Session 6B: Barriers to the implementation of the ESG for QA (IBAR project panel)

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Academic Freedom and changing focus on student assessment in Dutch higher education

The paper addresses this issue of academic freedom by exploring how the new regulation regarding student assessment procedures has been implemented in Dutch higher education institutions. We endeavour to understand how teaching staff have responded to the new rules and to what extent decision-making processes have included teaching staff. To answer our research question, we would like to concentrate on two issues: the role of the Examination Board and the design of the assessment procedures. Our working hypothesis is that new institutional arrangements of student assessments reduce academic freedom. Previous research has showed that academics largely engage in symbolic compliance with the imperatives of management requirements while keeping their academic freedom intact (Leisyte and Dee 2012). Universities in their turn, are increasingly acting as strategic actors in not only complying but also shaping their institutional environments (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Greenwood and Hinnings 1996, Krücken 2011). The responses to established norms and beliefs range from passivity to increasingly active resistance (Oliver 1991). We will discuss if the impingement on academic freedom is offset by increased assurance of quality for students, and explore how to balance the two values of freedom and quality. Methods used are document analysis and interviews with teachers, university administrators and during Fall 2011 in the frame of the Identifying Barriers in promoting European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (IBAR) project.

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Quality, Management and Governance in Portuguese higher education institutions

The purpose of this article is to describe the context for governance in Portuguese higher education institutions and how institutional governance arrangements impact on quality and quality assurance mechanisms of higher education. The study is part of a wider European research project, which aims to identify barriers and recommendations for the implementation of the European Standards and Guidelines for internal quality assurance.

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Access to higher education in Europe: issues, trends and barriers