

# **ANQA Stakeholder Workshop**

**Yerevan, 23 September 2010**

**“A Focus on Institutional Procedures“  
The Swiss Experience with external QA**

# **ANQA Workshop, Yerevan, 23 September 2010**

**Presentation Rolf Heusser, Switzerland:**

- 1. The Swiss Quality Assurance Agency (OAQ)**
- 2. External QA in Europe – positioning of Switzerland**
- 3. Institutional Audits at Swiss HEI's, experiences**
- 4. Towards a new Swiss Law in HE**

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# **Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ)**

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- **Established in October 2001, based on a legal act**
- **Mission: to assure and promote the quality of education and research of the Swiss Universities**
- **Independency in working process**
- **External peer review passed in 2006 (ESG fulfilled)**

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# OAQ – Philosophy

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- **Aiming at quality control and quality improvement**
- **Respecting autonomy of HEI's**
- **Involve well reknowned experts in Q-procedures**
- **Internationalisation**



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# External QA in Swiss Higher Education Area

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- **Focus on institutional procedures**
- **Institutional audits of universities are mandatory**
- **Programme accreditation is voluntary for universities**
- **Private Institutions can ask for institutional accreditation**

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# **Institutional Assessments – Strengths**

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- **Resource saving method; less bureaucratic**
- **Respect primary role of HEI's in quality assurance**
- **Produce results that can be used for institutional steering and development**
- **Enhance institutional quality mechanisms and facilitate the establishment of a quality culture**

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# Institutional Assessments in Europe - Some Recent Initiatives

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<b>Country</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Start</b>
Switzerland	Institutional Audit	2003
United Kingdom	Institutional Audit	2003
Norway	Quality Audit	2003
Denmark	Institutional Audit	2004
Finland	Quality Audit	2005
France	Institutional evaluations	2007
Netherlands	Institutional Audit	2008
Germany	System Accreditation	2008
Spain	Institutional Audit	2008



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# Institutional Audits in Switzerland – Methods

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- **Three steps procedure: self evaluation; on site visit by independent experts (4+1 student); publication of results**
- **Focus on internal QA-systems of universities; additionally sample of study programmes examined**
- **First audit cycle 2003/4: Basic expectations for QA-systems formulated by OAQ**
- **Second audit cycle 2007/8: Standards for internal QA issued by political authorities, ESG compatible**

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# **Institutional Audits 2007/8 in Switzerland – Examination areas**

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- **QA-Strategy**
- **QA measures (education, research, services)**
- **Processes and responsibilities**
- **Evaluation of subunits / study programmes**
- **Human resources management**
- **Management Information Systems**
- **Communication (internal/external)**

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# **Institutional Audits 2007/8 in Switzerland – Results**

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- **High quality of education, research and services at Swiss universities**
- **Audit process was very well accepted by universities**
- **Contribution to institutional quality enhancement**
- **Changes at universities introduced following the first audit cycle**

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# Effects of Institutional Audits in Switzerland

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- **Structural changes**
- **Introduction of systematic internal evaluations**
- **Coordinated and coherent QA-mechanisms**
- **Establishment of Management Information Systems; use of data for steering**
- **Etc.**

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# Effects of Quality Audits 2003/04 – Examples

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## University of Lausanne:

- Introduction of a Vice-rector for quality
- Committee for valorisation of teaching and research
- Systematic evaluation of all faculties --> action plans

## University of Bern:

- Quality year 2006/07
- Development of a quality concept ---> preparation for audit 08
- Events throughout the university

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# **Institutional Audits in Switzerland – Methodological lessons learned**

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- **Participatory approach (HEI's + QAA) and clear guidelines increased acceptance of audits**
- **Preparation time must be sufficiently long**
- **Training of experts needed in order to assure consistency**
- **International composition of panels was perceived as advantage, but knowledge of national HE-system must be present in expert panel**
- **It is possible to combine control and developmental elements in the quality procedures**

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# Institutional Audits – Open questions

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- **How well can institutional audits assure good quality of study programmes ?**
- **What is the optimal balance between “control” and “enhancement” ?**
- **Same rules for all types of HEI’s?**
- **How to use results of institutional audits for purposes of international recognition of qualifications ?**

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# Future perspectives for external QA in Switzerland

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**New federal law on HE in Switzerland (2012) foresees:**

- **Same requirements for all types of HEI's in Switzerland**
- **Mandatory institutional accreditation, centered around the assessment of internal QA-systems of HEI's**
- **Voluntary programme accreditation maintained**



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# Summary and Conclusions

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- **Many European countries have introduced external assessments at institutional level**
- **Institutional assessments are in the best interest of the HEI's: they respect autonomy and contribute to institutional development**
- **Switzerland has made positive experiences with institutional audits: impact could be demonstrated (changes occurred)**
- **Forthcoming institutional accreditations in CH should be based upon these experiences and should serve two purposes: Q-control and Q-enhancement**
- **Coherence of internal and external QA has to be assured**

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# THANK YOU!

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