



Blended course on

'External Quality Assurance (EQA) in higher education for SADC countries'

March – July 2019

COURSE OVERVIEW

Dates: March - July 2019 (10 weeks), with a two-week preliminary phase (18-29 March) for testing communications on the online platform.

Objective: The overall objective of this IIEP blended course is to develop the capacities of higher education officials to design and implement quality assurance systems or improve existing ones, in line with international good practices.

Participants: 6 national teams, consisting each of 5 members. Participants will be decision-makers and managers in charge of quality assurance (QA) in national QA agencies or buffer organizations, and vice-rectors for academic affairs or QA professionals at the university level.

Countries (Cohort 1): Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius and South Africa.

Language: English.

Workload: 5–8 hours per week.

Application deadline: Friday 22 February 2019.

INTRODUCTION

Most countries of the Southern African region have, in recent years, been confronted with major expansion and diversification of their higher education sector. Private and cross-border higher education are developing rapidly. As part of the regional integration within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), countries of the region are also faced with the challenge of aligning their quality assurance systems to support the recognition of qualifications across the region and therefore foster the mobility of students and professionals.

The development of external quality assurance (EQA) is a worldwide phenomenon. Over the past 20 years a majority of countries have set up an EQA system, and are constantly reforming it. In fact, EQA is an evolving reality that has to continuously update itself to remain aligned with a rapidly changing higher education sector and newly arising challenges.

While policy-makers in higher education are facing similar challenges world-wide, national higher education systems follow different traditions and may pursue different policy objectives. The current challenge for national policy-makers is thus to design an EQA system which not only corresponds to international 'good practice', but which is also in line with changing national and regional policy goals.

IIEP-UNESCO, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN) have created a partnership to jointly organize two blended learning courses on EQA in higher education during 2019 and 2020. This partnership draws on the sub-regional mandate of SAQAN to offer opportunities for exchange and training to its member organizations and the Southern African QA agencies at large. It furthermore builds on the memorandum of understanding (MoU) established between SAQAN and DAAD, as well as a Letter of Exchange between DAAD and IIEP, regarding the realization of the EQA blended learning course in the SADC region.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course aims to develop the capacities of higher education officials to design and implement quality assurance systems or improve existing ones, in line with international good practices.

Upon completing of this course, participants should be able to:

- define key concepts related to external quality assurance in higher education;
- identify tools and options to implement and develop EQA systems;
- assess the consequences of these options and be able to adapt them to their specific institutional contexts;
- draw lessons from good practices in EQA systems, so that teaching, learning and research can be improved in their higher education system.

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

National teams comprised of five persons will be formed for the duration of the course. They will include decision-makers and managers in charge of external quality assurance (EQA) in national QA agencies or buffer organizations (i.e. Head or deputy head of agency, officers in charge of different QA mechanism, etc). In order to facilitate the exchange on how EQA can best support internal quality assurance (IQA), it is suggested that each team should also include two high-ranking university representatives, such as Vice-rectors for Academic Affairs or persons in charge of quality management structures.

The course will be particularly useful for policy-makers and managers from countries which intend to develop or reform their mechanism for EQA. It will allow them to broaden their views on available options and position them to make better-informed choices on the suitability of such options for the reform of their national EQA system.

Please note that candidates must meet the following requirements:

- a minimum of 3 years' work experience in quality assurance at the national or institutional level;
- a Bachelor's degree (or equivalent);
- full proficiency in English (read and write);
- good computer skills, particularly in Microsoft Word;
- reliable access to the Internet and required equipment (see requirements outlined in the section 'Technology equipment').

Please note that the participation of female professionals is highly encouraged.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND MODULES

Module 1: Making basic choices for external quality assurance systems (2 weeks)

In Module 1, participants will be exposed to the international forces driving national governments (in both the developed and developing world) to establish quality assurance systems for their HEIs and programmes. Participants will also be presented with key decisions that will have to be made in relation to the scope and the basic functioning of an EQA system

Module 2: Understanding and assessing quality (2 weeks)

Module 2, introduces participants to the heart of the EQA question: how to measure quality. In this module, we will discuss basic approaches to quality measurement, such as the qualitative and quantitative approaches, with a particular focus on indicators for quality assessment.

Module 3: Conducting the process of external quality assurance (2 weeks)

Module 3 sets out options in the organization of the quality assurance process. While there is consensus on key elements, each stage of the process carries many different options, with major implications.

Module 4: Setting up and developing the quality assurance agency (2 weeks)

Module 4 will expose participants to different ways of conceiving the role and functioning of the support structure, or agency, for EQA. Differences relate to administrative affiliation, governance and organization, as well as to ways and means of ensuring the agency's accountability.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

This course will be organized in a blended learning format (10 weeks online learning to be followed by a one-week face-to-face seminar in the SADC region). The format of the course combines the advantages of a traditional face-to-face workshop – that is, instruction and interaction with the course team and among the participants themselves – with the flexibility of time and place for independent study.

The design of this course is based on a combination of the following learning techniques:

- independent study of materials and individual reflection on questions and exercises;
- scheduled group sessions to discuss individual responses and to prepare a group response;
- interaction with the IIEP course team and with other institutions (through webinars, online discussions, and access to the submissions of participating institutions), and
- interaction with the other participants and the course instructors during a face-to-face seminar to clarify open issues and to exchange amongst themselves on options for the reform of their QA system.

A Group Coordinator will be nominated for each national team. The nominee should preferably have a leading position in the national QA agency, in the area of the quality assurance of higher education. He/she will be responsible for disseminating the course documentation, organizing the group work, and communicating with the IIEP-UNESCO course team.

COURSE CALENDAR

Course component	Dates
Introductory phase	18-29 March
Module 1	1-12 April
Module 2	15-26 April
Module 3	29 April - 10 May
Module 4	13-24 May
Concluding phase	27-31 May
Preparatory work for the seminar	2 weeks (at a distance)
Face-to-face seminar	Dates to be confirmed

TEAM OF INSTRUCTORS

The course will be supported by a team of international experts who are EQA practitioners. They will interact with the course teams, provide feedback on assignments, and take part as moderators in the on-line debates.

■ ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

The course will combine two assessment modes:

Group assessment: Throughout, participants will be asked to complete group assignments, which will be evaluated by course instructors on a pass or fail basis.

Individual assessment: In order for participation in the course to be validated, participants must attend at least 75% of the group meetings and actively contribute to the group work. Group coordinators will record attendance at these meetings. In addition, participants will be required to participate in online discussions and complete individual quizzes.

Participants who meet the above-mentioned requirements will receive an IIEP-UNESCO certificate of participation.

■ TUITION FEES

No fees will be charged for participation. IIEP-UNESCO will cover the cost related to the organization of the online phase of the blended learning course. The development cost for an updated and adapted version of the training modules will be jointly borne by DAAD/DIES and IIEP-UNESCO. DAAD/DIES will also cover the travel and accommodation costs for participants and experts/trainers related to the face-to-face seminar.

■ REGISTRATION

Applications must be completed online by Friday 22 February by clicking on the following URL: <https://training.iiep.unesco.org/faces/AccessDirectNonAuth.xhtml?ir=45912&io>

Please note that each candidate must fill in his/her application form individually.

The selected candidates will be informed of their registration status shortly after they have submitted their application.

■ CONTACTS

More information on the course can be obtained from:

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The IIEP Virtual Campus platform is based on the Moodle learning management system. IIEP courses delivered on the platform provide participants with a variety of training materials and interactive resources and tools, such as discussion forums, videos, instructional presentations with audio, quizzes, individual and group assignments, etc. In order to participate in the course, learners must make sure they meet the following technical requirements:

Browser	<p>The IIEP platform (Moodle) is compatible with the majority of browsers:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="485 434 986 470">Desktop or laptop computer</td> <td data-bbox="1031 434 1437 470">Mobile device</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="485 488 986 667"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet Explorer • Mozilla Firefox • Google Chrome • Safari • Edge </td> <td data-bbox="1031 488 1437 555"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MobileSafari • Google Chrome </td> </tr> </table> <p>NOTE: The following older versions of these browsers have been known to have issues with Moodle – please avoid them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet Explorer 10 and older • Safari 7 and older <p>To ensure optimal security and user experience, it is recommended to use the most recent version of your browser.</p>	Desktop or laptop computer	Mobile device	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet Explorer • Mozilla Firefox • Google Chrome • Safari • Edge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MobileSafari • Google Chrome
Desktop or laptop computer	Mobile device				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet Explorer • Mozilla Firefox • Google Chrome • Safari • Edge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MobileSafari • Google Chrome 				
Pop-up windows	Configure your browser so that it allows pop-up windows from the IIEP platform. If necessary, consult the Help for your browser, or contact us if you need help.				
JavaScript	JavaScript should be activated in your browser. If everything is working fine, it probably is activated. If problems come up, activate JavaScript or contact us for help.				
Sound card, headset, speakers	In order to listen to videos, etc., your computer must have a sound card and you will need a headset, earphones or speakers.				
Microsoft Word and Excel	Several courses require you to download and work with Word, Excel or PowerPoint documents. If you don't have Microsoft Office, you can download Open Office, a free suite of software which will allow you to open and edit MS Office files.				
Adobe Reader	You will need a PDF viewer to open and view PDF files. You can download Adobe Reader for free.				
Flash Player	If a resource in a course requires you to install Flash, you can download this for free.				
Internet connection	<p>If you have a high-speed Internet connection, it will be easier and more enjoyable for you to take the course and benefit from all available resources.</p> <p>Minimum recommended connection speed: 500 Kbps</p>				

Ensuring optimal streaming speeds is especially important for videos. Make sure to close as many other tabs, browsers, and programmes as possible while streaming your content. It may also help to hardwire your Internet connection, rather than using a wireless network connection.