



ASEAN Cooperation Initiative in Quality Assurance

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ASEAN University Network (AUN)

Background

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN was established in August 1967 when 5 countries; namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, adopted the ASEAN Declaration or Bangkok Declaration. ASEAN was established with an aim to promote regional peace and stability through cooperation and friendship of member countries. This aim, according to the ASEAN Declaration, was to be achieved through promotion of economic, social, and cultural development in the region.

Networking in education was perceived as a principal vehicle for the development of human resource and the build-up of regional solidarity and identity. For this purpose, the ASEAN University Network or AUN was created. It was initially conceived during the ASEAN leaders' discussion at the 4th ASEAN Summit in Singapore in 1992. In November 1995, Ministers responsible for Higher Education from ASEAN Countries gathered and signed the Charter of the ASEAN University Network, which stated that the AUN be composed of the leading universities and colleges in ASEAN member Countries. 11 universities of 6 ASEAN member countries were nominated to be the founding members of the AUN. The numbers of the AUN member universities increased resulting from the accession of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam (collectively known as CLMV countries) into ASEAN in the second half of the 1990s. Currently, the AUN comprises 20 leading universities from 10 ASEAN countries.

Objectives

The AUN has objectives of

1. Promoting cooperation and solidarity among professionals, academicians, scientists, and scholars in the region;
2. Developing academic and professional human resources in the region;
3. Promoting information dissemination among ASEAN academic community; and
4. Enhancing awareness of regional identity and sense of ASEANness among members.

Activities

Developing human resources and encouraging academic collaboration among members are tasks that the AUN has been pursuing for the past 10 years. Up to present, there are more than 20 activities organised and coordinated by the AUN.

I. Activities within ASEAN

Activities that the AUN has implemented within the region support the prime objective of hastening the process of regional integration. The introduction of the **AUN Collaborative Research Programme** in July 2002 aimed to facilitate the exchange of expertise in the areas of economic security and information technology, in response to regional needs, so as to ensure the strengthened network of ASEAN scholars. On the other hand, the **ASEAN Studies Programme** was introduced to be a mechanism to enhance awareness, solidarity, and identity of the ASEAN region. Initiative in setting up the ASEAN Studies Programme came from discussions of experts in social sciences and humanities at several workshops and seminars organised during the period of 1997-2004. Launched for the first time in October 2006 with an initial intake of 9 students, the programme is designed to be a 1 year Master Degree Course with an internship at one of the ASEAN country. The M.A. Course in ASEAN Studies captures all aspects of regional affairs; politics, economics, and cultures. As such, attendants will have a full level of understanding of ASEAN once they have completed the study programme.

The AUN recognises the value of the youth as the power of tomorrow and the engine for change. The following activities; the annual **AUN Educational Forum and Young Speakers Contest** and the **AUN Youth Cultural Forum** aim to provide opportunity for ASEAN youth to express their perspectives on ASEAN and to share their national identities through diversity of cultures. The **AUN Educational Forum and Young Speakers Contest** is a two-week work camp designed to familiarise participants with the ASEAN context, which, in effect, would help build ASEAN spirit and solidarity. The **AUN Youth Cultural Forum** comprises activities such as lectures on music, a consolidating workshop, cultural performances, and, lastly, a cultural tour. All these activities are tools to develop cross-cultural understanding, promote mutual knowledge of ASEAN, and enhance an ASEAN spirit among the youth. As a consequence, solidarity across the region will be promoted.

The accession of CLMV countries into ASEAN in the 1990s could be regarded as a major progress of the regional integration. With ASEAN becoming a region-wide grouping with 10 members, the Southeast Asian region is united into one community. So as to ensure full and rapid integration of new members into the regional grouping, ASEAN leaders launched '**the Initiative on ASEAN Integration**' programme or '**IAI**' in November 2000. Through this initiative, ASEAN's older members (ASEAN-6) are to assist the newer ones (ASEAN-4) to the best of their capacity so that the development gap between members is bridged. The IAI work plan focuses on 4 priority areas; namely, infrastructure development, human resource development, information and communication technology, and regional economic integration in the CLMV countries.

Functioning as the organisation that boosts regional identity and solidarity through capacity-building, the AUN supports the initiative on ASEAN integration of ASEAN leaders by initiating the project entitled '**Enhancing Higher Education Management in the CLMV Countries**'. The AUN-IAI project aims at enhancing higher educational systems and developing human resource capacity in the CLMV countries. Surveys were conducted by assigned experts to compile all problems and priority needs in higher

education in the CLMV countries. A workshop was later organised in Hanoi in December 2005, upon completion of surveys by country experts, to update current situation and present development plans that ASEAN-6 could assist the ASEAN-4.

The IAI has been placed high on the national agenda and on the ASEAN's regional agenda. A key to success in economic growth, social stability, and human fulfilment is the development of human resources. Amid the economic and political flux brought about by globalisation, ASEAN finds itself facing important challenges for its bid to become a highly competitive region on the global stage. The integration of new members is not the only issue that ASEAN needs to address. All modes of integration -- political, economic, and social -- are also issues that member countries need to tackle to promote a peaceful and united region.

An ultimate objective of the ASEAN University Network is the establishment of an ASEAN University. A sense of ASEANness is the first step in leading ASEAN towards achieving common vision and a regional unity. Activities implemented under our network, thus, aim to enhance the sense of regionality within the region and, at the same time, function as a driving tool in gradually developing 'an ASEAN University'. Numbers of complementary activities, such as, the '**AUN Inter-Library Online**', the '**AUN Collaborative Research**', the '**AUN Quality Assurance**', and the '**AUN Distinguished Scholars Programme**' are designed to support the development of the ASEAN University.

The '**AUN Inter-Library Online**' supports the initiative on knowledge-sharing among member universities including electronic publications of newsletters, periodicals, journals, and textbooks. The '**AUN Collaborative Research**' facilitates the exchange of expertise in the areas of economics and information technology. It is expected that, through the promotion of research collaboration, member countries can develop technological self-sufficiency. The '**AUN Quality Assurance**' aims to harmonise higher educational system and standard in ASEAN through the use of AUN-QA policy and criteria. Last but not least, the '**AUN Distinguished Scholars Programme**' facilitates the exchange of experts in priority areas of interest among member universities.

II. Activities with ASEAN's Dialogue Partners

It is vital for ASEAN to develop an intensified relationship with its Dialogue Partners and other regional organisations so as to become a pivotal player in the international arena. Concerning this, the AUN has continuously developed partnership in higher education with the ASEAN's Dialogue Partners; namely, China, the European Union, Japan, and Korea.

The '**ASEAN-EU University Network Programme**' or '**AUNP**' and the '**ASEAN-European Engineering Exchange (ASE3) Programme**' indicate the depth of collaboration that the AUN has with the European Union. The AUNP provided funding support for collaborative project in higher education between ASEAN and the EU in addition to promoting better understanding and cooperation between the two regions through the organisation of conferences/meetings. Sadly speaking, the programme lasted for 6 years and come to an end in April 2006. The '**ASEAN European Engineering Exchange (ASE3) Programme**' is the programme that specifically aims to facilitate an exchange of students among AUN members, European educational institutions in engineering and a few European industry partners. The exchange under the ASE3 programme can be either academic study and/or an industrial internship. Last but not least, the '**EC-ASEAN Intellectual Property Rights Co-operation Programme**' or

'**ECAPII**' is a European supported initiative aiming to promote Intellectual Property Rights in the ASEAN region to international standard.

In April 2001, the '**AUN/Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network (AUN/SEED-Net)**', an educational network between ASEAN and Japan, was inaugurated as an autonomous sub-network of the AUN. The AUN/SEED-Net has its own secretariat office, which is hosted by the Faculty of Engineering, Chulalongkorn University. The programme awards scholarships in the field of engineering to graduate students at Master's and Doctoral Degree to study in Japan. The AUN/SEED-Net aims to enhance level of education and research of engineering departments in ASEAN countries as well as to strengthen network in the field of engineering between universities in ASEAN and in Japan.

The activities between the AUN and Korea began since 1999 under the '**ASEAN-ROK Academic Exchange Programme**', which illustrates cooperation between the AUN and the Korean Association of Southeast Asian Studies (KASEAS). The said programme promotes collaboration between students and scholars of ASEAN and Korea through joint research scheme and the exchange of fellowship. Meanwhile, the '**International College Student Exchange Programme**' provides scholarships for ASEAN students to study in the field of social sciences, business and Korean Studies at Daejeon University in Korea for a 1 full academic year.

Establishment of AUN-Quality Assurance (AUN-QA)

The initiative on ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) Networking was originated by the first Chairman of the AUN Board of Trustees (AUN-BOT), Dr. Vanchai Sirichana in 1998 in view that higher education institutions in ASEAN should strive to develop quality assurance networking as mechanism to reach and maintain high standard education, not just for one particular country but for ASEAN as a whole. Amid competitive environment of globalised world education, quality assurance is also an instrument for mutual recognition to and respect of differences among individual institutions including their diversified cultural and basic resources.

The initiative was welcomed by the fourth AUN-BOT meeting in Myanmar in 1998 and became an important priority of the AUN, particularly in the dimensions of teaching, learning, and management. In committing to this, the BOT also marked the year 1999 as the AUN year of quality education and convened the AUN-QA Network (AUNQANET) Task Force comprising administrators responsible for quality development in each member university with the aim to develop a common standard of quality by sharing experience and good practices.

The AUNQANET Task Force Meeting was held in November 2000, back-to-back with the 9th AUN-BOT Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, under the name "Workshop on AUN-QA Alliance". In this particular Meeting, collective wills and commitments of all AUN member Universities had been demonstrated in **the Bangkok Accord on AUN-QA** to chart ASEAN's future of quality improvement within the network. The Accord provides a guideline to promote the development of a quality assurance system as an instrument for maintaining, improving and enhancing teaching, research and the overall academic standards of AUN member universities. In order to achieve this aim, AUN Board Members, who represent all AUN Member Universities in their countries, agreed:

1. that a Chief Quality Officer (CQO) will be appointed by each Member University to coordinate the implementation to achieve this aim. The CQOs from Member Universities are to convene regularly at organised workshops. The first workshop

shall result in the establishment of common criteria for quality assurance in higher education as well as the benchmarking procedures through internal and external examiners.

2. that the common quality criteria and the benchmarking procedures, derived from the first workshop, (A. teaching and learning B. research C. community services D. media of instruction E. learning facilities F. staff/student ratio, etc.) are acceptable to all Member Universities.
3. that they would identify and encourage the implementation of good practices for quality assurance in higher education.
4. that they would continue mutual collaboration and information exchange through regular communication channels and sharing of information.
5. that the individual members may invite and facilitate auditing, assessment and review by other Member Universities as well as by external bodies.
6. that they shall be responsible for the implementation of this Accord by Member Universities. Any differences or disputes arising from the implementation of this Accord shall be settled by mutual consultation among Member Universities.
7. that they shall seek further and deeper engagement regarding quality assurance in higher education with ASEAN Dialogue Partners.

The 1st AUN-QA Workshop was hosted by the University of Malaya in Malaysia in April 2001. The CQOs had actively taken part in the drafting of **AUN-QA Common Policies and Criteria**, as well as formulating the long-term strategic plan for AUN-QA. The AUN-QA Common Policies and Criteria was endorsed that;

1. AUN member universities shall continuously strive to improve the implementation of a Quality Assurance System.
2. AUN member universities shall institute a Quality Assurance exchange and training programme, of which the framework and implementation be collectively agreed upon by the respective CQOs of member universities.
3. The CQOs of member universities shall formulate a plan by which the Quality Assurance System of member universities could be enhanced and commonly recognised by AUN.
4. AUN member universities shall welcome cross-external audits using commonly agreed upon auditing instruments to facilitate global recognition and benchmarking of member universities.
5. The quality criteria of the core activities of AUN member universities (teaching/ learning, research and services) shall be the foundation of any audit instruments formulated by AUN.

In October 2001, the 2nd AUN-QA Workshop was hosted by Chulalongkorn University, Burapha University and the Ministry of University Affairs of Thailand in Bangkok and Chonburi. The Workshop concentrated on QA status, movement, documentation, electronic manual and system implementation for AUN-QA activities, all of which effectively contributed to the development of AUN-QA benchmarking procedures.

In March 2002, the 3rd AUN-QA Workshop entitled "QA Practices: Teaching Best, Learning Best" with the focus on the sharing of good practices in teaching and learning, was held in Yangon, Myanmar. The Workshop turned out to be highly successful as member universities actively shared their experiences and expertise in teaching and learning. To accelerate AUN-QA development in accordance with ASEAN's *Prosper Thy Neighbour* approach, member universities also offered training programmes in various aspects to enhance QA to fellow members during the Workshop.

The 4th AUN-QA Workshop was hosted by Universitas Indonesia and Gadjah Mada University in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, Indonesia in October 2002, the CQOs continued to discuss AUN-QA good practices on research, services, ethics, and human resource development through sharing experiences among member universities. In addition, the Workshop agreed to compile and publish AUN-QA Guidelines as a manual for member universities in pursuing QA standard mutually recognised by the Network.

The 5th Workshop on AUN-QA for CQOs was held in March 2003 by Universiti Brunei Darussalam in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam. The Workshop further discussed draft AUN-QA Guidelines and AUN-QA assessment through experiences shared among member universities and lesson learnt from an external expert from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India. Besides, the CQOs identified and agreed on the AUN-QA assessment instruments, which would be used as indicators for practical assessment.

The 6th AUN-QA Workshop was held in Singapore in February 2004 to test the AUN-QA Assessment Indicators through case studies at National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University. In reviewing a compilation of the AUN-QA Assessment Exercises, it was consequently agreed that the Assessment Indicator Forms be needed some adjustments to be more practical and more integrated into the internal processes of individual AUN Member Universities.

After 6 AUN-QA Workshops, the AUN-QA Guidelines was jointly written by the CQOs to be used as a manual and reference for the QA movement in the ASEAN region. The 16th AUN-BOT Meeting in November 2004 endorsed the AUN-QA Guidelines and agreed to encourage the Member Universities to utilize the Guidelines as appropriate.

ASEAN-EU Collaboration in Quality Assurance

To further develop the AUN-QA to be more internationally recognised, the AUN also cooperated with the European Union with regard to QA collaboration within the two regions through the ASEAN-EU University Network Programme (AUNP). The AUNP is jointly operated by the AUN Secretariat and the European Commission through the Programme Management Office in Bangkok (PMO). Recently, the PMO organised the First AUNP Round Table Meeting under the theme "*Quality Assurance in Higher Education*" on 30 November - 3 December 2003 at Chulalongkorn University. The Meeting gathered QA experts from the ASEAN and the European Union to share experiences in QA, to learn from each other case studies of some specific countries from the two regions, as well as to explore possible QA collaboration among both regions. Drs. Ton Vroeijenstijn, QA consultant from the Netherlands, was recruited to conduct surveys and workshops at the AUN member universities in 9 ASEAN countries. Workshops were conducted basing on the common criteria and procedures described in the AUN-QA Guidelines. On 28-29 July 2005, the ASEAN Regional Workshop on QA was organized at Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City to discuss concepts and elements of internal and external QA and also to outline the structure of the national workshops in order to suit each

university's requirement. Apart from the Regional workshops on QA, Drs. Ton Vroeijenstijn also conducted another 8 national workshops in Hanoi-Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam.

Later on, the Training Trainers for Self-Assessment and Audit for the AUN-QA was hosted by Gadjah Mada University and University of Indonesia on 8-10 December 2005 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The Training was also funded by AUNP and Drs. Ton Vroeijenstijn was also served as a Trainer. The workshop agreed to revise the AUN-QA Guidelines and the selected CQOs would share their experience and help developing QA systems of other AUN Member Universities in order to upgrade educational standards among ASEAN countries. After the completion of the Yogyakarta workshop, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) expressed their wish to co-operate with the AUN in the field of QA. In response to the conclusion of the CQOs from the workshop, the revision of the AUN-QA Guidelines and the creation of a Manual for Quality Assurance in the ASEAN region needed to be done.

On 24-25 May 2006, the AUN with a partial financial support from HRK arranged an informal meeting of the "Steering Group" for the project "Towards a manual for Quality Assurance" at Chulalongkorn University, discussing on the revision of the AUN-QA Guidelines and the structure of a practical manual. After the informal meeting, Drs. Ton Vroeijenstijn and some small group of CQOs had been working so as to gather comments for a draft of a manual for the Guidelines. At the 20th AUN-BOT meeting in November 2006, the Board of Trustees endorsed the Manual for the Implementation of AUN-QA Guidelines as the AUN publication and also agreed to conduct that the 7th AUN-QA Workshop at Burapha University in 2007.

Recent Development

The 7th AUN-QA Workshop on Internal Quality Assessment (IQA) was held at Burapha University on 3 – 4 May 2007 to practice the Manual for Implementation of AUN-QA Guidelines" by assessing the AUN-QA model for 3 levels, namely Internal Quality System (IQA), Institutional level and Programme level. The CQOs gained experiences from the assessment exercise and agreed to refine the checklist in the Manual for better implementation by the CQOs' Task Force. The Task Force was set up to strengthen and promote the AUN-QA system within AUN Member Universities and Non-Member Universities in the ASEAN region as well as with other regions.

In this connection, the Workshop came up with the action plans for the AUN-QA activities as follows;

- The following schedules for the actual assessment of the Business and Engineering Programme levels at the voluntary AUN Member Universities;
 - University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur on 12 – 13 December 2007
 - De La Salle University, the Philippines in June 2008
 - University of Indonesia, Jakarta in December 2008
 - Universiti Brunei Darussalam in June 2009
 - Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City in December 2009
- The series of training/ workshop on Enhancing Quality Assurance in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV) supported by the ASEAN.
- Preparation for the certification of AUN-QA Label in the future.

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