# hbo-master Digital Design

## Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

16 November 2016

NVAO limited initial accreditation

Panel report

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# 1 Executive summary

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) received a request for an initial accreditation procedure, including programme documents, regarding a proposed hbo-master Digital Design at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS). NVAO convened an expert panel, which studied the information available and discussed the proposed programme with representatives of the institution and the programme during a site visit.

The following considerations have played an important role in the panel's assessment.

***Standard 1:*** *the panel concludes that the programme* ***meets*** *the standard.*
The master's programme Digital Design at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences is a full time, one-year programme, comprising 60 ECTS. The primary objective of the master's programme is to educate more and better digital designers, at an internationally competent level. The underlying ambition is to strengthen the societal and economic position of the Netherlands and to contribute to building the brand value of 'Digital Design'. The panel agrees that the envisaged programme fills the need in the creative industry for graduates with this specific master's profile and therefore makes an adequate contribution to the professional field.

Graduates from the Digital Design master programme are supposed to demonstrate the ability to function at level seven of the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The programme aims to educate the so-called 'T-shaped professionals'; the vertical bar on the *T* represents the depth of related skills and expertise in a single field (in this case: programming, business skills et cetera), whereas the horizontal bar is the ability to collaborate across disciplines with experts in other areas and to apply knowledge in areas of expertise other than one's own. The panel is of the opinion that, although the learning outcomes per course are adequately described, the overall learning outcomes are in need of further elaboration and clarification. According to the panel a further specification of the learning outcomes will facilitate the creation of a more clear profile of the (desired) applicant; in particular the panel understood the idea of the desired 'T-shaped student', but the specifics are to be elaborated.

The panel concluded that the academic and professional level of intended learning outcomes of the master's programme is according to international standards. The necessary competences are presented in the *Main Assessment Dossier* and are discussed during the site visit.

The programme made a comparison ("benchmark") with other master programmes. The panel endorses the conclusion of the programme's management that there is no comparable programme currently being developed within the Dutch realm. In addition the panel concluded that international ties have been made with other international institutes but the panel supports further initiatives to continue the international (Dutch) profiling of the programme and collaboration and comparison with other international institutes.

***Standard 2:*** *the panel concludes that the programme* ***meets*** *the standard.*
The master's programme is a full-time programme, carried out in two consecutive standard AUAS semesters of 20 weeks. Upon successful completion, the programme awards the 60 EC required for a Postgraduate Level 7 with a Master of Science degree.

The programme consists of 16 courses, 3 projects and 1 start/end conference and exposition. Courses are clustered according to areas of expertise, each characterised by a foundation course, essential for the identity of the master's programme. Besides the foundation courses, the programme includes supporting courses, which provide additional knowledge and skills for the areas of expertise and the related competences and capabilities of the digital designer at master's level. At the end of each semester the students will undergo a general assessment where their overall progress and the realisation of their individual learning goals will be evaluated and feedback given. In addition to all obligatory courses, students select one supporting course for which they choose to do additional individual coursework (extending it from 1 EC to 3 ECs). The panel wishes to complement the programme management with the extensive and detailed description of the curriculum courses.

Initially, the panel was of the opinion that the curriculum of the programme is fragmented and very 'dense': courses are offered with the study load of 1 EC (28h of study) and the final qualifications of some courses seemed to be very ambitious. The panel was also worried that the programme being as crammed as was suggested on paper, would not give the creative professionals enough space to breathe and to create their own process. The panel discussed the feasibility, the density and the study load of the programme during the site visit. Based on this (additional) information, the panel concludes that the master's programme is challenging and still dense from time to time, but that clustering of the (minor) courses should lead to a feasible study programme.

The panel is very pleased with the quality and motivation of the teaching staff, but expresses its concern about the heavy workload for the teaching staff, considering the many duties and roles of the programme and the few available hours given to execute these duties. The active involvement and dedication of professors ('lectoren') and members of the creative industry is highly appreciated by the panel. The panel is of the opinion that the programme is well organized and that the students will be well prepared for obtaining their final qualifications. The literature and facilities are up to standard.

As a result of the rising complexity of societal problems, there is a demand for 'T-shaped' professionals in industry. Therefore, the master's programme will collaborate closely with industry partners. Agencies will also specifically contribute to the design and marketing of the master's programme. The panel is positive about the collaboration with the creative industry but recommends the programme management to stay independent from the creative industry.

The programme management considers it of great importance that the 'right' type of students enters the master's programme. Therefore, a selection committee will judge every candidate. Students will submit an application including their profile, portfolio and a pitch. From the interviews – and not from the provided reports - the panel learned about the different specific qualities an applicant should possess to enter the master's programme. The panel therefore strongly recommends to define and specify the required qualities in written form as well on short notice.

***Standard 3:*** *the panel concludes that the programme* ***partially meets*** *the standard*.
Throughout the programme, both formative and summative assessments have their place. Formative assessments will be continuous; lecturers and coaches will assess students' work during lessons and through the portfolio and provide feedback. A range of formative, holistic feedback points supports the final summative assessments: peer assessment as input for the examiners, group and individual critiques and tutorials. Collaborative practice is encouraged alongside one-to-one feedback. Individual development and progression is monitored through face-to-face contact.

The level and complexity of assessments increase over time and more and more elements are introduced with each course and project. One intermediate assessment (1 EC) will be conducted at the end of Project 2; a final assessment (2 ECs) will take place after Project 3. Both assessments will take in consideration all the work (classwork, projects, individual study) conducted by the student up to that point.

A new postgraduate-level Examination Board will be appointed for the Master's programme. The Board will consist of suitably qualified and experienced members of Master's staff and other AUAS staff with suitable expertise. In the first instance, the Examination Board will also function as assessment committee. Every year the Examination Board draws up an assurance agenda and annual report. During the site visit the panel discussed the above mentioned topics with members of the Examination Board. The panel was not convinced by the explanations of the Examination Board and even though the panel is convinced that the quality of the members of the Examination Board are up to standard, it became clear that the duties and level of knowledge of the Examination Board are in need of sharpening.

The master's programme will be concluded by the completion of the final project, which underpins the personal vision and portfolio (including students' individual project contribution). Besides the two (independent) examiners, industry experts will be involved in the assessment as crucial advisors. The final presentations will be in the form of a conference/exposition in which students present their work and products. A supervisor and co-supervisor are appointed for the assessment of the final project. Based on the discussions with the programme management, the teachers and the examination board, the panel concludes that this part of the programme development is still under construction. The panel recommends to define (written and clear) criteria and procedures for summative assessments during the programme and the final project. Based on the constructive and trustworthy discussions with the prospective programme management the panel is confident that it takes its responsibilities seriously and it is in control of the quality management of the assessment procedures.

***Standard 4:*** *the panel concludes that the programme* ***partially meets*** *the standard.*
The *Main Assessment Dossier* states that the programme will be part of the organisatorial and financial structure of the AUAS School of Digital Media and Creative Industries (FDMCI). The panel is convinced that the programme is supported by the authorities of AUAS and has been provided with sufficient budget for the development and initial execution of the programme. However, to continue the programme in a sustainable way, to make sure that the workload for teachers will not be too high and that the programme is guaranteed to have 'creative space' and a sufficient study environment, the panel urges the programme management to increase the budget for staff and facilities.

Given these considerations, the panel advises NVAO to take a **conditionally positive** decision regarding the quality of the proposed programme hbo-master Digital Design at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.

The Hague, 16 November 2016

On behalf of the Initial Accreditation panel convened to hbo-master Digital Design Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences,

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| Prof. dr. ir. J.C. Brezet<br>(chair) | E.W.H. Kozlowska MA<br>(secretary) |

# 2 Introduction

## 2.1 The procedure

NVAO received a request for an initial accreditation procedure including programme documents regarding a proposed hbo-master Digital Design. The request was received on 23 June 2016 from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.

An initial accreditation procedure is required when a recognised institution wants to offer a programme and award a recognised bachelor or master's degree. To a certain extent, initial accreditation demands a different approach to the accreditation procedure for programmes already being offered. Initial accreditation is in fact an ex ante assessment of a programme, and a programme becomes subject to the normal accreditation procedures once initial accreditation has been granted.

NVAO convened an international panel of experts. The panel consisted of:

- Mr. Prof.dr.ir. J.C. Brezet (chair); (Em) Professor Sustainable Product Development with a chair both at TU Delft (The Netherlands) and AAU Aalborg University (Denmark);
- Mrs. J. Cremers MA; Academic Director bachelor Devine - Digital Design & Development, HOWEST Kortrijk (Belgium);
- Mrs. Drs. J. Ossewold MA; Director Education and Research, Member of the Board, Design Academy Eindhoven (The Netherlands);
- Mr. J. Solleveld Bsc, Msc (student member); Student Limnology and Oceanography, University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands).

On behalf of the NVAO, mr. Dagmar Provijn and mrs. Liza Kozlowska, policy officers, were responsible for the process-coordination and the drafting of the experts' report.

This composition reflects the expertise deemed necessary by NVAO. (Annex 1: Composition of the panel). All the panel members signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel has based its assessment on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Initial Accreditation Framework (Stcrt. 2014, nr 36791).

The following procedure was undertaken. The panel members studied the programme documents (Annex 3: Documents reviewed) regarding the proposed programme. Their first impressions were sent to the secretary of NVAO, in order to outline these remarks within the accreditation framework and detect the items to be clarified during the site visit.

Based on its first findings, the panel organised a preparatory meeting the day before the site visit: 13 October 2016. The site visit took place on 14 October 2016 at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit).

The panel formulated its preliminary assessments per theme and standard immediately after the site visit. These are based on the findings of the site visit, and building on the assessment of the programme documents.

## 2.2 Panel report

The first chapter of this report is the executive summary of the report, while the current chapter is the introduction.

The third chapter gives a description of the programme including its position within the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and within the higher education system of the Netherlands.

The panel presents its assessments in the fourth chapter. The programme is evaluated by assessing the themes and standards in the Initial Accreditation Framework. For each standard the panel presents an outline of its findings, considerations and a conclusion.

The outline of the findings are the objective facts as found by the panel in the programme documents, in the additional documents and during the site visit. The panel's considerations are the panel's subjective evaluations regarding these findings and the importance of each. The considerations presented by the panel logically lead to a concluding assessment.

The panel concludes the report with a table containing an overview of its assessments per standard.

# 3 Description of the programme

## 3.1 General

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| Country | : | The Netherlands |
| Institution | : | Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences |
| Programme | : | Digital Design |
| Level | : | master |
| Orientation | : | (hbo) |
| Specialization | : | none |
| Degree | : | Master of Science |
| Location(s) | : | Amsterdam |
| Study Load (EC) | : | 60 EC |
| Field of Study | : | Technology |

## 3.2 Profile of the institution

The Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS) is one of the largest institutes for higher education in the Netherlands. Based in the city of Amsterdam, AUAS reflects the eclectic diversity of the city with its desired character traits such as courage, ambition, creativity, hospitality and enterprise. AUAS claims to train the professionals of tomorrow. It has almost 50,000 students and over 3,500 staff. AUAS, from its seven schools, offers over 80 bachelor degree programmes, 3 associate degree programmes and 12 master degree programmes.

AUAS takes advantage of Amsterdam as a hotbed of education and research and is actively involved with the University of Amsterdam (UvA): the two institutions are governed by a joint Executive Board. Together, AUAS and UvA offer students a wide range of education pathways.

## 3.3 Profile of the programme

The master's programme Digital Design at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences is a full time, one-year programme, comprising 60 ECTS. The programme aims to attract 25 students the first year(s), to be conducted in English, and intends to start in September 2017, on condition of a positive accreditation decision by NVAO.

The primary objective of the master's programme is to educate more and better digital designers, at an internationally competent level. The underlying ambition is to strengthen the societal and economic position of the Netherlands and to contribute to building the brand value of 'Digital Design'. The programme document indicates that no other institution of higher education in the Netherlands offers a programme with a similar profile.

The Amsterdam Human Capital Agenda mentions the need for higher-educated professionals in design and digital technologies who can put the city of Amsterdam on the creative map, an objective also shared by the Dutch Government. Moreover, leading creative industries in the Netherlands have noticed a mismatch, both in engineering and analytical thinking, between the skills they expect from starting professionals and what recent graduates from creative bachelor's and master's programmes have to offer. Together with the crucial role of lifelong learning for mid-to-senior-level professionals, this has motivated a consortium of creative agencies to approach the AUAS to inquire about the possibility of setting up a master's programme in Digital Design. AUAS envisions this programme within the creative industry domain ('Techniek' sector).

# 4 Assessment per standard

This chapter presents the evaluation by the assessment panel of the standards. The panel has reproduced the criteria for each standard. For each standard the panel presents (1) a brief outline of its findings based on the *Main Assessment Dossier,* additional information provided by the programme and discussion during the site visit, (2) the considerations the panel has taken into account and (3) the conclusion of the panel.
The panel presents a conclusion for each of the standards.

## 4.1 Intended learning outcomes: Standard 1

*The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.*

*Outline of findings*
The *Main Assessment Dossier* mentions the need for higher educated professionals in design and digital technologies to strengthen the creative image of the city of Amsterdam, as well as filling the gap between the skills that are expected by the leading creative agencies and skills recent graduates have to offer. Together with the crucial role of lifelong learning for mid-to-senior-level professionals, this has motivated a consortium of creative agencies to approach the AUAS to consider the creation of a master's programme in Digital Design. The panel agrees that the envisaged programme fills the need in the creative industry for graduates with this specific master's profile and therefore makes an adequate contribution to the professional field.

The programme's main objective is to educate more and better digital designers, at an internationally competitive level. The underlying ambition is to strengthen the societal and economic position of the Netherlands and Amsterdam as creative city and to contribute to building the brand value of 'Dutch digital design'. According to the *Main Assessment Dossier*, graduates will response to global, regional and local challenges with the following seven core characteristics:

1. Applying a design-thinking mindset and methodology in addressing wicked problems;
2. Working in an interdisciplinary way;
3. Making informed decisions;
4. Understanding digital technology;
5. Creating responses (objects, solutions or connections);
6. Telling stories to communicate one's own vision and identity;
7. Adding value for people, profit and planet.

Graduates from the Digital Design master programme are supposed to demonstrate the ability to function at level seven of the European Qualification Framework (EQF). This implies that graduates are able to demonstrate highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in their field of work or study, as the starting point for original thinking and/or applied research. In addition, graduates must show a critical awareness of knowledge issues in a certain field and at the interface between different fields, and must possess specialised problem-solving skills required for research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields. In terms of competences, graduates are able to manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches, and they should take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams.

The following set of intended learning outcomes in terms of (five) competences are listed in the *Main Assessment Dossier:*

1. Framing and strategy;
2. Reflection and awareness;
3. Concepting and ideation;
4. Creating and crafting;
5. Self-directed learning.

The programme presents itself as professionally oriented as opposed to academically-oriented programmes. The *Main Assessment Dossier* describes three differences: first, the type of research involved in the curriculum (applied research versus academic research); second, the role industry and practice have in the curriculum (direct versus indirect); and third, the balance between acquiring new knowledge and learning innovative ways of working (skills versus knowledge). The programme and the learning outcomes have been discussed with representatives from the creative industry.

The programme made a comparison ("benchmark") with other master programmes. According to this benchmark, the master programme Digital Design is situated at the intersection of industry and master's level academia in a unique niche, currently occupied by only few competitors. The panel endorses the conclusion of the programme's management that there is no comparable programme currently being developed within the Dutch realm. In additional information provided by the programme, the panel found the benchmark was mainly executed in comparison with the master's degree in Human Computing Interaction and Social Media at Umea University in Sweden. During the site visit and based on additional information, the committee concluded that international ties have been made with other international institutes and the panel supports further initiatives to continue the international profiling, collaboration and comparison with other international institutes.

Admission is only possible after selection by a selection committee. During the site visit the panel found that, at this moment, the ideal profile of an applicant for this master's programme is clear to the programme management, but that its specifics are not elaborated. The panel addressed this point in several discussions during the site visit and recommends the programme management to pay special attention in translating the intended learning outcomes into a clear-cut and operational profile of the desired applicant.

During the site visit the panel discussed whether the grade 'of Science' should be replaced by a grade like 'of Design'. The programme management explained that the title Master of Science is a continuation of the Bachelor of Science. The panel underlines the conclusion that the quality of the (intended) learning outcomes is compliant with the standard. A Master of Science degree is therefore justified.

*Considerations*
The panel concluded that the academic and professional level of intended learning outcomes of the master's programme is according to international standards. The necessary competences are presented in the *Main Assessment Dossier* and are discussed during the site visit.

The panel is of the opinion that, although the learning outcomes per course are adequately described, the overall learning outcomes are in need of further elaboration and clarification. According to the panel a further specification of the learning outcomes will facilitate the creation of a more clear profile of the (desired) applicant; in particular the panel understood the idea of the desired 'T-shaped student', but the specifics are to be elaborated.

The panel comes to the conclusion that the programme fills the need in the creative business with this specific master's profile and therefore makes an adequate contribution to the professional field. During the site visit, the representatives from the creative industry confirmed this. The panel recommends the programme management to continue investing in international benchmarking and profiling as well as in collaborating. It also seeks to stimulate the programme management to make the 'Dutchness' of this specific programme more explicit, and thus create a clear and outspoken identity.

*Conclusion*
Regarding the above-mentioned considerations, the panel concludes that the programme **meets** the standard.

### 4.2 Teaching-learning environment: Standard 2

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| *The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.* |

*Outline of findings*
*4.2.1 Curriculum and didactic concept*
The master's programme is a full-time programme carried out in two consecutive standard AUAS semesters of 20 weeks. Upon successful completion, the programme awards the 60 EC required for a Postgraduate Level 7 with a Master of Science degree. The total hours of study are in the range of 1,500–1,800.

The programme consists of 16 courses, 3 projects and 1 start/end conference and exposition. Courses are clustered according to areas of expertise (Literacy, Research, Creation and Strategy), each characterised by a foundation course, essential for the identity of the master's programme. These are 'Design thinking' (Literacy), 'Design research' (Research), 'Interaction engineering' (Creation) and 'Design ethics' (Strategy). Besides the foundation courses, the programme includes supporting courses, which provide additional knowledge and skills for the areas of expertise and the related competences and capabilities of the digital designer at Master's level. At the end of each semester the students will undergo a general assessment where their overall progress and the realisation of their individual learning goals will be evaluated and feedback given.

In addition to all obligatory courses, students select one supporting course for which they choose to do additional individual coursework (extending it from 1 EC to 3 ECs). To do so, students provide a detailed plan in line with their individual learning trajectory, which will be assessed by the primary lecturer of the area of expertise. An expert in the subject matter will judge the additional individual coursework. During the site visit the management team concluded it should be an additional individual coursework of 2 or 3 EC (instead of a course of 1 EC) in order to ensure the students acquire 60 EC to complete the full master's programme. The panel wishes to complement the programme with the extensive and detailed description of the curriculum courses.

Initially, the panel was of the opinion that the curriculum of the programme is fragmented and very 'dense'; courses are offered with the study load of 1 EC (28h of study) and the final qualifications of some courses seemed to be very ambitious. The panel was also worried that the programme being as crammed as was suggested on paper, would not give the creative professionals enough space to breathe and to create their own process. During the site visit, the panel concluded that the programme is still very ambitious. The clustering of the small supporting courses (and hereby allowing students to combine the assessment of multiple supportive courses within more meaningful and integrated project-related assessments) seems to release the workload for students and diminishes fragmentation. According to the panel, elaboration of these assessments in the short term is required.

The programme also involves three projects, as well as an opening and closing conference/exposition. The projects differ in length, intensity and level of complexity and therefore are fast-paced, iterative, agile design challenges (of 6, 12 or 20 weeks) broken down into 'sprints' of approximately 3 weeks. During the site visit it became clear that the projects are considered the 'backbone' of the master's programme. The projects have an important role within the programme in educating the students to become T-shaped professionals who are highly specialised and are able to apply these skills in broad contexts. The management team explained that a project working group consists of 4 students, each with a different speciality to form multidisciplinary teams, e.g. technical knowledge, management skills et cetera. The panel is of the opinion that working in this kind of multidisciplinary teams will have its value but underlines that it is of great importance to select students beforehand on these different kinds of expertise (see also 4.2.3). The panel also mentioned that the programme expects a high level of self-directive learning: students are obliged to educate themselves in the deficit skills, e.g. programming.

A conference/exposition event is organised to coincide with the end of a programme cycle and the beginning of the following one. The conference concludes the theme of last year and kicks off the theme of the coming year. The portfolios of graduating students are the backbone of the exposition ('graduation exposition'). The event effectively serves as a career fair, showcasing the work of graduating students to a broad, international audience of potential future employers.

The didactical concept underlying the master's programme is mainly based upon educational principles from the so-called AMOO (*Amsterdam Model Onderwijs & Onderzoek*): first, a self-directed and competence driven learning within a differentiated supply. Second, the ability to start from a practical area of knowledge in order to realise new knowledge and innovation on the basis of current information, knowledge and research. Third, the integration of relevant societal issues and assignments from industry into the educational process. Fourth, each project participant brings professional knowledge and experience at his own level of craftsmanship to the table and indicates what needs to be learned or which development is needed. Finally, a perspective on design as a process of daring to experiment and handling imperfection and serendipity is core to the programme.

*4.2.2 Staff*

The Master's programme involves four main roles: course staff, project staff, organizational committees and administrative staff. The programme will involve primary lecturers associated with the AUAS and staff members, for a total of 1.8 full-time equivalents (FTEs). In addition, guest lecturers will also be involved. The intended teacher-student ratio will be 1:25.

During the site visit in Amsterdam the panel has recognised that the teaching staff of the master's programme is both qualified and committed. Primary lecturers (PhD level) are responsible for the foundation courses and are expected to have in-depth knowledge of digital technologies, experience in interdisciplinary projects and take part in the academic discourse. The primary lecturers staff consists of 4 employees at a total of 0,4 fte, supplemented with a Scientific Director (0,2 fte) and the Chair of the Examination Committee (0,1 fte). Secondary lecturers driving the supporting courses are leading in their fields of expertise and have extensive work experience in the field(s) addressed in these course(s).

Three roles are involved in running the projects. *Project coordinators* are responsible for generating project briefs by bringing together design agencies and AUAS Applied Research Groups. *Project coaches* are responsible for supervising the students during their projects. They make sure that the team understands and follows the design-thinking process and methodologies, as well as that the teams are on track and the execution of the project complies with the MDD standards. *Industry/Research Group coaches* are responsible for ensuring that the project meets the requirements of the design brief and complies with the industry/research standards.

The panel wishes to express its great concern about the workload of the (primary) teachers. Since the teachers are expected to not only teach classes and act as project coordinators, but also to act as a mentors for approximately 6 students and replace colleagues when necessary, the panel is concerned that the given amount of hours for the teaching staff is absolutely not enough and that the workload will be too high in the foreseeable future. The panel is concerned that the consequences will not only affect the teachers themselves but will also risk the continuation of the programme. Since the workload of the staff seems more a financial issue, rather than a matter of quality of the staff, the panel decides to address this point under Standard 4.

*4.2.3 Intake and guidance*

The programme management considers it of great importance that the 'right' type of students enters the master's programme. Students entering the master's programme not only require a bachelor's degree, but they also have to provide evidence that they have the knowledge, skills, competences and adequate mentality to complete the master's programme successfully. Therefore, a selection committee will judge every candidate. Students will submit an application including their profile, portfolio and a pitch. The best candidates will be interviewed and accepted based on the quality of their application and their fit in multidisciplinary teams.

From the interviews – and not from the provided reports - the panel learned about the different specific qualities an applicant should possess to enter the master's programme. The panel therefore strongly recommends to define and specify the required qualities in written form as well on short notice.

The policy regarding the supervision of courses and course assignments is described in the study guide and all information on supervision and tutoring is available via the electronic learning environment. Students receive coaching and engage in peer feedback throughout the course of the programme, in a way that is tailored to their needs. Tutoring is provided by all members of the teaching team where and when necessary. They grade the assignments and give formative and summative feedback.

In the programme, a distinction is made between three consecutive projects that differ in coaching intensity. Project 1 will have a high level of guidance, low level of unpredictability and complexity and focus on team dynamics. Project 2 will have less guidance, more stakeholder relationships and consequently a higher level of unpredictability and complexity. Project 3 will involve little guidance, multiple stakeholders (such as industry, agencies, researchers, etc.) and a high level of unpredictability and complexity.
The panel is of the opinion that guidance of students is adequate, but also wishes to express its concern that the above mentioned 'tailored made coaching' may be an additional work load for teachers and mentors.

*4.2.4 Collaboration programme and industry*

As a result of the rising complexity of societal problems, there is a demand for 'T-shaped' professionals in industry. Moreover, trends in industry and practice show that interdisciplinary team-based work is becoming increasingly the norm. Therefore, the master's programme will collaborate closely with industry partners. These partners are divided into agencies and sponsors ('friends'). At this moment, there are nine founding agencies and a rotating group of three agency members. Agencies will also specifically contribute to the design and marketing of the master's programme.

The panel advises the programme management to keep the programme as independent from the industry as possible. Collaboration with the industry is considered a positive asset, but only when both parties are independent and equal partners. According to the panel, this is the only way to create a truly innovative programme and to maintain quality.

*4.2.5 Literature and study facilities*
For those teaching and learning activities that do not require meeting in person, an e-learning environment (ELO) will facilitate a repository with web lectures, webinars and documentation, a working space for both students and lecturers to show work in progress.

The base for the master's programme will be the 027E Building of the newly opened Marineterrein site in Amsterdam. The Marineterrein has been formed as an incubator for open innovation, bringing together academics, high-tech start-ups and business professionals and citizens to work together on innovative digital ideas and projects that promote positive societal change. The programme is assigned a studio at Marineterrein, meeting the programme's vision of offering students a working space with international appeal and exposure, as well as a strong connection to state-of-the-art technologies and digital companies.

*Considerations*
The panel discussed the feasibility, the density and the study load of the programme during the site visit. Based on this information, the panel concludes that the master's programme is challenging and still dense from time to time, but that clustering of the (minor) courses should lead to a feasible study programme.

The panel is very pleased with the quality and motivation of the teaching staff, but expresses its concern about the heavy workload for the teaching staff, considering the many duties and roles of the programme and the few available hours given to execute this duties. The active involvement and dedication of professors ('lectoren') and members of the creative industry is highly appreciated by the panel.

The panel is of the opinion that the programme is well organized and that the students will be well prepared for obtaining their final qualifications. The literature and facilities are up to standard.

*Conclusion*
Regarding the above-mentioned considerations, the panel concludes that the programme **meets** the standard.

**Assessment: Standard 3**

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| *The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.* |

*Outline of findings*
*4.3.1 Assessment system*
Throughout the programme, both formative and summative assessments have their place. Formative assessments will be continuous; lecturers and coaches will assess students' work during lessons and through the portfolio and provide feedback.

During the modules, specialists from different areas of the creative industry form a group of consultants. Students will obtain a voucher, which allows them to ask a certain amount of feedback and guidance from the specialist of their choice. Thus, students are encouraged to perform self-assessment in order to be able to ask feedback at the right moment and from the right person. The supervisor and the mentor will oversee the progress of each student.

A range of formative, holistic feedback points supports the final summative assessments: peer assessment as input for the examiners, group and individual critiques and tutorials. Collaborative practice is encouraged alongside one-to-one feedback. Individual development and progression is monitored through face-to-face contact.

The level and complexity of assessments increase over time and more and more elements are introduced with each course and project. Each course and project will take the student a step further towards the end level. One intermediate assessment (1 EC) will be conducted at the end of Project 2; a final assessment (2 ECs) will take place after Project 3. Both assessments will take in consideration all the work (classwork, projects, individual study) conducted by the student up to that point.

*4.3.2 Final project*

The master's programme will be concluded by the completion of the final project, which underpins the personal vision and portfolio (including students' individual project contribution). Besides the two (independent) examiners, industry experts will be involved in the assessment as crucial advisors. The final presentations will be in the form of a conference/exposition in which students present their work and products.

A supervisor and co-supervisor are appointed for the final project. This is done by the Scientific Director. The industry or project coach as co-supervisor supports the thinking processes of the students, gives recommendations for improving the project results and ultimately approves them as ready for the final examination. During the final project, the Scientific Director and student agree to a supervision contract, using a standard format, which outlines the responsibilities of the supervisor, the co-supervisor and the student.

Although the panel discussed the final project with the examination board, it did not became clear how the final project is assessed and the panel at first got the impression that students have to determine the final qualifications themselves. Discussing the creative character of the final assignment versus the need for a detailed assessment method, the programme management later explained the desired and intended way of assessment during the programme and the final project. However, no written criteria or thresholds have been elaborated and formulated to determine why and when a student passes or fails the final project.

Based on the discussions with the programme management, the teachers and the examination board, the panel concludes that this part of the programme development is still under construction. The panel recommends to define (written and clear) criteria and procedures for summative assessments during the programme and the final project. Based on the constructive and trustworthy discussions with the prospective programme management the panel is confident that it takes its responsibilities seriously and it is in control of the quality management of the assessment procedures.

*4.3.3 Examination Board*

A new postgraduate-level Examination Board will be appointed for the Master's programme. The Board will consist of suitably qualified and experienced members of Master's staff and other AUAS staff with suitable expertise, such as in quality assurance or assessment. An external examiner from the professional field will also meet with the Examination Board once a year. The two Examination Boards at the master's programme (the existing Bachelor's Examination Board and the new master's Examination Board) will meet periodically to discuss academic performance issues, exchange ideas and monitor the connection between the learning outcomes at bachelor's level and the competencies required for enrolment in the master's programme.

In the first instance, the Examination Board will also function as assessment committee. The Examination Board (and assessment committee) have received specific training. They are experts in the field of exams and exam methods and are up to date with the legal framework. Some members have previous experience as member or chairperson of an examination board. Every year the Examination Board draws up an assurance agenda and annual report. They check the quality of the exams (knowledge tests, essays, scientific papers and assignments) and they assure the master's level of the programme and the degree.

The Examination Board appoints the examiners. Examiners have received the mandatory training (BKE/SKE) and have at least three years of experience as an examiner concerning the forms of assessment they will carry out. A profile for examiners has been created.

During the site visit the panel discussed the above mentioned topics with members of the Examination Board. The panel was not convinced by the explanations of the Examination Board and even though the panel is convinced that the quality of the members of the Examination Board are up to standard, it became clear that the duties and level of knowledge of the Examination Board are in need of sharpening.

*Considerations*

The panel is of the opinion that the assessment system in theory is well-considered: a structure of different types of assessments, adhering to AUAS guidelines. During the interviews, however, the panel concluded that despite well-thought assessment procedures, assessment forms and criteria are not yet elaborated and the Examination Board is not yet fully prepared for its job.

*Conclusion*

Regarding the above mentioned considerations, the panel concludes that the programme **partially meets** the standard.

### 4.3 Graduation guarantee and financial provisions: Standard 4

*The institution guarantees students that they can complete the entire curriculum and makes sufficient financial provisions available.*

*Outline of findings*

*4.4.1. Graduation guarantee*

The AUAS guarantees that students admitted to the master's programme Digital Design can follow the entire programme in two years. The AUAS guarantees that admitted students can finish the programme, even in unexpected circumstances or situations the programme needs to be cancelled.

*4.4.2 Financial provisions*

The *Main Assessment Dossier* states that the programme will be part of the organisatorial and financial structure of the AUAS School of Digital Media and Creative Industries (FDMCI). During the site visit the panel has recognised that the budget for expanding the staff is too tight.

One other point that still deserves attention is the 'creative space' that is needed to provide students in a creative master's programme. Since Amsterdam is an expensive city, with expensive square meters, the panel recommends allocating budget for study facilities in order to ensure a sufficient study environment.

*Considerations*

The panel is convinced that the programme is supported by the authorities of AUAS and has been provided with sufficient budget for the development and initial execution of the programme. However, to continue the programme in a sustainable way, to make sure that the workload for teachers will not be too high and that the programme is guaranteed to have 'creative space' and a sufficient study environment, the panel urges the programme management to increase the budget for staff and facilities.

*Conclusion*

Regarding the above mentioned considerations, the panel concludes that the programme **partially meets** the standard.

### 4.4 Conclusion

On the basis of the *Main Assessment Dossier,* additional information provided by the programme and discussions during the site visit, the panel concludes that the master's programme Digital Design is a programme that is expected to be relevant for the creative sector in the Netherlands, as confirmed by representatives from the industry. The intended learning outcomes are well defined and although they need a little sharpening, the panel is convinced that they are of the required master level.

The structure and didactic concept of the programme are up to standards. The panel considers the curriculum challenging, but reckons that the clustering of supporting courses will lead to increase of the study load for students. The panel is very positive about the detailed description of the courses. The panels considers the staff to be both qualified and committed but expresses its concern that the expected heavy workload combined with limited time will lead to negative consequences in the foreseeable future.

The assessment system is acceptable in theory but the panel concluded it has not been sufficiently elaborated in adequate assessment procedures and forms. In addition, the Examination Board has got both qualified members and potential, but its installation is still a work in progress.

The panel is convinced that AUAS guarantees that students, who have been admitted to the programme, can complete the entire curriculum. However, to continue the programme in a sustainable way, to make sure that the workload for teachers will not be too high and that the programme is guaranteed to have ‘creative space’ and a sufficient study environment, the panel urges the programme management to increase the budget for staff and facilities.

Therefore, the quality of the programme is assessed as **conditionally positive.**

# 5 Overview of the assessments

| Standard | Assessment |
|---|---|
| *1. Intended Learning outcomes*<br>*The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements* | Meets the standard |
| *2. Teaching-learning environment*<br>*The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.* | Meets the standard |
| *3. Assessment*<br>*The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.* | Partially meets the standard |
| *4. Graduation guarantee and financial provisions*<br>*The institution guarantees students that they can complete the entire curriculum and makes sufficient financial provisions available.* | Partially meets the standard |
| **Conclusion** | **Conditionally positive** |

## Annex 1: Composition of the panel

Chair:
- Mr. Prof.dr.ir. J.C. Brezet (chair); (Em) Professor Sustainable Product Development with a chair both at TU Delft (The Netherlands) and AAU Aalborg University (Denmark).

Members:
- Mrs. J. Cremers MA; Academic Director bachelor Devine - Digital Design & Development, HOWEST Kortrijk (Belgium);
- Mrs. Drs. J. Ossewold MA; Director Education and Reserch, Member of the Board, Design Academy Eindhoven (The Netherlands);
- Mr. J. Solleveld Bsc, Msc (student member); Student Limnology and Oceanography, University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands).

On behalf of the NVAO, mr. dr. Dagmar Provijn and mrs. Liza Kozlowska, policy officers, were responsible for the process-coordination and the drafting of the experts' report.

## Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit

The panel undertook a site visit on 14 October 2016, regarding the hbo-master Digital Design at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences as part of the external assessment procedure.

**Agenda:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 08.30u – 09.15u | Vooroverleg panel (*besloten*) (45') |
| 09.15u – 10.15u | Sessie 1 – gesprek (beoogd) opleidingsmanagement (60') |
| 10.30u – 11.15u | Sessie 2 – gesprek (beoogd) docententeam (45') |
| 11.30u – 12.15u | Sessie 3 – gesprek lectoren (45') |
| 12.15u – 13.00u | Paneloverleg tijdens lunch (*besloten*) (45') |
| 13.00u – 13.30u | Sessie 4 – gesprek (beoogde) leden opleidingscommissie en (beoogde) leden examencommissie (30') |
| 13.45u – 14.15u | Sessie 5 – gesprek vertegenwoordigers beroepenveld (30') |
| 14.15u – 14.30u | Sessie 6 - tweede gesprek vertegenwoordigers opleidingsmanagement |
| 14.15u – 15.15u | Afrondend paneloverleg (*besloten)* |
| 15.15u – 15.30u | Beknopte terugkoppeling eerste bevindingen van het panel |

## Annex 3: Documents reviewed

*Documents made available during the site visit*

Literature:
- Muratovski (2016) *Research for Designers: A Guide to Methods and Practice*
- Boling et al. *(2016) Studio teaching in higher education: Selected design cases*
- Dorst (2016) *Frame innovation: Create new thinking by design*
- Kippendorf (2006) *The semantic turn: A new foundation for design*
- Kuniavsky (2010) *Smart Things: Ubiquitous Computing User Experience Design*
- Nelson, Stolterman (2014) *The Design Way (2nd Ed.)*
- Lazar et al. (2010) *Research Methods in Human-Computer Interaction*.

Documents:
- Projects in the studio model
- Course catalogue
- Teaching and examination regulations
- Benchmark
- Competences
- Plan of approach
- Long list of faculty and contributors

## Annex 4: List of abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ba | bachelor |
| EC | European Credit |
| hbo | hoger beroepsonderwijs |
| ma | master |
| NVAO | Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie |
| wo | wetenschappelijk onderwijs |

The panel report has been ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the programme hbo-master Digital Design of Hogeschool van Amsterdam.

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