



NVAO • NETHERLANDS

PROFESSIONAL BACHELOR CREATIVE
MEDIA AND GAME TECHNOLOGIES

Breda University of Applied Sciences

PANEL REPORT

16 APRIL 2020



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PROFESSIONAL BACHELOR CREATIVE
MEDIA AND GAME TECHNOLOGIES
BREDA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

DISTINCTIVE FEATURE “SMALL-SCALE AND
INTENSIVE EDUCATION”

PANEL REPORT

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1 Executive summary

On 14 October 2019 the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) received a request for the assessment of the distinctive feature “Small-scale and intensive education” for the professional bachelor’s programme Creative Media and Game Technologies at Breda University of Applied Sciences. NVAO convened an expert panel, which studied the information available and discussed the application 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.

The hbo-bachelor programme Creative Media and Game Technologies (CMGT) has aligned its Body of Knowledge and Skills with other Dutch CMGT programmes. In addition, it has made a clear choice to aim at preparing graduates to work effectively at leading ‘triple A’ game studios. The programme aims at a strong focus (compared to other Dutch CMGT programmes) on professional standards and the development of skills necessary to execute a development role in a project. According to the panel, the ILOs of Creative Media and Game Technologies meet the standards of a regular Dutch CMGT programme, but explicitly aim at a higher level. The international profiling and the focus on preparing students for working in triple A game studios emphasises these high standards. Furthermore, the programme clearly aims at broadening attitudes and skills by stressing the importance of personal development, (multidisciplinary) team work and self-reflection.

The Academy for Games and Media (AGM) has created two platforms, ‘Creative Lab’ and ‘Cradle’, where students can gain extracurricular experience. There are several Expert Groups or Guilds, consisting of students and, if possible, alumni and industry, who share an interest or knowledge, or a query on a certain topic. Guilds can be student lead, staff lead, or a mix of both. Staff and students participate in world gaming festivals and study trips. Students and teachers can participate in several ‘clubs’ in BUAs. The panel is impressed with the amount and diversity of the extracurricular activities that are offered. Students are given ample opportunity to initiate and carry out activities. The formal extracurricular activities are directly related to ILOs, ensuring that the content ties in with and has a direct link to the curriculum.

Two main structuring elements in the curriculum are the Project Lab twice a week and the workshops offered every Wednesday. All projects are rooted in project-based learning and are structured along a standardized hierarchy of project cycles. During the workshops on Wednesdays, the programme offers a variety of sessions. Students have the opportunity to choose activities that meet their own interests or topics that are most relevant for them. The panel has learned through all discussion sessions that including industry into the projects adds to a deeper and more intense learning experience for students. The panel regards the learning environment as highly challenging, to the extent that protection is offered for students to keep a healthy study-life balance. It recognises the evolution of the student role over the years. In all stages, there is a community feel between students and teachers with a clear small-scale ambition and lots of possibilities for co-creation. The highly structured programme stimulates students to have a nominal study progress.

The programme has set a maximum intake of 180 students per year. The programme receives approximately five times as many applications from prospective students. The panel recognises that the selection procedure is clearly geared towards selecting the most motivated and talented students. The panel appreciates all the efforts the programme has taken to fine-tune the communication and guidance for prospective students. It advises to communicate the intensive character of the programme even more, and prepare them sufficiently for the large part of personal development in the programme. As for international students, the panel advises to consider intensifying the personal contact in the selection procedure as well, comparable to the

guidance offered for Dutch students. It also suggests to explore possibilities for attracting more scholarship opportunities.

The programme offers support to teachers to obtain necessary qualifications and participate in training. Teachers are assigned to a year team of students, providing teaching and supervision for this full group, to allow for a strong connection between the year team of students and teachers. The panel is impressed with the intense training and guidance teachers receive in teaching small groups of students and stimulating community building. Teachers are highly student oriented, with ample attention for the role of individual students in groups and the personal and professional development of students. Students speak very highly of their teachers and are clearly inspired by them. They also tell the panel that in some cases, they would welcome support from more specialised teachers or guest lectures on some specific topics. The panel appreciates that many teachers also work in the gaming industry, assuring up-to-date knowledge getting into the programme and creating a foundation for students in establishing a network in the industry. According to the panel, this also adds to creating an industry simulated environment. The programme has identified that on some subjects, more external expertise is desirable. They have shared plans with the panel on how to address this. The panel regards the plan as feasible and addressing the proper matters.

CMGT is offered at a central BUAs campus as part of the Academy for Games and Media. There are four Project Labs available, a technical drawing room, a life drawing room and several testing and game rooms. The multidisciplinary simulated game studio plays a central role in preparing students for their future role in a triple A game studio environment. Students have access to several digital tools for industry and educational purposes. According to alumni, the CMGT facilities are industry standard or beyond. The panel considers the programme to provide an excellent range of tools for preparing students for professional requirements. It acknowledges that these facilities allow the programme to accelerate and intensify the student's professional awareness, enhance their team skills and their ability to take initiatives. It also supports the small-scale and intensive nature of the programme and allows for extra-curricular activities to be conducted.

The panel sees that the programme currently has a marginally better success rate than most Dutch CMGT programmes. It acknowledges that these numbers relate to the previous variant of the programme and that the main issue regarding study success remains the relatively high dropout rate in the first year. The programme is thoroughly addressing this by rolling out proper policy and closely monitoring progress on this. At this moment, success rate is not exceptionally high. However, given all the efforts mentioned, and considering that the conditions for small-scale and intensive education are met, the panel expects that this will lead to a better average success rate in future.

The panel concludes that the programme meets the standard for all criteria. Given these considerations, the panel advises NVAO to take a positive decision regarding the distinctive feature "Small-scale and intensive education" for the professional bachelor's programme Creative Media and Game Technologies at Breda University of Applied Sciences.

The Hague, 16 April 2020

On behalf of the assessment panel convened for the initial limited accreditation assessment of the professional bachelor's programme Creative Media and Game Technologies at Breda University of Applied Sciences,

Prof. dr. Rob Koper
(Chair)

drs. Suzanne den Tuinder
(Secretary)

2 Introduction

2.1 The procedure

NVAO received a request for the assessment of the distinctive feature “Small-scale and intensive education” including programme documents regarding professional bachelor’s programme Creative Media and Game Technologies. The request was received on 14 October 2019 from Breda University of Applied Sciences.

For small-scale, intensive and residential programmes (hereinafter referred to as: small-scale and intensive), and for such tracks that fall within a programme, under certain conditions the institution’s board can select students and in combination with this impose tuition fees that are higher than those set down by law for standard programmes. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science must grant approval for this pursuant to Articles 6.7, 6.7a, 6.7b, and 6.7c of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) advises the Minister on granting such approval on the basis of an application for the distinctive feature of “Small-scale and intensive education”.

The Minister’s approval is granted on the basis of an initial assessment of a proposal submitted by an institution and valid for an indefinite period of time. Subsequently, the institution must have NVAO assess, on a one-off basis, whether it has realised its ambitions (NVAO practice-based assessment). The practice-based assessment must be conducted within six years after approval has been granted. Upon each re-accreditation, the distinctive feature must be re-granted by NVAO. The timeframe for the practice-based assessment is, in principle, aligned with the duration of the accreditation period, i.e., six years.

To assess the program, the NVAO convened an international panel of experts. The panel consisted of:

Chair

- Prof. dr. Rob Koper

Panel members

- drs. Jan van den Berg
- Prof. dr. Ben Schouten

Student member

- Mary Hayrapetyan MSc

On behalf of the NVAO, dr. Thomas de Bruijn was responsible for the process-coordination. drs. Suzanne den Tuinder of Odion Onderzoek drafted the experts’ report.

This composition reflects the expertise deemed necessary by NVAO. All the panel members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel has based its assessment on the criteria described in the Specification of the criteria pertaining to the distinctive feature of “Small-scale and intensive education” as published in the Government Gazette (Staatscourant 2018, 17909), which is part of the Assessment framework for the Dutch higher education system.

The following procedure was undertaken. The panel members prepared the assessment by analysing the documents provided by the institution (Annex 3: Documents reviewed). The panel organised a preparatory meeting on 5 March 2020 i.e. the day before the site visit. During this meeting, the panel members shared their first impressions and formulated questions for the site visit.

The site visit took place on 6 March 2020 at Breda University of Applied Sciences. During this visit, the panel was able to discuss the formulated questions and to gather additional information during several sessions (Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit). Afterwards, the panel discussed the findings and considerations and pronounced its preliminary assessments per criterion. At the end of the site visit, the initial findings were presented to the institution.

Based on the findings, considerations and conclusions the secretary wrote a draft advisory report that was first presented to the panel members. After the panel members had commented on the draft report, the chair endorsed the report. On 16 April 2020 the advisory report was sent to the institution, which was given the opportunity to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report. The institution replied on 24 April 2020. Some suggested corrections were adopted. Subsequently the final report was endorsed by the panel chair. The panel composed its advice fully independently and offered it to NVAO on 28 April 2020.

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 institution, Breda 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 assessed by assessing the criteria for the distinctive feature “Small-scale and intensive education”. For each criterion 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 consist of the panel’s judgments and subjective evaluations regarding these findings and their relative importance. The considerations presented by the panel are at the basis of a concluding overall assessment.

The panel concludes the report with a table containing an overview of its assessments per criterion and the final judgement.

3 Description of the programme

3.1 General

Country	Netherlands
Institution	Breda University of Applied Sciences
Programme	Creative Media and Game Technologies
Level	bachelor
Orientation	professional (hbo)
Degree	Bachelor of Science
Location	Breda
Study Load (EC)	240 (vwo-track 180)
Field of Study	Techniek

3.2 Profile of the institution

Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUAs) is a higher education institute offering bachelor's and master's programmes as well as one Associate degree programme at professional ('hbo') and academic ('wo') level in the domains of Games, Media, Hotel, Facility, Logistics, Built Environment, Tourism and Leisure & Events to more than 7,000 Dutch and international students. BUAs considers it important to prepare students to become global citizens with an open mind who are committed to continued growth and development, both as responsible professionals and as people. They regard close connections with the industry and with social institutions as being an essential part of the degree programmes.

3.3 Profile of the programme

Creative Media and Game Technologies (CMGT) is offered in a regular track (240 EC) and in a fast track for vwo-graduates (180 EC). In 2015, the programme was completely renewed to an industry simulated project-based educational environment. The programme has no regular exams but monitors progress through portfolio assessment. The programme offers three specializations; game programming, visual arts and game design and production.

The first year is highly structured and comprises of four projects. The first three projects are discipline projects and the final project is a group project where all disciplines work together. In the second year, project briefs become more open, providing opportunities for students to broaden or deepen their knowledge and skills. The second year has four projects where students undertake two discipline projects deepening their knowledge and skills and two team game development projects bringing the disciplines together. The third year consists of four project blocks which support a large project that runs for the entire year. In this third year, students learn how to work effectively in a larger team while working on a longer and more complex project. Students are expected to be more independent and proactive in solving problems and acquiring feedback. In the fourth year, students deepen their understanding and development of a specific topic or specific role in game development. The fourth year consists of two semesters of 30 EC each. Students can also opt for a full year project of 60 EC. The fourth year provides several options towards their future career, such as performing their own project, starting their own company, doing an internship, a minor or an exchange.

4 Assessment per criterion

This chapter presents the evaluation of the criteria by the assessment panel. The panel has reproduced the criteria. For each criterion the panel presents (1) a brief outline of its findings based on the programme documents and on documents provided by the institution and the site visit, (2) the considerations of the panel and (3) the panel's conclusion. The panel presents a conclusion for each of the criteria, as well as a final conclusion.

The panel has based its assessment on the criteria described in the Specification of the criteria pertaining to the distinctive feature of “Small-scale and intensive education” as published in the Government Gazette (Staatscourant 2018, 17909), which is part of the Assessment framework for the Dutch higher education system.

The panel will score each criterion in terms of “meets the standard” or “does not meet the standard” (see the definition of judgements in the accreditation framework). For an initial assessment, Criterion G is only assessed prospectively. In addition, the panel will provide a final conclusion of “positive” or “negative”, which is defined as:

- Positive: all the criteria are scored as “meets the standard”;
- Negative: one or more of the criteria are scored as “does not meet the standard”.

4.1 Criterion A: Intended learning outcomes

The objectives and intended learning outcomes are aimed at achieving an above-average level in one or more academic disciplines and/or professional practices in the domain concerned. In addition, the programme focuses on the broadening and development of related personal attitudes and skills.

Outline of findings

The hbo-bachelor programme Creative Media and Game Technologies (CMGT) has aligned its Body of Knowledge and Skills with other Dutch CMGT programmes. In addition, it has made a clear choice to aim at preparing graduates to work effectively at leading ‘triple A’ game studios where entertainment products for highly competitive global markets are created. This includes gaining experience in using various tools that are used in these professional game development studios. In order for the programme to stay closely aligned with latest developments, the Industry Advisory Board plays an important role in providing up-to-date information on trends and tools used in industry.

The programme intends to make students acquainted with the full pathway from product concept to implementation, covering design and prototypes, evaluation and re-design and product implementation. For this purpose, the programme has described its learning outcomes as project-corresponding intended learning outcomes (ILOs), which are further defined through behavioral indicators. The programme aims at a strong focus (compared to other Dutch CMGT programmes) on professional standards and the development of skills necessary to execute a development role in a project. The panel recognizes this intention in learning objectives such as being able to organize project work, adapt to changing contexts, creative opportunities and new insights, and being able to communicate within and between disciplines.

The ILOs are defined at three levels of competency, of which level three is the exit level. The programme compares their course level to the levels of other Dutch CMGT programmes and determines that, contrary to the other CMGT programmes, the BUAs year three projects are already in line with level three learning outcomes.

Management elaborates that the ILOs allow for the programme to stimulate students to find their own talent and passion. Students can switch between specializations and can create their own specialization, for example on the crossroad of specializations or domains (‘some students

can make art with math'). Students acknowledge this and add that they are highly encouraged to discover their own professional identity. According to teachers, the programme is very much focused on teaching students to become self-directed learners and team players, and to find their own path.

Considerations

According to the panel, the ILOs of Creative Media and Game Technologies meet the standards of a regular Dutch CMGT programme, but explicitly aim at a higher level, as is reflected in the benchmark with other programmes in the domain. The panel is convinced that the year three projects indeed aim at a higher level than year three of comparable programmes, but advises the programme to elaborate more on the argumentation why this is considered a higher level in future assessments. The international profiling and the focus on preparing students for working in triple A game studios emphasises these high standards. The panel advises to mention research in this context as well, as it supports reflection and a deepening of the knowledge base, which prepares those students that want to pursue their studies in a master's programme. Furthermore, the programme clearly aims at broadening attitudes and skills by stressing the importance of personal development, (multidisciplinary) team work and self-reflection.

Conclusion

The programme meets the standard for criterion A.

4.2 Criterion B: Curriculum: contents

The curriculum and the extracurricular activities are inextricably bound. Their contents tie in with the intended level and the broadening as formulated in the intended learning outcomes. Students and staff share responsibility for the organisation of the extracurricular activities.

Outline of findings

The Academy for Games and Media (AGM) has created two platforms, 'Creative Lab' and 'Cradle', where students can gain extracurricular experience. The 'Creative Lab' aims to build an active, co-creative, experimental platform and learning community for students, alumni, lecturers, researchers and industry representatives. 'Cradle' is a research and development lab, dedicated to designing and developing innovative games and media applications. This platform is directly related to the three professorships of Digital Media Concepts, Creative & Entertainment Games and Applied Games, Innovation & Society. The research groups have frequent contact with students through organized project work, consultancy for student teams, feedback session and lectures. Almost all of the research projects actively involve students. Cradle staff contribute to CMGT programme as lecturers.

There are several Expert Groups or Guilds, consisting of students and, if possible, alumni and industry, who share an interest or knowledge, or a query on a certain topic. Guilds can be student lead, staff lead, or a mix of both and usually consist of a student population from first year students to master students. Some Guilds meet frequently over a period of time to share experiences, for instance to help each other solve problems, or senior year students helping first years with project work. Other groups develop small game projects together. Programme management tells the panel that subjects that arise in one or more Guilds and that might be interesting for a wider audience, can be addressed in one of the workshops that are held every Wednesday.

In all discussions, the panel heard examples that the programme offers students ample opportunities to attend conferences and competitions, both local and global. Staff and students participate in world gaming festivals and study trips. During the annual 'Showcase Day' students can present their game products in a professional environment and present themselves for potential placement and job opportunities.

During the course of the site visit, it became apparent that both teachers and students are actively involved in initiating and organizing activities. During the tour of the facilities, the showcases that the panel was confronted with showed various examples of this.

For formal extracurricular activities, it is documented to which of the ILOs they relate, and specific learning outcomes are defined for each of these activities. In most activities, both students and teachers participate together. Year teams systematically evaluate all extracurricular activities through surveys and round table meetings.

Students and teachers can participate in several 'clubs' in BUAs, such as a cooking club, a board game club or a neuro-diversity club. Teachers guide students and recent graduates with launching their products, for instance with marketing of the launch. According to teachers, it helps students to be part of the campus, be able to use the facilities and be part of the student-teacher community.

For both the curricular and the extracurricular programme, the programme management expresses the ambition to increase industry involvement in projects.

Considerations

The panel is impressed with the amount and the diversity of the extracurricular activities that are offered. Teachers initiate activities and students are given ample opportunity to initiate and carry out activities as well. The formal extracurricular activities are directly related to ILOs, ensuring that the content ties in with and has a direct link to the curriculum. Students gain important professional skills during, for instance, conferences and showcase days, which have a direct link to the ILOs regarding e.g. familiarizing with professional standards. It struck the panel how many activities relate to personal development and leadership.

Conclusion

The programme meets the standard for criterion B.

4.3 Criterion C: Curriculum: learning environment

The teaching concept is based on a challenging learning environment, education substantiated in a small-scale and intensive manner, and a learning community of students and staff. The small-scale and intense nature of the education is demonstrated by the level of participation and preparation that is expected from students. The curriculum is structured in such a manner as to ensure nominal study progress by the students, including extracurricular activities.

Outline of findings

Two main structuring elements in the curriculum are the Project Lab and the workshops offered every Wednesday. In the Project Labs, students experience a work simulated environment two days a week from 9 to 5. These Project Lab days are highly structured in the first year(s) of the programme, including instructions and lectures. Students receive coaching, one-on-one feedback and group work reviews from a team of three teachers for around 50-60 students for the full day. Teachers and students work together on their project. The programme argues that this levels the playing field and allows for co-creation of solutions instead of a directed instruction from the teacher to the student.

All projects are rooted in project-based learning and are structured along a standardized hierarchy of project cycles; a project loop runs once a block, a subloop of that runs weekly, and a subloop of the weekly cycle happens daily. Students describe their progress on a project in their learning logs, which are biweekly reviewed by teachers. Students in year 1 receive written feedback with concrete feedforward, which they document in their learning log. From year 2, students are gradually allowed more freedom and initiative. In year 2 they are periodically checked and corrected, while in year three students receive both team feedback (on processes)

and one-on-one individual feedback. In the fourth year, students are thought to be able to show professional attitude and behaviour in a complex development context. The work field is actively involved by having industry clients perform the role of a project stakeholder, giving feedback to students and staff on the progress and performance of the project.

During the workshops on Wednesdays, the programme offers a variety of sessions from teachers on their expert topics, from guest lectures from industry or from other (Y3 or Y4) students that have gained expertise in a certain area. Students have the opportunity to choose activities that meet their own interests or topics that are most relevant for them. From year three on, students are increasingly actively involved in initiating and conducting these activities.

In the first year, the study coach focuses on helping students become accustomed to project-based learning and the educational environment at CMGT. This includes assisting with the personal development plan creation and delivering lectures and workshops dealing with topics such as study skills, time management and competency-based learning. The programme mentions that many students have difficulties balancing their workload, as they are highly motivated and engaged to take up (too) many opportunities within the programme and extracurricular activities. For this purpose, the programme actively encourages students to find a proper work-life balance and offers special classes such as mindfulness and yoga classes. Students tell the panel that they experience a strong sense of community. The BUAs clubs that many participate in, also strengthen their feeling of inclusion and being part of a (larger) community.

The programme has a multidisciplinary simulated game studio at its disposal. In these studios, students learn how to collaborate in a multidisciplinary environment. The learning environment is further enhanced by creating a direct connection with industry. The panel has learned through all discussion sessions that including industry into the projects adds to a deeper and more intense learning experience for students. Students emphasize that the programme has a flexible set up that allows personalisation and that they are guided in finding their own path.

Considerations

The panel regards the learning environment as highly challenging, to the extent that protection is offered by the programme for students to keep a healthy study-life balance. It recognises the evolution of the student role over the years; where first- and second-year students rely heavily on guidance in structuring their projects, the more senior students work on their projects more independently. In all these stages, there is a community feel between students and teachers with a clear small-scale ambition and lots of possibilities for co-creation. The highly structured programme stimulates students to have a nominal study progress.

Conclusion

The programme meets the standard for criterion C.

4.4 Criterion D: Intake

The programme has a sound selection procedure in place, aimed at admitting motivated and academically and/or professionally talented students, in which the criteria include suitability for and interest in the small-scale and intensive educational concept, in combination with extracurricular activities.

Outline of findings

The programme has set a maximum intake of 180 students per year. All of the programme's disciplines are equally represented in the intake numbers. The programme receives approximately five times as many applications from prospective students. A selection requirement is that prospective students have experienced creating at least one game or have actively been involved with a game development related task. The subsequent intake process consists of five components. These are partly conducted online and (for Dutch students) also on-site during a personal interview. All components are assessed, which leads up to a final ranking that decides whether a student will be accepted or not.

Programme management elaborates that the selection process is primarily geared towards selecting the most eligible students with the best potential for finishing the programme. Dropout rates are a concern here. The programme has managed to reduce the first year dropout rate from 47% (2010-2011) to 31% (2019-2020). Programme management tells the panel that they have been monitoring these dropout rates very closely over the years. It appears that of these numbers, 5% is a no-show, while another 5% of students quit the programme premature due to personal circumstances. Students add that dropout is also due to the intensive character of the programme, which puts a lot of pressure on students. Also, some students realise that the high amount of group work does not fit their learning preference or that there is too much focus on personal development. And despite ample information on the matter, there are also students signing up because they like playing games instead of creating them and thereby start the study programme with the wrong expectations.

In order to decrease the number of students dropping out for those reasons, the programme has mapped the 'customer journey' for potential students. They get the opportunity to inform themselves during open days, orientation days, online tutorials and a summer school for students who consider applying. Furthermore, a study coach is available for applicants to answer questions on the programme and the intake process. International students tell the panel that not all of these activities are eligible for international students, such as an interview on their portfolio. They would have preferred if there would have been more appropriate alternatives available for online communication.

A combination of a more elaborate intake assessment with portfolio review and interview, combined with setting clear expectations beforehand has proven to be successful in reducing these dropout rates. Programme management tells the panel that their ambition is to prepare students even better before they join the programme, to pre-train them more intensively.

Measurements taken to reduce dropout during the first years include the allocation of more time for first year staff to provide personal guidance to students, a dedicated study counsellor and the creation of small size (10 students) mentor groups that meet every day. In addition, mandatory contact hours for the first year are increased from 16 to 22 hours and students receive support workshops on project planning. Expectations from management are that the dropout numbers will decrease again this year.

Considerations

The panel recognises that the selection procedure is clearly geared towards selecting the most motivated and talented students. It appreciates all the efforts the programme has taken to fine-tune the communication and guidance for prospective students. The panel acknowledges the important progress the programme already made regarding the intake procedure. As a next step, the panel advises to strengthen the alignment between the intake procedure, assignments and communication with the explicit small-scale and intensive character and the relatively large part of personal development and team skills in the programme even more. As for international students, the panel advises to consider intensifying the personal contact in the selection procedure as well, comparable to the guidance offered for Dutch students. It also suggests to explore possibilities for attracting more scholarship opportunities.

Conclusion

The programme meets the standard for criterion D.

4.5 Criterion E: Staff

The number of staff is sufficient in terms of providing small-scale and intensive education, substantiating close contact between staff and students, and providing individual counselling to students outside the educational context. The staff demonstrably command the specific expertise and skills required to achieve the objectives of small-scale and intensive education. The programme actively monitors that teachers hold the required qualifications and, if necessary, ensures that teachers are trained in these aspects.

Outline of findings

The programme offers support to teachers to obtain necessary qualifications and participate in training, ranging from obtaining a teaching qualification to attending masterclasses for educators, for instance to facilitate building a learning community. All teaching staff recently underwent training in teamwork using the Belbin Team Roles tool and received their certification as Belbin instructors. Students tell the panel that teachers are highly approachable, very encouraging and knowledgeable.

Teachers are assigned to a year team of students, providing teaching and supervision for this full group, to allow for a strong connection between the year team of students and teachers. Every year team also includes a dedicated study coach who advises students on study skills and career management. The study coach monitors the professional and personal growth and provides support in projects in case of team issues.

The international character of the programme is reflected in two-thirds of staff being from abroad. Many teachers also worked in the gaming industry. Teachers regularly participate in (international) game development events. They are encouraged to undergo knowledge trips and short placements within companies. It appeared to the panel during the discussions as well as the tour through the facilities, that CMGT teachers are highly motivated to teach in this programme.

Students speak very highly of their teachers and are clearly inspired by them. They tell the panel that staff consists of both general and more expert teachers. The workshop system provides opportunities to invite guest lecturers from industry. This facilitates both staff and students to get exposed to new ideas and innovation. As some students run very specialised projects, teachers sometimes have the basic knowledge, but lack certain very specific insights. Students tell the panel that in some cases, they would welcome support from more highly specialised teachers or guest lectures on these specific subjects.

Programme management tells the panel that the current staff-student ratio for the first three years is 1 to 21. Student guidance is not included in these numbers. For the fourth year, guidance is on an individual basis. It is their ambition to increase the number of expert instructors, e.g. as guest lecturers, in the programme. From the discussions with programme management, teachers and students, the panel understands that in practice the programme has more intense teacher-student contact than the teacher-staff ratio shows. Teachers on average spend more time on helping and guiding students than is planned for in their tenure. According to programme management, the opportunity to expand the number of staff will contribute to relieving teachers of their heavy workload.

Considerations

The panel appreciates that many teachers also work in the gaming industry, assuring up-to-date knowledge getting into the programme and creating a foundation for students in establishing a network in the industry. According to the panel, this also adds to creating an industry simulated environment. The panel is impressed with the intense training and guidance teachers receive in teaching small groups of students and stimulating community building. Teachers are highly student oriented, with ample attention for the role of individual students in groups and the personal and professional development of students. The specific training teachers receive, such as Belbin, are clearly geared towards stimulating this. The programme has identified that on some subjects, more external expertise is desirable. They have shared plans with the panel on how to address this, for instance by allocating more budget towards highly specialised, international guest lectures. The panel regards the plan as feasible and addressing the proper matters.

Conclusion

The programme meets the standard for criterion E.

4.6 Criterion F: Facilities

The programme has its own infrastructure with facilities for small-scale and intensive education and common extra-curricular social activities.

Outline of findings

CMGT is offered at a central BUas campus as part of the Academy for Games and Media. This location contains classrooms, open workspaces, lecturer's offices and a production equipment office and counter. There are four Project Labs available, a technical drawing room, a life drawing room and several testing and game rooms. The in-house research and development lab 'Cradle' offers students access to its facilities and equipment expertise.

The multidisciplinary simulated game studio plays a central role in preparing students for their future role in a triple A game studio environment. The availability of this studio provides the programme with an industry simulated, project-based educational environment.

Students have access to several digital tools for industry and educational purposes. Specialized hardware and software are available to students, including video game console development kits from Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo. According to alumni, the CMGT facilities are industry standard or beyond.

Considerations

The panel considers the programme to provide an excellent range of tools for preparing students for professional requirements. It acknowledges that these facilities allow the programme to accelerate and intensify the student's professional awareness, enhance their team skills and their ability to take initiatives. It also supports the small-scale and intensive nature of the programme and allows for extracurricular activities to be conducted.

Conclusion

The programme meets the standard for criterion F.

4.7 Criterion G: Achieved learning outcomes

The content and the level of the tests and final projects are in line with the level and the broadening as set down in the intended learning outcomes. Graduates are admitted to demanding postgraduate programmes and/or jobs.

The success rates are substantially higher than those of other relevant programmes that do not carry the distinctive feature, and are at least on a par with other relevant programmes that have been granted this distinctive feature.

Outline of findings

Around 70% of students manage to successfully complete the programme within five years. The most recent public data on retention and success rates of other Dutch CMGT programmes after 5 years is from 2013. These numbers show that BUas CMGT success rate is slightly above average. Programme management explains that these numbers show the success rates of the former variant of our CMGT programme, as the new programme commenced in 2015. The programme has been closely monitoring study progress in recent years and tell the panel they have reason to believe that success rates will increase significantly in the coming years.

Students have been given the opportunity by national and international game events and showcases to present their work and have won international competitions. In 2019, the programme has been ranked among the top 5 best game design schools in the world according to the Rookies World Ranking. Students in their final phase and recent graduates can make use of an office at the campus. According to alumni, teachers provided a lot of support in the set-up of initial contacts.

Graduation work placement often leads to further employment. Around 80% of CMGT alumni currently work in the gaming industry, some of them in top game development studios. Several alumni currently work in several triple A game development studios, with one of them (Guerilla Games) employing 5% of alumni.

Considerations

The panel regards the success rates of 80% of alumni working in the gaming industry as impressive, considering the competitive industry. The panel sees that the programme currently has a marginally better success rate than most Dutch CMGT programmes. It acknowledges that these numbers relate to the previous variant of the programme and that the main issue regarding study success remains the relatively high dropout rate in the first year. The programme is thoroughly addressing this by rolling out proper policy and closely monitoring progress on this. At this moment, success rate is not exceptionally high. However, given all the efforts mentioned, and considering that the conditions for small-scale and intensive education are met, the panel expects that this will lead to a better average success rate in future.

Conclusion

The programme meets the standard for criterion G.

4.8 Conclusion

The panel is convinced that the programme aims for higher and broader ILOs than other Dutch CMGT programmes. It is impressed with the intense learning environment the programme manages to establish. Both the curricular and the extracurricular programmes are highly structured, allowing flexibility in the content and reinforcing each other. The panel is confident that, with obtaining this special feature, the programme will be able to intensify the student-staff ratio even further and will be able to acquire more specialised teachers and guest lecturers.

All in all, the panel assesses that the programme qualifies for the distinctive feature “Small-scale and intensive education”. The panel recommends that the practice-based assessment should be carried out after six years, with attention for:

- aligning the intake procedure more with the small-scale and intensive character of the programme

- reducing dropout and increasing study success rates.

Overview of the assessments

Criterion	Assessment
<p>A. Intended Learning outcomes <i>The objectives and intended learning outcomes are aimed at achieving an above-average level in one or more academic disciplines and/or professional practices in the domain concerned. In addition, the programme focuses on the broadening and development of related personal attitudes and skills.</i></p>	Meets the standard for this criterion
<p>B. Curriculum: contents <i>The curriculum and the extracurricular activities are inextricably bound. Their contents tie in with the intended level and the broadening as formulated in the intended learning outcomes. Students and staff share responsibility for the organisation of the extracurricular activities.</i></p>	Meets the standard for this criterion
<p>C. Curriculum: learning environment <i>The teaching concept is based on a challenging learning environment, education substantiated in a small-scale and intensive manner, and a learning community of students and staff. The small-scale and intense nature of the education is demonstrated by the level of participation and preparation that is expected from students. The curriculum is structured in such a manner as to ensure nominal study progress by the students, including extracurricular activities.</i></p>	Meets the standard for this criterion
<p>D. Intake <i>The programme has a sound selection procedure in place, aimed at admitting motivated and academically and/or professionally talented students, in which the criteria include suitability for and interest in the small-scale and intensive educational concept, in combination with extracurricular activities.</i></p>	Meets the standard for this criterion
<p>E. Staff <i>The number of staff is sufficient in terms of providing small-scale and intensive education, substantiating close contact between staff and students, and providing individual counselling to students outside</i></p>	Meets the standard for this criterion

<p><i>the educational context. The staff demonstrably command the specific expertise and skills required to achieve the objectives of small-scale and intensive education. The programme actively monitors that teachers hold the required qualifications and, if necessary, ensures that teachers are trained in these aspects.</i></p>	
<p>F. Facilities <i>The programme has its own infrastructure with facilities for small-scale and intensive education and common extra-curricular social activities.</i></p>	Meets the standard for this criterion
<p>G. Achieved learning outcomes <i>The content and the level of the tests and final projects are in line with the level and the broadening as set down in the intended learning outcomes. Graduates are admitted to demanding postgraduate programmes and/or jobs. The success rates are substantially higher than those of other relevant programmes that do not carry the distinctive feature, and are at least on a par with other relevant programmes that have been granted this distinctive feature.</i></p>	Meets the standard for this criterion
Conclusion	Positive
Advice regarding the practice-based assessment	In six years

Appendix 1: Composition of the panel

Chair: Prof. dr. Rob Koper, University Professor for the innovation of education at the Open Universiteit, Heerlen

Member: Prof. dr. Ben Schouten, Professor of Playful Interactions, Department of -Industrial Design, Eindhoven University of Technology and Lector Design for Games and Play, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

Member: drs. Jan van den Berg, Auditor, Management Staff, Fontys, Eindhoven

Student member: Mary Hayrapetyan MSc, graduated from the Joint Master Degree in-International Development Studies (GLODEP) of the University of Pavia, the Université Clermont Auvergne, and Palacky University; she passes an internship at the World Intellectual Property Organization, Geneva.

Process coordinator: dr. Thomas de Bruijn from NVAO

Secretaris: drs. Suzanne den Tuinder from Odion Onderzoek

Appendix 2: Schedule of the site visit

The panel visited Breda University of Applied Sciences on 6 March 2020 as part of the external assessment procedure regarding the hbo-bachelor programme Creative Media and Game Technologies.

09:00 – 11:00	Panel preliminary discussion
11:00 – 11:45	CMGT management
11:45 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 13:45	Guided tour facilities and showcase. Interaction with students and lecturers
13:45 – 14:30	Representatives from teaching staff
14:30 – 15:00	Students and alumni
15:00 – 15:15	Break
15:15 – 15:45	Representatives from the Board of Examiners/ Assessment committee
15:45 – 16:00	Follow up questions for management
16:00 – 16:45	Panel meeting (confidential)
16:45 – 17:15	Presentation of initial findings

Appendix 3: Documents reviewed

Programme documents presented by the institution

- Information dossier
- Appendices to the information dossier:
 - 1. Creative Technologies Professional Course Profile
 - 2. Curriculum Map CMGT 2020- 2021
 - 2. Workshops/Masterclass/Guild overview, CMGT 2020-2021
 - 3. Project briefs Year 1- Year 4, CMGT 2020-2021
 - 4. Graduation Project Brief, CMGT 2020-2021
 - 5. Samples of student learning logs Year 1- Year 4
 - 6. CMGT Student Handbook 2020-2021
 - 7. Benchmark overview: graduation assessment CMGT stem programmes (HKU, Hogeschool Rotterdam, Saxion Hogeschool)
 - 8. CMGT overview of Extracurricular Activities 2020-2021
 - 9. CMGT ILO (Intended Learning Outcome) Writing Tool sample
 - 10. CMGT Staff overview, 2020-2021
 - 11. CMGT Assessment sheets Year 1- Year 4.
 - 12. CMGT Distinctive Feature Roadmap
- Documents made available during the site visit
 - o 2019-12-09 Distinctive Feature Roadmap

Appendix 4: List of abbreviations

Ad	Associate degree
Ba	bachelor's degree
BUas	Breda University of Applied Sciences
CMGT	Creative Media and Game Technologies
EC	European credit point
hbo	professional higher education
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders
wo	Academic orientation

The panel report was ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the programme hbo-bachelor Creative Media and Game Technologies of Breda University of Applied Sciences

Application no.: 8853



Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders

Parkstraat 28 • 2514 JK Den Haag
P.O. Box 85498 • 2508 CD The Hague
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)70 312 23 00
E info@nvao.net
www.nvao.net