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Assessment of name change

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences
Hotel Management School Leeuwarden

Advisory report, May 2025

Colophon

Institution and programme

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences
Leeuwarden

Programme

Current name: Master International Hospitality and Service Management

Proposed name: Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality

CROHO code: 49158

Study modes: Full-time and Part-time

Assessment panel

Panel members:

Drs. H.A.J. Reul, MBA – Independent educational professional, former dean of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

Dr. Andy Nazarechuk – University of Santo Tomas, Manila; auditor for THE-ICE

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Introduction

In March 2025, NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences submitted a request to change the name of its Master's programme International Hospitality and Service Management to Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality. The proposed change applies to both the full-time and part-time variants of the programme (CROHO code 49158), and is intended to take effect as of the academic year 2025–2026.

In accordance with the procedure set out by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), the proposed name change must be assessed by an independent panel of experts. The panel is asked to consider two specific questions:

1. Does the proposed name adequately reflect the content of the programme?
2. Does the name change imply a substantial modification of the programme that would require a new programme accreditation?

The panel members involved in this advisory process—Drs. Bert Reul, MBA and Dr. Andy Nazarechuk—also took part in the full programme assessment of the Master's programme in March 2024. Prior to this advice, both experts reviewed relevant documentation provided by NHL Stenden, including a detailed comparison of the curriculum before and after the proposed name change.

Based on the written materials and independent analysis, the panel members independently formulated their conclusions. As the documentation was considered sufficiently clear and complete, no further meeting with the institution was deemed necessary.

Conclusion

Based on the documentation provided by NHL Stenden, the comparative analysis of the current

and future curriculum, and the expert judgement of the panel member panel draws the following conclusions:

1. The proposed name Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality adequately reflects the current content and strategic orientation of the programme. The name aligns with the programme's focus on sustainability, innovation, and international leadership within the hospitality sector. It corresponds with both the curricular content and the research activities embedded in the programme, and it resonates with broader developments in the professional field and among peer institutions internationally.

2. The name change is not accompanied by any substantial modification to the programme. The intended learning outcomes, assessment methods, programme structure, and overall qualification level remain unchanged. Adjustments in course titles and module composition represent a regular process of curricular refinement and do not alter the fundamental nature of the programme.

The panel **advises positively** on the proposed name change. The programme may proceed with the transition from International Hospitality and Service Management to Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality, without requiring a new accreditation procedure.

Does the proposed name adequately reflect the content of the programme?

Findings

The proposed name Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality is in line with the evolving focus of the Master's programme at Hotel Management School Leeuwarden (HMSL), and accurately reflects the central themes currently embedded in the curriculum. In recent years, the global hospitality industry has undergone significant transformation driven by factors such as sustainability concerns, rapid technological advancements, and changing consumer expectations. In response to these developments, the programme has progressively aligned itself with these key areas, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge to lead in an increasingly complex and dynamic sector.

The current curriculum emphasizes sustainable practices and innovation as core themes, which are now embedded across several modules. Not only is this reflected in the learning outcomes and the courses offered, but also in the research direction supported by the programme's affiliated research groups. The Disruption, Innovation & New Phenomena and Sustainability in Hospitality and Tourism research groups play a crucial role in shaping the programme content, ensuring that students are at the forefront of the latest trends and industry needs.

For example, in the module Hospitality Innovation & Management, students are introduced to concepts such as sustainable business models, green technologies in hospitality, and inno-

vative solutions for enhancing guest experiences while minimizing environmental impacts. These themes are central to the new name, Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality, and directly correspond with the curriculum's focus on preparing students for leadership roles that drive both sustainability and innovation within the hospitality sector.

The decision to propose this name change is also supported by the input of the programme's Advisory Board, which includes representatives from prominent industry partners. According to the supporting documentation provided by NHL Stenden, the Advisory Board has emphasized that the term service management, as featured in the current name, no longer accurately represents the evolving landscape of the industry. Industry partners have expressed a preference for a name that reflects the programme's stronger emphasis on sustainability and innovation, which are seen as essential drivers of growth and competitiveness in the hospitality sector.

The shift towards sustainability in hospitality education is not unique to NHL Stenden; it is part of a broader trend in higher education. Leading institutions worldwide are reorienting their programmes to better address the pressing challenges of sustainability and technological disruption. For example, institutions such as California State University Monterey Bay, Les Roches, and Glion Institute of Higher Education have embraced sustainable hospitality and

tourism development as core pillars of their curricula.

Furthermore, the new name aligns with the changing demands of prospective students, who are increasingly seeking programmes that offer a clear focus on sustainability and innovation. Research indicates that students are attracted to courses that provide practical solutions to global issues, and the growing interest in green and innovative practices within hospitality reflects this shift in student preferences.

Considerations

The panel considers that the new name Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality not only reflects the current content and educational approach of the programme but also positions it to better respond to future industry demands. The former name, International Hospitality and Service Management, was broad and functional but

lacked a clear connection to the specific trends and priorities that are shaping the future of the industry.

The name Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality highlights two core aspects of the programme:

1. Sustainability – a major focus of the curriculum.
2. Innovation – the programme fosters critical thinking and creativity to address disruption and opportunity.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the proposed name Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality accurately reflects the content of the programme and aligns well with its focus on sustainability and innovation. The name change is justified by the programme's current orientation and international developments in the field.

Does the name change imply a substantial modification of the programme that would require a new programme accreditation?

Findings

The panel notes that the name change is proposed in the context of a broader strategic repositioning of the programme. However, this repositioning does not coincide with a fundamental change in the design, structure, or intended learning outcomes of the programme itself.

The Master's degree remains a 60 ECTS programme, delivered in both full-time and part-time modes. From 2025–2026, the curriculum will allocate 21 ECTS to the first semester and 39 ECTS to the second semester, reflecting an expansion of the thesis component. The underlying educational concept - Design Based Education - continues to provide the framework for learning and assessment. The panel confirms that the learning outcomes have not changed, and that the assessment methods, programme structure, and final qualifications remain consistent with the version positively assessed during the March 2024 accreditation.

NHL Stenden has made some adjustments in how the curriculum is organised and labelled. Several modules have been reformulated, renamed, or split. For instance:

- The large 20 EC module Hospitality & Service: Principles, New Trends, Sustainability has been separated into smaller modules (Hospitality Innovation & Management, Sustainability in Hospitality), but the thematic focus remains the same.
- Elements of Service Performance and Sustainable Entrepreneurship have been integrated into other modules to better align

with students' workload and learning trajectories.

- The thesis component has been renamed Sustainable Innovation in Hospitality Project and slightly extended to 18 EC.

These curriculum refinements are consistent with what would be expected from normal educational development. They do not affect the overall level, scope, or orientation of the degree. The programme's core identity within the hospitality domain remains intact, with no shift toward another professional field or disciplinary area – thus, the panel concludes.

No new learning outcomes have been introduced, nor has the programme adopted a different didactic model or target audience. The same qualifications, professional orientation, and labour market expectations remain in place. The programme's Advisory Board, composed of industry representatives, was consulted in this process and expressed support for the repositioning.

The panel sees these developments as part of the programme's natural evolution. As the hospitality industry continues to adapt to global trends—particularly those relating to sustainability and technological disruption—it is reasonable for academic programmes to refine their positioning and language, without altering their fundamental structure or outcomes.

Considerations

From the panel's perspective, the proposed name change does not coincide with any substantial change to the programme. The minor structural and terminological adjustments serve to enhance clarity and student experience, but they do not affect the programme's academic foundation, learning goals, or degree characteristics.

The panel acknowledges that determining what constitutes a "substantial change" is not always straightforward. However, based on their professional judgement and past experience with similar procedures, the panel considers the changes presented by NHL Stenden to fall well

within the scope of regular curricular development. There is no indication that the programme should be reclassified, re-accredited, or reviewed as a new degree.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the proposed name change is not accompanied by a substantial modification of the programme. The programme continues to offer the same qualifications, at the same level and orientation, with unchanged learning outcomes and assessment structures. The name change is therefore not of such nature that it would require a new accreditation procedure.

Attachment: reviewed documents

- The panel reviewed the following documentation as part of its assessment:
- Name Change master International Hospitality and Service Management (internal document by NHL Stenden, March 2025)
- Adjusted documentation clarifying ECTS allocation across semesters (provided by NHL Stenden, April 2025)
- Formal request letter to the NVAO (Aanvraag naamswijziging M International Hospitality and Service Management, 4 December 2024)
- Advice request and procedural proposal (NHL Stenden voorstel beoordeling naamswijziging, AeQui to NHL Stenden, 14 March 2025)
- Final assessment report Master International Hospitality and Service Management (NHL Stenden HMSL Ad - Ba - Ma def.pdf, March/October 2024)
- Advisory board meeting minutes and curriculum outlines (2023–2024) – referenced in documentation

