

From crisis to innovation

Strengthening higher
education through agile QA

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Covid and QA: testing the limits



- Virtually all universities had to revise some internal regulations, e.g.
 - Data protection and privacy regulations for staff and students
 - Data protection agreements between universities and online tool providers
 - A code of conduct for remote teaching for both students and teachers



- Revised decision-making structures, e.g.
 - Awarding extended powers to different institutional boards and management groups
 - Establishing additional groups/committees in charge of approving changes
 - Redefining mandates (up or down; institution, faculty, indiv. teachers; also nationally)



- Extra monitoring and surveying
 - Conducting a thematic, cross-institutional quality review of online learning,
 - Conducting peer teaching observation of online teaching
 - Introducing questions in surveys re Covid-19 regulations and their impact on learning

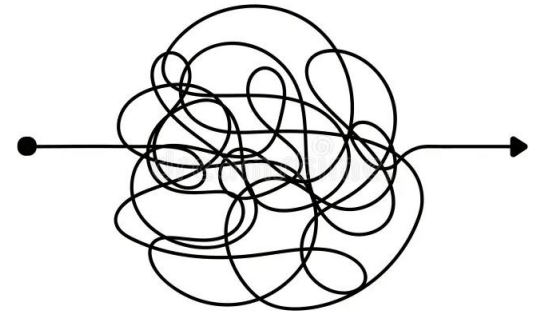


- Training and support

Gen AI and QA: facing complexity

Common institutional reactions:

- Developing guidelines for ethical use
- Guidelines and advice for valid and authentic assessment
- Training programs on AI literacy for staff and students

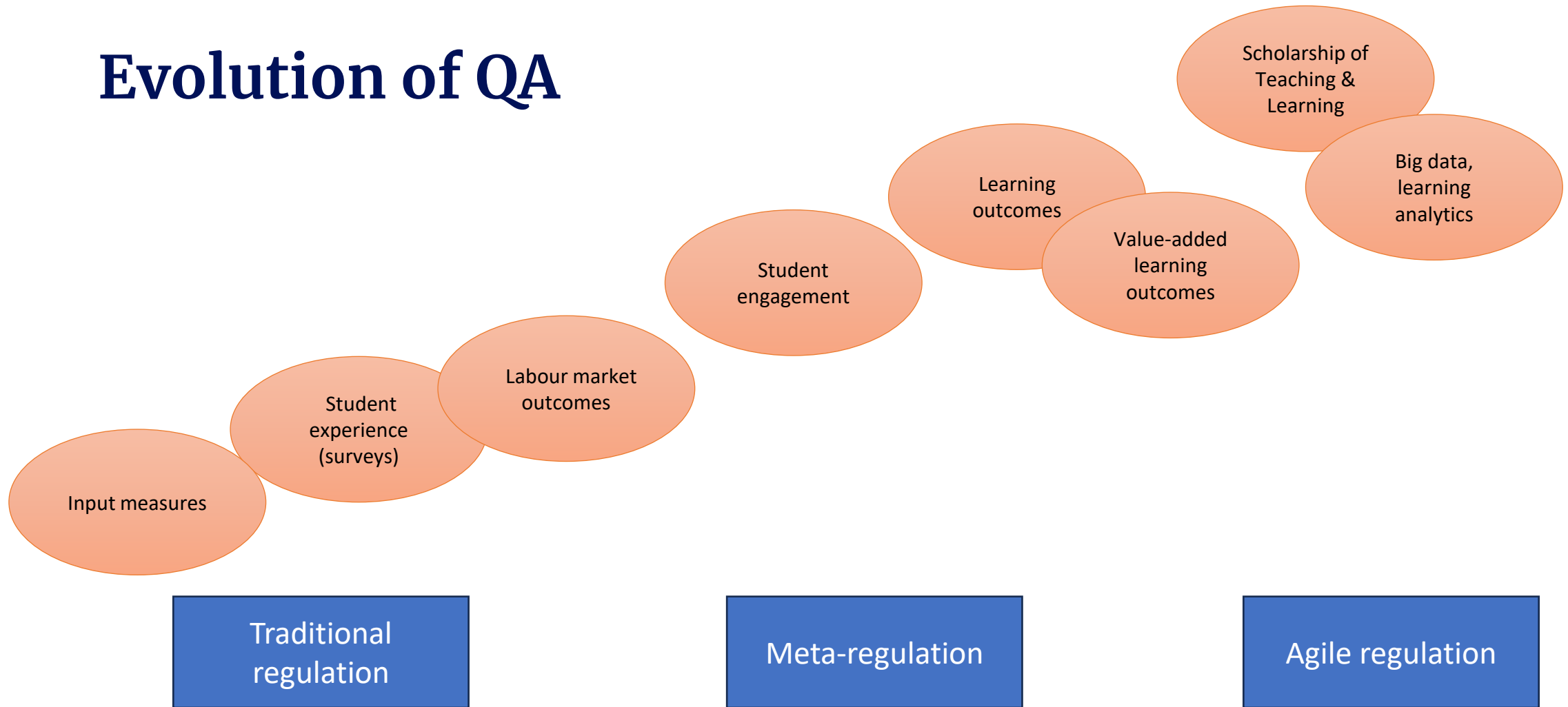


Additional challenges:

- Confronting learning objectives and standards
- Complexity: multiple regulatory frameworks
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), EU Artificial Intelligence Act, etc.

-> From technology based to principle-based regulation

Evolution of QA



[Beerkens 2022]

Agile governance and lessons from the crises

Lessons:

- Need for speed: fast-tracking changes in regulation
- Need for flexibility in processes and institutional structures
- Need for an 'adapt-and-learn' mindset
- Need for close interaction between stakeholders: incl. btw QA agencies and universities

How? In agile governance:

- Goal-based regulation (not 'technology' based)
- Sandboxes: experimentation under supervision (regulatory relief)
- Soft law: codes of conduct, guidelines, voluntary standards
- Regulatory advice services (innov. companies twice as likely to seek advice)

Threats for agile QA systems

- Regulatory overload and administrative burden

Competing agendas

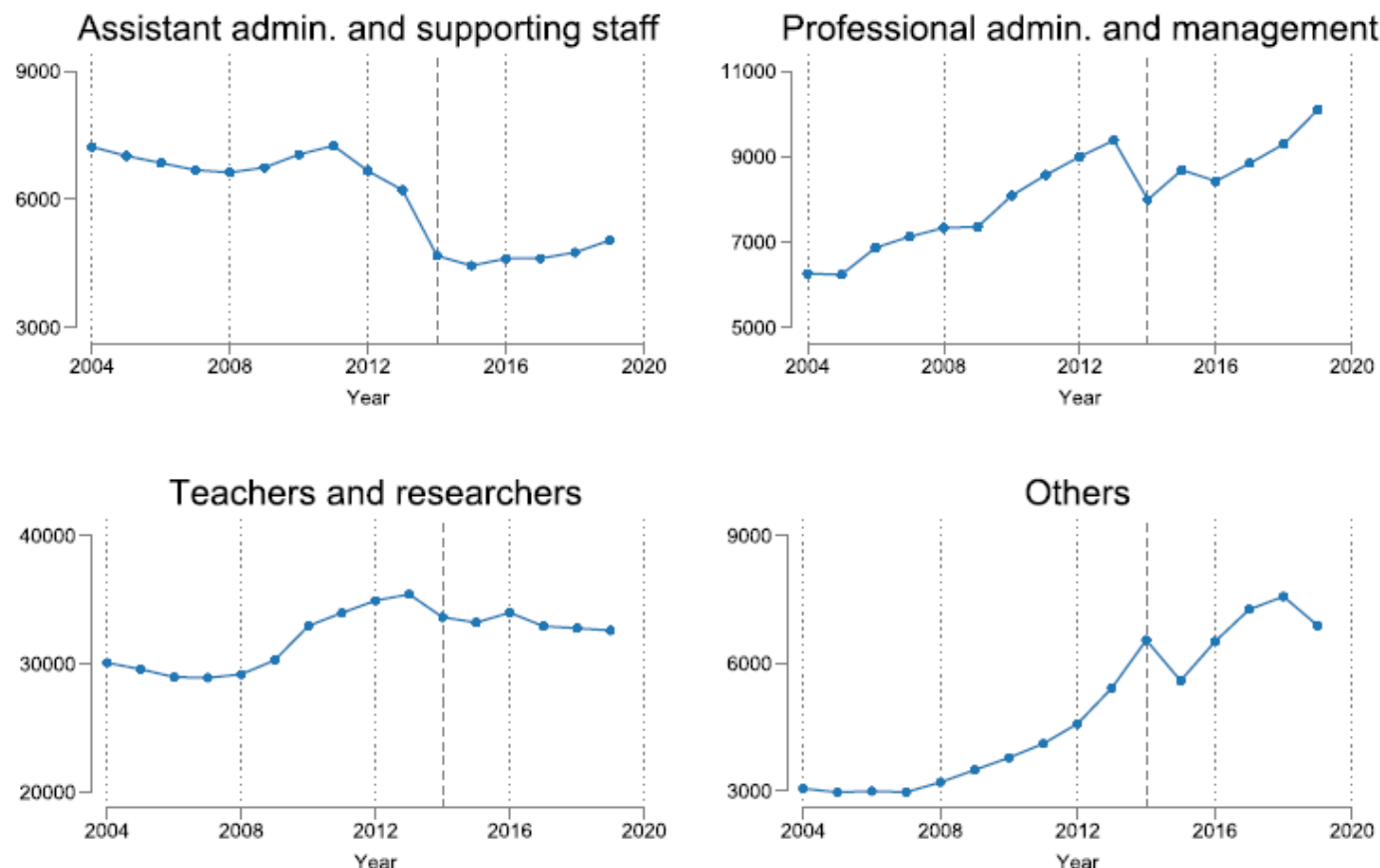
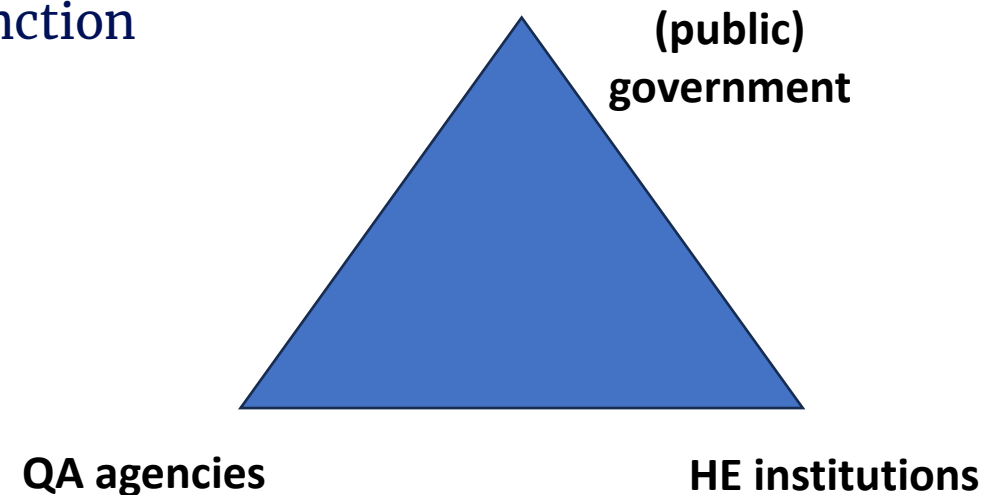


Fig. 2 Number of employees, 2004–2019. *Notes* For a definition of each group, see Tables 1 and 2. Note that the y-axes are shown on different scales to better display the variation

- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU 2016 +)
- EU Artificial Intelligence Act (EU 2023)
- Framework Knowledge Security (UNL 2022)
- Sectoral regulation on Ancillary Activities (UNL 2024)
- Code of conduct for Research Integrity (UNL)
- Code of Good Governance (2019 UNL)
- Code of Conduct
- Law re animal testing
- Data management
- Open Science
- Sustainability reporting
- Workload norm and labour inspection
- Ethics: sensitive international cooper.
- Colonial past
- Academic freedom
- On-campus security

Threats for agile QA systems

- Regulatory overload and administrative burden
- Guarding the autonomy of institutions and professionals
- Uncertainty costs, communication costs, development costs
- Guarding the distance of the quality assurance agencies
 - Key tasks: **assuring standards, legitimacy, trust**
 - An important intermediary function



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Illustrations: juicy_fish on Freepik; Cofkocof on Dreamstime.com; mr.Hiran on Freepik; Datadynamicsinc.com; Microvone on Dreamstime.com

Thank you!

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