

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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The Editor
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In Volume 26(1), pp143-156, you published an article entitled 'When is an auditor really a regulator?' by Douglas Blackmur. In a starred footnote on the first page, he implies that the Australian Universities Quality Agency ('AUQA') and the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education ('INQAAHE') tried to suppress the publication of this paper. Before you published such allegations, you should have checked the facts, which are as follows.

INQAAHE holds an annual international Conference or Forum. This year it was held in April in Toronto. In his opening 'housekeeping' announcements, the chair of the local facilities committee said that a few paper presenters would not after all be attending and he invited replacement papers from those present. As soon as she could, the chair of the international Program Committee went to him and pointed out that this was inappropriate. There had been a deadline for paper submission, followed by a refereeing process, and it would be inappropriate for this to be bypassed. He then asked her to communicate this to the one person who had come forward with a proposal. That person was Blackmur. The paper was your published criticism of AUQA, and by chance the chair of the international Program Committee was an AUQA staff member who was also a member of the Board of INQAAHE. She had no knowledge of the contents of the paper when she told Blackmur that it could not be accepted, but he is now representing this as censorship by AUQA and INQAAHE.

The fact that there has been no attempt by INQAAHE or AUQA to censor Blackmur is evident in that he already had one paper accepted for the Conference, and that that paper was critical of a particular project of INQAAHE's. He presented that paper and it has been published in the Conference proceedings.

I should be grateful if you would publish these facts in a future issue of your Journal. I have not taken up other issues in the paper, as it seems to me that the basic premise is flawed. The use of the term 'regulator' is so wide that it would embrace practically any organisation with an investigative role where there is some expectation that the investigation will lead to some action.

Yours faithfully

Dr David Woodhouse
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