

大學之道，在明明德，在親民，在止於至善。

*'The way of great learning consists in manifesting one's bright virtue, consists in loving the people, consists in stopping in perfect goodness.*

*The way of ultimate wisdom is the comprehension of absolute integrity, genial development of the common people and endless pursuit of the perfection of humanities'*

*Daxue (The Great Learning), 500 B.C.*

## SHENZHEN STATEMENT

### How to Build Regional and Local Capacity for Living Quality Culture in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific

*15-16 June 2017, Shenzhen, People's Republic of China*

Ensuring access to equitable quality higher education is an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action. However, the comparability, recognition and quality assurance of qualifications remains a key concern, particularly in Asia-Pacific where qualifications are often still not expressed in terms of learning outcomes. Strengthening investment in quality assurance of lifelong learning systems to build a quality culture is vital to enhance the relevance and comparability of higher education educational qualifications throughout the region.

Asia-Pacific is the fastest-growing region in terms of the numbers of inbound and outbound international students, which underscores the importance of facilitating the cross-border mobility of students and the need to align quality paradigms based on common academic infrastructures. In this way, the fair and transparent procedures and criteria for the recognition of higher education qualifications is crucial for building capacity of UNESCO Member States to facilitate mobility in Asia-Pacific and beyond.

Taking into account these critical concerns, as well as the quality challenges brought about by the massification of higher education throughout Asia and the Pacific, the diversification of higher education providers and the increasing use of technologies in the delivery of new types of higher education programmes, the **Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education** was held from 15-16 June 2017 in Shenzhen, People's Republic of China.

Representing multiple stakeholders of higher learning today, we, the meeting participants agree upon the following:

- With the rapid expansion of higher education systems, quality assurance mechanisms at both internal and external levels need to move from a traditional input- and output-driven process to one that is learning outcome-driven. Where relevant, such processes should be clearly aligned with national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) as the main reference tool to define learning outcomes across the key domains.
- Learning outcomes, as defined in NQFs should be holistic – covering cognitive and non-cognitive domains of learning, including both transversal skills as well as professional/subject-specific knowledge, skills and competencies. At the same time, institution-wide learning matrix should be developed to serve as an overarching framework for programme development and review at higher education institutions.
- Based on the holistic pursuit of learning outcomes, quality assurance is the source of mutual trust among countries for the recognition of higher education qualifications. It is therefore important for countries to build on the existing transparency and comparability measures, including through the ratification and implementation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (2011 Tokyo Convention). Quality assurance-driven, harmonisation-based recognition arrangements contribute significantly to facilitating student mobility, the recognition of learning across diverse delivery modes, and to the wider purpose of knowledge sharing, cultural intelligence and global citizenship.
- To meet the demands of the contemporary learner, higher education institutions will increasingly seek to offer lifelong learning opportunities via new types of courses and programmes by way of online and e-learning platforms (i.e. incorporating MOOCs, life experience and the world of work through blended and flexible learning approaches), and the cross-border movement of institutions and programmes. Such new modalities for higher education should be compatible with national qualifications frameworks, be subject to the same rigors of quality assurance and be clearly articulated in terms of learning outcomes.
- Given this growing diversity, the importance of strong and relevant internal quality assurance policies and practices to complement external quality standards and guidelines is essential. While external regulations and standards need to be internalized at institutional level in order to ensure system-wide coherence, institutions need the flexibility to adapt these to their institutional profiles and the communities of stakeholders and learners they serve.
- Building a living quality culture, one that continuously improves and evolves at institutional and faculty levels is key to the successful functioning of any quality assurance mechanism. Whenever possible, capacity building, research and training support need to be provided either by the external quality assurance agencies or within

the higher education institutions.

- Inclusive stakeholder ownership and engagement is crucial in identifying and continuously reviewing learning outcomes based on NQFs at the discipline and programme levels. Quality assurance specialists, students, researchers, teachers, employers and industry must work together to ensure that learning programmes are coherent, up-to-date and relevant for the holistic development of lifelong learning and knowledge societies that contribute to the humanistic, socio-economic, and development aspirations of countries in Asia and the Pacific.

UNESCO, as the lead agency of the Education 2030 agenda will, with its partners, support efforts in the Asia-Pacific to develop and implement regional and sub-regional capacity building efforts to build a foundation for future regional harmonization of quality assurance in higher education and lifelong learning in the region.