



香港學術及職業資歷評審局  
Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of  
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Educating Online in South East Asia: A regional workshop for  
higher education policy makers and practitioners

# Regulation and quality assurance of online education

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# Outline

- Setting the scene
- Quality assurance and quality issues
- A developmental approach to quality assurance of online education
- Concluding Remarks



## Setting the scene

- Online education can be described as a pendulum
- In the context of regulation and quality assurance, online education is considered to be a delivery mode
- Regulation: Refers to the process of ensuring that ‘something’ is done in a particular way, in relation to education often reflected in legislation and/or standards - minimum (eligibility) requirements
- Quality assurance: Also refers to a process of establishing how provision fulfills expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements but there is often an added focus on how provision can be improved
- Both practices make use of experts or peers to make the assessment and rely on institutional quality assurance



# Quality assurance and standards for online education

1. The same generic quality standards can relate to all types of delivery
2. A comprehensive approach to quality assurance would include online education
3. Standards need not be prescriptive but rather define quality expectations in general terms to allow institutions to present approaches that fit their institutional mission and objectives
4. The fulfilment of standards is assessed in the context of the characteristics of the institutions and/or programme/course being quality assured
5. The planning, development and implementation of programmes and an institution's ability to manage such processes to provide quality education is what is important in the QA process
6. If the QA approach and standards are the same, it is possible to compare the quality of education



## Quality issues and evidence

Examples of quality issues	Evidence
Methods of engagement with students in the learning & teaching processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The variety of engagement methods used</li><li>• The rationale for the methods chosen and how they are fit for online delivery</li><li>• Evidence of discussions between staff and academic leaders/decision-makers</li><li>• Feedback from students</li><li>• Regular reviews of the effectiveness of the methods of engagement</li></ul>
Staff qualifications in relation to online delivery and staff development and training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Position descriptions including specification of staff qualifications relevant for online education</li><li>• Analysis of staff development needs</li><li>• Plans for development of staff capacity and budgets</li><li>• Student feedback on quality of teaching</li></ul>



## Quality issues and evidence (Cont'd)

Examples of quality issues	Evidence
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rationale for chosen assessment methods</li><li>• Assessment examples to check adequacy and effectiveness in measuring outcomes</li><li>• Input and/or feedback from external expert advisors</li><li>• Regular review of assessment</li></ul>
Support for staff and students for administrative and technical enquiries and teaching and learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information about the resources available both infrastructure and human resources to provide technical support</li><li>• The institutional approach to identifying and providing T&amp;L support to students</li><li>• Regular review of the effectiveness of the support approaches chosen</li></ul>



## Quality issues and evidence (Cont'd)

Examples of quality issues	Evidence
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specifications regarding the online platform</li><li>• Analysis of capacity in the short and long term and development plans</li><li>• Feedback from students and staff</li><li>• Regular review of the platform</li></ul>
Monitoring of student performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use of performance data and KPIs related to online delivery, e.g. completion and attrition, employment rates</li><li>• Internal discussion of performance data and action taken, including internal benchmarking of performance data with face-to-face delivery and analysis</li><li>• External benchmarking</li></ul>



## Quality issues and evidence (Cont'd)

Examples of quality issues	Evidence
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence of how external online modules are integrated into the programme if relevant, e.g. how they are assessed and credit granted</li></ul>
Student authentication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minimum security, such as unique username and password</li><li>• Use of technology to ensure security in participation in the teaching and learning process and assessment</li></ul>





# A possible developmental approach to quality assurance of online education

✓Type 1: Standards defined as minimum requirements

- Teaching staff have a qualification one level above the qualification taught, minimum three years teaching experience and the programme leaders have a basic understanding of online delivery

✓Type 2: Standards defined as aspirations, i.e. beyond the minimum required

- Staff have a qualification one level above the qualification taught, have minimum three years teaching experience. A majority of staff have participated in staff development activities aimed at improving the institution's effective use of online education

✓Type 3: Standards defined as best practices

- Staff qualifications/experience in relation to online education are integrated into staff policies and consistently implemented and include continuous staff development opportunities that are appropriately funded. Staff consistently received positive [to be defined] student feedback.



## Examples of Standards

*Tertiary Education Quality & Standards Agency Threshold Standards (16 February 2013)*

✓The numbers, qualifications, experience, expertise and sessional/full-time mix of both academic staff who teach or tutor the course of study, and support staff, are appropriate to the nature, level, and mode of delivery of the course of study and the attainment of expected student learning outcomes



## Examples of Standards (Cont'd)

*ACCJC Guide to Evaluating Distance and Correspondence Education (June 2013)*

**A. Instructional Programs:** The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognised and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. **The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.**

**1. The institution demonstrates that all instructional programs, regardless of location or means of delivery, address and meet the mission of the institutions and uphold its integrity.**

- **What are the student achievement outcomes of the institution's DE/CE programmes; i.e. to what extent do students progress through and complete degrees and certificates, gain employment, or transfer to four-year institutions through DE/CE programs only or through a mix of DE/CE and face-to-face delivery?**



## Concluding Remarks

1. A comprehensive QA system, both internal and external should be able to assess issues related to online education
2. Use of online education requires careful planning, design and implementation to be effective
3. An adequate set of standards is a good starting point for review and enhancement of quality online education
4. The standards have to be interpreted in the context of the particular characteristics of online education and by experts with expertise and experience in online education
5. There is potential for learning in TNE Online
6. Due to the pace of development regular review for continuous improvement is essential



# Questions and Comments?



# Thank You

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