

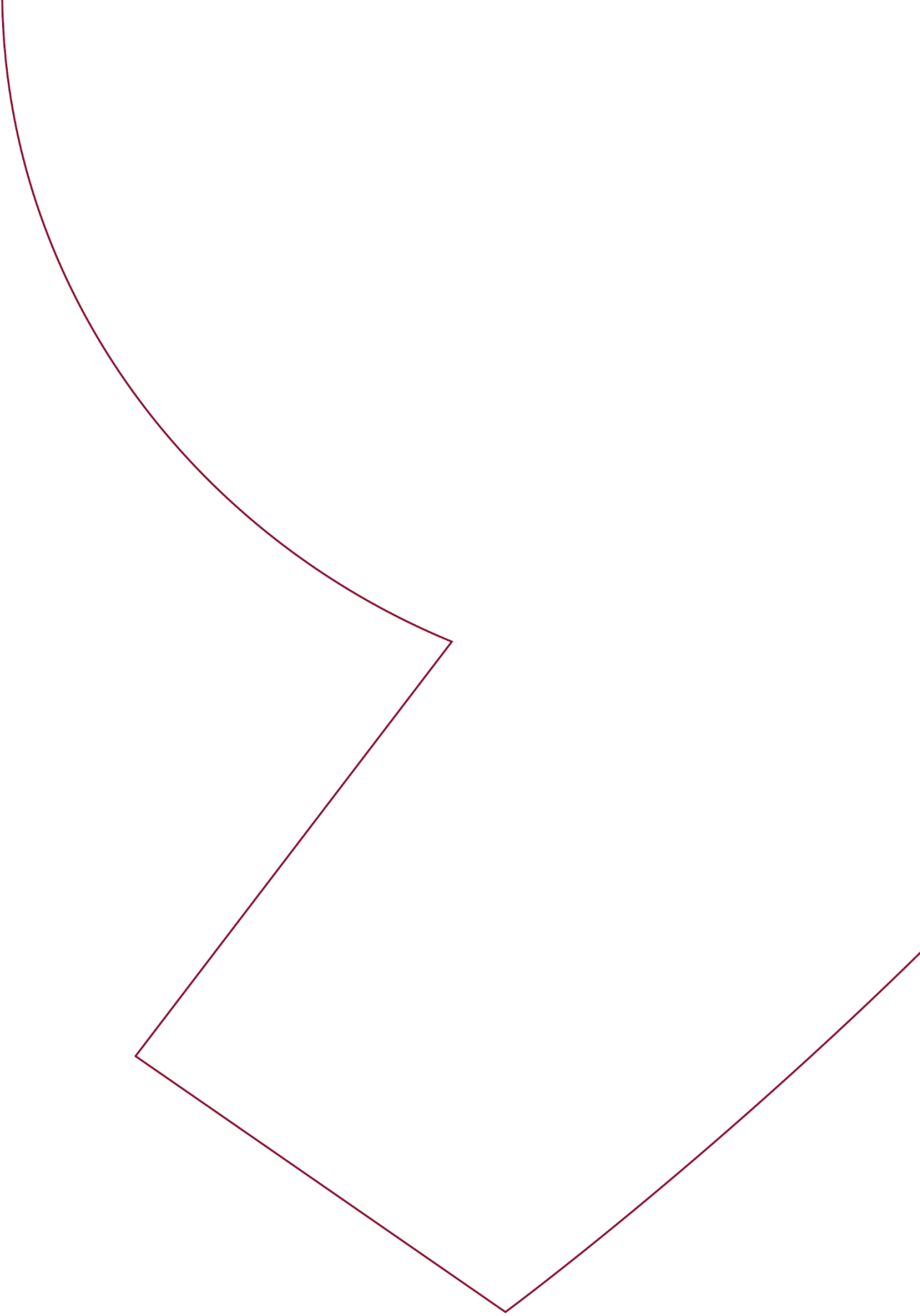
ASSESSMENT REPORT

Limited Program Assessment

Master Content & Media Strategy

Full time

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences



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Limited Program Assessment

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Full time

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences

Croho registration: 45284

Hobéon Certificering & Accreditatie

DATE

October 4th, 2023

Audit Panel

D. Majoor (chair)

T. van Dijk

Dr. E. Peelen

R. Tal (student)

Secretary

P. Shapiro

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Institution	NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences
Status	Funded
Outcome of Institutional Quality Assessment	Positive, 07-05-2020
Name of program in the Central Register of Higher Education (CROHO)	M Content & Media Strategy
ISAT-code CROHO	45284
Domain / Sector CROHO	Economy
Orientation and level	HBO Master
Degree	Master of Arts
Number of credits	60
Location	Leeuwarden
Variant	Full Time
Language	English
Date site visit	06-06-2023

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Introduction and Program Profile

The master program in Content and Media Strategy (MCMS) is a one-year program offered by the Academy of Communication and Creative Business (ACCB) at NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (NHL Stenden UAS). The program aims to graduate students who can strategically use content and media to realize organizational branding and communication goals. MCMS teaches research oriented practices that inform multidisciplinary approaches to solving difficult communications problems. Graduates are educated broadly on strategic communication and its implementation, instead of focusing deeply on one particular aspect of the content creation cycle. MCMS is aligned with NHL Stenden UAS' strategic goals regarding international and professional orientation.

MCMS was initially accredited in 2018. The panel is satisfied that the program has addressed the recommendations of the panel from 2018. The program is under ongoing development both in its curriculum and assessment methods, in line with industry and educational trends, which is reflected in this report and the panel's considerations.

2.2 Findings

The panel finds that MCMS **fulfills the requirements** of standard 1. The ILOs of the program are rooted in the content development cycle, encompassing content strategy, creation, and implementation, as well as research skills and personal and professional development. It is clear to the panel that MCMS involved industry stakeholders in the development of its ILOs. The panel finds that the ILOs are appropriate for the master level.

As with the ILOs, the curriculum of MCMS follows the content development cycle, with the first semester focusing on content strategy and the second on content creation and implementation. MCMS has transitioned to a design-based education (DBE) approach where students collaborate in ateliers on real-world projects, guided by expert coaches who facilitate personal and professional development. The DBE approach encourages student engagement, agency over their projects, and divergent thinking. Therefore, the panel finds that the program also **meets the requirements** of standard 2.

MCMS employs a diverse range of assessment methods to evaluate student achievement. Assessments encompass both individual and group work and include written exams, oral defense of graduation projects, and continuous informal feedback. The exam board plays an active role in quality control and collaboration with the program, ensuring consistency and effective feedback mechanisms. Students generally find assignment requirements clear and overall, the program **meets the requirements** of standard 3.

The panel, in their review of a representative sample of 15 theses and various student presentations, is satisfied that MCMS graduates successfully achieve the program's ILOs and reach the master level. Although the graduation assignment was recently modified to address workload concerns, it was not included in the sample since no students had graduated under the new scheme. However, drafts and conceptual work from the current school year were provided for review, and the panel acknowledges the improvements in the graduation project aligning with ILOs. The working field values the quality of graduates, and alumni appreciate the program's practical foundation. The panel finds that the program **meets the requirements** of standard 4.

2.3 Commendations

The panel commends MCMS, ACCB, and NHL Stenden UAS for a number of achievements:

1. The structure of the program around the content development cycle, which fits with the aim of educating T shaped professionals and aligns with industry needs.
2. The panel is impressed with the amount of time and effort that students put into their work and considers that this reflects positively on the program.
3. The idea of hosting client conferences to showcase student work and connect the program's partners is excellent.

2.4 Recommendations

The panel has several recommendations for the program going forward:

1. The program should develop a more unified and elaborated vision in the areas of sustainability, ethical considerations, and the balance between media strategy and content strategy within the curriculum. The program can reflect on its position and ensure that the program team is aligned in the choices it makes going forward in its development.
2. The panel encourages the program to innovate in its research and integrate new methodologies from the field.
3. The integration of external students (students who did not complete a bachelor at NHL Stenden UAS), and non-western students in particular, into the DBE didactic and assessment model could be improved. Particularly as it relates to expectations management and group work.

2.5 Conclusion

The panel advises that the NVAO re-accredit the program on the basis of the limited accreditation framework.

In agreement with the panel members, the chair adopted this report on October 4, 2023.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the program; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Explanation: The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level of the program (Associate Degree, Bachelor's, or Master's) as defined in the Dutch Qualifications Framework, as well as its orientation (professional or academic). In addition, they tie in with the regional, national or international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the program. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations.

MCMS trains new content and media strategy professionals who utilize multidisciplinary approaches informed by practice-based research to solve branding and communication challenges. Students learn to synthesize theoretical knowledge from various disciplines with practice-based research and prior experience to create new content and media strategies. The program aims to prepare students to operate in dynamic organizational contexts and international markets.

Starting in academic year 2022-23, MCMS implemented a redeveloped set of five intended learning outcomes (ILOs). The new ILOs are part of a broader reformulation of the professional profile of the program that was undertaken in cooperation with the program's advisory board, the transformational media professorship, and other internal stakeholders. The ILOs were developed in line with the principles described in the NLQF manual and the EQF 7 (master level) descriptors. The advisory board informed the panel that they were involved in the development of the profile and the resulting ILOs and that the program was open in its approach to asking them what competencies they look for in graduates. The advisory board informed the panel the board represents a wide variety of firms from across the industry, but that the program could consider asking more technology companies to join in the future.

The program's ILOs are based on the content development cycle, which is broken into three interdependent blocks: content strategy, content creation, and content implementation. These three core components form the foundation of the program's body of knowledge and skills (BOKS) that guides the curriculum. In addition, the BOKS includes pillars for research skills and personal & professional development. Each of the five pillars of the BOKS are translated into an ILO that states the competencies that students must demonstrate in order to graduate. The ILOs reflect the program's vision for what content and media strategy professionals need to be capable of to function independently in the field.

The panel finds that a student who realizes the ILOs as formulated would fulfill the requirements of the master level. Furthermore, the panel finds that the demonstration of the skills outlined in the BOKS would be conducive to realizing of the ILOs. It is clear to the panel that the ILOs were developed with industry needs and practices in mind. The program worked closely with its partners in industry in the development of the new ILOs. The panel is pleased that the ILOs are formulated in such a way that future developments in the field or further specialization of the program's profile would not render them obsolete.

While the panel is satisfied with the profile and ILO's of the program, it finds that there are elements of the program's identity – particularly in the area of sustainability and the balance of the curriculum between media strategy and content strategy – that deserve considered reflection and deeper curricular integration. The panel is aware that NHL Stenden UAS aims to profile the institution as a leader in sustainable education. It is not clear to the panel that the program team is of one mind on these issues. The panel advises that the program reflect on its brand position, as it were, and ensure that the program team is aligned in the choices it makes going forward.

The panel finds that the program **fulfills the requirements** of standard 1.

3.2 Teaching-learning environment

Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Explanation: The intended learning outcomes have been adequately translated into educational objectives of (components of) the curriculum. The diversity of the students admitted is taken into account in this respect. The teachers have sufficient expertise in terms of both subject matter and teaching methods to teach the curriculum, and provide appropriate guidance. The teaching-learning environment encourages students to play an active role in the design of their own learning process (student-centred approach). If the program is taught in a language other than Dutch, the program must justify its choice. This also applies if the program bears a foreign language name. The teaching staff must have a sufficient command of the language in which they are teaching. Services and facilities are not assessed, unless they have been set up specifically for the program concerned.

As with the ILOs of the program, the curriculum of MCMS is based on the content creation cycle. The first semester focuses on content strategy, the second semester on content creation and implementation.

In line with the policy and profile of NHL Stenden UAS, MCMS started transitioning to design-based education (DBE) in the 2021-22 school year. Students work together in ateliers on projects from the field to facilitate their education. The program sees the ateliers as a learning community of students, teachers, and industry partners. In this context, teachers serve as 'expert coaches' who assist students in their personal and professional development. The program sees DBE and the implementation of the ateliers as a didactic method that demands student engagement and allows students agency over their projects and education.

In its conversations with students and staff the panel found that the vision on DBE is broadly shared and understood. Students appreciate that they get to work on real-world problems and that the method allows them to focus on learning how to approach problems using divergent thinking instead of being told the 'correct' approach. Students informed the panel that the curriculum and DBE approach is flexible and allows for new concepts and technologies to be introduced over time. Initiative and asking coaches for constructive feedback is rewarded.

Staff see the benefit of DBE in its emphasis on professional development and the development of soft skills alongside the base of theoretical knowledge. The assignments given to students at the start of the year are more structured and offer more guidance from teachers and become more self-directed as the year goes on. The teaching staff are well educated on the DBE model. The panel was impressed by their confidence in their students ability to be self-directed and still learn from the constructively critical questions that educators use to guide their progress.

The core teaching staff of the program consists of six members along with a stable team of six faculty members from ACCB. The program utilizes other lecturers from NHL Stenden UAS on an ad hoc basis. All of the members of the teaching team hold master's degrees, three are PhDs, and one is entering PhD candidacy. Some of the staff also have a background in the professional field. The panel finds that the team is well qualified to teach and develop the curriculum and pleased with the diversity of professional backgrounds represented in the team.

There are challenges in adjusting to the DBE model for students joining the program from other institutions that use other didactic approaches. Students joining from programs within NHL Stenden UAS already have experience with the approach. The program is aware of these challenges and has implemented introduction programs before the start of the semester to help introduce the concept. Students informed the panel that issues with onboarding, expectations management, and intercultural attitudes towards school work sometimes result in problems with a heavy workload, particularly in the context of collaborative group work. The panel found that the program is aware of all these issues and actively working to address them. In its plans for future student onboarding the panel suggests that the program pay more attention to the onboarding of non-western students to ensure intercultural cooperation and effectively manage expectations.

Students are required to write a personal code of conduct – which the program sees as being an element included to encourage students to think about their values and the kind of work they will and won't do for clients. It fits with the broader aim of the curriculum to teach and encourage critical thinking without being prescriptive about a certain set of values. The exercise empowers students to navigate the complex moral landscape of media strategy and fosters a sense of personal responsibility and ethical awareness. The panel agrees with this in principle. As it relates to the panel's previous advice for the program to reflect on its own values and identity, the panel suggests that the program could, if not prescribing a set of values, proscribe those projects that students might want to pursue that do not align with the values of the program. Furthermore, students expressed to the panel that they would appreciate more curricular alignment with the program's stated sustainability goals and more instruction on ethical considerations as they relate to the working field. The panel sees space for the program to be more proactively involved in this area.

The program is closely connected with the Transformational Media professorship. In addition to conducting research and providing a place for some students to do their research, the professorship is focused on working on educational developments and bringing new trends into the program. In reviewing student work and project proposals, the panel considered that the program could do more to innovate in its research methodologies and teach these to students. The panel thinks that there are new methods in the field that would be interesting for students to use in their work.

The program informed the panel that they chose English as the language of instruction because of its international profile, the profile of the students, and the backgrounds of the teaching staff. In addition, NHL Stenden UAS has an international profile that MCMS reflects. The panel finds that the program adequately ensures that all staff are able to teach effectively in English and that the entry requirements for students ensure that they can study in English. The panel finds that the program motivates its decision to use English and that the decision is appropriate.

The program **fulfills the requirements** of standard 2.

3.3 Student assessment

Standard 3: The program has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Explanation: The student assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The requirements are transparent to the students. The quality of interim and final examinations is sufficiently safeguarded and meets the statutory quality standards. The tests support the students' own learning processes.

The program relies on a variety of assessment methods to evaluate student achievement. Assessment policy at MCMS is aligned with NHL Stenden UAS' strategy on DBE and assessment. Exams align with the didactic model of the program and follow from the structure of the curriculum. Students are assessed on both group and individual work. Most assessments are written, while students also orally defend their graduation project proposal and final product. The program makes use of summative assessments and formative assessments, as well as ongoing informal feedback while students complete assignments.

Assessment is based on the student's personal and professional development (PPD) assignment that they work on throughout the year, exams on research methodologies, written strategic briefs, written analyses, pitch books, and implementation plans. The panel considers that the assessment formats selected align with the principles of DBE and the professional orientation of the program.

The program and panel discussed the changes in assessment format that have occurred over the past year as the program seeks to reduce workloads for both students and staff. Previous assessment models required redundant work and excessive formal writing that the program, students, staff, and industry partners considered inappropriate for the aims MCMS has set for itself. The new assessment modes have reduced workloads and sharpened the focus on professional products. The test committee, which is mandated by the exam board, informed the panel that they conducted a quality control screening of the assessments in 2021 which generated a starting point for the current developments. The committee informed the panel that they have already seen improvements and that they are actively involved both in screening assessment models before they are used and in reflective quality assurance.

The exam board informed the panel that they work hard to maintain their independence from the program as a whole. The chair of the exam board serves as the chair of other exam boards within NHL Stenden UAS and the board is well-supported by institutional structures. The program utilizes extensive calibration sessions, as well as the four eyes principle for the final assignment, to ensure consistency across the program. The program and exam board work with teaching staff to ensure that formative feedback is useful for the learning process. The exam board informed the panel that the program is open and responsive to feedback.

NHL Stenden UAS is gradually shifting most programs towards programmatic assessment models. The program and exam board consider that it is likely that such a model would be appropriate for MCMS in the long term. However, the exam board has encouraged the program to be cautious in moving too quickly towards the new model. The program is taking necessary time to ensure that workloads remain manageable, and that staff are educated on the use of programmatic assessment. A step towards this is improving the feedback culture both formally and informally, as the program is already doing. The panel appreciates that the exam board is taking a proactive role in the consideration of future developments and that the program is taking the time it needs to implement changes well.

Students informed the panel that the requirements for assignments are generally clear to them. There have been issues with the timeline for receiving feedback in the past, which the panel finds are related to workloads and expectation management that the program could improve. Because the assessment mode changed this year, students informed the panel that the requirements for some assignments were adjusted during the year – but that this was communicated and ultimately resolved.

The program **fulfills the requirements** of standard 3.

3.4 Achieved learning outcomes

Standard 4: The program demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Explanation: The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in postgraduate programs.

The panel reviewed a representative sample of 15 theses to the achievement of MCMS graduates. The panel is satisfied that MCMS graduates realize the ILOs of the program, as demonstrated by their work and the jobs they occupy after graduation. The program changed the graduation assignment in the past year to address previous concerns about workload and improve the professional orientation of graduation products. Because no students had graduated under that scheme, the work was not included in the representative sample; however, the program included drafts and conceptual work products from this school year for the panel to review. In addition, current students presented their ongoing thesis work for panel members during the site visit. The panel agrees that the program has improved the graduation project with its implemented changes, and recognizes that the new model is also conducive to students demonstrating the realization of the ILOs.

The panel was impressed by the client conference that the program uses to connect companies providing internship and research positions for students to work on their thesis. It is a wonderful idea to bring all of the companies, thesis supervisors, and students together to review the work that students have done. This allows the program to build and strengthen its relationships with industry and serves as a check that students are still going to be interesting for employers going forward. For students, it provides an opportunity to showcase their abilities and connect with potential employers. Finally, industry can get insights into the projects that other students are working on.

The panel found that the working field is impressed with the quality of graduates and eager to hire them. 90 percent of graduates are employed in the creative industry. Alumni informed the panel that they were glad that the program was more practical than their previous education, while also providing them with a foundation of knowledge and skills on which they can build in the future.

The panel finds that the program **fulfills the requirements** of standard 4.

4. OVERALL JUDGMENT

The panel finds that the Master Content and Media Strategy offered by NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences meets the requirements of standards 1, 2, 3, and 4. Therefore, the panel advises that the NVAO re-accredit the program on the basis of the limited program assessment.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix I Overview of judgements

Overview of the panels judgements NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences Master Content & Media Strategy full time	
Standard	Judgement
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Meets the standard
Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment	Meets the standard
Standard 3. Student assessment	Meets the standard
Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes	Meets the standard
Overall judgement	Positive

Appendix II Agenda of the site-visit

The site visit took place on June 6th, 2023

Time	Activity
09:30 – 10:00	Arrival, brief tour, panel internal
10:00 – 10:20	Presentation program management and industry
10:20 – 10:45	Student presentation on theses cohort 2022-2023
11:00 – 11:45	Teaching staff
12:00 – 12:45	Students
12:45-13:30	Lunch
13:30-14:15	Exam committee and program committee
11:30 – 12:15	Students and student representatives
14:30-15:15	Industry, Raad van Advies, and alumni
15:30-16:15	Program management
16:15-17:00	Internal panel discussion
17:00	Feedback

For privacy reasons, names of auditees are not included in this report. The names of auditees are known by the secretary of the panel.

Working methods

Selection of the auditees and open consultation opportunity

In compliance with NVAO regulations the audit panel decided on the composition of the auditee delegations in consultation with the program management and on the basis of the points of attention that arose from the panel's analysis of the provided documentation. An 'open consultation session' was scheduled as part of the site-visit program. The panel verified that the scheduled times of the consultation session had been made public to all parties involved in the school community in a correct and timely manner. No students or staff members attended the open consultation session.

Auditing process

The following procedure was adopted. The panel studied the documents regarding the program (see appendix iii) and a number of theses. The panel secretary organized input from the auditors and distributed the preliminary findings among the panel members prior to the audit. A preparatory meeting of the panel was held before the site visit took place at the institute on June 1, 2023.

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

A first version of the assessment report was drafted by the secretary and circulated among the members of the panel for review and comments. The final draft was forwarded to the institution to correct factual inaccuracies. The panel finalized the report on October 4, 2023.

Assessment rules

According to the NVAO assessment rules, a program can either fulfil, partially fulfil or not fulfil the requirements of each standard. Hobéon applied the decision rules, as listed in the "Assessment Framework for higher education accreditation system Netherlands, September 2018.

Appendix III

List of documents examined

List of documents examined

Program visitation - MCMS June 6 2023.pdf
Welcome letter to the visitation panel.pdf
MCMS Self Evaluation Report sent to Hobeon 25 04 2023.pdf
1. MCMS Learning Outcomes 2022-2023.pdf
2. BOKS MCMS_V08-05-2023.pdf
3. MCMS Professional profile.pdf
4. Transition document MCMS_def.pdf
5. MCMS Graduation rate 2018-2022.pdf
6. Brochure ma-content-and-media-strategy lwd.pdf
Student manual Graduation Portfolio 2020-2021.pdf
Student manual Graduation Portfolio 2021-2022.pdf
Master Content & Media Strategy Course Catalogue 2022-2023.pdf
MCMS assessment infographic 2022-2023.pdf
MCMS Guide PPD.pdf
MCMS Guide Semester 1.pdf
MCMS Guide Semester 2.pdf
1. MCMS Coursedocument 2022-2023.pdf
1. Student Charter (programme specific section) Master MCMS 2022-2023 .pdf
2. De 8 Keuzes van DBE_NL.pdf
3. Toetsbeleid Creative Business - FEB 23.pdf
4. Quality Assurance Policy CB-CMP-MCMS 2022-2023 vSept22.pdf
5. MCMS_NSE2122_Actionplan.pdf
11367 TNO Master Content Media Strategy.pdf
20180614 Def.besluit NVAO MCMS.pdf
Advies NHL Stenden hbo-ma Content Media Strategy.pdf
MCMS 45284 Appendix 4 Curriculum Schedule 2020-2021.pdf
Student Charter (programme specific section) Master 2020-2021.pdf
TER 2020-2021 master appendices.pdf
TER 2020-2021 master secured.pdf
MCMS 45284 Appendix 4 Curriculum Schedule 2021-2022.pdf
Student Charter (institute-specific section) 2021-2022.pdf
TER 2021-2022 master appendices.pdf
TER 2021-2022 master secured.pdf
Corrigendum MCMS TER Appendix 4 Curriculum Schedule 2022-2023.xlsx.pdf
MCMS Corrigendum Master appendix 6 2022-2023.pdf
Student Charter (programme specific section) Master MCMS 2022-2023 .pdf
TER 2022-2023 master MCMS appendices.pdf
TER 2022-2023 master MCMS.pdf
MCMS_CCI_2223_Assessment info_Creative Brief.pdf
MCMS_CCI_2223_Assessment info_Defense Final Assignment & PPD.pdf
MCMS_CCI_2223_Assessment info_Lab Exam.pdf
MCMS_CCI_2223_Assessment info_Pitch Book and Implementation Plan.pdf
MCMS_CCI_2223_Assessment info_Qualitative Content Analysis.pdf
MCMS_CCI_2223_Assignment info_Final Assignment Information.pdf
MCMS_CS_2223_Assessment info_Consumer behaviour essay.pdf
MCMS_CS_2223_Assessment info_Defense Strategic Brief & PPD.pdf
MCMS_CS_2223_Assessment info_Lab exam.pdf
1. MCMS Team.pdf
2. MCMS personeel 2022-2023.pdf
List of graduates NHL Stenden Master Content & Media Strategy.pdf
2020-2021 Jaarverslag Examencommissie Academie Communicatie en Creative Business.pdf
2021-2022 Jaarverslag Examencommissie Academie Communicatie en Creative Business.pdf
2022-2023 Evaluatie Toetsing MCMS - Toetscommissie.pdf
Verslag RvA MCMS_15022021.pdf

20210518 Agenda RvA MCMS.pdf
20210518 App1 Minutes RvA MCMS_21_02_15.pdf
20210518 App2 revision plan.pdf
20210518 General information.pptx
20210518 Restructuring FCA.pptx
20210518 RvA revision block 3.2.pptx
20210518 Verslag RvA MCMS.pdf
20211123 Verslag Raad van Advies MCMS.pdf
Input AB 23-11.pdf
20220517 Minutes RvA MCMS.pdf
20221117 Verslag Raad van Advies MCMS.pdf
MCMS PP RvA 20221118.pdf
PPD MCMS - PPD - Advisory Board - nov 2022.pdf
Notulen vergadering OC 20_04_20.pdf
FeedbackStuCo.pdf
Protocol_05.12.22.pdf
Protocol_13.10.22.pdf
StuCo Onboarding Meeting.pdf
Minutes StuCo feedback session Semester 1 and MA 14022023.pdf

Following NVAO regulations, the panel reviewed the final projects of 15 students, including their evaluations. For privacy reasons, the names of these graduates and their student numbers are not included in this report. The names of the graduates, their student number, as well as the titles of the final projects, are known to the secretary of the audit panel.

Appendix IV Composition of the audit panel

The hbo Master Content and Media Strategy belongs to the visitation group:
HBO Ma Content & Media Strategy (unique)

Succinct resumes of the panel members:

Name	Succinct CVs
D. Majoor	Chair of the executive board Cibap vakschool voor vormgeving
T. van Dijk	Former lecturer of creative business at HvA
Dr. E. Peelen	Professor content marketing UvA
R. Tal	Student Master Media Innovation Breda UAS
P. Shapiro	NVAO certified secretary, consultant at Hobéon

Prior to the audit all panel members undersigned declarations of independence and confidentiality which are in possession of the NVAO. This declaration certifies, among other things, that panel members do not maintain, nor have they maintained in the past five years, any (family) connections or ties of a personal nature or as a researcher/teacher, professional or consultant with the program in question, which could affect their ability to independently judge the quality of the program in either a positive or negative sense.

In its decision dated 17-04-2023 with reference PA-1510 the NVAO assented to the composition of the panel.



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