



HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY MANAGEMENT: REFLECTIONS ON ITS FUTURE IN THE EHEA

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European quality assurance: lot of progress

- Consolidation and institutionalisation of external QA in many countries
- Increasing international collaboration, exchange, mutual recognition, shared practices
- Professional network: ENQA
- Frameworks, guidelines: ESG
- Register: EQAR



European quality assurance: achievements

- Really quality-poor programmes and institutions have been eliminated
- Strong upward quality improvement process across the system
- Institutional internalization of quality culture
- Quality increasingly integrated in institutional management and system policies
- Shaping conditions for progress in credit transfer, recognition and mobility



European quality assurance: challenges

- Progress towards more flexible recognition of qualifications and credits seems to come to a standstill
- ‘Quality fatigue’ in academic community
- Limited focus on ‘excellent’ segment of the quality distribution has decreased support and trust
- Increasing concerns about bureaucracy, overhead, costs, ‘proceduralism’
- Moves to institutional QA and internal QA as strategy to ‘lighten’ the system
- Concerns about peer review



BUT...

- The world of higher education is changing fast
 - With changes that are sometimes disruptive
 - Often moving beyond or alongside current QA
- *Is the quality assurance and accreditation system, based on self-regulation, on values, assumptions, concepts, and methodologies built up in the past, capable of catching up with systemic changes and continue to lead higher education into the future?*



TREND 1. DIVERSIFICATION OF DELIVERY AND PARTICIPATION MODES – ONLINE LEARNING



Diversity of routes

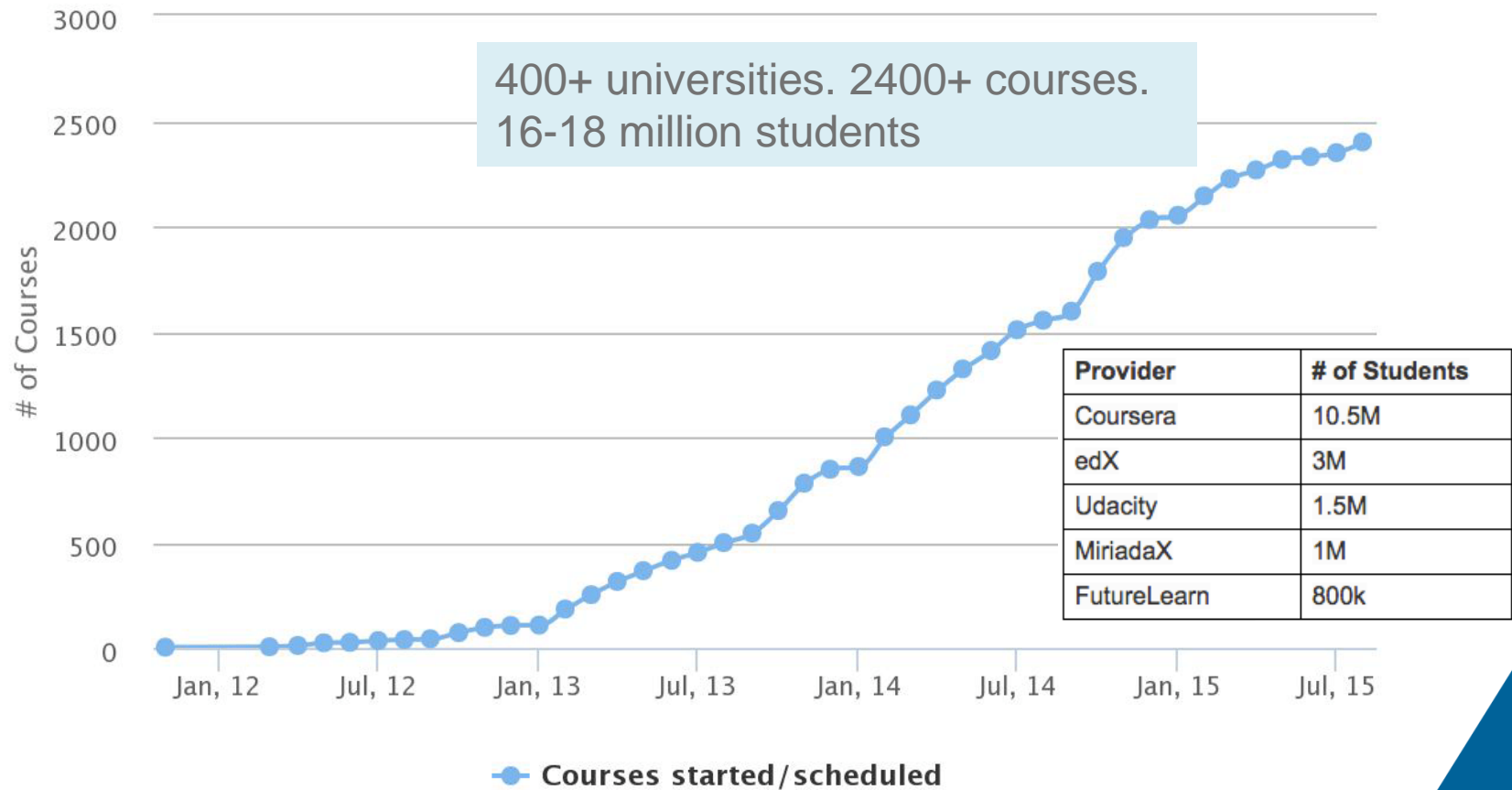
- Delivery
 - Online education, MOOCs
 - New providers
- Participation
 - Flexible routes
 - Part-time study
- Qualifications
 - New credentials, badges, micro-credits, nano-degrees, etc.



MOOCs are rapidly becoming part of the higher education system

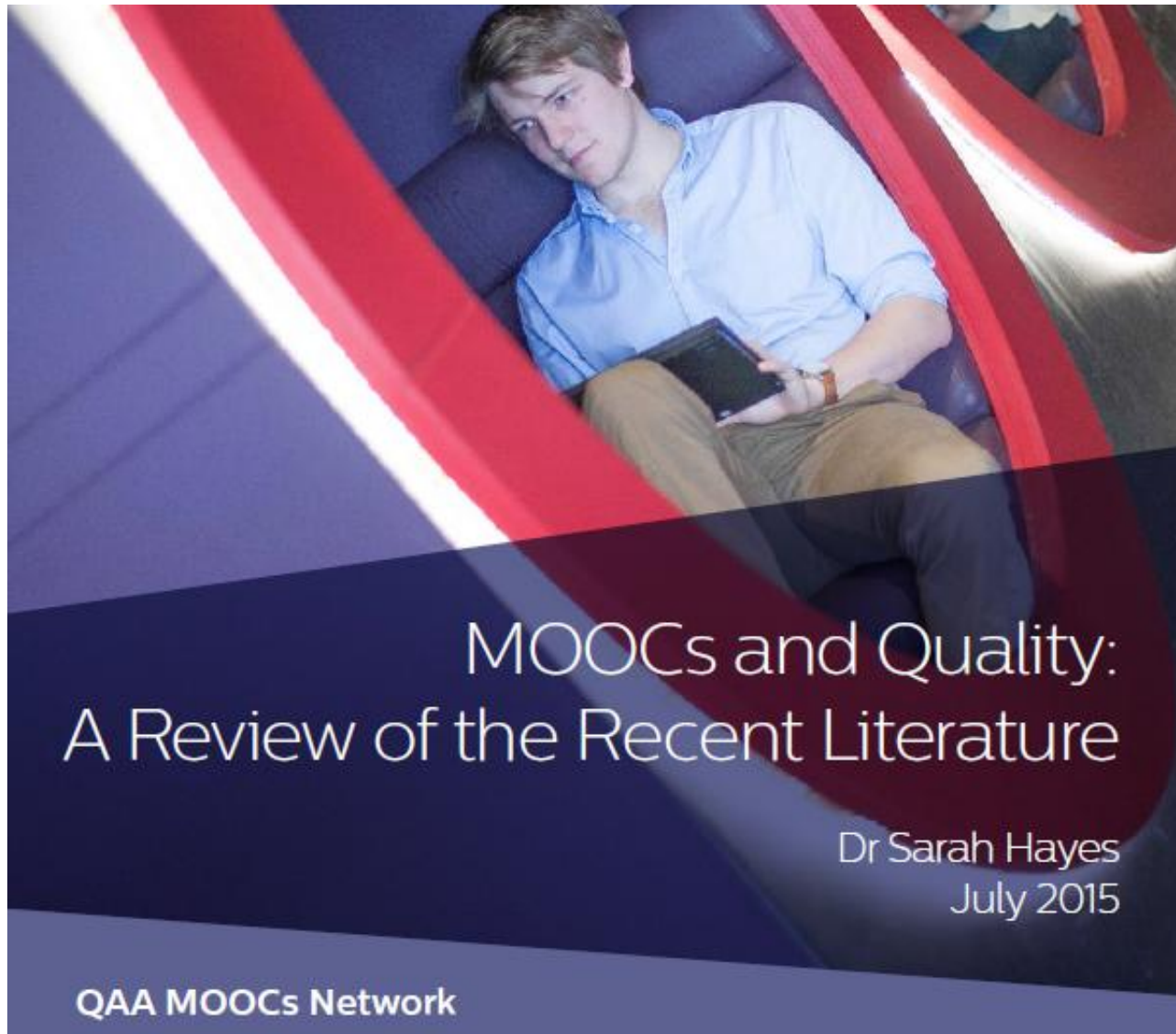
Growth of MOOCs

Cumulative number of courses started/scheduled





Quality challenges of MOOCs





Quality challenges of MOOCs

- How will MOOCs be integrated in accreditation, credit accumulation and credit transfer systems in higher education?
- Are quality assurance arrangements ready to implement specific evaluation instruments and procedures for MOOCs?
- How is institutional quality assurance and accreditation dealing with institutions with multiple delivery modes?



TREND 2. RISING COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION



Financial inputs in higher education increasing

- Total (public & private) financial investment grew
 - Between 2005 and 2012 on average across OECD increase of 10% in per student expenditure and 27% in total expenditure
 - With huge differences between countries, increases higher in countries with below-average expenditure, catching up
 - Yearly per student expenditure is now 14K US\$
 - Total expenditure increased from 1.3% GDP in 2000 to 1.6% GDP in 2011



Financial inputs in higher education increasing

- Private expenditure has increased a lot
 - 31% of total expenditure (0.5% GDP) comes from private sources, mainly tuition fees
 - Increase from 25% in 2000
 - Total private expenditure increased with 32% since 2005
 - >50% in Israel, US, Australia, Japan, UK, Korea and Chile



But strong signs of stagnating funding

- Increase in total per student expenditure slows down since crisis
 - Negative growth in almost half of countries between 2008 and 2011
 - Expenditure cannot catch up with increasing student numbers
- Increasing concerns about levels of private expenditure, student debt



But strong signs of stagnating funding

- Efficiency and value-for-money become very important policy considerations
 - Both for governments and students/families
 - Cost of higher education becoming political issue in many countries
- What are students actually ‘buying’?
 - Very weak relationship between cost and actual ‘product’, benefits and outcomes
 - Value-for-money depends enormously on institution and field of study



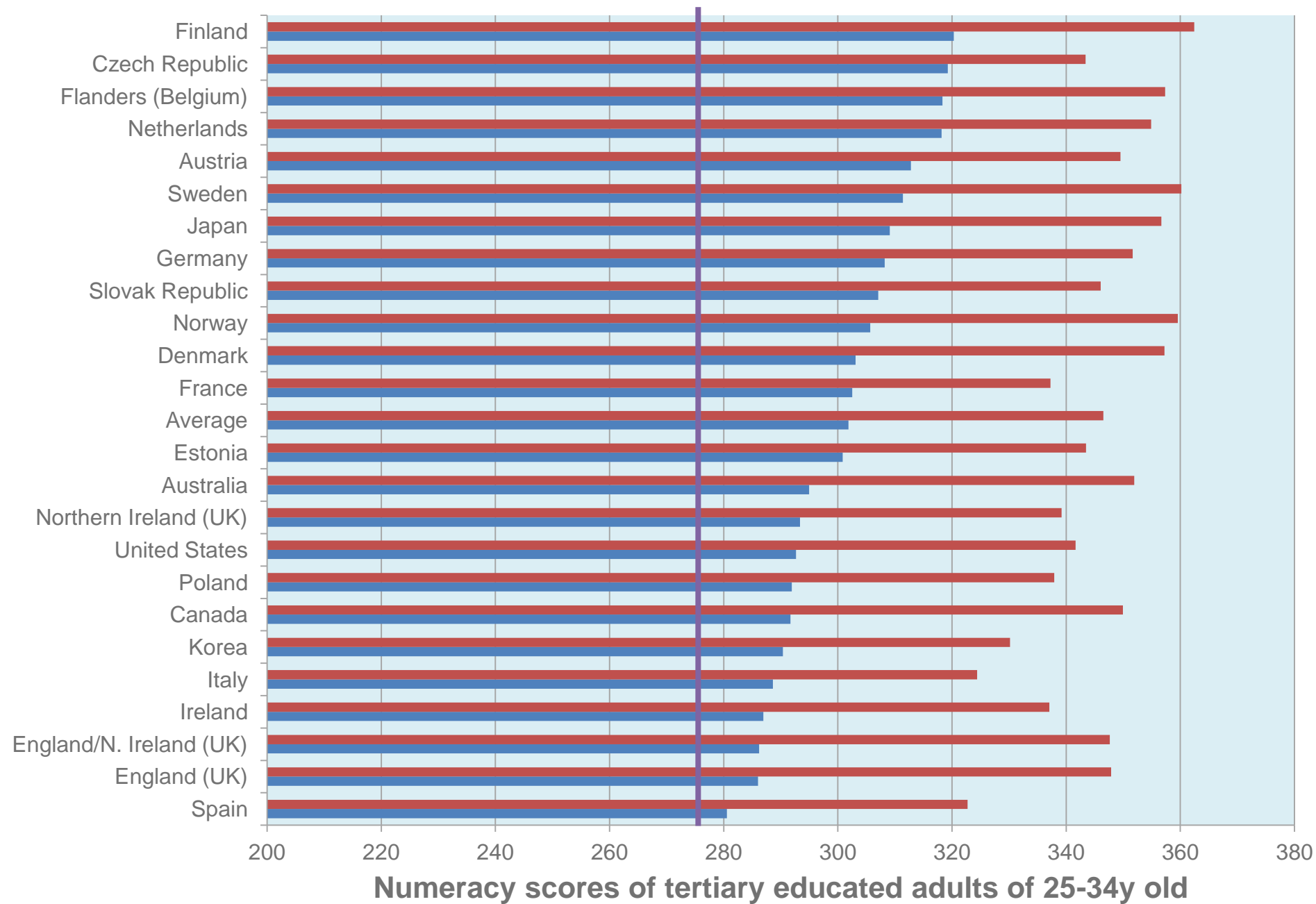
Challenges for quality assurance and accreditation

- Can quality assurance ‘reassure’ students and families that higher education is worth the money? Is QA a component of the new social contract which is emerging in HE?
- Is ‘quality’ an absolute concept or relative to the resources invested? “Added-value”?
- Policy-makers complain that QA and accreditation do not offer them many tools to increase efficiency and value-for-money in the system



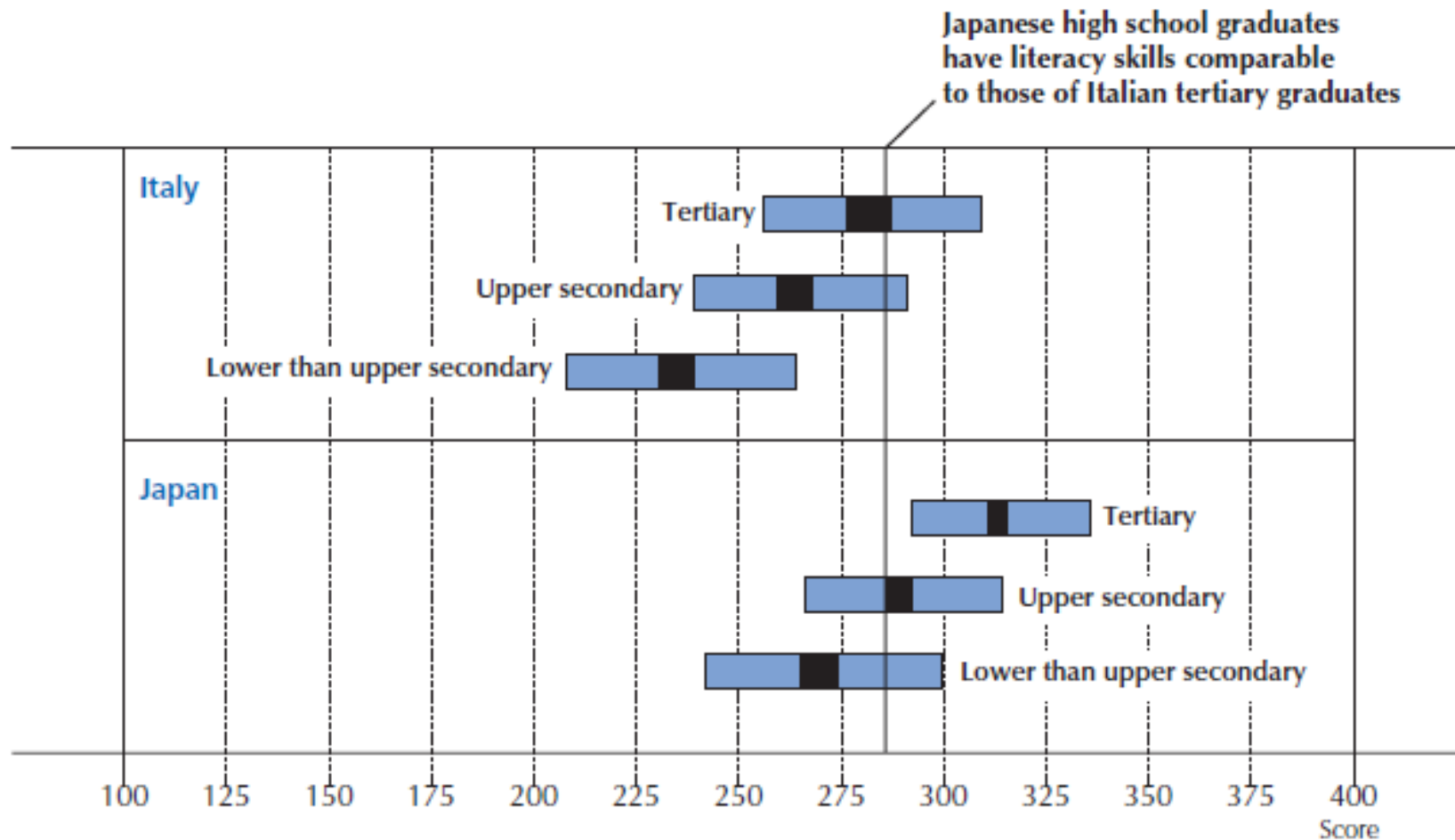
TREND 3. EMERGING EVIDENCE ON INTERNATIONAL QUALITY DIFFERENTIALS

■ 95th percentile ■ mean score tertiary 25-34y





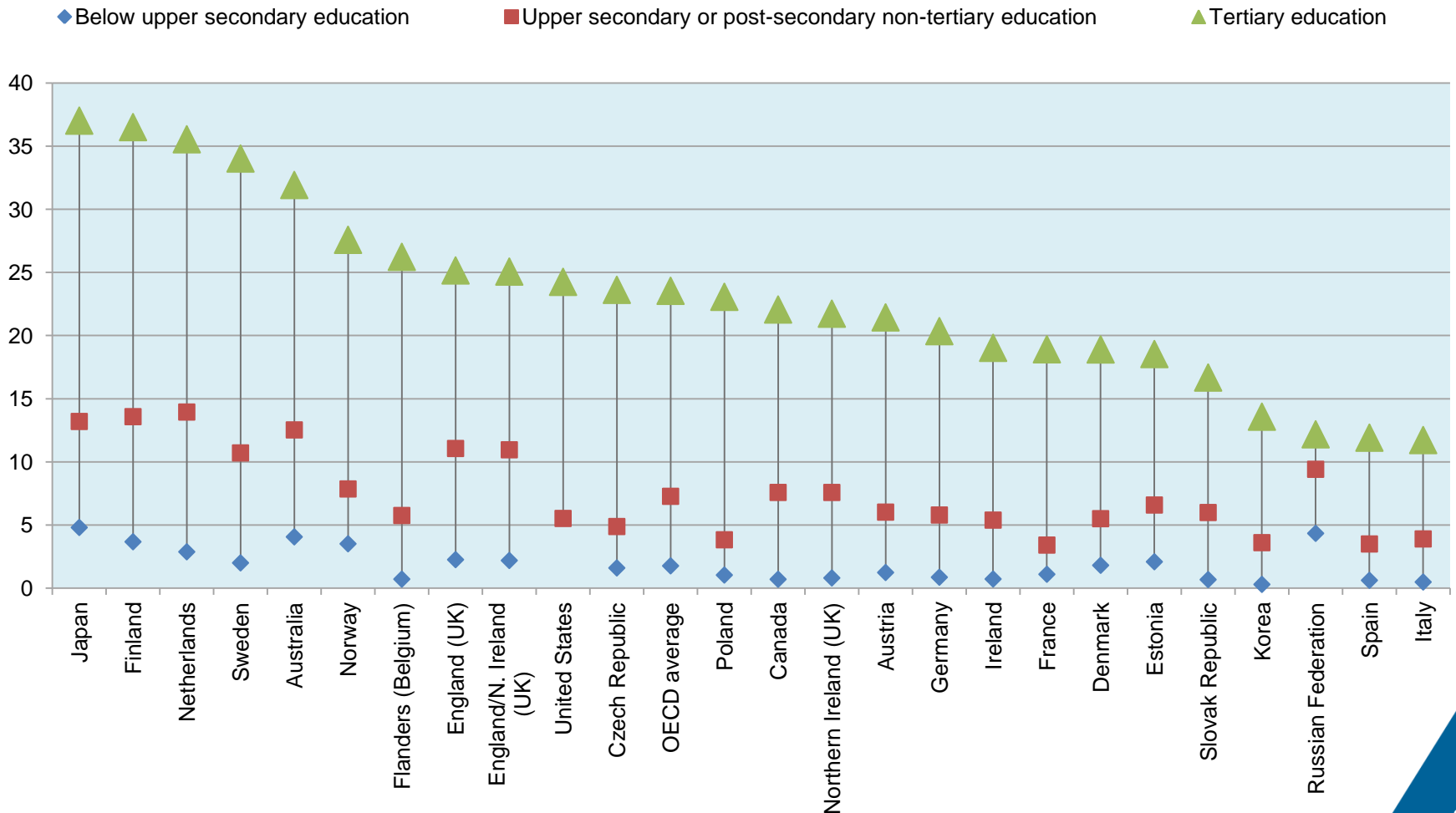
Literacy equivalent of tertiary qualifications





Numeracy equivalent of tertiary qualifications

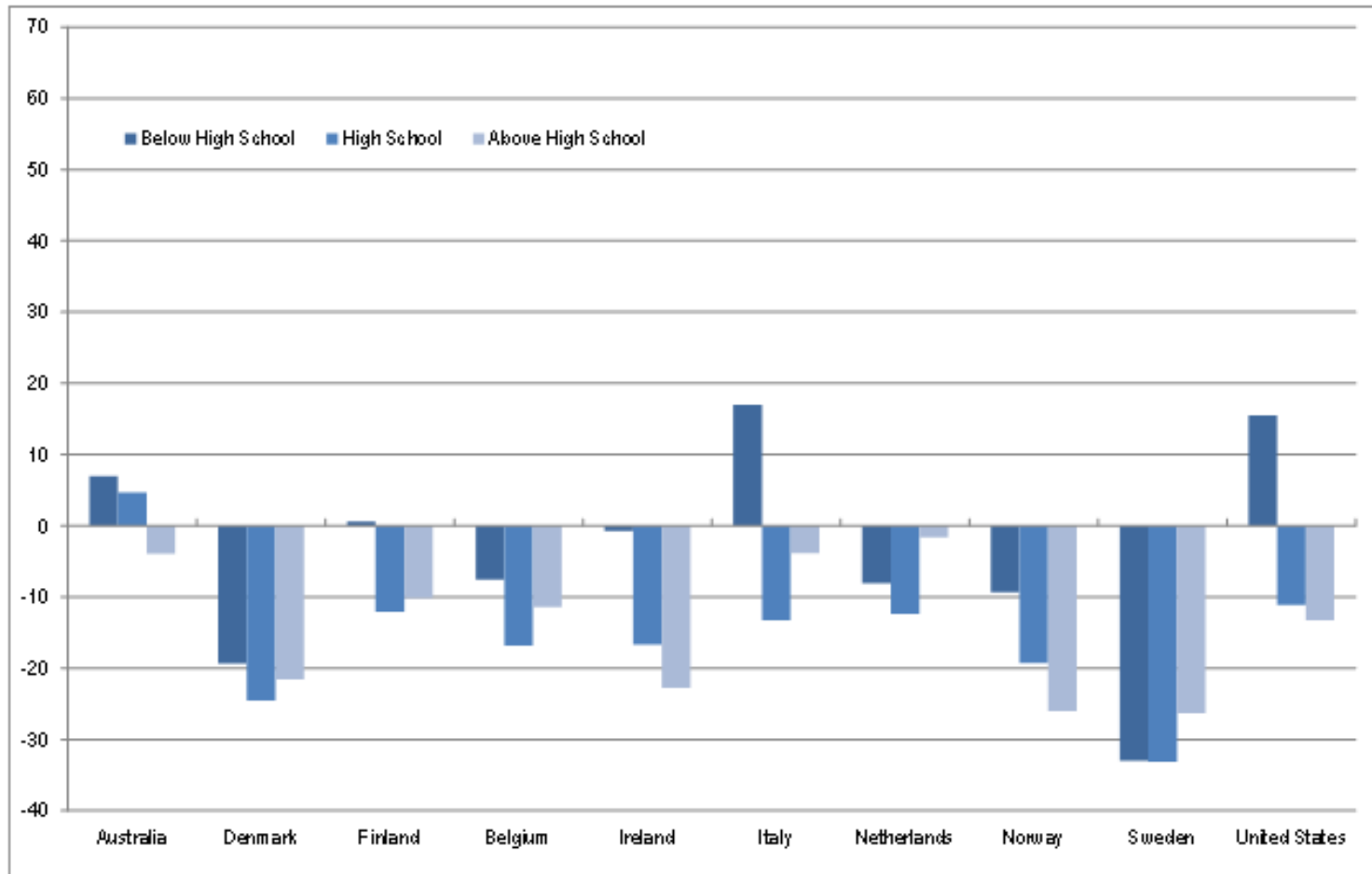
Proportion of 25-64 year-olds scoring at PIAAC numeracy level 4 and 5, by educational attainment of the population (2012)





Decreasing learning outcomes over time?

Figure 7. Changes in literacy proficiency from IALS to PIAAC, by educational attainment



Source: International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (1994-1998), and Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012).



Challenges for quality assurance and accreditation

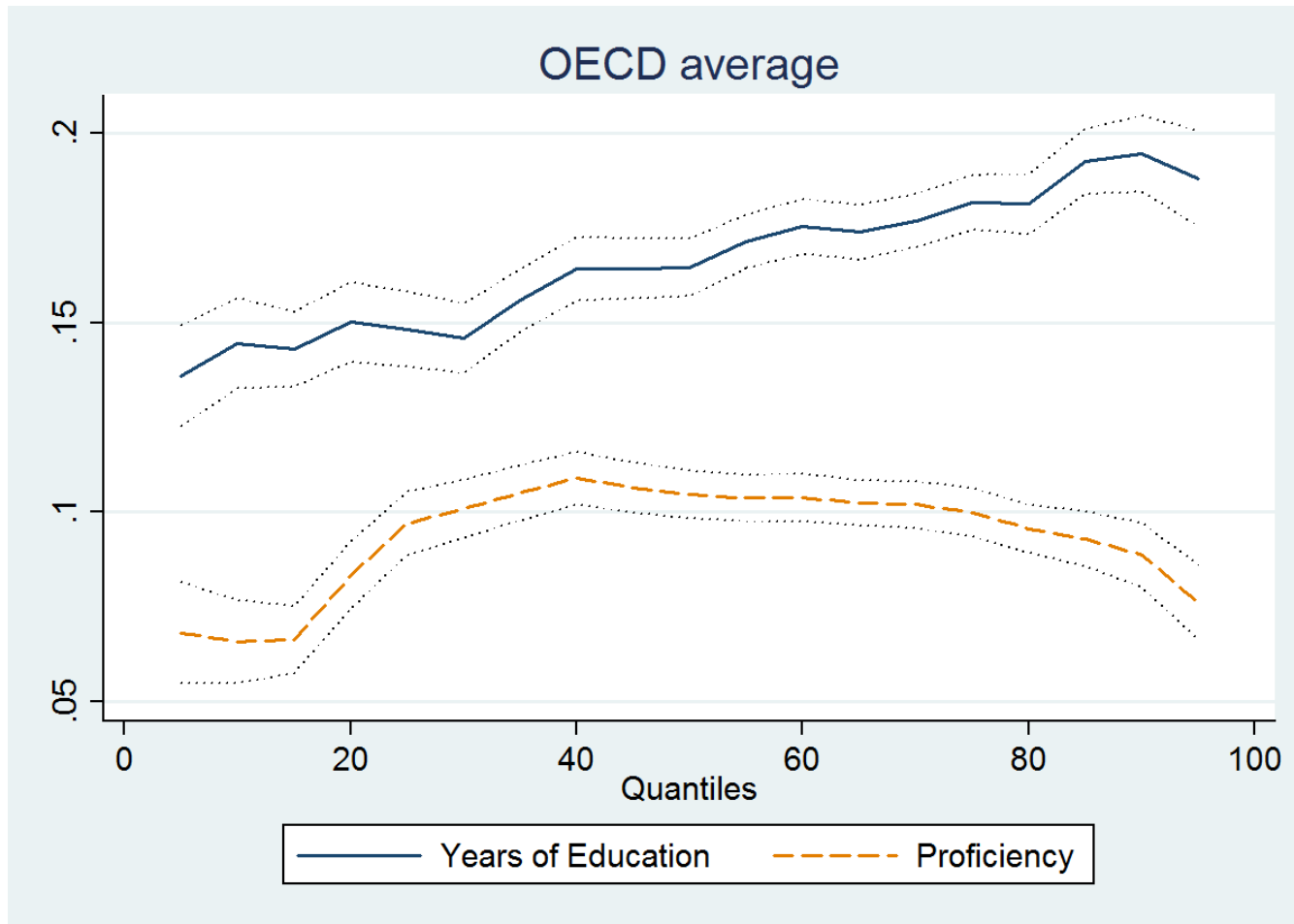
- Is 'assured quality' a guarantee for students meeting certain minimal learning outcomes?
- Has quality assurance an answer to the – perceived or real – grade inflation?
- Has the expansion of quality assurance prevented a (possible) decrease in quality of learning outcomes?



TREND 4. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF CREDENTIALISM



Qualifications, not skills are rewarded



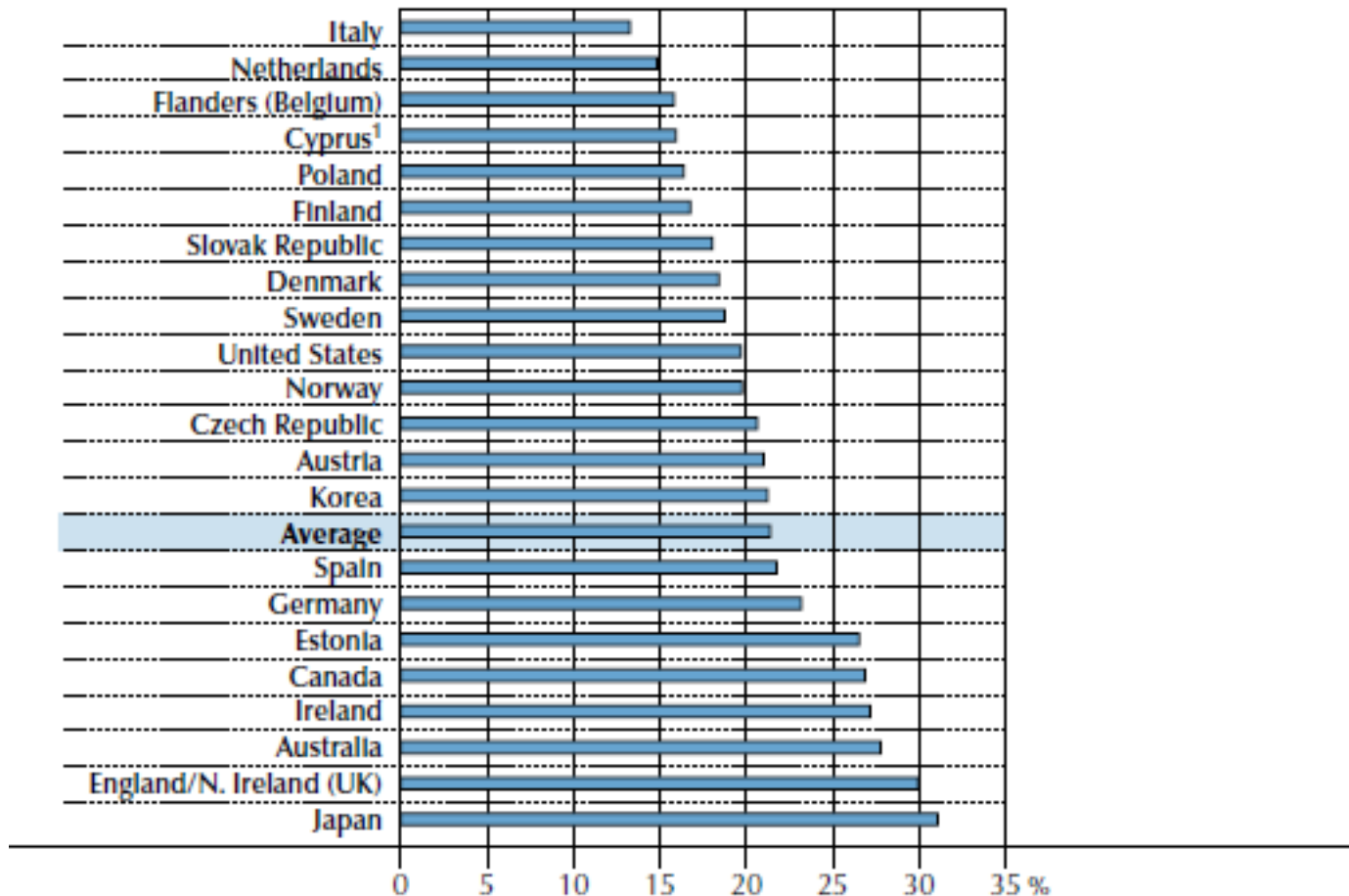
Source: Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012)



Concerns about over-qualification

Incidence of over-qualification

Percentage of workers whose highest qualification is higher than the qualification they deem necessary to get their job today





Concerns about quality and value of qualifications

- Concerns about the quality and added-value of a university experience
 - *Academically Adrift*: limited improvement in academic skills
 - What is the relative contribution of selection versus teaching and learning in the production of high-quality graduates; what is the actual 'learning gain'
 - Doubts on the quality of the teaching and learning experience at universities



Erosion of degrees?

Ernst & Young Removes Degree Classification From Entry Criteria As There's 'No Evidence' University Equals Success

The Huffington Post UK | By Lucy Sherriff

Posted: 04/08/2015 14:55 BST | Updated: 21/09/2015 09:59 BST



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Ernst & Young, one of the UK's biggest graduate recruiters, has announced it will be removing the degree classification from its entry criteria, saying there is "no evidence" success at university correlates with achievement in later life.

The accountancy firm is scrapping its policy of requiring a 2:1 and the equivalent of three B grades at A-level in order to open opportunities for talented individuals "regardless of their background".

Maggie Stilwell, EY's managing partner for talent, said the company would use online assessments to judge the potential of applicants.

"Academic qualifications will still be taken into account and indeed remain an

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Challenges for quality assurance and accreditation

- Should quality assurance protect the higher education system and wider society from credentialism, over-qualification and grade inflation?
- Is QA capable of moving beyond it's focus on processes and to take a critical view on what students actual learn and what the value is of qualifications in a wider context?



What does this mean?

These questions and challenges cannot be addressed without changing the focus of what we mean by quality from input and process to what students actually learn, to *learning outcomes*



Conclusions

- QA remains a critically important cornerstone of the EHEA
- Strong European QA framework are necessary to safeguard the achievements of the EHEA
- No more low-hanging fruits or easy wins, next layer of wins requires more and better efforts, in a context of increasing resistance
- QA should force the HE system to new steps towards credit transfer and recognition of qualifications



Conclusions

- At the same time new systemic challenges require more imaginative answers
 - New modes of delivery and learning
 - Rising (private) cost of higher education
 - Emerging evidence on huge skills differences
 - Limits of credentialism
- Radical shift in focus needed from inputs and processes to learning outcomes
- Relying on internal QA and weakening the external, critical eye will reduce the capacity of QA to be the driver of change in the EHEA



Thank you !

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