



Policy Brief: HAQAA Training Course on a common language for QA in Africa

June 2017

The HAQAA Initiative and Training Course

The 'Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance (QA) and Accreditation' (HAQAA) has organised a Training Course entitled 'Developing a common understanding for QA in Africa'. The Training Course, which gathered nationally nominated professionals representing QA bodies across 41 African countries, reinforced the goals of the HAQAA Initiative, namely to support the development of a **harmonised quality assurance and accreditation system at institutional, national, regional and Pan-African continental level**. The HAQAA Initiative is **funded by the European Union Commission**, in the context of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, and implemented by a consortium of University of Barcelona, the Association of African Universities (AAU), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European University Association (EUA).

The key objective of the Training Course was to develop a common understanding on Quality Assurance in Africa by discussing the example of the European Higher Education Area and exchanging with African and European experts about practices, challenges and lessons learnt. Key stakeholder from African regional institutions for higher education were implicated in the course so as to introduce an African regional perspective. The Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), which has been validated by the African Union, was presented and discussed, as were the recently drafted African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA), which intend to be an important reference document for higher education development and harmonisation across the continent. Participants also defined and worked on 'Personal Action Plans', targeting specific themes in quality assurance that matter especially for their countries or regions.

The following document summarises the main take-aways that participants agreed upon, which can be formulated as policy recommendations for their own regions and countries.

Main policy take-aways

1. Continental QA training activities for Africa

- There is a general consensus on the relevance and pertinence of 'continental-level' African QA training and sensitisation activities. This has proven valuable for:
 - Bringing together different African linguistic groups and sharing practice/networking across linguistic lines
 - Intra-African capacity building and knowledge transfer in the domain of QA
- There is a will for national QA bodies to include African experiences and expertise in their own national QA trainings and external quality procedures.
- There is a diversity of QA systems in Africa – some just emerging and some more established. Common 'Standards and Guidelines for QA in Africa', which are being developed by HAQAA, can help to create a common understanding of QA on the continent and reinforce transparency in QA practices. They can also be an objective/benchmark for some emerging systems.
- The European harmonisation experience in higher education and specifically in QA has valuable lessons for Africa. This includes the stakeholder-driven and ministerially endorsed European

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Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), which serve as criteria for admission into the European QA Agency Register (EQAR) and guide internal QA procedures developed by higher education institutions, while accommodating a diversity of practices and regulatory systems. Other regions, like ASEAN (South-East Asia), should also be examined as they too have advanced in quality assurance harmonisation.

- External quality assurance (EQA) should reinforce internal institutional quality assurance (IQA). Ultimately universities are first in the line of responsibility for their quality culture. This must be promoted more emphatically across Africa.

2. Continental African activities should reinforce African regional activities and vice versa

- QA agencies and higher education institutions need to work collaboratively on credit systems: TUNING Africa, an initiative of the European Union to support curricular alignment in different disciplines, is advocating this from the bottom up and will be proposing a common credit transfer system for Africa, based on the university and programme alignment experience. Regional initiatives, like the well established one in the Eastern African Community (EAC) and the one started by QA bodies in SADC, can complement the continental agenda while advancing the regional dimension and regional political priorities. Regional and political developments in credit systems, but also more widely in QA, should align to continental objectives and activities.

Taking PAQAF forward

- HAQAA is contributing to PAQAF but PAQAF needs a structure and implementing body in order to sustain it. The 'Continental Agency' foreseen under PAQAF should build upon an existing African structure or network that has a regional or continental mandate. This structure should be the guardian of the ASG-QA and can support continental QA training activities and agency reviews.
- Stakeholders need clarification on the legal ramifications of PAQAF, as PAQAF is still not widely known in the QA community across the continent.
- It is essential the governments ratify the Addis Convention for Recognition. Continental harmonisation in QA cannot advance without this.

