

Frameworks for the assessment of quality in internationalisation

Certificate for Quality
in Internationalisation



european consortium for accreditation

Frameworks for the Assessment of Quality in Internationalisation

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“Current literature suggests that higher education’s internationalisation is perceived as an indicator for the quality of higher education. Nonetheless few approaches have been developed to assess the quality of internationalisation.”

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1. Introduction

Over the past 25 years, the international dimension of higher education has become more important for governments, higher education institutions and accreditation bodies.¹ Internationalisation is perceived to be a key factor for modern knowledge-based societies; and has been steadily increasing in importance and scope. Higher education institutions pursue internationalisation as a pro-active strategic issue. Internationalisation of the curriculum and of the teaching and learning process has become increasingly relevant for higher education institutions and various forms of cross-border education have become widespread in Europe (e.g. joint programmes).

Today internationalisation itself is perceived as an indicator for the quality of higher education, but so far only few international approaches have assessed the quality of internationalisation (Hans de Wit, 2009). Most of these attempts either focused on the institutional dimensions of internationalisation or were limited to a fitness for purpose approach. There is furthermore a shortcoming in the definition and assessment of the quality of internationalisation at programme level. The current national accreditation systems in Europe do not assess international and intercultural learning outcomes of study programmes and a commonly agreed assessment framework on the European level is lacking.

Based on these observations, the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) decided to develop a methodology to assess the quality of internationalisation through an external quality assurance procedure. In doing so, ECA, its members and its project partners agreed to build on a methodology for the assessment of internationalisation developed and tested by the Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). The successful implementation in The Netherlands and Belgium and the demand of institutions from other countries contributed significantly to ECA's decision to develop a commonly agreed European framework for assessing the quality of internationalisation at programme and institutional level.

¹ De Wit, H. (2009). *Measuring success in the internationalisation of higher education*, NVAO, 2009

The assessment focuses on the impact internationalisation has on teaching and learning.

The assessment of internationalisation focuses on the impact it has on teaching and learning. Internationalisation of higher education is after all characterised by its focus on education. The most commonly referred to definition of what is

meant by internationalisation demonstrates this best. It is the system-level definition by Jane Knight: “The process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”². Betty Leask has further characterised internationalisation by focusing on the curriculum: “The incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the preparation, delivery and outcomes of a program of study”³. When assessing the quality of internationalisation we should therefore focus on teaching (the preparation and delivery) and learning (the outcomes).

The aim of the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation is to reward and enhance internationalisation. First, it intends to reward those

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institutions and programmes that have successfully incorporated an international and intercultural dimension into the function, purpose and delivery of education. This explicitly implies that the Certificate’s focus is on the impact of internationalisation on teaching and

learning. Second, the Certificate intends to contribute to the enhancement of internationalisation by using descriptive criteria and by assessing on a developmental scale, from unsatisfactory to excellent.

The Certification is voluntary and does not substitute existing external quality assurance or

The Certification is voluntary and does not substitute existing external quality assurance or accreditation procedures.

accreditation procedures. An assessment of internationalisation may be combined with

² Knight, J. (2004). *Internationalization remodelled: definition, approaches, and rationales*. Journal of Studies in International Education, Vol. 8, No. 1, 5-31.

³ Leask, B. (2009). *Using formal and informal curricula to improve interactions between home and international students*. Journal of Studies in International Education, Vol. 13, No. 2, 205-221.

regular external quality assurance procedures, but it is a supplementary and improvement-oriented service. This means that the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation can only be awarded to programmes and institutions that have been externally quality assured, though not necessarily at the same level.

This document should be read in conjunction with the explanatory documentation: [A Guide to Assessing the Quality of Internationalisation](#). It provides an explanation and interpretation of the criteria included in this document. In addition, three templates are available: for self-evaluation reports of programmes, for self-evaluation reports of institutions and for panel assessment reports.

The current document will guide the project partners when they undertake pilot procedures. These procedures will be used to test the proposed methodology. This means that the current version is not the final version of this document. Based on the experiences in the pilot procedures and feedback from the institutions, programmes and experts involved, these assessment frameworks will be improved where necessary.

2. Programme-level assessment framework

2.1. General principles

The following principles apply to the assessment of quality in internationalisation at programme level:

1. The assessment is based on the programme's ambition level, demonstrated through its internationalisation goals;
2. The programme's internationalisation must have a significant impact on the overall quality of the programme and its graduates;
3. The impact of internationalisation on the overall quality of the programme and its graduates is reflected in the intended and achieved international and intercultural learning outcomes;
4. The operationalization of internationalisation should be reflected in the programme's teaching and learning, staff, and students;
5. The assessment should be undertaken by a panel that has the appropriate expertise;
6. The assessment is geared towards improvement and therefore includes scaled assessments at the level of each standard.

The following explanations are meant to clarify these principles.

Because of the multiplicity of issues related to internationalisation, it is reasonable that the internationalisation of each programme will vary greatly. Some programmes focus on an international professional field (e.g. international business), others are based on a discipline which because of its nature has no national boundaries (e.g. physics), and even others integrate internationalisation by internationally benchmarking their nationally oriented programme.

This framework does not endorse any particular approach to internationalisation. Rather the programme's internationalisation goals provide the context in which the assessment should take place. Such internationalisation goals can be part of a programme's vision, mission or strategy but they may also be formulated separately. In any case, these internationalisation goals need to be documented in order for them to be the starting point of the assessment of the quality of the programme's internationalisation.

It is important that the programme description clarifies the impact internationalisation is supposed to have on the overall quality of education to be gained from it. The award of a certificate demonstrates that programmes provide what they promise (or practice what they preach). Such programmes present what they want to achieve through their intended learning outcomes. This means that the overall learning outcomes of a programme must comprise appropriate international and intercultural elements and/or competences. In the framework these elements and/or competences are referred to as the international and intercultural learning outcomes.

Programmes have to demonstrate that their graduates have realised international and intercultural learning outcomes. In this concept, the programme's intentions with regard to international and intercultural learning outcomes are also an element of student assessments. Through these student assessments it can be demonstrated whether the graduates have actually achieved the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.

The multifaceted concept of internationalisation implies that its operationalization may take place in very different ways. The assessment framework focuses on four elements in which this operationalization takes place:

- The teaching and learning provided through the programme;
- The way the staff is specifically suited to enable students' achievement;
- The way the students are facilitated in achieving international and intercultural learning outcomes;
- The necessary services to staff and students.

These elements are therefore explicitly included in the assessment framework.

It is, of course, very important that the assessment of the quality of internationalisation is done by experts and panels that have the proper programme-specific and international expertise. In addition to panel members with subject-/discipline-specific, educational and assessment expertise, all panels must include at least two experts who have an unquestionably international profile. One of these should have recently held a position outside the higher education system to which the programme under scrutiny belongs.

Finally, it has been considered useful to assess the standards for internationalisation on a four-point scale: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good and excellent. This provides the opportunity to clearly demonstrate the level of internationalisation with regard to a specific dimension of the programme. It also incorporates a strong element of improvement into the system: a programme may indeed be challenged to progress from satisfactory to good or from good to excellent.

The summary assessment does not apply this four-point scale. A programme either receives the Certificate for Quality in Programme Internationalisation or it does not.

2.2. Assessment standards & criteria

The framework for the assessment of quality in internationalisation at programme level comprises five standards and each of these standards is defined by three criteria.

Standard 1:	Intended internationalisation
Criterion 1a:	Supported goals <i>The internationalisation goals for the programme are documented and these are shared and supported by stakeholders within and outside the programme.</i>
Criterion 1b:	Verifiable objectives <i>Verifiable objectives have been formulated that allow monitoring the achievement of the programme's internationalisation goals.</i>
Criterion 1c:	Measures for improvement <i>As a result of periodic evaluations of the programme's internationalisation, the successful implementation of measures for improvement can be demonstrated.</i>
Assessment:	Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent
Standard 2:	International and intercultural learning
Criterion 2a:	Intended learning outcomes <i>The intended international and intercultural learning outcomes defined by the programme are a clear reflection of its internationalisation goals.</i>
Criterion 2b:	Student assessment <i>The methods used for the assessment of students are suitable for measuring the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.</i>
Criterion 2c:	Graduate achievement <i>The achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes by the programme's graduates can be demonstrated.</i>
Assessment:	Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent

Standard 3: Teaching and Learning	
Criterion 3a:	<p>Curriculum <i>The content and structure of the curriculum provide the necessary means for achieving the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.</i></p>
Criterion 3b:	<p>Teaching methods <i>The teaching methods are suitable for achieving the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.</i></p>
Criterion 3c:	<p>Learning environment <i>The learning environment is suitable for achieving the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.</i></p>
Assessment:	Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent

Standard 4: Staff	
Criterion 4a:	<p>Composition <i>The composition of the staff (in quality and quantity) facilitates the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.</i></p>
Criterion 4b:	<p>Experience <i>Staff members have sufficient internationalisation experience, intercultural competences and language skills.</i></p>
Criterion 4c:	<p>Services <i>The services provided to the staff (e.g. training, facilities, staff exchanges) are consistent with the staff composition and facilitate international experiences, intercultural competences and language skills.</i></p>
Assessment:	Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent

Standard 5: Students	
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Criterion 5a:

Composition

The composition of the student group (national and cultural backgrounds) is in line with the programme's internationalisation goals.

Criterion 5b:

Experience

The internationalisation experience gained by students is adequate and corresponds to the programme's internationalisation goals.

Criterion 5c:

Services

The services provided to the students (e.g. information provision, counselling, guidance, accommodation, Diploma Supplement) are adequate and correspond to the composition of the student group.

Assessment:

Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent

Overall Assessment	
Based on documented internationalisation goals, the programme has successfully implemented effective internationalisation activities which demonstrably contribute to the quality of teaching and learning.	
Decision:	A programme receives the Certificate for Quality in Programme Internationalisation when at least three standards are assessed as good or excellent and no standard is assessed as unsatisfactory

2.3. Assessment scale

The assessment-scale is based on the definitions given below. These definitions relate to the assessments at the level of standards only. The starting point of the assessment scale is not threshold quality but generic quality. Generic quality is defined as *the quality that can reasonably be expected from an international perspective.*

Unsatisfactory	The programme does not meet the current generic quality for this standard and shows serious identifiable shortcomings.
Satisfactory	The programme meets the current generic quality for this standard and shows an acceptable level across the standard's entire spectrum.
Good	The programme systematically surpasses the current generic quality for this standard across the standard's entire spectrum.
Excellent	The programme systematically and substantially surpasses the current generic quality for this standard across the standard's entire spectrum; it explicitly includes one or more exemplary practices and can be regarded as an international example for this standard.

2.4. Composition of the assessment panel

The composition of the assessment panel should meet the following requirements:

- The panel is composed of a minimum of four members, among whom there is at least one student;
- The panel comprises the following dimensions of expertise:
 - Subject- or discipline-specific expertise;
 - International expertise, preferably expertise in internationalisation;
 - Relevant experience in teaching or educational development
 - Relevant experience in quality assurance or auditing;
 - Experience as student auditor.

Members may contribute more than one type of expertise and/or experience.

- Each panel should include two members who have an unquestionably international profile. One of these should have recently held a position outside the higher education system to which the programme under scrutiny belongs;
- The panel is independent: over the past five years its members have had no ties with the institution providing the programme to be assessed and they have no personal interest in the (positive or negative) outcome of the procedure;
- The student on the panel needs to have international or internationalisation experience;
- All panel members need to have a good command of the English language.

The assessment panel is convened by the coordinator of the procedure on behalf of the quality assurance agency responsible for the assessment procedure. The ECA Management Group appoints the assessment panel.

3. Institutional level assessment framework

3.1. General principles

The following principles apply to the assessment of institutional internationalisation as a distinctive feature:

1. The assessment is based on the institution's ambition level, demonstrated through internationalisation goals;
2. These goals need to be complemented by appropriate actions and/or action plans;
3. Institutional internationalisation must have a significant impact on the overall quality of teaching and learning;
4. The realisation of its internationalisation goals should be demonstrated throughout the institution's activities. Realisations include at least the following dimensions: international and intercultural learning outcomes; teaching, learning and research; staff and students;
5. The assessment of internationalisation should be undertaken by a panel that has the appropriate expertise;
6. The assessment is geared towards improvement and therefore includes scaled assessments at the level of each standard.

The following explanations are meant to clarify these principles.

Because of the multiplicity of issues related to internationalisation, it is reasonable that the internationalisation of each institution depends on the overall aims and objectives of that institution. This framework does not endorse any particular approach to internationalisation. The institution's internationalisation goals provide the context in which the assessment should take place. Such internationalisation goals can be part of an

institutional mission, vision or strategy, but they may also be formulated separately. In any case, these internationalisation goals need to be documented in order for them to be the starting point of the assessment of the quality of institutional internationalisation.

It is important that institutions turn their internationalisation goals into action plans (such as policies, etc.) and actions. This means that institutions enact what they aim for. The context of institutional internationalisation makes it likely that the realisation of institutional goals will take place in very different ways. The assessment framework focuses on four dimensions through which this realisation is demonstrated: international and intercultural learning outcomes; teaching, learning and research; staff and students. Of course, institutions can supplement these with components that best suit the overall internationalisation goals of the institution. Some might focus less strongly on research, while others could, for example, focus on service to society.

It is, of course, very important that the assessment of the quality of internationalisation is done by experts and panels that have the proper institutional and international expertise. In addition to panel members with management, educational and assessment experience, all panels must include at least two experts who have an unquestionably international profile. One of these needs to have considerable international or internationalisation experience.

Finally, it has been considered useful to assess the standards for internationalisation on a four-point scale: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good and excellent. This provides the opportunity to clearly demonstrate the level of internationalisation with regard to a specific dimension of the institution. It also incorporates a strong element of improvement into the system: an institution may indeed be challenged to progress from satisfactory to good or from good to excellent.

The summary assessment does not apply this four-point scale. An institution either receives the Certificate for Quality in Institutional Internationalisation or it does not.

3.2. Assessment standards & criteria

The framework for the assessment of quality in internationalisation at institutional level comprises five standards and each of these standards is defined by three criteria.

Standard 1:	Intended internationalisation
Criterion 1a:	Supported goals <i>The internationalisation goals for the institution are documented and these are shared and supported by stakeholders within and outside the institution.</i>
Criterion 1b:	Verifiable objectives <i>Verifiable objectives have been formulated that allow monitoring the achievement of the institution's internationalisation goals.</i>
Criterion 1c:	Measures for improvement <i>As a result of periodic evaluations of the institution's internationalisation, the successful implementation of measures for improvement can be demonstrated.</i>
Assessment:	Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent
Standard 2:	Action plans
Criterion 2a:	Fitness for purpose <i>The institution's internationalisation plans warrant the achievement of its internationalisation goals.</i>
Criterion 2b:	Dimensions <i>The institution's internationalisation plans appropriately include at least the following dimensions: "international and intercultural learning outcomes", "teaching, learning and research", "staff" and "students".</i>
Criterion 2c:	Support <i>The institution's internationalisation plans are complemented by specific institution-wide instruments and adequate resources.</i>
Assessment:	Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent

Standard 3: Implementation

Criterion 3a: **Information system**
The institution has a functional management information system which enables it to collect and process relevant information regarding internationalisation.

Criterion 3b: **Information-driven management**
The institution makes use of processed information for the effective management of its internationalisation activities.

Criterion 3c: **Realisations**
The institution can demonstrate the extent to which its internationalisation plans are realised through documented outcomes and results.

Assessment: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent

Standard 4: Enhancement

Criterion 4a: **Internal quality assurance**
The institution's internal quality assurance system covers all internationalisation dimensions and activities.

Criterion 4b: **Approaches for enhancement**
The institution utilises internationalisation approaches as part of its regular quality assurance and enhancement activities.

Criterion 4c: **Stakeholders involvement**
The institution actively involves its internal and external stakeholders in its quality assurance and enhancement activities regarding internationalisation.

Assessment: Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent

Standard 5:	Governance
<p>Criterion 5a:</p>	<p>Responsibilities <i>The responsibilities regarding the institution’s internationalisation (goals, plans, implementation and enhancement) are clearly defined and allocated.</i></p>
<p>Criterion 5b:</p>	<p>Effectiveness <i>The organisational structure, decision-making processes and leadership (regarding internationalisation) support the realisation of the institution’s internationalisation goals and action plans.</i></p>
<p>Criterion 5c:</p>	<p>Responsiveness <i>The institution can demonstrate that it readily reacts to input from within and outside the institution regarding internationalisation activities.</i></p>
<p>Assessment:</p>	<p>Unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent</p>

Overall Assessment	
Based on its internationalisation goals, the institution has successfully implemented effective internationalisation activities which demonstrably contribute to the quality of teaching and learning.	
Decision:	An institution receives the Certificate for Quality in Institutional Internationalisation when at least three standards are assessed as good or excellent and no standard is assessed as unsatisfactory

3.3. Assessment scale

The assessment-scale is based on the definitions given below. These definitions relate to the assessments at the level of standards only. The starting point of the assessment scale is not threshold quality but generic quality. Generic quality is defined as *the quality that can reasonably be expected from an international perspective*.

Unsatisfactory	The institution does not meet the current generic quality for this standard and shows serious identifiable shortcomings.
Satisfactory	The institution meets the current generic quality for this standard and shows an acceptable level across the standard's entire spectrum.
Good	The institution systematically surpasses the current generic quality for this standard across the standard's entire spectrum.
Excellent	The institution systematically and substantially surpasses the current generic quality for this standard across the standard's entire spectrum; it explicitly includes one or more exemplary practices and can be regarded as an international example for this standard.

3.4. Composition of the assessment panel

The composition of the assessment panel should meet the following requirements:

- The panel is composed of a minimum of four members, among whom there is at least one student;
- The panel comprises the following dimensions of expertise:
 - Management experience;
 - International expertise, preferably expertise in internationalisation;
 - Relevant experience in teaching or educational development
 - Relevant experience in quality assurance or auditing;
 - Experience as student auditor.

Members may contribute more than one type of expertise and/or experience.

- The panel is well acquainted with developments in the higher education sector;
- Each panel should include two members who have an unquestionably international profile. One of these should have considerable international or internationalisation experience;
- The panel is independent: over the past five years its members have had no ties with the institution to be assessed and they have no personal interest in the (positive or negative) outcome of the procedure;
- The panel members with the student-related expertise needs to have international or internationalisation experience;
- All panel members need to have a good command of the English language.

The assessment panel is convened by the coordinator of the procedure on behalf of the quality assurance agency responsible for the assessment procedure. The ECA Management Group appoints the assessment panel.

4. Assessment procedure

4.1. Self-evaluation report

The self-evaluation report forms the basis for the assessment and the interviews during the site-visit. This report should be in the template available to ensure that the expectations of the assessment panel are met. As a rule, the self-evaluation report should only cover the last three years. In exceptional circumstances (to be explained), the time span can be less than three years.

The self-evaluation report should provide information with regard to the corresponding standards and criteria of this framework; it needs to be written in English. The report should not duplicate or extensively copy from existing documentation. References to the original documentation are expected while the original documentation may be included as an annex. The information provided by the self-evaluation report should be sufficient to supply the panel with initial knowledge that can be tested and amended during the site-visit.

The self-evaluation report includes a limited number of mandatory documents. A full list is provided in the template. It is assumed that these are readily available documents rather than documents prepared especially for the assessment. The documents serve as a substantiation and, if needed, as verification of the information given in the self-report.

Related documents:

- *CeQuInt Template for self-evaluation reports of programmes*
- *CeQuInt Template for self-evaluation reports of institutions*

4.2. Site visit

The assessment of the quality of internationalisation includes a site visit. The site visit will be organised in accordance with a proposed site visit agenda. In addition to the management, teaching staff, students and external stakeholders, it is recommended that

the panel also interviews the staff responsible for internationalisation activities (international officer, exchange coordinator, international students mentor, etc.).

During the site visit, the panel should be able to review additional documentation. In case of a programme, the panel needs to be provided with a sample of actual student assessments (included in mandatory annex 5). For each of the assessments, the sample should be differentiated by marks achieved.

Related documents:

- *Proposed outline of a site visit in Annex 4. of CeQuInt Template for Assessment Reports*

4.3. Assessment rules for the panel

For each criterion, the assessment panel will present findings and considerations leading to a conclusion, including recommendations. The panel then provides an overall conclusion for the standard to which these criteria pertain. Here the panel substantiates its assessment on the basis of the criteria by which the standard is defined. This overall conclusion finishes off with a judgement on a four-point scale: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent.

A programme or an institution is proposed to receive the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation when at least three standards are assessed as good or excellent and no standard is assessed as unsatisfactory.

Related documents:

- *A Guide to Assessing the Quality of Internationalisation*

4.4. Assessment report

In the assessment report, the assessment panel will give (separate) judgments for each standard and each underlying criterion listed in this framework. These judgments should all be separately substantiated. The respective chapter of the assessment report should conclude with a summative judgment regarding the level of internationalisation and make a proposal to the ECA Management Group to either award or deny the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation.

The assessment report is published in full on ECA's internationalisation platform: the Certified Internationalisation Platform.

Related documents:

- *CeQuInt Template for Assessment Reports*

4.5. Decision-making

For the duration of the project, the Steering Group will advise the ECA Management Group on the decisions to award a Certificate. The final decision on awarding the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation will be taken by the ECA's Management Group, however.

In case the Certificate is awarded, it remains valid for five years.

All decisions are of course open to an appeal by the applicant.

Related documents:

- *CeQuInt Appeals Procedure*

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www.eacaconsortium.net

www.grossroads.eu

www.ECApedia.net