# Digitalisation of Quality Assurance:

# Lessons from the COVID-19 Disruption for the Future

**December 2020**

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*This publication was produced with financial support from the **German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).***

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# A. Executive Summary

## The objectives of the project

The project called for an overview of the frameworks and models in the digitalisation of the QA, good practices in the implementation of QA processes and e-learning frameworks and standards and a short glossary of key terms. It also called for the analysis of pilot virtual site visits (VSV) to identify opportunities for and challenges to the continuation of VSVs in the future; and an outline for effective VSVs and recommendations which could enhance the Indonesian National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education / *Badan Akreditasi Nasional Perguruan Tinggi* (BAN-PT) virtual site accreditation.

## The methodology of project

The report is structured in a way that makes the project methodology transparent; the activities carried out enabled the project coordinators to address the objectives stated above. Further information on each of these is to be found in the relevant section of the report.

## State of digitalisation of quality assurance

This section of the report seeks to answer three questions:

- How have QAAs adopted digital tools and technologies in their internal management?
- How have QAAs responded to accredit distance and online learning modalities?
- How have QAAs used digital tools and technologies in accreditation?

It can be concluded that significant digitalisation of workflows processes and assessment activities has been undertaken, although the rate and extent of the digitalisation are uneven. Useful lessons may be learned from this global experience; however, such lessons must be considered, first and foremost, in the light of the national context. There are many guidelines and frameworks on accreditation of online learning which can be leveraged on by BAN-PT. Most importantly, they must be fit for the purpose for which they are needed in the Indonesian context and considered accordingly.

Notably, the literature scanned did not indicate any virtual assessment prior to the pandemic. None of the selected QA agencies featured in Table 1 practised virtual site assessment as part of its accreditation. The undisputed value of site presence of assessors is palpable though unstated.

## Analysis of VSV recordings

Twelve video recordings of virtual site visits (VSV) conducted by BAN-PT were viewed for the purposes of this report. Their analysis yielded four key notable points:

- That the VSV was the same as the physical site visit (PSV) in all but two aspects: the former involved virtual meetings and a digital data repository;
- The virtual presence boosted the confidence of institutions;
- Assessment is focused on indicators highlighted prior to VSV, and
- Current year changes were not assessed.

Each of these points is dealt with in full in section H below.

## Lessons from the focus groups

The project coordinators met with four focus groups, which were organised and facilitated by BAN-PT:

- BAN-PT staff
- Institutional representatives
- Assessors and
- Validators

As for the recordings of the VSVs carried out so far, the focus groups also indicated that there is no essential difference between PSV and VSV except that, for many respondents, the VSV offers more convenience. However, this was balanced by the acknowledgement of some loss of contextual insight.

It was clear that the VSV adds burden to the workload of BAN-PT support staff and connectivity issues, although not overwhelming, were mentioned by participants in all four focus groups.

The discussions also revealed a need for an updated evidence list to be given to institutions and, to date, the final part of any 'normal' accreditation model, the follow-up, has not been undertaken as yet. This may reveal further learning points if and when the follow-up process either for the VSVs or for those institutions who are due a follow-up from a previous PSV begins.

## Lessons from the case studies

Case studies from the Malaysian Qualifications Authority (MQA) and the Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (AQU Catalunya) are provided. These international case studies provide a useful reference for BAN-PT. Both QAAs had no strategy or plans to go virtual even though they had digitalised many aspects of their accreditation activities. Each of these QAAs developed

the virtual visits in a way appropriate to their respective contexts and concerns, and BAN-PT will recognise many of the challenges that they faced as well as finding the practice that may be usefully considered.

## Guidance on effective virtual visits

After the health emergency was declared by the Indonesian government, and in order to resume accreditations successfully, BAN-PT issued a Guide to Virtual Site Assessment in June 2020. The Guide was intended to help all parties to adapt the regular physical site visit to the modalities required by the pandemic restrictions.

The Guide adhered unequivocally to the conventional physical site visit in all areas, except on the physical presence of assessors on-site, the online access to data, and information related to the institutional or programme accreditation for the assessors. It sought to ensure that the VSV does not in any way represent a less robust assessment of the institution. These facts were borne out in the analysis of the recordings of VSVs and in the focus groups.

BAN-PT provided a video conferencing tool and group briefings for assessors and institutions on the technical and information preparation and contingency planning to handle power and internet disruptions. It also provided financial assistance to the assessors (IDR 100,000) for connection charges.

## Recommendations for BAN-PT

The report sets out its recommendations under 9 headings:

- Data, Information and Evidence
- Briefing and training
- Follow up on the VSV

- Wider stakeholder consultation on the VSV
- VSV as part of an overall accreditation policy
- Potential change in the objective of PSV and VSV
- Guidance on how emergency measures will be considered in the 2020 accreditation applications
- Adaptation of existing standards to online learning
- Mitigating inequality to be made part of the QA agenda

A total of 13 recommendations are intended to assist BAN-PT and the higher education sector in Indonesia to consider the national accreditation processes in the light of the response to the current pandemic and as a means of considering any post-pandemic changes, developments or improvements.

## B. Acknowledgements

# C. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a global impact on the acceleration of the implementation of online and digital teaching, learning and assessment in higher education. Providers have responded with varying degrees of readiness but, in general, have one thing in common: responses have been, to a large extent, based on a state of emergency rather than following the usual developmental trajectory that might be followed to ensure planning and testing that will allow embedding of best practice.

The accreditation system in Indonesia has been no exception to this state of rapid, emergency response. Globally, the question of how standards and quality in higher education will be maintained has been raised, along with the relevance of education outcomes delivered through online and blended teaching modes.

This project proposal to work with the Indonesian national accreditation body, BAN-PT, in support of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, takes as its very broadest starting point, the following facts that have been gleaned by international responses to the COVID-19 crisis to date:

- That there is a need to differentiate between processes that are implemented to cope in a time of crisis and those processes that are informed by the situation to develop new, sustainable ways of working that may be implemented post-crisis;

- That, globally, there is a significant amount of information, guidance and good practice around the subject of online external quality assurance measures. However, much of it has been implemented in response to the crisis and its sustainability and/or applicability in a variety of national contexts has not yet been tested;

- That there is evidence to suggest that the impact of the crisis on the quality assurance of higher education is more manageable if there is a strong institutional approach to internal quality assurance and that this will impact on the need for flexible external quality assurance processes;

- That the relationship between three key stakeholders (the external QA agency, the institutions, and students) must be taken into account when seeking to adopt a new methodology for online quality assurance. All three have had to respond rapidly to the crisis and their views on what worked well and what was less successful in terms of burden, user-friendliness and reliability of outcomes will have an impact on recommendations. Any transformation must be appropriate for all three;

- That the impact of any new methodology for external accreditation processes (in this case, online) may have an impact on the governance and resources of the agency and also on its ability to manage expectations of trust and confidence across the wider public, the national HE sector and internationally.

In this context, the study puts the Ministry of Education and Culture and BAN-PT at the forefront of testing new ways of working in relation to online accreditation and the opportunities, challenges and risks of doing so. This will be of international interest.

## D. Purpose and Scope of the Project

The stated purpose of the project was to "develop an analysis report on the practical approach of an effective online site-visit as well as accreditation system for online and blended learning, with recommendations of good practices implemented by other Southeast Asian countries".

The scope of the study was stated as being:

- An overview of existing EQA models and mechanisms in the field of digitalisation and quality assurance (e.g. selected good practice examples regarding the use of IT tools during the implementation of EQA processes, references to existing e-learning standards and frameworks, a short glossary on key terms and references);

- An analysis of assessment site visits in Indonesia that have been piloted online to identify opportunities and challenges to conducting online accreditation in the future. Provision of suggestions on process and procedures implemented via the SAPTO System (BAN-PT's online accreditation platform);

- The creation of an outline for conducting effective online site visits to streamline BAN-PT's accreditation processes, and

- The development of recommendations for BAN-PT based on good practices of online-based accreditation systems implemented in other countries in Southeast Asia and globally.

In any project of this kind, the boundaries of the scope are permeable; some of the recommendations made go somewhat beyond the scope. However, they are pertinent to the context within which the project is set and help to place the rest of the report in that context. They also serve to link the outcomes of this project with outcomes from other global and regional trends and recommendations.

## E. Project Methodology

This report is structured in a way that makes the project methodology transparent. The authors carried out the following activities:

- Environmental scanning
- Study of BAN-PT's documentation (its accreditation instrument(s), guidelines pertaining to changes to process in relation to the pandemic, and the recordings of virtual site visits)
- Focus group discussion with institutions, assessors, validators and BAN-PT support staff
- Regional and international case studies

Further information on each of these is to be found in the relevant section of the report. The activities allowed for recommendations to flow from what was learned about the national, Indonesian context and to set that in an international framework where that was deemed to be useful.

# F. Overview of Environmental Scanning

How has digitalisation affected the quality assurance agencies (QAAs)? To what extent QAAs have embraced digital technology in the delivery of its mission. A simple framework[1] can be used to depict the extent and locus of digitalisation in QA in terms of the QAAs, the subject of the quality assessment and the methodology employed to carry out the assessment (See Fig 1).

## 1. How have QAAs adopted digital tools and technologies in their internal management?

QAAs have, to varying degrees, employed digital technologies to organise, manage, operate, monitor and control the different activities to carry out their respective missions (e.g. see assessment reports of national QAAs on the European Quality Assurance Register; Asia-Pacific Quality Register; International Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education). The need to be efficient, effective, and accountable to stakeholders compels these agencies to be responsive to digital technologies which can reduce costs, increase work flexibility, expand access and enhance the productivity of its quality assurance activities. QAAs have been able to reach out and maintain regular contact with stakeholders - universities, academic staff, students, regulators and assessors through the information and communication technology. The QAA website provides access to all the guidelines, standards and other resources which supports the internal and external quality assurance of higher education. This digital window enables the public to review assessment reports, surveys of Higher Education Institutions'
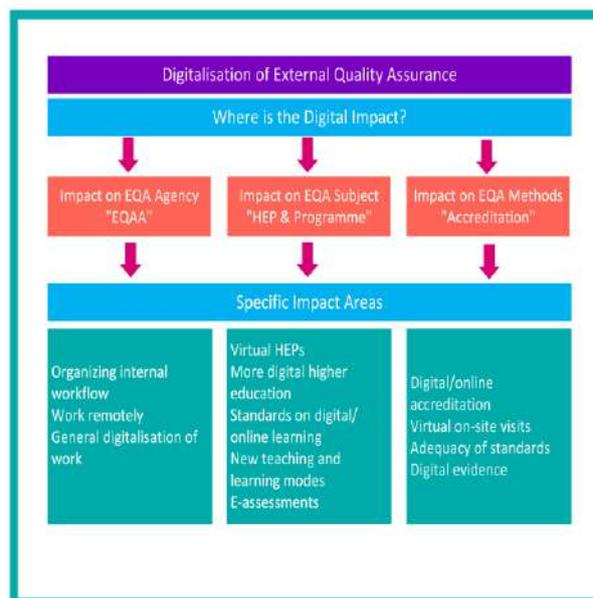


Fig. 1: Digitalisation of Quality Assurance Agencies –

(HEIs') practices and in many cases, check on the status or standing of institutions.

Many QA frameworks expect QAAs to use modern technologies in their QA activities. One project supported by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) has adapted the parts of *Standards and Guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) to online learning context to help institutions and QAAs to plan, implement, and carry out internal and external reviews of e-learning provision (Huertas, Esther, et al., 2018).

As online and e-learning became more common and more embedded, fully online institutions emerged offering all levels of academic awards through distance online learning. QAAs developed new standards to assess this category of institutions. Many frameworks (e.g. Commonwealth of Learning, Distance Education Accreditation

Commission - DEAC) emerged to help understand the key characteristics of this mode of delivery. DEAC in the US is a good example of a dedicated QAA for distance learning institutions which are invariably fully online education providers.

## 2. How have QAAs responded to accredit distance and online learning modalities?

Today, almost all EQAAs have developed standards to quality assure online distance learning. By and large, they have merely added new dimensions focused on the technology-based or technology-intensive learning to the conventional institutional or programme standards. Increasingly, this grafting approach to distance or online learning standards is questioned (Abdullah, 2020). Recognising the growing trend towards online distance learning, and also the lingering questions on the parity of quality of such learning with its conventional cousin, regional bodies have spearheaded new frameworks (e.g. APEC E-learning Toolkits, 2019) to bring the same level of recognition to this modality.

In the meantime, conventional residential and in-person education providers are adopting online learning as a key supplementary teaching and learning modality. For example Babson Surveys (2017, 2018) show that most conventional universities in the USA are offering more online courses and most learners have attended at least one online course. Blended and hybrid models of teaching and e-learning by all HEIs have disrupted the neat taxonomy i.e. conventional vs distance and online. Increasingly programme assessments are compelled to adopt a multimodal approach to be inclusive, comprehensive, effective, and useful. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has identified this growing duality or blending especially in

the wake of the pandemic and the pivot to online instruction as a major challenge to QAAs in their assessment work in the immediate years (Eaton, J, 2020).

## 3. How have QAAs used digital tools and technologies in accreditation?

QAAs have employed digital tools to facilitate accreditation activities. The preparation for accreditation, the submission of reports, the presentation of evidence (at least the core evidence), the communication with universities and assessors, and the preparation of final assessment reports have, to varying degrees, utilised digital tools and technologies, and have benefited from it. It has reduced costs, streamlined processes, enabled some auto-checks, and rendered the processes more transparent. Table 1 shows the extent to which selected QAAs in the region and beyond used digital tools and technologies to carry out quality assurance prior to the pandemic.

The mandatory physical site visit has been remarkably resilient in the face of developing technologies prior to the pandemic. The on-site assessor presence, the observation and interaction with institutional members at all levels are still deemed to be critical in understanding the less observable cultural organisation to better appreciate the sustainability of the processes and practices. This is evidenced by what the project coordinators heard during the focus group interviews (see Section I).

## Conclusions from the Environmental Scanning

1. QAAs have digitalised their internal workflows and processes, assessment activities and have also developed guidelines on digital, online or e-

learning modalities in institutions. The rate of the digitalisation is understandably uneven.

2. Although there are useful lessons to be gained from the survey of digitalisation of QA practices, the question of what, when, how, where, and to what purpose digitalisation should be pursued are questions that must be nationally situated. An ecosystems approach is a practical way forward - QAAs operate within a national system of providers and stakeholders each with its own attitude to and different levels of readiness for digitalisation.

(national) purpose. Adopting generic standards or standards developed for different national contexts may be suboptimal or have unintended effects.

4. Most notably, the literature scanned did not indicate virtual site assessment prior to the pandemic. None of the selected QA agencies featured in Table 1 practised virtual site assessment as part of its accreditation. The undisputed value of the on-site presence of assessors is palpable though unstated.

5. The reports since March 2020 almost

| | EQA | Submission of accreditation documents | Pre-visit Report by Panel | Evidence | Standard Site Visit | Post-visit Report by Panel |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **BAN-PT** (Indonesia) | Online** | Online | On-Site | Physical | Online |
| 2 | **MQA** (Malaysia) | Soft copy* | Soft copy | Soft copy & On-Site | Physical | Soft copy |
| 3 | **FAA** (Malaysia) | Online | Online | Soft copy & On-Site | Physical | Online |
| 4 | **ONESQA** (Thailand) | Online | Soft copy | Soft copy & On-Site | Physical | Soft copy |
| 5 | **PAASCU** (Philippines) | Soft copy | Soft copy | On-Site | Physical | Soft copy |
| 6 | **HKCAAVQ** (Hong Kong, SAR) | online | Soft copy | On-Site | Physical | Soft copy |
| 7 | **QAA** (United Kingdom) | Online | Online | Soft copy & On-Site | Physical | Soft copy |
| 9 | **AQU** (Catalunya, Spain) | Online | Online | Online & On-site | Physical | Online |

Table 1: Digitalisation of Accreditation Practices Among Selected Quality Assurance Agencies Before the Pandemic

* Documents are prepared <u>offline</u> using a standard template and submitted online (Email, Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.) to the QAA.
 ** The documentation is completed using an <u>online</u> template provided by the QAA.

3. There are many guidelines and frameworks on accreditation of online learning which can be leveraged on by BAN-PT. The adoption, adaptation or development of standards and guidelines for accreditation of online teaching and learning must be fit for

universally show that all QAAs have, in response to the pandemic, resorted to digital/online means of working remotely, resumed assessment activities through online mechanisms and employed some form of a virtual site visit to continue with the planned

assessments of institutions or programmes. The rapid digitalisation by QAAs in response to the COVID-19 crisis is not one guided by a clear strategy. It is driven by practical necessity. BAN-PT should think carefully about changes to QA practices that have been compelled by the pandemic and consider their sustainability if they were to be continued in the future.

## G. BAN-PT's Guidelines for the Virtual Site Visit (VSV)

After the health emergency was declared by the Indonesian government, all physical accreditation visits ceased. Institutions, students and other stakeholders were distressed by the cessation of accreditation activities. Recognising the need to resume the accreditation service, BAN-PT issued a directive to recommence accreditation visits virtually (*Peraturan BAN-PT* No. 5, 2020). To adapt the regular physical site visit modalities to the pandemic restrictions, BAN-PT issued a Guide to Virtual Site Assessment in June 2020.

The Guide adhered unequivocally to the conventional physical site visit in all areas except on the physical presence of assessors site and the online access to data and information related to the institutional or programme accreditation for the assessors. The Guide itemised the data and information to be provided by the institutions and indexed as per the indicators in the institutional (IAPT 3.0) or programme (IAPT 4.0) accreditation instruments. The instruments, templates, reports, the objectives of the visit, the assessment schedule and the participants to be interviewed remain the same. This is to ensure that the VSV does not in any way

represent a less robust assessment of the institution.

BAN-PT provided a video conferencing tool and its three support staff managed the technical matters and attendance taking. BAN-PT left the site operation – hosting, screen sharing etc.- of the meeting systems to the assessors. In addition, BAN-PT provided group briefings for assessors and institutions on the technical and information preparation and contingency planning to handle power and Internet disruptions. Their briefings ensured clearer communication of the needs and expectations on all sides. BAN-PT also provided IDR 100,000 as financial assistance to the assessors for connection charges.

## H. Analysis of the Selected Virtual Site Visits Carried out by BAN-PT

The list of virtual site visit (VSV) recordings provided by BAN-PT and viewed and analysed for this report are included as Annex 3 of this report. Annex 3 provides key descriptive information on the institutions, programmes, and assessors involved in these virtual site visits. A total of 16 VSV recordings were provided for viewing but only 12 video recordings were viewed for this analysis due to technical issues with the others.

**Observations of the Virtual Site Visit Recordings**

1. The VSV followed the same audit schedule as the physical site visits (PSV) as per the VSV Guide issued by BAN-PT.
2. The assessors utilised the same template as in the PSV to confirm the accuracy of the data and description

provided in the self-evaluation report (SER) and the institutional performance report (IPR) submitted to BAN-PT.

3. A guideline was issued to the institutions opting to undertake VSV on the preparations in terms of systems, connectivity, protocols, documents, and participants.

4. A live group online briefing is provided by BAN-PT to the assessors and the institutions on the guidelines for virtual assessment.

5. The daily schedules including rest and breaks followed the PSV.

6. The focus of the VSV, just like the PSV, was on the confirmation and/or correction of information provided either as data or descriptions of processes and practices through the SER and the IPR. The assessors appear to have highlighted specific indicators which required clarification from the institution. Pre-visit assessment is used to inform the prioritisation of areas for clarification.

7. There were frequent breaks in communication while assessors checked the data or description in their templates before proceeding to other questions.

8. In all cases reviewed, two assessors were assigned to conduct the VSV.

9. The VSV was scheduled and conducted over two days with the second day dedicated to consolidation, consultation and preparation of the executive summary of the assessment.

10. The physical facilities were displayed to the assessors through pictures and recorded video tours.

11. Most of the assessment time was spent with the accreditation team responsible for the information in the SER and IPR.

12. All evidence was stored in an online repository e.g. Google Drive and indexed to the indicators in the submission template to ensure easy access and reference. In some cases, documentary evidence was flashed on-screen for the assessors to view.

13. The quality of audio and video was good and generally, there was little disruption to the connection.

14. The atmosphere was cordial, friendly, respectful, and professional. In some cases, there was some tension when assessors pressed for further or better evidence of claimed practices.

15. The SER and IPR provided data and description of the educational activities in 2019 and earlier period (usually three years excluding the current year). Therefore, the assessment did not focus on current practices - online and remote teaching and learning, access to student and staff support services remotely, the ability of ICT services to cope with a sudden surge in usage. However, the assessors did inquire about the pivot to online teaching and learning in wake of the pandemic with the Rectors, and about online teaching with the staff and online learning with the students.

**Analysis of information from the recordings**

1. VSV = PSV plus two key innovations – virtual meetings and digital data depository.

The VSV mimicked the PSV in style, substance, and purpose as intended by the BAN-PT guideline. This level of similarity and familiarity with the site assessment process and protocol undoubtedly helped to assuage any anxiety institutions or assessors had in carrying out the VSV. The group briefings for assessors and institutions on the VSV guidelines appear

to have provided further clarification on roles and expectations and helped to resolve any outstanding concerns, questions and issues. The provision of data, information and evidence through a digital depository and the virtual interactions are the two innovations in VSV.

2. Virtual presence boosted the confidence of institutions.

It is indeed plausible that the virtual sessions increased the confidence of the institutions since the assessors are not in the institutions and therefore unable to observe the ambience, the environment, and the conditions personally and directly. The assessors have to rely on their virtual interactions to understand the data and the description or the text "without much-needed context". Assessors have to rely on any prior knowledge of the institutions, either through past assessments and/or academic visits to supplement their understanding of the context[2]. Assessors in the focus group discussion noted that while they preferred physical site presence, virtual presence did not materially affect their ability to carry out an objective and professional assessment.

3. Assessment is focused on indicators highlighted prior to VSV.

The assessors were focused on the verification and confirmation of the quantitative data and to a lesser extent, qualitative descriptions. Most of the observed corrections were in respect of the quantitative data (some of which were due to the misunderstanding of the requirements or terms, e.g. "Users of the Graduates/Pengguna Lulusan" did not include superiors but employers). The 2-

day VSV appears adequate as the assessors have already highlighted issues and areas on which they wanted clarification, confirmation, and verification. These questions are shared with the institutions prior to the VSV as per the Guideline.

4. Current Year Changes Not Assessed.

The assessment was focused on the practice in the period under review as documented in the SER and IPR. There is no assessment of the response to the pandemic in terms of the teaching, learning, assessment, student support services, safety, privacy and confidentiality, and equality. The assessment judgements are then about the conventional practices which are currently in pause mode. The quality may have been affected by the pandemic and the inability of the HEIs to respond rapidly. This is not part of the assessment although it was part of the discussion. This temporal scope might have played a big role in the smooth functioning of the VSV. The assessors and the institutions did not have to grapple with the new online learning modalities, its management, and quality assurance within the existing standards. This could have thrown up major issues which could have cast serious doubts about the VSV and is important in relation to recommendation number 11 in section L.

## I. Information Gained from the Focus Groups

The project coordinators met with four focus groups, which were organised and facilitated by BAN-PT:

- BAN-PT staff;

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assessed on the evidence submitted by the institutions and/or observed by the assessors.

- Institutional representatives;
- Assessors, and
- Validators

A good mix of type of institutions, subject of accreditation, and location of the institution was provided. For further information please refer to Annex 2.

Each group was asked a series of questions that followed the chronology of pre, during and post virtual site visit (VSV) to discover where they felt that the challenges lay in relation to a virtual rather than a physical site visit (PSV). They were also encouraged to discuss any opportunities arising from a VSV that might form part of a sustainable future process.

*Pre-VSV*

It was clear that the group most affected by the change to a VSV in terms of preparation is the staff of BAN-PT, particularly in relation to the workload of IT staff, although all administrative staff appear to be affected. Unlike the physical visits, the visit schedule and the Zoom links must be provided 10 days ahead of the visit to the assessors. The staff must prepare for and communicate the links and schedules much earlier than usual with as many as 50 VSVs that run concurrently. There is also a heightened need for monitoring to ensure that links continue to work and that there are no significant problems.

Also new for BAN-PT in terms of preparation is the organisation of a mass online briefing session for about 50 teams of assessors (50 institutions x 2 assessors = 100 assessors). This briefing involves the use of the online meeting tools, the instrument, and templates to be used and completed by the assessors, and the interview process. The participating institutions are also now provided with a

briefing on the preparations on their side in terms of the digital evidence and records to be provided to the assessor ahead of the visit, the senior managers, academic staff, support staff, students, alumni, employers, etc. who must be accessible online as per the schedule, the use of the online meeting tool, the computers, cameras, attendance signing, ensuring good stable internet connection and contingency arrangements for blackouts, presence of IT staff to troubleshoot at their end and the video tour of the physical facilities including a live video streaming of the facilities if required.

When the number of teams exceeds the 50 BAN-PT Zoom accounts, the IT staff try to solicit personal accounts from other staff to cope with the additional need.

Institutions must now prepare a digitised version of evidence listed in the BAN-PT Guideline (June 2020) and explained further during the briefing session organised by BAN-PT. This often takes some time as not all of these records and documents exist in soft copy. There is additional work to digitise, organise and upload the evidence ahead of the VSV and ensure that it is up to date.

Institutions must have the IT and accreditation team on standby to retrieve any data, record, and documents which the assessors require. There is a mandatory list of documents which institutions are required to upload. Often additional documents are requested by assessors prior to the visit and during the VSV. These unplanned and impromptu requests are stressful as the accreditation team tries its best to meet these requests quickly lest the institution is seen as inefficiently organised.

Institutions review their Internet speed in campus and also in the homes of staff, students, and others who will be linking up

on Zoom as part of the VSV. They have also increased their internet speed to a level that supports stable audio and video transmission. In areas where there are frequent power failures, institutions also get backup generators to minimise disruptions to the online meeting.

Nonetheless, institutions did not feel that preparation for a VSV was more arduous than for a PSV. Indeed, some expressed a preference for the VSV.

Assessors felt that the main difference is that it is now not possible for them to back up their preparation by 'seeing and feeling.' They have to accept what they see on the screen and cannot immerse themselves in the institution as experienced by its staff and students. A preference for PSV was expressed as it is a more realistic setting for clarification and verification. Previous visits to campus also help in this regard.

Both assessors and institutions praised BAN-PT for the business-like way in which it dealt with the crisis and appreciated that BAN-PT worked very hard to ensure that they receive all information and documentation without delay.

*During VSV*

Following on from the preparation issues for BAN-PT staff described in the previous section, on the day of the VSV, staff experience a rush early in the morning by assessors to be registered as co-host so that they can share the screens without any issues. BAN-PT staff have to deal with this early morning, deluge of requests alongside any other technical issues. For example, on the day of the interview, 60 concurrent VSVs were underway. All available staff (mainly IT) must be on hand to deal with any requests that may come from assessors and institutions.

Connection problems are an issue that was reported by all groups and this can be exacerbated in rural areas. Institutions reported having their IT team on standby to deal with any technical issues that arise from device, software, and connection. Frequently, there are connectivity issues due to low Internet speed which impedes smooth communication – particularly audio quality and stalled video. However, the protocols developed by BAN-PT were deemed to be very clear and helpful.

However, the institutions felt that there is no significant difference in the process and scope of assessment. The guidelines state that all aspects of the VSV will be the same as the PSV except that in the VSV the assessors are engaging the institutions online from remote sites. If the mandatory list of evidence issued by BAN-PT is comprehensive i.e. includes all documents assessors need, then institutions would be better organised and not distracted during the assessment. The institutions agreed that the use of digital or digitised evidence is a smart move and in line with green and eco-friendly agendas. Further, some institutions which were moving to online teaching, learning and communication welcome the virtual visits as some form of validation of their transformation.

The institutions also recognised the advantages of VSV in keeping everyone safe from the virus, it allowed the assessors to perform their assessment from the comfort of their office or home which reduced cost and saved the travel time. They also saw the VSV as a remarkably effective way of organising the alumni, practitioners, employers, and civic organisations to participate in the VSV. These groups can be in various locations and yet engage with the assessors as part of the assessment. Bringing all these

groups to campus poses a huge challenge to the institutional accreditation team.

One institution opined (with others agreeing) that the VSV is a more transparent assessment approach as the assessors share their template screen and make corrections and changes online based on the clarifications provided by the institution representatives. This reduces the anxiety of not knowing what the assessors are recording in their template which will eventually affect the score and the accreditation grade. However, they did comment that it is difficult for assessors to assess all the criteria in a limited time.

Assessors noted that all documents are stored in public or private cloud storage e.g. Google Drive so that they can be accessed at any time. They did not believe that the VSV impacts on the effectiveness of the new instrument and indeed, believed that the whole process can run more efficiently now. In contrast to the assessors who felt that something was missing from a VSV, some assessors said that they did not miss the interactions as they could now focus on their section of the report and do not have to do this in real time.

Assessors also pointed out that it is possible to verify a lot of data more quickly in a virtual situation. However, without a PSV, it is difficult for assessors to get a clear understanding of the levels of a QA system in an institution. During a PSV, it is easier to see what is happening on the ground. A PSV is useful for checking implementation and it is easier to find different ways to ask questions if there is a clear lack of understanding. A VSV limits the amount of cross-checking that the assessors can do.

Assessors suggested that mixed mode might be a possible future model, where data can be verified more quickly virtually,

but inconsistencies between data and documentation and other more qualitative matters could be discussed at a PSV.

*Post-VSV*

Due to public administration requirements, the BAN-PT staff, especially the IT section, must ensure that the recordings of the VSV are saved, indexed and stored in the cloud storage for future use or reference. Given a large number of VSVs taking place, managing the recordings is a major new task for the staff.

The reports and other claims processing are no different from physical visits. These processes are carried out online and also automated but the throughput has risen.

The staff clearly prefer the physical site visit which they perceived to be easier to manage and demand less from them. On the contrary, VSV is more intense and involves new tasks, technology and challenges.

The staff also believed that assessors who are more tech-savvy prefer the VSV while the older and less tech-savvy assessors prefer the PSV. Since they do not deal with the reports and its content, they do not know if the VSV affected the quality of the report. BAN-PT staff think that most assessors would prefer to work on-site rather than virtually as the VSV weakens the interactions that they might have with institutional and programme staff, although they also acknowledged that this would improve in the future as assessors become more used to working online.

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Institutions have not noticed any differences in the report from the VSV.

Assessors said that there is now more flexibility to prepare the report although

the move to online is demanding on time as assessors are now teaching, carrying out meetings, assessing, etc. all online. They also said that, since reports are vetted by BAN-PT, there should be no reason to be less confident about the quality of the VSV report.

Validators are unanimous that there is no difference in the quality of the reports that they work with as they are focusing on the analysis that the assessors have carried out. They opined that PSV/VSV does not impact on the quality of an assessor's work – this is affected by how well the assessors understand the instrument and guidance that they have to follow.

The institution's ability to write a good self-review report may also have an impact on the report since this affects the evidence which the assessors are working with. In the case of a bad or weak self-review, the assessor's job will be more difficult on a VSV as this does not allow the panel to get a feel for the institution and what it is doing.

Validators believed that a PSV is more beneficial in terms of allowing the assessors to do an effective job but were clear that the quality of the reports following a VSV was not different to those following a PSV.

**Analysis of information from the focus groups**

1. No essential difference between PSV and VSV but VSV offers more convenience.

In general, the focus groups were balanced in their views of the benefits of a PSV versus a VSV. Institutions and assessors felt that there was no significant difference in terms

of the burden of preparation for the visit whether physical or virtual. Many pointed to the benefits of the VSV in adhering to the 'green' or environmental agenda, time saved due to lack of travel and, in the case of the institutions, a feeling that the VSV led to more transparency. Validators reported no difference in the quality of the reports they received, whether they were the result of a PSV or a VSV and believed that other factors, such as the assessor's adherence to the instrument were more important in this regard.

2. Some loss of contextual insight.

There was an acknowledgement that VSV limited the assessors' ability to back up the data with knowledge and 'feel for' the context of the institution, meaning that they were making decisions about the data without any qualitative information in which to ground it. The assessors were also quick to point out that this limitation did not impair their ability to conduct an objective and professional assessment.

3. Added burden on BAN-PT Support Staff.

There is clearly an impact on the workload of BAN-PT staff who at times had to manage up to 60 concurrent VSV sessions in a day. It is not surprising that they almost universally expressed a preference for the PSV.

4. Connectivity Issues.

Matters of connectivity and internet reliability were also mentioned by all groups as causing problems to a greater or lesser extent, and this is corroborated by the experience of the project coordinators in conducting VSVs in different parts of the world during the pandemic.

5. Need to update the evidence list.

All groups felt that the current instruments and standards are not affected by VSVs, although some institutional staff felt that they were unable to provide all the necessary information online. Institutions suggested that the data and information list should be expanded to cover all information assessors need or want so that it can be prepared ahead of the meeting.

6. No follow-up on VSV.

No follow-ups to VSVs have yet been organised, but BAN-PT is planning for VSVs next year so this is a matter that will need to be considered.

# J. International Case Studies

The two international case studies representing Southeast Asian and European QA emergency practices provide a useful reference to BAN-PT's plans to conduct and continue with accreditation through virtual site visits. Both QAAs had no strategy or plans to go virtual even though they had digitalised many aspects of their accreditation activities. Each of these QAAs developed the virtual visits in a way appropriate to their respective contexts and concerns.

## Case Study: Virtual site visits as carried out by AQU Catalunya (European Higher Education Area)

### Background

The Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency, AQU Catalunya, (http://www.aqu.cat/index_en.html), is the main instrument for the promotion and assurance of quality in the Catalan higher education system. AQU Catalunya is entrusted with the assessment, accreditation, and certification of quality in the universities and higher education institutions in Catalonia. The origins of AQU Catalunya lie in the consortium, Agency for the Quality of the University System in Catalonia, which was constituted on 29 October 1996. It was the first agency for quality in higher education to be set up in Spain. After the passing of the LUC (Catalan Universities Act, 2003) the consortium became the present-day Agency.

AQU Catalunya is regulated by the Act 15/2015 on the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency (published in the Official Journal of the Government of Catalonia, DOGC, dated 23 July 2015). The Act strengthens and reinforces AQU Catalunya as the main instrument for the promotion and assurance of quality in the Catalan higher education system with functions that are upgraded and up to date, a more flexible structure and better compliance with European standards.

AQU Catalunya is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and was one of the first three agencies to be included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). AQU is also a member of the Spanish Network of Spanish Quality Assurance Agencies (REACU) and of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE); AQU has hosted the Secretariat of INQAAHE since 2013. AQU Catalunya was the first European quality agency to be ISO certified.

AQU's role in all of these national and international networks is an active one; it has led on ENQA projects such as the TESLA project (see below) and on various nationally adopted external quality assurance methods in collaboration with REACU. As the host of the INQAAHE secretariat, the Agency is involved across all of the work of that organisation.

Today, AQU numbers some 50 members of staff of which 64% are direction or technical advisors and 36% provide administrative services. There are 613 assessors active in AQU's evaluation processes and in 2019, AQU held 8 face-to-face training sessions for its assessors. In the same year, it carried out 522 evaluations of different kinds: 145 at Bachelor level, 306 at Masters level and 71 at the level of PhD. It also carried out evaluations of teaching staff (see below for further details). Methodology and reference handbooks are published for all evaluation methods that the agency uses.

### Leading the Change

Two projects are worthy of particular mention:

1. At the international level, AQU Catalunya was a leading partner in the ENQA working group that focused on the applicability of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) to e-learning. It also represented ENQA is the Adaptive Trust-based e-assessment System for Learning – TeSLA project. The current COVID-19 pandemic has meant that AQU's experience in both of these areas has been highly regarded across the world.
   See: https://enqa.eu/indirme/papers-and-reports/occasional-papers/Considerations%20for%20QA%20of%20e-learning%20provision.pdf
   and
   https://tesla-project-eu.azurewebsites.net/

2. At the national level, AQU Catalunya was one of three leading agencies within the REACU network to develop and implement the *Docentia* method for evaluating higher education teaching staff. See: http://www.aqu.cat/professorat/merits_docencia/mad_en.html#.X8NJfM1KiUk

In 2019 AQU carried out an evaluation of 5407 CVs of teaching and research staff in the region. The methodology is now widely used across Spain and the Spanish autonomous regions.

### Accreditation

AQU Catalunya's principal accreditation activities are carried out at both institutional and programme level. Accreditation at the institutional level is relatively new and is intended to recognise the increasing maturity of the Catalan HE sector. *Ex ante* and *ex poste* accreditation of programmes has been and is still the most significant of the accreditation activities but any future accreditation at the institutional level will reduce the requirement for external programme level accreditation for the institution in question.

AQU provides a searchable database of all programmes in the Catalan HE system and their accreditation status. Depending on the methodology, accreditation can be for four or six years at the programme level or five years at the institutional level. All documentation for accreditation processes, including pre-COVID-19, is managed electronically. Assessors have a secure site in which they can make their initial comments before the site visit and work on the report post-site visit. Final accreditation reports are also in soft copy. Likewise, institutional self-assessment documents and evidence are uploaded to the secure site and are not produced in hard copy.

The management of the accreditation process from pre-booking, submission of applications, forwarding to accreditation
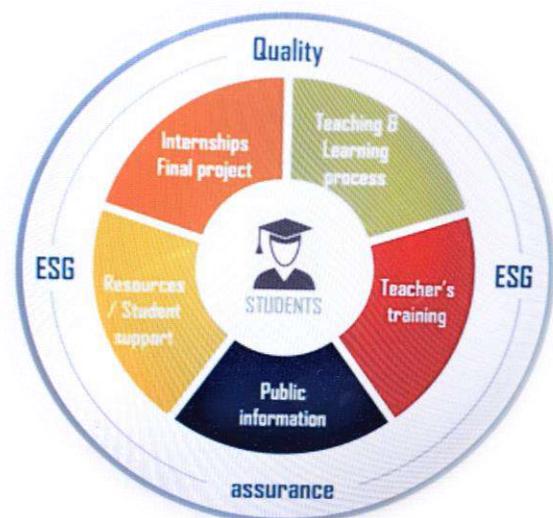


Fig. 2: Factors to Focus

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divisions for assessor nomination and confirmation, assignment of assessment, monitoring of pre-visit reports, setting and organising on-site visits, review of draft final reports by HEIs, HEI feedback on-site visit, monitoring the reception, review and submission of final assessors' reports to the Accreditation Committee, the publication of the decisions and eventually the posting of the details on the AQU database are carried out using a secure internal information system. AQU follows the ISO 27001 information security management standard, which guarantees the quality of the activities carried out by AQU Catalunya and its commitment to information security.

## Digitalisation Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Prior to the current crisis, there was no work from the home arrangement for AQU Catalunya staff. All staff worked from the offices and workstations in AQU in Barcelona. The assessors physically met at AQU offices for coordination meetings amongst themselves before the site visits, unless this was at some distance from Barcelona, in which case they met at the hotel.

Stakeholder consultations were also held at AQU offices or at other convenient venues in Catalonia.

## AQU and the Pandemic Response

As the world of HE shifted from institutional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances, AQU took as its first premise the fact that **numerous aspects of programmes of study would inevitably be altered,** including classroom-based activities, laboratories and internships, work experience and placement, Erasmus and other mobility programmes, and so on.

Second, it reaffirmed that the regional European framework for quality assurance provided by the ESG is still applicable to all types of programme (although some interpretation of the different standards might be necessary in the case of e-learning). It decided that quality assurance must focus its energies on the processes and inputs that will allow institutions to transit to this "new normality". Is the technology infrastructure sufficient? Do support staff have sufficient capacity? Is ongoing Faculty professional development sufficient? How can feedback from learners, Faculties and campuses support teams inform future developments? (See Fig. 2).

During the crisis (from March to June 2020), AQU asked HEIs to report the changes introduced in the annual monitoring progress reports, bearing in mind that degree programmes will regain their normal characteristics as soon as possible. If the modifications introduced in the degrees become permanent, the University will need to proceed to the modification or re-verification of the degree. This assessment of changes will begin in 2022.

At the same time, AQU revamped its external review process from face-to-face to virtual assessment. During this period, AQU formally approved a set of protocols for the accreditation of recognised degree programmes in exceptional circumstances, announced on its website that it would move to online activities and cancelled all site visits to the end of July 2021.

From the experience gained during this first phase, AQU was able to distil a set of general challenges associated with the external evaluation processes in this new scenario, such as:

- The management of uncertainty;

- Institutional concern with two important aspects: the teaching and learning process and external review procedures;
- Safeguarding the rights of students;
- The excess workload of teachers;
- Ensuring the same level of quality assurance, and
- The loss of personal contact in review and evaluation procedures.

On the other hand, there are also a number of more particular challenges at Agency level, such as:

- Responding quickly and precisely to the needs and requirements of the system of higher education and universities in Catalonia;
- Establishing effective communication with universities and other HEIs;
- Designing an efficient QA review procedure that avoids an excess workload;
- The need to replan QA procedures quickly and smoothly;
- Organise a new format for site visits, and
- Particular challenges for programme accreditation in the Health Sciences.

AQU Catalunya has already carried out 20 virtual visits, and 42 more are planned by the end of the year (see Fig. 3). This experience in all types of degrees (bachelors, masters and doctorates) and processes (programs and institutions) will give the agency a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities from which it seeks to learn. Thus, it will be able to enhance its quality assurance procedures so they are fit for purpose for this "new normal" reality.

## Resuming Accreditations

With some changes to deadlines, AQU continued to receive applications for accreditations from HEIs. Regular online meetings were initiated with the Vice-Rectors of the Catalan HEIs to ensure regular communication and the effective flow of information. This, and a survey of HEIs, has assured AQU that, although there was initial scepticism as to the possibility of successfully carrying out virtual site visits, this has now faded and HEIs are, in general, very content with the quality and outcome of their experience of online accreditation.

AQU Catalunya intends to resume physical site visits as soon as it is safe to do so. Nonetheless, it took the decision in September 2020 to continue with virtual site visits until July 2021. This decision was taken to facilitate short to medium term planning.

The Agency has continued to engage fully throughout the crisis with the networks in which it is involved both nationally and internationally and has contributed to the survey carried out by ENQA on how QAAs are managing and what changes they have made during the emergency period.

## Lessons from AQU Catalunya - Virtual accreditation site visits

- Clear and concise instructions are needed for site visits to be carried out by way of video link (for both reviewers and HE institutions).
- The agenda must avoid full-day work sessions. There must be pauses of 10-15 minutes between meetings. The number of HEI participants in meetings should not be greater than 8.
- Training for the review panels must be provided/revised.

- The agency must respond to requests by HEIs for more support.
- The need to guarantee confidentiality in the various interviews. <u>Sessions should not be recorded.</u>
- Institutions can submit supporting evidence by corporate email.
- The format of the site visit agenda needs to be adapted.



Fig. 3: AQU Online Accreditation

the standards for distance learning. Assessors who are subject matter experts are teamed with distance learning experts to carry out the assessment. In the future, all programmes are likely to employ some extent of online learning. Blended learning is more likely to be the future. This will require the present pool of

### How might the pandemic response affect the future of accreditation?

1. Catalan HEIs, after a period of scepticism, are generally positive about the online site visits carried out by AQU. Risk and the mediation of risk, as well as the notion of trust, will become more important in post-COVID-19 times, and may contribute to decisions on those processes that are carried out online.

2. The accreditation of Open and Distance Learning programmes is based on the applicable programme standards and

assessors to be trained in conventional and online modes to carry out a credible assessment. This duality will impact the standards, assessor training, staff and students training and the scope of the audit. The evaluation duration may be extended to cope with the added dimension of assessment of online learning.

3. AQU Catalunya recognises the shift that the crisis has engendered in terms of the recognition and growth of online teaching, learning and assessment and the necessary changes to EQA

methodologies to ensure that they are sufficiently flexible to cope with future scenarios. Its international work on e-learning and assessment provides it with a good base from which to make decisions in the future.

## *Case-Study of Malaysian Qualifications Agency's Virtual Audit (MQAVA)*

### Background

Before 1996, higher education was provided by statutory public higher education institutions (HEI) funded almost fully by the government. Some private education institutions provided tuition support for students taking professional external courses in accounting, law, and secretarial sciences. In1996, higher education was liberalised by allowing degree-awarding private and for-profit colleges and universities to compete with public institutions. To ensure quality the National Accreditation Board (NAB) was established to developed standards and accredit private HEIs. The public HEIs were monitored and reviewed by the Quality Assurance Division of the Ministry of Education (MOE). This dual system of QA was not seen in policy circles as healthy in developing a unified HE sector. Hence, in 2007, Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) was established with the mandate to develop and implement a national qualifications framework (NQF), carry out accreditation of programmes in HE and to maintain the Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR) containing details of accredited programmes as reference for the public and other national and international institutions.

Today, MQA has 330 staff, about 1,499 assessors, 24 programme standards, 4

standards, 13 Guides to Good Practices, Advisory Notes and Policies. It has accredited over 15,621 programmes and maintains periodic institutional review of 19 self-accrediting universities. MQA was among the earliest agencies in this region to grapple with foreign branch campuses and foreign programmes offered in collaboration with local colleges. MQA is a leading QAA in the Asian region playing a key role in the establishment of ASEAN Quality Assurance Network, development of ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, and ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework.

### Leading the Change

Since 2011, MQA has actively advocated the accreditation of prior experience (APEL) which resulted in the development of two guidelines namely APEL (Access), 2012 and APEL (Credits), 2016 and now on course to develop an APEL guideline for academic qualifications. Since 2015, MQA has been a strong supporter of flexible higher education. It encouraged a diversity of pathways to academic studies, more active engagement with industries as teaching partners (Work-based Learning, 2016; 2-U(-niversity) & 2-I(-ndustry), 2017), recognised more vertical credit transfers for qualifications at Level 6 (bachelors) and lower in MQF, provided guidelines for HEIs to evaluate Massive Open Online Courses courses for credit recognition (Credit Transfer for MOOCs, 2016), empower HEIs to unbundle degrees into micro-credentials (2020), it expanded the use of online learning within conventional programmes (2018) for greater blended learning, cleared the way for credible double, dual, and joint degrees with local and foreign partners, and multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary programmes.

## Accreditation

MQA practices a two-stage accreditation approach namely provisional accreditation and full accreditation. HEIs must apply for provisional accreditation before commencing a programme and apply for full accreditation when the first cohort is nearing completion. The programmes are listed in the MQR after full accreditation, i.e. the programme in terms of its design and delivery meets the minimum requirements in the standards. Accreditation is valid in perpetuity subject to a cyclical 5-year compliance audit which can result in disruption to the accreditation if warranted.

Until 2015, the HEIs submitted their applications for provisional and full accreditation as hard copies. Since 2015, all applications are in soft copy format. The assessors are provided with soft copies for their assessment work. Their final consolidated narrative reports with the recommendation form the basis of the decision of the Accreditation Committee. A quantitative rating on a 5-point scale indicating the level of attainment of the standards is also provided by the assessor to be used as a reference and for comparative analyses. The assessors' report based on a prescribed template is always in soft copy format. Starting in 2017, the HEIs were required to digitally attach required and relevant evidence in their application template.

### Digitalisation Before the COVID-19 Pandemic

There was no work from home arrangement before the Movement Control Order was issued on 18th March 2020. All staff worked from the offices and workstations in MQA, Cyberjaya. The assessors physically met at MQA offices for coordination meetings amongst themselves before and also after the site visits.

Stakeholder consultations – a required protocol in standards development and revisions are conducted in MQA or other convenient venues in the city. Although videoconferencing was proposed as a way to reduce the logistical cost of roadshows that MQA conducted to update HEIs and assessors on latest or impending initiatives and changes, it did not take off.

The management of the accreditation process from pre-booking, submission of soft copies of applications, the registration, forwarding to accreditation divisions for assessor nomination and confirmation, assignment of assessors, monitoring of pre-visit reports, setting and organising site visits, review of draft final reports by HEIs, HEI feedback site visit, monitoring the reception, review and submission of final assessors reports to the Accreditation Committee, the publication of the decisions and eventually the posting of the details in the MQR for full accreditation and provision accreditations in details in the Provisional Accreditation Database are carried out using an internal information system which is also web-enabled for remote access by staff.

### The MQA and the Pandemic Response

Following the Movement Control Order issued by the government on 18th March 2020, MQA ceased all operations. To ensure safety, only essential employees were allowed to go to the office. MQA issued notification suspending all pending accreditation arrangements with immediate effect until further notice. Since HEIs were allowed to continue their teaching and learning activities online, MQA issued notifications and Advisory

Notes outlining the flexibilities for teaching, learning and assessment for conventional providers. The Notes allowed

MQA surveyed the HEIs on their readiness and interest in considering virtual site visits. 80% liked the idea, 68% said they were

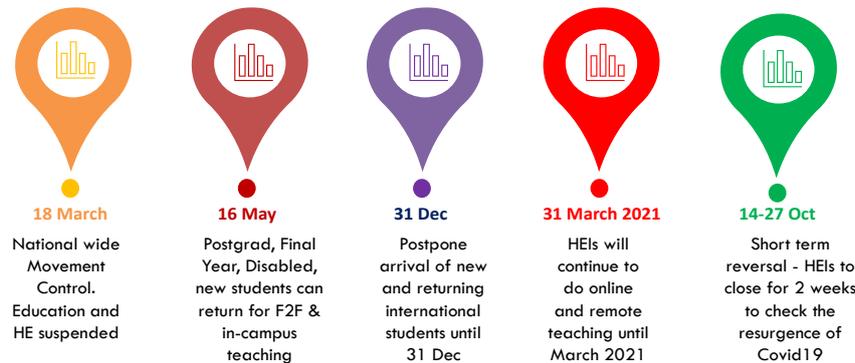| 18 March | 16 May | 31 Dec | 31 March 2021 | 14-27 Oct |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| National wide Movement Control. Education and HE suspended | Postgrad, Final Year, Disabled, new students can return for F2F & in-campus teaching | Postpone arrival of new and returning international students until 31 Dec | HEIs will continue to do online and remote teaching until March 2021 | Short term reversal - HEIs to close for 2 weeks to check the resurgence of Covid19 |

Fig. 4: Movement Control Order and Higher Education

HEIs to consider safe and practical measures to teach and assess online with special attention drawn to the need to be mindful of the digital divide amongst the students (See Fig. 4). MQA issued four further Advisory Notes on admitting students without delayed national examinations, allowing Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) evaluations to be carried out through online meetings and dealing with internships, industrial training, practicals, etc. MQA also held meetings with professional bodies for these bodies to issue similar notifications on the extension of accreditation, and the flexibility to continue teaching these programmes online and to use the online and open book and instead of a close book and proctored exams final examinations. In the interim, the government in partnership with telecommunication companies provided free data plans to all students to participate in online classes.

**Resuming Accreditations**

On 8th May 2020, MQA resumed accepting applications from HEIs both online and through physical submission subject to strict COVID-19 protocols. With physical site visits disallowed,

ready and 87% even liked the virtual visit to stay. The HEIs also expressed concern over additional documentation required, connectivity and data and document security. These HEIs wanted guidelines and training on MQA-Virtual Audit (MQA-VA) and to be given more time to prepare for the virtual visits.

In the meantime, MQA engaged with other QAAs in the region and beyond to learn about the virtual site visits. Online discussions were held with BAN-PT, HKCAAVQ, ENQA and NVAO between June and July 2020. Based on the practices elsewhere and simply practical requirements at home, an MQA -Virtual Audit Guideline was developed.

The MQA-VA Guideline spelt out several key terms:

a) MQA will host the virtual visits on a Zoom Platform.
b) HEIs must prepare and submit additional 21 documents before the actual VA.
c) The links will only be provided one day before the VA.
d) All participants are required to log in 10 minutes before the session using their names.

e) The camera shall be remain switched on at all times during the audit.
f) There shall a live virtual tour of the physical facilities.
g) There will no recording of the VA consistent with the practice in the physical audit.
h) The full accreditation audit will last one and a half day (see Fig 5 for details).

institutions no major training was required. Anecdotally, assessors found the work from home (WFH) to be very convenient, timesaving and it ensured safety for all parties amidst the pandemic. MQA plans to carry out a comprehensive study of MQA-VA for further improvements and perhaps future adoption.

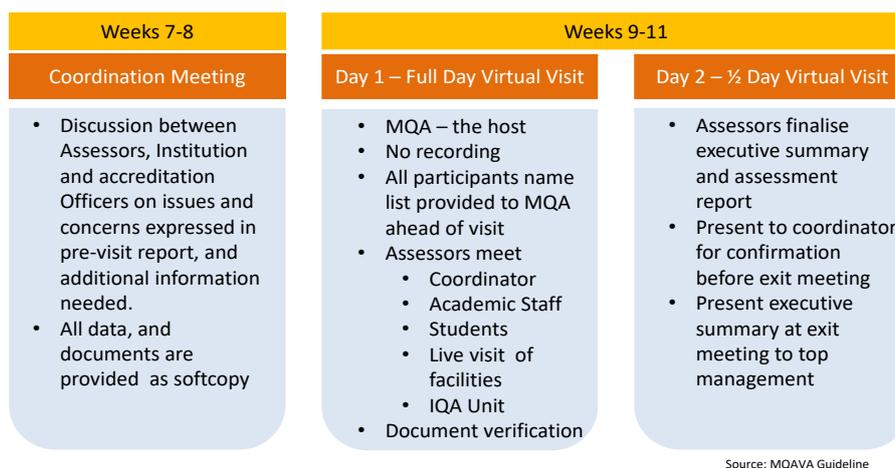| Weeks 7-8 | Weeks 9-11 | |
|---|---|---|
| Coordination Meeting | Day 1 – Full Day Virtual Visit | Day 2 – ½ Day Virtual Visit |
| • Discussion between Assessors, Institution and accreditation Officers on issues and concerns expressed in pre-visit report, and additional information needed.<br>• All data, and documents are provided as softcopy | • MQA – the host<br>• No recording<br>• All participants name list provided to MQA ahead of visit<br>• Assessors meet<br>  • Coordinator<br>  • Academic Staff<br>  • Students<br>  • Live visit of facilities<br>  • IQA Unit<br>• Document verification | • Assessors finalise executive summary and assessment report<br>• Present to coordinator for confirmation before exit meeting<br>• Present executive summary at exit meeting to top management |

Source: MQAVA Guideline

Fig. 5: Virtual Audit Schedule

For now, the MQA-VA Guidelines are only shared with participating HEIs. This guideline will be made public in due time after further refinement. Assessors and participating institutions are informed about the new form of the audit. Both the assessors and the HEIs were already actively using Zoom, Google Classroom, Google Meet and Microsoft Team platforms for online teaching, learning and assessment, making special training for the virtual meeting less urgent.

As of 27 September 2020, a total of 67 programme evaluations were conducted comprising 53 full accreditation audits, 9 follow-up audits and 5 compliance audits. The HEIs have not expressed any serious misgivings about the MQA-VA. As the assessors are conducting teaching and learning online in their respective

**Lessons from MQA Virtual Assessments**

1. *Work from home (WFH)/Remote working*: WFH was not a work option in MQA before the pandemic. Almost all work resumed and were conducted from home. Overtime, as the MCO was relaxed, some rotation of staff was instituted with many staffs still working from home. The WFH is both a boon and a bane depending on the individual circumstances and preferences. It appears that the WFH option will be continued but with adaptations.

2. *Accreditation going Online and Virtual*: MQA-VA precipitated a change that was in the books for many years – coordination meetings between assessors and with HEIs. Under MQA-VA all meetings between assessors and

assessors and HEIs are conducted virtually. In fact, under MQA-VA, a new coordination meeting was instituted to facilitate better understanding by the HEIs of the assessors' evidence requirements during the VA phase (see Fig. 5).

3. *Digitised evidence*: Since 2017, all HEIs were required to hotlink related and relevant evidence appropriately within the application. The HEIs were required to digitise or keep their records in digital form to facilitate submission. Under MQA-VA guidelines. HEIs must not only digitise their records but have effective records and documents management so that these records can be easily retrieved and transmitted to assessors without concerns about validity and authenticity.

4. *Accreditation cost to MQA*: The WFH feature of MQA-VA removed the travel and accommodation costs and issues from organising these visits. The new costs are mainly related to licensing costs for the new virtual meeting tools which are necessary for the MQA-VA. In the future, the assessors may be given options to be on-site or at home. This also makes it possible for industry and international assessors to be deployed in the programme audits.

5. *Assessors Knowledge of Online*: Since all HEIs have pivoted to online teaching, learning, assessment, and student support, assessors must be adept at examining the effectiveness of these arrangements from the standpoint of learning outcomes, safety, privacy, confidentiality, equality, equity, connectivity, staff and student training on the systems, the synchronous and nonsynchronous activities, looking at backroom analytics on attendance, attention, engagement, location, device, connection strength and stability, etc. from the standpoint of learning outcomes.

6. *E-assessment*: Under the flexible higher education agenda, HEIs were allowed to use online teaching as a supplementary mode to the classroom up to 60% of the courses in the programmes and up to 80% of the students learning time. This flexibility addressed the teaching and learning aspects of the delivery. During the pandemic, all HEIs took advantage of this flexibility and even extended it to all courses in consultation with MQA (Advisory Note 1, 29 March 2020). The assessment in conventional programmes still relied on proctored tests and final examinations which could not be implemented during the pandemic. All assessments were substituted with practical online assessments with some concerns about the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the integrity of the assessments. Hands-on practicals were replaced with simulations or deferred until the situation returns to normal. After waiting for a while, HEIs are carrying on their practicals and clinical assessments as per norm on-site following very tight COVID-19 protocols – physical distancing, sanitisation of test artefacts and keeping students in a COVID-19 "bubble" to prevent contagion.

7. *No difference in accreditation quality*: Despite the shortened audit duration to 1 ½ day and virtual site assessment, assessors have expressed satisfaction with their ability to access, examine, observe and engage with different groups from the HEI in the course of making judgements about the level of

compliance with the standards. MQA will study the MQA-VA assessment reports and compare it with pre-pandemic reports to detect any adverse effects on the quality of assessment reports.

## How might the pandemic response affect the future of accreditation?

1. MQA and the higher education regulators have been advocating, especially since 2015, for more flexibility in higher education. One of the key areas was conventional classroom-based teaching and traditional assessments. The pivot to online teaching, learning and assessment although compelled by practical necessity, has punctured the wall of resistance. Some of the online teaching and assessment will likely continue in the post-pandemic period providing the students with more options.

2. Surprisingly, Malaysian HEIs have an incredibly positive outlook on the MQA-VA. The survey of 188 HEIs in 2020 showed not only were they keen on the virtual audits, but they were also ready for it and hoped it can be continued. The interest in MQA-VA seems high and presumably, in the post-pandemic period, the demand for this form of audit may grow stronger, and probably also demand for a fee reduction.

3. In the future, all programmes are likely to employ some extent of online learning. Blended learning is more likely to be the new normal in higher education teaching and learning. This will require the present pool of assessors to be trained in conventional and online modes to carry out a

credible assessment. This duality will impact the standards, assessor training, staff and student training, and the scope of the audit. Audit duration may be extended to cope with the added dimension of assessment – online learning. An ambidextrous QA approach will call for a review of assessment methodology presently in use.

4. MQA-VA may also be risk-based. HEIs deemed high risk may be subjected to physical site audits whilst HEIs with a good record may be visited online. Trust may play a role in the MQA-VA option.

## Lessons from the Case Studies (AQU Catalunya and MQA)

What lessons can be drawn from the two case studies? What were the similarities and unique practices in response to the pandemic observed in these two cases that might hold potential value for BAN-PT?

- In both cases, a physical site visit is mandated by policy or regulation, but the agencies were still able to adapt to the realities of the moment by utilising technology to overcome restrictions. It is a strategic moment as agency mission was untangled from the method raising hopes for further innovation precipitated by the pandemic.

- Both agencies launched virtual visits after a short pause because of the uncertainty surrounding the duration of the pandemic. Business continuity was a key priority for the institutions and QA agencies.

- Both agencies recognised the risks of comparison of the virtual with the

physical site visits. The agencies kept the process, purpose, and form the same with some adaptations to the on-screen and remote nature of the exercise to allay concerns among institutions.

- Both agencies listened carefully to the institutions and assessors before, during and after the exercises to recalibrate the virtual visits to maintain credibility and data protection and privacy.

- In both cases, despite good internet services, connectivity concerns were ever-present. There were heightened concerns around the assessment of the quality of access to online learning opportunities by the students and mitigation efforts by the institutions. The equity agenda loomed large.

- Both agencies drew from their distance learning standards and expert assessors to inform the assessment of conventional institutions which have pivoted almost entirely to online learning even for on-campus students. Both agencies realised that the experience of the pandemic will encourage more online learning in all institutions. Therefore, existing guidelines and standards must be reviewed to ensure adequate flexibility for the new normal.

The interest in and demand for the continuation of the virtual visits amongst institutions appears strong in the case of MQA but the position is still unclear in the case of AQU.

# K. Conducting Successful Virtual Site Visits – Lessons from the Trenches

In this section, we draw lessons from what was learned during each phase of the project: the environmental scanning of digitalisation before and during the pandemic; the experience of BAN-PT in carrying out virtual site visits (VSVs) since June; the analysis of the VSVs from the video recordings; through the focus group discussions, and our own experiences in leading VSVs. We would like to underline a warning that we noted in the introduction to this report. Online or virtual accreditations especially the virtual site visit is a new practice introduced as an emergency response measure to ensure business continuity. While most, if not all, QAAs had some form of a risk management or business continuity plan in the event of unexpected events, none anticipated disruption of the nature and scale as this COVID-19 pandemic. QAAs are in fairly uncharted territory.

National and regional QAAs like AQU (Catalunya, Spain), MQA (Malaysia) and QAA (UK); CHEA (USA), ENQA (EUA-Europe), INQAAHE (Global) and university groups like European University Association (Europe) acted immediately to guide, support, share and enable institutions to cope with campus shutdowns. Although the range and depth of measures obviously vary from one country to another, there are lessons from this wealth of practices. We list many of them under seven headings for BAN-PT's consideration; not just to improve VSV during the continuing pandemic period but, more importantly, if it is to be adopted as new accreditation practice for the future.

## 1. Briefing and training

### The value of a well-designed video briefing with FAQs

Organising virtual group briefings for institutions and assessors on the VSV is necessary to explain the operation, allay fears and create trust. Briefing sessions for the assessors and institutions can be reduced or replaced by a well-designed video once enough experience and knowledge are available for such a training resource.

### Revise the assessor training module to support VSV

To ensure common understanding and consistent application of the standards and norms in the post-pandemic period to blended or hybrid learning, assessors need to be advised on how the standards can be applied or must be applied to online and conventional learning in a blended learning environment. The pedagogy is likely to be more varied and the organisation to be more complex than assumed in the training.

### Train assessors and institutions to work with video conferencing tools

The assessors who are hosting meetings need to be fully familiar with the tools in the video-conferencing application. The briefing described above would not necessarily provide training for the assessors in the use of video conferencing tools. Both institutions and assessors could use many other tools besides screen share, such as 'Annotate', to communicate more effectively.

## 2. Communication and coordination

### Timely and clear communication on the VSV

Management of uncertainty has been the number one imperative noted by all QAAs attempting to resume accreditation online. Understandably, institutions are nervous and anxious as to whether the virtual site visit will in any way jeopardise the accreditation outcomes. BAN-PT applied itself admirably to this task by publishing a Guideline of the VSV in June 2020. In it, BAN-PT reiterated the point that the VSV is the normal accreditation less the physical presence of the assessor on campus.

### Coordination between assessors, institutions and QAA

A coordination meeting between the assessors, the institution and the QAA helps to fill in the gaps in the guidelines, promotes a better understanding of the expectations, identifies likely challenges and considers mitigation.

## 3. Evidence and documentation

### Comprehensive digital evidence before the virtual visit

Clarity around what is required pre-VSV in relation to evidence and documentation is essential. The VSV guide issued by BAN-PT identifies 57 evidence items for institutional and 47 for programme accreditation which the institution must prepare and provide access to the assessors through a portal or a depository (e.g., Google Drive, Dropbox) at least 7-10 days before VSV. The assessors could still request for additional data from the institutions after the preparation of the pre-VSV report.

## 4. Operation of the accreditation process

### Showing patience and empathy

BAN-PT guidelines make it absolutely clear that VSV is PSV but without the physical presence of assessors on-site and site inspection of evidence. However, these two elements are likely to be subject of confusion or miscommunication. QAAs are realising that, more than ever, patience and empathy with institutions and programmes under review is essential.

### Adequate breaks and social spaces for assessors

Likewise, there is a need to take care of the assessors. Although the programme indicates that meetings are between 45 to 50 mins leaving 10-15 mins for assessors to have a break, nonetheless the schedule itself is continuous from the start to the lunch break and later until the end of the day. The project coordinators have both experienced this 'cut and paste' of a physical site visit agenda to the virtual one. The video recordings of BAN-PT accreditations also show that the interview sessions during VSV are continuous without breaks. Adequate breaks must be taken for health and safety reasons, and to review and reset for the next group. Screen fatigue can cause loss of focus and attentiveness on the part of the assessors affecting their productivity.

### Need for a live tour of facilities

Wherever possible, a live tour of facilities and equipment with narration should be encouraged. The live feed in many ways mimics an actual tour by the assessors. The assessors can direct the cameraman to areas which assessors might want a closer look like instructions and safety features. A time-stamped taped tour can be used as a backup in the event the bandwidth for direct live feed is not supported.

**Establishing feedback and review mechanisms to quickly address any weaknesses identified**

Currently, evaluations of accreditation processes are held once a year. This might need to be increased, at least in the short term, to ensure that issues around VSVs are picked up quickly and resolved.

**Data and Privacy Protection**

In other parts of the world, establishing clear and proactive policies on data and privacy protection within the context of law and policy has become more important than ever. These need to guide how the digital data and evidence is provided, accessed and/or downloaded by assessors including the storage, use and disposal of any recordings of the VSV.

**5. Recognition of national context**

**Recognise institutional and national info-structural readiness and work within those boundaries**

As has been seen across the world, the focus group discussions and also the analysis of VSV recordings point to lack of stable connectivity through the sessions. The guidance on low bandwidth communication included in the briefing helps to cope with the real and may be even pervasive digital divide issues. In some cases, a short trial run before the VSV may be advisable to test the stability of connections to the VSV to proceed without interruptions. Where disruptions are not transient, contingency plans must be available for institutions and assessors to extend visit or to reschedule.

**Mindful of different levels of digital readiness of institutions**

Encouraged by the switch to online and remote learning during the pandemic, institutions might continue to offer online learning as part of the in-person and on-

campus education mode in the post-pandemic period. Assessors will need to inquire into the institutional planning and strategies for online teaching, learning, assessment, student support and institutional management in the 2021 accreditations.

**6. Agency staff and resources**

**The need to support staff**

QAAs globally have had to pay attention to the increased workload of their staff in relation to the pandemic in general and, specifically, the additional call upon their time in relation to the VSV which requires management of the VSV platforms starting with the coordination meeting between assessors before the virtual visit, during the virtual meeting and post-VSV.

**The need to have adequate technical video-conferencing capacity**

The total number of daily VSVs carried out by BAN-PT is probably unparalleled in the world. BAN-PT might have to have some excess video conferencing capacity to cope with the number of concurrent VSVs if this is continued at the scale during the pandemic.

**7. The impact of COVID-19 on future developments**

**Guidance on how emergency measures be addressed in 2020 accreditation applications**

As mentioned above under 5, the accreditations and VSVs carried out in 2020 did not inquire into the switch to online and remote teaching, learning and assessment. This is due to the current year reference in the self-evaluation report and performance data. In the coming year, the accreditation and VSV will have to address the switch to online learning, communication, student and academic support, due diligence and

QA of the new online and remote e-learning. Many QAAs across the world are looking at their instruments, standards and processes to ensure that they are fit for this purpose. Institutions may also need help in reporting on the new modalities.

**IQA's role in pandemic response**
In the 2021 accreditations, institutions will have to account for the disruption to their normal mode. Assessors might want to inquire into the role of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) in helping to shape the institutional responses to the pandemic.

For example, was QA involved in the decision making on emergency responses? Was risk to quality assessed and understood by institutional leaders in making the changes? What new measures were considered in ensuring positive student experience? What measures were put in place to secure the integrity of online assessments?  These lines of inquiry can demonstrate the importance placed in the organisation on IQA, the development of quality culture and the need to always keep quality in the foreground.

# L. Recommendations

BAN-PT followed in the footsteps of many QAAs which, after a brief pause, recommenced accreditation of institutions or programmes through virtual or remote site visits due to the pandemic restrictions. Unlike many other QAAs, BAN-PT had already digitalised the accreditation process to a large extent leaving only the physical site visit offline. The resumption of accreditation involved largely a change in the mandatory site visit. As BAN-PT has digitalised most of its accreditation processes, it is eminently positioned to innovate and explore the last and critical mile in accreditation process – the site visit.

BAN-PT very astutely kept the disruption to the minimum. The instruments, the standards, the report templates, the rubrics and the outcomes are unchanged. This policy served to allay unnecessary anxiety on the part of assessors and institutions participating in the VSV. The guideline on VSV and the briefing provide clear information on what, when, where and how of the VSV.

BAN-PT did a stellar job of organising the assessors, the institutions, the briefings, the meeting platform, the monitoring and troubleshooting in carrying out 1129 including 76 institutional accreditations visits as of 20th October 2020 with as many as 60 concurrent VSVs in a day in spite of the vast and fragmented nature of the country and the issues caused by the digital divide. BAN-PT and its support team must be congratulated for demonstrating exceptional organisation, productivity, commitment and resourcefulness in managing this organisational feat.

## 1. Data, information, and evidence

The VSV and the focus group showed that additional information and data was requested during the VSV sessions. This visibly raised the anxiety level among the institutional representatives as they searched for the right personnel and information.

**Recommendation 1:** The assessors and institutions could be surveyed to identify additional data, information and evidence which the assessors asked for or the institutions were asked in course of the VSV. The documents list in the BAN-PT Guideline on VSV could be expanded to include more evidence.

**Recommendation 2:** BAN-PT could go further in the guidance on data, information and evidence to state documents required, expected and analysed. BAN-PT could use the assessment rubrics to build the evidence lists.

**Recommendation 3:** Need to provide clearer guidance on dealing with digital access to sensitive information or documents to institutions and assessors. This is a matter of concern in virtual accreditations carried out during the pandemic in most countries.

**Recommendation 4:** The creation of a digital repository of evidence accessible to the assessors is a VSV practice that can be continued within the conventional PSV. BAN-PT might want to consider adopting a Digital Evidence Repository for its future physical site visits. It allows assessors to consider the evidence before the actual visit making their pre-visit report more accurate and allows for refinement of their report rather than its composition as the site visit progresses. During the PSV,

assessors can look at more samples and triangulate from difference group perspectives.

**Recommendation 5:** The documents and evidence list (57 for institutional accreditation and 47 items from programme accreditation) should be reviewed together with the lessons from the VSV to include the additional documents that assessors requested during the VSV. Institutions also raised this in the focus group discussions. This can reduce undue stress and anxiety during the VSV. The guidance documents on the SER and IPR should indicate evidence using the typology suggested here. The rubrics can be used to distil the evidence categories.

### 2. Briefing and training

**Recommendation 6:** BAN-PT should consider the lessons learned set out in section K 4: Briefing and training.

### 3. Follow-up on the VSV

The accreditation cycle is only complete when an assessed institution has addressed all of the feedback given as part of the accreditation. The present policy of follow-up once in 5 years, typically as part of the reaccreditation visit, encourages a pre-reaccreditation flurry of activity rather than proper consideration of an action plan to respond to recommendations.

**Recommendation 7:** Establish a system of follow-up on the recommendations by the assessors with appropriate and practical timelines. Institutions should be encouraged or even required to furnish information on their plans to address identified areas of concern with timelines on when evidence of implementation can be provided. Such self-action may not require the physical presence of assessors

or BAN-PT staff. BAN-PT can use its accreditation system to alert institutions and monitor the follow-up submissions. This is also in line with BAN-PT objective of forging a quality culture and fostering the development of internal QA; i.e. it would be asking for the demonstration of improvements rather than inspecting them.

BAN-PT should also consider the other lessons learned as set out in section K 1: Operation of the accreditation process.

### 4. Wider stakeholder consultation on VSV

**Recommendation 8:** The institutions, at least those who have undergone VSV, appear to prefer the virtual site visit modality for its many advantages. Wider consultation must be carried out with students, academic and support staff, alumni, employers etc. on their views on VSV. If these groups express any reservations, the VSV can be adapted to have wider support and acceptance so that it can become a sustainable practice in the future. In addition, it would be helpful for BAN-PT to request and post self-reports from institutions which have undergone a VSV for the benefit of others. These institutions can contribute to the lessons learnt in preparation for the VSV which will benefit those who have yet to undergo accreditation with a VSV.

BAN-PT should also establish feedback and review mechanisms to quickly address any weaknesses identified in the VSV.

### 5. VSV as part of an overall accreditation policy

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**Recommendation 9:** Instead of using the VSV as a standard practice or as an option for the institutions, BAN-PT can strategically manage the deployment of

the VSV through risk profiling of institutions. The accreditation grades may be considered in such profiling. BAN-PT can reserve the use of VSV for institutions that are in good standing. A light touch and remote assessment carried out through VSV can be balanced with strong IQA. VSV can be presented not as an option of equal functional effectiveness but a symbol of high trust.

## 6. Potential change in the objective of PSV and VSV

**Recommendation 10:** The objective of the PSV and the VSV is to <u>clarify, verify, and confirm</u> the information and description of practices provided by the institutions in SAPTO. The instrument, the guidelines on preparation of SRR and IPR and the rubrics can be further improved to reduce the need to <u>clarify, verify, and confirm</u> information. This allows the assessors more opportunity to inquire into the operation of the IQA systems. BAN-PT could consider reserving the VSV for richer interaction/engagement with different groups on institutionalisation and embedding of QA within the institution leaving all data confirmation and verification to the pre-VSV process.

## 7. Guidance on how emergency measures be addressed in 2020 accreditation applications

**Recommendation 11:** The accreditation and VSV in 2020 did not inquire into the switch to online and remote teaching, learning and assessment. This is due to the current year reference in the self-evaluation report and institutional performance data. In the coming year, the accreditation and VSV will have to address the switch to online learning, the communication, the student and academic support, the due diligence and QA of the new online and remote e-learning. Since the instrument

addresses institutions which conduct in-person and on-campus learning, help may be needed by institutions to report the new modalities in place due to the pandemic. It is imperative that BAN-PT outline the flexibilities permitted and the care that must be exercised in the emergency or new modalities.

## 8. Adaptation of the existing standards to online learning

**Recommendation 12:** BAN-PT (and DIKTI) should consider providing guidance on blended learning guidelines and standards to help the institutions and assessors to evaluate the new medium of teaching, learning and assessment. Some clarification on the present standards in terms of online learning might be necessary to reduce anxiety among institutions and assessors. How well do the current set of indicators encompass this blended approach? Is there a need to review the indicators to accommodate the change? Of particular interest is the existence and role of learning management system (LMS) in online learning especially by institutions which aim to adopt a blended approach to learning. Videoconferencing tools offer limited teaching and learning flexibilities.

## 9. Mitigating inequality to be made part of the QA agenda

**Recommendation 13:** The pivot to online learning due to the pandemic brought the socio-economic inequality amongst students into sharp focus. The financial aid from the government and the support from the institutions helped to mitigate digital inequality. With blended learning expected and encouraged by authorities to be continued in the post-pandemic period, QA might have to pay special attention to the efforts by the institution to alleviate these ill-effects. From a policy standpoint, QA

should address, if not serve, the national priorities. BAN-PT should ensure that it mitigates against inequality in its accreditation processes.

## M. Conclusion

BAN-PT has gained from the experiences of other QAAs in the world in crafting its response to the pandemic. It has developed and deployed a virtual site visit protocol that has helped it to cope with the volume of scheduled accreditation visits. To protect the credibility and integrity of the accreditation exercise and the outcomes, BAN-PT has scrupulously applied the same instruments and requirements except for two – virtual site visit and inspection of evidence via Digital Repository in the virtual site assessment.

Given the online context within which BAN-PT manages much of its accreditation processes, it is clear that there is potential for the current PSV to also be carried out successfully virtually.

Much positive practice can be taken from the response to the pandemic and, in the eyes of external stakeholders, BAN-PT has responded professionally and helpfully in providing support in an emergency.

Of course, the current emergency is not yet resolved; this provides some time for reflection on the impact of any eventual decision on PSV, VSV or hybrid on instruments, standards and, in particular, the development of internal quality assurance in the institutions.

BAN-PT is in a good position to benefit from the outcomes of this project and of the national and international resources it offers. The project coordinators wish the agency every success as it considers the next stage of the development of its processes.

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4. Guidelines on Virtual Site Assessment – Pedoman AL Daring, 2020, BAN-PT.
5. Huertas, Esther et al., (2018) Consideration for Quality Assurance of E-Learning Provision by the European Association for Quality Assurance (Retrieved from https://enqa.eu/indirme/Considerations%20for%20QA%20of%20e-learning%20provision.pdf 10th Sept 2020.

# Annex 1

**Reference to e-learning standards and frameworks and glossary of key terms in e-learning**

**Resources on E-learning/online frameworks**

The following e-learning or online education frameworks provided guidelines on the criteria, standards and performance indicators which are used or recommended for institutions or programmes seeking to design and deliver programmes which are fully or mainly online. Many open and distance learning accreditation frameworks are indeed frameworks for online learning. These resources help QAAs to understand the unique requirements of these institutions or programmes and develop accreditation or assessment approaches to meet their mandate. BAN-PT might wish to consider which of the following resources are useful in its context, bearing in mind that it may be more useful to pick and choose aspects from some or all of them rather than to adhere to one resource in its entirety.

1. Consideration for Quality Assurance of E-Learning Provision by the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA: Esther Huertas et al., 2018). https://enqa.eu/indirme/Considerations%20for%20QA%20of%20e-learning%20provision.pdf

The adaptation of the IQA standards in ESG for e-learning provides an excellent guideline to QAAs and also institutions in thinking strategically and holistically about the QA of e-learning provision. This document covers parts 1 and 2 of the ESG which are comparable to quadrants 2 and 3 of AQAF.  To the extent that ESG is comparable to AQAF and other regional QA frameworks, this document offers good practice guides to QAAs to develop QA approaches including standards and guidelines contextualised to their local needs and priorities.

2. Framework for the Quality Assurance of E-Assessment. (ENQA: Martin Foerster et al., 2019). https://enqa.eu/indirme/papers-and-reports/associated-reports/D4.7%20Framework%20screen%20TeSLA%202606.pdf

This framework amplifies the quality and quality assurance considerations for e-assessment ("refers to methods and practices that utilise digital technologies to measure, evaluate and support the learning experience of learners", p.11) which is an integral part of e-learning. The 8 criteria cover the broad spectrum of factors which affect the robustness of the e-assessment system. The development of a valid, reliable, fair and authentic assessment system is explained and expanded for the benefit of institutions and QAA agencies. An approach to IQA and EQA which examines this segment of e-learning within an institution's broader teaching and learning strategy based on a sound pedagogical foundation is advocated.

3. Quality Assurance Toolkit for Distance Higher Education Institutions and Programmes, Commonwealth of Learning, 2009. http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/105

Distance education institutions and programmes essentially employ e-learning and online learning modalities in the execution of their mission to learners who are separated in time and

space. This document provides in Section I and II criteria, standards, performance indicators, evidence and performance measures for institutional assessments. The 10 criteria are similar to any accreditation or assessment standards used by QAAs. The value add is in the contextualisation of the criteria for the e-learning and online learning modalities which is the primary means for delivery of the programmes. For QAAs which are either facing hybrid or blended delivery environments or adoption of fully online modalities, this resource provides valuable guidance to expand or extend the present standards to encompass online learning.

4. Quality Assurance of Online Learning Toolkit, APEC and TEQSA, 2017. https://tech.ed.gov/files/2018/11/APEC-Quality-Assurance-of-Online-Learning-Toolkit-AUS-2.pdf

This QA toolkit was collaboratively developed by APEC QAAs with TEQSA as the project leader for quality assurance of online learning in view of the growing trend towards blended and fully online learning modes. A 9-domain framework encompassing curriculum, resources and leadership was evolved from the experiences of 13 participating nations. Unlike other QA toolkits, this document provides the principles for each domain, the key justificatory research findings, focus points or self-review questions and indicative evidence. The toolkit assumes a minimalist and friendly approach focusing on meta principles and allowing the institutions to articulate their approach, systems and processes to QAAs. A high degree of institutional maturity is expected in using this toolkit.

5. Questions to Inform a Toolkit for Enhancing Quality in the Digital Environment. Published - 3 July 2020 © The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2020. https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/questions-to-inform-a-toolkit-for-enhancing-quality-in-a-digital-environment.pdf?sfvrsn=4fabcf81_6

This guidance document is an extremely useful resource for QA agencies and institutions in reflecting deeply and holistically on the development of a digital learning environment. The questions which cover strategic focus, programme design, approval and management, students-centred learning, teaching and assessment, teaching staff and learning resources and student support offer a good basis to develop assessment instruments for digital teaching and learning that is forecasted to be the new normal; to sensitise and train assessors in a digital environment which they invariably will encounter in the coming years, and for standards development in a digital environment.

6. Building Taxonomy of Digital Learning, 2020. https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/building-a-taxonomy-for-digital-learning.pdf

This guidance document is a useful complement to the preceding resources. This guide lists and explains the different terminologies used to characterise the pivot to online learning due to the pandemic in terms of popularity, historical origin, general connotations and accuracy in the pandemic context. It also offers a taxonomy of digital learning ranging from minimal digital engagement in teaching, learning and assessment to a totally immersive digital experience. This classification "...does not make any judgement about the quality of learning experience that students will have. Instead, it attempts to categorise and describe the different student experiences depending on the type and volume of any digital engagement."

# Annex 2

## List of Focus Group Participants

### 1. First Group (Staff BAN-PT)
**Tuesday, 10 November 2020. 2.00 - 3.00 PM**

| No | Name | Occupation |
|----|------|-----------|
| 1. | SM. Widyastuti | Executive Board BAN-PT |
| 2. | Meriyana | Accreditation process |
| 3. | Parsini | Accreditation process |
| 4. | Ambar Setyaningsih | Accreditation process |
| 5. | Domo Pranoto | Accreditation process |
| 6. | Gina Noviana | Accreditation process |
| 7. | Ekwan Tunggul Wibowo | Accreditation process |
| 8. | Dwi Sakti Nugroho | Accreditation process |
| 9. | Azwardi | Accreditation process |

### 2. Second Group (Programmes and Institution)
**Tuesday, 10 November 2020. 3.30 - 4.30 PM**

| No | Name | Programme/ Institution | Region |
|----|------|------------------------|--------|
| 1. | Siti Hidayati 08111771165 | D-III Finance and Banking, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta | DKI Jakarta |
| 2. | Dorjte Th.Silubun 085335229402 | D-IV Marine Technology, Politeknik Perikanan Negeri Tual | Maluku |
| 3. | Diah 081805571502 | S-1 English Language Education, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha | Bali |
| 4. | Yushak Soesilo 081802570189 | S-2 Theology, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Intheos Surakarta | Jawa Tengah |
| 5. | Prof Kuntoro 08122626892 | S-3 Sports Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret | Jawa Tengah |
| 6. | Dr Sumi Amariena 082110682239 | APT - Universitas Indo Global Mandiri | Sumatera Selatan |
| 7. | BAN-PT | Executive Board | National |

### 3. Third Group (Assessors)
**Wednesday, 11 November 2020. 2.00 - 3.00 PM**

| No | Name | Type of Discipline | Region |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Nurna Aziza, Dr. M.Si., Ak. 08117308876 | Accounting | Universitas Bengkulu |
| 2. | Muhammad Iqbal Djawad, Ir., M.Sc., Ph.D 0811418335 | Aquaculture | Universitas Hasanuddin (Sulawesi Selatan) |
| 3. | Nihta Liando, DR MA 08135660661 | English Language Education | Universitas Negeri Manado (Sulawesi Utara) |
| 4. | Robert Setio, Dr. Ph.D 0817326564 Alim Roswantoro, Dr 081328685961 | Theology Aqidah dan Filsafat Islam | Universitas Kristen Duta UIN Suka Yogyakarta |
| 5. | Yudy Hendrayana, Dr.,M.Kes 085220181962 | Physical Education, Health and Recreation | Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (Jawa Barat) |
| 6. | Marwan Asri, Prof., Dr., MBA. 0811266993 Adang Suhendra, Dr. Ing, MSc, 08561086935 | Management Teknik Informatika | Universitas Gadjah Mada (DI Yogyakarta) Universitas Gunadarma |
| 7. | BAN-PT | | |

### 4. Fourth Group (Validators)
**Wednesday, 11 November 2020. 3.30 - 4.30 PM**

| No | Name | Validator | Region |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Baso Jabu, Prof., Dr. M.Hum 08124133488 | AK | Universitas Negeri Makassar (Sulawesi Selatan) |
| 2. | Dr. Swasono Rahardjo, S.pd.,M.si 081230269307 | AK | Universitas Negeri Malang (Jawa Timur) |
| 3. | Prof. Dr. Ir Prastawa Budi 08124237334 | AL | Universitas Hasanuddin (Sulawesi Selatan) |
| 4. | Dr. Atiyatul Ulya 081383971655 | AL | UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta |
| 5. | Dr. Lukito Eddy Nugroho 0811259276 | AL | Universitas Gadjah Mada (DI Yogyakarta) |
| 6. | Ir. Subagyo, Ph.d. 085959033351 | AK and AL | Universitas Gadjah Mada (DI Yogyakarta) |
| 7. | BAN-PT | | |

# Annex 3

## Site Visit Recordings Analysed for this Report – A Profile of Higher Education Institutions

| | Study Programme, Institution, Assessors, Video Length, Date | Status | Province | HEI Establishment | Programme Establishment | Academic Staff in Programme | Enrolment | Existing Score (Grade) | New Score (Grade) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | D-3 Keuangan dan Perbankan - Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta<br>Theresa Tyas Listyani & Dul Muid<br>6 Hrs: 57 Mins, 3 – 4 Sept | Negeri (Public) | DKI Jakarta | 2014 | 1967 | 7 | 214 | 347 (B) | 374(A) |
| 2 | D-3 Sistem Informasi - Universitas Airlangga<br>Irawan Thamrin & Paalus Ihsap Santosa<br>6 Hrs:30 Mins, 16-17 Sept | Negeri | Jawa Timur | 1954 | 1993 | 10 | 137 | 351 (B) | 347 (B) |
| 3 | D-3 Akuntansi - Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Bina Karya<br>Endang Raino & Nyoman Subratha<br>8 Hrs:13 Mins, 28-29 Sept | Swasta (Private) | Sumatera Utara | 2001 | 2001 | 7 | 96 | 272 (C) | 294 (C) |
| 4 | D-4 Manajemen Perhotelan - Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Bali Internasional<br>[Missing Recording] | Swasta | Bali | 2008 | 2008 | 31 | 1075 | 344 (B) | 347 (B) |

| | Study Programme, Institution, Assessors, Video Length, Date | Status | Province | HEI Establishment | Programme Establishment | Academic Staff in Programme | Enrolment | Existing Score (Grade) | New Score (Grade) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | D-4 Teknik Informatika - Politeknik Harapan Bersama [Missing Recording] | Swasta | Jawa Tengah | 2002 | 2012 | 13 | 502 | 287 (C) | 339 (B) |
| 6 | D-4 Teknologi Kelautan - Politeknik Perikanan Negeri Tual [Missing Recording] | Negeri | Maluku | 1997 | 2013 | 11 | 287 | Akreditasi Pertama | 268 (C) |
| 7 | S-1 Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris - Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha Muhammad Farkhan & Nihta Liando 6 Hrs: 9 Mins, 30 Sept – 1 Oct | Negeri | Bali | 1993 | 1996 | 23 | 1007 | 333 (B) | 365 (A) |
| 8 | S-1 Teknik Sipil - Universitas Islam Kuantan Singingi Ir Taufiq Saidi & Ir Najid 7 Hrs: 11 Mins, 2 -3 Oct | Swasta | Riau (Sumatera) | 2001 | 2001 | 5 | 121 | 239 (C) | 314 (B) |
| 9 | S-1 Teknik Kimia - Universitas Jambi Hadiyanto & Walmiki Samadhi 7 Hrs: 58 Mins, 7 – 8 Oct | Negeri | Jambi (Sumatera) | 1963 | 2014 | 7 | 200 | 249 (C) | 292 (C) |

| | Study Programme, Institution, Assessors, Video Length, Date | Status | Province | HEI Establishment | Programme Establishment | Academic Staff in Programme | Enrolment | Existing Score (Grade) | New Score (Grade) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | S-2 Peternakan - Universitas Halu Oleo Vitas Dwi Yunianto & Trinal Susilawati 7 Hrs: 8 Mins, 7-18 Oct | Negeri | Sulawesi Tenggara | 1981 | 2013 | 6 | 22 | 306 (B) | 366 (A) |
| 11 | S-2 Ilmu Hukum - Universitas Ekasakti [Missing Recording] | Swasta | Sumatera Barat | 1985 | 2000 | 5 | 368 | 315 (B) | 332 (B) |
| 12 | S-2 Teologi (Akademik) - Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Intheos Surakarta Robert Setio & Alim Roswantoro 4 Hrs: 7 Mins, 5 – 6 Oct | Swasta | Jawa Tengah | 1994 | 2011 | 6 | 36 | 251 (C) | 272 (C) |
| 13 | S-3 Ilmu Manajemen - Universitas Halu Oleo Marwan Asri & Agus Suman 3 Hrs: 28 Mins, 2 - 3 Oct | Negeri | Sulawesi Tenggara | 1981 | 2011 | 6 | 37 | 347 (B) | 362 (A) |
| 14 | S-3 Ekonomi - Universitas Bengkulu Samsubar & Waridin 7 Hrs: 23 Mins, 7 – 8 Oct | Negeri | Bengkulu (Sumatera) | 1982 | 2014 | 5 | 35 | Akreditasi Pertama | 303 (B) |

| | Study Programme, Institution, Assessors, Video Length, Date | Status | Province | HEI Establishment | Programme Establishment | Academic Staff in Programme | Enrolment | Existing Score (Grade) | New Score (Grade) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | S-3 Ilmu Keolahragaan - Universitas Sebelas Maret Yudi Handrayono & Syahruddin  7 Hrs: 26 Mins, 16 – 17 Sept | Negeri | Jawa Tengah | 1976 | 2016 | 5 | 32 | Akreditasi Pertama | 325 (B) |
| 16 | Universitas Indo Global Mandiri (021024) [PTS] [akrb] [Missing Recording] | Swasta | Sumatera Selatan | 2008 | | 131 | 2486 | | 326 (Baik Sekali) |

**Notes**

S3 – Doctoral

S2 – Masters

S1 – Bachelors

D4 – Diploma/Associate Bachelors

D3 – Advanced Diploma/Ordinary Bachelors

Translated for this project.