

Quality Assurance for HEIs' Continuing Education Programmes

QACEP Project Overview

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are key actors in lifelong learning promotion. For this reason they are now called to implement their efforts in providing research-based higher education for lifelong learners and in guaranteeing the quality of their learning offer.

A response HEIs actually give to social challenges in terms of lifelong learning need is the provision of advanced Continuing Education and Training courses. Considering the increasing and great relevance of this variety of offers at the intersection between HEIs, professional practice and general vocational continuing education and training, the need for transparency and external accountability as well as the need to assess the quality, becomes evident just as it is for higher education mainstream courses. Therefore, the need for creating and sharing specific tools in this field is obvious.

Specific aims

The main aim of QACEP project is:

- *to develop a general framework for QA of Continuing Education Programmes offered by HEIs, compatible and adapted to the needs and special features of each individual HEI*
- *to elaborate concrete and practical tools for the quality assessment of these programmes.*

The outputs of the project will give a concrete contribution to other HEIs offering continuing education programmes, supporting them in the process to become life long learning centres and in the actions apt to guarantee the quality of advanced Continuing Education and Training courses.

Work programme

The project plan has been developed according to three main phases:

- to carry out a comparative analysis within the partner universities with regard to the specific context in which continuing education programmes are offered and to their main characteristics and challenges, and with regard to QA in the field of, and/or relevant to, continuing education programmes;
- to design an overall framework on the basis of the analysis report and by sharing and analysing the selected good practices, considering the potential impact of these tools on continuing education programmes quality assessment in different university contexts;
- to conduct a "pilot evaluation" of a group of continuing education courses, using the overall framework and the specific tools in order to examine some operational and organisational aspects and the feasibility of the framework.

Project Start: October 2009; Duration: 2 years.

Consortium

The Consortium is composed of eight institutions - five HEIs and a Foundation attached to a University with a broad experience in the field of QA and in Continuing Education Programmes, and two associations representing a large number of other HEIs: University of Bologna - IT (Coordinator); Aalto University, School of Science and Technology, Lifelong Learning Institute Dipoli - FI; Inter-University Consortium Alma Laurea - IT; Coimbra Group; Katholieke Universiteit Leuven - BE; Institute for Lifelong Learning of the University of Barcelona - ES; University College of Cork - IE; University of Warsaw - PL.