



Validation Workshop on Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework

Accra, Ghana, 29 - 30 July 2015

VALIDATED DOCUMENT

To implement the AU Executive Council Decision on establishing a continental Accreditation Agency for higher education, the African Union Commission (AUC) has initiated the development of a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), in collaboration with the European Commission (EC) and the Association of African Universities (AAU). A study has been conducted with the support of the Joint Africa EU Strategy Support Mechanism.

On the basis of the study, a consultative meeting was held in Accra, Ghana from 21- 22 May 2015, to brainstorm and reach consensus on the process of establishing a PAQAF and possible operational modalities. The meeting agreed on an outcome document indicating the mandate, roles and functions of a Continental Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency, the relationship of this Agency to national QA Agencies and regional Agencies, implications in developing continental standards for quality assurance (QA), and operational modalities and instruments for PAQAF.

To validate the process for establishing PAQAF, a validation workshop was held in Accra, Ghana from 29 - 30 July 2015. The workshop was attended by 56 participants from 28 African countries representing universities, national and regional QA and accreditation agencies, directors of ministries for higher education, quality experts and practitioners as well as experts from European QA and accreditation institutions.

The workshop validated the following:

1. The development of a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) is needed to establish harmonized Quality Assurance (QA) practices in the continent.
2. Political endorsement and continuous commitment by AU Member States is essential for the development of PAQAF in order to ensure the establishment of a legal framework for supporting the process.

3. Continued consultation and coordination with higher education institutions (HEIs) as well as national and regional QA and accreditation agencies is required for effective operationalization of PAQAF.
4. Countries that do not have QA agencies or which are in early stage of development need to be encouraged to commit themselves and be supported by the AUC in establishing national QA agencies. Countries that have national QA systems are called upon to share their good practices and to encourage developments in other countries.
5. Sustained funding for PAQAF must be ensured. AUC should take the leading role of mobilizing funds. An effective funding mechanism should be worked out.
6. QA and accreditation concepts should be well conceptualized and be understood in the same way by all stakeholders. Therefore it is required that documents are available in the four official languages of the AU.
7. A Pan-African QA and Accreditation Agency (hereinafter referred to as Agency) needs to be set up to operationalize PAQAF. The mandate, roles and functions of this continental Agency will be:
 - (i) General mandate:

To coordinate, promote, and facilitate the harmonization of higher education, QA and accreditation systems within, across, to and from Africa as well as being the lead Agency of the continent in QA, quality enhancement and accreditation.
 - (ii) Roles/functions:
 - a. Set and continuously review principles, standards & guidelines, and benchmarks for a harmonized continental QA and accreditation system, including Open and Distance and e-Learning (ODEL);
 - b. Oversee the adoption and implementation of these principles, standards & guidelines, and benchmarks in the national and regional systems;
 - c. Encourage and support global competitiveness of African universities;
 - d. Develop and maintain a continental qualifications framework being aligned with the national and regional frameworks;
 - e. Support capacity building in QA and accreditation frameworks in African Union Member States;
 - f. Promote and support research and innovation for the advancement of QA and quality enhancement practices;
 - g. Promote, document, and disseminate good practices in QA and quality enhancement;

- h. Cooperate and collaborate with comparable international organizations;
 - i. Promote internationalization of African higher education systems;
 - j. Develop and operationalize a continental peer review system;
 - k. Mobilize and advocate political support for PAQAF;
 - l. Mobilize the necessary financial and technical resources to ensure effective and sustainable implementation of the activities of the Agency;
 - m. Accredite the Pan African University (PAU) according to the PAQAF principles;
 - n. Take up any roles or functions as assigned by AUC from time to time within the limits of the autonomy of the Agency.
8. The Agency's relationship to national QA Agencies and regional Agencies:
- (i) Facilitate and coordinate collaboration, consultation and networking between national QA and accreditation agencies and regional Agencies;
 - (ii) Support the regional Agencies and national agencies in further cascading initiatives of the continental agency to the respective institutions and vice versa;
 - (iii) Develop and disseminate continental tools (e.g. Handbooks) through establishment of a continental portal;
 - (iv) Develop and maintain a website for information sharing;
 - (v) Set up and maintain a register for national QA agencies, regional Agencies as well as a database of experienced peer reviewers;
 - (vi) Develop and maintain QA management information systems;
 - (vii) Develop an external review system for national and regional QA agencies following self-assessment.
9. Implications in developing continental standards for QA:
- (i) Integrate Africa Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) into the system for defining and setting standards;
 - (ii) Encourage institutions to strive for excellence.
10. Operational modalities and instruments for PAQAF:
- (i) Integrate the content of AQRM with the continental mechanisms;
 - (ii) Clarify concepts of QA including principles, standards & guidelines, and benchmarks by applying widely used glossaries;
 - (iii) Ensure political endorsement and continuous commitment by AU Member States;

- (iv) Ensure endorsement and continuous commitment by QA stakeholders;
- (v) Establish a Secretariat including its operational structure;
- (vi) Set up a governance structure;
- (vii) Establish a sustainable funding arrangement for the operationalization of PAQAF;
- (viii) Guarantee the autonomy of the Agency;
- (ix) AUC to develop the legal framework and the organizational set-up of the Agency in collaboration with key stakeholders;
- (x) Necessary instruments for the appropriate functioning of PAQAF:
 - a. A continental qualifications framework;
 - b. Ratified revised Arusha Convention (Addis Convention);
 - c. Agreed continental standards and guidelines for QA and Accreditation;
 - d. African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM);
 - e. African Credit Accumulation and Transfer System;
 - f. African QA Portal which includes:
 - i. African Register of QA and Accreditation Agencies;
 - ii. Register of Quality Assured HEIs;
 - iii. Database of experienced peer reviewers;
 - g. Any other instruments as appropriate.

Adopted on 30 July 2015 in Accra, Ghana