

# Assessment, Accountability, and Educational Quality in the United States and Sweden

Per Warfvinge, Lund University

Steve Culver, Virginia Tech



# Accreditation as quality

- Accreditation is primary means by which institutions assure quality to students and the public
- Accreditation signals that institution/program meets threshold standards

# U. S. Issues

- Public concerns about quality of higher education
- Employers' perceptions that graduates aren't ready
- Concerns from federal government about quality and definition of time-based credit hour (federal funding based on this unit)

# U.S. Accreditation

- No single authority oversees higher education.
- State governments oversee public institutions.
- Churches/other groups oversee privates.
- Multiple sources of funding:
  - State, student tuition, corporations, foundation, individuals, endowments, federal funds

# Swedish Issues

- Public has confidence in the quality of higher education
- Employers do not argue that graduates aren't ready
- The governments' main foci are
  - To give institutions more and more autonomy
  - Apply New Public Management with “service providers” and “customers”
  - Efficiency in the higher education sector

# Swedish Accreditation

- One single authority oversees higher education – Swedish Higher Education Authority
- Few sources of funding:
  - State funding for domestic (EU) students, no tuition fees (99%)
  - Full-cost tuition fees for non-EU students (1%)

# Standards to meet – VT situation

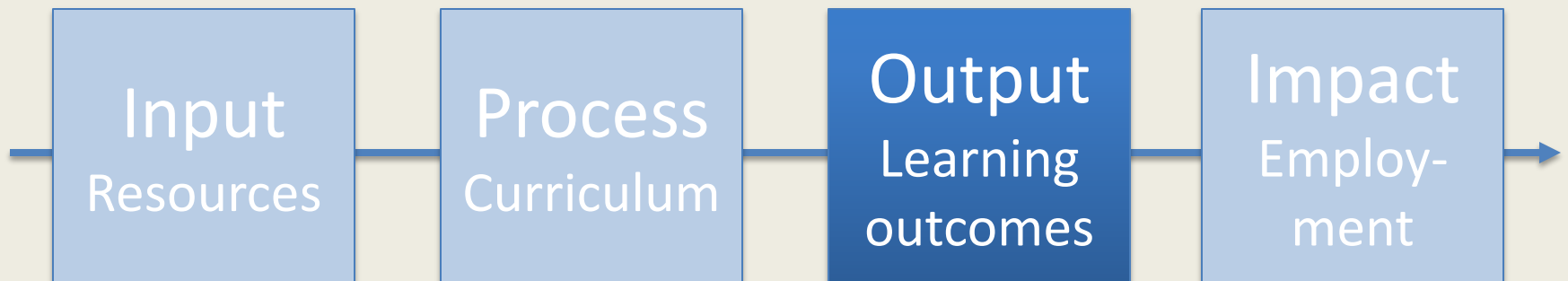
- Has a mission appropriate to higher education
- Has resources, programmes, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that mission
- Maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission



# Standards to meet – Lund situation

- Students should achieve the degree-specific learning outcomes laid down in the Higher Education Act.

*“demonstrate both broad knowledge of his or her chosen field of technology, including knowledge of mathematics and the natural sciences, as well as a considerable degree of specialised knowledge in certain areas of the field”*





# Observations

- Increased emphasis on use of Learning Outcomes as a basis for accreditation
- Providing evidence of what students are learning will become increasingly important
- Slow adjustment of institutions to the new situation
- Content and credits is still the academic currency

# Implications for international cooperation

- Potential: LO approach should move focus from institution to the student, open up for mobility.
- Challenge: To learn how to translate another institutions LO:s into the local context.
- Challenge: To provide evidence that allows “international experience” etc. to be translated into the local programme LO:s