UNESCO

Higher Education Conversation Series
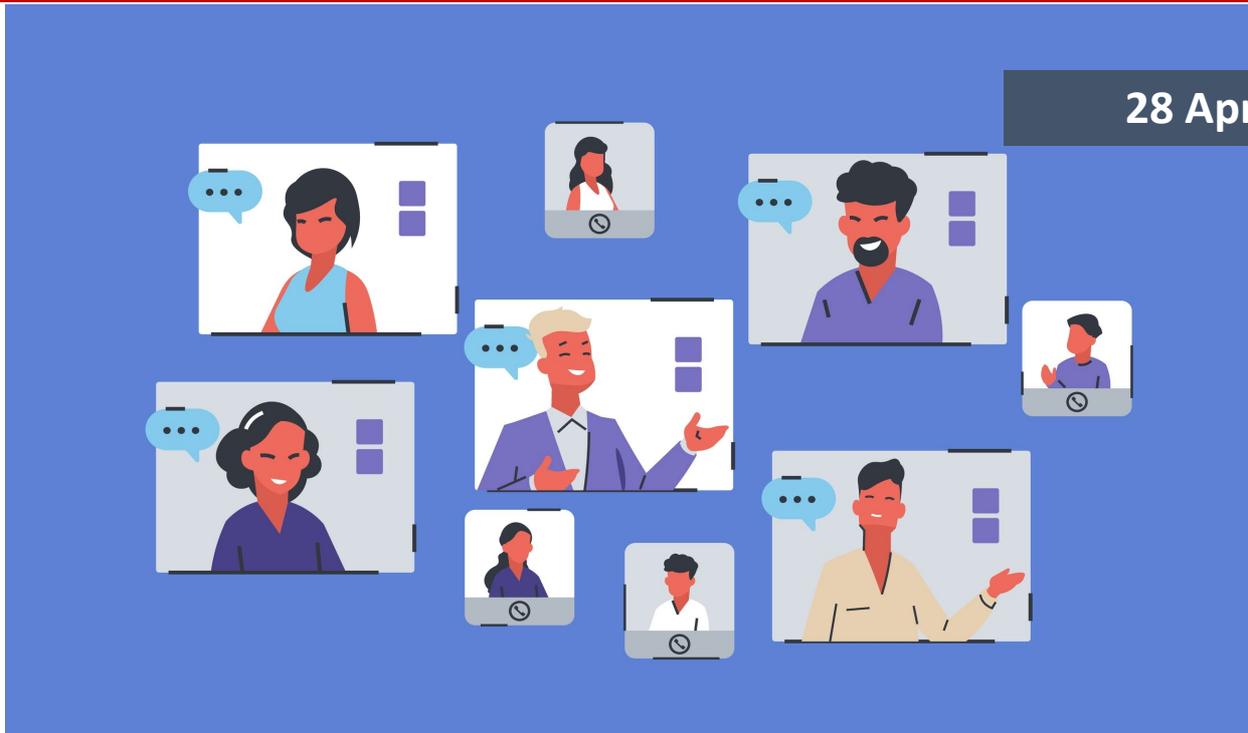## Quality Assurance Across Borders

28 April 2022

Date and time: Thursday, 28 April 2022, 14:00 – 15:00 (CET)

Format: Zoom webinar. Prior registration is required.
[link to come]

Target audience: Policy makers and higher education stakeholders

Languages: English/French, with simultaneous interpretation

Background

Over the last two decades, quality assurance in higher education has gained significant momentum worldwide. The rapid increase in enrolment, the diversification of provision and governance structures and, in some regions, the growth of student mobility have increased the demand for quality assurance mechanisms and agencies. Public, private and distance education institutions have grown in number, size, and scope, raising questions of quality and accountability.

The 2021/2 Global Education Monitoring Report on non-state actors in education highlights how the legal frameworks of quality assurance reflect the existing disparities in the world. High income countries have generally developed diverse quality assurance agencies and mechanisms, while low-income countries, with expanding tertiary education systems, often struggle to establish a national quality assurance system, leaving students more vulnerable to exploitative providers. The roles and responsibilities of these agencies also vary according to the national directives.

As private higher education institutions have proliferated, regulations have not kept pace in many countries. Besides, the presence of fraud, predatory lending and exploitative practices emphasize the importance of sensible regulations and effective quality assurance. Yet, it appears that even when such

quality assurance mechanisms are well executed in several countries, few of the outcomes reach the public or even other professional groups.

Good structures for the quality assurance of higher education are crucial for enabling trust in a qualification and protecting academic standards and integrity. They are also an underlying pillar of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education and the regional recognition conventions.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is further evidence that system-level assurance in higher education must have the capacity to respond to complex contexts. The effects of the pandemic continue to weigh heavily on the quality assurance of higher education, with delays and cancellation of both internal and external review processes, and challenges in evaluating and accrediting online learning.

Objectives and Agenda

This is the seventh in the series of Higher Education Conversations in the leadup to the 3rd World Higher Education Conference (Barcelona, 18 – 20 May 2022). It aims to bring together policy makers and higher education stakeholders to discuss how effective quality assurance across borders at the higher education level can contribute to meeting SDG target 4.3.

Key questions to be examined:

- What is the role of quality assurance in the recognition process?
- What are the main challenges faced by governments in developing robust quality assurance/mechanisms agencies?
- How can quality assurance contribute to innovative and effective lifelong learning systems?
- What is/should be the role of quality assurance networks and regional networks of information centres?
- What are the best practices of quality assurance in higher education, both internal and external?

Thursday, 28 April 2022	
14:00 – 14:05	**Opening:** Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director of the Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO
14:05 – 14:25	**Discussion:** - Ms Susana Karakhanyan, Higher Education Policy and Regulation Director at Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge, UAE, and Immediate Past President of INQAAHE - Mr David Mills, Deputy Director of the Global Centre for Higher Education and Associate Professor, University of Oxford - Ms Cynthia Jackson-Hammond, President of the Council of Higher Education Accreditation, United States - Ms Jenneke Lokhoff, President of the ENIC Bureau and NARIC Advisory Board **Moderator:** Ms Qingling Kong, Associate Project Officer, UNESCO
14:25 – 14:55	**Question and Answer session**
14:55 – 15:00	**Wrap up**

For upcoming discussions, please visit: https://en.unesco.org/news/higher-education-conversations