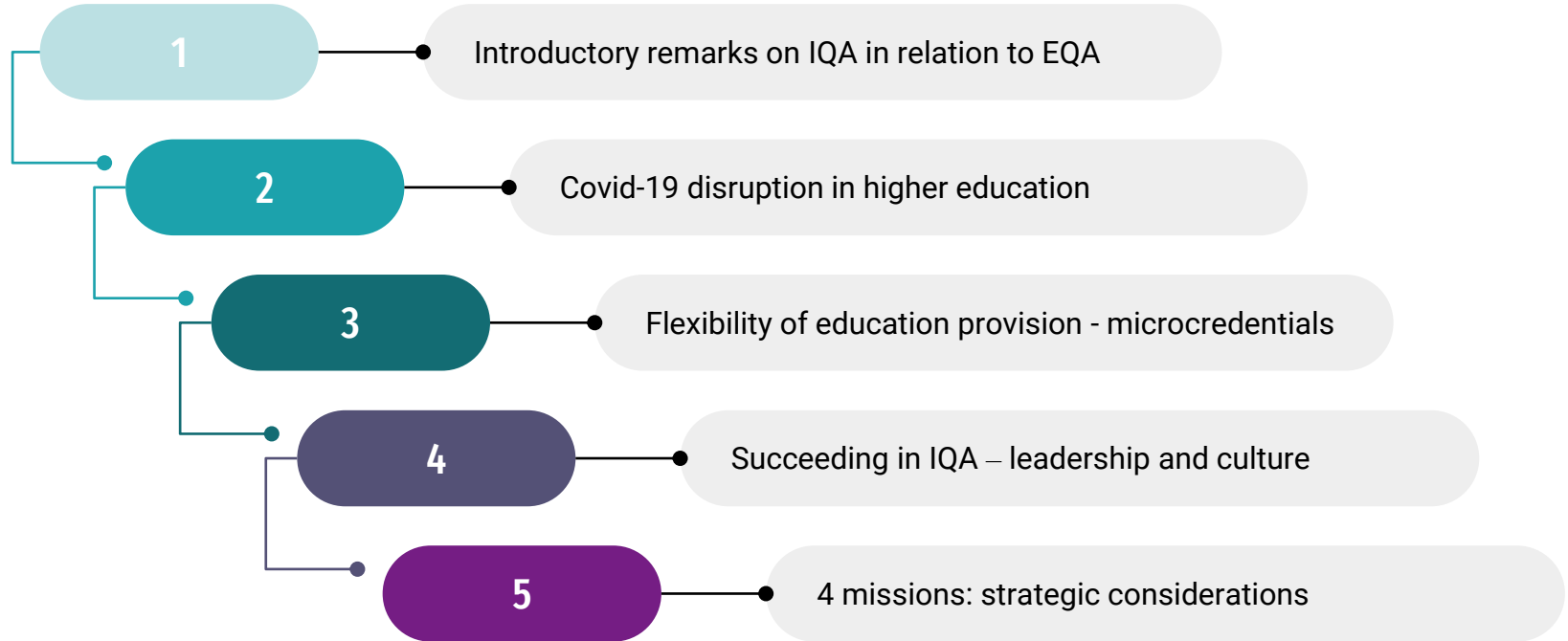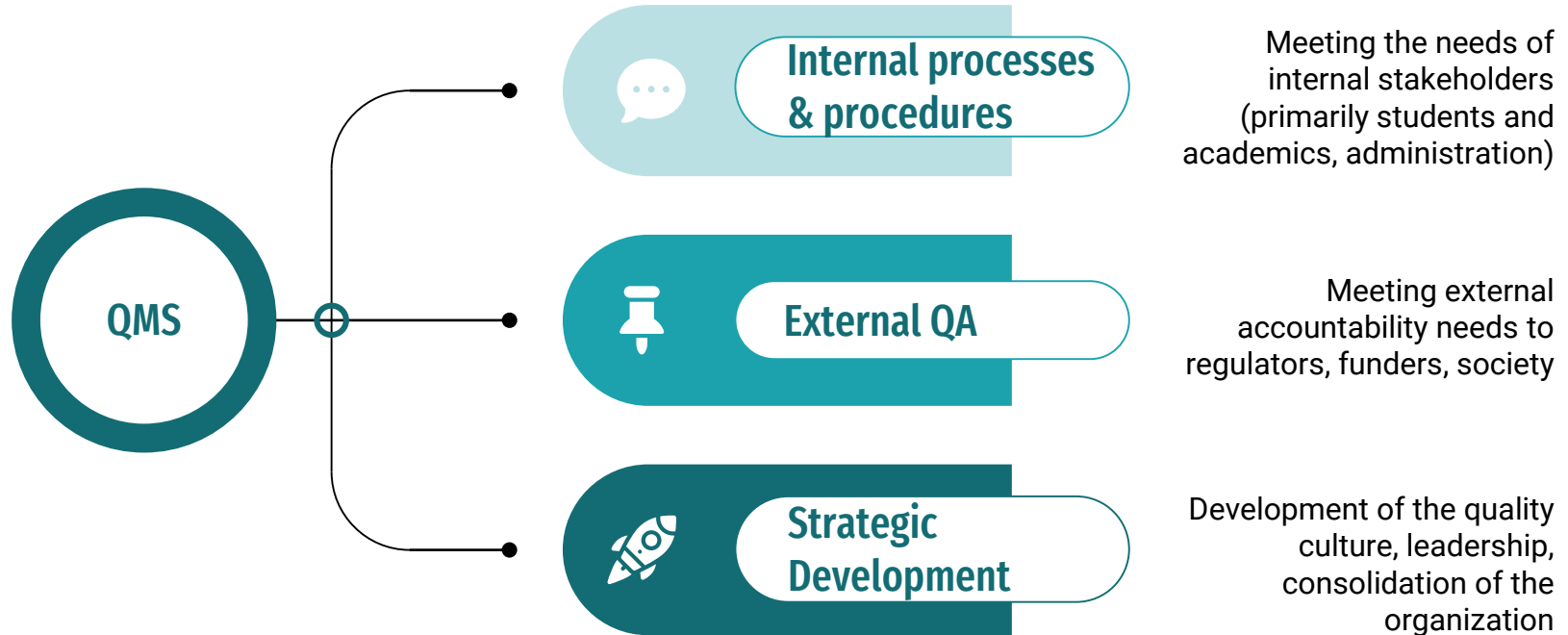# Managing Quality within a Higher Education Institution and Responding to New Realities: Quality Assurance Agency Perspective

Aurelija Valeikienė
Deputy Director, SKVC (Lithuania)

Content

1 — Introductory remarks on IQA in relation to EQA

2 — Covid-19 disruption in higher education

3 — Flexibility of education provision - microcredentials

4 — Succeeding in IQA – leadership and culture

5 — 4 missions: strategic considerations

Quality Assurance Functions

QMS

Internal processes & procedures

Meeting the needs of internal stakeholders (primarily students and academics, administration)

External QA

Meeting external accountability needs to regulators, funders, society

Strategic Development

Development of the quality culture, leadership, consolidation of the organization

Increasing pace of teaching and learning transformation

Student-centered

Pedagogies focused on learner autonomy, their needs and deeper understanding, fostering transferable skills by active communication and co-creation of learning experience

Learning outcomes

Focus on what the student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning

when

how

whom

what
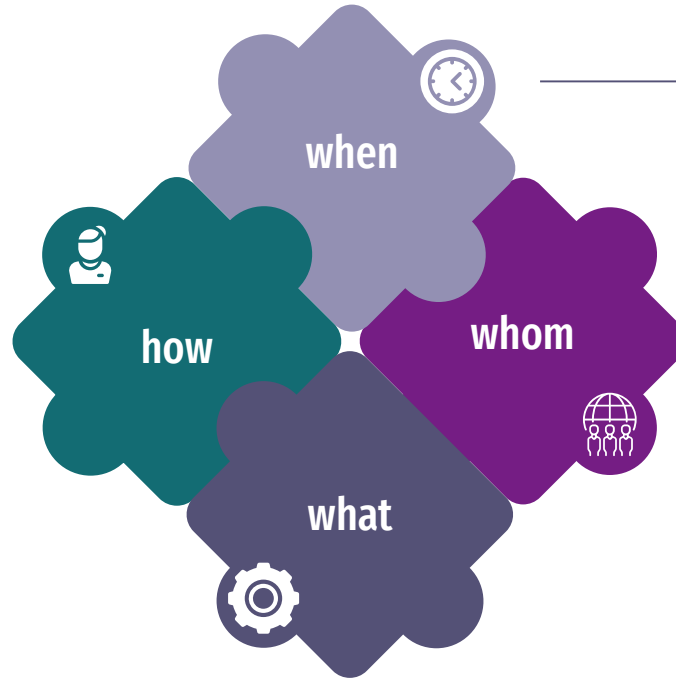
Flexibility

Full time vs. part time; physical/virtual/blended; full degrees/modules; multidipciplinarity; funding options

Diversity

Including learning paths (traditional vs. adult), ethnicity (local vs. international), language, socioeconomic class, background, gender, disability

IQA aspects of high relevance during the Covid-19 pandemic

Communication

Central role of a general [PR] offices; lecturer-student; student-student interactions. Increased international cooperation, incl. EUI
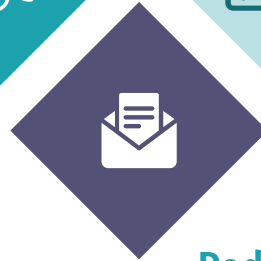
IT skills and technology

Online communication, use of teaching platforms, surge (?) of academic fraud and misbehavior

Academic support

(semi)closed libraries/labs; higher demands for support reported both from students and academics (peer-to-peer; subject field-educationalists)
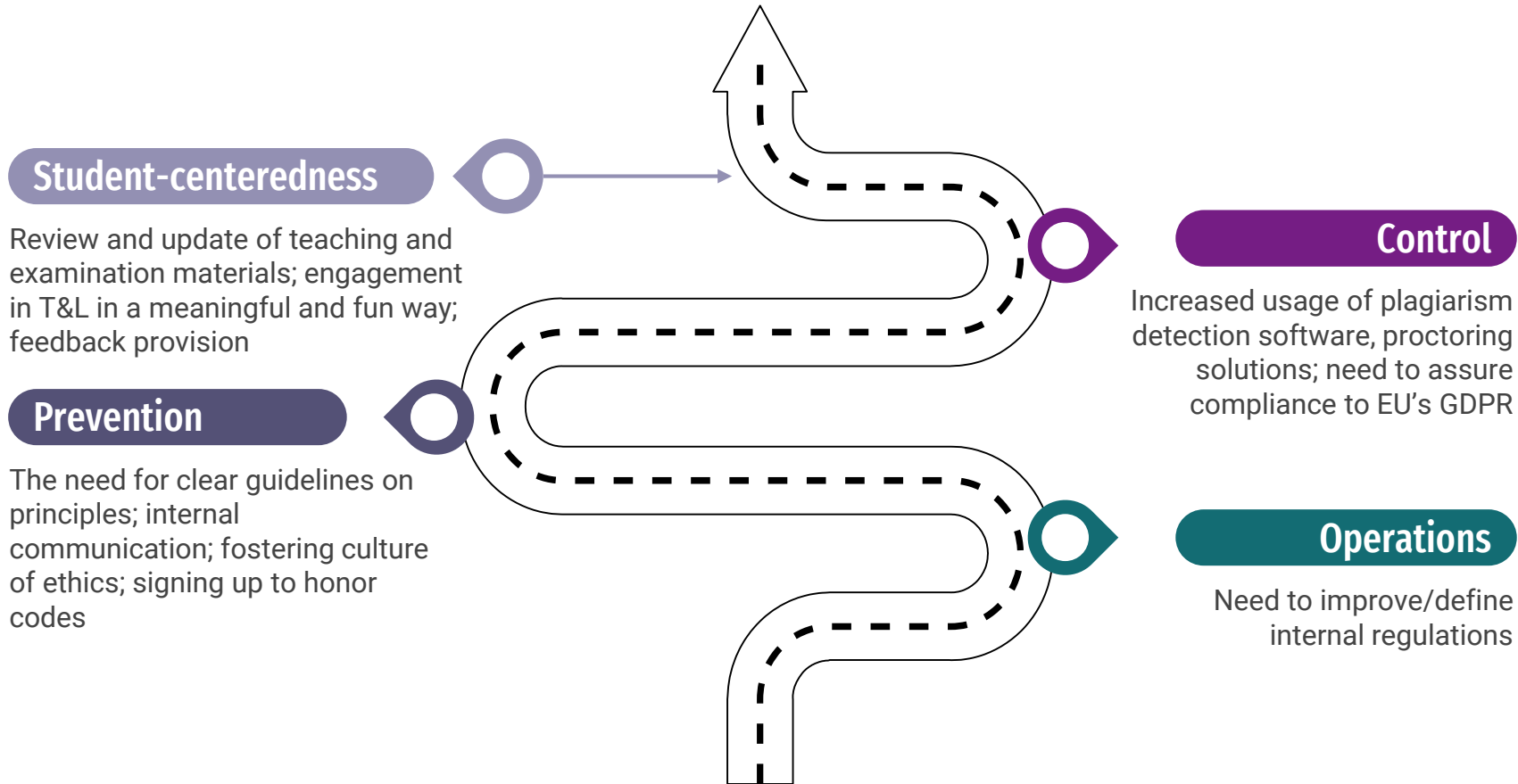
Pedagogy

Crisis management – in the short term; for the long term sustainability – digital learning construction design needed

Mental health

As a result of feelings of anxiety, loneliness and depression, difficulty to focus – student waiting lists for services; also the need to support burn out teachers

Increased challenges to maintain academic ethics

Student-centeredness

Review and update of teaching and examination materials; engagement in T&L in a meaningful and fun way; feedback provision

Prevention

The need for clear guidelines on principles; internal communication; fostering culture of ethics; signing up to honor codes

Control

Increased usage of plagiarism detection software, proctoring solutions; need to assure compliance to EU's GDPR

Operations

Need to improve/define internal regulations

Ambivalence around Microcredentials

Determination „to explore how and to what extent smaller, flexible units, including those leading to microcredentials, can be defined, developed, implemented and recognised by our institutions using EHEA tools".

EHEA

HEIs

„Empowering workers to up- and reskill throughout their entire lives."

EU Skills Agenda

Academics
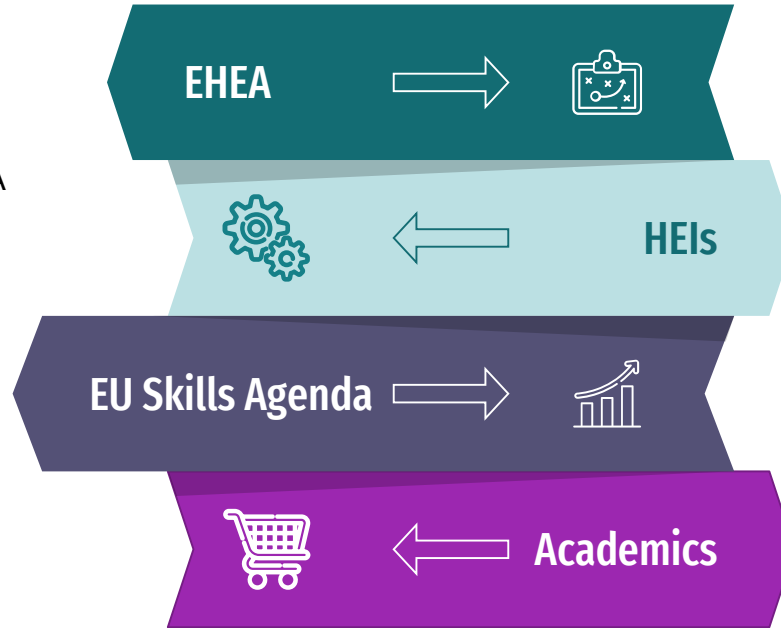
EUA: „The contribution of universities to lifelong learning goes beyond micro-credentials and it requires better recognition. Therefore, it might be more useful to discuss lifelong learning more widely, rather than focusing solely on microcredentials."

„The HRK emphasises that this can only be a secondary option besides full study programmes and continuing education courses."

„Micro-credentials are gig credentials for the gig economy"

Microcredentials (1)

A EUROPEAN APPROACH TO MICRO-CREDENTIALS. OUTPUT OF THE MICRO-CREDENTIALS HIGHER EDUCATION CONSULTATION GROUP. Final report by Hanne Shapiro Futures, Tine Andersen and Kristine Nedergaard Larsen, led by the Danish Technological Institute. December 2020

A micro-credential is a proof of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a short learning experience.

These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent standards.

The proof is contained in a certified document that lists the name of the holder, the achieved learning outcomes, the assessment method, the awarding body and, where applicable, the qualifications framework level and the credits gained.

Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared, are portable and may be combined into larger credentials or qualifications.

They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards.

Microcredentials (2)

A micro-credential is a small volume of learning certified by a credential.

In the EHEA context, it can be offered by higher education institutions or recognised by them using recognition procedures in line with the **Lisbon Recognition Convention** or **RPL**, where applicable.

A micro-credential is designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills or competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs.

Micro-credentials have explicitly defined **learning outcomes** at a **QF-EHEA/NQF level**, an indication of associated workload in **ECTS** credits, assessment methods and criteria, and are subject to quality assurance in line with the **ESG**.

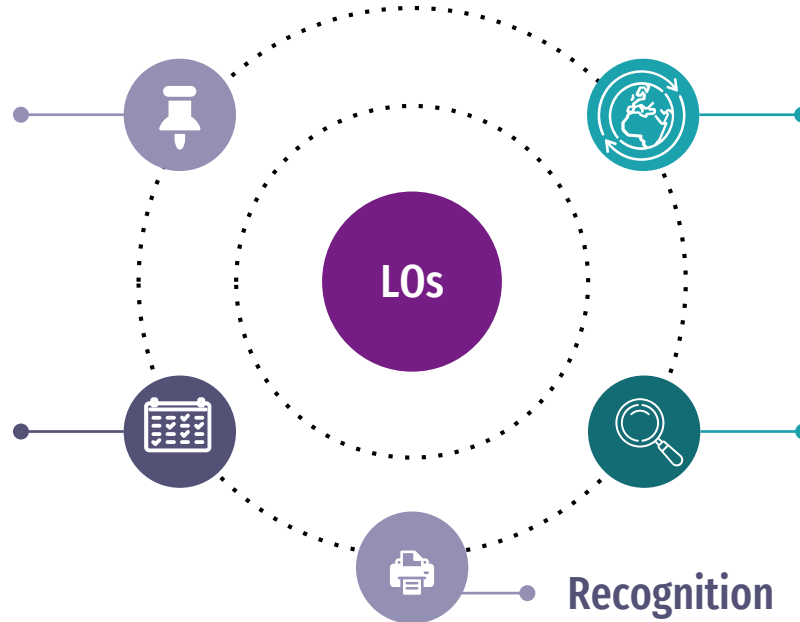# Examples of micro-credentials identified within 35 EHEA countries
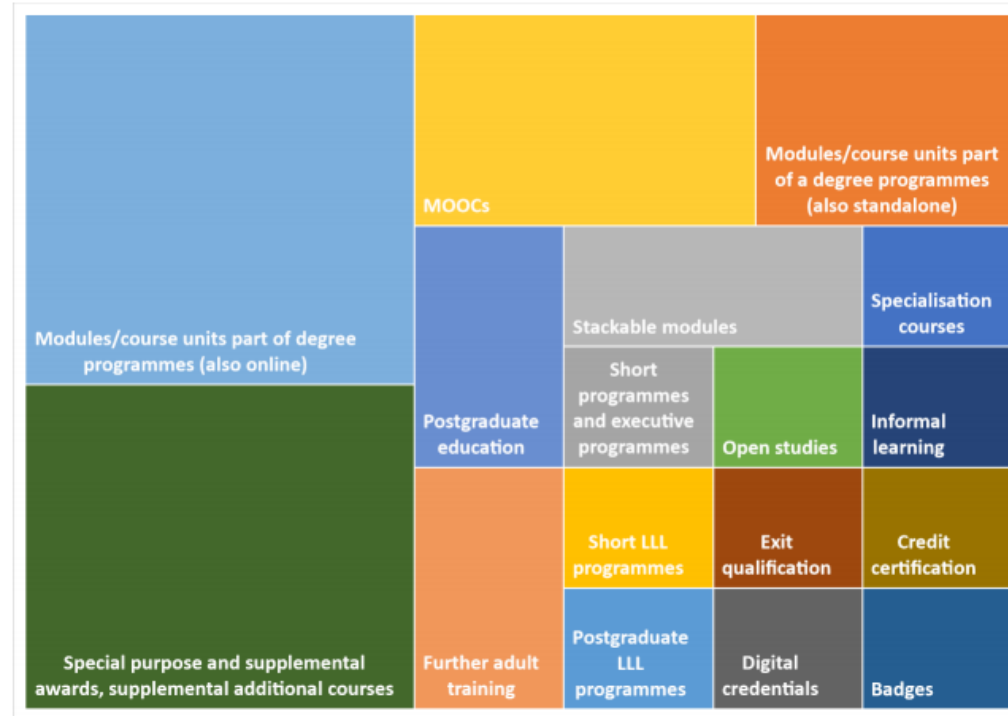
Quality Assurance of Microcredentials

Internal QA

The ESG apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery.

EQF-LLL/EHEA-QF

Placing on appropriate level, supporting by transparency instruments (credits, DS, DB/registers).

LOs

Networks

In wider partnerships (incl. industry, VET, NGOs etc.), the overall responsibility falls on the HEI(s).

External QA

External QA agencies may or may not have a separate mandate, thus, comes under overall provision.

Recognition

Principles of LRC, if not - RPL should be applied.

Microcredentials

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

STRENGTHS

Political support

Available funding

Versatility of micro-degrees and badges

Flexibility + Innovation

Ownership of learning

WEAKNESSES

Dependent upon sustainable financing over time

Ambivalent nature

No continuity of experience

Non-coherent academic material, methods and qualifications

OPPORTUNITIES

National discussions on policies still on-going

Attracting [international] students and talented individuals

Stackability

Digitalisation

THREATS

Competition to traditional degrees and multiple purposes of HE

Takes time and efforts

The need and relevance depend upon the [national/economic] context

4

Change of management styles: from boss to leader, from co-workers to effective teams

Emotional intelligence: self-reflection, mindfulness, analysis, insight, self-motivation, openneness, vision

EQ

Need to work with and in teams, provide feedback, delegate, define goals, inspire, support and even coach

Engagement

Leading by personal example, based on knowledge, skills, attitudes, communication styles

Authority

Processes and procedures should be in place, they need to be communicated and enacted, but beyond that – quality culture build and cherished

Focus

HEIs are far from ordinary organisations, but ability to manage business side gains increasing importance

Effectiveness

Rethinking missions of higher education

Education

On average across OECD countries, younger adults (25-34 year-olds) with tertiary attainment working full time and part time earn 38% more than their peers with upper secondary attainment; 45-54 year-olds earn 70% more.

Personal development

Adults with tertiary attainment not only expect to live ~5 years longer, they also report being in better health than adults with below upper secondary attainment.
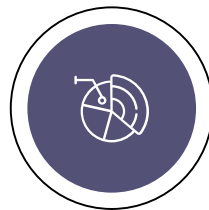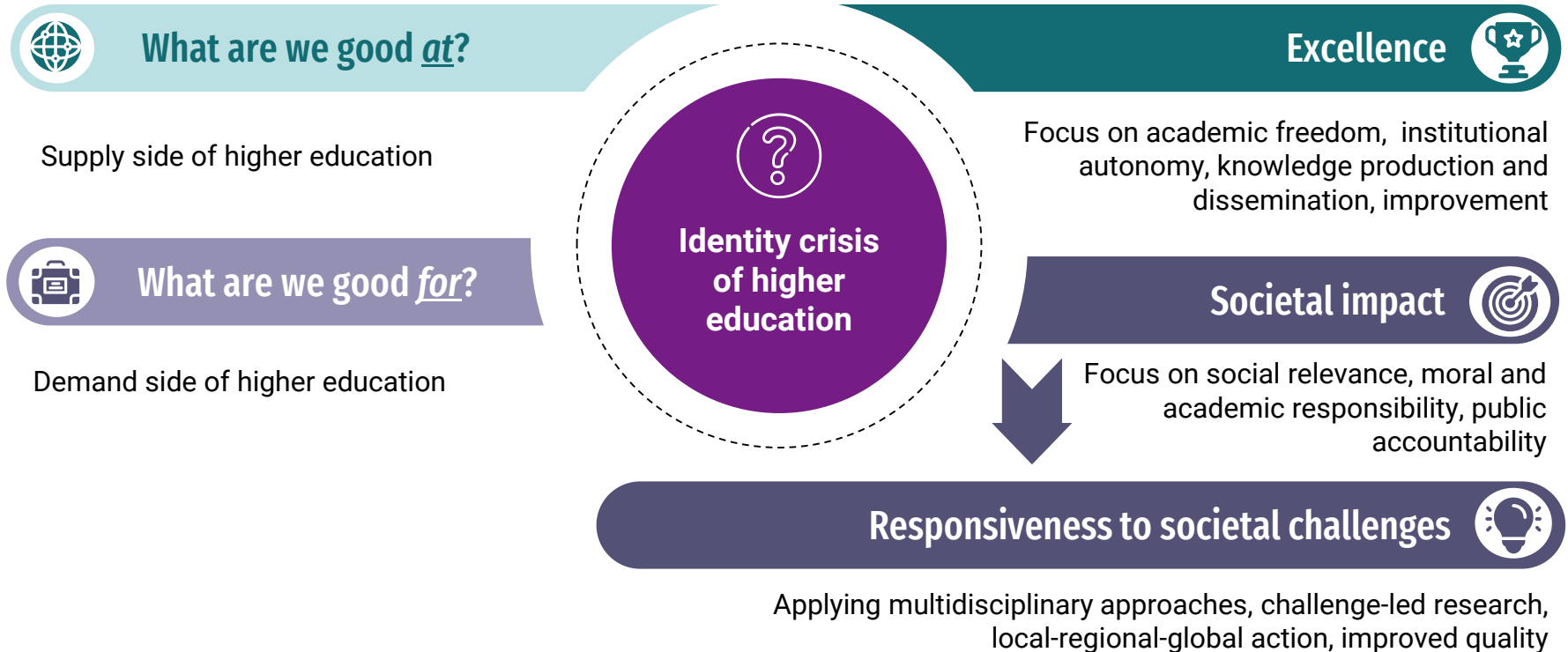
Research

Value and impact of research lies in increasing the stock of useful knowledge; training skilled people; creating new scientific instrumentation and methodologies; advancement of collaboration.

Citizenship

Preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies (civic engagement, further education, cultural impact, knowledge transfer, economic impact)

Tectonic shifts in higher education by prof. Chris Brink

What are we good _at_?

Supply side of higher education

What are we good _for_?

Demand side of higher education

Identity crisis of higher education

Excellence

Focus on academic freedom, institutional autonomy, knowledge production and dissemination, improvement

Societal impact

Focus on social relevance, moral and academic responsibility, public accountability

Responsiveness to societal challenges

Applying multidisciplinary approaches, challenge-led research, local-regional-global action, improved quality

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