Conducting graduate surveys and improving alumni services for enhanced strategic management and quality improvement

Have we made a difference in regard to Quality Assurance, defining the right scope in relation to the strategies of the institutions
CONGRAD is a Tempus IV Joint Project running from October 2011 until October 2014.

Objectives

- To implement regular graduate surveys at HEIs in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- To collect systematic and reliable information on the links between study offerings and subsequent employment
- To provide a general insight in country-specific conditions of the transition between higher education and the labour market
- To contribute to the improvement of institutional self-evaluation processes and to enable the evidence-based evaluation of higher education reforms and curricular changes in the last decade

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CONSORTIUM

- Bielefeld University, Germany (coordinator)
- Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic
- Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, Spain
- University of Jyväskylä, Finland
- University of Belgrade, Serbia
- University of Novi Sad, Serbia
- University of Kragujevac, Serbia
- University Singidunum, Serbia
CONSORTIUM (continued)

• Subotica Tech – College of Applied Sciences, Serbia
• School of Higher Technical Professional Education, Serbia
• Higher Business Technical School, Serbia
• Centre for Education Policies, Serbia
• University of Montenegro, Montenegro
• University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
• University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina
2007 cohort and 2012 cohort
~ 60,000 graduates (census)

Contact data of all graduates collected and verified by student service offices at faculty level or central level

On-line questionnaire development
Analytical Unit and EU Partners
Feedback and contributions by higher education institutions
Core questionnaire (with institutional supplements)

Field work
Online survey coordinated by Analytical Unit
~ 40,000 participants (responded)

Institutional field work organised by Institutional Coordinator

Data analysis
Analytical Unit and EU Partners
Data editing and analysis, interpretation

Reporting
Analytical Unit
Institutional reports and project report
Approach – Framework

Source: CHEERS Framework (modified)
Perspectives Regarding QA

- Study conditions
- Study success
- Student support
- Voluntary engagement
- Counselling & Guidance
- Regional/international mobility
- Transition process
- Curricula & Competences
- HE reforms/Bologna process
QA, defining the right scope in relation to the strategies of the institutions has provided valuable feedback on

- Curricula and education programs
- Learning resources,
- Learning outcomes
- Quality of teaching
- Pedagogical approaches
- Practical training and short term mobility
- Employability of graduates and graduate tracking
Obstacles encountered

Relationship between faculties and university: resistance at the faculty level
• Incomplete participation of all faculties

Quality of the data provided by student services officers
• higher number of graduates that could not be contacted

Technical obstacles
• Server capacities
• Sending emails took more time and resources
• Yahoo, Gmail filters
• Bounced e-mails

The size of the questionnaire

Are we getting realistic feedback?
The questionnaire

• Extensive changes were made in the study programs between the two cohorts (transition from traditional to Bologna studies)
• Students and faculty staff do not know what study programs are
• The respondents do know about ISCO codes
• In 2007 we had “nastavni plan i program” not study programs, so there was confusion among some student services officers
• Should we continue to model the questionnaire according to the German model?
Have we made a difference?

• When will the partners or others from the region perform the next survey?
• How will they collect the student contact data?
• Will accreditation bodies in the region define surveys more closely?
• What are the expectations from alumni networks/organisations?
Have we made a difference?

- The survey has shown its usefulness at the regional, national, institutional and departmental level.
- It is an important source of information to improve curriculum design and optimize institutional strategies, a proper QA tool.
- Will the financing of such surveys become a regular budget line of institutions in the region?
Questions, comments....

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