Programme accreditation customised to own conduct

Universities and university colleges are themselves responsible for ensuring the quality of their programmes. However, before a university or university college may conduct such assurance, a programme that has been recognised as new must attain programme accreditation. This is the official conclusion by NVAO that the programme meets the minimum requirements regarding quality and level.

Do you represent a recognised institution other than a university or university college? Then you need to follow another procedure.

GENERAL INFO

Programme accreditation is the official conclusion by NVAO that a programme meets the pre-determined minimum requirements regarding quality and level as set out in the assessment framework. NVAO bases its accreditation decision on an assessment of the programme quality by a panel of independent experts.

The quality of a programme is demonstrated on the basis of eight quality features. In addition, the assessment panel verifies how the programme is involving, on the one hand, internal and external stakeholders, and on the other, external and independent peers and experts.

If applicable, the panel verifies whether the programme meets the regulations with respect to the admission of graduates to corresponding offices or professions.

The assessment procedure is coordinated by NVAO and tailored to the control that the institution has elaborated regarding the quality assurance of its programmes. When drawing up its self-evaluation report, an institution may use the results and outcomes of the control it exerts. The site visit is structured in consultation with the institution: the duration, the substantiation of the schedule, and the specific discussion topics may vary depending on what the programme brings up in its self-evaluation report.

The assessment is followed by the accreditation procedure, which is also coordinated by NVAO. Once the assessment report by the panel has been endorsed, NVAO will take an accreditation decision (positive – limited validity – negative). A positive accreditation decision entitles the institution to henceforth itself vouch for the assurance of its programme quality.

STEPS

1

PRELIMINARY CONSULTATIONS (OPTIONAL)

No later than three months before the stipulated deadline for submission of the application dossier

In the build-up to the official application, the institution may conduct preliminary consultations with NVAO, up to three months before the stipula...

In the build-up to the official application, the institution may conduct preliminary consultations with NVAO, up to three months before the stipulated submission date of the application dossier, to confer on the timing and steps in the procedure, the profile of the assessment panel and the combination of expertise commanded by the members, the structure of the Self-evaluation Report and the documents to be submitted, and the substantiation of the site visit.

2 SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

The programme draws up a Self-evaluation Report that provides the panel with insight into what the programme is aiming for, how it is realising its...

The programme draws up a Self-evaluation Report that provides the panel with insight into what the programme is aiming for, how it is realising its aims, and how the realisation of such aims is verified. Attention is paid to the context within which the programme is taught, and to the manner in which internal and external stakeholders, peers, and experts are being involved in the programme. If so applicable, the report refers to relevant regulations regarding the admission of graduates to certain offices or professions.

3 APPLICATION

No later than eight months before expiry of the current accreditation or recognition as a new programme

The assessment procedure commences on the day on which NVAO receives an application for accreditation. Applications must be submitted by no later t...

The assessment procedure commences on the day on which NVAO receives an application for accreditation. Applications must be submitted by no later than eight months before expiry of the programme's current accreditation or recognition as a new programme. The application is submitted via the digital application form (see tab Submission of Applications); it comprises an application letter signed by the board of the institution and the Self-evaluation Report. Applications may be withdrawn at any time.

4 VERIFICATION OF ADMISSIBILITY OF THE APPLICATION

Notification regarding admissibility no later than 15 calendar days after receipt of the application

NVAO will check the admissibility of the application. If the application is inadmissible, the institution will be informed accordingly within a tim...

NVAO will check the admissibility of the application. If the application is inadmissible, the institution will be informed accordingly within a timeframe of fifteen calendar days.

5 COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The quality assurance system of Flanders revolves around peer review. An assessment panel comprises a minimum of four experts, among whom is a stud...

The quality assurance system of Flanders revolves around peer review. An assessment panel comprises a minimum of four experts, among whom is a student; it is supported by a secretary and an NVAO process coordinator. The latter two do not sit on the panel. In order to be able to take the context of the institution into account, NVAO always involves the programme (institution) in the composition of a panel. In order to warrant an objective and fair assessment, the panel must be able to work independently of the institution. This means that over the five years prior to the appointment of the panel, its members must not have had any connections or ties with the institution that is providing the programme. All the panel members, the secretary, and the process coordinator must sign a code of deontology. NVAO informs the board of the institution regarding the panel composition. The institution has the right to lodge a substantiated appeal to the panel composition within a timeframe of fifteen calendar days. In addition, the institution is required to inform NVAO, within that same timeframe, of any information it has regarding the expertise and independence of panel members.

6 SITE VISIT

The panel is allowed a minimum period of six weeks to peruse the Self-evaluation Report and the related documents. NVAO schedules each site visit i...

The panel is allowed a minimum period of six weeks to peruse the Self-evaluation Report and the related documents. NVAO schedules each site visit in consultation with the programme (institution). Each site visit is coordinated with the panel chair. As a rule, the site visit takes a full day and is preceded by preliminary panel consultations. The schedule takes maximum account of the Self-evaluation Report that the programme has prepared on the basis of the results and outcomes of the control it exerts over the assurance of its quality. The schedule is substantiated on the basis of a proposal by the programme, which is supplemented by the panel. Once the schedule has been finalised, the programme may indicate the positions for which it is proposing discussion partners. Participants may take part in multiple interviews.

7

ASSESSMENT AND ASSESSMENT REPORT

In its assessment report, the panel advises NVAO on the accreditation decision to be taken. Its recommendations are based on the assessment scale a...

In its assessment report, the panel advises NVAO on the accreditation decision to be taken. Its recommendations are based on the assessment scale and assessment rules as set out in the assessment framework. The draft assessment report is forwarded to NVAO within four weeks after the site visit. NVAO assesses the internal consistency of the report and the feasibility of the recommendations; if need be, it will suggest adjustments to the panel to clarify the findings or enhance the substantiation of the recommendations. Ownership of the assessment report remains vested with the panel. NVAO forwards the draft assessment report to the institution. The board of the institution is given a term of fifteen calendar days to formulate comments. Wherever necessary, the drafts are amended, whereupon the assessment report is definitively endorsed by the panel. The panel is obliged to respond in writing to the board of the institution regarding any factual inaccuracies identified.

8

DECISION BY NVAO

6 months after receipt of the application

On the basis of the assessment report by the panel, NVAO takes an accreditation decision in accordance with the assessment scale and assessment rul...

On the basis of the assessment report by the panel, NVAO takes an accreditation decision in accordance with the assessment scale and assessment rules in the assessment framework. The approved draft decision and the underlying report are forwarded to the institution, whereupon the board of the institution is allowed a term of fifteen calendar days to lodge an appeal to NVAO. If no appeal is lodged within the stipulated timeframe, the decision is final. Following the decision-making procedure, NVAO will publish the decision and the underlying assessment report on its website and forward both documents to the Education Minister of Flanders.

RATES

Once the application has been found admissible, the institution will receive a request for full payment of the cost price of the programme accreditation. The fee applicable to this procedure is fixed by the Education Minister of Flanders. It covers the costs entailed in the work performed by the panel members (remuneration, travel expenses, hotel accommodation, et cetera), which are paid by NVAO.

The rate for programme accreditation customised to own conduct is EUR 12.967.

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