



# Cross-border education and the UNESCO/OECD “Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education”

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## The Guidelines:

Why are they here?

What do they say?

Whom do they help?

Where do we go from here?



# The Guidelines – Why are they here?

## The Guidelines – Why are they here?

### What's the Problem?

- CBHE not covered by national QA regimes
- Lack of comprehensive international frameworks for co-ordination of international initiatives
- Some CBHE-programmes left outside any framework of quality assurance and accreditation

“This makes students and other stakeholders more vulnerable to low-quality provision and disreputable providers of cross-border higher education.”

## The Guidelines – Why are they here?

“There is therefore a need for additional national initiatives, strengthened international co-operation and networking, and more transparent information on procedures and systems of quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of qualifications.”

UNESCO, 2005, 9

## The Guidelines – Why are they here?

„Purpose of the Guidelines

The Guidelines aim to support and encourage international cooperation and enhance the understanding of the importance of quality provision in cross-border higher education.

The purposes of the Guidelines are to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision and disreputable providers as well as to encourage the development of quality cross-border higher education that meets human, social, economic and cultural needs.“

## The Guidelines – Why are they here?

(Another Problem:)

“At the same time, the increase in cross-border student, academic staff, researcher and professional mobility has put the issue of the recognition of academic and professional qualifications high on the international cooperation agenda.”

UNESCO, 2005, 8

## The Guidelines – Why are they here?

“Countries attach a high importance to national sovereignty over higher education. Higher education is a vital means for expressing a country’s linguistic and cultural diversity and also for nurturing its economic development and social cohesion. It is therefore recognised that policy-making in higher education reflects national priorities.

UNESCO, 2005, 10



## The Guidelines – Why are they here?

The purpose of the Guidelines points directly to GATS:

- Higher education is not a commodity!
- Regulation by national authorities not by the market!



## The Guidelines – Why are they here?

“an educational response to the growing commercialisation of higher education”

(UNESCO 2005)



# The Guidelines – What do they say?

## The Guidelines – What do they say?

### “Scope of the Guidelines

The Guidelines aim to provide an international framework for quality provision in cross-border higher education...”

UNESCO, 2005, 10

# The Guidelines – What do they say?

## Guidelines:

- For Governments
- For HEI
- For student bodies
- For quality assurance/accreditation agencies
- For academic recognition bodies
- For professional bodies

# The Guidelines – What do they say?

## Guiding Principles:

- National responsibility
- International collaboration

# The Guidelines – What do they say?

## Guidelines for institutions

- Guarantee comparable quality
- Consult QA and accreditation bodies and respect QA regime of the receiving country

## The Guidelines – What do they say?

### Guidelines for QA/Accreditation bodies

- Ensure that CBHE is included
- Consult QA and accreditation bodies in the receiving country
- Reach mutual recognition agreements with QA and accreditation bodies in the receiving country
- Use international panels, international benchmarks of standards, undertake joint AQ-procedures



## The Guidelines – What do they say?

### Guidelines for governments

- Establish a system of registration/licensing of incoming CBHE
- Establish capacity for QA of CBHE “recognising that quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education provision involves both sending and receiving countries”
- Encourage mutual recognition of qualifications through bi/multilateral agreements

## The Guidelines – What do they say?

### Conclusion

- Threatened by the commodification of higher education and consequently rough provision,
- Lacking quality assurance procedures, let alone those that cover CBHE,

national governments have to establish an international framework of collaboration (regulation?) that guarantees comparable quality of culturally sensitive provision of CBEH that is regulated by co-operating QA/accreditation bodies.



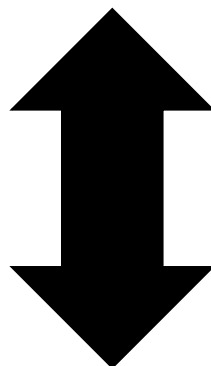
# The Guidelines – Whom do they help?



The Guidelines – do they help?

The Guidelines – do they help?

No need for revision but further implementation



Guidelines are irrelevant, HEIs don't know them

Vincent-Lancrin/Pfotenhauer (2012)

## The Guidelines – Whom do they help?

What's the situation 2014 compared to 2005?

- CBHE has grown significantly.
- Forms of CBHE diversify

## The Guidelines – Whom do they help?

What's the situation 2014 compared to 2005?

- Regional integration in HE develops
  - (Regional) Qualifications Frameworks spread
  - National quality assurance regimes converge
  - Recognition of qualifications develops according to regional conventions

## The Guidelines – Whom do they help?

What's the situation 2014 compared to 2005?

- Regional initiatives for QA in CBHE
- UNESCO/APQN Toolkit Regulating the Quality of CBHE (2006)
- ENQA Guidelines for external QA in CBHE (2015)



## The Guidelines – Whom do they help?

What's the situation 2014 compared to 2005?

QA/Accreditation bodies:

- The Guidelines' principle of bilateral collaboration is often not the solution to the problem but its reason.
- Distinction has to be made between accreditation/regulation and quality assurance

# The Guidelines – Whom do they help?

## Guidelines for QA/Accreditation bodies

- Ensure that CBHE is included
- Consult QA and accreditation bodies in the receiving country
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## The Guidelines – Whom do they help?

What's the situation 2014 compared to 2005?

QA:

- Standards for quality assurance encompass CBHE, not always explicitly though.
- Responsibility lies with the HEI!
  
- Various forms of internationalization of QA develop. ('QA-Market' in the EHEA)

## The Guidelines – Whom do they help?

What's the situation 2014 compared to 2005?

Accreditation bodies:

- Standards for accreditation/(state) approval necessarily disregard specificity of CBHE.
- Responsibility lies with relevant national authority!
  
- Mutual recognition agreements of accreditation decisions are inefficient, if relevant/possible at all.

## The Guidelines – Whom do they help?

What's the situation 2014 compared to 2005?

Governments:

- The Guidelines' principle of joint responsibility is often not the solution to the problem but its reason.
- Divers legal characteristics of CBEH matter;  
Distinction has to be made between accreditation/regulation and quality assurance

## The Guidelines – Whom do they help?

### Guidelines for governments

- Establish a system of registration/licensing of incoming CBHE
- Establish capacity for QA of CBHE “recognising that quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border higher education provision involves both sending and receiving countries”
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# The Guidelines – Where do we go from here?

## The Guidelines – Where do we go from here?

- Diverse legal characteristics of CBHE matter!
- Responsibility within national context needs to be defined and taken seriously!
- Registration of foreign providers is key!



## The Guidelines – Where do we go from here?

- Regional integration changed the situation substantially.
- Concept of bilateralism doesn't work in accreditation /regulation: Global regulatory framework is not likely to emerge!
- Inter-regional collaboration fosters trust of quality standards and standards for quality assurance!



The Guidelines – Where do we go from here?

New developments cause new challenges!

New questions call for new answers!



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