

Substantive Change Report

by Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)

Register Committee

Ref. RC23/C31

Ver. 1.0

Date 2019-04-16

Page 1 / 2

Decision of:	03/04/2019
Report received on:	07/12/2018
Agency registered since:	05/12/2008
Last external review report:	13 September 2017
Registration until:	30/09/2022
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Ann Verreth (Register Committee member)
Attachments:	1. Substantive Change Report & Annexes 2. Clarification request of 01/02/2019 3. Clarification response of 14/03/2019

1. The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 07/12/2018.
2. The Register Committee noted that the piloted institutional reviews initiated in 2016 have now become an integral part of the regular external QA activities of the Flemish Community of Belgium and are planned to be rolled out between 2019 and 2025.
3. In terms of new activities the Register Committee took note of NVAO's *'Protocol for assessment of quality agreements in higher education 2019-2024'*.
4. According to the protocol the institutions are asked to prepare a proposal on six agreed themes on their plans for using the revenues from the student loan system. The plans will be assessed by NVAO using a set of predefined criteria. The focus of the assessment of the plans will be targeted at how the plans are devised, the proposed expenditure, and what this expenditure is designed to achieve. The new activity includes three verification phases: the initial assessment of the plans (autumn 2019), assessment of progress (autumn of 2022), and the final evaluation of what has been achieved (by 2024).
5. The agency stated that the assessments follow a number of different criteria, in each of its three phases. While the agency did not provide a mapping of ESG Part 1, the Register Committee acknowledged that NVAO addresses ESG 1.1 - 1.10 either within the (optional) institutional audits or the (full) programme accreditation procedure, and that all higher education institutions remain subject to one of those.

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Page 2 / 2

6. The Register Committee was, however, unclear on whether the six themes to be addressed in the assessment protocol related to learning and teaching in higher education, and thus whether the assessment is within the scope of the ESG. The Committee has therefore sought clarification from NVAO.
7. In its response letter (of 14/03/2019) the agency presented the six educational themes that should be considered by HEIs in their quality agreement plan.
8. Having considered the clarification, the Register Committee concluded that the protocol addresses matters of learning and teaching in higher education and different elements of ESG Part 1 i.e. educational intensity (ESG 1.3), extra and better guidance of students (ESG 1.3 & ESG 1.6), study success (ESG 1.4), educational differentiation (ESG 1.3), appropriate and good quality facilities (ESG 1.6) lecture quality (ESG 1.5).
9. The Register Committee therefore concluded that the assessment of the quality agreements is within the scope of the ESG.
10. The Register Committee noted that in the design of the protocol NVAO has closely collaborated with the Ministry, the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (VH), the Dutch National Students' Association (ISO), and the Dutch Student Union (LSVb) (ESG 2.2).
11. The agency explained that ultimately the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science takes a decision (positive or negative) based on the advice of the Board of NVAO. (ESG 2.3)
12. In considering the composition of the peer-review teams, the Committee learned that the panels consist of up to five members, including a student member, a secretary and process coordinator, all trained for performing the assessment (ESG 2.4).
13. To ensure consistency in judgement the chairpersons of cluster assessment panels meet throughout the process to align their assessment. The panels are further supported by a process coordinator and the secretary of the NVAO (ESG 2.5).
14. According to the protocol NVAO publishes its recommendations and the advisory report by the panel on its website after the ministry's decision (ESG 2.6).
15. In terms of appeals processes the Committee noted that the decision of the minister may be appealed and objected to (ESG 2.7). The Register Committee underlined that higher education institutions should have the right to appeal not just the final decision, but also the recommendation and advisory report of NVAO. The Register Committee therefore noted this matter for attention in the next external review of NVAO against the ESG.

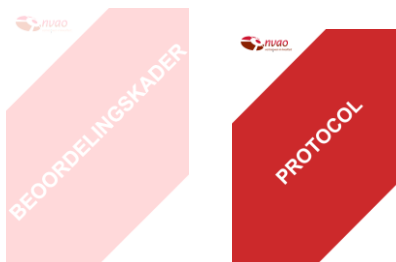
Reference #	14952096
Status	Complete
Agency name	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)
Expiry of registration	30/09/2022
Contact person	NL: Lineke van Bruggen, FL: Mark Frederiks
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Is the change you are reporting a merger that involves other organisations than the reporting agency/ies mentioned above (i.e. that are not registered on EQAR)?	No
A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed? This might include: changes to the legal form or status; merger with/into another body/entity, another body/entity becoming part of the agency; changes in parent entity, if applicable; liquidation, bankruptcy or similar proceedings.	No
B. Has the organisational structure changed? This might include: role or composition of governing or managing bodies (only changes of the general composition/membership categories – there is no need to report regular changes of individuals, e.g. when their terms end); establishment or discontinuing of governing or managing bodies; major/dramatic changes in the staffing or financial situation; outsourcing of activities with significant relevance for the agency's external quality assurance activities.	Yes
Please describe the changes in the agency's organisational structure:	Since March 2017 there are (for organisational purposes) two separate departments for the Netherlands

and Flanders.with one General Board. The composition of both departments is still mixed; Dutch and Flemish colleagues working together. The consequence is that there are two contact persons for NL and FL:
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Are there new types of activities?	Yes
Are there changes in existing activities (e.g. changes to their methodology, criteria or procedures)?	Yes
Have some or all existing activities been discontinued?	No
Please describe the following key aspects of the new and changed activities: purposes and development of the activity, involvement of stakeholders (ESG 2.2) criteria used, how they were developed, measures implemented to ensure consistency, how ESG 1.1 – 1.10 are reflected in the criteria (ESG 2.1 & 2.5) review team composition, selection, appointment and training of reviewers (ESG 2.4) site visits (ESG 2.3) publication of reports (ESG 2.6) follow-up (ESG 2.3) appeals system (ESG 2.7) embedding in thematic analyses and internal quality assurance of the agency (ESG 3.4 & 3.6) For new activities, please explain if they were developed from scratch or on the basis of existing activities that were subject to the last external review.	NL, new activity: Assessments of quality agreements higher education 2019-2024 (see appendices) FL, changes in existing activities: new institutional reviews were piloted first and are now part of the QA System Flanders 2019-2025. New system-wide analyses are also introduced. See appendix.
Item #55	Substantive_changes-NL-Quality_agreements.pdf (612k)

Assessment of quality agreements higher education 2019- 2024 *Protocol*

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) |
Netherlands Department
May 2018



This protocol contains the requirements associated with an NVAO assessment procedure, which are separate from the NVAO assessment framework.

Protocol for assessment of quality agreements in higher education 2019-2024

Name of procedures

Protocol for assessment of quality agreements in higher education 2019-2024

This protocol concerns the details of an Order in Council that has yet to be adopted: the '*Besluit kwaliteitsbekostiging hoger onderwijs*' (expected to enter into force on 1 January 2019). Changes to this version resulting from the Order are therefore possible.

Version

22 May 2018

Date of expiry

After the final evaluation of the quality agreements in 2026

History

n/a

Costs of assessment

n/a

Further information

<https://www.nvao.net/beoordelingsprocedures/nederland>

Contents

Introduction	4
A. Criteria	5
1) Assessing the plan	5
Criterion 1	5
Criterion 2	5
Criterion 3	5
Plan assessment rules	6
2) Assessment in 2022	6
Criterion 1	6
Criterion 2	6
2022 assessment rules	7
3) Evaluation	7
Criterion 1	7
Criterion 2	7
Plan evaluation rules	8
B. Plan assessment and evaluation process	9
1. Assessment of plan; 'separate' or as 'trail' in combination with ITK	9
2. Timetable	9
3. The plan for using revenues from the student loan system	11
4. Submitting an application	11
5. Composition of panel	11
6. On-site visits	12
7. Reports	12
8. Judgement by NVAO	13
9. Notification	13

Item #56	Protocol_Assessment_of_quality_agreements_Higher_Education_2019-2024-NL.pdf (542k)
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Introduction

On 9 April 2018, the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science made agreements with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, the Dutch National Students' Association (ISO), and the Dutch Student Union (LSVb) about the form that quality agreements for higher education for the period from 2019 to 2024 would take. The revenues that will be released as a result of the introduction of the student loan system will be linked to these agreements in the next few years. The parties are aiming to use the revenues to raise the quality of higher education. They agree that involvement on the part of the education community, in particular the participation bodies, with the quality agreements is essential, during the time that the plans are being devised and implemented alike.

This protocol sets out the details of the independent external assessments agreed by the parties of the plans of individual institutes on how the revenues from the student loan system are to be used and of the assessments of what the plans are achieving. The focus of the assessment of the plans will be targeted at how the plans are devised, the proposed expenditure, and what this expenditure is designed to achieve. The fulfilment of these proposals will be the main feature of the assessment, as will the involvement of participation bodies and other relevant stakeholders.

The protocol is a stand-alone assessment instrument that is closely aligned to the NVAO accreditation framework 2016 and the methods described therein. For institutes that have already requested an institutional audit (ITK) or are intending to apply for one, the processes for assessing the plan on how to use the revenues from the student loan system and the ITK can be combined in order to reduce the extra costs of the assessment of their plans as much as possible. The assessment of plans and the ITK will always result in two separate reports.

This protocol describes three verification moments: the assessment of the plans in 2019, the assessment of their progress in the autumn of 2022, and the evaluation of what the plans have achieved. This evaluation will coincide with the next ITK round or will take place six years after the original assessment of the plan.

A. Criteria

Below are the criteria by which plans for using revenues from the student loan system (hereinafter, 'the plan') are to be assessed, by which they have progressed in 2022, and the evaluation. This concerns institute-level assessments.

Words in **bold** indicate elements that feature specifically in the reports.

1) Assessing the plan

In the period up to April 2020, the institutes' plans will be assessed. The assessments will be carried out by panels of experts, each of whom will visit an institute.

The following criteria will be used to assess whether each institute's plan envisages quality:

Criterion 1

The plan makes a reasoned contribution to improving educational quality. The institute's proposals for the revenues from the student loan system and the aims it seeks to realise with them in relation to the named educational quality themes are clearly formulated and are in keeping with the institute's context, history, and broad vision.

Effect: For each of the **six educational quality themes**, the institute has made a **clear choice**. For each theme, it has provided a reasoned account of how it intends to spend the revenues from the student loan system (hereinafter, 'proposals') and what they intend to achieve through these proposals, or indeed why they do not intend to use said revenues for a particular theme. Proposals and aims may apply to the entire institute, but also to certain parts of it or to specific groups of students. The institutes will describe in explicit terms their **justification for their choices in relation to their broader educational proposals, vision**, history, and context; this can include their long-term budgetary developments. The proposals and aims make a reasoned contribution to **improving educational quality**.

Criterion 2

The internal stakeholders are sufficiently involved with the drawing up of the plan and there is sufficient support among internal and external stakeholders.

Effect: The proposals for improving quality, as laid down in the plan, have been arrived at in **consultations** with the participation bodies (teachers and students), internal monitors, and, where relevant, after consultations with external stakeholders. Management and the participation bodies will jointly ensure the **broad-based involvement** of the community of the research university or university of applied sciences and will agree on which bodies inside and outside their institutes will be involved in the creation of their plan.

The participation bodies are **sufficiently** involved, as fully-fledged partners, with the creation of the plan, and the plan shows that the sufficient involvement of the participation bodies is safeguarded during the realisation of the policy. **Facilitating participation bodies** enables them to fulfil their roles effectively.

The participation bodies have given their **consent** to the plan. The Supervisory Board has also approved the plan.

Criterion 3

The proposals in the plan are realistic in the light of the proposed use of the instruments and resources, and of the institute's organisation and processes.

Effect: The institute has adequately translated its plan into **concrete policy actions and processes** that provide a reasoned contribution to improving quality. The internal and, where relevant, external stakeholders regard the proposals as **achievable and feasible**, considering the financial context of the institute and its vision and policies. The institute is able to demonstrate that it is monitoring the progress of the agreements and the attainment of its objectives, and is modifying its proposals where necessary. To this end, it shows what existing and new, if applicable, **monitoring processes** it is applying and how it is involving internal and external stakeholders.

Plan assessment rules

Assessment on each criterion:	
<i>The panel provides an assessment on each criterion on the scale:</i>	
Complies:	the institute complies with the criterion.
Does not comply:	the institute does not comply with the criterion.
Final assessment rules on institute:	
Positive:	complies with all criteria.
Negative:	does not comply with one or more criteria.
Recommendations:	
The panel can make recommendations for improvements in relation to each criterion.	

2) Assessment in 2022

In 2022, there will be an assessment by the NVAO of what the plan has achieved up to that time. The annual report for the year 2021 will be used for the assessment, as will a reflection by the participation bodies appended to the annual report. No additional documents will be requested. In principle, this assessment will not involve any visits to the institute. The criteria for this assessment will be:

Criterion 1

The institute has made sufficient progress in realising its proposals, bearing in mind the efforts that have been made and how it has dealt with unforeseen circumstances.

Effect:

The assessment will concentrate on whether sufficient progress has been made in **realising** the agreed proposals up to the year 2021. The NVAO will take the institute's response to any unforeseen circumstances into consideration in its assessment. The NVAO will also consider any **measures** that have been taken in order to strengthen or modify the plan. The **reflection by the participation bodies** on the realisation of the plan up to that point will be considered by the NVAO in determining whether this criterion has been complied with.

Criterion 2

The participation bodies and other relevant stakeholders have been sufficiently involved during the implementation of the plan.

Effect: The policy of the institute encourages everyone involved to contribute to the **dialogue** during the implementation of the plan on the realisation of the proposals and

the related aims. The participation bodies are **sufficiently** involved during the implementation of the policy, including with the monitoring of and modifications to policy actions and processes.

The **reflection by the participation bodies** on the involvement of stakeholders and the facilitation of the participation bodies will be considered by the NVAO in determining whether this criterion has been complied with.

2022 assessment rules

Assessment on each criterion:	
<i>The NVAO provides an assessment on each criterion on the scale:</i>	
Complies:	the institute complies with the criterion.
Does not comply:	the institute does not comply with the criterion.
Final assessment rules on institute:	
Positive:	complies with all criteria.
Negative:	does not comply with one or more criteria.
Recommendations:	
The NVAO can make recommendations for improvements in relation to each criterion.	

3) Evaluation

The realisation of the plan of an institute with no ITK is evaluated six years after its initial assessment. In the case of institutes with an ITK that have applied for another one, the evaluation is generally part of the next ITK cycle. This means that the evaluations of institutes' plans do not take place at the same time. Some institutes will have a new ITK in 2023, and others not until early 2026.

Account will be taken during the evaluations of the when the assessment was carried out. Like the assessment of the plans, the evaluation involves a panel and a visit to the institute in question. The evaluation will involve the use of existing documents - in this case, annual reports for 2022 and later (the most recent in particular) and, as with the 2022 assessment, a reflection by the participation bodies. The criteria for the evaluation are:

Criterion 1

Up to 2024, the institute has sufficiently realised its proposals, bearing in mind the efforts that have been made and how it has dealt with unforeseen circumstances.

Effect:

The assessment will concentrate on the **realisation** of the agreed proposals.

The panel will take the institute's response to any unforeseen circumstances into consideration in its evaluation. The panel will also consider any **measures** that have been taken in order to strengthen, improve, or modify the plan, in line with expectations by students, teachers, or other stakeholders.

The **reflection by the participation bodies** on the realisation of the plan will be considered by the panel in determining whether this criterion has been complied with.

Criterion 2

The participation bodies and other relevant stakeholders have been sufficiently involved during the implementation of the plan.

Effect: The policy of the institute encourages everyone involved to contribute to the **dialogue** during the implementation of the plan on the proposed expenditure of the revenues from the student loan system and the related aims. The participation bodies are **sufficiently** involved during the implementation of the policy, including with the monitoring of and modifications to policy actions and processes. The **reflection by the participation bodies** on the involvement of stakeholders and the facilitation of the participation bodies will be considered by the panel in determining whether this criterion has been complied with.

Plan evaluation rules

Assessment on each criterion:	
<i>The panel provides an assessment on each criterion on the scale:</i>	
Complies:	the institute complies with the criterion.
Does not comply:	the institute does not comply with the criterion.
Evaluation rules on institute:	
Positive:	complies with all criteria.
Negative:	does not comply with one or more criteria.
Recommendations:	
The panel can make recommendations for improvements in relation to each criterion.	

B. Plan assessment and evaluation process

The assessment of the plan and the evaluation of its realisation may be carried out in their own right or in the context of an ITK. Even if they are carried out in the context of the ITK, they remain separate and are presented in their own reports.

At each assessment moment, the NVAO board will issue separate recommendations for each institute to the minister.

1. Assessment of plan: 'separate' or as 'trail' in combination with ITK

The separate assessment of the plan requires of the panel that it familiarises itself with the institute's existing vision and ambitions. The panel will also have to acquire an understanding of the organisational structure (including relevant decentralisation within the institute) and the concomitant management structure, the way in which quality assurance is embedded, and attitudes towards the participation bodies. Understanding these processes in the institute is important in order to be able to assess the plan according to the criteria listed in this protocol.

In the case of institutes that take part in an ITK, the assessment of the plan can be carried out as a 'trail', alongside the other trails that form part of an ITK (see ITK framework). In an ITK, the panel acquires an understanding at institute level of the aforementioned processes, which means that the assessment of the plan can be less of a burden for the institute. As already stated, the assessment of the plan is a separate matter, resulting in a separate opinion and report.

In some cases, the assessment of the plan will be carried out in addition to a recently held ITK. Here, the original ITK panel (or part thereof) will assess the plan. The assessment will have the character of a trail that is carried out separately. In order to distinguish it from anything else, we refer to it as an 'additional trail'. In its judgement, the panel may refer to findings from the ITK, but produce a separate view and report about the plan.

2. Timetable

The timetable is determined by the agreements that have been made with the minister.

1 April 2020

The **assessment of the creation of the plans** must have resulted in recommendations by the NVAO to the minister, for every institute by 1 April 2020. Institutes need time to prepare their plans and to coordinate matters internally. This means the assessments can start from the autumn of 2018.

For the purposes of scheduling the assessments, this means that the NVAO (in consultation with the umbrella organisations if necessary):

- enters into discussions with every institute that has not applied for an ITK about scheduling a separate assessment of their plans in 2019 or inclusion of the assessment of the plans in an ITK assessment in 2019 that has yet to be applied for;
- contacts institutes that have had or will have had an ITK in 2019 about scheduling an additional trail;
- contacts institutes for which an ITK is scheduled in late 2018 or 2019 about the possibility of combining plan assessment processes and their ITK;

- enters into discussions with institutes for which an ITK is scheduled in 2019 about the possibility of bring their ITK forward, so that the plan assessment

process and the ITK can be combined, or about a separate assessment in 2019.

The minister will enter into discussions with institutes whose plans have been assessed as insufficient by the NVAO (after the recommendations by the panel and after the arguments of both sides have been heard, see H). If the minister then adopts the recommendations by the NVAO, the institutes in question will have the opportunity to submit a new plan within twelve months. The NVAO will then assess the new plan within twelve months on the basis of the same criteria drawn up before the plan was assessed.

Autumn 2020

The progress of the realisation of the plans will be monitored at institute level. At the same time, parties will wish to see what quality agreements mean from a national perspective for improving the quality of education. For that reason, the NVAO will create a **national picture** from the year 2020 of the current state of play regarding quality agreements. The picture will be based on the plans and on the initial period of their implementation. The NVAO will not request any additional information from the institutes for this purpose. The form that the national picture will take will be discussed with the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, the VSNU, the ISO, and the LSVb. They will also be invited to give their comments on a draft version.

Autumn 2022

In 2022, an **assessment** of the realisation of the plans by the NVAO is due to take place. It will base its assessments on the 2021 annual report of the institutes in question in which they take stock of the progress they have made. A reflection by the participation bodies will be added to the annual reports. This concerns a reflection by the participation bodies on what the plans have achieved at that point, the involvement of stakeholders and the degree to which the participation bodies have been able to play their part. The 2021 annual reports and the reflections will form the basis for the assessments by the NVAO.

If the assessments of these documents gives rise to it, the NVAO will request a further discussion with the institutes in question. If this does not clarify matters, or if there are other reasons for further investigation, the NVAO may ask the panel that carried out the assessments of the plans to conduct an additional investigation.

If the 2022 assessments reveal that insufficient progress has been made in fulfilling the plans, the minister will hold discussions with the institutes involved - said institutes will then have twelve months to show that they are indeed making enough progress. The NVAO will then carry out further assessments in the autumn of 2023, based on the reflections by the relevant institutes themselves (first presented by the Executive Board to the Supervisory Board) and their participation bodies, to see whether sufficient progress has been made.

Autumn 2022

On the basis of the 2022 assessments, the NVAO will draw up a **national picture** of the current state of play regarding the quality agreements. For this sector-level picture, the NVAO will not request any additional information from the institutes. The form that the national picture will take will be discussed (as with the national picture in 2020) with the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, the VSNU, the ISO, and the LSVb. They will also be invited to give their comments on a draft version.

2023 - 2026

The **evaluation** of what has been achieved by the plans at the end forms, in principle, part of the next ITK cycle process, in the case of institutes that take part in it. The evaluations of the plans of institutes that do not take part in the ITK are held six years after their original assessment. This means that the evaluations of institutes' plans do not take place at the same time. Some institutes will have a new ITK in 2023, and others not until early 2026.

The evaluation is, like the assessment of the plans, a process that involves a panel and a visit to the institute in question.

The evaluation will involve the use of existing documents - annual reports of the relevant institute (the most recent in particular) and a reflection by the participation bodies.

3. The plan for using revenues from the student loan system

In their plans for using revenues from the student loan system, the institutes include their proposed expenditure (proposals) for the six agreed themes for improving the quality of education. They also set out in their plans the aims they would like to achieve by 2024, and they formulate what progress they would like to have made by 2021 in realising their proposals. Proposals and aims may apply to the entire institute, but also to certain parts of it or to specific groups of students. For each of the six themes, the institutes will describe either the proposals and the related aims they seek to achieve in respect of each theme using the revenues from the student loan system, or why they have decided not to allocate any of the resources to a particular theme.

The institutes will describe in explicit terms their justification for their choices in relation to their broader educational proposals, vision, history, and context; this can include their long-term budgetary developments. The institutes will include in their plans a long-term budget that provides information on the areas to which the institutes propose to spend the revenues from the student loan system.

The institutes will also demonstrate in their plans the involvement of internal stakeholders in the drawing up of the plans and the support among internal and external stakeholders.

Each institute's plan on how to use the revenues from the student loan system can be incorporated into a new institutional plan, but it could also be appended to an existing one, for example.

For the assessment by the panel, the institutes will structure their plans around the three criteria, or add instructions for readers.

4. Submitting an application

The NVAO and the institutes will reach binding agreements regarding the date of submission. In principle, the application files must be submitted eight weeks before the visit.

Institutes submit their application file for having their plans assessed to webaanvraag@nvao.net. The NVAO receives ten copies of the application file by post. See 'plan' above for a description of the application file.

5. Composition of panel

The NVAO will appoint the panel that carries out the assessments. In the event that an assessment is included in an ITK process, the ITK panel will be the one that carries out the assessment. Account will be taken of this when the composition of the panel is being determined. Institutes may notify the NVAO of any misgivings they have about the composition of the panel within two weeks. The panel will be confirmed after consultations with the institutes.

The assessment experts will be independent of the institute (there must have been no direct or indirect links with the institute in question for at least five years that could lead to a conflict of interest), will be recognised authorities in the field of administration or the development of higher education, be audit experts, or represent the social field. Panel members will sign a statement of impartiality before carrying out assessments.

The panel will jointly cover the following areas of expertise:

- administration;
- higher education, preferably including developments outside the Netherlands;
- expertise relating to the structure and effectiveness of quality assurance systems;
- student representative;
- representative from the social or professional field.

The panel will consist of no more than five members, including a student member, and will be assisted by a secretary and process coordinator from the NVAO. A panel member with administrative expertise will act as chairman. The NVAO will seek to appoint to every panel a member with experience of participation bodies. The panel will reach its judgements amicably. Each different perspective of quality that is represented on the panels, including that of students, will be treated with equal respect. The panels will seek to reach a consensus.

The NVAO will aim to appoint several panels for institutes that have their plans assessed separately (or in addition to an ITK), each of which will visit multiple institutes.

The NVAO will put every panel member on a training course or give them a briefing specifically aimed at assessing the plans on how to use the revenues from the student loan system.

6. On-site visits

On-site visits always form part of the assessment and evaluation of the plans. During their visit, the panel will talk with at least the current and possible previous participation bodies, teachers and students, the board of the institute, and the Supervisory Board. The panel will determine how the talks are to be arranged in consultation with the institute. At the end of their visit, the chairman of the panel will give summarised feedback to the institute. The definitive findings will be included in the report containing the recommendations.

When the assessment of a plan has been carried out after an institute has secured an ITK in the second round (additional trail), then the same procedure will be followed as described above.

When the assessment of the plan forms part of the ITK (trail), the assessment will be carried out as a trail during the in-depth visit (see description of ITK process in 2016 accreditation framework). In principle, the panel will hold discussions with each of the bodies referred to above. However, the panel can, in combination with the ITK, take account of previous discussions with any of the said bodies. At the end of the in-depth visit, the chairman of the panel will also give feedback specifically on the assessment of the plan.

7. Reports

In the case of the plan assessment and evaluation, the secretary will draw up a report of the recommendations of no more than six pages, following the visits to the institutes. The report will contain a summary of the findings and deliberations by the panel on which their opinions are based.

The heart of the report will contain, for each criterion, the factually substantiated findings by the panel, its deliberations, its opinion, and any recommendations. Each of the effects for each criterion (in bold) will feature in the reports. The panel will base its

reasoning on the application file, the discussions, and findings after studying the relevant material.

The reports will start with a brief and concise summary, aimed at a broad-based readership. The reports will conclude with opinions for each standard. The appendix will contain the summary by the panel and brief CVs of the panel members, the method used by the panel, the dates and programmes of the on-site visits (with the names and functions of the discussion partners and an overview of the material studied).

The chairman will adopt the draft reports after each of the panel members has given their agreement to the content thereof. The institute will receive the draft report and will have two weeks in which to correct any factual inaccuracies. The panel will process the institute's response, after which the chairman will adopt the definitive report after the panel members have all agreed to it, and present it to the NVAO.

For the assessments in 2022, the NVAO will draw up a report for each institute, using the 2021 annual reports and the reflections by the participation bodies. The reports will start with a brief and concise summary, aimed at a broad-based readership. The reports will conclude with opinions for each standard. The institute will receive the draft report and will have two weeks in which to correct any factual inaccuracies. The NVAO will process the institute's response, and then adopt the definitive report.

8. Judgement by NVAO

During the assessment and evaluation of the plan, the NVAO forms its own independent judgement about the advisory report, looking at its consistency, the panel's methods, procedural requirements, and its reasoning and considerations, in order to determine that the panel's recommendations are properly underpinned and imitable and that the formation of the panel's opinion has taken place in a consistent manner.


The NVAO may invite the chairman of the panel (and other panel members) to give a more detailed explanation. The NVAO will inform the institute about any such discussions and may also invite the institute for a discussion. Institutes may themselves state that they would like a discussion or more detailed explanation in advance of the NVAO forming a judgement.

On the basis of the advisory report by the panel and any additional explanatory information, the NVAO will produce its own reasoned independent judgement. Based on the judgements for each criterion, the judgement will either be positive or negative. The institute will have the opportunity to respond to factual inaccuracies in the judgement.

The judgement of the NVAO serves as a recommendation for the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. The minister will decide whether to allocate revenues from the student loan system. The decision of the minister may be appealed and objected to.

9. Notification

The NVAO publishes its recommendations and the advisory report by the panel on its website after the decision by the minister.



The judgements arrived at by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), independently and meticulously, strengthen the quality culture of institutes of higher education. Higher education study programmes are accredited on the basis of the judgements by the NVAO, which means students receive diplomas worthy of the name. The NVAO is binational and operates at an international level.

NVAO. Confidence in quality

Subject

Quality Agreements

Date

29 October 2018

Annex

1

Information

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1. Introduction

On 9 April 2018, the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science made agreements with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (VH), the Dutch National Students' Association (ISO), and the Dutch Student Union (LSVb) about the funds that are available from the introduction of the student loan system. The result of this agreement is what is being called the "Quality Agreements for Higher Education" in the Netherlands. The agreements between the parties are valid from 2019 to 2024. In total there are 54 educational institutions in the Netherlands need to be assessed.

The parties are aiming to use the funds to improve the quality of higher education. They agree that involvement on the part of the education community, in particular the participation bodies (staff and students, Supervisory Board), with the Quality Agreements is essential, during the time that the plans are being devised and implemented alike.

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) has been asked to perform the assessment of the Quality Agreements. The implementing act for a change of the higher education law in order to award the funds for the Quality Agreements procedure becomes effective as of January 1st, 2019.

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Minister of Education, Culture, and Science has asked the NVAO to execute the assessment of the Quality Agreements. A panel of experts (peer review) will visit the institutions and provide advice to the Board of the NVAO. Ultimately the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science will decide positively or negatively, based on the advice of the Board of the NVAO. Since the Minister decides, this is also the place for institutions to file an appeal to the decision. After the decision has been made by the Minister, the NVAO publishes the panel advice and the NVAO advice.

The design of the procedure of assessment had been done in close collaboration with the Ministry and the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (VH), the Dutch National Students' Association (ISO), and the Dutch Student Union (LSVb). The NVAO safeguards that the process is aligned with the existing assessments and the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Peer review is the assessment method, similar to the NVAO procedures that are already in place.

3. Process

The assessment of the Quality Agreements is executed through three verification moments: the assessment of the plans in 2019, the assessment of their progress in the autumn of 2022, and the evaluation of what the plans have achieved.

The assessment of the plans (phase 1) and the assessment of the evaluation (phase 3) is performed by means of a site visit by a panel of five experts (including a student member). For institutions that have applied for the Institutional Audit, can incorporate the assessment of the Quality Agreements in the visit of the Institutional Audit. Institutions that are not doing an Institutional Audit, will be audited on one day by a panel.

3.1 Separate assessment

Institutions that do not request an institutional audit, have already obtained the institutional audit in the second round (2017-2018) or chose to not combine the two procedures will be assessed separately. This is organized in a one-day site visit by a panel.

For institutions that already have obtained the institutional audit, the panel consists of panel members that have taken part in the audit panel of the institutional audit.

3.2 Trail in institutional audit

For institutes that have already requested an institutional audit or are intending to apply for one, the processes for assessing the plans for the Quality Agreements and the institutional audit can be combined in order to reduce the extra costs of the assessment of their plans as much as possible. The assessment of plans concerning the Quality Agreements and the institutional audit will always result in two separate reports.

3.3 Consistency

Consistency in the judgement is an important part of the process. For the separate assessments, institutions are divided into clusters (mostly based on the type of institution) and are assessed by standardized panels. All panel members will be trained for performing the assessment. The panel chairpersons meet throughout the process to align the assessment and to ensure feedback is shared with other panels and the NVAO. The panels are supported by a process coordinator and a secretary of the NVAO. The process coordinators and secretaries work closely together to align the panel reports and structure.

4. Protocol

A new protocol has been developed by the NVAO for the assessment of the Quality Agreements. This protocol sets out the details of the independent external assessments agreed by the parties of the plans of individual institutes on how the funds from the student loan system are to be used and of the assessments of what the plans are achieving.

The focus of the assessment of the plans will be targeted at how the plans are devised, the proposed expenditure, and what this expenditure is designed to achieve. The fulfilment of these proposals will be the main feature of the assessment, as will the involvement of participation bodies and other relevant stakeholders.

The protocol is a stand-alone assessment instrument that is closely aligned to the NVAO accreditation framework 2016 and the methods described therein.

5. Timing

The schedule below shows the steps in the process and the timeline for an assessment. Each assessment needs to take place within the time frame of 26 weeks (from application to decision of the Minister).

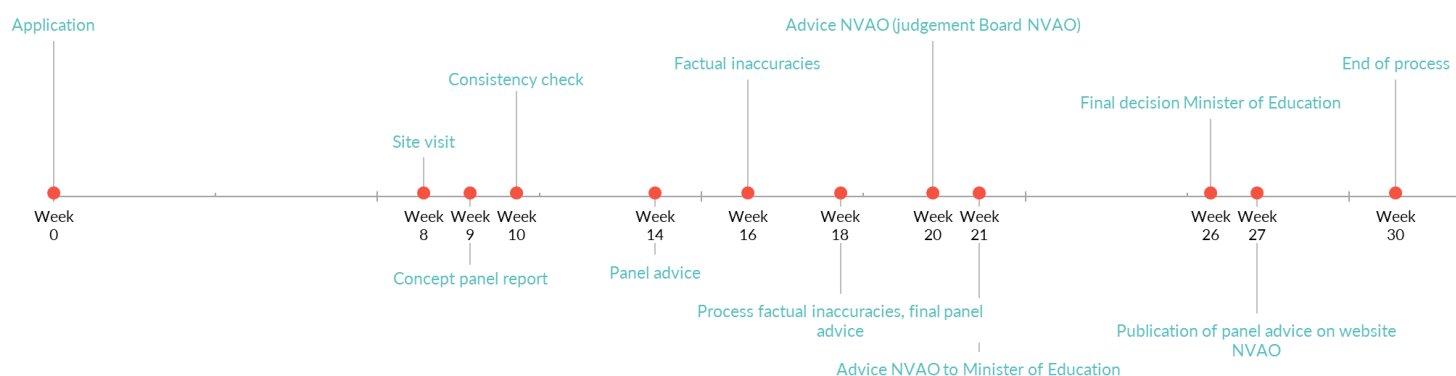


Figure 1 Timeline Quality Agreements

The table below shows the information from Figure 1.

Week	Process steps
Week 0	Application
Week 8	Site visit
Week 9	Concept panel report
Week 10	Consistency check by NAVO
Week 14	Panel advice sent to institution
Week 16	Respos from institution on factual inaccuracies
Week 18	Process factual inaccuracies, final panel advice
Week 20	Advice NVAO (judgement Board NVAO)
Week 21	Advice NVAO to Minister of Education
Week 26	Final decision Minister of Education
Week 27	Publication of panel advice on website NVAO
Week 30	End of process

Annex 1: Protocol Assessment of Quality Agreements Higher Education 2019-2024
English

Publishing details

Assessment of quality agreements in higher education 2019-2024

Protocol

May 2018

Compiled by: NVAO Netherlands Department

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NOTITIE

Datum
7 December 2018

Portefeuillehouder
Ann Verreth

Agendapunt
-

Behandelaar

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Onderwerp

Substantive change report - EQAR

Introduction

The Quality Assurance System - Flanders 2019-2025 focuses on the **quality of individual programmes** and *programme accreditation is mandatory for all programmes*. The quality is accounted for:

1. either by means of an institutional review and internal QA procedures of the institution for existing programmes and external QA procedures at programme level for new programmes; this option applies to all universities and university colleges;
2. or by means of external QA procedures at programme level for all programmes, carried out by an external evaluation body; this option applies to all other institutions in Flanders, viz. the registered institutions, the institutions of public interest for post-initial education, scientific research and scientific services, and the recognised faculties of Protestant theology.

External, independent experts ('peers') are involved in every assessment of educational quality, either by the institution itself or by a panel appointed by NVAO or by an evaluation body.

Recognised higher education

1. Universities and university colleges

In the new Flemish QA system, universities and university colleges are made responsible for confirming the quality of existing degree programmes. They are accountable to the public and are therefore obliged to publish information about the quality of each accredited degree programme on their website. *This information has to be both valid and traceable (e.g. towards reports of external experts). Quantitative information for each programme is also collected on a website administered by the government.*

The **institutional review** assesses in a fixed six-year cycle the way in which a university or university college implements its educational policy. As part of that educational policy, each institution developed a conduct to confirm the quality of the programmes. This responsibility for the quality assurance of the programmes is limited to accredited programmes.

Every new programme that is to be started up, first undergoes **initial accreditation**, an assessment by an external panel appointed by NVAO of the potential quality of the course. A positive outcome leads to the recognition as a new programme.

After the period of initial accreditation, a **first accreditation** procedure carried out by a panel appointed by NVAO ensures that the study programme meets predetermined minimum quality and level requirements. After the first accreditation (with positive outcome and no limitations in the accreditation period), the universities and university colleges become responsible for confirming the quality of the programme.

If, on the basis of an institutional review, it appears that a university or university college is not able to confirm the quality of its accredited degree programmes, the institutional review leads to a negative decision and the NVAO will carry out external QA procedures at programme level for each programme until a next institutional review has a positive outcome. A positive outcome of the institutional review leads to renewal of the individual accreditation period for six years for each programme of which the accreditation will expire (following the cycle as it is recorded in the Flemish Higher Education Register).

The initial accreditation and first accreditation procedures are designed in such a way that they can to a certain extent be adapted to the conduct that the institution has in place in order to confirm the quality of its other programmes. We speak of procedures tailored to the own conduct of the institution.

For joint programmes, organised by a Flemish institution and one or more foreign institutions, and leading to a joint degree, the law provides now for the quality to be assured by means of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. The assessment is carried out by an evaluation body that is registered in EQAR.

The procedures for universities and university colleges place greater responsibilities not only on the institutions, but also on the panels assessing them. Therefore, NVAO invests in an extensive training of all panel members, external secretaries and the own staff. Furthermore, NVAO closely monitors the QA activities within institutions, both at the time of an institutional review and by organising intermediate progress meetings with each institution.

Last but not least, NVAO organises seminars with representatives of the higher education community on a regular base in order to support institutions in their constant strive for quality and to follow up the impact of the new QA system. A Sounding Board Group unites

representatives of the students, institutions, umbrella organisations and the government, and it advises NVAO on the design and implementation of the QA system.

2. Other institutions

For the other recognised institutions for higher education, the quality of the programmes is accounted for through the intervention of an external evaluation body. An evaluation body is a quality assurance organisation that is registered in EQAR or recognised by the NVAO on the basis of a cooperation agreement that ensures that the external assessment is made in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015).

Every new programme that is to be started up, first undergoes **initial accreditation** to assess potential quality. A positive outcome leads to the recognition as a new programme. After the period of initial accreditation, periodical **accreditation** of the programme takes place. A positive outcome leads to an accreditation period of 6 years. For these institutions, nothing changes in the new QA system, except for the duration of the accreditation period that is reduced from 8 to 6 years.

3. System-wide analyses

System-wide analyses are now embedded in the Flemish regulatory framework. They aim at identifying and sharing good practices among higher education institutions and programmes. They stimulate collaborative learning among institutions, particularly regarding themes related to educational policy and educational quality. System-wide analyses are organised by NVAO on a yearly basis focusing each time on one theme. Overall, these analyses will contribute to the quality culture within the QA system and within institutions, and therefore implicitly, to the quality of programmes.

Non-recognised higher education

Non-recognised educational providers can be registered by the Flemish Government as a provider of recognised higher education. This is done on the basis of a **registration file**, supplemented by a positive decision by NVAO on the (potential) quality of their education after carrying out a **comprehensive initial accreditation** procedure for at least one of their programmes. Compared to the past, this comprehensive initial accreditation procedure will take into account infrastructure, facilities and services offered to students. These aspects were not included in procedures for non-recognised providers in the previous QA system and have been considered as a deficiency in the assessment of new providers.

EQAR | Aarlenstraat 22 rue d'Arlon | BE-1050 Brussels

Lineke van Bruggen

Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)

– by email –

Brussels, 1 February 2019

Substantive Change Report – Clarification Request

Dear Lineke,

We wish to thank you for the Substantive Change Report of 7 December 2018. Your report is currently being reviewed by two rapporteurs before it is brought to the attention of the entire EQAR Register Committee.

In your report, you mentioned that NVAO has designed a new assessment for individual higher education institutions on how the revenues from the student loan system are to be used and of the assessments of what the plans are achieving.

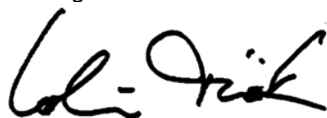
According to the 'Protocol for assessment of quality agreements in higher education 2019-2024' the institutions are asked to prepare a proposal on six agreed themes on their plans for using the revenues from the student loan system and these plans will be assessed by NVAO using a set of predefined criteria.

Could you kindly let us know what are these six agreed themes and to which extent they focus on learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation?

In order to expedite proceedings we kindly ask you for a reply **by 14 February 2018**. Please inform us if any difficulties arise in meeting this deadline. Please also note that this request and your response will be published together with the final decision on your Report.

I shall be at your disposal if you have any further questions or inquiries.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin Tück".

Colin Tück
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Subject

Quality Agreements – Information about themes

Date

14 March 2019

Information

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Appendix 1: Specification of quality agreements' educational themes¹

Intensifying and small-scale education (educational intensity)

The relationship between lecturers and students is crucial for good quality education. Therefore it is of importance to intensify contact between both parties, which can be done by focussing on smaller education groups and the forming of communities, or by reserving extra time for personal feedback and individual guidance. To achieve that, a further expansion of the number of lecturers per student is necessary. Also, the appointment of extra teachers enables them to link the educational contents to social topics and research, enlarging the students' curiosity and their research capacities.

Extra and better guidance of students

It's the higher education institutions' responsibility to offer equal opportunities to all students, regardless of their backgrounds, origins and prior educations. This must not only be done incidentally, in response of a threat, but also proactively and structurally. Intensive guidance and support by, for example, professionally trained mentors or coaches, study advisors, psychological counsellors, student counsellors and career advisors are possible ways to do so. Better guidance will prevent problems and will ensure an optimal development of every student.

¹ The specification of the educational themes is an appendix to the agreements that are made with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (VH), the Dutch National Students' Association (ISO), and the Dutch Student Union (LSVb)

Study success

All students with the required capacities, should be offered the opportunity to successfully start and complete their studies. The study progress and accessibility of education for students originating from secondary education or vocational education, equal opportunities (including higher education), preventing dropout and promoting study success remain important issues that require attention. Based on an analysis of study success amongst the student population, an institution may decide to focus their attention on specific groups of students and/or educations in particular and to formulate corresponding goals.

Educational differentiation

Higher education institutions respond to the various backgrounds and ambitions of students, as well as the job markets' needs. They do so by offering a varied set of educational trajectories towards different levels (Associate degree, Bachelor, Master). Also, institutions invest in talent programs such as honour programs or programs targeting societal involvement, entrepreneurship, arts or sports. Besides, they differentiate in didactic education concepts.

Appropriate and good quality educational facilities

It is of importance that the study facilities and infrastructure being used advance intensive and small-scale education. Digital sources could be integrated better in the educational process: students must be able to utilize the learning environment optimally, both physically and digitally. Study facilities and study infrastructure must meet the demands of future education.

Further professionalization of lecturers (lecturer quality)

Good quality lecturers with a high level of involvement are key to high quality education. A focal point could be the further professionalization of lecturers. This also includes propagating more appreciation of the lecturers' activities, for instance by focusing on educational achievements within scientific education. Also, teachers should be able to stay up to date with the most recent activities within their field of practice and with didactic and digital developments. The ability to share lecture material with others and profit from it, may help with that. Besides, lecturers should have more opportunities to develop themselves. For example, by doing research, in case of lecturers at universities of applied sciences.