**VU Guide to writing a self-evaluation report**

*Central Department of Education, Quality Assurance and Process Management, version January 2019*

**Background**

For assessment purposes, the framework of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) (as of 1 February 2019) includes one set of standards for new and existing programmes of education in university education.**The new framework is applicable to programmes with a submission date from 1-5-2019.**

The existing degree programmes of Dutch universities are divided into [assessment groups](https://www.nvao.net/beoordelingsproceduresnederland/visitatierooster). Annual deadlines apply for the submission of the applications for this purpose: **1 May** and **1 November**. Before that time, the entire process of the assessment must be completed for each programme in the site visit group, including the assessment panel’s advisory report. Before each assessment takes place, the panel for that programme will receive a self-evaluation report. This self-evaluation report forms the substantive basis for the visit. A **VU format** has been drawn up for this self-evaluation report.

**Self-evaluation report and appendices**

**This guide only concerns the self-evaluation report format and not any other potential forms of reporting.** **It is possible to make agreements on a method other than the self-evaluation report.** **However, whichever method is chosen, the standards in the assessment framework must always be clarified, for example by adding an explanation. Agreements on other reporting methods will always have to be coordinated with the Central Department of Education, Quality Assurance and Process Management and at cluster level.**

The programme drafts a self-evaluation report describing the **strengths and weaknesses** of the programme. The report is a self-contained document of a maximum of 15 pages in length (excluding Part I, the student section and attachments).

In its assessment, the panel assumes a **binary, undifferentiated assessment**: it assesses a programme as ‘satisfactory’ or ‘unsatisfactory’. On this basis, NVAO will decide whether or not a programme will be accredited. The panel’s assessment report describes the strengths and points for improvement of

the degree programme, but NVAO does not include these in the accreditation decision.

In connection with the public debate on the added value of providing higher education in English, a specific provision has been included in the 2018 framework for programme assessments in order to assure the quality of study programmes taught in **a language other than Dutch**. It states that the degree programme must provide valid arguments for choosing a particular language of tuition, and that the lecturers must be capable of teaching in that language. This also applies if the **name** of the degree programme is **in a language other than Dutch**.

Part of the self-evaluation report is a **section dedicated to students**. The programme must ensure that an independent and representative student section is included.

A new feature starting from the 2018 framework is **duty of disclosure**: institutions have the obligation to mention all specializations, tracks, variants, locations and legal requirements associated with the programme in the application for accreditation (and in the report the institution provides in order to maintain accreditation). Programme tracks that have not been reported will not be covered by the accreditation.

The programme may add a **limited number of appendices** to the self-evaluation report. These appendices provide information on the design and/or content of the programme, the composition of the teaching team and the Academic and Examination Regulations.

The assessment framework indicates that the panel may request **additional documents** and information. The assumption is that the programme will provide any documents and information that the panel may need to carry out its work. For VU Amsterdam, it is important that any documents requested do not relate to subjects already covered by the Institutional Quality Assurance Audit. For example, reports from the mid-term reviews of VU programmes will not be made available to the panel, in accordance with VU policy.

The self-evaluation report is divided into two parts. **Part I** directs the panel’s focus towards the formal aspects of the programme. It contains the official information required for accreditation, later featured in the NVAO decision and, in most cases CROHO as well. There is also a brief outline of the structure of the programme and its place within the organization, and a brief summary of the actions taken since the previous assessment.

**Part II is a maximum of 15 pages (excluding Part I, the student section and appendices).** The division of the report into sections should reflect the standards. The number of pages per section and the division into subsections shown in the contents page of this format is not mandatory but an indication.

The standards of quality achieved are essential to the assessment of existing programmes. The programme demonstrates that the educational practice meets the relevant standards. The assessment focuses on:

* the intended learning outcomes
* the design of the curriculum
* the learning environment
* the teaching team
* the testing and assessment system
* the learning outcomes achieved

This part of the self-evaluation report forms the *basis for the decision* made by the assessment panel. It provides the panel with reference points for the discussions during the visit. The description of the programme is in line with the standards of the assessment framework and is illustrated with examples that are as concrete as possible. Findings or statements are supported by arguments and data, and where possible specific examples are provided.

The text of the self-evaluation report must be written in a way that accommodates *the perspective of the reader*. The reader is a colleague but unlike the writers he will not be familiar with every detail of the programme. The reader is above all an assessor who has to be able to substantiate his positive assessment of the programme and justify this assessment to third parties. The self-evaluation report should therefore provide the readers/assessors with sufficient accurate and reliable information.

Within the limited framework, the emphasis is on the quality of the content of the programme, including the learning environment and the teaching team required to achieve this standard of quality. Outside the scope of the self-evaluation: institution-wide aspects of quality assurance and quality culture, institutional policy regarding personnel policy and facilities, and the relationship with the strategy of the institution. These are evaluated by means of the Institutional Quality Assurance Audit (ITK).

**Type of assessment and other useful information**

* **Limited Programme Assessment (BOB)**

The VU format follows section 4, paragraph 2 (**Limited Programme Assessment - BOB**) of the NVAO’s Accreditation System Assessment Framework for Higher Education 2018, in force as of 1 February 2019.

* **Assessment of new programmes**

Section 3 (restricted test for new programmes) of the regular assessment framework.

* **Research Master’s**

In addition to the regular assessment framework, a number of additional criteria apply. These relate to the research-oriented nature of the programme and the research context in which it is offered. With effect from **1 January 2017**, the [‘Further details of the additional criteria dated 30 May 2016](https://www.nvao.com/system/files/procedures/Specification%20of%20Additional%20Criteria%20for%20Research%20Masters%202016.pdf)’ will apply.

* **Postgraduate Master’s**

In addition to the standard assessment framework, [https://www.nvao.net/system/files/procedures/Richtlijn beoordeling postinitiele wo-master opleidingen in Nederland 2017.pdf](https://www.nvao.net/system/files/procedures/Richtlijn%20beoordeling%20postinitiele%20wo-master%20opleidingen%20in%20Nederland%202017.pdf) is also applicable.

* **Other guidelines and documents**

– Certiked Timmermansoog - not available through their site, but can be obtained from the Central Department of Education, Quality Assurance and Process Management

- [Documents on Quality Framework for Higher Education in the Netherlands](https://www.nvao.com/students/higher-education-netherlands)

- [Dublin Descriptors](https://www.nvao.com/system/files/pdf/Dublin%20Descriptors_1.pdf)

- [Composition of panels](https://www.nvao.com/recent/publications/panels-netherlands)

* **Reference for education at VU Amsterdam**

The [Educational Quality Handbook](http://www.vu.nl/nl/nieuws-agenda/profiel/jaarverslagen/onderwijskwaliteit/index.aspx)

* **Language**

The self-evaluation report should preferably be written in the language in which the programme is taught, but of course this will also be determined in part by the composition of the assessment panel. For a list of the most common terms in English, see [the Taalcentrum-VU glossary](http://www.taalcentrum.vu.nl/termenlijst/termenlijsttabel.php), the list of [English terminology](https://www.nvao.net/kwaliteitszorgstelselsinternationaal/terminologielijst-nederlands-engels) and the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders [term list](https://www.nvao.net/kwaliteitszorgstelselsinternationaal/woordenlijst-engels).

**Format for the self-evaluation report**

The format is now shown:

<Faculty VU>

**Self-evaluation report**

**<programme>**

<date>

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**Foreword**

by:

Prof. xx

Dean of the Faculty of yy

VU Amsterdam

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**List of appendices**

1 Field-specific reference framework and the intended learning outcomes of the programme;

2 Overview of the curriculum in diagram form

3 Description of the course components. Description of programme content, stating intended learning outcomes, learning objectives, teaching method(s), assessment method, literature (mandatory/recommended), teaching staff member and credits;

4 Academic and Examination Regulations

(Items 2 to 4 are usually included in the study guide, in which case this can be included as an appendix to the report or be provided in digital format)

5 Overview of with names, positions, scope of appointment, level and expertise

6 Fully anonymized list of all graduates from the two preceding academic years (including variant and location, student number, title of thesis, graduation date, results achieved in final phase)

7 Dropout rate, completion rate and/or average study duration among graduates

8 Teacher-student ratio achieved

9 Teacher quality based on proportion of teachers holding a Master’s degree and proportion of teachers holding a PhD, and percentage holding the BTQ, STQ, Educational Leadership qualification and C1 level English)

**Part I.**  **General information**

This part directs the panel’s focus towards the formal aspects of the programme. It contains the official information required for accreditation, later featured in the NVAO decision and, in most cases CROHO as well.

Part I also contains a brief outline of the structure of the programme and its place within the organization (3) and a brief summary of the actions taken since the previous external assessment (4).

Lay-out of Part I

1. Administrative data relating to the institution

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of institution |  |
| Status of institution | publicly funded |
| Result of institutional audit | Positive, 14 June 2016 |

Contact person at institution:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| First name | Jikke |
| Prefix(es) |  |
| Surname | Bekker |
| Telephone number | 020 - 5983231 |
| E-mail address | [j.w.bekker@vu.nl](mailto:j.w.bekker@vu.nl) |

2. Administrative data relating to the programme

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of programme in Central Register of Courses in Higher Education (CROHO) |  |
| New name (where applicable) |  |
| CROHO ISAT code |  |
| Orientation and level of programme | (orientation is university or university of applied sciences; level is Bachelor’s or Master’s) |
| Number of EC credits |  |
| Variant(s) (full-time/part-time) |  |
| Average amount of face-to-face instruction per academic year (in hours) |  |
| New name (where applicable) |  |
| Specializations or other programme tracks |  |
| New specializations/programme tracks (where applicable) |  |
| Joint degree programme (where applicable) | (stating the partner institutions involved and the type of degree awarded: joint / double / multiple degree) |
| Language of programme |  |
| Location(s) |  |
| New location(s) (where applicable) |  |
| Special feature |  |

Contact at programme

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| First name |  |
| Prefix(es) |  |
| Surname |  |
| Telephone number |  |
| Email address |  |

3. Outline of the structure and organization

A brief description of the position of the programme within the faculty. Organization of programme, programme management, the programme committee and the Examination Board. The Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities (QANU) assessment agency explicitly requests such a description (half A4 in length).   
  
An organization chart will be added here.

4. Actions taken in response to the previous assessment or TNO decision and previous mid-term review

In addition to the current self-evaluation report, the panel takes the decision and assessment made during the previous accreditation as its starting point. The recommendations from the previous assessment are an important part of this approach and can be stated briefly at this point with an indication of how they have been acted upon and, where relevant and appropriate, a reference to a later part of the text.

In the context of NVAO, it states: The panel takes note of the recommendations from a previous assessment if these recommendations are still relevant to the current curriculum or the learning environment, and assesses the approach taken by the programme.

Recommendations from the last mid-term review can also be included here if relevant/desirable. The mid-term review report itself is **not** provided or included as an appendix to the self-evaluation report.

**Part II. The assessment framework**

Each section begins with a box containing the NVAO standard text as shown below. As mentioned above, the following breakdown into subsections is not mandatory, but one of a number of options.

Layout Part II with key issues:

**1 Intended learning outcomes**

*Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes are appropriate to the level and orientation of the degree programme and are tailored to the expectations of the professional field and the field of study as well as to international requirements.*

*Explanation: The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level (associate degree, Bachelor’s or Master’s) defined in the Dutch qualification framework and the orientation (HBO or academic education) of the degree programme. In addition, they correspond to current requirements of the professional field and the field of study at the regional, national and international levels, in terms of the content of the degree programme. Insofar as applicable, the intended learning outcomes accord with relevant legislation and regulations.*

* 1. Educational vision, profiling and ambitions of the programme

In the final attainment levels, the programme describes the *distinctive contribution* it makes to a domain-specific frame of reference (Appendix 1) and the underlying reasons. The positioning of a programme can be further clarified by stating its educational vision and describing its profiling. The programme’s educational vision is in line with VU Amsterdam’s educational vision and how this is interpreted by the faculty. If relevant, the programme can indicate how it reflects VU Amsterdam’s priority areas: diversity, internationalization and talent. In a benchmark assessment, the programme is also compared to comparable national and international programmes. In any case, these will include programmes classified in the same assessment group. This section also looks at a programme’s future vision and ambitions, for example in relation to how it views its graduates and their position. The relationship with the didactic concept can also be mentioned in this regard (so that it can then be dealt with in detail as part of Standard 2).

1.2 Final attainment levels, programme level and orientationThis forms the *factual core* of the section. It gives a brief overview of the intended learning outcomes in relation to the Dublin Descriptors. This must be formatted as a table. A guideline for the number of final attainment levels is about 10 (5 is not enough and 20 is too much). The wording of the final attainment levels not only reflects the level of the programme (Bachelor’s, Master’s), but also its academic orientation.

Describe the professional field advisory board (its composition, role, how often it is convened, etc.) and its role in updating the final attainment levels.

**2 Teaching-learning environment**

*Standard 2: The degree programme, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching team mean that incoming students can achieve the intended learning outcomes.*

*Explanation: The intended learning outcomes have been adequately translated into learning objectives for (parts of) the degree programme. The diversity of students admitted is taken into account. Teaching staff are sufficiently knowledgeable, both in terms of content and didactics, to provide education and guidance. The teaching-learning environment promotes students’ active participation in designing their own learning process (student-centred). If the programme is taught in a language other than Dutch, the programme provides valid reasons for this decision. Teachers have sufficient command of the language in which they teach. Facilities are not assessed unless they have been specifically provided for the programme under assessment.*

2.1 Programme

2.1.1 Overview of programme, the curriculum

Begin with a schematic overview of the programme. Its aim is to give the reader a structure he can use to navigate the rest of this section. Additional reference can be made to Appendices 2 and 3, where a more comprehensive and detailed overview can be provided. Make sure that the format and content of Appendices 2 and 3 fit seamlessly with the schematic summary in the main text.

2.1.2 Realization of the final attainment levels of the programme, its structure and cohesion

Matrix of course components with their learning objectives and how they relate to the final attainment levels of the programme. Make sure that the final attainment levels cover all of the learning objectives. For each course, include the teaching and assessment methods in the matrix. If needed, provide a summary of the survey here and refer to the full, comprehensive list in Appendices 2 and 3.

Description of the programme structure, the learning pathways, the realization of the final attainment levels and the academic orientation. Choice of (variation in) teaching methods and appropriate assessment methods (the didactic concept) Describe the role of the Director of Studies in ensuring the coherence of the programme. In this section, state the reasons for the language of the programme and the name of the programme (if not in Dutch).

2.2 Students, entry requirements and progress

What are the characteristics of the student population? What form of selection takes place, if any? (describe rules and procedures unambiguously). In relation to the previous section, this section should contain information on how students progress through the programme and any problems which may partly be reconciled by means of entrance requirements. How are students supervised? How does the Programme Committee function?

2.3 Teaching team

The aim here is to describe the *teaching team* (further described in Appendix 5) in such as way as to make it clear that they *collectively possess the necessary expertise* (subject knowledge and didactic skills) to teach the programme at the required level. Indicate that teachers have sufficient command of the language in which they teach.

**3 Assessment**

*Standard 3: The programme has an adequate assessment system.*

*Explanation: Assessment is valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The requirements are clear to students. The quality of the examination procedures is adequately assured and complies with the statutory requirements. Assessment supports the students’ own learning process.*

The description here will give a clear answer to the question of how the quality of testing and assessment is guaranteed in practice throughout the programme. How does the Faculty Board takes up its role (e.g. the professionalization of personnel in the field of testing and assessment)? What is the role of the Director of Studies with regard to quality control in assessment? And what about the Examination Board? (How is compliance with assessment policy monitored? What random checks are conducted?) Is there an need for test committees? What concrete examples can be provided of the work of the Examination Board? This is also the right place to show how evaluation questions on testing and assessment play a role.

**4 Learning outcomes achieved**

*Standard 4: The degree programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

*Explanation: The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by interim and final tests, final projects and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in postgraduate programmes.*

*The programme describes how it checks that the learning outcomes have been achieved. This can be done by means of various products or tests that are summarized here using the term final project. A non-exhaustive list of final projects is: the final thesis, a portfolio, a professional product, a series of exam(s), an article or an artistic performance or a combination of these. The panel focuses on the products or assessments with which the students complete the programme.*

This is where the programme describes the ‘range of final achievements’ which shows that the student has achieved the required level at the end of the programme. There is a clear relationship with the curriculum structure as described in section 2.

Especially at Master’s level, assessment of having achieved the intended learning outcomes often takes place by means of a single final product: the Master’s thesis. However, in many cases a wider range of final products is needed, such as a literature survey, an work placement report, a practical assessment, a specific exam etc. Only when taken together do these final products give a good picture of the level of proficiency achieved. In cases where there is more than one final product, the programme makes it clear (preferably in tabular form) how the range of final products covers all of the intended learning outcomes (from section 1). The assessment of the range of products as a whole and any relative weighting within it is described in the main body of the text (preferably in a diagram). The assessment criteria of each final product will be supplied separately to the panel (see the NVAO guideline on the assessment of final products).

NB Explanation of the panel’s grounds for assessment:

In assessing the level achieved, the panel acts in accordance with the range as defined by the programme, as well as the assessment criteria. If any discussion should arise, the source of the difference of opinion should be pinpointed: is it in the composition of the range of final products, in the assessment criteria of a final product, or in the application of the assessment criteria?

This section must also include information about graduates’ further studies or professional careers. How successful are they in the job market? Or how successful are they in their further studies? Provide a clear overview of the programme’s graduates here, with reference to data from the National Alumni Survey, the VU Alumni Monitor, LinkedIn groups, Student Analytics, etc. What role does the Professional Field Advisory Board play in assessing the performance of alumni on the job market?

**5 Strengths and weaknesses analysis - SWOT**

This format has been chosen so that Part II can end with an overall description of strengths and weaknesses, as this is often less contrived than applying the same process to each standard individually. If it seems more effective, a strengths and weakness analysis for each standard is also possible.

Preferably, the analysis should be provided in the form of a SWOT.

Regardless of which option is chosen it is important to pay attention to the following points:

* Take care not to raise points which have not previously been discussed in the text;
* A superfluous list of points is to be avoided;
* The programme should anticipate the conversation with the peer reviewers about the analysis and the points it contains.

**6 Student section**

This section is new and was not included in the previous assessment framework (2016); its aim is to increase students’ (sense of) ownership. The section gives students the opportunity to submit their own independent contribution to the self-evaluation report.

For example, students can describe how they perceive the degree programme in terms of its strengths and potential opportunities for further development.