APQN Signs MoU with COL, Canada

Prof. Asha Kanwar, President & CEO of Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and Dr. Jagannath Patil, President of Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) represented their respective organizations to sign the MoU on Aug. 26, 2012 to initiate various projects for facilitating the promotion of quality enhancement and institutional excellence of higher education institutions.

COL is an inter-governmental organization created by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1987. COL has the objective to encourage the development and sharing of open and distance education, knowledge, resources and technologies and to assist Commonwealth member governments to benefit from this.

The objective of this MOU is to identify possible avenues for collaboration and to establish the basis of collaboration where it is mutually beneficial. The

- Compilation and dissemination of best practices and innovations in higher education institutions;
- Sharing the toolkits developed for quality assurance of ODL programmes in teacher education and higher education;
- Networking of higher education institutions and related quality assurance agencies;
- Developing quality benchmarking for dual-mode/flexible forms of higher education institutions;
- Evolving process based quality indicators for various modes of higher education programmes; and
- Strengthening institutional quality assurance systems.

APQN Board has complimented APQN President Dr. JP and COL president Prof. Asha Kanwar for this initiative while endorsing this MoU.
It gives me great pleasure to represent APQN as its fourth President after being part of growth story of APQN for about 7 years. I am thankful to colleagues of this prestigious network for thinking me worthy of this position. APQN is a young network nurtured by stalwarts in quality assurance such as Dr David Woodhouse, Mr. Peter Cheung and Prof VS Prasad who formed its founding team of office bearers. The legacy was carried forward by experts like Ms. Concepcion Pijano, Akihito Kawaguchi, Dorte Kristoffersen and Dr. Antony Stella till recently.

**Challenging times**

While sharing the joy of being APQN President, I must admit, this is the most difficult and challenging times for APQN. I am taking over in a month which is supposed to be the last month of financial support from GIQAC, UNESCO. From next month onwards APQN will have to survive on its own without any external funding. APQN was the first network to receive the World Bank Development Grant Fund (DGF) from September 2004 to March 31, 2008. For the past 3 and half it has also been a beneficiary of the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC) grant administered by UNESCO.

Projects that have been successfully implemented with the GIQAC grant include online discussion forums, creation of a database of consultants, developing training material for trainers in quality assurance and the internship programs. There have been over 50 staff exchanges and internships that benefitted more than 20 countries across the region. The review conducted in 2010 of the GIQAC projects of APQN acknowledged APQN’s leadership role in initiating projects which are then adopted by the other networks. All this was possible due to financial support of UNESCO and World Bank coupled with voluntary work done by board members and project leaders. The greatest challenge now is how to sustain this legacy and activities with increased expectations of member agencies with no external funding.

**APQN beyond GIQAC – Agenda for survival and revival**

While real strength of APQN is in-kind contribution of time and expertise shared by members of the network, the capacity building activities have largely been benefited by the support of World Bank in initial 3 years and GIQAC support till now. So the real challenge in front of us is to direct our efforts to set an agenda for APQN’s sustenance. Our ingenuity would be to convert this challenge into an opportunity. That is why I call it as an agenda for survival and revival.

- Collaborations with various international bodies for joint projects.
- Collaborative action research projects involving two or more agencies under APQN banner.
- APQN exchange program, scholarships and fellowships
- Creating APQN label of quality for QAAs and possibly for HEIs
- Planning AP QA Journal in collaboration with QAAs and reputed publishing houses
- Fund raising through website advertisement, journal advertisement and program sponsorship
- Introduction of value added services relating to quality assurance such as information clearing house and qualifications validation services.

Above points are at just conceptual level at present and I look forward to hearing from all colleagues to fine-tune these stray thoughts into concrete plan of action. I look forward to your ideas, initiatives and good wishes to make APQN a vibrant and self-sustaining network that would become the first point of reference in Quality Assurance in Asia Pacific.

Let’s pledge ourselves for survival and revival of APQN.
Dr. Antony Stella, the former President of the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) resigned from the position on 1 June 2012, as she has moved out of the region, and worked as Commissioner in the Commission for Academic Accreditation in Abu Dhabi, UAE since that time. Dr. Jagannath Patil, the former Vice-President of APQN has assumed the office of President since 1 June, 2012. In turn, Prof. Angela Hou Yung-chi, one of the elected Board members has been appointed as the Vice-President of APQN since 1 June, 2012.

APQN wishes to place on record the remarkable contribution made by Dr. Antony Stella since the inception of APQN. In her various roles as project leader, Board member, Vice-President and President, Stella contributed to building APQN which is now a force to be recognized and admired in the international QA fraternity. APQN bids a hearty farewell to Dr. Stella and wishes her all the best in the future.

APQN is also pleased to welcome Dr. Jagannath Patil of NAAC, India as its fourth President. Dr. Jagannath Patil has been a leading figure of the APQN since past 7 years. As Project leader, Board member and Vice President JP has led several initiatives of APQN. We are sure APQN will scale new heights under President-ship of JP due to his rich experience and international recognition in the field of quality assurance.

APQN looks forward to the collaboration of all members and friends in continuing to work together to strengthen even further APQN’s quality initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region.

APQN 2012 AGM in Siem Reap, Cambodia

The APQN Annual General Meeting held on 1 March 2012 was open only to APQN members. The meeting was attended by the following membership breakdown:

* 15 full members,
* 5 intermediate members,
* 2 associate member,
* 4 institutional members.

Dr Antony Stella, the President of APQN chaired the meeting. The agenda covered 2011 finance reports, progress updates on the projects, preparation for the APQN 2013 Conference and AGM and discussion on the draft of the APQN Strategic Plan (2012-2015). The members proposed many good ideas for the draft of the Strategic Plan.
From 29 February to 2 March 2012, the APQN 2012 Conference was successfully hosted by the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) and Cambodian Higher Education Association (CHEA) in APSARA Authority Complex, Siem Reap. The theme of the Conference is “External Quality Assurance in the Asia-Pacific: What has changed over a decade?” H.E. Dr. SOK An, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister in charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers, and Chairman of the ACC opened the Conference with Dr. Antony Stella, President of APQN welcoming all Conference participants. Dr Gwang-Jo Kim, Director of UNESCO Bangkok presented the keynote speech on “Trends of Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific: with a focus on quality assurance”.

The 2012 APQN Conference focused primarily upon reflecting on expectations and achievements of quality assurance in higher education, highlighting the current challenges and issues of quality assurance in higher education. To have in-depth discussions on “what has changed over the past decade” with respect to external quality assurance, the Conference contained various parallel sessions, panel discussions, workshops, and keynote lectures, which involved the following sub themes:

- Mutual recognition
- Qualifications framework
- QA of distance education
- QA of cross-border education
- Benchmarking
- Standards
- Research on QA and IQA
- Capacity building of the QA agencies
- Good practices in QA

The Conference closed with very positive feedback on the benefits of sharing good practices in quality assurance for which the conference provided a sound platform.
GIQAC Update

On 25 July, 2012, APQN submitted the narrative report and financial statement for the Contract No. 4500142209 to UNESCO. The narrative report is divided into twelve sections, covering the following twelve projects that have been approved:

I. APQN Website Expansion, Consolidation and Maintenance,
II. Expansion of the Database,
III. Moderated Online Forum,
IV. Internship Program,
V. Mutual Recognition (MR) Project,
VI. Workshop on Good Practice,
VII. Workshop-Round Table Discussion for the 2008 Batch of Interns,
VIII. Workshop for Pacific Nations,
IX. Peer Review of QA Agencies,
X. Liaison and Communication among APQN Members and Regional Networks,
XI. Quality Information Systems Toolkit,
XII. Publication of Electronic package for Reviewer’s Training.

Since then the GIQAC grant projects have been ended, and an external evaluation is conducted by UNIVERSALIA, Canada with the commission of UNESCO. The external evaluation will cover the entire grant period from 2007-2012 and it will assess the results of the program, demonstrate its achievements and challenges, identify the lessons learned and enhance its relevance, efficiency and effectiveness that will contribute towards the improvements for a potential second phase. Dr Jagannath Patil, President and Prof. Li Yaogang have been interviewed by UNIVERSALIA on telephone, and the other Board members have been surveyed. It is anticipated that the result of evaluation will be announced soon by UNESCO.

Expansion of the Database of Consultants

APQN and International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) have jointly launched the new round of expansion of the Database from Sep. 1, 2011. The heads of quality assurance agencies of the two networks are requested to nominate experts for the Database. Up to the deadline, 61 nominees have been received. The following experts reviewed these nominees: Dr Jagannath Patil, Vice-President of APQN at that time and Deputy Advisor of National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India (facilitator of the review process); Mrs. María José Lemaitre, President of INQAAHE, Vice President ofCentro Interuniversitario de Desarrollo (CINDA) , and Prof. Badr Aboul-Ela, Board member of INQAAHE, Director of Commission for Academic Accreditation, United Arab Emirates.

After review, 48 nominees have been approved to enter the Database. As a result, the total number of the experts in the Database of Consultants has been expanded into 122. The Database of Consultants could be available at: http://www.apqn.org/services/consultantsdb/.
The 4th Online Forum on Learning Outcomes and Accountability

The 4th moderated APQN online forum, supported by the GIQAC fund, was conducted from February 1 to March 15, 2012. Altogether 108 quality assurance experts, representing 29 APQN member institutions (7 full members, 7 intermediate members, 13 institutional members and 2 associate members) from 17 different countries/territories registered to take part in this important endeavour. There are a total of 144 responses in 4 sessions.

In order to enhance social understanding of institutional accountability and to facilitate student’s mobility in cross-border higher education, EQAs, institutions and governments have taken student learning outcomes into consideration seriously. Accordingly, the forum mainly focused on student learning outcomes and accountability in terms of the role of QA agencies and institutions, since they are both expected to respond to the global trend effectively by various stakeholders. Hence, under the topic, there were 3 more sub-themes for further discussion. Prof. Angela Yung Chi Hou, APQN Board member and Dean of the Office of Research & Development of Higher Education Evaluation & Accreditation Council of Taiwan in Chinese Taipei, played the role of the convenor in this exercise. APQN has also invited three reputed facilitators from different countries to run each of the sub-themes. The details are following:

- Learning outcomes, qualification frameworks and accountability.
  The session focused on the content of students learning outcome and the role of qualification frameworks, especially in relation to accountability. Prof. Hilary Winchester, Higher Education Consultant from Hilary Winchester Pty Ltd, Australia took care of this sub-theme.

- Assessing learning outcomes through EQA.
  How to assess learning outcomes through external review activities is a big issue for EQA agencies. Ms. Wong Wai Sum, Executive Director of the Joint Quality Review Committee (JQRC), Hong Kong was in charge of this sub-theme.

- Achieving outcomes through IQA.
  In order to respond to the public demand and assure student’s achievements, institutions started working toward greater emphasis on student learning outcomes through a well-developed internal quality assurance mechanism. Mr. Lemalu Lafi Sanerivi, APQN Board member, Senior Educational Assessment Specialists (for Accreditation) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment led this sub-theme.

The 4th moderated APQN online forum was a most valuable experience as it pointed out the areas of training needs.
By February 2012, 15 individuals from 11 countries had experienced APQN internships in several different agencies. 9 were able to be present at the workshop on 28 February 2012 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, along with two other individuals from within HE institutions. The workshop is designed to revolve on the capacity gained by the interns and seek to capture the good practices they have implemented in their home countries. The workshop was structured around the consideration of the following items:

- Administrative structure of the EQA,
- Aspects of quality review (whether accreditation, audit, etc.),
- Institutional actions and interaction with the EQA,
- Using the internships, and
- Improving the internships.

As interns discussed what they learned and what they do and the processes of their respective agencies, it was often difficult to separate the learning through the internships from discussion of processes used by the various agencies. The latter aspect of the discussion was itself valuable, and in relation to the former aspect, the overall level of appreciation for APQN’s internship program was very significant. The group noted that, beyond the specific learning for and improvement of the intern’s home agency, the exposure across the region to the work of other agencies is providing the opportunity to enhance mutual understanding and comparability across the region. Many interns reported on involvement in the host agency’s training of assessors. This experience, plus the use of the training material, can help the region to move forward in a compatible direction of improved quality.
The Mutual Recognition Workshop was conducted in the APQN 2012 Conference. Dr. Jan Cameron, Director of New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU) and leader of the Mutual Recognition Project chaired the workshop. The Mutual Recognition Project, one of APQN’s GIQAC projects established in 2010 to explore the development of a methodology to assess whether the quality assurance processes of potential partner jurisdictions are sufficiently comparable to give confidence that outcomes would be acceptable to another jurisdiction. The partners in the project are NAAC (India), MQA (Malaysia), NZUAAU (New Zealand) and Australia – until 2011 this was AUQA.

The workshop presentation outlined the background to the project and reviewed the methodology developed to assess agencies’ quality assurance processes. Project members reported on their experiences observing partner review processes of universities in India, Australia and New Zealand. A wide range of criteria had been used to reach a conclusion as to whether the observers had confidence that, allowing for contextual constraints, the observed agency’s processes were exploring similar activity within similar standard expectations as those which would be explored by the observer’s agency. One objective of the project is to consider whether a series of such bilateral assessments by the observer agency of the observed agency might then collate to a multilateral assessment. Mutual recognition of institutional quality assurance is an important factor in transnational educational assessments.

The DAAD carried out a one-day Pre-Conference Workshop on capacity development for reviewers prior to the APQN Conference 2012. More than 40 participants attended the event which placed particular emphasis on regional approaches to capacity development in quality assurance. In that respect, EQA experts from Europe and Asia stressed the importance of developing cross-national criteria and procedural guidelines in order to move forward to regional QA frameworks.

After having discussed good practice examples of reviewer trainings in Thailand and Spain, the participants jointly reflected on advantages and challenges of developing a pool of reviewers on a regional scale. In two rotating sub-groups innovative ideas for such formats have been developed, both in terms of content and methodology.

The outcomes of the workshop feed into a regional peer training which addresses a group of 30 reviewers from Southeast Asia. ASEAN-QA brings together IQA and EQA representatives through a sequence of trainings directed at QA practitioners from both universities and QA agencies in Southeast Asia. The overall coordination and organisation of the cross-regional capacity development initiative is done by the University of Potsdam, Germany. More information on ASEAN-QA at:

Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) Council of the UGC, Sri Lanka has successfully become the first member QAA of APQN to undergo external Peer Review. Congratulations to QAA Council!

The QAA Council, Sri Lanka submitted an expression of interest to the APQN and the same was approved by the APQN Board. The site visit was planned during 25-27 June 2012. APQN President Dr. Jagannath Patil facilitated the process by developing templates and guidelines. The self-assessment report was prepared with criteria drawn from APQN guidelines, the Chiba Principles and the INQAAHE guidelines of good practice. The review panel was selected by the Board of APQN and communicated to the QAA Council, Sri Lanka. The selected members were, Dr. Latha Pillai (Chairperson), National Assessment and Accreditation Council, Dr. Manuel Corpus (Member), Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines (AACCUP) and Mr. Vicheanon KHIEU (Member), Accreditation Committee of Cambodia.

According to the 3 day programme a detailed interactions were also held with stakeholders such as the UGC, reviewers, authorities of University of Colombo, representatives of the World Bank, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka and SAITM, a non-state Higher Education Institution. Also opportunities were provided to meet a group of trained reviewers, QAA Council officials and the UGC, Ministry of Higher Education officials. The peer team feedback was provided with a Review Report and information provided in the report was good enough to understand QAA Council’s strengths and weaknesses. The APQN Board approved the Review Report on July 20, 2012. The status will be valid for 5 year period. As agreed by QAA Council, the Review Report will be published on the members’ only area of the APQN website. QAAC will be awarded Certificate in Annual Conference and AGM, 2013. The Peer Review Report is available at: [http://apqn.org/members/virtual_library/pg_reports/](http://apqn.org/members/virtual_library/pg_reports/).

The Board of APQN has decided that procedure and templates that are developed by APQN expert team for review will be further fine-tuned so that it can be used for next call for peer review. After success of the first review of EQA in Asia Pacific against APQN Criteria, the Board will open this review process for its member QAAs which are willing to undergo external peer review.

Workshop on QIS in Quezon City, Philippines

On July 9, 2012, APQN organized the Workshop on Quality Information System, which is hosted by Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP) in Quezon City, Philippines. 6 international guests from India, Thailand, Chinese Taipei and UK and 8 representatives from the local quality assurance agencies and universities participated in the workshop. Principal Investigator of the project Dr Jagannath Patil and APQN Vice President Prof. Angel Yung Chi Hou facilitated the workshop. Dr Jagannath Patil presented the outcome of the survey on Quality Information System (QIS) among APQN members. Case study of UK NARIC presented by Ms. Angela Ki and College Navigator from Chinese Taipei by Prof. Angela Hou Yung-Chi added value to the survey report. The workshop participants were divided into groups, and draft template has been reached, which can become part of QIS Toolkit of APQN.
Publication of Electronic Package for Reviewer’s Training

Dr. Jagannath Patil with the help of Ms. Zia Batool and other colleagues have made edition and revision on the draft of Reviewers’ Training Package prepared by Prof Colin Peris. The revised package is APQN’s crucial initiative for designing and delivering resource-based training modules in the areas of quality assurance targeted at quality assurance professionals to provide “face-to-face” (f2f) resources supported by technology-mediated mentoring and resource provision. The training package is organized into seven modules. Each module provides generic descriptions for different aspects of quality assurance and reviewers’ training. At end, all modules contain suggestions to contextualize the module in respective country or territory in relation to jurisdiction of QA body concerned. Seventh module contains 3 examples of good practices that would help reviewers expand their understanding of different QA concepts and practices.

The package which can also serve as self-instructional training modules is available on CD-ROM, APQN website and also in print version. This is the first version of the package, which is expected to be revised from time to time and uploaded on the as Open Quality Resource of APQN. The package is now published in form of Digital book titled ‘Assessing Quality in Higher Education—Electronic Package for Reviewers’ Training’ on 200 CDs and also its print version is prepared which is in form of a book titled ‘Assessing Quality in Higher Education—Information Package for Reviewers’ Training’ with the ISBN freely provided by Advances In Management (AIM), India. 200 copies of this book are printed which will be promoted. The publications are available in the members’ only area of the APQN website.

APQN Signs MoU with AIM, India for Cooperation in Publication

Prof. Li Yaogang, Secretary/Treasurer of Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and Prof. Shankar Lal Gargh, Editor-in-Chief of Advances In Management (AIM), India represented their respective organizations to sign the MoC to engage as publications partner on 17 September, 2012.

According to the MoC, APQN will be responsible for content and editing of publications and hold the copy rights, while AIM will help in publishing and marketing APQN Publications and provide ISBN code for all publications. The APQN Board supports this MoC, and hopes that good quality publications will bring a very strong statement, commitment, communication and image of APQN.
2012 Exchange Program

APQN has launched the 2012 exchange program which is purely on reciprocal basis in which both financial and in-kind contribution is expected from the home and host agencies. The international air travel of the participants will be sponsored by the home agency, and local transport, hospitality and accommodation will be taken care by the host agency. The program is open to all categories of APQN Members, and flexible to accommodate needs of hosts and visitors. It is desirable that exchange program can include activities like observation of peer review visit, participation in reviewing / assessors training programs and visit to the internal quality assurance cell (IQAC) of higher education institutions (HEIs) besides interaction with agency staff. Up to September 25, 2012, there are more than 20 applicants for participants, and 10 quality assurance agencies or higher education institutions have applied to be the hosts. APQN will advance the program soon by October, 2012.

EAS Training Program in QA

This is the cooperative project among APQN, the LH Martin Institute, University of Melbourne and the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE), Australia. APQN is required to find the suitable candidates for the project. The project is essentially a 10 day training program at University of Melbourne between 18 February and 1 March 2013. The course will deliver units towards a Graduate Certificate in Quality Assurance. This project aims to develop a common understanding across the region on higher education QA and ultimately improve the transparency and quality of higher education systems in the region.

The selected participants will be sponsored by the Australian Government and their participation cost will be covered. Up to the deadline, about 30 nominees have been received. APQN will cooperate with the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE), Australia to identify the participants soon.

Visit from Sarawak Convention Bureau, Malaysia

Mr. CHEW Chang Guan, General Manager and Ding Lee Jiuan, Sales Manager of Sarawak Convention Bureau visited the APQN Secretariat. Their objective was to invite APQN to hold conference and workshop in the Convention Center Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. They were especially interested for the APQN 2013 Conference and AGM, as the host had not confirmed yet. A proposal would be soon submitted to the APQN Secretariat if it goes smoothly. Prof. Li Yaogang and Mr. Fang Le had a talk with the guests.
Call for Papers for the INQAAHE Conference

Chinese Taipei, 8 – 11 April, 2013

**Theme:** Managing Diversity: Sustainable quality assurance processes

**Sub-Themes:**
1. The QA of cross-border education: from quality providers to quality assured provision
2. Innovative approaches to external QA in tertiary education: not a single approach towards excellence
3. Impact of QA and the effects of external and internal QA: regional perspectives to a shared issue
4. National qualifications frameworks and their links to QA (including involvement of stakeholders)

Details could be available at:


---

**APQNews** is an in-house publication of APQN edited by APQN President Dr. Jagannath Patil and published by APQN Secretary Prof. Li Yaogang with the support of Mr. Fang Le, the APQN Administrator.

**APQN welcomes all contributions for the next issue of APQNews and requests that you email them to Mr. Fang Le (fangle666@gmail.com) by 20 December 2012.**