

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Towards a Comprehensive System for Quality Assurance
The Association of Universities in Lebanon

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Intervention Outline

- Quality Assurance of Programs
- Lessons Learned From Various Experiences
 - Tempus LCM Project
 - UNDP-QAA
 - ABET
- Quality Assurance Culture Creation
 - A Quality-Centered Culture
 - Internationalization/Globalization Challenges
 - Adaptability and Contextualization
- Role of the Association of Universities in Lebanon

QA of Programs – A Bunch of Questions

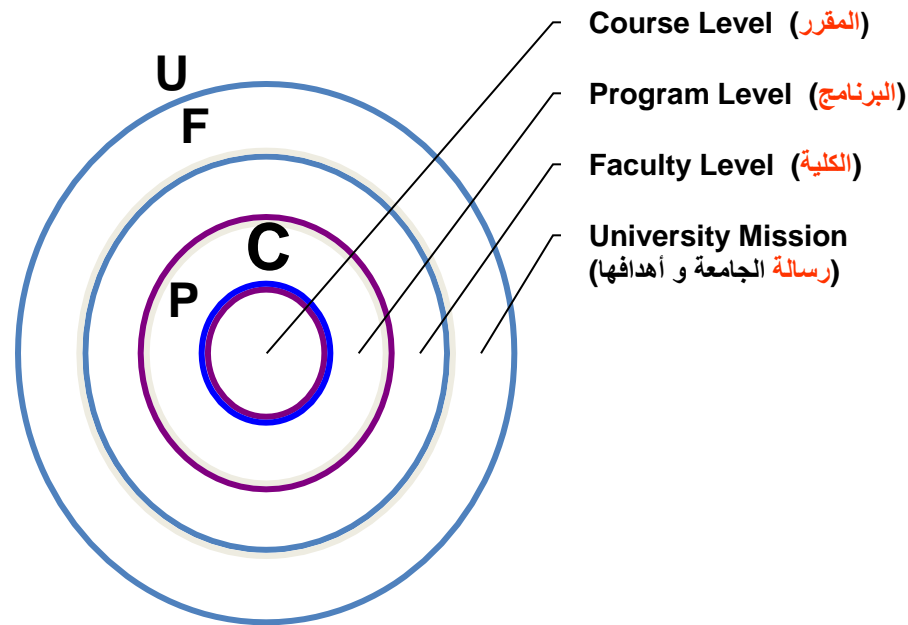
- What is QA of Programs good for?
- What is the motivation?
- Who should be involved?
- What are factors for selecting an Accrediting Agency?
- What is the nature of the evidence?
- How much work is it going to be?
- What about unique program features and outcomes?
- What is the impact of internationalization/ Globalization?
- How can we adapt int. models to the Lebanese H.E. sector?

Quality Assurance (QA)

- Quality Assurance in Higher Education is of **international/global** interest.
- Quality Assurance is a **broad term**. It may cover:
 - ✓ Assessment and Evaluation
 - ✓ Accreditation
 - ✓ Audit (internal and external).
- Is Quality Assurance for:
 - ✓ Accountability? Or
 - ✓ Improvement and Enhancement?

*Answer: **BOTH!***

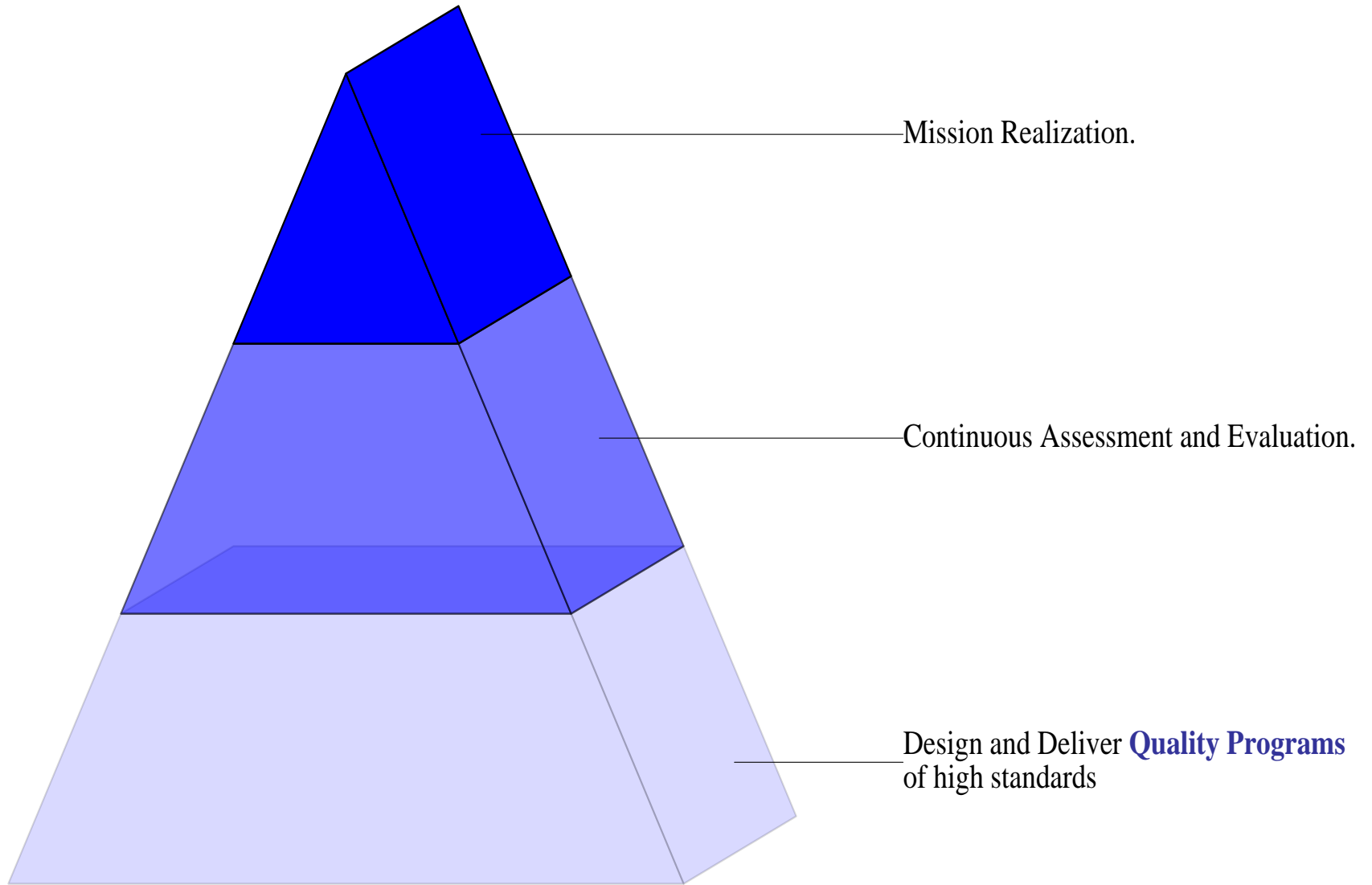
QA of Programs: Where does it all start?



Three pieces of advice:

1. Focus on **Teaching and Learning**
2. Put in place and practice internal **assessment processes**.
3. Let **Continuous Improvement** be the driving force, design for it, and build around it.

Program Quality



Operational Blocks

Lessons Learned From Various Experiences

Tempus SCM – LEPAC: The main objectives of the project were:

1. To establish an **organizational structure and bylaws** for an Accrediting Committee of Engineering Programs (LEPAC),
2. To establish a draft of accreditation **criteria**,
3. To establish a draft of accreditation **procedures**,
4. To **train** Lebanese accreditation specialists,
5. To be a **consultant** to the Lebanese Ministry of HE and the Orders of Engineers for the equivalency of international Engineering Degrees, and
6. To identify and **classify** Engineering Programs.

Outcome: Accomplished (on paper) objectives 1  4

Lessons Learned From Various Experiences (Cont'd)

United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي

Following a QAA Model, UNDP carried out “Quality Assessment of Computer Science, Business, Engineering and Education Programmes in Arab Universities”

- Academic Standards
 - Intended Learning Outcomes
 - Curricula
 - Students' Assessment
 - Student Achievement
- Quality of Learning Opportunities
 - Teaching & Learning
 - Student Progression
 - Learning Resources
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement

UNDP's Desired Outcomes

- A. Introduction in Arab universities of **independent systems of quality assessment** of programs with reference to internationally accepted criteria, procedures, and benchmarks.
- B. Assessing the **performance** of the last year **students** of the same programs using internationally-based tests
- C. Assisting universities in **building statistical databases** on their programs and student/staff demographics in accordance with internationally based data definitions and specifications.

Most Important Outcome: **Embedding a Culture of Quality!**

Program-Level Criteria of QA (Engineering Program - ABET)

1. Students
2. Program Educational Objectives
3. Student Outcomes (Program Outcomes and Assessment)
4. Continuous Improvement (Professional Criteria)
5. Curriculum
6. Faculty
7. Facilities
8. Institutional Support (and Financial Resources)
9. Program Criteria (Program-Specific Criteria)

A Quality-Centered Culture

- **Evaluation/Assessment**

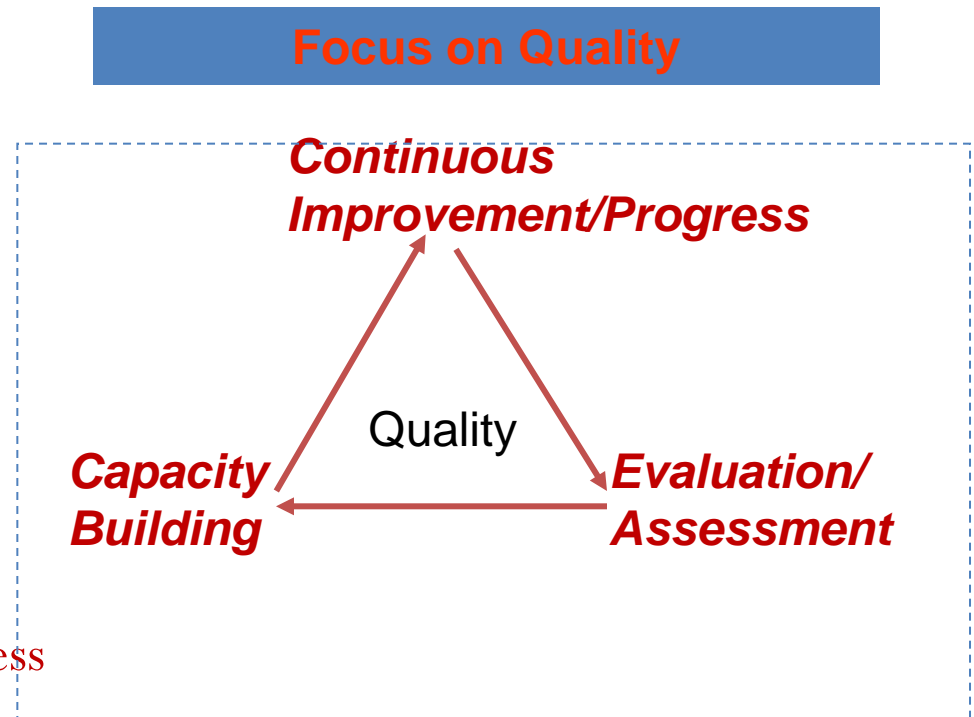
- Internal Review
- Self-Study
- Data & Evidence

- **Capacity Building**

- Training,
- Workshops
- Recognition

- **Continuous Improvement/Progress**

- Reflections
- Continuous self-evaluation
- Goals-setting



Who/What is Standing in the Way of a Culture Creation

- Faculty Members' Culture.
- Need for extensive documentation and hard evidence.
- A “compliance mentality” is developed to satisfy standards.
- Lack of recognition/rewards for engaged individuals.
- Need to rely on the “professionalism” of evaluators (peers).
- Objectivity maybe compromised. Fear of having a “buddy system”.
- Transformation from [inputs and resources] of evaluating the quality of academic programs to [processes, outcomes, and evidence].
- Consistent and coherent assessment processes, systems and indicators are needed.

Internationalization/Globalization Challenges

- Mobility
- Compatibility
- Standards selection
- Internal/external QA system/policies
- Jurisdiction of QA/accreditation agency
- Institutional specifics and region-level contexts
- Consideration (perception) of external/international agencies as “businesses”
- Reputation of Quality Agency
- Emergence of non-traditional institutions
- QA in Transnational Education
- Reciprocity and mutual recognition

The challenges of globalization are eased by seeking “mutual recognition” –
Worth the challenge but easier said than done!

Adaptability of QA/Accreditation Concepts - Contextulization

- Streamlining with “**Licensing**” at the Ministry of Higher Education
- The evidence may be **difficult** to provide or **link to** the **context**/environment/experience at the institution/program.
- Difficulty in measuring some **outcomes** given our context.
- “**Real**” implementation requires **accountability**.
- In Lebanon, students finance their own education with support from family or private sources – brings forward the question: **Whom should we be accountable towards?**

Role of the Universities in Lebanon

- **Universities** bear the responsibility of providing **assurance of quality!**
- Involve and partner with “**Professional Orders**” to sustain QA activities **and protect the professions.**
- Promote a concept similar to the **Washington Accord and ABET’s “substantial equivalence”.**
- **Join an International Network** for Quality Assurance.
- **Let Objectivity** drive **decision-making.**
- Avoid having the government “**control**” QA/Accreditation activities.
- Sponsor/create a set of **incentives** for faculty members.