

FOCUS

Benchmarking of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Experiences from the FOCUS Project



European Commission

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The FOCUS project has been funded with support from the European Commission (Programme: Tempus IV). This publication reflects the views only of the FOCUS consortium partners, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein

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@ FOCUS 2013



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Acknowledgements

To the European Commission, for providing financial support
Within the framework of the TEMPUS IV programme that has made
it possible to carry out this project

To the FOCUS Consortium:

University of Alicante –coordinator–
Libyan International Medical University
Omar Al-Mokhtar University
University of Benghazi
Swedish National Agency for Higher Education
Royal Institute of Technology
University College Cork

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1. The importance of Quality Assurance

1.1. The European Higher Education Area

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was initiated in 2010¹ with the main idea of creating **comparable, compatible, coherent** degrees and thus **recognizable systems** of Higher Education (HE) in Europe in the framework of the wider Bologna process.

From 1999 to 2010, all the efforts were focused on creating the EHEA that became reality with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration of March 2010, while the next decade is being focused on consolidating the EHEA.

*EHEA:
recognizable
systems*

The three main objectives of the Bologna process from the very beginning are:

- ◆ introduction of the **three cycle system** (*bachelor/master/doctorate*)
- ◆ **quality assurance** and recognition of qualifications
- ◆ **periods of study**

In the Bucharest Communiqué (April 2012) the Ministers identified three key priorities:

- ◆ mobility

1. http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/bologna_en.htm

- ◆ employability
- ◆ quality

Authorities also committed to implement **automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees** as long-term goal.

*Degree
recognition*

The Bucharest Communiqué priorities for the period 2010-2020 are:

- ◆ Ensure a quality HE system
- ◆ Adopt a two- or three-cycle system of study (*bachelor/master/doctorate*)
- ◆ Promote the mobility of students and academic and administrative staff
- ◆ Introduce a credit system (ECTS) for the assessment of study performance
- ◆ Recognise of levels adopting a system of easily identifiable and comparable levels

The **active involvement** of HEIs **teachers** and **students** in the Bologna Process and **student participation** in the management of HE is a key factor for the success of this complex process and the promotion of the HE European dimension. Equally important is also the promotion of the **attractiveness of the EHEA** including **Lifelong Learning**. Last but not least, the **European research** area and its convergence is also one of the most important points of EHEA.

*Collective
effort*

Thus, the Bologna process is a **collective effort** in which all actors intervene for a common purpose; **authorities, universities, teachers and students, stakeholder** associations, **employers, quality assurance** agencies, **international organisations** and **institutions** all intervene with the same purpose but exploiting their perspectives and needs so that the process would satisfy of all actors involved.

Although the process goes beyond the EU's borders, it is connected with broader EU policies and programmes. For the EU, the Bologna Process is part of a wider effort in the drive for a Europe of knowledge, which includes:

- ◆ Europe 2020 strategy for **growth and jobs**
- ◆ Strategic framework for the Open Method of Coordination in **Education and Training**
- ◆ ET2020 the Copenhagen Process for enhanced European co-operation in **Vocational Education**
- ◆ Training initiatives in the **European Research Area**

The EU's Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe's Higher Education Systems contemplates a broad range of measures to **modernise the content and practices of HE** in the 27 Member States with the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), and through the implementation of the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research (European Research Area) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme as well as the Structural Funds and loans from the European Investment Bank.

*Content
and practices
modernisation*

To establish **synergies** between the Bologna process and the Copenhagen process, which concerns **vocational education and training**, in co-operation with Member States, the Commission has established a **European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning** (EQF strictly related with other initiatives concerning **transparency of qualifications** (Europass), **credit transfer** systems (the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System for higher education – ECTS – and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training – ECVET) and **quality assurance** (European

association for quality assurance in higher education – ENQA – and the European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training – ENQA-AVET).

Last but not least, the European Commission also fosters a wide range of **international education and training activities**, an essential part of the EU's international policies that pretend to:

- ◆ Support partner countries outside the EU for their modernisation efforts
- ◆ Advance the EU as a centre of excellence in education and training
- ◆ Improve the quality of services and human resources in the EU by mutual learning, comparison and exchange of good practices

*European
Qualifications
Framework
for lifelong
learning*

1.2. European Standards and guidelines

The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) were jointly developed by the European representative bodies of quality assurance agencies (ENQA), students (ESU), universities (EUA) and other HEIs (EURASHE) together with the key stakeholders of quality assurance in HE.

In 2003 the Higher Education Ministers of the Bologna signatory states asked ENQA to develop, in cooperation with ESU, EUA and EURASHE, *a common set of standards, procedures and guidelines* (Berlin Communiqué).

Thus, as a response they developed the ESG as a common European set of **principles and reference points for quality assurance of higher education**. In 2005, the ESG were adopted by the Bologna Process ministerial summit in Bergen (Norway).

The standards and guidelines have been **designed to be applicable to all HEIs** and **quality assurance agencies in Europe**,

*Principles
and reference
points for
HE quality
assurance*

*Co-operating
within their
individual
contexts*

independently from their structure/function/size, and the national system in which they are located. It has not been considered appropriate to include detailed procedures in the recommendations of this chapter of the report, due to the fact that institutional and agency procedures are an important part of their autonomy and contexts.

As their starting point, the standards and guidelines are fully in line with the Graz Declaration of the European University Association (July 2003) which states that *«the purpose of a European dimension to quality assurance is to promote mutual trust and improve transparency while respecting the diversity of national contexts and subject areas»*. Thus, in line with this the standards and guidelines recognise:

*Primacy
of national
systems of HE*

- ◆ the **primacy of national systems of HE**
- ◆ the importance of institutional and agency autonomy within those national systems
- ◆ the particular requirements of different academic subjects

The standards and guidelines also take into account the **quality convergence** study published by ENQA in March 2005² that analysed the reasons of differences between different national approaches to external quality assurance and possible challenges for their convergence. They reflect the statement of Ministers in the Berlin communiqué that *«consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the*

2. www.enqa.eu/pubs_occasional.lasso

basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework³».

Thus, an appropriate balance has been sought between the **creation and development of internal quality cultures**, and **the role which external quality assurance procedures may play**.

3. www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/MDC/Berlin_Communique1.pdf

2. The Focus Project

2.1. Rationale

Over the past decade, Libya is experiencing a dramatic change in terms of engaging in new international and regional opportunities. Following the lifting of international sanctions in 2003 and 2004, Libya is now actively involved in investment and trade initiatives.

*Need for HEI
system reform
in Libya*

In order to promote human and sustainable development, Libya – the second largest oil producer in Africa – is working to **reform its higher education and scientific research systems** through a EUR7 billion five-year national **strategic plan and international cooperation** (University World New, 5 April 2009).

In the face of new opportunities, Libya faces a new challenge. The United Nations Population Fund Common Country Assessment highlights concerns about the **quality and efficiency of services in education, health and related areas** (UNPF CCA 2005). Large number of migrant workers in Libya co-exist with growing unemployment of Libyans. The report underlines the **need for further educational reform to ad-**

dress the quality of higher education in order to meet the country's modern needs and upcoming opportunities.

*Reducing
unemployment
and creating
a knowledge
society*

The same report noted that while the Government has succeeded in providing free universal education and vocational training, its highest priority now is to **raise the quality of education**, with a view to **reducing unemployment** and **creating a knowledge society**. The UNPF and the UNDP in its Country programme 2009 has called for more programmes supporting reforms in the education sector to create a labour force equipped to meet the challenges of globalization. It called for an improvement in educational standards via the development of core curricula, capacity building strategies, quality assurance mechanisms, and benchmarking the education system against international criteria.

At a macro level, the Libyan government has **initiated several projects**, amongst which is the establishment of a National Authority for Scientific Research (NASR) and a Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (CQAA). It has called for universities to develop standards to measure the quality and innovative nature of scientific research. The CQAA echoed this call by supporting the evaluation of academic performance of the education system according to international performance standards. This is intended to strengthen quality and continuously improve the Libyan university system.

*Agency
are young
and need
for national
culture of QA
at HEIs*

However, the abovementioned national **agencies are still young**. Their **coordination initiatives are still developing**. As such, while their activities from top down are producing positive effects, a bottom up approach focusing on quality assurance initiatives by universities can help accelerate to achieve the objective of creating a **wide national culture of quality higher education**.

At a micro level, a pre-proposal survey points to an opportunity for a **structured and coherent implementation of quality culture and assurance mechanisms within Libyan universities.**

Lack of guidelines for QA and capacity building

At the university level, most institutions are still grappling with the new quality policies introduced by national agencies. Internally, there is a **lack of clear guidelines and knowledge of methodologies for implementing quality assurance mechanisms** such as performing self-assessments of programmes and institutional services. Universities and higher education institutions are **still building up the capacity to improve quality bodies and mechanisms.** There is therefore a need to engage not only the institutions but their staff as well. Due to the recent nature of these initiatives the **personnel has no experience** in the implementation of quality assurance policy, limited knowledge concerning models for assessment of academic programmes and institutional services as well as no practical experience in management of an internal quality office and the development of strategic planning at the university level.

Need for information systems development

Omar Al Mokhtar University, for example has indicated interest in analysing the results of self-study for each educational program and receiving technical assistance in how to introduce continuous improvement mechanisms. **None of the Universities has established integrated data and information systems** that would support the analysis of Universities performance, dissemination of information to the members of the institution or enable internal and external benchmarking.

*Areas for
improvement
detected*

Additionally and taking into account the early stage of the definition for internal quality assurance framework within the partner Universities, the **top level management lacks capacity and experience** in the implementation of such policies, both at technical and strategic level.

The problems identified are therefore:

- ◆ Absence of a standardised effective mechanism for recognising and rewarding excellence and quality;
- ◆ Non-efficient information and promotion policy and
- ◆ Young management capacity
- ◆ Top management active to take part in Quality Management but lack opportunities – hence leading to poor strategy in Quality Management
- ◆ Quality units and staff are not sufficiently trained in tools such as continuous evaluation, benchmarking, etc.

*Promotion
of quality
assurance
culture and
awareness*

This proposal addresses the three main issues faced by Libyan universities:

- ◆ building **the capacity of quality assurance offices**
- ◆ developing a **strong and robust policy** on quality management
- ◆ **sharing expertise** on methodologies and processes

Capacity

2.2. Consortium

The selection of the consortium and experts has been made based on **experience** and **potential contribution** to the principal outputs. Collectively, the EU partners exhibit a **strong track record in quality assurance** in HEIs and **international cooperation**, significant expertise on the topic at hand and strong The selection of the consortium and experts has been made based on experience and potential contribution to the principal outputs.

*Quality
assurance,
international
cooperation,
dissemination*

Collectively, the EU partners exhibit a strong track record in **quality assurance** in HEIs and **international cooperation**, significant expertise on the topic at hand and strong **dissemination** potential:

University of Alicante

The **grant holder applicant, University of Alicante** (UA) – 28588-IC-1-2007-ES-ERASMUS-EUCX-1 – has been actively participating in Tempus programme and has extensive experience as coordinator of numerous Tempus and other European projects. UA has rich experience in implementing QA project, e.g. ALTAIR (JPGR 144789) in Arab region and CUBRIK (SMGR 158999) in Balkan region, FORT (2008-2455/001 MUN MUNATT) of Erasmus Mundus programme, IRIS Stimulating Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Jordan University (SCM M014B05), AFRIQ'UNIT(9-ACP-RPR-12#25 by Edulink programme), etc. The experience of working with Arab countries in current and previous Tempus projects, such as, UNILINK (JPHEs 145054), UNAM (JPGR 511109), BUILD (SCM M015B04-PS), BIRD (M015B04-PS), EXPRESS (SCM M016B05) and the above-mentioned experience in QA projects could ensure the project to be effectively and efficiently implemented.

University College Cork

The Quality Promotion Unit of University College Cork – National University of Ireland – 28454-IC-1-2007-IE-ERASMUS-EUCX-1, is one of best-practice universities regarding implementation of QA procedure with a specific focus on quality improvement in all aspects of the universities. The expertise in QA activities of UCC and its experience in Tempus QA projects would serve a key role in the project implementation by serving as a model for other institutions. The involvement of the top management of UCC, Dr. Norma Ryan and Dr. Ro-

nan Ó Dubhghaill, responsible for the strategic planning of UCC and QAA activities, will lead the WP2 and co-lead WP1 with KTH in Benchmarking quality assurances Mechanisms.

Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) –29371-IC-1-2007-1-SE-ERASMUS-EUCX-1, one of the leading university in international cooperation which proves KTH maintain its quality of teaching and services at the top of the international standards. The Faculty Board in the university is responsible for the quality of education and research while student representatives are also invited to participate in the management group so as to keep all stakeholders of the university in the decision making process. All key staff of KTH has a very strong background in international cooperation and work closely with the quality development in the institution. Among all, Dr. Mats Hannson worked as an international expert for Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities assessment for accreditation.

Besides the involvement of EU HEIs, two national QA agencies, one in EU and one in Libya, has become an added value to the project. HSV is the national agency for HE that reviews the quality of HEIs in Sweden and its QA policy has been developed in accordance with the European Network for Quality Assurance. Having the profound knowledge in drafting QA plans and evaluating HEIs, HSV will share their expertise in performing external assessments to the partner universities and comment on training materials and workshops. Meanwhile, the CQAAETI, under the General People's Committee for Education and Scientific Research, would supervise the development and implementation of the project and drafted workplans in the PU. Not only are the key staff top management of CQAAETI, they are also the key players of QAA at the Al-Fateh University, a non-consortium part-

*Swedish
National
Agency
for Higher
Education*

ner university and the second oldest universities in Libya. The contribution of CQAAETI could assist the project achieve an outstanding impact at the national level. Therefore, the outputs of the project would be expectedly extended to non-consortium universities in the country.

The composition of the partners took into account their enthusiasm to improve their QAA systems in both faculty and university level. Among the 3 selected Libyan universities, there are public and private universities in the consortium. All participated universities have **shown huge interest** in the project that could be found by the involvement of top management and head of QAA at different levels in their institution.

Given the increasing number of students enrolled in HEIs, private university also play a crucial role in the HE of the country.

*Gender
balance and
geographical
coverage*

The key staff of the whole consortium has also sought a relatively **balance in the gender** of the representatives. The diverse location of the selected public and private universities gives a good **geographic coverage** of the HEIs in the country, which facilitates the dissemination activities in distinctive regions.

The combination of private and public HEIs, of different size and structure shall enrich the project and increase the **impact on regional level**, providing local benchmarks and examples of good practice:

*Public and
private Libyan
HEIs*

The composition of the partners took into account their **enthusiasm** to improve their QAA systems in both faculty and university level. The selected Libyan universities are public and private:

- ◆ Libyan International Medical University
- ◆ Omar Al-Mokhtar University
- ◆ University of Benghazi

*Sustainable
quality
assurance
system
within Libyan
universities*

2.3. Main objectives

The FOCUS project leads to develop a **sustainable quality assurance system** within **Libyan universities** through the implementation of **capacity building programme**, the **development of a quality strategic plan** and the **enhancement of quality assurance methodologies and mechanisms**.

2.4. Activities

*Target real
needs*

The project structure is broken down into WPs, activities & subsequent outputs, which are logically sequenced & interlinked. Below follows a brief description of each Work package.

WP1: Analysis & Benchmarking

*Month 1–
Month 6*

WP1 provides a base for further WPs supplementing existing information on Quality assurance practices, & giving information on training needs to tailor modules in WP2. Two strands of activities will take place:

- ◆ Benchmarking exercise (Act. 1.1.1-1.1.3) to examine practices & conduct comparative self-evaluation. Involves developing benchmarking methodology, questionnaires & site visits &, finally, deliverable (1.1) «Comparative Analysis of Quality assurance Practices». This shall be used to promote QA self-critique outside the consortium.
- ◆ In parallel, training needs analysis will be carried out (Act.1.2.1-1.2.2) via observation & interviews. This produces internal deliverable (1.2) «Assessment of know-how & training needs» forming a basis for relevant training in WP2.

Methodology:

Benchmarking was chosen as it is a tool for self-evaluation & comparison, applicable in all contexts giving insightful findings regardless of size, structure or culture.

WP2: Creation of Sustainable Know-how potential in Quality assurance practices and self-Assessment methodologies and tools

*Month 6 –
Month 36*

WP2 builds on WP1 input for capacity building of Human Resources via targeted training measures. Training modules will provide relevant know-how for the implementation of quality assurance culture within the partner Universities. Specifically, activities will be:

- ◆ Preparation & delivery of 5 training classroom-based modules (Act. 2.1.1 & 2.1.2) including topics such as Internal quality management practices and how the quality of teaching and learning at HEIs can be managed with the overall aim of improving the situation for both teachers and students. A student-focused approach will be the main focus of this workshops. In addition, the training will focus on the Institutional assessment programme, Self-evaluation techniques, The EFQM Excellence Model and Key Management Processes; strategic planning. Modules include Ppt files & manuals. Outcome (2.1) are the training seminars themselves & are held at consortium level with outside invitees (120 staff).
- ◆ Conversion of the training to online e-learning format for wider outreach & dissemination (Act. 2.2.1 & 2.2.2). This involves a careful selection of contents, conversion using Articulate Studio programme to e-learning, & running of

the e-courses after advertising to target groups. Outcome(2.2) are the e-learning modules & students.

Methodology:

Pedagogical approach: Both face-to-face & e-learning modules will have interactive dynamic to encourage participation. face-to-face will include experience-sharing & good practice. E-learning will include interactive elements to fully immerse students. All modules are tailor-made based on needs & ratified prior to use.

WP3: Support structures and procedures

*Month 18 –
Month 29*

WP3 leads To update the quality assurance strategy and quality standards and to strengthen technical capabilities of the quality centers of the 6 participating Universities

Specifically, activities will be:

- ◆ Creation of a strategic working group for Quality assurance in each partner institution of at least 1 Quality assurance officer, head of department, rectorship representative, 1 administrative staff. The Working Group will have a crucial role in core project activities, especially the development and the adoption of a the quality assurance strategic plan, drafting of the Quality assurance procedures and policies Manual, the selection of training participants in WP 2; The assessment activities (wp4). (Deliv. 3.1)
- ◆ The assessment of the technical requirement for the modernisation of the Quality assurance centers. The installation of equipment and Quality management software for the management of QA procedures will be carried out by technicians libyan universities. (Deliv. 3.2)

Methodology:

The strategic working group will share with European experts the European standards and methodologies in implementing quality at institutional level in compliance with ENQA Guidelines.

WP4: Pilot implementation of the Quality assurance system

Month 6-36

After the know how acquired within the further WPs, WP4 will lead enhance the self-assessment practices and the internal quality management at Libyan universities via practical exercises.

To reach the overall aim, 2 major pilot actions are envisaged:

- ◆ Study Programmes assessment: The activity forms part of a practical exercise in the process of quality assessment. After extensive trainings the staff involved together with the Assessment Committees should be able to conduct an exemplary assessment. The exercise will at the same time provide the basis for potential improvements and assessment of the acquired know-how. and UA will advice for the writing of the final report. 3 EXPERTS from the Swedish quality agency will be in charge of the external assessment of the self-assessment reports, and will help establishing the priority list of improvement actions. (Deliv. 4.1)
- ◆ Assessment of 2 university services (Del: After the training (WP2) on the EFQM Excellence Model and Key Management Processes, LUs will conduct their own analyses and carry out the planning of this process. UA and HSV will be on hand throughout the process to provide insights and advice and to take part in the external assessment. The

assessment of the 2 university services will be carried out in order to underline the strengths and areas for improvement and to provide actions plans to raise quality levels. (Deliv. 4.2)

WP5: Securing institutionalisation of the Quality assurance system and procedures

Month 1–36

WP5 takes on board project results & provides sustainability. Specifically, it's aim is To create sustainability through targeted activities aimed at officially adopting the strategic action plans, Manuals and methodologies developed within WP3 and actively involving, creating awareness and informing all stakeholders within the 6 Libyan universities.

In other terms, the sustainability of the project will be enforced through:

- ◆ The revision and adoption of the quality procedures Manual by the university Top Management to be used by the university community as a guideline for future improvement (Deliv. 5.1)
- ◆ The official recognition of the Quality assurance Strategic plan with view to embed the quality culture as a fundamental element of the university modernisation agenda (Deliv.5.2)
- ◆ Organisation of at least 2 internal workshops per PC HEI, using the training seminars and round-tables with policy makers as content input, to ensure institutional support and create multiplier effects (Deliv.5.3)

Methodology:

WGs are used for decisions & proposing ideas in hierarchies. Likewise, internal dissemination can ensure resistance to change is combated. Action plans and guidelines provide roadmaps for the

future & it is appropriate to plan outside the project lifespan for sustainability purposes.

WP6: Dissemination

Month 1–36

WP6 is externally focused & has a clear strategy for optimal diffusion. Dissemination is mainly built into prior WPs (e.g. conferences, e-learning, publications). WP6 exists to provide strategy & tools for communication. Specifically via:

- ◆ Dissemination plan & package (Deliv. 6.1)
- ◆ Webpage (Deliv. 6.2)
- ◆ Media coverage & press releases (Deliv. 6.3)
- ◆ Dissemination via external channels & conferences (Deliv. 6.4—opportunistic and not covered by project budget).

Methodology:

A more detailed explanation of dissemination strategy is covered in section E.4. However, to support actions in other WPs a set of standard documents (logo, templates, web) is made available for use in daily & opportune promotional work.

WP7: Quality Plan

Month 1–36

WP7 will provide quality assurance to the action to mediate quality of the outputs & also gather unbiased opinions for improvement where needed. This consists of:

- Quality Board (QB) of 1 member of each HEI (Act. 7.1.1–7.1.2). QB is responsible for monitoring, providing feedback, & preparing reports to the coordinator. Expected deliverable (7.1) is achievement of objectives.
- External feedback via mechanisms, e.g. questionnaires, inter-project coaching (Act. 7.2.1). This will involve collect-

ing & synthesizing feedback received from externals in events (trainings, roundtables, conferences). Deliverable (7.2) is expected high quality of results.

Methodology:

Although quality control is inherent through all WPs, it is important to establish a specific structure for internal quality management, & ensure that external opinion is collected & processed. Both elements are incorporated here.

WP8: Management

Month 1-36

WP8 is Project Management as a whole. This involves setting the management structure (project management board and coordination meetings), formal reporting and other day-to-day actions. Expected deliverables include successful completion of the action (8.1) and reporting (8.2) are foreseen as the primary structures.

Methodology:

The structure has been conceived to be highly participative to ensure flowing coordination and successful partnership.

2.5 Target groups

The project foresees the inclusion of a range of stakeholders from all levels.

*High level
stakeholders*

Government, Ministry, accreditation agency and top-level HEI management will participate in planning actions. Their contribution will create potential for wider impact and generate change.

*Middle and
grassroots*

At HEI level, there are various stakeholders to consider including, Quality assurance officer or managers, head of departments and Teachers. Their involvement will help to shape the plans and processes to be improved as ultimate beneficiaries.

Final Beneficiaries

Students will benefit from the improved quality of teaching, learning and management of their institutions, and their feedback shall be sought during pilot action phase.

External beneficiaries

Other HEIs in the Arab Region will greatly benefit from this action, having a set of documentation and experiences to base their own improvement on a platform to interact (www.focusquality.eu) & e-learning courses with the benefits of learning within their own limits and time-constraints.

The project concept has been developed with a view to include as many stakeholders of differing power/interest levels as possible, thus ensure resistance to change is neither an issue nor a hindrance, and that all feel their involvement has assisted to foster Quality culture and to implement quality assurance mechanisms. This will generate a feeling of ownership for all project results and their more likely acceptance.

3. Benchmarking

*Benchmarking
for quality
improvement*

3.1 What is Benchmarking?

Benchmarking with the focus of improvement strategy and quality assurance tool is commonly used, but with different approaches throughout the world.⁴

It can be defined as an *«ongoing, systematic process for measuring and comparing the work processes of one organization to those of other organisations, bringing an external focus to internal activities, functions or operations»*.⁵

Two widely known definitions of Benchmarking are:

«Benchmarking is simply about making comparisons with other organisations and then learning the lessons that those comparisons throw up». (European Benchmarking Code of Conduct)

«Benchmarking is the continuous process of measuring products, services and practices against the toughest competitors or those companies recognised as industry leaders

4. ENQA, Benchmarking in higher public institutions (Benchmarking in the Improvement of Higher Education, ENQA Workshop Reports 2)

5. Kempner (1993); The Pilot Years: The Growth of the NACUBO Benchmarking Project

(best in class)». (*The Xerox Corporation – Pioneers of the benchmarking process*)

Simple and
customizable
tool for
processes
improvement

Private and public organisations use this technique for the **improvement of administrative processes** and **institutional models** by **examining** processes and models in other institutions and adapting their techniques and approaches.

One major advantage of Benchmarking is that the tool is **rather simple** in its application and execution. Essentially Benchmarking is about raising basic questions and attempting to find the answers.

- ◆ How well are we doing compared to others?
- ◆ How good do we want to be? What are our objectives?
- ◆ Who is doing it the best?
- ◆ How do they do it?
- ◆ How can we adapt what they do to our institution?
- ◆ How can we become better than the best?

Finding the answers to these basic questions, combined with a structured approach, and applying a proper methodology has proven to lead to valuable results.

3.2. Why Benchmarking in Higher Education Institutions?

Quality for
competitiveness

The European Convergence and the internationalization of Higher Education, increasing competition and increasing demand requires Higher Education Institutions to implement strategies to **maximize quality of their offer (study programmes and services) to be competitive**. Here a key role is played by the Quality assurance of study programmes and services offered by HEIs.

TQM or CQI

Among several improvement strategies and techniques such as Total Quality Management (TQM) or Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) **Benchmarking** has emerged as a useful, easily

understood, and effective tool for ensuring and improving competitiveness.⁶

*Benchmarking
is effective
and leads to
improvement*

Institutions experienced in benchmarking describe it as modern management tool and **the most effective quality enhancement method leading to growing efficiency and great improvements** within the institution. Practical reasons for the success of the method are considered to be that building on the work of others makes sense; that it can lead to cooperation; and that the method is **simple** and **concrete**.⁷

*Benchmarking
can detect*

The main opportunities presented by benchmarking in HEIs are:

- ◆ **Identifying gaps** in performance between the institutions and others;
- ◆ **Identifying opportunities & threats** for future expansion or improvement or the potential to be 'left behind';
- ◆ **Identifying strengths & weaknesses:** strong points or great defects can be identified after being allowed to study the processes of others;
- ◆ **Obtaining objective assessment** – 'critical eye' to be able to objectively study the current performance without paradigm blindness;
- ◆ **Justifying current methods, resources and practices** (and vice-versa); we may find we are actually operating at a very satisfactory level;

6. Alstete, J. W. (1995), 'Benchmarking in Higher Education: Adapting Best Practices To Improve Quality'

7. ENQA, 'Benchmarking in higher public institutions' (Benchmarking in the Improvement of Higher Education, ENQA Workshop Reports 2), www.enqa.eu

- ◆ **Comparing with competitors or organisations with similar functions or processes;** processes can be compared among different types of institutions and also between public and private organisations (for example: human resource management).

3.3. Advantages and concerns of Benchmarking for HEIs

Benchmarking is especially suited for HEIs, because of its **reliance on hard data** and **research methodology**, as these types of studies are very familiar to faculty members and administrators.

Practitioners' experiences lay down that Benchmarking at HEIs helps overcome resistance to change by providing specific, real-life examples of success, provides a structure for external evaluation, creates new networks of communication and facilitates sharing valuable information and experiences.

Besides substantial evidence of the positive effects of benchmarking, there are arguments used to criticize the method. Such concerns include for example that it is a euphemism for copying, lacking innovation, only has a marginal capacity to improve existing processes and exposes institutional weaknesses.

However, evidence clearly shows that Benchmarking can lead to radical changes of processes and innovation, by «adapting» instead of «adopting» best practices. Furthermore, by following

the Benchmarking Code of Conduct⁸, confidentiality concerns can be reduced.⁹

3.4. More information on Quality Assurance institutions and initiatives

The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education

<http://www.obhe.ac.uk>

The Observatory undertakes a wide range of research and consulting activities to help subscribing institutions to gain better understanding of current trends and emerging good practice.

EFQM – European Foundation on Quality Management

<http://www.efqm.org/Default.aspx?tabid=100>

Studies and other sources of information for registered members, possibility of participating in Benchmarking Groups: An EFQM Benchmarking Group consists of a variety of organisations from diverse backgrounds that have an interest in learning and sharing on a specific topic in order to improve their overall performance.

European Benchmarking Code of Conduct

<http://www.efqm.org/en/PdfResources/Benchmarking%20Code%20of%20Conduct%202009.pdf>

8. The Benchmarking Code of Conduct sets out the ethical and regulatory considerations of undertaking benchmarking, especially in terms of industrial espionage and other unfair competition measures.

9. Alstete, J.W. (1995), 'Benchmarking in Higher Education: Adapting Best Practices To Improve Quality'

The Benchmarking Code of Conduct sets out the ethical and regulatory considerations of undertaking Benchmarking, especially in terms of industrial espionage and other unfair competition measures.

Consortium for Higher Education Benchmarking Analysis™

<http://www.cheba.com/>

CHEBA provides a forum for the exchange of performance measurements and benchmarking data for all levels of higher education around the world. The association is currently a free organisation with fees assessed only when members want to join specific benchmarking efforts. Membership is limited to individuals employed as regular employees of public or private institutions of higher education.

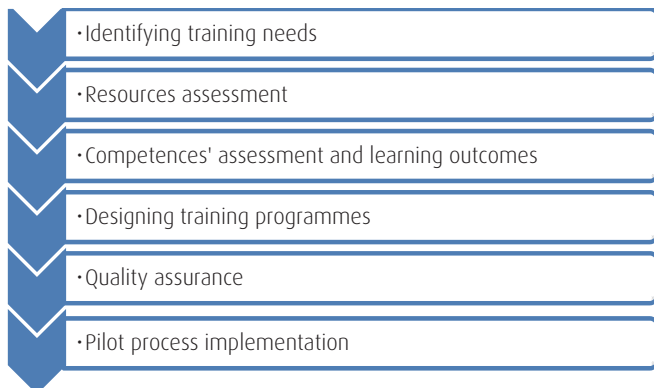
4. Process Identifying training needs and training implementation

4.1 Preliminary considerations

*Analysis
for a good
training plan*

The main objective of this section is to provide the main ideas to present the process of **making a benchmarking analysis** and then propose and **effective and useful training plan** for our target groups.

The process of developing a training system includes the following interrelated steps:



With regard to the first task in this process – **identifying the training needs is crucial** – it has already been carried out by the pre project draft survey and in this case a more in-depth need analysis is carried out in the next sections analyzing the result of a survey addressed to project HEIs for a better definition of the **training strategy plan and topics**.

4.2. Identifying training needs

*Organizational
and the
learner
training needs*

Training needs are **skills, competencies** and **knowledge** that are **missing** within an organization in order to allow its **best performance**. Identifying the training needs is a **starting point for managing the design of the training programme**. The methodologies, the resources and even the training success will depend on a clear perception of the **training needs**.

The training needs have to accomplish and balance the **organizational demands and necessities**, on one hand, and the **individual requirements** of the training learners, on the other hand. So, it is important to distinguish the **organizational** and **the learner training needs**.

Organizational training needs

*Strategies,
policies and
main working
field of an
organization*

The specific training needs should be identified, having regard to the **strategies, policies** and main **working field of an organization** or a corporation. These topics will, in fact, define the issues and subjects of trainings. This first premise allows that each training session will be **in line with the organization's goals**.

There are many factors that could justify specific trainings in an organization, such as:

- ◆ new systems or methods
- ◆ new legal framework or new legal requirements

- ◆ employment updating and recycling
- ◆ employees valorisation and equal opportunities
- ◆ new organization work area and organizational changes
- ◆ department performance reviews
- ◆ career objectives or organization succession plans

Learner training needs

*Specific skills
or abilities
that each job
requires*

The learner training needs are related to **specific skills or abilities that each job requires**.

The main factors that may determinate the learner training needs are:

- ◆ age
- ◆ the necessity to improve performance
- ◆ the requirement to acquire specific skills
- ◆ to be eligible for others jobs
- ◆ the last work experience
- ◆ the past training

It is also important to identify **how an individual prefers** to learn or what are the expectations that the learners have.

4.3. Procedure for identifying training needs

The method to identify the training needs of an organization will depend on its organizational structure. The best practices at this level could be divided into different phases:

*Areas to
benchmark*

1. **Select one or several PROCESSES or AREAS to benchmark** to define in detail what to benchmark, and select, train and manage the benchmarking team.
 - a. Define the strategic intent/ mission statement or objective of the department/ function to study.

- b. Come up with a list of critical factors, important for accomplishing the mission.
- c. Define the critical process or area to benchmark.

*Benchmarking
team*

2. Form a Benchmarking TEAM

- a. To plan the personnel input, first an estimation of the workload and knowledge requirements is needed.
- b. Ideally a benchmarking team consists of several people with different backgrounds (management background, research background, experience in different working environments, etc).
- c. Other important requirements taken into account were: knowledge of the process, the organisation, the culture; communication and team-player skills.

*Benchmarking
team*

3. ANALYSE *the Process or Area* selected to benchmark at your home institution

- a. Develop a detailed process description or *Process Map*, listing actors involved and potential problem areas.
- b. Develop a plan for the benchmark activity considering all necessary steps.

Review

4. Review existing sources of information – *SECONDARY DATA*

- a. Desk research: existing reports, articles, databases, statistics, collated surveys, etc.

*Methods and
data*

5. Select *methods* and collect raw data – *PRIMARY DATA*

- a. Weigh up benefits and disadvantages of using different methods for raw data collection.
- b. Select methods of primary data collection (e.g. mail surveys, telephone conversations, emails, video conferencing, site visits, questionnaires, observation).
- c. Develop questionnaires and collect primary data.

Performance gaps

6. Determine *PERFORMANCE GAPS*

- a. This step is about identifying strong and weak areas of each partner, relative to others in terms of the process under observation.
- b. After identifying the performance gaps, the main task is finding out the **reasons** for it and trying to **understand the cause**. All partners of the benchmarking group carry out the same analysis.

Performance targets

7. Set *PERFORMANCE TARGETS* for improvement and change

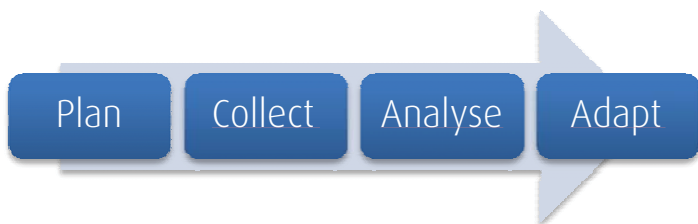
- a. Determining the performance gaps and the rationales and reasons behind them, allows the benchmarking team of each organisation to set targets for improvement. The targets should follow hereby the «**SMART**» rules:

Specific:	state precisely what is to be achieved
Measurable:	quantify your target if possible
Achievable:	if the targets are unrealistically high, it will not lead to any change
Realistic:	do not re-invent the wheel
Time bound:	timeframes and deadlines are very important

Evaluating reports of external entities may also point out the organizational gaps that should be fulfilled by trainings.

The chosen method should identify:

1. Main training subjects and the priorities areas of training
2. Number and the potential training population
3. Employees time available for the training
4. Training frequency
5. Training outcomes



4.4. Training Material

Importance of training materials

Training materials are fundamental to **promote knowledge acquisition** and to **accomplish the established training objectives**. Commonly, the training materials may include **workbooks**, training **manuals**, **computer-based lessons** or **audio-visual aids** which, generally, can be divided into two types: **written** materials and **audio-visual** materials.

Training multiplier effect

These materials can be both available in printed or digital / internet support (in e-learning trainings). This is very important for the **trainings multiplier effects**. Having material at disposal would mean that staff of the same institution that could not attend the training would have the possibility to have a look and use them.

The best method to choose and develop training materials is to analyse the training subject, the established plan and the available resources.

Written materials

Written material types

The written materials can be **textbooks**, **handouts**, **manuals** or **lecture notes**. This type of written material may support the training by providing the information structured relevant to trainees. The written materials ought to be clear, well organized, as well as specialized according with the training subject.

The written materials can be organized on a **workbook** that must include: a table of contents with the reference of pages; the syllabus with the objectives to each subject; the printed slides, worksheets or transparencies (if applicable); the reading list, among other material.

Cases studies and role plays

Depending on the training, it might be important to present **handouts** on **case studies** and **role plays**. Notwithstanding further developments bellow:

- ◆ A case study is a form of problem-based learning which presents a situation that requires a solution. This is a useful tool to practice and apply learning concepts.
- ◆ A role play allows trainees to experience their skills in situations similar to real-life. So, this technique could improve the trainees' practical experience. The trainer may review the learner's performance and correct it immediately.

Audio-visual materials

Audio visual material types

The visual resources include **power-points**¹⁰ or **slides**, as well as **transparencies**. The increased use of computers has made transparencies a less used material. However, when, for instance, a computer is not available, transparencies could be a suitable substitute.

With respect to the content, the visual materials should not be transcripts of lectures or of the course. Hence, the visuals materials should only provide the **key words** and the **main**

10. About how to create a power-point, see <http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-PowerPoint-Presentation> or <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/powerpoint-help/create-your-first-presentation-RZ001129842.aspx>.

ideas of the course, which can be followed by trainees during a class.

A power-point is only a supplement to the classroom activity that emphasizes the key points or that illustrate complicated information with graphics or illustrations. The audio-visuals may also serve to increase the trainee's attention and to reinforce the teacher's message.

Thus, the slides or transparencies should be **short and concise**. Each slide should have no more than 5 – 7 lines or bullet points and each line must not have more than 5 – 7 words.

Depending on the training topic, where appropriate, audio materials, like **films** or **videos**, are also important to reinforce the syllabus and the curriculum programme, because they perform as an example that demonstrates a live view of the information provided by the teacher.

Mention should be made to other non-project materials, such as drawings, models and objects that might be important, depending on the training subject, in order to reveal how some subjects work.

Human resources

*Human
resources
importance:
continuous
training*

Since the latter decades of the 20th century, due to the importance of **human capital** in nowadays type of society (society of knowledge, post-modern society) as the main productive factor of a modern economy, it is widely **recognized** that substantial **investment** in human resources should be made to guarantee a high training content quality and thus the effectiveness of the action.

In today's world almost everyone is a skilled worker, from the receptionist with the minimum requirement of high school education to the manager with an MBA or PhD. Today practically the entire workforce has become a skilled one and that means that there is perhaps no position that is not in need of **continuous training**.

In this new type of society, the development of human resources is now based on the establishment of an Economy of Knowledge Management, the main characteristic of which are the lifelong learning and the continuous training.

Vocational Education

The transition to a knowledge-based economy (Lisbon European Council 2000) requires modernization and continuous **improvement of vocational education and training (VET)** systems in response to rapid change in the economy and society, so that they can help to increase employability and social inclusion and improve access to lifelong learning for all, including disadvantaged people.

The **investment in human capital is a main concern of the European Union**. In this regard, the European Council stressed in 2002 the importance of increasing and improving the investment in human capital in order to achieve the Lisbon objectives. In fact, in the Programme «*Education and Training 2010*¹¹» (European Council, 2002) the optimal use of resources was one of the 13 specific objectives set by the European Council and it was also included in the revised version of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005.

11. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/compendium_05_en.pdf

In addition, in 2006, the conclusions of the European Council highlighted that *«investing in education and training yield large profits which outweigh the costs and will have long term effects»*. And, in March of 2008, the European Council reassert once again the need *«for greater and more effective investment in human capital and creativity throughout life¹²»* as a prerequisite for the success of Europe in a globalized environment.

The role of training is changing the Human Resource function in the contemporary business and administration environment. The relationship between the training function and other management activity are changing. The training and development activities are now equally important as other Human Resources functions.

*Flexible and
quality labour
market*

In terms of labor market and economy, in a world where **flexibility** and **quality** are critical factors for the competitiveness of enterprises and national economies, the investment in human resources and the production of additional skills are fundamental. Through training we should optimize the utilization of human resources aiming to increase efficiency.

The objective of maximizing the workforce's potential in an organization is probably one of the most significant stages to implement in order to achieve the organization's strategic goals, and the training process is fundamental to accomplish these objectives.

12. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/report08/invest_en.pdf

4.5. The FOCUS questionnaire design

The main aim of this questionnaire is to carry out and **exhaustive benchmarking** to compare the current QA situation in each Libyan HEI and **evaluate training needs** to tailor the next trainings. After gathering the necessary data, a capacity building program will take place to introduce good practices.

Before the proposal drafting a need analysis was carried out, however, in order to have **a more in-depth insight** on the needs in terms of learning of the Partner Countries involved in the project, we decided to carry out a questionnaire composed of different modules.

The questionnaire is composed by different sections as described below:

Explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire and instructions

Quality Assurance practices implemented at FOCUS Libyan Universities

This questionnaire is addressed to the university partners of the FOCUS project and comes under ACT. 1.1 of the FOCUS project concept.

The questionnaire aims at collecting information on the Quality Assurance practices implemented at each Libyan University to better understand their real training needs and thus enrich the initial need analysis carried out at the time of the proposal preparation.

In order to set a useful and effective training plan, the questionnaire is divided into 2 main aspects: a) *practices generally used at HEIs for Quality Assurance*; and b) *indicators used to measure the success and quality of study programmes*.

After the reception of the questionnaire filled in, the information will be stored, analyzed by the EU partners and exploited to define a common set of training needs and as that will be materialized in training modules implemented during the project life cycle in line with the project description and work plan.

*Please answer the questions in as much detail as possible, providing data and numbers where appropriate. Please provide this data by not later than **19th November 2012** to University of Alicante, OGPI.*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ACTIVE COOPERATION, AND PLEASE
DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US IN CASE YOU HAVE ANY QUESTION OR
DOUBT

Factual detail on the institutions

- 1. Name of Institution:*
- 2. Name of Respondent:*
- 3. Position in the organization:*

Context of the country on Quality Assurance at Higher Education Institutions

- 1. Is there a national Plan for Quality Assurance at HEIs common for all Universities? If yes. Which are the Quality Assurance standards for Libyan HEIs?*
- 2. Are those standards mentioned above in line with the ENQA standards for internal assessment or in line with other frameworks such as the EFQM?*
- 3. Do you know about the EFQM/ISO/TQM model used for the internal assessment of study programmes or services at HEIs?*

Context of each University in terms of Quality Assurance

4. *Which indicators are used by your institution to check the quality of Study Programmes?*
 - 4.1. *Please give an extended list, including the kind of data requested for each indicator.*
 - 4.2. *Please give a list of the 5 main ones you need (priorities) on the level of the programme.*
5. *Which indicators are obligatory for the institute to collect? For example:*
 - 5.1. *Data relative to a Legal government request?*
 - 5.2. *Data relative to an Internal Quality assurance system?*
 - 5.3. *Data relative to the Accreditation system?*
 - 5.4. *Other Data?*
6. *On which level is the information gathered and by whom?*
 - 6.1. *Centralized level (On the level of the institution)?*
 - 6.2. *Faculty level?*
 - 6.3. *Program level?*

7. *How is data gathered (Bought software, 'homemade' software), stored and analyzed?*
8. *Which is the next step after the analysis? How is the improvement plan formulated and implemented?*
9. *Which challenges do you experience in gathering, processing and analyzing the information?*

4.6. Conclusions drawn from questionnaires

Analyzing the answers from the different universities involved in the survey it has been detected that even if they are from the same country in some cases their answer differ. This could be due to **different level of awareness of the Quality Assurance procedures at national level**. Thus the 3 Libyan HEIs have an **heterogeneous background** and meaning that the approach of **good practice sharing** and **mutual support** among them would be vital **for a successful project implementation**.

Is there a national Plan for Quality Assurance at HEIs common for all Universities? If yes. Which are the Quality Assurance standards for Libyan HEIs?

It seems there is lack of information concerning the main institutions for QA at HEIs since procedures for HEIs to be implemented are not clear enough. Concerning the institution there is a National Agency for QA and accreditation that sets a framework for QA and Accreditation at HEIs and national standards for both Institutional and Study Programmes Accreditation. There is also the Libyan National Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of HEIs.

Are those standards mentioned above in line with the ENQA standards for internal assessment or in line with other frameworks such as the EFQM?

There is no clarification from CAQAA if the European Association (ENQA) for QA in HE or the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) criteria are used as a reference to set the National standards for internal assessment at HEIs. In general, it seems that the Libyan standards are based on different criteria adopted by international councils and institutions specialized in accreditation of HE programmes.

Do you know about the EFQM/ISO/TQM model used for the internal assessment of study programmes or services at HEIs?

LIMU has adopted ISO 19011 model for internal assessment for study programmes or services. Many people at Libyan HEIs as Benghazi University are not familiar with these terms and their applications in the educational field. These terms have not even been used before for the internal assessment of HEIs.

Which indicators are obligatory for the institute to collect? For example:

The Libyan National Standards centre for QA at HEIs has set several indicators to assess the quality of the academic programmes. Academic and institutional indicators are in place such as: mission, vision, strategy, objectives, organizational structure, job description, regulations, national curriculum, course specifications, academic staff affairs, learning supportive facilities and services, students' affairs, infrastructure, financial and administrative issues, scientific research and community needs, continuous improvement, health and recreation facilities, safety measures and transparency.

Please give a list of the 5 main ones you need (priorities) on the level of the programme.

LIMU: early final programme accreditation, course satisfaction, quality of teaching, student retention rate.

Benghazi: programme specifications, regulations, resources and teaching techniques, education and academic management, quality assurance and continuous improvement.

Which indicators are obligatory for the institute to collect?

Statistics about students, academic staff, regulations, financial issues, organizational structure, etc.

On which level is the information gathered and by whom.

HEI management and at faculty level with IT systems.

Data is gathered at different levels, all of them interconnected and sequential: board, faculty, department, thus it is a quite complicated process. The data is generally collected in paper format. For the moment only online surveys are employed.

Which is the next step after the analysis? How is the improvement plan formulated and implemented?

Set an action plan for SWOT analysis.

Which challenges do you experience in gathering, processing and analyzing the information?

Shortage of qualified full time staff, lack of top management cooperation, lack of finance to spend on QA trainings and workshops, lack of academic staff cooperation, lack of strategic planning, organizational struc-

ture problems, lack of modern management and technological practices in dealing with data, staff, correspondence and communication.

4.7. Final conclusions

From the answer received there is clear evidence on the fact that there is a heterogeneous situation among Libyan HEIs (public and private).

There is an urgent need to set some common criteria for both internal and external evaluation taking into account national regulations as well as the European Standards and Guidelines to ensure HEIs competitiveness both at national and international level. This will increase degree recognition and will foster students and HEIs staff mobility.

Possible topics for the training plan could be:

- ◆ How to prepare a high quality self assessment report for study programmes using the ESG or EFQM
- ◆ How to prepare a study plan based on learning Outcomes satisfying the Bologna requisites.
- ◆ How to design and implement surveys for quality measurement
- ◆ IT tools for quality assurance at HEIs

Annexes

Quality Assurance practices implemented at FOCUS Libyan Universities

This questionnaire is addressed to the university partners of the FOCUS project and comes under ACT. 1.1 of the FOCUS project concept.

The questionnaire aims at collecting information on the Quality Assurance practices implemented at each Libyan University to better understand their real training needs and thus enrich the initial need analysis carried out at the time of the proposal preparation.

In order to set a useful and effective training plan, the questionnaire is divided into 2 main aspects: a) *practices generally used at HEIs for Quality Assurance*; and b) *indicators used to measure the success and quality of study programmes*.

After the reception of the questionnaire filled in, the information will be stored, analyzed by the EU partners and exploited to define a common set of training needs and as that will be materialized in training modules implemented during the project life cycle in line with the project description and work plan.

Please answer the questions in as much detail as possible, providing data and numbers where appropriate. Please provide this data by not later than 19th November 2012 to University of Alicante, OGPI.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ACTIVE COOPERATION, AND PLEASE DO NOT
HESITATE TO CONTACT US IN CASE YOU HAVE ANY QUESTION OR DOUBT

4. Name of Institution:

University of Benghazi

5. Name of Respondent:

Sabri G M Elkrghli

6. Position in the organization:

Head of Quality Assurance Office

10. Is there a national Plan for Quality Assurance at HEIs common for all Universities? If yes. Which are the Quality Assurance standards for Libyan HEIs?

Answer: Yes. There are some standards set by the Libyan National Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (for more details about standards and policies implemented, please refer to Centre's website: www.qaa.ly).

11. Are those standards mentioned above in line with the ENQA standards for internal assessment or in line with other frameworks such as the EFQM?

Answer: The Libyan National Standards are based on different standards adopted by some international Councils and institutions specialized in accreditation of higher education programmes.

12. Do you know about the EFQM/ISO/TQM model used for the internal assessment of study programmes or services at HEIs?

Answer: Many people at Libyan universities including University of Benghazi are not familiar with these terms and their applications in the educational field. These terms have not even been used before for the internal assessment at the university. It would be great if we could apply some models of this nature in the educational field in the Libyan universities.

13. Which indicators are used by your institution to check the quality of Study Programmes?

13.1. Please give an extended list, including the kind of data requested for each indicator.

Answer: The Libyan National Standard Centre for Quality Assurance have set several indicators to assess the quality of the academic programmes. Academic and Institutional indicators are in place such as: mission, vision, strategy, objectives, organisational structure, job description, regulations, national curriculum, course specifications, academic staff affairs, learning supportive facilities and services, students' affairs, infrastructure, financial and administrative issues, scientific research and community needs, continuous improvements, and health and recreation facilities, safety measures, transparency.

13.2. Please give a list of the 5 main ones you need (priorities) on the level of the programme.

Answer: The Libyan National Standard Centre uses several indicators before giving accreditation to higher education institutions. According to this body, all are important and have different weights in the evaluation process.

In general, the order of these standards might be placed as follows:

1. Programme specifications (strategic planning, vision, mission, strategy, outputs, academic standards).
2. Regulations (staff, students, ...etc.)
3. Resources and teaching techniques (teaching staff, assistant staff, educational services, infrastructure).
4. Educational and academic management (organisational structure, documentation).
5. Quality assurance and continuous improvement.

14. Which indicators are obligatory for the institute to collect? For example:

14.1. Data relative to a Legal government request?

General statistics about students and academic staff, regulations, financial issues, Organisational Structure ...etc.

14.2. Data relative to an Internal Quality assurance system?

The quality Assurance Office at Benghazi University requests a detailed list of items must be available for the self-assessment phase. These items consist of mission, vision, strategy, objectives, organisational structure, job description, regulations, academic programmed contents, course specifications, qualified academic staff, learning supportive facilities and services, students' affairs, infrastructure, financial and administrative issues, research, continuous improvements, and health and recreation facilities, safety measures, transparency.

14.3. Data relative to the Accreditation system?

The Libyan National Standard Centre requests the same items mentioned above in order to consider and approve a particular academic programme.

14.4. Other Data?

15. On which level is the information gathered and by whom?

Data and information are gathered through different levels. At each level, data is collected and prepared (processed) to be used at the same level, as well as by the upper level. The output of the lower level will be the input for the upper level and so on. For example, course evaluation results at programme level will be an input for faculty report.

Three main levels can be distinguished at the University of Benghazi. These include: board level (main office), faculty level, and department level. The University of Benghazi has 222 departments follow 22 different faculties. This explains how complicated the process of data collection at the university level.

15.1. Centralized level (On the level of the institution)?

At this level, data and information are gathered by Quality Assurance Office and then prepared and placed in summary and simple reports to be used by top management. It permits creating, updating, reviewing and following-up university's strategies, plans and policies. Inputs to this level are coming from faculties and top administrative units of the university. Such kind of data includes: faculty report on teaching process evaluation (course, instructors, learning supportive facilities, etc), reports on administrative staff performance, university's student services, finance, procurement and inventory performance, etc.

15.2. Faculty level?

At this level, data and information are gathered by Quality Assurance division at the faculty and then prepared to be used by faculty management. It permits improving and updating faculty

plan with respect to teaching process, learning supportive facilities (library, laboratories, etc), research capabilities, and so on. Inputs to this level are coming from academic and administrative units of the faculty. Such kind of data includes: results report on course evaluation, students assessment, teaching staff progress, supportive facilities, statistics of graduate students, defaulting students, students studying in different levels, post-graduate study, administrative staff performance, etc.

15.3. Program level?

This level is the operational level, where data and information are gathered by conducting questionnaires, site surveys, and feedback from teaching staff members, students, employees and other related parties. Data and information are then organized in reports to be utilized by both department and faculty management.

16. How is data gathered (Bought software, 'homemade' software), stored and analyzed?

Answer: The data are usually collected in paper format not electronic one. Many efforts have been made to collect the data electronically but we still suffer in this regard. An example of electronic collection and analysis of data is the online questionnaire of course evaluation by students recently conducted by Faculty of IT. The software used in this regard is locally made. Snap software is useful in this regards as well.

17. Which is the next step after the analysis? How is the improvement plan formulated and implemented?

As explained above, the approach adopted at the university relies heavily on documents collection and making decisions based on that. In general, analysis reports (whatever the method used in the analysis) are very important for monitoring performance, evaluate actual perfor-

mance with previously set goals, and take action to maintain, improve, and correct performance.

18. Which challenges do you experience in gathering, processing and analyzing the information?

In fact, many challenges are facing the Quality Assurance Office at the university and the faculties levels. These challenges act as an impediments to the Quality Assurance Office in doing their job properly. The lack of top management cooperation, lack of finance to spend on quality training and workshops, the lack of academic staff cooperation, the lack of strategic planning, organisational structure problems, lack of modern management and technological practices in dealing with data, staff issues, correspondence and communication are examples in this respect.

Suggestions:

In my opinion, some training might be useful for the University of Benghazi especially in the following areas:

- How to conduct self-assessment study for university such as Benghazi University?
- How to write course specifications in a very clear way?
- How to apply ISO / TQM at Benghazi University?
- What are the requirements for international accreditation of Benghazi University?
- How to raise the rank of Benghazi University nationally, regionally and internationally?

Quality Assurance practices implemented at FOCUS Libyan Universities

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The questionnaire aims at collecting information on the Quality Assurance practices implemented at each Libyan University to better understand their real training needs and thus enrich the initial need analysis carried out at the time of the proposal preparation.

In order to set a useful and effective training plan, the questionnaire is divided into 2 main aspects: a) *practices generally used at HEIs for Quality Assurance*; and b) *indicators used to measure the success and quality of study programmes*.

After the reception of the questionnaire filled in, the information will be stored, analyzed by the EU partners and exploited to define a common set of training needs and as that will be materialized in training modules implemented during the project life cycle in line with the project description and work plan.

Please answer the questions in as much detail as possible, providing data and numbers where appropriate. Please provide this data by not later than 19th November 2012 to University of Alicante, OGPI.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ACTIVE COOPERATION, AND PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US IN CASE YOU HAVE ANY QUESTION OR DOUBT

7. *Name of Institution:*

LIBYAN INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL UNIVERSITY (LIMU)

8. *Name of Respondent:*

HADEEL HIKMAT NASR

9. Position in the organization:

HEAD OF QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICE at LIMU.

19. Is there a national Plan for Quality Assurance at HEIs common for all Universities? If yes. Which are the Quality Assurance standards for Libyan HEIs?

THERE IS A NATIONAL AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION (CQAA), SETS A FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE & ACCREDITATION AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, AND NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR BOTH INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAM STUDY ACCREDITATION.

20. Are those standards mentioned above in line with the ENQA standards for internal assessment or in line with other frameworks such as the EFQM?

THERE IS NO CLARIFICATION FROM CQAA IF:

- (ENQA) EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION, OR
- (EFQM) EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT.

ARE USED AS A REFERENCE TO SET THE NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR INTERNAL ASSESSMENT AT HEI.

21. Do you know about the EFQM/ISO/TQM model used for the internal assessment of study programmes or services at HEIs?

LIMU HAS ADOPTED ISO MODEL (ISO 19011) FOR INTERNAL ASSESSMENT FOR STUDY PROGRAMMES OR SERVICES.

22. Which indicators are used by your institution to check the quality of Study Programmes?

22.1. Please give an extended list, including the kind of data requested for each indicator.

THE INDICATORS USED FOR THE OBJECTIVE OF «ENHANCING TEACHING & LEARNING» AT EACH STUDY PROGRAM, ARE:

- STUDENT RETENTION RATE.
- COURSE SATISFACTION (EDUCATION, & MEAN TARGET ≥ 3 FOR LIKERT TYPE SCALE (1-5).
- COURSE SATISFACTION (EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES). & MEAN TARGET ≥ 3 FOR LIKERT TYPE SCALE (1-5).
- QUALITY OF TEACHING. & MEAN TARGET ≥ 3 FOR LIKERT TYPE SCALE (1-5).

THE INDICATORS USED FOR THE OBJECTIVE OF «ENHANCING RESEARCH» AT EACH STUDY PROGRAM, ARE:

- RESEARCH FUNDING BY NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.
- RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS.

THE INDICATORS USED FOR THE OBJECTIVE OF «IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENT» AT EACH STUDY PROGRAM, ARE:

- INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION.
- PROGRAM ACCREDITATION.
- STUDENT PASS RATES.
- ON TIME GRADUATE RATE.
- GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT RATE.

THE INDICATORS USED FOR DIFFERENT OTHER OBJECTIVES:

- STUDENT / TEACHER RATIO.
- FULL TIME /PART TIME FACULTY STAFF RATIO.
- COMPLAIN RATIO IN SUCH CATEGORIES.

- JOB SATISFACTION IN SUCH CATEGORIES.
- STAFF TURNOVER RATIO.

22.2. Please give a list of the 5 main ones you need (priorities) on the level of the programme.

- EARLY FINAL PROGRAM ACCREDITATION.
- COURSE SATISFACTION (EDUCATION
- COURSE SATISFACTION (EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES).
- QUALITY OF TEACHING.
- STUDENT RETENTION RATE.

23. Which indicators are obligatory for the institute to collect? For example:

23.1. Data relative to a Legal government request?

- EARLY FINAL ACCREDITATION.
- EARLY FINAL PROGRAM ACCREDITATION.
- STUDENT ENROLLEMENT.
- FULL TIME /PART TIME FACULTY STAFF RATIO.

23.2. Data relative to an Internal Quality assurance system?

- COURSE SATISFACTION (EDUCATION),
- COURSE SATISFACTION (EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES).
- QUALITY OF TEACHING.

23.3. Data relative to the Accreditation system?

- EARLY FINAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION.
- EARLY FINAL PROGRAM ACCREDITATION.

23.3. Other Data?

24. On which level is the information gathered and by whom?

24.1. Centralized level (On the level of the institution)?

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT & UNIVERSITY COUNCIL.

24.2. Faculty level?

FACULTY DEAN, VICE DEAN, & FACULTY STAFF.

24.3. Program level?

SAME AS FACULTY LEVEL BECAUSE MEDICAL SCHOOL HAS ONLY ONE PROGRAM.

24.4. How is data gathered (Bought software, 'homemade' software), stored and analyzed?

SOFTWARE

25. Which is the next step after the analysis? How is the improvement plan formulated and implemented?

SET AN ACTION PLAN FOR SWOT ANALYSIS.

26. Which challenges do you experience in gathering, processing and analyzing the information?

SHORTAGE IN QUALIFIED FULL TIME STAFF.

Quality Assurance practices implemented at FOCUS Libyan Universities

This questionnaire is addressed to the university partners of the FOCUS project and comes under ACT. 1.1 of the FOCUS project concept.

The questionnaire aims at collecting information on the Quality Assurance practices implemented at each Libyan University to better understand their real training needs and thus enrich the initial need analysis carried out at the time of the proposal preparation.

In order to set a useful and effective training plan, the questionnaire is divided into 2 main aspects: a) *practices generally used at HEIs for Quality Assurance*; and b) *indicators used to measure the success and quality of study programmes*.

After the reception of the questionnaire filled in, the information will be stored, analyzed by the EU partners and exploited to define a common set of training needs and as that will be materialized in training modules implemented during the project life cycle in line with the project description and work plan.

Please answer the questions in as much detail as possible, providing data and numbers where appropriate. Please provide this data by not later than 19th November 2012 to University of Alicante, OGPI.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ACTIVE COOPERATION, AND PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US IN CASE YOU HAVE ANY QUESTION OR DOUBT

10. *Name of Institution:*

Omar Al-Mukhtar University

11. *Name of Respondent:*

Saleh E. Abdall

12. Position in the organization:

Director of Quality Assurance office

27. Is there a national Plan for Quality Assurance at HEIs common for all Universities? If yes. Which are the Quality Assurance standards for Libyan HEIs?

None until now

28. Are those standards mentioned above in line with the ENQA standards for internal assessment or in line with other frameworks such as the EFQM?

...?

29. Do you know about the EFQM/ISO/TQM model used for the internal assessment of study programmes or services at HEIs?

No

30. Which indicators are used by your institution to check the quality of Study Programmes?

30.1. Please give an extended list, including the kind of data requested for each indicator.

We used three forms for evaluation one is for institution the second is for the program the third is for course.

30.2. Please give a list of the 5 main ones you need (priorities) on the level of the programme.

1. Development of strategic plane for the program
2. Setting the learning outcome
3. Standards for program evaluation

4. Course report by student and teachers
5. Program auditing

31. *Which indicators are obligatory for the institute to collect? For example:*

31.1. *Data relative to an Internal Quality assurance system?*

...

31.2. *Data relative to the Accreditation system?*

...

32. *On which level is the information gathered and by whom?*

32.1. *Program level?*

on Program level by the chairman of the department and teachers

33. *How is data gathered (Bought software, 'homemade' software), stored and analyzed?*

Both homemade and bought software.

34. *Which is the next step after the analysis? How is the improvement plan formulated and implemented?*

Submit the final report to the university to start the improvement

35. *Which challenges do you experience in gathering, processing and analyzing the information?*

1. Lack of knowledge about QA in general between most students and employee)
2. Lack of knowledge about learning outcome for course and program between some teachers
3. Submitting some forms after deadline



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TEMPUS