

Report on
Study visit
“Quality culture in practice: Scotland and the University of Edinburgh”
October, 5 – 6, 2017

Title: Seminar for Higher Education Reform Experts “Quality culture in practice: Scotland and the University of Edinburgh”

Date: 5 - 6 201 October 7 year

Venue: University of Edinburgh (Scotland, UK)

Participants from Ukraine:

- **Taras Dobko**, senior vice-rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University, Associate Professor, National higher education reform expert;
- **Stavytskyi Andriy**, ECTS coordinator, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, National higher education reform expert.

Program: <http://supporthere.org/edinburgh2017>

Materials: <http://supporthere.org/edinburgh2017/page/documents-presentations-1>

Key Information:

The main aim of the study visit was to generate awareness for the ESG 2015 in practice in a particular institution, especially regarding internal quality assurance. It was supposed to discuss the management of quality culture in educational institutions, define the roles of all stakeholders (students, staff and other interested parties), organizational responsible for creating and maintaining a quality culture, consider the practice of linking internal quality and external quality assurance system of the country.

Event participants:

More than 30 participants from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as the Balkan region were invited to the seminar. It should be noted that before the event a special preliminary survey was conducted among the participants. It helped to clarify difficulties in understanding the current stage of quality assurance in universities. Each country was represented by one or two people, which made it much easier to get acquainted with them than with other similar events.

Description and key information:

The main leitmotiv of the seminar was to prove that the quality is not a virtual part of the work, but should be regarded as a certain “added value” to each student. In fact, only this approach makes studying culture of quality economically feasible and important. As a result, any action to improve the quality of education is measured by a macroeconomic scale as an incentive for the entire economy. Such an approach requires constant improvement of all components of quality at all levels. The main purpose of any quality assurance activity is to enhance the quality of student experience. This should be a sacramental issue when introducing any changes and quality assurance measures.

It is extremely important to provide the ongoing monitoring of educational programs, training courses, teaching methods. Each year rector's office at the University of Edinburgh defines several key objectives for educational programs to improve teaching and learning. Programs report annually on the activities carried out and the results obtained. In our universities, it is worth establishing a practice of confronting our educational programs with certain goals for improving teaching and learning with further reporting on their implementation. From each audit, survey, evaluation it is necessary to make managerial conclusions, to implement them and to communicate, what changes have occurred as an outcome. It should become a part of university culture and practice. It should be assumed that no poll should be conducted if we are not ready to introduce changes. It is necessary to invest time and effort in follow-up actions.

A great role is devoted to teaching and improving its quality, as it is considered to be a strategic goal of the university. For this purpose a special document has been developed at the University of Edinburgh, which determines the necessary qualities of a teacher of each level. More details can be found by the link: http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/ExemplardocumentSE_Jul15.pdf.

Despite of the attention to the quality indicators of the measurement of the quality of education, the University began to apply quantitative measurements; in particular, the percentage of students who passed the exam. Besides, it is also worth emphasizing that the exams are now anonymous and imply the participation of two teachers (one of them is external, who writes a review of the exam and its structure, but does not interfere with the process of evaluation).

Also, in the United Kingdom, considerable resources are allocated for the training of teachers. There is even a special *Institute for Academic Development*. It offers a variety of opportunities for improving the skills of teachers (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/cpd/cpd>). It's also interesting to learn the practice of the so-called Edinburgh Teaching Award (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/cpd/teaching-award>). This is not a competition but an amazing program of professional development for teachers at the University of Edinburgh, the graduation of which gives a high public status and is an important element for the academic growth and promotion. An important part of the program is supporting a so-called "reflective blog" about teaching experience and best practices in teaching. Thus, the topic of better teaching in public discourse is introduced at the University for further discussions.

All teachers are currently compelled to participate in three kinds of activity: teaching, research, administration and academic leadership. The promotion is possible only with achievements in all these spheres.

Students play a significant role in improving the quality of education. First, they conduct mid-course feedback so that the teacher can understand student's opinion during the course and quickly change something in case of necessity. Secondly, students provide their feedback at the end of each course, as well as the entire university (National Survey), participate in special committees to improve each discipline.

Thirdly, the University of Edinburgh Student Association has its own nominations for the best teachers: Student Led Teaching Award (<https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/representation/campaigns/teachingawards/>). Perhaps, this experience should be introduced in Ukraine. It is also worth noting that the university allocates 2.7 million pounds for student union per year, which is a huge sum within our country.

Despite a student-centered approach, the high involvement of students, in reality just about 5-10% of all of students actually actively participate in such activities. Others just come to study. Only approximately the half of students in the UK participate in the National Survey feedback. This is their own choice: if you want to participate, you may do it, if you have no desire, you may avoid taking part in it. However, it's difficult to acknowledge the student's activity due low rate of participation.

It should be noted that the Scottish system has external accreditation of the institution as a whole and there is no external accreditation of individual educational programs. This is a responsibility of the university itself. Accordingly, the University of Edinburgh has a model for ensuring the quality of its educational programs: (1) the creation and launch of the program; (2) annual monitoring in advance for the purpose of improving the program; (3) periodic audit of the program and its effectiveness at the output. Undoubtedly, it's not about finding mistakes and punishing someone, but about an increasing effectiveness of the program; everybody should work constantly for improving the program and the student's learning experience.

One can also mention some difficulties that the university faces. In particular, it was noted that the rating system of research currently does not actually fulfil its role. All journals were ranked according to the quality of the research, and the teachers and the universities were evaluated by the number of publications in the magazines of the corresponding rating. This system has distorted the results and led to not quite honest presentation of the relevant scientists in the journals. The system is currently being modified.

Conclusions and recommendations / recommendations for Ukraine:

1. To keep working on raising awareness about the university's primary responsibility for QA and the function of external QA as auxiliary to make sure that the internal QA system works well and delivers the results.

2. To introduce the principle "Close the loop". From each audit, survey, evaluation it is necessary to make managerial conclusions, to implement them and to communicate, what changes have occurred as an outcome. It should become part of university culture and practice.

3. It is important to realize which data are most relevant and suitable for evaluating the situation at a university for the purposes of QA and learn how to regularly collect and analyze them.

4. To implement the system of annual monitoring the programs with the involvement of external experts not on a formal basis, which will help to improve them substantially.

5. To facilitate the involvement of students in all forms for providing the feedback, stimulate them to participate in the modernization of educational programs and courses.

6. To consider the expediency of introducing in Ukrainian universities of CPD (Continuing Professional Development) Framework as internal reference point for promoting excellence in teaching as well as build a practice of a mandatory internships based on external organizations that will contribute to a real improvement in the quality of teaching.

7. To increase the attraction of teachers to administrative work and leadership in projects.