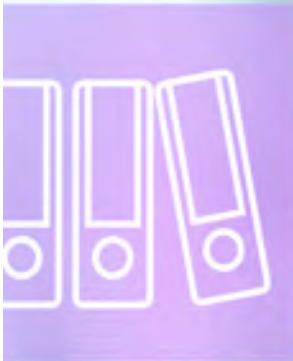


More than just compliance



EFMD launches the Quality Assurance Academy
By **Ulrich Hommel**, **Ivana Marinkovic** and
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Quality assurance (QA) professionals are in short supply these days. As more and more business schools invest in international positioning, so demand is rising for professional talent capable of managing accreditation projects, leading ranking initiatives, driving the pursuit of topical quality labels – on top of coping with more obligations imposed by national oversight bodies.

The vast majority of new hires nowadays learn the fundamentals of quality assurance “on the job”, by observing and imitating peers. The Quality Assurance Academy offers an alternative (but complementary) pathway. It builds on the basic skill sets required by the field to provide an in-depth and integrated understanding of the different activities and missions falling under the remit of a QA expert and the corresponding competencies required to meet institutional performance objectives. How “to get the job done” in an environment “with limited authority” is key in this context.

The Quality Assurance Academy has not been designed as a check list for managing specific projects but will enable participants to deal with project demands more effectively. It offers a balanced mix of basic skill coverage and advanced topics such as the expanding role of technology so that senior QA experts will also find it a rewarding learning experience.

The Academy stands on three foundational pillars that interlink the different parts of the programme transversally. Participants will learn (1) how to manage projects effectively; (2) how to lead and guide stakeholders to ensure project success; and (3) how to see what is “next” in the way quality assurance work is evolving.

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The first pillar relates to basic project management skills that are of the essence considering that accreditation projects can last for several years and require the syncing of strategic development and project advancement. Sequencing project steps properly, accounting for delays in the completion of tasks and avoiding capacity bottlenecks due to project jams are all issues that need to be addressed by QA experts serving as project leads. Failing to do so, while working against tough and strict deadlines, could lead to hotchpotch outcomes that underplay a business school’s true strengths.

The second pillar relates to leadership skills. QA departments have a cross-functional role to play but lack real power over the dean, the faculty, the university administration and so on. They may be the champion of quality-related data without the expertise and tools to handle the task effectively.

QA experts may therefore operate from a position of weakness in terms of governance but of strength when considering their responsibilities and information ownership. Challenges are manifold, ranging from obtaining sufficient resources to build an effective team, coping with the balancing act of managing multiple quality initiatives in parallel to gaining the support of non-QA colleagues, especially the sharing of best practices and how their work is contributing to the quality agenda.

Finally, as regards to the third pillar, the Quality Assurance Academy encourages participants to look ahead. Next to the obvious trends (e-learning, flipped classroom pedagogy), there are currently many issues only partly perceived that will affect the way business schools conduct their “business” in the future.

These include stackability and micro-credentialing, blockchain-based verification and certification of learning achievements (academic or other) and the emergence of learning ecosystems.

In addition, we are still exploring how impact will influence the way students will be educated in the future. Participants will gain a sense of how these developments may affect their work generally and explore when it is appropriate to assume a pro-active posture and make it part of the institutional quality enhancement agenda.

An important add-on to the Quality Assurance Academy is a supplementary one-day Report Writing Workshop. The ability to convey a business school’s development journey, including its future aspirations, is a key skill that any QA expert must have but is often insufficiently developed.

For example, treating external quality frameworks as merely a set of survey questions, reporting the bare minimum on each of them, failing to coherently align report sections, or failing to develop an overarching theme that conveys distinctive institutional features can easily culminate into “a good story told poorly”.

The Report Writing Workshop will convey the ingredients of good and effective reporting and will also help participants develop a better understanding of how reporting deficiencies can translate into potentially fatal misconceptions on the part of external reviewers. This also links back to the Quality Assurance Academy itself, which covers the review process more generally, including how to orchestrate effective on-site quality reviews.

The Quality Assurance Academy is positioned as another flagship offering of EFMD GN Professional Development, next to the Executive Academy of Teaching and Learning Professionals and the Online Teaching Academy



that will be launched in November. It can be considered as a sister offering of Smart Data Management, both offered in partnership with RimaOne, the provider of Academ.

The Quality Assurance Academy complements the seminar offerings of EFMD Quality Services and challenges similar offerings from other associations representing business schools.

This new offer is a good example of the type of programmes that Professional Development intends to present to the EFMD GN membership. It addresses qualification needs, advances the business schools’ quality improvement agenda, reflects a data-driven and analytical management approach and incorporates current sector developments.

Challenging conventional thinking and fostering a debate on the right way forward in the face of business model disruption is part of the *raison d’être* of Professional Development.

It reflects, first of all, the belief that institutional legitimacy of business schools is an evolving concept and, second, the intent to lead the evolution of quality assurance frameworks and consensus performance metrics.



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The Quality Assurance Academy stands on three pillars



The Quality Assurance Academy Factsheet

Structure

- Three segments (preparation, face-to-face, follow up)
- Total workload: approx. 60 hours
- Face-to-face segment: 11-13 December 2019, Budapest (Host: Corvinus Business School)
- Key features: mentoring and facilitated peer-to-peer learning throughout the programme, capstone project
- Supplementary 1-day Report Writing Workshop: 13-14 December 2019 (same location)

Target Group

- QA professionals, faculty engaged in quality assurance

Focus

- Core QA skills (learning outcome management) with emphasis on (data) analytics
- Project management
- Leadership abilities ("getting the job done" with limited authority)
- "Futurising" QA work



About the Authors

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