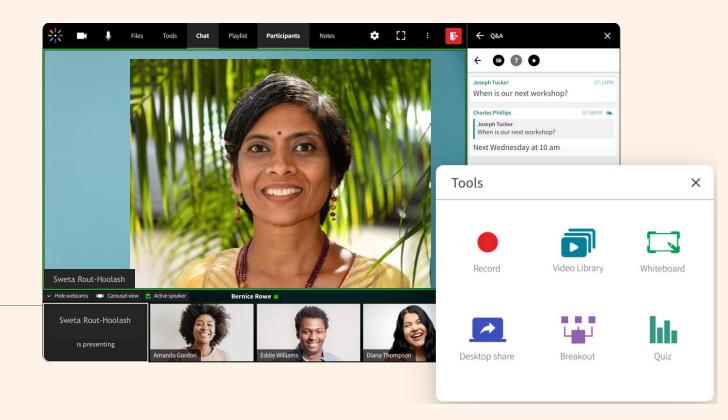
What is Quality and Quality Assurance in Higher Education?



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 fulfills 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"

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





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

Reflect on the following question:

In session Activity -

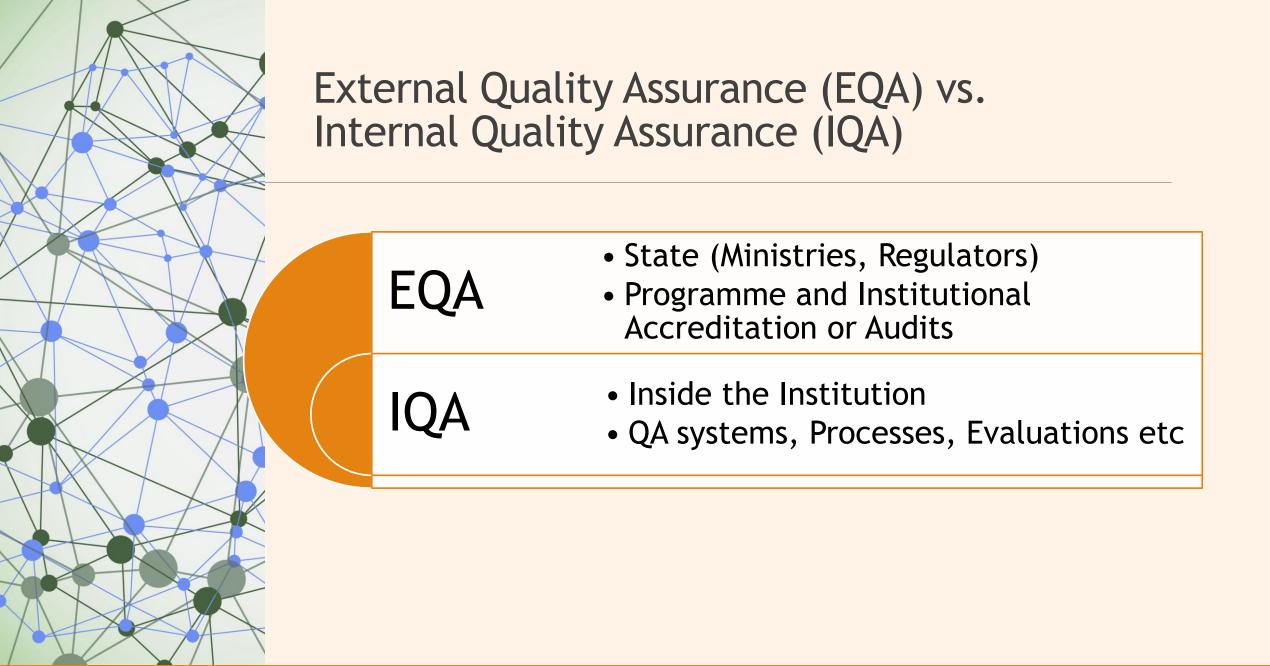
According to you, who should be held accountable for maintaining quality in higher education?

on Accountability

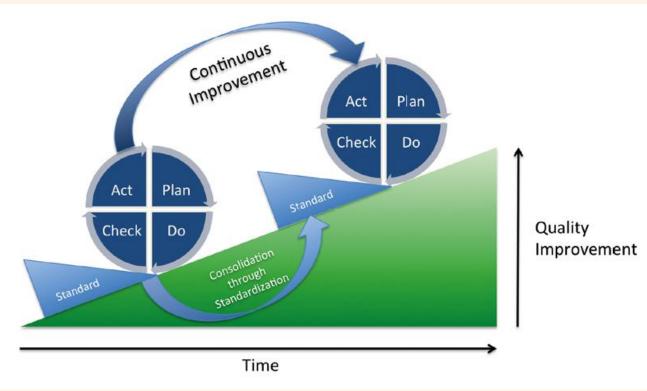
Be ready to share and defend your answer!

Main Quality Assurance Terminology and Definitions

SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO HIGHER EDUCATION



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





Quality Assurance (QC)

- Quality Assurance
- Process
 Documentations and Qualifications
- Quality Standards
- End of Line Quality Checks



Quality Management (QM)

- Quality Processes
- Process Manuals
- · Software QM
- Quality Assurance and Standards, e.g ISO 9001
- Everybody responsible
- Quality Improvement Actions
- Quality Awreness
- Measuring of Cost of Quality (CoQ)



Total Quality Management (TQM)

- Customer
 Satisfaction
- Customer-centric Quality Strategy
- Striving for Excellence
- Empowerment and Leadership Change
- Impact on Society
- TQM as Part of the Corporate Strategy
- QMS and Quality Audits
- Quality Awards,
 e.g. EFQM Model



Total Quality Excellence (TQE)

- Customer and stakeholdercentric Quality Strategy
- Striving for Excellence
- Environmental Social Governance (ESG) & Impact on Society
- Empowerment and New Leadership Change
- Excellence as Part of the Corporate Strategy and Culture, e.g.
 EFQM Model

1960 - 1970

1970 - 1980

1980 - 1990

1990 - 2020

2020 - 2030

Outlook

Internal IQA – Internal Quality Assurance Used by HEIs: EQA - External Quality Assurance to assure their own quality OAA - Quality Assurance Agency · when doing self-assessment for the purpose of quality enhancement Part A **IQA** Part C Part B **ASG-QA QAA EQA** Internal External Used by OAAs: Used by OAAs: · when conducting audits or · to assure the quality of their own activities programme accreditation · for self-assessment in at HEIs preparation of EQA

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

Input dimension

Financial and material resources

Human resources and staff development

Service resources

Students

What input do I need for high quality teaching and learning?

Process

How things are done.

How should good teaching and learning be done at the institution?

How does the administration support the students and the academics?

Outputs

Tangible, measurable products of educational processes.

Number of graduates

Research publications or funding received

Outcomes

Short-medium term effects from the outputs

Graduate
Employability
Career Progression

Contribution or Meaningful benefits

Longer term changes Global Competitiveness

Context Dimension: Often ignored, but factors such as demographics, cultural aspects, regional characteristics as well as the level of freedom and autonomy of higher education institutions are crucial considerations which must be taken into account.

Students may be familiar with this model as the CIPO model or the CIPP model used in different disciplines!

Examples at different levels of higher education's ecosystem

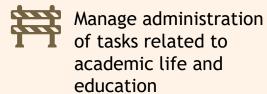
Level of HE	Output	Outcome	Impact	
Lectures	Students who passed exam	Students with knowledge and skills on topic studied in the lectures	Students successfully master the final exams and graduate	
Study programme	Graduates with degree certificate	Graduates with increased knowledge and skills who find 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

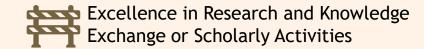
Relationships between different quality dimensions

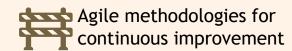












Motivations for Quality Assurance in HE

Control		Accountability		Trust		Evaluation	
Globalisation		Massification of HE		Widening Access		Diversity and Equality	
Competition		Mobility		Recognition			

Thank you very much for your attention!

NOW, let's hear from you !!!

Any questions, comments or insights

List of References

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