EAD 5628

International Quality Assurance

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Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Thai Education System

Today we will learn from beginning to end on the topic of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Thai Education System. Internal Quality Assurance and Accreditation, External Quality Assurance in Thailand and Quality Assurance in ASEAN.

From the topic of actors in the ASEAN Regional QA Arena exemplifies the quality assurance framework to be self-educated After that, we will take a final exam of 30 questions. It takes approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

The Ministry of University Affairs/MUA introduced accreditation and quality assurance in 1996. All public and private universities have set up quality assurance systems and work towards quality teaching. Internal and external quality assurance was brought forward through the National Education Act 1999
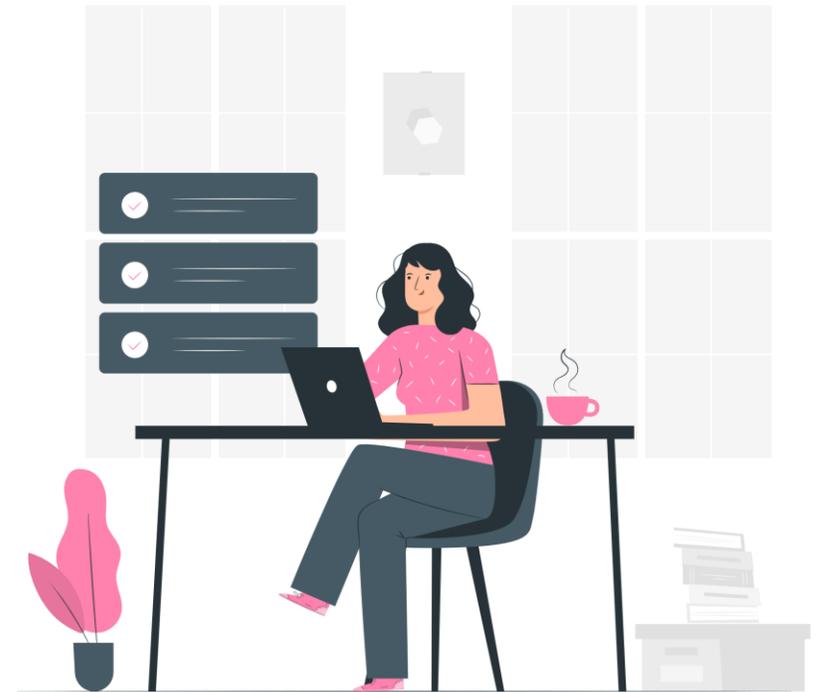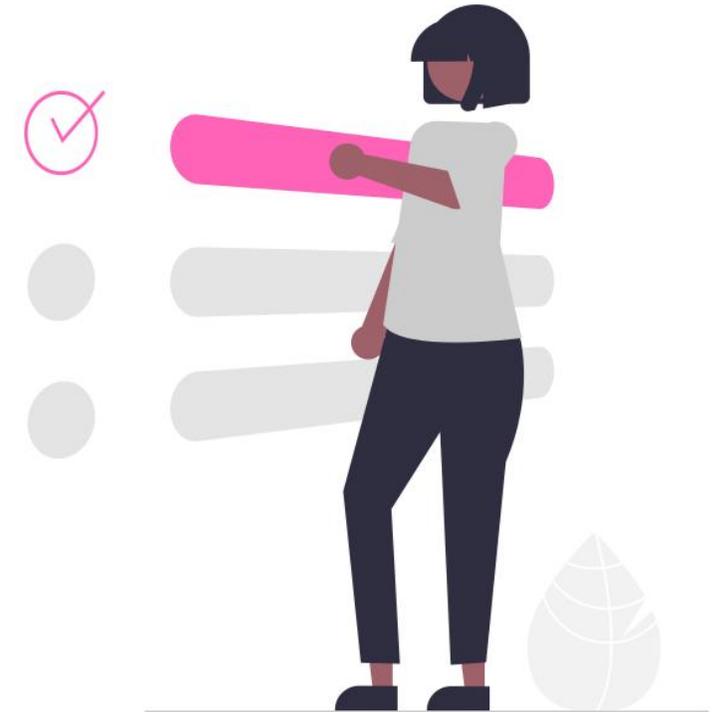
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As per the act, quality assurance in higher educational institutions includes an external and internal system. For internal accreditation and quality assurance, the internal mechanisms are used. External quality assurance is through ONESQA or Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment.

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Internal Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Thailand

Quality Assurance Framework

Foundation for Thai quality assurance framework lies in formulation of standard criteria and requirements established by MUA for degree courses in the nation. All degree courses provided at public and private higher educational institutions, especially transitional ones will have to attain standard criteria before they are approved for starting operations. Over years, approval authorisation has been transferred by MUA to public higher educational institutions.

Governing councils as well as academic boards are responsible for quality of educational provision and this includes academic standard control. External persons with expertise are invited by some of the universities for review of developing curricula and reviewing internal activities.
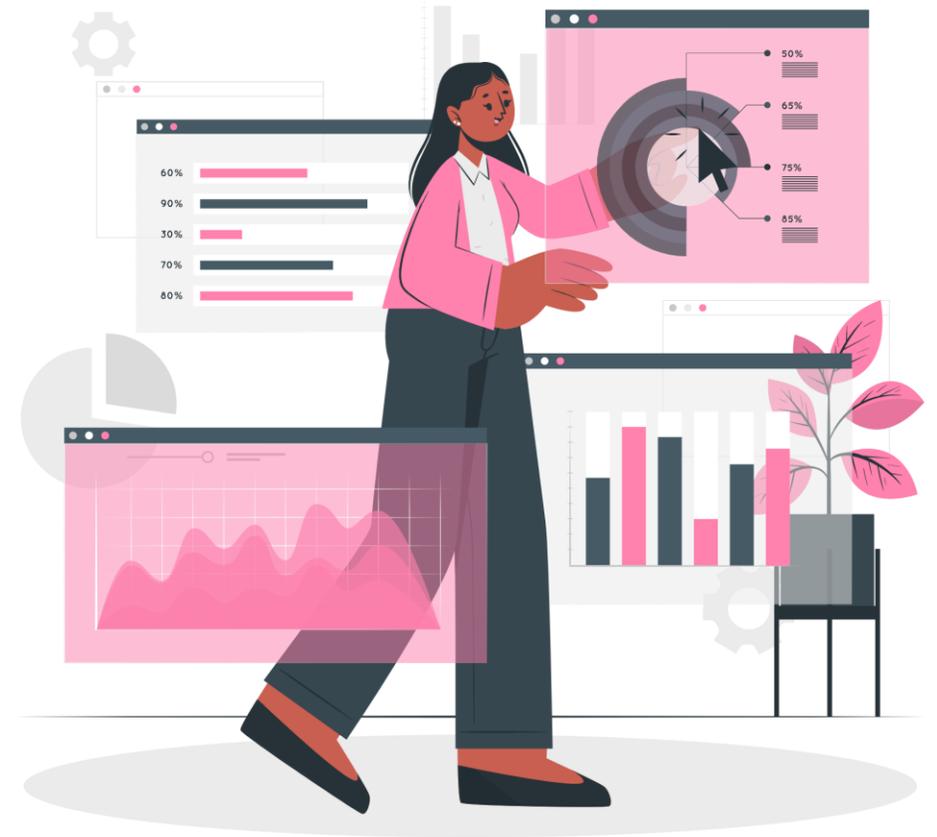
Accreditation system is associated with professional degrees such as architecture, nursing and medicine. For private higher educational institutes, MUA takes care of approval of degree programmes and accreditation. MUA is currently known as Commission on Higher Education under the Ministry of Education. Three aspects of quality control are under its aegis namely quality control, audit and assessment.

Framework provides autonomy to institutions to adapt their traditions. Quality framework proposed by the commission has 9 components :

1. Objectives, commitment and philosophies
2. Research and academic services
3. Preserving culture and art
4. Management and administration
5. Budgeting and finance
6. Internal systems and mechanisms of quality assurance
7. Learning
8. Teaching
9. Student development activities

However, each institution is also given the freedom to establish a quality assurance system relevant to its context. Each institution develops its own system. Implementation, audit and review is based on policy makers within the institution.
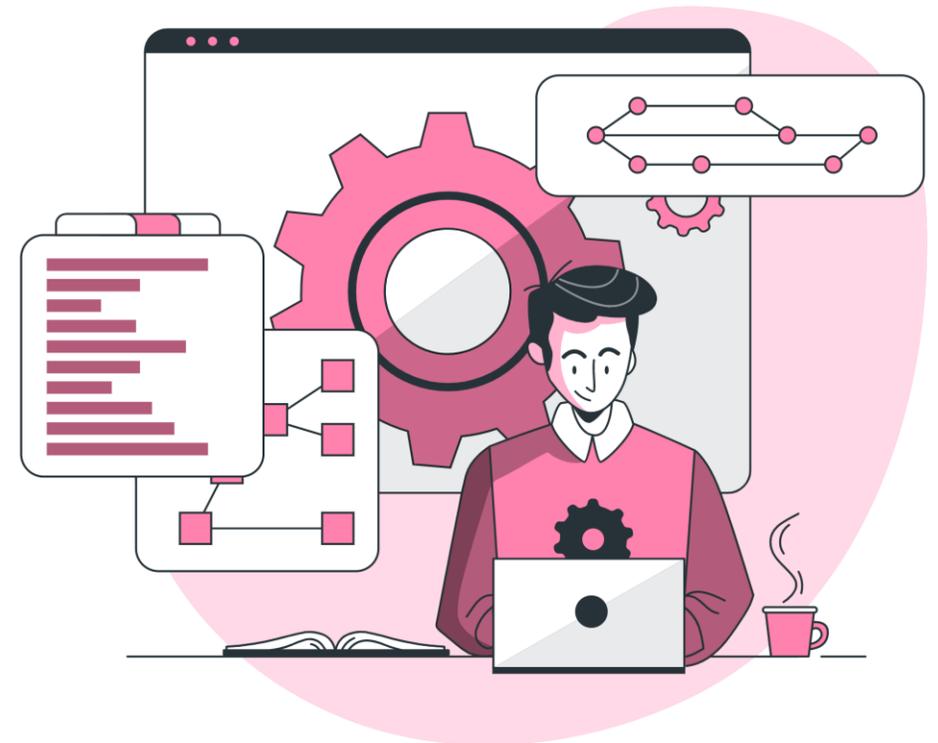
# External Quality Assurance in Thailand

ONESQA:

Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment was formed in the year 2000. It is a public body which is independent and concerned with external quality assurance and accreditation. Each institution reviews its performance based on the following indicators provided by ONESQA:

- Graduates quality : 4 indicators

- Support for learning resources : 5 indicators

- Innovating and research : 4 Indicators

- Academic support service : 2 indicators

- Preserving culture and art : 2 indicators

- Management as well as administrational operations : 5 indicators

- System for internal quality assurance : 2 indicators
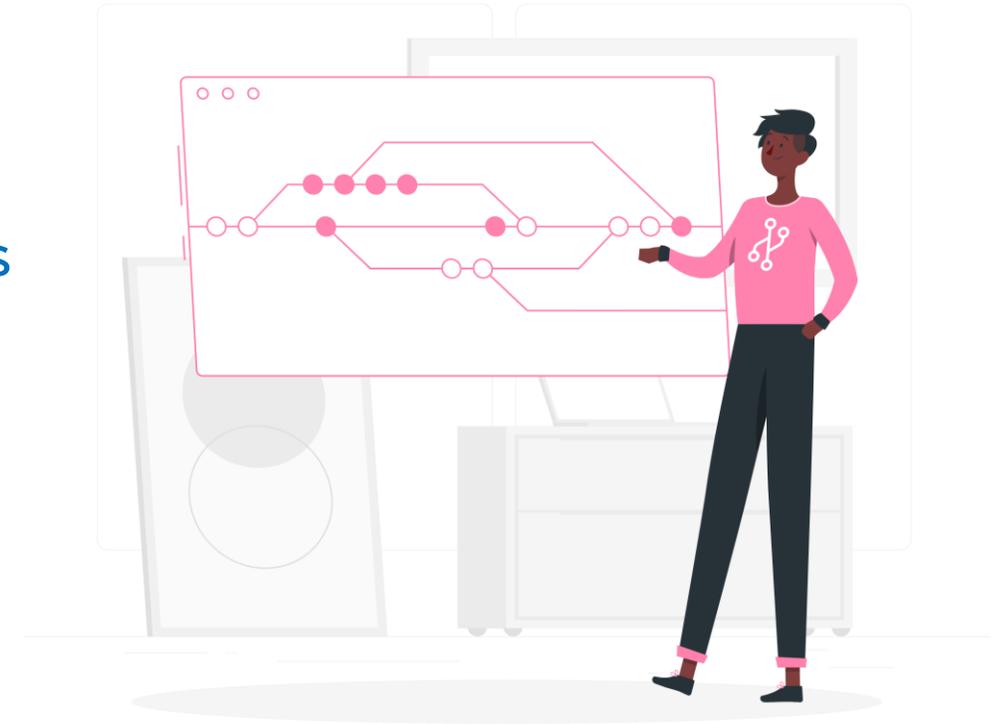
Indicators:
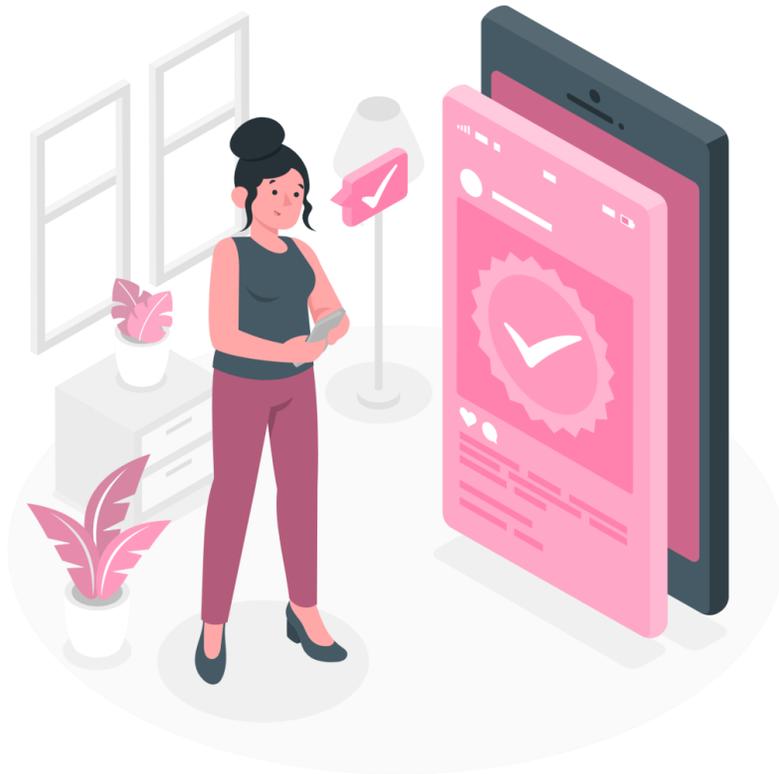
Only five of the 28 indicators are descriptive in nature. There are differences between institutions in the use of these statistical indicators for assessing performance of institutions. Once certain standards are marked, the first review cycle is carried out by ONESQA to assess the external quality assurance system. Review cycle lasts for 5 years and comprises the following principles:

Standards of Assessment:

International standards against which higher education is measured and assessed :

- Quality of academic standards upheld in educational institutions for higher education
- Upholding academic standard quality in universities and institutions
- National Education Act's objectives, principles as well as directives to guide the process
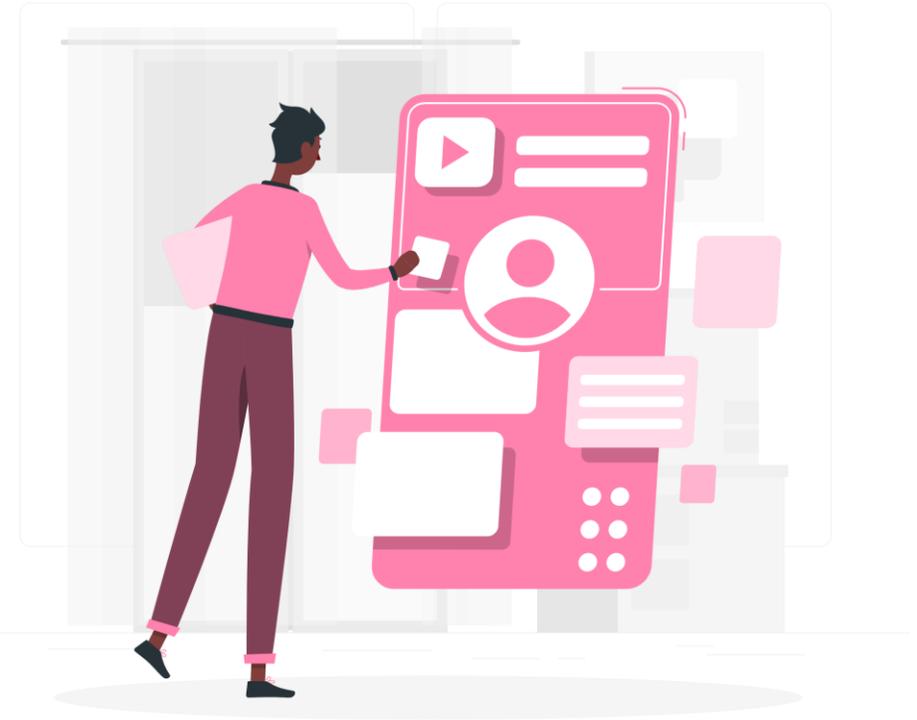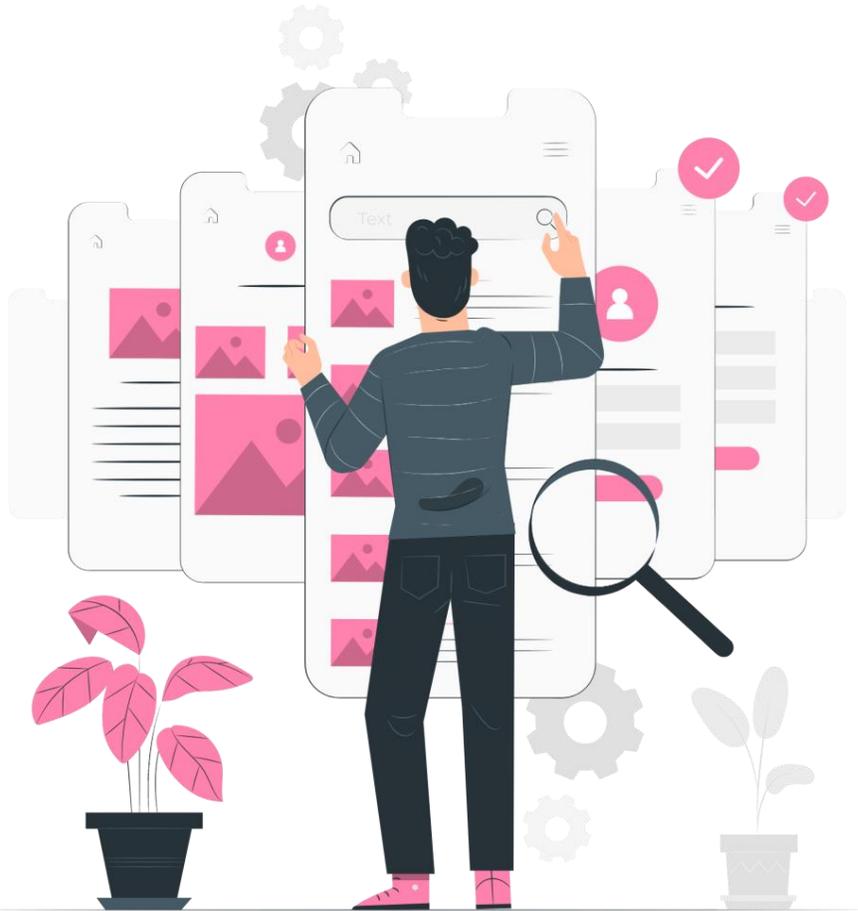
- Review and confirmation of current system of the institute for assessment of quality and functions keeping in mind their objectives, visions, missions, uniqueness and academic autonomy
- Support for the implementation of internal system of quality assurance in an institution
- Transparency and accountability while carrying out the assessment

Dimensions of Development :

3 dimensions of development are considered namely achievement, attempt and awareness.

The self review report and data of each university is submitted to ONESQA before external assessing is carried out. Extra documents and reports on internal system of quality assurance complements the external assurance system. Experts and academic authorities from various sectors constitute the team for review and assessment.

Important Organisations for Quality Assurance and Accreditation:

1. Ministry for Education
2. Bureau for International Cooperation Strategy, Office of Higher Education Commission,
3. Office of the Higher Education Commission
4. Office for National Education Standards and Quality/ONESQA
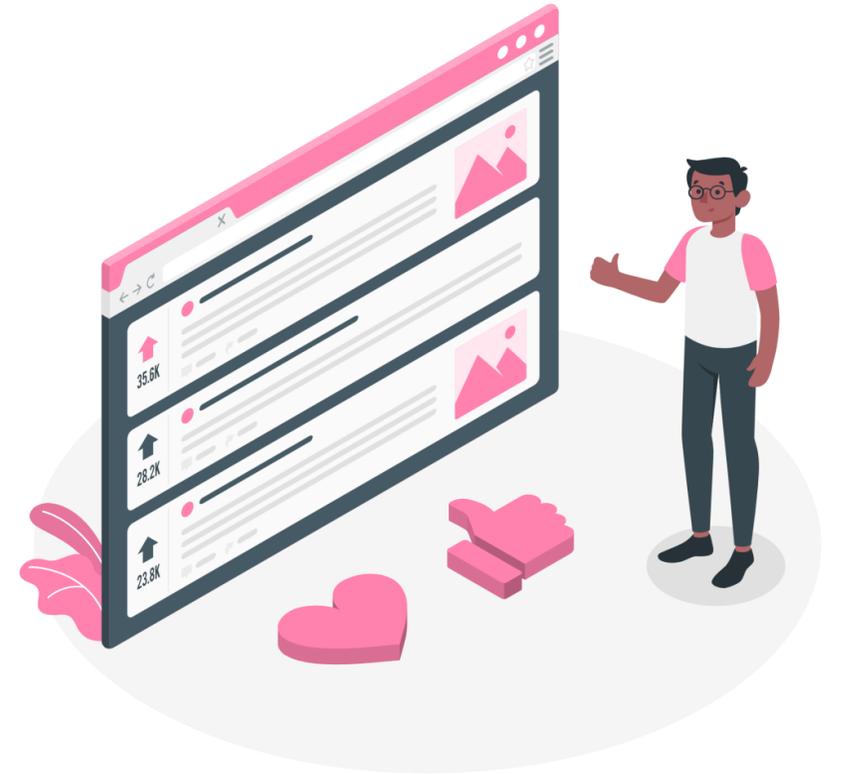
Commission on Higher Education or CHE is a catalyst in the process of assessing higher educational institutions for accreditation and quality assurance. Internal as well as external systems of quality assurance are well in place to provide feedback to institutions and universities.

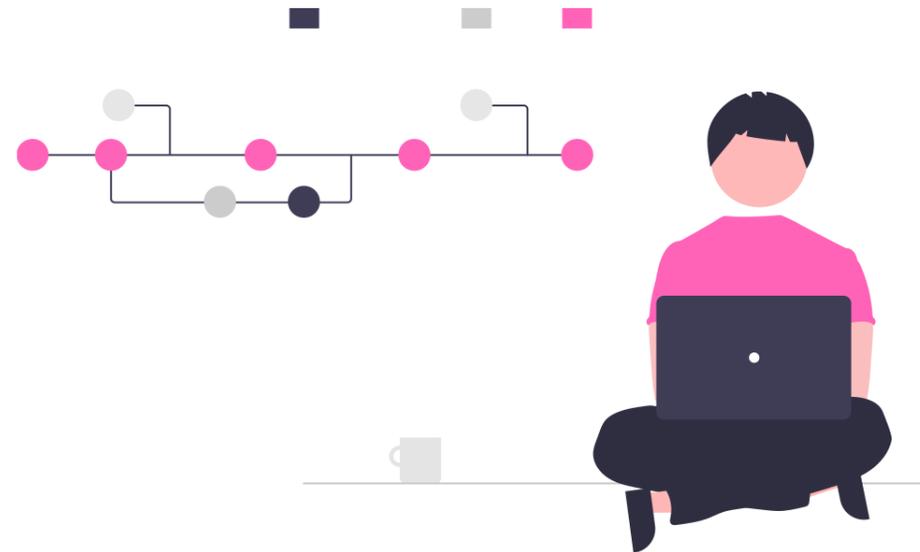# Higher Education System in Thailand

Tertiary or higher education in Thailand is provided at the following types of educational institutions:
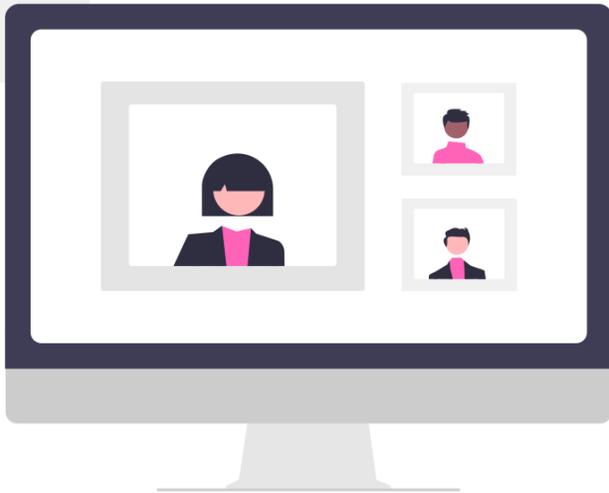
- Universities
- Institutes of Technology/Rajamangala Institutes
- Vocational and technical colleges
- Teachers colleges/Rajabhat Institute
- Professional colleges such as nursing, military and police academies

Vocational Education (VE) in Thailand is offered in three forms namely the programme which is normal, vocational training (dual) and informal education programme. The levels of vocational education offered are three namely as follows:

- Certificate in Vocation Education
- Diploma(Technical)
- Higher Diploma

Popular Courses in Thailand

Management, humanities, science and social sciences are preferred by students pursuing higher education in Thailand. Commerce and Information Technology are also popular options. Courses in Thailand focus on imparting theoretical as well as practical learning.

Quality Education:

Thailand is like many Asian nations that value higher education. There is rigorous competition to get into the best schools and Thailand is known for its quality education. World class higher educational institutions are at the forefront of modern science and techno savvy. These provide advantages to global students who study here. International students also travel to this nation to study in areas such as ecology and the environment, given the geographical uniqueness of Thailand.
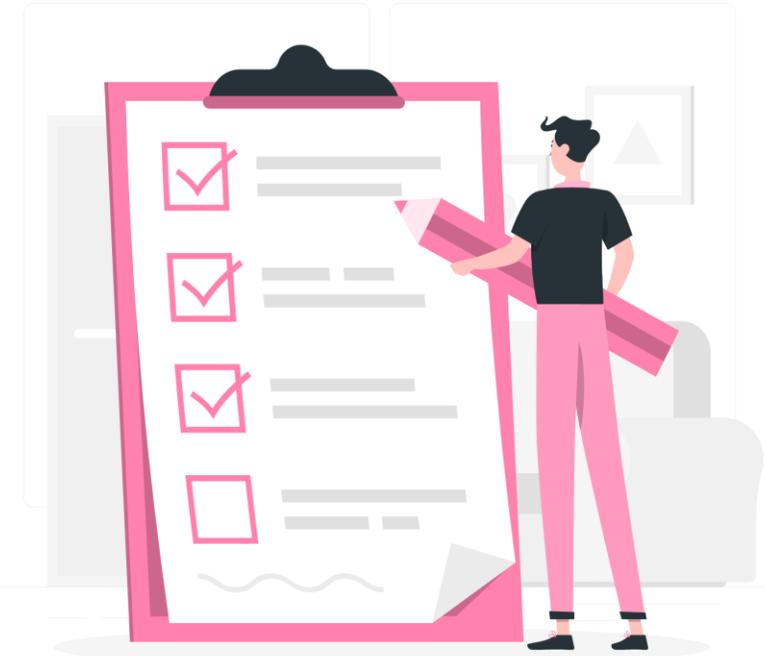
The Management of Quality Assurance: A Review of International Practice

Current and recent international practice in the management of quality assurance for higher education systems and institutions is reviewed. Particular attention is given to administrative agencies or units with responsibility for the management of quality assurance at both national and institutional levels; whether participation in reviews and other activities is optional or compulsory; the main methodologies employed; the focus of quality assurance activities; the purposes of such activities; and reporting and/or follow-up activities.

# How to set up and manage quality control and quality assurance
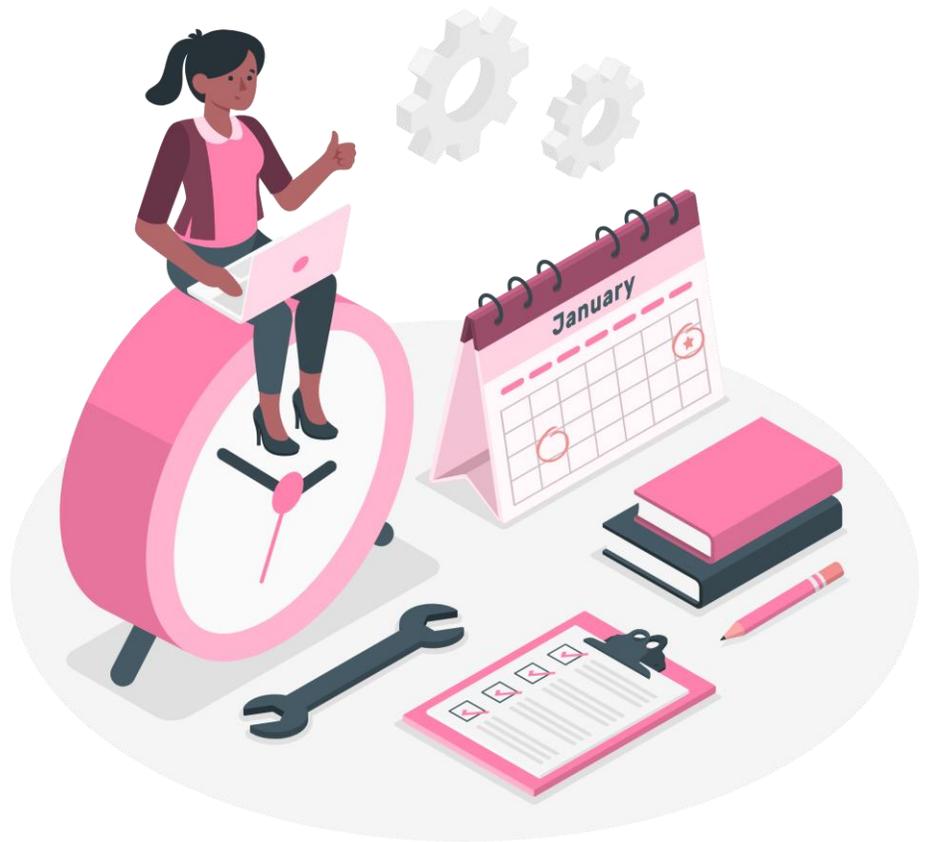
The differences between quality control (QC) and quality assurance (QA). It serves as a starting point for implementing a quality system approach within an organization. The paper offers practical guidance to the implementation of quality and the importance of QC in its relationship to QA. It can be used in conjunction with the various quality regulations or guidelines.

Regional integration of higher education (HE) systems is a response to the growing complexity and international interdependence of our globalised world and global education market (Yepes 2006). In Europe, the HE systems are in the midst of the Bologna Process, an initiative that, among other objectives, aims to harmonise regional HE and to establish and further develop the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The Bologna Process is expected to ensure comparability and compatibility between national HE systems in order to make Europe more visible and competitive as a region. The intended outcomes of the process are mutual recognition of students' qualications and degrees, student and staff exchange, and mobility. The process can be characterised as the farthest-reaching reform project in European education.
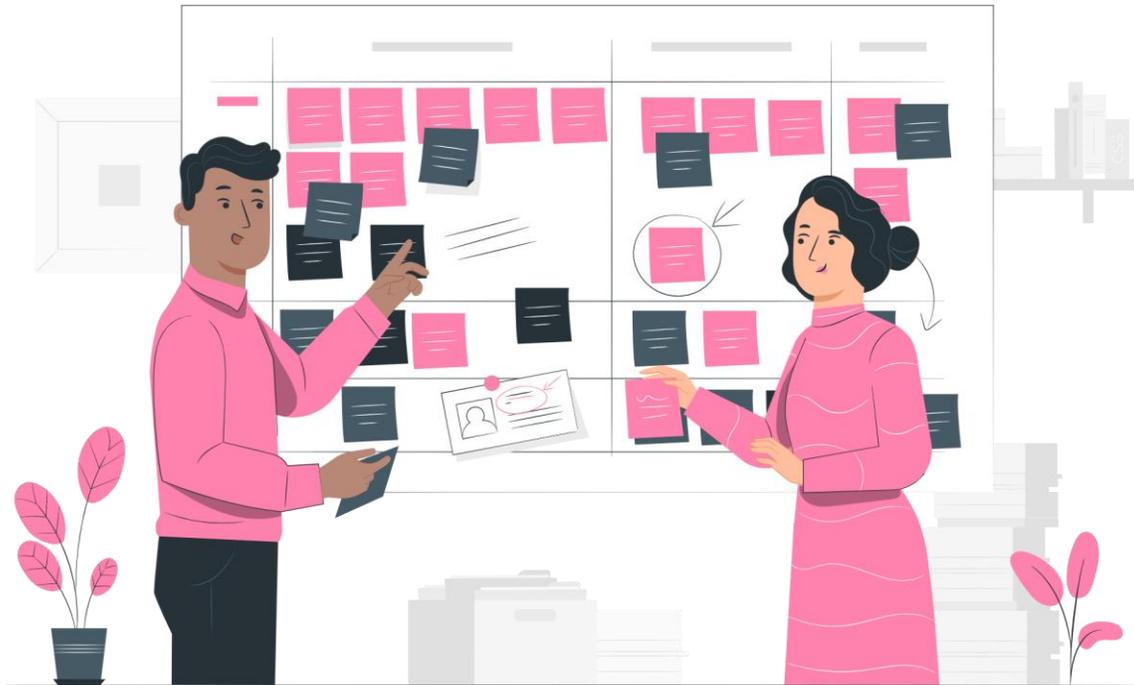
Similarly, in regions like ASEAN, which are characterised by diverse national educational policies and cultures, the issue of harmonising educational processes and outcomes (e.g. degrees) is gaining importance. On a global level, comparability between regional systems (e.g. EHEA and ASEAN) is a demanding yet prospective objective.

Important instruments to support the harmonisation of HE areas are (external) quality assurance (EQA) frameworks and practices. Quality assurance (QA) frameworks set common standards and guidelines. In return, these create mutual trust for stakeholders (e.g. the regional labour markets and employers) in the quality of the programmes provided and degrees awarded by the higher education institutions (HEIs) of the different countries.
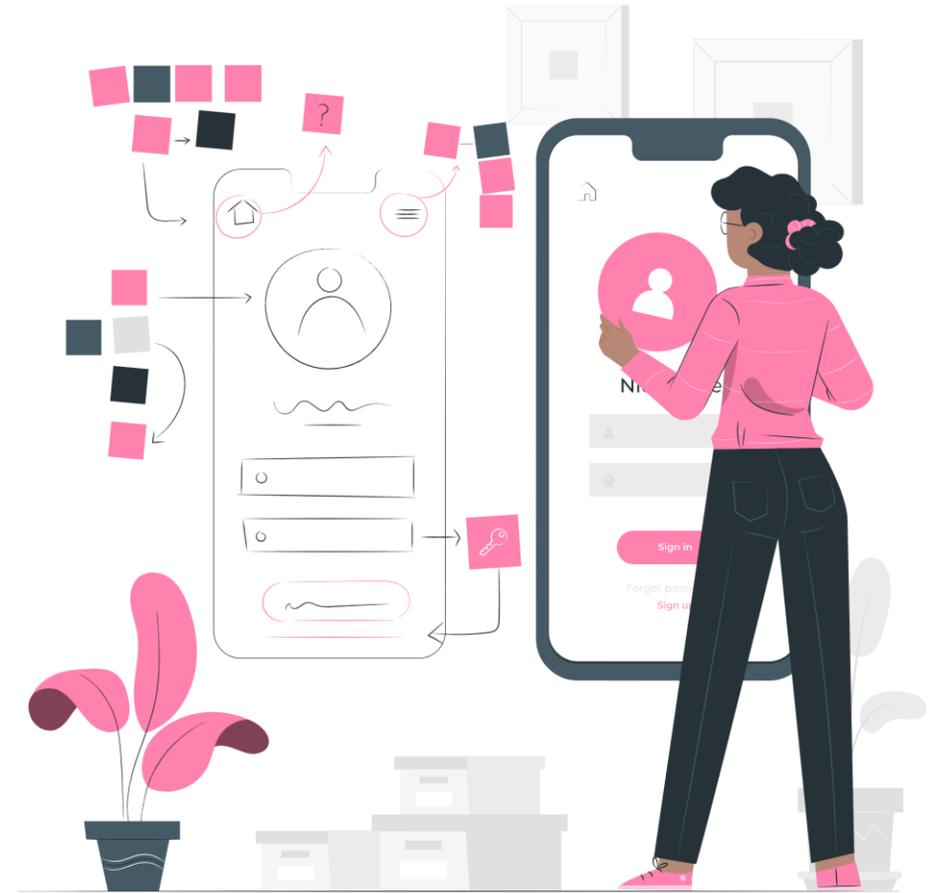
QA has been introduced in many HE systems worldwide in the last two or three decades as an instrument to make universities' achievements in HE visible and comparable. Thus, the expectations towards QA to serve as a crucial instrument in the process of harmonising regional educational policies are high.
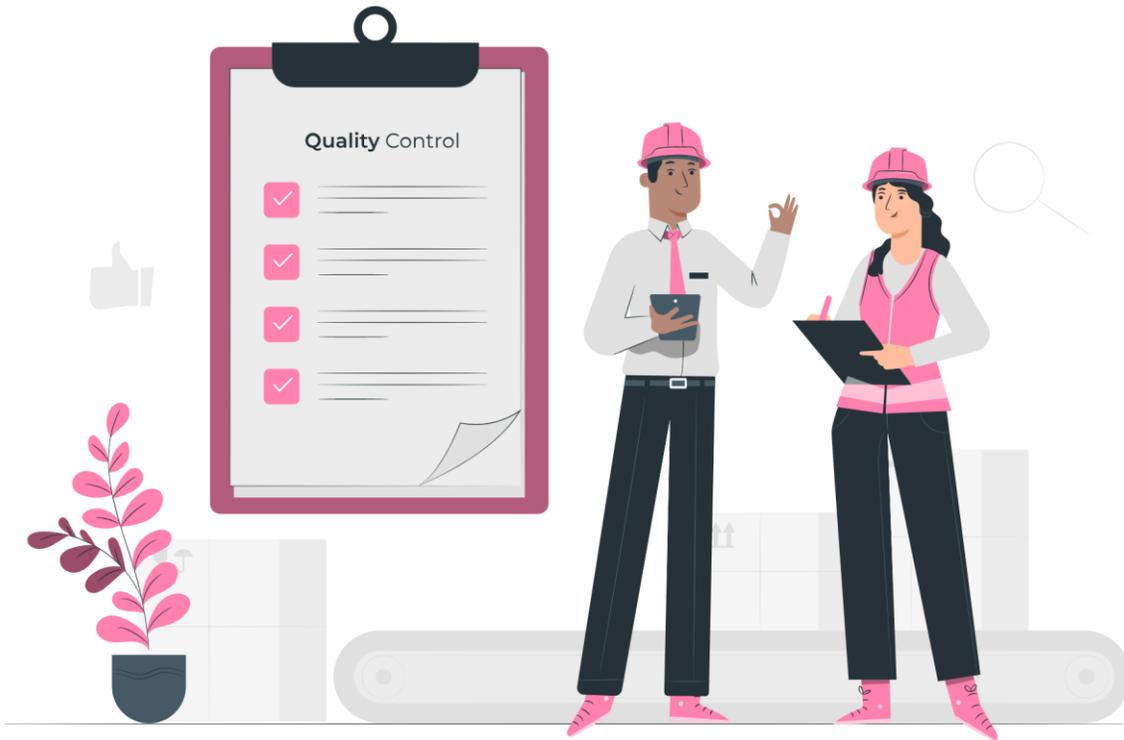
As one important milestone of the European Bologna Process, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were adopted in 2005 and revised in 2015 (ENQA 2005, 2015).

The ESG are expected to assist actors at HEIs as guiding principles for establishing a supportive QA policy. However, they are not prescriptive in nature and thus leave space open for the elaboration of an individualised approach to what quality is at the level of an individual institution.

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EQA refers to assessment exercises, which are typically carried out by peer reviewers from universities other than the one under assessment and usually managed by an appointed QA agency. In many European cases, these agencies are eligible to award accreditation for individual study programmes (or quality management systems) based on the results of the peer reviews
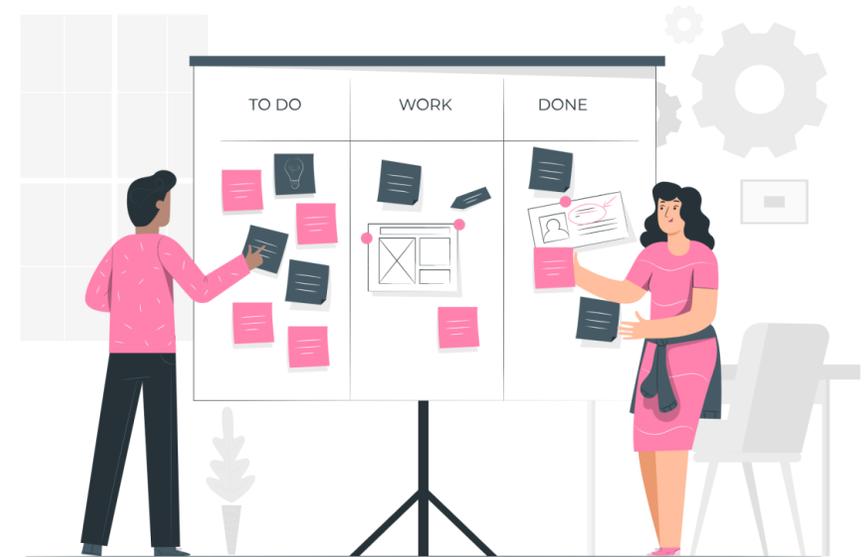
The generic nature and the non-binding character of the ESG seem to be important success factors in the European context. In the ASEAN context, the search for an equally successful framework for QA in HE is underway. In this context, the aim of the present study is varied. It strives to identify:
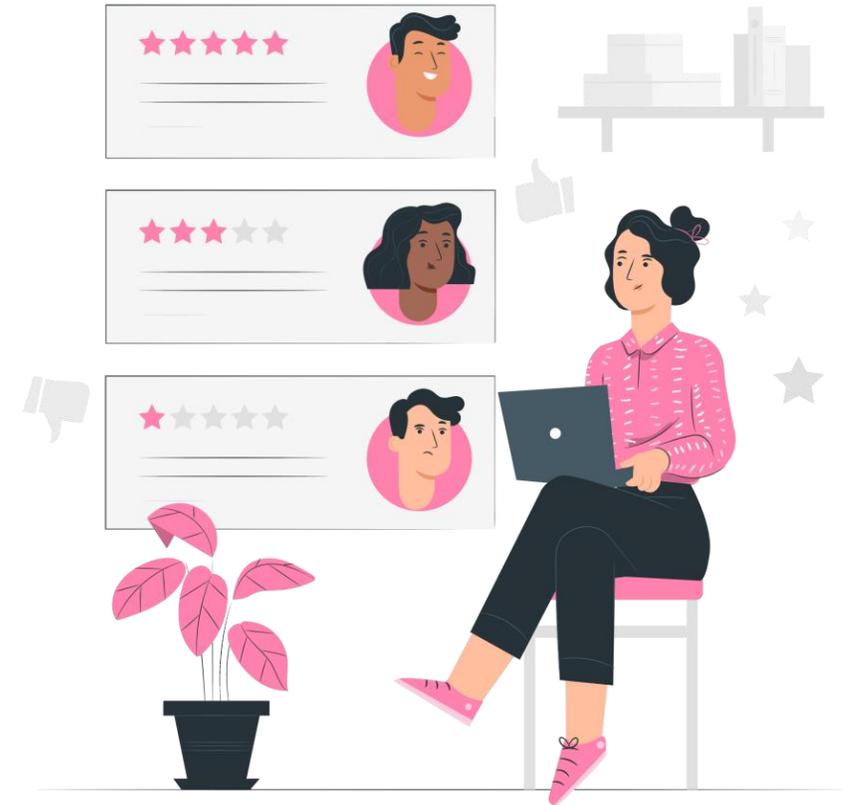
The current state of play of (external) QA in all ASEAN countries in order to set a common ground for a regional policy and to gain an understanding of the countries' different situations and 'points of departure';

- Specic characteristics of selected national policies (success factors for the national implementation of a supranational policy) and respective aspects for future development needs;
- Areas for urgent development needs, e.g. in terms of elaborating QA tools or training needs of actors in charge of the implementation of QA procedures; and
- Strengths and weaknesses of national policies and the current supranational approaches to a shared QA framework
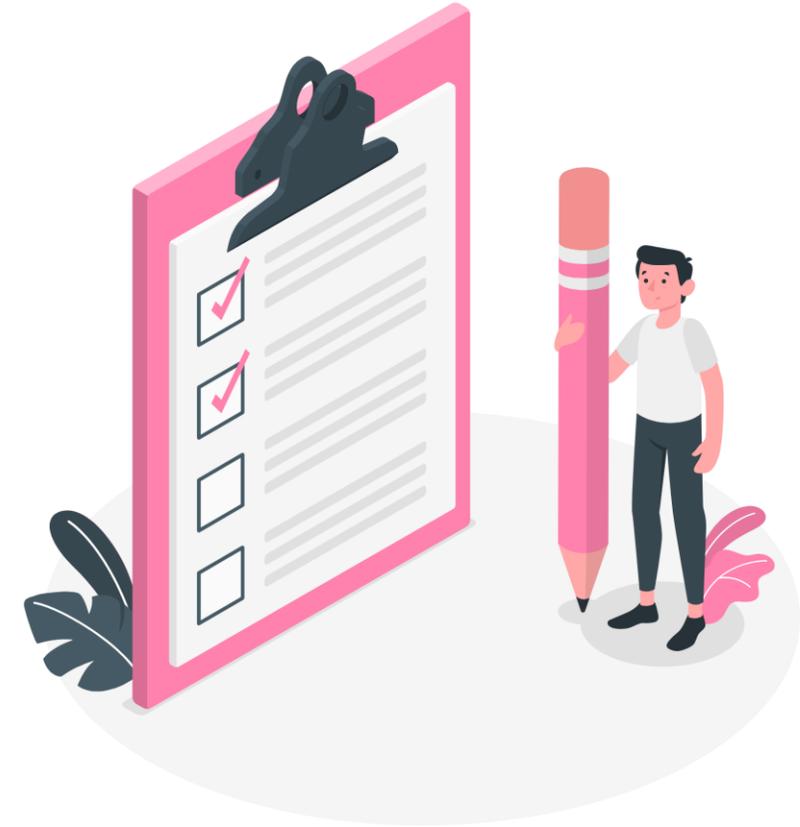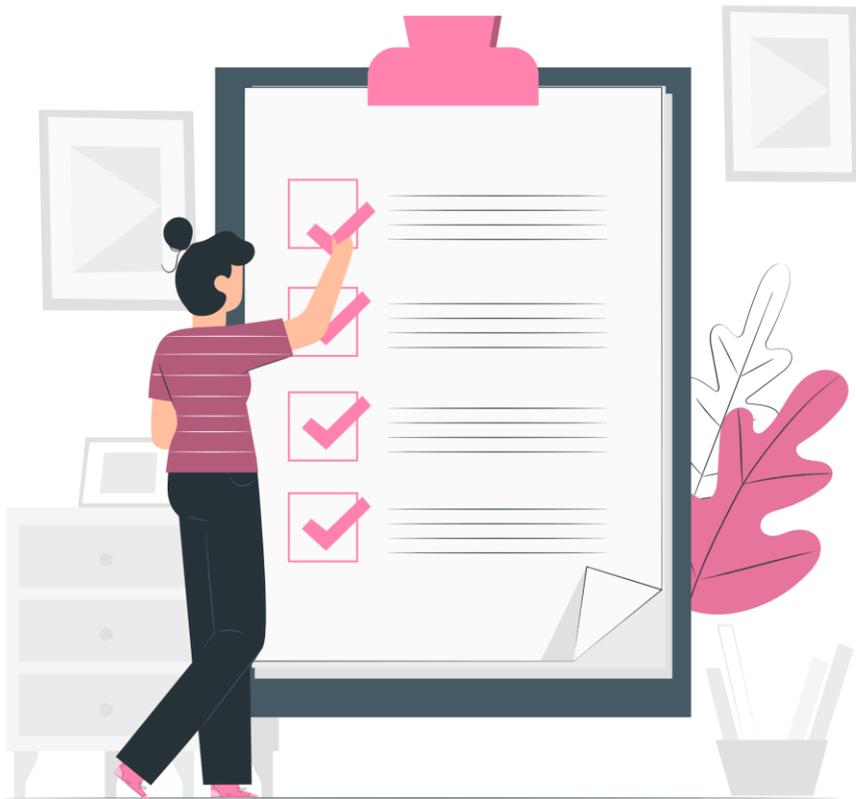
One of the main objectives of the EU-funded European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) project is to give guidance and support to ASEAN HE systems. In this context, the present study takes stock of the current state of affairs in the eld of QA in the ASEAN region.

Such information is needed in order to support national and regional actors at all levels of policy making and to enable evidence-based activities that contribute to achieving the overall objective of elaborating a shared QA policy and harmonisation of HE policies in the ASEAN region
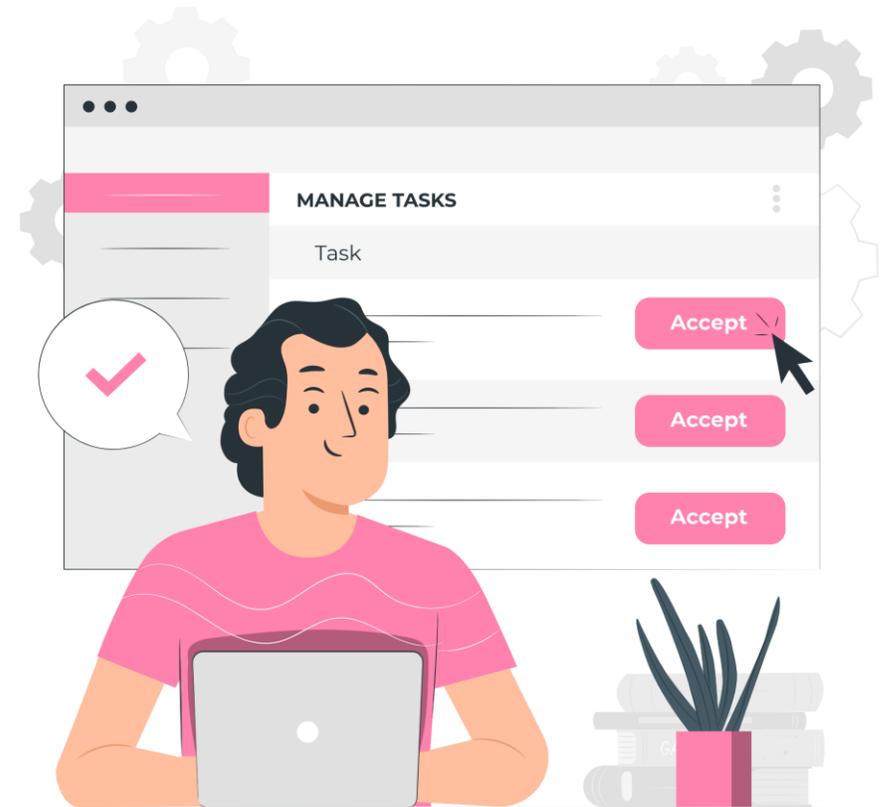
Regional harmonisation of teaching and learning processes and outcomes in HE, however, is not an end in itself. It should not remain at the level of policy statements. It is important that the idea of a shared HE area, and the benefits that individual universities can gain from it, is communicated at all levels of the HE system: from governmental bodies (ministries) in charge to the individual teaching staff at a given university.

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Harmonisation of educational structures and outcomes is a complex change process that requires thoughtful planning and comprehensive change management. One of the experiences with the Bologna Process in Europe is that stating and stipulating a new policy at the political level and its sustainable and successful implementation at the individual teacher or department level are two entirely different phenomena.
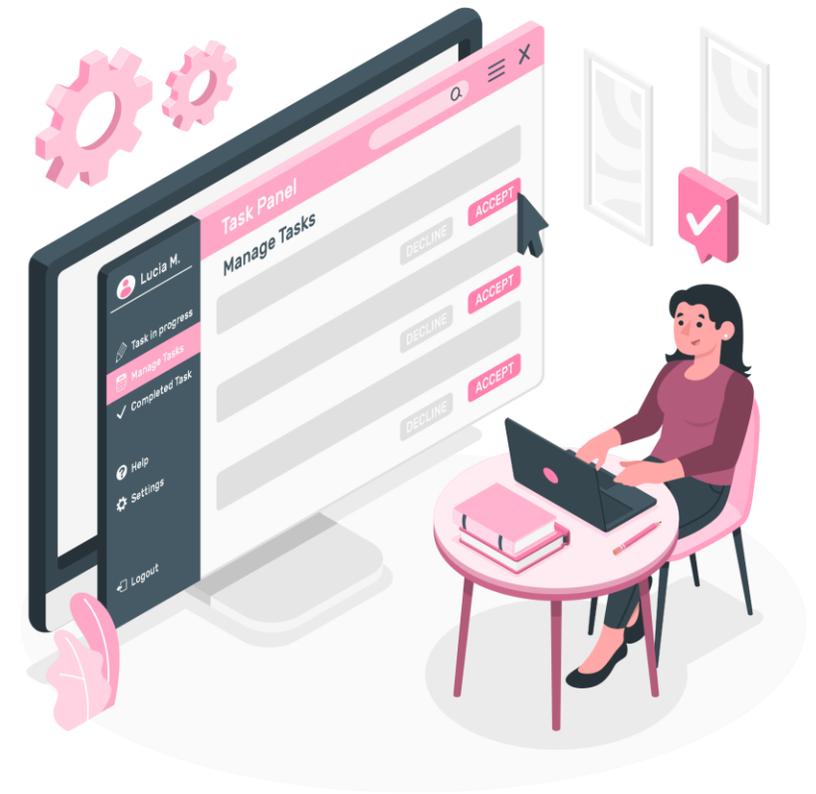
Thus, the change process needs to comprise strategies for QA that support teaching staff and departments, e.g. with elaborating curricula according to new standards or with new approaches to teaching delivery
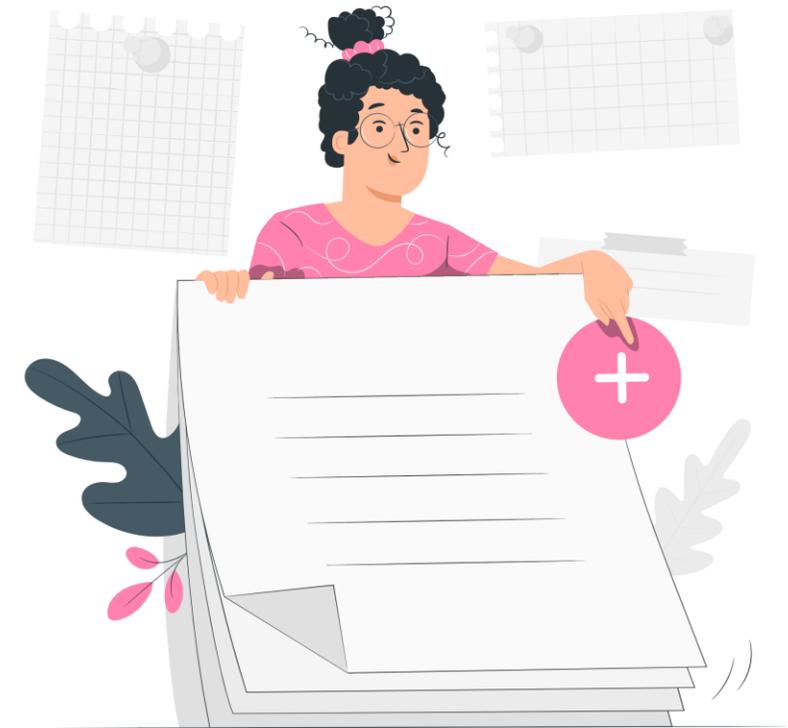
Thus, the change process needs to comprise strategies for QA that support teaching staff and departments, e.g. with elaborating curricula according to new standards or with new approaches to teaching delivery

Quality assurance (QA) of HE adheres to a specie form of rationality: the application of QA procedures of whichever type and nature follow the assumption that the outputs of teaching and learning processes (e.g. student achievements, teaching quality, etc.) can be controlled and changed towards more desirable outcomes

This is why university managements, national governments, and even supranational regional networks elaborate frameworks for QA that presume HE can be managed and success and failure can be attributed to the respective acting of persons (teachers, students) or organisations (universities) responsible.

Such frameworks are publicly available. They come in the form of national education or accreditation laws or appear as regulations for student course evaluations in higher education institutions (HEIs). They are supposed to support HEIs by offering degree programmes that are up to educational and organisational standards and to promote the comparability of similar study programmes and degrees (e.g. in academic disciplines) across different institutions or even national HE systems
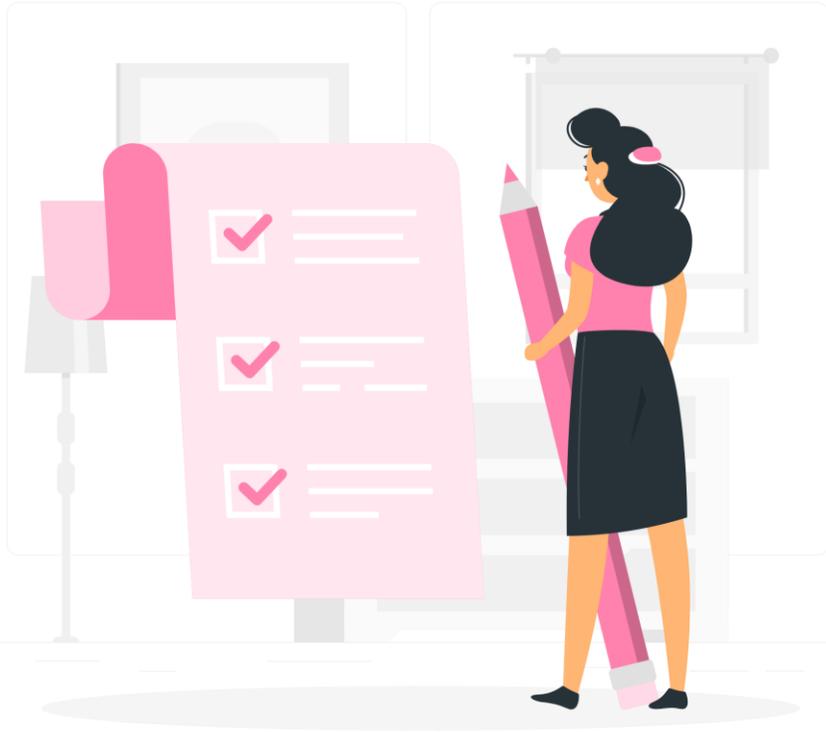
Quality Assurance in
ASEAN

Quality Assurance in ASEAN

Regional harmonisation of study programmes and degrees is a prominent topic in different regions of the world (e.g. Europe, Latin America, and East Africa). It aims to promote student and teaching staff mobility and thus regional exchange and inclusion. A regional QA framework is a common instrument to secure the comparability of HE provisions throughout the adhering countries.

In the ASEAN region, a variety of initiatives have already been undertaken by different actors in the eld in order to elaborate a respective QA framework document. The rst version was drafted and is currently subject to debate and political decision–making. The following subchapters give an overlook of the national QA of all ten ASEAN member states and then focus on the regional process, activities, and actors.

The main results of the comparison of national approaches to QA are:

- Different ministries have authority over HEIs. In some cases, the university system is centrally managed by a ministry of education and/or science. In other cases, different line ministries manage HEIs, which offer study programmes in their respective eld (e.g. medical schools are under the management of the ministry of health).

- Most of the ASEAN member countries host at least one body that is in charge of EQA processes for study programmes or entire HEIs (e.g. institutional audits). Only in the case of Myanmar a respective organisation has not yet been introduced. The establishment of these bodies is still in ux in some cases. They vary in number and organisational shape. In the case of Vietnam, for instance, three regional organisations (for North, Central, and South Vietnam) have recently been founded in order to decentralise the management system that used to be under the central authority of the national Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).

- Quality standards and their use in EQA processes vary over member-countries. In some cases, there are quality standards for both institutional and programme levels (e.g. Indonesia and Malaysia), whereas others only address one of the two levels (e.g. Cambodia, Lao, and Vietnam with the institutional level) or are in the process of drafting standards, like

Vietnam, where programme level standards are soon to be published. The only country that is just starting the process of drafting standards is Myanmar. Some countries like Thailand and Indonesia have separate standards for EQA and internal quality assurance (IQA) managed by different departments/organisations.
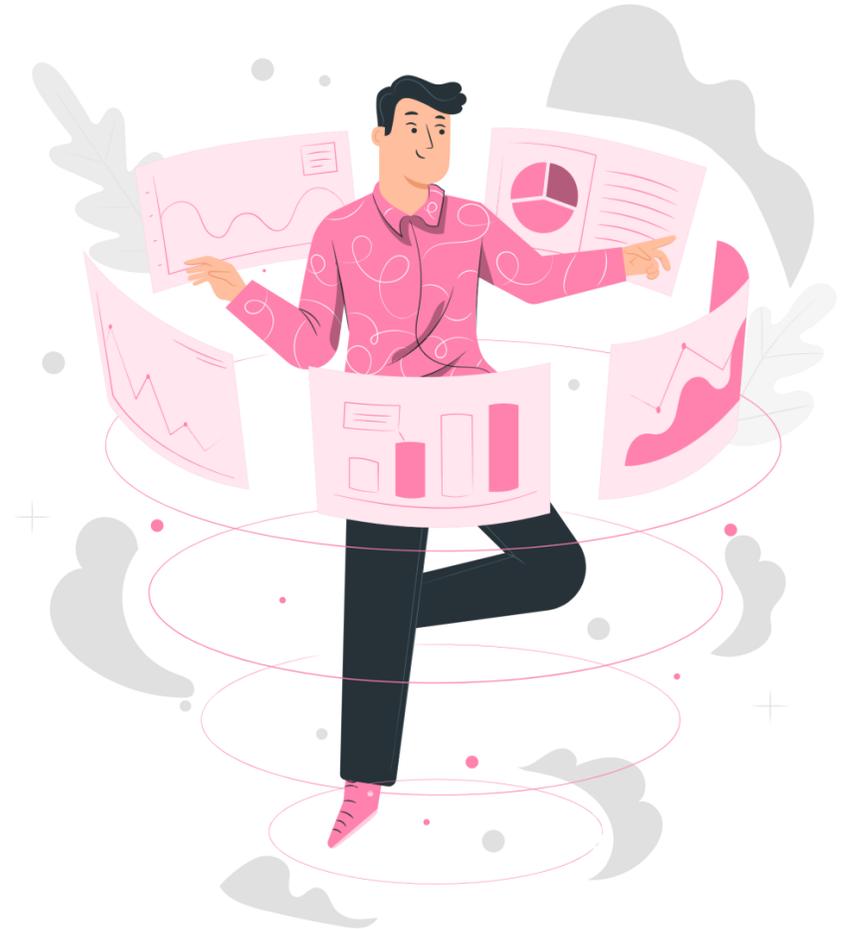
Altogether, the data obtained in the country reports reveal a high diversity of QA approaches across ASEAN member countries. For example, some countries have started with institutional approaches and others with a programme approach. The documents available provide an overview of the national strategies and cross-country development needs and priorities for the future development. These priorities are in line with the intentions of the SHARE project.

At the regional policy level, there are different bodies and organisations dealing with HE in ASEAN. Their relationship and responsibility to build a common HE space for ASEAN countries is not very clear and a formulation of how an ASEAN HE space should look, and what purpose it would serve, has yet to be drafted and agreed upon.

A key player at the policy level is the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation established in 1965. Its Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED) has been the forefront promoter of a common HE space in ASEAN. The SEAMEO is a chartered, international organisation and comprises 11 Southeast Asian ministers of education (ASEAN+ Timor).
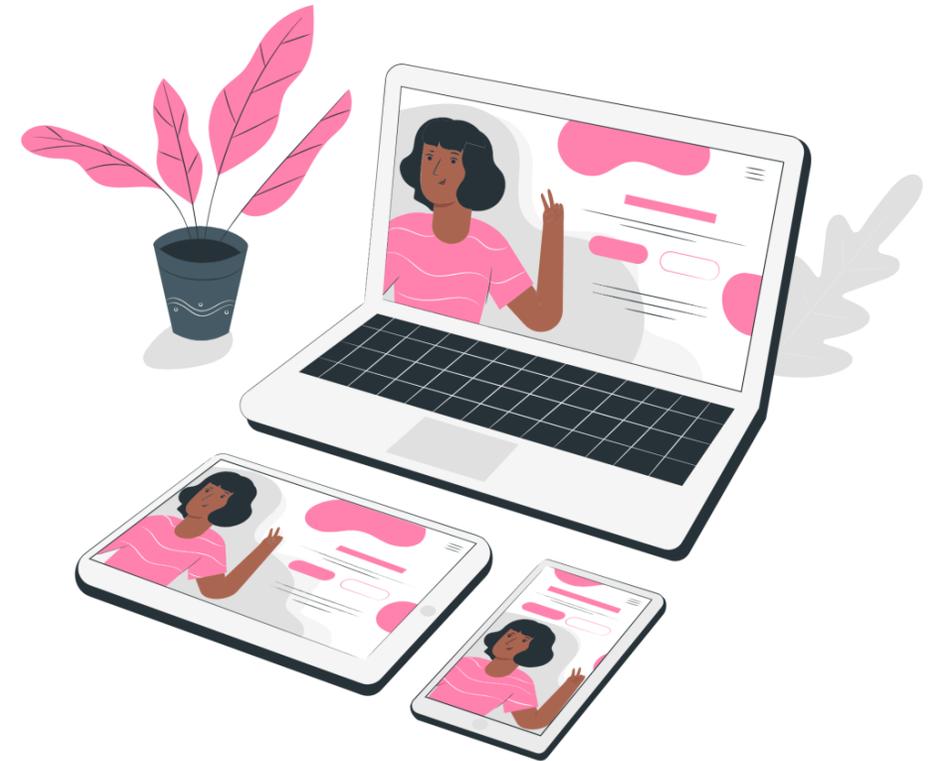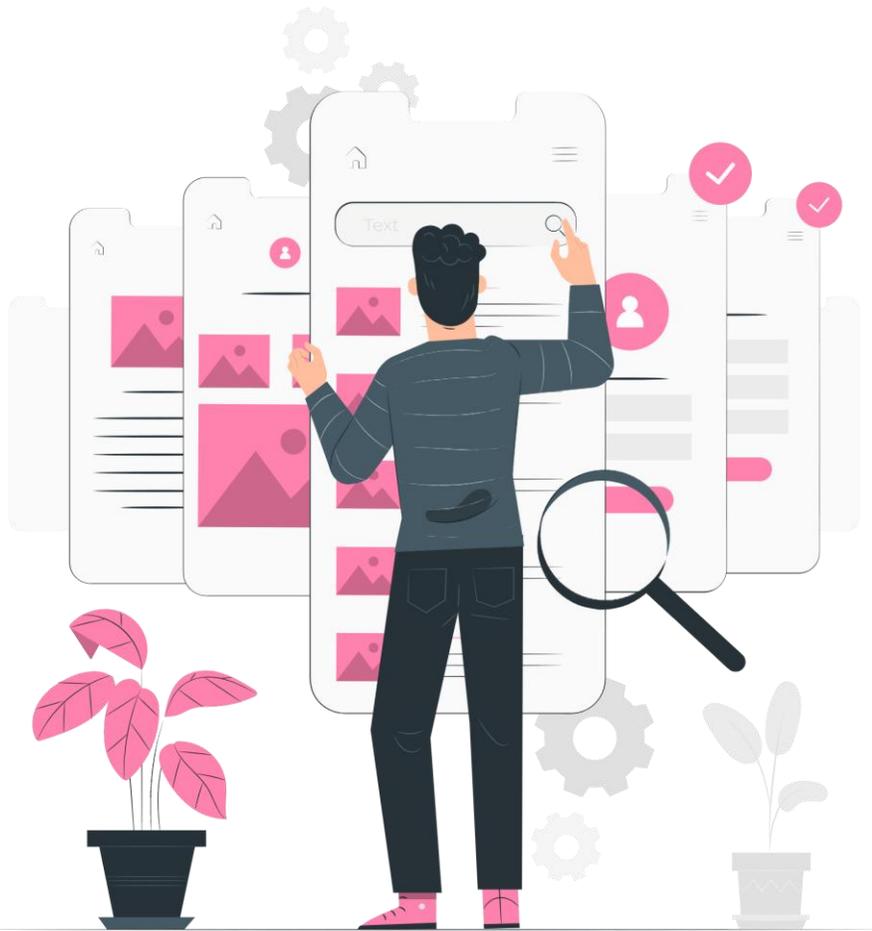
SEAMEO's mandate is to promote cooperation in education, science, and culture. The SEAMEO Council comprises the 11 education ministers and is the organisation's governing body. It meets bi-annually since 2013 (before annually since 2011) in SEAMEO Council Conferences (SEAMEC) in line with the two-year terms for the presidency.

The SEAMEC is prepared and supported by the SEAMEO High Offcials Meeting (SEAMEO HOM). Additionally, the ASEAN national governments have assigned different sectoral ministerial bodies. In the eld of education, the ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting (ASED), which meets annually since 2006 and is organised back-to-back with the SEAMEC conferences, shows that there is a strong connection between SEAMEO and ASEAN with regard to education.

The ASED is under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASECC). The same stands for the ASEAN University Network (AUN). Beneath ASED, there is also the Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOM-ED) (ASEAN, 2007), which, similar to the SEAMEO HOM, prepares and supports the ASED. Between the ASED and SOM-ED meetings, there are also other ministerial meetings that take place.

Thus, both ministers and senior officials meet regularly during the ASEAN+3 Education Ministers Meeting (APT EMM) and East Asia Summit Education Ministers Meeting (EAS EMM) since 2012. All of these meetings have discussed joint efforts and matters of quality enhancement and capacity building in HE. Similar efforts are being made between Asia and Europe under the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM), which comprises the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting

In regards to the political endorsement of a regional HE space, in 2008, the SEAMEO Council meeting agreed upon the project proposal by SEAMEO RIHED on 'A Structured Framework for Regional Integration in Higher Education in Southeast Asia: The Road towards a Common Space'.

Endorsed by the 43rd SEAMEO Council Meeting, SEAMEO RIHED subsequently organised a conference series on 'Raising Awareness: Exploring the Ideas of Creating a Higher Education Common Space in Southeast Asia' in 2008 (SEAMEO RIHED, 2009), thus starting the process towards harmonisation.
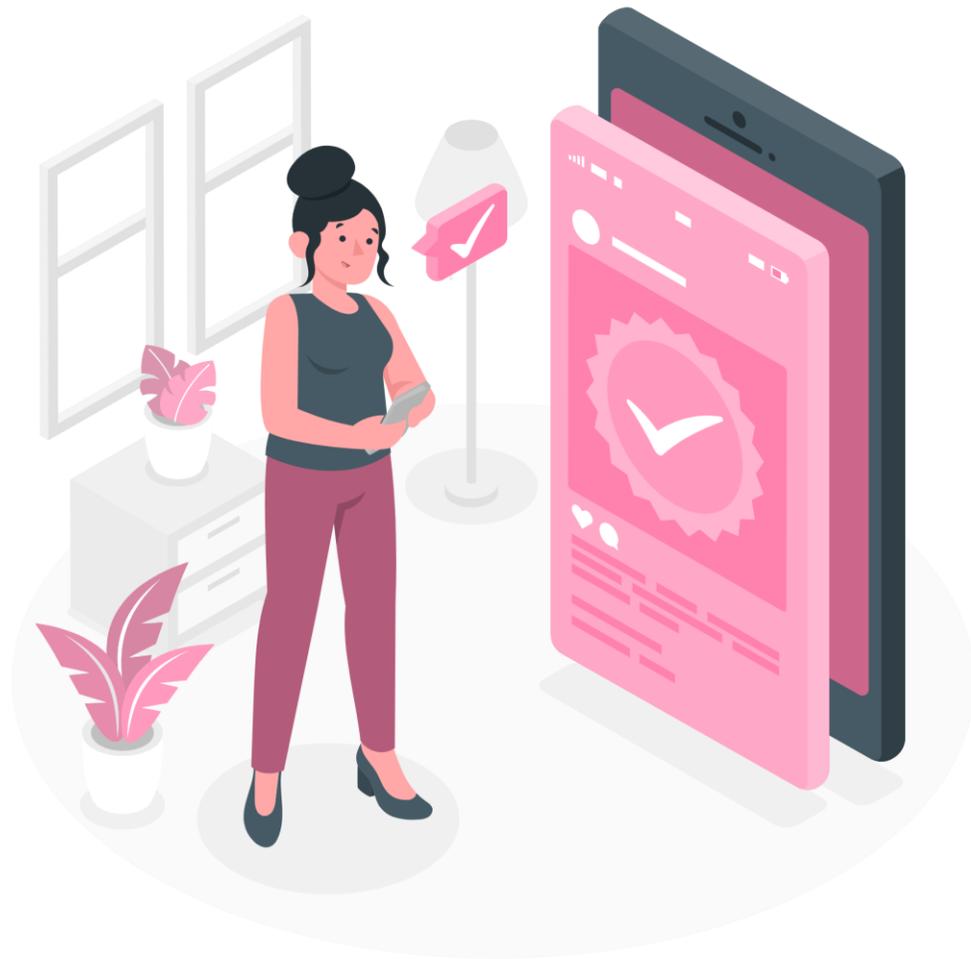
This process has led to the establishment of AQAN alongside many other activities and projects. SEAMEO RIHED published an overview of QA practices in Southeast Asia in 2012 (SEAMEO RIHED, 2012a) to support a regional QA framework. The AQAF Task Force started working on the regional framework in 2011

Generally, all these processes and initiatives are voluntary and as such rely on initiatives either by countries, organisations, or centres such as SEAMEO RIHED and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, which played a key role in establishing the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN). The AUN with its quality assurance initiative (AUN-QA) and the AQAN, which is leading the AQAF Task Force together with the AUN and SEAMEO RIHED, are other such examples.
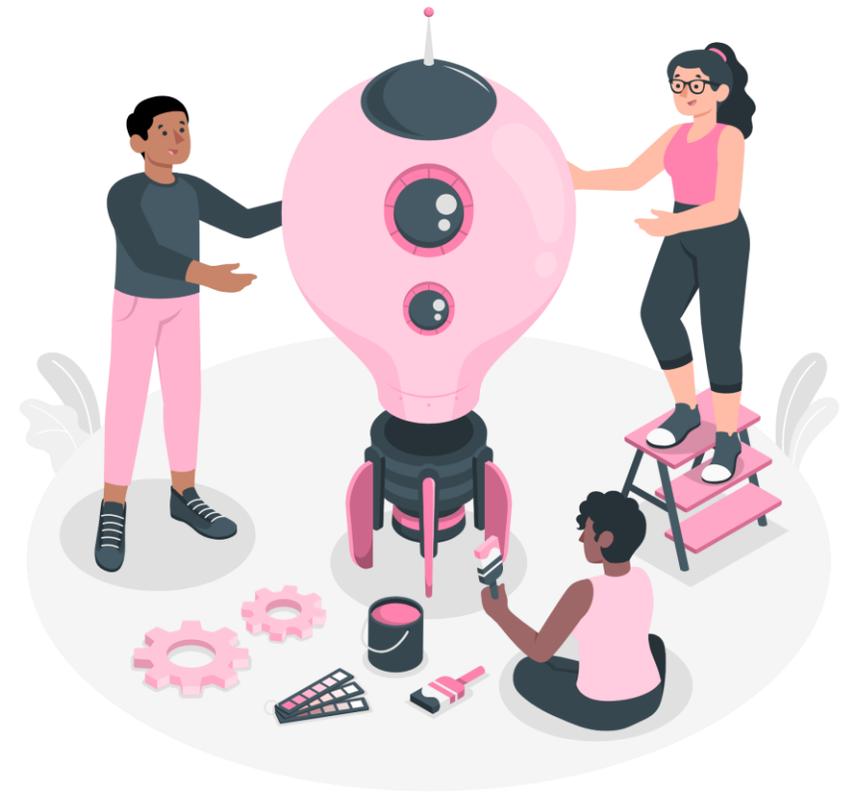
Still, an official statement, directive, or published and recognised document is missing that defnes an ASEAN HE area or a QA framework at the policy level. Quality is seen to be a crucial step for overall integration, but there is no statement calling for common QA practices in ASEAN at the policy level nor a mandate given to any organisation that they draft a regional common framework, such as the AQAF. Intermediate organisations, such as AQAN, the AUN, and SEAMEO RIHED, are promoting such a need in a variety of forums and conferences.
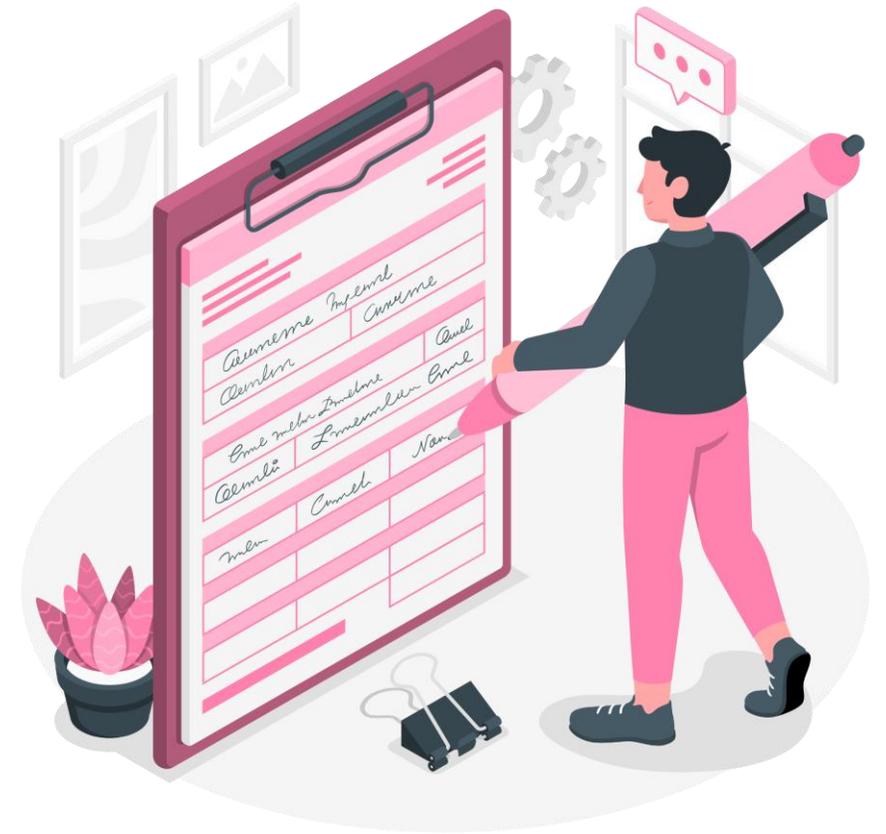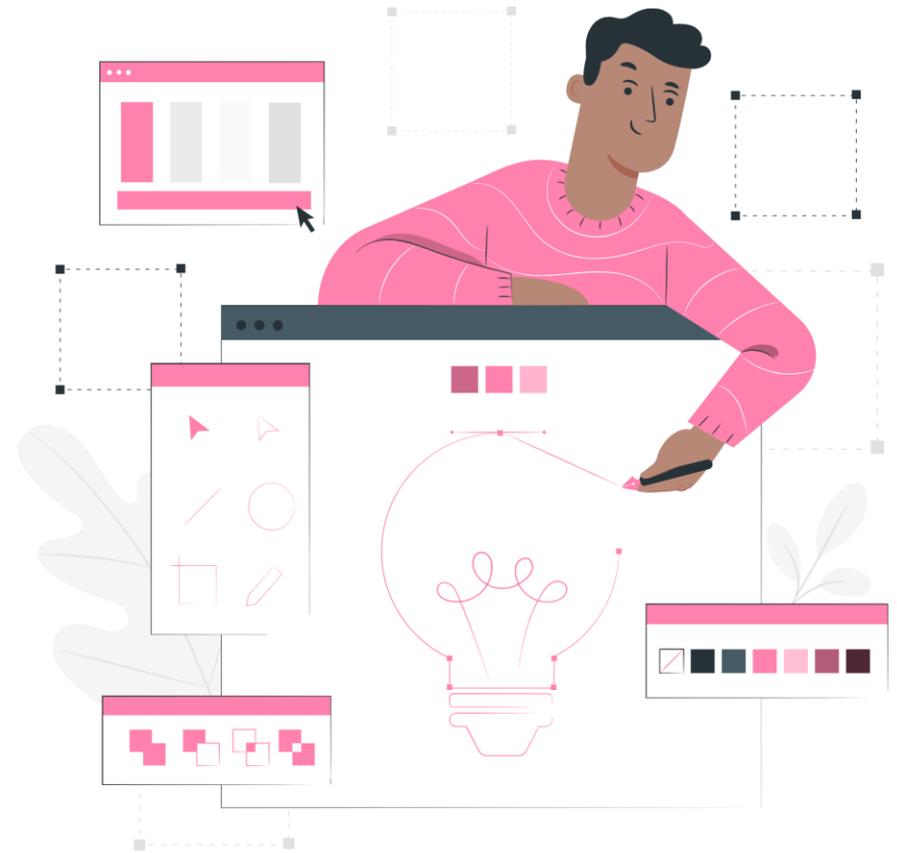
When following the debate on harmonisation strategies, it is noticeable that, on one hand, harmonisation is promoted very strongly as an already agreed-upon political goal for the region and, on the other hand, national autonomy and diversity of educational cultures and traditions is described as the major asset for the regional HE system, which needs to be preserved, cultivated, and protected from external interference.

The richness of educational traditions is indeed an important feature of the ASEAN HE landscape. However, if the political aim to promote harmonisation of study programmes and degrees is to be achieved, political decision-makers must identify a core set of commonalities that could form the key features for 'ASEAN higher education' and make the regional HE system distinguishable from other regions.
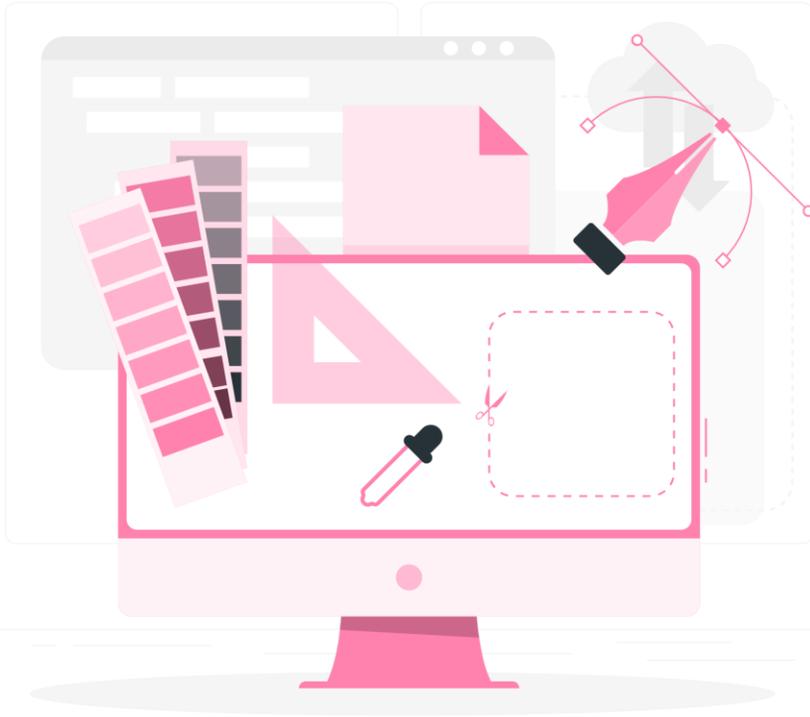
The Bologna Process has forced European universities to navigate a comparably awkward discussion: on the one hand, to gain more global visibility and competitiveness through joining forces, and on the other hand, to not to give up the uniqueness of their national HE traditions. Regarding QA, the ESG provided the solution of stipulating very generic standards, which are supposed to be applied in context with national HE systems and traditions.

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Plenty of regional efforts and activities concerned with QA exist, driven by both regional and international organisations. In Southeast Asia, there are three main actors who work on and promote the topic of QA at the regional level:
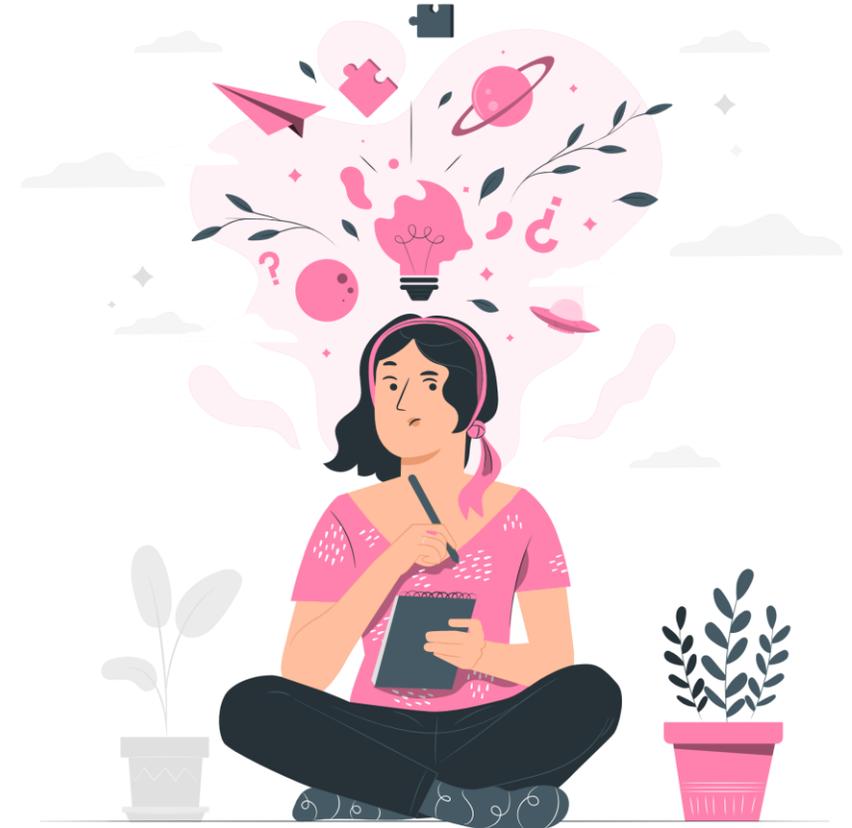
1 The ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) represents the national EQA bodies and ministries in charge of QA who are setting, developing, and implementing the EQA frameworks on a national level. AQAN is thus an important stakeholder in connection with establishing a regional QA framework. Its members either have decision power or are directly consulting with national decision-making bodies
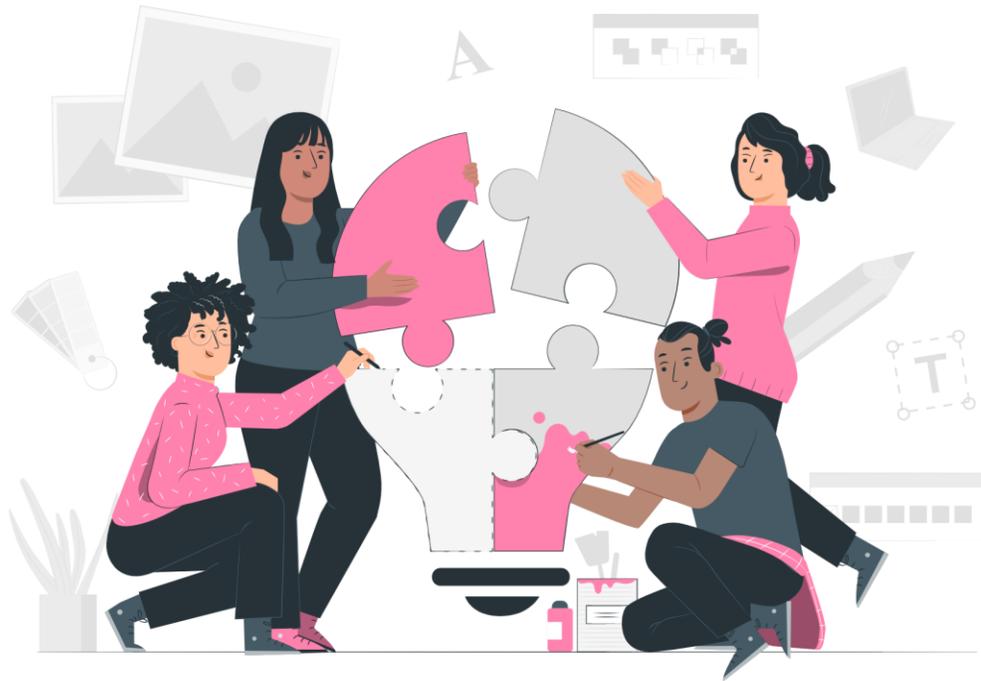
AQAN was established in Kuala Lumpur in 2008 on the initiative of the Malaysian Qualications Agency (MQA) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED). The AQAN Secretariat is hosted by the Malaysian Qualications Agency (MQA)

The full members of AQAN represent the EQA bodies or departments of the ministries in charge of HE and EQA from the ten ASEAN countries. Furthermore, AQAN has associate members, such as the ASEAN University Network (AUN), SEAMEO RIHED, and the National Agency for Academic Assessment and Accreditation (NAAAA) from Timor Leste

The mission of AQAN is to "promote and share good practices of quality assurance in higher education in the Southeast Asia region; to collaborate on capacity building of quality assurance in higher education in the region; to share information on higher education and facilitate mutual recognitionof qualications throughout the region; and to develop a regional quality assurance framework for Southeast Asia" (ASEAN Quality Assurance Network, 2014).

The current main initiative by AQAN is the AQAF and its implementation. AQAN organises regular roundtable meetings for its members and also recently, the Forum and Roundtable Meeting for Young Quality Assurance Officers. AQAN is further involved in different regional and inter-regional meetings and seminars, such as the ASEAN+3 Quality Assurance Expert Meeting
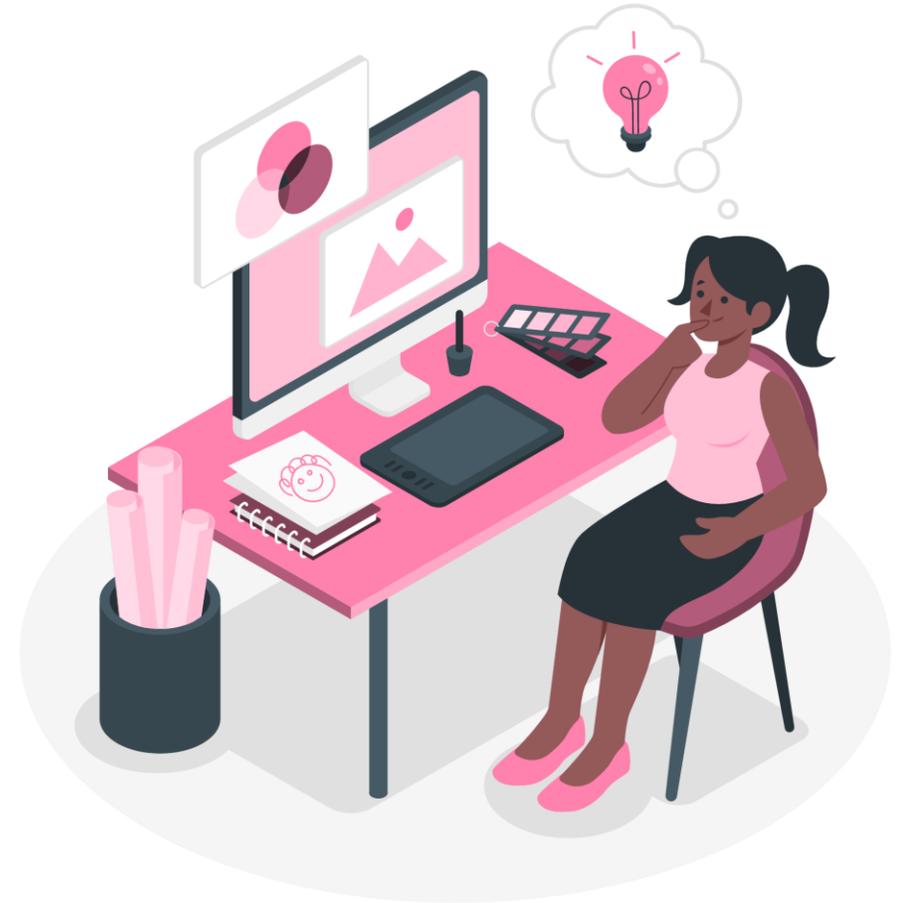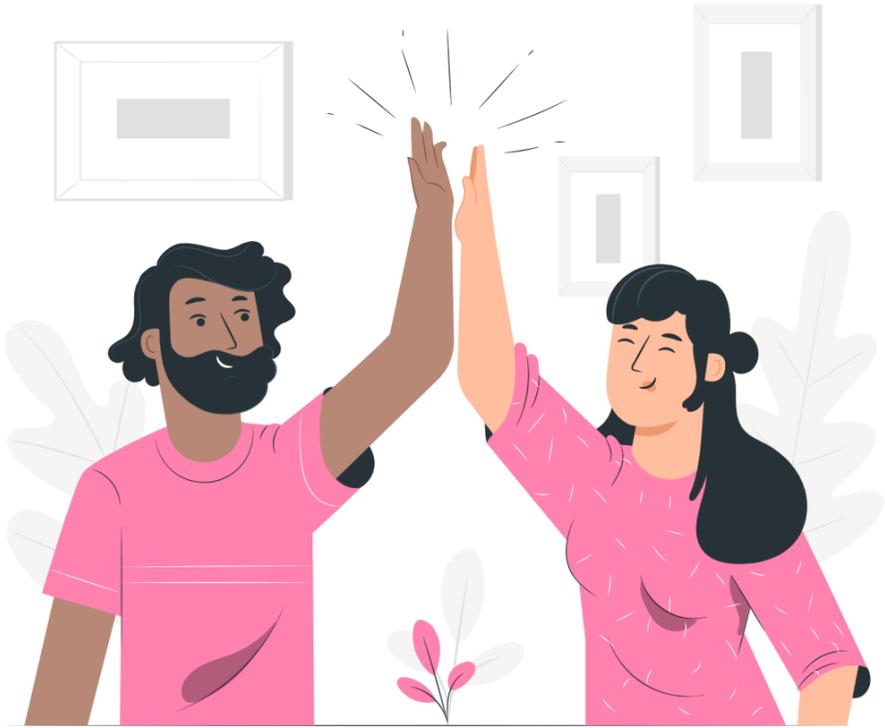
2 The ASEAN University Network (AUN) is another main actor involved in QA activities and promotion in the region. AUN was established in 1995 by the ministers responsible for HE from six ASEAN countries. Originating from 11 member universities in 1995, today AUN has grown to 30 member universities. AUN is thus a representative of universities but is limited mostly to the 'elite' universities of ASEAN countries due to restrictions on the number of members per country.

Since 2007, AUN has become a key implementing agency of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The Board of Trustees consists of one university representative per country designated by the respective government, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, the Chairperson (Secretary-General of the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand), the Chairperson of the Senior Official Meeting on Education (ASEAN SOM-ED), the Director of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), and the AUN Executive Director as Secretary. The implementation of AUNs' programmes and activities is the duty of member universities.

AUN's current mission is "to strengthen the existing network of cooperation among universities in ASEAN and beyond; to promote collaborative study, research and educational programmes in the priority areas identified by ASEAN; to promote cooperation and solidarity among scholars, academicians and researchers in the ASEAN Member States; and, to serve as the policy–oriented body in higher education in the ASEAN region" (ASEAN University Network, n.d.).

The activities and initiatives of AUN are focused on exchange and collaboration in ASEAN HE. The areas comprise:

1) youth mobility;

2) academic collaboration;

3) standards, mechanisms, systems, and policies of HE collaboration;

4) courses and programme development; and

5) regional and global policy platforms.

One of the initiatives of AUN is the AUN-QA network, which was established in 1998. It promotes QA at the programme level with its own QA guidelines, which have been used for programme quality assessments of member universities since 2007; since 2014, it has also been used for afliate members of AUN-QA (AUN non-member universities).

The assessments are voluntary and aim to support, enhance, and sustain the level of QA at universities. Every AUN member and AUN-QA afliated university can request that their programmes be assessed by AUN-QA. Until the end of 2015, a total of 139 study programmes have been assessed under AUN-QA. Currently, AUN-QA is preparing to conduct assessments at the institutional level.

In order to build capacity in HEIs, and to conduct the assessments, AUN-QA organises regular trainings to introduce QA, the AUN assessment process, and how to perform self-assessment as a prerequisite for the AUN-QA assessment at the study programme level (Tier 1 level, ten trainings since 2015). Furthermore, since November 2013, AUN has started to offer advanced trainings that are targeted to future assessors (Tier 2 level, three trainings since 2013).

3 The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED) is a major regional player when it comes to harmonising HE in Southeast Asia and has been active in both the establishment of AQAN and AUN.
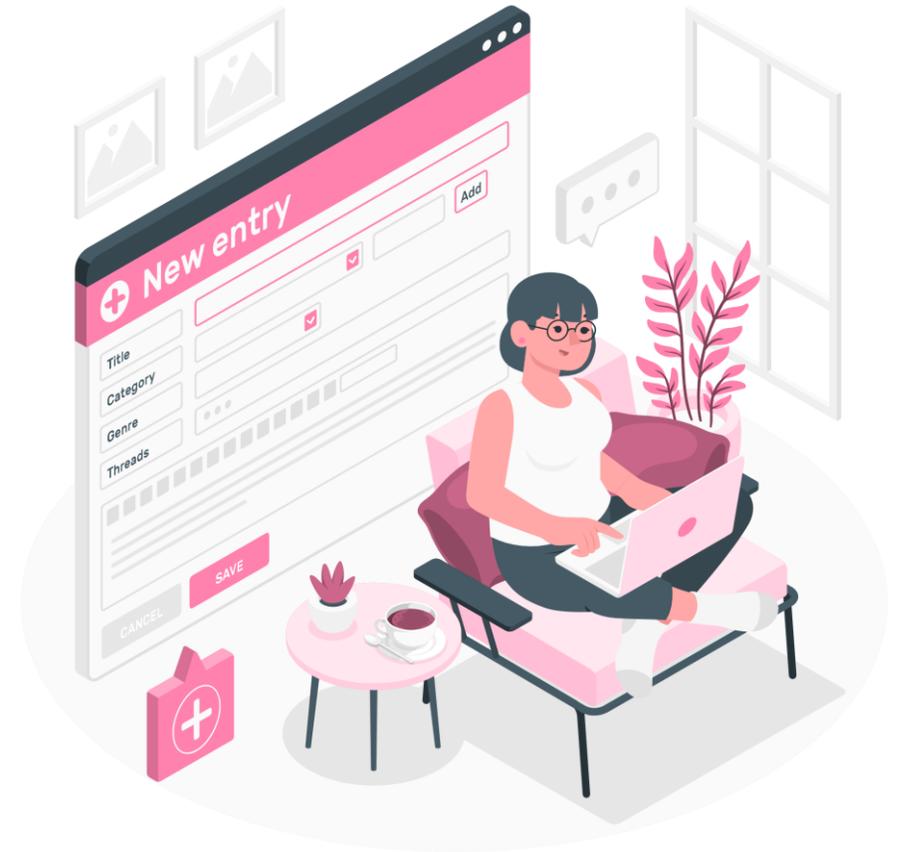
SEAMEO, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1965 to promote cooperation in education, science, and culture in the region. This is inter alia supported by 21 specialised centres within the organisation and hosted in different countries SEAMEO RIHED is hosted by the Government of Thailand and specialises in the development of HE in member countries.
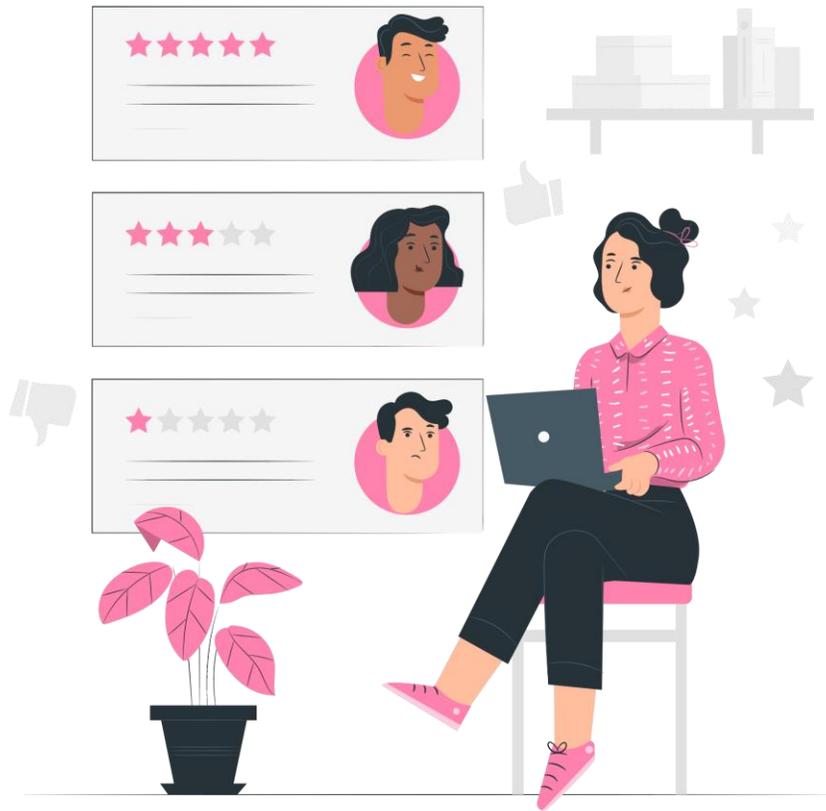
Its mission is "to foster efficiency, effectiveness, and harmonization of higher education in Southeast Asia through system research, empowerment, development of mechanisms to facilitate sharing and collaborations in higher education" (SEAMEO RIHED, 2012b). SEAMEO RIHED assists member countries with activities, such as policy forums, workshops, trainings, study visits, information dissemination, and research.
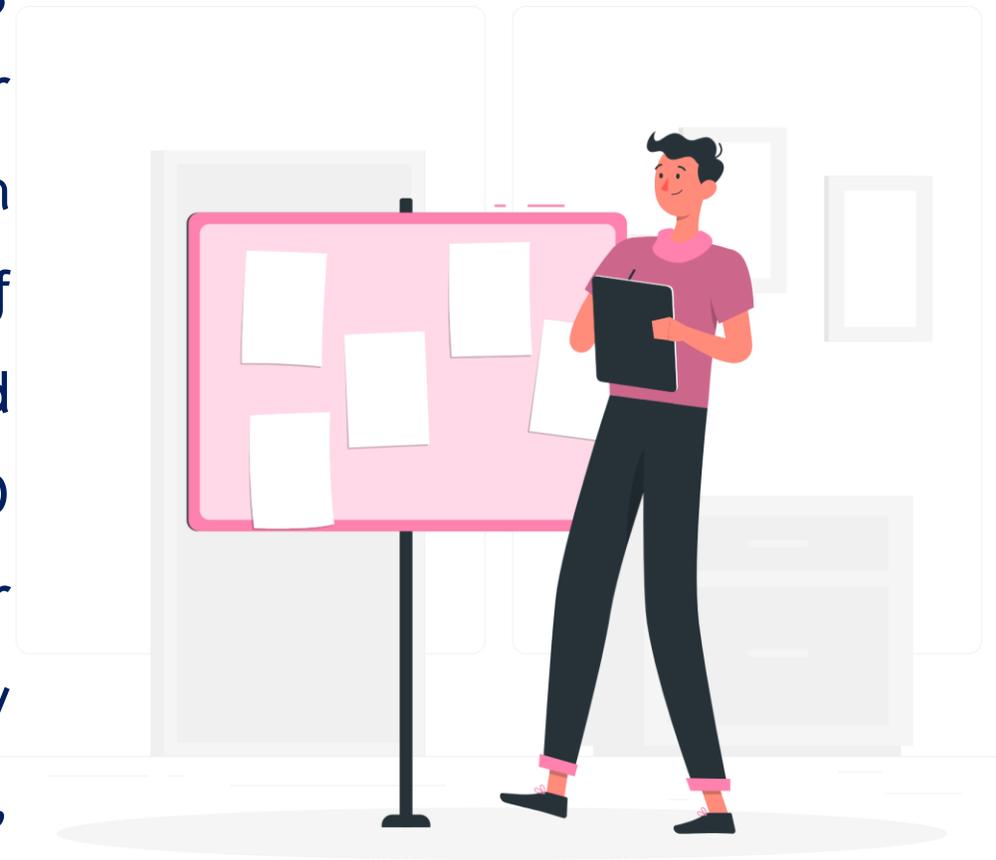
The three organisations have connections and cooperate on various topics and activities. Both AUN and SEAMEO RIHED are an associate member of AQAN, for example, and the Director of SEAMEO is furthermore a member of the AUN Board of Trustees. The three organisations are also part of the AQAF Task Force led by AQAN
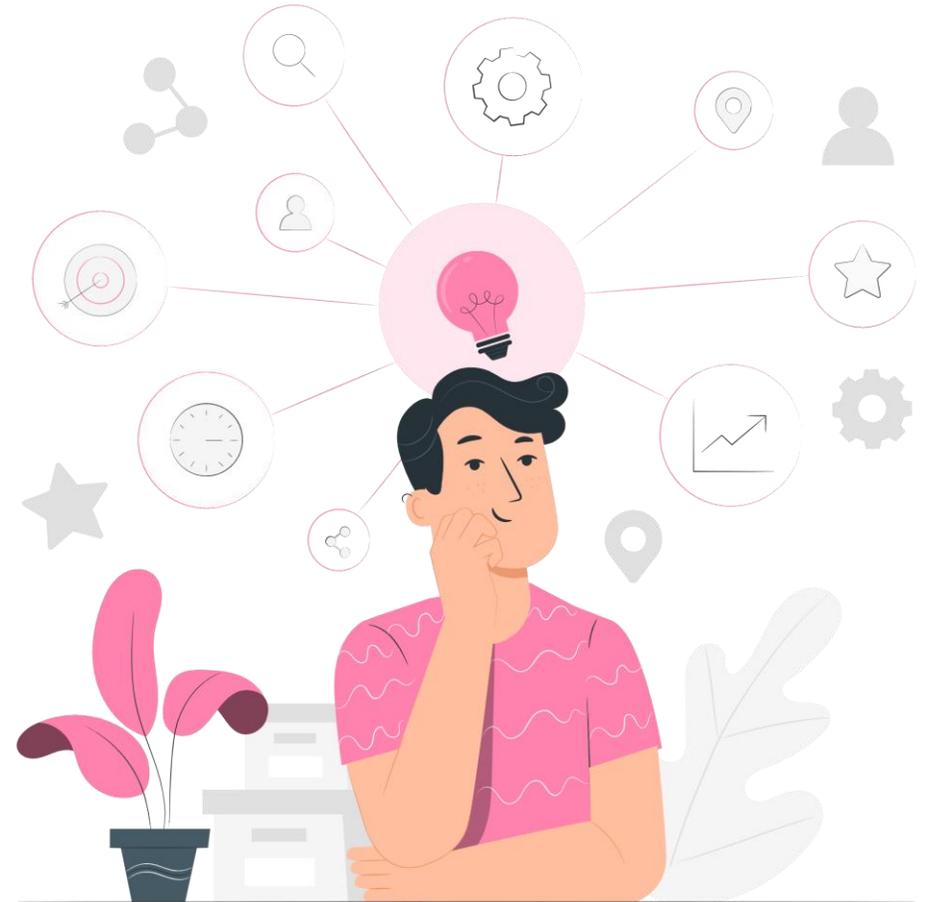
Since 2011, AQAN, AUN and SEAMEO RIHED are partners in the ASEAN-QA project, a joint initiative with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), and the University of Potsdam. ASEAN-QA organises and conducts capacity building activities for EQA and IQA actors in the region in support of harmonisation within ASEAN.
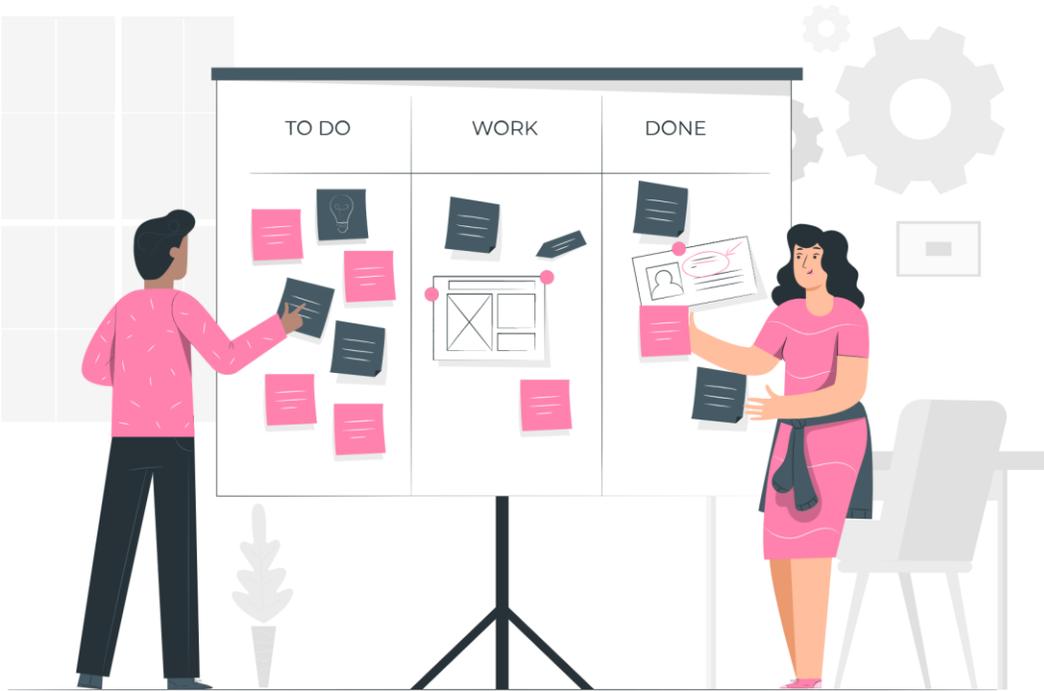
The ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework

The elaboration of a regional QA framework is currently one of the core activities of the HE management scenery in Southeast Asia. Major progress has already been made with regard to developing standards and principles for approaches to QA for universities and QA agencies.
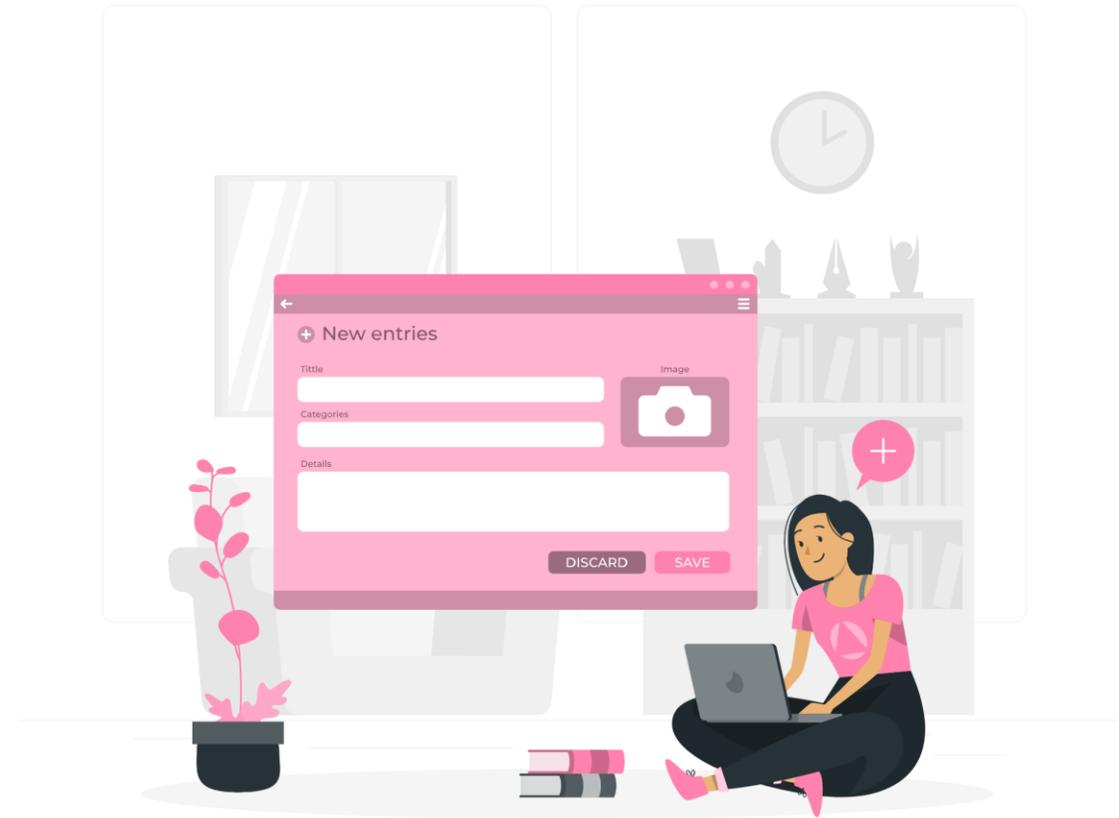
Since such a framework forms the basis for acting and decision-making at the institutional level(s), we will place considerable emphasis on the process that gave speed to the development of what is now known as the AQAF.10 In Chapter 7, we draw conclusions from this process for future development paths.

In 2011, AQAN began the project to develop an ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education (AQAFHE). A task force was established with representative officials from the MQA, SEAMEO RIHED, AUN, Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council (BDNAC), General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation (GDETA) Vietnam, Office for National Education

Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) Thailand, and the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU). The AQAF is driven by the view that harmonisation within ASEAN is a process recognising the diversity of HE systems, cultures, and traditions while promoting common practices and guidelines.
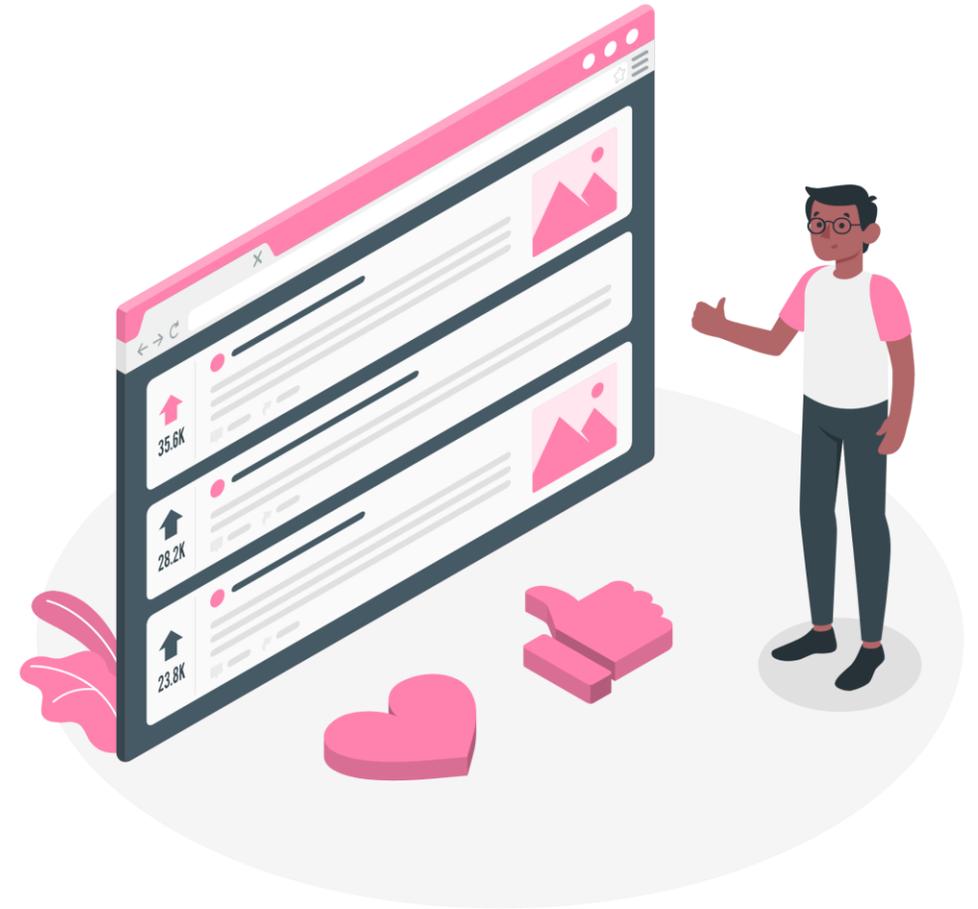
The framework is expected to serve as a common reference point and link for QA agencies and HEIs as they strive toward harmonisation amid the diversity in the region. It is for this reason that the framework's principles and statements are generic, so as to be adaptive to various political, legal, and cultural settings without compromising the country's basic values and traditions.
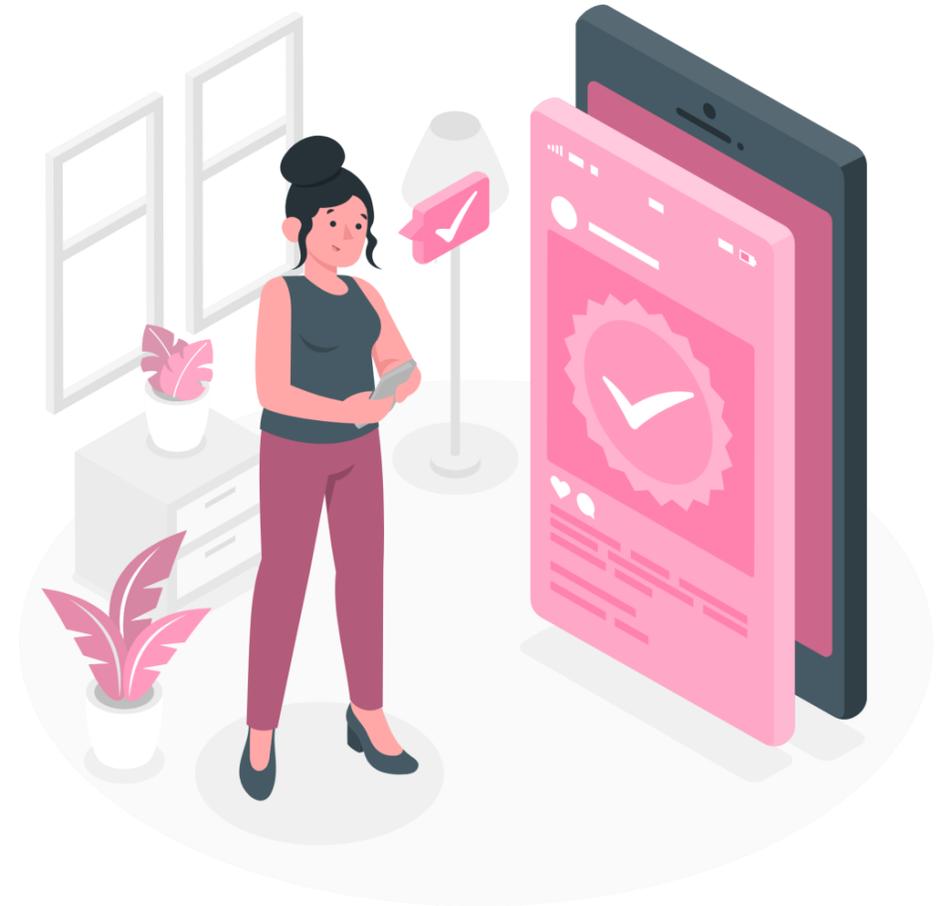
The framework consists of four interrelated thematic areas, which are based on QA principles. These principles are supposed to give guidance to:

1. EQA bodies and their activities,
2. EQA processes (e.g. accreditation),
3. the elaboration of institutional QA systems (e.g. quality management systems at university level), and
4. the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. These thematic areas are described as the 'four quadrants' of the QA framework concept
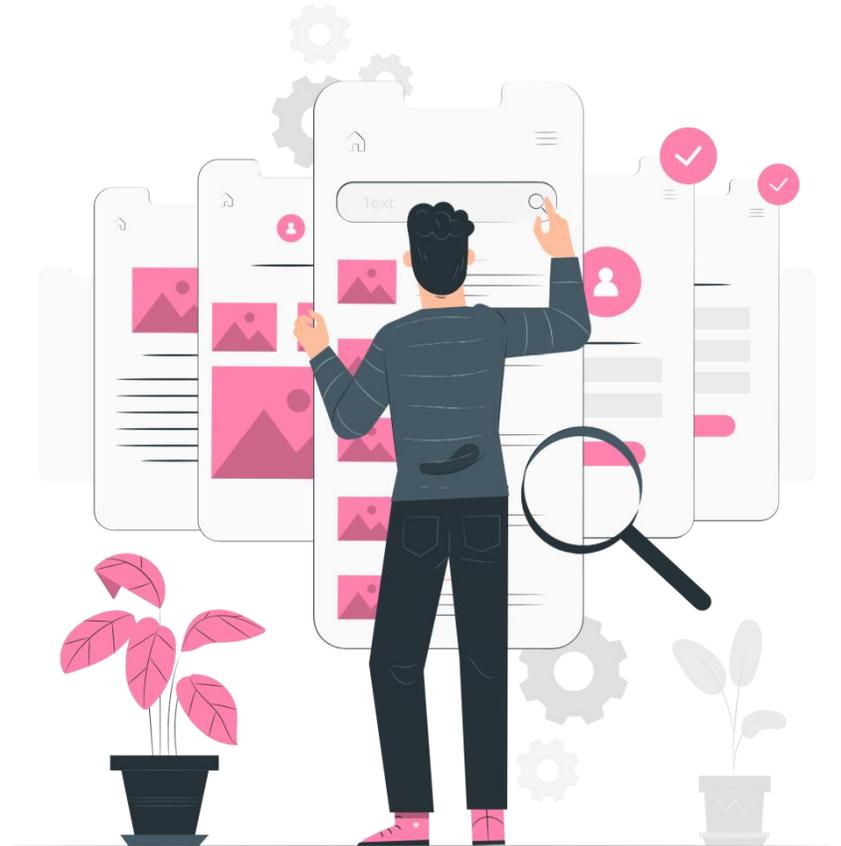
The AQAF was endorsed in principle by all AQAN members at a round table meeting in Hanoi in February 2013. Renements were subsequently discussed. In the August 2014 meeting, held in Jakarta, the AQAN members agreed to submit a draft framework to their principals to consider AQAF for endorsement and future adaptation.

They also recommended that information on the AQAF should be submitted to the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting to start a formal political endorsement process. Putting the AQAF on the political agenda is still an on-going process. A binding legal basis would be extremely helpful for implementing the AQAF principles at the HEI and QA agency levels (please refer to the recommendations in Chapter 8

Each of the four AQAF principles focuses on core statements. The drafted framework is characterised by the following features:

- It is not prescriptive and does not aim to standardise the different national HE cultures, traditions, and strategies.

- It is, in contrast, appreciative of the cultural diversity of the regional HE landscape.

- It is supposed to promote good practices and serve as a link between EQA and IQA practices and procedures.

It is based on principles of QA practices that are generic in nature and thus supportive of a diversity-oriented approach. However, it also promotes consistency of QA practices across Southeast Asian countries, based on a set of principles and examples of good practice. It thus allows for an effective recognition practice and for mutual credibility of national HE outcomes (student learning, degrees, etc.). As a result, mobility in the region (and beyond) is projected to be supported as well.
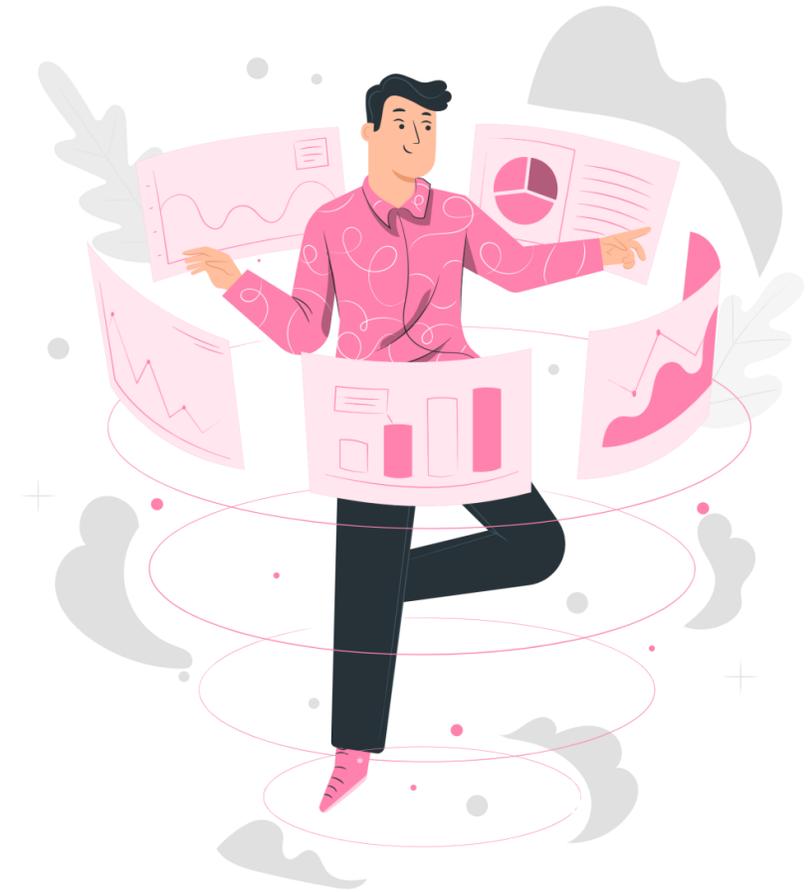
The draft goes into detail about the four quadrants and their specfic functions and purposes. Subsequently, the basic principles outlined within each of the quadrants are briefly described. The full version of the specific principles relevant for each of the quadrants can be found as Annex of this study.
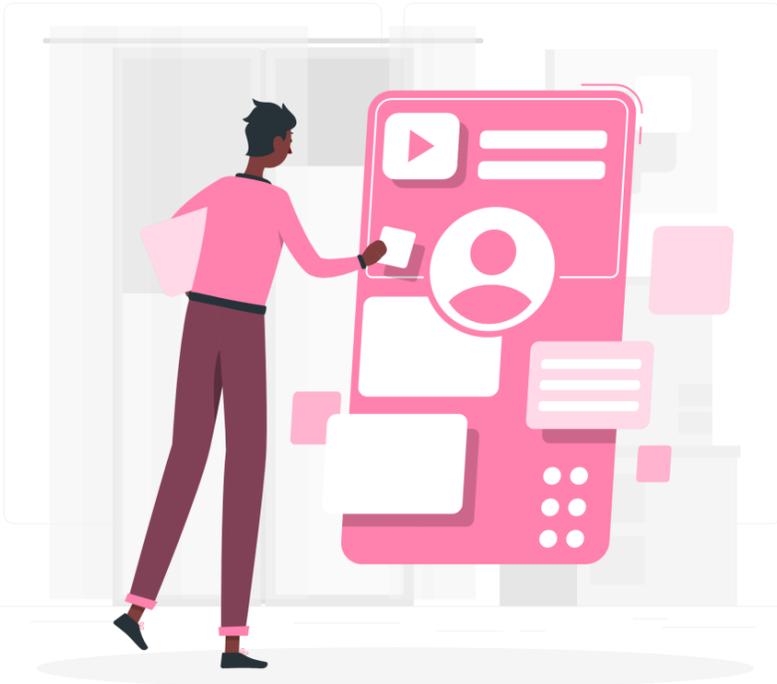
The EQAA is a key player for maintaining and sustaining the quality of education in every nation and puts the interests of students and various stakeholders at centre stage. The establishment of a shared set of values and good practices for EQAA across the region refers to transparency, self-responsibility, and self-management of QA agencies in order to ensure that the professionalism, accountability, and integrity of the agencies are visible to their stakeholders

EQA processes (e.g. accreditation at the study programme or institutional levels) are the core activity of a QA agency. In these processes and activities, the interests of students, employers, and society at large take centre stage. The respective statements in the draft AQAF demonstrate the systematic approach embarked upon by QA agencies toward the development of agency standards and criteria, thereby achieving their goals and objectives

A fundamental principle in QA of HE is that quality primarily rests with the HEIs themselves. The statements following the draft AQAF designated to IQA define the role of the HEI as building and assuring quality to its stakeholders. The drafted statements clarify the processes and quality systems through which HEIs demonstrate their accountability and safeguard the interests of students and societ

National Qualications Frameworks (**NQFs**) have turned into key instruments for reforming education, training, and qualication systems in many **ASEAN** countries and beyond. Increasingly, lifelong learning policies are embedded into the **NQF**: primarily by addressing the fexibility of educational pathways within the national systems. It also addresses the barriers to access and progression of learning. **NQF** is expected to facilitate the mobility of students, workers, and professionals across the region and beyond.