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Introductory Note

BACKGROUND AND SOURCING

This report will present the evaluation tools that the FAB project will employ for the effective assessment of the delivery of the FAB Master's program. The tools and methodology have been carefully chosen so as to take under consideration the standards and guidelines for the Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). What follows is an analysis of the ESG 2015 (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area). The full report with more detailed information can be found in:

https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

The Standards and Guidelines were authored by the following bodies: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Students' Union (ESU), European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE).

European Higher Education Institutions must apply the European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education which fall into: (a) Standards & Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance; (b) Standards & Guidelines for External Quality Assurance; and (c) Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance Agencies.

CONTENT & APPLICATION

What follows is a discussion of these standards and guidelines which Asian European Higher Institutions should engage and implement to take forward quality assurance in Higher Education in Asia and, as such, provide a solid foundation for successful implementation.

In addition to the information regarding the Standards and Guidelines used by the European Higher Education Area, and which can be adopted by the higher education institutions operating in Asia, this report includes several evaluation techniques that are used by European Higher Education Institutions as an integral part of their Internal Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines. Such tools take the forms of faculty self-assessment reports, student questionnaires, peer review feedback questionnaire, and others. These tools are used by students and faculty members to assess the delivery of courses and programmes offered by their institutions such as in the case of the FAB project.

The tools can be found in the Appendices that accompany this report. The Asian partners must use these tools in order to collect evaluation feedback from key stakeholders such as the faculty

teaching the FAB courses and the students studying in the FAB Master's program, for the continuous review and update of the FAB courses and their delivery.

Data must be regularly collected and analysed, and a report of the findings/evaluations must be submitted by each and all Asian HEIs participating in the FAB project, for its monitored duration. These will form the basis for the evaluation reports that will be prepared by FAB that will essentially allow the monitoring of proper academic implementation and the identification and communication of the areas for improvement.

Note that the "Faculty Self-Assessment & Appraisal Form" (Appendix 2) is a template of best practice, as applied at a European (EU) university. We advise that this form/process, if adapted to the context, regulations, structure and practices of individual Asian partner universities, it will provide a helpful evaluation tool for the specific program and its faculty, as well as for the wider university evaluation system (assuming no other/corresponding one is already in place).

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European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) Description

ABOUT ESG

The specific toolkit is based on the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for the European Higher Education Area were adopted by the ministers of higher education in May 2015 in an effort to safeguard quality assurance in the European Higher Education sector, and as such provide a solid foundation for effective implementation. Undoubtedly, higher education, research and innovation play a vital role in nourishing social cohesion, economic development and national as well as international competitiveness. Thus, higher education becomes a vital element of socio-economic, and cultural progress and development.

Higher Education institutions have to increasingly respond to diversity and inclusion and thus, they are faced with increased social expectations to adopt a more student-centred approach to learning and teaching, implement flexibility in learning practices and paths, and recognise competences that are cultivated outside formal curricula (ESG, 2015 Available at: https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf, Accessed 9 January, 2023).

A primary goal of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) is to build a common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across geographical boundaries and among diverse stakeholders. They have played and continue to play a pivotal role in the development of national and institutional quality assurance systems across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and cross-boarder cooperation. Involvement in and implementation of quality assurance processes, both internal and external, help higher education systems to demonstrate transparency, quality, and subsequently build mutual trust with all key stakeholders, and wider recognition of their qualifications.

ESG SCOPE AND CONCEPTS

The ESG are a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. The ESG are not standards for quality per se, nor do they dictate how the processes for quality assurance will be applied, but they provide direction, since they encompass the areas that are crucial for the provision of quality within the learning environments of higher education.

ESG's focus is on quality assurance associated to learning and teaching in higher education, encompassing the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation.

Additionally, higher education institutions have policies and processes to confirm and enhance the quality of other important activities such as research and governance.

According to ESG (2015), higher education serves multiple purposes such as the preparation of students for active citizenship, equipping them for their future careers, giving them the knowledge, skills, and competencies for their employability, nourishing their personal development, and stimulating research and innovation. Thus, stakeholders of higher education institutions are likely to emphasize different purposes, and subsequently view quality differently in HE. Hence, quality assurance must address these different perspectives. Even though quality as a term is difficult to be defined in the context of higher education institutions, is primarily the outcome of the interaction and interdependence of teachers, students, and the institutional learning environment. The effective implementation of a quality assurance system will generate information to assure the higher education institution and the public of the quality of the higher education institution's activities (accountability) and will also provide advice and recommendations regarding any possible improvements in terms of what it is doing (enhancement). Quality assurance and quality enhancement are two terms that are tightly knitted, and together support the creation and nourishment of a quality culture that can ultimately be embraced by all the internal stakeholders' students, academic staff, the institutional leaders, and management (ESG 2015).

ESG PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES

The ESG have the following purposes (ESG 2015, p. 7):

- They set a common framework for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national, and institutional level;
- They enable the assurance and improvement of quality of higher education in the European higher education area;
- They support mutual trust, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national boarders;
- They provide information on quality assurance in the EHEA (European Higher Education Area).

The ESG are based on the following four principles for quality assurance in the EHEA (ESG 2015, p. 8):

- Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;

- Quality assurance responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes, and students;
- Quality assurance supports the development of a quality culture;
- Quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all stakeholders and society.

EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The standards for quality assurance have been divided into three parts:

- ➢ Internal quality assurance
- ➢ External quality assurance
- ➢ Quality assurance agencies

The three parts are intrinsically interrelated and interlinked since they form the foundation for a European quality assurance framework. External quality assurance, recognises the standards for internal quality assurance, therefore ensuring that the internal work carried out by educational institutions is directly related to any external quality assurance that they undergo. Thus, the three parts complement each other, and all together strengthen the quality orientation of higher educational institutions.

The *standards* indicate agreed and accepted practice for quality assurance in higher education in the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) and should thus, be taken account of an adhered to by those concerned.

The *guidelines* provide explanation as to why the standard is important and describe how standards might be applied. They indicate good practices in the relevant area for consideration by the actors involved in quality assurance but the implementation approach will be different depending on the context.

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

PART 1: STANDARDS & GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

In the context of the FAB project the Asian Higher Educational Institutions should use the Internal Quality Assurance tools found in the Appendices at the end of this report to collect data from key

stakeholders such as students and teachers, once the program rans to assess the delivery of the FAB Master's Program by both staff and students. As aforementioned, data must be regularly collected and analysed, and a report of the findings/evaluations must be submitted by each and all Asian HEIs participating in the FAB project, for its monitored duration. These will form the basis for the evaluation reports that will be prepared by FAB that will essentially allow the monitoring of proper academic implementation and the identification and communication of the areas for improvement.

1.1 Policy for Quality Assurance

Standard:

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is communicated publicly and is an integral part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through suitable structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Guidelines:

Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a circle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution. It nourishes the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. To achieve this, the policy is formalised and publicly available. The effectiveness of quality assurance policies is achieved when they reflect the link between research, learning, & teaching and consider the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context, and its strategic approach. The Policy for Quality Assurance supports among others:

- The organisation of the quality assurance system;
- Departments, schools, faculties, and other units and stakeholders within the institution to take responsibilities in quality assurance;
- Academic integrity and freedom and safeguard against academic fraud;
- The involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

In addition the quality assurance policy covers any elements of an institution's activities that are subcontracted to or carried out by other parties.

1.2 Design and approval of programmes

Standard:

Institutions should instil and follow processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The design of the programmes should be such that they meet the objectives

set for them, with an emphasis on the intended learning outcomes. The qualification earned from the programme should be clearly specified and communicated and indicate the correct level of the national qualifications framework.

Guidelines:

Higher education institutions, have at the heart of their teaching mission the development of their study programmes, which in turn must equip students with the academic knowledge and skills that will be applied in their future careers.

Programmes
- Are designed based on explicit learning outcomes and are inline with the institutional strategy
- Are designed with the involvement of students and other stakeholders in the work
- Benefit from external expertise
- Are designed to ensure the smooth student progression
- Are subject to a formal institutional approval process

1.3 STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT

Standard:

Institutions should make sure that the delivery of their programmes is done in such a way that enables students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Guidelines:

Student-centered learning and teaching play a critical role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection, critical thinking, and engagement in the learning process. Thus, this requires a careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.

The implementation of student-centered learning and teaching
- Respects and addresses student diversity and their needs, thus enabling flexible learning paths
- Considers and uses different modes of delivery
- Uses various pedagogical methods
- Carry out regular evaluations and adjustments of the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods
- Encourage learner's autonomy supported by teacher guidance and support

- Encourage mutual respect between teacher and learner
- Instill and implement student complaint procedures

Recognizing the importance of assessment in terms of the students' personal development and their future careers, quality assurance processed regarding assessment must take into consideration the following:

- Assessors are knowledgeable regarding the existing testing and examination methods and receive continuous support from their institution in terms of developing their own skills in the area
- Assessment criteria and assessment methods are established and communicated to students in advance.
- Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner. It is recommended that the use of Double Marking is implemented across all FAB Master's courses at least to one form of assessment type such as the Final Exam and/or the Course Assignment.
- Assessment is consistent and fairly applied to all students and carried out based on the stated procedures
- A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.
- Students are given feedback, which, if needed is related to advice regarding the learning process.

1.4 STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION

Standard:

Pre-defined and published regulations pertaining the various stages of the student progress throughout their studies e.g. student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

Guidelines:

Focus on the provision of conditions and continuous support needed for students to progress in their academic "life-cycle" is in the best interest of the students, the programmes, institutions, and systems.

It is crucial that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and with transparency.

Provide induction and support to the institution and the programme.

Institutions need to establish processes and tools to collect, monitor, and act on information on student progression in their programmes of study.

Graduation represents the culmination of the students' period of study. Students need to receive documentation that states and explains the qualification gained, the learning outcomes achieved, and the context, level, content, and status of the studies that were pursued and completed with success.

1.5 TEACHING STAFF

Standard:

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They need to establish and apply fair processes characterized by transparency for the recruitment and development of the faculty.

Guidelines:

The faculty member's role is critical in contributing to the creation of a high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences, and skills. Due to the heightened student diversity, which demands a stronger focus on learning outcomes, and the need for a student-centered learning and teaching, the role of the teacher is also changing (cf. Standard 1.3)

Higher Education Institutions have a primary responsibility for the quality of their faculty and for the provision of a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively.

Such an environment:
- Sets up clear, fair, and transparent recruitment processes for faculty
- Offers opportunities for and promotes professional development
- Encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research
- Encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies

Refer to Appendix 1 "Class Observation Form (Peer Review Form)" and Appendix 2 "Faculty Performance Appraisal & Self-Assessment Form" regarding the above. Student feedback through Appendix 3 "Student Evaluation Questionnaire" also relates to this.

1.6 LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

Standard:

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities as well as ensure that the provision of learning resources and student support are adequate and readily accessible.

Guidelines:

For a good higher experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These may encompass library resources, study facilities, IT infrastructure, human support, tutors, counsellors, and other advisers.

The role of support services is vital for facilitating student mobility within and across higher education systems.

It is important to take into consideration the needs of a diverse student population that includes among others: mature, part-time, employed, local and international students as well as students with disabilities. In addition, institutions must take into account the necessity for student-centred learning, flexible modes of teaching and learning, the provision of learning resources, and support. The internal quality assurance must ensure that all resources are fit for the purpose in hand, accessible, and students are adequately informed regarding their availability.

To this end, the higher education institutions should also use Student Evaluation Questionnaires (Appendix 3) to give the opportunity to students to assess the quality of the course and the faculty member teaching the course.

In delivering support services, the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and supported to develop their skills and competences.

1.7 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Standard:

Institutions should have appropriate mechanisms to collect, analyse, and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

Guidelines:

Informed decision making depends on reliable data. Thus, institutions must establish effective processes to collect and analyse information about study programmes and other activities into the internal quality assurance system. The information collected depends, to some extend, on the type and mission of the institution. The following are of interest:

- ➢ Key performance indicators
- ➢ Profile of the student population
- ➢ Student progression, success, and drop-out rates
- ➢ Students' satisfaction with their programmes
- ➢ Availability of learning resources and student support
- ➢ Information regarding graduates' career paths and employability opportunities

NOTE: Various methods of collecting information may be utilised. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities.

1.8 PUBLIC INFORMATION

Standard:

It is paramount that institutions publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.

Guidelines:

Prospective and current students, graduates, and other stakeholders need regular information regarding the institutions' activities and thus, institutions must share regular information about the
programmes that they offer, the qualifications they award, the teaching, the learning and assessment procedures used, the intended learning outcomes, the pass rates and the learning opportunities that are offered to students as well as information regarding graduate employment opportunities.

1.9 ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEWS OF THE PROGRAMMES

Standard:

Institutions must monitor and periodically review their programmes, to ensure the achievement of the set objectives and respond to the need of the students and society. These reviews should lead to the continuous improvement of the programme, and the subsequent actions planned or taken must be communicated to all those concerned.

Guidelines:

Instututions must engage in regular monitoring, review, and revision of study programmes that will aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and the institution creates and provides a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

Ongoing monitoring includes the evaluation of:
- The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline to ensure that the programme remains up to date.
- Society's changing needs
- The students' workload, progression, and completion
- The effectiveness of student assessment procedures
- The student expectations, needs, and satisfaction in relation to the programme
- The learning environment and support services and their suitability for the programme

Programmes must be reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. This requires the analysis of the information collected and the up-to-date programme adaptation.

1.10   CYCLICAL EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance on a cyclical basis.

Guidelines:

External quality assurance through its varying forms verifies the effectiveness of institutions' internal quality assurance and can act as an incentive for continuous improvement. It also provides necessary data to verify the quality of the institution's activities to both the institution itself and the public.

PART 2: STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.1 Consideration of Internal Quality Assurance

Standard: External quality assurance should in essence verify the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance process described in Part q of the ESG.

Guidelines: Quality assurance in the higher education area is founded on the institution's responsibility for the quality of their programmes and thus it is vital that external quality assurance recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance. Ensuring the interrelationship between internal and external quality assurance, the external quality assurance includes consideration of the standards of Part 1.

2.2 Designing Methodologies fit for purpose

Standard: The definition and design of the external quality assurance should take into consideration its suitability to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. The involvement of stakeholders in its design and continuous improvement is important.

Guidelines: To ensure effectiveness and objectivity it is critical for external quality assurance to have clear aims agreed by all the stakeholders involved. The system for external quality assurance might operate in a more flexible way if institutions have the ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own quality assurance.

2.3 Implementation Process

Standard: The processes for the external quality assurance should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include:

(a) A self-assessment or equivalent
(b) An external assessment normally including a site visit
(c) A report resulting from the external assessment
(d) A consistent follow-up

Guidelines

External quality assurance carried out professionally, consistently and with transparency ensures its acceptance and impact. Depending on the design of the external quality assurance system, the institution provides the basis for the external quality assurance through a self-assessment or by collecting other material that provide supporting evidence. The written report is usually complemented by interviews with stakeholders s=during a site visit. The

findings of this assessment exercise are summarised in a report (cf. standard 2.5) written by a group of external experts (cf. Standard 2.4).

2.4 Peer-review experts

Standard: External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include also student members.

Guidelines: In order to make sure that there is value and consistency in the work done, the experts need to:

(a) Be carefully selected
(b) Have the skills and competence to perform the required tasks
(c) Receive appropriate training and/or briefing

2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Standard: Any outcomes or judgements resulting from the external quality assurance must be based on explicit and published criteria that are implemented with consistency, irrespective of whether the process results to a formal decision.

Guidelines: External quality assurance and particularly its outcomes have a significant impact on institutions and programmes that are evaluated and judged. In order to achieve equity and reliability, the outcomes of external quality assurance must be based on pre-determined and published criteria, which are interpreted consistently and are evidence based.

2.6 Reporting

Standard: The reports prepared by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners, and other interested parties. If the agency makes a formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

Guidelines: The report prepared by the experts forms the foundation for the institution's follow-up action of the external evaluation and it provides information to society regarding the activities of an institution. In order for the report to be used as the basis for action to be taken, it needs to be clear and concise in its structure and language used.

It is recommended that a summary report is prepared.

The institution should be given the opportunity to give feedback and point out any errors before the report is finalised.

2.7 Complaints and Appeals

Standard: Complaints and appeals processes should be provided and clearly defined as an integral part of the external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Guidelines: To protect and safeguard the rights of the institutions and ensure fair decision-making, external quality assurance must be carried out in an open and accountable manner. However, there are times when dissatisfaction may emerge, therefore, institutions must have the processes to allow them to express their concern with the agency; and the agency(ies) need to handle such issues with professionalism and in a manner which is consistently applied.

In an appeals procedure, the institution may have concerns regarding the formal outcomes of the process, where it can demonstrate that the outcome is not founded on sound evidence, that criteria have not been properly set up or that processes have not been followed consistenctly.

PART 3: STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES

3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Standard: Agencies should carry out external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should set clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement.

Guidelines: Institutions and the public should trust the external quality assurance agencies to ensure the meaningfulness of the quality assurance agencies. It is imperative that the goals and objectives of the quality assurance activities are described and published as well as the nature of the interaction between the agencies and relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the scope of the agency's work.

3.2 Official Status

Standard: Agencies should have an established legal basis and should have a formal recognition status as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

Guidelines: When external quality assurance is carried out for regulatory purposes, institutions need to have the confidence that the outcomes of this process are acceptable within their higher education system, by the state, the stakeholders and the public.

3.3 Independence

Standard: There is a need for agencies to be independent and autonomous. They should have the full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of their operations.

Guidelines: Autonomous institutions need independent agencies as counterparts. Thus, the following are important: organisational independence; operational independence; independence of formal outcomes.

3.4 Thematic Analysis

Standard: Agencies should publish their reports regularly. These reports analyze the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

Guidelines: In the context of their work, agencies obtain information on programmes and institutions that can be useful across the higher education system. These findings play a crucial role on the improvement of quality assurance policies and processes in institutional, national and international contexts.

3.5 Resources

Standard: Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to perform their work.

Guidelines: It is in the interest of the public, to ensure that agencies have adequate funds to perform their work, since the higher education sector has a strong impact on societies and individuals.

3.6 Internal Quality Assurance & professional Contact

Standard: Agencies should instil processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their services.

Guidelines: Agencies need to be accountable to all stakeholder groups. To this end, high professional standards and integrity in the agency's work are indispensable.

3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Standard: Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines

Guidelines: A periodic review will help the agency to assess and reflect on its activities and policies.

REFERENCES

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). (2015). Brussels, Belgium. ISBN: 978-9-08-168672-3. https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CLASS OBSERVATION – PEER REVIEW FORM

APPENDIX 2: FACULTY APPRAISAL & FACULTY SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

APPENDIX 3: STUDENT EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE