A Study on Quality Assurance Models in Southeast Asian Countries:

Towards a Southeast Asian
Quality Assurance Framework

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SEAMEO RIHED is the Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development working for the 11 Member Countries in Southeast Asia under the umbrella of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO)

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Preface

As Southeast Asian Nations move toward greater integration, higher education plays a significant role in regional development. Recognising the needs for a regional response to ensure interconnectivity and effectiveness of higher education, SEAMEO RIHED has worked closely with Member Countries to promote the development of a regional higher education common space.

Quality assurance is a key harmonisation mechanism. SEAMEO RIHED understands that in order to promote a common regional framework for quality assurance in higher education, the region must first understand the systems of quality assurance currently used by Southeast Asian nations and the practices adopted by agencies responsible for it. To facilitate this understanding, we carried out a study on Models of Quality Assurance in Southeast Asian Higher Education in 2010-2011.

Quality assurance experts were enlisted to provide first hand information on their countries external quality assurance system, including detailed data on the agency or agencies responsible for assuring the overall quality in their countries higher education system. This report uses the knowledge of those experts, providing an in-depth analysis of external quality assurance in the region and identifying activities that will step Southeast Asia towards greater harmonization in higher education quality assurance.

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Acronyms

AACCUP - Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines

ACS-CAA - Association of Christian Schools and Colleges Accrediting Agency, Inc. (The Philippines)

ALCUCOA -The Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation ((The Philippines)

APQN – Asia Pacific Quality Network

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

AUN-QA - ASEAN University Network- Quality Assurance Alliance

BAN-PT - National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (Indonesia)

BDNAC - Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council

CHED - Commission on Higher Education (The Philippines)

CPE - Council for Private Education (Singapore)

DEEWR - Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Australia)

DGHE - Directorate General of Higher Education (Indonesia)

EHEA European Higher Education Area

ESQAC - Educational Standards and Quality Assurance Centre (Lao PDR)

ETA - Education Testing and Accreditation (Vietnam)

FAAP - Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines

HEQA - Higher Education Quality Assurance, Ministry of Education (Singapore)

INQAAHE – International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

MQA - Malaysian Qualifications Agency

MQF - Malaysian Qualifications Framework

NNQAA - National Network for Quality Assurance Agencies (The Philippines)

OHEC – Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand

ONESQA - The Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Thailand)

PAASCU - Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities

PACUCOA - and Philippines Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation

SEAMEO - Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organisation

SEAMEO RIHED - Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organisation, Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development

Executive Summary

SEAMEO RIHED initiated this report in support of the agreement made by higher education policy-makers at the 3rd Meeting of Director Generals, Secretary Generals and Commissioners of Higher Education in Southeast Asia (2009). At that meeting, policy makers highlighted their intention to move towards a Southeast Asian Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework. They requested SEAMEO RIHED conduct a research study to collect and update external quality assurance information in the region.

This report is the result of a survey of countries quality assurance agencies and literature review. It aims to:

- Provide current information on the diverse quality assurance systems in the region
- Facilitate increased higher education quality assurance activities in the region
- Assist with the development of an ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The research identified several areas of quality assurance excellence in the region. It also highlighted the great diversity in the approach, methods and tools used by various quality assurance agencies. Most countries have active external quality assurance systems, and there is a fledgling but practical

structure in place upon which to develop a regional quality assurance system.

Three key external quality assurance trends were identified:

- Firstly, external quality assurance is primarily assured through the registering or reregistering of institutions or programmes. Often this uses an accreditation approach to a site visit, with a 'yes' or 'no' outcome. However, other approaches such as assessment with a value outcome and audit are also seen.

- Secondly, there is a move to rank universities through voluntary or extra accreditation. Such voluntary accreditation is often on a higher education institution pays basis, and maybe linked to extra financial or other benefits.

- The final significant trend aims to move responsibility for quality assurance back to education institutions, with a focus on strengthening internal quality assurance process. This focuses on processes aims to strengthen internal systems in order to move accountable institutions towards deregulation and self-accreditation.

Key Quality Assurance Issues in the Region

The region faces the challenge of ensuring that external and internal quality assurance systems work together productively, and ultimately, that quality outcomes of higher education

institutions are improved. These are both common issues seen around the world. Common issues across countries surveyed are a lack of resources to support quality assurance initiatives including insufficient funding, lack of quality experts, limited tools and knowledge and also a lack of awareness of assurance implementation. Restrictions at a policy level also occur as quality assurance development strategies are rare, and quality assurance responsibilities sometimes fell within several government departments. Finally, there is a lack of leadership for respective countries to strengthen their national quality systems. Further collaboration on developing the regional quality assurance framework will address these issues.

Possible Areas of Future Work

The research identified strong support for the development of a regional quality assurance system, as a means of developing both internal quality assurance and national systems, and of facilitating the internationalisation of higher education systems. The region's higher education policy makers most recently articulated support for a Framework at the 5th Meeting of Director Generals, Secretary Generals and Commissioners of Higher Education, held in Nha Trang Vietnam 24-25 March 2011.

The research project identified several actions to move the region towards the vision of an effective regional quality assurance system. Activities in following three interconnected areas will assist with the development of an ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework:

- The development of common quality assurance principles,
- Capacity building of all stakeholders through cooperation, and
- Promoting the benefits of quality assurance broadly.

The action plan included in this report is developed from survey responses. The plan is also in-line with other prominent research on regional gaps in quality assurance systems. The first set of actions develops the required infrastructure to support regional quality assurance, driving regional quality assurance through agreement on guidelines and codes of conduct. The second set of actions involves utilising the region's experience to build capacity in Member Countries where needs are identified. It involves actions to strengthen both internal and external quality assurance, and increase participation in quality assurance activities. The final set of activities promotes the benefits of a strong regional approach to quality, and will be driven by regional organisations.

SEAMEO RIHED is convinced that working in cooperation both ensure the positive development of the region and individual nation's higher education systems. Further, that alignment in terms of quality assurance criteria and process will aid the broader harmonisation movement underway in the region.

Introduction

This research report is the outcome of the SEAMEO RIHED research study on Models of Quality Assurance in Southeast Asian Higher Education. The research was conducted to:

- Collect and update quality assurance information on the diverse systems in the region
- Raise awareness of quality assurance systems and status among all stakeholders
- Facilitate increased higher education activities relating to quality assurance in the region.

Consistent with the wishes of the region's higher education policy makers, to promote a framework that is in line with regional quality assurance frameworks and to work in partnership with regional organisations, this study builds from the research undertaken by the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) on Quality Assurance Arrangements in Higher Education in the Broader Asia-Pacific Region (Stella & Department of Education, 2008). This avoids the development of contradictory or redundant quality assurance tools, and ensures coherence between the approach of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) quality assurance and other initiatives.

The research project was initiated following the agreement made by higher education policy-makers at the 3rd Meeting of Director Generals, Secretary Generals and Commissioners of Higher Education in Southeast Asia, held in 2009. Policy makers

highlighted their intention to move towards a Southeast Asian Quality Assurance and Qualification Framework, and requested SEAMEO RIHED conduct a research study to collect and update Quality Assurance information in the region. The SEAMEO RIHED Governing Board approved the research proposal at the 17th Governing Board Meeting later that year. Noting that the research would aid the development of a regional quality assurance system, the Office of Higher Education Commission, Thailand generously supported the project.

Progressing this initiative is the responsibility of SEAMEO RIHED, with input from experts in the State of Brunei Darussalam, Kingdom of Cambodia, Republic of Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Singapore, Kingdom of Thailand and Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

A survey questionnaire was designed to scope the quality assurance systems of countries in region. With support from the APQN Secretariat, the occasion of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network Seminar and Rountable Meeting (28-30 July 2010) was used to enlist countries quality assurance representatives as survey participants. The quality assurance experts provided first hand information on their countries external quality assurance system, including detailed data on the agency or agencies responsible for external quality assurance. Absentee experts were recruited following this event.

A further source of information came from the Regional Seminar on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Southeast Asian Countries, held 22 September 2010. The SEAMEO RIHED organised seminar utilised the experience of the SEAMEO RIHED Governing Board members by asking them to provide insight into higher education issues in their countries. Board members, who are primarily prominent policy makers from ministries responsible for higher education, provided an overview of the status of quality assurance in their country (Aphijanyatham & Hepworth, 2011).

The second project step was to develop a report of the survey outcomes, with analysis of implications for strengthening Southeast Asian quality assurance systems. This report makes use of the knowledge of experts in the field, using that knowledge to identify activities that will step Southeast Asia towards a regional quality assurance system. In order to set the scene, the report begins by providing a background to quality assurance in higher education. An overview of the quality movement, providing definitions and key concepts is also included. Quality functions at local higher education institution level, at national level and at regional level are considered. This leads onto the development of regional quality assurance systems including the regionalisation of higher education.

Around the world, national higher education systems are actively regionalising. Trends driving this development include the globally significant lessons learnt from the Bologna Process, changes to the higher education sector, global tendencies and

the development of the ASEAN Community by 2015. There is a coinciding regionalisation of quality assurance, which is being seen. The development of regional quality assurance networks is an implication of this. Thus Southeast Asia quality assurance networks are studied, firstly with a review of the quality assurance response from the ASEAN University Network (AUN) beginning in 1998, and with the recent establishment of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) in 2008. Quality assurance networks purpose is discussed, along with common activities of developing quality assurance principles and guidelines.

The report then uses data provided in the surveys, to paint a detailed picture of quality assurance approaches in each of the Southeast Asian countries. A review of the status of countries quality assurance systems shows great variance of national policies. This is unsurprising, given the diversity of the nations under review. The research collates this diverse information and provides an overview of external quality assurance in each country. This involves firstly identifying whether any external quality assurance system exists and its state of development. The body of the report deals with nation's quality assurance agencies, the authority or body with designated responsibility for the quality assurance system of the nation (Harvey, 2011). Agencies may be independent public authorities or units with government ministries. The report investigates details of establishment, purpose, commonalities and diversity in scope of service, participation, governance and financing arrangements, organisational structure, staff and the make-up of quality assurance teams.

An explanation of external quality assurance in practice follows, including a detailed list of the tools and mechanisms used in the region. These tools include site visits, accreditation, assessment, audit, peer review, report, external validation, quality control, standards, and qualification frameworks.

The report concludes by detailing the opportunities for collaboration that the research project has identified. These are provided firstly by identification of the key quality assurance issues in the region. The report also identifies capacity-building opportunities for nations and sketches out the future of quality assurance in Southeast Asia. The report provides three broad activities which will lead to the development of an ASEAN quality assurance framework, firstly, developing regional quality assurance principles, secondly, capacity building through cooperation and finally, promoting the benefits of quality assurance.

The first set of actions drive regional quality assurance through agreement on guidelines and codes of conduct. This step includes developing the required infrastructure to support regional quality assurance. The second set of actions involves utilising the experience of those in the region, to build capacity in other nation's quality assurance systems. It involves actions to strengthen both internal and external quality assurance, and increase participation in quality assurance activities. The final set of activities promotes the benefits of a strong regional approach to quality assurance, and will be driven by regional organisations. Actions to support these activities are also detailed, with a breakdown by stakeholder to allow for easy implementation.

Quality assurance in Higher Education

> *Quality assurance, in higher education, has become a generic term used as shorthand for all forms of external quality monitoring, evaluation or review.* (Harvey, 2011)

The Quality Movement

Quality assurance as a concept originally emerged from the manufacturing industry, which then spread to other sectors over time (Mishra, 2007). While the academic tradition has always included attention to quality, the last three decades have seen stakeholders demanding increasing emphasis on it. The ASEAN University Network note that "it is the outside world that now emphasises the need for explicit attention to quality" (2007, p. 19). The increasing interconnectivity and internationalisation of higher education institutions is another factor explaining the recent emergence of quality assurance as a key higher education concern. Dr Sanjaya Mishra (2007, p. 14), quoted below, notes several forces raising quality concerns in higher education, including:

- increased competition following globalisation and the Global Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)
- customer satisfaction and an increasingly savvy consumer base
- maintaining standards
- accountability to stakeholders
- improving employee morale and satisfaction
- credibility, prestige and status, and

- image and visibility.

Higher education stakeholders include government, policy-makers, industry, teachers, administrators, students and parents. The broad-range of actors means that quality has traditionally been considered from many perspectives, notably from customer and management focuses. More recently, the impact of globalisation and regionalisation has required an understanding of education quality from an internationalised perspective. In order to conceptualise quality assurance in the Southeast Asian region, this section firstly considers the key definitions of quality and quality assurance. It also provides a background to the quality assurance movement, and details higher education quality assurance functions locally, nationally and regionally.

Definitions

The key to understanding quality assurance is to understand the notoriously slippery concept of quality. As AUN note "quality is like love. Everybody talks about it and everybody knows what they are talking about. Everybody knows and feels when there is love. Everybody recognises it. But when we try and give a definition of it we are left standing empty handed" ((2007, p. 8). Things become even more complicated when considering quality in a higher education context, with so many stakeholders it is not always clear what the product is, or who the client is (AUN, 2007, p. 8). Visser (1994) assists by proposing that quality education is made up firstly of an output, or the

successful attainment of objectives. It is composed of the inputs of professional status of teachers, the nature of institutions, the teaching and learning process, the innovation process and the attributes of incoming students.

There are two main ways of understanding quality. The first understanding implies set of standards that can be used as a minimum, what Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck define in terms of "a minimum "threshold" by which performance is being judged" (1996, p. 21). Another notion of quality relates to the pursuit of the exception, or exceeding minimum standards. The Indian National Assessment and Accreditation Council's overview of quality assurance in higher education, considers this second understanding more useful in the higher education context, advising "[I]n higher education, our objective is to move the 'standard' and move towards 'excellence'" (Mishra, 2007, p. 13). Thus, quality in higher education is concerned with maintaining consistency and should perhaps aim for excellence.

Following on from the understanding of quality, quality assurance, therefore, as the formal approaches that ensure quality exists. Such 'official' quality assurance complements the individual procedures and standards that institutions have developed to ensure the quality of their education product. Quality assurance also exists at institutional, national and regional levels. As with the term quality, reaching an understanding of the definition of quality assurance is essential. A review of relevant literature shows that one group of definitions, such as those provided by HEQC (2004), Melia

(1994), Duff, Hegarty & Hussey (2000) and the European Training Foundation (1998), introduces twin themes of accountability to stakeholders and the meeting of certain standards. Many quality assurance definitions also introduce a third theme, noting a significant role in enhancing quality. See UNESCO-CEPES (Vlãsceanu, Grünberg, & Pârlea, 2007), Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002), Fraser (1994) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (2002) for further details. This is consistent with the debate occurring around the definition of quality. Malaysia's Minister of Higher Education made an argument in 2008 for using an expanded quality assurance definition, asserting that "[t]he demand for quality has gone beyond fulfilling threshold minimum requirements but to exceed them. It is critical for institutions of higher learning to embrace the language of quality and to make quality and standards as institutionalised and routinised components of their provision" (Nordin).

Key Concepts

The first key concept for understanding quality assurance in the region is the broader frameworks within which quality is articulated, and the ways in which quality is defined and understood within those frameworks (Blom & Meyers, 2003, p. 10). These are known as quality frameworks. Each country has a local approach to implementation, with different processes to encourage quality. Blom and Meyers (p. 11) note that these frameworks may be "primarily one of quality control, one of

quality assurance, or one of quality improvement". Quality control is typically localised to institutions, and involves the measure they take to ensure quality outcomes. Conversely, the key element of quality assurance is a focus on process, rather than product. It involves the definition of standards, procedures monitored and non-conformance analysed. External bodies or auditors typically implement standards. The final framework, quality improvement, is a management approach involving a commitment to continuous improvement. Given that this research is interested in national and regional approaches, this study primarily focuses on the quality assurance framework. It discusses the actions undertaken by the various actors in the field, to build a picture of the quality assurance landscape in Southeast Asia.

Research on quality assurance in the Asia Pacific undertaken by APQN proposes that three basic quality assurance approaches are found in the region: accreditation, assessment and audit. An accreditation model evaluates whether an institution or programme qualifies for a status or threshold level. The 'yes' or 'no' outcome may have an impact on an institutions recognition as a higher education institution or its ability to receive public funding. An assessment approach analyses outputs. The typical outcome of an assessment is graded, whether numerical, literal or descriptive. Finally, academic audits focus on the processes used by a higher education institution to monitor its own academic standards (Stella & Department of Education, 2008, p. 7). While useful to have such groupings, APQN's research indicates that strictly defined approaches are rare, with most countries using more than one

approach to quality assurance. "In practice, many QA bodies of the region follow a combination of these approaches. For example, the QA agency in Indonesia uses assessment in combination with accreditation… Within the same country, one can find different QA approaches among QA bodies depending on the specific purpose each agency wishes to achieve" (p. 7)

Quality Functions by Stakeholder and Level

Higher education institutions role within the system, regardless of the quality assurance approach taken, is to meeting the required institutional level or status; achieving set outputs; and monitoring its own academic standards.   The activities undertaken by an institute collectively make up its internal quality assurance mechanism. Thus, an institute's quality assurance is the "collections of policies, procedures, systems and practices internal or external to the organisation designed to achieve, maintain and enhance quality" (Harvey, 2011). Internal quality assurance is the "intra-institutional practices in view of monitoring and improving the quality of higher education" (Harvey, 2011). Conversely, external quality assurance systems are the "inter- or supra-institutional schemes of assuring the quality of higher education institutions and programmes (Harvey, 2011)". So if the internal quality assurance processes are designed to achieve the required standards, the external processes are more concerned with monitoring that universities meet the standards.

Conversely, quality assurance functions at the national or country level consists of the nation's education policy, systems and processes, collectively ensuring high quality learning. National quality assurance systems in Southeast Asia generally have three main purposes:

- maintain quality in higher education, thus meeting the public interest
- allow for informed decision-making by students and parents through sharing information on the status of universities, and
- enhance assessment and assurance of standards.

Strong national systems can also assist with connectivity between higher education institutions, by increasing mutual recognition and easing the credit transfer process. These national systems are often comprised of a quality assurance agency, a qualifications framework, an accreditation procedure, monitoring of outputs, and internal and external quality assurance processes.

Regional quality assurance functions above both local and national functions. Regional quality assurance consists of a network of national higher education systems, individual institutions, quality assurance agencies and other stakeholders. Such collaborations aim to develop comparable criteria and methodologies and build the quality assurance capacity of individual nations. Regional quality assurance actions often promote and share good practices, collaborate on capacity building, share information to facilitate mutual recognition and

move towards regional quality assurance frameworks (Harvey, 2011).

Development of Regional Systems

Southeast Asia's regional quality assurance network is AQAN, the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network. The challenge for any regional network, as with AQAN, is to cooperate while maintaining positive regard for the education history that has developed individual quality assurance systems. A regional network in Southeast Asia must respect the ongoing commitment to the regions diversity, in order to be successful. AUN actively promotes the harmonisation of the quality assurance education system, noting that "this does not mean that all universities and all countries are expected to have the same system and the same approach. Harmonisation is not the same as uniformity. It is a big challenge for the ASEAN region with all its cultural, political and historical differences to strive for harmonisation, while retaining those differences" (2007, p. 24).

The Southeast Asia quality assurance system exists within the regions particular tertiary education landscape. This landscape is chiefly characterised by diversity, due to the different historical, structural and educational developments in countries of the region. The region is not a homogenised area, made up of countries of comparable sizes, stages of development, and approaches to education. Instead, differences exist in terms of size, economic wealth, political approach and educational traditions. Lee and Healy identify it as a region of "vast

developmental diversity, from wealthy Singapore to the much poorer Greater Mekong Sub-region countries" (2006, p. 1). Analysis of quality assurance must be mindful of this diversity, and the different corresponding stages of development of quality assurance systems and agencies at national levels.

Thus, the regional quality assurance system operates to strengthen national quality assurance systems, facilitate mobility and increase cooperation among higher education institutions. Strong quality assurance can promote and improve the quality of higher education, permit better-informed international recognition of qualifications, ease credit transfer schemes in order to enhance student mobility and promote sound accreditation practices and organisations. Cooperation can also lead to regional harmonisation and the establishment of a common higher education space, as promoted in SEAMEO RIHED's Structured Framework for Regional Integration in Higher Education in SEA: the road towards a common space (SEAMEO RIHED, 2007). Strong quality assurance systems are also central to the success of SEA nations as they move towards the ASEAN community 2015.

Southeast Asia has chosen an approach to harmonisation that allows systems to work with each other more effectively, rather than implementing a major overhaul to implement an ASEAN national education system. Several frameworks exist that the region could use to support the development of regional quality assurance systems, while maintaining respect for individual systems. These include:

- The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (1983) (UNESCO, 1983). The convention assists to mutually recognise accreditation decisions and creates transparency in systems. The Convention has been ratified by five nations, but it has not yet been ratified by Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Singapore.

- The UNESCO-CEPES: Guidelines on quality provision in cross-border education (OECD UNESCO, 2005). These guidelines respond to the need for new international initiatives to enhance quality provision in cross-border higher education at a global level. The international guidelines further strengthening quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications schemes at both national and international levels through non-binding international guidelines on "Quality provision in cross-border higher education".

- Framework for Higher Education Quality Assurance Principles in the Asia Pacific Region, as discussed in the Paper on Developing an Agreed Set of Quality Assurance Principles in the broader Asia-Pacific (DEEWR, 2008). The Chiba Principles provide quality assurance principles for the Asia Pacific region in three main sections – Internal Quality Assurance, Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance Agency.

Figure 1: Common QA functions at local, national and regional levels
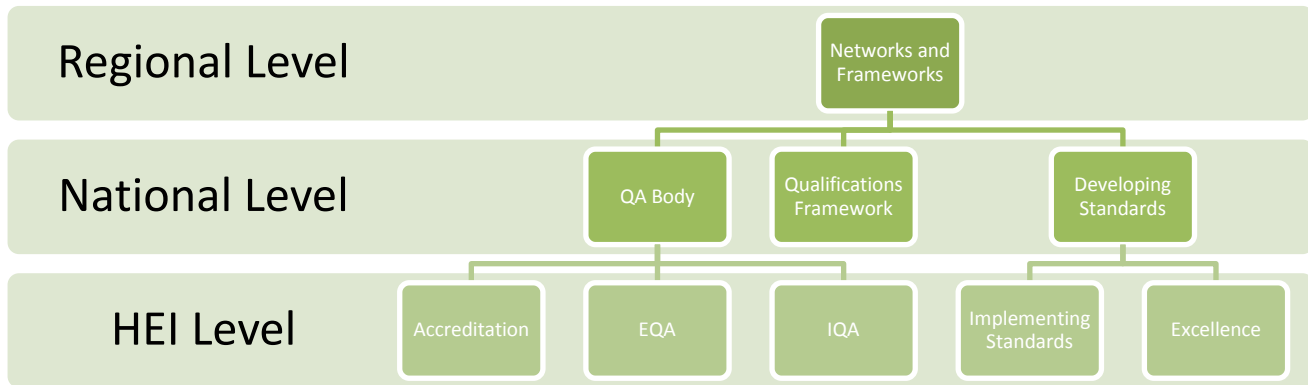
Driving Regional Quality Assurance in Southeast Asia

> *Assuring the quality of education provision is a fundamental aspect of gaining and maintaining the credibility of programmes, institutions and national systems of higher education worldwide. The same is true in South-East Asia, and quality assurance is one of the prime concerns. Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia have already set up quality assurance mechanisms to monitor their higher education institutions, and Cambodia and Lao PDR are in the process of setting up their own quality assurance and accreditation bodies* (Lee & Healy, 2006, p. 9).

Drivers of Regionalisation

The Bologna Process, which led to the European Higher Education Area, provides a successful model for higher education quality assurance harmonisation. In charting the development of the Bologna Process, Sybille Reichert (2010) notes that a precursor to the process was a variety of debates on the quality of education. Reichert asserts that the process emerged following an era of higher education national debates on quality problems in higher education. "Complaints about overcrowded classrooms and student-staff ratios, which did not allow for individualised attention, coupled with outdated teaching methodologies and teacher centred curricula, long study duration and high drop-out rates, were among the most prominent of the many complaints about a higher education sector that was not equipped to respond to the demands of its time" (p. 1).

These debates are currently occurring in Southeast Asia, along with concerns about graduate outcomes, accountability and reduced government support; see research from the Asia Development Bank (Dhirathiti, Unpublished) and Lee and Healy (2006) for expansion. National debates have been driven by the rapid expansion of higher education providers. This expansion has been characterised by:

- an increase in the number of students able to access higher education
- the privatisation of higher education institutions,
- an explosion in the number of higher education institutions,
- the internationalisation of providers

Additionally, global trends such as globalisation, massification, diversification, marketisation, institutional restructuring, the balance of autonomy and accountability have caused great changes to the region's higher education sector (Lee & Healy, 2006). Many countries have recently restructured their higher education systems, in an effort to deal with the increasingly multifaceted activities undertaken by higher education institutions. An outcome of these forces has been a shift in institutions, from autonomous inward facing organisations, to regionalised, commercialised entities. Most nations have seen a need for increased autonomy of universities, to allow them to face the increasing range of demands and accelerated pace of international research competition (Dhirathiti, Unpublished).

Autonomy, however, must be matched by increased accountability provisions. This has driven the creation of quality assurance agencies in the region. "The introduction of institutional autonomy and the simultaneous cutting back of state control could only be realised, however, in conjunction with heightened accountability provisions. Hence, in many countries quality assurance agencies were either created or transformed to meet these new demands" (Reichert, 2010, p. 5). Chealy Chet notes this trend in the case of Cambodia, warning "rapid expansion of higher education without sufficient quality assurance systems in place can lead to the creation of institutions of dubious quality weakening the whole system. Cambodia is currently exposed to both of these dangers" (2006, pp. 13-14).

While all Southeast Asian nations have different educational structures and scope, it has been noted that governments in Asia have the same objective. That is to use education as a mechanism to increase development and growth. "It is commonly viewed in Asia that higher education is more than a provision of public good but also a strategic move toward a greater growth and social solidarity" (Dhirathiti, Unpublished).

The broader regionalisation process underway through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations harnesses the intention of the regions nations to increase social and economic development. The Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015 details aims to establish an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The community envisions the end goal of economic integration, aiming to create a "single market and

production base, making ASEAN more dynamic and competitive" (ASEAN, 2009).

As part of the proposed ASEAN Community 2015, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint provides the education strategic thrusts and activities for advancing and education (ASEAN, 2009, p. 68). The Cha-am Hua Hin Educational Plans detail objectives for quality education including promoting equal accessibility to education, improving educational quality, strengthening cooperation between international organisations, encouraging cross-regional cooperation, enhancing regional mobility and exchange programmes and promoting life-long learning via IT (ASEAN, 2009). SEAMEO RIHED supports the broad ASEAN agenda through its previously referenced harmonisation framework, which provides an integration roadmap for harmonising the higher education systems of all Southeast Asian nations. The Framework identifies a regional quality assurance system as one of five prioritised areas for harmonisation. Other areas are student mobility, a regional credit transfer system, executive development and e-learning and mobile learning (SEAMEO RIHED, 2007).

Many regions have moved towards development of common higher education areas. This has led to development of regional quality assurance frameworks, to support common education areas. The most notable is the European Union's approach through the Bologna process in establishing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This aims to "ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher

education in Europe" (Romanian Bologna Process Secretariat). Leading quality assurance academics note that the development of EHEA in its entirety has been has been "the most significant global approach to quality assurance" (Stella & Department of Education, 2008, p. 18). There are many other regional quality assurance groups, addressing needs that are common at a regional level. Strong networks currently exist in South America, among the Gulf States and in Southern Africa. Malaysia's Minister of Higher Education noted the importance of regional quality assurance groupings in the Welcome Address at the Opening Ceremony of the AQAN Roundtable Meeting. The Honourable Dato' Nordin stated "[C]onsidering that many of these countries and groups of countries are at different levels of development, regional networks are vital in supporting initiatives for the improvement of quality in higher education through capacity building, through projects to promote harmonisation of qualification frameworks, and through the development of transfer credit systems for purposes of mobility of students, services and recognition" (7 July 2008, p. 14).

The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) is a global network to collect and disseminate information on the current and developing theory and practice in the assessment, improvement and maintenance of quality in higher education (INQAAHE, 2011). The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) deals with European quality assurance concerns. ENQA was established in 2000 to promote European co-operation in the field of quality assurance. It disseminates information,

experiences and good practices in the field of quality asurance in higher education to European agencies, public authorities and higher education institutions (ENQA, 2011). More locally, the previously discussed APQN was established in 2005 to serve the needs of higher education quality assurance agencies in the Asia-Pacific region. APQN is a networking body, its membership covers "all Pacific island nations and territories, New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea; all island and mainland nations and territories of Asia, including Russia, Afghanistan, the other central Asian states and Iran, but excluding the Gulf states (which are covered by another network)" (APQN, 2011).

Regional Quality Assurance Networks in Southeast Asia

In Southeast Asia, the establishment of the ASEAN University Network- Quality Assurance Alliance (AUN-QA) in 1998 and the establishment of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) in 2008 echoes the global regionalisation push. The AUN-QA is very active among the 26 member universities of the ASEAN University Network. AUN-QA is a group of Chief Quality Officers appointed by the AUN member universities to harmonise educational standards and continuously improve the quality of universities in ASEAN. The activities under AUN-QA are carried out in accordance to the Bangkok Accord adopted in 2000 (AUN Secretariat, 2010). While AUN-QA has a scope across Southeast Asia, it is not truly regional, as it restricts its work to member universities. However, their work provides useful best practice models, to lead the rest of the region.

The more recent and wide-reaching activity is the creation of the ASEAN quality assurance network in 2008. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Establishment of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) was adopted on 8 July 2008 during the ASEAN Quality Assurance Agencies Roundtable Meeting, organised by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency and SEAMEO RIHED. Signatories of the Declaration officially agreed to establish the AQAN (MQA, 2008). The Declaration notes the active movement towards the development of the ASEAN community, the benefits of collaboration and sharing, and the crucial role of quality assurance in promoting harmonisation in higher education. It also acknowledges mutual interests and common concerns amongst Southeast Asian nations and affirms the need for closer relationship between people in the region, facilitated through the mobility of students, faculty and programmes. It states the AQAN's role to complement the role of regional and international quality assurance networks (MQA 2008). The Declaration also details an undertaking by signatories to contribute to the overall picture of quality assurance development in Southeast Asia.

As the Southeast Asian regional quality assurance agency, AQAN's aims are to:

- "promote and share good practices of quality assurance in higher education in the Southeast Asia region;

- collaborate on capacity building of quality assurance in higher education in the region;
- share information on higher education and facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications throughout the region; and
- develop a regional quality assurance framework for Southeast Asia" (2010).

AQAN was established to increase quality level development in the region. It was envisioned that two activities would support this, firstly, by encouraging practice sharing among agencies and secondly, by developing a "regional quality assurance and qualification framework in the future" (AQAN, 2010). The AQAN website notes that "[B]y adopting the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, all participating agencies and ministries agree to work together under the AQAN umbrella towards the harmonization of the higher education in the ASEAN member countries" (AQAN, 2010).

Given that many agencies are pushing quality assurance across the region, there is a danger of duplication. In order to avoid this, a meeting was held between the key regional quality assurance players. The AQAN-AUN-RIHED: Tripartite QA Synergistic Relationship meeting was held on 15 June 2010 (SEAMEO RIHED, 2010). This meeting promoted cooperation between the three agencies on quality assurance and provided a session for all agencies to present their activities work plan. All agencies discuss the best methods for approaching the as yet unattended aspects of quality assurance.

Principles and Guidelines

A key role of regional quality assurance networks is to create documents to guide stakeholders in enhancing quality assurance policies and practices. For the Asia Pacific, the Chiba Principles were drafted as part of the Brisbane Communiqué project, with input from "more than 35 participants from 17 countries" (AEI, 2008). The established Principles are applicable to the particular context of quality assurance in higher education in the Asia-Pacific region. The Principles provide guidance to both higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies interested in enhancing policies and practices (AEI, 2008)*.*

ENQA has successfully developed the European Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines (ENQA, 2005), which were adopted by the Ministers of Education in 2005 (Reichert, 2010, p. 7). These standards are implemented through the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies endorsed by the Education Ministers in London in 2007. The Register requires an external evaluation of an agency every five years and includes a judgement of substantial compliance with the Guidelines. Reichert attributes three strengths of these standards:

- "the guidelines emphasise strongly that the primary responsibility for quality assurance lies with higher education institutions themselves, rather than with any outside body. They also suggest that that the external control should be lighter if internal processes prove robust enough.

- consists of the emphasis that internal quality assurance should not be reduced to formalised processes but should be likened more to a set of institutional and individual attitudes, a "quality culture", aiming at "continuous enhancement of quality."

- reflect a certain shift to student and stakeholder interests away from the pure supply perspective which had dominated universities for decades. This attention is reflected e.g. in the concern with student support and information, with graduate success and, of course, with the demand for including students as active participants in quality assurance processes, even as members in agencies' external review teams (p. 7)".

Finally, in keeping with the role of regional agencies to produce guidelines, the AUN-QA Guidelines were created as a "manual and reference for the QA movement in the ASEAN region" (AUN, 2007). The Guidelines are further supported by the AUN-QA Manual for the Implementation of Guidelines, which provides advice for enhancing internal quality assurance systems in higher education institutions.

Figure 2: Concept Map AQAN-AUN-RIHED (Source: P Pattanotai)
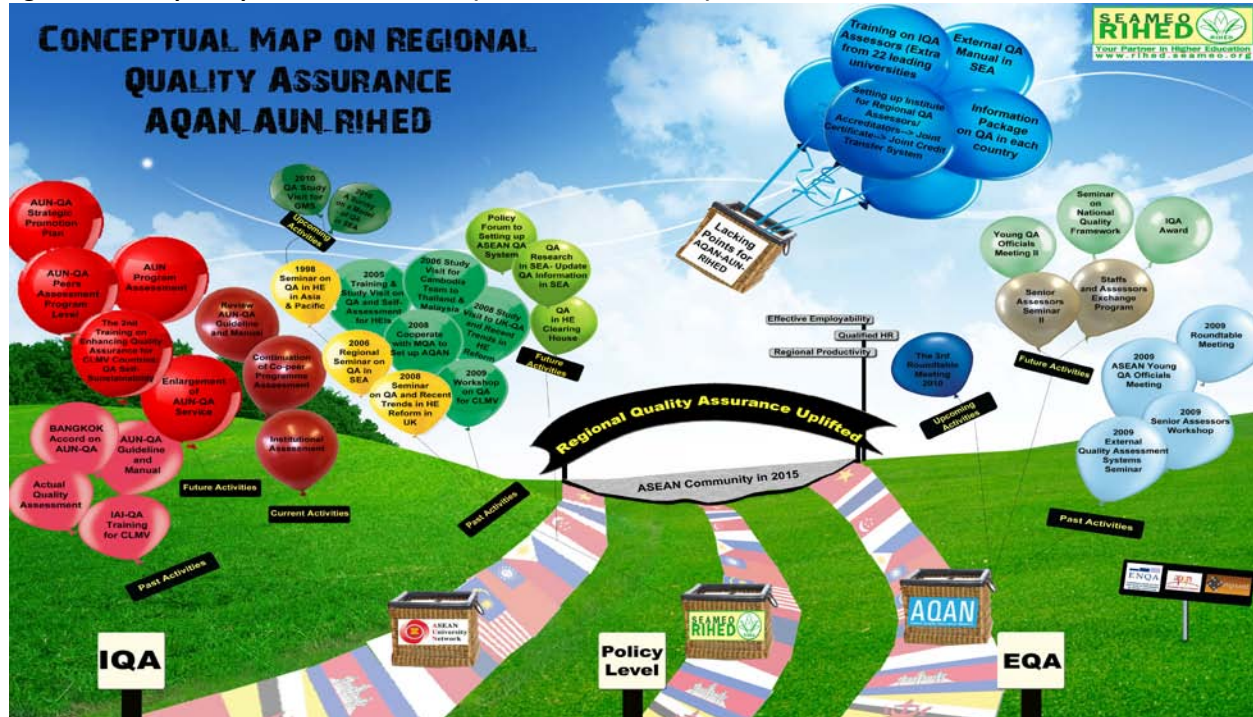
Southeast Asian National External Quality Assurance Approaches

A review of the status of Southeast Asian national quality assurance systems shows great variance of individual countries policies. This is unsurprising, given the diversity of the nations under review. In broad overview, all countries have a commitment to quality. However, the process, procedures and mechanisms for review are all significantly different, as is the rigour of application of the quality assurance process. The concept map on which follows this introduction provides an overview of the various aspects making up the quality assurance systems in the region. This includes scope, approach, tools, outcomes, quality assurance agencies, frameworks and cooperation.

Some countries have sophisticated quality assurance processes, based on strong internal quality assurance procedures within higher education institutions, fitting within national qualifications frameworks. These countries are moving through a process beginning at quality control, encompassing quality assurance, and towards quality enhancement. The majority of countries in the region have firmly established quality assurance processes and procedures, but have identified that quality of education is not yet conforming to standards set. This often means ongoing reliance on external auditing processes for compliance. A third group of countries have developed national quality assurance policies, but the implementation of these policies is in first steps. Remaining countries have yet to develop a national approach to quality assurance.

Given that research is categorising the incredibly diverse quality assurance approaches taken in the region, the project presents this complex information in three ways. Tables present information about each country for comparison. Sections explore the various elements of quality assurance in detail, to highlight patterns emerging from the surveys and identifying common approaches. Case studies present examples of good practice or great divergence from trends. Finally, the Matrix of Quality Assurance Systems in ASEAN Countries provides a snapshot of quality assurance systems of Southeast Asian nations. The matrix includes the establishment and background of any Quality Assurance Authority, the countries assurance framework, the existence of a national qualification framework and collaborations with other networks.

This section explores survey responses in more detail, beginning by considering the existence and development of national quality assurance systems. It then explores the status of quality assurance agencies in each nation, including organisation and ownership, founding date, establishment, policy and purpose.

All countries quality assurance systems distinguish between internal and external quality assurance. All countries have a mechanism at institution level, or internal quality assurance. Institutions in Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia have very active internal systems. While Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam have designed internal quality assurance mechanisms, they have not yet been fully implemented and realised. Brunei Darussalam is still in the

process of establishing policies and procedures, noting their intention of developing guidelines in line with existing systems including the European Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines and AUN-QA Guidelines. Institutions in Myanmar are responsible for quality control within institutions.

Internal quality assurance in higher education institutions takes the form of a centralised quality unit in most cases. Its existence is often legislated by government. For example, in 2004 Cambodia, through the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, issued a regulation that an internal quality assurance unit be created in every higher education institution. The unit undertakes self-assessment and prepares institutions to obtain accreditation from the Accreditation Council of Cambodia (Dhirathiti, Unpublished). Indonesia also has a government requirement that HEIs have internal quality assurance units and Vietnam uses centralised Quality Assurance Centres within institutions. Quality units may also be decentralised, becoming part of other units, such as in Malaysia where quality is often part of management, administration, corporate planning or communication divisions.

Figure 3: Concept Map: Quality Assurance Elements
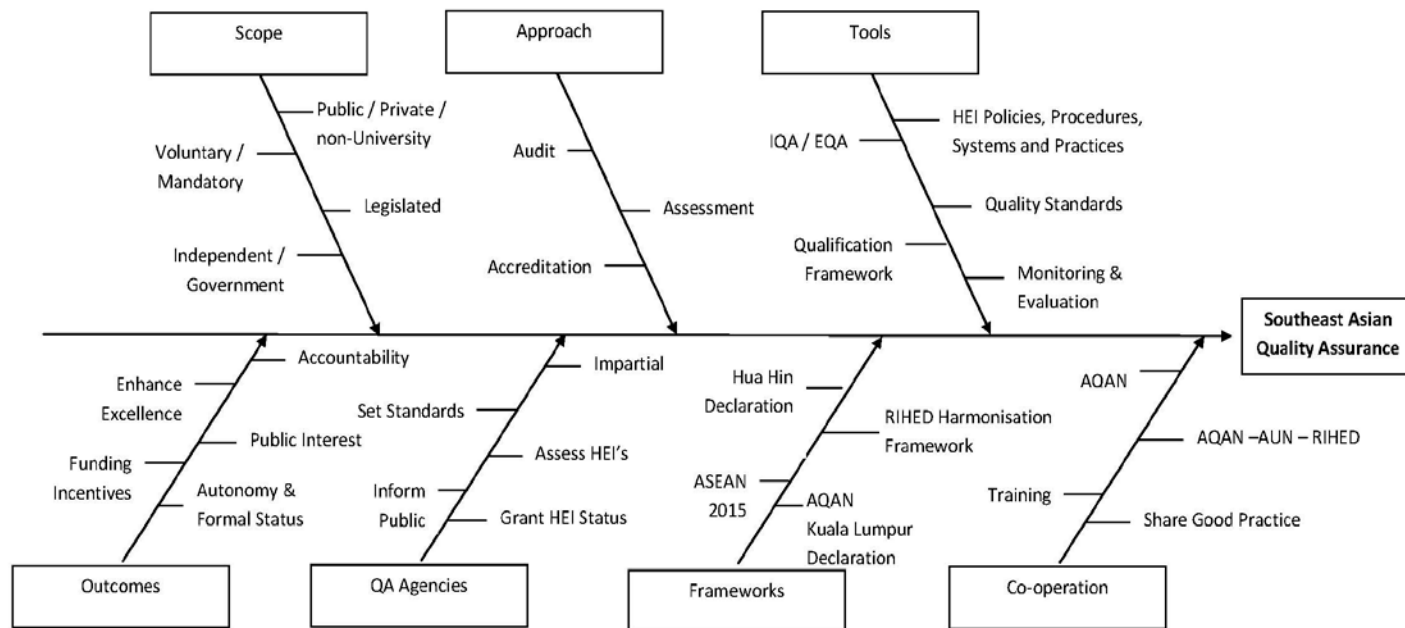
All countries except Myanmar also have external quality assurance systems, to complement internal systems. External quality assurance is those mechanisms external to the university with responsibility for quality assurance. Most practices focus on a combination of accountability, quality enhancement, and providing public information on quality of the institution and programmes (Aphijanyatham, 2010). These aim to provide an impartial and fair judgement of institutions claims.

Quality assurance systems are most often controlled by an established quality assurance agency. These are the organisations delegated to make decisions on behalf of the higher education sector, about the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, or programme (Harvey, 2011). The organisation and ownership, founding date, establishment, policy and purpose of quality assurance agencies are explored in the following section.

CASE STUDY: Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Myanmar has seen a tremendous expansion of HEI's in recent years, from 32 in 1988 to 159 in 2010.

Myanmar does not currently have a national external quality assurance system. Councils within individual universities are responsible for the institutions quality assurance. The Minister for Education formally chairs these Councils. Councils usually frame broad policy, regulations and coordinate academic work. Boards of Study revise course and syllabus.

Table 1: Matrix of Quality Assurance Systems in ASEAN Countries

Country / Quality Assurance Authority / Acronym	Background	Quality Assurance Framework	National Qualifications Framework	Collaboration
Brunei Darussalam **Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council** **(BDNAC)** **(Salleh, 2011)**	Backed by the decree of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brueni Dasussalam. Looks into quality of qualifications awarded to Bruneians by various institutions of higher learning. Mainly for the purpose of employment within the public sector	Quality Assurance: Mandatory accreditation of programmes and institutions including admission, employment, approval of programmes and professional registration	The formation of Brunei National Qualifications Framework (BNQF) is still in the initial stage	• ASEAN Quality Assurance Network • Malaysian Qualification Authority • NOOSA, Australia • The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK • New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Country / Quality Assurance Authority / Acronym	Background	Quality Assurance Framework	National Qualifications Framework	Collaboration
Cambodia **Accreditation Committee of Cambodia** **(AAC)** **(Vichaenon, 2010)**	Established in March 2003 by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). The Secretariat of the National Supreme Council of Education in charge of ACC. Establishment and management of higher education institutions is the jurisdiction of MoEYS	Quality Assurance: Accreditation— institutional (for institutions which confer Bachelors, Master's and PhD). Accreditation is the jurisdiction of the ACC Provisional and full accreditation. Mandatory Institutional Accreditation	No	• ASEAN Quality Assurance Network • Asia Pacific Quality Network • Malaysian Qualification Authority • Philippines Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities

Country / Quality Assurance Authority/ Acronym	Background	Quality Assurance Framework	National Qualifications Framework	Collaboration
Indonesia **National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (*Badan Akreditasi NasionalPerguruan Tinggi*)** **(BAN-PT)** **(Rahardjo, 2010)**	Established in 1994 with a Ministerial decree; government agency accountable to the Minister of National Education BAN-PT only accredits study programmes or institutions that have obtained a permanent operation permit from the Minister of National Education. There are also other authorised independent accreditation agencies	Quality assurance: Programme and institutional accreditation and assessment Provides information on accreditation status to stakeholders Compulsory	Indonesian Qualification Framework (IQF)	• ASEAN Quality Assurance Network • Malaysian Qualification Authority • Australian Universities Quality Agency • New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Country / Quality Assurance Authority / Acronym	Background	Quality Assurance Framework	National Qualifications Framework	Collaboration
Lao PDR **Educational Standards and Quality Assurance Centre** **(ESQAC)** **(Xiongchunou, 2010)**	ESQAC was established in 2008 under a Ministerial Decree. Governmental agency responsible to Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education	The formation of Educational Standards and Quality Assurance Centre is still in the initial stage. It will design an appropriate quality framework as part of its mandate.	No	AQAN

Country / Quality Assurance Authority / Acronym	Background	Quality Assurance Framework	National Qualifications Framework	Collaboration
Malaysia **Malaysian Qualifications Agency** **(MQA)** **(Hussein, 2010)**	MQA was formed from the previous quality agency, the National Accreditation Board (LAN). MQA provides a single, unified, transparent quality assurance body to develop and provide reliable information on accredited programmes and institutions.	Quality Assurance: • Programme and Institutional Accreditation of higher education providers • Provides information on accreditation status to stakeholders • Maintains Qualifications Register and develops standards	Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF)	• ASEAN Quality Assurance Network • Other ASEAN Accreditation Bodies • National Assessment of Accreditation Council, India • Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK • New Zealand Qualifications Authority, New Zealand • Japan

Country / Quality Assurance Authority / Acronym	Background	Quality Assurance Framework	National Qualifications Framework	Collaboration
				University Accreditation Association, Japan • The National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation, Japan
Myanmar **Nil**	No centralised national system, quality assurance functions are undertaken by individual universities	Assurance functions are coordinated by universities' Central Council.	No	• ASEAN Quality Assurance Network

Country / Quality Assurance Authority / Acronym	Background	Quality Assurance Framework	National Qualifications Framework	Collaboration
Singapore **Higher Education Quality Assurance, Ministry of Education (HEQA) (Siow, 2011)** **Council for Private Education (CPE) (Jik, 2011)**	Quality assurance framework established in 2000 to ensure institutional accountability, in return for greater operational autonomy devolved to institutions. HEQA oversees quality assurance in Ministry of Education funded universities. CPE established in 2009 to regulate the private sector and build standards in local private education industry.	Quality Assurance / Improvement HEQA Institutional audit for public universities. Compulsory CPE Institutional assessment for private HEI's Compulsory for registration / Voluntary for recognition (EduTrust Certification)	No	• ASEAN Quality Assurance Network

Country / Quality Assurance Authority / Acronym	Background	Quality Assurance Framework	National Qualifications Framework	Collaboration
The Philippines **Commission on Higher Education (CHED), (Garcia, 2010)** **Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP), and** **National Network For Quality Assurance Agencies (NNQAA)**	CHED empowered to establish the current quality assurance system for the higher education sector in 2005, in support of institutions, the academic community and other stakeholders. FAAP made up of 2 agencies NNQAA made up of 3 agencies	Quality Assurance / Improvement **CHED** Programme and Institutional Accreditation Compulsory **FAAP/NNQAA** Institutional Recognition via programme assessment and audit. Voluntary	Philippines National Qualifications Framework	• ASEAN Quality Assurance Network

Country / Quality Assurance Authority / Acronym	Background	Quality Assurance Framework	National Qualifications Framework	Collaboration
Thailand **Office for National Education Standards and Asessments** **(ONESQA) (Pornrungroj, 2011)**	ONESQA established as a public organisation in 2000, in line with ministry quality assurance policy and guiding direction	Quality Assurance: Institutional and Programme Assessment and Audit. Compulsory Emphasis on strengthening external process including through the use of standards	National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand	• ASEAN Quality Assurance Network • ONESQA Network
Vietnam **Education Testing and Accreditation (ETA) (Thinh, 2011)**	QA system was initiated in 2002 with establishment of Accreditation Division. Currently in pilot stage, with full implementation in the future.	Quality Assurance: Programme and Institutional Accreditation Compulsory	Nil	• ASEAN Quality Assurance Network • Asia-Pacific Quality Network

Status of Quality Assurance Agencies

Most countries have a quality assurance authority or body with responsibility for the quality assurance system of the nation. Such agencies ensure that desired standards of quality in higher education are maintained. There are two different models operating in the region. The first involves an agency established as a centralised government organisation. The second model sees the agency as an independent entity. The next section explores the status of each nation's agencies in detail, including organisation and ownership, founding date, establishment, policy and purpose.

Figure 4: Agency Model One-Centralised Government Agency

Figure 5: Agency Model Two-Independent Authority
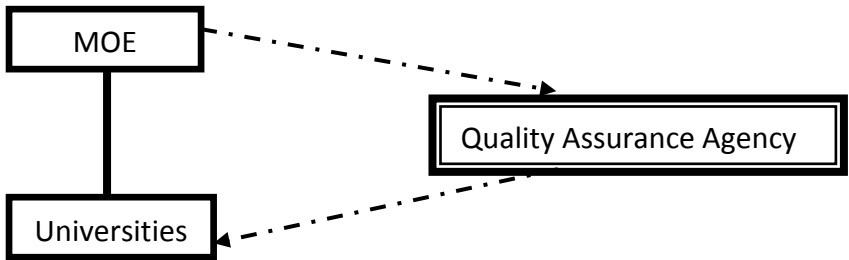
Ownership

There are different models of organisation and ownership in the region. Brunei, Lao PDR, and Vietnam have a centralised government organisation established as a government agency within the ministry responsible for higher education. These agencies exist as a unit in the ministry responsible for higher education. As many universities in the region are government entities, and the agencies responsible for monitoring and evaluating the quality of those entities are themselves government entities, the potential conflict of interest has been recognised. Some countries have focussed on developing independent bodies as a means of ensuring impartiality. Agencies that are established as independent authorities' can have more neutrality. Countries with an independent authority include Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. While the government may have established the organisation, these agencies run independently.

Both Singapore and the Philippines have mixed systems. Singapore's HECA has been in existence since 2001, as a centralised government body to oversee public higher education institutions. More recently, the statutory body CPE was established to regulate private education institutions that fall under the Private Education Bill. In the Philippines, all higher education institutions apply to CHED, a centralised government organisation, for the right to operate. However, underneath CHED there are two umbrella organisations of certifying bodies. Agencies within these bodies are authorised by CHED. Universities are granted progressive deregulation, or

benefits of another nature, after being certified as being of high quality level. While Vietnam currently has a centralised government agency, this may change when the quality assurance system is fully established. Building from the already established ETA, a centralised government agency, Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training plans to establish accreditation agencies to undertake accreditation activities. The 2010 Provisional Regulations on Accreditation of Universities, Colleges and Secondary Vocational Schools, detail the anticipated establishment of a National Accreditation Council to work hand in hand with the ETA. Myanmar alone does not have an established quality assurance agency. All quality functions are delegated to individual higher education institutions, which have responsibility for reporting to the Minister of Education.

Table 2: Agency Organisation and Ownership

Country	Agency	Independent Public Authority	Centralised Government Organisation	Comments
Brunei Darussalam	BDNAC		X	
Cambodia	ACC	X		
Indonesia	BAN-PT	X		
Lao PDR	ESQAC		X	
Malaysia	MQA	X		
Myanmar	-			
Philippines	CHED	X		
	FAPP	X		Umbrella
	NNQAA	X		Agencies
Singapore	HEQA		X	
	CPE	X		Statutory Board
Thailand	ONESQA	X		
Vietnam	ETA		X	

Founding date

The oldest established agency dealing with quality assurance in the region is the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities, PAASCU, established in 1957. PAASCU is a private, voluntary, non-profit and non-stock corporation. It accredits private institutions academic programs that meet commonly accepted standards of quality education (PAASCU, Undated).

The oldest umbrella organisation is the

CASE STUDY: Agencies in Vietnam's Quality Assurance System

The last few years has seen the establishment of Vietnam's education quality accreditation and assurance system.

Modern quality assurance was introduced into Vietnam's education system via the World Bank's first Vietnam Higher Education Project that provided funding to some 30 higher education institutions to strengthen their infrastructure. (Duong, 2010)

Since that time, many institutions have established quality assurance centres. Additionally, the Education and Testing Accreditation unit has been established within the Ministry of Education and Training.

Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines, which has been in existence since 1977, followed by CHED in 1994. Prior to 1994, the education ministry in the Philippines dealt with all

In order to build a more systematic structure for education quality accreditation, several quality assurance agencies will be established in the near future, including:

- *Three state quality accreditation agencies for; high school and preschool; professional secondary schools, colleges and universities; for vocational training.*
- *Four quality agencies for; private universities; medicine and pharmacy disciplines; accounting disciplines; and law discipline.*

levels of education. However, a broad agenda of reforms of the education system followed the Congressional Commission on Education in 1992, including splitting the education sector into three governing bodies for tertiary (CHED), basic (DepEd), and technical and middle education (TESDA).

Brunei Darussalam's National Accreditation Council was another recent quality assurance agency, being established in July 1990. Most agencies emerged since the 1990s, with the most recent being the CPE in Singapore. Following the establishment of CPE, private higher education institutions are now subject to external quality assurance measures, implemented to both regulate the private higher education industry, and uplift standards through capacity building.

Establishment

Agencies are often established as part of broader educational review and reform. In Singapore, the University Governance and Funding Review Committee recommended a Quality Assurance Framework for universities, ensuring institutional accountability in return for greater operational autonomy devolved to the universities. HEQA was established in 2001 to fulfil this objective. Cambodia's ACC is part of the legal framework for higher education, responsible for the establishment of higher education institutions and accreditation. This goes hand in hand with the reforms undertaken by the Royal Government of Cambodia to improve the quality of higher education. The Educational Strategic Plan 2001-2005, updated to the years

> **CASE STUDY: Lao PDR Education Standards and Quality Assurance Centre (ESQAC)**
>
> *ESQAC was established in 2008 with its main mission to establish a national quality assurance system in Lao PDR. It has undertaken considered steps towards this goal. To facilitate a national quality system, Ministry of Education policy states that all universities must establish quality assurance units at both headquarter and faculty level. These units will implement the self-assessment procedure and support external assessment, once established.*

2009-2013, covers the three key education policies of equitable access, quality and efficiency and institutional development.

Malaysia notes the factor contributing to the establishment of the Malaysian Qualification Authority was the need to establish a single, unified and transparent quality assurance body, which is public or private blind, to develop a systemic national qualifications framework as a reference point of qualifications and to develop a reliable national information center on accredited programs and qualifications.

Policy

Each Southeast Asian country has a commitment to providing high quality higher education, and assures that commitment through a legal framework for education including a quality assurance system. Long-term Higher Education strategies, such as Vietnam's National Education Strategic Plan 2001-2010, are often used to articulate this commitment. In most countries, quality assurance is built into policy and legislation, such as Vietnam's Higher Education Reform Agenda.

Quality assurance agencies are established under ministerial decree or government acts. For instance, Cambodia's ESQAC was established in 2008 under a Ministerial Decree, while the Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007 led to the establishment of MQA. Government law establishes all agencies.

Purpose of Agency

Agencies all exist with the common purpose of promoting academic quality, but each agency has a different focus. The majority of agencies are responsible for accrediting institutions, or giving them a 'licence' to operate, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Many quality agencies also accredit, evaluate and review the status of individual qualifications (also known as programmes), including Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam.

Recently established agencies, such as ESQAC in Lao PDR, have responsibility for establishing a quality assurance system across the country. Conversely, already established systems Singapore and the Philippines, still require quality assurance elements to be strengthened, but within specific institutions through capacity building activities.

Another common purpose is to develop and set national education quality standards. CHED, MQA and ONESQA have all developed standards to assess institutions, a role that ESQAC will take on when established. The MQA has further responsibilities of implementing and updating the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). The main role of the MQA is to implement the MQF as a basis for quality assurance of higher education and as the reference point for the criteria and standards for national qualifications.

CASE STUDY: Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council (BDNAC)

The BDNAC undertakes assessment and accreditation in the following circumstances:

- *When government authorities propose to send students, officers or staff for training at institutions outside Brunei*
- *When recruiting personnel into the Public Service Department or Commission*
- *Following scholarship offers from government*
- *When registering new higher education institution courses*
- *When assessing a particular qualification in order to register or license graduates into certain professions.*

A final purpose of quality assurance agencies is providing information on accreditation status. Both BAN-PT and CHED take this as a key activity. BAN-PT states that its two purposes are accrediting programmes, and providing information on accreditation status. Indonesia is developing a national database and information system for higher education. This is a horizontal approach to quality assurance as stakeholders can monitor and evaluate the comparative quality of institutions with quantitative information collated from all universities. MQA also maintains a register of accredited qualifications, the Malaysian Qualifications Register.

Table 3: Agency Organisation and Purpose

Country / QAA	Organisation & Founded	Policy	Purpose
Brunei **Darussalam** Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council (BDNAC)	Centralised Government Agency July 1990	BDNAC Order 2011	1. To consider and evaluate the status and quality of qualifications awarded by various local and overseas institutions; 2. To set up, if necessary, appropriate committees including special and ad hoc to assist the Council pertaining to the evaluation and assessment of qualifications in various subjects or disciplines; 3. To act upon matters relating to the Council's responsibilities either as directed by His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam or if and when the Council considers it appropriate and necessary to do so; and 4. To review the status of any qualifications, as and when the Council sees it necessary.

Country / QAA	Organisation & Founded	Policy	Purpose
Cambodia Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC)	Independent Public Authority March 2003	• Decree on Accreditation Committee of Cambodia NS/RKT/0303/129 (31.3.03) • Sub-Degree on the Organization and Functioning of General Secretariat of Accreditation Committee of Cambodia No. 45/ANK/BK (12.6.03)	1. To establish a legal mechanism for administering the accreditation of higher education for all higher education institutions. 2. To ensure and promote academic quality for greater effectiveness and quality, consistent with international standards 3. To determine the organisation of structure, roles, functions, and duties regarding the administration of the accreditation process of higher education for all institutions granting degrees in Cambodia.
Indonesia Badan Akreditasi Nasional – Perguruan Tinggi BAN PT	Independent Public Authority 7 Aug 1994	• BAN-PT was established in accordance with the 2nd Higher Education Long Term Strategy (1986 – 1995). • BAN-PT is under National Education Ministerial Decree No. 28/2005.	1. Providing national accreditation to all study programs, and the public, private, religion-based, and government service higher education institutions, which are providing academic and professional education programs; 2. Providing accreditation status to the users of institution's graduates

Country / QAA	Organisation & Founded	Policy	Purpose
Lao PDR Educational Standards and Quality Assurance Centre (ESQAC)	Centralised Government Agency 2008	• Prime Ministerial Decree No 84/ PMD (1.3.07) regarding to the Recognition and Declaration of Strategic planning of Education System Reform in Lao PDR. • Revised education law (March, 2008) Articles 68-72.	To set up the quality assurance system included the standards, assessment mechanisms, quality accreditation and so on for whole level within cooperation of stakeholders.
Malaysia Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA)	Independent Public Authority 1 Nov 2007	Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007	1. Implement and update the Malaysian Qualifications Framework; 2. Accredit programmes, qualifications and higher education providers; 3. Quality assure institutions and programmes; 4. Maintain the Malaysian Qualifications Register; 5. Develop standards and criteria and all other relevant instruments as national references; 6. Facilitate the recognition and articulation of qualifications.

Country / QAA	Organisation & Founded	Policy	Purpose
Myanmar	Nil	N/A	N/A
Philippines Commission on Higher Education (CHED)	Centralised Government Organisation 1994	In line with Art. XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution and in support to the declared policy of CHED to support and value the significant role of higher education institutions, academic community and other stakeholders in establishing a quality assurance systems for the higher education sector, the Quality Assurance System in the Philippine higher education was created in May 9, 2005 .	CHED provides permission for higher education institutions to operate. CHED's purpose is: 1. To enhance institutional capacity in designing, delivering and managing programs and services; 2. To identify areas for reform and intervention; 3. To provide accurate, up-to-date information on performance of higher education institutions to enable stakeholders to make informed choices; and, 4. To enable the institutions to set up its own institutional quality assurance management system

Country / QAA	Organisation and Founded	Purpose
The Philippines (continued) Certifying Bodies:- Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP)	Umbrella agency of certifying bodies founded 1977 Composed of: • the Association of Christian Schools and Colleges Accrediting Agency, Inc. (ACSCU-AAI); • The Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PAASCU); • Philippines Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation- PACUCOA.	Authorised by CHED to certify the quality levels of accredited programs at the tertiary level, for the purpose of granting progressive deregulation and other benefits to **private** higher education institutions.
National Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (NNQAA),	Umbrella agency of certifying bodies founded 1957 • Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines-AACCUP (1987); • Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (ALCUCOA).	Authorised by CHED to certify the quality levels of accredited programs at the tertiary level, for the purpose of granting progressive deregulation and other benefits to **public universities**.

Country / QAA	Organisation and ownership	Policy	Purpose
Singapore Higher Education Quality Assurance Section (HEQA)	Centralised Government Organisation 2001	HEQA was established within the Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, to institute and oversee quality assurance in Ministry funded post-secondary educational institutions.	HEQA's key function is to oversee the implementation and operations of quality assurance in Ministry-funded higher education institutions. Its main responsibilities include: 1. To plan and conduct quality audits, with the help of external review panels. 2. To work closely with the institutions on continuous quality improvement. 3. To conduct research on quality assurance best practices around the world as part of our continuous enhancement of our own quality assurance framework.
Council for Private Education	Statutory Board 1 Dec 2009	Private Education Act (2009)	To regulate private education institutions which fall under the Private Education Bill

Country / QAA	Organisation & Founded	Policy	Purpose
Thailand Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA)	Independent Public Authority 4 November 2000	• As stipulated in Section 81 of the 1997 constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, a National Education Law is required. • The 1999 National Education Act became effective on August 20, 1999. • Chapter 6 of the Act on Education Standards and Quality Assurance mandates establishment of ONESQA.	• Develop external assessment system in line with the quality assurance system of the institution and supporting agencies • Develop external quality assurance standards and criteria • Certify external assessors; • Supervise, set standards and issue certificates for external assessment conducted by external assessors • Develop and train external assessors • Submit annual reports on the assessment of educational quality and standards to the Council of Ministers, the Minister, Minister of Education, Religion and Culture, and the Budget Bureau for consideration allocation for education.

Country / QAA	Organisation & Founded	Policy	Purpose
Vietnam Education Testing and Accreditation (ETA)	Centralised Government Organisation 2003	National Education Strategic Plan 2001 – 2010 and the Higher Education Reform Agenda 2010-2020.	1. Assist the Ministry of Education and Training in testing, examinations and quality assurance from basic to post graduate education and training. 2. Study, develop and monitor the implementation of accreditation and quality assurance criteria at all levels.

Agency Focus

Agencies focus on different elements of higher education institutions operations, whether teaching and learning, research, quality management, quality process, student and community services. The first broad area of agency focus is quality. All surveyed focus on a universities internal quality assurance processes, and most also focus on quality management. Singapore's HECA completes a review of the management of the institution, including assessing governance and leadership, management and strategic planning of the organisation.

CASE STUDY: The Philippines Quality Assurance Agencies

The Philippines has a diversified accreditation system, with eight active quality assurance agencies in operation. CHED deals with the accreditation of all HEI's, whether public or private. HEIs are accredited upon meeting to the minimum requirements prescribed by CHED.

Further voluntary accreditation agencies are authorised by CHED to certify the quality levels of accredited programs, for the purpose of granting progressive deregulation and other benefits. Public and non-university institutions are accredited by the umbrella agency the National Network of Quality Assurance Agencies, composed of; the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines-AACCUP (1987); and The Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation -ALCUCOA.

CASE STUDY: The Philippines Quality Assurance Agencies

(continue)

Private HEIs are accredited by the umbrella agency the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines, composed of; the Association of Christian Schools and Colleges Accrediting Agency, Inc.; The Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PAASCU); and Philippines Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation- PACUCOA.

A second area of focus is student related. The quality of teaching and learning is widely reviewed, specifically by the ACC, BAN-PT, MQA, HECA and ETA, as is the quality of research. BAN-PT notes that it also reviews the quality of graduates. Most universities also review community services such as support services. CPE reviews connection with industry and development as part of its mandate.

Diversity in Scope of Activities

An area of divergence between the agencies in the region is the scope of each agencies activities. Scope can vary due to the type of education provider, whether public or private, or its relation to a particular industry or government ministry.

Most agencies use the same instrument, methods, policies and procedures for both public and private institutions, regardless of size and other factors. In countries with more than one quality

assurance agency, agencies may have different scope of activities. The Philippines provides the extreme example of this, as five accrediting agencies, two umbrella agencies and the ministry for higher education all provide quality assurance services.

Singapore separates all functions for private and public institutions. Public universities fall under the Education Act and are administered by the Ministry of Education. All universities that fall under the scope of the Private Education Bill are required to register with the Council for Private Education. Previously, the enterprise development agency SPRING Singapore dealt with private institutions, until the establishment of the CPE in 2009. Further differences in Singaporean policies and procedures for public and private providers are detailed below:

Figure 6: Singaporean Public and Private University Policy

Public HEI's	Private HEI's
• Governed by Education Act • HEQA Section, an unit in MOE • ERPs are appointed by MOE to conduct reviews • Tap on External Review Panels for expertise • ERPs bound by Terms of Reference and Undertaking of Confidentiality	• Governed by Private Education Act • Council for Private Education (CPE), a MOE statutory board • Assessors for the institutions under the PE framework are full-time staff employed by CPE • Assessors go through an internal training programme Assessors bound by Code of Conduct

Using a slightly different model, Thailand applies the same scheme to public and private providers, but has different indicators for each. Cambodia's ACC is responsible for all institutions except those that fall under the remit of the Ministry of Labour and Professional Training, which focus on vocational education. There are differences in scope in Malaysia for religious higher education institutions. The Education Act 1996 specifically excludes from its definition of educational institutions, schools or any other institutions where the teaching is confined exclusively to the teaching of any religion. This allows for schools that provide religious instruction exclusively, like seminaries, to be exempt from the jurisdiction of the MQA.

CASE STUDY: Council for Private Education, Singapore (CPE)

CPE has recently implemented a ranking system for private providers, EduTrust. EduTrust certification is given to HEI's which have met minimum standards in key areas of management, provision of educational services and demonstrated financial health.

EduTrust-certified private education institutions are differentiated in the type of EduTrust awards they receive, based on their performance in the assessment by the Council for Private Education. These awards are made known publicly and thus, enable students to make more informed choices. Students benefit from the introduction of EduTrust as their fees will be protected and HIE's are held accountable for maintaining their standards across the board for all students.

CASE STUDY: Council for Private Education, Singapore (CPE) (continue)

- *EduTrust is a voluntary certification scheme that helps to distinguish higher quality players in Singapore's private education industry.*
- *Private education institutions need to be EduTrust-certified before being able to offer placement for international students who require a Student's Pass from the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority.*
- *Private education institutions may be awarded a EduTrust Star, EduTrust, or EduTrust Provisional certification (Council for Private Education, 2011).*

Participation

Quality assurance systems also vary based on whether assessment participation is voluntary or mandated. Most quality assurance agencies have mandatory assessment for both institutions and individual programmes including BDNAC, BAN-PT, ONESQA and ETA. However, ACC and HEQA have assessment for institutions only, but not individual programmes. Malaysia has voluntary assessment as part of a broader plan to increase higher education institution autonomy and accountability for quality assurance, and focus on internal capacity building within universities. Compliance with the Malysian quality framework is assured through the various aspects of the quality assurance guidelines. These consist of:

- Malaysian Qualification Framework
- Codes of Practice – Programme Accreditation (COPPA) and Institutional Audit (COPIA) assist with implementation of the MQF
- Programme standards
- Professional Programme Accreditation Manuals
- Guides to Good Practice.

A notable scheme exists in Malaysia, to rank the countries individual universities. The SETARA scheme is the MQA's rating system for institutions. It was implemented to measure the performance of undergraduate teaching and learning in universities and university colleges in Malaysia. This was most recently conducted in 2009, with 58 universities participating and 47 receiving ratings. SETARA '09 used a total of 25 criteria captured through 82 indicators comprising the generic framework of Input, Process and Output. Benchmark figures were established for the indicators. Data for the final analysis were sourced from the institutions as well as the Academic Performance Audit, the Generic Student Attributes test score, the Tracer Study, and the Employer Survey (MQA, 2009).

Case Study: Indonesia National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (BAN-PT)

Interestingly, the board of Indonesia's BAN PT is comprised entirely of representatives from universities. BAN-PT ensures its independence from institutions by not receiving any funding from them; it ensures its independence from the government by receiving only non-binding funds from the government.

Often while the more fundamental elements of the programme such as registering or accrediting a new institution are mandatory, other elements are voluntary. Some agencies use voluntary assessment as a means of distinguishing between institutions, and to grant deregulation. This includes assessments by FAAP and NNQAA in the Philippines, as previously identified. Singapore's EduTrust voluntary certification scheme also aims to distinguish higher quality players in Singapore's private education industry.

Governance

QAA's are governed in different ways, with management, decision-making and processes varying depending on the governance of the agency. The governance of QAA's in the region bears overall similarities, with slight variations

depending on the QAA model in use. Centralised government QAA's operate as an agency within government, and governance decisions ultimately remain with the minister responsible for education. Alternatively, private entities generally have a board as a decision making arm. The board usually includes representatives from the ministry responsible for education, along with other stakeholders including government, HEI's and industry. As organisations, QAA's are run as hierarchical entities, with a director overseeing operations. The following section will investigate QAA's more closely, considering financing, organisational structure, and the composition of quality assurance teams.

Financing

QAA's are either financed by government, by HEI's, or a combination of both sources. BDNAC, BAN-PT, ESQAC and both Singapore's agencies HECA and CPE are financed through annual government budgets. As member organisations with voluntary accreditation, Philippines accrediting bodies FAAP and NNQAA are financed by HEI's. HEI's are required to pay membership, and then pay for costs associated with accreditation. In the case of MQA, CHED and ETA, financing is received from both government and HEI's. HEI's tend to pay for accreditation cost, as with FAAP and NNQAA. Cambodia's AAC also draws funds from international donors.

Organisational Structure

Board

The organisational structures of quality assurance agencies in the region are all hierarchical, with slight differences in structure. AAC, BAN-PT, MQA and CPE have a board or council as the decision-making organ of the organisation. These agencies also happen to all be independent bodies. Centralised government quality assurance agencies tend to operate without a guiding council, perhaps as the lines of communication come straight from government. Where a board exists, the ministry of education or other government officials appoints board members. Cambodia is the exception to this rule, as some board members are elected. The Deputy Prime Minister of the Office of the Council of Ministers chairs the ACC board, which is deputy chaired by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport. The five remaining board members are elected representatives. Staff from the ministry responsible for education are represented on most quality assurance agency boards, and in the case of Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, staff from other relevant ministries are also board members. Representatives from higher education institutions and industry representatives often also make up the board.

Subcommittees

Often, agencies have committees to deal with specific quality assurance aspects. BDNAC is assisted by 10 sub-committees,

with responsibility to assess, evaluate and make recommendations to the Council. BDNAC has a unique model, in that subcommittees are broken down into academic disciplines. There are committees for:

- Accountancy and Management
- Communications
- Education
- Engineering and Architecture
- Environmental Science
- Islamic Religious Studies
- Medicine
- Law
- Military and Security.

In other agencies, committees are more commonly broken up into work function. For instance, the MQA has several committees covering the areas of accreditation, institutional audit, equivalency and standards. Singapore's HECA uses external review panels appointed by the Minister of Education. These panels are generally comprised of Singaporean and international academics, captains of industry and quality assurance experts. Panel members are carefully selected to ensure that they have adequate skills and expertise to render professional judgement on the quality of the institution being validated.

ONESQA also uses committees, but has several executive committees which sit above the ONESQA secretariat, and are answerable to the Thai Prime Minister. These Committees

make decisions about various aspects of the organisations operations, including:

- Performance Follow Up and Evaluation
- Committee of Development of Assessment Systems for Basic Education
- Committee of Development of Assessment Systems for Vocational Education
- Committee of Development of Assessment Systems for Higher Education.

Table 4: Agency Organisational Structure

Country	QA Authority	Secretariat / Agency	Board / Council	Board Members	Committees	Details	Appointed by	Finances
Brunei Darussalam	BDNAC	X	-		X	Secretariat supported by Executive Secretary	Government of His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam	Government $Variable
Cambodia	AAC	X	X	7		Board and General Secretariat	MOE x 2 & 5 elected members	Government / HEI's / Donors US$400,000
Indonesia	BAN-PT	X	X	15		Board and Secretariat	MOE	100% Government Rupiah 100 billion
Lao PDR	ESQAC	X	-			Secretariat	MOE decree	Government Not yet set
Malaysia	MQA	X	X		X	Council, Committees & Agency	MOE	Government / HEI's RM 24.7 million (2010)

Organisational Structure

Country	QA Authority	Secretariat / Agency	Board / Council	Board Members	Committees	Details	Appointed by	Finances
Philippines	CHED	X			X			Cost sharing between Government/ Fees from HEIs $Variable FAAP/NNQAA: HEI's – membership/ visit costs
Singapore	HECA	X			X	4 External Review Panels		Government S$750,000
	CPE	X	X				MOE	Government S$8million
Thailand	ONESQA	X	X		X	3 guiding committees,	Prime Minister	Government
Vietnam	ETA	X	Not yet defined			DG, DDG, and 5 units	MOE	Government / HEI USD$200,000

Secretariat

All quality assurance agencies have an operational unit, or secretariat, that runs day-to-day activities. A Secretary General, Director General, Executive Secretary, Director or Chief Executive Officer variously heads the secretariat, depending on the terminology used in the country. General staff at Singapore's CPE are seconded from the Ministry of Education or polytechnics. Most structure units within the agency by function, for instance units dealing with administration, planning or testing. Alternatively, units may be multifunctional but based on client area, for instance, basic or higher education units. For instance, the operational aspects of ONESQA itself is broken down into sector specific task teams, including basic education, vocational education and quality assurance promotion.

Figure 7: Agency Staff
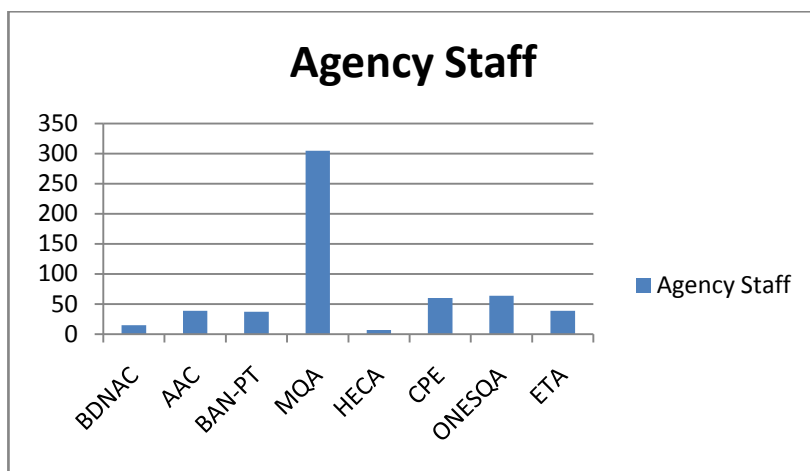
Agency staff size varies, from very small to very large. At the smaller end of the scale, HECA has only 7 staff and BDNAC has 15. Most QAA's are medium sized; AAC, BAN-PT, CPE and ETA all have less than 100 staff. MQA has the largest workforce, with over 305 agency staff.

Table 5: Quality Assurance Teams

Country	QA Authority	Secretariat Staff	Accreditors	Assessors	Auditors	External Review Panels
Brunei Darussalam	BDNAC	15	90	8		
Cambodia	AAC	39	260			
Indonesia	BAN-PT	37	1600			
Lao PDR	ESQAC		Not yet set			
Malaysia	MQA	305	20 (Accreditation Committee members)	1309	80	
Philippines	CHED					
Singapore	HECA	7				25 – external review panel
	CPE	60		13	17 (inspectors)	3 industry development executives
Thailand	ONESQA	64		527		
Vietnam	ETA	39	Not yet established			

Quality Assurance Team

Aside from core agency staff, quality assurance agencies also have a pool of staff to undertake quality assurance assessments. These staff have different titles, depending on the quality assurance framework used and the role that staff undertake. They are generally either accreditors, assessors or auditors. Again, these staff pools vary in size. BAN-PT has the largest pool with 1600 accreditors, while MQA has 1309 assessors, along with 20 accreditors that make up an Accreditation Committee. CPE uses inspectors and industry development executives to review private education providers.

Quality assurance teams are most commonly drawn from academic and faculty HEI staff and the private sector. CPE also utilises retired principles and vice principles for this purpose. The following chart shows the sectors that members of quality assurance teams are drawn from. This is an average of all the countries surveyed, to provide an overview of trends in the region.

Figure 8: Profession of members of QA Teams
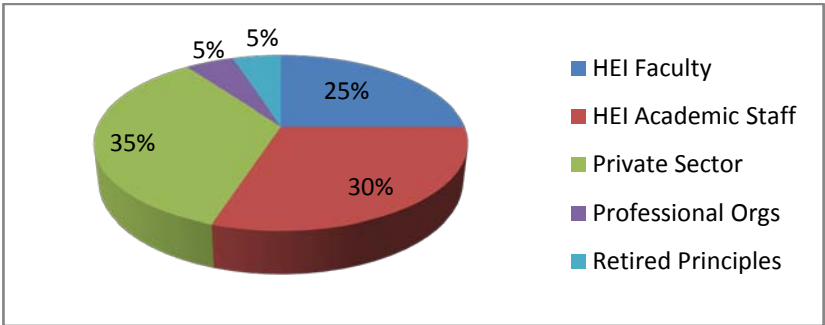
Members of quality assurance teams are required to undertake training in all cases except Brunei Darussalam and HECA. HECA notes that their rigorous selection of appropriate candidates negates the need for training. ACC, BAN-PT and CPE all have one weeks training, while MQA and CHED have 2 to 3 days. Half of the agencies surveyed have training manuals. In some cases quality assurance teams, staff must simply undertake training, and in others, such as for BDNAC's auditors, they must pass an assessment following the training.

Table 6: Team Training

QA Authority	Yes	Days	No	Training Manual
BDNAC			X	Auditors must pass, assessors just have to attend
AAC	X	5		
BAN-PT	X	4-5		X
ESQAC			X	
MQA	X	2.5		X
-				
CHED	X	3		
HECA		-	X	X Members selected to
CPE	X	5		X Auditors must pass, assessors just have to attend

ONESQA	X	2			Training + evaluation
ETA	Not yet set	N/A		X	

External Quality Assurance in practice: Tools and Methods

Site Visit

The practice of quality assurance visits, as undertaken by Quality Assurance Agencies, is a key component of all external quality assurance systems in the region. These visits are the interplay between internal and external governance of quality. The process of external quality assurance in practice generally involves a pre-visit stage, a site visit, a post-visit stage and a conclusion. Throughout the process, quality assurance agencies or their representatives assess the relevance, breadth and adequacy of institutions quality assurance processes. They also assess whether an institution is meeting quality assurance standards, and achieving desired outcomes.

Often the site visits are a formative part of the quality assurance process in the region. Rather than a strict form of public control, an accreditation, assessment or audit process can actually work to "foster institutional responsibility… particularly in a situation where institutions are only just beginning to build QM systems", similar to the process in Europe (Witte, 2010) . Rather than acting as a formal guard of quality assurance, and providing a yes or no judgement of institution's quality assurance processes, the actual practice of agencies in the region is often to provide a yes, with conditions. The following section looks at the nature of the external quality assurance process more fully.

Site visit is the most common quality assurance tool in the region, occurring in all of the quality assurance agencies surveyed. Site visits all have a slightly different focus, as they are run by disparate groups of professionals and all asses different things. Site visits all have a slightly different focus, as they are made up of disparate groups of professionals and assessing different things. Some review whether a certain threshold or standard is met, usually taking inputs as their focus such as teaching qualifications and the organisation's facilities. This usually results in an accreditation measure. BDNAC, AC, BAN-PT, MQA, CHED and EQA all have this focus, whether for the entire institute or for an individual programme. Others such as ONESQA focus on outcomes, assessing graduate outcomes and completion rates. The typical result of an assessment visit is graded, whether numerical, literal or descriptive. For visits from HEQA, FAAP and NNQAA the quality assurance process itself is of main interest, with staff assessing the mechanisms the HEI has in place to assure quality. These audits focus on the processes used by a HEI to monitor its own academic standards. There are examples of all three quality approaches, accreditation, assessment and audit found in the region. All countries use more than one approach.

The implication of a quality assurance assessment varies amongst countries. In many countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, the quality assurance outcome is linked to higher autonomy and other incentives. This can be a means of increasing higher education institution autonomy while ensuring accountability. In Brunei, Singapore and

Vietnam, the implication of quality outcome results in giving a formal status to the higher education institutions.

In some countries, governments are responsible for taking the final decision on accreditation, including Indonesia, Brunei and Vietnam. In Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand, the assessment panel makes a recommendation and board or professional body decides on status.

Table 7: Site Visit Quality Approach

Agency	Accreditation		Assessment		Audit	
	Institution	*Programme*	*Institution*	*Programme*	*Institution*	*Programme*
BDNAC	X	X				
ACC	X					
BAN-PT	X	X	X	X		
ESQAC	*Still being established*					
MQA	X	X				
CHED	X	X				X
FAAP/ NNQAA				X		X
HEQA					X	
CPE			X			
ONESQA			X	X	X	X
EQA	X	X	X	X		

Table 8: Annual Number of Reviews

Authority	Number of reviews in 2010
BDNAC	4 public universities, 13 private institutions
AAC	64 institutions reaccredited, 24 institutions reviewed
BAN-PT	(2009) Programmes: Diplome 300, Undergraduate 1400, Postgraduate 200, Professional 50 Institutions: 80 institutions accredited 2007-2007. Accreditation cycle will recommence 2011.
ESQAC	Not yet operational
MQA	(2009) Provisional Accreditation Assessment – 732 Programme Accreditation Assessment – 629 Institutional Audit (academic performance) – 24
CHED	(2009) IQuAME average of 5 institutions visited for evaluation
HECA	Institutional 3
CPE	Registration 300, EduTrust - 60
ONESQA	73 institutions
ETA	100 universities completed self-study reports. 40 universities externally evaluated.

Site Visit Stages

While there are major differences in the site visits across the region, the process shares some similarities. All have a pre-visit element, often made up of a self-assessment or desk audit. This information is considered by the quality assurance team before visiting the higher education institution. Decisions will also be made about the visit time and nature.

During the visit, the team will speak with staff and sometimes students of the institution, and review documents and facilities. Following the visit, a report is developed. This often includes recommendations, and is sometimes passed to the institution for feedback before the final stage. The outcome stage is particularly important if it is an accreditation visit as the outcome may be a licence to operate. In unusual cases, such as BDNAC, BAN-PT and CPE, failure to meet standards results in fines, derecognition of programmes or limited access to government grants. Alternatively, failure to meet standards results in reassessment (CHED), or in most cases, guidance or conditions provided and ongoing monitoring (ACC, MQA, HECA and ONESQA).

Figure 9: Site Visit Stages

Site Visit Outcome

Site visits have various outcomes and implications, depending upon their nature. Accreditation results may grant formal status, impact on the amount of funding, academic freedoms and level of autonomy granted to an institution. Bruneian, Thai and Vietnamese universities are granted formal status through the accreditation process. The implication

CASE STUDY: Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, Thailand (ONESQA)

ONESQA has identified 'magic' strategies for external quality assessment, which it deems will return the best and most reliable results and meet the needs of all parties:

- *Have an understanding of the HEI before the site visit, through Self-Assessment Report, Annual Report and other documents*

CASE STUDY: Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, Thailand (ONESQA) (continue)

- *Conduct quality assessment using the cause and effect method, which indicates whether a HEI is quality assured or not according to the standards determined by ONESQA*
- *Assess the actual state: Mechanism + Context = Output/Outcome*
- *Theory driven evaluation: Predict and Prevent is better than Find and Fix*
- *A team of at least 2 assessors should work in unity under the same quality assessment standards (team up and pair off)*
- *Utilise the quality case study method*

for Indonesian and Malaysian universities is approval, funding incentives and autonomy. For other countries, outcome depends on the agency used. In the Philippines, for instance, PAASCU grants formal status, incentives and autonomy, while AACCUP grants approval, direct funding, incentive and prestige. Singapore is unusual in there is no final specific outcome for public universities, other than the report provided by HEQA. The report is shared with the institution, which provides an action plan. Private institutions receive formal status and incentives through the CPE accreditation process. Failure to meet selected standards may

result in private institutions losing their licence to recruit international students.

ONESQA works with universities that do not meet standards. The institution will develop an improvement plan agreed between the institute and ONESQA. At the same time, ONESQA recommends improvements to the Ministry in charge of the HEI, these improvements will be monitored by the ministry and may be linked to funding and ongoing viability.

Table 9: Site Visit Process

QAA	Planning Stage	Visit Stage	Post visit	Conclusion	Implications	Authority
BDNAC	7 days Official Letter + Pre-inspection checklist	1 day Evaluation through discussion and inspection of HEI	7 days Report produced for HEI and Council (if required)	A further visit may be conducted to address serious accreditation issues.	Failure to meet criteria or requirements will result in fines or derecognition of programmes.	BDNAC Chairman
AAC	2 days HEI tables report to ACC	3 days at HEI Evaluation through discussion and inspection of HEI	1 week Report prepared. Submitted to HEI, Ministries, publicly disseminated		No-Accreditation = monitoring Fail = guidelines provided and review in 2 years	ACC Board

QAA	Planning Stage	Visit Stage	Post visit	Conclusion	Implications	Authority
BAN-PT	HEI tables self assessment + accreditation documents If Board decides should proceed, move to next stage	3-5 days Evaluation through discussion and inspection of HEI	Report prepared. Submitted to Board, and publicly disseminated	Certificate of Accreditation with rank and grade	Programme No-Accreditation = no legal standing to issue qualifications and cannot access government grants	BAN-PT Board

MQA	8 weeks HEI tables Accreditation Application to MQA MQA Council agrees on process and establishes assessment committee	2 days Evaluation through document review, discussion and inspection of HEI	12 weeks Report sent to Accreditation Committee (with feedback from HEI). Committee grants accreditation	Certificate of Accreditation (programme) or Certificate of Self-Accreditation	Accreditation with requirements = actions to be met by an agreed date Or conditions = which must be met before accreditation granted	Accreditation Committee
QAA	Planning Stage	Visit Stage	Post visit	Conclusion	Implications	Authority

CHED	4 months HEI submits self-evaluation to CHED Regional Office. CHED establishes team of assessors.	3 days Validation of document review through discussion and inspection of HEI	1 month Presents findings HEI Report of recommendations submitted to CHED for deliberation	Recommendations approved: CHED Resolution signed by members of the Commission	HEI's can reapply after a certain period.	CHED Commission
HECA	15 weeks before validation HEI submits self-assessment report to HECA. MOE establishes validation framework.	4-5 days Assesses systems and processes through discussion. Presents findings to HEI	16 weeks from visit Report finalised by review panel with feedback and follow up actions provided by HEI	Report sent to Ministry and HEI.	Report provides areas to address. MOE monitors progress of actions.	Review Panel Chairman

QAA	Planning Stage	Visit Stage	Post visit	Conclusion	Implications	Authority
CPE	Registration: 1-3 months HEI submits application and documents to CPE	1 month: Site inspection	1-3 months: Corrective actions, submission of report.	Awarded registration status.	If registration fails cannot operate as a school.	CEO of CPE
	EduTrust Certification: 1 month HEI submits application and documents to CPE, desktop review by Assessors	1 month Presite assessment meeting and site assessmet. Submission of Assessment Report to PEI	1-2 months HEI submits corrective action plan to CPE. Post-site assessment meeting to review. CPE issues Recommendation Report.	EduTrust Certification	Cannot enrol international students.	CEO of CPE

QAA	Planning Stage	Visit Stage	Post visit	Conclusion	Implications	Authority
ONESQA	ONESQA reviews data set and develops criteria. HEI provides Self-Assessment Report.	3-5 days Evaluation through sampling, document inspection, discussion and inspection of HEI Report orally presented to HEI CEO.	30 days Full report prepared and submitted to HEI for correction. Finalised report presented to Government, Ministers, Education Minsters, Budget Office and HEI.	Annual Quality and Standards Assessment Report submitted to Government.	If conditionally assured or failure to meet standards, HEI develops improvement plan within a specific period of time mutually agreed between HEI and ONESQA. ONESQA recommends improvements to the Ministry in charge of the HEI.	Executive Board of ONESQA.

QAA	Planning Stage	Visit Stage	Post visit	Conclusion	Implications	Authority
ETA	HEI undertake self-assessment.	Site visit (currently in pilot stage)	Report released stating how HEI meets criteria, and improvements to be made.			

Accreditation

Accreditation is a very commonly used means of assuring quality in the region. Accreditation evaluates whether an institution or programme qualifies for a status or threshold level. This process establishes "the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, programme or module of study" (Harvey, 2011). Accreditation assesses the value of an educational institution, and involved meeting pre-defined standards. This is conducted through external assessment, but can also include a self-assessment element. Self-assessment allows providers to pre-assess their suitability, before lodging an application.

CASE STUDY: Higher Education Quality Assurance Section, Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education Singapore (HEQA)

The Minister for Education appoints the External Review Panels, which generally comprise local and international academics, captains of industry and quality assurance experts. EPR members are carefully selected to ensure that they have adequate skills and expertise to render professional judgement on the quality of the institution being validated

Ongoing quality assurance checks are also undertaken through programme accreditation. This establishes the academic standing of the programme and the ability of a programme to produce graduates with the professional competence to practice. It considers educational delivery and the quality of the programme.

Quality assurance agencies in most countries accredit both institution and individual programmes. However, Cambodian, Laotian and Singaporean agencies only consider institutional applications, leaving programme accreditation to institutions.

Accreditation decisions are usually limited to a fixed period, after which the institution or programme is required to engage with a more, or less, rigorous re-accreditation process. The Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore currently have a follow-up requirement. Malaysia only has a follow up requirement if the accreditation process identifies a need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Assessment

An assessment approach analyses outputs, and the typical outcome of an assessment is graded, whether numerical, literal or descriptive. Assessments usually consider performance indicator data, usually quantitative in form. This data provides a measure of some aspect of an individual's or organisation's performance against which changes in performance or the performance of others can be compared (Harvey, 2011). Taking

Indonesia's Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) and Thailand's Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) as examples. The process is based on the assessment of a report of performance indicators every academic program has to be submitted for approval from the national agencies. In the case of Indonesia, these reports form a national database system that can be used to evaluate study program performance and is called Study Program Evaluation Based on Self Assessment'. Similarly, in Thailand, the regulation to monitor the opening of new program or the revision of existing program in institutions is aimed at maintaining quality and standards in light of the increasing HEI autonomy. (Dhirathiti, Unpublished). Thailand applies the same scheme but has different indicators, depending on the type of university.

Audit

Academic audits review the processes used by a higher education institution to monitor its academic standards, and provide quality education within departments. Academic audits concern themselves more with the "processes that faculty use to think about their curriculum decisions and how they carry out these activities in the best interests of the discipline and student learning. Academic audits also focus on how faculty members organize these activities and how well they perform them" (University of Missouri, 2004). These processes include determining learning outcomes, designing course content and curriculum, designing teaching and learning, developing

assessments and implementing quality education. In most cases, these are developed within the institution and suitable for their own purpose. The purpose of an academic audit is to encourage departments to strengthen the techniques and processes they have in place to improve the quality of their work. In line with this, Lao PDR has a self-assessment procedure to support external assessment. Academic audit is used by CHED, FAAP, NNQAA, HEQA and ONESQAA.

Peer Review

Many agencies in the region use peer review, including AAC, BAN-PT, MQA, CHED and ONESQA. Peer review uses skilled individuals or team from outside the institution, to review its provision, work process or outputs (Harvey, 2011). Peers are often recruited from similar positions in other higher education providers. Many institutions also use peer review as part of their internal quality assurance process, with reviewers sourced from within the university but from different faculties or departments.

Report

All agencies provide a report as a documented outcome of an evaluation process. MQA, HEQA, CPE and ONESQA present the report to the higher education institution before dissemination to other relevant stakeholders. Institutions may provide an action plan detailing how they plan to respond to the recommendations in the report, these are included in reporting to other stakeholders. The report is presented to various stakeholders including the quality assurance agency board, council or committee and government ministries. Some agencies also publicly

CASE STUDY: Accreditation Committee of Cambodia

The ACC grants accreditation through a transparent process. The ACC Board approved nine institutional accreditation standards in February 2008, namely: 1)Mission; 2) Governing Structure, Management and Planning; 3) Academic Programmes; 4) Teaching Staff; 5) Student Services; 6) Teaching and Learning Resources; 7) Physical Facilities; 8) Financial Management and Planning; and 9) Dissemination of Information.

Dissemination of Information is an unusual standard, but included as information is the key to informed decision making. Therefore, institutions should disseminate information widely as a means to promote public awareness on the development of univresities.

disseminate reports. For instance, this fulfils BAN-PT's function of providing information to the public about the accreditation status of institutions.

External Validation

External validation is used by six agencies in the region, AAC, BAN-PT, MQA, CHED, HEQA and ONESQA. The external validation process confirms that programme can commence or continue operations. It evaluates and passes judgement on the appropriateness or level of quality and standards at an institution.

CASE STUDY: The Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF)

The Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) is Malaysia's declaration about its qualifications and their quality in relation to its education system.

MQF is an instrument that develops and classifies qualifications based on a set of criteria that are approved nationally and benchmarked against international best practices. The MQF clarifies the earned academic levels, learning outcomes of study areas and credit system based on student academic load. These criteria are accepted and used for all qualifications awarded by recognised higher education providers. Hence, MQF integrates and links all national qualifications.

CASE STUDY: The Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF)

(countinue)

MQF also provides educational pathways through which it links qualifications systematically. These pathways will enable the individual to progress through credit transfers and accreditation of prior experiential learning, in the context of lifelong learning.

Standards

Standards are widely used in the region as a quality assurance instrument. Standards are a set of reference points, which institutions use to guide their policies for maintaining academic values and quality. Most countries have developed purpose built standards to meet their own particular circumstances. Generally, standards cover items like mission, governance, teaching staff, student service and physical facilities. The Philippines government sets six common internal practices for providers to follow, the ACC in Cambodia established nine, Vietnam set 10 standards with 63 criteria, while Thailand's OHEC provides policy guidelines to all HEIs.

Qualification Frameworks

Qualification frameworks are national frameworks comprising of school, vocational education and training, and higher education sectors. Qualification frameworks link together all these

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qualifications into a national education recognition system which promotes lifelong learning and a seamless and diverse education and training system. In discussing VET systems, Blom and Meyers (2003) claim "[W]here VET quality systems are based on national qualifications frameworks and formalised standards for the registration of providers there is generally a higher degree of consistency in outcomes than in systems where certification of qualifications and accreditation of providers is less systematic" (p. 6.)

Qualification frameworks are quite common in the region. Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam do not have national qualification frameworks, all other countries do.

Opportunities for Collaboration

The SEAMEO RIHED research project enlisted quality assurance experts to provide first hand information on their countries external quality assurance system, including detailed data on the agency or agencies responsible for assuring the overall quality in their countries higher education system. The knowledge of the quality assurance experts and further analysis has identified several opportunities for collaboration and capacity building in the region. This section identifies the issues key quality assurance activities, capacity building opportunities for nations, the future of quality assurance in Southeast Asia and concludes with activities that will step Southeast Asia towards a regional quality assurance system.

Key Quality Assurance Issues in the region

Experts from quality assurance agencise in the region identified several quality assurance issues to be addressed. In summary, most countries face the following common concerns in assuring quality in their higher education systems:

- Insufficient funding
- Insufficient quality assurance experts, tools and knowledge
- Lack of awareness of assurance implementation
- Limited participation in voluntary quality assurance processes

- Quality assurance results not incorporated into higher education institutions quality improvement process
- Limited national quality assurance development strategies
- Overlap of quality assurance functions in government
- The existing collaboration on the regional quality assurance is still not firm.

Capacity Building Opportunities for Nations

The review of the national quality assurance systems of the ten Southeast Asian countries has revealed several areas requiring attention in order to strengthen the region's quality assurance framework:

- Build internal capacity in higher education institutions
- Assist institutions in developing assessment documents in order to increase pass rate of proposals
- Encouraging development of an external quality assurance process in all nations
- Building capacity of newly developed quality assurance agencies
- Ensure accessible quality agency and a quality system which is easy to conceptualise
- Develop national qualifications frameworks
- Encourage active participation in AQAN.

The Future of Quality Assurance in SEA

The development of a regional quality assurance framework in Southeast Asia is based on three assumptions. Firstly, that quality assurance is not an ends in itself, but there to uplift broader higher education quality. Secondly, that quality assurance will facilitate connectivity between students and staff. Thirdly, that development of a framework will aid the broader harmonisation movement underway in the region.

Bearing in mind these assumptions, higher education policy makers from the ten Southeast Asian nations reached agreement on the future of quality assurance in the region. This agreement was reached at the 5th Meeting of Director Generals, Secretary Generals and Commissioners of Higher Education, held in Nha Trang Vietnam 24-25 March 2011. The policy makers agreed that:

- AQAN will continue to promote the benefits of quality assurance,
- AQAN will lead the development of the Southeast Asian Quality assurance system,
- that this will include future alignment in terms of quality assurance criteria and process,
- that countries will cooperate in order to build capacity,
- that these actions will develop the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework.

Actions to Develop the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework

Figure 10: Actions for the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework
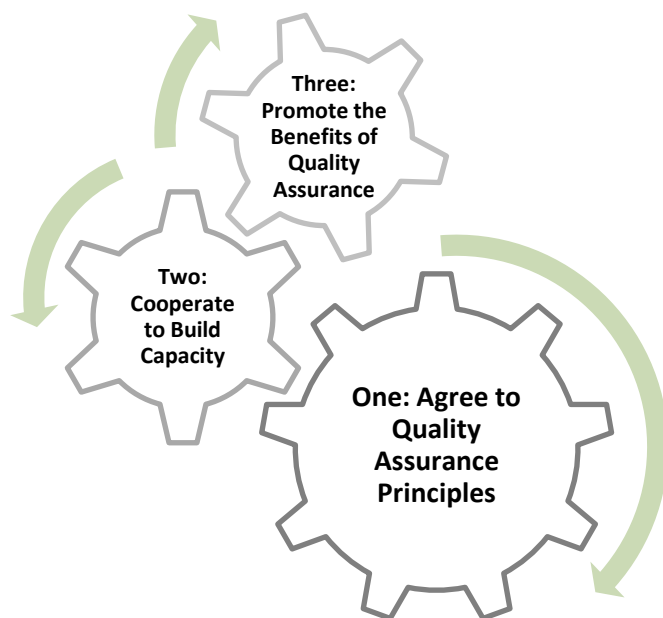
Activities in three interconnected areas will promote a Southeast Asian quality assurance system, firstly, quality assurance principles, secondly, capacity building through cooperation and finally, promoting the benefits of quality assurance. The following steps and action plans are taken from survey responses, and are in-line with the Asia Pacific Quality Netowrk's research on gaps in QA systems in the region (Stella & Department of Education, 2008).

The first set of actions drive regional quality assurance through agreement on guidelines and codes of conduct. This step includes developing the required infrastructure to support regional quality assurance. The second set of actions involves utilising the experience of those in the region, to build capacity in other nations quality assurance systems. It involves actions to strengthen both internal and external quality assurance, and increase participation in quality assurance activities. The final set of activities promotes the benefits of a strong regional approach to quality assurance and will be driven by regional organisations. Actions to support these broad activities are provided in more detail in the following table, with a breakdown of responsible stakeholders.

In order to build a regional quality assurance system, actions are required by all stakeholders at all levels. Thus, recommendations provide actions for the ASEAN Quality Assurance Agency, SEAMEO RIHED, government ministries and higher education institutions.

SEAMEO RIHED is convinced that working in cooperation in this way will both ensure the positive development of the region and individual nation's higher education systems, and that alignment in terms of quality assurance criteria and process will aid the broader harmonisation movement underway in the region.

Table 10: Three Actions for ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework

One: Agree to Quality Assurance Principles		Two: Cooperate to Build Capacity		Three: Promote the Benefits of Quality Assurance	
1.1	Coordinate activities towards regional alignment in quality assurance	2.1	Active participation in AQAN	3.1	Complement initiatives by other partners such as UNESCO and APQN
1.2	Endorse an ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework	2.2	Strengthen national external quality assurance capacity and support systems	3.2	Undertake ASEAN Mobility Project
1.3	Coordinate creation of ASEAN Quality Assurance Code of Practice and Guidelines	2.3	Develop National Qualifications Frameworks	3.2	Raise awareness amongst key stakeholders of the centrality and benefits of quality assurance
1.4	Develop an ASEAN Qualifications structure	2.4	Strengthen national capacity for quality assurance across borders	3.3	Map the quality assurance needs of the region

One: Agree to Quality Assurance Principles		Two: Cooperate to Build Capacity		Three: Promote the Benefits of Quality Assurance	
1.5	Create an ASEAN Qualifications Register	2.5	Increase mutual recognition	3.4	Publish trend and research reports
1.6	Develop a Southeast Asian Credit Transfer System	2.6	Strengthen internal quality assurance		
		2.7	Increase understanding and use of external quality assurance process		

Figure 11: AQAF Stakeholders Plan
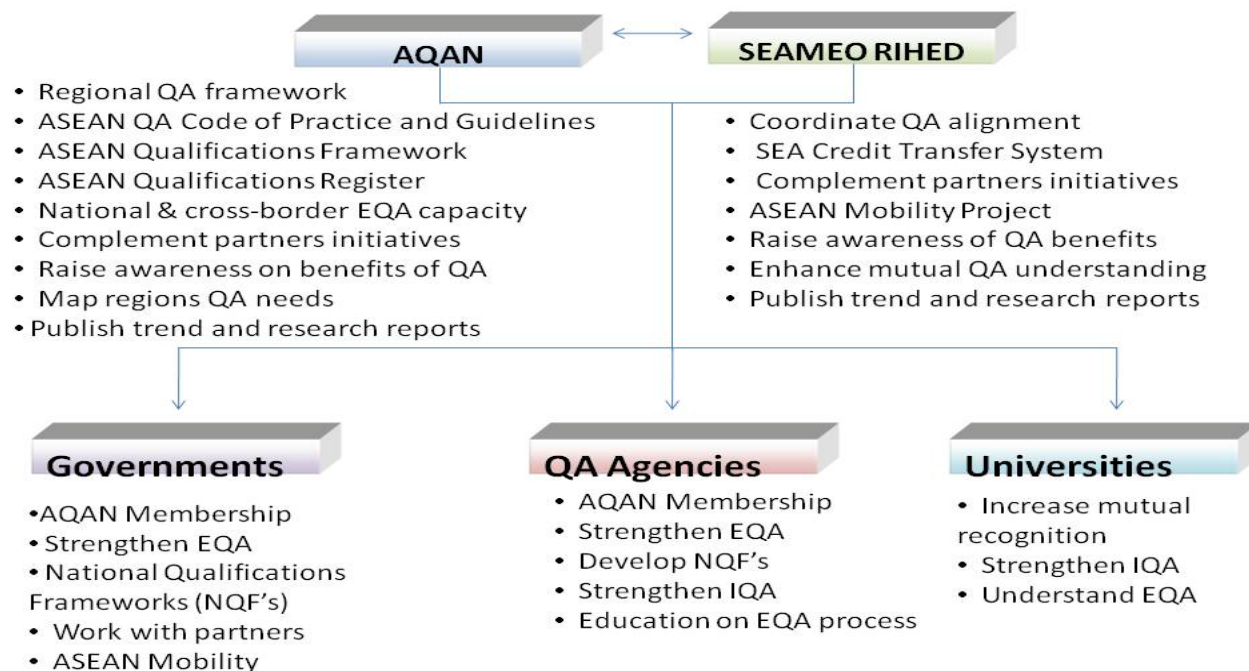
Conclusion

This research report is the outcome of the SEAMEO RIHED research study on Models of Quality Assurance in Southeast Asian Higher Education. The research was conducted to:

- Collect and update quality assurance information on the diverse systems in the region
- Raise awareness of quality assurance systems and status among all stakeholders
- Facilitate increased higher education activities relating to quality assurance in the region.

In order to provide a complete picture of quality assurance in the region, the background to quality assurance in higher education was firstly provided in this report, including an overview of the quality movement, definitions and key concepts. Quality functions at local higher education institution level, at national level and at regional level were also introduced, leading to a discussion of the development of regional quality assurance systems. This report provided an overview of the regional quality assurance architecture in place in Southeast Asia, including reviewing the ASEAN Universities Network quality assurance response from 1998 and the recent establishment of AQAN in 2008.

The report analysed survey's provided by regional quality assurance experts, on the nature of their countries external quality assurance system. The review of the data provided by experts on the status of countries quality assurance systems in

Southeast Asia showed great variance of national policies. Analysis of the data explored the existence and development of external quality systems. The body of the report dealt with nations quality assurance agencies, the authority or body with designated responsibility for the quality assurance system of the nation. The report provided in depth information about agencies organisation, approach, process, staff, funding models, tools and methods.

Making use of the knowledge of experts in the field, this report used that knowledge to identify activities that will step Southeast Asia towards a regional quality assurance system. Opportunities for collaboration were identified because of the research project. These include identification of the key quality assurance issues in the region, capacity building opportunities for nations and the future of quality assurance in Southeast Asia. The report concluded with the implications for strengthening Southeast Asian quality assurance systems that emerged from the research project.

Three broad activities will lead to the development of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework, firstly, developing regional quality assurance principles, secondly, capacity building through cooperation and finally, promoting the benefits of quality assurance. The first set of actions drive regional quality assurance through agreement on guidelines and codes of conduct. This step includes developing the required infrastructure to support regional quality assurance. The second set of actions involves utilising the experience of those in the region, to build capacity in other nation's quality

assurance systems. It involves actions to strengthen both internal and external quality assurance, and increase participation in assurance activities. The final set of activities promotes the benefits of a strong regional approach to quality assurance, and will be driven by regional organisations. Actions to support these activities are also detailed, with a breakdown by stakeholder to allow for easy implementation.

In order to move towards a Southeast Asian Quality Assurance and Qualification Framework, SEAMEO RIHED will continue to work with partner organisations in fostering collective mechanisms to build a more harmonized regional higher education landscape.

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Appendix

Survey Questions

SEAMEO RIHED Study On Models of Quality Assurance in Southeast Asia

Part 1: Respondent details

Name:

Agency/Organization:

Current title of position/role:

Postal Address:

Country:

Phone and Fax No.

Email Address:

Part 2: Current Status of Quality Assurance Agency in your country

Name of Agency/Organization:

Acronym:

Question 1: Organization and Ownership of the Agency

Question 2: Founding Date or Year

Question3: The Establishment of the QA Agency

Question 4: Policy or a form of Legislation that is supporting the Establishment of Agency

Question 5: The major purposes of the AGENCY

2.1 Governance / Management Structure of Quality Assurance Agency

Question 6: The Organization Structure of Quality Assurance Agency (Please briefly draws or describes the Organization Structure and its

responsibility, i.e. Constitution, General Assembly, Council, Committee, Board, Secretariat, etc.)

Question 7: The Establishment of the Agency Council and the Appointment of Agency's Board Executives and Members (Please briefly describe on the establishment of the Council and who has the authority to appoint the Chairman/President/Director and members of the Board)

Question 8: Staffs of the Agency (Please describe about the number of staffs (Full-time and Part-time and their positions or draw organizational structure of staff)

Question 9: Team of Professional QA of the Agency

9.1: How many Accreditators/ Assessors/ Auditors in the Agency (Please specify)

9.2: Who is the professional QA team

☐ Faculty from Higher Education Institutions

☐ Expert from Private Sector

☐ Student

☐ Academic Staff from Higher Education Institutions

☐ Other

9.3: Are these professionals obligated to pass the training before conducting the assessment/accreditation/etc?

☐ Yes, it is compulsory

☐ No, not necessary

☐ Other

9.4: If yes, how many days is the training? (Please specify)

9.5: Does the agency have own training manual? (Please indicate ✓)

☐ YES

☐ No

2.2 Financial Resource and Funding of the Agency

Question 10: Where has the agency receive financial resource/ funding from? (Please specify)

Question 11: How much is the estimated financial resource/ funding annually? (Please specify)

2.3 External Quality Assurance in Practice

Question 12: Focus of the Agency (please indicate ✓, You may select more than one ☐)

☐ Teaching / Learning

☐ Quality Management

☐ Research

☐ QA Process

☐ Community Service

Question 13: Methods and Instruments (please indicate ✓, You may select more than one ☐)

☐ Accreditation

☐ Audit

☐ External Validation

☐ Self-Assessment

☐ Peer Review

☐ Control

☐ Site Visits

☐ Report

☐ Evaluation

Question 14: Scope of Activities (please indicate ✓or specify briefly on the area of operation for Assessment Systems)

☐ All Institutions

☐ All Programmes

☐ All Institutions and Programmes

☐ A specific set of institutions and programmes

Question 15: Scope of Higher Education Institutions (please indicate ✓, you may select more than one ☐)

☐ Public Institutions

☐ Private Institutions

☐ Both Public and Private Institutions

Question 16: Approach and Level (please indicate✓, you may select more than one ☐) and briefly specify who is the conductor of the selected Approach and Level above?

Example: by Self-Assessment, External Assessors, by Ministry of Education, etc.

☐ Programme Assessment

☐ Institutional Assessment

☐ Programme Audits

☐ Institutional Audit

☐ Programme Accreditation

☐ Institutional Accreditation

Question 17: Assessment Participation (please indicate ✓, you may select more than one ☐)

☐ Mandatory

☐ Voluntary

Question 18: Conducting the Process of External Quality Assurance

Question 18.1: Before the visit/ Planning Stage (Please briefly describe or draw a diagram of the procedure of the first stage of the process)

Question 18.2: During the Visit (Please briefly describes or draws a diagram of the procedure of the Visiting stage of the process)

Question 18.3: After the Visit (Please briefly describes or draws a diagram of the procedure to be followed after the visiting of the process)

Question 18.4: Final Result/Outcome/Conclusion of the Procedure

Question 18.5: What is the consequence if the institutions/ programmes fail to reach the requirement? (Please briefly specify)

Question 18.6 Who has the final authority to approve the overall procedure and conclusion?

Question 18.7: Number of institutional/ programme/ subject reviews carried out in the last operational year giving separate figures where appropriate. If the Organization/ Agency is not yet in operation, please estimate the number of reviews that will take place in the first operational year.

2.4 Other Relevant Questions on External Quality Assurance in your country

Question 19: In your country, within each Higher Education Institution, is there a Unit dealing with Quality Assurance (for promoting and handling QA inside the school/ faculty)?

Question 19.1: Please briefly specify to what extent are these QA units existing in the HEIs. For example, almost all universities have the QA Units in each faculty, only some or only in the leading universities, etc.

Question 20: Do you have a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in your country?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 21: Does the Organization/ Agency collaborate with similar bodies in other countries?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please list the agency/ agencies/ organizations and provide the areas of the collaboration (i.e. exchange information, joint project, to enhance regional QA activities, etc.)

Question 22: Please briefly outline any possible obstacles to the progress that you are aware may limit the EQA Development in your country

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About SEAMEO RIHED

Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization

Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development

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SEAMEO RIHED is the South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organization Centre specializing in regional higher education development. RIHED's mission is to foster efficiency, effectiveness, and harmonization of higher education in Southeast Asia through system research, empowerment, development of mechanisms to facilitate sharing and collaborations in higher education.

BRIEF HISTORY

Originally founded as the Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development in Singapore in 1959. RIHED was reorganized and established in Thailand in 1993, as a regional centre of SEAMEO. RIHED plays a crucial role in the capability building of SEAMEO member countries in the field of higher education. It responds to a variety of needs with activities on policy, planning, administration and management of higher education.

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

SEAMEO RIHED operates within the rapidly changing environment of the Southeast Asian higher education systems. This landscape is chiefly characterised by diversity, due to the different historical, structural and educational developments in countries of the region. Global forces including globalisation, massification, diversification, and marketization compound this variety. Many countries have recently restructured their higher education systems, in an effort to deal with the increasingly multifaceted activities undertaken by HEIs. This has frequently resulted in increasing autonomy of HEIs, to allow them to face the increasing range of demands and accelerated pace of intra- and international competition.

Higher education development is a priority in the region as a primary means of promoting Asian socio-economic development. The harmonization of higher education is also in line with the ASEAN objective of 'One ASEAN at the Heart of Dynamic Asia'. SEAMEO RIHED strongly advocates the Harmonisation of Higher Education in Southeast Asia, as a means of meeting the vision of ASEAN leaders.

PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

RIHED conducts programmes to assist member countries to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by the Southeast Asian higher education landscape. Activities include policy forums, workshops, training, study visits, information dissemination and

research. The activities as laid out in the SEAMEO RIHED 4th Five-Year Development Plan (2012 – 2017) comprised three key components:

1. Programmes serving 5 objective areas
2. Higher Education Policy Dialogues
3. Regional Higher Education Information Gateway

1. Programmes serving 5 objective areas

RIHED's programmes are built on the five pillars reflecting its main functional objectives to foster access, excellence, and synergy in higher education for regional development: empowering and capacity building higher education institutions; developing harmonization mechanisms; cultivating globalized human resources, advancing knowledge frontiers in higher education system management; and promoting university social responsibility and sustainable development.

1.1. Empowering higher education institutions

RIHED envisions universities that are empowered, accountable and ready to embrace the challenges offered by the globalized education world. In order to meet this objective, RIHED provides many opportunities for universities to build capacity in the areas of university governance and management, for instance:

- education programmes on University Governance and Management; University Research Management; Quality Assurance, Harmonization of Higher Education; Internationalization. (e.g. US AGB-RIHED, UK InTREC-RIHED, Australia AEI-RIHED programmes)

- workshops on Management of Higher Education (e.g. UNESCO IIEP- RIHED)
- programmes on relevant areas for Greater Mekong Sub Delta countries
- seminars on higher education in Southeast Asia
- publications, reports and translation of relevant materials

1.2. Developing harmonization mechanisms

In line with the intentions of policy makers in the region, SEAMEO RIHED is promoting the harmonization of Southeast Asian higher education systems. This process will allow national systems to work with each other more effectively, while recognizing both national authority and the diversity of education systems in the region. RIHED facilitates the harmonization process by fostering development of the following mechanisms:

- Southeast Asian Quality Assurance Framework
- Southeast Asian Credit Transfer System
- ASEAN citation indexes
- Internationalization Award (iAward)

1.3. Cultivating globalized human resources

A mobile, globalized workforce is one of the key pillars of establishing the ASEAN Community. Human resources with trans-system competency can provide nations with the educated workforce needed to ensure development in a globalized environment. Human resource projects can have a positive impact on academic and cultural development as well as political, social and economic

spheres. To facilitate the cultivation of globalized human resources in Southeast Asia, SEAMEO RIHED implements:

- Student Exchanges: ASEAN International Mobility for Students *(AIMS)* Programmes
- Regional student internship/ work experience
- Researcher Mobility
- ASEAN Future Leaders Camp

1.4. *Advancing knowledge frontiers in higher education system management*

To strive for excellence within the changing contexts in which higher education systems and institutions in the region operate, there is a need to advance the knowledge on education systems, their transformation, harmonization process, and best practices in higher education management. SEAMEO RIHED undertakes research in a variety of areas, such as:

- Higher Education in South-east Asia
- Quality Assurance Models in South-east Asian Countries
- Comparative Study on Credit Transfer Systems
- ASEAN research clusters

1.5. *Promoting university social responsibility and sustainable development*

The higher education sector has a responsibility to the sustainable development of local, national, as well as global communities. RIHED will undertake a number of activities to increase university social responsibilities in Southeast Asia. These activities will cover areas of:

- bridging university social responsibilities and corporate social responsibilities
- initiating and facilitating development of curricula that focus on emerging cross-border issues.

2. Higher Education Policy Dialogues

SEAMEO RIHED builds platform for regular policy dialogues on higher education:

- Annual meeting of Directors General/ Secretary General/ Commissioner of Higher Education in South-east Asia
- Annual meeting of Presidents/ Rectors/ Vice Chancellor of Higher Education Institutions in South-east Asia
- Seminar on key issues in higher education: organized annually back-to-back with SEAMEO RIHED Governing Board meeting
- SEAMEO RIHED Brain Trust: Southeast Asia Forum on Education Future: a forum for thinkers, educators, and policy-makers in education to share their values, express their visions, and exchange their views.

3. Regional Higher Education Information Gateway

SEAMEO RIHED website is undergoing redesign to be an internet gateway on regional higher education. A number of new features will be added which include:

- Database of higher education institutions (HEIs) in South-east Asia with links to the HEIs' websites
- Depository of international programmes in various fields/disciplines offered by HEIs in the South-east Asia region

www.rihed.seameo.org

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SEAMEO RIHED

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