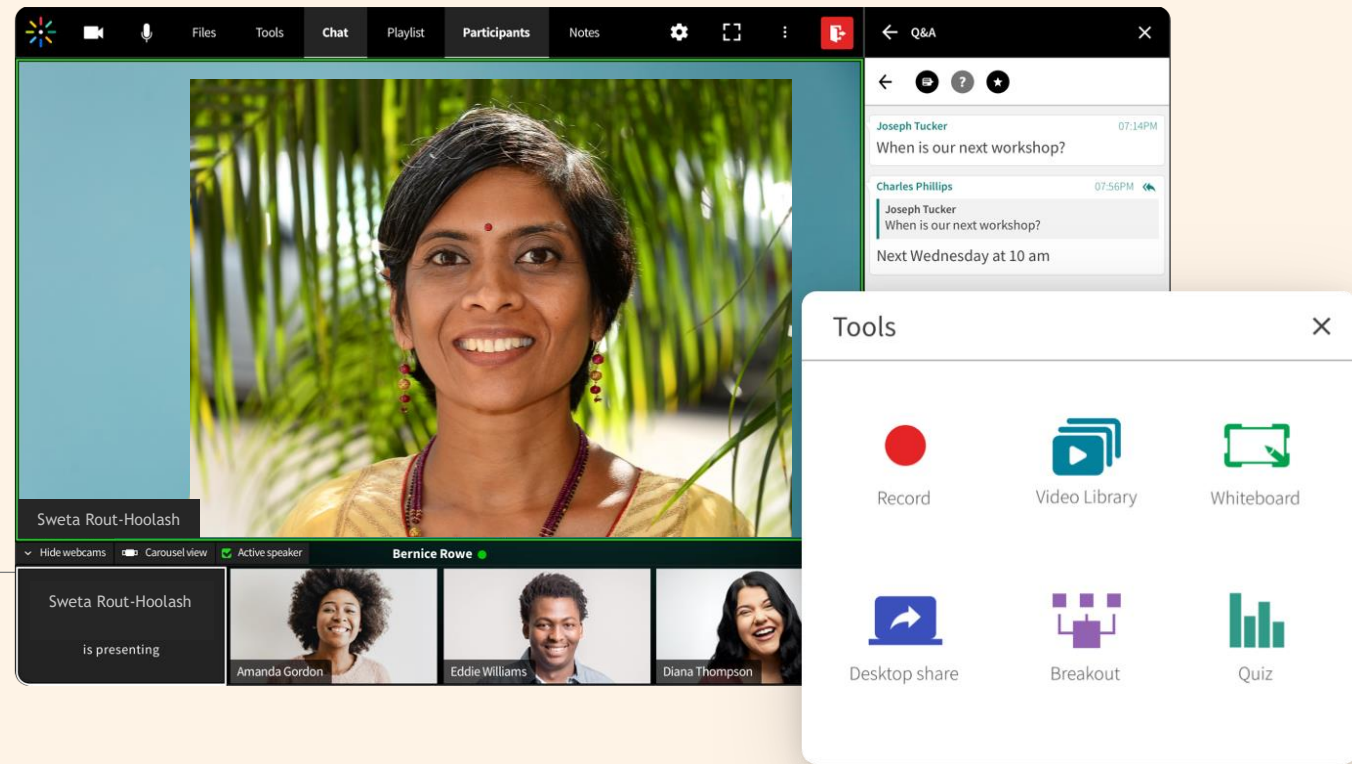


What is Quality and Quality Assurance in Higher Education?

Dr. Sweta Rout-Hoolash, PFHEA
10th Nov 2025



Online Training:

Students in Quality Assurance

Introduction to Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

Focus on ... (but in no particular order)

- Concepts of Quality.
- Quality Assurance.
- Key Definitions.
- Dimensions of Quality Assurance.
- Stakeholders.

What is Quality?

THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Defining quality - A debate for the ages

Descriptive definition - Back in 1974, the philosopher Pirsig wrote:

“Quality - you know what it is, yet you don’t know what it is. But that’s self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There’s nothing to talk about. But if you can’t say what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it doesn’t exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really does exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously, some things are better than others - but what’s the “betterness”? So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding any place to get traction. What the hell is Quality? What is it?”

(Pirsig 1999)

Commonly, Quality is synonymous with the following:
but they still don't define "what is quality" ? !!

Quality Assurance

A collection of methods that checks the quality of processes or outcomes and can have the purpose of compliance, control, accountability or improvement/enhancement.

Standards

pre-set criterion
level of attainment
measurable indicators

used with the means to compare
and assess things

passed a set of checks to assure
minimum standards.

Concepts of quality

➤ Quality as fitness *for* purpose

- For example, how well does an institution, program, or service fulfill its stated mission and objectives.

➤ Quality as value for money

- For example, do the outcomes for students and stakeholders reflect the value of their invested resources?

➤ Quality as transformation

- *“shifting from teaching to learning; encouraging critical reflection; developing explicit skills, attitudes and abilities as well as knowledge; developing appropriate assessment procedures; rewarding transformative teaching; encouraging discussion of pedagogy; linking quality improvement to learning”*

(Harvey, 2012)

Various stakeholders' notions of quality in higher education



Lecturers

Quality focuses on processes of teaching & learning & assessment



Students

Their academic journey and future career



Alumni

Career opportunities



Professional Services

Service delivery, Student experience, Responsiveness



Parents

Wellbeing, Value for money, Transparency



Employers

Competences of the graduates



Management

Achievements of the institution (tangible and intangible)



Community

Ethical and socially responsible citizens



Society

Address present and future challenges

In session Activity - on Accountability

Reflect on the following question:

According to you, who should be held accountable for maintaining quality in higher education?

Be ready to share *and defend* your answer !

Main Quality Assurance Terminology and Definitions

SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO HIGHER EDUCATION



External Quality Assurance (EQA) vs. Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)



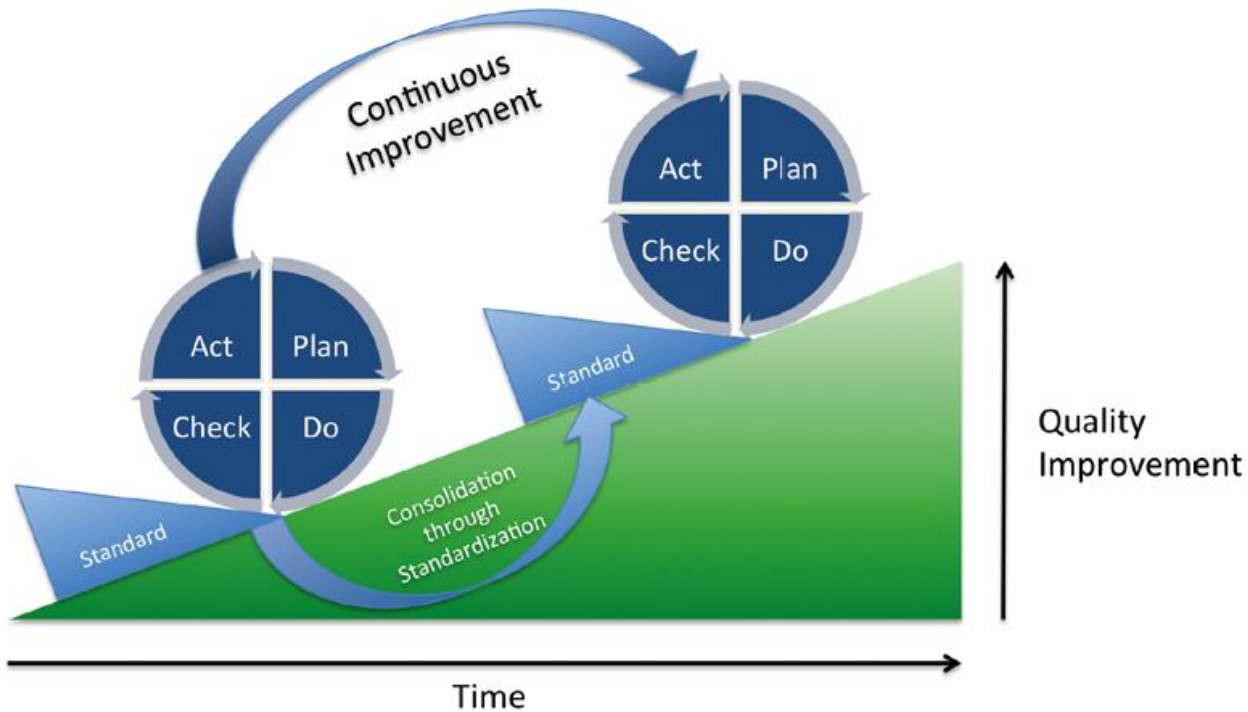
EQA

- State (Ministries, Regulators)
- Programme and Institutional Accreditation or Audits

IQA

- Inside the Institution
- QA systems, Processes, Evaluations etc

Quality Management Systems (QMS)

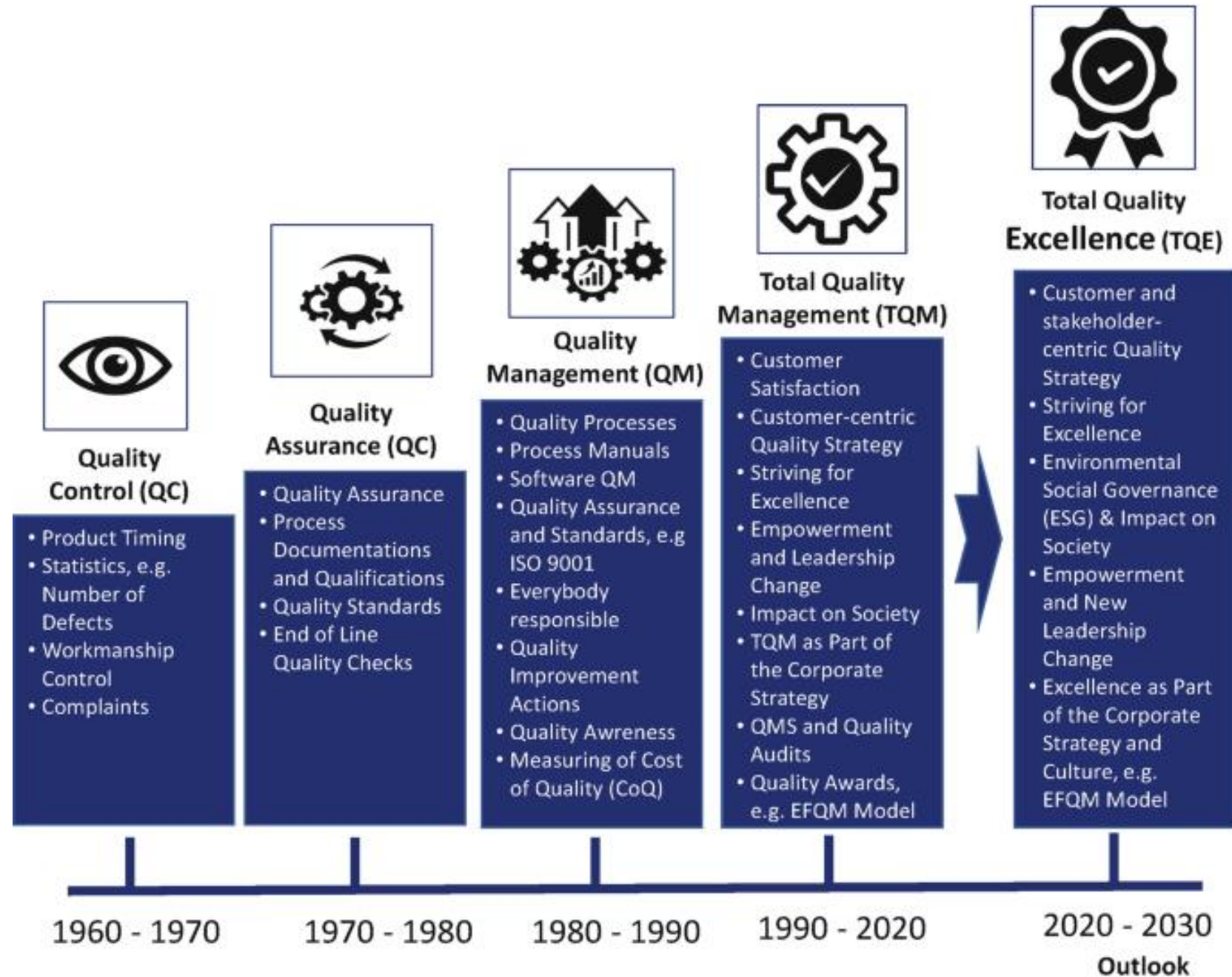


The PDCA cycle of continuous improvement

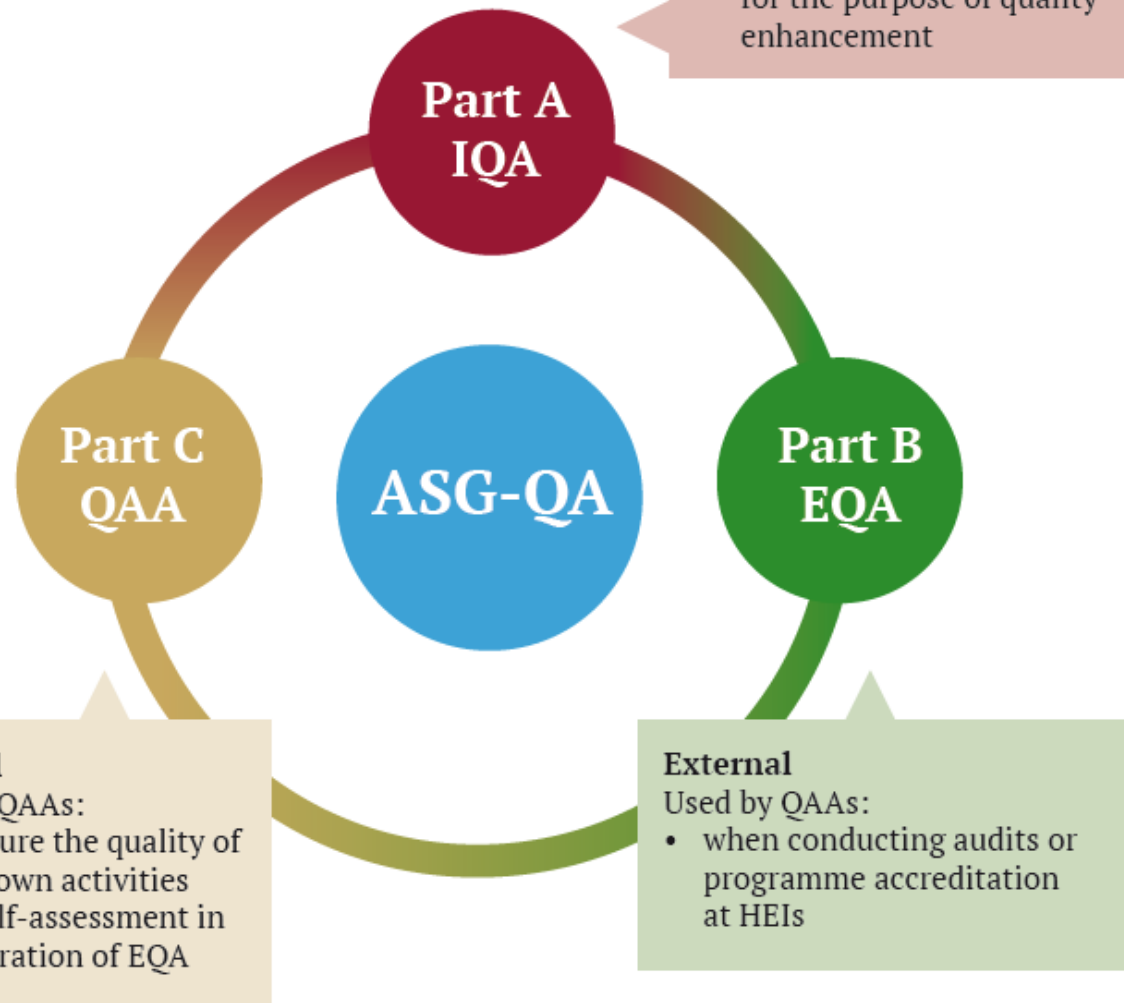
- Quality Control
- Quality Assurance
- Quality Assessment
- Quality Enhancement
- One main instrument is evaluation.
- The PDCA cycle is a basic evaluation model and tool and is therefore vital for the improvement in different settings.
- Accreditations and Audits
- Benchmarking

A history of quality management

Figure adapted from citation in Helmold, 2023



IQA – Internal Quality Assurance
EQA – External Quality Assurance
QAA – Quality Assurance Agency



Interlinkage of the three parts of the ASG -QA

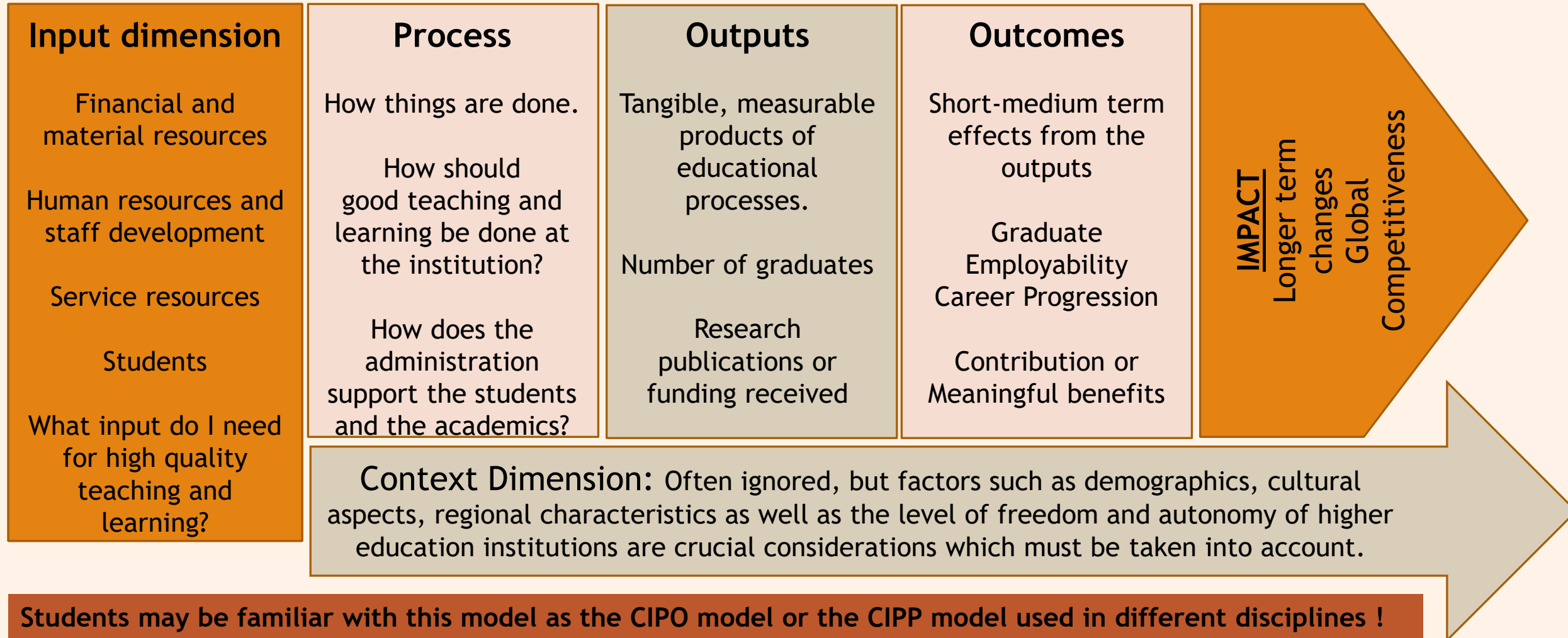
AFRICAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Dimensions of QA

QUALITY DIMENSIONS AND FRAMEWORK:

INPUT, PROCESS, OUTPUT, OUTCOME, IMPACT AND CONTEXT

The productive system framework: inputs into outcomes



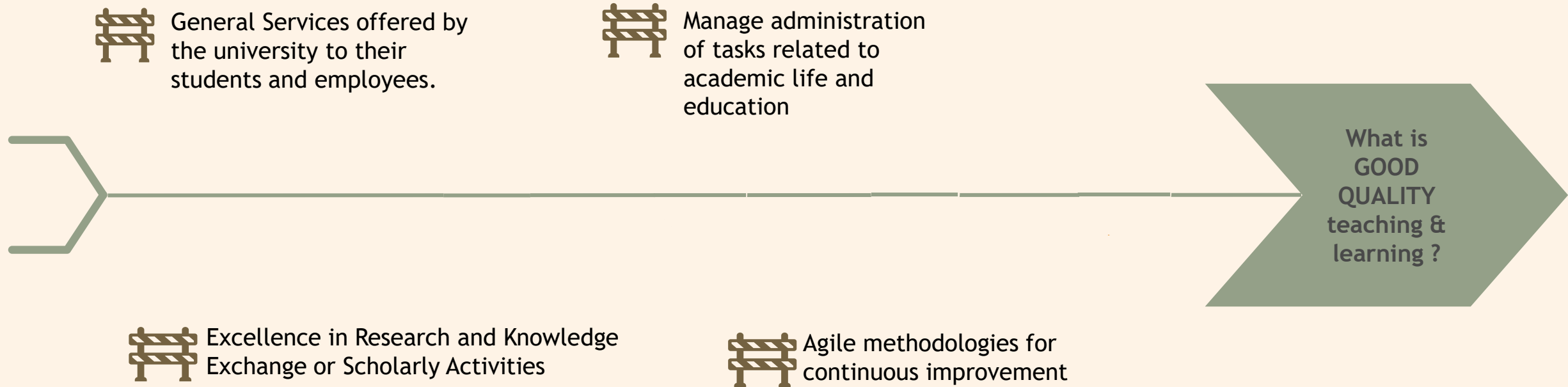
Examples at different levels of higher education's ecosystem

Level of HE	Output	Outcome	Impact
Lectures	Students who passed exam	Students with knowledge and skills on topic studied in the lectures	Students successfully master the final exams and graduate
Study programme	Graduates with degree certificate	Graduates with increased knowledge and skills who find a commensurate job	Graduates who serve and improve society and the economy and are successful in their careers
System	Increase of number in graduates	Qualified workforce for society and labour market	Higher educational status of population and advancement of society and the economy - global competitiveness

Integration and Collaboration

THE RELATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH THE
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, ADMINISTRATION AND RESEARCH

Relationships between different quality dimensions



Motivations for Quality Assurance in HE



Thank you very
much for your
attention!

NOW, let's hear
from you !!!

Any questions,
comments or
insights

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