Quality assurance and benchmarking in Europe and Japan: A shift to focus on teaching and learning

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What is Quality in Higher Education? An on-going discussion

There are no quick and easy answers. There are many definitions (or rather there is no definition) what quality is and how it can be measured.

In general: Accountability and Enhancement

In the end the concept of quality depends on which stakeholder´s criterions are used (governments, universities, employers, parents etc.)

Higher Education Institution Quality in the European Higher Education Area(EHEA): Background

The need to modernise higher education

The need to guarantee the quality in a multitude of institutions in very diverse academic systems (at least four different academic traditions)

The need of increased mobility and employability

The need of transparency, comparability and transferability

THE NEED OF A COMMON QUALITY CULTURE

EHEA

The Bologna Process

Accountability on an European level

A common European understanding about

1. The fact that educations are defined by academics in consultation with other stakeholders – reference points
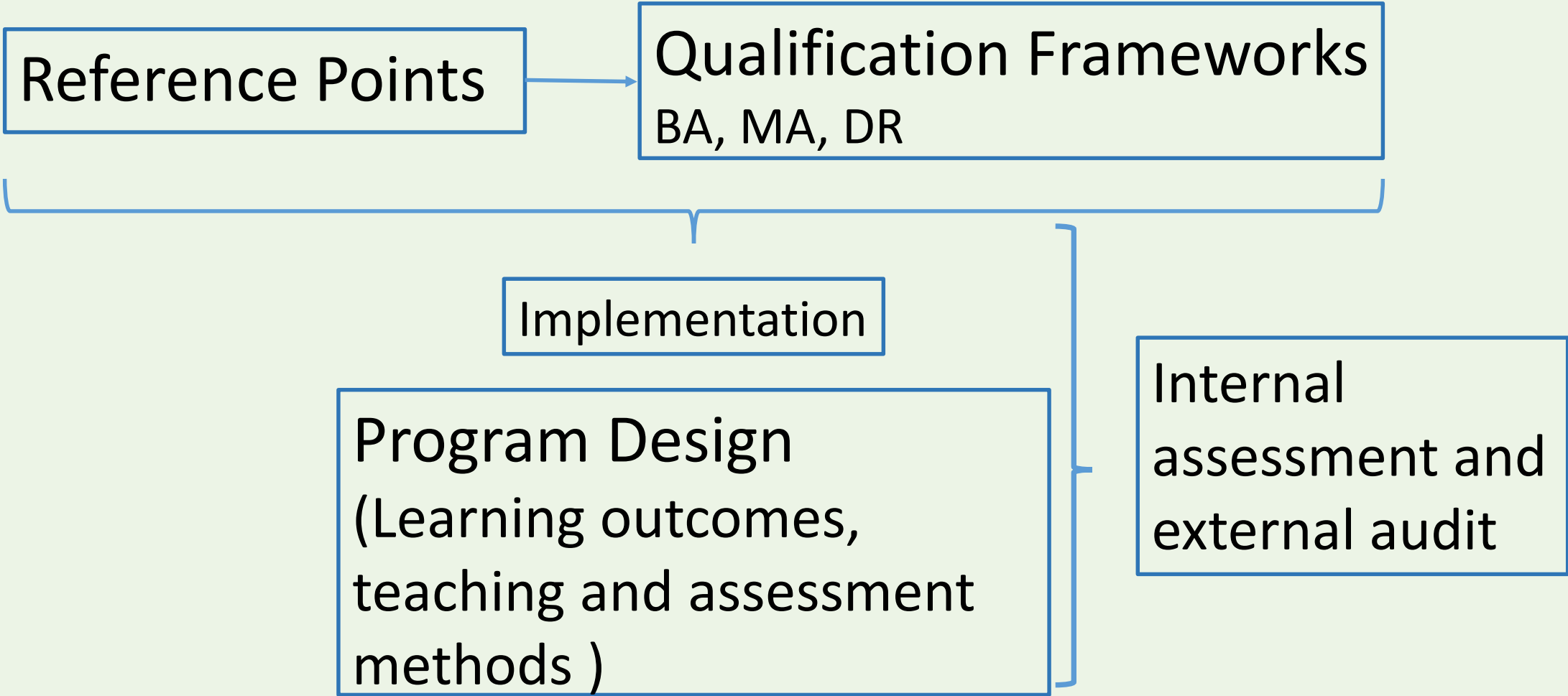
2. The fact that (all) students must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and core transferable competences they need after graduation – learning outcomes

3. The students are "the containers" of comparable and transferable knowledge, skills and abilities – student centred learning

Reference Points(RP) and Qualification Frameworks (QF) EHEA

Qualification frameworks have been recognised as having the potential to make higher education systems more transparent, through common reference points for levels of qualifications and also strengthening links between qualifications and learning outcomes.

The relationship between RP, QF
program design and assessment

| Reference Points | → | Qualification Frameworks
BA, MA, DR |

Implementation

Program Design
(Learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods)

Internal assessment and external audit

The concept of student-centred learning.

A shift from what is taught to how and why something is taught.
From thinking of the performance of teachers to looking at the learning processes the students should go through in order to learn effectively.

A shift from what teachers give to what (and how) students receive.

Assessing both the result and the process.

Quality Assurance in the EHEA

ESG (European Standards and Guidelines) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (latest May 2015)

ENQA (European National Quality Assurance) European Association for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education

Reference points QFs and QA and the ESG

ESG IS ONLY A GUIDELINE AND ENQA CAN ONLY ISSUE RECOMMENDATION

BUT

1) By signing a number of declarations national governments within the EU (and the EHEA) have complied to follow the ESG

2) Following the recommendations is a requirement for membership in ENQA

Steering and/or encouraging use of learning outcomes in national policy in the EHEA for programme development, 2013/14
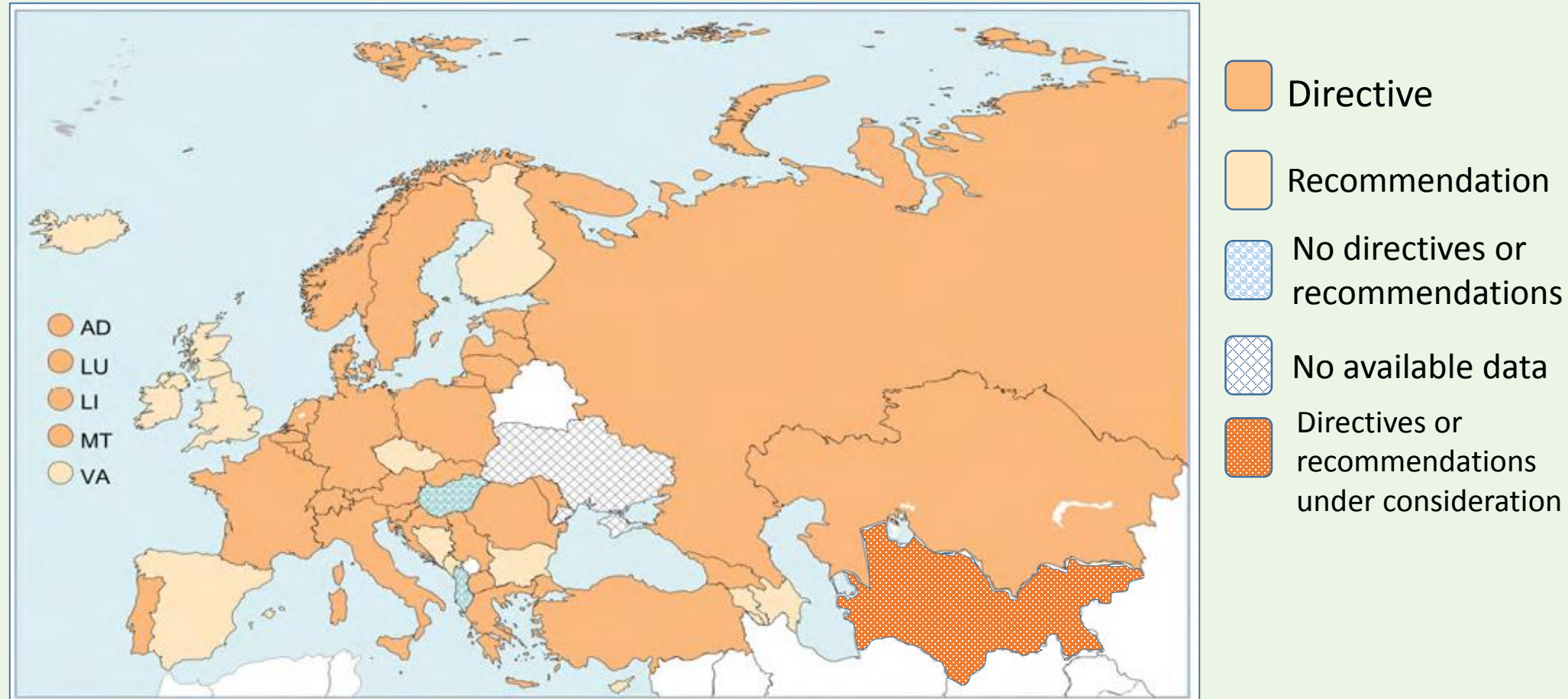
How are the reference points constructed and used for Qualification Assurance (QA)?

Creating reference points and Qualification Frameworks(QF) in EHEA

EU Commission and European University Association

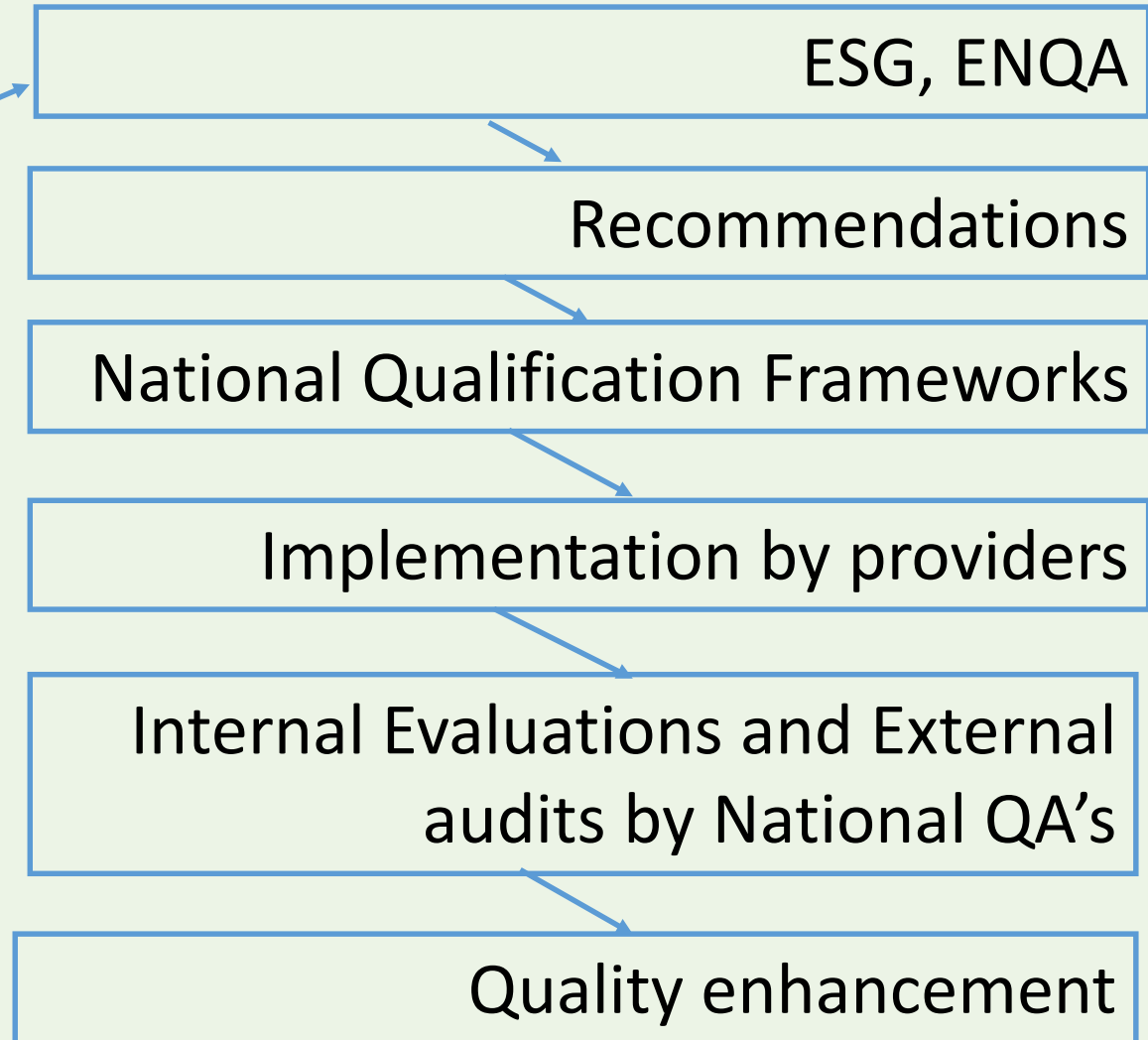**Projects lead by academics (e.g. Tuning)**

Subject area groups

Consultations with stake holders (Academics, graduates, employers)

Reference points (subject specific and generic competencies)

Cross-national reference points and QFs

Reference points and QF´s in practical use in EHEA

Cross-national reference points and QFs

ESG, ENQA

Recommendations

National Qualification Frameworks

Implementation by providers

Internal Evaluations and External audits by National QA's

Quality enhancement

Example: The UK Benchmark Statements

ESG

UK Quality Code for Higher Education

UK QAA (Quality Assurance Agency)

National HEIs

UK Benchmarking groups Academics and student and employer representatives

Curricula design

Revision every 7th year

Consultations with Subject Area Associations.

Internal assessments and external audits by National QAA

National Subject Benchmark Statements.

Quality enhancement

The similarities and difference between ESG, ENQA and UK QA

ENQA

Cross national Reference points

Included in the directives in almost all EHEA countries

QFs for all three levels (BA, MA, DR)

Wide consultations

Guidelines and recommendations for curricula design

No scheduled revisions of reference points

No definitions of learning outcomes but expected to be in tune with the reference points.

UK QAA

Do comply with ESG principles

National Reference points (benchmarks)

No wider consultations

Benchmarks for BA only

Scheduled revisions of reference points

Main learning outcomes defined (2015)

No guidelines for curricula design

No directives but strong recommendations and HEIs financial support depending on membership in UK QAA

Japan

In 2008 the MEXT formulated a project to create standards for 30 subject areas.

The objective: to create standards (reference points) for BA and Liberal Arts, taking student centred learning and generic competencies into account.

The instructions follow quite closely the UK QAA and are thus also in tune with ESG and ENQA reference points.

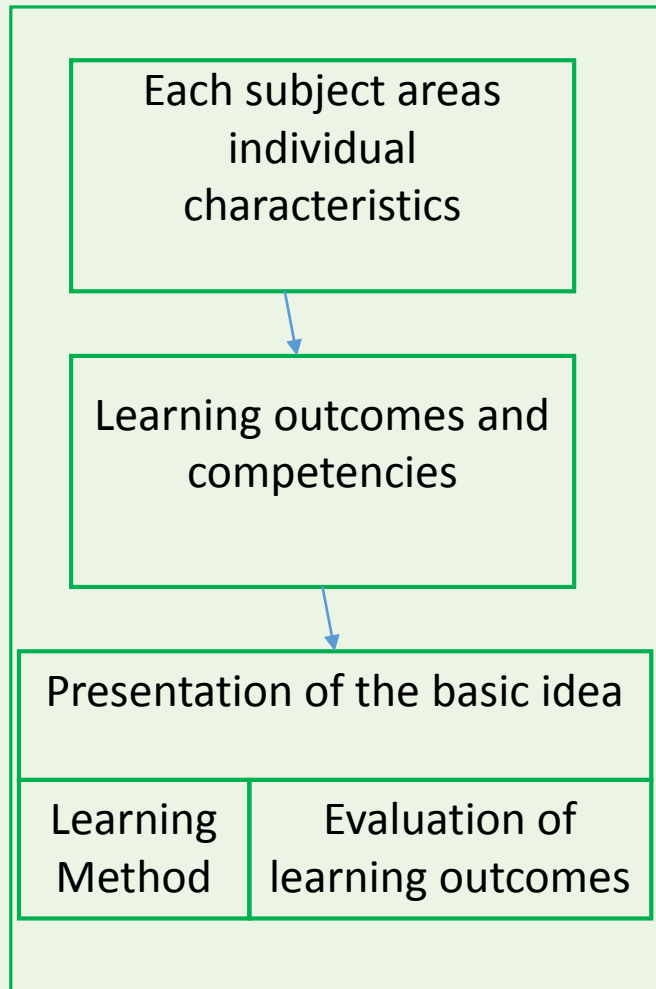The responsibility was given to the Japanese Science Council.

The process began in 2010 with creation subject area sub-committees.

So far standards have been published for 18 subject (?) areas.

図1

Planned system for QA in Japan
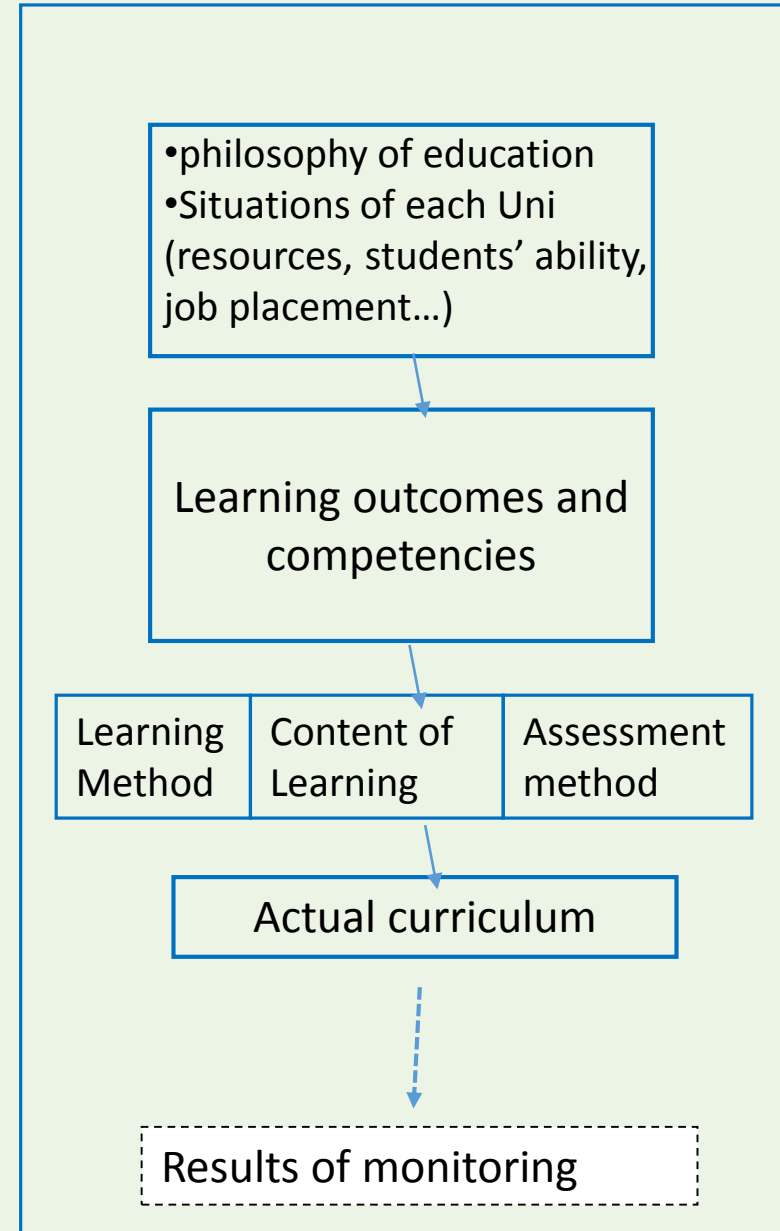
Curriculum organization based on the reference standard

Each subject areas individual characteristics

Learning outcomes and competencies

Presentation of the basic idea

| Learning Method | Evaluation of learning outcomes |

Reference standards are "starting point" – each university decides their specific curricula independently

reference
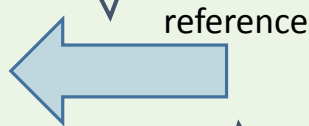
By presenting essential parts of each subject, we expect each university to define their own learning goals.

Organization of the actual curriculum at each university

• philosophy of education
• Situations of each Uni (resources, students' ability, job placement…)

Learning outcomes and competencies

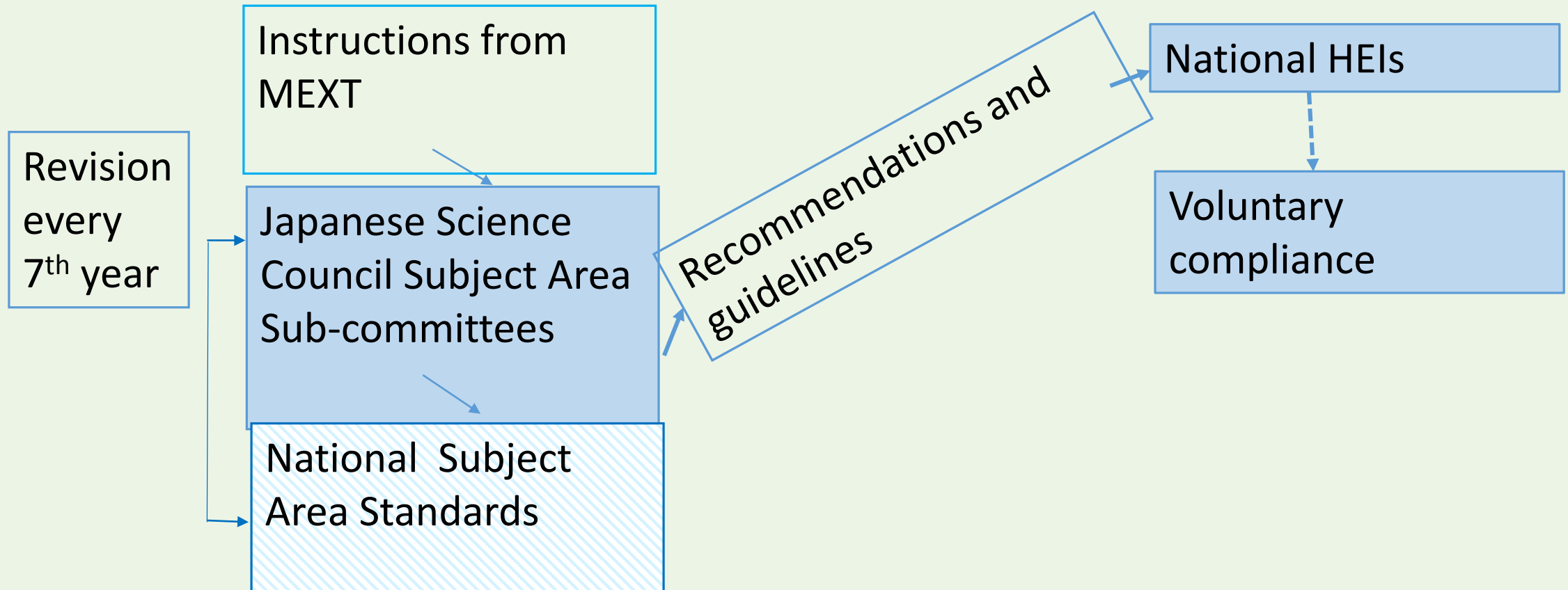| Learning Method | Content of Learning | Assessment method |

Actual curriculum

Results of monitoring

How specific and generic are combined should be decided by how best students can reach the learning goals
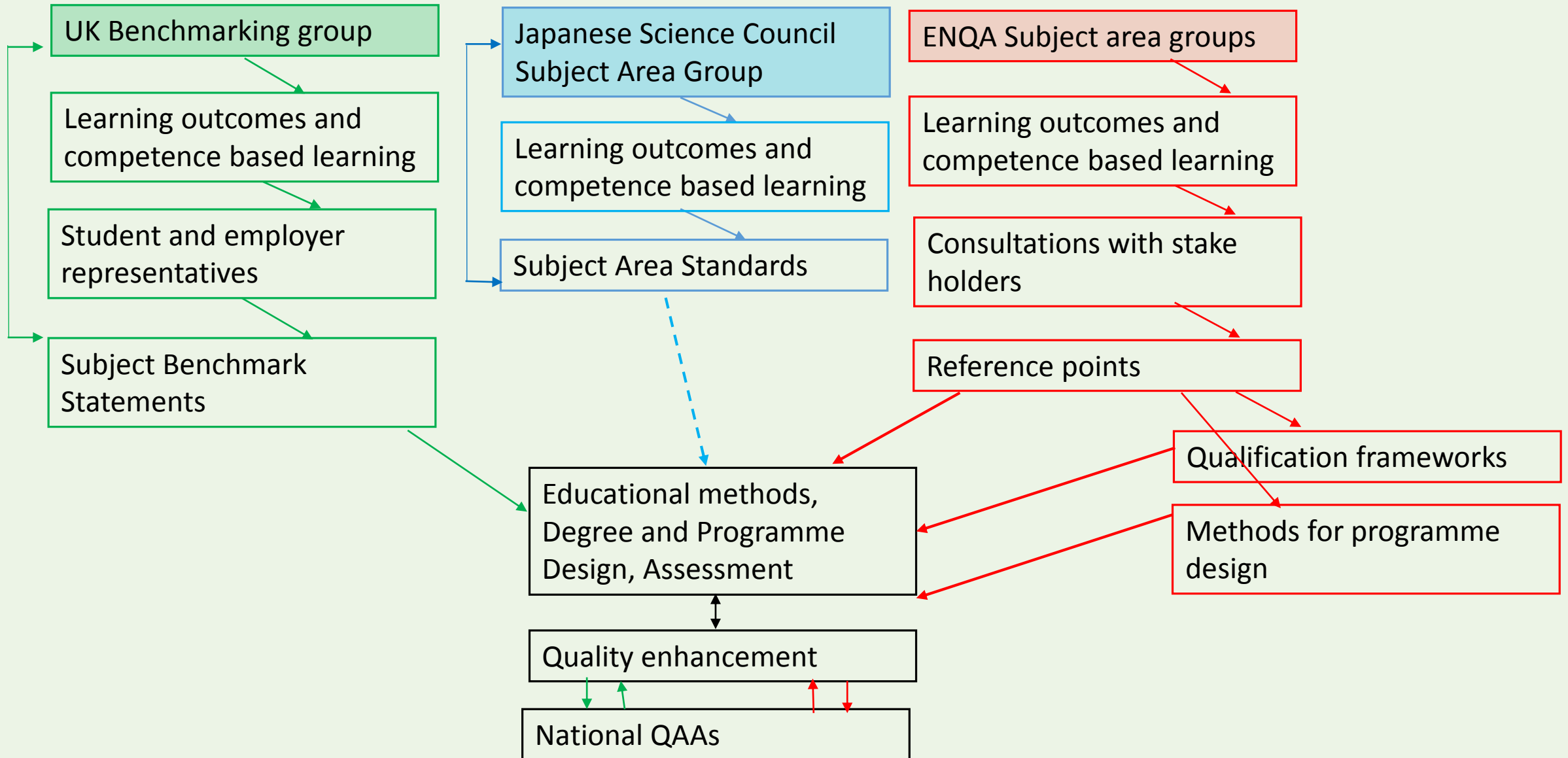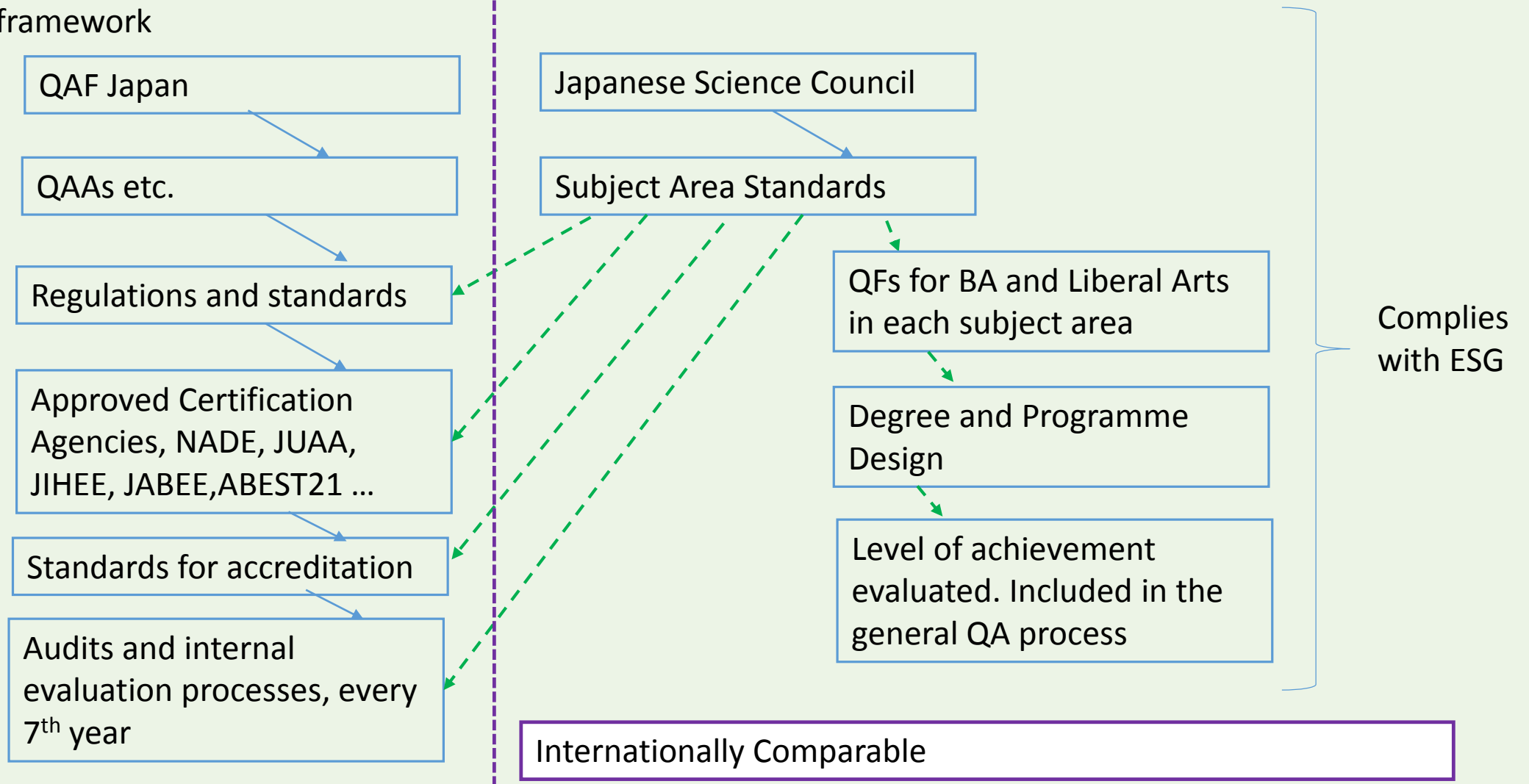
Monitoring and revision
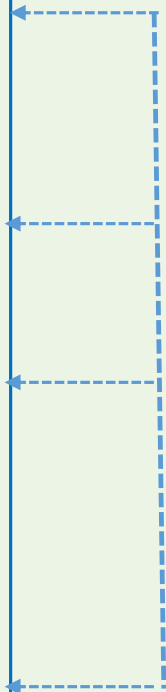
Japanese standards: A simplified version

The role of Benchmark Statements, Subject Area Standards
and Reference points in the QA process

The possible role of Japanese Subject Area Standards and Japanese QA hypothetically infused into the existing framework

QAF Japan

QAAs etc.

Regulations and standards

Approved Certification Agencies, NADE, JUAA, JIHEE, JABEE,ABEST21 …

Standards for accreditation

Audits and internal evaluation processes, every 7th year

Japanese Science Council

Subject Area Standards

QFs for BA and Liberal Arts in each subject area

Degree and Programme Design

Level of achievement evaluated. Included in the general QA process

Complies with ESG

Internationally Comparable

Benefits and problems of QF based QA

BENEFITS

Internationally and nationally transparent, comparable and transferable

Better accountability

Student centred

Guidelines for better teaching

Measurable transformation and enhancement

Democratic: better education for all

Benefits and problems

PROBLEMS

Mechanical definitions of educations

Static educational profiles

"All education alike", no room for innovative education

Accountability in conflict with autonomy

Labour intensive at least in the beginning

Faculty resistance

A sort of a conclusion

- Societies high expectations on higher education puts pressure particularly on the publicly financed HEIs accountability, that is fit for purpose, value for money and degree of transformation.

- The quality of educations are best measured through testing the functionality of processes.

- QA based on reference points and QFs increase transparency, comparability and transferability

- Reference points and QFs form a framework for the processes.

- There are benefits and there are problems

A sort of a Conclusion 2 (Japan)

There is a clear ambition to follow the ESG and ENQA approaches and principles

There are no measures to make the individual HEI comply

The latest NIAD-UE overview of the Japanese Quality Assurance system (2015) do not mention teaching, reference points or learning outcomes.

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どうもありがとうございました

THANK YOU