

External Quality Assurance in The Netherlands and Flanders

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Overview

- Introducing the NVAO
- The Dutch QA system
- Institutional reviews in the Flemish HE system

Introducing the NVAO

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- In the wake of the implementation of the Bologna Declaration in the Dutch and Flemish HE system, the two Ministers of Education in 2001 - 2002 decided to set up a joint accreditation: NVAO - *Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders*
- NVAO was established by the Dutch and the Flemish Parliament (Treaty ratified in 2005), is included in HE legislation in both countries and has authority to act under both Dutch and Flemish law

Governance of NVAO

- Bi-national organisation
- Publicly funded
 - Annual subsidies of the Netherlands & Flanders (approx. 60/40%)
 - HEIs pay for procedures
- Accountable
 - Committee of ministers
 - Parliaments
 - Independence in procedures and decision-making
- Organisation
 - Board < Executive Board
 - Policy advisors and staff supported by Management

NVAO's scope of work

- Recognition of new higher education institutions
- Initial accreditation
 - (New) programmes that want to offer a recognised degree
 - All bachelor and master's programmes, associate degrees and research masters
- Accreditation
 - programmes that already offer a recognised degree
- Institutional audits/reviews
- Publication of decisions (and officially recognised degrees)
- Internationalisation

Purpose of NVAO's system

Accountability

- Public demonstration of quality
 - Public reports
 - Necessary for recognition & funding & student grants
- Increase transparency
 - Public register of quality assured, accredited higher education
- Respect institutional autonomy
 - generic, descriptive standards



Enhancement

- Stimulate quality culture
 - Focus on functioning of internal QA system with respect to teaching & learning
 - institutional audit/review
 - programme accreditation
 - Stimulate HE to aim above threshold
 - distinctive quality features; e.g. for internationalisation, entrepreneurship
 - appreciative approach

NVAO: some key data

- NVAO: approx. 45 FTE
- Budget: approx. 7 million euro
- Different assessment fees, published on website
- In NL+FL some 1 million students at approx. 20 research universities, 60 universities of applied sciences/university colleges, and 80 recognised/registered HE providers (mostly private and in the Netherlands)

Processed applications in 2017

	Institutional audits/reviews	New programmes (initial accreditation)	Existing programmes (accreditation)	Total
NL	2	93 (8 withdrawn; 18 conditions)	291 (3 withdrawn; 7 improvement period)	386
FL	18	4	95 (37 improvement period)	117
Total	20	97	386	503

The Dutch QA System

Combination of institutional audits and programme accreditation



Accreditation of new programmes

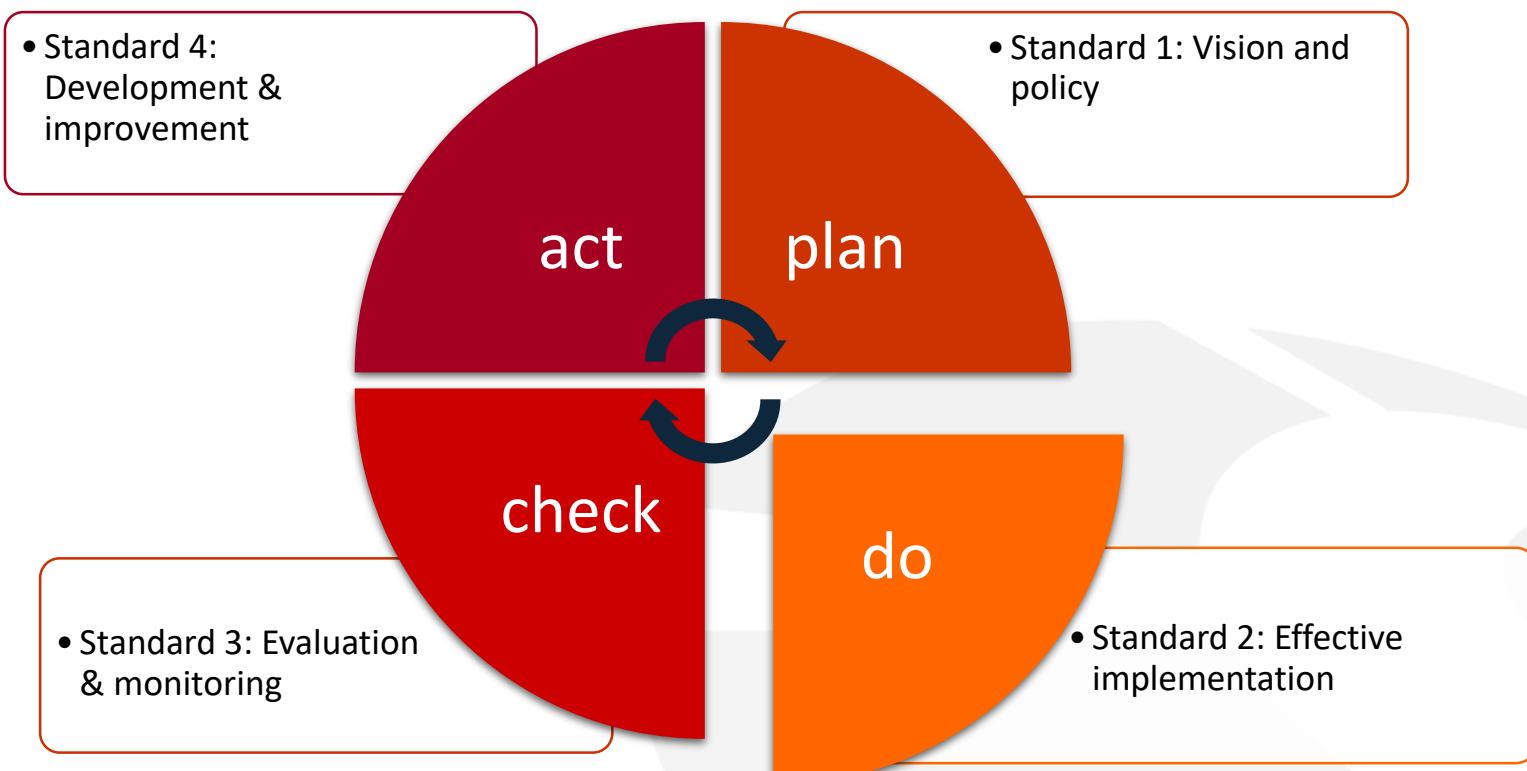
Limited programme assessment	Extensive programme assessment
4 standards	11 standards
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Intended learning outcomes2. Teaching-learning environment3. Student assessment4. Achieved learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intended learning outcomes• <i>Curriculum</i>• <i>Staff</i>• <i>Services and Facilities</i>• <i>Quality assurance</i>• Student assessment• Achieved learning outcomes (assessment after 3 years)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conclusion: positive, positive with conditions, negative• Assessment by NVAO panel; accreditation decision by NVAO Board• Prior ministerial macro-efficiency decision for publicly funded programmes	

Accreditation of existing programmes

Limited programme assessment	Extensive programme assessment
4 standards	11 standards
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Intended learning outcomes2. Teaching-learning environment3. Student assessment4. Achieved learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intended learning outcomes• <i>Curriculum</i>• <i>Staff</i>• <i>Services and Facilities</i>• <i>Quality assurance</i>• Student assessment• Achieved learning outcomes

- Conclusion: excellent, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory (negative or improvement period)
- Assessment carried out by certified secretaries (assessment agencies) hired by HEIs; prior panel approval by NVAO Board; accreditation decision by NVAO Board

Institutional audit



Institutional audit: decision-making

- Meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard
- Overall judgement:
 - Positive: NVAO approval valid for 6 years
 - Conditionally positive: positive judgement within 2 years
 - Negative: HEI cannot apply again for 3 years;
 - extensive programme assessments
 - additional assessments for those programmes which have already had limited assessment
- Internal (hearing) & external (Council of State) appeals possible

Institutional reviews in the Flemish HE system

Overview of Flemish QA System

Universities & University Colleges (18)

- Institutional Review
 - Educational policy
 - Conduct to confirm programme quality
- Accreditation of specific programmes ('full accreditation')
 - New programmes
 - Joint programmes
 - Programmes with limited accreditation period ('in recovery')

All other institutions

- Accreditation of all programmes

NVAO's Appreciative Approach

- A mindset, style, attitude based on contextualisation, empathy and trust in HEIs
- NOT: Focus on what should be done
 - Assessing or prescribing the ‘how’
 - Judging the model
- BUT: Focus on what is and can be
 - Starting point is ‘the own(ed) context’ (of the assessed)
 - Strong, appreciative questions
 - Judging whether the model works
 - Coming to judgements in dialogue, in co-creation

Institutional reviews (2016-2017)

Educational policy & quality culture

- Vision on higher education and its quality as an adequate response to societal challenges
- Adequate implementation to realise policy and support quality
- Effective policy implementation through evaluation and monitoring
- Improvement & innovation policy

Framework
for the Institutional Review
- Flanders 2015-2017

Horizontal trials

Vertical trials

Evaluation report

Overview report on the institutional reviews

Conduct to confirm programme quality

- Focus on quality features
- Assessment on the basis of results and outcomes of “involvement”
- Required involvement of internal & external stakeholders, peers & experts (edu. & prof. field)
- Information regarding the quality of the programme is publicly accessible

Conduct

Advisory report

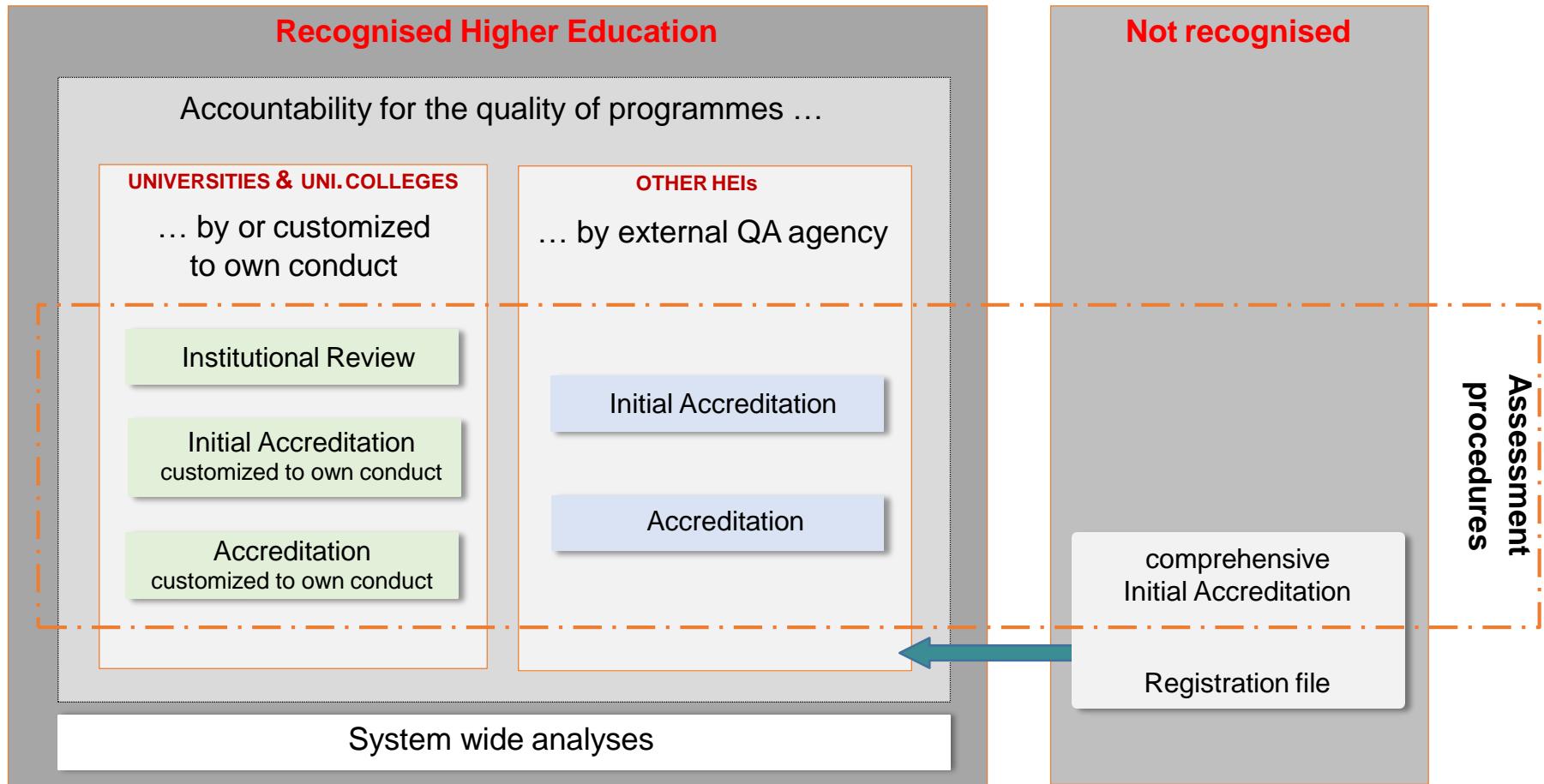
Insights from the institutional reviews

- Strong vision on education & resulting policies
 - Societal challenges are addressed
 - Quality culture is apparent
 - Quality is agenda-setting on all levels
- Conduct of confirming quality of programmes
 - Include external perspectives (stakeholders & experts)
 - Provide valid & traceable public information regarding programme quality

Lessons learned – Appreciative Approach

- Appreciative Approach works well (in Flemish context)
- Not ‘soft’
 - Does not impede critical remarks or judgements
- Requires continuous attention from all involved
 - Thorough (re-)training of panel members
 - New position for NVAO’s process coordinators
 - Guardian of the Appreciative Approach
 - Coach of panel in establishing an appreciative dialogue
 - Institutional openness for dialogue

... THE FUTURE



Quality features

- The programme's learning outcomes constitute a transparent and programme-specific interpretation of the international requirements regarding level, content and orientation.
- The programme's curriculum ties in with the most recent developments in the discipline, takes account of the developments in the professional field, and is relevant to society.
- The staff allocated to the programme provide the students with optimum opportunities for achieving the learning outcomes.
- The programme offers the students adequate and easily accessible services, facilities and counselling.
- The teaching and learning environment encourages the students to play an active role in the learning process and fosters smooth study progress.
- The assessment of students reflects the learning process and concretises the intended learning outcomes.
- The programme provides comprehensive and readable information on all stages of study.
- Information regarding the quality of the programme is publicly accessible.

Thank you very much!

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NVAO

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