

The Pursuit of International Standards

David Woodhouse

President

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
(INQAAHE)

Executive Director

Australian Universities Quality Agency

Abstract

The last decade has seen increasing attention paid to international issues in quality assurance, both because some national issues occur in many countries, and because the mobility of education, students, institutions and graduates requires quality agencies to be able to operate internationally. One topic that is currently high in the agenda of many countries is learning outcomes and standards. This paper briefly sketches the history of attention to this in Australia, UK and USA, and then outlines the current situation in a range of Asian countries. Then the cross-border activities of some professional accrediting associations are described.

National statements of desired learning outcomes become the formal definition of academic standards, providing a basis for review, audit, monitoring and enhancement. But they must be set at discipline level, not institution level, and doing it will be expensive. Looking ahead, to address these and the many other challenges to quality in higher education, the next decade might become the “decade of new models of QA.”

Keyword: Learning Outcome; Standard; QA; International