

# Accreditation/Quality Control in Higher Education:

2009 UPDATE

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## US vs non-US Quality Control

- US accreditation (private but recognized— regional, national, faith-based, programmatic)
- ENQA
- 22 other supra-national bodies
- 467 bodies in 175 countries (unmediated; at CHEA.ORG)

Terminology is NOT STANDARDIZED

## DEFINITION OF US ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is a **status** which indicates that an institution or program is accomplishing its **mission** and meeting the **standards** of a **non-governmental** association and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future

A FLOOR NOT A CEILING

## US: Quality Control = Accreditation

Currently:

- Mission-Based
- Peer Review
- Non-Governmental

Current Criticism:

- Insufficient accountability to public (graduation and employment rates)
- Intrusively prescriptive standards; or not real standards (because qualitative not quantitative)
- Undermining authority of Governing Boards

## Role of Federal Government

### INDIRECT

- Recognition of accreditors
  - formal process
  - notification AFTER the fact
- Financial Interest
- NEW—criminal penalties for individuals using phony degrees for federal employment
- Avoidance of
  - conflict of interest
  - Political considerations
  - Imposition of uniform rules

## Role of State Government

### DIRECT

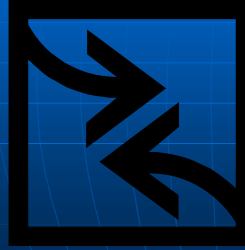
- Licensing (legal right to confer degree)
- Financial (public institutions)
- Supervision varies--
  - New York; California
  - Connecticut, Wyoming
  - Hawaii, Montana, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico

## Current Trends

- Emphasis on outcomes—documented, pragmatic (ENQA\*—Qualifications Framework)
- Learner-Centered Teaching—not just in US institutions—and what it means for international students (cf. India's new “add-on” programs)

\* Terminology differs but essence is same

## Mission—many are being rewritten for LCE



- Appropriate to higher education
- All individual program objectives are related to the mission
- Concrete and realizable
- Publicized and understood
- Assessed and reviewed regularly

## URI Mission Statement (excerpts)

- URI is the state's public learner-centered research university
- We are a community joined in a common quest for knowledge
- Students, faculty, staff and alumni are united in one common purpose: to learn and lead together

Endorsed by faculty senate, approved by president, approved by Higher Education Board

## Current Issues

- Increased Government Regulation (what it means –and doesn't mean—for international students)
- Proliferation of overseas branches and programs
  - What students get (academic and some cultural benefits)
  - What they miss out on (some cultural and immersion benefits)

## Global Spread of “Accreditation”

- Why?
- What?
- How Does it Differ from US accreditation and why does that matter?

## Major US Differences from non-US accreditation

- Non-Governmental
- NO OFFICIAL RANKING
- Mission-based (i.e., non-quantitative)
- Behavioral and affective as well as cognitive domains (know, do, value)
- Improvement and Planning (assessment rather than evaluation)

## Non-US: Accreditation and National Qualifications Framework

- Governmental? Ministerial? Issues?
- What is the framework and when will it be "universal"?
- The US equivalent
- Diploma supplements (US and Other?)

## Can We TRUST distance Education offerings?

- What are the new requirements of the US government?
- Who grants the degree? (state licensing )
- Other considerations?

## What about all these NEW Campuses—is this really a US education?

- Is it a branch and how does one know?
- It is free-standing but can it attain or claim US accreditation?
- What is a student NOT getting and is that important?

## Branch campuses

- Process of Accreditation (plans, report, visit, decision)
- Rights of the host system
- Issues for the regional accreditors
- "Collaboration", "Cooperation" do NOT mean accreditation

## Overseas Accreditation: The Process

Visiting Committee  
2-8 Members

US Campus:  
Mission; Planning  
Resources; Control

Overseas Campus:  
Qualifications;  
Congruity;  
Outcomes

Report to Commission:  
Inclusion in accreditation;  
Stipulations;  
Loss of accreditation (US + Abroad)

## Frequent Problems

- Measuring competence in English (oral and written)
- Integration of one discipline with another
- Application of classroom work to outside world

## Cultural Issues

- University-level general education
- Attendance
- Interaction and dialogue
- Reading assignments
- Information resources
- Method of assessment

## What Students are NOT Getting

- Socio-Cultural mixture on US campuses
- Expansion of out-of-class language skills

Another way of putting it:  
What IS a United States education?

## Free-Standing Institutions Abroad

- Locally Licensed
- Composition and experience of faculty
- Experience and INDEPENDENCE of Board
- US Accounting Practices
- Conform with (modified) Requirements of Affiliation and ALL regional Standards (plus some specifics)

## PROCESS: Similarities and Differences

- Similarities (Mission, Resources, Effectiveness, Stability)
- Differences (capacity, identity check, compensatory resources)
- Evaluation team specializations
- Transcript Issues (Regional Accreditation vs others)

## Ensuring Effectiveness of Overseas Campuses

- What outcomes are being assessed?
- What capabilities and skills are expected?
- Is the method of assessment appropriate?
- Are the marking criteria clear and appropriate?
- Are the criteria consistently and fairly applied?

## Diploma and Accreditation Mills

- Outright Fraud--Purchaser is NOT a victim
- "Accreditation is not governmental"—often used to mislead students; non-recognized accreditation agencies; misunderstanding of apostilles
- Trying to evade regulations—student may be a victim

Questions or Comments?

Thank you very much for your attention.

*Amy*