



Unione delle Università del Mediterraneo
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إتحاد الجامعات المتوسطية



APPRAIS

governAnce, quality, accountability:
a Piloting Reform PRocess
in kurdistan region of Iraq

Questions and Answers - MOOC

March 2023



10 JANUARY 2023: MODULE 1- GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND STRATEGIC PLANNING (UNIVERSITY OF ÉVORA)

1. Which kind of leadership style is common at Évora University?

At the University of Évora we have a hierarchical structure with Rectors, Faculties, Schools and Directors but this structure also has autonomy. Every school has a certain grade of autonomy, they can make their own decisions. There are meetings to make decisions, they listen to the Rector but at the end the decisions are up to Vice-Rectors.

2. How can we apply the leadership in the group works of students in the classroom assignment?

During the presentation, I showed you two slides regarding different types of leadership, and I think it will depend a lot on the situation because as you know there are times to deliver a certain task and if you have a lot of time to perform it, then it tends to be a more democratic way of doing it. But whenever the task is going beyond the deadline then the one responsible to deliver tends to assume a more autocratic leadership, in order to guarantee that the task is well delivered. So, I would say that within a group of people working be students or colleagues, these different types of leadership can be there depending on the personality of the people and on the other hand on the timeline you have to deliver. Different kinds of leadership can occur.

3. In case universities have no autonomy in decisions, how is it possible to implement a distributed leadership?

In my opinion, it is possible to implement a distributed leadership also if universities have less autonomy because for the staff it is not only important to know the rules, they also should be engaged in the decision-making process so that they can contribute. Even if there is not so much autonomy, leadership can be distributed, people can be involved in the process.

4. Related to the customer in the product canvas, what is the difference between customer needs and wants?

In terms of the business canvas, the business canvas relates very much with the value proposition that a certain organisation has to offer. So, in terms of a university, it might be well recognition in nationwide or even internationally of a degree or a course done at that university, or that the university offers research facilities, for example in Évora you know is one of the few institutions in Europe which have a very strong facilities within concentrating solar power. That means that if you want to pursue your studies and research within this field, you know that Évora will have excellent conditions to continue. Another example could be the presence of a great campus. People perceive it as a good value. It's up to the university to match the needs of their customers, students of course.

5. Iraqi universities are less autonomous than European universities, how could we increase the grade of autonomy?

It is important to show the decision makers that we are ready to be more autonomous.

24 JANUARY 2023: MODULE 2 - LEARNING OUTCOMES (UNIVERSITY OF PISA)

1. What do you mean by Soft Skills?

By soft skills we mean problem-solving; critical thinking, etc.

2. What is the difference between learning outcomes & learning objectives? And should these be equal in number?

Learning outcomes are more succinct, they describe what the students should learn in the course. The learning objectives is a list of what will happen in the course. Learning outcomes and objectives should be coherent, not the same number.

3. The students' feedback regarding a certain department or module was weak regarding the market needs because market needs change quickly. What does the professor suggest? Shall we remove the module? Or updating some syllabus or what?

The university should prepare students to face the market for the next 10 years at least, so it's needed a balance between more general skills and more specific abilities

4. As I studied PGCertHE in the UK and am currently a fellow of the British HEA, I see that what you are explaining is very similar to theirs. My question is that do you adopt the same regulations and have the same programs?

It is very similar because what he described is part of the Bologna process that is implemented also in the UK. The main characteristic of learning outcomes is that students can compare programmes implemented in different countries.

5. The elements of the Dublin Descriptors should be fulfilled in all and any program, but not necessarily in a course or module?

Yes, in particular if you want to write a program that has to be compared with programs of other countries, it is important to address the elements of Dublin Descriptors so that the students can easily compare them.

6. Are there specific vocabularies we should use when writing learning outcomes?

You have to write the learning outcomes so that they understandable by the students, so it is better not to use a technical language.

7. The only question that I need to ask, which exhausted English Teachers, is there any specific curriculum or special program to teach listening and speaking skills? In order to have the best learning outcome by special and specific means any program belongs to the Bologna process.

There are courses focused on teaching listening and speaking skills.

8. Could you mention some effective strategies you used to enhance the student-centred learning approach?

It is possible to use different strategies, for example in Pisa it was implemented a one-year program for the professor to explain to them how to use new teaching methods, how to prepare a syllabus with the learning outcomes, how to manage the class, how to speak better. Moreover, it was then introduced in Italy by law that inside each program there is a committee consisting of a certain number of students and professors whose aim is to check how the delivered programme is going, if there are any problems and this clearly helps implementing a student-centred learning approach.

9. Is the learning outcomes of the programme focusing only on the core courses or all courses including language, computer and other ethical courses?

Not completely, if you consider important that the students in the programme should learn other languages or learn about ethical issues, that should be stated in the learning outcomes.

10. Could you determine the period that after that we need to check and revise learning outcomes of the programme. For example, let's say for master programmes I assume it should be after the completion of the programme by a group of students started with the programme, so how about Bachelor's degree?

Typically, after the completion of a cycle, there's a natural moment where to do some comprehensive checking and revision but to do so it is necessary to monitor what's happening year by year, and collecting data, for instance, could be a relevant tool.

11. What is the role of autonomy of professors to achieve learning outcomes?

It depends on the situation or on the cultural expectations which are different from one country to another. I think there are two levels: the level of the committee managing the program and the other level consists in suggesting changes if they can be useful and if the course is not achieving the foreseen goals. On the other hand, professors have a certain level of autonomy that belongs to freedom of teaching. That means that they can choose different ways to achieve the goals established in the programmes with certain limits of course.

Just a short comment from Prof. Bjarne Skov (University of Oslo)

It is essential to understand that needs for adjustments in learning outcomes in programs and courses depend not only on changing societal needs, but also on feedback that comes from elements we will address in later MOOC lectures: external program evaluations and internal evaluation processes through local (departmental and faculty) course and program evaluation procedures.

31 JANUARY 2023: MODULE 3 - EUROPEAN CREDITS TRANSFER SYSTEM (ECTS) AND CREDIT RECOGNITION (UNIVERSITY OF MURCIA)

1. How about the number of ECTS for higher Diploma (1 year and 2 years)?

There is a diploma, that is a bachelor's degree, which each year consists of 60 ECTS.

2. In the case of a system for accepting 240 ECTS, for example in Murcia. Is it possible for a student to collect more or less than 240 ECTS? Does the university accept it?

No, the total is 240 because if students follow more courses, they can obtain more ECTS but it is not official. The extra ECTS are not necessary to obtain the degree, but they can't collect less than 240 ECTS.

3. How are the workload hours estimated for students who do self-preparation, as there are various abilities among students?

It is not so easy to evaluate different abilities so professors have to estimate the average student.

4. Is there any allowance to the ECTS for any of the semesters other than 30? (e.g. semester 1 is 27 ECTS and semester 2 is 33ECTS)?

In the Spanish system it is compulsory to have 30 ECTS for a semester. A different number of ECTS is possible only for joint titles.

5. What about using a benchmark and students survey together in assessing workload hours? Do you think it will be more reliable?

The benchmark is a good point of reference to start. The survey needs to be applied during the course, not at the end. They are different tools, each of them is useful for different reasons.

6. Is there a possibility that a student fails and repeats an entire year or he/she can move to the next stage/year and take more modules to complete the required ECTS for graduation?

The only limit in Murcia is the progression. Students need to pass the exam, if they don't pass the exams they can't attend the course of the following academic year.

7. How many hours correspond to 1 ECTS, 25 hrs or 30 hours? Is it possible to do a range of 25-30 hours?

When you establish the number of ECTS for the degrees, you have to follow the same number of ECTS. So, it will always be 25. Depending on the course, there can be more hours for the same number of credits.

8. Per ECTS is about 25 hours in normal circumstances, but if the period is less than 30 weeks in one academic year, how can the missing period be addressed?

If the academic period is shorter you still have to implement the activities because you need to implement the same number of hours.

9. Do you have full-time and part-time students? How do you consider total credits per semester for them?

For part time students, in a bachelor degree we consider 18 - 46 ECTS. In a master's degree we consider less than 30 credits.

10. For organising the same basic courses module with the same ECTS, do you mean in the same discipline for a specific university or the similar disciplines of different universities?

According to the Spanish legislation, the basic courses must be recognized both in the same university or different institutions.

11. In the ECTS system, the exam period for one semester is only 4 weeks. Does this period include just one attempt of the final exam for each course? In case a student fails in one of the courses taken, how can you repeat the final exam, is it in this mentioned period or in another different semester?

We have different semesters in Spain. The student of the first semester can do the exams at the end of first or second semester. The subject is not related to the semester. The student has one possibility in the first semester, if they fail they have another possibility in the second semester.

12. How many ECTS in the PhD transcript?

There is not a value of the ECTS for the PhD program because every PhD can define their own ECTS.

13. If the number of weeks decreased per semester due to the unexpected situation or multiple holidays that we have, how can we complete the syllabus or what we have planned in the subject outline?

You schedule the teaching activities considering the holidays or unexpected events.

7 FEBRUARY 2023: MODULE 4 - EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (UNIVERSITY OF PISA)

1. How can students' Unions be involved or engaged with the QA process? I mean separately from the students themselves.

In general, in Italy there are elections for the representatives of students. These representatives actively participate in the evaluation process of the university.

2. Currently, some of our teaching staff evaluate the teachers which leads to insufficient scores. What kind of independent QA agency can evaluate teaching staff? And how can we develop a local agency?

The university has a strategic plan that foresees units of academic staff that have to achieve some results. Of course, the evaluation of the unit can be done in terms of how much they contribute to the fulfilment of a certain task. This kind of evaluation should be similar in the case of professors so that they can understand what they need to improve.

3. Some of the challenges identified affecting QA in our region include shortage of funds, policy inconsistency and lack of regular training for staff, do you have those challenges as well?

In Italy we have this system evaluation done by the VQR, the evaluation of research that distributes funding proportionally to the results achieved but this means that not every Italian university has the same opportunities.

4. How do you assess social and market needs? How do you design the objectives and questions when assessing community demands?

First of all, you need to involve stakeholders from the beginning because you want to be clear on the outcomes that you want to reach. At the same time, there is a sort of merge between the needs of the world market and the needs of the academic community because this kind of quality assurance should be made clear not only for the university but also for the market itself. The competences of both worlds are needed.

5. How to make a strong relationship between Internal QA and external QA due to the learning environment in Kurdish Universities?

It depends a lot on the country of reference, but a relevant aspect is the timing of the evaluation. Another point is how much the external quality assurance agency is able to drive the process. This issue is still a discussed topic in the public universities in Italy.

6. How does INQAAHE differ from ENQA? Would one of these be a better option for an accreditation body in higher education?

The purposes of the two documents are the same, the standardisation made in Europe is really clear but there are many international examples of internal quality assurance that can help in order to make these guidelines.

7. Is an accreditation body still reliable in EHEA if it is recognized by INQAAHE while it is not recognized by ENQA?

The agencies like ANVUR have to make accreditation to the ENQA. This does not affect the reliability of the institution.

What is your recommendation for that?

I mean ENQA is working really well so this is important. Both standards and guidelines are important to consider but it depends on what are the results that Kurdish universities would like to achieve.

14 FEBRUARY 2023: MODULE 5 - INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (UNIVERSITY OF OSLO)

1. What is the difference between University Rector and University Director?

The University rector is the academic head of the entire institution, he is a Professor, he is a linkage among students and staff belonging to the University. The University Director is an administrative head, that's the job he applied for, so he is employed by the University Board to run the administrative side of things.

2. How can students be motivated to effectively participate in the QA process?

I think there are several things that we need to think about, and of course the first one is that the students must know that the time they take to participate may actually lead to adjustments and some improvements for them. For example, when I have a course evaluation I say that this is also an opportunity for you to make the course better for the students who come within the subject later but I think also for the formal issue. We are interested in what the students mean but this also leads to the insurance that they get weary answering questionnaires etc. So, we want to tell them clearly that this is their chance to participate and for us to hear what they want to say. Sometimes people will not be willing to fill in a questionnaire so maybe it is better to have a paper questionnaire in the classroom and do it during the break lecture or even to have a good discussion which is more direct in that sense.

3. Does program assessment form part of internal quality assurance or is it a requirement for external quality assurance?

The program review is part of our internal quality assurance system but we are required to have external representatives in the panel which conducts the review. So it's a job for the University of Oslo, it is not a job of the National Agency.

4. How do you handle low feedback scores from students? What measures do you take to improve?

This is of course a situation that many teachers may meet and I think that it is a question of culture and making it clear to students that if they participate they have a chance to have an impact on their own students' programme but in the short term if you do a course evaluation and there are very few you can of course try to do it more times but then you may run into the problem that students are not willing to do it.

So, I suggest that if students have problems with that, I would try to work with the teacher group in the sense that we can develop better methods.

5. How do you encourage students to participate in the feedback?

I think that teacher will try to explain why we are doing this. This is not just something that we have to do, but something that we want to do and which are the reasons. Students are different, some of them will participate more than others, but in general what is important is that they know why they should do it and that in some ways they can have an impact and make the difference for their own study programs.

We could also mention that we collaborate with the elected students, who are representative of the University of Oslo.

6. How can the internal QA deal with the feedback results? Sometimes students say why do we give feedback while the lecturers are not keen to change themselves?

It's important to work collectively with the feedback but that may also necessitate working with the teacher collectively because sometimes if you receive a negative feedback you may think that you are a terrible teacher, it's better not to show it to my colleagues. Instead, we could work on a collective responsibility, so that we can learn from each other. The students' feedback is the most important source of information but we do have other sources: compliance rates, grade average, statistics about the course and also the teachers themselves will have reliable information about the course and also about how it is going for them.

7. Should students know the final result of the evaluation process?

Yes, at least they should have a summary of the results

8. Involving all the students in the QA process may result in unfair results since some of them are not taking care of their classes as the others. What do you think about this issue?

I think this is also a kind of more general question about getting responses to surveys and questionnaires. People who are happier about the course will be more likely to answer than people who are unhappy. But you can't avoid a different participation from the students. We have examples for that, for instance if the teacher or the head of department sees a little participation, he can try to understand the reason why, this is also part of the follow-up.

21 FEBRUARY 2023: MODULE 6 - LEARNING MOBILITY (UNIVERSITY OF MURCIA)

1. Could you better explain the study cycle?

For our undergraduate studies, which are four years long, we have the Bologna process which asks the universities to revise the length of the undergraduate studies. There were two options: three years of undergraduate plus two years of master's degree but Spain decided to implement four years of undergraduate and one year of postgraduate. It is important because sometimes we have colleagues who have partners that have the 3+2 system and students who are in the fourth year will be in the first year of master and it has to be included in the agreement.

2. Is it true that it is better to avoid student mobility for the first time and try first staff mobility instead, especially for a university that is starting to work on mobility? and why is that so?

As I have already mentioned in my presentation, I have insisted on the importance of the academic supervisor's work. The role of the academic supervisor is very relevant. It's like an inspection of travels, they need to check if the subject that the students are going to follow there, if you are prepared so when you will issue the final certificate, everything will be fine. You have to guarantee that the quality of the time they spent abroad, that they have obtained the professional skills and technical competences for that job.

3. Can a student apply for the mobility from a university which is not a partner in the Erasmus+ ICM with your University?

We sign agreements with universities out of the Erasmus programme. Normally the problem of these agreements is that in case there is no budget behind, there won't be a successful placement of students in the grants. You can sign the agreement, you can open a call but you also need to look for funds.

4. Another issue that we have is that Kurdish is the main language of instruction at the majority of our scientific departments here. How difficult is it to design a Kurdish language course as a requirement for admission of foreign students especially when Kurdish is completely different from European languages in many aspects such as the writing system, the sounds, etc, which may not be the case for a European individual doing the mobility within Europe?

I must confess that the Spanish society has problems with second languages. Nowadays, students generally have a high level of English language proficiency. Language proficiency is an important aspect to consider when we talk about mobility. For instance, I don't know if you have programs teaching a second language but if you want to receive students it's not realistic that they will be fluent in Kurdish. You should ensure that your students are fluent in English in order to go abroad and then identify which institutions can provide courses in English or at least a certain number of subject that could cover the interest of the international students.

5. Some EU universities do not ask for the learning agreement to be signed before the start of the mobility while others do. In which stage should it be signed?

First of all, it's compulsory to sign the agreement and secondly it is advisable. You have to take care of your mobility from the beginning and to prepare for the academic program takes time.

6. In case of differences in the modules of the two universities, what is the best option for the mobility student to complete the missing credits at the home institution?

Sometimes there is no other way than to take the subject at the home institution especially if it is a core subject. For this reason we sometimes advise students on the third or fourth year because they have more eligible subjects. We try to guarantee to the students that the period abroad will lead to an enlargement of the curriculum because sometimes these eligible subjects give them the possibility to study something related to the country.

7. Are the admission/tuition fees of the coming students equal to the home/domestic students?

We have been talking about exchange programs where the exchange students pay fees at their home institution, but they are not paying them abroad.

8. What about if the student fails in the evaluation in his institute when he/she returns even if he/she passed in the foreign institute?

It is important when you do a session for the students before their departure to give them some advice. If they fail abroad it's the same as if you fail at home, if your host institution gives you the opportunity to have a second chance, the student can take the exam again. If the student has not the possibility to take the exam, when he comes back he will have to repeat the subject in the home institution.

9. Regarding the requirements of Student's documents before departure. Will the host institute depend on the home institute regarding the acceptance or rejection process of students to go abroad or will the host institute have another decision?

There are different ways of selecting our students. For example, there is a procedure in which when you sign the agreement you say that I trust you will select and it's written there that you will select the best students that have the language and academic requirements. So I trust that the selection process will be okay. In our case, for instance, within international credit mobility the process of selection intervenes in two parts and we have an online platform that makes that. That way it's according to the documents provided by the students, each student obtains a grade and then they obtain a media.