	Indonesia	BAN-PT	Report, Formal Status	Approval, incentive, autonomy	Govt takes the final decision	Panel report, SAR	Formal Status, part of the report, Recommendation for program improvement	Formal Status	Chair and agency staff	Recommendations and suggestion for program improvement and further development	No	3–5 years. Depends on the accreditation status	Yes. Authority – Chair and Secretary of the board, and executive secretary of BNA-PT. Ten appeals in average – granted four and denied six
7a	Japan	NIAD-UE	Only report	Approval, linked to improvement	Review panel decides	??	Report	Full report and summary	Chair	Achievement to the standards – comments on areas that are excellent and areas that need improvement	No	There is no validity of QA outcome. HEIs have the obligation to have the review in no more than 5–7 yrs	Yes. Review panel judges the appeal. 14 Colleges of Technology appealed during 5 yrs. Nine were granted. Post QA reporting – HEIs report on substantive

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Outcome	Implication	Who decides on final QA outcome	Inputs considered for final QA outcome	QA outcome given to Institution	QA outcome given to Public	Who is responsible for the report	Report conclusions	Follow-up	Validity of Outcome	Appeals
													changes. Law Colleges have annual reporting
7b	Japan	JUAA	Report	Linked to formal status or approval	Panel makes recommendations and GB decides	Panel report, SAR and other relevant info	Report and Formal Status	Full report and Formal Status	All panel members	Recommendations, Commendations, suggestion	Yes. Panel does it with the submitted improvement report from the university within 3 years	7 years	7 years
8	Malaysia	MQA	Report	approval, funding, incentive, autonomy	Panel makes observations. Decision is by agency or professional body	Panel report, SAR and relevant info	Report and Formal Status	Formal Status and summary of the report	All panel members	Recommendations, Commendations, suggestion for corrective action	Yes. Depends on the conditions stated in the certificate of accreditation /provisional accreditation	In general 5 years. Varies depending on conditions specified.	Yes. Authority – Minister for HE. Process- formal written representation. Outcome- Approved or rejected. Post QA reporting –depends on conditions imposed
9a	New Zealand	ITP-Q	Report, Formal Status	Approval, autonomy	Panel makes recommendations and GB decides	Panel 's recommendations or observations only	Report and Formal Status	Formal Status and summary of rep	Chair	Requirements for corrective action, Recommendations, Commendations, suggestions	Yes. Within 3 months or as agreed due to the timeline of the corrective action	One year to four years. If the Corrective Action Required (CAR) is serious then a one-year period is given with a follow-up audit after one-year, otherwise four years	Yes. Agency is the appellate – authority. It forms ad hoc sub committees of 4 from outside the agency. It makes recommendations to Board. There was one appeal during 5 yrs and it was granted. Post QA reporting - once in two yrs report
9b	New	NZQA	Report,	Status, direct	Recommendations by	Panel's report,	Report and	Formal	Agency staff	Meeting audit	Yes – Action	6 months to 3	Yes. CEO and

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Outcome	Implication	Who decides on final QA outcome	Inputs considered for final QA outcome	QA outcome given to Institution	QA outcome given to Public	Who is responsible for the report	Report conclusions	Follow-up	Validity of Outcome	Appeals
	Zealand		Formal Status	funding, autonomy, less compliance costs, longer audit cycle and more autonomy	panel and delegated responsibility to managers for final decision	recommendations and SAR	Formal Status	Status and summary of Report		standards, Recommendations, Suggestions	plan – if actions are not carried out satisfactorily within the timeframe, legislation allows for compliance action	years. For ITPs it is 4 years – variation depends on audit report, complaints, major changes and financial stability	finally the Board is the appellate authority. HEIs lodge a formal appeal to Board. There will be a hearing & investigation. There were 5 appeals and 4 were granted. There is annual post QA reporting.
9c	New Zealand	NZUAAU	Report	No formal consequences	Panel makes recommendations and GB decides	Panel's recommendation's and observations only	Report	Full report	Agency staff	Recommendations, Commendations	Yes – Panel Chair and Director visit the HEI after 3 months of public report. Timetable (18 months) for a follow-up report is decided then	5 years	No appeals mechanism.
10a	Philippines	AACCUP	Report, Formal Status	Approval, direct funding, incentive, prestige	Panel makes recommendations and GB decides	Panel report and SAR	Formal Status and summary of report	Formal Status	All panel members	Strengths, areas needing improvement and recommendations	Yes. Agency staff does follow-up within one year	3–5 yrs depending on the accreditation status. Candidate status for 6 months to 2 yrs. Accredited at level I is for 3 yrs. Next level is for 3–5 years	Yes. Appeals to the Board and the National Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (NNQAA). There were 3 appeals during past 5 yrs and 2 were granted. Post QA reporting - Annual reporting
10b	Philippines	PAASCU	Report, Formal Status	Formal Status,	Panel makes recommendations and	Panel report and SAR	Report and Formal	Formal Status	Chair	Commendations and Recommendations	Yes If monitoring is needed	3 yrs for first time	Yes. GB is the appellate authority.

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Outcome	Implication	Who decides on final QA outcome	Inputs considered for final QA outcome	QA outcome given to Institution	QA outcome given to Public	Who is responsible for the report	Report conclusions	Follow-up	Validity of Outcome	Appeals
				incentives, autonomy	GB decides		Status				progress report after 2–3 yrs and interim visit	accreditation and re-accreditation is for five years	During past five yrs there was one appeal and it was denied. Post QA reporting – annual report
11	Russia	NAA	Report, Formal Status	Formal status, funding	Accreditation Board makes the decision on the basis of the report prepared by NAA	Panel report and SAR	Report and Formal Status	Summary of report	All panel members	Recommendations	No	5 years. Conditional accreditation is for less than 5 years	Yes. HEIs can go to the Court of Law. Legal procedures of the Russian Federation apply. There were 3 appeals-in five years and none were granted
12a	Singapore	SPRING	Report, Formal Status	Formal status, incentive	Panel makes recommendations and GB decides	Panel recommendations	Report and Formal Status	Formal Status	All panel members	Recommendations to award certification or deny certification	No	3 years	Yes. SQC-PEO committee is the appeals committee. HEIs give a letter of appeal and pay an administrative fee. So far there has been no appeals. Post QA reporting – mid-term reporting
12b	Singapore	MoE	Report	No formal consequences	No final specific outcome other than the report. Report is shared with HEIs for follow-up	NA	Report	none	Chair and agency staff	Commendations and Recommendations	Yes - HEIs provide response and formulate action plans	5 years	No. Post QA reports – annual updates
13	South Korea	KCUE	Report, Formal Status	Formal status	Panel recommends and University Accreditation Committee decides	Panel recommendations	Report and Formal Status	Formal Status and Summary of Report	All panel members	Strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for corrective action	No	5 years	Yes. HEIs apply to the University Accreditation Committee which reviews the result. During the past five

S. No.	Economy	Agency	Outcome	Implication	Who decides on final QA outcome	Inputs considered for final QA outcome	QA outcome given to Institution	QA outcome given to Public	Who is responsible for the report	Report conclusions	Follow-up	Validity of Outcome	Appeals
													years there was one appeal and it was granted. Occasional post QA reports.
14	Chinese Taipei	HEEACT	Report, Formal Status	Formal status, direct funding, incentives, prestige	Panel recommends and the agency decides	Panel report and SAR	Report and Formal Status	Formal Status	All panel members	Observations, Commendations, Recommendations and suggestions	Yes	5 years	Yes. HEIs apply to the agency. An appeals committee is constituted. No data on appeals since this is first year of operation of the agency.
15	Thailand	ONESQA	Report, Formal Status	Formal status or approval, Suggestion to policy makers	Panel recommends and GB approves	Panel report, SAR and other relevant information	Report and Formal Status	Formal status and Summary of the report	All panel members	Assessment regarding standards and criteria, commendations, and suggestion for corrective action	Yes. Office of Higher Education Commission & Minister of education by monitors action taken including timeframe	5 years	–
16	Vietnam	DGET	Report, Formal Status	Formal status	Panel recommends and the GB decides	Panel report and SAR	Report and Formal Status	Formal Status	All panel members	Whether HEI meets standards and Recommendations	Yet to reach that stage	In general 5 years – might vary	Yes. Minister of Ed and Trg- constitutes a working group. Yet to reach the stage of appeals and denials. Post QA report – one in mid term about 2–3 years after review