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for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level“**

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QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT/GOVERNANCE

Comparative Report

Work Package 8

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INTRODUCTION

The comparative report related to Work Package 8 – Quality and Management/ Governance of the IBAR project presents the results regarding the relationship between the themes of quality and management/ governance of higher education institutions in Europe. It is based on seven national reports derived from 28 institutional case studies of the countries participating in the project (CZ, LV, NL, PL, PT, SK, and UK). The work package was coordinated by the Portuguese team, and the report produced during May and June 2012.

The report starts by putting quality and management/ governance in higher education institutions into context, namely its European dimension. Then it reports on the findings that resulted from the analysis and synthesis of the information provided by the seven national reports. The reports present data derived not only from the empirical data collected at the institutions surveyed but also on document analysis relating to the national and institutional contexts, such as the political and legislative frameworks. The national reports were subjected to content analysis (see syntheses in the Annex). The findings are organised around two main themes: the institutional context for governance, and institutional governance and quality assurance. In the context of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) – Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions, many sections carry management and governance implications, but the following standards are particularly related to these themes:

Standard 1.1: Policy and procedures for quality assurance: Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

Standard 1.2: Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards: Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

Standard 1.5: Learning resources and student support: Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

The report concludes with the identification of barriers and examples of good practice arising from the discussion on the management and governance structures of the institutions and how they relate to the implementation of policy and procedures for quality assurance.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN CONTEXT: IMPLICATIONS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

In the last two decades a lot has been written about the changing face of governance and management in higher education ([Rhoades, 1992](#); [Braun and Merrien, 1999](#); [Amaral et al., 2003](#); [Bleiklie and Kogan, 2007](#); [de Boer et al., 2008](#)). Less has been investigated about the relationship of changing governance structures and developments in quality in higher education ([Salter and Tapper, 2002](#)).

At the European level, the Bologna process progressively led to the creation of the European Standards and Guidelines disseminated by ENQA ([ENQA, 2009](#)). Arguably, there is no direct link between governance and management structures and quality mentioned in the ESG. However, and especially, standard 1.1 by focusing on strategy, policy and procedures for quality assurance as well as the role of different stakeholders is implicitly talking about issues of management and governance. So are to a lesser extent standards 1.2 and 1.5, as they regard procedures for the review of programmes, and management of resources, respectively. Thus, these European developments interacting with national policies can be considered an important steering mechanism for higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Existing research has been pointing to governance processes grounded “on the creation of a common grammar that provides models, concepts and resources, and influences national discourses and decisions on higher education issues” ([Magalhães et al., 2012](#)).

Therefore, another important steering mechanism with impact on higher education institutions’ management and governance arrangements are the national states. In this respect, there seems to be a

move inspired by New Public Management in reconceptualising higher education institutions as corporations and their top management as chief executive officers ([Melo et al., 2010](#)). Following the massification of higher education and the concurrent pressures on higher education budgets and the consequent decline of per capita funding, the preoccupation with the quality of the education provided arose ([Barnett, 1992](#)). Initially, the mechanisms for quality review of programmes and awards were very much in the hands of the institutions themselves or their representative bodies, such as in the Netherlands or in Portugal. The quality assessment exercises were mostly about improvement via peer review, based on a collegial culture. Later and more recently the tide changed towards accreditation with an emphasis on accountability and student satisfaction with their experience ([Westerheijden et al., 2007](#)). The figure of the quality office in higher education institutions became common, the process of quality assurance more systematised and formalised, often more top-down, more managerial in character, and more centralised. At the same time, the role of other than academic stakeholders has probably strengthened: the professional non-academic manager, the student as consumer, the lay member representing the employers, industry and society at large. In this respect, Bleiklie and Kogan ([2007](#)) speak of a transition from a 'republic of scholars' to a 'stakeholder organisation'. Executive bodies have shrunk in an attempt to become more agile; collegial bodies often accused of being too slow to make decisions; the latter often losing deliberative powers and become merely consultative bodies to the executive centralised decision-making power. These management and governance structures are thus considered more apt to answer the requirements of external accreditation and more recently of the demands of an increasingly competitive market for students, staff and funding. Some have derided this move to a corporatist organisation with a loss of collegial values and risen managerial ones. Others, more positively, see the emergence of a partnership between non-academic professional managers and academics with better managed institutions which have been able to retain their collegial character and make a strength out of it ([Shattock, 2003, 2006](#)).

In the meantime, the literature on quality in higher education is full of reports stating that the frenzy for quality assessment, quality audit, quality assurance, quality review, quality accreditation, etc. has produced little evidence for the intrinsic improvement of the learning experience of students ([Harvey and Williams, 2010](#)). The movement for quality enhancement has changed the emphasis of the quality efforts back to the classroom and to the teaching and learning processes, with a call for student support, staff development and back to a collegial dialogue regarding learning outcomes, the development of a quality culture within institutions that is about academic values and bottom-up processes ([Sarrico, 2010](#)). There is clearly a tension between recent developments in the management and governance of higher education and what are the practices developed in academic circles ([Räsänen, 2012](#)). This is an issue worth exploring in this report.

Another important steering mechanism which may have an impact on quality issues is that of the market of higher education in Europe ([Dill and Soo, 2004](#)). Higher education as a competitive market is a rationale as well for the development of the EHEA, as a whole in competition with others, namely North America and Australia, but also between the European nations. These markets compete for students, staff, and resources. Quality assessment provides information, a requisite for the functioning of markets. The European Commission funded projects U-Map (www.u-map.eu), to develop a classification tool of higher education institutions, and U-Multirank (www.u-multirank.eu), to compare the performance of higher education institutions, will probably lead to increased transparency and stratification regarding the performance of nations and institutions. This stratification will boost competition. Often, however, the differentiator of performance is research productivity and impact, which will probably concentrate institutional efforts in this regard, and will do little for the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning ([Sarrico et al., 2010](#)).

Another important development might be the idea of third mission, and the onus on service provision and economic and social relevance of universities, which again raises the visibility of certain stakeholders such as lay members, representatives of industry, employers, the third sector, and society in general ([Amaral and Magalhães, 2002](#)). The role of these new stakeholders in quality assurance is worth exploring as well. In this vein, an always important stakeholder may have been also reconceptualised: along the role of actors in the teaching and learning process, the students become as well consumers of higher education, as their contribution in the cost-sharing has increased steadily in a number of countries ([Cardoso, 2012](#)). This is well exemplified in the UK National Student Survey, for instance.

FINDINGS FOR QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT/ GOVERNANCE

Institutional Context for Governance

Main changes for institutional governance and quality

Changes to institutional governance arrangements and quality have occurred in all countries studied (see Table 1). Relevant policy actors in these countries include the Ministry responsible for higher education and accreditation and/ or quality commissions and agencies. In the Czech Republic, the European Commission appears as a funding agency increasingly relevant to recent policy developments, bringing in a new layer with impact on the activities of higher education institutions. There, the ESG have been reflected on in some strategic higher education policy documents, even if there is no explicit adoption of the ESG into the legal framework (Higher Education Act). With the exception of the Czech Republic and the Netherlands, all countries acknowledge changes in the legal framework or in government policy in the last 5 years. For example, in Latvia, changes dated of 2011 introduced a quality management system as compulsory for all HEIs. In Poland, recently, the following has occurred: regulation in curricular design and delivery was introduced; a “teaching content framework”, with very negative reactions from the academic community was abolished; the National Qualifications framework for HE with the adoption of generic learning outcomes was drawn up for eight fields; a benchmark model for learning outcomes was adopted; regulation of study conditions at specific faculties and teaching cycles was introduced; as well as institutional accreditation focussing on internal quality assurance systems.

In Poland, the adoption of the national qualifications framework emerges as a regulation tool in the area of institutional governance and quality. In the Czech Republic the implementation of the national qualifications framework is in the pilot stage and it is unclear yet what the policy intentions of the Ministry may be. In Slovakia, there appears to be an emerging tendency to centralise the definition of study fields. In Poland, attempts to centralise national qualifications have been vehemently opposed by the academic community and abolished by government.

Except for the UK and the Netherlands, there are explicit national policies promoting internal mechanisms of quality assurance within higher education institutions. In these countries accreditation mechanisms are key evaluation tools. In the Netherlands a programme accreditation (2003-2010) was replaced by an optional institutional audit and external evaluation of all study programmes. A quality license for all newly-developed study programmes is required.

In some countries (NL, PT and UK), changes in the legislative or policy framework orient higher education towards the modernisation of governance structures. In the Netherlands, there is even a code of governance of universities and universities of applied sciences pointing into that direction. In Portugal, changes in governance structures make the participation of external stakeholders compulsory and reduce the representativeness of academic staff, students and management and administrative staff. In the UK, the Dearing Report (1997) recommended a code of practice setting out areas of responsibility for governing bodies, and the Lambert Review (2003) of business-university collaboration, praising small executive management teams (University Vice-Chancellor as “Chief Executive Officer”), underlines the reconfiguration of institutional management, with resultant impact on governance structures and quality at many institutions.

Reflecting the present circumstances of financial and economic crisis, in the UK (specifically in England), the Browne Report (2010) on higher education has influenced current changes to the funding of higher education (in particular for domestic undergraduate students). There is already evidence of some changes to governance arrangements, particularly in the enhanced representation of students in decision-making.

Impact on quality

In the Netherlands, Poland, UK and Portugal agencies and bodies created at national and institutional level have been having an impact on quality at institutional level (see Table 2). In the UK, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the UK Funding Councils maintain procedures and instruments that have a regulatory effect on universities (for example, the Quality Assurance Agency’s codes of practice, the National Student Survey and HEFCE/HESA Key Information Sets). As previously said in the Netherlands, all universities operate under a code of governance and in the UK and Portugal the quality and accreditation agencies follow very closely the legal framework to establish evaluation and accreditation criteria.

At institutional level, these changes have been impacting on the establishment of a wide range of bodies. For instance, in the Netherlands, a central representative council advises the management of institutions; an academy directorate, at faculty level, advises on proposals in terms of policies, exam and course regulations, and budget; an advisory committee, representing business and industry, provides input from the professional field to develop study programmes. In all of the HEIs surveyed, in some form or another, an internal quality assurance working group was established, which designed an internal quality assurance system based on the “Plan Do Check Act” continuous quality improvement cycle of Deming. In the Portuguese higher education institutions surveyed the strength of organisational rationales and the enhancement of managerial bodies in detriment of collegial bodies is visible on governance structures and processes. Additionally, the Senate became merely an advisory body. These changes have been creating tensions between central administration and faculties/schools, and it has been recognised that further coordination is needed. To cope with the demands of the Portuguese Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation Agency, the HEIs surveyed have been establishing offices and task forces to deal with quality issues and to promote internal quality assurance systems. In Polish higher education institutions, because accreditation is focusing on the functioning of the internal quality assurance system, as it occurs in Portugal, there is the enhancement of the central administration level (Rector and Senate) that take administrative decisions related to curriculum design and functioning of the internal quality assurance system. In the UK, a different trend is impacting higher education institutions’ structures. The recognition that the “standard” model of undergraduate provision is unlikely to bring enough income is having an impact on the simplification and rationalisation of committee structures, their membership and their roles (e.g. Student Experience, Academic Quality and Standards Committee, Research Committee).

Decision making culture

Regarding the culture of decision making the balance between bottom-up and top-down approaches is worth discussing. A bottom-up quality culture does not prevail within the higher education institutions surveyed (see Table 3). Combinations of top-down and hybrid cultures (top-down and bottom-up) are commonly seen. Hybrid cultures have been the norm in the UK, although pressure resulting from budget cuts and fast-moving changes to higher education policy has tended to emphasise top-down planning and control in some institutions. In Portuguese higher education institutions hybrid quality cultures prevail at institutional level. In Slovakia, the combination seems to emerge between bottom-up and hybrid quality cultures.

Research findings show problematic issues arising from the tensions between central administration and the shop-floor level. For instance, in the Czech Republic, there seems to have been an increase of the role played by top management on quality issues, the decision making culture has been promoting top-down arrangements, which is lowering the academics’ trust in institutional quality management, aggravated by complaints about time-consuming teaching and research activities, and scarcity of resources in the wake of the economic crisis.

Institutional Governance and Quality Assurance

Governance structures’ role in institutional quality assurance

Governance structures’ role in institutional quality assurance with impact on the development of institutional quality cultures is to be found in the role and processes of governance. In the Czech Republic, at some of the higher education institutions analysed, there seems to be the centralisation of decision-making processes, as there are some cases of faculty development plans following the Rectorate’s approach to quality management. Nevertheless, the process of re-accreditation involves the top institutional level, middle management and front level staff. This could indicate the existence of hybrid mechanisms of decision-making and the subsistence of a formalised institutional quality culture. In this grouping, manifesting a formalised quality culture, Poland also appears to emerge; where the strength of hybrid mechanisms of decision-making could reveal the still very much formalised character of institutional quality cultures. For instance, the consultation with internal stakeholders and the role of the Senate Programme Committee might balance the top-down decision-making culture.

Research findings seem to establish an association between decision-making cultures and institutional quality cultures. In the case of the Netherlands and the UK, in spite of some clear top-down features of decision making cultures, a hybrid culture seems to be emerging, where the orientation towards quality improvement appears to be significant. In these countries the student opinion is paramount. In the Netherlands, student evaluations feed changes in the curriculum. In the UK, the impact of higher undergraduate fees in England and the influence of the National Students Survey have tended to enhance student status at all levels of university governance, although many institutions would claim that this

enhanced influence is a natural result of student-centred quality policies rather than a straightforward reaction to external forces. The involvement of students might be important as well in the case of Portugal and Latvia, where the students' opinions are also relevant to change curricula. The institutional quality culture in Portuguese higher education institutions, however, is still very much focusing on formal elements.

Governance structures' intervention in the QA of study programmes

The governance structures' intervention in the quality assurance of study programmes (ESG 1.2 and ESG 1.5) focuses on the following dimensions:

- Learning outcomes;
- Curriculum and learning and teaching design;
- Periodic reviews; and
- Resources and student support.

An overview about curriculum design, learning outcomes, periodic reviews, resources and student support appears can be found in Table 4 of the Annex.

The HEIs surveyed showed compliance with formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review, and monitoring of their programmes and awards. Research findings appear to reflect the commitment of academics at the shop floor level, as well.

However, it is not possible to state that the confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is established and maintained, as the data gathered is inconclusive whether the quality assurance activities surveyed follow very strictly the guidelines previewed in the ESG.

The quality assurance of programmes and awards is expected to include development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes (CZ, LV, NL, PL, PT, UK). Careful attention to curriculum and programme design and content is visible in all case-studies, and the availability of appropriate learning resources is to be confirmed under the framework of accreditation processes (LV, PT).

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Barriers and challenges emerging from the introduction of policy and procedures for quality assurance and the approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards are mainly related to the low awareness about ESG (CZ, UK, SK, LV, PL PT), as found in Table 5. As acknowledged in the comparative analysis of WP 5 – Survey of Internal Quality Assurance Systems, the data gathered for WP 8 appears to confirm that the legal framework could be further developed to foster the interpretation/translation of ESG into national legislation and institutional practices. For example, the Czech Republic recognised a somewhat passive role of the state bodies (i.e. the Ministry and the Accreditation Commission). Anyhow, there is a fine borderline between a national initiative that allegedly contributes to raise awareness and the consequences of national top-down movements which can have perverse effects, as was the case in Poland. National top-down movements may not favour the development of institutional quality cultures, thus weakening the motivation for their development. These preliminary remarks point to the fact that national structures and processes of governance are probably better understood taking into account national and institutional specificities and priorities.

In the same vein, at institutional level, it is apparent that there is a tension between the development of a quality culture and centralised control management (LV, PT, NL, SK). In the case of Slovakia and Latvia there generally seems to be a lack of staff motivation, or inertia, and a lack of flexibility to implement changes.

In the UK, there is a the potential for tension between the increased “marketisation” of higher education in the UK and new pressures on governance systems. These pressures include increased levels of external scrutiny and accountability measures, diversification of business bases (for example through partnerships with other providers) and commercialisation of university assets. There is little evidence from this study however that there has been much serious attempt to rethink governance arrangements to reflect these changes and some concern that certain constituencies of students and other stakeholders may be affected.

GOOD PRACTICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations, deriving from good practice, should be read under the framework of national and institutional specific settings, where alignment of existing practices with formal European standards and guidelines appears to come forward in different guises (see Table 6). The cases presented by the Czech Republic, focusing on the diversification in designs of evaluation between institutional units versus the development of a rectorate quality unit leading to plans of unification inherent to re-accreditation processes, is a good example. Or the Portuguese case, where frameworks and guidelines of the accreditation agency to promote the implementation of internal quality assurance systems align with the ESG.

From the analysis of the Dutch case there is a theme emerging: different stages or phases of quality assurance and accreditation may be leading to the development of practices at institutional level that would potentially foster the adaptation to the ESG. For example, the accreditation framework fostered the shift to institutional audit; the centralised action linked to accreditation and quality assurance, combined with the bottom-up consultation processes and the PDCA cycle, provides clear lines of accountability, enhances transparency and stimulates benchmarking between different faculties. These are some exercises that, in the Dutch context, are promoting quality improvement and, thus, promoting the ESG.

Another issue that empirical findings tend to reveal, such as in the Latvian and Polish case-studies, is that the participation of students in decision-making processes is perceived as a good practice.

Following a drawback related to the strengthening of the top management level in quality assurance decisions (see previous section), the Polish case identified the assistance provided to the academic staff in preparing obligatory learning outcomes for the curriculum descriptors as a good practice. This finding reinforces the idea of a balance between what is a good practice and what could turn into a barrier. The Latvian case also reinforces this aspect, in so far as the expansion of management systems is associated with the development of learning outcomes.

Thus, the question of low awareness of ESG per se might not be the problem, especially at the shop floor level; in fact, at this level, they may be consider a disturbance to daily teaching and learning activities. The important thing may be that good practice derived from the ESG is promoted through national and institutional governance and management arrangements and changes practice for the better and as a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Finally, supra-national and national agencies as well as individual universities may wish to consider whether the changing nature of higher education, including changes to staff roles, changes to student expectations, and changes to the portfolio of core business pursued by institutions might require changes to governance arrangements.

CONCLUSIONS

The comparative analysis related to Work Package 8 – Quality and Management/Governance of the IBAR project regarding the relationship between the themes of quality and management/ governance of higher education institutions in Europe presents some interesting issues.

Firstly, national and institutional contexts of policy implementation are important factors to grasp to better understand barriers and good practices hindering or fostering the adoption of the ESG at institutional level.

Secondly, the analysis of the implementation of ESG at institutional level is complex due to the existence of a wide range of drivers for change. Changes related to the legal framework, norms, values and interpretations, together with adaptations of governance structures and processes, occur at different levels and paces. Additionally, the roles of academic staff, students and administrative and management staff are being reconfigured. The reconfiguration is inducing hybrid mechanisms of both top-down and bottom-up decision-making and the need to cope with dynamic equilibriums regarding institutional quality management. Changes impacting academic staff are to be found in their involvement with the teaching and learning process and the dynamics associated with the management of quality systems. The fact that students are increasingly perceived as clients and consumers, or simply as important stakeholders as active actors in the teaching and learning process, has been reflected in their involvement in the decision-making process, an experience that they value and that has contributed to enhance their status. In many cases, administrative and management staff are driving changes to quality management by overseeing institution-wide processes (for example, student surveys) and are key actors in quality processes. This

has been an important shift in the balance of power in many institutions. But, while they are expected to keep up with the pace of the expansion of management systems, academics often fear the possibility of them intruding in the actual teaching and learning process.

Thirdly, quality management and governance changes associated with the implementation of the ESG, while reinforcing the quality management system, can bring on negative consequences associated with a quality culture characterised by compliance and formalism, rather than genuine improvement of teaching and learning. This situation induces unintended consequences coupled with tensions between academic staff and administrative and management staff originated by an often paradoxical separation between quality assurance procedures and the actual teaching and learning processes; as if what goes on in the classroom is actually kept apart from the whole quality assurance system. However, the need to cope with and manage these tensions, through appropriate balanced governance arrangements, is necessary and might in itself constitute a good practice; a necessary requirement to producing favourable outcomes regarding quality improvement and enhancement.

ANNEX

Table : Main changes for institutional governance and quality

	Dates	Instruments	Relevant policy actors
CZ	2000	Development Programmes as a major funding incentive-based	Ministry
		Accreditation of study programmes only. Institutional accreditation and accreditation of areas of study being debated.	Accreditation Commission
		Multi-criteria for institutional evaluation	
		Adoption of ESG	EU funds
LV	2011	Adoption of National Qualifications Framework (piloting phase)	
		Law 2011	Ministry
NL	1985 1993 1997 2006	Quality Management System compulsory for HEIs	
		Accreditation system	
		White paper: HE: autonomy and quality	Ministry
		Introduction of self-regulation principle	Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation
NL	1997 2006	Modernising University's governance structures	
		Code of Governance of Universities	
		Programme Accreditation (2003-2010)	
		Introduction of institutional audit (optional)	
PL	2011	External Evaluation of all study programmes	
		Quality license for all newly-developed study programmes	
		Amendment to the Act on Higher Education (of 2005) containing: Regulation in curricular design and delivery "teaching content framework" (negative reaction from academic community)	Minister of Science and Higher Education
		National Qualifications framework for HE with the adoption of generic learning outcomes drawn up for eight fields	Central Council for Science and Higher Education (advisory competences)
PL	2011	Model (benchmark) learning outcomes	Polish Accreditation Committee
		Study conditions at specific faculties and teaching cycles	
		Abolishing of "teaching content framework"	
		Institutional accreditation focussing on internal quality assurance systems	
UK	1985	Jarratt Report advocating a new managerial model of decision-making and accountability re-conceptualising universities as corporations	Ministry
		Dearing Report (1997) recommending a Code of Practice setting out areas of responsibility for Governing Bodies.	Funding Councils (England, Wales, Scotland)
	1997		Research Assessment Exercise
	2003	Lambert Review (2003) of Business-University Collaboration praising small executive management teams (University Vice-Chancellor as "Chief Executive").	Quality Assurance Agency CVCP/UUK NUS
UK	2010	Browne Report on HE in England changed the ways in which undergraduate programmes and places are funded promoting the competition between "middle" institutions.	
SK		National system of Study Fields	Minister of Education,

	National legislation defines the internal mechanisms for internal quality assurance at HEIs	Science Research and Sport Accreditation Commission (advisory body of the Government)
	Pressures on HEIs to introduce internal systems of quality assurance	
Dates	Instruments	Relevant policy actors
PT	2007	Legal Framework imposing changes on governance structures (RJIES) making compulsory the participation of external stakeholders and reducing the representativeness of academic staff, students and management and administrative staff.
		Promotion of quality assurance mechanisms at institutional level
		Adoption of external quality assessment systems
		Introduction of the accreditation system of degree programmes replacing a system emphasising quality improvement
	2009	

Table : Impact on quality

	Drivers	Changes at institutional level with impact on quality	Role
NL	Both universities and universities of applied sciences have a Code of Governance issued by the their representative bodies	Central Representative Council Academy Directorate (at Faculty level) Advisory Committee at faculty level representing business and industry All universities have the PDCA cycle in one form or another and their own quality office	Advisory to the management Advises on proposals in terms of policies, exam and course regulations, and budget Provide input from the professional field to develop the study programmes Design an internal quality assurance system Promote “trial” audit
PL	Accreditation is focusing on the functioning of the internal quality assurance system	Rector Senate Department Councils Collegial	Administrative decisions related to curriculum design and functioning of internal quality assurance system Academic decision on designing and running programmes
UK	Code of Practice on University Governance Rules laid down by funding councils Quality Assurance Agency’s codes of practice “close” to legislation National Student Survey HEFCE/HESA Key Information Sets	Simplification and rationalisation of committee structures, membership and roles (e.g. Student Experience, Academic Quality and Standards Committee, Research Committee)	Recognition that the “standard” model of undergraduate provision is unlikely to bring enough income
PT	Stronger organisational rationales, enhancement of managerial bodies in detriment	Changes on governance structures and processes Senate (advisory)	Tensions between central administration level and Faculties/Schools

of collegial bodies (RJIES) Higher Education Assessment and Accreditation New regulations for the assessment of academic staff	Offices, task forces established to deal with quality issues	Recognition that further coordination is needed Promotion of internal quality assurance systems
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Table : Decision making culture

	Decision-making culture	Manifestations	Problematic issues
CZ	Top-down Hybrid	Some faculties do not develop their own long-term plan; others do. Faculty statues follow rectorate approach to quality management Establishment of the Department for Quality Assurance at the top Council for Quality Assurance (advisory board) Non-existence of academic Senate (private HEI) Pro-active role of the institutional top management	Inadequate participation of external stakeholders Uneven level of trust (some faculties do trust, others not quite) attributed to the top-down institutional quality management Time-consuming teaching and research Scarcity of resources in the wake of economic crisis Top management on quality issues tend to increase
LV	Bottom-up Hybrid	Teaching and learning processes Discussion involving the parties affected Decentralisation of management activities	
NL	Hybrid	PDCA cycle Graduate monitor and Staff Monitor Student evaluations feeding changes of the curriculum Faculties develop their own plan of action within the limits of strategic vision of the university	Changes to study programmes are gradual and incremental Difficulties in encompassing a wide range of programmes with different “levels” of quality [quality as a matter of importance for the whole institutions] Varied picture: while in the universities it is more mixed, management by faculties as well as increasing central influence; in universities of applied sciences it used to be more mixed and now there is increased devolvement of responsibilities to the faculties. Hard sciences would like to see more bottom-up initiatives
PL	Top-down Hybrid	Learning outcomes validation University leadership has impact on the pro-quality university Rector’s Committee for Didactic Offer Compliance with NQF Team for Education Quality Management Pro-rectors for Education Quality, for Strategy and Development Academic environment is engaged with the reforms Consultation with internal stakeholders	Strong impact of national regulations (NQF) favours top-down orientation Haste, bureaucracy and discouragement

Senate Programme Committee

	Decision-making culture	Manifestations	Problematic issues
UK	Top-down/ Hybrid	<p>Senior management associated with changes in strategic priorities</p> <p>Shifts in decision-making from wider academic community to a smaller executive team</p> <p>Enhanced representation for School/Faculties managers</p> <p>Rationalisation of job descriptions across all the institution</p> <p>Changes in time and formatting of reporting from schools to the centre</p> <p>Students described their enhanced status at all levels of university governance</p>	Dissatisfaction with consultation opportunities
SK	Bottom-up	Academic Senate steers the Rector	
	Hybrid	<p>Commissions contribute to the development of internal documents and standards</p> <p>Employees develop tasks top-down oriented</p>	
PT	Hybrid	<p>Academic, administrative, quality, technical services are centralised</p> <p>Pedagogic and scientific matters are at the Faculties</p> <p>Relevance of student opinions to change curricula</p>	<p>Communication gaps are unidirectional to the top</p> <p>Regulation for assessment of academic staff</p>

Table : Curriculum design, learning outcomes, periodic reviews, resources and student support

	Curriculum design	Learning outcomes	Periodic reviews	Resources and student support
CZ	Departmental level Intensification of the role at central level	National Qualification Framework in piloting stage	Reviews are a component of internal quality evaluations	Institutional capacity-building
NL	Professors have a say via the study programmes committees Curriculum design linked to the professional character as an element of quality assurance	More openness and awareness in formulation of learning outcomes and linking them to assessment Competence-based learning measures learning outcomes in form of competences	Reviews are a component of the improvement cycle	Part of the improvement cycle Part of the quality policy in the universities of applied sciences
LV	Faculty level (Senate and Convent of Counsellors) Professors and junior staff active in promoting curricular changes	Learning outcomes New procedures to harmonise course descriptions and student assessment methods Expansion of management systems Publically available	Annual compulsory reviews By national regulations it includes feedback from employers and alumni	To be assessed under the framework of accreditation process of individual study programmes
PL	Designed at departmental level, accepted by senate	National regulations make compulsory the use of learning outcomes defined for eight subject areas	Reviews are included in routine annual cycle	Institutional capacity-building

	Curriculum design	Learning outcomes	Periodic reviews	Resources and student support
UK	Adoption of strategic and institution-wide principles and guidelines Multiplicity of reference points and of stakeholders creates challenges	Universally implemented. Mandated by National Qualifications Framework. QAA requires learning outcomes for all programmes/modules.	Reviews linked to wider strategic initiatives	Student experience as a coherent, carefully managed and central part of university business
SK	Involvement of governance bodies Faculty level with personal responsibility of professors at departmental level	National regulation on the compulsory part of the particular study programmes' content according to the study field to which these belong	Involvement of Scientific/Arts Council at middle management level Reviews are a component of internal quality evaluations at faculty level and periodical (every 6 years; legislatively compulsory) accreditation at university level	Assessed by students' quality of education assessment [Lack] Institutional capacity-building
PT	Involvement of governance bodies at middle management level	Evaluation and dissemination of learning outcomes is dedicated by law guaranteeing formal implementation not its embedment at institutional level	Routine practice involving middle management level	To be assessed under the framework of accreditation process of individual study programmes

Table : Barriers to ESG

CZ	Low awareness about ESG Somewhat passive role of the state bodies (i.e. the Ministry and the Accreditation Commission) Inadequate participation of external stakeholders Unevenly-balanced (case-by-case) trust attributed to the top-down institutional quality management
LV	Low awareness about ESG Inertia of academic staff
NL	Despite hybrid nature of the quality assurance system, top-down features of the system may be detrimental and foster window dressing rather than improvement Communication between the top and the lower levels does not always work Concern about micro rules and control management
PL	Lack of practice and methodologies at institutional level to follow graduates Lack of understanding of study flexibility, three-cycle studies National top-down movement did not favour the development of quality culture weakening the motivation for its development
UK	Low awareness about ESG/belief that ESG1 is covered by national frameworks. Multiplicity of other drivers for the design of governance systems and the direction of strategic decision-making.

Some evidence that current governance arrangements do not reflect fully the complexity of UK higher education.

SK Low awareness about ESG

Lack of motivation of staff and lack of flexibility to implement changes

PT Alignment of existing practices with formal European standards and guidelines

Table : Good practice

CZ	Diversification in designs of evaluation among institutional units [versus development of rectorate quality unit leading to plans of unification inherent to re-accreditation processes]
LV	Participation of students in decision-making processes Quality Management System
NL	Accreditation framework fostered the shift to institutional audit Centralised action linked to accreditation and quality assurance combined with the bottom-up consultation processes PDCA cycle provides clear lines of accountability, enhances transparency and stimulates benchmarking between different Faculties
PL	Students' self-government based on the students association Assistance provided to the academic staff in preparing obligatory learning outcomes curriculum descriptions
UK	Importance of frameworks and guidelines associated to subject areas Alignment with Europe is recognised as a desirable or strategically useful outcome of quality arrangements High levels of student representation in governance activities Considerable devolved responsibility for internal evaluation within institutional guidelines
SK	Recognition that alumni opinion is important Participation in international projects focusing on quality contributes to raise the awareness about ESG
PT	Frameworks and guidelines of Accreditation Agency to promote the implementation of internal quality assurance systems align with ESG

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