

EUA INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION PROGRAMME

Internal quality procedures

The mission of the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is to support higher education institutions and systems in developing the capacity for change consistent with their institutional autonomy, through the process of institutional evaluation.

Related procedures:

The IEP Steering Committee is responsible for all essential matters of the Programme (i.e. the methodologies employed in the IEP and decisions on Programme activities) and in this respect ensures that all activities are aligned with, and fit for purpose considering this overall mission of the Programme.

The IEP evaluates higher education institutions in the context of their specific goals and objectives with the aim of quality improvement. The Programme emphasises an inclusive self-evaluation process and institutional self-knowledge for improved internal governance and management as well as for external accountability purposes. The evaluation methodology is based on a peer-review approach.

Related procedures:

All evaluations undertaken by the IEP are based on the IEP Programme Guidelines. There is one set of Guidelines for institutions undergoing an IEP evaluation, and another set for evaluation teams. All teams are requested to read both sets together as complementary. The IEP Guidelines are updated annually under the responsibility of the Steering Committee and the pool is informed of these all changes by written communication and or discusses them during the annual seminar.

In addition to the IEP Guidelines, a preparatory workshop is organised for the participating institutions in the beginning of each evaluation round, in order to prepare them for the evaluation.

Evaluations are undertaken by members of the IEP pool of evaluators. A team always includes former or acting rectors or vice-rectors, a student with experience of quality assurance processes and a team coordinator (who is usually an experienced higher education or quality assurance administrator). All decisions regarding the management of the IEP pool are made by the IEP Steering Committee based on the "Guidelines for Managing of the IEP Pool". This document defines the criteria for pool membership and the processes for recruitment as well as departure from the pool.

The Charter of Conduct for Pool members, included in the "Guidelines for Evaluation Teams", defines the manner in which the pool members are expected to conduct themselves.

The members of evaluation teams are appointed by the Steering Committee. In so far as it is feasible, teams are balanced in terms of gender, country of origin and academic

discipline. No two experts from the same country are appointed to a team and no expert is appointed to evaluate an institution in his or her own country.

IEP evaluations examine on institutional structures and decision-making processes and the effectiveness of strategic management. The evaluations focus on the relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as identifying any gaps in these internal mechanisms.

Related procedures:

The responsibility for the quality of an individual evaluation and the evaluation report lies with each team.

IEP Programme Guidelines provide institutions and evaluation teams with support in focusing the evaluations (see in particular the Check-list in the Guidelines). In addition, the Guidelines for Evaluation Teams specify the main issues to be covered by the evaluation reports.

The knowledge and experience of IEP pool of evaluators is the biggest asset of the Programme. In order to ensure the quality of evaluations, all evaluation pool members are required to attend the IEP annual seminars. The purpose of the annual seminar is to update members on recent European and international higher education issues, quality assurance policies and institutional developments and trends. The seminar also provides a forum for discussion and for developing lasting relations within the pool as the basis for effective team work during the evaluations. Finally, new pool members receive an introduction to the Programme and its values and methodology, through an additional training session particularly designed for them.

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

Related procedures:

The responsibility for the day-to-day management of the IEP rests with the IEP secretariat. It is guided in its work by the “Guidelines for the IEP secretariat” that defines the procedures of the Programme for the secretariat staff and summarises the internal QA processes of the secretariat. The Guidelines are updated regularly.

The Programme conducts several surveys in order to monitor the quality of its activities:

- Upon completion of each evaluation, the evaluated institution is invited to fill out a feedback form, reflecting on the evaluation process and outlining strengths and possible areas for improvement.
- IEP pool members are invited to fill in a feedback questionnaire after each evaluation (focusing on the evaluation in question), and a second one on a yearly basis, on a set of

more general issues. The annual seminar also provides an opportunity for collecting feedback from the pool.

The IEP secretariat staff collects responses to the surveys and submits them to the Steering Committee on a yearly basis as part of the Annual Report. The secretariat also takes note of informal feedback received from pool members, for example, through discussions and various email exchanges. The feedback received either through the surveys or informally, is taken into account when preparing the Work Programme and in planning the IEP activities.

In order to demonstrate the quality of the IEP, the Programme has undergone a number of external reviews in the past. These include:

- CHEPS Monitoring (1995-1998)
- Review of the pilot phase (1995)
- Review of the experimental phase (1996)
- Review of the follow-up evaluations (1998)
- Review of the evaluation reports by Peter Williams (1999)
- External review by an international panel (2003)
- An analysis of 60 evaluation reports by Stefanie Hofmann (2005)
- External review by ENQA panel (2009)