Measuring Effectiveness of Internal Quality Assurance (Institutional Research) Units in Universities

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Karma El Hassan, PhD.
American University of Beirut.
Outline

- Introduction:
  - Changing Conceptualizations of Quality
  - Quality Assurance

- Internal Quality Assurance
  - Definition
  - Effectiveness of Internal QA Units

- Internal QA at AUB
  - Initiatives
  - Plan to Measure Effectiveness of internal QA
Changing Conceptualizations of Quality

- From established ‘earmarks’ of quality like measures of resources, faculty and staff qualifications to
  - inclusion of learning outcome assessment,
  - focus on teaching, documentation, and transparency with more public accessibility to information

- View of Quality affects approach to quality
  - Standards ➔ Basic standards
  - Perfection or excellence ➔ Excellence standards
  - Fitness for purpose ➔ Fitness for purpose
  - Value for money ➔ Consumer satisfaction
  - Transformation and change ➔ Enhancement
Definitions of quality

- excellence standards
- consumer satisfaction
- basic standards

high

low

internally relative

externally relative

fitness for purpose

absolute
Quality Conceptualization

- Primary responsibility for quality lies in **HE institution itself**, and this provides basis for real accountability of the system.
- Importance of **grassroots development of quality** rather than a top down approach.
- Promote in institution a **quality culture** that is fit for purpose that takes into account institution's own context and realities.
- A quality culture indicates a **change in attitude & behavior**.
- Emphasis on improvement not just development of quality, **quality enhancement**.
Quality Assurance

- An all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving) the quality of (teacher/higher) education systems, institutions or programs.*

- A range of review procedures derived from institution's own strategic goals, fitting into their own quality culture, while also fulfilling external requirements for QA.

- Levels of QA: Internal and external
  - Internal evaluation is the cornerstone of QA in HE, while external evaluation is necessary to provide credibility of the results of the internal evaluation.

*UNESCO
Different Levels of QA

- Regional Level Standards
- National level External QA, Legal structure
- HEI, Internal quality assurance culture
Activities Covered by IQA processes

- Research
- Teaching and learning
  - Student learning outcomes
  - Review of programs
  - Quality of teaching staff
- Student support services
  - Processes (advising, registration, food services, etc.)
  - Resources (labs, library, computing facilities, etc.)
- Community service
  - Student engagement
- Governance and administration
- Communication flow
Effectiveness of Internal QA Units

- IQA units are change agents, so expected to promote IE on campus.
- Evaluation of effectiveness of IR office is a worthy practice by itself;
  - all of six accrediting agencies require assessment of administrative functions, including IR.
  - IR office has opportunity to model the behavior it teaches, by turning magnifying glass inward and conducting a study of its own effectiveness.
  - To be credible on campus, you have to engage in the very practice that we support. ‘virtue begins at home’, ‘lead others through example’.
What is Effectiveness of Internal QA Units?

- An effective IR office is one that has a tangible impact on decision making, planning, and policy formation (Knight, 2010).

- Other suggestions for IR’s effectiveness include:
  - Maintain objectivity
  - Being proactive ahead of the curve not behind it
  - Stay aware of trends at different levels
  - Breaking out of the routine
  - Understanding context of institution by communicating and collaborating with senior administration
  - Participating in self-assessment practices (Chambers 2007).

- Knight (2010) identified 10 themes for effectiveness of QA Unit.
Figure 2. Structural model of effectiveness in institutional research.
Internal Assessment Initiatives at AUB

To monitor quality and performance at AUB and its administrative & academic units from a variety of perspectives, a number of assessment initiatives were launched at institutional & unit levels. OIRA plays a leading (L) & supporting (S) roles in the monitoring performance.

- Strategic planning and assessment (L)
- Balanced Scorecards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (L)
- Monitoring budgets & expenditures (S)
- Internal audit monitoring (S)
- Assessment of student learning outcomes (S)
- Assessment of General Education Program (S)
- Periodic Program Review (S)
- Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA) Activities (L)
Director of IR and Assessment

**External & Internal Reporting**

**Internal**
- Fact book
- Facts & Figures
- Faculty Workload

**External**
- College Board
- Common Data Set
- Thomson Petersons Surveys
- ASHA
- Middle States IP Rankings

**Planning & Assessment Support**

- Enrollment projections
- Revenue projections
- Accreditation self-studies
- Strategic Planning KPIs
- Units in preparation of assessment plans
- Special research projects

**Data Management Technical Support**

- Student database
- Data warehouse
- Hardware & software support
- Faculty workload & evaluation database
- Data Mining
- Data Warehousing

**Assessment and Research**

**Outcomes assessment:**
- Institutional, Program & General Education

**Survey research**
- Campus climate research
- Institutional effectiveness
- Alumni studies
Routine Basis

Quadrant (II) Accountability Work on a Routine Basis

Quadrant (I) Improvement Work on a Routine Basis

Quadrant (III) Accountability Work on an Ad-Hoc Basis

Quadrant (IV) Improvement Work on an Ad-Hoc Basis

Accountability

Improvement

Routine Basis

Ad-Hoc Basis
Routine

Common Data Set
Accreditation Report
College Board
Rankings

Retention Graduation Rates
Factbook
Support Learning Outcome Assessment
Support internal surveys & data analysis

Accountability

Support Strategic Planning
Financial Analysis
Provide program review data

Ad Hoc

Improvement
Plan to Measure OIRA Effectiveness

I. Periodically conducting a self-study

II. Assessment
   I. Internal
   II. External

III. Cost effectiveness

IV. Process and performance benchmarking

V. Gap analysis

VI. Improvement plan
# Self-Study Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Office Mission</td>
<td>Is it written? Consistent with institutional mission and with best practices in IR; Communicated to internal and external constituents (visible); Periodically reviewed and updated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Human Resources</td>
<td>Are human resources sufficient to meet needs, Do they have necessary competencies to complete work, Are they provided with professional development opportunities, clear job descriptions and assignments, Do they have time to reflect and act proactively, Do they have good working relationship with administrative and academic units?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Office Resources</td>
<td>Do we have adequate hardware and software and budget, Do we have assistance available for programming needs, web design, statistical and research methodology, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Workflow</td>
<td>Process of submission work requests, for accepting, assigning and prioritizing assignments; Use of tracking system to monitor progress; Automation of routine reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Information access &amp; retrieval</td>
<td>Ease of access to live and archived data, Availability of data dictionary, Process of ensuring data integrity and reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Reports and other products</td>
<td>Verifying accuracy, distribution, Availability of info on web, Process of backup and security of data.</td>
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</tbody>
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Assessment: Internal & External

1. Internal. Regularly obtaining customer feedback:
   - At completion of every work assignment,
   - Annual brief surveys to rate experience and quality of products covering
     - Website visibility; timeliness of delivery; knowledge of staff; responsiveness; staff professionalism;
     - Products: ease of use; accuracy and consistency; comprehensiveness.
     - Example from Ball State University (Knight, 2014) follows.

2. External review
   - Consultant
   - Volunteer peer review
Office of Institutional Research Customer Survey

The Office of Institutional Research is interested in your feedback concerning the quality of the services we provide. We would appreciate your responses to this survey, the results of which will be used in our program review process. If you can not answer any item, please leave it blank. Please send the completed survey via campus mail to the Office of Institutional Research, 301 McFall Center. Please do not fold this form and please use a pencil or heavy black pen to fill it out. Thank you.

Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Information received from Institutional Research meets my needs
Information received from Institutional Research is dependable and accurate
Information is provided from Institutional Research in a useful format
Information provided from Institutional Research is clear and understandable
I plan to use the services of the Office of Institutional Research again
I would recommend the services of the Office of Institutional Research to others
The Office of Institutional Research has had a definite positive influence upon BGSU
Institutional Research staff members are courteous and friendly
Institutional Research staff members are available and approachable
Institutional Research staff members demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior
Institutional Research staff members demonstrate creativity and initiative
Institutional Research staff members have the appropriate knowledge and skills to meet my needs.
Institutional Research staff members listen and make an effort to understand their customers' needs.
Institutional Research staff members show interest in receiving feedback and improving performance.

I have used this product/service... I am ___ with this product/service.

Very Often
Often
Occasionally
Seldom
Never

... Information on IR web site
... Assisting with strategic planning activities
... Presentations by Institutional Research staff members at meetings
... Assisting with the design and administration of questionnaires
... Receiving information during telephone calls or walk in office visits
... Information support for committees when requested
... Information support for program review
... Summer Friday Factoid

Very Dissatisfied
Dissatisfied
Neutral
Satisfied
Very Satisfied
Other Steps

- **Cost effectiveness of operations.** Analysis, compare direct costs with benefits accrued to the institution as a result of the work.

- **Benchmarking**
  - Process benchmarking. Study work procedures and processes in other successful institutions. Adopt successful practices to one's own advantage.
  - Performance benchmarking. Compares a set of measured outcomes to a numerical criteria or data point. Use of KPIs.

- **Put results to work.**

- **Conduct a gap analysis.**
  - Difference between one's current position and what it wants to achieve in the future.

- **Determine what specific actions must be taken to close the gap and achieve the goals.**

- **Prepare plans for improvement** that include resources needed and timeline.
Conclusion

Well performing higher education systems need to:

- balance between internal and external QA
- willingly engage in critical self-evaluation and self-regulation
- invest in strong quality culture aimed at mission
- incorporate evidence-based transparency

Above processes safeguard academic standards, and promote better learning opportunities and services for students in a turbulent and changing environment.
Useful References


Thank YOU

- OIRA Website
  http://www.aub.edu.lb/oira/Pages/index.aspx
- Email
  kelhasan@aub.edu.lb