

NEEDS ASSESSMENT / MARKET ANALYSIS

Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA) 2nd Edition 2017

- Area 1: Programme Development and Delivery
- Area 6: Programme Management
- Area 7: Programme Monitoring, Review and Continual Quality Improvement

INTRODUCTION

Area 1 of COPPA states that a new programme must be considered only after a “needs assessment” indicates clear justifications for the proposed programme.

ISSUE

MQA has in the past relied on the wisdom of the Higher Education Providers (HEPs) to carefully examine the market and industry needs before HEPs design, develop and submit new programme applications. The recent MQA compliance audit series show that many programmes have very low enrolment resulting in significant to severe quality issues. In some cases, this has led to the issuance of Withdrawal of Accreditation Notice to HEPs.

SOLUTION

As a preventative measure, and as part of the standards requirement, MQA insists that HEPs conduct a thorough and in-depth needs assessment / market analysis for their proposed programmes. It has become a common practice for HEPs to provide broad national data on manpower needs and the institution’s desire to offer a broader range of programmes to support their applications. However, MQA requires that HEPs outline some of the following key elements for a more compelling needs assessment / market analysis exercise.

ELABORATION

1. HEPs are to conduct detailed analysis of current supply and demand for graduates of the programmes. It is reasonable to expect that the HEPs are able to identify the existing suppliers of such graduates in the marketplace. Information such as number of suppliers, their capacity, location, fees and etc. must be part of this account.
2. HEPs must be aware of the regional and national demands for graduates of the programme. In other words, HEPs are to identify the positions, jobs and industries that the graduates are qualified or trained for. Wherever possible, HEPs should provide a detailed and current account of these demands at the regional and national level. Employment conditions for these graduates and the present graduate employability status must be established.

3. HEPs must disclose details of the surveys or studies conducted. This includes the number and choice of respondents, source of information, statistics, reports, basis for the conclusions and etc. These surveys or studies should be carefully planned and data rigorously analysed for robust conclusions and decision making.
4. HEPs must be responsive in addressing to current issues, concerns and expectations relating to the present graduates in the marketplace. What are the points raised by employers, industry and government regarding the quality of graduates? Are HEPs producing “fit and competent” graduates for the century? How is the industry changing? Are the technologies underpinning these jobs changing or has changed? Will graduates’ competencies be relevant? How will the proposed new programme address these concerns?
5. HEPs must distinguish and create niche areas for their programmes. How is the HEPs’ programme different from the other providers (design, delivery pedagogy, assessment, resources etc.)? What are the unique propositions of the programme that will attract prospective students?

ACTION

All HEPs are strongly urged to review the rigor of their needs assessment / market analyses before submitting application for provisional accreditation. MQA can refuse provisional accreditation if the market analysis is cursory and fails to address many of the questions about supply and demand and the how the new programme will be a better alternative in the market.

The needs assessment / market analysis is an imperative and continuing initiative. HEPs must constantly review changes in market needs for their programmes through feedback obtained from alumni, employers, professional bodies, advisors, external assessors and the academic staff and adapt the curriculum and enrolment to these changes.

MQA will also consider withdrawal of accreditation if the HEPs do not adapt their programmes accordingly to the market changes and new requirements as stipulated or if HEPs are unable to present prospects for their graduates through credible employment data. These changes or adaptation, however, must be carried out in a systematic manner based on the guidelines issued by MQA on curriculum review.