

# Annex A

## Guiding principles EUR quality assurance vision

To engage in a fruitful conversation about the enhancement goals for our internal quality assurance, we need to start with our vision on quality assurance at EUR. To a large extent, we are already living that vision, even if not all aspects of it have been made explicit before. We ask the organisation to endorse the following guiding principles:

### **Linked to educational vision: *outcome over output***

- Quality assurance at EUR should serve the development of education. Our common educational vision describes the focus of our improvements.
- Our shared understanding of quality emerges discursively, in the context of dialogue between various stakeholders.
- Quality improvement is defined in terms of a contribution to internal goals, derived from the educational vision, and formulated at the different levels (programme—faculty—institution),
- Ideally, these goals can be described as measurable outcomes to which quantitative indicators can be attached. At the minimum, they should be described as noticeable results, to be evidenced by qualitative reflection from relevant stakeholders.
- Monitoring the effects of innovation and improvement policies at the programme level requires operationalisation of internal goals at this level.

### **Consciously decentralised: *autonomy and alignment***

- The quality assurance vision assumes that autonomy and alignment are not two opposing forces, but forces that – when properly understood and deployed – can mutually strengthen each other.
- Alignment in vision and processes, through an open but clear structure, allows efficient and effective capitalisation on any initiatives arising in the organisation.
- The quality assurance system is aimed at facilitating a conversation between autonomous professionals while ensuring overall consistency.

### **Leadership and Mastery: *shared ownership and trust***

- All those involved in education are given maximum space to flesh out the educational vision from the perspective of their professional role and responsibility. The underlying assumption is that in dialogue between different viewpoints and perspectives the best quality results are achieved.
- Productive tensions between roles and responsibilities, for example in the relationships between educational management and examination board (*zorgen-borgen*), management and participation bodies (*zeggenschap-medezeggenschap*), central and decentralised, Executive Board and Supervisory Board, and formal and informal leadership, should be nurtured.

- The responsibility for adequate execution of PDCA, risk management and compliance rests with line management (i.e. programme director—(vice-)dean—Executive Board). Quality assurance advisors at decentralised and central level do not bear responsibility for results; they facilitate line management with expert advice and monitoring focused on the functioning of the PDCA in the line.
- The independent positioning of the participation bodies and examination boards is of paramount importance. Participation bodies and examination boards are not the owners of programme quality, which means they are free to question the choices made in education and assessment.

**Appreciative approach: development orientation and earned trust**

- We are deliberately choosing to shift the focus from compliance-oriented, periodic quality control to more continuous and transparent quality development.
- We look with appreciation at how education is delivered and collectively think of opportunities for improvement. We are open-minded and receptive to signals from stakeholders, which we receive candidly. We are enterprising, which requires room to make mistakes.
- To engage in a fruitful dialogue, we start from a position of trust, communicate transparently about our goals and results and reflect on them together.

**Informed dialogue: responsiveness and responsibility**

- Autonomy in the operationalisation of the educational vision and implementation of educational policy goes hand in hand with an appeal to take responsibility for our own role in educational quality and make explicit the connection based on our own position.
- In doing so, we are aware of our public duty, we involve relevant internal and external stakeholders, and we acknowledge their interest in the justification of our choices (responsiveness).
- Based on the broader public values represented by higher education institutions, themes such as social safety, student wellbeing and student success are translated into policy and quality assurance systems.
- Accountability is a means, not an end. We start from the intrinsic motivations of professionals to reflect on their choices and ways of working, because they consider this important or because it is part of their professional role.
- While data can be brought up to support an argument in the dialogue on educational quality, data never stand alone: they require interpretation and acquire meaning only when linked to an explicit position.

Specifically regarding the **role of the participation bodies**:

- A sustainable quality culture also includes a solid culture of participation. The participation bodies are a crucial linchpin in the informed dialogue on educational quality. As strategic sparring partners for the various layers of governance, the central and decentralised participation bodies help achieve sound and well-supported policies.
- Members of the participation bodies are encouraged to be proactive. As an essential part of our quality assurance system, the participation bodies are not a prop for compliance,

but a guardian of our quality culture. They require adequate support in administrative and financial areas, but also in terms of information provision and transfer, training and professionalisation.