O3. StudES Quality standards & guidelines development

O3.1. Mapping of quality standards for DLE

Quality standards for Digital Learning Environment Mapping

- draft analysis report –

It is generally accepted that the existing Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015), if appropriately interpreted could be used as a backbone for quality assurance processes "regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery", including those for e-learning (ENQA, 2018). However, it is the responsibility of quality assurance agencies as well as higher education institutions to further improve methodological development of ESG 2015 in e-learning quality assurance, and particularly some standards require special guidance on how they can be applied (ENQA, 2018). It has been noted that the quality assurance of online learning courses provision has been given far less consideration, namely in the realm of external quality assurance (EUA, 2014). In the present situation when emergency remote teaching due to Covid-19 pandemic has been massively employed, higher education institutions need specific, effective and accurate tools, i.e. quality standards and guidelines on its implementation, to facilitate the evaluation of remodelled courses delivered in blended or fully online mode.

Although there is a number of quality standards for e-learning and online courses issued from different sources, they should be critically evaluated and carefully revised to adapt to the specific educational context.

Detailed desk research of the available literature has been conducted, and relevant standards from different sources have been mapped against the ESG 2015 in order to perform their comparative evaluation and identify and select those standards which would be of most importance for self-evaluation and internal quality assurance processes within higher education institutions (HEIs). Table 1 presents the outcomes of this initial quality standards mapping.

Effective teaching for student engagement & success in digital learning environment

Table 1. Selected e-learning quality standards mapping

ESG 2015	E-xcellence	Quality Matters[1]	NSQOL[2]	QA of Online Learning Toolkit[3]
1.1. Policy for Quality Assurance	Strategic management			Leadership and management
1.2. Design and approval of programmes	Curriculum design Course design	1.Course overview and introduction 2.Learning objectives	A course overview and support Content	Curriculum design Learning outcomes
1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	Course delivery	3.Assessment and measurement 5. Course activities and learner interaction	Assessment and measurement Learner assessments	Assessment and integrity
1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification				
1.5. Teaching staff	Staff support		Professional responsibilities Digital pedagogy Community building Learner engagement Digital citizenship	Staffing profile and professional development
1.6. Learning resources and student support	Student support	4. Instructional materials 6. Course technology 7. Learner support	Diverse instruction Instructional design Technology	Student experience Student information and support Resources

[1] https://www.qualitymatters.org/sites/default/files/PDFs/StandardsfromtheQMHigherEducationRubric.pdf

[2] https://www.nsqol.org/the-standards/

[3] https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/quality-assurance-online-learning-toolkit_0.pdf?v=1575861567

1.7. Information management				
1.8. Public information				
1.9. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes		8.Accessability and usability	Accessability and usability Course evaluation	Review and improvement
1.10. Cyclical external quality assurance				

It is evident from the comparative review of the existing quality standards that specific topics which are related to e-learning, and digital learning environment (DLE) include specific instructional materials and course activities, as well as the use of technology.

NSQ National Standards for Quality Online Learning include standards for Online Teaching (in black colour in Table 1), Online Programs (not listed in Table 1), and Online Courses (in blue colour in Table 1). Although they are intended for pre-university education, it may be used as useful resource for higher education standards and guidelines development.

Topics for further discussion and development:

- Additional reference documents for review
- Purpose, objectives and scope of the StudES Quality Standards
  Project Application
  (3) StudES Quality standards and guidelines for effective teaching and learning in digital environment are defined as the third objective of the proposed project.
  The document developed will provide an input for further policy development at the university level and impetus for the update of accreditation standards. It will also serve as a guidance for teachers developing courses and educational resources in DLE. Quality standards and guidelines developed will be communicated to the national accreditation bodies and wider academic community and discussed with all the internal and external stakeholders. This document will compile the available best practices and recommendations and serve as a framework for further quality assurance of study programmes delivered in the digital learning environment (either as fully online courses or e-learning component of blended learning courses). A comprehensive review of the available research publications, and regulatory institutions recommendations and initiatives (ENQA Workshop Report 14 Quality Assurance of E-learning, 2010; Third edition E-xellence manual, 2016; ENQA Occasional Papers 26 Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision, 2018; INQAAHE Conference 2021 Re Imagining of Higher Education Quality in an Age of Uncertainty) will be performed and findings discussed with particular focus on the development on discipline/content specific needs and approaches of instruction. Final version of the document will be translated to local languages of the partner institutions, and made available to the wider academic community at the national and regional level, including academic staff, students and management of a number of other universities, beyond the present partnership, quality assurance agencies, ministries of education and other policy development bodies.
- Design of StudES Quality Standards
  - Domains
  - Core (minimum/treshold) standards
  - Advanced (developmental) standards
- Guidelines and indicators for standards implementation

References

- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)
- ENQA Occasional Papers 26: Considerations for quality assurance of e-learning provision (2018)
- EUA Report E-Learning in European Higher Education Institutions (2014)
- TEQSA, APEC Quality Assurance of Online Learning Toolkit (2017)
  https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/quality-assurance-online-learning-toolkit_0.pdf?v=1575861567
- QQI Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Providers of Blended Learning Programmes (2018)
  https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Statutory%20QA%20Guidelines%20for%20Blended%20Learning%20Programmes.pdf
- European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) Quality Assessment for E-learning: a Benchmarking Approach (2016)
  https://e-xcellencelabel.eadtu.eu/images/E-xcellence_manual_2016_third_edition.pdf