

Report on the Project Group 3

Quality Assurance of Distance Learning & E-learning

With the remarkable development of technology, use of distance learning & e-learning (D/E-Learning) is rapidly growing even in the higher education. In the D/E-learning system education services can be offered to the students by the different mode from the traditional education which is offered in classroom. When doing quality assurance of the institution/program which uses the D/E-learning, some special characteristics must be considered to grasp the appropriate situation. For example, synchronous/asynchronous, interactive/one-way, appropriateness of educational media (e.g. TV, radio, e-mail, web-based, fax, correspondence, etc. for delivering education, interaction, feedback, etc.), availableness of educational resources, student and faculty support in campus or cyberspace, teacher & instructor/ student ratio, appropriateness of the curriculum and course contents etc.

It is widely known that some quality assurance agencies set their own guidelines for the D/E-Learning quality assurance such as the guidelines of Accreditation bodies (USA), QAA (UK). However, in the Asia-pacific region it is not known for mutual about what system is employed for the D/E-Learning quality assurance.

Since there are no restrictions of the student's learning place for D/E-Learning, students can receive the education of a foreign country by use of the D/E-Learning system. In this context, many problems will appear on the D/E-Learning. Especially, from a view point of the students compatibility of a course credit they earned is a serious problem. Therefore, it is supposed mutual understanding of the D/E-Learning quality assurance among Asia-pacific neighbors is meaningful for student protection.

“Project Group 3” targets the D/E-Learning quality assurance, and works for the following purposes:

- Gather, select, and define information of quality assurance of D/E-learning
- Share information on the latest quality assurance systems of the D/E-learning in Asian-pacific quality assurance agencies and open it to the public
- Promote the development of the D/E-learning quality assurance in each quality assurance agency

Report of the progress and the tentative work plan of PG3

Jan. 2005

- PG3 collected information on D/E-learning quality assurance guidelines:

e.g.

- *“Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Higher Education Degree and Certificate Programs”*, the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, 1996.

(<http://www.wcet.info/projects/balancing/principles.asp>)

- *“Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs”*, the eight regional accrediting commissions in USA, 2000.

(<http://www.wcet.info/resources/accreditation/Accrediting%20-%20Best%20Practices.pdf>)

- *“Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education”*, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK, 2004.

(<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/COP/cprovis/contents.htm>)

- To grasp the situation of the D/E-learning quality assurance in each APQN quality assurance agencies PG3 is planning to implement the “Preliminary Survey on Quality Assurance of Distance Higher Education”. PG3 made a draft of and distributed to ask for comments of the APQN members and experts of e-learning. Then based on their opinions and comments PG3 is revising the questionnaire sheet.

- The questionnaires will deliver to the APQN members via e-mail as soon as possible. The interim report of the survey will be presented in the INQAAHE meeting in Wellington.

Dec. 2005

- The report of the “Preliminary Survey on Quality Assurance of Distance Higher Education” will be open to the public on website of NIAD-UE and/or APQN.

- Based on the result of the preliminary survey and the comment from some experts on D/E-learning, PG3 will set the discussion points and quality items on D/E-learning.

- The questionnaire sheet for the survey on the D/E-learning quality assurance will be developed and the survey will be carried out.

In the future

PG3 explicates the definition of quality assurance information and makes clear the differences and similarities among the D/E-learning guidelines used in APQN countries in order to agree and understand more each country.

If the necessity arises for a face-to-face, across-the-table discussion, not an e-discussion, PG3 will consider to set the occasion of discussion or conference on the quality assurance of D/E-Learning in Tokyo. Actually, it is supposed to be depends on the collected information and expected outcomes.

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