

**Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences  
Amsterdam School of International Business**

**EFMD – NVAO combined accreditation visit**

**Bachelor programme International Business**

**CROHO: 30029**

**1 March 2021**



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## SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

This document reports on the external assessment of the bachelor programme International Business at the Amsterdam School of International Business of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. The assessment was undertaken as part of a broader exercise combining the programme set accreditation of EFMD with the assessment of programme quality according to the 2018 NVAO framework for limited programme assessments. The Peer Review Team (PRT) performing the external assessment consisted of four EFMD panel members, a student member and an NVAO-certified secretary. Because of COVID-19, the combined EFMD-NVAO accreditation visit was held online from 25 until 27 January 2021.

The bachelor programme International Business (IB) started in September 2018 and is a merger of two programmes, which are currently phasing out: International Business and Management Studies (IBMS) and International Business and Languages (IBL). At the time of the visit, the first cohort of IB students had reached its third year while IBMS and IBL students were still in the process of finishing their respective programmes. The panel's judgements, overall and per standard, are based on the perceived quality of the IB programme at the time of the site visit taking into account the constituent programmes IBMS and IBL, as well as the respective full-time, part-time and fast-track programme variants.

In the run up to the visit, the PRT received extensive information on the degree programme. Moreover, supporting materials were available in the online base room. The panel appreciated the open atmosphere in the discussions. Throughout the visit, the panel sensed a positive spirit among all interviewees, as well as a clear commitment to AUAS, AMSIB and the IB programme. Faculty were passionate about their discipline, the courses they teach and the programmes they relate to. Students and alumni felt part of the AMSIB community and were advocating strongly for their programme. As the constituent programmes were already accredited and IB aimed to maintain the EFMD quality mark and obtain re-accreditation by NVAO, the materials and the discussions focused on recent developments and future plans at school and programme level. The PRT considers that since the previous accreditations in 2013, 2016 and 2017 respectively, good progress was made on all accounts.

In so far as the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the IB programme are concerned, the PRT considers that by abiding to the national IB framework, the bachelor programme International Business at AMSIB aligns with the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and the international requirements. However, the IB programme at AMSIB goes beyond the national framework: the panel thinks highly of AMSIB's efforts to reformulate the national ILOs into programme learning outcomes which reflect what the school stands for. The resulting set of 23 ILOs are well formulated and clearly bear an AMSIB stamp. The panel also found that there is a direct link between the IB programme objectives, the intended learning outcomes and the IB curriculum as it is delivered at AMSIB. Moreover, the AMSIB set of ILOs defines clearly how students are expected to demonstrate that they have achieved the ILOs at end level: the thesis is linked to the research ILOs, the ILOs related to the AMSIB values are demonstrated during

the internship assessment, and the capstone project captures the business knowledge ILOs in the specialisation tracks. The panel has one caveat and one observation: because there has not yet been a full run of the new IB programme, the PRT can only acknowledge that for now, the way AMSIB has set up the ILOs is clever and seems to function on paper. While the reformulated ILOs clearly reflect the strategic pillars of the AMSIB variant of IB, the PRT sees room for AMSIB to further distinguish itself from other IB programmes in the Netherlands and identify in the curriculum what IB students can learn at AMSIB that is unique or different from what is on offer at (all/most) other institutions.

In order to establish the quality of the achieved learning outcomes, the panel has reviewed a set of end level products and checked the follow-up positions of the IBL and IBMS graduates. Based on the sample of thesis and internship reports, the PRT considers that students who successfully pass these end level products have indeed achieved the programme learning outcomes. The panel welcomes the new approach of internship portfolio and assessment, which constitutes a relevant means to check whether students have indeed achieved the AMSIB values. The thesis review has shown that the quality differs considerably, ranging from very good quality research products to theses that could improve in terms of data treatment and research question formulation. Furthermore, the PRT considers that IBMS and IBL graduates are successful in their career, which in turn is a positive indication that graduates have indeed achieved the programme learning outcomes. A good number of students move on directly to a master programme; others start their own company or use the programme as a lever for their entrepreneurial ambitions; still other graduates enter the labour market where they invariably find a job that is commensurate with the level and discipline of their study.

Based on the information provided and the discussions during the online visit, the panel considers that the bachelor programme International Business meets the quality requirements set by the NVAO's Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands for limited programme assessments and relevant for this particular external assessment visit: intended learning outcomes and achieved learning outcomes. The PRT therefore issues a positive advice to NVAO on the quality of the bachelor programme International Business submitted for accreditation by the Amsterdam School for International Business of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.

The chair and the secretary of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

On behalf of the Peer Review Team,

Michel Poté  
Chair

Mark Delmartino  
Secretary

Date: 1 March 2021

## INTRODUCTION

This document reports on the assessment of the Bachelor programme International Business (IB) offered by the Amsterdam School of International Business (AMSIB) at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS). Because the IB programme was submitted for external accreditation to both NVAO and EFMD, its assessment was organised as a combined EFMD-NVAO endeavour in line with the Agreement between EMFD & NVAO (October 2015). The composition of the Peer Review Team (PRT) who performed the assessment reflected the requirements of both EMFD and NVAO.

The bachelor programme International Business (IB) started in September 2018 and is a merger of two programmes, which are currently phasing out: International Business and Management Studies (IBMS) and International Business and Languages (IBL). At the time of the visit, the first cohort of IB students had reached its third year while IBMS and IBL students were still in the process of finishing their respective programmes. The panel's judgements, overall and per standard, are based on the perceived quality of the IB programme at the time of the site visit taking into account the constituent programmes IBMS and IBL, as well as the respective full-time, part-time and fast-track programme variants.

The date of the accreditation visit was initially foreseen for May 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the visit was postponed twice. Eventually AMSIB, EFMD, NVAO and the panel agreed to perform the external assessment through an online visit from 25 to 27 January 2021.

### Panel composition

The assessment was performed by a so-called Peer Review Team, a panel consisting of four EMFD experts, a student member and an NVAO-certified secretary. The international panel, which was approved by NVAO, consisted of:

- Michel Poté (FR), former Dean of ESSCA Angers, chair
- Stephanie Morgan (UK), Professor at University of Aberdeen Business School, member
- Huub Ruël (NL), Research professor at Hotelschool The Hague, member
- Eric Carlier (FR), Director Lake Park International, member representing the industry
- Joris Hahn (NL), Master student VU Amsterdam, student-member

The PRT was accompanied by Mark Delmartino (BE), an NVAO-certified secretary who liaised between the panel, the programme and EFMD and ensured that the visit complied with NVAO procedures. All members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality. Annex 2 contains the curricula vitae of the panel members. Mrs. Isabel Ramos, Senior Manager Quality Services at EFMD, coordinated the assessment visit with the school and the programme.

### **Combined assessment visit**

Prior to the visit, AMSIB's Senior Quality Assurance Officer was in contact with the EMFD representative, the PRT chair and the panel secretary to work out the programme of the sessions and agree on the materials to be made available. In order to allow the panel to prepare for its tasks, AMSIB produced a Self-Assessment Report on the IB programme, as well as a Datasheet and a Student Report addressing the issues covered by the respective NVAO and EFMD standards. Furthermore, university and faculty-wide policy documents on Quality Assurance and assessment as well as programme-specific materials on intended learning outcomes, course learning goals, course assessments and student evaluations were made available in the digital base room hosted by AMSIB. The materials which the PRT studied in the framework of this combined accreditation visit are listed in Annex 4. The panel wants to express its gratitude towards AMSIB's Senior Quality Assurance Officer who has been instrumental in ensuring a good and timely information flow from the IB programme to the panel.

On 17 December 2020, the EFMD office organised a briefing session for the PRT. During this so-called pre-visit call, to which also a representative of NVAO was invited, the specific character of this combined accreditation visit was presented to the panel members, as well as the particular perspectives of the respective EFMD and NVAO programme assessments. In the week before the online visit, EFMD organised two preparatory meetings for the PRT: at the first session on 19 January 2021, the panel members exchanged their first impressions on the programme documents and decided who would chair and take note during the respective plenary and parallel sessions. Moreover, the digital platform that would be used during the visit was tested together with representatives of AMSIB and EFMD. During the second session on 21 January 2021, the PRT identified the key issues to be raised with the different stakeholders during the respective interview sessions and discussed the findings from the thesis review.

The online assessment visit was held from Monday 25 until Wednesday 27 January 2021. On Monday and Tuesday the programme mainly consisted of interview sessions with stakeholders. The visit schedule also featured an open consultation hour for IB students, teaching and support staff, the possibility of which was communicated by AMSIB to aforementioned stakeholders; eventually nobody made use of this opportunity to speak individually and confidentially with the panel. On Tuesday the PRT also discussed internally the performance of the IB programme on the EFMD and NVAO standards. On Wednesday morning, the PRT finalised its considerations and presented its finding from both EFMD and NVAO perspective to representatives of the university, faculty, school and programme. An overview of the site visit programme is provided in Annex 3.

The visit did not include a separate Development Dialogue. However, the purpose of the EFMD assessment is development oriented, just as this was the case for the previous EFMD assessment in 2017. That EFMD report included three 'areas of improvement' on which the programme has been reporting on a yearly basis. These elements have also been discussed during the visit. The current EFMD report will also contain three areas of improvement for the near future.



### **Assessment framework**

AMSIB has chosen to combine the NVAO accreditation with the EFMD accreditation, which results in two reports: one issued by EFMD covering the EFMD standards on programme accreditation (institutional context, programme design, programme delivery and operations, programme outcomes, and quality assurance processes) and the underlying NVAO report, i.e. the external assessment report AMSIB will receive in order to present it to NVAO as an annex to its request for reaccreditation of the IB programme.

To establish the quality of the IB programme from an NVAO perspective, the panel has followed the Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands, which is described in the NVAO publication of September 2018. As AUAS has received accreditation at institutional level, its programmes can be assessed according to the limited evaluation framework of NVAO, which consists of four standards. Moreover, AUAS' participation in a pilot of the Dutch Ministry of Higher Education allows its programmes to experiment with a new accreditation process. It means that external assessment on standards 1 (intended learning outcomes) and 4 (achieved learning outcomes) needs validation by NVAO, while standards 2 (teaching-learning environment) and 3 (student assessment) can be assessed by an external panel without the involvement of NVAO.

In the underlying document, the PRT has given a substantiated judgement on NVAO standards 1 and 4 on a three-point scale: meets the standard, partially meets the standard or does not meet the standard. The panel subsequently recommended a final conclusion regarding the IB programme on a three-point scale: positive, conditionally positive or negative. This weighted and substantiated appreciation serves as advice towards NVAO when taking a decision on the re-accreditation of the bachelor programme IB at AMSIB.

It is the intention of AMSIB to use (parts of) the EFMD report to demonstrate that the IB programme fulfils NVAO standards 2 and 3. Hence, the PRT has been careful during the visit to also address those topics that relate to the teaching-learning environment and student assessment of the IB programme.

### **Review of end level products**

The NVAO standard on achieved learning outcomes is tested among others by examining a sample of end level products. The panel secretary organised the thesis review with AMSIB and supported the PRT members in their work.

In line with NVAO requirements, the PRT reviewed the thesis and internship report/portfolio of fifteen students who graduated between September 2018 and August 2020. These end products were produced by students from the IBMS and IBL programmes as there are no graduates of the IB programme yet. Based on a list of approximately 750 student numbers, the PRT chair and the panel secretary selected 15 student numbers who had obtained a variety of

scores on their thesis and belonged to different programme variants. In order to get a comprehensive picture of the end level product quality, the PRT members also looked into the internship reports and portfolios from these same students.

### **Report structure**

This report covers the external assessment of the bachelor programme IB from an NVAO perspective. The next chapter constitutes the core of the report as it presents the findings, considerations and conclusions of the PRT with regard to the intended learning outcomes and the achieved learning outcomes of the programme. After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft version of this report and circulated it to the PRT for review and feedback. The comments of the panel members were incorporated in a pre-final version, which was validated by the chair. The final draft was sent to AMSIB for a check on factual errors in February 2021. The feedback from the School was discussed in the panel that modified the text where it thought this was appropriate. The chair then established the final version of this report, which was sent to AMSIB in March 2021.

## PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

The Amsterdam School of International Business (AMSIB) is part of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS). AUAS has seven faculties. With almost 3000 students, AMSIB is part of the Faculty of Business and Economics, which has roughly 11000 students.

The International Business (IB) bachelor programme at AMSIB attracts students with a hands-on attitude who pursue broad skills in business administration as well as the global mindset needed to thrive in international business. The international dimension of the programme is visible in the student and staff composition at AMSIB: about 22% of the IB students are international, with a good spread across a wide variety of countries. In the third and fourth year around 450 incoming exchange students join the regular course offer, leading to classrooms with 40-50% of international students. More than half of the core faculty was born outside the Netherlands and one third of the staff is non-Dutch, representing 25 different nationalities.

The IB programme is a merger of the International Business Management Studies (IBMS) and International Business and Languages (IBL) programme. From September 2018, students have only been able to enrol in the IB programme. This means that at the time of the site visit, 1925 first-, second- and third-year students are following the merged programme with dedicated ILOs and a redesigned curriculum, while roughly 500 IBMS and IBL students attend their fourth year and a similar number of students are finishing the final stages of their programme. The vast majority of IB students are enrolled in the regular four-year programme; about 130 students follow the part-time evening variant and another 95 students are on the three-year fast-track IB programme.

### Standard 1 - intended learning outcomes

*The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.*

#### **Amsterdam School of International Business**

At the time of the site visit, AMSIB had just entered a new five-year phase with its Strategic Plan 2021-2026 building on the previous 2016-2020 plan. The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions that the mission, vision and strategic areas in the new plan reflect very well the school's intentions and ambitions. AMSIB wants to create graduates with the hands-on skills, knowledge and global mindset to thrive in the world of international business. To this effect, it will educate a new generation of international business leaders who are able to provide creative and socially responsible solutions to the global challenges of today and tomorrow. AMSIB's mission and vision are based on three pillars: a global mindset, a hands-on attitude, and attention to social responsibility. The panel learned that these pillars are effectively incorporated in the IB, IBMS and IBL programmes through their attention for cultural diversity, their orientation on international business and their focus on global

knowledge, through their learning by doing approach to business and management education and research, and through the explicit attention in courses to ethics, sustainability, norms and values.

Furthermore, the panel acknowledges the importance the school attaches to employability skills, which AMSIB rightly claims as a key element for their students to acquire because it is highly valued by employers. These employability skills are transferable skills and include the ability to work in teams, communicate across cultures, and demonstrate both adaptability and critical thinking. In this regard, AMSIB considers internationalisation as an important lever to enhance both the employability and discipline-specific skills of its graduates.

### **National Framework International Business**

AMSIB's bachelor programme International Business is a merger of its International Business Management Studies (IBMS) and International Business and Languages (IBL) programmes. The panel was informed that as of 2016, there was a development in Dutch higher business education which wanted to reduce the number of degree programmes at the bachelor level by creating broader programmes that allow for specialisation after the foundation year. The objective was to provide clearer and more transparent offerings for prospective students and the corporate world, as well as adding flexibility so that students have more specialisation choices after the foundation year. This caused the different Universities of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands offering bachelor programmes in the broad field of international business to merge their respective IBMS- and IBL-like programmes into one International Business programme with several specialisation tracks. While existing programmes could gradually phase out, the new IB programmes were implemented on a year-by-year basis as of September 2018.

According to the national IB Framework, which was elaborated with the input of all eleven partner universities, as well as professors, lecturers and international companies, all IB programmes in the Netherlands provide their students with a truly international degree that meets the changing demands in the international and domestic labour market. Being taught in English, IB degree courses act as an important example, source of inspiration and benchmark of internationalisation for all other Dutch-taught degrees in the Economics and Business domain. Across all programmes, IB graduates are able to operate within the wide spectrum of the international Business Administration domain, acquire a set of interdisciplinary skills and a solid knowledge base, and are able to perform as an intermediary within various business domains, are versatile and able to cope with changing job market requirements.

The panel gathered from the materials that - provided the individual IB programmes meet the commonly agreed quality standards - schools are at liberty to design and deliver the new programme in line with their own profile, and to differentiate the IB programme by adding their own unique selling proposition. Asked what sets AMSIB apart from other IB programme providers, the programme management referred to school values such as the global mindset, the hands-on approach and the attention to ethics, responsibility and sustainability. Moreover, the city of Amsterdam and the presence of many international companies play an important part in attracting not only foreign but also local students. In comparison to its three main competitors

in the cities of Utrecht, Rotterdam and The Hague, the IB programme at AMSIB reportedly stands out in terms of entrepreneurship. The PRT acknowledges that the obligation to merge IBL and IBMS into a single IB programme allowed the school to sharpen its profile and put its own AMSIB stamp on the IB programme.

### **International Business at AMSIB**

The development of the IB programme at AMSIB has been an intensive process involving input from many stakeholders within and outside the school. The panel learned from the materials and the discussions that the learning outcomes and curriculum blueprints were established taking into account the ideas, concerns and feedback of these stakeholders. In line with the national framework, the IB programme at AMSIB is built on five objectives offering students a learning experience to become professionals who:

- A: can draw on and critically interpret thought-leading research and develop research skills to influence entrepreneurial decision-making;
- B: have developed a global mindset that enables them to act as connectors across various sectors and within culturally-diverse environments;
- C: have developed the hands-on skills and an entrepreneurial spirit to cope with changing job market conditions, and are primed to adapt to the demands and challenges of the rapidly changing 21st century economy and world;
- D: have developed the knowledge base and mindset needed to find socially responsible solutions for the challenges of today and tomorrow;
- E: have developed a solid knowledge base that makes them able to operate across a wide spectrum of international business sectors.

The panel acknowledges that these objectives are very much aligned with AMSIB's vision and mission: objectives B and C are linked to the global mindset and the hands-on attitude, objective D relates to social responsibility, and objectives A and E provide tools (knowledge and research) to become graduates who thrive in the world of international business. The objectives refer explicitly to the AMSIB values and emphasize the importance of internationalisation and employability. As will be elaborated below, these objectives are also directly reflected in the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) of the IB programme and operationalised in the curriculum.

### **Intended learning outcomes**

The national IB framework contains a common set of ILOs, which in turn are related to the Dutch Higher Economic Education standard and the Dublin Descriptors. The panel noticed that the IB programme at AMSIB features 23 ILOs, which are based on the set of ILOs prescribed by the national IB framework but have been reformulated to reflect what AMSIB stands for. The school provided the PRT with extensive information on how the national set of IB ILOs are embedded in the programme ILOs at AMSIB.

The panel, moreover, established that there is a clear link between the programme ILOs and the programme objectives. The 23 ILOs of the IB programme at AMSIB are divided in three categories:

- five ILOs relate to research (objective A): AMSIB graduates can draw on and critically interpret thought-leading research and develop research skills to influence entrepreneurial decision-making;
- eight ILOs relate to the AMSIB values (objectives B, C and D) addressing the global mindset, entrepreneurial spirit and social responsibility;
- ten ILOs relate to business knowledge (objective E) ensuring a solid knowledge base that makes graduates able to operate across a wide spectrum of international business sectors. These ILOs address international business awareness, as well as the four fields of study (Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management and Organisation & People).

Throughout the curriculum, students acquire the 23 learning outcomes via different course components and demonstrate their progress through a range of exams and products. The panel noticed that the ILOs constitute a clear and visible framework for the IB curriculum with the key components of the ‘AMSIB variant’ of IB being integrated across all years and variants of the curriculum. Students are exposed to research-informed education and acquire research methodological skills right from the first semester up to the thesis. The AMSIB values (global mindset, hands-on attitude, social responsibility) are embedded in the course learning goals. Corporate Social Responsibility, business ethics and sustainability are recurring topics in the curriculum. Internationalisation – through mobility and internationalisation at home – remains a key element of the new IB programme. And the set of employability skills that students build during their studies are eventually assessed through the internship portfolio. Just as it had been the case for the IBMS and IBL programmes, the full-time, part-time and fast-track variants of the IB programme work towards the same set of intended learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the PRT found that the ILO framework allows the IB programme to define clearly how AMSIB students are expected to demonstrate that they have achieved the ILOs at end level: in the graduation programme, the thesis is linked to the research ILOs, the ILOs related to the AMSIB values are demonstrated during the internship, and the capstone project captures the business knowledge ILOs in the specialisation tracks. With regard to these tracks, the picture is very clear for the four ‘regular’ fields of study, which coincide largely with the former IBMS programme. Following its explicit request, the PRT was informed that the fifth specialisation - Language, Communication and Culture immersion – follows the business knowledge ILOs on Organisation & People. Moreover, students taking one or more additional languages (in line with the specific purpose of the previous IBL programme) are expected to demonstrate at end level their language use to facilitate international business. For the sake of completeness in information provision, the panel suggests AMSIB to adjust its matrix overviews and indicate how the fifth specialisation ties in with the curriculum’s ILOs.

According to the PRT, AMSIB’s organisation of the IB programme ILOs is appropriate and its formulation of the ILOs reflect the school’s mission and vision with regard to International Business. There is a direct link between the IB programme objectives, the (intended) learning outcomes and the curriculum. The way AMSIB has set up the ILOs is clever and seems to function, at least on paper. The latter *caveat* is due because the ‘proof of the pudding is in the eating’ and there has not yet been a full run of the IB programme.

### Considerations

The PRT noticed that the IB programme at AMSIB features 23 ILOs. These ILOs are based on the national framework for IB programmes. The PRT considers that the national framework ILOs constitute an adequate basis for the programme and by abiding to this framework, the programme is in line with the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and the international requirements. AMSIB, however, goes beyond this national framework as it has reformulated the ILOs to reflect what the school stands for. The PRT very much appreciates the efforts of the school and the programme to adjust the national framework ILOs to the mission and vision of AMSIB and to the corresponding objectives for its IB programme.

According to the PRT, AMSIB's organisation of the IB programme ILOs is appropriate and its formulation of the ILOs reflect the school's mission and vision with regard to International Business. AMSIB IB has done an extensive job in the formulation of its own ILOs and in organising these ILOs into the categories research, values and business knowledge. The panel considers that this work has been well described and is executed properly with respect for the level and orientation of the programme.

There is a direct link between the IB programme objectives, the (intended) learning outcomes and the IB curriculum as it is delivered at AMSIB. The PRT noticed that the programme ILOs form a visible framework for the IB courses and their respective learning goals. The way AMSIB has set up the ILOs is clever and seems to function, at least on paper. The latter caveat is due because the 'proof of the pudding is in the eating' and there has not yet been a full run of the IB programme.

In so far as the end level is concerned, the panel considers that the ILO framework allows the IB programme to define clearly how AMSIB students are expected to demonstrate that they have achieved the ILOs at end level.

According to the panel, AMSIB has made good use of the transfer from IBMS/IBL to IB to put its own distinct stamp on the IB programme. Moreover, the IB programme lives up to the expectations with regard to AMSIB's strategic pillars (global mindset, hands-on attitude and social responsibility) and to the three selling points of the 'Amsterdam' variant of IB: Amsterdam, values and entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, the panel thinks that these overarching elements altogether do not necessarily make the IB programme stand out as unique among the other IB programmes in the Netherlands. Hence, the PRT sees room for AMSIB to further distinguish itself from other IB programmes in the Netherlands and encourages the school to further sharpen its IB programme profile in the years to come. The panel advises AMSIB to identify in the curriculum what IB students can learn at AMSIB that is unique or different from what is on offer at (all/most) other institutions, and to market these unique selling propositions towards potential students.

## Conclusion

In sum, the PRT considers that the intended learning outcomes are formulated in such a way that they align nicely with the objectives of the programme and the profile of the institution. Moreover, the ILOs are sufficiently concrete with regard to content, level and orientation. As a result, **the panel judges that the bachelor programme International Business at AMSIB meets standard 1, intended learning outcomes.**

## Standard 4 – achieved learning outcomes

*The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

### Quality of the end level products

In line with NVAO requirements, the PRT has reviewed a representative sample of intermediate tests and end products, i.e. the thesis and internship report/portfolio of fifteen students who graduated between September 2018 and August 2020. The end products are produced by students from the IBMS and IBL programmes as there are not yet graduates of the IB programme. A representative sample in this case means that the PRT chair selected students who had obtained a variety of scores and belonged to different programme variants. It was agreed with AMSIB that the PRT would not review the language exams, which complement the graduation programme of IBL students.

In order to make a valid selection of end products, AMSIB IB provided an overview of all students whose thesis had been submitted and accepted in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. This overview contained the student number, the programme variant, the score on both thesis and internship, the date of thesis submission and, where applicable, the specialisation track. The thesis score was the key determining factor in the selection. Before starting the sample selection, the PRT secretary calculated the number and percentage of theses that received a low score (rounded off at 6), an average score (7) and a high score (at least 8). A similar exercise was done to establish the number and percentage of students per programme variant (IBL, IBMS regular, part-time and fast-track). Given that the total pool of students to choose from was large (749 entries), secondary selection criteria included the year of thesis submission and the score on the internship. The sample of 15 end products, which was eventually validated by the PRT chair, featured 5 IBL and 10 IBMS students (including 1 fast-track and 1 part-time student); it consisted of 5, 6 and 4 theses with a low, average and high score, respectively.

AMSIB provided the selected end level products and their assessment forms, which were divided over the PRT members. During the very first internal meeting, the panel secretary briefed the members on their specific review task and provided further guidance in an accompanying note to the review template the PRT members were asked to complete.

Prior to the site visit, the PRT members reviewed and reported on the quality of the end level products. Given that the underlying assessment report to NVAO only covers standards 1 and 4, the PRT was asked to focus on the quality of the end products. The respective evaluation forms



could be used as supporting evidence but did not require separate attention to establish the quality of end level product assessment. For each student the experts answered three questions: (i) Is the thesis of sufficient quality to pass? (ii) Do you agree to the score given by the assessors? (iii) Does the student show in the internship that s/he has achieved the related learning outcomes? Furthermore, PRT members were asked to indicate particularly strong or weak elements they had come across in the thesis and/or the internship report/portfolio. Once all contributions were gathered, the secretary drafted a note which was discussed at the third preparatory meeting.

Among all end level products, two theses and no internship reports were submitted for a second opinion. Both theses had received a low score. Eventually the PRT found that one thesis had been scored properly and deserved to pass, albeit marginally, while it thought that the other thesis was just below the quality threshold. Moreover, the PRT either agreed to the thesis score (10 times) or would have given a slightly different score (5 times). In the latter cases, the divergence could go two ways: either slightly upwards or slightly downwards. Anyway, the differences in scoring were small and the PRT overall established that the ranking of the theses was fine: final products with a higher score proved indeed to be of a better quality than those with a lower score.

Overall, PRT members indicated that the quality range of the reviewed theses was wide. While this is not surprising as such - the sample was after all representative in terms of scoring – it did strike the panel members: on the one hand, several theses were of high quality and a few were even exceptionally strong, notably those products that had been produced through the research lab. On the other hand, there were several theses who were rather weak in either data treatment or in translating the thesis topic in a proper research question. According to the panel, these weaknesses could have been spotted during the thesis trajectory and possibly repaired through additional support or training. Confronted with this finding, IB staff indicated that they had spotted these weaknesses recently and have now included additional workshops during the thesis course. Furthermore, PRT members indicated that not every thesis evaluation form had been completed in an insightful way. In fact, there was hardly any assessment information on the thesis which the PRT deemed below par, while the other thesis which had been submitted for a second opinion had been properly and extensively assessed, a motivation which the PRT eventually agreed to. The Examination Board and Thesis Committee acknowledged this finding and indicated that they are looking into this matter already and will henceforth check this even more thoroughly.

The outcome of the internship report or portfolio assessment was positive: in 12 out of 15 cases, the PRT found that students had convincingly demonstrated that they had achieved the learning outcomes related to the internship; in the remaining three cases, it was not so much the internship product but the assessment form that had made it difficult for the PRT to come to similar conclusions. In this regard, the reviewers welcomed in particular the new approach of internship portfolios and assessment. According to the PRT the portfolio assessment is more relevant as a means to check whether students have indeed achieved the respective ILOs, which in the case of the internship are linked to the AMSIB values. The PRT did notice, however, that

the assessment form of the internship portfolio can be further improved to reflect better the learning goals and behavioural indicators students are expected to demonstrate. The programme representatives indicated that they had only started recently with this new approach and will enhance the assessment form accordingly.

### **Performance of graduates**

Another way to demonstrate the achievement of programme learning outcomes is to look at the whereabouts of the graduates. The information provided in the SAR demonstrates that graduates do very well on the labour market. Moreover, the panel gathered from the conversations with alumni and programme directors that IBL and IBMS graduates from AMSIB are in high demand on the job market and smoothly transition to the labour market. Data on AMSIB alumni shows that 94% of the current IBMS graduates and 90% of the current IBL graduates who are looking for a job find employment within three months after graduation. The organisations that employ these graduates vary from very large corporations to small businesses.

In order to assess the quality of its graduates, AMSIB conducts an evaluation each semester among the company supervisors of internship and thesis assignments. In general corporate partners are highly positive about the quality of students.

In order to keep track of its alumni and improve the services to its graduates, AMSIB has recently implemented a CRM system for corporate and alumni relations. A dedicated Alumni Engagement Officer manages online and offline communications and services offered to alumni. All services stem from previous research conducted specifically on AMSIB alumni engagement.

The PRT noticed that a good number of IBL/IBMS graduates at AMSIB move on directly to a master programme. While there are no specific data to back up this assumption – 25% is given as a qualified guess by AMSIB representatives - the school's attention to research-informed teaching may explain the relatively high share of students entering a (pre-) master programme of academic orientation.

Furthermore, several students and alumni mentioned they had started their own company or had used IB as a lever for their existing entrepreneurial ambitions. According to the panel, the part-time programme variant which is taught in the evening and several interviewees described as particularly effective, could be instrumental in enhancing these entrepreneurial ambitions.

Finally, the PRT noticed in its meeting with alumni that several former IBL/IBMS students indicated that the programme was quite broad and that the internship had provided them with a good opportunity to reflect on the future direction of their career.

In addition to all positive findings, the PRT noticed that – in comparison to other aspects of the programme - there was not so much information available on the concrete trajectories of graduates. Given the success of IB graduates in terms of follow-up study, entrepreneurship

and/or employment, AMSIB may want to collect and analyse information on the individual pathways of its alumni right after graduation and a few years into their career.

### Considerations

There are three ways to establish whether the programme ILOs have been achieved: through intermediate tests, through a quality review of the final products and through checking what programme graduates are doing after they finished the programme.

In as far as intermediate tests are concerned, the PRT has looked into a range of assessment products, which it found to be adequate.

Upon review of the 15 internship products, the PRT considers that students have indeed achieved the ILOs that should be demonstrated through the internship. It welcomes in particular the new approach of internship portfolios and assessment, which according to the PRT is more relevant as a means to check whether students have indeed achieved the AMSIB values. Upon review of a sample of 15 theses, the PRT considers that 14 theses are of (at least) acceptable quality and that the quality of one thesis (which received a very low pass mark from its assessors) is below par. This means that overall students achieve the ILOs that are linked to the thesis.

From a quantitative point of view, the outcome of the end product sample review remains adequately within the limits of what is acceptable to NVAO. From a qualitative point of view, the sample review has demonstrated that in addition to many very high quality end level products, there is definitely room for improvement in what the panel members called ‘the soundness of the process’. These improvements relate to issues that fall under NVAO standards 2 (curriculum) and 3 (assessment).

Furthermore, the PRT considers that IBMS and IBL graduates are successful in their career, which in turn is a positive indication that graduates have indeed achieved the programme learning outcomes. A good number of graduates move on directly to a master programme; others start their own company or use the programme as a lever for their entrepreneurial ambitions; most graduates enter the labour market where they invariably find a job that is commensurate with the level and discipline of their study. Given that AMSIB has recently stepped up its efforts with regard to alumni engagement, the PRT suggests that the programme uses this opportunity to also collect and analyse information on the individual pathways of its alumni right after graduation and a few years into their career.

### Conclusion

In sum, the panel considers that students who pass the thesis and the internship invariably achieve the intended learning outcomes and are therefore entitled to graduate. Moreover, IBMS and IBL graduates from AMSIB manage to find a job quickly and advance swiftly in their careers. As a result, ***the panel judges that the bachelor programme International Business at AMSIB meets standard 4, achieved learning outcomes.***

## **Overall judgement**

In sum, the panel considers that the bachelor programme International Business meets the two NVAO standards under consideration: intended learning outcomes and achieved learning outcomes. **The Peer Review Team therefore issues a positive advice to NVAO on the bachelor programme International Business at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.**

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1 – Administrative data on institution and programme

#### Administrative data on the institution

Name of the institution:	Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences Amsterdam School of International Business
Status of the institution:	publicly funded
Result of the institutional quality assurance assessment:	positive (2019)
Contact person:	Renate Teuwsen (c.w.teuwsen@hva.nl)

#### Administrative data on the programme

Name:	International Business
CROHO:	30029
Level:	bachelor
Orientation:	professional
Credits:	240 ECTS (regular) 180 ECTS (fast track)
Location:	Amsterdam
Mode of study:	full-time part-time
Language:	English
Tracks:	none
Majors:	Marketing & Sales Organisation & Supply Chain Management Finance & Accounting Organisation & People Language, Communication & Culture immersion

The bachelor programme International Business (IB) started in September 2018 and is a merger of two programmes, which are currently phasing out: International Business and Management Studies (IBMS – CROHO: 34936) and International Business and Languages (IBL – CROHO: 34407). At the time of this external assessment visit, in the academic year 2020-2021, the first cohort of IB students had reached its third year.

## Annex 2 – Peer Review Team

### **Michel Poté, PRT chair**

Michel Poté is a Professor of management and a Consultant on quality systems for higher education. He was Director General and Dean of EM Normandie and of ESSCA Angers in France. Michel has extensive experience as chair of EPAS/EFMD panels, and as EDAP/EFMD mentor of business schools.

### **Stephanie Morgan, member**

Dr. Morgan is professor and Interim Accreditation Lead at the University of Aberdeen Business School, UK. She has built up a strong reputation in Business School accreditations (AACSB, EFMD, AMBA) on behalf of her own institution and as facilitator and chair of AACSB and EFMD conferences and Accreditation groups.

### **Huub Ruël, member**

Dr. Ruël is Research professor of Global Talent Management and International Business at Hotelschool The Hague, where he is also involved in the curriculum renewal project. Huub has experience with both EFMD and NVAO accreditation schemes.

### **Eric Carlier, member**

Eric Carlier was a senior manager in different Business Schools with international scope. As director of a consulting company specialised in training, executive and higher education, he is currently involved in many international projects. Eric has experience as PRT member of EFMD accreditations.

### **Joris Hahn, student-member**

Joris Hahn is a master student Spatial, Transport & Environmental Economics at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He holds a bachelor degree International Economics & Business from Groningen University. Joris has broad experience as student-member in NVAO accreditation panels.

The peer review team was assisted by Mark Delmartino, MDM Consultancy bv, Antwerpen – Belgium. As freelance secretary, Mark has worked with NVAO panels since 2006. He is certified by NVAO and belongs to the AUAS pool of certified external secretaries. Mark has experience in supporting combined AACSB-NVAO accreditation panels and assisted several evaluation panels in assessing IB programmes in the Netherlands.

All members of the peer review team and the thesis committee, as well as the secretary have signed the NVAO independence form. The PRT chair was informed of the NVAO profile for Panel Chairs (2016).

## **Annex 3 - Programme of the online site visit**

### **Monday 25 January 2021**

09.00h	Welcome session
09.15h	Meeting with AMSIB Dean and Senior Management Team
10.15h	Meeting with AMSIB Heads of academic subject areas
11.15h	Meeting with IB Programme Director and Management Team
12.45h	Meeting with Faculty staff teaching on the IB programme
14.15h	Parallel sessions with Alumni and with External relations
14.45h	Summary meeting Peer Review Team
15.15h	end of day 1

### **Tuesday 26 January 2021**

09.00h	Preparatory meeting Peer Review Team
09.15h	Meeting with Students on the IB programme
10.00h	Internal meeting PRT – preliminary evaluation
12.00h	Meeting with staff services relevant to IB programme
12.45h	Meeting with staff responsible for Quality Assurance
14.00h	Open Consultation Hour
14.30h	Meeting with AMSIB Dean / IB Programme Director
15.00h	Internal meeting Peer Review Team – assessment session
17.00h	end of day 2

### **Wednesday 27 January 2021**

10.00h	Internal meeting PRT - finalise assessment and prepare debriefing
12.00h	Feedback to AMSIB on EFMD and NVAO programme accreditations
12.45h	Summary meeting PRT
13.00h	end of online site visit

An overview of the persons interviewed is available on request.

## Annex 4 – Materials reviewed

Prior to the site visit, the Peer Review Team received following documents:

- AMSIB Self-Assessment Report. Bachelor International Business, November 2020.
- AMSIB Datasheet. Bachelor International Business, November 2020.
- AMSIB Student Report. Bachelor International Business, November 2020.

In addition to covering the respective EFMD and NVAO standards, the Self-Assessment Report contained several annexes, including:

- Faculty list
- IB Intended Learning Outcome (ILO) matrices
- National IB ILOs clustered in AMSIB ILO categories
- IB Assessment programmes
- Definition of IB competence levels

Moreover, the panel had access to other university-wide, faculty-wide and programme-specific materials in a dedicated Base Room. Before and during the site visit, the PRT studied among others the following documents:

- AMSIB Strategic Plan
- National IB programme plan
- AMSIB IB programme plan
- AUAS Testing Policy
- AUAS Quality Assurance policy
- Minutes IB Programme Committee
- Materials produced by the Examination Board and Test and Assessment Committee
- Materials produced by the Curriculum Advisory Board
- Teaching and Examination Regulations
- Alumni flyer and newsletters
- National Student Survey
- NVAO accreditation reports and decisions on IBMS and IBL

The PRT reviewed a representative sample of 15 theses and internship reports/portfolios from (IBMS and IBL) students who graduated between September 2018 and August 2020. A list of the selected end products is available on request.

Note: Further to what is mentioned in annex 1, any reference to the Bachelor programme International Business also covers two programmes that were phasing out at the time of the site visit (preparation): International Business and Management Studies and International Business and Languages programme.