



NVAO • THE NETHERLANDS

INITIAL ACCREDITATION

PROFESSIONAL MASTER

SPORT BUSINESS & LEADERSHIP

Hogeschool van Amsterdam

FULL REPORT

11 APRIL 2024

Content

1	Peer review	3
2	New programme.....	4
	2.1 General data.....	4
	2.2 Profile.....	4
	2.3 Panel	4
3	Outcome.....	5
4	Commendations	6
5	Recommendations.....	7
6	Assessment	8
	6.1 Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes.....	8
	6.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment.....	10
	6.3 Standard 3: Student assessment.....	12
	6.4 Degree	13

1 Peer review

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) determines the quality of a new programme on the basis of a peer review. An initial accreditation procedure is required when an institution wishes to award a recognised degree after the successful completion of a study programme.

The procedure for new programmes differs slightly from the approach of existing programmes that have already been accredited. Initial accreditation is in fact an ex ante assessment of a programme. Once accredited the new programme becomes subject to the regular review process.

The quality of a new programme is assessed by means of peer review. A panel of independent peers including a student reviews the plans during a site visit to the institution. A discussion amongst peer experts forms the basis for the panel's final judgement and the advisory report. The agenda for the panel visit and the documents reviewed are available from the NVAO office upon request.

The outcome of this peer review is based on the standards described and published in the limited NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands (Stcrt. 2019, nr. 3198). Each standard is judged on a three-point scale: meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard. The panel will reach a conclusion about the quality of the programme, also on a three-point scale: positive, conditionally positive or negative.

NVAO takes an accreditation decision on the basis of the full report. Following a positive NVAO decision with or without conditions the institution can proceed to offer the new programme.

This report contains the findings, analysis and judgements of the panel resulting from the peer review. It also details the commendations as well as recommendations for follow-up actions. A summary report with the main outcomes of the peer review is also available.

Both the full and summary reports of each peer review are published on NVAO's website www.nvao.net. There you can also find more information on NVAO and peer reviews of new programmes.

2 New programme

2.1 General data

Institution	Hogeschool van Amsterdam
Programme	M Sport Business & Leadership
Variants	Full-time: Yes. Part-time: Yes. Dual: No.
Degree	Master of Science
Tracks	No tracks
Locations	Amsterdam
Study load	60 EC ¹

2.2 Profile

The Master's programme Sport Business & Leadership (MSBL) at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA) is a joint initiative of the Faculty of Bewegen, Sport en Voeding (FSBV) and the Faculty of Business en Economie (FBE) at HvA. It is taught in English and focuses on leadership within commercial sports businesses, (top) sports clubs, sports federations, sports umbrella organisations, and social and semi-public organisations within the sports sector from a business perspective. The aim is to combine economic value creation with value creation on social and ecological levels in order to actively contribute to a better and more sustainable (sports) world. For elite sports clubs and federations, the pursuit of sporting success is paramount. Therefore, it is essential not only to balance value creation in terms of social, ecological and economic aspects but also to consider sporting performance in the mix. The programme is specifically tailored to meet the sector's growing demand for business insights, which is crucial for effective leadership across diverse sports organisations. In this programme, students learn how to navigate the world of sports at both the national and global levels. The curriculum covers a range of business topics like management, finance, human resources, marketing, and leadership. It also highlights the importance of managing both paid staff and volunteers in the sports world. Leadership development focuses not only on leadership knowledge and skills but also on the cultivation of personal qualities. Throughout the programme, students get hands-on experience with real-world examples, expert guidance from faculty, and opportunities to connect with professionals from the field. The graduates will be professionals who possess a clear vision with an international focus and an open attitude towards other sectors.

2.3 Panel

Peer experts

- Steven Decroos (chair), professor 'Lichamelijke Opvoeding en Bewegingsrecreatie', coordinator 'Domein Beweging', Karel de Grote University of Applied Sciences and Arts;
- Anneke van Zanen-Nieberg, consultant at VanBerkel Professionals, chair NOC*NSF;
- Menno Slingerland, lecturer-researcher at the bachelor 'ALO' and the master 'Sport- en Bewegingsonderwijs', Fontys University of Applied Sciences;
- Idris in 't Hof (student member), student 'Humanistiek & Psychologie', HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht.

Assisting staff

- Johanna Gordijn, external secretary;
- Jona Rovers, NVAO policy advisor and process coordinator.

Site visit

Amsterdam, 15 March 2024.

¹ European Credits

3 Outcome

The NVAO approved panel reaches a positive conclusion regarding the quality of the Master's programme Sport Business & Leadership (MSBL) offered by the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA). The programme complies with all standards of the limited NVAO framework.

The MSBL is a broad and attractive programme based on a clear vision. It is a relevant programme that meets the needs of the professional field. It addresses key issues in the sports sector and will prepare students for working in various sectors in the sports sector and transformation management.

The MSBL aims to provide a continuous learning trajectory for both Dutch and English-speaking bachelor students Sportkunde, Sport Studies and Sportmarketing. This commitment to inclusivity, combined with the international nature of the sports industry, has led to the decision to offer the programme in English. The panel agrees with this choice.

Together with an advisory board with representatives from the sports sector, the development team has created a programme with a solid foundation, including a validated professional profile and its corresponding educational profile. The core tasks are clearly defined and effectively translated into intended learning outcomes. Notably, the programme has introduced an additional core task which focuses on planning and shaping personal and professional development. The requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes are included in the Body of Knowledge and Skills (BOKS) of the MSBL. The panel noted that it is not always clear how the BOKS is integrated into the intended learning outcomes. While the intended learning outcomes are comprehensive, the panel suggests a more explicit inclusion of the ethical component, emphasizing the importance of a moral compass in effective leadership.

The curriculum consists of seven modules which are based on the seven core tasks. In the first module students already make a start with developing research skills and this is further developed in various other modules. Leadership is also an integral part of all modules.

The learning outcomes are achieved through different types of professional deliverables, all of which are based on practical assignments. The programme has adequate procedures to guarantee their quality. The examination board appoints all teaching staff as examiners, and an assessment committee checks the validity and appropriateness of assessment formats. Calibration has been planned to ensure consistency and reliability in assessment practices, further enhancing the assurance of quality. The examination board has a clear idea of what still needs attention and will safeguard the quality through frequent consultations and discussions.

The team is inspiring and their enthusiasm has impressed the visitation panel. The programme management, developers, lecturers, researchers, members of the examination board, and the advisory board take pride in the programme and will effectively promote it in the future. Students will benefit greatly from this commitment and dedication.

Standard	Judgement
1. Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
2. Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
3. Student assessment	meets the standard
4. Achieved learning outcomes	not applicable
Conclusion	<i>positive</i>

4 Commendations

The programme is commended for the following features of good practice.

1. **Appealing profile** – The HvA developed an appealing profile for the Master Sport Business & Leadership. This profile is in line with the needs of the sports sector as confirmed by representatives from the field who have been involved in creating the programme. The programme meets their need for highly trained conceptual professionals who can work with a wide range of different specialists.
2. **Personal professional development** – There is ample opportunity for the students to direct their own personal and professional development. They are individually guided in this process.
3. **Transparency** – The examination board has transparent procedures in place. They have been involved throughout the programme development.
4. **Team** – The programme is carried out by a team with various expertise and the aim is to invite guest speakers for additional professional input.
5. **Activating education** – The programme is nested in practice and complemented by a focus on research skills to equip students with the mindset they need to improve the sports sector.

5 Recommendations

For further improvement to the programme, the panel recommends a number of follow-up actions.

1. Ethical component – make the ethical component explicit in the intended learning outcomes.
2. Learning outcomes – Reconsider the large number of learning outcomes in view of the workload, both for the students and the staff.
3. Research skills – develop a learning line for research skills.
4. Student guidance – Write a vision document including a description of the differentiated approach for part-time students to ensure appropriate student guidance.
5. Rubrics – The rubrics for the professional deliverables are still in need of further refinement. Continue calibrating and aligning them appropriately.

6 Assessment

6.1 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.

Judgement

Meets the standard.

Findings, analysis and considerations

Professional profile

The panel appreciates that the Master Sports Business & Leadership (MSBL) programme is clearly structured around the professional roles in the sports sector. Both the content of the professional profile and that of the educational profile and curriculum have been aligned with, and validated by experts from the sports sector, education managers or other leaders from sports-focused bachelor's and master's programs, students from the HvA bachelor's programs in Sports Studies, Sport Management and Entrepreneurship, International Sports Management and Business, and Commercial Economics with a specialization in Sport Marketing, as well as alumni from those bachelor's programs who have pursued sports-focused master's degrees elsewhere and are currently working in the sports sector. It is evident that the professional profile is based on developments in the (inter)national sports management community where leadership is high on the agenda. The panel spoke with a passionate advisory board who is involved in the development of the master. They indicated a strong demand for professionals with a business insight to improve the sports sector. A significant portion of the challenges and issues within the sports sector are related to the need for multiple value creation within various categories of organisations. Market and hybrid organisations are expected to keep an eye on the triple bottom line – the three Ps: people, planet, and profit (with the third P of 'profit' increasingly being replaced by that of 'prosperity'). This has been integrated in the professional profile.

The professional profile consists of six core tasks and a specific professional attitude:

1. developing and communicating vision and strategy in sports organisations
2. creating and innovating value and business models
3. connecting and influencing decision-makers and stakeholders in sports
4. managing and structuring the operations of sports organisations
5. leading and professionalizing people in sports organisations
6. researching and resolving complex issues in sports

Additionally, from an educational perspective, a seventh core task has been added: planning and shaping personal and professional development. This was done based on the vision that personal formation and development of professional identity should always be an essential part of practice-oriented learning.

The panel appreciates that a specific professional attitude has been added. The developing team has been able to demonstrate that the programme has been developed to deliver graduates with a professional attitude that consists of a passion for sports and an affinity with sports business. Furthermore, the guiding principles in leadership and decision-making are rooted in the contextual characteristics of sports. The graduates will demonstrate proactivity, creativity, empathy, and (inter)cultural sensitivity to achieve their goals collaboratively. They are innovative and adaptable in changing environments. They understand themselves, organize peer consultation, and reflect on their own actions. And last but not least, the MSBL graduates are able to further develop autonomously because they aspire to do so themselves.

Intended learning outcomes

The core tasks and professional attitude have been translated into fourteen intended learning outcomes, professional deliverables and a Body of Knowledge and Skills (BOKS). The learning outcomes ensure that an MSBL graduate possesses sector-specific business knowledge and skills, along with a professional attitude and a personal leadership style that align with the practices and cultures within the various categories of organisations in the sports sector. This has been appropriately and meaningfully aligned with the professional field. By obtaining the intended learning outcomes the graduate meets the professional

master standard based on the four pillars of the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen), which is drawn up based on the Dublin Descriptors and NLQF/EQF level 7. The panel noted that 14 intended learning outcomes is quite substantial for a 60 EC programme. As every learning outcome is assessed with several assignments and a deliverable, it leads to a considerable amount of work for both the staff and the students. They suggest that the management keep an eye on the work pressure for both the staff and the students.

The panel commends the development team for recognizing the importance of integrating the challenging professional landscape into the programme. This consideration has been a focal point of the discussions during the feedback sessions with the advisory board. Implementing transformation management can be particularly difficult when confronted with the complexities of real-world scenarios, such as coordinating volunteer efforts. Consequently, this aspect has been incorporated into the HR module, ensuring students are equipped with relevant skills. Additionally, students will need to develop an effective leadership style in order to become innovators in the sports sector. To this end, students will start to consider various leadership approaches and envision the type of leader they would like to become. This module will also include cases about performance management and deliberations on ethics in sports.

Master level

The four pillars of the professional master standard: *mastery*, *research capacity*, *interprofessional action*, and *impact* are reflected in the various learning outcomes MSBL graduates must achieve. With their *mastery*, MSBL students will be able to assess challenges and issues in the sports sector effectively - including those related to multiple value creation. And when they subsequently address them, they have come to understand the need to act ethically and morally. In the module Value Creation & Business Models in Sports for example, students will learn to understand what value creation is from different perspectives, monetary, functional, sporting, emotional and social value and how it can be created through innovation, efficiency, customer experience and such. Students will consider current business models in sport and compare them to other industries and explore case studies from different countries that have a holistic perspective of their sport business and aim to change on the sustainability scale. Graduates will also learn to reflect on their own role and continue to develop as professionals, even after completing the master's program. The MSBL students develop their *research capacity* throughout the programme. They learn to recognize, analyze, and then strategically, tactically, and creatively find solutions for challenges in the sports sector. *Interprofessional action* comes into play when MSBL students encounter various professional groups within their own organisation and with those in other (categories of) organisations in the sports sector, whether as partners or competitors. MSBL students learn to interpret situations from different disciplines, stakeholders, perspectives, and angles. And finally, MSBL students will have learned to deliver results. They propose solutions and improvements, and through their actions, they have an *impact* on the sports practice. The panel found that the programme effectively balances depth of content at the master's level with a broad perspective on sports sector management and leadership, encompassing ethics and sustainability.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board will provide advice twice a year on current developments in the sports sector. With this information, both the professional and educational profiles can be kept up to date.

In summary, the HvA offers an attractive professional master in Sports Business & Leadership. The development team of the master has designed a profile to deliver leaders for the sports business sector. These leaders will be able to contribute to innovating the sports sector. Representatives from the field stated that they have actively contributed to the design of the profile and that they are happy with the result. The profile meets their direct need for leaders with a business insight who can work within the broad national and international sports sector. The intended learning outcomes are comprehensive, reflect the strengths of the programme and adhere to the required master level. The panel believes that the ethical component should be better reflected in the intended learning outcomes, but that doesn't prevent the panel from deciding that the requirements for this standard have been met.

6.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

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

Judgement

Meets the standard.

Findings, analysis and considerations

In conversation with programme management and lecturers, it became clear to the panel that the Hogeschool van Amsterdam has created an inspiring learning environment that encourages students to learn. The educational programme is well aligned with the HvA education and assessment policy that states:

1. We empower students to take control of their own learning path;
2. We provide activating education;
3. We work in learning communities;
4. We assess and evaluate development-oriented;
5. We use assessment methods that are representative of the profession.

The emphasis on personal formation and development of professional identity as expressed in the vision of the HvA has been explicitly taken to heart in the educational development. Furthermore, the MSBL development team has added that, within the education, the practice of the sports sector should always be leading.

The curriculum

The panel recognizes the aforementioned policy in the way the curriculum has been structured. It is clearly structured in alignment with the core tasks that are outlined in the professional and educational profiles. It provides significant autonomy to the students to customize their educational path. Students develop competences in practical situations during their traineeship. For example, in the module Human Resources in Sport they must prepare, execute and evaluate a competency development programme for professionals within their organisation. Through such a process of detecting, investigating, intervening, and evaluating, the MSBL student achieves an improvement in the organisation while developing their own ability to act professionally. Research is addressed right from the outset in the first period. After that it runs as a common thread throughout the programme and students will be able to choose from master classes according to their needs. However, the panel notes that the limited contact time allocated to methodology in the Master Thesis module warrants reconsideration, given the significance of this aspect in the thesis' successful completion. The panel suggests evaluating the approach to methodological training regularly and ensure that there is a well-thought-out learning line in the programme as it is crucial to ensuring students acquire the necessary academic skills for their research endeavours.

The MSBL curriculum consists of seven modules, together worth 60 EC. It is organized so it can be done within one year, two for part-time students. The modules are all derived from the seven core tasks. Each module is assessed with a professional deliverable that covers two intended learning outcomes. The development team takes into account that acquiring or developing some of these attitudes, skills and knowledge takes time and follows a layered or cyclical process. That is why the Personal Professional Profiling module (10 EC) runs throughout the year, just like the Vision and Strategy in Sports module (15 EC) and the Master Thesis module (15 EC). The other four modules are 5 EC and they are taught one after the other.

The curriculum for full-time and part-time students is identical and consists of the same seven modules. Students from both cohorts attend some classes together and others separately. This is done to accommodate the specific (work) situation of part-time students. The development team and the advisory board think that students with different backgrounds can learn from each other. Also, students can apply what they learn in the modules to their own traineeship/work situation. Moreover, individual tailor-made guidance should support the students to focus on their own development. Some staff already have experience with this from other programmes and they think it works well. The panel supports this but would like to see a clearer differentiation in addressing the unique needs of the two student cohorts. The

panel recommends to write a vision document on student guidance so everyone will understand this in the same way and plan the part-time trajectory very carefully.

Teaching methods

The panel appreciates the variety of instructional methods and practice-oriented assignments, such as bootcamps, field trips and scrum-like activities, that prepare students for functioning in a rapidly changing, hands-on, initiative-based professional context. Students develop skills to deal with various current challenges in the sports sector, such as multiple value creation and performance pressure, while working on business cases that are developed by the teaching team in collaboration with guest speakers such as consultants and leaders from the sports sector, and experts in training and guiding athletes, sports teams, and sports federations.

Language

The MSBL is taught in English as it aims to provide a continuous learning trajectory for both Dutch and English-speaking bachelor students Sportkunde, Sport Studies and Sportmarketing. Moreover, students will learn to operate at both the national and international levels and English is used in related scientific and professional literature. The panel agrees with this choice. The concern about the level of English was relieved as various staff members are bilingual and international experts will be invited as guest speakers. Students come from diverse backgrounds and some are also bilingual.

Teaching team

The teaching team is diverse in both its national and disciplinary backgrounds. It consists of teacher-researchers with expertise in business administration and the sports sector. In addition to holding a master's or PhD degree, they have completed the Basic Teaching Qualification (BDB) programme. Furthermore, they are required to speak and write English at C2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Each module is overseen by a module lead who ensures the alignment of content within and across modules. The seven module leads collectively monitor the personal and professional progress of individual students. Based on conversations with the programme management team and lecturers, the panel believes that the teams are adequate to implement and coordinate the programme.

Admission

There are two admission requirements for the MSBL: a prospective student holds a related bachelor's degree, and a prospective student can demonstrate proficiency in English at a minimum level of C1. For prospective students who wish to pursue the part-time variant of the MSBL, a third additional admission requirement is that they hold a position at an HBO+ level within an organization in the sports sector at the start of the master's program. When the admission requirements are met, a selection procedure follows to comply with the intake restriction of a maximum of 60 students per year. Prospective students submit a portfolio including a statement of motivation for pursuing the MSBL. The panel believes this selection can ensure that incoming students are motivated enough to pursue the master's programme within one year. This is of importance as the programme appears to be quite heavy according to the panel. The development team will continue to monitor the study load.

All in all, the learning environment is designed to offer a comprehensive learning journey catering to both full-time and part-time students, acknowledging their diverse backgrounds and requirements. The programme is based on the practice of the sports sector. The learning outcomes, professional deliverables, and corresponding BOKS are derived from the core tasks and professional attitudes of the MSBL professional profile. The professional deliverables that students produce are responses to challenges from the practice of the sports sector. With a teaching team featuring a varied mix of skills and expertise, including several instructors holding PhD qualifications, the programme is well-positioned to deliver high-quality education across its seven modules. Some areas for improvement remain to better address the diverse student needs and elevate the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. Through strategic planning and ongoing refinement, the programme can effectively equip students for leadership roles within the dynamic sports business landscape. Based on the above, the panel concludes that the requirements for this standard have been met.

6.3 Standard 3: Student assessment

The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Judgement

Meets the standard.

Findings, analysis and considerations

At the faculty level, a clear, concise vision on assessment has been formulated, based on the principles that assessment should be primarily development-oriented and that the assessment methods that are used should reflect the profession. The first principle is leading for the formative assignments, whereas the second is the starting point for the professional deliverables. The assessment within the MSBL aligns with this vision. The programme has translated the intended learning outcomes into learning objectives and module descriptions, accompanied by detailed information on assessment for each module. The learning outcomes are assessed through assignments and professional deliverables that are based on challenges and issues in real sport organisations. They include a variety of formats, such as reports, group presentations, research proposals or a Business Game. In one module students are assessed based on the implementation of a competency development plan. The panel finds that this diverse assessment programme aligns with the learning objectives and effectively equips students for professional roles within the sports sector.

The independent examination board for the MSBL consists of a chairperson and three members. One member is a lecturer within the MSBL and one is an external member, working within another programme of the faculty. All board members hold the Senior Qualification in Examination (SKE). The examination board is supported by a non-teaching staff member in the role of administrative secretary. For MSBL the examination board safeguards the quality of the professional deliverables. The board also formally appoints examiners. The examination board has given a mandate to an assessment committee to carry out quality assurance assessments.

The professional deliverables are subject to internal peer review and calibration will continue after the start of the programme. The panel appreciates that the examination board has been involved in making choices while developing the assessment programme, for example on formative and summative assessment. The panel finds it suitable to evaluate the professional deliverables in a summative manner, while assessing the preparatory assignments formatively. The latter approach will also include peer feedback. The panel advises to monitor the workload for teachers as providing feedback on the various assessments may be demanding.

Full-time and part-time students are assessed in the same way. The panel noted that working with learning outcomes may lead to a checklist to be ticked off. This can be convenient for part-time students as a way to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes in their previous careers. The examination board assures that the learning outcomes need to be assessed before an exemption is granted. In addition, students may choose themselves in what organisations they carry out their tasks and the panel has a concern that this flexibility may lead to one-sided professional deliverables. This could especially be the case for part-timers who can use their own organisation for their activities. However, the development team believes that effective student guidance will ensure that students develop the requisite skills in diverse settings.

Within the MSBL, graduation occurs after all seven professional deliverables have been assessed with a passing grade. The first five professional deliverables will then already have a final grade. And the provisional grade for the professional deliverables Master Thesis in Sport Business & Leadership and Personal Professional Profiling should be at least a passing grade at that time. To reach a final assessment, the student gives a graduation presentation on both professional deliverables 6 and 7 in front of two instructors. During the presentation, the student demonstrates the personal and professional leadership style developed during the MSBL. The instructors assess the presentation and determine the final grades for the last two professional deliverables.

The study guides include assessment rubrics. These rubrics enable lecturers to assess students via transparent and clear criteria and to ensure fair grades. The rubrics also have a formative purpose by

making sure students know how they perform during the project. The panel noted that the rubrics do not appear fully thought out yet because they sometimes have a partially holistic approach while the other part of the same rubric is more analytical with clearly defined criteria. They recommend to further refine the rubrics and align them appropriately.

In conclusion, the MSBL programme has developed a comprehensive assessment framework that aligns with the faculty's vision on assessment and effectively supports student development in the sports sector. The detailed assessment information in the module descriptions ensure transparency and clarity for both students and instructors. The diverse range of assessment methods, including assignments, professional deliverables, and real-world implementations, provides students with practical experiences that prepare them for professional roles within the sports industry. Furthermore, the involvement of the examination board in shaping the assessment programme demonstrates a commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement. The panel has some considerations regarding workload management for instructors, as well as the need for further refinement of assessment rubrics to ensure consistency and fairness in grading. Overall, the panel concludes that the requirements for this standard have been met.

6.4 Degree

The panel advises awarding the following degree to the new programme: Master of Science.

