

AQU Catalunya Workshop
Design and evaluation of Higher Education
in the Netherlands and Flanders

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Barcelona, 21 May 2007



Design & evaluation of Higher Education in the Netherlands & Flanders

Introduction modern approach QA

- After second world war, an accelerated evolution in industry
- Public and non-profit sector following slowly

Public pressure increases

- Consequences of massification
- Economic crises, tension in relation labour market-training
- Public funds decrease
- Society becomes more emancipated
- Autonomy and accountability
- Globalisation and liberalisation

External assessment of programme (peer review)

Introduction:

Netherlands 1988

Flanders 1991 (universities)
1998 (hogescholen)

External assessment of programme

- self evaluation (by HEI)
- external evaluation= external assessment=
peer review (coordinated by umbrella
organisations)

External assessment of programme

- self evaluation →
reflection, analysis weak/strong,
test agreeing set of criteria →
self evaluation report (SER)
- external evaluation →
independent expert committee →
on basis of SER and site visit →
public evaluation report

Characteristics of extern. assessment system

- evaluation of programmes , not institutions
- improvement (and accountability)
- cyclic system
- cohorts
- protocol umbrella organisation- HEI
- subjects :
 - aims and objectives of the degree curriculum
 - contents and structure programme
 - students, staff and graduates information
 - internationalisation
 - aspects of IQA

Bologna declaration (1999)

- Bachelor-Master structure
- Mobility of students, staff and graduates
- Transparency, compatibility, comparability

Bologna declaration (1999)

“Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies”

Implementation Bologna

Implementation →

- Netherlands 2002
- Flanders 2003

→ Comparable degree structure and common QA system

Higher Education
Netherlands
Flanders

Higher education Netherlands & Flanders

Some key figures

	The Netherlands	Flanders	Total
Inhabitants	>16 million	6 million	>22 million
Universities (public/private/total)	14 / 8 / <u>22</u>	7 / 0 / <u>7</u>	36
Other & Hogescholen (public/private/total)	45 / 68 / <u>113</u>	22 / 7 / <u>29</u>	135
Students	>550 000	>200 000	800 000
Bachelor Progr.	2050	540	2590
Master Progr.	950	730	1630

Higher education Netherlands & Flanders

The Netherlands:

- professional bachelor and master degrees
- academic bachelor and master degrees
- at universities & *hogescholen*

The Flanders:

- professional bachelor degrees
- academic bachelor and master degrees
- prof. ba. degrees: at *hogescholen*
- ma. degr.: at universities & *hogescholen*
- At *hogescholen*: in Association with a university

Higher education Netherlands & Flanders

Netherlands

60/120 ECTS	60/120 ECTS
Professional Master	Academic Master
240 ECTS	180 ECTS
Professional Bachelor	Academic Bachelor

Higher education Netherlands & Flanders

Flanders

	60/120 ECTS
	Academic Master
180 ECTS	180 ECTS
Professional Bachelor	Academic Bachelor

Quality Assurance

Higher Education

Netherlands

Flanders

Quality Assurance Netherlands & Flanders

- Common QA system
- based on accreditation
- by means of an international organisation
- NVAO

Choice for programme accreditation

- maintain positive points of former system
- eliminate negative points of former system
- introduce new accents and points of interest

Choice for programme accreditation

- building on familiar system
- institutions are not ready for evaluation on an higher aggregation level
- some programmes have never been subject to externally evaluation
- Dutch HE system deinstitutionalised
- pressure stakeholders
- maintain comparability programmes

Choice for a common agency

- Dutch and Flemish HE system comparable, even after Bologna implementation
- there was already a cooperation for external evaluations
- same language
- scale size and distances
- international strength and influence

Choice for NVAO

- established by convention as an international organisation governed by public law
- wish of both countries for independent organisation
- balance in autonomy of NVAO and sovereignty of states
- opportunity to set out new land-marks and to leave space for extension

Organisation of the NVAO

Board: 12 members

- Appointed by Dutch & Flemish ministers
- Meets monthly

Executive Board: 4 members

- Part of Board
- Meets weekly

Director: 1

Policy advisors: +/- 20

Administrative staff

Mission of NVAO

On an independent way NVAO guarantees the quality of HE in the Netherlands and Flanders by means of evaluation of programmes , granting a quality mark and by contributing to the advancement of quality.

Apart from this, NVAO contributes to the increase of the quality-conscience in the HE and promotes the position of HE in a national and international context

Tasks of NVAO

- Accreditation of programmes of Dutch and Flemish HEI
- Quality assessment of new programmes
- Facilitate and stimulate international cooperation in QA
- Monitoring HE register of accredited programmes (Flanders)
- Evaluate research masters (Netherlands)
- Evaluate enlargement of length of studies (NL)
- Advise government concerning recognition private HE (NL)
- Quality assessment of new associate degrees (NL)

How the new QA system works

Combination

- numbers of programmes to be assessed
- commitment to remain in close proximity to the assessment system
- experience in external evaluation in the past

→ assessment of programmes will be conducted by other agencies than NVAO, the Quality Assessment Agencies

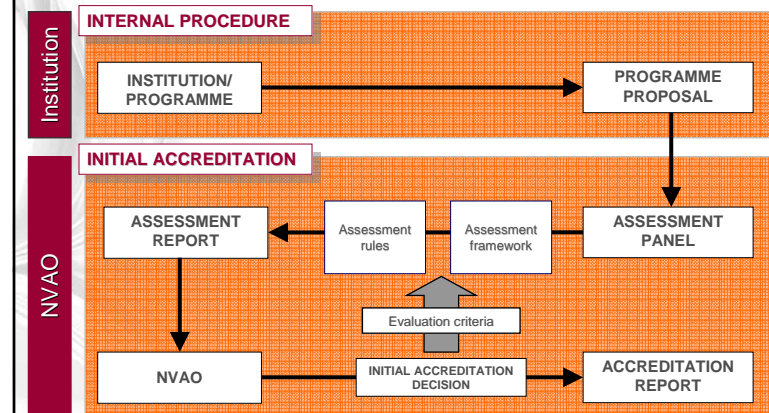
Quality assessment agencies

- in the Flanders: limited to umbrella organisations of the HEI. In the past, both these organisations carried out assessments.
- in the Netherlands: free market approach to quality assessment agencies. NVAO draws up a list of agencies capable of carrying out sound assessments.

Initial Accreditation

- Assessment of the potential quality of a new programme
- Initial accreditation decision = yes / no
 - Validity: 4 years (FL) / 6 years (NL)
- Precondition to obtain:
 - recognition of degrees
 - public funding (~macro-efficiency by ministry)
 - student support (e.g. grants)
- Can be considered the gatekeeper to the regular accreditation system

Initial Accreditation

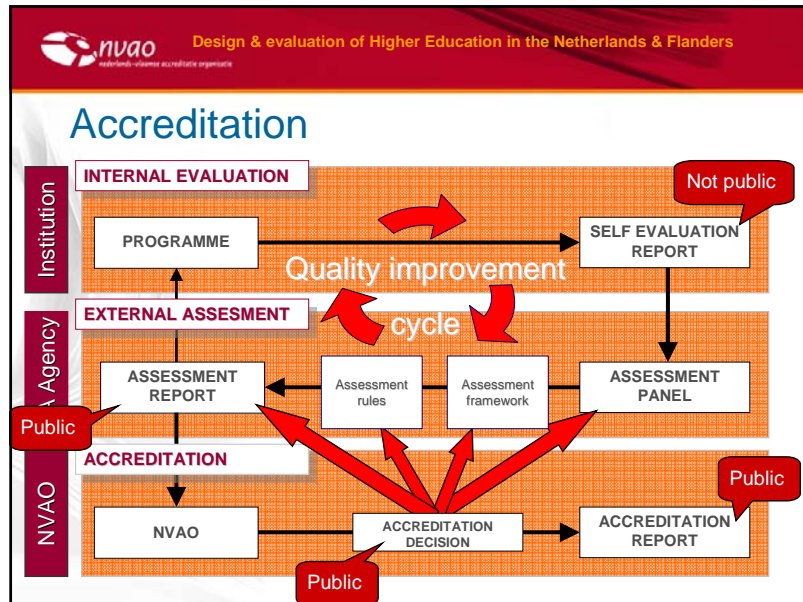


Accreditation (1/2)

- Assessment of the generic quality of a program
- Accreditation decision = yes / no
 - No ranking
 - Validity: 6 years (NL) / 8 years (FL)
 - Improvement period possible
- Precondition to obtain:
 - recognition of degrees
 - public funding
 - student support (e.g. grants)

Accreditation (2/2)

- Involvement of QA agencies in the external assessment
- Institutions that offer recognised degrees can choose a QA agency
- NVAO has drawn up a protocol for QA agencies
- NL: - list of QA agencies (2006: seven QA agencies)
- FL: - QA agencies recognised by law (2)
 - international accreditation organisations



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nederlands-vlaamse accreditatie organisatie

Assessment framework (generic)

6 themes → standards (facets) → criteria

Themes (Subjects):

- aims and objectives of the degree (3/2 standards NL/FL)
- curriculum (8/9 standards NL/FL)
- staff (3 standards)
- facilities (2 standards)
- self evaluation system = IQA (3 standards)
- results (2 standards)

Assessment framework

Example: Theme 'self evaluation system'

Standard 1: Internal quality assurance system

→the curriculum is evaluated periodically, ...

Standard 2: Improvement measures

→the outcomes of the evaluation form the basis for demonstrable measures for improvement

Standard 3: Involvement of personnel, students, alumni, professional field

→...actively involved in internal quality assurance

Assessment rules

Assesment of standards → Assessment of themes	
Excellent	→ Sufficient / Insufficient
Good	
Sufficient	
Insufficient	→one 'insufficient' results in a negative accreditation decision

Assessment rules

Assesment of standards → Assessment of themes	
Example 1	
Standard 1: Good	→ Sufficient (Positive)
Standard 2: Sufficient	
Standard 3: Excellent	
Example 2	
Standard 1: Sufficient	→ Sufficient (Positive)/ Insufficient (Negative)
Standard 2: Sufficient	
Standard 3: Insufficient	

Criteria for the evaluation of procedure & report (1/2)

scope 1:

- The assessment panel
 - Quality and composition of the assessment panel
 - QA protocol of assessment agency
 - Assessment framework used
 - Assessment rules used

Criteria for the evaluation of procedure & report (2/2)

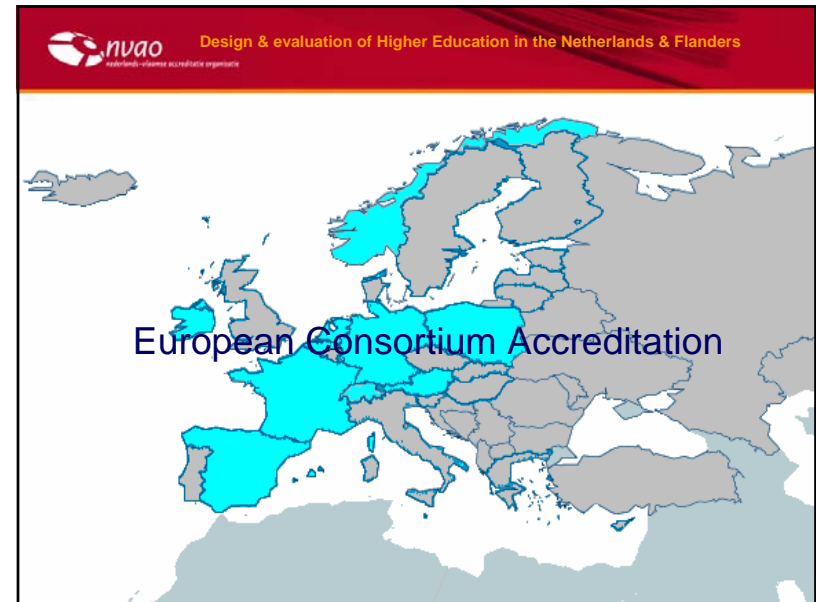
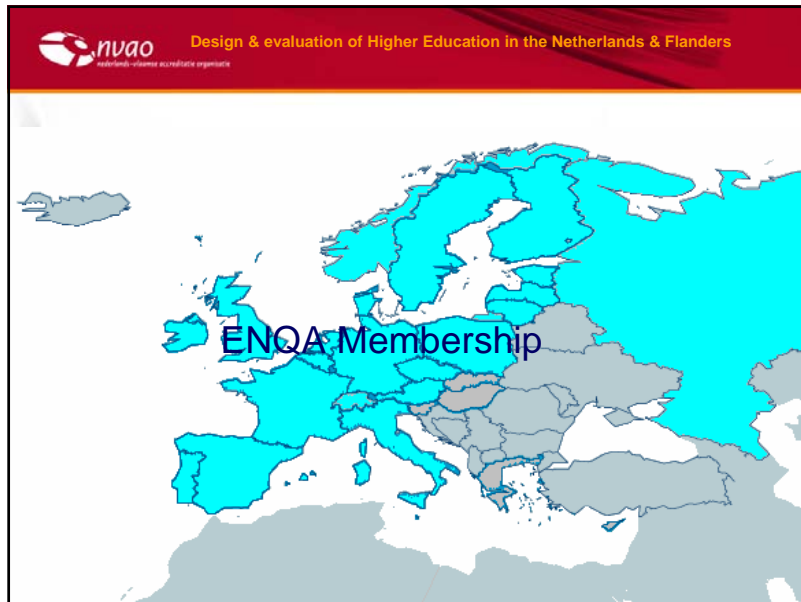
scope 2:

- the assessment report
- Assessment of every standard and every theme (with decisions)
- Assessment based on (objective) facts and (subjective) evaluations
- Comparisons with similar degree courses
- International standards
- Final conclusion

Internationalisation

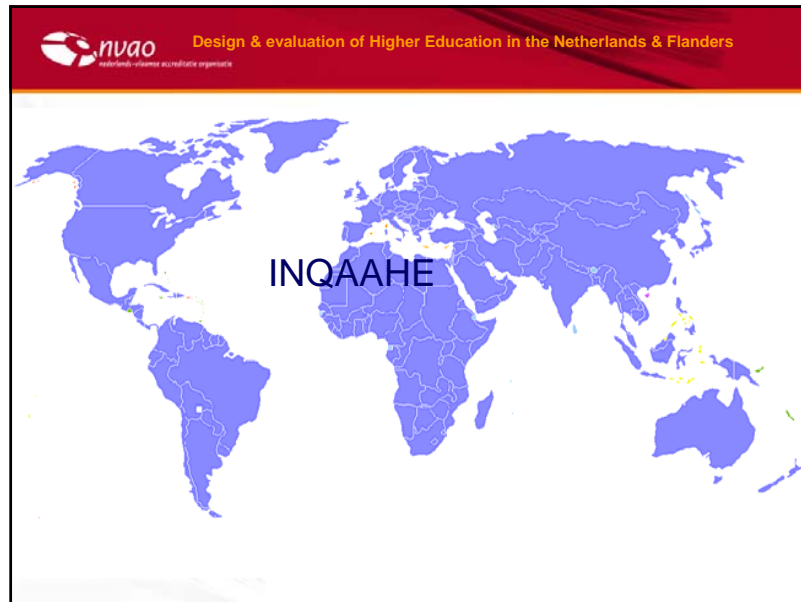
Objectives of the NVAO

- Active membership of umbrella organisations
- Endorsement of the NVAO accreditation system and the higher education systems under its responsibilities
- Promotion of the aim for mutual recognition of accreditation decisions
- The establishment of a transnational Qualifications Area where diplomas from accredited programmes are automatically accepted
- Pro-active approach to international developments in HE and QA



Date:

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The Story so far ...

Procedures

- >328 initial accreditation decisions
 - Almost no negative final decisions
 - Possibility of withdrawal of request
- >966 accreditation decisions
 - Limited number negative
 - Negative assessment reports don't reach NVAO
 - Deleted in the register of officially recognised degrees
 - Assessment reports refused
 - New external assessment: new assessment report

The Story so far ...

Strengths

- An enormous drive for quality, both within institutions and programmes
- Bad quality providers (institutions) are being detected
- Bad programmes have 'disappeared' from the system
- Huge political support for the system
- Information tool for students and stakeholders
- International credibility of Dutch and Flemish higher education has improved

The Story so far ...

Challenges

- "Safety first" behaviour
 - How visible is the "improvement function"?
- Operationalisation of accreditation frameworks
 - How do QA agencies and institutions apply the standards?
- Roles and positions of NVAO and QA agencies
 - Dilemma QAA: listening to HEI vs. "obeying" NVAO
- The composition of panels
- The costs of quality assurance and accreditation

The Future

- Inconvenience of the actual system
- International tendencies and evolution
- Strategy and policy