

**Quality Assurance in Flanders**

Nina Mares

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Quality assurance system 1991-2006**

- 1<sup>st</sup> level: internal quality assurance and a self-evaluation report
- 2<sup>nd</sup> level: external quality assurance: assessment panel-peers-public report; experts appointed by the rectors' conference; no formal framework
- 3<sup>rd</sup> level: weak meta-evaluation – Flemish Government
- Until 2001 no quantified judgements
- Focus on quality enhancement but no formal follow-up
- No legal consequences for institutions

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Accreditation system 2006-2013**

- 1<sup>st</sup> level: internal quality assurance – self evaluation report
- 2<sup>nd</sup> level: external quality evaluation by a peer review group appointed by the rectors' conference (but EQAR –registered) – formal accreditation framework approved by the government
- 3<sup>rd</sup> level: NVAO- accreditation based on a public assessment report (subject review) – accreditation decision Yes or No
- More focus on accountability
- Legal consequences for funding and degree-awarding power

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### New accreditation system 2013-2021

- Programme accreditation
- Institutional review: review of HEI educational policy plus trials in departments or specific policy issues
- Review commission appointed by the NVAO
- 1<sup>st</sup> review round: 2015-2016: public report, no legal consequences
- 2<sup>nd</sup> review round 2019-2020: legal consequences (in ultimo: the closure of the institution)

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### New accreditation system 2013-2021

- 1<sup>st</sup> level: internal quality assurance – self evaluation report
- 2<sup>nd</sup> level: external quality evaluation by a peer review group appointed by an evaluation agency
- 3<sup>rd</sup> level: NVAO- accreditation based on a public assessment report – accreditation decision Yes or No

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### New accreditation system 2013-2021

- Standards for programme accreditation:
  - Intended learning outcomes that meet the international requirements set by the professional field or by the discipline;
  - Teaching-learning environment: the curriculum (programme specifications), staff, services and facilities enabling students to achieve the learning outcomes;
  - Assessment and achieved learning outcomes: demonstrated by final tests, final projects and the achievements of graduates in postgraduate programmes and on the labour market.

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Judgements

- The judgements are weighted and substantiated:
  - Excellent
  - Good
  - Sufficient
  - Unsatisfactory

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Standards Institutional review

- The vision of the HEI on HE and the policy objectives and targets: policy issues: internationalisation, employability, social dimension, LLL, sustainable development, ...
- The policy processes and instruments in place to realize its policy objectives in an effective way and to improve the quality of teaching & learning;
- The feedback and monitoring systems in particular the internal QA system
- The actions taken to realize the quality improvement and the capacity to change and innovate

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Relation IR and programme accreditation

- If the second IR is concluded 'sufficient' the programme can be accredited on the basis of an internal assessment of the quality: the HEI has to demonstrate that the programme is meeting the quality standards; no formal external quality evaluation; the involvement of international experts is required as well as an international benchmark
- The role of the accreditation agency is limited to a verification whether the internal assessment was valid or not

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- Flemish system: 2 steps after self-evaluation report
  - visitation committee (coordinated by quality assessment agency)
  - accreditation decision by NVAO

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Quality assessment agency

- Organisation of the external assessment of the programmes
- Establishment of an assessment protocol (together with the accreditation organisation)
- Assigned by decree: QA unit of Council of Flemish HEI's (Vlhur) ...

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Quality assessment agency

... **but** HEI's can choose another quality assessment agency:

- Agency must be EQAR-registered or recognised by NVAO
- Possible in 2 cases :
  - International comparability of the programme with other programmes in institutions abroad
  - or
  - Match between expertise of the foreign agency and the specific content of the programme

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Quality assessment agency

System is compromise:

- Government and HEI's wanted no monopoly of the Flemish assessment agency
- Flemish assessment agency was reserved because difficult to judge influence on their tasks if HEI's could choose totally free

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### NVAO

- Assessment of application for accreditation: is the external assessment report according to the rules and complete:
  - Fulfils the format of the assessment protocol
  - Contains assessment according accreditation framework
  - Based on verifiable facts
  - Gives insight into the quality of the composition of assessment committee
- Decision on accreditation

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Accreditation by foreign agency

- NVAO can award accreditation on basis of accreditation from different accreditation organisation
  - Accreditation is conducted according to a comparable methodological approach
  - Length of accreditation remains

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Foreign EQAR-registered agencies

### Limited experiences:

- So far no foreign visitations
- Foreign accreditation decisions: for ex. management schools and veterinary education

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Difficulties / questions

- 'Comparable methodological approach' needs to be used:
  - Presence of the 3 generic quality standards are present
  - Looking at 'Achieved learning outcomes' might be difficult (mostly focus on processes)
  - Student member of visitation committee
  - Visitation report has to be published
- Will HEI's choose for a foreign agency for visitation or for accreditation?
- What does 'accreditation' mean in other countries?

Department of Education and Training  
Division for higher and adult education

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---