EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS

The Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education 19-20 May 2005 adopted Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The standards are given here for easy reference. The complete set of standards and guidelines are given in the ENQA report *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.

A. European standards for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions

1 *Policy and procedures for quality assurance:*
   Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

2 *Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards:*
   Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

3 *Assessment of students:*
   Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

4 *Quality assurance of teaching staff:*
   Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved in the teaching of students are qualified and competent with regard to teaching. The methods and procedures for ensuring that this is the case should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

5 *Learning resources and student support:*
   Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

6 *Information systems:*
   Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

7 *Public information:*
   Institutions should regularly publish up-to-date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

B. European standards for the external quality assurance of higher education

1   *Use of internal quality assurance procedures:*
    External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part A above.

2   *Development of external quality assurance processes:*
    The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

3   *Criteria for decisions:*
    Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

4   *Processes fit for purpose:*
    All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

5   *Reporting:*
    Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to their intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

6   *Follow-up procedures:*
    Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

7   *Periodic reviews:*
    External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

8   *System-wide analyses:*
    Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

C. European standards for external quality assurance agencies

1   *Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education:*
    The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part B above.

2   *Official status:*
    Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

3   *Activities:*
    Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

4   *Resources:*
    Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial,

to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

5 *Mission statement:*
Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

6 *Independence:*
Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

7 *External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies:*
The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

1 a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;

2 an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;

3 publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;

4 a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

8 *Accountability procedures:*
Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.