Evaluation review of the APQN

Final Report

Evaluation Review of the APQN: Final Report
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Contents

List of tables

List of Figures

Executive summary

The Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) was formed in January 2003 and was incorporated as a non-profit association in the state of Victoria in Australia on 1 December 2004. The region covered by the Asia-Pacific Quality Network includes: all Pacific island nations and territories, New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea; all island and mainland nations and territories of Asia – including Russia, Afghanistan, the other central Asian 'stans' and Iran, but excluding the Gulf states (which are covered by another regional network). The main focus of APQN's activities is to build capacity for external quality assurance of postsecondary education.

The APQN has been a recipient of a World Bank Development Grant Facility (DGF) from 2004 to March 2008. As a consequence, APQN is required to conduct an external evaluation of the achievements of the DGF objectives at the end of the grant period. This report is the outcome of this external evaluation.

The Board of the APQN was responsible for the external evaluation and the preparation of the Terms of Reference of this evaluation.

The evaluation was to address the following criteria:

1. Efficacy – the outputs delivered by the activities organised as part of the APQN and DGF and the extent to which these met the overall objectives articulated at the approval of the grant.
2. Initial outcomes – the extent to which the activities organised by APQN have contributed to building capacity.
3. Governance and Management – the effectiveness of the organisation of the network, the role of the Board and the Secretariat in the management of APQN, and implementation of the objectives of the DGF.
4. Efficient financing – review of the financing and administrative structure of APQN, trying to derive lessons for the financing and administrative models of other regional networks and determine whether APQN has an effective financing and administrative model.
5. Sustainability – the sustainability of APQN in terms of the results achieved, with respect to a strengthened awareness of quality assurance in the region, financial sustainability, and the likelihood that the Network benefits and results will be maintained.

The external review was undertaken by Andrea Bateman and Robert Bateman, from Bateman & Giles Pty Ltd. The review was based on a desk top analysis of APQN documents and website, and also included feedback from members and key stakeholders through interview and survey.

- o Formal interviews were conducted with the Board (prior to the Annual General Meeting in Chiba, Japan February 2008) as well as with individuals from member organisations (3) and the Secretariat (1) plus 3 key stakeholder representatives. The interview questions posed mirrored those in the survey but with varying degrees of emphases.
- o The survey (refer to Appendix 1) was developed and distributed to all members including observers. Completed surveys were received from 34 members. One member chose to respond only on the first page and therefore the data presented in the report relates to 33 responses. Additional responses were received from two observers, only one of which made any comment (general in nature) and the other declined to comment.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the report highlight the comprehensive range of programs and activities undertaken by the APQN – initiatives that have been affirmed by members as significant contributing factors in building capacity in quality assurance.

The task undertaken by the APQN in such an expansive and diverse region has not been without challenges; however, DGF funding and in-kind contributions from individuals and member agencies have enabled the APQN to target the establishment of quality assurance agencies in countries/territories that have small or poorly developed quality assurance systems and to strengthen practices that support the enhancement, reform and renewal of emerging and developed quality assurance systems.

In many respects activities undertaken by the APQN can be seen as setting the ground work for further strengthening quality assurance systems in the Asia-Pacific region. Member feedback provides a strong sense of the momentum that the APQN has generated across the region.

Efficacy and outcomes

Over the last three years the Network has: supported a range of conferences, workshops and training programs to meet the needs of the emerging quality agencies/systems; established a database of reviewers and consultants; established a clearinghouse of quality assurance related papers and report; instituted a mailing list; developed a website; plus undertaken research and projects. The findings of the survey indicates that the APQN activities considered most effective by respondents were conferences and workshops, with the clearinghouse, regional exchanges, and the consultants and reviewer database also considered effective.

Governance and management

The region covered by the APQN roughly stretches east from the Ural Mountains in western Russia to the Asia-Pacific region. The notion of 'region' as applied to the APQN should not be seen as a tight geographic area but rather a set of interconnecting initiatives – some focusing upon all member organisations, others dealing with particular national issues – and other initiatives that are peculiar and common to several agencies. This broad definition of the APQN region rightly focuses upon needs and outcomes and avoids the semantics that might be associated with a purely geographic notion.

A regional approach is an efficient and cost effective mechanism to deliver capacity building across a wide and diverse region. The APQN regional model has demonstrated that it has reached many nations and has built capacity.

The APQN has demonstrated that it has sound policies and procedures for the governance and management of the network. These practices provide transparency for APQN operations and are a basis to prioritise initiatives which have been implemented in a largely efficient manner. Strong secretariat support in operational areas has complemented the APQN governance structure.

The APQN Board, by and large, is composed of representatives from organisations that are relatively more advanced in quality assurance arrangements. The less developed countries/territories in terms of quality assurance are not equally represented on the Board. This is not a surprising outcome as the APQN Board provides leadership in quality assurance capacity building and is reflective of existing expertise and/or a lack of resources from the less developed quality assurance systems.

The DGF has been instrumental in funding the APQN Administrator and with the conclusion of this funding the APQN may consider reducing the time fraction of the Administrator. The evaluators, on the other hand, consider that APQN should strengthen the Secretariat model by considering a full-time administrator and one full-time quality assurance consultant who is recognised by the Network. By strengthening the Secretariat, the quality assurance consultant could focus on bringing on board more members, facilitate fundraising actions, assist with the workload of the volunteer Board members, manage the project groups, and undertake liaison activities with other agencies and bodies.

Membership fees of the APQN are reasonably comparable to those charged by INQAAHE[1], albeit a little less. The full membership fee for ENQA[2] is significantly higher again, along with a non-refundable membership application fee which is similar to the APQN joining fee. Given these figures, the APQN could consider an increase in membership fees, but needs to balance the possible increase with the underlying principle of inclusiveness and 'value for money'. The APQN could also give consideration to broadening their income base and their standing within the quality assurance community, and could therefore consider the option for individual subscription to the APQN for interested individuals.

Finances

Over the life of the APQN expenditures have been within budget, and there has been a strengthening of its financial position, an expansion in activity and a containment of costs. This strengthening is a reflection of the sound financial practices employed within the network. It is the evaluators' opinion, that expenditures have been controlled.

Mobilising direct funding has not been an easy task for the APQN, and members readily acknowledge that they lack expertise. However, the findings indicate that the level of in-kind contributions provided by individuals within agencies and member agencies has been high. With the anticipated limited access to financial resources, the APQN should consider additional strategies to minimise the cost of given activities as a means of minimising the financial burdens upon members.

Sustainability

The findings from the review confirm that the APQN is a strong model for regional cooperation. Over its short life the APQN has well defined procedures and organisational administrative framework that has successfully delivered programs and other activities to build quality assurance capacity within the region. In doing so the APQN has created a critical mass of resources, networks and expertise to enable the benefits of the Network to be maintained.

Recommendations

The Asia-Pacific Quality Network has demonstrated that it has delivered capacity building outcomes across the region within many of the countries/territories that have less developed quality assurance systems. However, the task is not complete and following recommendations are framed with view of further developments and reaching out to all nations within the region.

Recommendation 1: Minimum funding model
It is recommended that the APQN Board in the future, at a minimum, fund:
- o Annual conference with associated workshops
- o Secretarial support (refer to recommendation 6).

Recommendation 2: Website
It is recommended that the APQN Board:
- o Develop the notion that the APQN website be a *gateway* to all things pertaining to quality assurance in education
- o Continue to develop the Virtual Library
- o Review the website to include and extend the links page to other key sites. It is suggested that this links page be placed in a more prominent position.

Recommendation 3: Board co-option
It is recommended that the APQN Board consider the use of co-opting members as a means to mentor members that have less developed quality assurance systems. This would promote the notion of inclusiveness and of capacity building across the region.

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[1] International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
[2] European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Recommendation 4: Sub-regionalisation
It is recommended that the APQN Board examine options in relation to sub-dividing the Asia-Pacific region as a means to efficiently deliver quality assurance programs and to enhance the notion of inclusiveness*.*

Recommendation 5: Strategic Plan
The APQN Board should develop a Strategic Plan focussing on the next 5 to 10 years.

Recommendation 6: Secretariat
It is recommended that the APQN Board give consideration to a reconstructed Secretariat, to include a full-time administrator plus one full-time quality assurance consultant who is recognised within the Network.

Recommendation 7: Fees
It is recommended that APQN Board review their fee structure and benchmark it against other such networks.

Recommendation 8: Individual subscription category
It is recommended that the APQN Board give consideration to including individual subscription for interested individuals across the region, so that when access to information and services is restricted to members, individuals (for a fee) would have access to a number of limited services on the website, including the links page, Virtual Library, publications and mailing list.

Recommendation 9: In-kind contributions
It is recommended that the APQN Board continue the mobilisation of in-kind contributions.

Recommendation 10: Additional strategies
It is recommended that the APQN Board examine strategies to minimise costs associated with the delivery of its core capacity building activities and programs.

Recommendation 11: Sustainability
With the limited potential of on-going future funding it is recommended that the APQN Board should look toward maintaining core activities and any additional funding sources that will value add to the Network's regional capacity building activities, such as:
- o Development and dissemination of core quality assurance tools, possibly on a user pay principle
- o Nominal charges for provision of print /electronic material on quality assurance
- o Delivering programs in different (and cost effective) ways, such as the web
- o Continuing to foster interaction that enables individuals and agencies to network and learn from others' experiences via techniques such as on-line forums
- o Recruitment of additional members
- o Continuing to seek sponsorship, support and in-kind contributions from key agency/organisation stakeholders within the region
- o Utilising current expertise to develop a 'commercial arm' to undertake research and develop materials relating to quality assurance.

Background to the review

Overview

The Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) was formed in January 2003 and was incorporated in the state of Victoria in Australia on 1 December 2004. The region covered by the Asia-Pacific Quality Network includes: all Pacific island nations and territories, New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea; all island and mainland countries/territories of Asia – including Russia, Afghanistan, the other central Asian 'stans' and Iran, but excluding the Gulf states (which are covered by another network). The main focus of APQN's activities is external quality assurance of postsecondary education.

The APQN has been a recipient of a World Bank Development Grant Facility (DGF). As a consequence, APQN is required to conduct an external evaluation of the achievements of the DGF objectives at the end of the grant period, from 2004–2007. This report is the outcome of this external evaluation.

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The evaluation was to address the following criteria:
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Methodology

The external review was carried out by Andrea Bateman and Robert Bateman, from Bateman & Giles Pty Ltd.

The reviewers acknowledge the extensive terms of reference, however given the short life span of the APQN the review was limited to a desk top analysis of documents provided to the reviewers by the APQN Secretariat. These documents were limited to:
o   Annual reports and semi-annual reports
o   Annual proposals for DGF funding, grant agreements
o   Programs, presentations and papers from events
o   Event evaluation reports and reports on outcomes from a majority of the APQN sponsored events
o   Web statistics reports
o   Reports from APQN project groups and other APQN sponsored projects

o   Board meeting minutes
o   Finance Committee minutes
o   Audited financial statements and any interim financial reports
o   List of fundraising activities.

The APQN website was also scanned (at www.apqn.org) at the time of the review.

The review also included feedback from members and key stakeholders. Feedback was sought via:
o   Interviews
o   Survey.

Formal interviews were conducted with the APQN Board (prior to the Annual General Meeting in Chiba, Japan February 2008) as well as with individuals from member organisations (3) and the Secretariat (1) plus 3 key stakeholder representatives. The interview questions posed mirrored those in the survey but with varying degrees of emphases.

The survey (refer to Appendix 1) was developed and distributed to all members, including observers. Completed surveys were received from 34 members out of 57 APQN members. One member chose to respond only on the first page; and therefore the data presented in the report relates to 33 responses: Additional responses were received from 2 observers, only one of which made any comment (general in nature) and the other declined to comment. The distribution of responses by country/territory is represented in Figure 1.
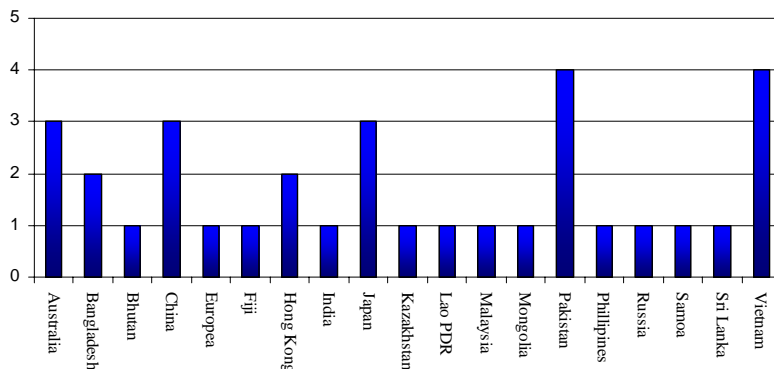

Figure 1: Responses by country

Of the 34 respondents, 15 agencies, or 44%, of the respondents reported APQN support of membership fees. The response categories are represented in Figure 2 below.
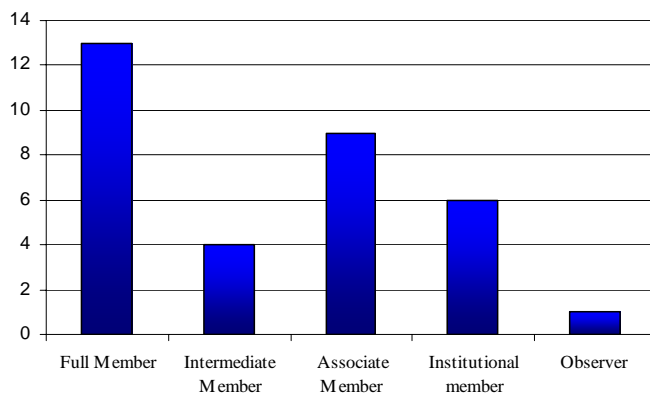

Figure 2: Responses by membership categories

Overview of APQN

The Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) was developed with the purpose of serving the needs of quality assurance agencies in higher education in a region that contains over half the world's population. APQN is a non-profit-making organisation, of which there are currently 57 members and 6 observers.

The history of the APQN as an informal network goes back prior to 2003. As part of the biennial INQAAHE conferences, representatives of the external quality assurance agencies in the Asia-Pacific region met regularly from 1999 onwards. These meetings led to an agreement that there was a need, and an interest, to establish a regional network as a platform for more formalised interaction on areas of common and regional interest.

The APQN was formed in January 2003 as a regional network of higher education quality assurance associations and professionals from an identified 51 countries/territories across the Asia-Pacific region[3]. The Constitution was ratified electronically by potential members and the APQN was formally registered as a legal entity within the state of Victoria, Australia on 1 December 2004[4] and held its first annual general meeting in Wellington in March 2005.

The region covered by the Asia-Pacific Quality Network includes: all Pacific island nations and territories, New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea; all island and mainland countries/territories of Asia, including Russia, Afghanistan, the other central Asian 'stans' and Iran, but excluding the Gulf states (which are covered by another network).

Governance

The APQN is governed by:
- o   The General Council
- o   The Board.

The General Council comprises:
- o   Full Members
- o   Intermediate Members
- o   Associate Members
- o   Institutional Members of APQN.

Each member is represented by one nominated person.

The General Council meets once a year, with the last meeting occurring in Chiba, Japan in February 2008. There have been four annual general meetings.

The General Council is responsible for:
- o   Electing the Board
- o   Considering reports from the Board;
- o   Setting the annual fees and any other contribution to be paid by members;
- o   Considering and approving APQN's annual financial statements;
- o   Making decisions necessary for the satisfactory operation of APQN
- o   Excluding, on the recommendation of the Board, any member who disregards the Constitution.

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[3] Given the membership categories there can be more than one member from a country/territory.
[4] *APQN Annual Report 2004 – 2005*, p. 1.

The General Council elects to the Board:
- o A President
- o A Vice President
- o A Secretary/Treasurer
- o Four other members.

Constitution

The current APQN Constitution can be accessed directly from the website at www.apqn.org/virtual_library/?referrer=home. Adjustments to the Constitution were approved at the Annual General Meeting (20/02/2008) and were effective from the 14 April 2008.

The Constitution outlines the purpose of the APQN which is to:
- o Promote good practice in the maintenance and improvement of quality in higher education in the Asia-Pacific region
- o Facilitate research in the region into the practice of quality management in higher education and its effectiveness in improving the quality of higher education in the region
- o Provide advice and expertise to assist the development of new quality assurance agencies in the region
- o Facilitate links between quality assurance agencies and acceptance of each others' decisions and judgements
- o Assist members of APQN to determine standards of institutions operating across national borders
- o Permit better-informed international recognition of qualifications throughout the region
- o Assist in the development and use of credit transfer schemes to enhance the mobility of students between institutions, both within and across national borders
- o Enable members of APQN to be alert to dubious accrediting practices and organisations
- o Where appropriate, represent the region and promote the interests of the region, e.g. vis-à-vis other networks and international organisations.

The Constitution also outlines the suggested methods to achieve its purpose, the financial arrangements, the membership categories, the makeup of the Board, dissolution processes and dispute resolution processes.

Mission, vision and values

The APQN has a clear mission statement which can be accessed via the APQN website, and is:

> To enhance the quality of higher education in Asia and the Pacific region through strengthening the work of quality assurance agencies and extending the cooperation between them[5].

The APQN vision and values appear in each annual report and are:

> Vision: To be a self-sustaining Network by 2010, in which it will come naturally to members to use APQN as a first pint of reference for advice and support.

> Values: APQN is:
> - o Committed to high quality higher education
> - o Supportive of quality agencies in the region
> - o Open in its information sharing[6].

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[5] APQN website http://www.apqn.org/about/mission/ , accessed 20 April.
[6] *Annual Report 2006 – 2007*, p. 7.

Financing

APQN's financial statements are audited and published in each annual report. The funding for APQN was derived from fees, grants, donations or other earnings. The APQN has sought donations and has derived income from projects. The APQN has set fees for membership and is able to set fees and levy charges for its other products and services.

Any assets and income of APQN must be applied solely in furthering its purposes and cannot be portioned and distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the organisation except as bona fide compensation for services rendered, or expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation.

The Secretary/Treasurer is responsible for:
- o Arranging for APQN's publications and website
- o Preparing the Annual Reports
- o Keeping and maintaining APQN's records (including the register of members)
- o Arranging and recording General Council and Board meetings
- o Collecting fees and subscriptions
- o Maintaining any necessary bank accounts and make payments as required
- o Preparing APQN's financial statements for presentation at the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- o Carrying out decisions of the Board and General Council[7].

Role of DGF

In September 2004 the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (The World Bank Group) agreed to provide a Development Grant Facility (DGF) through the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) to strengthen its institutional capacity and the technical capacity of APQN member organisations.

The activities proposed were the provision of technical assistance to:
- o Conduct workshops to build quality assurance capacity in developing countries/territories
- o Provide external reviewer services to quality assurance agencies in developing countries/territories
- o Provide regional accreditation services to countries/territories without a national accreditation process
- o Establish a regional information clearinghouse on quality assurance for developing countries/territories
- o Support research, policy analysis and services to APQN member organisations
- o Carry out regional staff exchanges to improve information exchange and build capacity of recipient's quality assurance agencies
- o Strengthen liaison functions among regional organisations working on quality assurance, such as the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), the Asian University Network (AUN), and United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

The original grant was for US$362,200, across the following period instalments:
- o 1 October 2004 – 30 September 2005
- o 1 October 2005 – 30 September 2006
- o 1 October 2006 – 31 December 2007.

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[7] APQN website http://www.apqn.org/virtual_library/?section=board&referrer=home, accessed 25 April 2008

An extension to the grant period was granted to the end of March 2008.

The World Bank Group divided the Asia-Pacific region into countries/territories eligible for DGF funding and countries/territories ineligible for DGF funding. Country/territory eligibility information can be accessed via the website at www.apqn.org/about/development_gf/eligibility/ and has been included in this report in Appendix 2.

It is a requirement of the DGF agreement that APQN undergo an independent external evaluation at the end of the grant period that covers the whole grant period from 2004 to 2007[8]. This report is the outcome of this external evaluation.

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[8] DGF file: 306507-01

Findings

The main purpose of the evaluation was to examine the operation of the APQN as a regional network and its use of Development Grant Facility (DGF) seed funding. The evaluation may inform others about the appropriateness of APQN as a model for other regional networks. The evaluation aims to specifically assess to what extent APQN has undertaken the activities that the Development Grant Facility (DGF) was intended for, and to what extent these activities have contributed to building capacity in the region amongst the member agencies.

The evaluation was to address the following criteria:
1. Efficacy
2. Initial outcomes
3. Governance and Management
4. Efficient financing
5. Sustainability.

A: Efficacy

This section of the review focuses on the outputs delivered by the activities organised as part of the APQN and DGF and the extent to which these met the overall objectives articulated at the approval of the grant.

Consistency with Grant and APQN objectives

The purpose of the Development Grant Facility (DGF) is to support the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) to strengthen its institutional capacity and the technical capacity of APQN member organisations. The Grant was provided to strengthen the capacity of quality assurance agencies and quality assurance professionals in the APQN region. The Objectives are to support existing regional associations of accreditation to help them build capacity to:

1. Coordinate organisational functions and mutual recognition of credentials
2. Sustain ongoing review of participating organisations to assure a high quality of organisational performance
3. Encourage leadership to help individual agencies develop tools and strategies to sustain the value of quality assurance
4. Serve as an advocate for accreditation of tertiary education to the public, governments and institution
5. Provide research, policy analysis, and service to its member organisations
6. Nurture the core academic values central to tertiary education and quality assurance collaborations, independence, academic freedom, open and transnational cooperation and exchange of ideas, procedures and standards[9].

The activities (the Activities) for which the Grant is given are to:

1. Conduct workshops to build quality assurance capacity in developing countries
2. Provide external reviewer services to quality assurance agencies in developing countries
3. Provide regional accreditation services to countries without a national accreditation process
4. Establish a regional information clearinghouse on quality assurance for developing countries
5. Support research, policy analysis, and services to APQN member organisations
6. Carry out regional staff exchanges to improve information exchange and build capacity of recipient's quality-assurance agencies
7. Strengthen liaison functions among regional organisations working on quality assurance, such as the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), the Asian University Network (AUN), and UNESCO[10].

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[9] Taken from the grant agreement, reproduced in the APQN Annual Report 2006–2007, p. 5.

Workshops

The first major activity for which the Grant was given was the conduct of workshops to build quality assurance capacity in developing countries.

Over the short period of three years the Network has supported a range of conferences, workshops and training programs to meet the needs of the emerging quality agencies/systems. For example, in the *APQN Annual Report 2006–2007*, the Network supported 2 conferences and 6 workshops and one round table meeting in China The President's report cites the UNESCO International Institute of Education Planning (IIEP) online education course on *External Quality Assurance: Options for Higher Education Managers* as producing 'laudable and tangible results'[11].

Over the three years, the workshops, conferences and training programs have being conducted in countries/territories such as Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Mongolia, Vietnam, China, Bangladesh, Vanuatu, Malaysia, Japan, India, Pakistan, Lao PDR, and Fiji. The topics addressed included auditor training, quality audit processes, accreditor training, internal and external quality assurance processes, training of external reviewers, quality enhancement, measurements for higher education quality assurance, and transnational education.

The topics addressed were commensurate with APQN's mission and values as well as the prescribed DGF activities.

Appendix 3 sets out a comprehensive list of APQN activities from the period 2004–2008.

The members' perception of the worth of the workshops is discussed further in this report; refer to sections Determining Efficacy and Initial Outcomes. However, the APQN annual reports do provide a sense of the perceived worth of the workshops. One notable example was the workshop conducted in Vietnam related to the external review of higher education. The *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006* notes:

> My assessment is that the workshop contributed to longer term capacity building in Vietnam in several ways. Discussions with the facilitators in preparing for the workshop have assisted MOET in finetuning guidelines and processes for the first round of accreditations. MOET now has a full set of training materials in Vietnamese for use in future workshops and training. Given the presence of experienced QA experts in Vietnam, further training of external reviewers will be able to be led by participants at the workshop, on the 'train the trainer' principle. Moreover, the workshop assisted the development of a team spirit among the first cohort of external reviewers (Jeanette Baird[12].

The Asia-Pacific region is vast, with 51 countries recognised by the APQN to be within their area of remit. The workshops have been conducted in 13 countries from a pool of 28 countries[13] within the region. The concentration of the workshops has been in Hong Kong, Australia, Philippines, Vietnam and China; with each of these countries conducting 2 - 3 workshops. In general, the majority of workshops have been conducted in countries with relatively more established quality assurance systems, and the minority in countries with less robust quality assurance systems. This discrepancy may be due to a range of factors. It may be a reflection of the level of in-kind contributions from members with robust quality assurance systems, rather than the lack of interest by members with less robust quality assurance systems in terms of hosting activities. It may be that some countries/territories 'on the marches' of the Asia-Pacific region have access to other regional networks and are more oriented towards these networks.

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[10] APQN website, accessed at 11 April 2008, http://www.apqn.org/about/development_gf/
[11] *APQN Annual Report 2006–2007*, p.15.
[12] *APQN Annual Report 2005-2006*, p. 11.
[13] Countries with current members

Regardless, the geographic scope and the thematic scope of the APQN activities undertaken were consistent with the objectives of the Grant in building systems capacity at the regional, sub-regional and national levels and extending the cooperation between member groups.

External reviewer services

During the 2005–2006 period, APQN sought nominations for the APQN database of consultants and reviewers[14]. At the publication of the *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006* there were 18 people listed. Since that time the number of consultants has expanded to 22 people, and the reviewer's list expanded to 29 people, with an overlap of consultants/reviewers between the two lists.

The Consultants' Database includes people with expertise in Quality Assurance in Higher Education who have expressed their willingness to provide advice to APQN member agencies. The Reviewers' Database includes people who have expressed their willingness to be members of review panels for APQN member agencies.

The *APQN Annual Report 2006–2007*, notes that there has been very little activity in this service. The consultancies webpage on the APQN website (http://www.apqn.org/services/consultancies/) states that there were two consultancies undertaken to the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) in 2005 and 2006.

The *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006* provides valuable information in terms of the worth of these two consultancies; noting that outcomes included:
  o A team of 40 core and external assessors were trained
  o Guidelines were finalised
  o Draft accreditation minimum standards were developed
  o Outlined duty of assessment team leader
  o Proposed self-assessment tools and report.

The report noted that the consultancy had been 'a constructive contribution in strengthening the professional capacity of the ACC, and in the development if quality assurance tools'[15]. In addition, the consultant noted that the 'ACC has taken a big leap forward and could lead the way for other emerging accreditation agencies'[16].

Although it is considered that there has been very little activity in these services, web statistics indicate that from the period April 2007 to September 2007, there were 1098 hits to the consultant services home page and 2325 hits to the reviewer's page with a significantly higher figure to the consultant/reviewer's CV pages. In addition, anecdotal evidence of emails from international bodies expressing appreciation for the list was provided to the evaluators.

The number of consultancies that may have emanated from this list, without the financial support or knowledge of APQN has not been collected.

Accreditation services

The activities for which the Grant was given included the provision of regional accreditation services to countries without a national accreditation process. Marjorie Peace Lenn[17] states that accreditation is an evaluation of whether an institution qualifies for a certain status; of which there are two types – institutional and program. She states that there are four processes to accreditation: development of standards; self-evaluation; external review; and accreditation decision.

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[14] *APQN Annual Report 2004–2005*, p. 26.
[15] Mr Pen Sithol, Director of Standard and Accreditation, *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006*, p. 19.
[16] Mrs Concepcion Pijano, *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006*, p. 20.
[17] *Strengthening World Bank support for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education in East Asia and the Pacific*, June 2003.

There is very little in the APQN documents that directly and explicitly relates to this Grant activity – the provision of accreditation services to countries. However, there has been a range of activities related to accreditation with the aim of building capacity, these include:

- o How to Conduct Institutional Accreditation [Workshop] (Manila 2005)
- o External Review for Higher Education (Hanoi 2006)
- o Training Workshop for Accreditors (Manila 2007)
- o Training of External Reviewers [Workshop] (Phnom Penh 2005).

In addition, there were two consultancies to the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) undertaken in 2005 and 2006 (as previously mentioned in the External reviewer services section above) related to strengthening the technical capacity of the Committee.

The consultant and reviewer databases (previously mentioned) are a form of accreditation services to the Network. However, work in relation to accreditation in terms of research and policy development has still to be realised.

In 2005, a proposal to lead a Project Group in relation to accreditation was received by the Secretariat but the Finance Committee did not approve the submission.

The focus of the APQN has been on building capacity of new or emerging accreditation bodies rather than providing services per se. This approach is considered by the evaluators to be commensurate with building capacity rather than providing services on behalf of the receiving countries.

Clearinghouse

Another of the Development Grant Facility deliverables was the establishment of an internet based clearinghouse, first reported in the *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006*. The clearinghouse on the APQN website is listed as the Virtual Library. The library holds a range of documents pertaining to quality assurance issues in relation to the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Documents include newsletters, survey reports, project group reports, annual reports, research reports and evaluation reports, good practice documents, toolkits, articles and presentations.

This section of the website appears well patronised by members and the general public. Web statistics[18] indicate that for the month of September 2007 the Virtual Library scored 735 hits. For the period April 2007 to September 2007, hits totalled 4196, not including hits to the Constitution which is also located in the Virtual Library.

At this stage the documents loaded onto the website are modest in number; however; the Network is still quite young and it can be assumed that there will be an increase in documents generated over time by the Network or its members. Notably amongst the documents is the *Toolkit: Regulating the Quality of Cross-Border Education* (UNESCO 2006) which at least 2 of the stakeholder interviewees mentioned as a 'success story', scoring 435 hits April 2007 to September 2007.

Support research, policy analysis, and services

Research & Policy analysis

Project Groups (PGs) are created by the Board as a mechanism through which matters of common interest to APQN members are addressed. These groups were first established in 2005, and then extended in 2006 and 2007. There were 13 project groups identified.

Completed project groups are listed on the APQN website[19], and include:

- o Identify Constituency (PG1)

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[18] Internal Board Paper, September 2007
[19] http://www.apqn.org/project_groups/completed/

- o   Qualifications Frameworks (PG2)
- o   Quality Assurance of Distance Learning & E-learning (PG3)
- o   Indicators of Quality (PG4)
- o   Survey: Monitoring of Transnational Activities (PG7).

Related reports are included in the Virtual Library on the APQN website and include the following:
- o   Understanding Quality Assurance in the Asia-Pacific Region: Indicators of Quality (PG4)
- o   Qualification Frameworks in the Asia-Pacific Region (PG2)
- o   Quality Assurance of Distance Learning & E-learning (PG3)
- o   Mutual Recognition (PG8)
- o   Attention Paid to Education that Crosses National Boundaries (PG7).

The *APQN Annual Report 2006–2007*, identifies and outlines the activities of the 6 project groups that were active over the last financial year:
- o   Qualifications framework (PG2)
- o   Quality Assurance of Distance Learning & E-learning (PG3)
- o   Indicators of quality (PG4)
- o   Mutual recognition (PG8)
- o   Transnational education (PG11)
- o   Student participation in quality assurance (PG13).

Project Group 13, although not a completed project has generated:
- o   Text - *Best Practice in Student feedback and participation*
- o   Post conference publication
- o   The NAAC[20] taking up various activities to promote student participation
- o   NAAC celebrated in 2006 a 'year of student participation in quality assurance'[21].

The project groups and their reports provide valuable information and extend understanding amongst the members regarding each country's 'situation'. Of interest is the report pertaining to qualifications frameworks which is relevant to many initiatives in Europe (i.e. Bologna and European Qualifications Framework) and recent initiatives in this region with the Brisbane Communiqué[22] and an Asia-Pacific Qualifications Framework.

Proposed future project groups reflect issues confronting education across the Asia-Pacific region, for example:
- o   Quality literacy
- o   Accreditation.

The APQN was also instrumental in undertaking a series of external projects. These projects (for the period 2006–2007) and a profile of the project are listed in the table below.

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[20] National Assessment and Accreditation Council

[21] *APQN Annual Report 2006–2007*, p. 43.

[22] The Brisbane Communiqué, issued at the Asia-Pacific Education Ministers' Meeting in Brisbane, Australia, on 3-4 April 2006, outlines the commitment of the greater Asia-Pacific region to strengthening good relations in the region and underpinning its social and economic development, through student and academic mobility and research collaboration.

Table 1: Projects

Project	Overview
The Toolkit: Regulating the quality of cross-border education	Joint project between UNESCO and APQN – a practical guide for governments and policy makers and other relevant parties in setting regulatory frameworks for cross-border education.
Toolkit Phase II: A compendium of sample country materials on regulatory framework	Collection of sample materials from different countries (including providing and receiving countries) relating to regulatory system.
International Institute of Education Planning (IIEP) – APQN course in External Quality Assurance	Distance education course – to assist decision-makers to set new national mechanism of quality assurance. Objective was geared towards institution building rather than the development of individual capacities.
Brisbane Communiqué	APQN undertook a scoping study under the direction of Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR, Australia). A workshop was also held in Chiba prior to the APQN 2008 Conference and Annual General Meeting in Japan.

Of these projects:
- The Toolkit has been cited by an interviewee as 'one of the success stories' in terms of demand for copies and interest in the resources
- The IIEP was cited by one member in the survey as one of the most successful workshops;

  The UNESCO-IIEP sponsored distance education program has benefited the staff of many QA agencies in the region.

- The APQN's participation in the Brisbane Communiqué is timely for the Network as the project aims to 'better position the education systems and approaches of the broader Asia-Pacific with international developments, thus ensuring transparency and mutual trust between countries' education systems'[23].

APQN's participation in these projects and the opportunity to provide services and advice to the decision making bodies is invaluable in increasing its profile and standing in the Asia-Pacific region. Given that the Network is only three years old, a number of these projects will potentially impact on the building of knowledge and capacity within the region.

Services

The APQN Secretariat provides support services to all workshops, conferences and APQN related activities. Finances, reimbursements, applications for membership and other related activities are administered through the Secretariat.

One key service provided by APQN is the mailing list. The mailing list is in addition to the members' mailing list and enables other interested parties to keep up-to-date on APQN matters and be informed of changes and additions to the APQN website – this is a free service. As at September 2007, the number of people registered for the mailing list was 381; as at April 2008, the latest information from the APQN Secretariat, places this number at 428.

The APQN website provides members and the public with information pertaining to the Network and provides a 'fledgling' link to other documents pertaining to quality assurance of education. A links page that includes web links to INQAAHE, ENQA and to other key sites is also included. The APQN WebPages could provide a *gateway* to all things pertaining to quality assurance of education, and could also link to key departments within OECD and UNESCO websites pertaining to quality assurance and higher education issues and also to key public access databases.

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[23] *APQN Annual Report 2006-2007*, p. 54.

Staff exchanges

As part of the DGF agreement, the APQN has shown commitment to facilitating regional staff movement as a strategy to improve information exchange and build capacity of recipient's quality assurance agencies. Staff exchanges are categorised as:

o APQN sponsored
o Agency sponsored
o Shared APQN-Agency sponsored.

At the time of this report there have been:

o 3 APQN sponsored exchanges (in 2007)
o 4 Agency sponsored exchanges (in 2006 and 2007)
o 6 shared APQN-Agency sponsored exchanges (all in 2006).

The beneficiaries of these exchanges include China, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, India and Hong Kong.

Strengthen liaison

Since the inception of the Network has been relatively short there has been significant progress made with strengthening liaison and relationships between quality agencies. The annual reports exemplify the cooperation and knowledge sharing that exists on a range of levels. There have been four Memorandums of Understanding/Memorandums of Cooperation signed between quality assurance agencies. These Memorandums are directly attributed to the associations fostered by participation in the Network (*APQN Annual Report 2006–2007*). Agreements exist between Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), and the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU). The fourth agreement is with HKCAAVQ and Shanghai Educational Evaluation Institute (SEEI).

These agreements specify a range of understandings, including mutual recognition, staff development, use of reviewers and collaboration. These agreements are the first steps towards regional understanding, cooperation and 'zones of mutual trust'.

The APQN has also taken a role in strengthening liaison functions within countries and also among regional organisations working on quality assurance via:

1. A three-day workshop – Quality Enhancement: Theory of External Quality Assurance (Kunming, China 2007). Key aims of the workshop were to promote communication and cooperation among the quality assurance agencies in China, as well as increase mutual understanding. Participants included 45 participants from external quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions throughout China.
2. The *APQN Annual Report 2006–2007* highlights a number of contacts made to regional agencies, written within the report as ostensibly seeking funding; however, there is clear indication from the short notes within this report that strengthening liaison was a key motivator as well. Meetings were held with the ASEAN Universities Network (AUN) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMCO). Additional liaison was noted with Brisbane Communiqué representatives and UNESCO.

Determining efficacy

Given that the Network has been established for only 3 years, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the APQN activities as quality assurance initiatives do require time to come to fruition and may involve an evaluation of specific outcomes in nations. Such an evaluation is beyond the scope of this review.

Whether the APQN has fulfilled its core objective of strengthening the work of quality assurance agencies and extending cooperation between them is best assessed by APQN members. Board

members and selected interviewees all spoke highly of the work of the APQN and the overwhelming perception was that the APQN has played, and could continue to play, a strong role in the capacity building of the Asia-Pacific region. This view was also supported by the survey respondents who rated whether the APQN program activities had helped build capacity of external quality assurance – 50% strongly agreed and 33% agreed. The others indicated 'neither agree or disagree' or 'not applicable'. Comments related to building capacity of external quality assurance included:

> The conferences, workshops and consultancies which were conducted in various countries and the impact of these activities on the QAA can attest to this. In late November 2007 we trained assessors from 5 countries and we got reports that in Cambodia, for example, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia is replicating the workshop which they attended in Manila. They are now applying what they learned from us.

And cited examples, such as:

> EQA developments in Cambodia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Laos PDR and many other APQN member countries

Survey respondents also considered that APQN has fulfilled its core objective of strengthening the work of quality assurance agencies and extending the cooperation between them, with 36% strongly agreeing, 40% agreeing and the remainder indicating 'neither agree or disagree' or 'not applicable'. Comments from the respondents cited the MOUs and MOCs[24] between agencies, as well as capacity building activities in Laos PDR and Vietnam. One participant commented that:

> I think the APQN is heading towards achieving and fulfilling its objectives. It is still a relatively young organisation or network, and it needs to plan and implement more 'hands-on' training to assist new QA Agencies. It needs to assist in terms of developing and formulating agreed-to regional 'means' to validate QA mechanisms between countries and to establish equivalences, and mutual recognition of qualifications between countries in the region, as well as more hands on training to enhance capability and capacity of QA professions.

The survey sent to all members addressed the efficacy of the APQN in meeting the DGF Objectives (as listed previously in this report). In general, the majority of respondents considered that the DGF Objectives had been met by APQN activities. In particular they considered that APQN had:

o Served as an advocate for accreditation of tertiary education to the public, governments and institution
o Provide research, policy analysis, and service to its member institution
o Nurtured the core academic values central to tertiary education and quality assurance collaborations, independence, academic freedom, open and transnational cooperation and exchange of ideas, procedures and standards.

Responses were overwhelmingly positive with 76%–78% in agreement or strong agreement with the notion that APQN activities had fulfilled these three Objectives.

In terms of the other Objectives; respondents also considered that APQN activities had encouraged leadership to help individual member agencies develop tools and strategies to sustain the value of quality assurance (68% agreement). Respondents were less definite in their perception in regard to APQN activities fulfilling the remaining Objectives: coordinated organisational functions and mutual recognition of credentials (58% agreement) and sustained ongoing review of participating organisations to assure a high quality of organisational performance (49% agreement).

The APQN activities that were considered most effective were ranked by respondents, with conferences and workshops considered the most effective. Table 2 summarises activities undertaken by the APQN with respect to regional capacity building and reflects the importance attached to 'grass

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[24] Memorandums of Understanding and Memorandums of Cooperation

roots' capacity building activities for sponsored members. On the other hand members with more developed quality assurance systems (typically non sponsored members) have benefited from activities that further develop, reform or renew quality assurance systems.

Table 2: Member perception of effective APQN activities

Activity	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Cumulative
Conferences	12	7	4	23
Workshops	10	9	1	20
External reviewer services to quality assurance agencies (including the databases of consultants and reviewers)	2	3	11	16
Regional accreditation services to countries/territories without a national accreditation process (through the database of consultants and reviewers)	0	6	0	6
Regional information clearinghouse (including information sharing and events) through the APQN website	2	6	6	14
Research, policy analysis and services to members	4	4	2	8
Regional staff exchanges to improve information exchange, and build on capacity of recipient's quality agency	2	2	6	10
Strengthen liaison functions amongst networks	1	1	2	4

As previously, stated it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the APQN activities as quality assurance initiatives do require time to come to fruition and to impact on specific outcomes in countries/territories. However, it is worth considering whether information gained at these activities has also filtered down into other organisations within countries/territories. Survey respondents indicated that of members who had been supported in the event participation, 90% considered that information had filtered down; and that there was an awareness of APQN within their country/territory (74%).

Survey respondents suggested other activities that could have been used to help build capacity, including:
- o Satellite conferences
- o Video conferencing
- o Vide taping and burning DVDs from workshops for dissemination to other members
- o Organised study tours, in-service training and consultant exchanges.

Indications from the member organisations have been positive in terms of APQN activities and meeting its core objective.

B: Initial Outcomes

The evaluation was also to focus on the extent to which the activities organised by APQN have contributed to building capacity. Capacity building relates to a range of activities by which individuals, groups and organisations improve their capacity to achieve sustainable improvement in quality assurance practices. It includes awareness, skill development, engagement and commitment to quality assurance management.

Marjorie Peace Lenn identified a range of programs that are consistent with capacity building. These included programs that support the development of national systems through the provision of experienced and well-trained personnel to carry out the sovereign accrediting functions and region-wide quality assurance forums for the discussion of common issues ranging from professional standards to regional standards for institutions of higher education[25]. Core activities of the APQN are commensurate with Marjorie Peace Lenn's identified programs and included:

- o Regional pool of external reviewers and consultants
- o Regional information clearinghouse
- o Regional staff exchanges
- o Regional liaison.

Due to its short existence it is difficult to determine the full impact of the capacity-building and knowledge-sharing APQN activities. However, as a part of the review of the APQN, members were asked to indicate the extent to which APQN activities have contributed to capacity building. Figure 3 below indicates very strong support to the notion that the APQN model has contributed to regional capacity.
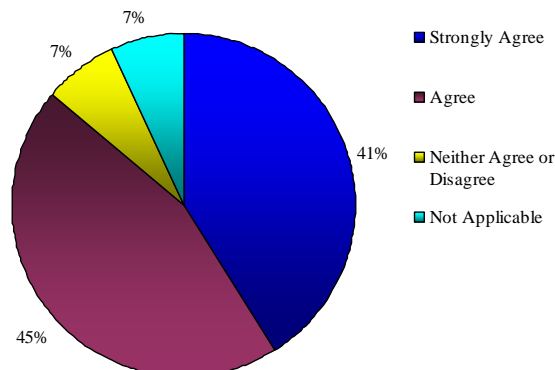
Figure 3: The capacity building activities of APQN has led to sustained Quality Assurance capacities in the region

Members were asked to consider what areas APQN activities had contributed to building capacity, either within their country or within the region. The responses indicated that the most impact has occurred in quality assurance mechanisms, in the exchange of ideas and of expertise, in enhanced institutional capabilities, and in promoting communication and cooperation between the agency and institutions. Table 3 provides a summary of member responses; these have been separated into sponsored members and non-sponsored members. Sponsored members were those members supported by APQN funding to host APQN activities or attend APQN activities (within their own country or in another country).

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[25] Marjorie Peace Lenn 2003, *Strengthening World Bank Support for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education in East Asia and the Pacific Education Sector Unit East Asia and the Pacific Region*, p. 30.

Table 3: Areas of impact

Examples	Sponsored members In what areas has APQN activities contributed to building capacity **within your country/territory**?	Non-sponsored members In what areas has APQN activities contributed to building capacity **within the Asia-Pacific region**?
Accreditation processes	9	11
Audit processes	12	7
Mutual Recognition of qualifications	8	9
Qualification frameworks	7	9
Quality assurance mechanisms	11	10
Educational reform	7	13
Establishment of an agency	7	4
International benchmarking	5	6
Research and evaluation strategies	5	6
Current issues on quality assurance	15	6
Personal and professional development	14	7
Exchange of ideas and expertise	16	15
Enhanced institutional capabilities	10	10
Promoting communication and cooperation between the agency and institutions	10	14
Cross border education	16	7

One respondent noted that:

> I think the APQN has contributed enormously in all areas mentioned, indirectly in terms of the papers and materials provided in the conference and workshop attended, which have helped inform our own work and our own policy development work for our country.

Of members who had received support for an APQN event in their country, 62% agreed or strongly agreed that concrete policy actions taken within their organisation were as a result of the workshops/seminars in their country/territory sponsored by APQN. For example:

> [the agency] has formed its internal quality assurance cell, and [the commission] is now aware of the importance of having an agency both for public and private universities for accreditation.

> To organize an international conference biannually with the objective of experience sharing and capacity building on QA has become a policy outcome for development of QA in higher education.

Seventy-eight percent of these same members agreed, or strongly agreed, that their organisation's quality assurance practices have improved as a consequence of the APQN activities, citing such examples as;

> Our policies have been enhanced since we got the APQN/UNESCO guidelines on cross border education. Implementation of our policies just started

> My organisation's QA is in higher level if compared with other countries in this region.

> We are now moving into improvements, such as institutional accreditation.

Finally, 75% or these members also believed that knowledge sharing (including research and policy analysis) of the APQN had translated into capacities. The cited examples were:

> In the workshop held in Manila in Nov 2007, for example, the knowledge and experience which the foreign participants gained is slowly trickling down to their organisations. I know that this is happening in Mongolia and Cambodia.

> [the agency] referred to APQN research and policy analysis to prepare its own quality assurance procedure.

> [the agency] has not had much to consider in terms of research and policy analysis but capacity building for those engaged in Quality Assurance processes at the university continues to progress.

Other members cited that participation in the APQN activities has led to knowledge sharing between those members with more mature external quality assurance systems and those members with less developed structures:

> Staff of the [agency] had the opportunity to share good practices and meet experts in the area of Quality

> Conferences and workshops are the places for exchanges between member agencies and help capacity building of them.

Although it is 'early days' for the APQN, perceptions of member organisations has been positive in terms of APQN activities and they have cited concrete examples where they consider these activities have impacted on capacity building within their organisation or institutions.

C: Governance and Management

This section of the evaluation focuses on the effectiveness of the organisation of the network, the role of the Board and the Secretariat in the management of APQN, and implementation of the Objectives of the DGF.

Regionalisation

Regional approach

The region covered by the APQN roughly stretches east from the Ural Mountains in western Russia to the Asia-Pacific area. Despite the obvious differences, such as languages and stages of development, in terms of quality assurance practices, there is a shared view across this region that includes a desire to build, to strengthen or to reform quality assurance practices with respect to higher education.

A region can be defined by various measures, such as by cultural and social links, political or trade arrangements or as a specific geographic area. Taking a purely geographical perspective the *Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia* defines Asia as being bound in the west in roughly a north-south direction along the eastern Ural Mountains; the Caspian, Black, Aegean, and Mediterranean seas; the Suez Canal; and the Red Sea[26]. UNESCO in their Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2007[27], define the Asia Pacific region to include sub regions:
  - o East and North-East Asia
  - o South-East Asia
  - o South and South-West Asia
  - o North and Central Asia
  - o Pacific.

In the UNESCO definition, this area of the Asia-Pacific includes the countries identified in the APQN but also includes other countries/territories such as Armenia, Turkey and Georgia.

The World Bank defines 'its world' into the following regions:
  - o Africa
  - o Latin America & Caribbean
  - o Middle East & North Africa
  - o East Asia and Pacific
  - o Europe and Central Asia
  - o South Asia.

However, the notion of a geographic region ignores the importance of cultural, educational, political and trade links to which organisations may belong. In addition, having a tight definition of a region also ignores the concept that countries on the borders or 'marches' of this vast region may concurrently look to other regions or networks to which they may have a link or connection.

The notion of 'region' as applied to the APQN should not be seen as a tight geographic area but rather a set of interconnecting initiatives, some focusing upon all member organisations, others dealing with particular national issues and initiatives that are peculiar and common to several agencies. This broad definition of the APQN region rightly focuses upon needs and outcomes and avoids the semantics that might be associated with a purely geographic notion.

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[26] Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia, http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9355941, accessed May 2008.
[27] *United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2007*, UNESCO website accessed May 2008.
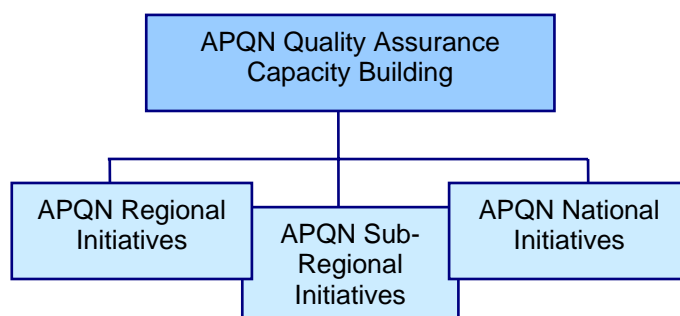
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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   APQN Quality Assurance    │
│     Capacity Building       │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│ APQN Regional│  │  APQN Sub-   │  │ APQN National│
│  Initiatives │  │  Regional    │  │  Initiatives │
│              │  │  Initiatives │  │              │
└──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
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Figure 4: Regional approach

Regionalisation is a logical path for the APQN to follow for it:
- o Recognises that differences exist but at the same time preserves regional character with the overarching objective of improving quality assurances practices across agencies
- o Recognises existing and developing connections between systems
- o Recognises that 'one size does not fit all' and that programs need to be tailored to particular needs
- o Acknowledges synergies between countries/territories enabling common programs and approaches can be used
- o Provides opportunities to deliver initiatives in the most cost effective manner
- o Provides the potential to learn through the sharing from experience
- o Provides the potential to harness the expertise of the more developed systems.

Despite the diversity there are synergies. Although the emphases may differ, countries/territories within the Asia-Pacific region share visions of economic development and instinctively know that a prerequisite to development and competition on the world stage requires:
- o A highly educated population
- o Higher education institutions planning to produce the graduates required by society
- o Efficiently run higher education and training institutions and the
- o Effective operations of these institutions[28].

These prerequisites have led to an evolving concept of quality and a realisation that quality assurance practices are an essential element of the development mix.

Regional representation

The APQN's regional notion has a strong Asia-Pacific focus; it acknowledges the common goals and interconnections between countries/territories with respect to higher education and the need for quality assurance systems. This notion also recognises that much can be achieved through cooperation and sharing.

The APQN has maintained a broad Asia-Pacific focus through an inclusive approach to quality assurance. APQN initiatives that support these ends include:
- o APQN Annual General Meeting and Conferences providing the opportunity to share experiences and discuss emerging issues
- o Staff exchange programs

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[28] Marjorie Peace Lenn 2003, *Strengthening World Bank Support for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education in East Asia and the Pacific*, p. 4.

- o Workshops that focus upon national and cross national quality assurance issues
- o Modelling best practices from countries such as Australia to develop specific solutions to quality assurance issues in developing systems
- o Capacity building activities organised by the APQN, such as conferences and seminars, project groups, consultancy visits and the creation of a regional reservoir of experts and reviewers
- o Undertake scoping studies and provide specialist workshops, e.g. Brisbane Communiqué Initiative.

An examination of the APQN programs over the short life of the Network reveals a commitment to regional capacity building and recognition of the differential needs of the member organisations. Programs have included, but were not limited to:

- o Initiatives to establish quality assurance agencies for countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Laos that that have <u>small or less mature and less developed systems</u>. In the year 2004–2005 and again in 2005–2006, efforts were initiated for these purposes with representatives from these countries invited to participate in APQN meetings and training events in an effort to assist them in establishing quality assurance agencies.
- o The training of agency staff from Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and China that have <u>emerging quality assurance systems</u>. Over the life of the APQN, the Network has helped to train the agency staff in good quality assurance practices, through training the trainers for external review, and through consultancy services.
- o Support for training workshops targeting <u>reform and renewal of quality assurance systems</u> for countries such as India, Indonesia and the Philippines to bring in change and to introduce new elements in their practices[29].

Figure 5 is indicative of member representation at APQN events and reveals a spread of representation from across APQN countries/territories.
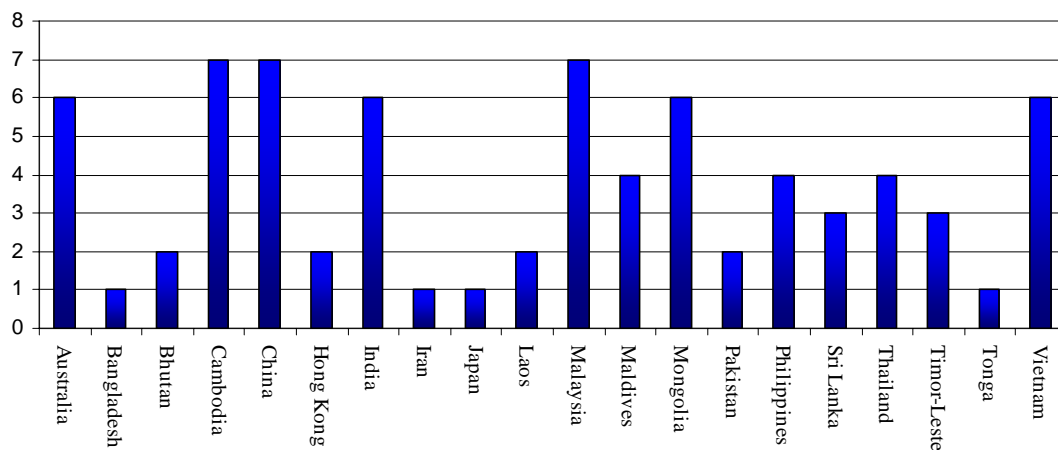

Figure 5: Country representation at APQN events
Source *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006*, p 6.

With limited funds and high needs among many of the members, the APQN has managed to gain high levels of involvement in a short period of time. This involvement has seen members with underdeveloped or emerging quality assurance systems being involved in foundation activities as well as members with highly developed systems taking an important strategic lead role and supporting quality assurance capacity building.

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[29] *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006*, p. 1.

The type of programs in which member organisations and individuals have participated can also be determined; the results of the survey indicate that conferences were the most well attended function with workshops second. The Figure 6 below includes the level of member organisation attendance at events and the level of participation of individuals who responded on behalf of their member organisation.
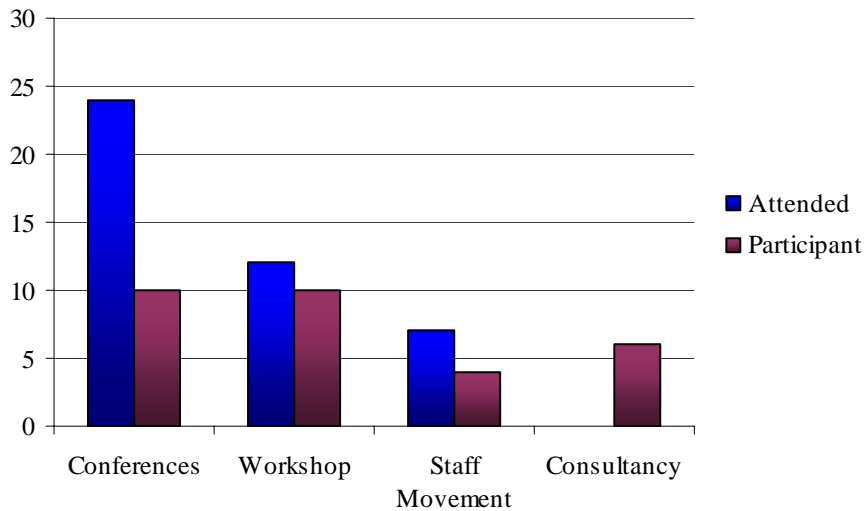

Figure 6: Type of Participation

Meeting the challenges of a regional approach

Given that there were limited funds; there is rightly a focus by the APQN on activities of greatest need and those that have the potential to generate maximum flow on effects. Areas of focus for the APQN have been assistance with membership fees and attendance at conferences and workshops, as well as consultancy support and staff exchanges.

The survey of APQN members revealed that 44% of the respondents received membership fees assistance and 41% instances of capacity building assistance. Figure 7 summarises APQN supported activities, in terms of APQN funding to attend or host activities.
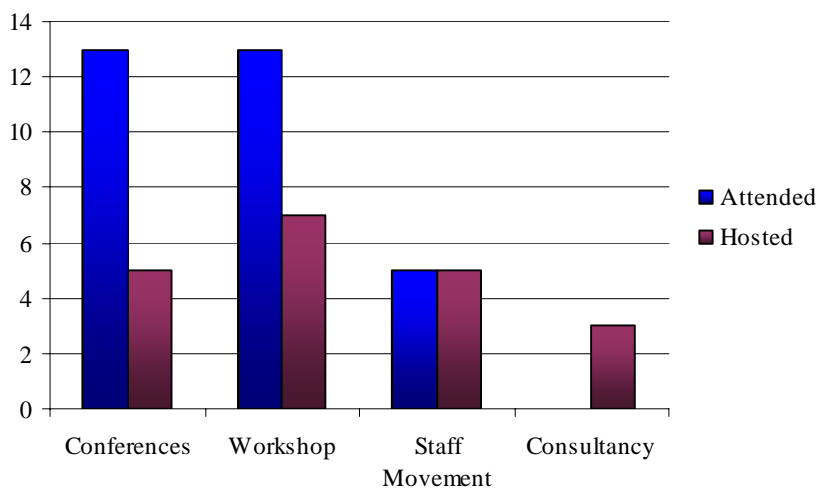

Figure 7: APQN Supported Activities

With limited resources, priorities inevitably must be set. Demands for financial assistance have often exceeded the funds available. This has created some pressure, with the APQN putting a cap on how many DGF sponsored participants are permitted at each event and the level of financial support.

In the survey, APQN members were asked whether sufficient effort had been made by APQN to bring on board more underdeveloped countries/territories as members of APQN or beneficiaries of its activities. Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 8 and indicate agreement to the proposition that the APQN has made sufficient effort to support for the underdeveloped countries or territories.
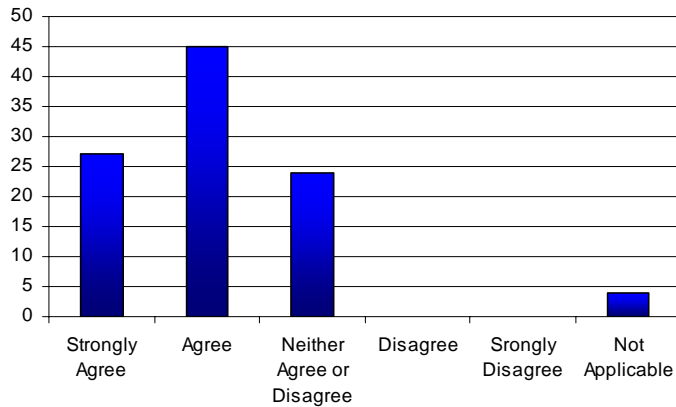

Figure 8: Members' perception of 'sufficient effort has been made by APQN to bring on board more underdeveloped countries/territories as members of APQN or beneficiaries of its activities'

Whilst APQN members supported the proposition that the Network has made sufficient effort to bring on board more underdeveloped countries/territories as members of APQN or beneficiaries of its activities, they also supported the proposition that the main expenditure of APQN from the DGF has been well spent (refer Figure 9). Only one member indicated a negative response to the question.
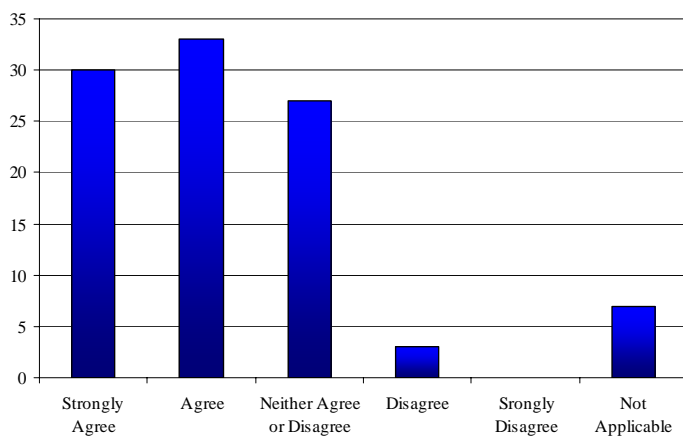
Figure 9: Members' perception of 'the main expenditure of APQN from the DGF has been well spent on enabling members to participate in conferences and workshops'

The evaluators consider that the process of responding to demand side pressures has been appropriate. Policies and procedures to manage the funding allocations have been implemented; resulting in needs based allocations and the avoidance of duplication. Processes are transparent and conducted in an equitable manner (e.g. reports from finance committees provide justification and rationale for decisions) and they have provided material assistance to many agencies throughout the Network.

Applicability of regional approach

A regional approach is an efficient and a cost effective mechanism to deliver capacity building across a wide and diverse region.

Programs with a national focus can cater for relatively large numbers of participants and can be delivered in a limited number of venues within confined time frames – factors which reduce travel, venue and presenter costs. Economies may also be reaped by identifying countries/territories with specific needs and grouping them to participate at a sub-regional capacity building level. A carefully coordinated sub-regional and national capacity building program for these can serve for a more efficient use of resources.

Despite the overarching goals and strong regional flavour underlying the APQN, differences between countries/territories require differential programs that lead to sub-regional and national approaches to quality assurance. This strategy can serve to substantially strengthen the capacity to assure quality higher education throughout the region.

The regional approach has led to greater capacity to learn and share. Participant feedback from the 2006 APQN Conference and Annual General Meeting below typifies the 'educative' benefits from a regional approach to capacity building of quality assurance systems.

> Attending the workshop has kept me updated on current trends and developments in quality assurance across the region. I am able to share with my agency the developments in QA done in other countries, and learn some best practices along the way (Concepcion Pijano, Philippines[30])

> Attending the workshop will benefit my agency; especially the information on the present QA frameworks in China and Russia was of benefit to us (Hiroshi Fukusaki, Japan)[31]

The APQN regional model has demonstrated that it has reached many countries/territories and built capacity. It has done so:

- o Through the efficient the use and the sharing of resources arising from the inherent economies of scale associated with proximity
- o By demonstrating a willingness to identify opportunities to expand the Network
- o By identifying specific needs and targeting issues peculiar to nations or institutions within the region
- o In an inclusive manner
- o By drawing on the experience of others.

The Asia-Pacific region is composed of countries/territories with differential experience and capacity in quality assurance. However, there is unanimity among the quality assurance agencies that there is interdependence, that countries/territories learn from the experiences of others and that there is a need for regional cooperation.

The overwhelming impression about APQN activities is one of cooperation and a full program designed to tackle the issue of regional capacity building in a comprehensive and systematic manner. The regionally based model adopted by the APQN serves as an example for other networks to follow. In instances where a 'regional character' can be identified, the focused attention on national and regional quality assurance, as the APQN has demonstrated, serves to develop higher education quality assurance systems more quickly and effectively.

However, what is defined as the region may be of issue. The APQN Network encompasses the vast Asia-Pacific region and as such includes within its community 51 countries. Given that the APQN

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[30] *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006*, p 13.
[31] *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006*, p 14.

Network was only established in 2003, the strength of the Network has been its stance of inclusiveness, its growth in terms of member numbers and hence the number of participating countries/territories. It may be in the future; when all potential members (and therefore all APQN recognised countries/territories) have come on board that the region, as it is currently defined, may be 'too big to manage'. It may be that a sub-regional approach may be a more efficient and cost effective option, or indeed a review of the region and the division into sub-areas, such as a South East Asia and East Asia-Pacific group and a Central Asia group. However, a purely tight geographical distribution may not necessarily be the best option in determining these regional boundaries.

Membership

The APQN, in pursuing its objective of building capacity within the region, has established a tiered membership structure to support its objective.

In its foundation year, three tiers of membership were recognised:

1. Full Members are either organisations responsible for assuring the academic quality of post-secondary institutions or education programs other than their own, or organisations responsible for assuring the quality of external quality assurance agencies, and which meet the conditions for membership as expressed in the membership criteria of APQN.

2. Intermediate Members are either organisations responsible for assuring the academic quality of post-secondary institutions or education programs other than their own, or organisations responsible for assuring the quality of external quality assurance agencies, but which do not fully meet the conditions for membership as expressed in the membership criteria of APQN.

3. Associate Members are organisations with a major interest and active involvement in evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance in higher education, but without the responsibility for assuring the quality of institutions, education programs, or external quality assurance agencies.

In April 2005, following an enquiry from the QAA[32], the Board decided to introduce procedures and criteria to introduce an observer category to the network.

4. Observers (organisations outside the Asia-Pacific region that have major interests in and strong links within the region) include external quality assurance agencies, institutions with a major interest in evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance in higher education and other regional networks.

The APQN with its objectives of promoting quality assurance best practices and building capacity within the region quite properly implemented stringent requirements with regards to membership. Table 4 outlines the requirements associated with the membership category and arguably this had an initial restrictive effect upon membership. As a result, APQN's membership has been growing slowly.

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[32] Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK.

Table 4: Eligibility criteria

	Criteria	Test
1.	Nature of the operations of the agency	The agency is responsible for reviews at institutional or programme level of postsecondary education institutions or postsecondary quality assurance agencies.
2.	Mission statement and objectives	The agency has formulated a mission statement and objectives which are consistent with the nature of the agency
3.	Agency staff, numbers, profile and roles	The profile of the staff is consistent with the Mission Statement
4.	Profile of reviewers	The profile of the reviewers is consistent with the Mission Statement
5.	Independence	The judgements and recommendations of the agency's reports cannot be changed by third parties
6.	Resources	The agency has sufficient resources to run its operations in accordance with its mission statement and objectives
7.	External quality assurance criteria and processes	The description of the processes and criteria applied should be transparent and publicly available and normally include: self evaluation, site visit, public report and follow-up measure
8.	Quality assurance	The agency has quality assurance measures in place and is subject to occasional review

Source: APQN website

APQN requirements are that:
- o Full Members must provide evidence that they fulfil the requirements for all criteria
- o Intermediate Members must provide evidence that they fulfil the requirements for Criteria 1 and 2
- o Associate and Institutional Members must provide evidence to prove that they have an active interest in Quality Assurance
- o Observers must indicate their interest in the region and state why they wish to become Observers.

The membership structure reflected a logical starting point for the APQN; however, it had the effect of excluding a small but significant number of institutions that had an active interest in APQN activities. Associate membership, for example, included some government departments and research institutes but excluded institutions with quality assurance interests. These institutions may represent the only quality assurance agency in the country and the only opportunity for that country to participate in quality assurance matters.

The inclusion of Institutional Members in the APQN Constitution in 2007 broadened the scope of the APQN to increase the membership.

5. Institutional Members are institutions of higher education in the region that are in good standing with the relevant quality assurance agency if one exists.

There are currently 57 member organisations, and Table 5 shows the represented countries/territories by membership category (and the number of organisations per country).

Table 5: Membership representation

Full	Intermediate	Associate	Institutional	Observers
Australia (3)	Australia (1)	Bangladesh (2	Hong Kong (1)	Ethiopia (1)
Cambodia (1)	Hong Kong (1)	Bhutan (1)	Macau (1)	Germany (2)
China (2)	Kazakhstan (1)	Cambodia (1)	Pakistan (7)	Turkey (1)
Hong Kong (2)	Maldives (1)	Fiji (1)		United Kingdom (2)
India (1)	Mongolia (1)	Laos (1)		
Indonesia (1)	Nepal (1)	Mongolia (1)		
Japan (3)	Samoa (1)	Timor-Leste (1)		
Malaysia (1)	Sri Lanka (1)	Vietnam (5)		
New Zealand (3)	Thailand (1)			
Philippines (2)	Vietnam (1)			
Russia (2)				
Taiwan (1)				
Thailand (1)				

Source: Summarised from the APQN Website, accessed May 2008

The APQN has managed to achieve in a short period of time a relatively wide coverage through its membership structure.

Structure rationale

The membership of the APQN as outlined above reflects the membership categories of other quality assurance networks, such as the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). APQN's membership structure; however, is not reflective of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education's (ENQA's), which is limited to full member agencies and candidate member agencies[33].

The membership structure of the APQN recognises the critical aspects of quality assurance – academic content quality, the quality of agencies, evaluation and accreditation. The breadth of the membership structure is a logical and inclusive framework that has the capacity to embrace the major players in quality assurance and help build quality assurance within the region.

The APQN rightly sought to exercise an element of 'quality control' over membership inclusion through the development of policy and the implementation of rigorous criteria. These policies and procedures have clarified the inclusion criteria particularly in the areas of Associate and Institutional membership.

Associate Members, are those with a major interest and 'active involvement' in quality assurance, which the APQN has defined as being involved in policy-making, research, analysis or demonstrable well-developed expertise in matters relating to higher education quality assurance. Individual universities or other higher education institutions, or units within these institutions, will only be approved for Associate Membership if they are able to demonstrate they have such an involvement[34].

Institutional members are a particular type of Associate Member, with a caveat of 'good standing' as with the widening of the definition of Associate Member to include all institutions could include many other institutions where the link with quality assurance is too distant[35].

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[33] Before becoming a full member of ENQA the applicant agency may be given a candidate status for a maximum of two years.
[34] *APQN Procedures Manual*, v2, 27 March 2007, p. 2.
[35] ibid

Respondents to the survey indicated that in general they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' (69%) with the membership structure and commented that; it 'gives flexibility' and that it allows 'new quality assurance bodies to mature'. Of those that disagreed (8%), comments included that the 'difference among the membership is partly vague' and that there was 'lack of equal opportunity for participation in the network'.

Benefits of membership structure

The membership structure has been an evolutionary process reflecting the nature of quality assurance capacity building within the Asia-Pacific context. The APQN has a well-defined membership structure that reflects the goals of the APQN and seeks to be inclusive.

Figure 10 shows the growth in membership over the period September 2005 to September 2007 and reflects the evolutionary nature of the APQN. From a modest beginning membership has grown and is currently expanding at approximately two new members per month. The inclusion of Institutional Members in 2007 provided the opportunity to significantly increase their base membership.
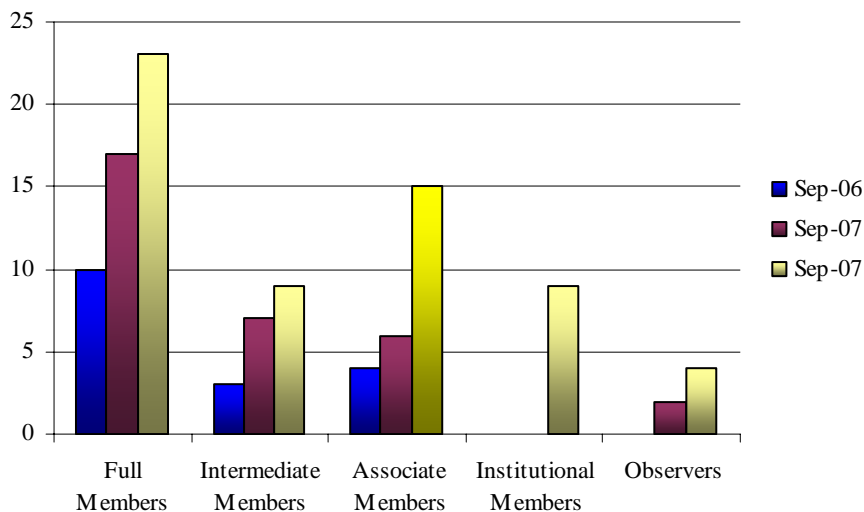

Figure 10: Membership growth
Source Annual Reports and Interim Reports to World Bank

As with any organisation, different categories of membership confer different entitlements and obligations. Table 6 below summarises entitlements and obligations of members.

Table 6: Membership entitlements

	Voting rights	APQN Financial Support	Other membership rights	Fees ($US)	
				Joining	**Annual Fee**
Full Members (23)	Yes	Yes (subject to World Bank criteria)	Benefit from APQN activities and collaborate in the attainment of APQN's purposes	$500	INQAAHE members $200 Non INQAAHE members $300
Intermediate Members (9)	Yes	Yes (subject to World Bank criteria)	Benefit from APQN activities and collaborate in attainment of APQN's purposes	$500	INQAAHE members $200 Non INQAAHE members $300
Associate Members (15)	No	No	Benefit from APQN activities and collaborate in attainment of APQN's purposes	$500	$200
Institutional Members (9)	No	No	Benefit from APQN activities and collaborate in attainment of APQN's purposes	$500	$200
Observers (5)	No	No			$150

In addition:
- o APQN has a policy of only financially supporting Full and Intermediate Members from eligible countries, except in exceptional circumstances.
- o Only Full and Intermediate Members are eligible to participate in the governance and administration of APQN.
- o Associate and Institutional Members may participate in the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and other meetings of the General Council, but without the right to vote.
- o All members may benefit from APQN activities such as workshops, projects, the dissemination of information and knowledge sharing between members.
- o All members may collaborate in the attainment of APQN's purposes.
- o All Members have access to APQN activities and input.

The membership structure is not, however, a limiting factor per se to APQN activities in that it does not appear to limit the benefits that might flow to different categories of membership. However, it does restrict the ability of some members to directly influence areas such as governance and administration through voting rights. The membership structure seeks to be inclusive of reputable institutions and agencies that have a stake in quality assurance within the Asia-Pacific region. To these ends the APQN has also demonstrated a degree of flexibility and this has the capacity to assist quality assurance building across the region. But despite all of this there are gaps in membership, as the Network to this point in time has not expanded the membership to all countries/territories in the Asia Pacific region.

Future directions for membership

In a bid to expand the membership base the APQN has identified those countries, and institutions within those countries, to target as prospective members. Table 7 shows the countries (and the number of identified potential members).

Table 7: Potential members

Potential APQN Members		
Afghanistan (2)	Nepal	Papua New Guinea
Brunei Darussalam	New Caledonia	Singapore (2)
China (4)	Macau	Solomon Islands
Cook Islands	Maldives	Taiwan (2)
Fiji	Marshall Islands	Thailand
India (3)	Micronesia	Tonga
Iran (2)	Myanmar	Tuvalu
Kiribati	Nauru	Vanuatu
Korea, South	Niue	

Source: APQN website, accessed May 2008

There appears to be limited membership, or areas of under representation within the APQN region, for example, China and India. Many of the organisations identified as potential members must firstly be convinced that they will benefit from membership of the APQN. 'On-boarding' of these countries would see the vast majority of eligible Asia-Pacific countries/territories as members of the Asia-Pacific Quality Network.

For many organisations or agencies membership fees – in particular the joining fee – may represent a hurdle. The recent inclusion of the category of Institutional Member in the APQN Constitution has broadened the scope of APQN to increase membership; however, the Secretariat has noticed that a lack of funds of applicants to finalise the application process still exists[36].

Membership fees of the APQN are reasonably comparable to that charged by INQAAHE, though a little less. The full membership fee for ENQA is significantly higher and also includes a non-refundable membership application fee – which is similar to the APQN joining fee. Given these figures, the APQN could consider an increase in membership fees, but it needs to balance the possible increase with the underlying principle of inclusiveness and 'value for money'.

INQAAHE includes Affiliate Membership for 'persons with a major interest in evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance in higher education[37]'. They do not have voting rights. If there is one 'untapped source' for APQN, it is individual membership. Within many of the Asia-Pacific Network nations individuals and small consulting enterprises have an active and important role to play in quality assurance and evaluation of educational programs. The inclusion of individuals, subject to appropriate safeguards through the development of rigorous entry criteria, could see a significant expansion of the membership base, provide additional input to APQN program, and bring a strengthened financial viability of the APQN.

Individual members may bring increased membership and cash flow but they could also bring a different perspective and varying needs to the Network, to which the Network may not be able to address or meet. At this stage, with the membership limited to five levels, the Network can clearly define their membership and are able to readily identify the membership needs. Increasing the scope of the membership to individuals for purely commercial reasons could conflict with the APQN's mission; the Network could lose clarity of their membership base and needs. For these reasons, the evaluators note that caution is advised.

Another possible position that the APQN could consider would be the avenue for individual subscription to the APQN. A subscription fee for interested individuals could provide limited access

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[36] *APQN Semi Annual Report*, First Quarter 2007, p. 17
[37] INQAAHE website, accessed 14 April 2008, http://www.inqaahe.org/

to the mailing list, publications for purchase and access to the Virtual Library and links page; but there would be no voting rights and no rights as per the membership categories or access to services i.e. training workshops. Providing a subscription could increase income and not impinge on the profile of the membership.

Effect of membership in capacity building

Each country/territory has a unique context for quality assurance. This uniqueness may be:
o   Demographic or geographic,
o   The economic capacity to devote sufficient resources to quality assurance
o   Variations in education systems and infrastructure
o   Stages of development leading to differences in quality assurance needs.

The difference may on the one hand create challenges to build capacity; however, the very nature of diversity in a regional context can provide the opportunity to build capacity which can move a country's quality assurance system toward being completely functional and effective.

Capacity building within a regional context is dependent upon:
o   Sharing resources and providing access for the different agencies and institutions to resources
o   Sharing knowledge between these institutions and agencies
o   Members that share needs and experiences (synergies)
o   Members capable of sharing knowledge and experiences relating to quality assurance
o   A coordination mechanism that is capable of identifying needs and exercises a degree of control over the sharing of knowledge.

The APQN now has a critical mass of members that share common concerns and experiences in the area of quality assurance. These include countries/territories:
o   Needing to establish quality assurance agencies
o   Needing to consolidate their emerging quality assurance systems
o   Needing to reform or renew their quality assurance systems
o   With specific needs
o   With well-developed quality assurance agencies capable of demonstrating and supporting best practice.

The World Bank has directly supported the establishment of the APQN to act as an agent to build regional quality assurance capacity.

The APQN membership structure supports the capacity building of quality assurance systems. The APQN has demonstrated a capacity to identify needs, mobilise resources that generate benefits across a range of quality assurance elements and has as a focus on the building of regional partnerships and leverage knowledge-sharing to the benefit of developing countries.

All quality assurance systems can learn from one another by sharing knowledge and resources. The APQN membership structure with member countries/territories experienced in and possessing well developed quality assurance systems provides a strong base for this to occur. The synergies provided create a capacity to group countries/territories thereby leading to a more efficient delivery of quality assurance programs. There is a strong case to be made that less mature quality assurance systems can learn from more mature ones justifying different well defined membership categories. From an equity perspective intermediate and associate members also allow better representation of less developed countries in terms of quality assurance systems.

However, there are members from the more advanced quality assurance systems that do bear the burden of being a non-sponsored member, as well as providing expertise to other members requiring assistance. Even so, the spirit of the Network is that organisations with the more advanced or

established quality assurance systems provide in-kind contributions to support the capacity building activities within the region. The approach of the Network has been succinctly described by the previous President as:

> One noteworthy feature of APQN is that much of its work is done on a pro bono basis. Agencies responsible for organising events normally do not charge for the input…Individual experts get an honorarium for their direct involvement, but there has neve been any case of the organisation to which these experts belong asking for the full cost of their release[38].

> Within the brotherhood, we should heighten our spirit of mutual support and do as much as possible on a pro bono basis. Those who are capable should contribute more[39].

Governance

Board

The APQN Constitution states that the Board of APQN will consist of the President, Vice-President and Secretary/Treasurer, four other elected members, and other members the Board may decide to co-opt, to a maximum of four co-opted members. Each elected Board member can be drawn from APQN's Full and Intermediate Member organisations; and no two individuals of the elected Board members can be from the same member organisation.

Table 8 shows the countries represented on the APQN Board over the period 2004 to 2007 inclusive.

Table 8: Board membership from 2004–2007

	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
President	Peter PT Cheung HONG KONG	Peter PT Cheung HONG KONG	Concepcion Pijano PHILIPPINES
Vice president	VS Prasad, INDIA	VS Prasad, INDIA	Akihiko Kawaguchi JAPAN
Secretary	David Woodhouse AUSTRALIA	David Woodhouse AUSTRALIA	Dorte Kristoffersen AUSTRALIA/HONG KONG
Treasurer	David Woodhouse AUSTRALIA	David Woodhouse AUSTRALIA	Dorte Kristoffersen AUSTRALIA/HONG KONG
	Manuel Corpus PHILIPPINES	Dorte Kristoffersen AUSTRALIA	Zita Mohd Fahmi MALAYSIA
	MK Tadjudin INDONESIA	Concepcion Pijano PHILIPPINES	Jiang Yanqiao CHINA
	Varaporn Seehanath THAILAND	Varaporn Seehanath THAILAND	Nuanthip Kamolvarin THAILAND
	Takahiro Saito JAPAN	Manuel Corpus PHILIPPINES	Colin N Peiris SRI LANKA
	Antony Stella AUSTRALIA	Antony Stella AUSTRALIA	Antony Stella AUSTRALIA
	Dorte Kristoffersen AUSTRALIA	Jagannath Patil INDIA	Jagannath Patil INDIA
		Takahiro Saito JAPAN	Sohail Naqvi PAKISTAN
			Mike Willing NEW ZEALAND

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[38] Mr Peter Cheung, President, *APQN, Annual Report 2004-2005*, p. 3.
[39] Mr Peter Cheung, President, *APQN, Annual Report 2005-2006*, p. 30.

Over the life of the APQN there has been a change to personnel and countries/territories represented on the Board; however, by and large it is composed of representatives from member organisations that have well established quality assurance arrangements. The less developed nations in terms of quality assurance are not equally represented on the Board. This is not a surprising outcome as the APQN Board provides leadership in quality assurance capacity building and is reflective of existing expertise and/or a lack of resources from the less developed member organisations.

It should be noted that the APQN has the capacity to address this balance should it decide to do so. The Constitution (s36) provides the opportunity to co-opt members. Co-opted members do not have voting rights; however, they do have input into APQN Board deliberations. Presumably the 'imbalance' has not been seen as an issue and there appears no apparent push to do so.

In the survey, members were queried whether they considered the composition of the Board was representative of the nations within the region. Of the respondents, 63% agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Board was representative, with 14% strongly disagreeing, or disagreeing. Comments from respondents included:

> The board members are elected by the vote, so it is rather difficult to compose in proper ratio.

> The Board represents the different types of member agencies e.g. large and small agencies, mature and less mature agencies.

> There should be representation from the Pacific.

The General Council has ultimate responsibility 'to make decisions necessary for the satisfactory operation of the APQN' (s32.5); however, effective strategic responsibility lies with the Board. Section 40 of the Constitution outlines the role of the Board, which is to:
- o Actively promote the functions provided for in this Constitution
- o Implement the decisions of the General Council.

Section 41 of the Constitution expands on the powers of the Board stating:

> In furtherance of this objective the Board may establish committees and the Board will appoint Project Group Leaders who, if not already members of the Board, may be co-opted as members of the Board to a maximum of two co-opted Project Group Leaders.

In addition to the Constitution specifying the respective responsibilities of the President and Vice President, Section 46 of the Constitution states that the responsibilities of the Secretary/Treasurer are to:
- o Arrange for APQN's publications and website
- o Prepare the Annual Reports
- o Keep and maintain APQN's records (including the register of members)
- o Arrange and record General Council and Board meetings
- o Collect fees and subscriptions
- o Maintain any necessary bank accounts and make payments as required
- o Prepare APQN's financial statements for presentation at the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- o Carry out decisions of the Board and General Council[40].

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[40] APQN constitution, http://www.apqn.org/virtual_library/?section=board&referrer=home accessed 11 April 2008.

Board's relationship with others

The APQN Constitution (s36) specifies the composition of the APQN Board. This composition is represented by Figure 11 and illustrates the relationship between the Board, Secretariat, Committees and Project Groups.
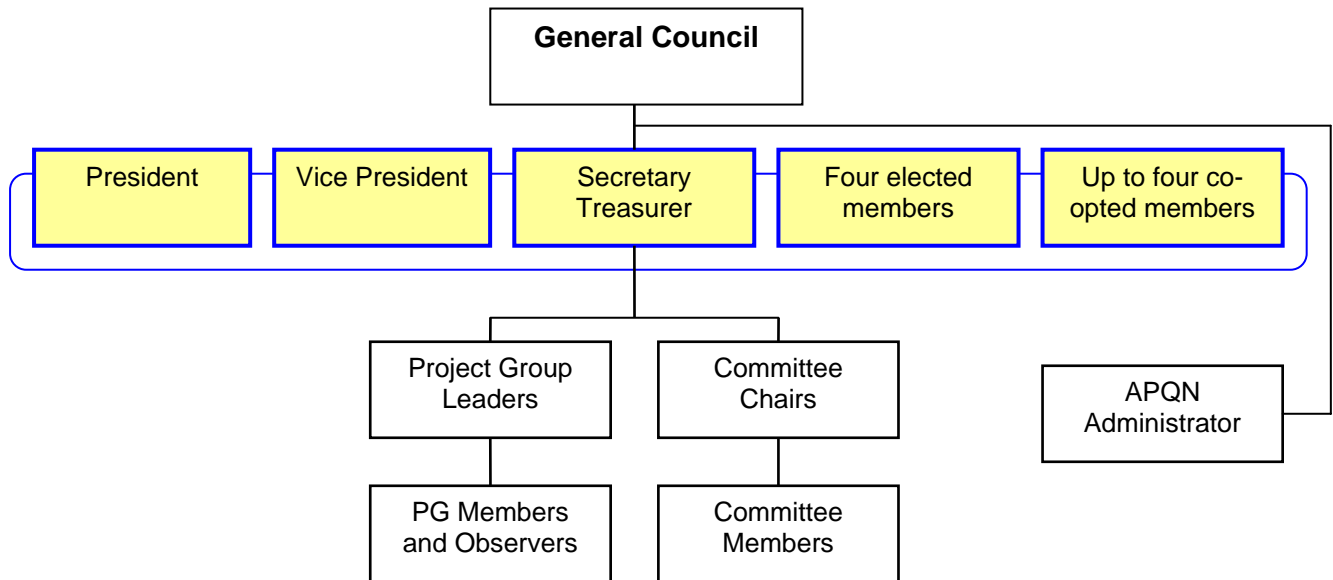
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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │   General Council    │
                        └─────────────────────┘
                                  │
  ┌──────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┐
  │President │Vice President│  Secretary   │ Four elected │Up to four co-│
  │          │              │  Treasurer   │   members    │opted members │
  └──────────┴──────────────┴──────────────┴──────────────┴──────────────┘
                                  │
                    ┌─────────────┴───────────┐            ┌──────────────┐
              ┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐     │     APQN     │
              │Project Group │        │  Committee   │     │Administrator │
              │   Leaders    │        │   Chairs     │     └──────────────┘
              └──────────────┘        └──────────────┘
              ┌──────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
              │  PG Members  │        │  Committee   │
              │and Observers │        │   Members    │
              └──────────────┘        └──────────────┘
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Figure 11: Network Structure

Roles and responsibilities within the APQN Board and its Committees are well defined through Constitutional and Procedural arrangements and coupled with the comprehensive reporting of activities; these represent well defined accountability lines within the network.

The Vice-President has coordinating responsibility for project groups and this provides an accountability framework and oversight across these diverse groups. Project Groups are created by the Board as a mechanism through which matters of common interest to APQN members are addressed. Well defined procedures relating to these groups help ensure that common areas of interest are identified among APQN members and facilitate work on these areas with shared responsibilities from various agencies across the region.

Board management

The Board is responsible for the management of the Network. The respondents of the survey were asked to consider the management of the Board in terms of organising functions and disseminating information. Members responded positively, with 89% noting that over the last 3 years the conferences, workshops and projects were well managed. Comments included:

> All AGMs and annual conferences were well managed and coordinated with greater efforts of local hosts and APQN guidance.

> Hosting has been of very high standard; program varied and presentations well reflected the diversity of stakeholders.

Although no respondents disagreed with the assertion, a number provided comments pertaining to the management of project groups, which reflected the volunteer nature of the Network:

> Conference and workshops are however better managed than projects.

Some projects struggled and project group members had difficulties in finding time for the projects.

Respondents were also positive (83%) in terms of the dissemination of information that has been timely and easily accessible, such as project group findings, publications and workshop/conference outcomes.

Strategic planning

Strategic planning can be defined as an organisation's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. Normally this would be consolidated into a single document and would be internally focused.

An examination of APQN activities and governance procedures reveal logical, comprehensive and well developed processes to building capacity in the Asia-Pacific region; however, these processes have not been consolidated into one single document. The range of APQN documents include:

- o The Vision, Our Mission, Our Objectives, Our Values and Our Methods statements most noticeably in the annual reports (refer to *APQN Annual Report 2006-2007*, p. 7)
- o The Constitution (refer to http://www.apqn.org/virtual_library/?referrer=home)
- o The *APQN Procedures Manual* (version 2, 27 March 2007)
- o Annual reports.

Early APQN documents (provided by the Secretariat to the evaluators) indicate that an externally focused Business Plan was initiated and later developed into a Proposal for Funding. The Proposal, although useful, lacked the defining characteristics of a strategic plan.

The evaluators consider that a strategic plan would articulate the approach APQN has to its future and such issues as capacity building and sustainability. It would provide the membership with a clear articulation of APQN's direction beyond World Bank funding.

Secretariat

The Secretariat is in many respects the 'glue' and has a pivotal role in the operations of the APQN, performing a coordinating and liaison role between the Board, committees and Project Groups. The APQN Administrator is the pivotal person within the Secretariat.

The majority of members acknowledge the hard work and important role of the Secretariat, with 95% indicating that the Secretariat was efficient and highly professional – 'secretarial support is really impressive leaving no matches in terms of efficiency'. However, the respondents also recognise that the Administrator is on a 0.8 time fraction and 'coordinating a large number of activities across forty countries'. Although there were no negative responses in relation to the Secretariat, one respondent noted that the 'current secretariat personally makes a good effort, but the system of the Secretariat of APQN does not seem to be going well'.

The DGF has been instrumental in funding the Administrator and with the conclusion of this funding the APQN may have to consider lessening the time fraction of the Administrator. The evaluators, on the other hand, consider that APQN could strengthen the Secretariat model by considering a full-time administrator and one full-time quality assurance consultant who is recognised as an expert within the Network. By strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat, the quality assurance consultant could focus on bringing on board more members, facilitate fundraising actions, assist with the workload of the volunteer Board members, manage the project groups, as well as undertake liaison activities with other agencies and bodies. It would be critical to this role that this person is recognised within the APQN as being able to take a leadership in quality assurance.

Representation of Board and Council

Structural arrangements are in place to provide representation and input into APQN activities; however, practical issues such as expertise and or funding constraints have resulted in the APQN

executive being essentially drawn from the more advanced quality assurance agencies and systems within the region.

Nevertheless the General Council is attracting more members (and with the changes in the Constitution, especially Institutional Members) and these represent a broader cross section of countries/territories, agencies and levels of development. Only Full and Intermediate Members are eligible to participate in the governance and administration of APQN. Associate and Institutional Members may participate in the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and other meetings of the General Council, but without the right to vote.

All members may benefit from APQN activities such as workshops, projects, the dissemination of information and knowledge sharing between members, and all members may collaborate in the attainment of APQN's purposes. Finally, all members have access to APQN activities and input. With the well defined roles, procedures and reporting standards, this represents a model that supports representation, input, plus transparency and accountability of processes.

Annual General Meetings

The AGM and the Annual Conference is the largest single event on the APQN calendar. Attendance has grown steadily over the life of the APQN and in 2008 some 91 persons[41] attended the conference in Japan.

To facilitate the organisation of the AGM, the AGM Organising Committee, in consultation with the Board, takes overall responsibility for the program theme and sub themes, inviting submissions, keynote speakers, scheduling and drafting the program. While the Program Committee acts as an advisory committee on broad issues related to the conference, the Local Organising Committee shoulders the responsibilities related to logistics and operational details of the conference arrangements.

AGM and Conference arrangements are advertised well in advance and are supported by the APQN Administrator and a comprehensive website that provides information and assistance on all matters relating to the activity as well as logistical support links for delegates, for example, accommodation.

APQN processes

For the management of its processes, the APQN has in place a:
- o   Constitution
- o   Well documented procedures manual.

The Constitution describes the governance arrangements and the procedures manual outlines the key processes for the administration and management of the Network.

The *APQN Procedures Manual* (2007) outlines:
- o   Project Group Guidelines which includes:
    - -   Purpose
    - -   Criteria for identification
    - -   Project group composition
    - -   Making a proposal
    - -   Format for presentation of proposals
    - -   Time schedule
    - -   Support.
- o   AGM and election procedures
- o   APQN Committees including the Finance Committee

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[41] Number excludes members from the conference organisers (NIAD-UE and APQN) and the sponsored organisations (MEXT, JUAA and JABEE).

o Workshop funding processes.

Finance Committee
APQN has constituted a Finance Committee with a representation of: Vice-President (Chair), President, Secretary/Treasurer, one member of APQN on the Board, and one member of APQN not on the Board but appointed by the Board.

The terms of reference are to:
- o Advise the Board on financial and risk-related matters
- o Review the end-of-year accounts
- o Recommend a budget for the subsequent year to the Board for approval
- o Propose to the Board of APQN criteria for provision of grants and other financial support
- o Develop a Finance Manual which includes all matters relating to the DGF and its relationship to APQN
- o Set out APQN policies and priorities for funding
- o Consider applications from members for grants and other financial support in the light of the criteria established by the Board.

The *APQN Procedures Manual* (2007) states that the Finance Committee was established to manage the distribution of the DGF evenly and fairly across the region[42]. This section in the manual outlines:
- o That eligible countries as defined by the World Bank[43]
- o The processes for application
- o The travel policy
- o The 80/20 rule
- o Activities that can be supported
- o Draft parameters for APQN funding decisions.

The APQN has established well defined procedures to manage the allocation of resources. Exercising an overall framework of fiscal accountability, the Finance Committee has established clear responsibilities for the allocation of funding.

Project Groups
The monitoring of the Project Groups is the role of the Vice President. Procedures in relation to Project Groups illustrate the processes that the APQN have put in place and communicated to members and other interested persons. Key features of the operational procedures include:
- o Well defined structures with clear responsibilities
- o Budget limits
- o Defined information required in submissions including:
  1. Objectives/purpose
  2. Relevance to APQN Objectives/activities
  3. Methodology/Process
  4. Expected Outcome
  5. Budget
  6. Time Schedule
  7. Project Team
- o Priority funding areas aligned to World Bank objectives
- o Templates for submissions and Reporting requirements[44].

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[42] *APQN Procedures Manual,* v2, March 2007, p. 9.
[43] Eligible countries are listed on the APQN website, http://www.apqn.org/about/development_gf/eligibility/, accessed May 2008; and also listed in Appendix 2.
[44] Additional advice regarding Project Groups is available on the AQPN website, http://www.apqn.org/project_groups/, accessed May 2008.

The *APQN Procedures Manual* outlines the Project Group Guidelines, which are:

1. Purpose of APQN Project Groups
   The purpose of APQN projects is to identify common areas of interest that need close attention and to facilitate work on those areas with shared responsibilities. The work of a project group should result in a report that will be made available on the APQN website.

2. Criteria for identification of the projects
   The projects are expected to serve common purposes of APQN, and projects that address the needs of only one or two members only have a low priority. Proposals involving multiple member agencies are given priority. Proposals should be directly relevant to quality assurance related issues.

3. Project group composition
   Each project is steered by a project leader, and would have no more than five members, drawing members from at least three different agencies within the region, with not more than two from any one agency. The project group members might be identified by the project group leader, or based on expressions of interest or by specific invitation to potential contributors to the project. The diversity of the APQN members should be taken into account while constituting the project groups.

4. Making a proposal
   Project proposals are made through email to the Secretariat using a set format. Proposals must have the formal approval and support of the Head of an APQN member agency. The APQN Board consider the suggestions and applications and identify priority projects. The Board will invite the project leader to lead the group.

5. Time schedule:
   Project groups are expected to provide an interim report after six months, and complete their work with a final report after one year. Extensions may be granted by the Board for a maximum of one further year if progress has been made and further progress is likely.

6. Support for the project:
   APQN may provide seed money for a project, not exceeding US$2,500 per project. Valid reasons for seed money include convening meetings and discussions of the project area and travel within the region for completion of the project. It cannot be spent on consultancy charges. A detailed budget is to be submitted and the spending of the project funding should adhere to those estimates. The APQN Board/Finance Committee may advise the project group leader on these estimates. Once the project group is approved by the Board, the Secretariat will release the money for sanctioned purposes in response to requests by the project group leader.

Sponsorship

Similarly, sponsorship to conferences and other APQN activities is subject to well established procedures which reflect the equity objective of the Wold Bank. Eligibility for support is contingent upon:

- o Membership from eligible countries (as defined by the World Bank)
- o Defined application processes
- o Budgeting and funding limits
- o Spending with preferred suppliers (travel)
- o Time limits
- o Reporting requirements.

The APQN procedures serve as a model for other networks to manage the allocation of limited funds and to establish an accountability framework.

World Bank funding requirements stipulate that funding assistance is only available to members from specified countries. Typically these countries are less developed and or have poorly developed quality assurance systems in higher education. Comprehensive procedures are freely available to members or interested parties upon request or can be accessed via the web site. Procedures include the 80/20 rule where once a workshop has been approved for funding through the Finance Committee, 80% of the approved funding can be issued to the host agency. The remaining 20% will be issued only upon presentation of receipts and final accounting summaries.

The APQN has disseminated the outcomes of activities and has provided members and other interested parties with adequate opportunities to participate in these activities. The APQN has taken a proactive role in relation to accountability, by including comprehensive information in the annual reports under the banners of:
o Management and Administration
o Reports on Activities
o Reports on Finance and Sustainability.

With respect to activities, all annual reports cover events, such as conferences, and workshops, staff movement, consultancy external, projects, project groups and planned future events. In general, annual reports are comprehensive and include participant feedback, status reports and outcomes.

APQN annual reports reveal detailed expenditures incurred. The alignment of expenditure to the DGF notional allocations are noted in Figure 16 in the Finance section.

D: Efficient Financing

Section D focuses on the review of the financing and administrative structure of APQN, trying to derive lessons for the financing and administrative models of other regional networks and determine whether APQN has an effective financing and administrative model.

Income overview

The APQN's sources of finances are:

- o World Bank Grant
- o Membership dues and joining fees
- o Fundraising activities.

Figure 12 shows the contribution of each income component from January 2007 to March 2008.
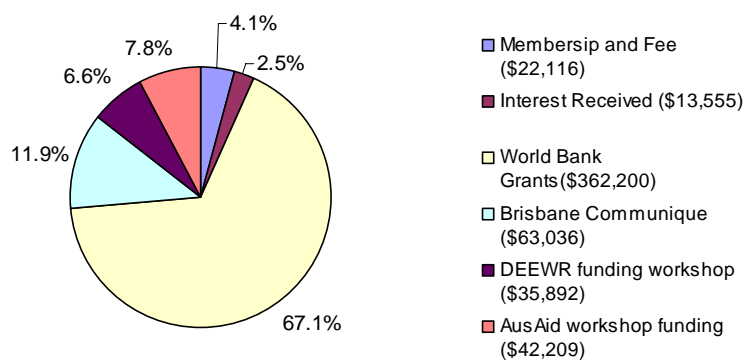
Figure 12: Contribution of each income component for January 2007–March 2008 in US$

Over the life of the APQN there have been different standards of reporting for financial operations. Prior to 2007 different sources of income (other than the World Bank Grant) were not reported and it is therefore not possible to provide comparative data. In 2007 changes in the administration of the APQN finances resulted in financial statements that provided more revealing information.

In 2007 interest received represented 3% of total income. The figure reflects:
- o A return on surplus funds from the previous year
- o Investments arising from the timing of income compared with expenditure commitments of these funds.

The Brisbane Communiqué project represents the only source of fundraising and contributed 10% of total funds, whilst membership fees account for US$21,166 or 4.1% of the APQN's revenue sources.

Figure 12 illustrates the APQN remains heavily reliant upon the World Bank Grant to finance its activities.

Membership fees

There has been a steady rise in memberships and fees (refer to Figure 10), especially since the introduction of Institutional membership and this represents not only an absolute increase in income but also represents a greater proportion of income coming from membership source.

In 2007 membership fees and subscriptions represented 5% of the APQN income flow and are a modest component of APQN's income source. Nevertheless, the growth in membership has provided the APQN with a greater capacity to deliver programs in accordance with their charter.

In-kind contributions

Accounting conventions dictate that in-kind contributions are not reported in financial statements, but nevertheless these contributions represent a significant resource for the APQN.

Survey responses identified in-kind contributions include but are not limited to:
- o Agency sponsored exchanges and secondments
- o Sponsorship and hosting of APQN conferences and workshops
- o Infrastructure/Premises (gratis or less than market rates)
- o Events organisation
- o Publications
- o Personal expenses incurred in conducting APQN business but not reimbursed
- o Members' time – Executive support, Committee membership, Project leadership and membership.

Of the 34 survey responses, 23 respondents (67%) indicated that they or the organisation they represent have provided in-kind contributions. Over a 3-year period the per annum estimate ranged between 20 hours to 813 hours for individuals (average 208 hours per individual) and a total 5,898 hours for organisations' in-kind contributions (20–4100 hrs with an average of 173 hours per organisation).

It is difficult to estimate the value of the in-kind contributions and some assumptions need to be made to value these contributions. Based on individuals' responses (which totalled 4,378 hours per annum) and assuming the member organisation responses are representative of all APQN member organisations (an average of 412 hours per organisation in-kind contribution per annum), an assumed hourly rate of $US62.50 per hour (i.e. US$500 per day) the reported value of in-kind contributions from the Network would be US$889,937 per annum.

Caution should be exercised when considering these figures. The figure:
- o Only examined in-kind time contributions
- o Valuation methods (i.e. US$500 per day) may be below commercial rates for the highly credentialed personnel involved
- o Is a conservative valuation of individual in-kind contributions as the calculation is based on actual reported with no estimate made for those who did not respond to the survey
- o Assumes agency responses are representative of other APQN member organisations.

Mobilisation of in-kind or cash contributions

From the annual reports it is obvious that the APQN was well aware of the expectation that, over its life, the Network needed to explore fundraising and in-kind contributions, not only to provide a better service to its members (and thereby raising capacity across the region), but also to establish a sustainable base to continue with its activities once Word Bank funding ceases in March 2008.

The APQN has been active in their efforts to mobilise cash and in-kind contributions external to the Network. The methods employed have ranged from ad hoc approaches to structured responses to the issue of funding and have included:

1. From the outset APQN Board members set about identifying possible sources of funding. Relying on known potential funding sources, individual networks and personal contacts, members initiated personal approaches to a variety of organisations.
2. Over time the identification of funding opportunities and in-kind contributions was approached in a more systematic manner. For example, the draft APQN Business Plan was developed into a funding proposal that was presented to the US Foundation.

3. In 2006 and again in 2007 the APQN engaged a consultant to identify opportunities and develop funding proposals in the region and in Europe. The costs associated with fundraising activities were US$10,363 (2006) and US$6,675 (2007).

Table 9 outlines funding approaches undertaken by the APQN and illustrates a proactive response to the issue of fundraising and a clear desire to pursue sustainability through this avenue.

Table 9: Funding approaches

2006–2007	2005–2006	2004–2005
ASEAN Universities Network	Not reported	UNESCO
Asia-Pacific Recognition Network		Japan International Cooperation Agency
Association of Southeast Asian Institute of Higher Learning		Japan Bank for International Cooperation
Brisbane Communiqué		South Eat Asian Minsters of Education Organisation
The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs		Asia Development Bank
European Commission		European Commission
SEAMEO		Danish International Development Agency
University of Alicante		UNESCO Paris (global)
US Foundations		UNESCO Bangkok (regional)
		UNESCO country staff (national)

For the APQN to be a self sustainable network funding, other than that from recurrent grants, must be sourced. Over the life APQN's success in mobilising direct funding has been modest however over the last reporting period additional funds have been generated. In the period January 2007 to March 2008, fundraising accounted for 26.3% of APQN revenue (see Figure 12). For the APQN to be a network that provides a range of programs for its members, the generation of additional funds must be sustained.

It is interesting to note that the difficulties associated with mobilising external funds and the provision of in-kind contribution is acknowledged within the APQN. In the *APQN Annual Report 2005–2006*, the APQN President stated:

> Fundraising, however (is) uphill and unfamiliar to most of us, has to be pursued with vigour. But that should not be the only way. Within the brotherhood, we should heighten our spirit of mutual support and do as much as possible on a pro bono basis. Those who are capable should contribute more[45].

Mobilising direct funding has not been an easy task for the APQN, and members readily acknowledge that they lack expertise. However some positive signs and outcomes should be noted. Approaches to agencies and foundations have raised the possibility of future income flows, especially in the areas of specific project work and projects that are closely related to donor ambit or particular geographical coverage. Recent project work has included the Brisbane Communiqués Initiative. APQN fundraising activities, as they 'pounded the pavements' have certainly raised the Network's profile and this provides a basis for further exploration of funding sources.

The APQN has been more successful in mobilising in-kind resources. In-kind contributions have essentially being mobilised via the goodwill of members and individuals within member organisations. Essentially mobilisation has not been proactive but relied upon the initiative and hard work of individuals and member organisations. In-kind contributions provide significant cost savings for the APQN and have contributed to the development and delivery of APQN's activities.

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[45] Mr Peter Cheung, President, *APQN, Annual Report 2005-2006*, p. 30.

One noteworthy feature of the APQN is the level of contributions that are pro bono. In-kind contributions include agencies that are responsible for the organisation of events but do not normally charge for their input. Secretariat and Treasury functions are similarly provided without charge and, although experts receive an honorarium for their direct involvement, this is far less than the full cost of their services.

The APQN expended US$10,362 and US$13,178 in 2006 and 2007 (Jan 2007 to March 2008) to identify and raise alternative or additional funding sources. Over the same period of time, cash contributions generated from the Brisbane Communiqué project represented US$63,036. Additional funds totalling $77,101 were received from DEEWR[46] and AusAid.

Fundraising activities up to the end of 2006 have not translated into substantial cash contributions and from this respect the fundraising cost may be viewed as being unreasonable. In 2007 greater success in raising funds were achieved and from a long term perspective as these activities typically raise the profile of organisations, 'plant seeds' and it is not unusual for the product of these approaches to be lay the base for future income flows.

There is ample evidence that individuals within the APQN executive have been proactive in sourcing funds. Within the APQN there are additional opportunities to raise funds; however, it is conceded that the magnitude of these funds may not be extensive. Avenues that might be pursued include:
  o Admission of individual membership or subscription to the APQN
  o With the development of expertise within the APQN, the greater use of web based resources and project outcomes that have wide application across borders, future opportunities may be exploited through the application of user pay arrangements. Currently many services provided by the APQN are provided without charge.
  o Consultancy services for other networks
  o Continued identification of in-kind contributions (sponsorship), especially in the conference and specific project/workshop activities.

Operating costs

Global overhead costs

As illustrated in Figure 13 the global overhead cost of operating the APQN over its life has ranged between US$360,672 and US$307,543. The relatively higher cost incurred in 2004–2005 reflect initial set up costs of the APQN.
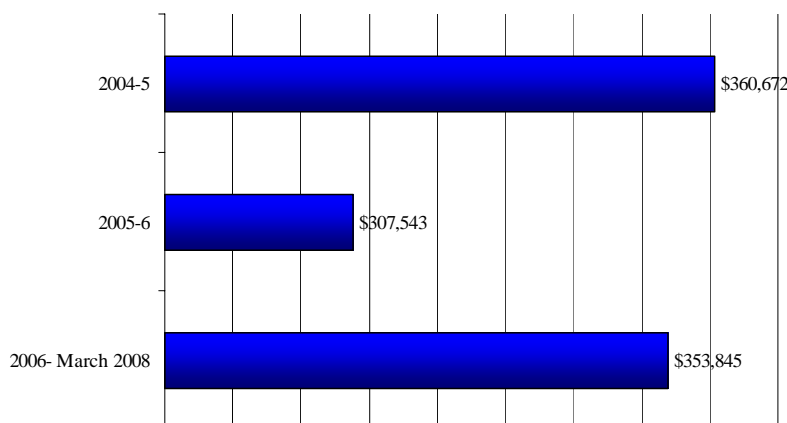

Figure 13: Global overhead costs, US$

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[46] Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Australia

From January 2006–March 2008 the administrative, finance and liaison cost component of managing the APQN was US$139,573. As illustrated in Figure 14, this represents 39% of the total costs of APQN.
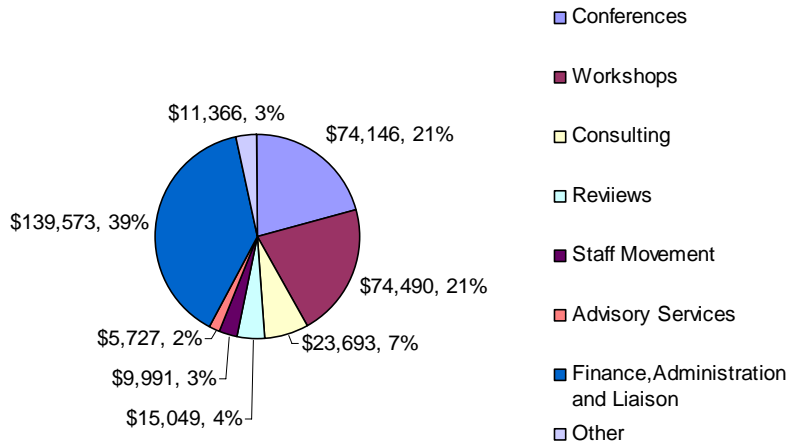

Figure 14: Global cost for January 2006–March 2008, US$

Administration, finance and liaison costs

Reporting standards differed between years vary and this makes comparisons between years difficult nevertheless the cost of administering the Network (i.e. direct secretariat costs, fundraising, bank charges, liaison costs) has been relatively stable. Figure 15 illustrates the secretariat costs over the life of the APQN.
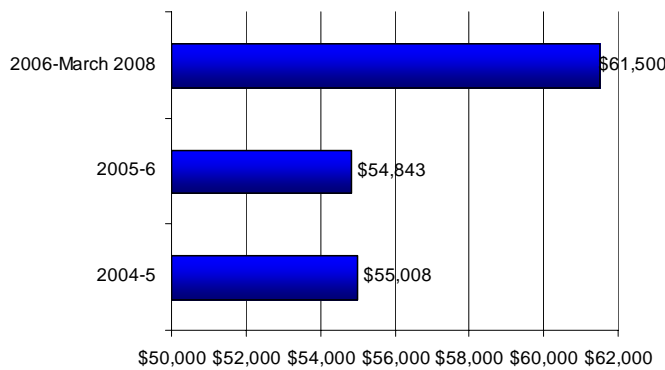
Figure 15: Administration, finance and liaison costs, US$

The containment of costs between 2004 and March 2008 reflects sound management practices in administering the Network.

Cost analysis

It is useful to examine APQN administrative costs compared with DGF notional allocations and the relationship between total administrative costs and the activity generated. The relationships provide an indication as to the efficiency of the APQN's operations. Figure 16 illustrates this relationship.

Figure 16 illustrates that APQN expenditure has been contained within World Bank Grant notional funding allocations for the period January 2007 to March 2008
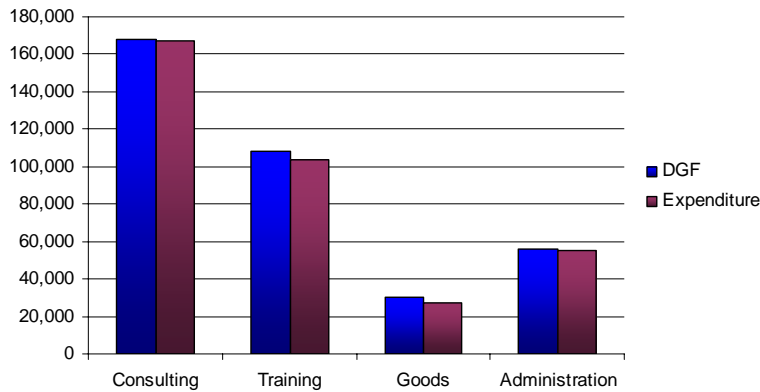
Figure 16: Alignment between World Bank DGF and APQN expenditure

The Finance Committee is charged with:
- o Advising the Board on financial and risk-related matters
- o Recommending to the Board for approval budgets for the subsequent year
- o Proposing to the Board of APQN criteria for provision of grants and other financial support
- o Developing a Finance Manual which includes all matters relating to the DGF and its relationship to APQN
- o Setting out APQN policies and priorities for funding
- o Considering applications from members for grants and other financial support.

Over the life of the APQN expenditures have been within budget, and there has been a strengthening of its financial position, an expansion in activity and a containment of costs. This strengthening is a reflection of the sound financial practices employed within the network. Figure 17 illustrates the outcomes for January 2006–March 2008.
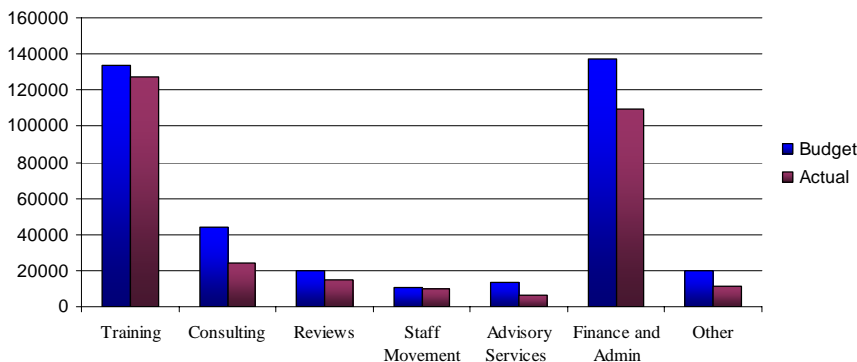
Figure 17: Actual expenditure compared with budget allocations, January 2006 – March 2008

It is the evaluators' opinion, that expenditures have been controlled. The Finance Committee has exercised prudent monitoring of APQN expenditures over the life of the organisation. Procedures are in place and the minutes from regular Finance Committee meetings indicate thorough discussion. Expenditures in 2006–2007 have been in line with World Bank Direct Grant funding and within budget.

Although the ability to further reduce costs is limited, the following strategies are worthy of consideration:

1. One element of the APQN program is the subsidisation of conference attendance. Strict criteria is applied in terms of equity and funding is granted only after needs are assessed in terms of the likely flow on effects of subsidisation at both local and regional levels.

   APQN covers a wide geographical area, and travel and accommodation are high fixed cost components of participation in the APQN activities. Opportunities should be explored to 'bundle' workshops and conferences into defined locations and timeframes so as to consolidate travel cost.

2. Limiting the regional coverage to the Asia-Pacific regions for APQN sponsored events.

3. The use of the web has the capacity to deliver programs within the region. Networking opportunities are somewhat diminished but nevertheless web resources have the capacity to effectively reduce costs.

4. Fundraising costs – these costs represent a small proportion of total costs although the expenditure has not translated into cash contributions.

5. Administration costs – it is difficult to identify a reduction in administration costs without a significant reduction in services provided by the administrator and/or the secretariat.

Appropriateness as a regional model

The APQN acts as a coordinating body to increase the capacity within the Asia-Pacific region. A single body is a logical and economically sound model to manage regional initiatives. Centralisation and acting as an agent for other Asia-Pacific initiatives, the APQN has established policy and procedures to manage initiatives and the spending of money. The ability to lower overhead costs is limited; however, the APQN has displayed financial responsibility and has introduced measures to manage the finances of the Network. These measures include:

o Finances Manual
o Annual Budgets
o Alignment of APQN goals to finances
o Monitoring of expenditure
o Tendering of contacts (e.g. management of travel)
o Accountability through regular Finance Committee meetings
o Transparent reporting (2006–2007).

Taken together, these initiatives have resulted in a model that is capable of prioritising requests to best deliver quality assurance programs in the context of budget constraints, can ensure more value for money and avoid duplication.

Alignment to DGF

The review of APQN financial activities has identified sound practices, the containment of costs and an expansion of APQN activities. Figure 16 indicates that APQN activities closely align with World Bank Direct Grant funding allocations.

In absolute terms APQN activities have been undertaken at reasonable cost. Ultimately the question of 'reasonableness' must be assessed in terms of the outputs generated from the expenditure. Within this report, the sections pertaining to efficacy and outcomes provide some indications of the participants' satisfaction with APQN sponsored activities, and by any measure these indicate positive feedback. Similarly, the level of APQN activity in the area of regional capacity building has had significant flow on effects within the region (Refer to Appendix 3). The expansion of activity over the short life of the APQN has seen agencies learning from the experiences of others, developing their expertise, sharing best practices and implementing within their country practices to enhance the quality assurance of higher education.

F: Sustainability

This section reviews the sustainability of APQN in terms of the results achieved, with respect to a strengthened awareness of quality assurance in the region, financial sustainability, and the likelihood that the Network benefits and results will be maintained.

The DGF has had an invaluable effect on the development of quality assurance in the Asia-Pacific, as the 'seed money' it provided has enabled APQN to support eligible member agencies in the areas where it is most needed.

Regional sustainability

Critical to the discussion of APQN and sustainability is the extent to which the capacity building activities have contributed to sustained quality assurance capacities in the region, more particularly in the developing countries.

Through the development and implementation of procedures, the APQN has attached priority support to:

- Membership from the typically less developed eligible countries/territories
- Proposals involving a greater number of less or least developing countries in the region that are involved and will benefit
- Proposals which have the greatest potential for building capacity in quality assurance in one, or preferably several, countries of the region
- Proposals most closely tied to:
  - labour needs in the region, especially for the improvement of professional education
  - which has clear implications for regional mobility (e.g. engineering) and economic development
  - building institutional capacity for quality improvement (governance, management, planning, finance, academic program development, faculty development, student services, learning resources)
- Proposals demonstrating sustainability and/or a multiplier effect
- Proposals that are vital and there are no other alternatives open to the applicant[47].

Activities have included:

- Initiating discussions nationally and institutionally about good quality assurance practice in higher education
- Sharing good practices about quality assurance
- Training to create and establish a pool of trained reviewers in the region
- Establishing a pool of consultants that members can draw on
- Facilitating project groups that conduct research in areas that are relevant not only to the Members in the region, but also to governments and higher education institutions
- Developing a toolkit for regulating the quality of cross-border education.

Refer to Appendix 3 for specific APQN activities that demonstrate the Network's commitment to directing resources and activities to areas that have the maximum multiplier effect and to countries where systems are most in need of development.

Over its short life the APQN has successfully developed and delivered programs and other activities to build quality assurance capacity within the region. In doing so, the APQN has created a critical mass of resources, networks and expertise to enable the benefits of the Network to be maintained.

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[47] Adapted from the *APQN Procedures Manual,* March 2007, v2, p. 14 & 15.

From the outset APQN activities have been directed towards activities that have applicability across many nations and activities that have reasonable prospects of being sustainable. The task of maintaining the momentum will however be more difficult when World Bank funding ceases in March 2008.

Currently the core need for sustainability is:
- o   Annual minimum cost conference - networking
- o   Website – dissemination of information and interaction
- o   Conduct of workshops with the support of in-kind, donations, and sponsorship – practical applications of quality assurance
- o   Provision of sufficient resources to enable the APQN coordination and administrative function to continue.

In the absence of funding similar to that provided by the World Bank, the harnessing of the critical mass to maintain the momentum and the benefits will hinge on:
- o   The ability of the APQN to undergo structural change to meet the challenge
- o   The adoption of different practices in using resources at their disposal
- o   A continuance of the philosophy espoused by President designate Concepcion V. Pijano;

> ….APQN will enter an exiting phase in its history as it learns to fend for itself…It will remain steadfast in its commitments to enhance the quality of higher education in Asia and the Pacific through strengthening the work of quality assurance agencies and extending cooperation between them[48].

- o   Continued sourcing of in-kind support for network activities
- o   Base funding for Secretariat and Administrative support to coordinate APQN activities, mobilise expertise and discharge key functions of the Network
- o   Need to coordinate and help mobilise the expertise and experiences within the Network.

Organisational financial sustainability

The APQN has had limited success in attracting additional funds; however, this should not be equated to the Network being seen as an unsustainable organisation.

There are a number of features of APQN activities that establish it as a model for regional cooperation (refer to Appendix 3). Programs and activities have had significant flow on effects within the region, created critical mass in the area of regional quality assurance and there is optimism that the momentum can be maintained. As stated by Dorte Kristoffersen, APQN Secretary-Treasurer:

> …there is no doubt that APQN is no longer a baby, but a strong and well nourished person, which has been able to live up to its objectives at large[49].

The APQN has been active in seeking additional financial support for the network. Section D explored this is more detail and identified a number of funding initiatives and these have been useful in raising the profile of the network and developing a 'template' for additional funding approaches. The task has been difficult and despite considerable efforts to gain financial commitments as identified in Section D the efforts have not translated into commitments to inward resource flow.

The APQN has been more successful in accessing in-kind contributions and sponsorship. This has been a vital ingredient in the APQN's success in building regional capacity and is an important resource in creating the base and maintaining the sustainability of the Network. The APQN has set its course towards sustainability, through well defined procedures and its sound organisational and

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[48] *APQN Annual Report 2006–2007*, p. 15
[49] *APQN Annual Report 2006–2007*, p. 17

administrative framework that has successfully delivered programs and other activities to build the capacity within the region. Through these activities the APQN has created a critical mass that will provide the momentum to achieve sustainability of the Network.

With the cessation of World Bank funding and in the absence of a significant alternative funding source it is likely that the current scale of APQN activities will be curtailed. However, core activities can be maintained and any additional funding sources will value add to the Network's regional capacity building activities, such as:
- o Development and dissemination of core quality assurance tools possibly on a 'user pay' principle
- o Deliver programs in different (and cost effective) ways, such as the web
- o Continue to foster interaction that enables individuals and agencies to network and learn from others' experiences via techniques such as on-line forums
- o Consider the addition of individual subscription to Network information and services
- o Recruitment of additional members
- o Continue to seek sponsorship, support and in-kind contributions from key agency/organisation stakeholders within the region
- o Utilise current expertise to develop a 'commercial arm' to undertake research and develop materials relating to quality assurance.

The APQN has been very conscious of the risks associated with lack of financing options and has been proactive in minimising those risks. From the outset APQN Board members set about identifying possible sources of funding, relying on known potential funding sources, individual networks and personal contacts and member initiated personal approaches to a variety of organisations.

APQN has worked towards developing a sustainable network through:
- o Projects and activities that maximise benefits and have the ability to be applicable to others and have flow on effects
- o Building strong networks so that members can share and learn from one another
- o Making resources freely available.

Member perceptions

Members were asked in the survey whether the capacity building activities of APQN have led to sustained quality assurance capacities in the region. Figure 18 demonstrates some 85% of the members either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposition that APQN activities have led to improvements in the quality assurances capacities within the Asia-Pacific region.
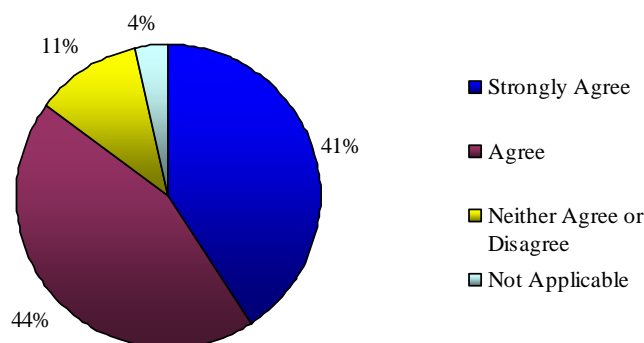

Figure 18: Members' perception of APQN capacity building

The examples identified by APQN members encompass a broad range of targeted capacity building activities that have wide application across the region. Member's responses were an affirmation of the success of the quality assurance activities and demonstrated just how strongly the members consider the success has been of the APQN over the past three years.

The capacity building activities of APQN that had led to sustained quality assurance capacities in the region are cited, in order of importance and itemised in the table below.

Table 10: APQN activities that have led to sustained quality assurance capacities

Examples	Responses
Revision of QA approach	28
Establishment of links with other QA bodies	18
Discussions about a national QA body	16
Development of manuals and tools	14
Initiation of QA processes	14
Development of a training programme for panel members	14
Strong links between external and internal QA	14
Training of panel members	13
Policy revision	13
The establishment of a QA body	13
Establishment of a pool of experts	11

Conclusion and Recommendations

The report highlights the comprehensive range of programs and activities undertaken by the APQN; initiatives that have been affirmed by members as significant contributing factors in building quality assurance.

The task undertaken by the APQN in such an expansive and diverse region have not been without challenges; however, DGF funding and in-kind contributions from individuals and member agencies have enabled the APQN to target the establishment of quality assurance agencies in nations that have small or poorly developed systems and to strengthen practices that support the enhancement, reform and renewal of emerging and developed quality assurance systems.

In many respects activities undertaken by the APQN can be seen as setting the ground work for further strengthening quality assurance systems in the Asia-Pacific region. Member feedback provides a strong sense of the building momentum that the APQN has generated across the region.

The Asia-Pacific Quality Network has demonstrated that it has delivered capacity building outcomes across the region within many of the countries/territories that have less developed quality assurance systems. However, the task is not complete and recommendations are framed with view of further developments and reaching out to all nations within the region.

Efficacy and outcomes

Over the short period of three years the Network has supported a range of conferences, workshops and training programs to meet the needs of the emerging quality agencies/systems; established a database of reviewers and consultants; established a clearinghouse of quality assurance related papers and reports; instituted a mailing list; developed a website; as well as undertaken research and projects.

An examination of the APQN programs reveals a commitment to regional capacity building and recognition of the differential needs of the member agencies. With limited funds and high needs among many of the nations, the APQN has managed to gain high levels of involvement in a short period of time.

The survey findings show that the APQN activities considered most effective by respondents were conferences and workshops; with the clearinghouse, regional exchanges and the consultants and reviewer databases also considered effective. Given the loss of DGF funding the APQN is faced with possibly reducing services or putting money where it is most effective. Therefore in the future the monies available should be focussed on the annual conference with associated workshops.

> *Recommendation 1: Minimum funding model*
> It is recommended that the APQN Board in the future, at a minimum, fund:
> - o Annual conference with associated workshops
> - o Secretarial support (refer to Recommendation 6).

The APQN website provides members and the public with information pertaining to the Network and provides a 'fledgling' link to other documents pertaining to quality assurance of education. The Virtual Library contains a relatively small number of documents but over time this should be further developed. Virtual Library and links to other documents and databases pertaining to quality assurance should be further encouraged. A links page that includes web links to such sites as INQAAHE, and ENQA and to other key sites is also included, although its position on the home page is not readily discernible. The APQN WebPages should provide for its members a *gateway* to all things pertaining to quality assurance of education, and should also link to key departments within OECD and UNESCO pertaining to quality assurance and higher education issues and also to key public access databases which may be relevant.

If in the future the APQN website provides only full access to its members then the members will require 'more value for money', and more exclusive information.

> *Recommendation 2: Website*
> It is recommended that the APQN Board:
> - o Develop the notion that the APQN website be a *gateway* to all things pertaining to quality assurance in education
> - o Continue to develop the Virtual Library
> - o Review the website to include and extend the links page to other key sites. It is suggested that this links page be placed in a more prominent position.

Governance and management

The APQN has demonstrated that it has sound policies and procedures for the governance and management of the network. These practices provide transparency for APQN operations and are a basis to prioritise initiatives which have been implemented in a largely efficient manner. Strong Secretariat support in operational areas has complemented the APQN governance structure.

In the event of a significant reduction in funding the APQN will need to examine a range of alternative strategies to maintain the quality assurance capacity building within the region. These strategies can be incorporated within existing structures thereby ensuring a degree of continuity.

The notion of 'region' as applied to the APQN should not be seen as a tight geographic area but rather a set of interconnecting initiatives, some focusing upon all member organisations, others dealing with particular national issues and other initiatives that are peculiar and common to several agencies. This broad and flexible definition of the APQN region rightly focuses upon needs and outcomes and avoids the semantics that might be associated with a purely geographic notion.

A regional approach is an efficient and a more cost effective mechanism to deliver capacity building across a wide and diverse region. The APQN regional model has demonstrated that it has reached many countries/territories and has built capacity.

The APQN Board, by and large, is composed of representatives from member organisations that are more advanced in quality assurance systems. The countries/territories less developed in terms of quality assurance systems are not equally represented on the Board. This is not a surprising outcome as the APQN Board provides leadership in quality assurance capacity building and is reflective of existing expertise and/or a lack of resources from the less developed country/territory quality assurance systems.

The APQN has the capacity to address this balance should it decide to do so as the Constitution (s36) provides the opportunity to co-opt members. Co-opting members from countries/territories with less developed quality assurance systems could provide a valuable mentoring opportunity.

> *Recommendation 3: Board co-option*
> It is recommended that the APQN Board consider the use of co-opting members as a means to mentor members that have less developed quality assurance systems. This would promote the notion of inclusiveness and of capacity building across the region.

A minimal funding model will require the APQN to consider an optimal model for the delivery of its activities. As noted, the region is extensive and is diverse with respect to experience and needs in the area of quality assurance. Within the region there are highly developed quality assurance systems that are strategically placed to provide 'local' leadership to less developed member agencies. The examination of splitting the Asia-Pacific region into sub-regions may offer the opportunity to reinforce the connections and synergies between member organisations, thereby leading to a more

targeted and efficient delivery of programs. Sub-regionalisation also provides greater opportunities for developed systems to provide leadership win a defined area.

The report notes that members expressed overall support for the APQN governance structure; however, there was a small but sufficient number of responses to suggest there was a sense of 'us and them'. Comments included:

> 'Divide between so called ' givers' and ' takers' [haves and have nots] disturbs'
> 'Membership. It is lack of equal opportunity for participation.'
> 'There should be more Pacific representation on its Board/committees.'
> 'More decentralisation of management, resource generation and more participation of agencies should top the agenda in future'
> The real challenge for APQN is to create sense of ownership among the members'

Sub-regionalisation has the capacity to provide a decentralised tier within the APQN structure and creates an opportunity to 'on board' additional member agencies in committee and organisational roles.

Recommendation 4: Sub-regionalisation
It is recommended that the APQN Board examine options in relation to sub dividing the Asia-Pacific region as a means to efficiently deliver quality assurance programs and to enhance the notion of inclusiveness.

Strategic planning can be defined as an organisation's process of defining its strategy, or direction, and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. Normally this would be consolidated into a single document and would be internally focused. An examination of APQN activities and governance procedures reveal logical, comprehensive and well developed processes to building capacity in the Asia-Pacific region; however, these processes have not been consolidated into one single document.

The evaluators consider that a Strategic Plan would articulate the approach APQN has to its future and to issues such as sustainability. It would provide the membership with a clear articulation of APQN's direction beyond World Bank funding.

Recommendation 5: Strategic Plan
The APQN Board should develop a Strategic Plan focussing on the next 5 to 10 years.

The DGF has been instrumental in funding the APQN Administrator and with the conclusion of this funding the APQN may consider lessening the time fraction of the Administrator. The evaluators on the other hand consider that APQN should strengthen the Secretariat model by considering a full-time administrator and one full-time quality assurance consultant who is recognised within the Network. By strengthening the Secretariat, the quality assurance consultant could focus on bringing on board more members, facilitate fundraising actions, assist with the workload of the volunteer Board members, manage the project groups, as well as undertake liaison activities with other agencies and bodies. It is critical to this role that this person is recognised within the APQN as being able to take a leadership in quality assurance.

Recommendation 6: Secretariat
It is recommended that the APQN Board give consideration to a reconstructed Secretariat, to include a full-time administrator and one full-time quality assurance consultant who is recognised within the Network.

Membership fees of the APQN are reasonably comparable to those charged by INQAAHE, though a little less. The full membership fee for ENQA is significantly higher again, along with a non-refundable membership application fee – which is similar to the APQN joining fee. Given these

figures, the APQN could consider an increase in membership fees, but needs to balance the possible increase with the underlying principle of inclusiveness and 'value for money'.

> ### *Recommendation 7: Fees*
> It is recommended that APQN Board review the fee structure and benchmark it against other such networks.

To broaden its income base and broaden its standing within the quality assurance community, the APQN could consider the option for individual subscription to the APQN. A subscription fee for interested individuals would enable these subscribers access to the mailing list, publications for purchase and access to the Virtual Library and links page. There would be no voting rights and no rights as per the membership categories or services, i.e. training workshops. Providing a subscription option would increase income and not impinge on the profile of the membership.

> ### *Recommendation 8: Individual subscription category*
> It is recommended that the APQN Board give consideration to including individual subscription for interested individuals across the region so that when access to information and services is restricted to members, individuals (for a fee) would have access to a number of limited services on the website, including links page, Virtual Library, publications and mailing list.

Finances

Over the life of the APQN expenditures have been within budget, and there has been a strengthening of its financial position, an expansion in activity and a containment of costs. This strengthening is a reflection of the sound financial practices employed within the Network. It is the evaluators' opinion, that expenditures have been controlled. The Finance Committee has exercised prudent monitoring of APQN expenditures over the life of the organisation, and expenditures in 2006–2007 have been in line with World Bank DGF and within budget.

Mobilising direct funding has not been an easy task for the APQN, and members readily acknowledge that they lack expertise. However, the findings indicate that the level of in-kind contributions provided by individuals within agencies and member agencies has been high. In-kind contributions included, but were not limited to:
  o Agency sponsored exchanges and secondments
  o Sponsorship and hosting of APQN conferences and workshops
  o Infrastructure/Premises (gratis or less than market rates)
  o Events organisation
  o Publications
  o Personal expenses incurred in conducting APQN business but not reimbursed
  o Members' time – Executive support, Committee membership, Project leadership and membership.

The reported value of in-kind contributions from the Network was estimated to be US$889,937 per annum.

> ### *Recommendation 9: In-kind contributions*
> It is recommended that the APQN Board continue the mobilisation of in-kind contributions.

With the anticipated limited access to financial resources, the APQN should consider additional strategies to minimise the cost of given activities as a means of minimising the financial burdens upon members. Additional strategies that deserve consideration include:
  o Minimising costs by using facilities and locations/premises, such as universities, to hold the AGM and conferences

o 'Bundling' activities such as conferences and workshops together as a mechanism of reducing travel costs.

Recommendation 10: Additional strategies
It is recommended that the APQN Board examine strategies to minimise costs associated with the delivery of its core capacity building activities and programs.

Sustainability

The findings from the review confirm that the APQN is a strong model for regional cooperation. In a short time frame the APQN has successfully developed and delivered programs and other activities to build quality assurance capacity within the region. In doing so the APQN has created a critical mass of resources, networks and expertise to enable the benefits of the Network to be maintained.

Recommendation 11: Sustainability
With the limited potential of on-going future funding it is recommended that the APQN Board should look toward maintaining core activities and any additional funding sources that will value add to the Network's regional capacity building activities, such as:

- o Development and dissemination of core quality assurance tools possibly on a 'user pay' principle
- o Nominal charges for print /electronic material provision on quality assurance
- o Deliver programs in different (and cost effective) ways such as the web
- o Continue to foster interaction that enable individuals and agencies to network and learn from others experiences via techniques such as on-line forums
- o Recruitment of additional members
- o Continue to seek sponsorship, support and in-kind contributions from key agency/organisation stakeholders within the region
- o Utilise current expertise to develop a 'commercial arm' to undertake research and develop materials relating to quality assurance.

Future directions

In many respects the real challenge for APQN is to create sense of ownership among the members. It needs to come out from under the label of a grant seeking body to a sustainable network valued by all stakeholders. In some of the survey responses there was a sense of a divided community between the more established agencies and less developed agencies in terms of quality assurance. Feedback from one respondent noted [the]…

> Divide between so called ' givers' and ' takers' [haves and have nots] disturbs

There was also a sense that the APQN needs to be cognisant that it is a network of agencies, represented in many respects by one representative. One respondent noted that…

> It is not sure if the APQN is the network of the "agencies"; each activity is "personnel-based" (rather) than "agency-based"

The Network also needs to give consideration to the activities of quality assurance in Asia-Pacific region, as there are two dimensions: supporting capacity building of developing countries/territories and the network bringing benefit for all the members; these two are not same. There needs to be a focus on both, enabling the less developed agencies in terms of quality assurance and also be cognisant of the needs of those agencies with stable, established quality assurance systems.

APQN has been a platform for quality assurance discussions and debates since 2003. It has gained momentum and visibility with World Bank funding. However, it needs continued support to keep up that momentum for some more years to maximise its impact on emerging quality assurance systems.

Finally, APQN should continue to provide activities in line with its key objectives. Its contribution to capacity building in higher education through quality assurance systems cannot be measured over the short time span since APQN was established. For many developing and smaller country/territory members in the Asia-Pacific such impact takes time to be demonstrated as it involves developing national systems which are dependent on adequate resources and help. APQN should continue to provide an inexpensive platform and space to help enhance quality of higher education through networking, assisting, sharing and developing good effective practices.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey

APQN Evaluation Survey

Dear members of APQN

As you may be aware the APQN has been a recipient of a World Bank Development Grant Facility (DGF). As a consequence APQN is required to conduct an external evaluation of the achievements of the DGF objectives at the end of the grant period, covering the grant period form 2004 – 2007. The Board has contracted Ms Andrea Bateman from Bateman & Giles Pty Ltd to be responsible for the evaluation.

This survey is one component of this review and is being sent to all APQN members.

The questions posed relate specifically to the review's evaluation criteria:

1. Efficacy – The outputs delivered by the activities organised as part of the APQN and DGF and the extent to which these met the overall objectives articulated at the approval of the grant.
2. Initial outcomes – The extent to which the activities organised by APQN have contributed to building capacity.
3. Governance and Management – The effectiveness of the organisation of the network, and the role of the Board and the Secretariat in the management of APQN and implementation of the objectives of the DGF.
4. Efficient financing – Review of the financing and administrative structure of APQN, trying to derive lessons for the financing and administrative models of other regional networks and determine whether APQN has an effective financing and administrative model.
5. Sustainability – The sustainability of APQN in terms of the results achieved with respect to a strengthened awareness of quality assurance in the region, financial sustainability, and the likelihood that the Network benefits and results will be maintained. criteria as specified by the APQN Board:

As members of the APQN your input and judgements are essential to this evaluation. As you have been using the network's services and have benefited from this support and you can provide critical feedback into this review.

All responses will be treated as confidential and findings will be collated and analysed as a group. Could you please respond to the questions on the following pages and return via email to:

Andrea Bateman
Bateman & Giles Pty Ltd
andrea@batemangiles.com.au

Return date: Tuesday 25 March 2008

If email is not possible can you please complete the form electronically and fax to the AUQA offices in Melbourne: +61 3 9639 7377.

APQN Evaluation Survey

Details:

Respondent's name:
Job title:
Organisation:
Country/Territory:

Organisation's APQN Membership category:

Full ☐   Intermediate ☐   Associate ☐

Institutional ☐   Observer ☐

Type of participation:

Has your organisation…?

	Yes	No
Attended:		
o Conferences	☐	☐
o Workshops	☐	☐
o Staff movement	☐	☐
Participated:		
o As a Board member	☐	☐
o In project groups	☐	☐
o As a project leader	☐	☐
o As a consultant	☐	☐

Level of support:

Has your organisation received support for the payment of membership fees?

Type of support	Yes	No
Membership fees	☐	☐

Has your organisation been supported by APQN funding to:

Type of support	Yes	No
Attended:		
o Conferences	☐	☐
o Workshops	☐	☐
o Staff movement	☐	☐
Hosted:		
o Conferences	☐	☐
o Workshops	☐	☐
o Staff movement	☐	☐
o Consultant(s)	☐	☐
Participated as a:		
o Board member	☐	☐

How many of your staff have participated in the above activities?

1. Efficacy

1.1 The APQN program activities have helped build capacity of external quality assurance organisations and agencies in the region

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

1.2 The APQN has fulfilled its core objective of strengthening the work of quality assurance agencies and extending the cooperation between them?

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

1.3 The World Bank Grant is provided to strengthen the capacity of accreditation agencies and quality assurance professionals in the APQN countries/territories. APQN activities have fulfilled the following objectives:

1.3i Coordinated organisational functions and mutual recognition of credentials

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

1.3ii Sustained ongoing review of participating organisations to assure a high quality of organisational performance

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

1.3iii Encouraged leadership to help individual agencies to develop tools and strategies to sustain the value of quality assurance

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

1.3iv Served as an advocate for accreditation of tertiary education to the public, governments, and institutions

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

1.3v Provided research, policy analysis, and service to its member institutions

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

1.3vi Nurtured the core academic values central to tertiary education and quality assurance, collaboration, independence, academic freedom, open and transnational cooperation and exchanged of ideas, procedures and standards.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

1.4 For the eight APQN activities listed below, identify what you consider to be the **3 most effective strategies, and <u>rank</u> their effectiveness from 1 – 3 (1 being the most effective)** in strengthening the technical and institutional capacity of the member organisations within the Asia-Pacific region.

*Please rank only **3** of the activities below.*

Activity	Rank from 1 - 3
Conferences	
Workshops	
External reviewer services to quality assurance agencies (including the database of consultants and reviewers)	
Regional accreditation services to countries/territories without a national accreditation process (through the database of consultants and reviewers)	
Regional information clearinghouse (including information sharing and events) through the APQN website	
Research, policy analysis and services to members	
Regional staff exchanges to improve information exchange, and build on capacity of recipient's qualify agency	
Strengthen liaison functions amongst networks	

1.5 <u>**Members who have received support for an event**</u> *please answer*
The knowledge gained via APQN activities is filtering down within organisations within my country.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment:

If agree please give examples

If disagree please explain

1.6 There is an awareness of APQN and its activities in my country/territory.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

2. Initial outcomes

2.1A <u>**Members who have received financial support**</u> *please answer*

In what areas has APQN activities contributed to building capacity **within your country/territory**?

Tick as many as you consider relevant

Please tick	Examples
☐	Accreditation processes
☐	Audit processes
☐	Mutual Recognition of qualifications
☐	Qualification frameworks
☐	Quality assurance mechanisms
☐	Educational reform
☐	Establishment of an agency
☐	International benchmarking
☐	Research and evaluation strategies
☐	Current issues on quality assurance
☐	Personal and professional development
☐	Exchange of ideas and expertise
☐	Enhanced institutional capabilities
☐	Promoting communication and cooperation between the agency and institutions
☐	Cross border education
☐	Other… Please specify:

Please comment:

2.1B Non -sponsored members please answer

In what areas has APQN activities contributed to building capacity **within the Asia-Pacific region**:

Tick as many as you consider relevant

Please tick	Examples
☐	Accreditation processes
☐	Audit processes
☐	Mutual Recognition
☐	Qualification frameworks
☐	Quality assurance systems
☐	Quality assurance measures
☐	Educational testing
☐	Educational reform
☐	Establishment of an agency
☐	International benchmarking
☐	Research and evaluation strategies
☐	Current issues on quality assurance
☐	Personal and professional development
☐	Exchange of ideas and expertise
☐	Enhanced institutional capabilities
☐	Promoting communication and cooperation between agencies
☐	Cross border education
☐	Other… Please specify:

Please comment:

2.2 Members who have received support for an event *please answer*
There have been concrete policy actions taken within my organisation as a result of the workshops/seminars in my country/territory sponsored by APQN.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

2.3 My organisation's quality assurance practices have improved? For example specific changes to quality assurance practices have been made.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

2.4 I believe that knowledge sharing (including research and policy analysis) of the APQN has translated into capacities.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

3. Governance and management

3.1 The regional concept of the APQN is helpful for building capacity in developing countries/territories.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

3.2 Sufficient effort has been made by APQN to bring on board more underdeveloped countries/territories as members of APQN or beneficiaries of its activities.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

3.3 The 4-tiered membership (i.e. full, intermediate, associate and institutional) structure is appropriate for the Network.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

3.4 The composition of the Board is representative of the nations within the region.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

3.5 Over the last 3 years, the conferences, workshops and projects were well managed?

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

3.6 The dissemination of information, such as project group findings, publications and workshop/conference outcomes, has been timely and easily accessible?

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

3.7 The Secretariat is efficient and highly professional.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

4. Efficient financing

4.1 The main expenditure of APQN from the DGF has been well spent on enabling members to participate in conferences and workshops.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

4.2 Are there any other strategies in terms of participation and activities that could have been used by APQN to help build capacity in the region?

Yes	No
☐	☐

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

4.3A In-kind contributions: Individual response

What has been your personal involvement in APQN activities over the last 3 years for which you have not been directly paid for?

Participation	*Please tick*
Organiser of event/s	☐
Project group leader	☐
Project group member	☐
Project group observer	☐
Board member:	
o Executive member (treasurer, secretary, president, vice president)	☐
o General member, including appointed and co-opted	☐
o Finance Subcommittee chair	☐
o Finance Subcommittee member	☐

Over the last 12 months, estimate the number of hours that you have spent on APQN activities that you have not been directly paid for, including:

Activity	Estimated hours
Attendance at conferences/workshops etc	
Presenter/facilitator of conferences/workshop/s	
Organising conferences/workshops	
Project Group participation	
Time spent participating *as a beneficiary* in staff movement activities	
Time spent providing assistance in staff movement activities	
Consulting	
Board membership	

4.3B. In-kind contributions: Organisational response

In addition to the above, has your organisation: organised, planned and conducted workshops and conferences, sponsored exchanges and secondments, funded APQN activities for which there has been no charge levied against the APQN.

Yes	No
☐	☐

List the APQN activities in the last year and estimate the number of hours your organisation have spent on APQN activities for which there has been no charge levied against the APQN

Activity	Estimated hours
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	

5. Sustainability

5.1 The capacity building activities of APQN has led to sustained Quality Assurance capacities in the region.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

If agree please tick as many examples as you consider relevant

Examples	*Please tick*
Training of panel members	☐
Development of a training programme for panel members	☐
Establishment of a pool of experts	☐
Development of manuals and tools	☐
Initiation of QA processes	☐
Revision of QA approach	☐
Policy revision	☐
Discussions about a national QA body	☐
The establishment of a QA body	☐
Strong links between external and internal QA	☐
Establishment of links with other QA bodies	☐
Other. Please specify…	☐

Please comment:

If disagree please explain

5.2 The APQN is a strong model for regional co-operation.

1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Please comment: *If agree please give examples*

If disagree please explain

5.3 What aspects of the APQN model do you like or not like and why?

Please comment:

5.4 Do you have any suggestions for how APQN could strengthen its financial sustainability?

Please comment:

6. Final comments:
Please include here any additional comments that you would like to make.

………………………………………………………………………………………

Could you please respond to the questions and return via email:

Andrea Bateman
Bateman & Giles Pty Ltd
andrea@batemangiles.com.au

Return date: Tuesday 25 March 2008

If email is not possible can you please complete the form electronically and fax to the AUQA offices in Melbourne: +61 3 9639 7377.

Thankyou for responding.

Appendix 2: DGF Funding Eligibility

Eligible countries	Ineligible countries
Afghanistan	Australia
Bangladesh	Brunei Darussalam
Bhutan	French Polynesia
Cambodia	Hong Kong
China	Iran
Cook Islands	Japan
Fiji	Kazakhstan
India	Korea, North
Indonesia	Korea, South
Kiribati	Kyrgyzstan
Laos	Macau
Malaysia	New Caledonia
Maldives	New Zealand
Marshall Islands	Russia
Micronesia	Singapore
Mongolia	Taiwan
Myanmar	Tajikistan
Nauru	Turkmenistan
Nepal	Uzbekistan
Niue	
Pakistan	
Palau	
Papua New Guinea	
Philippines	
Samoa	
Solomon Islands	
Sri Lanka	
Thailand	
Timor-Leste	
Tokelau	
Tonga	
Tuvalu	
Vanuatu	
Vietnam	

Appendix 3: APQN Activities 2004–2008

	Conference	Projects	Workshops	Other Activities	Publications	Project Groups
2004 -05	INQAAHE Conference: AGM Wellington,		APQN Meeting Hong Kong The World Bank And The Centre For Quality Assurance In International Education Hong Kong INQAAHE Workshop Wellington, AUQF2005: Engaging Communities Sydney How To Conduct Institutional Accreditation, Manila, Quality Management Of Quality Assurance Agencies Mongolia Training Of External Reviewers Phnom Penh		Constitution Project Groups Guidelines Finance Manual Proposal for Funding	Identify Constituency (PG 1) Qualifications Frameworks (PG 2) Quality Assurance Of Distance Education/E-Learning (PG 3) Indicators Of Quality (PG 4) Survey: Monitoring Of Transnational Activities (PG 7) Mutual Recognition Of Quality Assurance Agencies (PG 8) Quality Literacy (PG 10) Student Participation In Quality Assurance (PG 13)
2005 -06	APQN Conference and AGM Shanghai Regional Mobility: Cooperation in Quality Assurance Shanghai,	APQN–UNESCO Toolkit Regulating the Quality of Cross-Border Education	AUQA Auditor Training Melbourne The WTO and International Trade in Education services: The Opportunities and	Agency Sponsored Staff Movement (3) APQN Sponsored Staff Movement (3) Shared APQN –	APQN Annual Report UNESCO/APN Tool Kit Constitution v5.4 Understanding Quality	Qualifications Frameworks (PG 2) Indicators Of Quality (PG 4) Mutual Recognition

	Conference	Projects	Workshops	Other Activities	Publications	Project Groups
	World Bank Joint Client-Staff Learning Seminar: Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education Sèvres, International Conference on Student Participation in Quality Enhancement Bangalore		Challenges of Transnational Higher Education Hong Kong,	Agency Sponsorship Staff Movement (6) Consultancy took place between the Philippines and Cambodia.	Assurance Frameworks in the Asia-Pacific Region: Indicators of Quality Higher Education in India: Seven Steps to Quality Cooperation in Quality Assurance: Developments in Asia and the Pacific Structural change to APQN website	Of Quality Assurance Agencies (PG 8) Student Participation In Quality Assurance (PG 13)
2006 -07	First International Conference on Assessing Higher Education – 2006:Prosperity through Quality Education (Lahore) Emerging Challenges, Emerging Practices: Sharing a Global Vision of QA in Higher Education (Kuala Lumpur) APQN Annual Conference and AGM Future of QA in Asia-Pacific: Cooperation	Toolkit Phase II: A Compendium of Sample Country Materials on Regulatory Framework IIEP – APQN Course on External Quality Assurance Brisbane Communiqué	Internal QA: Key Factors for Ensuring and Enhancing Quality in Higher Education Institutions. (Ho Chi Minh City) Development of Measurements for Higher Education QA (Dhaka) Round Table Meeting (Shanghai) Quality Enhancement: Theory of External QA and its Practice in China (Kunming)	Moderated On-line Discussion Forum Monitoring Unmoderated On-line Discussion Agency Sponsored Staff Movement (3) APQN Sponsored Staff Movement (3) Shared APQN – Agency Sponsorship Staff Movement (6)	SEAAIR Electronic Newsletter APQN Annual Report Good Practices for Accreditation Councils in Pakistan Quality assurance in Higher Education: A Shifting paradigm Understanding Quality Assurance Frameworks in the Asia-Pacific Region: Indicators of Quality	Qualifications Frameworks (PG 2) Quality Assurance Of Distance Education/E-Learning (PG 3) Indicators Of Quality (PG 4) Mutual Recognition Of Quality Assurance Agencies (PG 8) Transnational Education (PG 11) Student Participation In Quality Assurance (PG 13)

	Conference	Projects	Workshops	Other Activities	Publications	Project Groups
	Amidst Diversity. (Chiba)		Training Workshop for Accreditors (Manila) Workshop on QA (Vientiene) Quality Audit Workshop (Suva) Workshop on Higher Education Quality Assurance in the Asia-Pacific (Chiba)		Bonn Declaration on Regional Cooperation Quality assurance in Higher Education	