



Improving Higher/Vocational Education through the engagement of student experts

Report of the study session held by

European Students' Union (ESU)

in co-operation with the
European Youth Centre
of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Strasbourg
12 – 18 July 2009



This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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1. Executive Summary

European Students' Union (ESU) has established a student experts' pool in the field of quality assurance of higher education in Europe and is nominating students to be part of external quality assurance reviews to a number of institutions and quality assurance agencies. In the framework of developing the pool, ESU organised a study session on the involvement of students in such processes which lead to improving educational possibilities and processes. The session had two overarching aims: first to train and prepare students to be part of such activities promoting student participation and to develop further ideas and proposals on how to continue the work on building such a student experts' pool.

The session focused on giving participants wide background knowledge on quality assurance as such thus first parts of the session were devoted to discussing European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance (ESG) while learning to implement them. Participants also debated about philosophical differences in quality assurance in Europe and about overall aims and objectives of ensuring quality and building a common European Higher Education Area through constructing quality culture in (higher) education institutions. Furthermore, the participants practiced important skills like teamwork, working in groups and multicultural environment, active listening skills and argumentation, all which is very much necessary in their work as student evaluators.

Furthermore, ideas of expanding and further developing the pool were presented and discussed. Participants agreed with the aim and goals of ESU's activities in this regard and proposed a set of guidelines to be developed in addition to setting everything from selection procedures, discussing transparency of the pool to debating which skills and knowledge should be developed by organising trainings and providing materials.

The study session provided an ample opportunity to ESU to strengthen students' contribution to European Higher Education Area by consolidating already known and existing examples, ideas and actions into one pool of student experts who can further promote student participation as an essential integral of developing educational processes in Europe.

2. Introduction

Aims and objectives of the study session

ESU is on its way of establishing our own student experts' pool, which will take a significant role in further development of the organization as an important partner in ensuring quality assurance of universities and quality assurance agencies in Europe as well as developing capacity to provide a wide range of trainings and in particular about equality issues, student union development and student activism as well as higher education policy.

In 2008 ESU launched the trainers' pool consisting of 10 international trainers. ESU has also a pool of students, participating in the Institutional Evaluation Programme of the European University Association. Both these sub-pools are intended to be a part of the general ESU students' experts pool. Also, ESU is already receiving many requests to delegate student experts for external quality assurance evaluations of universities and quality assurance agencies. To respond to these requests, ESU urgently needs to have a pool of trained students.

The further aim of the training of experts' pool is to develop the necessary expertise to address the needs of our members and to increase ESU's capacity to provide student expertise for other students as well as higher and vocational educational institutions.

Underlining the developments, ESU applied for organising a study session with the following objectives in mind:

1. To train 25 selected expert pool's participants. Among them, students, working on quality assurance issues; to improve their knowledge on quality assurance and quality reviews of universities and quality assurance agencies, as well as trainers; to improve their knowledge on student union development, equality and higher education policy issues and to improve their trainer skills. Particularly, students should be able to train either other students or even higher/vocational institutional staff in best practices in the involvement of students in institutions
2. To update participants' skills to generate and accumulate knowledge in a form of training materials and content packaged which would be used for online trainings as well as for future trainings for the national unions of students and for ESU.

It must be noted that during the preparation phase some of the aims were refocused to be more

quality assurance specific and even later, during the session itself, the aim of training trainers and developing training materials was cut from the programme to allow for more discussions on the first part relating to quality assurance experts' pool. This was requested by the participants as the original timeline of the session proved to be too optimistic and the team chose the focus to be where we could actually reach aims and not steer into trying to fulfil other objectives at the expense of others. Furthermore, it was understood that proper knowledge of quality assurance and of different practices serves as an foundation to the future capacity of these people to multiply the knowledge by following the session with training of trainers.

Secondly, the second part was mainly replaced by an objective to gain insight into what the participants think ESU's expert pool should be, how it should be developed and how do they as members of the pool relate to it. Discussing this would lead to clear input to the strategy of sustaining such a pool which also includes development of administrative support in the form of training materials, constant communication and further cooperation with other bodies relating to quality assurance in ESU.

Profile of participants

Originally, it was intended that some of the participants would have previous experience of being a member of ESU's experts' pool or being otherwise involved in ESU's work on quality assurance. The goal was to have a pool with a wide range of knowledge and skills which is passed on from student-generation to student-generation. Thus there was an expectation that the applicants would stay active and committed to the expert pool.

ESU opens a call each year for new members of the pool and in 2009 this regular call was merged with the call for participants to the study session. The reason for this is that in this way, the students gain a previous learning experience, conducted by ESU in a form of a training/study session and thus ESU can also be more certain of the competences of the students that we nominate to evaluate the quality of higher education on various levels. The call for participants was sent out to ESU's members and alumni network. The Executive Committee of ESU, being the everyday decision-making body, was responsible for selecting students, in consultation with the Academic Affairs Committee who is responsible for the topic of quality assurance in ESU.

30 applications were submitted within the deadline. Gender and regional balance was taken into account in selection as well as the criteria which was basic knowledge of quality assurance and European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), having an experience of being a student representative and willingness to commit to being a member of ESU's expert pool. It

could be noted that there were several applications from Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Romania and Poland as these are countries in which there is a higher level of involvement of students in external quality assurance and in the case of Switzerland, Germany and Romania, there are also national student expert pools established. In the end, 22 applications were accepted while maintaining the maximum balance between genders and countries of origin.

Among the 22 participants, only one was a member of previous pool though 8 other people have been rather highly involved with ESU's work on quality assurance for some time, among them several alumni and members of ESU's committees from years past. 11 people we are relatively new to ESU's work on quality assurance and the pool though still having some knowledge and experience regards to quality assurance. Overall, it can be said that the profile in the end matched the desired diversity and having people of different level as one aim was to organise the session in a way that there would be emphasis on peer-to-peer learning in diverse groups. Though we regret not having more people who have been in ESU's pool, but this was mainly due to the summer period being too busy for most of them. This said, it must be noted that those who once entered the pool, can remain there as long as they wish provided they are students thus people from previous years are still included in the receiving end of the external requests for students to be involved in quality assurance reviews.

Overview of the programme

The programme was developed largely through internal work, but also with the aid of a preparatory meeting that was held in Strasbourg in May during which the programme was finally laid down based on ideas that had surfaced already. The programme was designed to have theoretical and practical elements following up each other. Topics included:

- Technical issues on university quality assurance
- Training skills for multinational environments
- Skills for training a mature audience as a student
- Content issues such as student union development, student democracy, equality issues and higher education policy
- Self evaluation and development

The programme design emphasized active learning and sharing of knowledge as compared to digestion of masses of theoretical information. Since participants were expected to have the

experience necessary in terms of complimentary knowledge sets, this training approach focused on helping them to use that knowledge and pass it on to others, rather than focus on the knowledge creation process itself. While participants largely had extensive experience in working within multicultural environments – one of the aims of the training modules was to give them the skills necessary to be able to train in the same environments. Specifically, they should be able to challenge participants in their own trainings to break down cultural barriers and embrace other from all backgrounds.

As already noted above, the parts on giving participants more training skills were cut from the final execution due to the reason that quality assurance expertise part needing more time. It was decided that in 2010 ESU will organize a training session for the pool to focus on training skills to provide an even greater multiplication effect on the national level as it is expected that people from ESU's expert pool also disseminate their knowledge on the national level thus laying the ground for higher student involvement.

Lecturers or experts included individuals from different training backgrounds to provide participants with exposure to different pedagogical techniques, offered by people from such backgrounds:

- One trainer, being the educational advisor assigned by the Council of Europe (Simona Mursec)
- One trainer from the ESU alumni network (Nik Heerens)
- One expert from the European University Association (EUA) (Dionyssis Kladis)

While ESU has extensive experience in providing trainings throughout Europe on a multitude of topics, the quality of the pedagogy has always been dependent on the individual experiences of our volunteers, rather than any systemised selection and training (of trainers) process. ESU is creating a student expert pool in response to a high demand for such services from student unions and higher/vocational institutions alike, and thus wishes to conduct this preparatory phase in the most professional way possible. The vast experience of the EYC in this area was of course used, and the valuable contribution of educational adviser Simona Mursec was a major factor in the success of the training.

Main discussion points

The programme was mainly interactive, having presentations, group work in various sizes and scopes, role plays and active exercises. The main outline started by giving an introduction to

quality assurance and discussing it in the framework of the Bologna Process. Understanding the general context of the establishment of the pool was also one of the aims in the first sessions, but also to get a view of how participants perceived the students' role in it, but also their own involvement.

The discussion for the second part of the first day and the whole second day focused on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance which serves as the main guiding document for the action line in the Bologna Process context. The sessions were built so that the participants would get to know the document and would discuss general processes concerning internal and external quality assurance and agency reviews. In this way, not only did the participants look at practical usage of the guiding document while learning about different procedures and perspectives, but this served as a feedback session for ESU who was one of the four organisations behind the development of the ESG. This was complemented by a philosophical view into quality assurance which was delivered by one of our invited experts D.Kladis who has been highly involved in the development of European University Associations' (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) besides being very knowledgeable in quality assurance, governance of institutions and the Bologna process. The second day was concluded by a presentation and discussion on what it is for students to be part of an experts' panel and what kind of contributions they have.

The third day was dedicated to practical exercises. Namely there was a session on how to actively listen, followed by a role play of an actual quality assurance review, including a study visit. Participants were divided into groups while the organising team played roles of university leadership, students and teachers who were to be interviewed by the formed teams. The team was also assisted by Nik Heerens who is an alumni, but also heading a support and training services provider for students in Scotland, especially the organisation related to quality assurance. In the role play, the organising team also had an internal role division and hidden conflicts which were left for participants to discover. There was also a self-evaluation report which the teams needed to follow-up during the practice of site visit. The day was concluded by the teams delivering reports and presenting them in front of everyone. During the role play, the organising team also monitored each and every person which was used to give participants feedback on what was good in the way they acted and how they can still improve.

The fourth day kicked off with reflections on the role play conducted by Nik Heerens during which, more extensive feedback was provided to the participants as the session was mostly meant to cement the learning experience. After the debriefing, the session moved to its second phase of discussing ESU's work on the establishment of an experts' pool which started with a

presentation on ESU's side followed by a brainstorming activity aiming at giving participants more insight into the functioning of the pool with all its practical challenges and considerations, as well as for ESU receiving direct input from the future members of the pool on the very same issues. This would allow for streamlining the activity of the pool accordingly to the needs of the students participating. The day was concluded by a free afternoon and a very nice dinner hosted by Council of Europe in one of the many fine restaurants of Strasbourg.

The final day saw a continuation of the discussion over the pool and its development. In the beginning ESU presented its view on where the students' contribution falls in the pool and explained the practical considerations more in detail. There was also a presentation on developing a strategy for the pool. After this the participants were given a chance to choose between main areas of the development such as skills building of students, selection procedures, infrastructure etc, of the pool and indicate which they found more important. Following this, they were divided to groups based on priorities they chose and they were tasked with using all of their knowledge built to come up with concrete proposals in a consensus-building activity to input into the strategy. Results of this exercise are pointed out in the next chapter of this report.

The session was concluded with a back looking presentation on what we did and a group evaluation in which people marked their level of satisfaction on a thermostat, but also shared their views with the entire group.

3. Programme – inputs and discussions

Introductory sessions

Monday, 13th of July

In the construction of a European dimension to quality assurance with a well established institutional quality culture the foundations must be laid on common principles. In this, the cooperation of the higher education governance institutions, academic personnel, students and academic-technical staff is central in order to enable the ongoing development of higher education institutions. Since it is the students that are experts when it comes to their learning requirements, ESU has been fighting for student involvement in quality enhancement and assurance processes since a long time. The expertise of students in quality assurance is increasingly recognized. To further and sustainably establishing ESU as a strong and professional stakeholder in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) the maintenance of the European Students Experts' Pool role will play an important role and this was agreed to by both the ESU organizers and the participants alike. These presumptions serve as a basis of understanding to the build-up of the rest of the session.

Introductory session

Objectives:

1. Getting the participants familiar with the scope and construction of the quality assurance (QA) session.
2. Getting the organizers into contact with participant needs and expectations.
3. Getting a common point of view on QA across Europe.

Activity summary:

We tried to identify the expectations and fears of the participants, present them the rules and conditions for the quality assurance session and the use of EYC facilities. There was of course, a strong input from participants, which filled out their fears, expectations and expected contribution on a series of flipcharts.

This exercise, plus the informative session, had the role to introduce the participants into the meaning and the goals of the quality assurance session. Also, with help from Simona Mursec, our educational advisor, we adjusted the tools we were using for every session to meet participants' expectations, demands and needs.

One tool used was a SWOT analysis done in small groups and applied at a general European level. The SWOT was on student involvement in quality assurance processes on the continent. The purpose was for the participants to exchange examples of the situation in various parts of Europe, since the level to which students are involved in the whole process varies to a great degree.

At the end, the participants identified a couple of main traits of student representation in Europe, which had no value (positive or negative) attachments, but were rather aimed at gauging the reality of student representation.

Overall the conclusions bordered on the fact that while there has been a great deal of progress in terms of getting students involved in the quality assurance process they are still seen as somewhat second class stakeholders.

Main outcomes:

- Participants became familiar with the structure and goals of the study session.
- Participants got a chance to form a clear opinion on the current status of student participation in the quality assurance processes across the national borders of Europe.
- Participants got a glimpse into working in multinational workgroups, as this became one of the main, major features of the whole study session.

The tools used for achieving the overall objectives started to be adjusted to participant needs. This was ongoing throughout the study session, as we tried to be responsive to feedback for the whole duration of the study session and much of the feedback and recommendations from the evaluation groups organised in the evenings were implemented promptly and this was also very much noticed by the participants.

Session – Introduction into QA

Objectives:

1. Giving participants input with regard to current European trends in the QA process.
2. Discussing with participants the main trends that exist and are presented.

Activity summary

Mr. Bruno Carapinha, former ESU responsible for the quality assurance area within the organisation, presented the general situation on the quality assurance processes and debates across Europe. The participants were encouraged to offer their input and to assess

the situation. The presentation was thus interactive and tried to gauge the input of the participants to an as great degree as possible.

Main outcome:

- Participants had further insight on the European context linked to the QA session proper.
- Participants got a clear view of the context in which a potential European students experts pool will function.
- Participants understood that the differences between various national contexts in Europe are still noticeable.

Sessions on the European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance (ESG)

Monday, 13th of July and Tuesday, 14th of July

The most extensive sessions in the whole study session were the ones on the European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance. These sessions were very important, in order to be able to give participants the theoretical insight on the subject matter that they needed. Since the subject covered was the largest of any during the study session, and since it needed to be applied in practice in later sessions, almost 2 full days were devoted to the ESG.

Another purpose of the sessions devoted to the three main parts of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance has been to give participants at the study session an insight into the main tool used to give a framework to quality assurance procedures across Europe, by mixing comparative text studies with input from experts and with practical exercises. The guidelines were presented in three distinct parts, one focusing on **internal QA**, one on **external QA** and the last one on the **review of QA agencies**.

Objectives:

1. Offering participants theoretical and applicable knowledge on the content of the ESG and the way they are applied in real contexts.
2. Offering participants an insight into the operationalisation of the ESG.
3. Offering participants knowledge on how the ESG is perceived by different stakeholders and is used in QA processes.

Activity summary:

Participants took a look at the ESG document and at the different parts. The first level of analysis was individual, then the participants teamed up in groups to share and compare, then they elaborated and voiced their concerns in the groups.

Later on, Prof. Kladis from European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEO) gave his own input with regards to the ESG to complement the learning experience.

Among the tools used to get the session message across were:

1. Text reading and analysis of the ESG. Strong points and shortcomings were emphasised on the ESG 's current form and smaller groups were created in order to streamline discussion on the ESG debate.
2. Small groups were created in order to analyse fictive Quality Assurance Agencies and to identify which points of the ESG part III they could use in order to have a thorough analysis of the functionality of the respective agencies.
3. "Good cop, bad cop" exercise – The ESG were interpreted in two differing manors by ESU expert Bruno Carapinha and by IEP expert Dionyssid Kladis. This exercise was meant to point out the limits of the ESG, the possibility of interpretation in terms of what the ESG stands for and how ESG implementation can be obscured by the institutional vision in which it is used.

As a side note, this was also the first activity in the study session in which presentations were offered by groups after analysing various models found across Europe. The success of this form of group work determined us to try to integrate group work in most of the other sessions, also taking advantage of the fact that EYC infrastructure facilitated this type of work.

Group presentations were noted down to assess group perceptions of the ESG and its practical use. The groups identified several sets of conclusions:

Group 1:

This group discussed the Finnish model and found it to have several unique features. In the report there is fulfilment of everything, although some things are not well defined – the process in which the panel is selected for example. As such, the group concluded that the guidelines on what to do after the report is finished are insufficient. So the question remains

whether the process is designed in order to fit certain demands or to actually try to improve the situation afterwards.

Group 2:

The group analysed a situation of a quality assurance agency doing an institutional evaluation. For their analysis, problems were identified with regards to the fact that it was not clear how the panel was selected. Some follow-up procedures were defined (re-evaluation), but no other described follow-up procedure besides the re-audits (in 6 years). Hence, group 2 had a situation in which they identified problems related to agencies not having clearly defined procedures for all aspects of their work.

Group 3:

The discussion included topics similar to the context of Group 2. The group concluded that the results of institutional evaluations could be better linked to the criteria. For the group, the question of management of the quality assurance process was also very important. The group did not believe that sufficient information was available from a public institution, but that the process was probably fit for purpose even in these conditions, because of fair freedom offered to a quality assurance evaluation panel upon site visit.

Professor Dionyssi Kladis's input focused on the IEP programme of EUA:

Institutional Evaluation Programme, in Mr. Kladis's presentation, is considered as an External Quality Assurance Agency on the European level. This has created some problems – the IEP had to be externally assessed by a Committee appointed by ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) which tried to find out whether they complied with the ESG. There was also a problem to combine the national and European level, but in the end the program was assessed positively.

Mr. Kladis also presented the difference between internal and external quality assurance. In his opinion, there are the two sides of the same coin of quality. In the context of Bologna before Berlin 2003, the quality assurance was given 3 lines, and then the situation from political side changed. Internal QA lies internally with each individual institution (beginning of discussion), but Bergen and London communiqués included external components. Nowadays, both approaches (internal, external) are full part of Bologna.

He emphasised the philosophical differences between the approach of IEP and the general understanding within the Bologna Process with the ESG implementation. He stressed that in IEP, the external quality assurance is in the service of strengthening internal procedures and

that there is no expected complacency to the ESG. Ha added that in his view, in Bologna the ESG is used much more for checking purposes though he did not give a value attachment to these differences of philosophy.

Mr. Kladis also tackled the issue of fitness for purpose in quality assurance (not for the institution) – what are the purposes of the external procedure and is it fit to this established purpose? What should be considered as the purpose of the institution? Is it derived from the mission, strategy and vision of the institution or by external factors? He concluded that any review process should be contextualised and evaluated against the mission, vision and the strategy of the institution.

This last issue was debated between Mr. Kladis, Mr. Carapinha and the participants. The conclusion is that IEP's current strategy and procedures are not focusing on grilling institutions for compliance, but on offering enhancement recommendations.

The relevance of discussing one existing practice example with the participants was to give them a chance to apply the ESG with a practical example in mind. As the ESG is the most relevant guiding document for work in European quality assurance, having one example of and agency doing different reviews than what is perceived usually, was found to be quite interesting by the participants. Furthermore, ESU has official relations with IEP hence the pool members will receive an invitation to join IEP.

Role play of quality assurance evaluation

After veering through quality assurance processes and debating the different ways of applying standards and guidelines, the participants were given a chance to apply their newly formed knowledge in a setting of a simulation of external evaluation of a fictional university. This exercise proved to be the one of the most successful parts of the entire study session, especially in terms of achieving learning outcomes and of being practical value to the participants for their future tasks within the experts' pool.

Objectives:

1. Offering participants insight into the main problems they face in a “real” context of an external review of an HEI.
2. Offering participants the support tools needed for conducting a “real” evaluation.
3. Offering participants an insight into aspects related to the construction of a functional audit team, including team roles, protocol and working with information provided by

the institution.

4. Offering participants an extra view into the role of students in the panel.

Activity summary:

The role play was quite real in many aspects, as the self-assessment report submitted by the fictional host university was difficult to understand, the groups were varied and people didn't know each other well. Participants were grouped into 4 panels, and roles were distributed amongst them from the panel coordinator, to student, to secretary and regular members.

The panels were given a fictional self-assessment report from the host University, which gave hints as to the problems of the HEI, but also tried to cover up various problems and aspects, such as lack of facilities, lack of competitiveness, excessive marketisation and lack of student representation. Also, there were some systemic failures that were inherent to the structure of the fictional University, such as poorly functioning Quality Assurance department, and the outdated views on quality that were shared by most of the academic community. Also, „trick characters” such as students influenced by the University leadership were played by the organisers, in order to make the task of the review panels more difficult.

There were numerous problems and difficulties that relate to actual issues on evaluations. For example, the fact that the English in the documents is written by people who do not speak it as a native language, thus a wide range of interpretation is necessary. Similarly, there was a major problem in the fact that even though the teams had a self-organisation and preparation time allotment, the fact that the people did not know each other beforehand caused some minor problems.

One of the things that enhanced the role-play exercise was the fact that positive attitude in the panel by the participants was present overall, and this was more than welcome, and this was a characteristic all throughout the role-play exercise.

Groups felt that people overall stuck to their character. But some time pressure was felt and the groups found that they would have needed some time between meetings for debriefing. But this was again the responsibility of the chair of the panel to set the agenda – thus there was the possibility to give time for this.

The role of the review panel was, on purpose, unclear and undefined, as going too much into details would have killed the purpose of the role play. In a real situation, the systems might

be different, but the processes within the teams are quite similar. The difference between accreditation and institutional evaluation/quality audit is that the institution reacts differently – for instance being more distant when it comes to accreditation, as it sees the stakes being higher and has a reflexive tendency to be closed to the „external“ reviewers.

The case offered to the review panels (extracts from the self-assessment report):

As a result of initial internal restructuring, the University leadership has managed to get the tuition fees collected centrally and to collect 20% overhead over the public lump sum and the private activities. This measure has brought a greater financial stability to faculties with greater financial difficulties [...].

The current rector wants an internal formula for distributing money from the University's central this should be done. So far, broad agreement has been reached on the necessity to have a formula for financial distribution, mitigated by the need to keep solidarity payments in place for faculties with a poor financial outlook.

A big deficit in the budget is created by faculties such as the Faculty of History, which are demanding more money to support the faculty. The problems have been caused by a decreasing number of students and by the large number of eminent professors, that have high wage brackets. [...]

The number of students has registered a slight decrease from 17.750 students in 2005 to 14.000 in 2009, largely cause by adjustments to demands for certain educational profiles. [...]

The curriculum is fixed on a per subject basis, but renewed emphasis on flexibility means that 20% of ECTS credits are allotted for optional subjects which can be chosen freely from among the subjects within the same faculty.

The average size of student groups varies for lectures, but for practical courses it is within a narrow bracket of 8 to 20 across most programs within the University. This is part of the strategy to emphasize practical courses in smaller groups so that the learning experience is going to be enhanced.

The University has built new teaching facilities, among which 4 new 250 seat amphitheatres for the faculty of Engineering, which are able to accommodate some of the larger lectures and courses, and wireless in almost 10% of University spaces. This share is likely to increase and be introduced into all the main amphitheatres starting from next year.

There is one library, with approximately 25.000 titles. The number of scanned books available on the Internet still small but is increasing rapidly, being estimated at just 300 titles at the moment, all of them public domain books. This is going to change though in the near future, as more and more books will be available online.

[...] ECTS are measured on workload for most subjects on the following multidimensional system which includes research and reading activities for students:

1 ECTS = 1 hour course/week/semester

1 ECTS= 500 pages of scientific literature read

1 ECTS= 50 pages of scientific publication

As such, this ECTS measuring system creates the premise of the recognition of informal learning. Exceptions to the before-mentioned rules exist in the following field:

- 1. Foreign languages, which are fixed at 2 ECTS per semester.*
- 2. Sports and physical activities, which are fixed at 1 ECTS per semester.*
- 3. Participation to courses held by external lecturers, which are rewarded with 1 ECTS per course.*
- 4. Participants who do a professional master get 60 credits recognized for their first year of work at the audit firm the University cooperates with in achieving the master. These are recognized in event of participation to LLL programs.[...]*

Review of interviews

The interviews conducted by the students in the evaluation panels were analysed by the organisers of the study session (who played the staff and students of the fictional institution in the role-play) based on what the participants were given feedback. Also, the participant-formed panels had the task to identify the greatest possible number of flaws that the fictional institution had as compared to their self-assessment report. Made up a round of most important questions and themes. The biggest challenge was to get the information and to cut through the „wall of nonsense“. So politeness was quite important.

Giving room to the people to express themselves by allowing to answer a simple question like „name one most important...“ was vital, but has sometimes been ignored by the participants themselves. Often. The questioning was a bit aggressive and the panel members did not give the university staff full time to answer or did not question them further on potential leads.

The conclusion that was formulated by the participants and organisers at the review session was that *It doesn't matter whom you talk to, but it's most important to feel the process of learning more and finding out more information. Yet it is always good to first meet the students as they are one of the most open, thus giving good „leads“.*

Learning outcomes

1. Participants got a better grasp of the practical aspects of having a QA review.
2. The participants improved their fact-finding skills in an academic context.
3. The participants learned how to use a self-assessment report in preparing their review strategy.
4. The participants developed their capacity to view the ESG in a operational context.
5. The participants acknowledged the important role of students in quality assurance.

Sessions on improving skills

Objectives:

1. To train participants in active listening skills.
2. To train participants in argumentation skills.

Activity summary:

Led by the educational advisor, the organisers envisaged two exercises that developed the participants' skills which are necessary for students in their future roles in quality assurance reviews. One of such abilities being active listening which is crucial during site visits in which the review panel interviews the leadership, teachers and students of an institution to gain more insight. This serves as a basis for quality assurance reviews. Secondly, it is also useful for panels as you also need to pay attention to your colleagues. The other important skill is argumentation as the final review report might induce conflicts and difference in opinion, it is vital for students, especially as they might be perceived as less important by some, to practice and value skills that help them persuade their colleagues in the panel.

The first exercise was about analysing a retelling process in which five volunteers had to listen a story being retold from one person to another and then retell it to the next one. The rest of the participants got a task to look for what kind of information got lost, changes or interpreted. This was analysed together in the end.

The second exercise was a yes/no activity in which a controversial statement was made by the facilitator and everyone had to pick either they agreed or did not with the statement. One of the statements was that you can't have good quality assurance without gender equality on the review panels. Once participants had chosen whether they agreed or disagreed they grouped themselves into opposites. The facilitator asked participants why they were standing on one or the other side – they are asked to argue in favour or against the statement. On gender equality, naturally there were people who disagreed as they perceived there to be no problems with equality in this respect. Others agreed on the basis that organisations such as ESU should at least pay attention to gender equality when nominating students. After some discussions, people are asked whether someone is willing to change their positions after which the groups were given some time to come up with arguments that are meant to persuade people to change their opinions. This was followed by presentation of arguments and apparently on this point there were people that did change their position from being against gender equality being in favour on some of the arguments that were presented. After the exercise, there was a briefing on how people felt and what they learnt

from the exercise as the aim was to practice argumentation skills, not debate on gender equality in quality assurance as such.

Learning outcomes:

1. Participants learned how to be better active listeners and how they can use these skills in their roles as student experts.
2. Participants learned how they can use skills of building an argument in order to persuade other people to see their reasoning.

ESU's Experts' Pool development sessions

The sessions on quality assurance content and the role play were followed by a multilevel discussion on ESU's work on forming an experts pool which has been started, but needed feedback and input. The main aim was not only to develop concrete proposals for implementation, but to also give the participants an overall understanding of why they should be in the pool and what should they do and also about the general idea and philosophy behind such an initiative.

World Cafe workshops

Objectives:

1. Receiving input from the participants on the future structure and sustainability of the European students' experts pool on QA.
2. Mapping out a proposed future vision of the pool with the perspectives of the future members being taken in.
3. Getting the participants to understand the issues raised by the problem of sustainability (financial, membership, training, communication) of the experts' pool.

Activity summary:

The participants were grouped into three fairly large teams that could go and sit besides three "café" tables in which the topics linked to the pool's functionality were debated. There was a moderator at each table, and minute takers were designated from among the participants.

The “World Café” workshops have been introduced in the session schedule with the purpose of giving the idea of a European students QA experts pool input from the participants themselves, and in light with this were very interactive.

The conclusions of the World Café, as summed up by the participants, will be taken in the future structure of the pool. These conclusions are:

1) How do you see the selection and training of the members of a European student experts’ pool?

Selection and membership into the pool:

- As open as possible, maybe even more wide than it was this time, still minimal experience on QA is necessary. Among the ideas for making it public, calls to the board, to alumni, etc.
- NUSes (National Unions of Students, ESU members) have to nominate and there will be evaluations from ESU, but some minimal level is necessary to establish. From there you can build on as there will be further selection from within the pool to the actual panels.
- People from national pools should have facilitated access and/or cooperation possibilities with the European one.
- Membership of several student pools should not and must not be limited, as there is a risk that people who specialize in evaluations stay idle due to lack of work.

Trainings:

- Admission into the pool once a year, which means regular trainings. The minimal amount would be one training per year, including one similar in scope to the QA session.
- The scope and fields covered by trainings should extend to QA of programs, agencies and institutions.
- One can also be a member of the pool and not go to the reviews, but be a trainer.
- People must be aware of ESU policy, to see the student perspective as you are nominated by ESU, but no obligation to follow this.
- The former members of the experts’ pool (alumni) should be involved in training and follow-up processes. They should be heavily involved in the handover and dissemination process, including the national level.
- ESU should try to organise „real“ simulations, with visits to universities rather than mock evaluations of imaginary ones.

- Participants should receive more support materials before and after trainings, so that they can update their knowledge on relevant topics.
- Online and physical exchange of good practices should be an integral part of the learning experience.

2) What has the student experts' pool achieved in 2 years from now?

- Create an ESU quality label, that will be trusted to do evaluations of its own, including student-centred quality enhancement. This label should be the basis for an institutional evaluation program that is student centred.
- The same label might even include evaluations outside the continent, in order to create a global emphasis on student-centred quality.
- The pool will contribute to changing the evaluation paradigm
- European pool should be model/precedent for the creation of national pools in each European country.
- Students in the pool need abilities to multiply the knowledge and provide trainings for national unions.
- ESU will have full ownership and coordination power over the pool.
- The pool will offer input into ESU policies.
- As there is a continuous need for people within the pool and as student QA experts overall, the most important is to establish a good knowledge base to multiply the effects at national level.
- More recognition is necessary – agreement with National Unions as problems lie within national agencies.
- ESU might jeopardise the efforts of the national union when entering into contract with national agencies, and this could be used by QA's for *divide et impera* policies.
- ESU must facilitate enhancement of knowledge of national pools from the basis of the European experts pool.
- It is not necessary to organise the pool as an umbrella of national pools as there are different requests from institutions.
- Building trust with ESU and establish good communication.
- Maintaining the network – the essential part of the pool.
- ESUs budget will increase due to professionalisation. There shall be adequate financing of pool activities through diversified sources of revenue. This will also increase independence.

- Update meetings among the members of the European experts' pool.
- Communication tools (database of reports from the evaluations, online communication platform, exchange of good practices at regular meetings and via reports).
- Central databases about agency management systems as well as QA of the student involvement; also database of knowledge, handbook.

Learning outcomes:

1. The participants got an insight into the functioning of the experts pool.
2. The participants gained full knowledge of the financial and logistical requirements of a functioning students experts pool.
3. Participants developed some level of ownership over the future priorities of ESU's work in this regard

Final sessions on pool development

The World Cafe discussions were followed by a consensus-building activity before which ESU presented an overview of how strategies in ESU are formulated. It was explained to the participants that they are developing key inputs to the overall strategy on the quality assurance sphere not just about the development of the pool. Thus the participants were tasked to come up with a common view in terms of priority areas in the experts' pool.

Objectives:

1. Build a common plan for the development of the pool based on the ideas discussed in the previous session.
2. Get practical tips on how to increase the involvement of the pool members

Activity summary:

Participants were asked to pick issues closest to their hearts when it comes to the pool future. Groups, as formulated based on World Cafe discussions and issues that felt a bit controversial or needing follow-up were:

- (a) overlap of ESU and national pools,
- (b) definition of selection procedures,
- (c) which skills should be developed when,
- (d) what is necessary and essential in terms of support and infrastructure,
- (e) people acting as experts on several levels, and finally which was picked by participants

(f) what should be the content knowledge of the participants.

The groups were asked to come up with concrete proposals in a given time after which they were given a chance to meet with another group and ask for feedback, but also provide feedback to their ideas. This was followed by some internal discussions and another similar meeting, but with a different group. The aim was that the groups consult each other and adjust their ideas so that once it is presented in plenary, there is wider consensus. This of course was highly dependant on whether the groups were flexible and incorporated the feedback that they received.

In summary, the ideas, as presented and discussed were:

Overlap between ESU and national pools

- It is vital to have clear rules and procedures established by ESU to have transparency. This should be followed by communicating this in a clear manner to all ESU members.
- If necessary in countries where there is a national pool, ESU and the national union running a pool should sign an agreement of mutual understanding, based on the established procedures.
- Furthermore, ESU should facilitate national discussions on the matter. And as ESU cannot replace national level pools, there should be a continued effort to encourage unions to set up pools that mainly deal with nominations within their countries.

Definition of selection procedures in ESU pool

- The overall aim should be to have diversity within the pool while emphasising aspects as regional and gender balance, but also balance of different experience background and a wide range of knowledge.
- Selection procedures should allow for sustainability by maintaining the knowledge, experience and good reputation of the pool which is why it is important to be transparent.
- There should be one call per year sent out to ESU members who can further distribute it within their own membership. The call should specify the expected level of commitment and workload ESU members should nominate people to the pool.
- Members should be selected on the basis of clear criteria and their level of knowledge and experience while maintaining the overall balance. There

should be developed forms for application, including a self-assessment form indicating all the relevant experience and skills of the person.

- Applicants should receive personal feedback in the case they are not selected to the pool.
- Members of the pool should be expected to stay active for at least two years or as long as they are students.
- The pool should not change dramatically in size from year to year thus the selection procedure should take this into account.
- In the longer perspective and with the expansion of the pools activities in mind, there should be a steering committee established for the pool which will also be tasked with selection of members.

Development of skills and competencies of the pool members (at ESU trainings for example)

- Cognitive skills/cognitive and behavioural flexibility (ex. process loads of information in short amount of time, research skills, time management, etc.)
- Personal skills (establishing yourself as a full and respective partner in expert panel, flexibility, respect, enthusiasm and commitment, etc.)
- Communication skills (ex. rhetoric and negotiating skills, ability to work in an intercultural team, etc.)

Overall, the group felt the following should be the main requirement of skills and competencies:

- Language skills (good command of language required)
- Technical skills (visualization of the documents, presentation skills, use of e-learning platform, etc.)
- Organizational management skills (strategic planning and delivery of tasks, etc.)
- Training process skills (for those who intend to do trainings on local, national or international level)
- Appropriate experience and values

And when it comes to the development and when and how

- Educational activities (aims, target group, methodology): peer-to-peer meetings, training of trainers, workshops on developing particular skills, e-learning courses, annual meetings of the pool, manuals, etc.)
- Self-assessment forms should be in constant use and these need to be used for personal feedback and for development of trainings

- Such activities should be as continuous as possible

What is necessary and essential for the pool members in terms of support and infrastructure

- Common activities such as annual meetings (might be coupled with trainings)
- There should be one basic handbook/guidelines for experts in the pool.
- Communication platform which would have a library, background information, best practices sharing and contacts.
- A database of experts pool and conducted reviews.
- Basic administrative support for booking travel, communicating with the organisers of the evaluation and for financial issues.
- Content support from other ESU structures such as committees on student issues, ESU policies especially relating to quality assurance. This should be integrated in the communication platform.
- Templates for reports and feedback. The feedback forms should be as open as possible within the pool to foster sharing of information and best practises.

Involvement of students on different levels

- There should be no contractual relations in the ESU pool as it might restrict people from being involved outside of the pool to an extent which is not actually beneficial to anyone.
- There should however be an understanding that in general, it is acceptable to be a member of more than one student pool in Europe if the student accepts the regulations for each specific pool and review.
- The students in the pool should provide ESU with information on where else they are involved. This should be done once other commitments appear not only once ESU asks for it. This information should also be provided to organisations requesting student nominations or reviews from ESU.
- Clarification needed on certain issues i.e. role of PhD students in certain countries.
- ESU should develop clear procedures and regulations for membership of the Student Experts Pool and other pools.
- Clear selection criteria for each review should be established by ESU.

Development of content knowledge of the pool members, especially related to quality assurance

- ESU should provide members of the pool with easily accessible and readable info on higher education policy developments as well as ESU policy
- ESU should develop an information package (handbook) specifically on quality assurance that will be available and constantly updated
- Members of the pool should have a general understanding and knowledge of ESU policy though they should not be expected to follow or agree with it at all times. Members of the pool should, however promote student participation in quality assurance which is one of the key policy statements of ESU in this regard.
- ESU should also distribute information from different other organisations active on quality assurance and policy regarding this. This should be done in the form of sending newsletters.

Learning outcomes:

1. The participants increased their level of ownership over the experts pool
2. Participants learned to form a consensual agreements and work on taking in feedback to their ideas.

Final conclusions

The results of the pool development sessions were taken in as the final conclusions of the study session with regard to the future functionality of the experts pool. The people who took part in the study session were all accepted as members of the future European student experts' pool which will be organised. The follow-up will include participation of the members of the pool in the IEP program, and further communication among the members of the pool and the group coordinators.

4. Main outcomes of the study session

The session developed a whole range of outcomes that related to both functionality of the experts' pool and common knowledge and skills that the participants gained and are potentially useful in the context of institutional evaluations.

Among these, we can count:

1. 22 participants gained the basic level of skills that were needed to be included in the European students' experts pool.
2. Better knowledge of the participants on what the European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance represent, how to operationalize it and shortcomings of the standards and guidelines in practical terms.
3. Participants gained panel construction and self-assessment review skills by working in a fictional review panel.
4. Identification of procedures on the selection and training of new members to the pool and creation of coherent membership criteria.
5. Creation of multiplication capacity in the form of knowledge about quality assurance among the student experts in order to have a greater coherence between the European and national experts pools.

5. Follow-up activities

Overall, we can identify four main areas that need follow-up besides the everyday functioning of the pool and ESU's activities on quality assurance.

First of all, the participants who are willing to continue will be included into ESU's Experts' Pool of quality assurance and hence they will receive further requests to apply for panels, reviews and other quality assurance related activities. They will be asked to apply also for the Institutional Evaluation Programme for which there will also be a seminar and will be invited to apply to attend the 4th European Quality Assurance Forum in November in Copenhagen.

Secondly, on a more political level, ESU will start its work on the assessment and possible revision of the European Standards and Guidelines, together with other stakeholders in quality assurance within the Bologna Process. For this, ESU can use the expertise of the pool members as well as the information received during the study session on the practical implementation of the ESG.

Furthermore, ESU will develop a strategy for the experts' pool and set strategic goals for which a lot of valuable and interesting input has been received during the session. In conjunction with this, ESU will strive to provide more administrative support by trying to implement some of the suggestions by the pool members. And naturally, ESU will further promote the activities and services of the pool. This will also be supported by the continuing call for higher student involvement in quality assurance by ESU and maintaining the topic as a political priority.

Finally, ESU will start preparing for another seminar or study session that will focus more on giving the pool members some training skills in order to facilitate continuity of the pool, but also ESU will react positively to national calls for support in establishment of further student pools or expert groups and developing a training capacity is essential in this regard.

6. Evaluation analysis of the study session

Role of the educational advisor and feedback sessions

A factor that greatly enhanced the session overall was the presence of feedback groups, which permitted the adjustment of activities according to participants needs. Furthermore, having an educational advisor who focuses mostly on methods used in the team facilitated a lot of new ideas and approaches during the session. In this way, there was a learner-centred approach in delivering the content of the study session. On the basis of the feedback received, activities became more interactive and some completely new activities were introduced in the original schedule (the „World Café“ being the most clear example).

Overall and based on the feedback forms, following feedback was received from participants during the project and was taken in or shall be considered next time by the organising team in order to enhance the session's effectiveness:

- People felt more involved, more active, as interactive sessions were introduced.
- Experts' input was good, and much appreciated by participants.
- Time management was sometimes a problem, and some participants felt the need for more „severe“ chairing of sessions.
- Perception of smooth sessions and lack of excessive pressure from organisers.
- More diverse methods of offering information and dealing with the main issues would have been welcome by most participants.
- Learning outcomes should have been more structured and put together for the overarching sessions.
- Conclusions should be done on what to prioritise, and what do participants need to know.
- Wish for a clearer picture of what pool will do after the study session.
- More materials on quality assurance and the study session should have been sent out before as well as the objectives communicated in a more clear way.

It should also be noticed that later evaluations pointed out to progress on the issues which had previously been identified as being problematic and this was also noted in feedback forms.

Use of facilities at the European Youth Centre

The facilities we were provided within the European Youth Centre were more than adequate for the needs of the study session. The close proximity of the sleeping quarters, study rooms and dining facilities reduced lost time to a minimum. Similarly, the spaces facilitated work-group. Overall, we can state that with regards to facilities:

- The overall atmosphere and conditions were more than adequate.
- The rooms and spaces for the study session were also excellent.
- The food and dining arrangements also proved very satisfactory.
- There were minor issues, among which lack of adequate rooms for projection during sunny days and also some rooms being too warm.

Overall, the atmosphere created and the compact and proper facilities placed at our disposal were a major factor in the success of the study session.

7. Annexes - Final Programme

	12/07	13/07	14/07	15/07	16/07	17/07
9:30		Introduction: Name games Aims and learning outcomes Intro to ESU and Council of Europe Expectations	Practical work in small groups followed by group presentations and discussion on the second part of European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) about external QA (K.B.Nielsen)	Practice on active listening (S.Mursec)	Role Play Debriefing in a big group. Lessons to be learned. (N.Heerens)	Presentation on student experts' role in the pool (A.Päll) Definition of main areas of discussion on the development of the pool
11:00		Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
11:30		Introduction: Experience of the participants in QA Group presentations and discussion on what is important for students in quality of higher education? What is quality and how to assure it? (R.Santa)	Presentation and discussion on the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) of the European University Association (EUA) and it's relation to ESG (D.Kladis)	Role Play Introduction to the role play and preparations in review groups - reading the self-evaluation report and preparing for the review. Argumentation building exercise (S.Mursec)	Presentation of ESU's student experts' pool on quality assurance (A.Blättler, A.Päll) Knowledge Cafe brainstorming on participants perspective on the experts' pool (N.Heerens)	Consensus building exercise in small groups on the development of the experts' pool (A.Päll, S.Mursec)
13:00		LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
14:30		Overview presentation and discussion of developments in the quality assurance in Europe. What is ESU's role in it (B.Carapinha)	Presentation and practical work in small groups followed by group presentations and discussion on the third part of European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) about quality assurance agency reviews (B.Carapinha)	Role play Conducting the review	Free afternoon	Presentations of group works and discussion over the development of the experts' pool. Defining desired outcomes (A.Päll) Looking back at the Study Session - conclusions (R.Santa)
16:00		Break	Break	Break		Break
16:30		Presentation of internal quality assurance and quality enhancement (K.B.Nielsen) Practical work in small groups followed by group presentations and discussion on the first part of European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) about internal QA	Presentation and discussion on how to communicate and act in the experts' panel (Good cop vs Bad Cop) (D.Kladis, B.Carapinha)	Role play Review report drafting Presentations of review conclusions by review teams		Evaluation of the session and dissemination of materials. Photo opportunity.
19:00		DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER in Town	DINNER
20:30		Evaluation Groups	Evaluation Groups	Evaluation Groups		
	Welcoming Drink					Farewell Party

List of participants

Nr.	Name	Surname	Nationality	Role
1	HELGE LUNDSVOL	ANDERSEN	Norwegian	Participant
2	ANDREAS KVIST	BACHER	Danish	Participant
3	KRISTINE	BAK NIELSEN	Danish	Organizer
4	BARTIOMEJ	BANASZAK	Polish	Participant
5	MAREK	BARANSKI	Polish	Participant
6	LUKAS	BISCHOF	German	Participant
7	TOBIAS	BISCHOFF	Swiss	Participant
8	ANDREA	BLÄTTLER	Swiss	Organizer
9	BRUNO	CARAPINHA	Portuguese	Organizer
10	GERTIE DE	FRAYE	Belgian	Participant
11	ANJA	GADOW	German	Participant
12	ALINA C.	GAVRA	Romanian	Participant
13	LAURA A.	HOWELL	British	Participant
14	RAHEL ANNE	IMOBERTSTAG	Swiss	Participant
15	OLEKSII	KLIASHTORNYI	Ukrainian	Participant
16	SIMONA	MURSEC	Slovenian	Educational advisor
17	OLAV	ØYE	Norwegian	Participant
18	ALLAN	PÄLL	Estonian	Organizer
19	VANJA	PEROVSEC	Slovenian	Participant
20	BARTLEY	ROCK	Irish	Participant
21	NATASA	SAJLOVIC	Bosnian	Participant
22	INGA	SAKNITE	Latvian	Participant
23	ROBERT	SANTA	Romanian	Organizer
24	TANEL	SITS	Estonian	Participant
25	CHRISTIAN	STRAHLMAN	Swedish	Participant
26	KARINA	UFERT	Lithuanian	Participant
27	MIHAI ADRIAN	VILCEA	Romanian	Participant
28	SIME	VISIC	Croatian	Participant

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