



Education and Training Section

Report on quality assurance models in LIS programs

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Executive Summary	3
1. Background	4
2. Goals and objectives	4
3. Methodology	4
3.1 <i>Activities done</i>	5
4. Findings.....	6
4.1 <i>Literature and documentary review findings</i>	7
4.1 Taxonomy of LIS guidelines and standards.....	11
4.2 <i>Survey Findings</i>	13
5. Conclusions.....	18
6. Recommendations.....	19
References.....	20
Annex 1 Questionnaire.....	24
Annex 2 LIS Quality Guidelines.....	30

Executive Summary

IFLA ET Section has been studying the issue of equivalence and reciprocal recognition of academic qualifications in LIS since 1977 and its current activities still include the problems of international reciprocity/equivalency of qualifications and Library and Information Science (LIS) School guidelines. The goals of these efforts are to facilitate the mobility of students and to increase employability. The need to reinforce the comparability of Higher Education internationally through quality assurance systems is now becoming more pressing for IFLA due to the WTO GATS agreement on commoditization of education. The internationalisation of higher education systems could give the opportunity for improving the skills of individual students and to increase the quality of the national LIS higher education systems.

At the Berlin Conference in 2003, the IFLA Education and Training Section approved a survey on quality assurance models in LIS programs, aimed at achieving greater transparency of professional qualifications and increasing international cooperation of LIS schools for quality assurance and accreditation. Two overarching priorities guided the survey:

- To explore the issue of quality as currently measured in worldwide LIS schools;
- To provide support for promoting quality in LIS education and training.

The primary purpose of this survey was to gather data from a sufficient number of LIS schools from each region of the world about current quality assurance processes, priorities and concerns. The study required an investigation of quality assurance models worldwide, collecting data about current quality measurement, quality assurance systems, LIS guidelines and standards. The methodology has been based on a literary and documentary review and on a questionnaire which has been sent to a selection of LIS Schools. The total of replies received were 31%.

Quality assurance has been considered a strategic importance for LIS schools in at least two approaches: 1) the professional association accreditation of the program, 2) the government agency accreditation of the program. There is a third quality assurance model, based on educational standards, less used in LIS schools (only 10%), focused on the educational process. The survey has shown that there is often (58%) the same quality assessment procedure, in four steps: 1) external evaluation always begins with self-evaluation, 2) site visit (evaluation by impartial experts, usually from the field of study concerned) using LIS or general guidelines, 3) public reports (of which only 41% are publicly available) are then done, 4) follow up. Regarding what quality assurance covers, it can be said that quality assurance in LIS is more focused on resources and curriculum design (76% and 64%) than on outcomes (52%) and student evaluation (58%).

The main finding of the survey has been a quality model, which is based on a taxonomy(ies) covering quality criteria/processes/definitions to describe, specify, and understand critical properties, characteristics, and metrics of quality in LIS. Three models of quality assurance have emerged from various LIS guidelines and standards: 1) program orientation, 2) educational process orientation, 3) learning outcomes orientation.

Further studies are needed for developing an international policy approach to quality assurance and accreditation.

Recommendations are given for stimulating sharing data and experiences between LIS Schools and creating link between quality assurance and recognition collaborating inside IFLA Sections.

Survey objectives[Survey questions
Existence of a quality assurance system Who is accrediting	1) Is the LIS program evaluated by a body outside the School?
Ways to review performance	2) How often does a formal evaluation of the LIS program take place? 4) Is a self-evaluation report delivered to the evaluating body? 5) Do site visits take place? 6) What standards and guidelines are used for the LIS program evaluation? 7) Is a follow up evaluation report made publicly available, not limited to School/University?
Ways to look at performance indicators Ways to look at outcomes	8) What aspects of the LIS program are evaluated?

7. The analysis of data was done with a view to developing a typology of approaches to assessing quality and to understanding the different rationales used. (February-June 2005).
8. A database containing the questionnaire results and the quality indicators in LIS was built. This will be available online for research and will be updated continuously (From July 2005 onward).

outcomes assessment process is not only important for quality assurance: it also enables the lifelong learner, from students to full professional status, to trace their progress through the identification and recognition of knowledge and skills acquisition and further training needs (Brine, Feather 2003). Some indicators relate to professionalism by identifying competencies and knowledge mastery, and critical skills such as problem solving and the ability to apply practical knowledge. (Special Libraries Association 2004; Association of College and Research Libraries 1992) The quality assurance model in this case is based on individual certification and stresses the transformative concept of quality assessment and proscribes ways to measure it.

These three approaches correspond to the different phases of the educational cycle. Most LIS schools use a combination of the three approaches. The three approaches are listed in *Table 1 Taxonomy of LIS quality assurance models*, indicating the quality evaluation elements of: accreditors, purposes of evaluation and related indicators, time frame, typical output of the evaluation process and definition of the quality underlined concept.

(i) Tab. 1 Taxonomy of LIS Quality Assurance Models			
Quality Assurance Models	Programme orientation	Educational Process orientation	Learning outcomes orientation
Assessor or accreditor	Government Agency, Professional Association External review committee University Audit	Internal assessment, University Audit	Professional Association Educational assessors Participation of students
Purpose of assessment	Accountability Customer protection	Improvement of the learning experience	Improvements in the quality of the student achievements, competences or employability
Indicators	Organisational structure Resources in terms of funding, staff numbers and IT/Library facilities Number of students, drop - out rates, recruitment Course content and design Staff	Validation and approval frameworks Level and standards Support for learning Responsiveness to learner backgrounds and preferences, pedagogy	Assessment of student learning outcomes through exams and/or employee evaluations Placement in employment Student evaluation of the learning experience Complaints and appeals
Time frame	Periodic	Continuous	Programme lifecycle
Typical output	Accreditation of the programme	Self improvement report	Certification of student/learner achievements
Information sharing	Publication of results	Internal report	Individual Certification, Publication of results
Quality Concept	Fitness for purposes, Value for money	Exceptional, Perfection	Transformative

activities. Individuals complete a set of tasks which are assessed against criterion-referenced national standards and, if deemed to be satisfactory, a national recognised qualification is awarded.

4.3.2 Ways to review performance

The quality assurance procedure usually has four steps:

- periodical evaluation process;
- self-assessment;
- site visit;
- follow up report.

The quality assurance process most frequently (66% of the respondents) takes place every two to five years, with self-assessment and site visits combined represent 58% of those who replied. Few programs produced a follow up report and there was not much evidence of providing publicity about the reports. Only 38% indicated that they produced publicity about the results of the evaluation process.

Most of the respondents said that guidelines are followed. Typically the guidelines are part of an accreditation handbook or policy manual that contains a description of the accrediting process, the eligibility requirements, relevant policies that institutions must address in the self study reports and other documentation developed to assist institutions that are preparing a self study and conducting evaluation and assessment exercises. The policy generally elucidate standards and relate to their application.

Tab. 6 Quality assurance procedure		
Frequency	Replies	%
- annually	5	10
- two to five years	33	66
- over five years	1	2
- other	4	8
Self assessment	30	60
Site visit	29	58
Follow up report		
- publicly available	19	38
- not publicly available	6	12

The quality assurance process in four steps is used, with little differences, in all the regional areas and seems to be recognised as the best practice to be followed.

Differences remain for the follow up of the quality assurance evaluation, as the report is not always produced and if it is, is not often distributed to public.

Tab. 9 Performance indicators by Area

Area	Resources in terms of funding, staff numbers and IT/Library facilities	Number of students, drop - out rates, recruitment	The design and content of the program	Other
Africa	1	1	1	
Asia and Oceania	6	6	6	2
Europe	19	14	24	6
Latin America and Caribbean	4	3	5	2
North America	2	2	2	2

4.3. 4 Ways to look at outcomes

An outcomes focus is less prevalent than the use of input measures. Students are involved in quality assurance in only 58% of countries. Learning outcomes are used by only 52% of countries, at different educational levels.

Tab. 10 Outcomes	Replies	%
Student evaluation of the learning experience	29	58
Assessment of student learning outcomes through exams and/or employers evaluations	26	52
Other	9	18

A regional review of the importance attached to these factors show more similarities than differences. For instance learning outcomes approach is diffused in Asia, Africa and North America (100%), while student evaluation is less used. In Europe and Latin America student evaluation is preferred, while learning outcomes assessment is less used. It should be noted that the Bologna process is aiming to focus on this latter approach and in the future the situation can change. In Latin America, outcomes based approach is about 40%, looking both at learning outcomes and students satisfaction. In North America the outcomes based approach is very popular and widely used..

Other indicators are related to: staff teaching evaluation for promotion, the percentage of students working after graduation, relevance to the labour market, and research done by students.

Tab. 11 Outcomes by Area

	Assessment of student learning outcomes	Student evaluation of the learning experience	Other
Africa	1	1	
Asia and Oceania	6	4	2
Europe	15	20	4
Latin America and Caribbean	2	2	1
North America	2	2	2

* It should be noted that only recently the ALA Committee on Accreditation added learning outcomes to indicators. They were not on the 1992 version of the standard.

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(Web sites accessed December 2005)

Annex 1

**Quality assurance models
in LIS programs**

A survey

Conducted by



**International Federation of Library Associations
and Institutions**

Education and Training Section

October 2004

4.

4. Dear Colleague,

In today's global arena, Library and Information Science (LIS) is increasingly becoming a global knowledge sector. Whether an opportunity or a challenge, internationalisation cannot fail to be central to IFLA for the development of library and information professionals. The real pressure is coming from the greater opportunities for global mobility of employment, to which the Quality Assurance (QA) and Accreditation agencies are being compelled to respond on an international basis. The need to reinforce the comparability of Higher Education internationally through quality assurance systems is now becoming more pressing for learner protection, greater transparency of qualifications and increasing international cooperation of national quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

The survey intends to contribute to the current debate by investigating existing models, procedures, methods and institutions responsible for QA. We are specifically interested in how the quality of your LIS program is evaluated.

The questionnaire is primarily aimed at members of *SET*, the Section Education and Training of the IFLA. However, we would appreciate if you send us names and addresses of other stakeholders which are knowledgeable and competent in the field.

The data gathered will be kept and processed strictly confidential and anonymously throughout the entire survey and analysis task.

The questionnaire is composed of these elements:

- Definition of key terms;
- Details on respondent;
- Questionnaire about existing QA systems in your country;
- Documentation.

The completion of the questionnaire will require about **15 minutes** of your time.

Thank you for your support in advance.

Sincerely yours,

Anna Maria Tammaro

Deadline: 15 December 2004

**Please return the questionnaire
by email to annamaria.tammaro@unipr.it.**

**or send by mail to:
Anna Maria Tammaro
Via Montebeni 9
50014 Fiesole (Firenze)
Italy**

Annex 2 LIS Quality Guidelines

LIS Guidelines	Unit of analysis	Ways of looking at performance	Ways of looking at outcomes	Ways to review performance
ALISE	Program	Faculty Students Curriculum Revenues and expenditures Continuing education		Annual statistical report
ALA-APA certifications	Certification Program	Needs assessment Curriculum design and delivery Assessment exam and planned evidence of results Target audience Eligibility requirements	Analysis of results from individual certification programs, Survey and analysis of the perceptions of those with the certification that it: Aided their career advancement Increased their ability to be effective in their library position Ability of the certification program to sustain itself financially, Assessment of the credibility and influence of the certification program throughout ALA and in the library field.	The competencies and requirements for professional practice (e.g., the body of knowledge, required experience, mandated skills) in a specialty will be established by the appropriate ALA division
ALA-COA (Accredited by CHEA and member of ASPA)	Program	Mission, goals, objectives; Curriculum content; Faculty or faculty recruitment plans; Students recruitment, pre-requisite; Physical resources and facilities; Administration and financial support; Evaluation plan.	Desired learning outcomes assessment* Way of accommodate various learning styles; Way of encouraging students to practice and apply their learning * The phrase "outcomes assessment" does not appear in the 1992 Standards.	Measures of aims and objectives achievement; Resources effectively used; Departmental and program evaluation; Students achievements: basic skills, thinking and practice in the discipline, preparations for lifelong learning. Examinations Performances Student work Alumni survey Employer feedback

LIS Guidelines	Unit of analysis	Ways of looking at performance	Ways of looking at outcomes	Ways to review performance
ALCTS Educational Policy Statement	Program			The standards are advisory only.
Australian Library and Information Association ALIA	Program			ALIA course recognition is for a maximum of seven years. However, it also requires an annual course return which is scrutinised and if unsatisfactory may result in queries and recommendations that aspects of the program be addressed. Education Policy statements and the statement 'Library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes' at http://www.alia.org.au/policies/
American Association of Law Libraries (AALL)	Outcomes	The document is divided into two sections: general competencies and subject competencies.	Areas of general competency include: 1) Reference and Research Services; 2) Library Management; 3) Collection Management; 4) Organization and Classification. Graduate library education for law librarianship must, at a minimum, provide basic competencies in: 1) the Legal System; 2) the Legal Profession and Its Terminology; 3) Literature of the Law; 4) Law and Ethics	The standards are advisory only.
American Association of School Librarians (AASL)	Outcomes		Position Statement on preparation of School Library Media Specialists	The standards are advisory only.
American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST)	Outcomes		Include six general areas Foundations of Information Information Use and Users Methods of Inquiry Information Processing Information Technology Information Service Provision and Management	The standards are advisory only.

LIS Guidelines	Unit of analysis	Ways of looking at performance	Ways of looking at outcomes	Ways to review performance
CERTIdoc	Outcomes	Competences Diploma (Level 1: in Higher Education; other Levels: secondary studies) or	Self-assessment	Assessment of items in the dossier; Interview; Decision of the Certification Committee Renewal

