



GOOD PRACTICES IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIETY

ECA CERTIFICATE FOR QUALITY IN INTERNATIONALISATION (CeQuInt)

Fostering Student Engagement through AI-driven Qualitative Quality Assurance Practices

A Project Developed by:



**UNIVERSITY
OF TWENTE.**



MCAST



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Project: Fostering Student Engagement through AI-driven Qualitative Quality Assurance Practices

Consortium Partners

Riga Technical University

University of Twente

Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)

European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA)

Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU)

Authors

Eva Fernández de Labastida



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GENERAL INFORMATION

Title: ECA Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation (CeQulnt)

Organization: ECA - European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education.

Country: Mostly European Higher Education Area (EHEA), although it could be worldwide.

Authors: Eva Fernández de Labastida

One-liner – essence of the case study: The CeQulnt methodology is used to assess the quality of internationalisation at programme or institutional level in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Short Summary: The CeQulnt methodology is used to assess the quality of internationalisation at programme or at institutional level in HEIs. A successful assessment leads to the award of the ECA Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation. This Certificate confirms that a programme or an institution has successfully incorporated an international and intercultural dimension into the purpose, function and delivery of its education.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Short description

As explained before in the General Information part, this case study is not one from an institution, but from a network of Quality Assurance Agencies, the [European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education \(ECA\)](#), which developed this CeQulnt framework to review the quality of internationalisation activities in HEIs. The European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) is an association of recognized accreditation and quality assurance agencies in Europe. The vision of ECA is to act as an internationally acknowledged driver of innovation in accreditation and quality assurance in higher education. With its expertise, networking and services ECA contributes to the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), promotes internationalization of higher education and “state of the art” activities of its members.

There is no way of knowing the number of students who could be impacted. But the number and the specific details of programmes and institutions reviewed can be checked at: <https://cequint.eu/awarded-certificates/>

Number of certificates awarded:

- Programme level: 49
- Institution level: 5

Background Information

Over the past 25 years, the international dimension of higher education has become more important for governments, higher education institutions and accreditation bodies. 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).

Following this trend, higher education institutions and programmes have been asking quality assurance (QA) agencies to include internationalisation in their assessment. A consistent, qualitative methodology was however not readily available. Internationalisation is a complex phenomenon and is strongly influenced by the

context in which it takes places. As a multidimensional concept, the realisation of internationalisation widely varies in different higher education settings. This means the context and the varied ways in which it is operationalised need to be considered when assessing the quality of internationalisation.

Based on these observations, the members and partners of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) developed this methodology to assess the quality of internationalisation.

The methodology was developed within the Erasmus+ project CeQuInt (2012-2015). The project consortium was composed of 14 partners from 11 countries, consisting of quality assurance agencies from Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Croatia, Germany (2), Finland, France (2), the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Spain (2), the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). More information about the CeQuInt project can be found here: <http://ecahe.eu/home/about/projects/cequint/>

Aims and Motivations

Higher education institutions started to pursue internationalisation as a pro-active strategic issue. Internationalisation of the curriculum and of the teaching and learning process has become relevant for HE institutions and various forms of cross-border education have become widespread in Europe. Internationalisation itself is perceived as an indicator for the quality of higher education, but so far only few European-wide approaches have assessed the quality of internationalisation. Most of these attempts focused on the institutional dimensions of internationalisation, such as the initiatives of the Institute for International Education (www.iienetwork.org) or the initiative of a large European consortium with the IMPI project (<http://www.impi-project.eu/>).

There was a shortcoming in the definition and assessment of the quality of internationalisation at programme level. The national accreditation systems in Europe did not assess international and intercultural learning outcomes of study programmes and a commonly agreed assessment framework on the European level was lacking. Based on these observations and on the pre-existing knowledge in this area NVAO, representing two-member countries (Netherlands/Flanders) of the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher Education (ECA), developed and tested a system of assessment of internationalisation on the programme level.

The evaluation of some pilots resulted in a framework for the assessment of internationalisation at both the programme and institutional level. Based on these successful initiatives in two countries and the demand of HE institutions from different countries who participated or attended meetings where these pilots were presented, ECA declared an interest to develop a commonly agreed European framework for assessing internationalisation at the programme and institutional level. Those institutions or programmes that have successfully incorporated an international and intercultural dimension into the function, purpose and delivery of education should receive a European certificate as a testimony to their achievements.

The project provided HEIs in Europe with the opportunity to benchmark against good practices in internationalisation. This brought internationalisation of the education to new quality levels and had a positive impact on the international activities (cooperation and competitiveness) of the involved institutions and study programmes. The European certificate expresses that students achieve high international and intercultural competencies in the certified study programmes or institutions. This is a valuable orientation point for the labour market and has also the potential to facilitate cross-border recognition of the corresponding qualifications in Europe.

The project was on a commonly agreed European framework for the assessment of internationalisation, established in a close dialogue with HEIs and its stakeholder groups (academics, administrative staff, students, graduates, etc.). The project capitalised on the already existing cross-border cooperation of ECA members; it introduced a strong European dimension into the European Higher Education Area and thereby filled in a perceived shortcoming in European quality assurance. As enhanced internationalisation and the evidence of a certificate is a driver for goals of the Bologna process, such as mobility and transparency, this project contributed to the further development of a coherent European Higher Education Area.

The challenge of this EU-project was to develop an assessment framework for internationalisation (criteria and standards) that could be used in the various European countries.

Stakeholders

The main partners of the project were the Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs) (see the project consortium composition at the Background part). These QAAs involved HEIs from their Higher Education systems to take part in the pilot reviews either at programme or institutional level. The students, graduates, academic and

administrative staff were involved either as part of the assessment panels or of the interviews to stakeholders during the site visits, in addition, these stakeholders are expected to participate in the drafting of the Self-assessment report.

At the core of any external quality assurance procedure is the expertise provided by the assessment panel. They contribute greatly by providing input from various relevant perspectives, including those of peers, students and (internationalisation) practitioners. The panel is expected to interview the management, teaching staff, students, external stakeholders, and staff responsible for internationalisation activities (international officer, exchange coordinator, international students' mentor, etc.).

The same applies for the current review procedures once the project was finished.

IMPLEMENTATION

Inputs

The methodology was developed within the Erasmus+ project CeQuInt (2012-2015) cofounded by the European Commission and consisted of four phases as described in the following point “Strategies and activities”. Staff from the partners QAAs was in charge of coordinating the procedures and external experts were included in the assessment panels.

Strategies and Activities

The CeQuInt project consisted of four phases with distinct outcomes:

1. Development of a European framework: The framework would allow the assessment of the quality of internationalisation at the level of study programmes and institutions. Milestones of this first phase were: definition of standards and criteria for the assessment, development of guidelines for HEIs and experts, establishment of procedural rules, rules for decision-making and appeals, and trainings of experts. The assessment framework for the European certificate is based upon the input from the stakeholders (associate partners) as represented in the Stakeholders Group, the existing literature and the experiences with the pilots in the Netherlands and Flanders. The judgement is envisaged to take place on a four-point scale and to allow excellence judgements: unsatisfactory- satisfactory, good and excellent. A European certificate should be handed out if the overall judgement is either “excellent” or “good”. The assessment framework was prepared in a close dialogue with HEIs from different ECA members countries (Stakeholders Group).
2. Pilot-Studies: The framework for internationalisation was tested in 12 pilots, covering all European regions. The composition of the pilot-candidates assured that various institutions, disciplines and study programmes were represented in the sample. Eligible were recognized/accredited study programmes or institutions, both from the public and private domain. The candidates had the choice between a stand-alone procedure or a procedure embedded in the normal national accreditation or QA system. In order to increase consistency of judgements, expert leaders and secretaries were trained. An appeal committee was set in place to handle justified complaints. Milestones of this phase of the project were the site visits and completion of the assessment pilots.

3. Good practices workshop and evaluation of the pilots: After the completion of the twelve assessment reports a Good Practices in Internationalisation Workshop was organised. During this workshop a selection of the good practices, as proposed by the experts in their assessment reports, were presented and shared among participants. The pilot-studies were evaluated and the results were analysed and published. A survey was set up to receive feedback on the pilots from the assessed programmes and institutions, experts and secretaries. A specific research question dealt with the (potential) effect of the project on the institutions (internal QA system, strategy, admission policies, recruitment of staff, competence driven curricula, intercultural processes at education level, etc.).
4. Dissemination of the knowledge: The knowledge gathered in the first three project phases was disseminated through a variety of communication tools: the project website, a database where good practices in internationalisation are presented, the evaluation report, contributions to national and European workshops, seminars/conferences, the proposed publications and the dissemination conference.

After successful completion of phases 1) to 4) the European certificate for internationalisation was implemented by ECA throughout Europe.

Coordination with the Target Groups

Apart from the QAAs partners of the project who communicated periodically through the project via coordination meetings, there was a Stakeholders' Group whose aim was to involve, inform, discuss and get feedback from the project's stakeholders. In order to achieve this aim the Stakeholders Group was an integral part of the whole project enabling them to monitor all parts of the project at the different stages in the project. The Stakeholders Group was an important element in the quality assurance of the project.

The Stakeholders Group was chaired by:

- ACA, the Academic Cooperation Association,

an important body within the field of internationalisation of higher education. ACA was assisted by:

- DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service.

The Stakeholder Group further consisted of representatives of other organisations focussing on internationalisation in higher education

- European Association for International Education (EAIE),
- the Netherlands organisation for international cooperation in higher education (Nuffic),
- The German Rectors' Conference (HRK),
- Centre for Higher Education (CHE)

and representatives of the main European higher education stakeholder organisations

- European University Association (EUA),
- European Students Union (ESU),
- European association of Higher Education Institutions (EURASHE)
- BUSINESSEUROPE

In addition, the higher education institutions included as associate partners took part in the Stakeholder Group.

This ensures that the content of the project was rooted in the needs and wishes of experts on the field. Within the time span of the project, the Stakeholders Group met two times and took part in the Good Practices in Internationalisation Workshop. In between meetings the Stakeholders Group was given updates on the project activities via a newsletter and a dedicated project website. The Stakeholders Group provided feedback on all the work packages and deliverables. The Stakeholders Group focused in more detail on the proposed methodology, the pilot procedures and their outcomes, and played a key role in the Good Practices in Internationalisation Workshop.

Through the feedback of the Stakeholders Group the project activities could be adjusted to the real needs of European higher education stakeholders. The appointment of a Stakeholders Group thus provided the project with a close link to the actual situation of higher education stakeholders and ensured that the project is continuously evaluated by an outside party.

Deliverable Outputs

[Frameworks for the Assessment of Internationalisation](#). This document includes the overarching methodology. It consists of two distinct frameworks to assess the quality in internationalisation either at programme level or at institutional level. The standards and criteria form the substantive part of the assessment framework.

[The Guide to Assessing the Quality of Internationalisation](#). The goal of this guide is mainly to complement the Frameworks for the Assessment of Quality in Internationalisation. By showing how the elements that make up the assessments standards are to be interpreted and by presenting elements that can be used to substantiate realisations, this guide intends to guide the (self-)assessment of the quality of internationalisation.

[An introduction to international and intercultural learning outcomes](#). This document presents an introduction to writing learning outcomes and to the concept of international and intercultural learning outcomes from the perspective of quality assurance. This document presents international and intercultural learning outcomes from intentions over teaching and learning to students' achievement.

The students contributed via their participation in the reviews either as panel members or as interviewees, or through the contribution and suggestions of ESU representatives in the Stakeholders' group of the project.

Intangible Outputs

In an intangible manner, the certificate assures that students achieve high international and intercultural competencies in the certified study programmes or institutions. This is a valuable orientation point for the labour market and has also the potential to facilitate mobility and cross-border recognition of the corresponding qualifications in Europe. Students contributed to that via their participation in the project as stated in the previous point.

EVALUATION AND IMPACT

Strategical Initiatives for Evaluation & Monitoring

After the completion of the twelve assessment reports, the Good Practices in Internationalisation Workshop was organised. During this workshop, a selection of the good practices, as proposed by the experts in their assessment reports, were presented and shared among stakeholders.

The methodology was evaluated on a case-by-case basis and the overall results were analysed and published. A survey was set up to receive feedback on the pilots from the assessed programmes and institutions, from the experts and from the procedure coordinators.

A specific research question dealt with the (potential) impact of the assessment on the institutions and on the programmes.

As an accompanying measure, the project integrated dissemination activities throughout the project activities. The knowledge gathered was disseminated through a variety of communication tools: the project website, the partners' websites, a newsletter, the publications and partner's contributions to national and international workshops, seminars and conferences. In this phase of the project, dissemination further promoted the Certificate as a future-proof tool for internationalisation. Promotion culminated at the final conference and the unveiling of the internationalisation platform where good practices in internationalisation are published.

Analysing the Impacts of the Outputs

The CeQuInt project developed a methodology to assess the quality of internationalisation in higher education. The overall aim of the project partners was to assess, enhance and reward internationalisation.

The CeQuInt methodology can be used to assess the quality of internationalisation at programme- or at institutional level. A successful assessment leads to the award of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation. This all impacts directly on the programmes or institutions positively assessed and mainly on the students as they are enrolled in a programme or institution that has successfully incorporated an international and intercultural dimension into the purpose, function and delivery of its education.

Defining major success factors

- Building up on a previous methodology at programme level developed by NVAO in the Netherlands and Flanders
- The implication of all the stakeholders involved in higher education through international organisations in the Stakeholders' group
- The project methodology with the pilot procedures and the good practices workshop
- The continuation of the project through the Certificate for quality in internationalisation by ECA.

Lessons Learned

Good practices related to internationalisation gathered in the Internationalisation platform: <https://cequint.eu/what-how/>

SUPPORTIVE AND INFLUENCING ASPECTS

Identifying the major Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths:

- Robust methodology
- Dedicated trainings
- Pool of experts

Weaknesses:

- Lack of knowledge of institutions and students about the framework and the certificate.

Further Challenges

Related with the weakness described, further dissemination of the framework might be needed in order for institutions and students to know about its potential.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Sustainability Factors

ECA has a dedicated webpage regarding the certificate, the outcomes of the reviews and the good practices detected. In addition, periodically trainings are organized to increase the pool of experts and to enhance the knowledge of the certification. ECA has also a standing Certification group in charge of everything related with the CeQuInt procedures.

Transferability

The framework is publicly available, although only ECA member agencies can run the procedures in order to get the certificate. The review reports and the good practices are published on the dedicated webpage and periodically trainings for everyone are organized.

Links

<http://ecahe.eu/home/internationalisation-platform/certification/>

<http://ecahe.eu/home/about/projects/cequint/>

<https://cequint.eu/cequint/>

Contact Persons

Eva Fernández de Labastida (eva.fdzlabastida@unibasq.eus).

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