The European Accreditation Agency for Public Health Education (EAAPHE)

Working Package 5 Report

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1. Introduction

The field of public health education is rapidly expanding in Europe. The Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region has supported this development by initiating and performing a process for quality improvement through descriptions of common standards, peer reviews and mutual support between schools of public health. The EU-supported project on accreditation of public health programmes, however, is designed to develop, and initiate a new framework for quality assurance through international accreditation of European master programmes in public health.

Accreditation has been defined as a "a procedure by which an authoritative body gives formal recognition that a body or person is competent to carry out specific tasks"[1]. What is important in the accreditation approach is the recognition of competency.

Accreditation of higher educations is encouraged through a number of international initiatives including the Bologna Process which supports the development of international as well as national accreditation agencies and procedures within higher educations. Presently, public health programmes in some European countries are subject to general national accreditation procedures which might take account of local requirements and regulations, but they are not always sensitive to the international trends and developments in the field of public health. Specific international agencies for accreditation of public health are not in place yet in Europe.

The EAAPHE is designed to accredit any public health master programme falling within its scope when a higher education institution applies on a voluntary basis. In light of international experience and for the credibility of the agency, it is important that the EAAPHE benefit from a status that is independent from any other structure, including ASPHER. This independence supposes that the EAAPHE is responsible for the development of its tools, and in particular the quality standards, and that it is able to manage the different stages of the accreditation procedure – self-assessment (or internal evaluation) guidance, organisation of

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[1] International accreditation forum, http://www.iaf.nu

the external assessment, monitoring the production of the assessment report, and decision-making.

In the following a proposal for a EAAPHE is presented on the basis of the experiences and results acquired through the joint European EAAPHE project carried out in the period of 2005-7.

2. European recognition

It is anticipated that the EAAPHE becomes recognized by and member of the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and becomes registered by the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies proposed by the ENQA, in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB (E4 Group) to the London conference of Ministers in 2007.

ENQA is the representative body for quality assurance agencies at the European level. It aims at promoting European cooperation in the field of quality assurance, and membership of the association is open to quality assurance agencies in the signatory states of the Bologna Declaration. Full membership of ENQA requires using the recommended review method that was pursued in the EAAPHE pilot projects.

The aim of ECA is to achieve mutual recognition of accreditation decisions among the participants. During the EAAPHE pilot projects we have adhered to the ECA code of good practice which includes requirements on the accreditation organisation, the accreditation procedures and the accreditation standards.

The aim of the European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies is to further the development of the European higher education area by creating and managing a Register that will provide clear and reliable information about reliable and trustworthy quality assurance agencies operating in Europe.

3. General tasks

There are four main tasks for such an agency. The first task is to establish an expert panel. We propose compliance with the ECA principles for the selection of experts which was used in the EAAPHE pilot project. The second task is to support the accreditation processes, the accreditation committees and the board, using procedures that ensures adherence to the ECA Code of Good Practice. The third task is to provide information for key stakeholders, for collaborators, for public health schools interested in accreditation and for the public. This main task also comprises editing a web-page with constantly updated information about ongoing activities. The fourth main task is to organise the site visits for the accreditation committees, including taking care of contracts and agreements.

More specific, the executive manager of the agency should take responsibility for the following tasks:

- selection of the expert panel in collaboration with the board
- preparing site visits together with the target institutions (timetable, self assessment report, etc.)
- proposing timetables for accreditation procedures and organising the accreditation teams
- cooperating with the experts, book flight tickets and hotel, taking care of logistics.
- participating in the site visits and assist the experts on the site visits
- assisting the site visit team with preparing the accreditation report
- checking the report and forward it to the accreditation committee
- publication of reports, including any decisions, recommondations or other formal outcomes
- a follow up procedure to review further actions in the light of recommendations contained in the report
- acting as secretariat for the committee (organise meetings, write minutes, etc.)
- acting as secretariat for the board (organise meetings, write minutes, etc.)
- answering phone and e-mails
- editing and updating web-site
- organising and maintaining databases on experts, MPH Schools, accreditation processes etc

- providing information to institutions interested in and seeking accreditation
- propose budget and keeping accounts

4. Organisation of the agency

The full organisation of the accreditation office includes a board which holds the responsibility for the entire activity, the accreditation committee, the appeal committee and the agency to take care of administrative tasks. It is difficult to define the size of such an agency at this stage, but we can draw upon experiences from PEER reviews and the first experiences gained through the pilot accreditation projects in 2007.

The staffing of the agency is of course dependent of number of accreditation projects per year and the proposal is based on the assumption that four accreditation projects are carried out per year during the first few years in business and that the schools involved have been subject to a peer review. Given this assumption, we propose a staffing of one executive manager employed 30 hours weekly. We estimate that the manager needs three months to take care of basic activities (mail, phone calls, home-page, organising board meetings, keep contact with stakeholders and MPH schools etc) and two months per accreditation process.

There are three possible models for the agency:

1) a fully self-contained unit
2) a joint agency with a similar organisation (shared staff)
3) a purchasing arrangement with another institution/organisation which is ready to sell required working hours delivered by qualified staff on a flexible basis.

The proposal is based on the first model which will provide the most stable and independent framework for the agency – but also requires a certain stability of income.

A detailed development plan should be developed as a first preparatory step defining procedures for particular functions of the agency including appeal procedures. Also terms for the election of chairs and members of boards and committees (3-5 years) will have to be specified according to European standards in this field.

6. Business risk

The actual demand for annual reviews and accreditations is still somewhat uncertain and will depend on financial aspects, national and international developments within the field of quality assurance and accreditation in the field of higher education, specific developments in public health academics, education and practice etc. A lower or higher demand than expected will require adjustment of the organisation and budget and flexibility of staffing. A particular risk is related to lack of external funding (see appendix) which will lead to high costs for the schools engaged in the accreditation processes – and thereby a risk of lower demand. Another risk is related to the international and national recognition of the agency and the accreditations performed. Lack of recognition will also weaken the potential demand. This should obviously be prevented by seeking acceptance and close collaboration with the main stakeholders in the field.

7. Suggested time Schedule for the launching of the agency

January – March 2008	Obtaining comments and feed-back from major stake-holders.
April - July 2008	Recruiting board members and establishing the board Applying for external funding
September – December 2008	Contracting Recruitment of staff Establishing accreditation committee, appeal committee, and renewing peer review panel. Identifying programmes for accreditation in 2009. Ensuring European recognition
January 2009	Launching the agency

APPENDIX 1. A business plan example: EAAPHE situated in Copenhagen

The content of a business plan for the EAAPHE is strongly influenced by the choice of placement regarding the country, city and host institution. The following proposal for locating the agency in Copenhagen, Denmark is based on the following preconditions: The city is easily reached through direct flights from most major centres of Europe, The University of Copenhagen has offered office space in the vicinity of a large School of Public Health involved in many international collaborative activities, the European regional office of WHO is located nearby, other relevant international organisations and agencies are already located at the University including the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME), and the University has recently been given responsibility by the WHO office for Human Resources in Geneva to develop and maintain the World Directories of Educational Programmes for health professionals including medicine and public health.

The business plan is based on the following assumptions:
- No premises and equipment belonging to the agency (host institution)
- Office rental paid by the host institution
- Staff member: 0.8 Manager part-time
- Accreditation board of 5 people meeting once a year
- Accreditation committee of 5 people meeting once a year
- Chairman of the expert team writing the final accreditation report
- 4 accreditation reviews per year with 3 reviewers alongside with someone from the agency

Costs for a year

- Staff costs Manager	€ 55.000
- Operating expenses (computers, consumables)	€ 10.000
- Board costs 5 x €400 fee/day + travel and accommodation €800	€ 6.000
- Committee costs 5 €400 fee/day + travel and accommodation €800	€ 6.000
- Site visit 4 x 4 (3 reviewers + 1 assistant) x 1.400*	€ 22.400
- Fee for the chairman of the expert team 4 x €1.500	€ 6.000
Total	€ **105.400**

* Travel expenses: 570, accommodation: 230, fee/allowance (3x 200): 600 = 1.400 per person

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Under these conditions the actual costs of one accreditation would be about **€ 26.350** on the average**.**

Site visits

The site visit team: Three experts alongside with someone from the agency.

Workload: Three days including travel. The team meets during the evening of the arrival and depart in the evening of the third day.

In order to reduce the costs it might be necessary to include only 2 reviewers (+ 1 person from the agency) per site visit. It will reduce the expenses with Euro 5.600 annually.

Income for a year:

Subscription by schools for future accreditations *	€ 20.000
Average accreditation fees 4 x 10.000**	€ 40.000
External funding***	€ 45.400
Total	€ **105.400**

* An annual fee of € 1,000 – 2,000 could be paid by 10-20 schools aiming at accreditation – which will reduce the fee for the actual accreditation procedures accordingly.

** Fees could be flexible according to previous subscriptions, size of the school/programme and the GNP of the country.

*** EU, WHO, host organisation and other public and private institutions and organisations could take the role of sponsors

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