

Meeting of the Quality Board, Reykjavik June 8 2015

Present: Norman Sharp (QB Chair), Rita McAllister (QB), Frank Quinault (QB), Jean-Marie Hombert (QB), Tove Bull (QB), Barbara Brittingham (QB), Magnus Diðrik Baldursson (Quality Council), Andrée Sursock (European University Association), Þorsteinn Gunnarsson (Rannis), Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson (Rannis), Lilja Steinunn Jónsdóttir (Rannis).

1. Minutes of Jan 11. 2015 QB meeting were approved unanimously.
2. Norman welcomed Dr. Sursock, and noted her excellent reputation that preceded her both in the QB and in European Higher Education. Norman also noted that the QC had had final say in picking Dr. Sursock as an external reviewer of the work of the QB based on the 1st edition of the Quality Enhancement Framework (EQF). Dr. Sursock thanked NS for his kind words, and stated that this was a great learning opportunity for her. Norman outlined her agenda, and busy schedule, which included meetings with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (MESCS), students, the Rectors' Conference, and the Quality Council.
3. Þorsteinn circulated a logo that had been designed for the QB by a student in the Icelandic Academy of the Arts (IAA). The feedback on the logo was overwhelmingly positive. The QB approved the logo. NS asked if a formal letter of thanks to the IAA was in order. TB and NS agreed that this should be sent out, and they would prepare and send such a letter.
4. NS welcomed SOS as new advisor to the QB, and noted the challenges associated with the 2nd edition of the QEF (QEF2) this year, and the role SOS would play in that work.
5. ÞG announced his decision to retire as of 1 September 2015 and thanked all for the wonderful collaboration, albeit for a relatively short time. NS voiced the QB's unanimous support for Þorsteinn's work.
6. Norman reviewed the agenda for the day, especially the University of Iceland conference. MDB was expecting 70 people for that event. Norman then reviewed the rest of the week's plans for the QB. ÞG noted about the UoI conference that the schedule is tight, so he presented an appeal to all presenters to stick to the time limit. NS asked for discussion of the agenda for the UoI conference. He noted that this conference focuses more on the outcomes rather than the process. The first half of conference is about the UoI review, and then the talks become more about the process itself, and what the QB and the HE system in Iceland has learned. The final part of the conference will be looking toward QEF2, drawn from the Clever Data Report and other sources. NS observed that now is a good time to invite discussion and follow-up input. Jón Atli Benediktsson will take over as new rector of UoI on

July 1. NS noted the good relations between the current rector, Kristín Ingólfssdóttir and the QB, and that she will be missed.

7. NS requested that two issues be raised that were not on the agenda. ÞG and NS met with with RC and MESC in March to get feedback and thoughts on future arrangements and work on QEF2. The representatives from MESC were Sonja Dögg Pálsdóttir and Hellen Gunnarsdóttir. RM observed that it was clear that a formal process was needed to delineate QB activities and MESC accreditation, and that universities saw these as separate processes. The common data set was also discussed with MESC. The discussion turned to the need for sector-wide agreement on what common metrics should be collected and reported for everybody. BB noted that perhaps the QB could be involved in deciding on these common metrics. ÞG responded that MESC had circulated a draft of ideas to HEIs in Iceland, but that the draft not been finalized. ÞG agreed to follow up with this effort, get a copy of the draft and translate (at least the highlights) for the QB, and to generally reinforce to MESC the importance of this endeavor and the possible contribution of the QB.

8. NS updated the QB on a meeting with the Rectors' Conference.

9. RM asked if there had been any updates about possible mergers of HEIs in Iceland. ÞG reported that a working group had been appointed by MESC to make recommendations about mergers.

10. Discussion of confidential individual university matters.

11. NS introduced the Clever Data Report (CDR) and his detailed responses to suggestions in the report.

TB noted her satisfaction that the CDR reflected mostly positively on the work of the QB, that the QB has made relevant inputs, and that there is little discrepancy between what the QB observes and what the other stakeholders observe. TB agreed with the findings of the CR that the student voice could be heard more loudly, and that criteria for judgment were not clear enough.

RM also observed that it was reassuring to observe the results of the CRD, and that QEF1 was a better system for quality in HEIs than some of the others she has been involved in. RM was pleased to see that the HIE Sector has bought in to what the QB is doing.

MDB remarked that the CDR makes QEF evidence-based and transparent, and that CDR had contained no big surprises as all issues that raised in the report had been discussed as areas for possible improvement in previous QB meetings. MDB noted the high levels of satisfaction with QEF, in spite of common concerns such as lack of student voice, judgments of confidence, the role of the QC, and how to strengthen the link between judgment and accreditation. He also noted concerns about the

workload for institutions in preparing reports, as well as issues with Handbook in terms of language and clarity.

BB then observed that the CDR provided good validation of the work of the QB, and that it contained a helpful reminder to think about incorporating European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) information into the work of the QB. BB further argued that ESG may tell us what we should be looking at in our assessments, that the ESG is not too prescriptive, and can be applied broadly.

AS echoed BB's comments in that the ESG does not seem to be embedded into the process. AS noted that questions about how to apply the standards were well founded. AS also took the example of student-centered learning, in particular how the QB collects evidence of the degree to which HEIs accomplish that. AS advised more formal incorporation of ESG into QEF2, especially if the QB seeks some type of validation of the process at the European Level. Discussion then turned to the possibility of selecting Akim Hopbach as a Subject Matter Expert, perhaps for next conference. AS cautioned that it was easy to be pushed into more bureaucratic approaches if institutions want clarity, but it should be up to the institutions how much guidance they want. NS suggested that the QB should aim for ENQA membership.

MDB followed up by noting that accreditation, quality assurance, and judgments of fitness-for-purpose needed to be balanced, because when full confidence becomes available, institutions that do not get it will want to know why.

FQ was encouraged by the extent of support voiced for the QEF and echoed MDB's comments about criteria for judgments of Full confidence in QEF2. FQ then asked what respondents constituted the group "other" stakeholders in the CDR. FQ found it interesting that they were most critical of the process, but little was known about them. PG clarified that this group of various stakeholders included, among others, faculty sending separate responses, and individuals working on quality matters within institutions, but that no labor market employers were included. PG added that the QB should be really worried if there were only positive comments in the CDR.

JMH stated that the most salient point in the CDR concerned judgments and student voice. He also suggested that the level of student sampling could depend on the size of the institution. JMH added that it was for example nice to hear how happy BU students were.

PG commented that he was pleased the QB went to a 3rd party for this evaluation, and that he was pleased with the findings of the report. He found it to be informative and balanced, especially in terms of how to strengthen the QC, how to get more of the student voice, and how to provide clearer guidelines for SLRs.

12. MDB raised the issue of timing of SLRs and IWRs, and noted the importance of scheduling SLRs so they inform IWRs and selecting the best strategic time for an IWR.

13. NS thanked the group for their input, and turned to his notes on possible actions to address concerns raised in the CRD. The first topic was the transparency of the QEF process. BB suggested that QB minutes be published on the Rannís website. RM and JHM noted that it would be difficult to distinguish between confidential and not confidential in terms of what to report in a public version of the meetings. A decision was made that SOS should prepare two sets of meeting minutes: one for QB internal use and one to be published. Opinions about institutions should not be included in the public version, but **decisions** should be communicated. Discussions about process should be included. Discussions about the principles vs. values of the QB ensued. AS suggested that the QB take ESG as an example, and observed that the QB needs a mission statement that should articulate values, such as transparency. NS stressed the need to have a discussion about how the QB incorporates its values of transparency into its procedures, and stated that he would lead that effort.

14. NS raised the idea of adding something about faculty collegiality to assessments of student-centered learning, as well as the roles of HEIs. We focus on teaching and learning, but do not take into account the context of the institution. 4th bullet of Principles proposed. NS will act on that.

15. The discussion then turned to the QB in CDR, and changes in the membership of the QB over time. FQ suggested that the QB gradually change membership. RM then added that there may be need for more members with expertise in evaluations of management of research quality as research is added to IWRs. BB tabled a suggestion that the QB Change two people every 2 years. SOS added that the QB may want to take into account the timing of IWRs to ensure that the QB does not change too much in a given cycle at inopportune times. PG reported that MESC would probably prefer for this transition to be uncomplicated. NS made then the following proposal. The QB will remain as is through July 1 2017. From then on, two people will withdraw every 2nd year. FQ reminded the QB of RM's comments earlier about research evaluation, and RM added that it would be desirable in general to have an extra person, given the current workload of the QB. NS responded that the QB could lobby for one extra person to join the board, perhaps temporarily, for subject matter expertise in research in Summer 2016.

16. Discussion ensued about creating a position on the QB for a student. MDB offered as comparison that at the UoI university council, there are 2 student members out of 11 total members, and noted that there are 2 students on the QC. The discussion ended with a proposal to appoint to the QB 1 student, and 1 student reserve. Students would be appointed for 2-year terms, and be voting members. To represent student interests, you must be a registered student, or 1 year past registration. Student members can be either under- or post-graduate, and should be interested in managing quality of teaching and learning. TB noted that adding

research could imply that a graduate student member would be ideal. NS responded that such an arrangement might not be necessary, but LSJ suggested as an alternative that preferably one (either main or reserve) of the QB student members should be post-graduate. The QB will ask LIS (Icelandic Student Union) to be involved in that process, and the QC as well. In terms of compensation, NS suggested that student members should get 50% of what QB members get, plus out-of-pocket expenses. Reserve member would not be paid, except out-of-pocket expenses. Student members should also get some paper that recognizes their contribution/achievement, preferably as a diploma supplement. SOS will create a formal proposal for procedures for student member selection, responsibilities, compensation, etc. over the summer.

17. FQ asked if we have a student, should we not also have a staff member. After some discussion, it was agreed that this would not be necessary since we had involvement of staff through their involvement in the QC.

Meeting of the Quality Board, Reykjavik Jun 9 2015

Present: Norman Sharp (QB Chair), Rita McAllister (QB), Frank Quinault (QB), Jean-Marie Hombert (QB), Tove Bull (QB), Barbara Brittingham (QB), Magnus Diðrik Baldursson (Quality Council), Þorsteinn Gunnarsson (Rannis), Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson (Rannis).

1. As a follow-up from the UoI Conference of 8 June, discussion began with MDB providing information about the UoI Graduate school.
2. Discussion of confidential individual university matters
3. NS reported that the QB has been encouraged to formalize its communications with QC and suggested an annual schedule of meetings. MBD added that an annual meeting would be enough, unless there is something specific. MB will take this proposal to the QC. QC meets once a month this year.
4. Discussion turned to the scheduling of annual meetings with the HEIs: RM & TB suggested that the QB meet the rural colleges in Rvík. NS was of the opinion that the default position should be that the QB go to the home institute, as it makes a difference from their perspective to be “on home court”. Also, students may have a hard time attending meetings in Rvík. NS added that in the future, the QB should look at the academic calendar for scheduling annual meetings, and that the timing of any conferences should also be organized with the HEIs.
5. NS noted the urgency of signing an agreement with MESC that would serve to establish a calendar of meetings and a list of formal responsibilities ÞG added that this should be a contract b/w Rannis, QB and MESC. NS pointed out that this

document should express expectations in writing about what QB expects from MESC and vice versa. BB suggested that perhaps a MoU would be a better option. NS agreed with that observation.

6. NS asked if there was any concern that the QC chair was not fully involved in QB. MDB did not see any problems with that, but asked for a discussion of how MB gives feedback to QC, and if there is anything MDB can do? NS observed that the default position should be that confidential documents should not go to the QB, but they should see or be briefed of documents of a non-confidential nature.

7. Discussions turned to the need for a proper QEF website that is easy for people to access. PG agreed, and opined that it would be nice to have the QB on the Rannís frontpage. It should be more visible on front page. PG and SOS are to look into this, and in particular see if the right menu bar can go from general to QEF specific when you go to the QEF sub-page.

8. AS noted that the QB should aim for a system-wide analysis of the SLRs. SOS will take an initial attempt at a system-wide review of SLRs.

9. NS praised the work of the QC. MDB felt that the QC is on the right track, and that it is a venue to facilitate communication between institutions, especially between private and public. MDB reported that the QC is going for a conference in London in November. The QC has also organized a conference on SLRs – workshop-like conference. MDB sees the biggest obstacle to the success of the QC is that there is no funding for this council. PG added that he could not emphasize enough the value of increasing trust between the institutions, and added that the network of public universities has funded an initiative to make student satisfaction surveys open to all public universities.

10. The next topic was student representation in QC. MDB reported that one student UoI and one from BU were appointed by Icelandic Union of Iceland to QC. They come to meetings, and are active. Una from MESC also attends QC meetings regularly. NS raised a general question of student involvement and if the QC is doing enough to engage them? Also, whose role is it to engage them, and in what, and should the QB include it more in QEH. RM suggested the QB needs a separate add-on for them, and RM added we need to ask what they think, to figure out what their role should be. SPARQS is a Scottish student organization dedicated to increasing the role of students in quality process. Iceland may take a note of their work. It was suggested that the QC should develop a 5-year scenario with three possible budgets/scopes. The budgets would specify the support should amount to. In terms of staff: Full time staff, half-time, junior staff, or sessional staff? MDB asked for a timeline for this work, and NS suggested a draft by early September. After that, the QB has to work on final drafts for the November meeting.

11. NS reported that annual meetings between QB and HEIs were in general welcomed, and had improved communication and trust as evidenced by the CDR.

Comments in CRD suggested that formal agendas would be useful. Those have happened for the most part, but could be more formal and consistent. NS noted that it was useful to have annual meetings in two parts: Part 1 is general, and Part 2 about SLRs in past 12 months. FQ noted that these meetings could be helpful to the institution, and that learning from the outcomes of SLRs is important. FQ also noted that department-level administrators would like to maintain contact in some form with QB in terms of SLRs. So for example, TB could meet with Business at UoI, engage them about issues, how they are taking the results of the SLR forward, etc. It would not be a review, but collegial discussion. MDB asked how these meetings would practically be arranged, and voiced the opinion that perhaps it is the institutions that should build feedback mechanisms for review. FQ argued that the QB should use the annual meetings for feedback on SLRs. This could be discussed at annual meetings this June and results of those discussions shared with QB. TB noted logistical complications associated with this proposal. For example, she is responsible for other institutions as SLR external than she has done IWRs for. NS responded by stating that clarity is needed on these issues. We need to confirm that one board member should be in the team, and should that person be chair? Should second team member be from QB, and be the “buddy” to do annual review? JM then asked if these meetings could be more frequent than one per year. Possible financially? Ok for institutions? TB responded that maybe the QC should ask the HEIs before making any plans. AS noted that this should be a discussion for how the QB will do QEF2. TB suggested that these questions should be asked during annual meetings and brought back to QB. BB noted that there may be a need for a conference to oversee implementation of what comes out of the SLRs. MDB reported that the QC has not talked about it, but should. He also noted that the SLRs involve a lot of work, and the QB needs to be careful not to get review fatigue. Follow-up should be the focus of the 2nd round, in MB’s view.

12. Hallgrímur Jónasson (HJ) joins meeting. Updated Board on Rannís developments, additional functions of Rannís. Stated that none of these changes should affect Rannís’ service to the QB. September meeting would be a nice venue for a retirement get-together for Þorsteinn. 14th or 15th.

13. NS brought discussion back to SLRs, and that imposing a central regulation is important. In each SLR, there is a central reporting committee. The QB could stipulate that at least 2 students should be on that committee. The QB agreed. NS opined that moving forward, the QB will write in the handbook that universities should ensure students are appropriately prepared for their roles in SLRs. QC and student unions should be involved. QC and Student union should jointly prepare training. Where students have participated appropriately, they should be given a commendation, for example as a diploma supplement. HEIs would have to agree, and wording should be open.

14. The role of the external in SLRs. NS noted that there was a clear need for clarification of that role voiced in CDR. There is a proposal that there should be 2 externals, and the QB should agree to that, if possible. There is a board definition of

conflict of interest and that statement should become part of the handbook, and if anything, needs to be reinforced.. BB suggested that maybe if the bigger departments do an external review/accreditation in a given cycle, they would not have to do a SLR in that cycle. QB would contribute to 1 external. NS added that when appointed, main role demands and time scales for externals should be more clearly defined. Appointment should not be sanctioned by the QB, but rather the senior institutional committee/academic board should be agreeing to the appointment. FQ suggested that each SLR should have an annex of the external's CV. BB noted that the QB needs to provide a statement to HEI about conflict of interest, and have them sign it. The QB would have to describe different types of conflict of interest. SOS will look at current CoI statement and look if something can be done about it. FQ noted that the guideline about timescale of submission of report after review visit should be in SLR guidelines. QB Agreed. NS referenced Note 4, paragraph 3, on role of external, in his summary of CDR, and QB broadly agrees to that.

15. NS stated that it was possible for the scope of a SLR to be narrowed to allow depth on a particular issue, but not at the expense of an overview of the health of the unit. Every SLR should talk about follow-up on issues in earlier SLRs, report data, student FB, what did they do about it, and how they provided FB to students about those deliberations. The SLR should have an action plan for next 5 years. From paragraph 4 of note 4. QB agrees to that.

16. NS suggested that the QB ask institutions to have a place on their website where they have a calendar of SLRs and accreditations, external committees, etc. This is consistent with ESG, and in general bring more to the public how they manage quality. TB asked if HEIs are to incorporate SLRs into IWRs, how these can be confidential. NS responded that it is worth asking the institutions if they would want their reports to be made available to the ministry in the 2nd round in some form.

RM reminded the QB that there is a danger that SLRs could become a mini-IWR. The QB needs good guidelines for that not to happen.

17. NS reported that the general shape of IWR will continue, including the case study and giving first half day to the institution where they decide the agenda. NS added that small institutions should have no a priori assumptions of shorter reviews, and that the QB should not do back-to-back IWRs.

18. According to the CDR, the number of meetings in IWRs is appropriate. NS noted feedback to the effect that the size of meetings should not be too big, so as to enable full participation of everybody. The language of meetings has to be English by default. In exceptional circumstances, other languages may be an option for individual meetings, but not the whole visit. PG argued that key documents should be in English, and the responsibility of translation should not be with secretariat.

19. The QB agreed that post-review conferences should be discontinued.

20. NS referenced paragraph 8 of Note 5 in his summary of the CDR. BB added that any change in focus of RA should not be less data, just less description. Also, how will content of IWR be influenced by ESG? SOS will prepare an outline of what an RA should look like. SOS will look at QEH, ESG, NS comments, and meeting notes from this June meeting. SOS is to start with NS comments, and then see what is missing based on ESG.

21. Discussion about individual IWRs.

22. FQ added that he would like to see some detailed descriptions of updates in HEIs since their last IWR, in terms of student representation, etc. This needs to be more explicit than what is proposed in NS notes on CDR. FQ added that the HEIs should be clear on what they did with the concerns in cycle 1, and also what has happened to the institution since then. An analysis of where the HEI is now, and the plan for the future.

23. NS referred the meeting to Note 5, paragraph 10 of his document on the CDR concerning Judgments. For example, what happens when a HEI gets limited confidence, and what are the consequences? PG added that it would be better for HIE, MESC and QB that there be time limits with specified consequences for lack of follow up activities by an HIE, and normally it should be a year. NS voiced the opinion that links to accreditation need to be clear. If there is no relationship, then nothing should be said about that.

24. NS raised the notion of full confidence and self-accreditation status. Discussion then turned to the option of getting "Full Confidence" from an IWR. FQ noted that the removal of a full confidence option might be controversial because some institutions are hoping that they will attain it. Full would be optional after 2 successive confidence ratings, but the criteria would need to be clear.

25. The discussion turned to confidence ratings again, and a suggestion made that in cases of limited confidence, the HEI get 3 months to get an action plan together. Then QB team would visit 1 year after initial visit to look at progress. Possible outcomes of that visit include:

1. No confidence if things are worse
2. Restore Confidence if things are appreciably better
3. Keep limited confidence if some progress has been made

LANGDON NOTES BEGIN

7 Research paper – sufficient agreement for this to go to the QC for consultation, and QB can then continue discussions on it thereafter. Input and involvement of the HE institutions needed especially for the extended model. Copy of the draft paper should also go to the MESC. Choice of external experts for SLR/Research processes will be crucial. Important at this initial stage to emphasise that we are looking at the *management* of research rather than at the quality of the research itself.

There might be some modifications to the content of the paper in the light of the NOQA conference.

10 Next steps – we now more or less know what we want for QEF2 – all the main elements of the system. These now have to be turned into coherent papers for the various sections of the Handbook. Soggi to put the material into the different sections – emailed out to us – QB members to read these and correct them timeously.

In turning these sections into a Handbook – QC has expressed the wish to be involved in the writing of the new QEF2. This will promote a sense of ownership. Drafting group to be formed of 2/3 QC members + Soggi + designated (distance?) member of QB.

11 November conference

Venue: Grand Hotel

Duration: whole day

Chair: Jon Atli as chair of the Rectors' Conference?

Ministry input: Minister should be invited.

Speakers: from outside Iceland in addition to QB