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Author

ALDERMAN, Geoffrey

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Alderman ; Roger Brown

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Abstract

This article provides a comparative analysis of the systems used for the 'accreditation' of degree-granting institutions in the USA (accreditation) and the UK (audit). The authors begin by outlining the similarities and differences between the two processes. They point out that audit is not the subject of political controversy in the way that accreditation currently is. However, they add that this does not necessarily mean that all is set fair and potential sources of disturbance are highlighted. The article then considers what changes can be expected in the two processes as a result of increased market pressures, and whether such changes will make them more effective vehicles for quality improvement. An alternative approach, which would involve merging the regulatory role of the QAA with the regulatory functions of the Funding Councils, as part of a complete scheme of risk assessment, is suggested. The article also asks to whom the accrediting agencies in both countries are accountable for their work. According to the authors, neither process is foolproof; both can be

13.7.2025

manipulated and are open to abuse. In addition, it is argued that on neither side of the Atlantic are there currently adequate arrangements to "inspect the inspectors". The authors conclude by warning that with the growing tendency to resort to the legal process, more questions will be asked about the accountability of those whose judgements are being questioned. In their view, the stronger the market pressures, the greater will be the recourse to legal process in both countries. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)