

EUA INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION PROGRAMME

IEP STRATEGY 2015 – 2020

Mission

Consistent with institutional autonomy, the mission of the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is to support higher education institutions and systems in developing their strategic leadership and capacity to manage change through a process of voluntary institutional evaluations.

IEP evaluates higher education institutions in the context of their specific goals and objectives with the aim of improving quality. The Programme emphasises an inclusive self-evaluation process and institutional self-knowledge as a contribution to improved strategic leadership accompanied by efficient internal governance and management, as well as for external accountability purposes.

Therefore, IEP evaluations focus on the effectiveness of quality culture and the degree to which the outcomes of internal quality processes are used in decision-making and strategic management, as well as on identifying any gaps in these internal mechanisms. The evaluation methodology is based on a peer-review approach.

IEP is committed to continuous improvement of its own processes and operates in a manner consistent with good European and international practice, including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Strategic goals

IEP has been designed to ensure that higher education institutions gain maximum benefit from a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a team of experienced higher education leaders. By the beginning of 2015, IEP evaluation teams have carried out nearly 400 evaluations and follow-up evaluations of diverse higher education institutions in 45 countries worldwide. Upon request, IEP also conducts coordinated evaluations at the national or regional level. These are usually commissioned by ministries, national rectors' conferences or NGOs.

The European higher education landscape has changed in the last years. One important change is that in many countries national quality assurance systems are shifting toward institutional approaches. IEP needs to find a place in this new landscape by diversifying its offer and introducing more flexibility into its operations, while still ensuring the high quality of its services and maintaining its profile as a robust evaluation programme that conforms to the ESG, is a full member of ENQA and is listed in EQAR.

Goal I:

To develop IEP as a robust and credible quality assurance agency

Strategic objectives:

1. To maintain and safeguard the independence of IEP

IEP is self-governed: it is a non-governmental evaluation programme that is independent of national higher education authorities, higher education institutions and other stakeholders. The IEP Steering Committee plays a pivotal role in managing all aspects of the Programme, from defining the Programme's policies to planning and monitoring its activities. For certain administrative and other support services IEP will continue to rely on European University Association (EUA); however, this is an arms-length relationship that does not affect the choice of experts, the evaluation process or the reports.

2. To ensure sustainability of IEP

IEP will continue to aim at achieving financial sustainability, which requires at least 15 evaluations to be carried out each year. Appropriate planning and management of human resources is considered an important element of IEP's operations.

3. To improve the visibility of the Programme and its offer by implementing and further developing the marketing plan

IEP will further expand its marketing activities based on a plan developed to increase the visibility of its offer. The core objective set out in the marketing plan is to use every opportunity to promote IEP's services among stakeholders and define its positioning among other external quality assurance providers.

4. To maintain and extend the wide geographical scope of IEP evaluations

The main geographical area of IEP operations will remain Europe, but the Programme will also seek ways of working outside Europe, building on the wider interest in European higher education developments.

Goal II:

To maintain and enhance IEP's role in supporting higher education institutions and systems in their strategic leadership and capacity for change

Strategic objectives:

1. To maintain the core features of the IEP methodology

The core of the methodology is based on an improvement philosophy, the peer-review approach, the four questions and the evaluation phases (self-evaluation followed by self-evaluation report; two site visits, the latter finishing with oral report; delivery of the final evaluation report, which is published online; and a follow-up procedure). This core will remain unchanged.

2. To further develop the focus of IEP evaluations

IEP will continue to evaluate higher education institutions in the context of their own goals and objectives and provide analysis of and recommendations on the institutions' policies, structures, processes, and culture. This aims to enable them to perform the full range of their activities in line with their strategic plans and objectives, to develop their strategic leadership and build capacity to address change processes.

As an additional component to its regular approach, IEP will offer the option of having an institutional evaluation with a special focus, to be selected from a pre-defined (but non-exhaustive) list of possibilities. This will serve to address the specific needs of the evaluated institutions and ensure a fitness for purpose approach. Similarly, the possibility of selecting a special focus will be offered in the context of coordinated evaluations (as a way of catering to specific needs expressed by national authorities or agencies).

In order to successfully implement and accommodate the requests, particular attention will be paid to the appropriate expertise and experience of the IEP pool and the high quality of evaluation reports through careful selection and training.

3. To strengthen the institutional follow-up after evaluations

The IEP process does not end when the evaluation report is delivered to the institution. The true benefits of an evaluation come afterwards, as the university community examines the findings of IEP and addresses its recommendations. IEP will actively support institutions in these processes by maintaining contact with them, promoting the concept of a progress report, fostering the cyclical nature of evaluations and organising post-evaluation workshops in coordinated evaluations.

4. To promote the cyclical nature of evaluations and coordinated evaluations

The core of IEP activities is institutional evaluations carried out at the request of individual institutions on voluntary basis. While this remains the case, IEP will

- explore means to encourage institutions to undertake evaluations on a more cyclical basis, among others strengthening the promotion of follow-up evaluations as an essential element of the evaluation cycle, by offering institutions the option of a “combined package” of services (a full and a follow-up evaluation).
- actively promote coordinated evaluations following the successful past experiences that have demonstrated IEP’s capacity to carry out such exercises.

Milestones and evaluating the success

The activities needed for the implementation of this strategy will be further elaborated in the yearly Work Programmes to be adopted by the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will also evaluate the progress made on a yearly basis, when it adopts the annual report, with particular attention paid to the impact of the progress report and combined package.