

# Achieving Quality Assurance and Moving to a World Class University in the 21st Century

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## Outline of Presentation

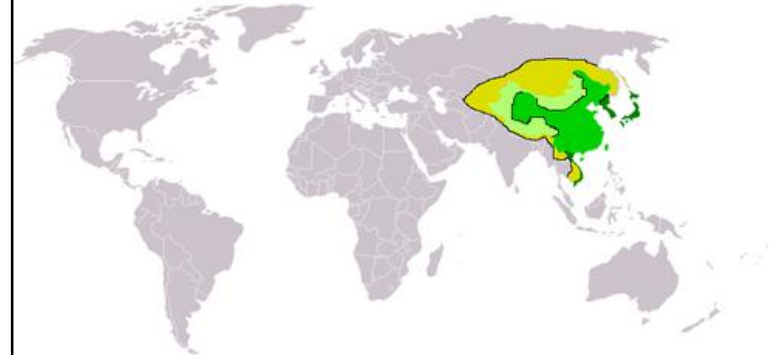
- “University Quality Assurance (UQA) and University Ranking (UR)” or “Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and External Quality Assurance (EQA)” Should Be Like A Pair of Chopsticks
- The Current Higher Education Evaluations in Taiwan Have Helped Universities Assure and Enhance Their Quality but Are Facing Several Challenges

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“University Quality Assurance (UQA) and University Ranking (UR)” or “Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and External Quality Assurance (EQA)” Should



Chinese-character culture sphere (“漢字文化圈”) or the chopsticks sphere



<http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%BC%A2%E5%AD%97%E6%96%87%E5%8C%96%E5%9C%88>

- The people in the chopsticks sphere highly value education and the students there compete fiercely for entering leading universities.
- In the past, recruiting top quality students is the most crucial factor in a university's ability to maintain its national reputation.
- In the 21st century impacted by globalization, many universities in the chopsticks sphere not only want to become a national leading university but also desire to become a world-class university (WCU).

- The purpose of this paper is to point out that the current higher education evaluation and accreditation in Taiwan have helped the universities in Taiwan to achieve quality assurance and move to a WCU in the 21st Century.

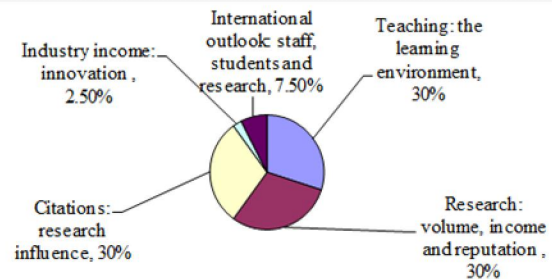
- A WCU is not achieved by self-declaration. Its status is basically conferred by global university rankings.
- It certainly implies that a WCU is assessed based on a predefined set of criteria and standards of excellence which are internationally comparable.

- Salmi (2009) and Russell Group (2012) pointed out the following three characteristics of WCU:
  - (1) **Concentration of talent**--a high concentration or critical mass of talent, including faculty, staff and students;
  - (2) **Abundant resources**--sufficient resources to provide an extensive, comprehensive learning environment and a rich environment for advanced research; and
  - (3) **Favorable governance**--favorable governance allowing and encouraging autonomy, strategic vision, innovation, efficient resource management and flexibility.

- Hamilton (2012) viewed that a WCU comes down to the following four things: (1) **Outstanding people**, (2) A focus on research excellence underpinned by an international and open outlook, (3) **A commitment to high-quality education**, and (4) Sustainable funding to ensure excellence and access.
- Apparently, **talented people and sustainable funding** are in common in the above two groups of characteristics.

- A quality university should fulfill the following three major roles in excellence: (1) education of its students, (2) research, development and dissemination of knowledge, and (3) activities contributing to its community and society.
- **Most of the existing rankings put more weight on research performance rather than the quality of teaching.**
- A WCU is widely seen as a world-class research university.

### Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2012- 2013



- The only global university performance tables to judge research-led universities across all their core missions--teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook.
- **The breadth and depth of research performance of a university are highly weighted.**

- It has been criticized that comparing with other academic activities, **research performance** is easier to obtain from international data, and the other performances are largely identified by **reputations and perceptions**.

- Salmi (2013) pointed out that among the key accelerating factors supporting the quest for becoming a WCU, the most influential one appears to be reliance on the diaspora.
- He identified five effective ways of rapidly building up a WCU as follows: (1) **bringing overseas scholars back to their country of origin**, (2) the use of English as the main working language, (3) **concentrating on niche areas, such as the science and engineering disciplines**, (4) using benchmarking to orient an institution's upgrading efforts, and (5) **introducing curriculum and pedagogical innovations**.

- Quality can be considered as exceptionality, excellence, zero errors, fitness for purpose, transformation, reshaping, threshold, enhancement or value for money.
- **University quality assurance is the activity that aims at maintaining and raising quality.**

UNESCO's (1998) "World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century"

- "quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept, which should embrace **all its functions and activities**: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment" (Article 11) .
- This implies that in terms of quality the criteria and standards of excellence predefined in the existing global university rankings are too narrow.

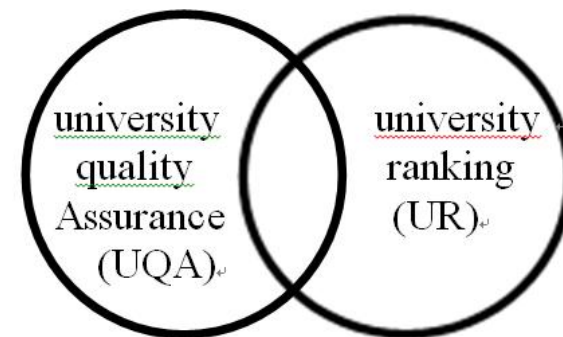
- Quality assurance (QA) is generally understood as “any systematic process of checking to see whether a product or service being developed is meeting specified requirements”.
- QA is based on the following three main principles: control, accountability and improvement.

- According to its customers, university quality assurance (UQA) can be divided into internal quality assurance (IQA) and external quality assurance (EQA).
- IQA aims at institutional development and assessment of internal accountability, while EQA aims at achieving public accountability.
- Both IQA and EQA are necessary for a university in order to prove to its internal and external customers that the goals set by the university will be achieved

### UNESCO’s (1998) “World Declaration” also declares:

- **Internal self-evaluation and external review**, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international expertise, are vital for enhancing quality. Independent national bodies should be established and comparative standards of quality, recognized at international level, should be defined. **Due attention should be paid to specific institutional, national and regional contexts in order to take into account diversity and to avoid uniformity.** Stakeholders should be an integral part of the institutional evaluation process. (Article 11)

A cursory difference between university quality assurance (UQA) and university ranking (UR)



Chopsticks as well as fork and knife  
as a metaphor of IQA and EQA



The Current Higher Education  
Evaluations in Taiwan Have Helped  
Universities Assure and Enhance  
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The following approaches are often used in  
UQA:

- (1) **Quality assessment**—It is generally conducted in the following four steps—define what quality is, set assessment standards, compare the latter with the real outcome and decide to what extent the standards are met; (2) **Quality audit**—It investigates whether the process of activity is efficient; (3) **Accreditation**—It is often delegated by the government to specially formed assessment agencies as it is common in accreditation of institutions and programs; and (4) **Quality control**—It is a system that checks whether the produced product or offered service meets the set standards

In Taiwan, the evaluation of all  
universities/colleges is mandated  
by the University Act

- **Universities--Conduct self-evaluation on instruction, research, services, guidance, institutional administration, student**
- **MOE--Regular evaluation on universities and publish the results**

- At present, the higher education institutions in Taiwan receive mandated accredited evaluation every six years, while higher education programs receive mandated accredited evaluation every five years.
- The PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle and the following five domains of evaluation were adopted in the newly completed institutional evaluation: (1) institutional self-positioning, (2) institutional governance and management, (3) teaching and learning resources, (4) accountability and social responsibility, and (5) continuous improvement and quality assurance mechanism.

- The PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle and the following five domains are adopted in the current program evaluation: (1) Rationale, goals, and features of program, (2) Curriculum planning and design, (3) Faculty qualifications and instructional quality, (4) Learning resources and environment, and (5) Organizational and administrative operations as well as self-improvement mechanism.

- Both institutional and program evaluations are conducted in the following five stages: preparation, self-evaluation, site visit, decision-making and follow-up. When conducting site visits, all peer reviewers are external.
- The final results are categorized into three statuses: “accredited,” “accredited conditionally” or “discontinued.”

- The higher education institutional and program evaluations adopt the quality assurance approach which combines both “quality assessment” and “accreditation”.
- People hold different judgments on the current higher education evaluations in Taiwan.
- Many stakeholders appraise that the current evaluations have substantially helped universities assure and enhance their quality.



The current evaluations are facing the following challenges:

**1. Quality culture has not been well formed**

- As Damme (2011) pointed out, an institutional quality culture includes: (1) A transparent and active commitment to quality at all levels, (2) A willingness to engage in critical self-evaluation, (3) An internal regulatory framework with clear and consistent procedures, (4) Explicit and clearly assigned responsibilities for quality control and assessment, (5) A drive to obtain feedback

from a variety of internal and external constituencies, (6) A clear commitment to identify and disseminate good practice, and (7) Prompt, appropriate, and sensitive managerial action to redress problems, supported by adequate information.

- Based on the above criteria, quality culture has not been well formed in the universities of Taiwan.
- Firm policies and effective supports will help the formation of quality culture.

**2. Faculty and staff feel overloaded**

- Due to the heavy burdens from a variety of evaluations and project competitions, university faculty and staff feel overloaded.
- Integrating various evaluations appropriately and identifying key evaluation criteria are urgently needed.

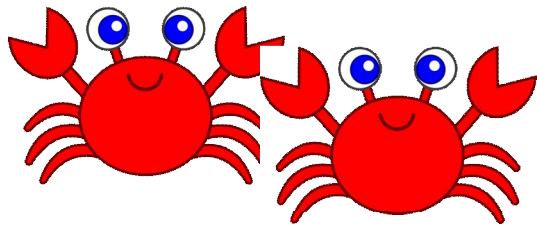


### 3. The try-out of self-conducted and external program evaluation is off the track

- The Ministry of Education has required 34 higher education institutions to try out self-conducted and external program evaluation.
- This try-out is inconsistent with the University Act, in which both self-evaluation and third-party evaluation are required.
- At least, a third-party audit should be added to the self-conducted and external program evaluation.

- In order to achieve UQA and move to a WCU in the 21st century, all stakeholders of UQA in Taiwan should think globally and act locally to overcome the above challenges as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention!



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