



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

learning for development

## The 2nd Lecture in the Dennis Irvine Lecture Series

Higher Education in the 21st Century:  
The Iron Triangle's Critical Angle  
of Quality Assurance

Dr. Willie Clarke-Okah  
Commonwealth of Learning





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**Dr. Dennis Irvine**



## The 2nd Lecture in the Dennis Irvine Lecture Series



**Sir John Daniel**

President & Chief Executive  
Officer

Commonwealth of Learning



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# Tan Sri Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan

Vice-Chancellor and CEO  
Wawasan Open University  
(WOU)  
(former President & CEO  
Commonwealth of Learning)



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## Structure of Lecture

- COL's work in the Commonwealth and Jamaica
- Trends & challenges in higher education
- The iron triangle of higher education
- Focus on Quality Assurance



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## COL's work - Areas of Focus

- Education
- Learning for Livelihoods
- Human Environment



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## COL's Activities in the Caribbean

- Open Schooling in Trinidad & Tobago
- Creation of CARADOL
- Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth
- Educational technology
- Annual meeting of Caribbean Chief Education Officers



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## COL's Activities - Jamaica

- 4<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, Ocho Rios 2006
- Acting Chair of COL's Board of Governors is H.E. Burchell Whiteman
- UCC - new partner in CEMBA/MPA degree programs
- Teacher training and development of learning material
- UTech Special Diploma in technical and vocational training



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## Higher Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- Demand expanding rapidly, from 13 million enrolments in 1960 to 130M students in 2004.
- Same period, HEIs in Latin America grew from 164 to 7,500.



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- Age Participation Rates (APRs) need to increase substantially.

### Age Participation Rates

What threshold for 'developed' status?

Examples:

Canada	-	60%
Malaysia	-	30% aiming for 40+%
India	-	<10%



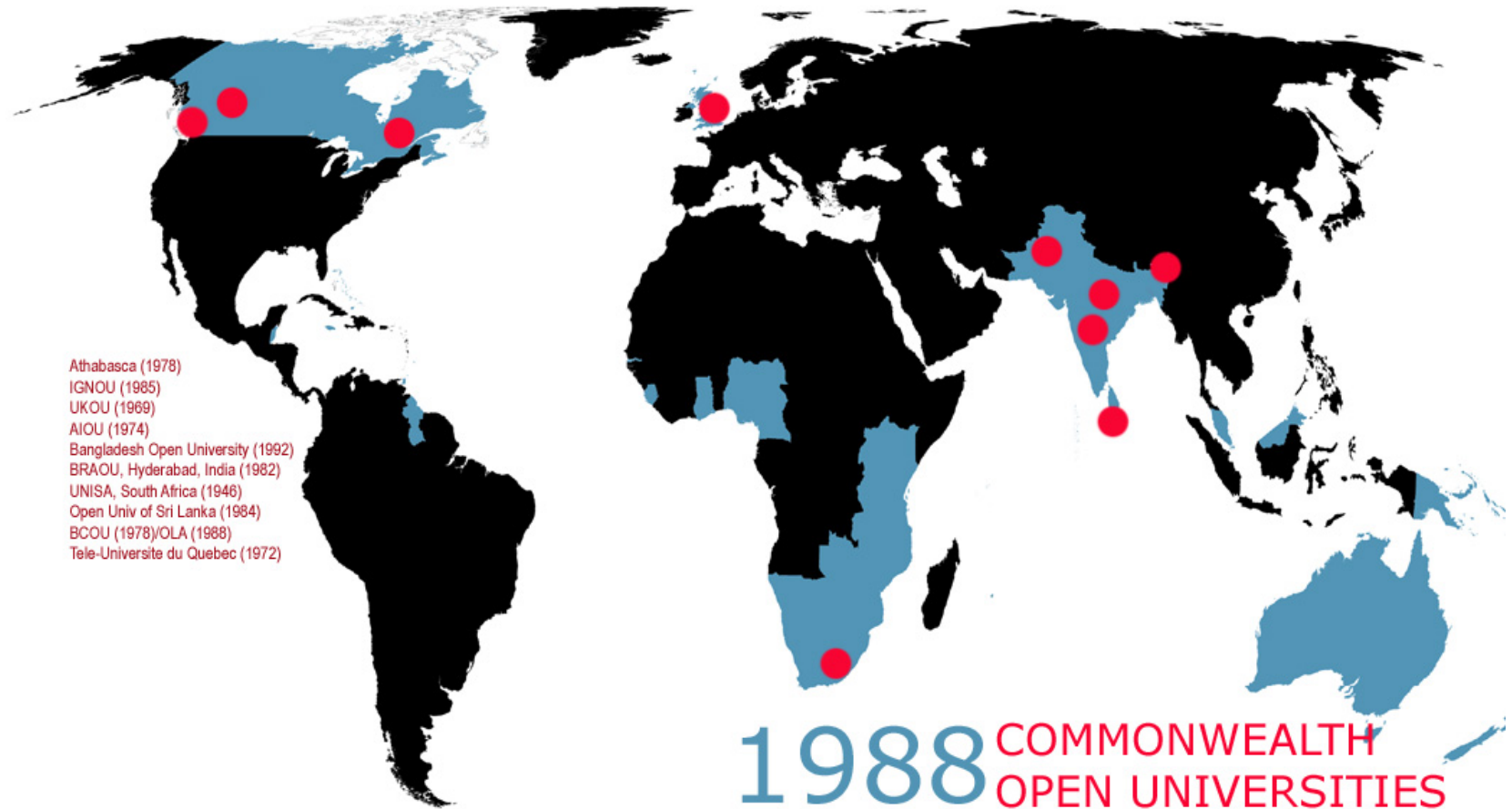
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- Open and Distance Learning (ODL) - a means to meet increasing HE demand.



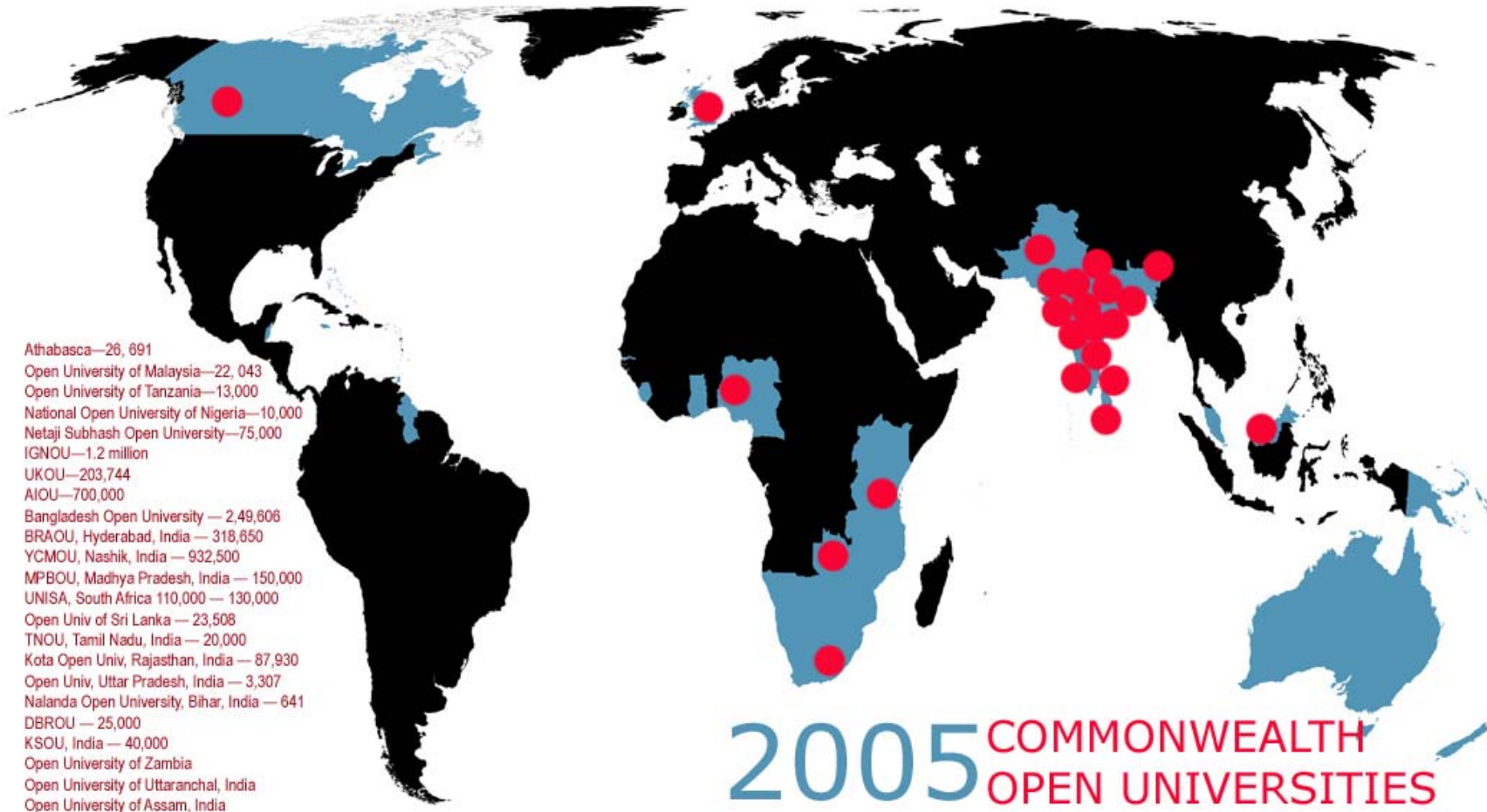
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- Growth in open universities.





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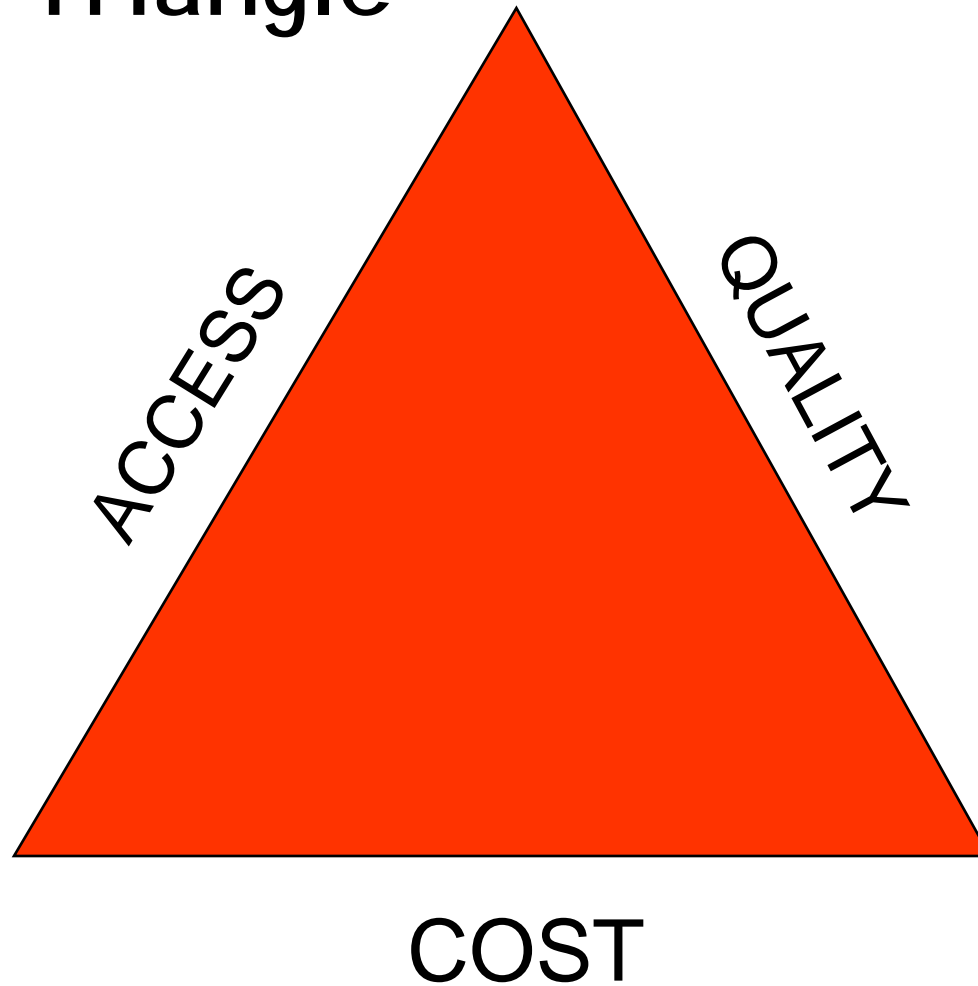
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State role in HE decreasing.



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# The Iron Triangle

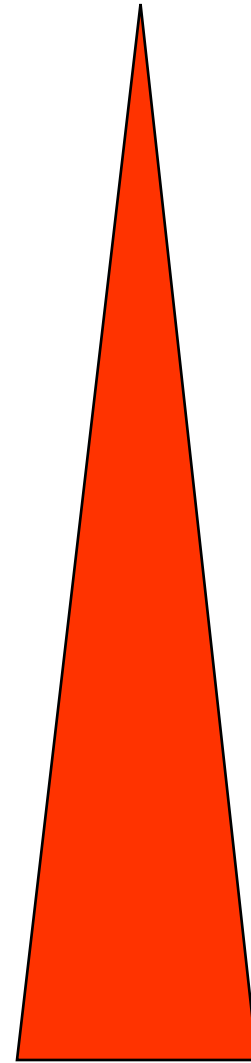




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**ACCESS**

**QUALITY**

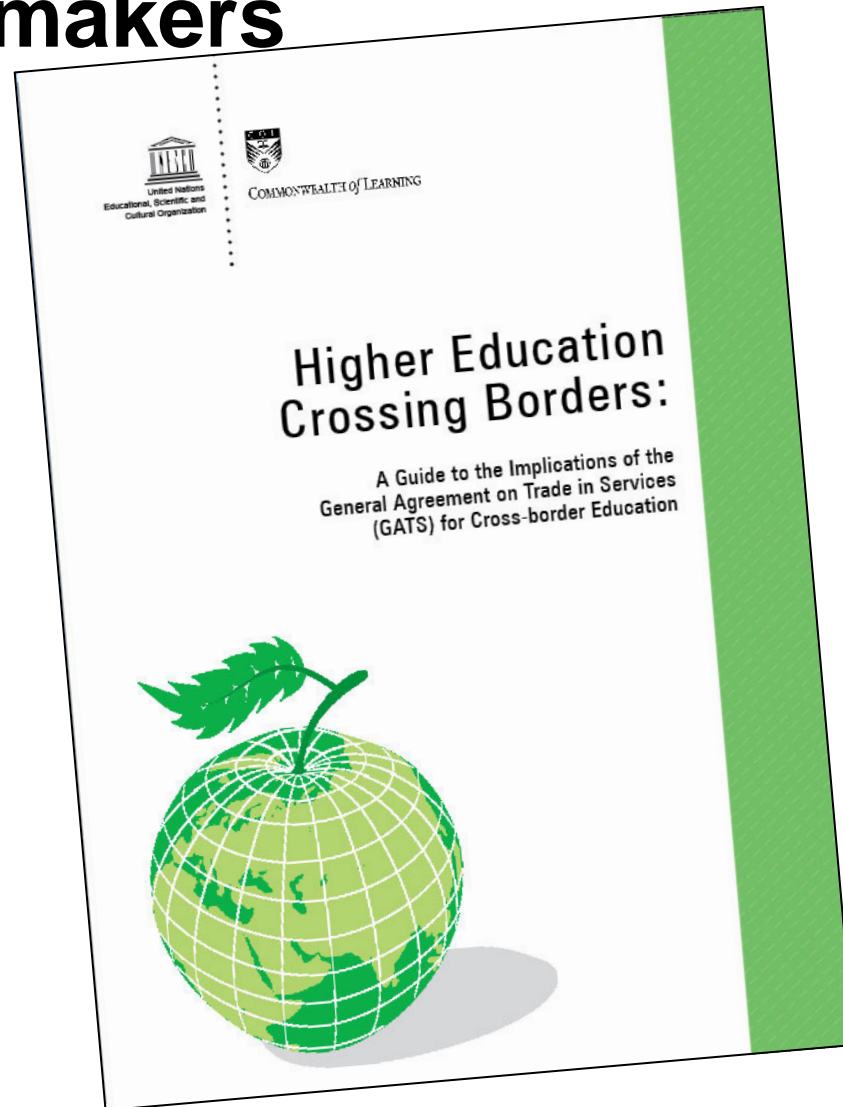


**COST**



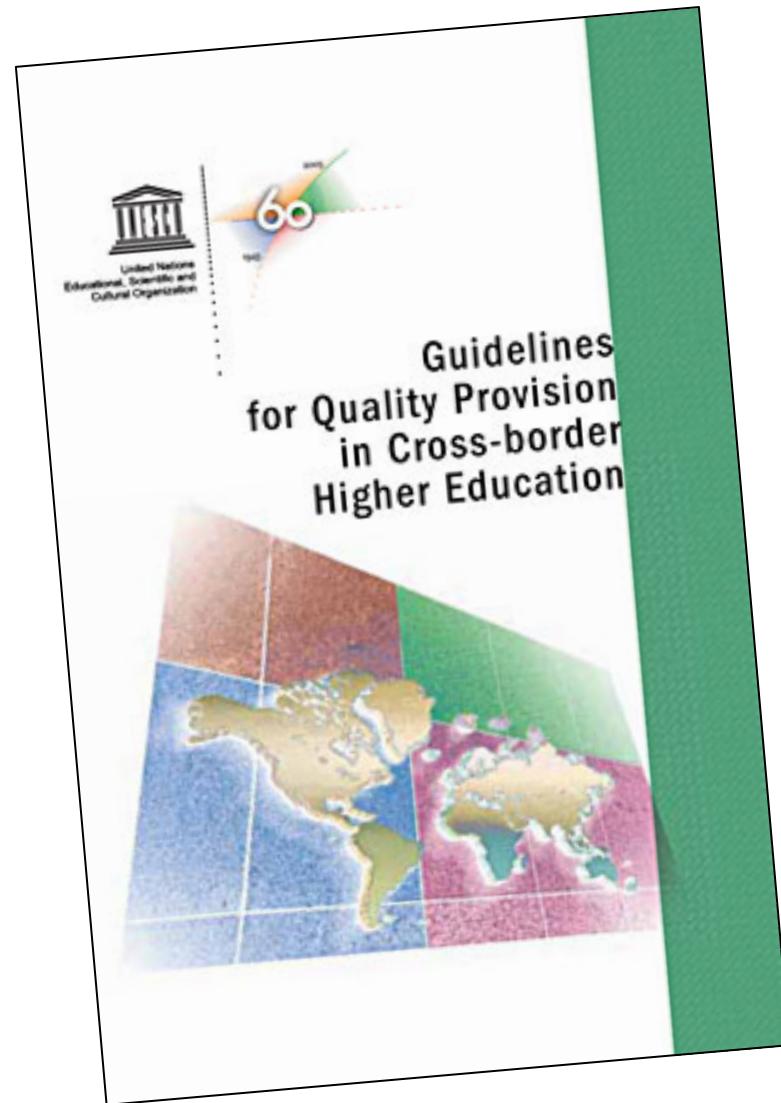
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# Guide for policy-makers





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### Institutional Audits - Context

- An institutional trial quality audit to prepare **Unisa** for the real thing in 2008.
- A visitation at the **University of Ghana** undertaken to help the institution address immediate problems and chart a path for the future.



## Backstory

- Neglect of higher education;
- Deterioration in standards;
- Flight of human resources;
- Acute scarcity of resources;
- Weakened institutions;
- National development severely at risk.



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### The Good News

- A renewed focus by governments and HEIs on re-energizing and revitalizing HE;
- Appreciation that HE is the strategic heart of education;
- HEIs are recognizing the imperative of ensuring quality while making access a priority.



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# Audit Phases

## 3 Phases of the Audit Process

- Pre-Audit Phase
- Audit Phase
- Post-Audit Phase



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### Pre-Audit Phase

- Commitment, a first step
- Designate a coordinating unit
- Conduct self-assessments
- Select the audit team
- Brief the audit team
- Size of the audit team



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### Audit Phase

- Duration
- Audit site, logistics & the audit



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### Post-Audit Phase

- Debriefing of senior management
- Report writing
- Contingency plan



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### Lessons Learned

- Size matters (i.e., team size)
- Keep pre-audit briefings simple
- use existing documentation wherever possible
- Conduct reflective, analytical and self-critical assessments



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### Lessons Learned cont.,

- Self-assessments are good for internal quality assurance and external accreditation processes;
- Audit site should be self-contained;
- Institutional audits uncover significant issues of governance and management;



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### Lessons Learned cont.,

- Audits stimulate and enhance the basis for on-going QA structures and processes.



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### Conclusion

- The Higher Education landscape is changing rapidly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- Some challenges in Higher Education:
  - Increasing APRs; Stemming brain drain; assuring quality; increasing access; lowering costs.

Thank you



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