Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE) – moving towards strengthened cooperation

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Cross-Border Higher Education (CBHE):

‘education in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based’

(UNESCO/Council of Europe 2001 Code of Good Practice in the provision of transnational education)
Overview

The QACHE project: its aims and activities

…its findings and outcomes

…the QACHE Toolkit

…first, need for inter-agency cooperation: a visible case from the UK
The main area of growth in UK HE

- Total students in the UK
- International students in the UK
- Off-shore students
Spread of UK TNE

Students studying wholly overseas by geographic region of activity 2012/13

- North America 32,395
- EU 77,240
- South America 2,130
- Africa 129,450
- Middle East 52,790
- Asia 281,775
- Other Europe 19,940
- World total 598,925

Top 5 countries of activity:
- Malaysia 68,020
- Singapore 50,025
- China 42,475
- Pakistan 41,805
- Hong Kong 29,905

Source: www.HESA.ac.uk/pr199
The QACHE project (2013-15)

- Funded by the European Commission
- Undertaken by a project consortium led by ENQA:
  - ANECA (Spain), GAC (Germany), HCERES (France), QAA (UK), TEQSA (Australia)
  - APQN and ANQAHE
- Main aims:
  - enhance international practice in the QA of CBHE
  - develop an European approach to the QA of CBHE
QACHE’s three phases

Phase 1 – Information gathering

Regional networks surveys (ENQA, APQN, ANQAHE)
European providers survey (SP, DE, FR, UK)
Country reports (ANECA, GAC, HCERES, QAA, TEQSA)

Phase 2 – Regional expert forums

Europe (UK), Gulf (Bahrain), Asia (Macao)

Phase 3 – Deliverables

Toolkit and Guidelines
Phase 1: information gathering

• Regulation of and information about CBHE is patchy
  - Absence of a common approach to CBHE
  - Absence of developed QA systems for CBHE
  - Absence of comprehensive data about CBHE
  - Lack of reciprocal understanding by sending & host countries of each other’s QA frameworks
Phase 1: information gathering

• Strengthening inter-agency cooperation is unanimously seen as the way forward to
  - promote mutual understanding
  - share information and good practice
  - build mutual trust
  - facilitate the QA of CBHE

• Regional networks seen as playing a key role in facilitating information sharing / cooperation
Phase 2: regional expert forums

- Facilitated policy dialogue between sending and receiving countries of CBHE
- Informed the development of the Toolkit, highlighting the need to
  - consolidate existing international guidelines
  - provide new and useful guidance
  - address the ‘trust gap’ between sending and receiving countries about the quality of CBHE
Phase 3: the Toolkit

- Complement the UNESCO/APQN Toolkit’s effort to support the implementation of the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines
- Offers guidance on how agencies can realise that mutual understanding, trust and cooperation required to ‘share the responsibility of quality assuring CBHE’ (UNESCO/OECD)
- Directed primarily at agencies, but also included recommendation for networks and HE providers
- Respects the autonomy of different national systems
- Sets out general recommendations supported by explanatory text
With a view to facilitating mutual understanding and building mutual trust, QA agencies should:

- have clear and accessible policies about their approach to in-bound and out-bound CBHE
- make easily accessible a list of those institutions they have quality assured or accredited, including any eventual list of quality assured or accredited CBHE provision and associated reports
- seek to establish regular channels of communication to facilitate information sharing and strengthen mutual understanding
With a view to avoiding duplication of efforts and lessen the regulatory burden on providers, QA agencies should:

• liaise whenever undertaking review of CBHE

• consider whether they would be able to make use of each other collected information or quality assurance/accreditation decisions

• consider ways in which review activity of CBHE could be undertaken jointly
The Toolkit: Networks

With a view to facilitating inter-agency cooperation and the implementation of the Toolkit, QA networks should:

- consider ways in which they could serve as first point of contact for obtaining information about QA and HE systems and recognised providers in their member agencies’ countries

- strengthen cooperation with other networks to promote policy dialogue, information sharing, and dissemination of good practice

- consider ways to align regional standards and guidelines to facilitate cooperation between agencies from different regions
The Toolkit: Providers

With a view to facilitating the external quality assurance of CBHE and effective cooperation amongst agencies, HE providers should:

• *make publicly available and accessible up-to-date data and information about their CBHE activity*
• *make publicly available and accessible updated information about their internal quality assurance policies and processes for CBHE*
• *make publicly available and accessible information about any external quality assurance or accreditation that their CBHE has undergone in either the home or host country*
Conclusions

• The project has highlighted the need to:
  - enhance the national and international oversight of CBHE
  - address the lack of information about CBHE and different national regulatory approaches to CBHE
  - strengthen cooperation to facilitate information exchange, policy dialogue and the regulation of CBHE

• A Toolkit for enhanced inter-agency cooperation fills a gap in current international guidance

• Work together to harness the opportunities posed by CBHE, in the interest of students and societies