

QANU PROTOCOL

Guide to external quality assessment of bachelor's and master's degree programmes in research-oriented universities

Version 3.1 e

QANU
Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities

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Part A: QANU assessment and NVAO accreditation

A.1 Accreditation in higher education

Accreditation is a precondition for government funding of a degree programme, for the right to issue officially recognized degree certificates and for the approval of grants or loans to students following the programme.

According to Dutch law (the Higher Education and Research Act, Dutch abbreviation WHW), accreditation is 'the quality mark for educational programmes'. The issuing authority for this quality mark is the NVAO (Dutch abbreviation for the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization)¹.

The quality of a degree programme is determined by an authorized assessment agency, a 'Visiting and Assessing Institution' (VAI)². The VAI, Dutch abbreviation VBI, nominates a panel of independent experts to form an opinion about each programme to be accredited.

A.2 QANU as an assessment agency for Dutch academic education

Quality standards in the academic world are highly developed, because science must withstand the test of academic scrutiny. Quality assessments under the auspices of QANU are therefore carried out by independent panels of academics regarded as authoritative in their field and selected for their professional expertise and reputation. The panels are set up after consultation with the field. The board of QANU monitors the quality of the composition of the assessment panels.

The assessment of degree programmes also takes account of the quality of teaching, the student success rate and the orientation of the teaching activities towards the professional field for which students are prepared. It is further expected that the teaching quality of each degree programme will be guaranteed by an internal quality assurance system. The composition of the panel is chosen to ensure that expertise in this field is also guaranteed. Finally, QANU guarantees the expertise of the panel as regards external quality assessment and auditing.

The QANU assessment protocol reflects the structure of the internal quality assurance systems operated by institutions of higher education and degree programmes, since these institutions and programmes are themselves responsible for the quality of the education they provide. The QANU protocol offers an operationalisation of the 'basic quality', i.e. the minimum standards to be met by an academic degree programme. It provides concrete points to describe the academic orientation of the programme and of the level that bachelor's and master's degree programmes in research-oriented universities are expected to attain. The protocol helps programmes to indicate how they realise educational innovations and how they keep the programme in line with changing social, professional and academic requirements. This can be done within each programme's own specific objectives and the standards of the internal quality assurance.

The QANU protocol is intended to permit transparent, systematic and reliable assessment of academic degree programmes, also internationally. To this end, it is in line with international practice in external quality assessment as implemented by members of INQAAHE and ENQA.

¹ see www.nvao.net

² *Visitation: investigate (a degree course) in loco and give a quality assessment*

QANU aims to allow for comparative assessments of similar programmes, using a single frame of reference and carried out by panels of (partly) the same composition operating at a national or international level. In such comparative assessments the international standards for programmes in a given field can be uniformly applied. This facilitates improvement and accountability.

The *improvement function* (facilitating improvement of the quality of the programme) and the *accountability function* (providing a basis for public accountability concerning the quality of the programme) remain integral parts of the quality assessment. The *quality mark function* (judging the quality of the programme to provide a basis for accreditation) is a new addition.

The NVAO does not have an improvement function. Their accreditation decision simply states whether or not the programme in question meets the relevant basic quality standards. This decision is based on the assessment of the topics and facets and on the panel's overall judgement about the programme. The quality mark function of the accreditation does reinforce the accountability function because the panel's judgement is validated by the NVAO. This certifies that the programme's quality justifies state funding, the issue of degree certificates and student grants.

The institutions providing the programmes are free to formulate their own improvement policy in response to an external assessment. The panel's recommendations can be of assistance in this context.

QANU is developing a national time schedule for the assessments of academic degree programmes, and will offer comparative national assessments in particular for bachelor's programmes. As regards master's programmes, it is to be expected that not only national but also international institutional or disciplinary networks will be set up in the near future to provide a basis for comparative assessments of degree programmes, possibly combined with research reviews. The national schedule for simultaneous assessment of related programmes permits cross-pollination between this international assessment of master's programmes and the assessment of bachelor's programmes. It also ensures uniformity between the different assessments in a given cluster by using a single domain-specific frame of reference.

A.3 A guide in transition

This is the first guide for the accreditation of academic degree programmes. It appears at a moment when the introduction of bachelor's and master's degrees in the Dutch higher education system is leading to far-reaching restructuring of degree programmes, while at the same time the introduction of accreditation is making new requirements on internal and external quality assurance systems.

A degree of continuity is needed to keep in touch with the present state of the degree programmes and the internal quality assurance. At the same time the external quality assurance will have to be adapted to the new developments in academic education. This guide will therefore be periodically revised in response to reactions, experiences and evaluations.

The present guide applies to the assessment of degree programmes due to submit self-evaluations before August 2005.

A revised guide will be issued in October 2004, which will apply to programmes due to submit self-evaluations in August 2005 or later.

A.4 The purpose of this guide

This guide describes the procedure used by QANU in external assessments of academic degree programmes for the purposes of accreditation. It is also intended as an aid for the university staff responsible for degree programmes who are preparing for such an assessment, since it contains guidelines for writing a self-evaluation report with the aid of an assessment protocol. Such a report forms the basis for the external assessment of the programme.

The guide is also intended for use by the independent experts who assess the degree programme. The assessment protocol thus provides not only a framework for self-evaluation but also the criteria for assessment of the programme.

A.5 The accreditation process in brief

The initiative for accreditation lies with the university: the law requires that one year before the expiry of the current accreditation they submit an application for renewal of the accreditation to the NVAO. In this application, the university describes a number of features of the degree programme, including its level (bachelor's or master's) and orientation (higher professional education or academic education). The application must be accompanied by an assessment report prepared by an authorized visitation and assessment agency. This means that the institution will have to approach such an agency well before the current accreditation expires, and request an external assessment of the degree programme in question.

The NVAO grants accreditation to a degree programme on the basis of this external assessment. Accreditation occurs in accordance with the rules laid down in the *Accreditatiekader bestaande opleidingen higher education* (Accreditation framework for existing degree courses in higher education), which consists of an assessment protocol, decision rules, criteria for judging the assessment method and the report produced by the agency, and a description of the procedure to obtain accreditation. Separate accreditation is necessary for each bachelor's or master's programme³, and an assessment report prepared by an authorized assessment agency must be submitted for each programme.

The following steps can be distinguished in the process for obtaining accreditation:

- The institution reaches agreement with an authorized assessment agency concerning the external assessment of the programme. The agency appoints an assessment panel.
- The programme staff carry out a self-evaluation of the programme in accordance with the agency's assessment protocol. This self-evaluation records the results of a structured internal quality assurance procedure in a report that is sent to the agency.
- The agency decides whether the self-evaluation report is explicit and informative enough to provide a basis for assessment meeting NVAO requirements.
- The assessment panel determines the quality of the programme on the basis of the self-evaluation report and the interviews held during a site visit, and decides whether the programme satisfies the criteria for accreditation.
- The assessment panel's decision is laid down in a report submitted to the institution by the agency.
- At least a year before the expiry of the current accreditation for the programme, the institution submits an application for renewal of the accreditation to the NVAO. This application is accompanied by the assessment panel's report. The assessment must

³ And also for 'old style' degree programmes that are NOT being phased out. This applies to just a small number of programmes. The present QANU Protocol applies to bachelor's and master's programmes only.

refer to the situation prevailing not more than one year before the submission of the application.

- The NVAO evaluates the report prepared by the agency and the overall decision concerning the quality of the programme laid down in that report, and checks these against the accreditation criteria.
- The NVAO decides on the renewal of the accreditation within three months after receipt of the application.
- If the NVAO's decision is favourable, the programme's accreditation is renewed for a period of six years counting from the date when the old accreditation expires.

Time schedule and customized assessments

On the basis of the transitional arrangement agreed between NVAO and VSNU, which in essence comes down to continuation of the VSNU's existing assessment schedule, QANU has established a time schedule for clusters of related degree programmes. QANU offers comparative assessments at a national level following this time schedule.

Outside this overall schedule, customized assessments are possible within or outside these clusters, e.g. in the framework of international comparative assessments of (research) master's programmes. QANU maintains contact with the universities to offer such customized services.

The assessment timetable

The VSNU's assessment schedule, including the associated agreements, applies in principle during the period of validity of the transitional arrangement. In the subsequent period, QANU will use a timetable in which preparations for renewal of the accreditation begin 36 months before the expiry of the current accreditation as the point of departure for national assessment of related degree programmes. This timetable can be summarized as follows:

NATIONWIDE ASSESSMENT TIMETABLE	
Period	Activity
36 months before expiry of accreditation	QANU reminds the institutions involved of the need for assessment and asks them whether they wish to participate in the assessment process. QANU and the participating institutions make formal agreements about the performance of the assessment.
24 to 34 months before expiry of accreditation	QANU appoints the external assessment panel. The course provider conducts a self-evaluation and records the results in a self-evaluation report.
12 to 24 months before expiry of accreditation	The external assessment panel assesses the degree courses in question and reports on its findings. The panel's assessment reports are sent to the institutions concerned.
No less than 12 months before expiry of accreditation	The institutions submit the application for renewal of accreditation, accompanied by the report van the assessment panel, to the NVAO for each degree programme involved.

The timetable for the assessment of individual programmes or of a number of programmes within one institution is established in consultation between QANU and the institution. It is desirable that agreements between the institution and QANU should be reached at a very early stage. Discussions about the arrangements to be made should preferably start three years before the current accreditations are due to expire.

Part B: Assessment protocol and self-evaluation guidelines

The document 'Concise instructions for writing a self-evaluation basic quality report', issued alongside the present QANU Protocol, contains a résumé of the contents of Part B of the present Protocol.

B.1 Assessment protocol

Dutch law prescribes which quality aspects must be considered during the assessment of a degree programme for the purpose of obtaining accreditation (Higher Education and Research Act [Dutch abbreviation WHW], art. 5a8).

Taking these legal provisions as its basis, the NVAO has formulated an assessment protocol that forms part of its 'Accreditation framework for existing degree courses in higher education'. In this protocol, various aspects of quality are distinguished, which are referred to by the NVAO as **topics**. The NVAO assesses degree programmes on the basis of the following topics:

1. Objectives of the degree course
2. Programme
3. Deployment of staff
4. Facilities and provisions
5. Internal quality assurance
6. Results

These topics are further subdivided into what the NVAO calls **facets**, which are assessed with reference to **criteria**. The NVAO describes the decision-making rules on the basis of which the assessment panel comes to an overall judgement as to whether the quality of the programme is adequate or not. This largely defines the frame of reference for an assessment agency. However, as the NVAO protocol states on p.14: 'The NAO's accreditation framework for existing degree courses gives a broad outline and leaves room for institutes to make their own choices and for VAIs to make their own interpretations.'

The QANU assessment protocol

The QANU assessment protocol presented below has been formulated on the basis of the NVAO protocol. It includes all topics, facets and criteria from the latter. One section is devoted to each topic from the NVAO protocol, with a summary of all relevant facets and assessment criteria.

QANU has cast the NVAO criteria in a more explicit form, and developed them further into 'checkpoints' which provide a basis for the underpinning of arguments and conclusions in the self-evaluation report and the panel assessments.

The QANU protocol formed part of the material taken into consideration during the NVAO's assessment of QANU as an assessment agency. The QANU protocol meets the requirements set by the NVAO.

Programme variants and locations

The NVAO stipulates that when a degree programme is offered in different **variants** (full-time, part-time, dual), the assessment must demonstrate that the basic quality is ensured for each of the various course programmes, based on the criteria laid down in the assessment framework. The course provider must pay attention in the self-evaluation to the differences between the variants. These differences must at least be discussed under the headings 'Programme' and 'Results'.

When degree programmes are offered at different **locations**, it must be demonstrated that the basic quality is guaranteed at each location.

Topic 1: Objectives of the degree course

Facet 1: Domain-specific requirements
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Criterion: The final qualifications of the degree course correspond to the requirements made to a degree course in the relevant domain (field of study/discipline and/or professional practice) by colleagues in the Netherlands and abroad and the professional practice.

Checkpoints:

- The objectives of the programme comply with national and international academic and professional norms.
- The final qualifications of the programme, which describe the qualifications a graduate should have acquired, are derived from the objectives.
- The final qualifications of the programme comply with national and international domain-specific requirements.
- The final qualifications of the programme meet the requirements of professional practice.

Facet 2: Level

Criterion: The final qualifications of the degree course correspond to general, internationally accepted descriptions of the qualifications of a bachelor or a master.

Checkpoints:

- The level defined by the final qualifications corresponds to the Dublin descriptors of the level (bachelor or master) of the programme (or to other internationally accepted level descriptors).

Facet 3: Orientation

Criterion:

- The final qualifications are based on requirements made by the academic discipline, the international academic practice and, if applicable to the course, the relevant practice in the prospective professional field.
- A University (WO) bachelor possesses the qualifications that allow access to a minimum of one further University (WO) degree course at master's level as well as the option to enter the labour market.
- A University (WO) master possesses the qualifications to conduct independent academic research or to solve multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary questions in a professional practice for which a University (WO) degree is required or useful.

Checkpoints:

- The final qualifications of the undergraduate degree match the entry requirements for at least one postgraduate degree programme and possibly the level of competence required to enter the labour market.
- The final qualifications of the postgraduate degree include conducting independent academic research or solving multi- or interdisciplinary questions in a professional field for which an academic degree is required or useful.
- The final qualifications of the degree programme adequately cover the general characteristics of academic training.

Explanatory notes

Objectives and final qualifications

The objectives of a degree programme describe in general terms what the course provider aims to achieve with the programme. The objectives must show the relationship between this programme and more or less comparable programmes in the Netherlands or abroad.

An academic degree programme should have objectives that match the requirements of professional practice and the (international) academic field in which it operates.

The final qualifications of a degree programme describe the knowledge, skills and attitude expected of a student who has successfully completed the programme. The final qualifications (also known as 'learning outcomes') are an operationalisation of the objectives.

The final qualifications must be verifiable, i.e. they must be formulated in such a way as to make it possible to determine whether a graduate has actually acquired a given qualification. They must also serve as a basis for comparison with other degree programmes.

The objectives of a degree programme reflect the level (bachelor or master) and the orientation (higher professional education or academic education) of the programme. The level and orientation are also reflected in the final qualifications and, one step further, in the curriculum for the programme.

When applying for accreditation, the institution in question must state explicitly the level (bachelor or master) and the orientation (higher professional or academic education) claimed for the degree programme for which the application is made. Clear motivation for and evidence of the validity of this claim must be given in the self-evaluation report. The assessment panel will determine whether the claim is justified. A full description of the objectives and the final qualifications must be provided in an appendix to the self-evaluation report.

The objectives and final qualifications of a degree programme can be divided into two categories: *domain-specific* and *general*. In other words, graduates should have acquired not only domain-specific but also general knowledge and skills, the latter class in particular being related to the orientation of the programme.

Domain-specific requirements

The *domain-specific* objectives and final qualifications are related to the *content* of a programme: they give an indication of the academic domain or discipline on which the programme is based, and lead to certain requirements which the content of the programme must meet. These domain-specific requirements form part of the frame of reference used by the assessment panel as the point of departure for its assessment.

A national frame of reference already exists for a number of disciplines (such as medicine); it specifies the final qualifications for degree programmes in this discipline. In other cases, the domain-specific requirements have to be defined from within the discipline.

The systematic procedure to formulate the domain-specific requirements is described in Chapter 4.

Examples of domain- or discipline-specific knowledge, skills and attitudes are given below.

- The objectives, assumptions and values associated with the development of knowledge in a given academic field;
- the ability to critically review results, arguments and problem statements from accepted perspectives in the field;
- the relevant perspectives regarding the advancement of science and technology in the field;
- relevant domains of knowledge and perspectives;
- relevant ways of developing knowledge and expertise;
- relevant analytical methods and techniques;
- domain-specific ways of transposing knowledge and expertise into social, professional and economic contexts;
- an overview of the (international) scientific conduct in the field in question;
- specific skills required in the field;
- specific academic attitudes expected or demanded of workers in the field(s) in question.

Level

Use should be made of the Dublin descriptors (see Appendix 1) in the description and assessment of the level of a degree programme. This set of descriptors for bachelor's and master's degree programmes was developed by a group of international experts and taken over by the NVAO. The course provider is asked to demonstrate that the learning outcomes for the programme define a level corresponding to the appropriate set of Dublin descriptors.

Orientation

The basic question to be addressed when describing and assessing the orientation of a degree programme is whether the objectives and final qualifications of the programme correspond to an academic orientation. This can be answered by consideration of the domain-specific requirements on the one hand, and the attention to general academic qualifications on the other.

Examples of general academic qualifications are given below.

- an analytical approach to problem-solving;
- ability to submit an argument in the exact sciences or humanities to critical appraisal;
- analytical and critical way of thought and ability to apply logical reasoning;
- ability to independently follow current scientific developments;
- openness to inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary cooperation;
- ability to transpose academic knowledge and expertise into social, professional and economic contexts;
- academically appropriate communicative skills;
- reflection on one's own style of thought and working methods and readiness to take the necessary corrective action;
- acquaintance with the standards of academic criticism;
- awareness of the ethical, normative and social consequences of developments in science and technology.

Topic 2: Programme

Facet 4: Requirements University

Criteria:

1. The students acquire knowledge on the interface between teaching and academic research within the relevant disciplines.
2. The programme follows the developments in the relevant academic discipline(s), as it is demonstrated that it incorporates current academic theories.
3. The programme ensures the development of skills in the field of academic research
4. For those courses for which this is applicable, the course programme has clear links with the current professional practice in the relevant professions.

Checkpoints:

- The teaching and learning interacts with the development of science and knowledge.
- The teaching and learning adequately covers the domain-specific and generic features of academic education mentioned in the previous section, at the appropriate level.
- The programme has links with professional practice in the relevant fields.

Facet 5: Relationship between aims and objectives and contents of the programme

Criteria:

1. The course contents adequately reflect the final qualifications, both with respect to the level and orientation, and with respect to domain-specific requirements.
2. The final qualifications have been translated adequately into learning targets for the programme or its components.
3. The contents of the programme offer students the opportunity to obtain the final qualifications that have been formulated.

Checkpoints:

- The learning objectives of the various parts of the programme are such as to ensure adequate achievement of the learning outcomes set.
- Curriculum content and structure are effective in allowing achievement of the final qualifications aimed at.
 - the level of the content is in line with the phase of the programme;
 - the programme promotes academic and intellectual growth.

Guarantees are in place to ensure that the curriculum followed in flexible programmes (where each student follows the learning path best suited to him or her) offers an effective means of achieving the final qualifications aimed at, and the criteria for approval by the examination committee are concrete and clear.

Facet 6: Coherence of programme

Criterion: Students follow a programme of study that is coherent in its contents.

Checkpoints:

- The contents of the various parts of the curriculum are well matched. Students continue to build on acquired knowledge and skills, and unnecessary overlap or repetition is avoided.

Facet 7: Study load

Criterion: The programme can be successfully completed within the set time, as certain programme-related factors that may be an impediment to study progress are removed as much as possible.

Checkpoints:

- The planned study load corresponds adequately to the actual study load and is distributed uniformly over the programme.
- The programme contains no unnecessary obstacles or other factors that hinder study unnecessarily.

Facet 8: Intake (*)

Criterion: The structure and contents of the programme are in line with the qualifications of the students that embark on the degree course:

- Bachelor's degree at a University (WO): VWO (pre-university education), propaedeutic certificate from a University of Professional Education (HBO) or similar qualifications, as demonstrated in the admission process.
- master's degree programme: bachelor's degree and possibly (content-based) selection

**) These intake requirements do not apply to the Open University of the Netherlands.*

Checkpoints:

- Appropriate intake requirements exist for all student intake groups, and checks are carried out to ensure that students meet these requirements.
- Students entering the programme have in general no problems in meeting the course requirements.
- The information given to students before entry provides an adequate, realistic picture of the programme and of career prospects after graduation.

Facet 9: Duration

Criterion: The degree course complies with formal requirements regarding the size of the curriculum:

- Bachelor of a University: 180 credits as a rule
- Master of a University: a minimum of 60 credits, dependent on the relevant degree course

Checkpoints:

- *for bachelor's degree programmes:* the programme normally has a workload of 180 credits;
- *for master's degree programmes:* the programme normally has a workload of 60 credits.

Facet 10: Coordination of structure and contents of the degree

Criteria: The didactic concepts are in line with the aims and objectives. The teaching methods correspond to the didactic concept.

Checkpoints:

- The didactic concepts of the programme are in line with the objectives and are instrumental in developing the programme, structuring the teaching and learning process and choosing the working methods.

- The didactic concepts are realized in the programme.
- The relationship between contact hours, self-study and other study activities is optimal.
- Guarantees are in place that the location, function and quality of the internship (if applicable) and the graduation project or any other final test of the student's ability, which forms an integral part of the programme, are appropriate.

Facet 11: Assessment and examinations
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<p><i>Criteria:</i> The system of assessments and examination provides an effective indication whether the students have reached the learning targets of the course programme or its components.</p>
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Checkpoints:

- The tests, evaluations and examinations provide an adequate check on attainment of the target qualifications of the programme.
- The tests, evaluations and examinations are in line with the content and learning objectives of the various parts of the programme.
- The programme provides individual students with adequate feedback concerning the extent to which the various learning objectives have been achieved.
- The programme ensures adequate consistency of the student assessments.
- The assessment is adequately organized (as regards e.g. announcement of the results, opportunities to resit tests or examinations, compensation arrangements etc.).
- The examination committee functions adequately and performs its statutory tasks.

Explanatory notes

General requirements on academic education

The criteria for the description and assessment of the academic nature of a programme are the same for all academic degree programmes. The weight given to them will however vary from one type of programme to another. For example, the interaction between teaching and research will be stronger and more intensive in a master's than in a bachelor's degree programme. The same is true of the treatment of the latest advances in the field in question.

Academic education is characterized by the strong relationship between teaching and research. An academic degree programme is based on and nourished by scientific research. This is how a student learns how to apply academic standards in practice. However, academic standards are not only characterized by the interaction with research. The generic features of academic education cover a much wider scale (see the explanatory notes to the previous section). The extent to which these individual features are expressed varies from one type of programme to another. A bachelor's degree programme gives students an initial impression of the field, helps them to understand the basic concepts, to adopt a standpoint on major issues, etc. In a master's programme, students learn to apply the concepts and integrate them into the overall scheme of things, to criticize and appraise these concepts, to become acquainted with the latest advances in the field, etc.

Relationship between the objectives and content of the programme

The objectives of a degree programme have to be converted firstly into final qualifications for the programme as a whole and then into learning objectives for the various parts of the programme. As a result of this process, the content of the programme reflects its objectives.

The content and structure of the curriculum must at the same time provide an effective basis for acquisition of the intended final qualifications. For example, the degree of difficulty of the content must increase steadily with time, thus promoting the students' academic and intellectual growth.

Coherence of programme

When assessing the organization of the programme, one should pay due attention to the relationship between the different parts of the programme. Are their contents consistent? Do they fit together properly? Have the students already acquired all the preliminary knowledge they need to deal with a given part of the programme? Is there no unnecessary redundancy? Is the complexity of the subject matter increasing at an appropriate rate? Has the proper balance between theory and practice been achieved? What is the relationship between compulsory and optional subjects?

The perspective taken in assessing the criteria relating to the coherence of the programme will depend on the type of programme in question. Some programmes have a clear structure with all students taking the same subjects, but in others (e.g. the 'wide' bachelor's degree programme) students can choose from a wide range of different subjects. In this latter case, monitoring the consistency of the different study pathways will be an important task for the examination committee, which is responsible for approving the programme on behalf of the university where it is given. The criteria for this approval must be clear and unambiguous.

Study load, duration of studies and feasibility

QANU uses the term 'feasibility' to denote the extent to which students are enabled to complete the programme in the time set for it, without encountering unnecessary obstacles. When removing such obstacles, one should pay due attention to the spread and compatibility of the different subjects, the relationship between planned and actual study load, the spread of interim examinations and the scope for resitting examinations. Attention can also be paid to the policy concerning particularly 'hard' subjects.

Intake

A distinction must be made between the intake criteria for the bachelor's degree programmes and those for master's programmes. In the case of the bachelor's programmes, the key questions are whether the university staff responsible for the programme is providing the kind of information required to attract the right kind of students, and whether they pay attention to the match between pre-university and academic education.

In the case of master's programmes, it must be clear what the admission requirements are. What conditions are set for entry to such programmes? If a selection procedure is in place, what are the selection criteria? And are they effective?

Duration

When assessing the duration of a programme, one should first of all consider the formal requirement that a bachelor's degree programme is worth 180 ECTS credits, and a master's programme at least 60.

In addition, the assessment panel should determine whether the volume of the programme is adequate and comparable with that of similar programmes abroad.

Structure and content

The learning environment of a degree programme must be compatible with the programme's objectives and content. Some programmes are explicitly based on a well-defined teaching philosophy (e.g. problem-driven education), while in others the teaching philosophy is implicit rather than explicit. In the latter case too, the course providers must ask themselves whether the (implicit) teaching approach and working methods used promote achievement of the programme objectives and final qualifications. A balanced choice of teaching approaches and working methods allows students to study in a purposeful, structured and efficient way and promotes a balanced spread of the study load over time.

Not all programmes include an internship period. When this is the case, the learning objectives for the internship must be clearly understood. Proper supervision plays an important role in guaranteeing that these learning objectives are achieved and that the functional requirements on the internship are met.

An important integral component of any degree programme is the final test of the student's ability (usually a graduation project). This project can take various forms. It may be a traditional final thesis, but also e.g. a piece of design work. There are also differences between bachelor's and master's degree programmes as regards the form of the graduation project. In both cases, however, it should be designed to give the student the chance to demonstrate the acquired knowledge and skills and the ability to apply them. The supervision given during the project and the assessment of the result are also important. In an academic degree programme, the supervision should be provided by members of the teaching staff who are themselves active in research.

Student assessment and examinations

Setting adequate programme objectives and translating them into adequate programme content only make sense if an adequate system is in place to test whether students have indeed learnt what is expected of them. The assessment criteria and the consistency of the assessment of internships and graduation projects require particular attention here. The evaluation of the student assessment system should in any case cover the following points:

- compatibility of the assessment system with the programme content;
- proper feedback of assessment results to the student;
- uniformity and consistency of assessment;
- guarantees of the quality of the assessment system and the role of the examination committee in ensuring them;
- organization of the student assessments.

Topic 3: Deployment of staff

Facet 12: Requirements for University

Criterion: Teaching is largely provided by researchers who contribute to the development of the subject area.

Checkpoints:

- A major part of the education is provided and/or developed by teaching staff who are actively engaged in academic research of recognized quality.
- Right from the start, students come into contact with academic and/or professional role models in the field covered by the programme *).
- *) *In distance learning this role-model function will in some way be incorporated in the programme material.*
- Teaching staff and/or those responsible for developing the programme will establish adequate links with the professional field of practice for which the students are being trained.

Facet 13: Quantity of staff

Criterion: The staff levels are sufficient to ensure that the course is provided to the required standards.

Checkpoints:

- The available manpower is sufficient for the execution of all teaching and supervisory tasks.

Facet 14: Quality of staff

Criterion: The staff is sufficiently qualified to ensure that the aims regarding contents, didactics and organization of the course programme are achieved.

Checkpoints:

- The teaching quality of the staff is sufficient to ensure execution of the degree programme and realization of the underlying teaching philosophy.
- The range of specialisms available in the teaching team is wide enough to support the programme objectives and the target qualifications.
- The human resources and internal training policy monitors and promotes the teaching quality and performance of the individual members of the teaching staff.

Explanatory notes

The NVAO Protocol only discusses staffing in terms of staff quality and staffing levels. The NVAO does however see staff quality as a key factor in distinguishing between higher professional education and academic education, since in the latter researchers who contribute to the development of their field provide a large part of the teaching.

The QANU protocol, on the other hand, places staffing in a wider context where human resources, HR policy and organization are discussed in relationship with one another.

Requirements for University

A sufficient proportion of the academic education must be provided by staff involved in research of recognized quality, e.g. because they hold a research position at a research school recognized by ECOS or because their research programme has been judged to be of sufficient scientific quality within the framework of national VSNU assessments or by an independent external assessment panel operating in accordance with the *Standard Evaluation Protocol* formulated by the KNAW, NWO and VSNU. Other indicators of academic recognition are the fact that the researcher has supervised doctoral studies, that he or she has a doctorate, that the research project worked on has external funding, etc. The extent to which active involvement of members of teaching staff in research is desirable depends on the programme objectives. It will be clear that a research-oriented master's degree programme should be largely given in a research environment, with much of the teaching input being provided by researchers. A wide bachelor's degree programme, on the other, will require less involvement of researchers.

The academic content of forms of education where face-to-face contact is less relevant, such as learning in an electronic environment, correspondence courses or other forms of distance learning, must be guaranteed at least by due attention to the development phase and the content of the final product.

It is important that students following academic degree programmes should come into contact with role models from the world of research (generally professors) right from the start of their studies.

Academic degree programmes train students more or less explicitly for professional practice demanding an academic background. The staff teaching within the framework of the programme must create the necessary links with these professions. The links may be less direct than in higher professional education, taking the form e.g. of contributions to professional knowledge or discussions, though explicit professional training may also be given.

Quantity of staff

An adequate staffing level is a basic condition for proper education, ensuring that all aspects of the educational programme are carried out effectively. The size of the student population compared with the number of teaching staff is also important: the student/teacher ratio should not be so high as to impede proper student-teacher contact.

Quality of staff

The quality of the teaching staff relates to the spread of their expertise and to their teaching skills. It is also important that teachers are enthusiastic about the programme and the underlying didactic concepts.

Staff quality must be guaranteed by a structural HR policy. This covers such matters as the organization of the teaching role of PhD students, courses on teaching skills for staff (including PhD students), the supervision of junior members of staff and regular performance review interviews. One important point is the balance between teaching and research effort in the career path of the individual members of staff. Is teaching experience given due weight alongside research experience in determining staff members' chances of promotion?

Topic 4: Facilities and provisions

Facet 15: Material facilities

Criterion: The accommodation and material facilities are sufficient to implement the programme.

Checkpoints:

- The available educational facilities are adequate for execution of the programme, and permit implementation of the working methods chosen.
- ICT facilities are adequate and sufficiently accessible.

Facet 16: Student support and guidance

Criteria: The student support and guidance, as well as the information given to students are adequate for the purpose of students' progress.

The student support and guidance, as well as the information given to students meet the requirements of the students.

Checkpoints:

- The student progress registration system is effective and informative; students receive timely information about the progress they are making in their studies.
- Tutors pay sufficient attention to the progress students are making in their studies.
- The first year of a bachelor's degree programme has the necessary selective and directive effect; students are provided with (binding) advice about the further course of their studies at the end of this year.
- The tutoring, counselling and information supply services meet students' needs.

Explanatory notes

Material facilities

The educational facilities required vary from one degree programme to another. This is why the criterion relating to this facet does not specify the type of facilities involved. In on-campus education, especially the teaching accommodation will have to satisfy the requirements set by the programme. In experimental subjects, suitable laboratories or practical rooms will have to be available. Current teaching approaches often make use of electronic learning environments; where present, these are also subject to assessment. In distance learning, study centres can play an important role. Textbooks and other written course material also form part of the educational facilities.

Library facilities can vary from a large central library to faculty or department libraries. It is important that the library contains a suitable selection of standard textbooks for student use, and that the accessibility and opening times are adequate.

The computer facilities available for students must be adequate. There must be enough computers for students to use, and good Internet facilities. The extent to which the programme in question makes use of ICT aids may also be of importance.

Student support and guidance

The tutoring and counselling services available must meet students' needs. The opinion of the students on these facilities will thus represent important input for the assessment. The assessment panel will also consider the way in which students are provided with advice about the further course of their studies at the end of the first year.

Topic 5: Internal quality assurance

Facet 17: Evaluation of results

Criterion: The degree course is subject to a periodic review, which is partly based on verifiable targets.

Checkpoints:

- The staff responsible for the programme monitor the educational process and changes in the educational environment periodically.
- This monitoring of the educational process makes use of criteria permitting a check on whether the intended results are achieved.

Facet 18: Measures to effect improvement

Criterion: The results of this evaluation form the basis for measures that can be demonstrated to improve the course and that will contribute to reaching the targets.

Checkpoints:

- The results of the monitoring process lead to actual modifications in the educational system.
- Improvements really are introduced when the intended results are not achieved.

Facet 19: Involvement of staff, students, alumni and the professional field

Criterion: Staff, students and the professional field in which graduates of the course are to be employed are actively involved in the internal quality assurance.

Checkpoints:

- The relevant stakeholders (university staff, students, alumni and professionals in the field fed by the programme) are involved in the monitoring of the education process and the modification of the education environment.
- The programme committee⁴ performs its (statutory) tasks adequately.

Explanatory notes

Internal quality assurance is an important topic in the assessment laid down in the NVAO protocol. The course provider has to demonstrate that the quality of the education provided is structurally and systematically monitored, and improved where necessary. To this end, an internal quality assurance system must be in place to monitor the degree programme; this system must operate in the cyclic manner characteristic of quality assurance systems.

The course provider must show that the **Plan, Do, Check** and **Act** steps are undertaken in a cyclical manner. (These steps are explained in the subsection entitled 'Underpinning through the internal quality assurance system' in section C.1 below). In the **Plan** step, criteria and measures are formulated for checking whether the intended results are achieved. When the **Check** shows that intended results are not achieved, improvement measures are taken: **Act/Plan**.

⁴ In Dutch: Opleidingscommissie. This committee is responsible for the curriculum and the quality of teaching.

Concrete, testable criteria can be defined for various aspects of the quality control process, e.g.:

- objectives of the degree programme;
- specific strategies (e.g. more students from minority groups, more female students);
- intended student success rate (number of graduates per year);
- assessment of the programme by students;
- assessment of graduates by employers;
- assessment of the programme by graduates.

The care with which the results of evaluations are converted into improvement measures is an important aspect of the internal quality assurance system.

The following instruments and actors, among others, play an important role in the framework of internal quality assurance:

- HR policy of department providing the programme;
- programme committee;
- examination committee;
- study progress registration system;
- evaluation of the programme by students;
- feedback from teachers;
- feedback from professionals working in the field and from the labour market;
- feedback from alumni.

Topic 6: Results

Facet 20: Level that has been achieved

Criterion: The final qualifications that have been achieved correspond to the targets set for the final qualifications in level, orientation and domain-specific requirements.

Checkpoints:

- The final qualifications achieved by the graduates are in line with the target qualifications of the programme.
- The content and level of the graduation projects are in line with degree (bachelor's or master's) awarded.
- Graduates are able to operate adequately in the field for which they have been trained.

Facet 21: Results of teaching

Criterion: To measure the results of teaching, target figures have been set in comparison with relevant other degree courses.

The results of teaching meet these targets.

Checkpoints:

- The department responsible for the programme has set targets for the student success rate (= number of graduates per year) and the duration of studies comparable with those for other relevant programmes.
- The actual student success rate is in line with these targets.

Explanatory notes

Graduate quality level achieved

The key question associated with this facet of the programme is whether graduates deserve the bachelor's or master's degree they have been awarded. The course provider is expected to systematically collect data in order to monitor whether the graduates meet the requirements of follow-up courses and of the functions for which they have been trained. Indications can be derived from alumni surveys, studies carried out in the field targeted by the programme, the esteem in which graduates are held on the labour market, etc. Such indicators provide evidence of the quality of graduates, and whether the programme has sufficiently developed an identity in its field of knowledge.

In the case of a bachelor's degree programme, the assessment panel should also consider data on follow-up courses for graduates of the programme: what master's programme do they choose and do they successfully complete that programme? When determining the level achieved in a master's programme, one should also take the nature and level of any internship involved into consideration. Further data, e.g. from the *WO-monitor* (an ongoing study of graduates of Dutch institutes of higher education carried out by the VSNU) or other alumni studies and information about the reputation of the programme on the labour market, are also relevant. The assessment panel will also investigate whether the expected prospects of graduates from the programme on the labour market are in fact realized.

The quality of the graduates is so crucial that the assessment panel specifically investigates this point. The panel determines the level achieved by evaluating the content and level of the graduation projects prepared by the students at the end of their studies. The graduation project will in most cases involve writing a thesis, but it may also be e.g. a piece of design work or a research project. The panel will consider a number of graduation project reports from the period under review and will determine their level in accordance with its own standards of reference.

The course provider is asked to describe how they check whether graduates have achieved the target qualifications, e.g. with reference to the relevant criteria given above for topic 2 (Details of the programme), in particular facet 11 (Testing and examination).

Student success rate

The student success rate data comprise information on the absolute numbers and percentages of students who have successfully completed (a particular phase of) the programme. Since there are no objective criteria for this indicator, the assessment panel will compare the observed student success rate with the targets set by the department in question and the output of other programmes in the same or a related field. In addition to the student success rate, the panel will also consider the average time it took graduates to complete the programme.

Student success rates are calculated for the cohorts in question, i.e. the entire group of first-year students registered for a given programme in a given year. The progress of the various cohorts is followed throughout the years.

The propaedeutic output of a cohort is the percentage of students in that cohort that pass the propaedeutic exam after one or more years, while the student success rate is the percentage of students in the cohort that have completed their studies successfully and gained their degree after one or more years.

The relevant indicators are calculated with the aid of the KUO data from the VSNU. (KUO stands for *Kengetallen Universitair Onderwijs* = University Education Indicators; these data are collected and maintained by the KUO group of the VSNU). When the composition of a given cohort is unusual, the effects of this departure from the norm on student success rate and duration of the studies can be analysed with reference to the KUO data and the results of this analysis presented in the assessment panel's report.

B.2 Self-evaluation guidelines

The self-evaluation report on the programme must meet the following requirements:

- It deals with all topics and facets of the assessment protocol described in Chapter B.1 of the present guide. Each topic is discussed in a separate chapter of the self-evaluation report, and each facet in a separate section of the relevant chapter. Each chapter ends with a summary of the relevant strong and weak points.
- It presents evidence based on facts and analyses of how the programme meets the various criteria. The assessment panel will check this evidence, and will decide on the basis of its expert knowledge whether the criteria are actually met.
- It is an open, analytical document. The following four *types of evidence* for the claims can be distinguished:
 1. directional information (aims and objectives)
 2. factual information (measures taken)
 3. evaluative information (observed results)
 4. analytical information (causes of results, proposed improvement measures)
- The object of the assessment is the individual bachelor's or master's degree programme, as registered in the CROHO. In principle, the quality is described for each programme separately. The content of each bachelor's or master's programme is also described separately, as is the quality of different variants and locations.
- When one panel jointly assesses a number of degree programmes within a single institute or faculty, a single general description may be given of a number of topics. These descriptions are then included in a general section accompanying the evaluation reports. This is subject to the condition that the self-assessment report for each individual degree programme will include a clear cross-reference from the discussion of the aspect in question to the relevant passage in the general description. A supplementary description should be given of how the policy described in the general section is realized and guaranteed in each programme. While it makes sense to give a common treatment of the topics HR policy, Facilities and Internal Quality Assurance, this is not obligatory. If preferred, the description of these topics may be repeated for each individual programme.
- Old style degree programmes are dealt with marginally in the assessments. Each self-evaluation report will include a brief description of the stage reached in the phasing out of these programmes.
- As regards the assessment period, since the bachelor's and master's degree programmes under evaluation are not all operational yet it will often be necessary to evaluate the plans for these programmes. It goes without saying that the confidence in the quality of the bachelor's and master's programmes will depend on the quality achieved in the past with the old style degree programme. In connection with most topics, it is relevant to describe how things have developed within the degree programme. The information requested under each topic gives ample scope for this. As regards Results, when the bachelor's and master's degree programmes have not yet delivered any graduates (or not yet enough), the results of the old style programmes will be evaluated. Reference periods are defined in connection with the standard information (indicators) requested.

B.2.1 Structure of self-evaluation per programme

- The self-evaluation reports for the individual degree programmes should follow a fixed structure to facilitate the work of the external panel.
- When a joint description is given of a number of topics and facets of several degree programmes, this is placed in a general section of the evaluation report. The evaluation report for each degree programme should however contain all the chapters listed below, if necessary with a reference to the general section.
- The quality of different variants of a degree programme and different locations where such a programme is given should be indicated separately.

The self-evaluation report for each degree programme should contain the following chapters:

0. Administrative data
 - name of degree programme; CROHO number; expiry date of accreditation; variants and locations; claimed level and orientation; contact person.
1. Old style programme
 - name of old style degree programme from which the programme under review was derived; CROHO number;
 - planned date for completion of phasing out of old style programme;
 - concise description of current status of phasing-out process: number of active students; overview of operational part of old curriculum; transitional arrangements; strong and weak points.
2. Self-evaluation method
 - Reference to the general section of the report where appropriate, with addition of operational details and results for each individual degree programme.
3. Sketch of organizational setting of degree programme within the institution of higher education
 - Description of unit responsible for the degree programme; organizational structure;
 - Reference to the general section of the report where appropriate, with addition of operational details and results for each individual degree programme.
4. Treatment of the various topics from the evaluation protocol, each facet being given a clearly recognizable heading and full evidence of the evaluation arrived at. The discussion of each topic ends with a strength-weakness analysis.
 - 4.1 objectives of degree programme
 - 4.2 curriculum of degree programme
 - 4.3 staffing
 - 4.4 facilities
 - 4.5 internal quality assurance
 - 4.6 results
 optional:
 - (4.7 internationalisation)
5. Summary of strong and weak points

Appendices

The number of Appendices given in the self-evaluation report for each degree programme should be kept to a minimum, but in any case the following information should be included:

- a) Full description of the objectives and final qualifications of the degree programme.
- b) List of the names of all members of academic staff, with qualifications and specializations; where appropriate; main research programme(s).
- c) List of the 25 most recent graduation projects (or those from the last five years, in case fewer than 25 graduation projects are available from that period), giving details of author's name, title, specialization, evaluation year and grade awarded.

This requirement also applies to bachelor's degree programmes. The graduation project is understood here to constitute an integrative assessment; this can also be in the form of e.g. a portfolio.

The assessment panel should in principle have access to all graduation work, so that it can judge whether the target level of the degree programme is adequately monitored. If graduation projects have to be considered as confidential, this is mentioned in the list. A special procedure can be agreed in such cases, to allow the panel to assess the work properly while still respecting its confidential nature. If there are objections to the inclusion of grades in the self-evaluation report, these can be given in a separate list which is for the eyes of the panel only.

- d) A list of important documents relating to the degree programme (such as education reports, development plans, evaluation reports and education policy plans), which the assessment panel can request if they wish to study them. These documents should in any case be available for inspection during the panel's visit.
- e) The teaching and examination regulations (OER) for the degree programme, when they are not included in the prospectus.
- f) Ten copies of the latest edition of the prospectus.

The self-evaluation report should not be more than fifty A4 pages long, excluding Appendices.

Ten hard copies of the report should be made available, together with a digital version on CD-ROM. If so desired, the Appendices may only be made available in the digital version (on CD-ROM).

Access to information

The assessment panel shall be given access to all relevant information required for proper execution of its tasks. It can ask to have further information sent to it or be made available for perusal during its visit to the institution in question. Members of the assessment panel will not use the information collected in the framework of the assessment for personal purposes. Confidential information will be treated appropriately.

B.2.2 Tables, indicators and appendices for each facet

The self-evaluation process must follow the structure laid down in the present assessment protocol, facts and analyses being presented to support the claims made about how the programme meets the criteria. Additional information is sometimes required for the purposes of the assessment by the external panel. Guidelines are given below about information relating to various topics, which should in any case be included in the self-evaluation report.

Objectives

- A full description of the objectives and final qualifications of the programme is included as Appendix A.

Programme

- Details of the courses included in the degree programme, including year of programme when course is taken, whether optional or compulsory, (short) name of course, number of credits gained, working methods and test methods used.

Programme, facet Intake requirements

- Tables showing the intake:
 - a) of the old style programme up to the moment when the intake of first-year students stopped (for programmes that are being phased out);
 - b) of the bachelor's or master's programme from the starting date of the programme up to the most recent year for which data are available.

The data presented should as far as possible be taken from:

Table 2.2 of the 'KUNO *visitatieproduct*' (KUNO product for assessments) (*): 'Registered students by type of course and sex (first year of higher education, propaedeutic phase)', with reference to the column headings: Registered students; Full-time course; Part-time course; External students, with totals and male/female breakdown in each category.

Table 2.1 of the 'KUNO *visitatieproduct*' (KUNO product for assessments) (*): 'Registered students by type of course and sex (all registered students)', with reference to the column headings: Registered students; Full-time course; Part-time course; External students, with totals and male/female breakdown in each category.

*) the KUNO product is available from the KUNO contact within the university, whose name can be obtained from QANU.

The course providers may, if they so wish, present a reconstructed picture of the course of the intake for programmes that are a continuation of other programmes.

It goes without saying that the programme providers cannot restrict themselves to supplying quantitative data, but must also submit these data to further analysis.

Programme: facet Agreement between form and content

- A table showing the breakdown of the study for the various years of the programme, based on analysis of the working methods used in the various courses. A distinction should in any case be made between educational activities involving large and small numbers of students, with further refinements as appropriate. Since study pathways can vary, it may be necessary to give a range of hours for different activities. The breakdown for a bachelor's degree programme might e.g. have the following form:

year	lectures	workshops	problem-based learning	thesis	self-study	Total
1	200	400	400	0	680	1680
2	150	500	300	0	730	1680
3	100	500	200	0	880	1680

Staffing and HR policy

- A table showing the manpower (No. of persons and FTEs) available for teaching purposes, with a breakdown by a) category (professor, senior lecturer, lecturer, doctoral student and other academic staff) and b) sex (male/female). Definitions and the basis on which the figures are determined should be explained. **Reference date: 1 December of the most recent year for which data are available.** The figures should preferably be given per programme, but if this is not possible at a higher aggregation level (e.g. faculty or university), with indications of how the staffing works out for the individual programmes.

Category	m		f		Total		Percentage PhD
	No.	FTEs	No.	FTEs	No.	FTEs	
Professor							
Senior lecturer							
University lecturer							
PhD students							not applicable
Lecturers without tenure							
Student assistants							
Other academic staff							
Total							

- In Appendix B: A list of the names of the academic staff, with their qualifications and specialisms and where appropriate important research programmes in which they are involved.

Staffing and HR policy: facet Quantity of staff

A table giving at least the student/teacher ratio for the past three years:

Year	Number of teaching FTEs	Number of registered students	Number of students graduating	Number of students per teaching FTE	Number of graduates per teaching FTE
assessment year - 1					
assessment year - 2					
assessment year - 3					

The figures should preferably be given per programme, but if this is not possible at a higher aggregation level (e.g. faculty or university), with indications of how the student/teacher ratio works out for the individual programmes.

Information should also be provided on how teaching support is organized, with details of functions available (e.g. study advisor, internationalisation coordinator), organization (e.g. per programme or per faculty) and staffing levels (in FTEs).

Results: facet Level achieved

- A concise summary of the latest alumni survey.
- A list (included as Appendix C) of the 25 most recent graduation projects (going back no more than 5 years when fewer than 25 graduation projects are available for the period in question), giving details of author's name, title, specialization, evaluation year and grade awarded. This requirement also applies to bachelor's degree programmes. The graduation project is understood here to constitute an integrative assessment; this can also be in the form of e.g. a portfolio.

Results: facet Student success rate

- Tabular presentation of the student success rate (from KUO data) over at least the past eight years of the old style degree programme from which the programme under evaluation is derived, together with as accurate as possible an impression of the course of the student success rate since the bachelor's/master's system was introduced.

In the case of both bachelor's and master's programmes, the student success rate of the old style programme from which they are derived is presented for the propaedeutic year and for the post-propaedeutic period.

- Student success rate for the propaedeutic year from KUO Table 3.1
- Post-propaedeutic success rate from KUO Table 4.1.

The VSNU is currently working on development of a new KUO indicator for the student success rate for the first (propaedeutic) year of the bachelor's degree programme. Until this new indicator is available, each institution can give its own figures for the propaedeutic success rate.

In addition, if students have already graduated from the bachelor's programme, each institution can present its own figures to give a picture of the student success rate of the programme as a whole (percentage of cohort graduating per year).

In the case of master's programmes, the student success rate is given for the programme as a whole (percentage of cohort graduating per year).

B.2.3 The international framework

International benchmarking of the programme is demanded at various points in the assessment protocol. The programme's objectives and final qualifications must meet the requirements of (foreign) professionals in the field in question and of international academic practice. Law requires the external assessment panel to compare the programme under review with similar programmes, preferably at an international level; this requirement is also laid down in the NVAO protocol.

Key information required in order to be able to place the programme in an international context must in the first instance come from the department responsible for the programme. The following information should therefore be made available in the self-evaluation report:

- The international sources (including relevant degree programmes abroad) used as a basis for formulation of the programme's objectives.
- The international benchmarking performed and its results.
- The positioning of the programme in an international setting in the view of the self-evaluation team.
- Details of contacts with similar programmes abroad, including information about the level at which contacts are maintained (from student exchanges to formal arrangements between faculty boards, etc.) and the content and level of programmes in question.

B.2.4 Submission of self-evaluation report

Ten hard copies of the self-evaluation report together with the appendices requested should be submitted to QANU by the agreed date. Failure to meet the submission deadline can delay the assessment process.

In addition, the report should be made available digitally on CD-ROM. If desired, the appendices may be supplied on CD-ROM only.

QANU will check the self-evaluation report with reference to the following requirements:

- Are all relevant topics, facets and criteria dealt with?
- Has all the information requested been supplied?
- Is the self-evaluation sufficiently analytical and critical?
- Is sufficient evidence provided to permit assessment of the programme's level and orientation?

If the self-evaluation report does not meet these requirements, QANU will ask for additional information and may in the last resort refuse to accept the report.

QANU will treat the self-evaluation report as a confidential document, only to be used by the external panel for the assessment of the programme.

QANU does not give the NVAO access to the self-evaluation report. The NVAO can ask the university or department responsible for the programme for supplementary information, but will not request a copy of the self-evaluation report.

B.3 Optional assessment topics

QANU has added one specific feature of academic degree programmes, internationalisation, to the assessment protocol as an optional topic. Degree programme providers are free to pay separate attention to this point in their self-evaluations. When such information is included in the self-evaluation report, the assessment panel will consider it but it will not be taken into account in the panel's final decision for accreditation purposes. Agreements about this will be made with the universities or departments in question at the start of the review. In addition to this optional treatment of internationalisation as a separate topic, it is also included in the domain-specific frame of reference and is thus an (indirect) topic of assessment in any case.

Another way of adding an individual touch to the assessment is to make use of the special quality features mentioned in the NVAO assessment protocol. A number of conditions must be met before these features are recognized by the NVAO; these are explained in section 3 ('Special quality features') of the NVAO 'Accreditation framework for existing degree courses in higher education'.

B.3.1 Internationalisation and external contacts

Internationalisation is not included in the NVAO assessment protocol. QANU has added it, on an optional basis, to the list of topics covered in the self-evaluation in view of its great (and increasing) importance in the field of academic education, especially as part of the Bologna process. Internationalisation is not taken into account in the final decision on accreditation. The programme provider should let QANU know well before the review whether this topic will be covered in the self-evaluation.

Criteria:

1. An internationalisation policy exists for the programme, which is directly related to programme's general objectives and also has links with the policy in other fields.
2. The programme's profile and final qualifications in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude are in line with international norms, so that differences and similarities between the programme and those in other countries show up clearly.
3. The programme makes use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and has adequate arrangements in place to include competences acquired abroad in individual courses of study.
4. International student and teacher mobility (both incoming and outgoing) is at the intended level and receives the necessary promotion and support.
5. Internationalisation has a clear place in the curriculum and is reflected in the teaching methods used.
6. The programme forms part of an international institutional network for high-quality educational activities.
7. Participation in relevant international activities (e.g. networks, projects and congresses) can be realised.

Checkpoints:

- The programme has an internationalisation policy laid down in a policy plan or other official document, which is directly related to the programme objectives.
- There is a clearly demonstrable relationship between the internationalisation policy and the policy in other fields.
- The final qualifications of the programme are in line with international norms.
- The programme has well defined procedures for taking certain courses abroad and for recognition of credits gained abroad.
- The numbers of students and teachers coming from abroad and going abroad are both absolutely and relatively in agreement with the targets set for the programme.

- The programme has facilities and arrangements (financial and administrative, but also in the fields of reception, supervision and accommodation) for students and teachers coming from abroad and going abroad.
- The programme has clear, up-to-date information material, both for students and for teachers, on the conditions and arrangements for international exchange.
- The programme offers students going abroad the opportunity of following a course in the language and culture of the host country. The credits gained by following such a course count towards the main programme the student is following.
- The programme includes components that are especially suitable for students coming from abroad (e.g. because they are given in another language), such as summer schools or master classes.
- The programme participates in international educational projects such as exchange programmes.

Explanatory notes

Internationalisation is increasingly becoming an integral part of academic education. The academic world is international by its very nature: the fields of study are not subject to geographical limitations, and cooperation with colleagues from other countries is accepted as self-evident. Internationalisation received a powerful stimulus from the Bologna Declaration, which stated that universities play a central role in the development of the cultural dimensions of the Europe of the future. One of the explicit objectives of the Bologna Declaration is promotion of the mobility of both students and teachers. Moreover, universities are increasingly training students for an international labour market. They are also explicitly aiming at new target groups, such as foreign students, and hence have to reinforce their position with respect to other institutions of higher education not only at home but particularly abroad.

When assessing the internationalisation of a programme, the panel will consider not only the policy in this field but also the extent to which it has proved possible to implement this policy. The point of departure is that internationalisation should be an integral part of the programme. This should be reflected in the mission and objectives formulated for the programme, and should be very clearly present both in the programme's content and in its organization.

The programme's internationalisation policy gives a picture of its position and status in an international context: how much progress has been made, and what still remains to be done? The objectives formulated in this field can refer to different aspects of internationalisation, such as student and teacher exchanges, the introduction of international themes in the programme's content and participation in international projects and networks.

Student and teacher exchanges are two-way affairs, with some students and teachers going abroad and some coming from abroad. Arrangements should be set up and facilities should be provided for both groups, to help them to get the most out of the exchanges. For example, arrangements may be made for the recognition of credits gained by following courses abroad and schemes may be set up to help foreign students and teachers to find suitable accommodation. Another important aspect of such exchanges is the need to help teachers and students who are going abroad to gain some acquaintance with the language and culture of the host country. One sign that internationalisation is being taken seriously in a degree programme is that credits gained by taking a language course for this purpose count towards the final bachelor's or master's qualification.

There are various ways of internationalising a degree programme. One is to include courses that are easily accessible to foreign students. This can be done e.g. by giving the courses in a language of which both the home students and the foreign students have a good command (usually, but not always, English), or by making the entry requirements more flexible for foreign students (no demand for highly specialized knowledge as a prerequisite for entry to the course, no formal requirements such as successful completion of another component of the programme). Programme components specially developed for foreign students (such as summer schools or master classes) may also be offered. Another approach is to include certain courses in the programme that can relatively easily be replaced by courses known to be offered abroad.

It almost goes without saying that the academic staff associated with a programme with a well defined international orientation will be actively involved in relevant networks and projects, such as European professional organizations or Thematic Network Projects, and that as such they will for example give lectures or presentations and contribute to reports addressing educational issues from an international perspective.

Information to be provided in the self-evaluation report under the topic Internationalisation:

- Number of students registered for the programme who are studying abroad and number of students from abroad who are (temporarily) following the programme; the participation in student exchanges should also be expressed in terms of credits.
- List of university cooperation schemes within the framework of ERASMUS/SOCRATES and other institutional cooperation schemes with foreign universities in the field of education.

B.3.2 Special quality features

As stated in the NVAO assessment protocol, a university or other institution of higher education can submit a request for recognition of a special quality feature. In this case, the institution should contact QANU early to allow time for an assessment protocol to be developed specifically for this feature.

QANU expects to develop (in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders) standard assessment protocols for the following special quality features in the not too distant future:

- student-friendliness;
- labour market perspectives;
- sustainable higher education;
- the transition from old style programmes to the bachelor's/master's system.

The student-friendliness refers to all measures taken to promote student interests in the programme.

The feature 'labour market perspectives' covers e.g. efforts made to deliver graduates more in line with the requirements of potential employers.

The final point mentioned above deals with the need for curriculum renewal in the transition from old style programmes to the bachelor's/master's system.

According to the NVAO accreditation protocol, such special quality features should meet the following criteria:

REQUIREMENTS ON SPECIAL QUALITY FEATURES	
facet	criterion
Differentiation and profile	The feature makes a significant contribution to increasing the differentiation and distinctive profile of educational options offered in Dutch higher education.
quality	The feature adds special quality to the programme.
concretisation	The consequences of the feature for the quality of the programme (intake, curriculum, teaching process, output, facilities, staff quality) have been operationalized.
distinctiveness	The feature must possess a distinctive (though not necessarily unique) character when compared to similar degree courses in higher education in the Netherlands.

Special quality features allow the universities or programmes to partly determine the agenda for the external quality assessment. Working in consultation with other stakeholders to incorporate their own points of view in the assessment procedure will help the staff responsible for the programme to increase their sense of involvement in the assessment process as a whole. As a result, more effective use will be made of the assessment results, leading to a steeper learning curve in the organization. These benefits justify highlighting special quality features, even when they are not submitted for endorsement by the NVAO.

Part C: The self-evaluation report and the work of the assessment panel

C.1 Writing the self-evaluation report

The external quality assessment is based on self-evaluation of the degree programme by the institution responsible for it. As stated in the NVAO protocol,

'The institute carries out a self-assessment. The self-assessment report contains a description and an assessment of the degree course, taking into account at least the subjects, facets and criteria set out in this accreditation framework. If the course is provided on a fulltime, part-time and/or dual basis, the various study programmes are described and assessed separately.

In its self-assessment the institute also states the level (Bachelor or Master) and orientation (university or university of professional education) of the degree course. This is to be substantiated with clear argumentation. It is also stated whether the course concerned is an undergraduate or a postgraduate degree course.'

A self-evaluation report has two important functions:

1. The writing of a self-evaluation report stimulates to think systematically about the quality of the education offered to the students and about the level they reach.
2. The self-evaluation report provides the basis for assessment of the programme by the external panel, which checks and verifies the statements made in the report.

Self-evaluation = self-analysis

The writing of the self-evaluation report gives the staff responsible for the programme the opportunity to reflect systematically on the questions, 'what are we doing?', 'why are we doing it?' and 'why are we doing it the way we do?' This should be accompanied by a strength/weakness analysis based on facts as much as possible. The document also describes the changes made since the last external assessment. Where weak points are discovered, it goes without saying that the staff responsible for the programme should formulate concrete policies for improvement of the situation.

Much of the information required for the writing of a self-evaluation report will be automatically generated by a properly functioning internal quality assurance system. The criteria given in the QANU assessment protocol allow scope for adapting the self-evaluation procedure so that optimum use can be made of the output of the existing quality assurance system.

Self-evaluation = information for the external assessment panel

The self-evaluation report with its strength/weakness analysis is the point of departure for the external panel's assessment of the programme. A clear strength/weakness analysis and clearly presented evidence that the criteria are met, allow a peer-to-peer discussion between the panel and the faculty about the quality of the programme.

The external panel regards the self-evaluation report as the basic description of the programme as a whole, and carries out its discussions with the various stakeholders on this basis. It is therefore important that all those involved with the programme (both staff and students) are aware of the contents of the self-evaluation report and recognize it as the description of their programme.

The degree programme as the object of assessment; recognizability of different variants and locations

Each degree programme (both bachelor's and master's) requires separate accreditation, on the basis of a separate self-evaluation report. It will be clear, however, that not all topics need to be dealt with afresh each time a self-evaluation report is prepared. In many cases, several academic degree programmes at bachelor's and master's level have been derived from one old style programme. Further, some topics in the assessment protocol need to be investigated at university or faculty level rather than at degree level. When a number of degree programmes within a single university or faculty are assessed together, the description of these topics can be given at a higher aggregation level – as long as each self-evaluation report describes how the quality of each of the programmes under assessment is guaranteed. The topics HR policy, Facilities and Internal quality assurance lend themselves particularly well to the kind of joint description indicated above.

In this joint approach, the prescribed format for the self evaluation must still be followed. When descriptions of topics and facets are to be found elsewhere, exact reference must be made to the relevant passages.

When a given degree programme exists in different variants (full-time, part-time, dual), the assessment must show that the basic quality is guaranteed for each variant. The self-evaluation reports will then have to point out the differences between the variants clearly. During its review, the assessment panel will check whether the differences were adequately represented in the self-evaluation reports. The same procedure applies when the course is provided in different locations.

Underpinning through internal quality assurance

The self-evaluation report is the link between internal and external quality assurance. Quality standards in the academic world are highly developed, because science must withstand the test of academic scrutiny. Academic knowledge is certified through scrutiny by fellow professionals. The reputation and authority of scientists are established in that same process. Academic education qualifies graduates in the first place to measure themselves against these standards at the appropriate level. After completing their studies, the graduates should be able to function in the domain of science. It follows that academic standards should play an important role in the assessment process. This is achieved by appointing leading academics as members of the external assessment panel and by using the domain-specific frame of reference discussed in C.2.1 below.

It should further be realized that academic education takes place in a wider context where socio-economic objectives must also be taken into account. Hence, a coherent internal quality assurance system must be set up for each degree programme to guarantee that the programme continues to meet the changing requirements of the academic and socio-economic environment by translating these requirements into the programme's final qualifications and by ensuring that these targets are consistently and efficiently realised in the programme.

The authors of the self-evaluation report can make extensive use of the information generated by the internal quality assurance system to determine whether the programme objectives are sufficiently in line with the requirements from the environment and whether the final results are in line with these objectives. This information provides a basis for formulation of the policy for the programme.

A quality assurance system has a cyclic character.

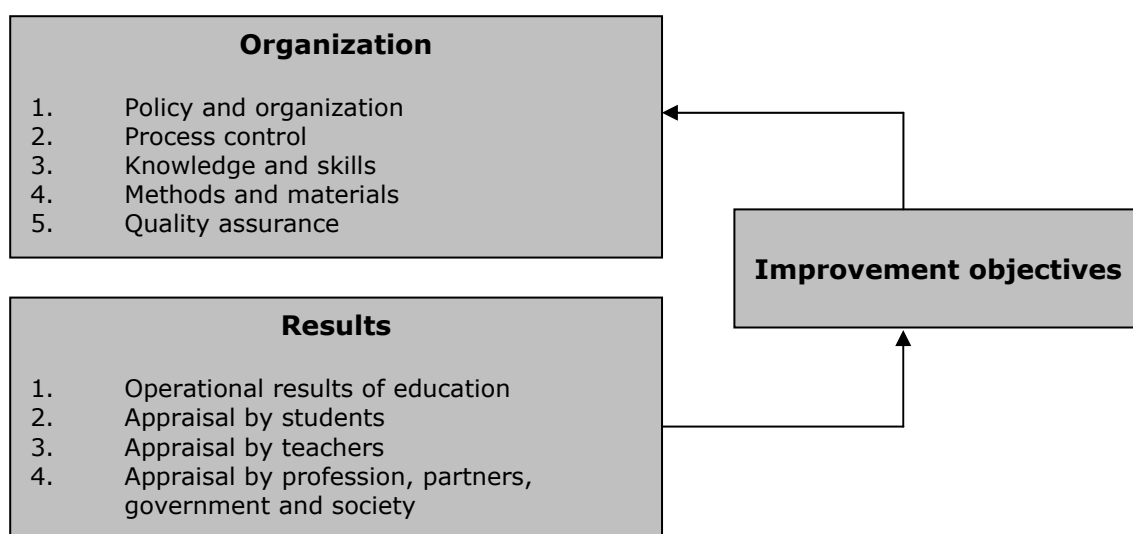
- An organization sets an objective and formulates measures to reach it (**Plan**).

- The measures are executed (**Do**).
- The organization determines whether the results achieved are in line with the original objectives (**Check**).
- The plans are either finalized or modified on the basis of the results (**Act**).

If necessary, new objectives are set, which completes the cyclic character.

It follows that the quality of a degree programme depends not only on the adequacy of the processes involved, but also on the way these processes are controlled in the light of the results achieved.

The *Instituut Nederlandse Kwaliteit* (INK) or Dutch Quality Institute has developed a management model, which is widely used in the Netherlands. This 'INK model' comprises five organizational fields and four results fields linked by a feedback loop embodying learning and improvement. This is represented in the following simplified diagram:



Evidence that the criteria are fulfilled is usually provided from the organizational fields as well as from the results fields.

In the self-evaluation report, the course provider describes how compliance with the various criteria defined in the QANU protocol is measured, or in other words which indicators are used in the internal quality assurance process to make results explicit.

In the **results fields**, quantitative or qualitative indicators ('targets') are formulated which are measured to determine whether the organizations own objectives are met. If they are not, the plans made have to be adjusted. There are many possible ways of measuring the indicators, e.g. by analysis of statistics, surveys, panel discussions, benchmarking, peer review. More informal qualitative ways such as team evaluations or discussions with colleagues from abroad can also be used to make results explicit. These activities are mainly related to the **Check** and **Act** steps of the quality cycle.

The quality of education also depends on that of the educational processes involved, in particular in the fields of strategy, planning and policy. This brings us to the **organizational fields** of the above diagram, where the staff responsible for the programme find evidence of the quality of the processes involved by analysis of the measures taken to reach the various objectives such as quality assurance systems, teacher training, admission policy, methods and equipment, and to the **Plan** and **Do** steps in the quality cycle.

C.2 External assessment

The external assessment panel will have to take the quality requirements set by the various stakeholders (students, future employers, the authorities and the academic world) into account in its assessment. The assessment protocol describes which aspects of quality have to be taken into consideration in this context. The panel decides on the basis of its expert knowledge whether the programme meets the basic quality criteria. This decision is based on the data on the programme presented in the self-evaluation report and on the panel's own findings made during the site visit. Support in the decision-making process is provided by a domain-specific frame of reference (see C.2.1), which defines in detail the basic quality criteria for the field covered by the programme. The panel lays down its decision in an assessment report, which is submitted to the NVAO, giving reasons for its decisions which would be understandable to an outsider.

The NVAO uses the assessment report as a basis for its decision as to whether or not to grant the programme accreditation. The assessment must meet stringent requirements, in view of the far-reaching consequences attached to it. The following aspects are particularly important in this context:

- the domain-specific frame of reference;
- the expertise of the panel;
- the independence of the panel;
- the panel's working procedure;
- the panel's final report (the assessment report).

QANU structures the external assessment procedure to ensure that the requirements on the panel's expertise and independence are met.

C.2.1 The domain-specific frame of reference

The general assessment protocol only becomes meaningful when the domain-specific details are filled in. A domain-specific frame of reference used by the external panel as the point of departure for its assessment is developed for each programme or group of programmes within a given academic field.

Since the introduction of the Bologna process, it has become more and more common for programmes to develop and maintain their own frame of reference in a national or international context. One example is the Framework Plan (1994) for medical education, another is the EAPAA criteria for public administration studies, while a third is the development of common frameworks for curricula in the context of the Tuning project. QANU will use the results of these processes in the formulation of the domain-specific frame of reference. Frames of reference made in this way are currently only available for a limited number of programmes, but more will doubtless be produced in the future in view of the importance of domain-specific frames of reference in the harmonization of qualifications in the European Higher Education Area.

While QANU will make use of such resources but retains the ultimate responsibility for the frame of reference used in the assessment of degree programmes. The following procedure will be followed in this context:

- QANU formulates a draft domain-specific frame of reference (making use of existing models where available) at an appropriate moment in time;
- QANU submits the draft frame of reference to international external experts in the academic field in question for review;
- The chairman and other members of the external assessment panel (if known) will participate in this review;

- members of the VSNU's discipline committee for the academic field in question will also be consulted.

Use may be made e.g. of the following when formulating a frame of reference:

- frames of reference used in previous assessments;
- frames of reference used by colleagues abroad;
- the products of thematic network projects;
- the products of the Tuning project;
- benchmark standards such as those formulated by the QAA in the UK.

The frame of reference will in any case contain a global description of the domain-specific qualifications to be produced by the programme, with special reference to:

- the minimum requirements as regards learning outcomes and qualifications for a bachelor's and master's programme in the academic field in question, including:
 - the knowledge and skills a graduate would be expected to possess after completing the bachelor's or master's degree programme;
 - specific professional qualifications;
- the fields of knowledge and perspectives to be considered in connection with the learning outcomes;
- specific skills associated with the academic field in question;
- specific academic attitude to be expected within the academic field in question.
- domain-specific features of the programme such as practicals, excursions, requirements to be met by graduation project, etc.

As mentioned above, the domain-specific frame of reference is formulated by QANU. The assessment panel will decide during its first meeting whether it wants to add a particular focus of its own.

C.2.2 The assessment panel

C.2.2.1 Independence of the panel

The panel must be completely independent in its assessment of the programme. No conflicts of interest or dependences of any kind are allowed. The independence of the panel is guaranteed by the procedures described in Appendix 2, 'Independence of panel members'. The chairmen and members of the panel must sign the Statement of Independence that forms part of this appendix.

C.2.2.2 Composition of the panel

Strict demands are made on the expert knowledge, authority and independence of the assessment panel. QANU is responsible for monitoring these demands and ensuring that panel members meet them. Evidence of this assurance is provided to the NVAO.

When determining the composition of the panel, QANU works on the principle that the following expertises should in any case be represented:

- **Domain-specific expertise** The panel has the expertise needed to assess the content of the programmes under review, to determine their orientation (higher professional education or academic education) and to appraise them from the viewpoint of professional practice and potential employers.

- **Educational expertise** The panel has the expertise needed to judge the adequacy of the teaching and learning environment.
- **Management and organization expertise** The panel has the expert knowledge in the field of the management and organization of institutions of higher education needed to assess how effectively the programme is organized and to evaluate the financial and HR boundary conditions.
- **Audit expertise** The panel has expertise in the field of quality assessment and auditing.
- **International expertise** The panel is able to place the programme in an international setting. At least one of the panel members with domain-specific expertise is a foreigner or a Dutch citizen who has lived abroad for a long time.
- **Student's perspective** At least one member of the panel is a student.
- **Knowledge of higher education and educational policy in the Netherlands** The panel has expertise in the field of Dutch higher education and higher education policy.
- **Special expertise** Where necessary, e.g. when the programme under review offers special forms of education, the panel's range of expertise will cover the field in question. QANU monitors the presence of this special expertise. For example, when the panel has to assess a distance-learning programme, an expert in this field will be added to the panel.

The expert knowledge of the panel members will be supplemented and reinforced by that of the secretary to the panel, who is appointed by QANU. He or she will have expertise in the field of external quality assessment and auditing, based on experience and/or training.

QANU is responsible for monitoring the profile and the composition of the assessment panels. It consults the universities involved and the relevant discipline committee within the VSNU about the desirability and necessity of including specific expertises and about the right way of putting the panel together. The panel's assessment report will include the curricula vitae of the members as evidence that the panel has the right profile.

Panel chairmen are expected to be able to give effective leadership to the team of experts under them, and to be prepared to use the QANU protocol as a guideline for panel activities.

The size of the assessment panel will depend to a certain extent on the width of the academic field to be covered. It may be stated in general, however, that the panel should have at least four and at most six members (including the student member) per programme under review.

C.2.2.3 Appointment of panel members

QANU will prepare an inventory of potential panel members. It will ask the faculty boards in question, among others, to submit lists of potential candidates for the posts of chairman and member of the panel, bearing in mind the list of required expertises given in the previous section. A curriculum vitae of each candidate is provided, together with a statement that he or she has no links with the programme(s) under review. QANU may also consult sister organizations abroad, the relevant discipline committees within the VSNU and key figures within the field in question about possible additions to the overall list of candidates.

QANU then selects a possible chairman from the overall list of candidates and the weighted order of preference following from the consultations held. This candidate is approached, and on acceptance of the post of chairman will work closely together with QANU in selecting the other panel members.

QANU submits the names of the chairman and the other panel members to the relevant discipline committee within the VSNU and the faculty boards involved, and asks whether they have serious and well-founded objections to any of the names put forward. Only when such objections exist, QANU will reconsider the composition of the committee.

The board of QANU will officially appoint the assessment panel.

C.2.2.4 Remuneration of panel members

The panel members receive remuneration from QANU for the activities they perform. The board of QANU will determine the level of this remuneration. Panel members submit declarations of travel and accommodation costs to QANU.

C.2.3 The panel's working procedure

The following phases may be distinguished in the work of an external assessment panel:

- the preparations preceding the panel's first meeting;
- the panel's first meeting;
- the visit(s) paid by panel to the programmes under review;
- the panel's final meeting(s).

The present QANU protocol gives guidelines for assessment activities. The panel is expected to follow these.

C.2.3.1 Preparations for the first meeting

Studying the self-evaluation reports

The self-evaluation reports on the programmes under review will be sent to the panel members no later than six weeks before the first meeting. Before the reports are sent off, the secretary of the panel will check them for completeness and content.

The panel members will study the self-evaluation reports and will send the secretary, no later than three weeks before the first meeting, a list of questions to be asked during the site visit. The panel members can also indicate what supplementary information about the programme needs to be requested.

The secretary will make a structured survey of the questions suggested by the panel members, and will ensure that the supplementary information requested about the programmes is supplied.

Studying graduation projects

Graduation projects are important assessment tools, since they help the panel members to gain insight into the content and level of the programme. They reflect how well the student can apply the knowledge, skills and attitude acquired during the studies to the independent planning and execution of a task of current relevance. By reviewing the content of a number of graduation projects and the grades assigned to them by the teaching staff of the programme under review, the panel also gains an insight into the standards and criteria applied by the teaching staff and hence into the way the teaching staff monitor the achievement of the learning outcomes expected within the framework of the programme.

As soon as the self-evaluation reports are available, the secretary in consultation with the chairman will select an appropriate number of graduation projects from the list of 25 such projects⁵ for each programme under review. The idea here is to give each panel member two graduation projects per programme to study, one of which should be taken from the group of projects awarded the highest grades and the other from the group with the lowest grades.

The secretary will ask the institution responsible for the programmes in question to send him the selected graduation project reports, and will distribute them among the panel members on receipt.

Comparison of self-evaluation reports and international settings

As part of the preparations for the first meeting, the secretary will prepare a digest of the main lines of the various self-evaluation reports for the use of the panel members. This digest will in any case analyse, compare and contrast the following points:

- the learning outcomes and qualifications of the various programmes under review;
- the structure of the programmes;
- the internal quality assurance systems set up to monitor the quality of the programmes;
- the role of the programme committee;
- the role of the examination committee.

Comparative quantitative data on e.g. the intake and student success rates of the programmes will also be presented in tabular form.

The secretary will also make an initial attempt to describe the international setting of the programmes under review on the basis of the information provided in the self-evaluation reports and relevant information which is available (e.g. the results of the European Tuning project and the benchmarking standards of the QAA in the UK).

C.2.3.2 The panel's first meeting

The assessment panel will meet for the first time shortly before it is due to visit the programmes under review. This first meeting allows the panel to:

- prepare for its review activities;
- discuss and define the domain-specific frame of reference;
- discuss the self-evaluation reports for the various programmes;
- plan the visits to be made.

Instruction of panel

The chairman and members of the assessment panel need to be well informed about the framework within which they are working and the procedures this entails. They will be instructed on these matters by a QANU representative during their first meeting, when particular attention will be paid to the following points:

- quality assessment within the accreditation system: the requirements and expectations of universities and the NVAO;

⁵ Or all graduation projects from the past five years, if fewer than 25 are available for the period in question.

- use of the assessment protocol: interpretation of and testing compliance with the criteria for assessment of degree programmes;
- the approach to be taken during the site visits (attitude, guidelines for the interviews etc.);
- developing audit skills when required;
- the function and use of the checklist in decision-making;
- the function of the decision rules;
- the presentation of evidence to back up decisions;
- the formulation and verbal presentation of the preliminary findings.

Discussion and definition of frame of reference

The preliminary frame of reference prepared by QANU (see C.2.1) will be presented to the assessment panel for discussion. The panel may introduce changes or additions if necessary.

Discussion of self-evaluation reports

The panel will discuss the self-evaluation reports for the programmes under review, with reference to the comparative digest prepared by the secretary and the queries and comments from the panel members among other things. The aim of this initial discussion is to formulate queries and comments that can be put to the staff responsible for the programme(s) under review during the visits.

Planning of the visits to be made

During the meeting, the assessment panel will if necessary make further arrangements about:

- the precise division of tasks;
- the way to deal with specific questions which might be put to the panel;
- the response to possible requests for assessment of special quality features.

C.2.4 Site visits

The assessment panel will visit the sites where the programmes under review are given in order to reach a definitive decision about the quality of these programmes. QANU and the university in question will agree the time and duration of the visit well in advance.

The panel has a two-fold task during such visits. Firstly, it should verify the statements made in the self-evaluation report. And secondly, it should assess the basic quality of the programme(s) with reference to the general assessment protocol and the domain-specific frame of reference.

When checking the statements made in the self-evaluation report, the panel observes the actual situation and determines whether this situation is adequately described in the self-evaluation report. This is done by:

- interviewing representatives of various groups involved in the programme(s), including management, teaching staff, support services, students, graduates and employers;
- studying relevant documents which are made available for review, including recent evaluation reports, student surveys, recent minutes of the programme committee,

policy notes, development plans, lecture notes, readers and textbooks currently used by students, examination papers;

- inspecting facilities used by the programme such as lecture theatres and tuition rooms, libraries and laboratories.

The final decision as to the quality of the programme is reached by:

- filling in the checklist (see C.2.4.2);
- applying the decision-making rules (see C.2.4.3).

C.2.4.1 Review timetable

During its visit, the assessment panel will talk to representatives of various groups involved with the programme(s) under review. Several programmes (in general, bachelor's and master's degree programmes all derived from a single old style programme) may be assessed during a single visit. The interviews are governed by the following rules:

- as far as possible, the entire panel attends all interviews;
- the composition of the groups representing students and teachers is determined in consultation between the panel and the programme coordinator. Efforts are made to have groups that are as representative as possible, but they must not be too large;
- the panel decides who it wishes to interview;
- teachers or other staff are not present during the interviews with student representatives;
- the panel has a visiting hour where students, teachers and other members of staff can voice concerns confidentially.

The panel interviews the compilers of the self-evaluation report(s) first of all, so that it can ask for elucidation of passages that are unclear and further explanation on certain points.

EXAMPLE OF A TIMETABLE FOR REVIEW OF ONE PROGRAMME OR A NUMBER OF RELATED PROGRAMMES

Day 1

4:00 – 6:00 pm: preparatory meeting of assessment panel, for:

- discussion of the self-evaluation report(s) of the programme(s) under review;
- discussion of the graduation project(s) of the programme(s) under review;
- discussion and finalization of the panel's draft report of the previous visit (if any).

7:00 pm: dinner for assessment panel together with a representative of the Executive Board of the university, the Dean of the faculty, the programme director and the assessment coordinator.

Day 2

9:00 am – 5:00 pm: interviews with:

- the compilers of the self-evaluation report;
- student representatives;
- teachers' representatives;
- the programme committee (teachers and students separately);
- the examination committee;

- student advisor, internship coordinator and other support staff;
- the faculty board and the programme director.

7:00 pm: dinner for panel members, rounding-off discussion, and preliminary conclusions.

Day 3

9:00 – 10:30 am: interviews continued, plus visiting hour if appropriate

10:30 – 11:30 am: tour of facilities (lecture theatre, tuition rooms, library, laboratories).

11:30 am – 12:30 pm: final interview with faculty board and programme director.

1:30 – 4:30 pm: formulation of preliminary findings.

4:30 – 5:00 pm: verbal communication of preliminary findings; end of visit.

The interviews with students should be held early on in the visit, so that any problems or criticisms raised can be discussed in subsequent interviews with teachers and other responsible parties. The main objective of the interviews with the students is to throw light on the feasibility of the programme, the study load, the teaching quality of the staff, the coherence of the programme, students' acquaintance with the objectives of the programme, strong and weak points in the organization of the education (cancellation of lectures; availability of teaching aids, facilities etc.).

Interviews are also held separately with the teacher and student members of the programme committee. Important points for consideration here are internal quality assurance and how innovations are introduced in the curriculum.

The interviews with the examination committee are aimed at finding out how the quality of the interim and final examinations is guaranteed.

Finally, the interviews with a study coordinator or student advisor are intended to give a clear picture of the supervision, advice and information provided for students in the course of their studies.

If the panel considers it necessary, interviews can also be held with representatives of other groups (alumni, doctoral students, support staff etc.).

Time is also set-aside during the visit for inspection of facilities such as lecture theatres, tuition rooms, laboratories and practical rooms and libraries and for studying additional documents. The panel should follow the rules given below in this connection:

- the facilities should in any case be inspected if the self-evaluation report and the interviews with students indicate that the facilities are inadequate;
- supplementary documentation will be studied if the self-evaluation report and the interviews call for this;
- the panel can split up during the inspection of the facilities and/or the study of supplementary documentation;
- while the panel members are inspecting the facilities or reading supplementary documentation, the chairman and secretary can hold a visiting hour open to all students and teachers (but those interested in attending must make an appointment in advance).

The final interview with the Dean of the faculty and the programme management gives the panel the opportunity to exchange views about its preliminary findings and to get feedback on its appraisal of the programme.

The visit ends with a meeting of the panel lasting about three hours, to allow the panel to reach a preliminary decision on the programme(s) under review.

Finally, the panel presents a verbal account of its preliminary findings. The Executive Board of the university, faculty staff and students are invited to attend this presentation.

C.2.4.2 Use of the checklist

The assessment protocol forms the basis of a checklist prepared for the panel's use during site visits. This checklist has the following structure:

Topic	Facet
Objectives of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - domain-specific requirements - level (bachelor's or master's) - orientation (academic)
Details of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - requirements on academic education - relationship between objectives and content - coherence - study load - intake requirements - scope and duration - agreement between form and content - tests and examinations
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - requirements on academic staff - staffing level - staff quality
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accommodation and equipment - tutoring facilities
Internal quality assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluation of results - improvement measures - involvement
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - level achieved - student success rate

optional topic:

internationalization	- internationalization and external contacts
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Each programme is assessed facet by facet, with reference to the criteria laid down in B.1 above.

The panel is in principle free to add items to the checklist, but not to remove them. The checklist is a useful instrument for a number of purposes, in particular for:

- helping individual panel members to formulate their opinions on the various facets of the programme with reference to the various criteria;
- helping the panel as a whole to identify differences of opinion as a basis for discussion;
- helping the chairman to check whether all topics have been dealt with during an assessment;
- helping the secretary to draw up the final assessment report on the programme under review.

Once filled in with details of a given programme, the checklists must be treated as confidential documents for use by the committee only.

C.2.4.3 Decision-making rules for final assessment

The task of the assessment panel is to give an overall assessment of the quality of the degree programme under review, on the basis of which the NVAO can decide whether to grant or withhold accreditation. The programme is considered to have passed the assessment if it receives a rating of 'adequate' or better for each of the six topics defined in the NVAO assessment protocol (see B.1 above and the checklist in the previous section). Any additional topics are left out of consideration here. If one or more of the six topics receives a rating of 'poor', the programme is considered to have failed the assessment.

The rating for each topic is arrived at by summing the weighted appraisals for the individual facets of that topic.

Facets are scored on a four-point scale, using the ratings poor, adequate, good and excellent. As indicated in the following table, 'poor' means that quality on this point is below the acceptable level, and 'adequate' that it has achieved this level. The ratings 'good' and 'excellent' indicate higher quality levels. They are not intended for ranking programmes, but as a means of highlighting examples of successful policy and best practice.

1	poor	the quality level is below the basic standard
2	adequate	the quality level corresponds to the basic standard for university degree programmes
3	good	the quality level exceeds expectations, thanks to well-thought-out policy
4	excellent	the quality level is very good in all respects and can withstand comparison with international competitors. This is an example of best practice

A 'good' or 'excellent' rating for one facet can be used to cancel out a 'poor' rating for another facet of the same topic, with the proviso that if the analysis shows that the 'poor' facet is seriously below standard, this cannot be compensated. Convincing arguments must be given for compensating one poor rating with a good or excellent rating elsewhere in the topic.

A 'poor' rating for a given topic cannot be compensated by a good or excellent rating for another topic.

The above rules may be summarized as follows:

Assessment level	Procedure
criteria per facet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the panel evaluates compliance with the various criteria and gives an overall rating for the facet as a whole - compensation is possible
facets per topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the panel scores each facet on a four point scale - the panel weights the facets to arrive at an overall score for the topic as a whole - a poor score on one facet can be compensated by a good or excellent score on another facet of the same topic
topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all topics must have at least an adequate rating - no compensation possible - overall decision on programme as a whole

C.2.4.4 The degree programme in national and international perspective

Dutch law and the NVAO assessment protocol stipulate that the work of the assessment panel includes comparing the degree programme under review with similar programmes, preferably in an international context. This does not mean, however, that the panel has to carry out a full-blown international comparative study every time it assesses a degree programme. Such studies are very time-consuming, even if they are restricted to the programme's objectives and the intended final qualifications rather than covering the whole curriculum. Another question is whether such a comparison should be limited to one arbitrarily chosen programme in some foreign country or should include several programmes in several different countries.

The panel's task is to decide whether the programme measures up to national and international standards as regards its objectives, learning outcomes and intended final qualifications, and whether the programme level (bachelor's or master's) is in line with an internationally accepted framework.

Assessing the quality of a programme at a national level is not a problem in the case of a nationwide assessment, since information about comparable degree programmes are readily available. Determining the programme's status in an international (in the first instance European) context is more difficult, however. The information on which the panel can base its decision on this point will have to come in the first instance from the self-evaluation report, which should show the extent to which the staff responsible for the programme make use of international benchmarks and contacts and try to follow international trends in the formulation of the programme's objectives and the intended final qualifications. Indications that can be used to reach a decision on this point include:

- the contacts established by the university in question with other universities abroad in setting up the programme;
- the participation of the university in SOCRATES/ERASMUS thematic networks;
- the existence of student and staff exchange schemes;
- the presence of an international dimension in the programme.

The self-evaluation report must also contain evidence to back up the claim that the intended final qualifications are in line with internationally accepted descriptors of the level expected from a bachelor's or master's degree. The Dublin descriptors given in Appendix 1, and any future versions of these that may be developed, may be regarded as the internationally accepted level.

Apart from the data given in the self-evaluation report, the panel can make use of other sources of information to place a degree programme in an international setting. The utility of these sources will vary from subject to subject. The information sources that come into consideration here include the following:

- results of European Tuning projects;
- results of transnational quality assessments;
- quality assessments by QANU's sister organizations abroad;
- benchmark standards from the QAA in the UK (not available for all disciplines);
- frames of reference used by foreign assessment and accreditation agencies such as ABET and EQUIS;
- the expert knowledge of foreign members of the assessment panel.

C.2.5 The report

The assessment panel records its findings in a report which consists of two parts, giving

- general information and
- specific information about the programme under review.

C.2.5.1 The general part of the report

The general part of the report contains:

- A. Details of the programme(s) under review
- B. Description of the assessment panel's working method
- C. Evidence of the panel's independence
- D. Evidence of the expertise and authority of panel members
- E. The domain-specific frame of reference
- F. An indication of the status of the programme(s) under review in comparison with similar programmes, from a national and international perspective
- G. The panel's general findings
- H. Comparative numerical data on all programmes under review (if available)

B, C, D, E and F are obligatory according to the terms of the NVAO accreditation framework.

C.2.5.2 Programme part of the report

This part of the report should contain at least the following information:

- name of programme, CROHO number, variants offered (full-time, part-time, dual);
- assessment of the topics:
 - objectives
 - programme
 - staffing
 - facilities
 - internal quality assurance
 - resultsand the associated facets;
- details of the decision-making rules used and a tabular presentation of the ratings assigned per facet within each topic and per topic;
- overall assessment.

When a programme is offered in different variants (full-time, part-time, dual), the report must also make it clear that each variant was assessed (and approved).

When a programme is given at different locations, the report must make it clear that each location was tested for compliance with the quality criteria.

The panel will ensure that the institution responsible for the programme(s) under review receives a copy of the report for the correction of factual errors. At this point, the institution is given the option of withdrawing from the assessment process.

The board of QANU checks each assessment report for completeness, independence and argumentation.

The NVAO assesses the report to determine whether it provides an adequate basis for the decision as to whether the programme is suitable for accreditation. Stringent demands are made on the proper argumentation that underlies the judgements made in the report. Description and analysis of the relevant facts must lead via a clear, logical argument to the final conclusion. The panels are therefore requested to state which indicators, facts or other evidence were used to support the assessment.

C.2.5.3 Publication of the report

The assessment report is suitable for publication, thus providing a means of informing all interested parties about the quality of the degree programme(s) in question. The decision on whether or not to publish is taken by the Executive Boards of the relevant universities. Article 1.18 (Quality assurance) of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act [Dutch abbreviation WHW] states not only that the executive boards of institutions of higher education should take steps to ensure regular external assessment of their degree programmes, but also that the results of such assessments must be made public.

In principle, the assessment report is made public at the moment when the application for accreditation is submitted.

C.2.5.4 The panel's recommendations

When the review begins, the host university is given the choice between various ways of reporting the assessment panel's recommendations, viz.:

- a) Recommendations are included in the assessment report. The assessment panel formulates a judgement on each topic and facet defined in the assessment protocol, with reasons. Using the decision-making rules described in C.2.4.3, the panel then arrives at a final overall assessment of the quality of the programme (Pass or Fail). Alongside the assessment for each topic and facet, but separate from it, the panel makes recommendations where appropriate about possible improvement measures that could be used to remove shortcomings noted by the panel.
- b) The recommendations are not included in the assessment report but are communicated to the university in question in a confidential management letter.
- c) The university states that it does not wish to receive recommendations, so these are not reported.

QANU prefers to follow the same procedure for all programmes in a given inspection cluster.

C.2.6 Management letter

If the Executive Board of the university in question so desires, the assessment panel will put its recommendations in a management letter. This gives the panel, acting in an advisory role under the authority of QANU, the opportunity to make explicit suggestions about how observed shortcomings could be dealt with.

A management letter is a confidential document that is not included in the panel's final report. It is only written and sent to the Executive Board of the university in question if the latter requests this in advance.

C.2.7 Discharge of panel

The panel is discharged after it has submitted its reports.

C.2.8 The secretary

In addition to his or her duties as secretary, described below, he or she also acts as project leader during the review. The project leader

- supervises the formulation of the frame of reference;
- checks the self-evaluation report for completeness and compliance with the requirements made on it;
- maintains contact with the university about the planning of the review;
- performs various preparatory activities for the panel, including a comparative analysis of a number of aspects of the self-evaluation reports;
- makes preparations for the panel's first visit;
- files the documents referring to the assessment process.

Once the panel has been installed, the secretary has the following three-fold task:

- *to monitor the panel's working procedure and compliance with the assessment protocol*

The secretary is the connecting link between QANU and the panel. His or her primary responsibility is to monitor the assessment process. Is the panel following the guidelines laid down for it? Is it maintaining its independence? Are agreed procedures followed? Are all facets of quality considered?

- *to support the panel with specific expertise*

The secretary supports the panel in the fulfilment of its duties. As the chairman's right-hand man, he or she plays an active role in drafting the assessment reports. Although not formally a member of the panel, the secretary does contribute specific skills in the fields of quality assessment and policy development in higher education.

- *to archive the audit trail.* The secretary is responsible for keeping the documents relating to each assessment at least until the end of the accreditation procedure.

QANU has a training and supervision programme to prepare junior secretaries for their task.

Appendix 1. Description of bachelor's and master's levels ('Dublin descriptors')

	Qualifications of Bachelors	Qualifications of Masters
Knowledge and understanding	Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and supersedes their general secondary education, and are typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study.	Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context.
Applying knowledge and understanding	Can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study.	Can apply their knowledge and understanding and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study; have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity.
Making judgements	Have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, academic or ethical issues.	Can formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, that rather include reflection on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements.
Communication	Can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously.
Learning skills	Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.	Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.

Appendix 2. Independence of panel members

0. Introduction

QANU-panels are expected to assess the quality of university degree courses or research institutes and research programmes in an authoritative, critical and independent way. Therefore, these panels must conform to high standards of quality. Safeguards are necessary to make sure that these standards can be met and to demonstrate that they are actually fulfilled.

The QANU safeguards are described in this document, which contains

- a description of the general safeguards
- a description of specific measures
- rules of conduct
- a declaration.

The independence of the panels and panel members means that their judgement is not influenced by the institution or programme under review or by any other interested parties. An important safeguard in this respect is the disclosure procedure, which means that any potential conflict of interest, bias or undue influence is reported and undesirable effects are minimised through clear agreements. This is not only aimed at finding and preventing *actual* undesirable influences, but also to detect what could give *the impression* of undue influence. A number of evidently undesirable situations (such as financial interests) are explicitly forbidden. The rules of conduct (section 3) describe how to deal with such situations.

1. General safeguards

General safeguards regarding the independence of panels are:

- a) there is a preference to assess comparable institutes or programmes together in one review
- b) candidates for review panels are preferably submitted through organisations with a wider scope than the institutes or programmes under review. The QANU decides upon the composition of the panels
- c) avoiding or counterbalancing potential bias (of a personal, organisational or academic nature) is an important consideration in the composition of the panels
- d) panel members who are (or were) committed to institutes or programmes under review, do not participate in the assessment thereof
- e) the committee as a whole is responsible for the definitive assessments
- f) the definitive assessments are presented in draft to the participating institutes for factual correction and to check whether adequate use was made of all relevant information
- g) there is a procedure for appeal against the assessments.

For research assessments the following additional safeguards apply:

- h) all programmes under review are always submitted to two panel members (as first and second reviewers)
- i) the first and second reviewers carry out their preliminary assessments of the programmes independently from each other.

2. Specific measures

QANU has also taken a number of more specific measures to guarantee the independence of the panels.

- a) QANU has guidelines for the composition of the panels, which describe the procedures and criteria.
- b) QANU has rules of conduct which panel members must follow during the review process (see section 3). In these rules the importance of the independence of the review is stressed, the notion is defined and rules are set.
- c) QANU requires that programmes or institutes under review report any potential conflict of interest, bias or undue influence regarding candidates for panels.
- d) QANU has an "independence form" for prospective panel members. By signing this declaration the members commit themselves to maintain an independent position during the review and not to allow undue influence to affect their judgement. Completing and signing the independence form is a requirement for installation as a panel member.
- e) the QANU-protocol requires that the principle of independence and its implications are explained in the installation meeting of a panel.
- f) potential conflicts or tensions that are reported in the independence form (or by other means) are discussed in the committee and an assessment is made to what extent these could unduly affect the judgement (or appear to do so). Measures are then taken to avoid undesirable effects. Such measures range from completely or partially excluding a panel member from the review, to carefully counterbalancing or otherwise neutralising undesirable effects. The report states how potential tensions were detected and how these were dealt with in order to warrant the independence of the judgement.
- g) the QANU protocol requires that the members reconfirm or update their declaration during the final committee meeting and state that they have actually fulfilled the requirements.

3. Rules of conduct for QANU review committees

1. A panel member must avoid any influence in the assessment from persons or parties committed to the programme or institute under review, or from other interested parties.
2. A panel member must maintain sufficient distance from personal ideas, convictions or preferences about the academic area under review.
3. A panel member judges primarily on the basis of:
 - the domain specific frame of reference provided by or on behalf of QANU, and
 - for education:
 - the QANU-protocol for the review of academic programmes, based on the NVAO⁶ accreditation framework for existing degree courses in higher education
 - for research:
 - *The Standard Evaluation Protocol 2003-2009 for Public Research Organisations.*

In case several programmes or institutes are assessed by one panel, these protocols and frames of reference and the criteria they contain are used uniformly for all programmes or institutes.

4. A panel member uses the following information for the assessment:
 - the self study and annexed documentation provided by the programme or institute
 - any additional data provided at the request of the committee
 - the interviews held in the course of the review
 - observations made during site visits.
5. The assessment made by a panel member must conform to quality standards that prevail in the scientific world in general and in the relevant academic disciplines in particular. Relevant aspects in this respect are:
 - expertise and professionalism
 - independence and objectivity
 - carefulness and consistency
 - transparency and absence of bias.
6. A panel member does not use information gathered in the course of the review for personal purposes. Confidential information is treated appropriately.
7. A panel member who is (or was) closely involved with the institute or programme under review, does not participate in that particular assessment or in the interviews concerned.
8. A panel member does not accept presents or remunerations from the programme or institute under review.
9. A panel member does not have financial or commercial stakes in the programme or institute under review, nor in any associated companies or organisations.

⁶ NVAO: *the Dutch-Flemish accreditation organisation*

Independence form

This declaration is intended for persons nominated for appointment as a member of a QANU review panel. The QANU review panels are expected to assess the quality of study programmes or research institutes and research programmes in an authoritative, critical and independent way. The independence implies

- that the judgement is made without undue influence from the institute, the programme or other stakeholders, and
- that the panel members judge without bias, personal preference or personal interest.

Situations that must be reported include:

- family relations or other personal relationships
- personal involvement
- confidential inside information
- peer pressure
- expected personal benefit
- conflicts or cooperation with personnel, programmes or institutes.

Signing the declaration of independence is a requirement for installation as a member of the panel.

Independence and Disclosure form for members of QANU panels

1. Conflict of interest assessment

In the light of the QANU policies and standards, do you perceive any risk of conflict of interest or serious appearance of such conflict in your participation in the QANU-review?

Yes

No

If the answer is yes, please provide a brief description and analysis of the potential for conflict.

2. Declaration about financial interests

"I declare that I have no financial links with any of the persons, programmes or institutes under review (other than disclosed under 1), and that I have not accepted and will not accept any financial or other remunerations from outside sources for my participation in the QANU-review. I declare that I will report any offers of such remuneration to the chairman of the review committee."

3. Declaration of independence

"I have read the principles and rules applying to this QANU assessment and I declare that I will follow these to the best of my ability and that I will judge without influence from the institute, programme or other stakeholders, and without bias, personal preference or personal benefit."

Name: Date: Signature:

Note: If your situation with respect to potential conflict of interest changes in the course of the review, you are obligated to submit an updated disclosure statement. Information provided in this disclosure form will be restricted to authorised persons.

List of abbreviations

ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
CROHO	Centraal Register Opleidingen Hoger Onderwijs = Central Register of Higher Education Programmes
EAPAA	European Association for Public Administration Accreditation
ECOS	Erkenningscommissie Onderzoekscholen = Accreditation Board for Research Schools
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ENQA	European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQUIS	European Quality Improvement System
FTE	Full time equivalent
HR	Human resources
ICT	Information and communication technology
INK	Instituut Nederlandse Kwaliteit = Netherlands Quality Institute
INQAAHE	International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
KUO	Kengetallen Universitair Onderwijs = University Education Indicators; also the name of a VSNU working group responsible for coordinating the collection of such data
KNAW	Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen = Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie = Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization
NWO	Nederlandse Organization voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek = Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research
QANU	Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
VAI	Visitating and Assessing Institution
VSNU	Vereniging van Universiteiten = Association of Universities in the Netherlands
WHW	Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek = Dutch Higher Education and Research Act