The Assessment of Internationalisation

An evaluation of the NVAO's pilot procedures

Contents

Part 1.   Introduction

Lucien Bollaert

The mission of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) states clearly *"the advancement of both the European and the international dimension in Dutch and Flemish accreditation and maintaining contacts in order to reach agreement and cohesion."* In order to realize this mission NVAO formulated five strategic aims, the second of which focuses on the international dimension of higher education. It says that NVAO is *"to occupy an international leading position in the Dutch and Flemish accreditation and higher education systems so as to strengthen the international position of the Dutch and Flemish higher education institutions."*

Within the Bologna process mobility has always been a central theme in order to build the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA). The 2020 objectives even aim at a 20% student mobility as to ensure the achievement of international and intercultural competences, which are so much necessary in the global knowledge society. The Netherlands and Flanders are too small to achieve, maintain and be recognized as an internationally leading qualitative and thus attractive higher education area if their higher education is not internationally oriented. During the Bologna process and the globalisation of higher education in general other means of internationalisation than mobility have been developed. Internationalisation@home gathers lots of initiatives for students and staff to go international without leaving their institution. NVAO has always acknowledged the necessity of internationalisation. Hence its binational character and the fact that internationalisation has not been a specific criterion in the framework of accreditation. NVAO has always argued it should be a theme throughout all the standards. In the meantime NVAO has had the possibility to deliver a specific quality feature on internationalisation based on the excellent score on the standards.

With the arrival of a new accreditation system the possibility to diversify the scores on the standards from unsatisfactory to excellent gave an answer to the question of the study programmes and institutions to create a distinctive profile for themselves on their quality. By combining these features with the internationalisation NVAO developed a framework and certificate in order to make clear the quality of internationalisation as well as the added value of internationalisation to the quality of the programme.

This report explains the standards and methodology of this framework and certificate. The pilot project made clear that a lot of programmes and institutions are interested to be involved in assessing their quality of and through internationalisation. In the meantime lessons were learnt both by the institutions and by NVAO. The launching of a European project on this certificate was internationally welcomed in lots of European seminars and conferences. NVAO hopes that with this report the framework and methodology of the certificate on internationalisation will be improved, better understood and internationally welcomed.

Part 2.   The pilot procedures

2.1   The methodology applied

Axel Aerden, Mark Frederiks and Esther van den Heuvel

2.1.1   Internationalisation as a distinctive quality feature

From NVAO's point of view, it is quite clear how broad and multifaceted the concept internationalisation has become. To remain focused, higher education institutions and programmes need to question the "internationalisation" objectives they pursue, how they wish to achieve these objectives and whether their internationalisation leads to the desired effect.

NVAO is convinced of the importance of internationalisation for education. It is an additional contribution to the development of The Netherlands and Flanders. Both regions are very dependent on trade and services and both rather small regions depend on good international relations. Internationalisation is therefore regarded as self-evident for nearly all professions and disciplines, and higher education would fail terribly if this was not taken into account.

To underline the importance of "internationalisation", NVAO developed a framework to assess the level and quality of internationalisation. It has done so within the Dutch and Flemish legal (accreditation) frameworks in which such an additional assessment is referred to as a distinctive (quality) feature. In The Netherlands, we distinguish between distinctive quality (for excellence concerning certain standards in the framework) and distinctive feature while in Flanders we only refer to distinctive quality features. The award of a distinctive feature (in The Netherlands) or a distinctive quality feature (in Flanders) primarily indicates that the feature concerned contributes in a meaningful way to the distinctiveness of the programme compared to the other higher education programmes. Such a feature is appended to a normal accreditation decision.

An institution therefore needs to request NVAO to assess this feature and only then this can lead to an annotation in the accreditation decision. The assessment of a distinctive (quality) feature has however no influence on the accreditation decision of NVAO. Until this pilot procedure, NVAO awarded 20 distinctive features in The Netherlands and 10 distinctive quality features in Flanders. We can see a few recurring features: social accountability, intermediality, entrepreneurship, internationalisation and sustainable development. Eight of the features awarded highlight sustainability. The reason for this success is probably the fact that the sector of sustainable development came up with a de facto assessment framework that can be used to assess a programme's distinctiveness with respect to sustainable development.

The distinctive (quality) feature is intended to give a programme the opportunity to emphasise a certain feature, with the intention to give full autonomy to programmes and institutions over what they perceive as their distinctiveness. With regard to

internationalisation, this led to programmes not requesting a distinctive (quality) feature because of the difficulty to demonstrate distinctiveness. NVAO wanted to tackle this problem by providing programmes with an assessment framework for internationalisation. This should on the one hand encourage programmes to further their internationalisation efforts and on the other hand provide an incentive to programmes to demonstrate distinctiveness.

Although NVAO considers internationalisation a mandatory element of all higher education, the distinctive (quality) feature was developed as a voluntary system. NVAO therefore developed the assessment framework for internationalisation in order to facilitate programme's demonstration of their internationalisation.

2.1.2   The framework for assessment and guidelines for the self-evaluation

The process

The framework for assessment of internationalisation was the result of several brainstorm sessions and meetings at NVAO with experts on internationalisation from Dutch and Flemish institutions and ministries, and Nuffic. The framework was presented at a seminar for Dutch and Flemish institutions on 10th December 2009. The framework and the proposal to carry out NVAO pilot projects for the distinctive quality feature on internationalisation were in general received positively. A lot of interest in the pilots from institutions emerged in the weeks and months following the seminar. On 1st March 2010 a meeting was organised for those institutions that would be willing to participate in the pilots. At this meeting also guidelines for the self-evaluation were presented and discussed with the participants.

The framework for assessment

In 2009 the discussions on the distinctive quality feature internationalisation with the experts on internationalisation led to several drafts for an assessment framework. It was decided to take the 6 themes from the accreditation framework (the first cycle of the accreditation system was then still in operation) as a starting point. At the same time it was felt that duplication of the existing accreditation framework should be avoided. This led e.g. to the decision not to design a separate standard for internal quality assurance with regard to internationalisation, although important elements of internal quality assurance have been taken into account. Moreover, the internationalisation framework should acknowledge specific standards and criteria that are most relevant for internationalisation. The latter point led to the formulation of four guiding principles for the framework relating to the vision on internationalisation, the impact on the overall quality of the programme, and the learning outcomes (see principles 1, 3, 4 and 5 of the framework in Annex A):

- The distinctive quality feature is based on the ambition level of the programme. As internationalisation is a multifaceted concept which can be reached in many ways, dependent on characteristics of the discipline, institution and the ambitions and goals of the programme, the internationalisation of programmes can vary greatly in practice. Such diversity should be encouraged and taken as the starting point for the assessment of internationalisation. Therefore, it is considered

- necessary that an assessment starts from the programme's perspective, i.e. the programme's **vision on internationalisation**. This vision can be both very explicit (e.g. internationalisation policy statement) and more implicit (e.g. a joint programme agreement).
- The programme's desired internationalisation must have a significant impact on the overall quality of the programme. Internationalisation, at least in the context of a distinctive quality feature, should not just be an end in itself but the programme should clarify how internationalisation contributes to the overall quality of the programme. A vision on internationalisation is not complete if it does not cover this "why internationalisation?" question.
- Apart from the "why" there is also the "how" question. How can the vision on internationalisation of the programme take shape in the programme? Of course the students are essential for realising the programme's vision on internationalisation and therefore the vision should be reflected in the intended and achieved **learning outcomes**. Programmes should transfer the vision on internationalisation into intended learning outcomes. The framework refers to the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes to single out the intended learning outcomes which result from the vision/policy on internationalisation.
- The further operationalisation of "internationalisation" (the "how" question) should be reflected in standards that relate to: the **teaching and learning** provided by the programme; the way the quality of the **staff** is specifically suited for internationalisation; the necessary **services** to make internationalisation function properly; the way the **students** are engaged in internationalisation.

In sum, the framework is focused around the questions what (wants the programme to achieve with internationalisation), why (does internationalisation contribute to quality overall), and how (does internationalisation take shape in the learning outcomes, teaching and learning, staff, services and students)?

The what and the why questions regarding internationalisation can be derived from the programme's vision on internationalisation. It is important that this vision is shared by staff members and that the programme's stakeholders are involved (criterion 1a). The vision should also include verifiable objectives and benchmarks (criterion 1b). For example, a programme has an international classroom as an objective for which it needs a certain amount of foreign students. But how many, what constitutes a good mix between foreign and national students? To make well-reasoned choices the programme should look for benchmarks; e.g. programmes with similar visions nationally or abroad that one would like to be compared with. Data included in instruments for measuring or providing indicators of internationalisation can also be useful. Appropriate objectives and benchmarks may change with the passing of time, and so it is important that the vision on internationalisation (which includes objectives and benchmarks) is evaluated periodically (criterion 1c). Have the objectives of internationalisation been realised, and if not, what are the consequences; which improvement measures or fine-tuning of objectives and objectives are necessary; is the vision on internationalisation still the right one?

The how question starts with the formulation of adequate intended international and intercultural learning outcomes. These intended learning outcomes are derived from the

programme's vision on internationalisation (criterion 2a). The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes are achieved by its graduates (criterion 2b).

In the framework, the vision and the learning outcomes form the context for the assessment of the curriculum, educational practice, and assessment of students (criterion 3a); the engagement and composition of staff (criterion 4a); the international experiences, intercultural competences and language skills of staff (criterion 4b); the services provided to national and international students (criterion 5a); the services provided to the staff (criterion 5b); the engagement and composition of the student group (criterion 6a); the international experiences gained by the student group (criterion 6b); and the inbound and outbound mobility of students (criterion 6c).

The discussions by experts on the framework for the assessment led to the formulation of the six standards and thirteen criteria listed in the Table below. The right column refers to the six themes in the accreditation framework that were taken as a starting point when developing the internationalisation framework. It is evident that only criteria 1a, 5b, 6a, 6b, and 6c have no similarities in the accreditation framework (first cycle). These criteria can be seen as very specific for internationalisation.

Standards	Criteria	Reference to theme in accreditation framework
1. Vision/policy	1.a. Vision/policy	-
	1.b. Objectives and benchmarks	5
	1.c. Evaluation	5
2. Learning outcomes	2.a. Intended learning outcomes	1
	2.b. Graduate achievement	6
3. Teaching and learning	3.a. Curriculum, education and assessment	2
4. Staff	4.a. Engagement and composition	3
	4.b. International experience and competences	3
5. Services	5.a. Services provided to students	4
	5.b. Services provided to staff	-
6. Students	6.a. Engagement and composition	-
	6.b. International experience	-
	6.c. Inbound and outbound mobility	-

The assessment framework is completed by principles relating to the composition of the panel and the rules for assessment (see principles 6 and 7 of the framework in Annex A):

- The assessment of internationalisation should be undertaken by a panel that has the appropriate expertise. The main requirement for the expert panel is expertise in internationalisation. This refers to experts with international experience and with knowledge of internationalisation (policies) in the relevant discipline/subject.

See section 2.1.4 for a description of the way in which this requirement has taken shape in the pilots.

- The assessment takes place on a four-point scale: unsatisfactory - satisfactory - good - excellent. This scale is also used in the accreditation framework. The four-point scale provides the opportunity to clearly demonstrate the level of internationalisation of a particular programme. It also incorporates a strong element of improvement into the system: a programme may be challenged to progress from satisfactory to good or even excellent. If a standard is assessed as excellent this means that the panel considers the programme's initiatives and activities to meet that standard an exemplary practice. These can therefore serve as an example for other programmes. Important for the assessment is that much weight is attributed to the vision (standard 1) and the learning outcomes (standard 2). A "good" assessment on these standards is necessary, albeit not sufficient, to qualify for a "good" assessment overall, and thus for obtaining the certificate. Although the framework only refers to the assessment of standards, the assessment of the criteria on the four-points scale was presented at the December 2009 seminar for institutions and included in the guidelines for the pilots and self-evaluation. See section 2.1.6 for more information on the application of the assessment rules in the pilots.

The guidelines for the self-evaluation report

At the meeting on 1st March 2010 guidelines for the pilots and the self-evaluation were presented to the institutions. The guidelines are written in Dutch and deal with some questions that were raised during the seminar. The assessment method is explained with reference to the composition of the panel and the site visit. The conditions for institutions to participate in the pilots, the planning of the pilots, and some notes on the evaluation of the pilots are given.

A separate section deals with guidelines for the self-evaluation report. The major part of this section is dedicated to the content of the report; the guidelines give some descriptions for information on each standard. The guidelines refer to the criteria and give an indication on what kind of information would be expected. However, the guidelines on the content are not detailed as the philosophy of NVAO is that programmes themselves decide on the scope and depth of information provided, as long as there is sufficient information for the experts to assess the standards and criteria. Too detailed guidelines can be taken as prescriptions from NVAO (and in fact an extension of the framework) instead of providing some pointers for programmes that can assist them to decide on the information for inclusion in the report. The guidelines with regard to learning outcomes focus in particular on a question posed at the seminar, namely on how to define or interpret international and intercultural learning outcomes. The guidelines give a brief summary of the literature and raise a number of questions that stem from the literature. The intention was to make programmes aware of these discussions and to encourage them to find their own solution to the problems presented. The guidelines state that: "NVAO considers it particularly important to get more insight into how programmes refer to these questions and try to answer these, instead of requiring a well-defined answer". It is therefore understandable that on this point these guidelines were not of great help for programmes that struggled, as we will see in the following chapters,

with the concept of international and intercultural learning outcomes that appeared to be relatively new for most of them.

Apart from the content the guidelines for the self-evaluation report also refer to:

- The desired length of the report; not more than 30 pages.
- The appendixes; if these are in Dutch then an English reading note should be included.
- The structure of the report which should follow the standards of the framework.
- The submission of the report; digitally through the NVAO website and in print in eightfold. The deadline for submission was later on decided to be 3 weeks before the site visit took place.

2.1.3   The selection of programmes

Discipline	Institution	Orientation	Level
Health Sciences	University of Applied Sciences	Professional	Bachelor
Business	Research University*	Academic	Bachelor
Business		Academic	Master
Law	Research University*	Academic	Master
Law		Academic	Master
Law		Academic	Master
Engineering	Research University*	Academic	Master
Engineering		Academic	Master
Engineering	Research University	Academic	Master
Health Sciences	University of Applied Sciences	Academic	Master
Business	Research University	Academic	Bachelor
Engineering	University of Applied Sciences	Professional	Bachelor
Business	University of Applied Sciences	Professional	Bachelor
Business	University of Applied Sciences	Professional	Bachelor
Business	University of Applied Sciences	Professional	Bachelor
Performing arts	University College*	Academic	Bachelor
Performing arts		Academic	Master
Social studies	University of Applied Sciences	Professional	Bachelor
Social studies	Research University	Academic	Master
Business	University College	Professional	Bachelor
Business	University College	Professional	Bachelor

*For these programmes a combined site-visit was organised

The Distinctive Quality Feature in Internationalisation was introduced in December 2009 during the NVAO-ECA seminar 'Internationalisation and Accreditation'.

During this meeting the NVAO encouraged institutions to participate with one or more programmes in this pilot. The programmes that indicated their interest were invited for a special meeting on 1st March 2010.

A total number of 21 programmes applied of which 11 programmes are offered by universities of applied sciences or university colleges and 10 by research universities. The majority of the applications came from Dutch institutions, only three Flemish institutions, all university colleges, decided to participate. This reflects the fact that distinctive (quality) features are mostly requested by Dutch institutions. Another clarification may be found in the legal constraints of the Flemish Higher Education system. Institutions can only offer English taught programmes at Master's level and if an equivalent Dutch taught programme is available in Flanders. This of course makes the creation of an international programme a bigger challenge.

When looking at the different study disciplines participating in the pilot, eight programmes in the field of (international) business were involved. Various representatives of these programmes indicated that 'business by nature is international' which does explain their interest in the pilot.

Other participating programmes (four in total) having an international name can be found in the field of law and social sciences.

The technical universities were also represented, the internationalisation of three engineering programmes was assessed during the pilot. One of the universities of applied sciences also participated with an engineering programme in this pilot project.

Two programmes in the field of health sciences were involved. In the field of performing arts also two programmes were part of this pilot.

2.1.4   The selection of experts

NVAO considers it very important that any type of assessment is done by panels that have the right and relevant expertise. When composing expert panels, NVAO of course took into account the element of internationalisation. The main requirement, i.e. expertise in internationalisation, was interpreted as a combination of European experts with international experience, experts with knowledge of internationalisation (policies) and experts with the relevant discipline/subject-specific international expertise. The discipline-/subject-specific experts were required to have had experience in earlier NVAO's procedures.

A typical panel therefore consisted of the following experts:

-   Chair with knowledge of internationalisation (policies)
-   European expert with international experience
-   Expert(s) with the relevant discipline/subject-specific international expertise
-   Student

Each panel was furthermore supported by a secretary and a process coordinator from NVAO.

Additionally, NVAO wanted to ensure consistency in the whole pilot project. Consistency was aimed for throughout the project in order to increase the validity of results and to enable the experts to benchmark the levels of assessment. This led to the combination of the following two approaches:

-   A core group of chairs, European experts with international experience, students, secretaries and process coordinators were established.

- Similar programmes were assessed by the same panel

The following core groups were identified:

- Chairs:
  Hans de Wit, Frederik de Decker and Jindra Divis
- Euopean experts with international experience:
  Guy Haug, Gemma Rauret, Rolf Heusser, Staffan Wahlèn (acted once as chair) and Elisabeth Fiorioli
- Students:
  Tess de Lange, Gertie de Fraeye, Lisa Westerveld, Jasmijn Koets, Anne van Dijk
- Process coordinators:
  Mark Frederiks, Axel Aerden and Esther van den Heuvel
- Secretaries: Jetse Siebenga, Kaja Braathen, Henri Ponds, Michèle Wera

The following discipline/subject-specific international experts took part in the pilot project:

- Johannes van der Donk, Joel Branson, Thomas Eger, Jan Detand, Jan Devos, Carolyn Baum, Adam Kowalski, Piet Van den Abeele, Marinus Verkuil, Jan Orbie, Frank de Zwart and Dennis Righters.

An overview of the panel composition for each procedure can be found in the decisions and reports regarding the award of the distinctive features to programmes, as published on NVAO's website. (http://search.nvao.net)

2.1.5   The site visits

A standardized schedule for the site-visit was developed which was followed with a few exceptions due to logistical reasons or when a combination with a regular accreditation visit was made. Typically the site-visits started on the afternoon of the first day with a short introductory meeting of the process coordinator and secretary of NVAO with the contact person of the participating programme. Then a preparatory meeting for the panel was organised during which the panel members shared their first impressions about the quality of the internationalisation of the programme, thereby taking into account the self-evaluation report. The panels had the opportunity to look at the (study)materials provided by the programme, if possible panel members could take some of the theses to their hotel room and read them in the evening.

The interviews started in the morning of the second day with a meeting with the management, followed by a meeting with students and a meeting with the teaching staff. All these meetings lasted one hour. The standardized schedule can be found in Annex B.

After these three sessions a one hour lunch break was scheduled during which panel members also had the possibility to review the materials provided by the programme.

In the afternoon two sessions of 30 minutes each were organised for the alumni and representatives of the professional field.

NVAO had asked the programmes to include at least six representatives for each group with exception of the management group where the number could be smaller.

The chair of the panel started with a short introduction of the panel and often asked the first questions. During the sessions all panel members were involved in interviewing the different stakeholders.

After seeing all the different stakeholders the panel held an internal meeting to discuss the outcomes of the assessment. After this a general impression of the site-visit, without revealing the assessments results, was given to the management of the programme. Programmes were also allowed to invite the other stakeholders such as the teaching staff and students to this meeting, but this did not happen often.

2.1.6   The reporting and decision-making

After the site visits the resulting sixteen draft panel reports were written by a total of four secretaries, all of which were NVAO policy advisers. The secretaries experimented with the format of the reports. These experiments were allowed within the context of the pilots as it would enable NVAO to get more insight into the pros and cons of different formats, and to decide on a preferred format for reporting in the future. The following two basic formats for the reporting were designed by the secretaries:

- Nine reports are based on the format of the initial accreditation reports and have the following structure: executive summary; introduction (procedure, assessment rules, panel report), description of the programme (short overview); assessments of each standard; overview of the assessments (table); annexes (composition of panel, schedule of site visit, documents reviewed, list of abbreviations). The assessment of each standard lists for each criterion the outline of findings (the facts), the considerations of the panel, and the conclusion (the assessment of the criterion). Then a conclusion on the assessment of the standard is given, mostly with arguments that explain how the panel has come to this conclusion (particularly when assessments of the criteria differ, e.g. a satisfactory on one criterion and a good on the other criterion). The length of these reports vary from 24 to 41 pages.
- Seven reports are based on a much shorter, concise format of reporting. This format typically starts with an overview of the most important characteristics of the programme and the composition of the panel. This is followed by a short executive summary consisting of the overall conclusion and the table with the assessments, and listing several strengths, weaknesses, good practices, and recommendations. The report then briefly describes the assessment process, some preliminary remarks may be given, and some facts and figures are presented. The main part of the report is dedicated to the assessments of the standards. The report concludes with the overall assessment of the programme. Each criterion is assessed but in most cases the texts do not make a clear distinction between findings, considerations and the resulting conclusion as in the format mentioned above. In one case this distinction is made explicitly in an attempt to combine the concise format with distinctions in findings, considerations and conclusions. Similarly, in the texts on the assessment of the standard it is usually not explained why the panel has come to this assessment, particularly when the assessments on the criteria differ. The assessments of both criteria and standards do, however, put more emphasis on pointing to strengths, weaknesses, good practices (if any), and on giving recommendations, than the assessments in

the format mentioned above. The length of these reports varies from 11 to 13 pages.

After reading all reports the NVAO Executive Board, the panel chairs and the NVAO process coordinators have come to the conclusion that the longer format mentioned first is preferred. The information that is given in these reports, particularly the distinction between findings, considerations, and conclusions, and the arguments given for the assessment of the standards are considered to be essential. The fact that these reports are significantly longer than the reports that follow the concise format and do not explicitly list strengths, weaknesses, good practices and recommendations is considered to be less important. Perhaps the one case in which the concise format is combined with distinctions in findings, considerations and conclusions constitutes an acceptable compromise between length and thoroughness, but only if the arguments on how the panel reached the assessments on the standards (particularly when the assessments of the criteria differed) are included.

The secretaries sent the draft reports for comments to the panel chair, the other members of the panel, and the process coordinator. The resulting reports were then discussed in two meetings of all panel chairs, secretaries and process coordinators. In each meeting about half of the reports were discussed. The main purpose of these discussions was to discover any inconsistencies between the reports. In fact these meetings were very useful as it resulted in a number of proposed changes in the assessments or in the accompanying texts of the reports. These proposed changes were then sent to the panels for their comments and approval. As a consequence, the reports gained in consistency, with regard to both the assessments and the texts. The Executive Board of NVAO then discussed the reports in two meetings. In a few cases some clarifications of the panel chairs were asked.

The NVAO Executive Board accepted the assessments of the panels and thereby the assessment rules in the framework on which the assessments were based. However, the Executive Board made the following decisions with regard to the overall assessments:

1. The assessment rules in the framework state that: "A certificate or a distinctive (quality) feature is awarded if a programme's internationalisation is considered as either good or excellent." The Executive Board decided to indeed award a certificate to each programme with an overall "good" assessment (there were no programmes with overall "excellent").
2. In view of the high standards of the framework, also in relation to previously awarded distinctive features on internationalisation, the Executive Board decided that all programmes which got at least "satisfactory" on all standards would receive the distinctive feature internationalisation. As a consequence, ten programmes that received the certificate ("good") additionally received the distinctive feature ("satisfactory"). In addition, eight programmes received only the distinctive feature.
3. The institutions of which programmes obtained an "unsatisfactory" assessment on one or more standard were asked whether they wanted to withdraw the application. All three programmes did.

The Executive Board made its decisions in its meeting of 30th November 2010 which were presented and accepted in the 13th December 2010 meeting of the NVAO Board. The

NVAO decisions and the panel reports were sent to the programmes. The certificates and distinctive features were formally awarded during the seminar on 15th December 2010.

2.2 The results of the assessments

Axel Aerden, Mark Frederiks and Esther van den Heuvel

2.2.1 Overview of programmes assessed

	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Total
1 Vision/policy	**1**	**9**	**9**	**2**	**21**
1.a. Vision/policy	1	7	11	2	21
1.b. Objectives and Benchmarks	3	9	5	4	21
1.c. Evaluation	3	4	12	2	21
2 Learning outcomes	**2**	**9**	**8**	**2**	**21**
2.a. Intended learning outcomes	4	5	10	2	21
2.b. Graduate Achievement	1	11	7	2	21
3 Teaching and Learning	**0**	**4**	**12**	**5**	**21**
3.a. Curriculum, education & assessment	0	4	12	5	21
4 Staff	**0**	**5**	**7**	**9**	**21**
4.a. Engagement and composition	0	3	9	9	21
4.b. Competencies	0	5	9	7	21
5 Services	**0**	**5**	**12**	**4**	**21**
5.a. Services provided to students	1	5	10	5	21
5.b. Services provided to staff	1	10	7	3	21
6 Students	**1**	**1**	**15**	**4**	**21**
6.a. Engagement and composition	2	1	11	7	21
6.b. International Experience	0	2	14	5	21
6.c. Mobility of Students	1	5	9	6	21
Totals	**21**	**104**	**189**	**85**	**399**
Standards	4	33	63	26	126
Criteria	17	71	126	59	273

Several conclusions can be drawn when analysing the results of the overall perspective.

None of the programmes have been assessed overall as excellent, almost fifty percent of the participants received a good, eight programmes have been assessed as satisfactory and the internationalisation of only three programmes was considered as unsatisfactory.

When looking at the 126 assessments that were given on standard level four times a satisfactory was reported and 26 times a standard was assessed as excellent. Eighteen criteria were assessed as unsatisfactory and fifty-nine as excellent. Despite the relatively high percentage of criteria (22%) and standards (21%) assessed as excellent no programme received an excellent overall assessment. This can be explained by the assessment rules applied during the pilot. For an overall excellent assessment the first 2 standards needed to be assessed as excellent as well as two of the other four, and none of the standards could be unsatisfactory. Although the percentage of unsatisfactory assessments at criteria level and standard level (7% and 3%) is much lower three programmes received an unsatisfactory overall assessment. If one of the standards was assessed as unsatisfactory then the programme received an overall unsatisfactory assessment.

The standard that received the most positive assessments was standard 6 on students. For 19 of the 21 programmes the standard on students was assessed as good or excellent. Only one programme received an unsatisfactory for this standard.

Standard 2 on learning outcomes was assessed least positive. Two programmes received an unsatisfactory for this standard. Nine were assessed as satisfactory, eight received a good assessment and the learning outcomes of two programmes were assessed as excellent.

Criterion 4.a Engagement and composition of staff received the highest number of excellent assessments (9). The highest number of good assessments was given to criterion 6.b International experience (14). Criterion 2.b received the highest number of satisfactory assessments (11) while criterion 2.a got the highest number of unsatisfactory assessments (4).

When making a distinction between the programmes with a professional orientation and the programmes with an academic orientation the latter ones fared better; 69% of them were assessed as good, while 13% of the professional oriented programmes received this assessment. The three programmes that were assessed as unsatisfactory are all professional oriented programmes. However, the number of participants in this pilot is not statistically representative and therefore we cannot draw any generic conclusions from this outcome.

Master programmes fared better than Bachelor programmes: 70% of the Master programmes have been assessed as good, whilst 27% of the Bachelor programmes received this judgement. The three programmes that were assessed as unsatisfactory are all Bachelor programmes.

2.2.2   Vision or policy on internationalisation

Table. Overall assessment of standard 1 Vision or policy on internationalisation

Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Total
#	1	9	9	2	21

The distribution of the assessments of the standard on vision gives a rather balanced perspective. At the extremes of the spectrum one programme is assessed as unsatisfactory and two programmes (a bachelor's and master's in the same field and of the same institution) are considered to have an excellent vision on internationalisation. These cases are quite straightforward; the "unsatisfactory" programme has unsatisfactory assessments on all three criteria regarding the vision, whilst the "excellent" programme has excellent assessments on these three criteria. There is an equal number of programmes, nine, with vision assessed as satisfactory and good.

If the programme's vision is assessed satisfactory then criterion 1.a is assessed mostly satisfactory too, and in some cases good. In three cases where a satisfactory judgement on the standard is made either criterion 1.b. or 1.c. is assessed unsatisfactory.

If the programme's vision is assessed good then criterion 1.a is also assessed good. In the case of three programmes the good on the standard is accompanied by a satisfactory on criterion 1.b. or 1.c. In other cases the judgement on criteria 1.b. is either good or (in 2 cases) excellent.

One can conclude that the outcome of the assessment of the standard overall depends to a large extent to the assessment of criterion 1.a.

Table. Assessments of standard 1 Vision/policy, differentiated on the basis of orientation

Type of programme	Assessment				Total
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	
Professional orientation	1	5	2	0	8
Academic orientation	0	4	7	2	13

The excellent assessments were given to two programmes with an academic orientation (and offered by a research university), while the unsatisfactory assessment was received by a programme with a professional orientation. In addition, the programmes with a professional orientation (total: 8) receive 5 satisfactory and 2 good assessments while programmes with an academic orientation (total: 13) receive 4 satisfactory and 7 good assessments.

Table. Assessments of standard 1 Vision/policy 2, differentiated on the basis of level

Type of programme	Assessment				Total
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	
Bachelor's level	1	6	3	1	11
Master's level	0	3	6	1	10

When we only focus on the level, i.e. Bachelor and Master's level, we can see that the two excellent assessments are received by a Bachelor's and a Master's programme while the unsatisfactory assessment was received by a Bachelor's programmes. Furthermore, a small majority of Bachelor's programmes received a satisfactory assessment (6 out of 11) while a small majority of Master's programmes (6 out of 10) received a good assessment.

Table. Assessment of the criteria under standard 1 Vision/policy on internationalisation

Criterion	Assessment				Totals
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	
1.a. Vision/policy	1	7	11	2	21
1.b. Objectives and benchmarks	3	9	5	4	21
1.c. Evaluation	3	4	12	2	21
Totals	7	20	28	8	63

The criterion 1.c. on Evaluation was assessed most positively: for 14 programmes this was assessed either as good or excellent. Next, 13 programmes received good or excellent assessments on criterion 1.a. Objectives and benchmarks were assessed least positively (good or excellent in 9 cases). Especially the benchmarking appeared to be difficult to achieve for programmes.

An overall unsatisfactory judgement was given to a programme that was lacking a clear and pronounced vision on internationalisation, had not formulated objectives in a clear and concrete (SMART) manner, did not use benchmarking, and lacked a systematic evaluation of the vision and objectives.

2.2.3   Learning outcomes

Table. Overall assessment of standard 2 Learning outcomes

Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Total
#	2	9	8	2	21

The results of the assessment of the standard on learning outcomes gives a rather balanced perspective on the use of international and intercultural learning outcomes by the programmes included in the pilot project. On the one hand, only two programmes received an excellent overall assessment for this standard while on the other hand an equal amount of programmes received an unsatisfactory assessment. The satisfactory and good assessments are also balanced well with respectively 9 and 8 programmes receiving these assessments.

Table. Assessments of standard 2 Learning outcomes, differentiated on the basis of orientation

Type of programme	Assessment				
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	**Total**
Professional orientation	2	5	1	0	8
Academic orientation	0	4	7	2	13

If we look closer at the orientation (academic vs. professional) we can see that the excellent assessments were received by two programmes with an academic orientation, while the two unsatisfactory assessments were received by two programmes with a professional orientation.

Table. Assessments of standard 2 Learning outcomes, differentiated on the basis of level

Type of programme	Assessment				
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	**Total**
Bachelor's level	2	6	2	1	11
Master's level	0	3	6	1	10

When we only focus on the level, i.e. Bachelor and Master's level, we can see that the two excellent assessments are received by a Bachelor's and a Master's programme while the two unsatisfactory assessments were received by two Bachelor's programmes.

Table. Assessment of the criteria under standard 2 Learning outcomes

Criterion	Assessment				
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	**Totals**
2.a. Intended learning outcomes	4	5	10	2	21
2.b. Graduate Achievement	1	11	7	2	21
Totals	5	16	17	4	42

As can be seen in the table above, the assessment of the criteria reflect the results of the assessment of the standard. Interesting here is that the intended learning outcomes actually get very positive results with almost half of the programmes (10 out of 21) that receive an assessment as good. Graduate achievement is assessed slightly less positive. Here half the programmes (11 out of 21) receive an assessment as satisfactory. However, only one programme receives an unsatisfactory for graduate achievement while four programmes receive an unsatisfactory for intended learning outcomes.

All the results above reflect the wide range of considerations that can be found in the panel reports. From these reports we can draw some overall, but general conclusions. Intended international and intercultural learning outcomes are generally appreciated as being excellent when they are on the one hand clear and explicit and on the other hand involve subject-related aspects, social/communicative skills and attitude-related features. Panels were not satisfied with programmes without either explicit international and intercultural learning outcomes or a clear link with the programme's internationalisation vision/policy.
On the issue of full-fledged integration of international and intercultural learning outcomes into the programme's general learning outcomes or explicit but separate

dedicated international and intercultural learning outcomes panels do not seem to be partial to any approach. Both approaches are in fact assessed as good and excellent.

Graduate achievement is generally appreciated as being excellent when a programme can verifiably demonstrate where and/or how international and intercultural learning outcomes are assessed and realised. This includes a clear link between the actual achieved learning outcomes with the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes. Panels were not satisfied when they were presented with assumptions of achievement, exemplified by statements such as "*participation in our international projects automatically results in the achievement of international and intercultural competencies and therefore demonstrates the achieved learning outcomes with regard to internationalisation*".

2.2.4   Teaching and learning

Table. Overall assessment of standard 3 Teaching and Learning

3.a. The programme's curriculum, educational practice and assessment of students are in line with the vision/policy on internationalisation and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.				Total
Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	
0	4	12	5	21

Standard three consists of only one criterion: The programme's curriculum, educational practice and assessment of students are in line with the vision/policy on internationalisation and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes. Before summarizing the results it is important to mention that the relationship between the curriculum, educational practice and assessment of students (all these elements are included in this standard and not divided into separate criteria) is quite unbalanced. Some reports are more focussed on certain aspects than others.

The results of the assessment of the standard on teaching and learning are positive. Eleven programmes received a good overall assessment, six were assessed as excellent, four as satisfactory and none of them were assessed as unsatisfactory.

If we look more into detail four programmes with an academic orientation (total: 13) received an excellent assessment and one programme with a professional orientation (total: 8) was assessed as excellent. The panel reports demonstrated that the academic oriented programmes are stronger in connecting explicitly the curriculum and educational practice to the vision and international and intercultural outcomes which explains why four of them were assessed as excellent. There is no difference in the number of programmes that received a satisfactory assessment.

The differences between Bachelor and Master level are less visible. For six Bachelor and Master programmes the teaching and learning has been assessed as good. Two Bachelor programmes and three Master programmes received an excellent. At the Bachelor level the teaching and learning of three programmes have been assessed as satisfactory. At the Master level the teaching and learning of only one programme was assessed as satisfactory.

Programmes that have received an excellent do pay more explicit attention to international and intercultural aspects both in theory and practice. They integrate special international elements in their programme such as a language buddy system and make strong use of their contacts with the (international) professional field. One programme intends to be 'truly' international by not focussing only on the Anglo-American world. Another common element among these programmes is that the involved teaching staff is actively stimulating the intercultural interaction. They have been trained and are really enhancing the interactivity among students from different nationalities.

On the contrary programmes that have received a satisfactory assessment from the panels are not structurally integrating international elements into the curriculum, educational practice and/or assessment. Sometimes these elements are present but still there is no guarantee that these elements will also be present in the future. Students have the possibility 'to escape' the international experience and sometimes internationalisation is mainly linked to the content only of (certain) specializations of the programme.

The relation between the assessment of students and the international and intercultural learning outcomes requires attention at all levels. All programmes indicate that the theses have to contain an international component and that students when making exams or writing essays need to be able to solve international cases thereby applying cultural theories.
However, only a very limited number of programmes have their international and intercultural competencies explicitly included in the assessment forms and are discussing these with students.

Some panels indicated that the Dutch programmes that do have an international classroom have to be aware of continuously stimulating the integration between Dutch and international students both in and outside the classroom. The panels also recommended that institutions with a more national or regional outlook, with a relatively low number of international students, should make some extra efforts to create an international environment.

Other practical issues that, according to the panels, require attention are the international internships and exchange possibilities for students that are following a one year Master programme. For these students it is sometimes difficult to include an exchange period or internship abroad.

2.2.5   Staff

Table. Overall assessment of standard 4 Staff

Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Total
#	0	5	7	9	21

The assessment of the standard on Staff was quite positive for most programmes. Nine programmes were assessed as excellent; eight of these are programmes with an academic orientation of which six are Master programmes. Moreover, seven programmes were assessed as good; these are almost evenly distributed among Bachelor's and Master's level, with most programmes having an academic orientation.

Table. Assessment of the criteria under standard 4 Staff

Criterion	Assessment				
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	**Totals**
4.a. Engagement and composition	0	3	9	9	21
4.b. International experience and competences	0	5	9	7	21
Totals	0	8	18	16	42

The engagement and composition of staff was assessed slightly more positive (9 times excellent and 9 times good) than the international experiences and competences of staff (for 7 programmes excellent and 9 programmes good). No programme was assessed as unsatisfactory on one of these criteria. Even if conditions were less than optimal (e.g. in small programmes with financial or legal difficulties) the panels were sufficiently positive about staff policies, particularly the creativity of the programme management and the enthusiasm or investment of staff to make the most of it in difficult circumstances.

The percentage of foreign staff was in some cases very substantial. But also programmes with less foreign staff could be assessed (very) positively, e.g. if the programme had a good policy in place for acquiring English language skills (e.g. required certificates in English) or intercultural competences (e.g. courses on intercultural communication). Inviting international guest lecturers could also help to internationalise the composition. In some cases the programme stimulated its staff to go abroad (staff exchange, visiting international partners, sabbaticals, etc) to broaden their international experiences. The panels signalled that it is important for staff to be not only aware of international and intercultural differences in mixed student groups but also to take measures for dealing with possible (open or covert) conflicts between student groups. In addition, staff should consider group work, assignments, etc that enable students from different backgrounds to work together effectively in mixed grounds. Making use of the international experiences of staff and students to the full was sometimes a point of attention. Also individual differences between staff with regard to language skills or international experiences and intercultural competences were noted by students. In these cases it is particularly important that the programmes has sound staff policies in place for the professionalisation of internationalisation.

2.2.6   Services

Table. Overall assessment of standard 5 Services

Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	**Total**
#	0	5	12	4	21

The results of the assessment of the standard on services provide evidence of the high level of services the participating programmes provide to their students and staff. Four programmes received an excellent overall assessment for this standard while none of the programmes received an unsatisfactory. The good assessments account for an overwhelming majority: 12 out of the 21 participating programmes received this assessment.

The overall results are quite evenly distributed over Bachelor and Master's programmes. This is however not the case if we look at the orientation of the programmes. Here, the excellent assessments were received by four programmes with an academic orientation. Nevertheless, there is no significant differentiation when we look at the satisfactory and good assessments.

Table. Assessment of the criteria under standard 5 Services

Criterion	Assessment				
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	**Totals**
5.a. Services provided to students	1	5	10	5	21
5.b. Services provided to staff	1	10	7	3	21
Totals	2	15	17	8	42

The results at the level of the underlying criteria present some interesting elements. Although there are no unsatisfactory assessments at the level of the programme there are two at the level of the criteria. Generally, we can say that the programmes are doing very well in the provision of services to students with five excellent and 10 good assessments. For services provided to students, the majority of assessments converge on good (10 out of 21) while for services provided to staff, the majority of assessments converge on satisfactory (10 out of 21). Interesting to note is that Bachelor's programmes with a professional orientation account for the majority of the good assessments on both criteria.

From the panel reports we can conclude that student services are generally appreciated as being excellent when a programme shows proof of an integrated approach: the *pro-active* provision of a broad range of integrated services to all students (national and international) before, during and after their studies and all this with an intercultural awareness. Panels were critical of supply-side services. Here, several services were offered but the reasonable demands (reasonable, as deemed by the panels) by the (international) student body were essentially not met.

Staff services are generally appreciated as being excellent when a programme actively provides support to their staff in their international and intercultural activities and/or aspirations. Panels were critical of haphazard measures that were not an integral part of the programme's policy on internationalisation. Reports often point towards the gap between words and deeds. Either programmes provide a lot of possibilities but circumstances under responsibility of the programme prevent staff to make use of these or programmes facilitate international activities of staff in all possible ways but only a limited amount of staff make use of the provided services.

2.2.7   Students

Table. Overall assessment of standard 6 Students

Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	**Total**
#	1	1	15	4	21

When looking at the results the overwhelming majority, fifteen out of twenty one, of the programmes have received a good overall assessment. In addition the standard students was assessed excellent for four programmes.
Nineteen out of twenty one programmes thus received a good or excellent assessment for the standard regarding students. Only two programmes have the standard regarding students assessed as unsatisfactory or satisfactory. These programmes are Bachelor programmes with a professional orientation.

From the four programmes that received an excellent assessment three are having an academic orientation and one has a professional one while the distribution over Bachelor's and Master's level is equal. When looking at the programmes with a 'good' assessment ten out of thirteen academic oriented programmes were assessed as good and five out of eight professional oriented programmes.

Table. Assessment of the criteria under standard 6 Students

Assessment of each criterion					
Criterion	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Total
6. a. Engagement and Composition	2	1	11	7	21
6.b. International Experiences		2	14	5	21
6.c. Mobility	1	5	9	6	21
Totals	3	8	34	18	63

When looking at the assessment of the different criteria two programmes with a professional orientation are having their engagement and student composition assessed as unsatisfactory. One of them also received an unsatisfactory for the mobility criterion. Five out of eight programmes that received a satisfactory for one or more criteria were programmes with a professional orientation. Only one programme received a satisfactory overall assessment for this standard. The other programmes compensated the satisfactory for one criteria with good or excellent assessments for the two other criteria and finally had this standard assessed as good. Fifteen out of the eighteen excellent assessments were given to programmes with an academic orientation. The good assessments were more balanced between the programmes with an academic orientation and the programmes with a professional orientation: thirteen programmes with a professional orientation received a good against twenty one programmes with a academic orientation.

Panels consider the engagement and composition as excellent when programmes have established an international classroom with a huge variety of nationalities and a good balance between foreign and Dutch students. Moreover these programmes also ensure interaction between Dutch and foreign students. When students of these programmes have to work in small groups these groups contain a balanced mix of different nationalities.

In general the international experiences gained by the student group originates from following an international curriculum offered in an international classroom with internationally oriented staff. In addition to this internationalisation at home almost all programmes offer different international initiatives such as internships, (short) international projects and exchange semesters.

Panels appreciated the fact that the majority of the programmes have integrated the mobility aspect in a smooth way. Students have the opportunity to choose between different types of mobility (short-term, long term, study exchange or internship) both in and outside the European Union. Programmes of which the level of international mobility depends on the willingness of each individual student were assessed as satisfactory by the panel. Also the panel has recommended the one year Master programmes that have not yet included international internships or exchange semesters to change this policy. A more general point of attention that was mentioned by the panels is how to ensure that all the partner universities of the programmes (one programme has more than hundred international partner institutions) are offering a high-quality exchange? The same goes for the quality assurance of internship placements.

2.3 Feedback from programmes, experts, secretaries and process coordinators

Axel Aerden, Mark Frederiks and Esther van den Heuvel

2.3.1 Introduction

NVAO gathered oral feedback about the procedures, mostly from the chairs of the panels and the NVAO policy advisers. However, NVAO considered it particularly useful to hear from the programmes and all experts in detail how they had experienced the procedures. This feedback should enable critical remarks to be expressed freely. It was decided to gather feedback from all programmes that were assessed, experts, secretaries and process coordinators by means of an on line survey. After the site visits had taken place the relevant questionnaires were sent to all the contact persons of the programmes, and to the experts, secretaries and process coordinators. The results were analysed and presented anonymously, and discussed in two meetings at NVAO with the panel chairs.

In the following sections these results from the evaluation are presented.

2.3.2 Feedback from programmes

Twelve institutions responded to the evaluation. Among them there are seven university colleges/ universities of applied sciences and five research universities.[1] Five of the institutions participated with programmes with a professional orientation. The remaining institutions participated with programmes with an academic orientation.

---

[1] Recently one specialised institution merged into a research university.

Do you consider the framework helpful for writing the self-evaluation?

The majority of the programmes thought the framework was helpful for writing the self-evaluation. However, some programmes experienced problems with the interpretation of concepts such as the international and intercultural learning outcomes, and the translation from vision to the international and intercultural outcomes. Five institutions (two university colleges and three research universities) commented that the framework was rather broad, and asked for more clear and explicit criteria.

For one programme it was not clear where in the self-evaluation report to put 'international research projects' which they considered to be an important part of internationalisation.
Another programme commented that the content of criteria 4a and 4b partially overlaps. The support and training of staff (as it appears in 5b) connects better with standard 4 in this view.

One programme found it strange that the framework for internationalisation is not congruent with the new NVAO accreditation framework. The 'teaching and learning' standard, for example, covers an extensive subject with only one criterion and standard 6 lacks a clear focus ("6a is vaguely formulated and 6b overlaps with 3a and 2b").

One programme felt that the framework was created with a limited definition of internationalisation in mind, because certain aspects of internationalisation in the programme where emphasized, such as student mobility and an explicit presence of internationalisation in the description of the learning outcomes, whereas the aspect 'teaching and learning' has only one criterion.

Was the information provided by the guidelines adequate and clear?

Twelve out of thirteen respondents agreed that the information provided by the guidelines was adequate and clear. However, a comment was made that the guidelines were thought to be content-wise not always consistent with the framework. For some programmes it was not clear under which standard they should provide certain information and which additional documents should be included. The fact that the guidelines were available in Dutch only was also mentioned.

Are there any missing criteria or standards in the framework? Do we need to assess additional or other elements to grasp the quality of internationalisation?

In general the programmes were satisfied with the standards and criteria used. Some suggestions were made.

One programme mentioned that criteria with respect to the organisation were missing, e.g. how to deal with internationalisation in exam/education committees and the student council. Another programme would like to underline the important role of alumni and the corporate world and mention them in the framework and/or guidelines.

Two programmes suggested to include a separate standard on (international) research. According to one programme the framework was focused on institutions that had no internationalisation in the past and developed recently a policy on internationalisation. "A real international institution like ours had some difficulties to fit in the framework."

Finally, the time students spent in international contexts, their international experiences at home and the financial resources and investments were mentioned as not being represented well enough in the framework.

Did the framework bring about internal discussions about internationalisation of the programme?

Eleven of the participating institutions confirmed that the framework brought about internal discussions on internationalisation, although some specified that it was more the self-evaluation or the assessment in general than the framework as such. Two programmes indicated that internationalisation is part of an ongoing discussion. Four institutions (three research universities and one university college) mentioned that especially the international and intercultural learning outcomes generated discussion.

What is your experience with the site visit? Did the site visit add any value to your internal discussions about internationalisation and the quality thereof?

All respondents had positive experiences with the site visit, the way of interviewing and the feedback was much appreciated. Still, a few issues were mentioned. One institution reported that although the exchange of ideas was interesting and productive, it also became clear that the panel used a different definition of internationalisation. One comment was received about the large number of questions which were not directly related to internationalisation. Also a suggestion was made that the focus of a committee could be even more on quality improvement than on accountability.

How much effort did it take to participate in the project? Please give an estimate in hours or FTE.

The time that was spent on the pilot procedure by the institution (mostly on the self-evaluation) varied from 120-160 to 800 hours. Not all institutions mentioned the number of hours spent. From the institutions that did mention numbers the average time spent is 355 hours.

Three institutions emphasised that participating in the project required a lot of efforts.

Do you have any suggestions for improvements of the procedure?

Six out of thirteen suggested to combine the assessment of internationalisation with the regular accreditation procedures. One programme advised to apply the distinctive quality feature for a whole department.

Also mentioned were a more precise instruction on study materials to be made available for the panel; clearer instructions for the criteria and to specify the kind of information required; earlier requests for additional information; more attention for the selection of panel experts.

Also a suggestion to include the representatives of the (international) services in the schedule for the site-visit was made. One programme was not satisfied about the communication with NVAO and suggested to improve this. Another institution indicated

that it would be great if the framework also fitted the international institutions in the Netherlands (and Flanders).

2.3.3 Feedback from experts

Table: overview of the interpretations of the responses by panel members and panel member groups to the question "Is the framework appropriate for the assessment of the quality of the internationalisation of the programme?"

	Subject-specific expert	Student	International expert	Chair	Totals	%
Positive response	9	1	3	0	**13**	65%
Positive response with suggestions	1	3	0	1	**5**	25%
Negative response with suggestions	0	0	1	0	**1**	5%
Negative response	0	0	0	0	**0**	0%
No response	0	0	0	1	**1**	5%
Totals	10	4	4	2	**20**	

Two thirds of the panel members (13 out of 20) indicated that they find the framework used appropriate for the assessment of the quality of the internationalisation of the programme. An overwhelming majority of the subject-specific experts agree that the framework is appropriate. The student experts are also positive but 3 out of 4 propose suggestions for improvement. In total one fourth of the panel members (5 out of 20) are positive about the framework but put forward suggestions for improvement. These suggestions cover the following range of topics:

- Where does the intensity and quality of collaboration with international partners fit into the assessment?
- Since the achievement of learning outcomes is a difficult topic, the framework needs to clarify how achievement should be "measured".
- There seems to be an overemphasis on the criteria under the two first standards, while all the criteria should be more or less of equal importance.

There were more suggestions that referred to the "strong" emphasis on the first two standards and how the "logical" order included in the framework undermines good or excellent assessments of the following four standards. This refers to the fact that most of the criteria in these four standards refer to the vision/policy under the first standard and the international & intercultural learning outcomes under the second standard.

There is only one response that is not positive and mainly consists of an analysis of elements that need to be improved. Here there is also a reference to the emphasis on the first two standards as clarified in the preceding paragraph. Additionally, this response indicates that the criteria under the first standard are too much intertwined and that this undermines separate and differentiated assessments on the three criteria. This statement is analysed more in the third chapter. A last element put forward in this response is the suggestion not to evaluate the engagement and composition of staff and student in one criterion.

Table: overview of the interpretations of the responses by panel members and panel member groups to the question "Are there any missing criteria or standards in the framework? Do we need to assess additional or other elements to grasp the quality of internationalisation?"

	Subject-specific expert	Student	International expert	Chair	Totals	%
No	8	3	3	1	**15**	75%
Yes	2	1	0	0	**3**	15%
No response	0	0	1	1	**2**	10%
Totals	10	4	4	2	**20**	

An overwhelming majority of the panel members (75%) indicate that there are no missing criteria or standards in the framework and that there is no need to assess additional or other elements to grasp the quality of internationalisation. Two panel members (10%) chose not to respond to this question. The following three additional elements are proposed by the other panel members:

- How the elements of internationalisation have an impact on the quality of the master theses and on career opportunities of alumni.
- A reference to the special role a programme thinks an international teacher should fulfil in its institution.
- How the programmes support (international) student initiatives such as excursions, readings and student associations.

Table: overview of the interpretations of the responses by panel members and panel member groups to the question "Did the panel have sufficient knowledge and experience with regard to the assessment of the quality of internationalisation of the programme?"

	Subject-specific expert	Student	International expert	Chair	Totals	%
Positive response	9	2	3	2	**16**	80%
Positive response with suggestions	1	2	1	0	**4**	20%
Negative response	0	0	0	0	**0**	0%
Totals	10	4	4	2	**20**	

All panel members felt that the panels they were part of had sufficient knowledge and experience with regard to the assessment of the quality of internationalisation of the programme. This positive response was complimented by a few suggestions. On the one hand there were two suggestions regarding the "training" of panel members. One pointed towards a short meeting/briefing on the definitions of the decision-rules and the interpretation of the framework in order to align all panel members with the criteria while the other referred to full-fledged training. On the other hand there were two suggestions regarding the internationalisation expertise of the student ("significant international experience") and the subject-specific expert ("involvement in the internationalisation of the subject").

Table: overview of the interpretations of the responses by panel members and panel member groups to the question "Are the differences between satisfactory, good and excellent quality of internationalisation at the level of the programme clear?"

	Subject-specific expert	Student	International expert	Chair	Totals	%
Positive response	7	1	1	0	**9**	45%
Positive response with suggestions	2	2	1	1	**6**	30%
Negative response with suggestions	1	1	1	1	**4**	20%
Negative response	0	0	1	0	**1**	5%
Totals	10	4	4	2	**20**	

Panel members seem to be unsure about the differences between satisfactory, good and excellent quality of internationalisation. Only 45% understand the differences as clear. Almost one third (30%) indicate that these differences are more or less clear. These respondents suggest several approaches to clarify the differences: benchmarking material provided by the results of the pilot, an integration of positive and negative elements to corroborate an assessment and, most often, the inclusion of NVAO's understanding of these "labels".

The differences are more or less unclear for 20% of the respondents. These are included in the table as negative responses with suggestions. All of the suggestions here point towards somehow defining the differences. The one negative response is quite appropriate for this pilot: the difference is not clear and we should eliminate all uncertainty in order to reduce interpretation differences between panels across all countries in Europe.

Table: overview of the interpretations of the responses by panel members and panel member groups to the questions "Were the right people interviewed during the site visit? Are there any changes you would like to recommend regarding the site visit?"

	Subject-specific expert	Student	International expert	Chair	Totals	%
Positive response	5	0	4	1	**11**	55%
Positive response with suggestions	5	4	0	1	**9**	45%
Totals	10	4	4	2	**20**	

All the panel members agree that the right people were interviewed. Half of the respondents do not recommend changes to the organisation of the site visit. The recommendation put forward by the other half revolve around two topics:

- A panel should be able to interview people involved in or responsible for the international office;

- Discussion through telephone or Skype conferences should be well prepared and the panel should be able to talk with the whole group at the same time;

Table: overview of the interpretations of the responses by panel members and panel member groups to the questions "Do you have any suggestions for other improvements of the procedure?"

	Subject-specific expert	Student	International expert	Chair	Totals	%
No suggestions	5	1	2	0	**8**	40%
Suggestions on framework	2	1	2	0	**5**	25%
Suggestions on self-evaluation	3	1	0	2	**6**	30%
Suggestions on the site visit	0	1	0	0	**1**	5%
Totals	10	4	4	2	**20**	

Around two thirds of the respondents (60%) have suggestions for improvements of the procedure other than the suggestions mentioned above. These suggestions cover three topics: the framework, the self-evaluation & procedure and the site visit.

The suggestions about the framework (25%) refer to two elements already addressed above: limit the "strong" emphasis on the first two standards and clarify the assessment scale and/or levels of "compliance". The self-evaluation can be improved according to 30% of the respondents. The main improvements should come from a better template, the inclusion of key facts and figures, and more (written) evidence regarding international collaboration. One respondent suggests clarifying the role of NVAO staff in the procedure in order to prevent inappropriate interference.

Table: overview of the interpretations of the responses by panel members and panel member groups to the questions "Do you think this procedure can be used in other countries? Which adaptations, if any, would be necessary then?"

	Subject-specific expert	Student	International expert	Chair	Totals	%
Positive response	8	4	2	0	**14**	70%
Positive response with suggestions	2	0	2	2	**6**	30%
Totals	10	4	4	2	**20**	

All respondents think that this procedure can be used in other countries. One third of respondents (30%) suggest adaptations to ensure usability in other countries. These suggestions mainly concern the consideration for the national context. First, there is a need to cope with national legal restrictions to internationalisation. How this can be done is not mentioned in any of the suggestions. Second, there is a need to (inter)nationally interpret the assessment scale. For example, on which level do we regard something an exemplary practice: on the national or on the European level?

An additional suggestion is to eliminate the original three step procedure of European quality assurance: self-evaluation, site visit and panel report/decision. Instead a two-tier procedure is proposed: the self-evaluation report undergoes a quick-scan with a decision that a minimal threshold is passed. This step doesn't include a site visit or a panel (report). Only programmes that pass this minimal threshold can then apply for the full procedure.

2.3.4   Feedback from secretaries and process coordinators

There were four secretaries and three process coordinators, all of them NVAO (international) policy advisers. Five out of these seven responded to the questionnaire. Two persons made specific remarks and suggestions with regard to the (reformulation of) some parts of the framework. All responses are included in the overview of the feedback below.

Is the framework appropriate?

The standards were generally seen as the right ones but the criteria need some changes in wording and clarification (e.g. in the guidelines for the self-evaluation). This relates especially to standards 1 and 2. With regard to these standards it was remarked that for most programmes internationalisation did not start with a clear vision or explicit learning outcomes on internationalisation. This might result in an unfair judgement on programmes which have achieved the international and intercultural learning outcomes to a great extent but have not made this explicit. One person commented that benchmarking of the vision on internationalisation is not seen in practice, and that this is one of the most abstract elements of the framework which has the least to do with the quality of internationalisation.

Furthermore, some specific remarks were made concerning the criteria:

- Assessment of students should be part of standard 2 and not of standard 3
- It is strange that standard 3 contains only 1 criterion (standard is criterion).
- Some criteria (e.g. 3.a and 4.a) contain different requirements in one criterion.
- There is some overlap in criteria 6.b and 6.c.
- The criteria in the framework should receive a name and the numbering should be adjusted (e.g. 1.1 instead of 1.a).
- The fact that criteria are assessed should be mentioned in the framework.

Finally, it was observed that the overall assessments "good" and "excellent" are mentioned in the framework but "unsatisfactory" and "satisfactory" are not.

Were the institutions well prepared for the procedure?

Almost everyone felt that most institutions were not well prepared. The self-evaluation report was too often an insufficient basis for discussion within the panels. This could lead to stressful discussions during the site visit because the panel wanted to see additional documentation. Sometimes this information turned out to be very convincing and it was difficult to understand why this information had not been included in the application file. It was also surprising for secretaries and process coordinators that the attention paid to the most important standards 1 and 2 was limited compared to the attention given to the other standards. Although the framework is very clear on the importance of the first two standards, some programmes were apparently not aware of this.

Other examples of lack of preparation were: information only available in Dutch; last-minute finalisation of the programme; insufficient representation of the professional field; unclear or confusing references to previous accreditations. It was also commented that the self-evaluation report was often too descriptive and positive, and lacking in self-criticism.

Suggestions made for NVAO to improve the procedure were:

- The self-evaluation report should follow the framework and should not be accepted by NVAO if it does not.
- Some basic facts and figures should be prescribed by NVAO and included in the self-evaluation report, e.g.: student-staff ratio; proportions of foreign students and staff; success rates; results of evaluations.
- NVAO should make a list of documents that should be on display during the site visit, e.g.: diploma supplement, final theses and graduation work; CV's of staff with regard to international experiences.

Did the panels function well?

All respondents felt that the panels functioned well but the following remarks for improvement were made:

- Subject specific experts should be specialised in internationalisation of education in their own field. Sometimes they were very positive on internationalisation just because the overall quality of the programme was good.
- More attention should be paid to national differences in the level of internationalisation as these experiences are often leading for assessing internationalisation. Sometimes panel members are confronted with another national practice in education and they spend a lot of energy in getting to understand that whereas the internationalisation component than shifts to the background.
- Experts should be asked to complete the assessment format in advance of the site visit to ensure that they have read the documentation and, if needed, can ask for additional information before the site visit takes place.
- There could be more focus on providing evidence by panel members for judgements made, particularly when something is assessed as "excellent" whilst there are a number of weak points or recommendations.
- There should be guidelines for panels.

Were the assessments rules clear and used well by the panel?

The responses were mixed. Some were positive about the assessment rules but others thought that these were used differently by panels and should be revised. The rules had to be explained and sometimes references to the definitions in the new accreditation framework were made.

Were the right people interviewed during the site visit and do you have any recommendations for the site visit?

Respondents agreed that the right people were interviewed although services support staff (from the international office/services, exchange coordinator, internship coordinator, etc.) should be added to the interviews. There was also agreement that the number of alumni and employers, the topics to be discussed with them, and the possibilities for interviewing on distance should be reviewed. However, respondents disagreed on the practicalities: one respondent thought it most efficient to combine the interviews with

alumni and professional field in one session, whilst another felt this was unhelpful as one of the groups tended to be underrepresented.

One respondent remarked that it was very difficult to combine a normal accreditation procedure with this site visit.

Do you have suggestions for the improvement of the procedure?

The following suggestions were made:

1. Fine-tuning of the framework.
2. More explicit description of the criteria.
3. All the panels wanted to see certain types of information (e.g. breakdown of student mobility figures) so this information should be obligatory beforehand or on site.
4. Characteristics of programmes and CV's of panel members should be collected in all cases.
5. Panel members should be required to fill in the assessment matrix (which has to correspond fully with the framework) and to send this to NVAO before the site visit. Not the preliminary assessments but the argumentation is important in this respect.
6. Guidelines for secretaries and requirements for the reporting format should be written including a revision of the roles of secretaries and process coordinators.
7. The application letter of the institution should be in English so that all panel members can understand it.
8. Thank you letters for institutions and panel members should be drafted.

Can the procedure be used in other countries; are adaptations necessary?

Respondents thought that the procedure can be used in other countries. Some scepticism about the feasibility with the current framework was voiced though: the experiences of the international experts led one respondent to comment that international and intercultural learning outcomes are not much developed in other European countries. In addition, not all countries are allowed to offer programmes in English (without any restrictions) and for this reason it is difficult to attract foreign students and generate an international/intercultural student body.

One person specified that it would be possible to use the procedure in other countries if panels are experienced, have a European frame of reference, and the role of the subject expert is more clearly defined. It was agreed that the use of the certificate in other countries is of crucial importance for the further development of internationalisation as a distinctive (quality) feature. It was also remarked that a ECA certificate needs to strive for excellence.

2.4 Impressions of the panel chairs and good practices in internationalisation in the Netherlands and Flanders

Hans de Wit, Frederik De Decker, Jindra Divis and Staffan Wahlén

During the pilot phase, 21 programmes have been assessed for the distinctive (quality) feature 'internationalisation' between June and October 2011. All of these programmes received an one-day visit from a panel consisting of a chair (experienced in internationalisation), an international expert (experienced in quality assurance), a subject/domain specialist and a student. The panels were accompanied by an NVAO secretary and an NVAO Process coordinator. In some cases (an) external observer(s) were also present. What follows are the impressions of the 4 persons who acted as chairs: feedback on the pilot process, some overall statements on the state of affairs regarding internationalisation in the Netherlands and Flanders, good practices and advice/recommendations for the future.

Of course, these conclusions have to be seen in the perspective of the pilot project: only a limited number of motivated programmes could participate and it would hence be unjust to use these examples to jump to overall conclusions that are valid for the whole higher education field in the Low Countries.

Having said this, for the programmes which applied, it is clear that overall the state of internationalisation appears to be "satisfactory" to "good". And even though some came close, no real cases of overall "excellence" were encountered. This is primarily linked to the fact that only a few cases of "good" or "excellent" were encountered with respect to the *internationalisation vision/mission/policy* or *intercultural and international learning outcomes*. Both these standards play a crucial role in determining the overall judgement for the level of internationalisation of a certain programme. In many cases, however, the overall quality of the three standards *students*, *staff* and *services* and to a certain extent of the standard *teaching and learning process* was good to excellent. And even though this might not be surprising for such a pilot project, it is comforting that on all individual standards, only very few unsatisfactory cases were encountered.

Vision/mission/policy and learning outcomes

The framework used for the assessment, puts a lot of stress on the explicitness of on one hand a vision/mission/policy (it was left up to the programme to decide on which of these types of overall statements was chosen, which did not always make it easy for them – hence a proposal to alter this in the new framework) on internationalisation and on the other hand the intercultural and international learning outcomes (again: full freedom for the programmes to make these concrete).

In that respect, the panel chairs were quite surprised to notice that, while more and more institutions have internationalisation policies on a central level (and have placed internationalisation in their institutional vision and mission), many programmes still appear to lack an explicit vision/mission/policy with respect to internationalisation.

Instead of this, many programmes take an *implicit* or *instrumental* approach to internationalisation. Statements such as "*we are international by name or nature*", "*we have international students*", "*we teach in English*", "*we send 15% of our students abroad*", "*we breath internationalisation*" etc. and because of this "*we are internationalised*" were heard frequently during the visits. If this is also the reason why many programmes have not or only implicitly thought about the *intercultural and international learning outcomes* needs to be seen. Even though in general, Flemish and Dutch higher education institutions are well advanced in describing the intended learning outcomes of a programme, using this concept to make the aspirations regarding internationalisation seems far less developed. This is even more the case for the *achieved* learning outcomes since even less of the programmes have made explicit if and how they assess whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved. This means that also to this standard, most programmes seem to have taken an implicit or instrumental approach.

This means that often the panels have come across programmes where the intentions were made explicit but the achievements were not measurable and vice versa: programmes where students clearly achieve intercultural and international learning outcomes, which could however not be clearly linked to the intentions since these were not explicitly defined.

In the last case it was not easy to judge if those results were achieved intentionally based on an internationalisation experience or an internationalisation dimension in the programme or whether these outcomes resulted from the overall quality of the programme and were hence achieved rather 'incidentally', missing a structured foundation and offering no guarantee for sustainability.

A concrete recommendation would hence be to further stimulate and support programmes in policy development and in including an international/intercultural component in the definition ánd assessment of learning outcomes.

We hope that stimulating and supporting programmes in policy development and in including an international/intercultural component in the definition ánd assessment of learning outcomes might reduce the problems which now were certainly related to this. As a result of this, some programmes that perhaps intrinsically have a lot of internationalisation potential did not succeed in sufficiently making this clear in their report and/or during the site visit. The panels struggled in particular with the relationship between 'intended' and 'achieved', and with the too narrowly defined relationship between the first two standards and the other four. But this was obviously linked to a comparable "struggle" of the programmes involved.

There are, though, some good practices to be noted, where the programme has been able to develop more explicit and programme related policies and learning outcomes. These examples follow below. After these, also some good practices for the other 4 standards are given. The examples are based on the texts provided in the Self-evaluation reports on one hand and on the panel reports on the other hand.

For reasons of variety, it was decided to always give two examples per standard: one comes from a programme that was evaluated as "excellent" for this item and was awarded the certificate; the other one is from a programme that scored at least "good" for the standards. The examples were anonymized and are given in random order to allow for a personal appreciation of the reader of each of the cases. The examples are purely given to allow for inspiration to other programmes. They are by no means prescriptive or restrictive. Other programmes might have taken other decisions, better suited to their aims and ambitions, the local or national opportunities or restrictions, etc.

Good practices vision/mission/policy

EXAMPLE 1

The experience of ten years of co-operation between the different partners in this joint programme resulted in a renewed Memorandum of Co-operation in 2009. It sets down the rights and responsibilities of each partner in offering the programme. The primary purpose of the Memorandum is to assure the quality of the learning experience for the students and the output standards of the programme.

A Board policy paper has been developed over the last two years. In the different phases of its development it has been discussed within the Board and the Management team and with staff, the Advisory board and students. The pen-ultimate version was accepted by the Board in their February 2009 meeting. In March 2009, after a written consultation, the Board adopted the policy paper.

This paper describes the mission, underpinning values, vision and the strategies for continuing and further developing this joint programme, and it outlines the planned inter-institutional co-operation between the five organisations over the next five years. The ideas within the paper are based on recent developments in higher education in Europe; anticipated needs in the field of study and the recommendations of the 2004 accreditation and the 2008 internal audit. In the paper, the vision is described and it contains a specific focus on internationalisation and interculturalisation.

In the opinion of the panel the documents presented (Memorandum and Policy paper) are perfect incentives to formulate an explicit vision on Internationalisation. More than once in these documents and in the self-evaluation document the partners argue that internationalism, culture and diversity are key elements in their vision on Internationalisation and in the programme. The panel is convinced that the partners have a clear vision on Internationalisation, which is supported by the relevant stakeholders. The panel agrees with the management and staff that internationalisation, culture and diversity are inherent to and inseparable from the used vision on the field of study.

Three of the nine defined overall objectives of the programme refer to aspects of internationalisation. The aims and objectives for the programme were originally developed by the academic staff from several countries in consultation with colleagues from relevant European umbrella organisations (both educational and professional). The programme received letters of endorsement from these European organisations as well as from similar worldwide organisations. In the opinion of the management these letters indicate the esteem and influence of this programme and its internationalisation. The international relevance of the aims and objectives have been valued I by the audit panel advising on reaccreditation in November 2009 as well. The current panel has endorsed the proper development of the objectives and has noticed that relevant aspects of internationalisation form a serious part of it, although a more explicit formulation and better communication were recommended.

The panel agreed with the programme management that the programme is unique in its form and, as a consequence, in its content for a substantial part as well which does not facilitate benchmarking. Nevertheless, the panel argues that the programme should consider looking for other programmes for the sake of benchmarking its internationalisation.

The panel notices a strong evaluation culture among all stakeholders involved. There is a permanent ambition to further develop the programme and to enlarge the component of internationalisation. Taking into account that most of the management and the teaching staff have to travel to another country to meet each other, it is remarkable how often team meetings are organised. The panel signals that staff, students and management have a natural attitude of evaluation, reflection and giving/receiving feedback. They all share strong believes on how to act professionally and internationally.

EXAMPLE 2

According to the programme, an international school is much more than a standard national institution that uses English as the language of instruction and attracts foreign students. An international school must offer programmes with international profiles, employ international staff, have an international diverse student population and be part of an international network of universities and business schools for student and staff exchange, research activities and joint programmes.

A diverse international classroom is key for an international school. International students bring their own culture and their own experiences into such classrooms. This creates added value for staff and fellow students, in particular combined with the use of the Problem Based Learning method. On the other hand, intercultural cooperation does not automatically occur spontaneously. Therefore, the training of staff and students on how to cooperate in a multicultural setting is an integral part of the curriculum. An international setting is the actual situation in which students will be living and working after they graduate. Since the objective is to educate and to prepare graduates effectively for international positions, an international school also offers global internships and integrates the international corporate world into the school. In this way, students can experience working in an international setting, with ample opportunities to practice and gain knowledge about work content, attitude and behaviour in various societies and businesses.

Furthermore, an international school must be part of an international academic and corporate community. An international school has long-term relationships with other international schools, both in research and education. These relationships guarantee that developments are not only known, but also shared, creating opportunities for joint initiatives to take research and education a step further. The close bonds with international business ensure the school's knowledge about the latest developments in business problems, but also give ample opportunity to teach business students the latest insights in science. In addition, these relationships form a highly valuable network for students and graduates for international career orientation and career opportunities. This multifaceted approach of internationalisation is crucial to guaranteeing that internationalisation is embedded in the structure, governance, policies and business processes of an international school. And this is what makes a school with English-language programmes and many foreign students a truly international school.

The internationalisation policy of the programme is characterized by the key words *innovation, focus* and *reputation*. These are dealt with more extensively hereafter.

Innovation

For more than two decades, the programme has been well-reputed for its international focus and student exchange programme. Although the bachelor/master structure makes higher education

more transparent and open, national differences in the length, levels and focus of programmes still exist. These differences can be overcome by developing double and joint degree programmes, creating excellent opportunities to respond to national, formal requirements and qualifying students for an international career.

The future of student mobility lies in the organization of quality networks in which students can follow courses and obtain a degree composed of courses from the various partners in this network, the 'network education society'. Hence, programmes will not have a one-to-one relation with specific universities.

Crucial for the future of international education in a globalizing world is accessibility to (master's) degrees. Within this context, the programme will integrate international experience in the master's programmes by working on double degree and extended master's programmes. Related to these programmes are consortia in which the programme cooperates with a partner university and a specific company. In this way the programme connects the academic network to the business network through such consortia.

The consortium idea goes further in that it enables the programme to expand the network business school into an international, virtual school consisting of five to eight well-reputed partners and companies. Students can build their own programme within this virtual school and receive a degree provided they have gained enough credits.

In addition to increasing student mobility, the programme aims to increase staff mobility. The target is, each year, to exchange one academic staff member per department and three administrative staff members with staff from partner universities for shorter or longer periods.

Focus

To foster an academic learning community that is characterized by a high-quality and internationally diverse student body, the programme has taken systematic action to reach potential international students. To develop an international classroom in which students can interact with students with different cultural backgrounds, targeted international recruitment takes place. Recruitment is focused on both EU and non-EU countries, with the help of so-called country teams who are responsible for recruitment policies in specific countries. The goal is to streamline and diversify the inflow of new groups of international students.

Reputation

The international playing field is highly competitive. Therefore the programme must have a good reputation in this field. To establish a good reputation, it has committed itself to continuous quality control and improvement, and has joined international accreditations and international rankings. Taking part in these accreditation and ranking procedures ensures that the international profile and quality of the school is assessed on a regular basis. There are high quality standards with respect to mission and vision, strategies, business processes and administration, facilities, HR policies, internationalisation and corporate relations. Reputation building is extremely important in the development of networks and in international recruitment policies. The programme's international accreditations have definitely contributed to the increased quality of its exchange partners.

The vision/policy on internationalisation includes verifiable objectives and benchmarks. For the programme, being international means having internationally focused programmes, internationally diverse students, international staff and connections to the international academic and corporate world.

The review panel was impressed by the clear vision, mission and policy on internationalisation of the programme. They form the basis for and the focus of the learning outcomes, teaching and learning, staff, students and services with respect to internationalisation

EXAMPLE 1

The programme describes its main objective as "to train students to become strategic advisors on complex socio-technical problems, as we expect our graduates to be working in an international and interdisciplinary environment". This objective forms persistently the focal point of the intended learning outcomes, which focus on intercultural awareness in theory and practice.
The programme identifies six intended international and intercultural learning outcomes, concentrating upon:
- the temporal and social context;
- co-operation and communication;
- cultural theories and cultural sensitivity;
- an interdisciplinary environment;
- new theories and insights to own (and different) culture;
- an independent critical attitude and the use of international resources.
In sum, the absorption of the theories and the knowledge on the one hand and the implementation in practice of intercultural awareness on the other is the focal point of these learning outcomes.

These learning outcomes are integrated in the course content as well as in different pedagogical measures and strategies, e.g. in specific group compositions. In projects students are confronted with the social, cultural and ethical dilemmas involved in cooperation and intercultural communication. They are required to work in cooperation with students from different cultural and national backgrounds and they learn to both appreciate and to accommodate their differences.

Very helpful, and also exemplary, is the clear and effective table of the content courses matched with the 6 targeted learning outcomes mentioned. During the visit, the panel was of the opinion "that the clear formulation and the convenience with which the learning outcomes are transferred into the programme is of very high quality and can be considered an example to other programmes."

Another important feature of the programme is the strong link with the professional field. The professions are involved in the review of the content and of the structure of the programme.

For the assessment of the achieved outcomes, a vast alumni survey was undertaken in 2008, in which the programme participated. Actually, the graduates come to work in international and intercultural settings in many large companies and government agencies, both in the Netherlands and abroad. The results of a questionnaire showed a high ranking of the intercultural cooperation by the alumni themselves.

Also the opinion of the professional field is taken seriously. A representative statement of the professions was that alumni were considered "the glue in a international project team" within the company.

EXAMPLE 2

The Programme provided in the self-assessment report a full overview of intended learning outcomes, including the intended international learning outcomes. The intended international learning outcomes are content, skill or attitude related.

Content related aspects are:

- Have knowledge of business administrative theoretical insights and factual findings on business: environmental knowledge: competitors relations, international cooperation, social responsibility, cultural diversity; interaction between companies and determinants of business development.
- Have knowledge of business administrative theoretical insights and factual findings on management of business processes in an international context, on business administrative (sub)sectors like: cross-cultural management.

Skills related aspects are:

- Social communicative skills: be able to deal with other people and be able to work in a team with people with different; backgrounds and expertise; be able to function in an international business context, often in foreign countries; be able to communicate with professional and non-professional partners from different fields of language and culture; be able to communicate in the English language.

Attitude related aspects are:

- Regarding reflective ability: interpret and accept your personal place in society; understand and interpret cultural limitations and restrictions; be able to appreciate cultural differences.
- Business ethical actions: make the values of a intercultural and international orientation the basis of your view of man and society.

A distinction is made by the programme between international learning outcomes and intercultural learning outcomes. By content, most business programmes are international programmes. Hence, the international dimension is present at large in business curricula. Additionally, some programmes with a more outspoken international orientation, include courses in which the international element itself is the focal point. Still, it is possible that these courses are taught without something intercultural happening in the learning process.

To this end the programme has decided to further distinguish between international learning outcomes and intercultural learning outcomes. The latter have the following characteristics:

- They put the learning process in culturally diverse groups as the central focal point
- Hence: the learning outcomes are heavily influenced, over even determined by how the group proceeds through the process
- Differences within the group are perceived and valued
- In the end, the learning process should be positively influenced by the group process created
- Still: these kinds of learning outcomes are definitely more difficult to measure than the international learning outcomes.

Most of these learning outcomes will be seen as soft skills.

Four 'archetypes' of courses are distinguished:

1. Courses with a regular content, not necessarily international, having a regular learning process. Little or no group dynamics is involved in this course, hence intercultural processes are absent.

2. Courses with a specific international content, but with a regular approach to the learning process, where students attend plenary lectures and do exercises on an individual basis.

3. Courses with a regular content, but taught in such a way that the dynamics of an international student population are in place. The course as such is regular, but it needs to be written in a small group of four students, which automatically is a culturally diverse group. Also courses

taken on exchange do not need to be international, but are savoured in an international learning environment.

4. Courses that combine international content with an international learning approach, including working in small, diverse groups on assignments.

As far as the achievement of the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes are concerned, the programme considers them within the programme achieved if the following can be observed or measured:

- Graduates have demonstrable knowledge of the international aspects of the various courses they have encountered in their bachelor programme

- Graduates have demonstrable intercultural competences

In the courses where the international dimension is central, the intended international learning outcomes are assessed through examinations, which are content-based. Other courses mainly strengthen the student's intercultural skills and by that the intercultural competences. Progress in acquiring intercultural competences as such is measured through the assessment of the course, as within the various courses, the intercultural competences have to be used to be able to successfully complete the course. The work in smaller groups in particular will have a strong influence on how students learn with regard to cultural differences.

The programme considers the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes after the programme achieved if the following can be observed or measured:

- Graduates applying at reputed (business) schools should be able to gain high acceptance rates;

- Graduates applying for jobs after their bachelor should be able to secure predominantly international placements.

The review panel was impressed by the clear and detailed description of the intercultural and international learning outcomes by course. The panel was also positive about the assessment within the programme, but would like to see the programme have an elaborated policy to track alumni on their achievements.

Teaching and learning

Since the standard teaching and learning only included one criterion linking a variety of elements ("*The choices the programme made with regard to the curriculum, educational practices and the assessment of students are logically derived from its vision/policy on internationalisation and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes*"), the overall assessments do not always reveal enough detail of what lies beneath. We came across some exemplary programmes with regard to the lay-out of the programme (the curriculum) which on the other hand lacked clear information on the assessment of students. Or other cases with some very well thought-through and apt teaching and assessments methods used by some teachers in combination with unintentionally used methods which were not fit for purpose by others. In general one can say that some very

good examples can be found, but that other programmes still have a large margin of growth in this area and could benefit from these good examples.

EXAMPLE 1

The programme is international and intercultural in the sense that the vast majority of all students come from a variety of countries outside of the Netherlands. This means that there is a natural mixture of nationalities with different backgrounds and experiences. To make use of this, the curriculum and teaching are based on four issues: 'real world' connection, policy orientation, multidisciplinarity and cross-country comparison, which are also features in the programme's vision.

The programme takes into account the fact that students already have an educational and professional background from their home countries, which is made use of in teaching and learning situations, at the same time as it includes a necessary theoretical basis. The courses have all been developed specifically for an international, multicultural group of students aiming to work in the field of international development and (global) social change and are designed to give the students a necessary background for their specialization. The courses are

- foundation courses on economics, sociology and politics

- a general course on international development history, theories and practices

- a set of core courses, each focusing on specific sets of issues in the field of development studies that relate the general courses to specific areas of specialization chosen by the students

- a research methodology workshop preparing students for the writing of their thesis

- a set of courses on research methods from which students must choose.

Course readings relate, to a significant extent, more general discussions to the realities of developing and transition countries and in many cases, teaching materials draw on varying policy contexts from across the world and, explicitly or implicitly, apply comparative frameworks.

Teaching is student centered and is based on students bringing their own experiences into the classroom and being compared with those of other students and then related to theory. Discussions revolve around issues of comparison and comparability – and transferability – of lessons learnt in different national contexts. All teachers have worked with international development activities themselves and are sensitive to intercultural issues, which contributes to the possibility of relating course content and course work to students' and teachers' cross-cultural and cross-national experiences. It should be added that most courses are conducted as team-teaching with two teachers who complement each other and can give different (or even opposing) perspectives of areas under consideration. This means that students become used to taking several points of view into account when making judgments and not taking things for granted.

Most courses are taught in small groups and teaching methods used include participatory lectures, workshops, tutorials and student presentations. There is a strong emphasis on guiding students in the writing of their thesis, and interaction with other students in and outside class is also an important factor in the writing process. Thus, all students participate in research methodology workshops in which ideas for and outlines of the paper are discussed with peers. Further, the

preparation of the paper includes two presentations in class where students are required to present their work and get feedback from supervisors and peers.

Necessarily, English is the common language used in the programme and for this reason a good command the language is crucial. This is an entrance requirement, but there is also during the first week of the programme an introductory course in which students take a diagnostic test in English and academic skills. On the basis of the results, those who seem to be weak in both or either are referred to remedial courses. In the rare cases where students are found to be seriously incompetent in English, they are de-registered.

At the start of the programme a lot of attention is also given to intercultural communication and gender differences, as well as information literacy, academic skills, and computer skills.

The review panel was impressed by the way teaching and learning relate to the programme's vision and the way in which teachers carry out their tasks accordingly. It is noteworthy that the course literature gives perspectives from all over the world and that teaching takes into account most developing regions and countries in transition. The manner in which teachers support students, facilitate group work, focusing on their various backgrounds makes the international and intercultural learning outcomes possible.

EXAMPLE 2

The programme refers in the self-evaluation report to the use of English literature and as language of instruction for the programme of life science. Students that participate in the Dutch programme are taught in writing (scientific) English and have to read English as well. The body of knowledge convened in the programme meets the operating standards in the international field. Students that travelled abroad for education or to complete their internship abroad, do not experience any gaps in knowledge or skills. In order to adapt to the usually more traditional teaching methods in other countries, students report that they require a short period to adapt. However, they also report that this is a valuable learning experience.

The students have to work together in international teams and that the staff ensures that students from the same ethnicity do not stick together but learn to work in groups with international compositions. In addition, students (under supervision) reflect on intercultural differences that show themselves during classes. Topics that are discussed during these reflections are, amongst others, the level of interaction that student from different nationalities are used to and the extent to which they feel free to express themselves.

The English taught version of the programme and the educational practice with regard to internationalisation is stronger than in the Dutch spoken programme. This is mainly caused by the fact that there are more international students present in the English spoken programme. The differences between the two programmes became less when the programme decided that students from the Dutch-spoken programme and the Life Science programme had to cooperate in practical lab-work in the first two years of their study. During the site visit, students that more recently started their studies, mentioned this as a positive change in comparison with their predecessors. It helped them to prepare and get motivated for following parts of their education programme abroad or do their internship in another country. Only in the third and fourth year the students from the Dutch programme and the Life Sciences are more actively integrated in the classroom. The panel

advises to strengthen the integration between international and Dutch students in the first and second year even further. This will improve the English language skills of the Dutch students, their interaction with the international students in the last two years and their intercultural competencies.

Staff

The panels also came across many engaged teachers, who invested a lot of time (also, it has to be said, pro bono) in developing the internationalisation of their programmes. In a lot of cases this was supported (and also made clear during the site visits) by the management. The composition of the staff groups on the other hand was very variable, with some cases of good and apt mixes of local and international staff and others which were clearly struggling with this issue. Also the participation of staff in international projects, international staff exchange programmes, development cooperation initiatives etc. was very unequal. But as has been stated before, overall there is satisfaction on the role of staff in the internationalisation process.

Good practices Staff

EXAMPLE 1

This example concerns a joint master, organized by 5 European partner institutions

The information about staff has been described in the self evaluation document of the programme as follows:

'The programme does not directly employ any staff. Core staff are employed by, and subject to, the personnel policies of their higher education institute. The staff comprises a Scientific Director, an Educational Director, twelve Module Co-ordinators and other core staff who teach, supervise or examine the programme. Currently, there are 27 core staff members employed by the five partner institutes. The staff student ratio is 1:20. Overall, there is a total of 2.5 fulltime equivalent for 50 students (2 cohorts) at one time.

The international CV's of the Directors, Module Co-ordinators and core staff show an internationally active and experienced group. All the staff have published in international, peer-reviewed journals and presented at international conferences. Some are members of editorial boards and on professional/disciplinary organizations.'

These facts were confirmed by the accreditation report of NVAO (February 2010):

'To the audit panel the most striking feature of the staff is that their composition reflects both the strong academic focus of the master course and the international professional practice, being the context of the master course … the staff are fully equipped to ensure the quality of the programme in an adequate way'.

The panel for the distinctive feature could not but confirm that 'staff members are very dedicated and proud to be part of the programme'. It was clear that the present co-operation between staff from a broad variety of nationalities and cultures encourages the exchange of all kinds of good practice, also regarding teaching, learning and assessment. Guest lecturers, also from outside Europe, contribute to the international composition of staff as well, by this adding an even more intercultural flavour.

The panel had no doubts at all about the quality and quantity of staff and their competences concerning internationalisation. The unique format of this master brings several of the best peers in the field of study together. The engagement of staff is hence an example of best practice. Their involvement in and commitment to the programme is extraordinary and probably partly inherent to the discipline occupation and health. This is guaranteed by the unique and well defined structure with a Scientific Director, an Educational Director and twelve Module Co-ordinators with a clear division of tasks and responsibilities.

Students were very satisfied with the staff, especially regarding their supervision which is a key aspect in the programme (a combination of short intensive course weeks and intermediate periods of independent work, impelling a lot of online supervision). Students experience staff as capable to supervise mixed (in terms of nationalities, cultural and professional backgrounds,…) groups and they have no complaints about their language skills. In general the panel got a positive impression of the international experience and the intercultural competences of staff as well. All staff gave relevant and interesting information about their international (albeit almost exclusively European) activities.

The continuity is also guaranteed by means of regular staff meetings, which are also used as (peer) training moments.

The key success factors are:

- staff from a broad variety of backgrounds

- extraordinary involved and committed staff members

- a unique and well defined staff structure, including regular staff meetings

- staff trained to and capable of teaching and supervising mixed student groups

- staff with the necessary linguistic and intercultural competences

EXAMPLE 2

In the self evaluation report it is stated that 25% of the artistic teaching staff and the body of lecturers are from abroad or have foreign origin. Within the masters lecturers the figure is 90% or higher. It is further explained that the programme also has a large number of staff with an international practice in their profession, education or research. 90% of the teaching staff, 73% of lecturers and 100% of masters combine their teaching assignment with a practice in the international arena. The programme has also appointed a specific coordinator for internationalisation and master classes.

In order to attract well qualified, international staff members the programme is actively screening the employment market. They are aiming at attracting a "*committed, professional and pedagogically skilled corps from both [the own country] and abroad*". It is an aim that the teachers should still be active in the field, something which is reflected in the number of staff employed full time. "*Out of the 60 full-time equivalents that are filled by the teaching staff, only 19 staff are employed full-time. The majority (140 staff) work part-time because of their practice elsewhere*". Teachers are "*selected on the basis of their practice linked to their research interests and activities and their teaching potential as regards teaching the theory course components*". The CV's of the staff confirm that the programme is succeeding in recruiting such lecturers.

From the interviews with the students it became very clear that the main reason for the students to choose programme is that the teachers have a good reputation. The students found that the staff members were encouraging the students to reflect upon their practices through international

research and were facilitating international experiences through sharing their own. There were no complaints from the students on the level of English of the teachers. Through the teachers networks various projects are carried out such as community projects. Teachers are also linking excellent students with own networks.

The staff members have sufficient international experience, intercultural competences and language skills to make the achievement of intended international & intercultural learning outcomes possible. The staff members are encouraged to pursue their professional careers and interact in international research projects. There is a large number of incoming staff lecturers which contributes to the international environment of the institution. The programme is focusing on, and is able to attract, a large number of international staff members.

It is explained in the self evaluation report that the programme aims to facilitate so that teachers can combine teaching with professional and/or research practice and that they are trying to stimulate the teachers to be active in these fields. This is done in a variety of ways; examples are flexibility regarding teaching schedules, working parties and consultative bodies and support to carry out individual research projects. Additionally the programme promotes participation in conferences, seminars, festivals, continuing training courses, projects, etc. at home and abroad. An overview provided by the programme of the participation of staff at international congresses, conferences and working groups shows that the staff are actively attending conferences and that the number of conferences has increased since 2006. The programme is also aiming at enhancing inbound and outbound teacher mobility.

The programme is encouraging the staff to be internationally oriented and the services provided to them are reflecting this. The support the programme is giving the teachers to participate in international projects and activities is positive. Teachers are encouraged to go on an Erasmus exchange and that foreign staff members are welcomed as visiting staff members. Facilities such as the elaborate library are also contributing to fulfilling the international visions of the programme.

Services

Also, the overall picture on services provided to staff and students is uneven. Some parts of it look very bright for some programme, but not so for others. In general one can say that in most cases much has been accomplished already (not only at the level of the programmes involved, in many cases primarily or also at the central administration level), but some work still needs to be done, especially regarding the guidance of students and the staff development regarding internationalisation.

Good practices Services (for students and staff)

EXAMPLE 1

Services in internationalisation are provided by the central International Office, the local Support Office and the programme's International Officer. Services offered to international students include:

-       providing information to both future and current students by means of websites, intranet, brochures and leaflets

- assistance in enrolment procedure, including visa application, credential evaluation, insurance, registration, pick up service, the arrangement of accommodation and the preparation of Diploma Supplements and Transcripts of Records.
- 40 scholarships for excellent non-EEA students.

In addition (and this especially appreciated by international students), all students are given a tutor, monitoring the students' performance and personal development. On top of this, the programme has set up a buddy system to familiarize students with the Netherlands, the institution and the Dutch education system. Second and third year students are buddies for first year students from abroad. Students meet with their buddy at least once a week. Since 2009 the institution offers also the possibility to enrol for a pre-course involving language training (English), an introduction to Dutch culture and society and an introduction to project-based learning (which is the dominant learning style used in the programme). The institution's international student association provides several multicultural activities and opportunities to meet with other students from abroad. The programme's measures for improvement with regard to facilities address administrative support (enrolment and accommodation), support in academic success and support in social well-being.

Students who went abroad, report that the programme helped them to arrange their housing and their visa. The programme put them in touch with a contact person abroad and introduced them to the buddy system of the partner university (if applicable).

Foreign students recall that they found a warm welcome. Also students who went abroad stated that the programme pays close attention to them: they are regularly contacted by a supervisor (twice a month), who asks how they are doing both personally and related to their studies. The students feel free to discuss any problem encountered. In addition, the buddy system and the system of tutoring students during the first semester are felt to be exemplary. The panel concluded that the facilities of the programme and the way in which the programme guides students, also when they are abroad is a good practice.

The panel also looked at the services available for staff members. The programme provides staff members with courses in English and in international coaching. A training programme for the intercultural dimension will be set up in 2010-2011 consisting of three elements. Firstly experts in the field of intercultural curriculum development will be invited to discuss the present curriculum and to select elements for improvement.

Secondly a programme will be set up to discuss the needs of companies for intercultural training. International companies will be interviewed to see what they actually do themselves in terms of intercultural training and to investigate what they think is needed for the students in terms of intercultural training.

Thirdly, there will be a refreshment course in intercultural coaching. The coordinator of the Personal Leadership program has been given the assignment to conduct a survey on what is specifically needed. The integration of intercultural sensitivity in the project groups will be one of the main topics.

Staff members are now experienced in teaching in the international classroom and as such feel confident. Although the programme does not organise further professionalization services with regard to internationalisation for its staff, the staff team meets regularly to discuss experiences in this field and as such develops its knowledge and insight in the international classroom by means of "intervision". In addition staff members feel that if they indicate that they need further support with regard to internationalisation, the programme management is open to provide for it.

EXAMPLE 2

Services for Students

Before entering the programme, students participate in the introduction week organised by the International Office of the University, which is mandatory for all international Master's students. This week is entirely focused on new international students settling in and giving them a head start in their studies – actually from the very welcome at Schiphol Airport.

The focus is on practical matters, such as the registration procedures and finding their way on the campus, and on the acquaintance with fellow (international) students. An important objective is to learn how to deal with intercultural differences and to become aware of how to work in projects.

The institution has won the Nuffic Orange Carpet Award, a prize for higher education institutions that make a special effort for international students. A distinguishing element is the reception of new students. An important feature is the idea of equal treatment of Dutch and international students, *while acknowledging differences between countries and cultures that the students come from*.

Specifically for the international students, the University developed a programme including the following issues:

- Cultural activities, focusing on the different cultural identities;
- Initiatives on building and sustaining a social network;
- To help students prepare for the global job market that the University offers;
- Medical & psychological assistance with;
- Limited financial aid (from scholarship extensions and tuition wavers to some contribution in specific cases);

For its graduating students & alumni the University organises a number of activities mostly aimed at building and maintaining their network and finding a position.

'Decentralised' services provided by the programme itself include intensive contact with the international officer even before coming to the Netherlands. The faculty organises an own introductory day for all its new international students. The programme combines providing of information about the programmes and the faculty with socialising to get to know the staff and each other. In the course of the year, students are supported in different aspects, from information services and library facilities to academic advice and mentorships. The panel found out that especially the intensive contacts with the *mentor* and the *advisor* is highly beneficial to and appreciated by the students.

In sum, the students are provided with services that facilitate them in pursuing their academic studies in a truly international and intercultural context.

Services for Staff

According to the visiting panel "All staff members are competent to teach in an international classroom and have consciously developed an educational practice in which they stimulate the development of international and intercultural competencies, sharing from their own experience." This judgement is due to the excellent services provided to the staff by the institution.

The Faculty works with the Basic Teaching Qualification (BTQ) programme, which aims to

provide new university teaching staff with the opportunity to develop competencies necessary to carry out their current and future teaching duties effectively. Lately one shifted to intermediate and experienced teacher qualifications. In this respect, all university staff can make use of the services provided by the Centre of Expertise in Education. The thematic courses of the centre are provided in Dutch and English and include specific courses meant to prepare staff for the intercultural classroom and non-native speaking staff for English-medium instruction. Important subjects contain facilitating the learning of international groups and creating an international dimension in education.

Other activities to support internationalisation in education are

- the grassroots project "One thousand Flowers in Delft" in which lecturers create an international dimension to their course or course environment;

- supporting departments with the development of an internationalisation policy by using the MINT tool of NUFFIC;

- preparing international master students for their education in Delft (online summer programme).

Last but not least, on the annual Education Day the teaching staff gather for lectures and workshops on a variety of current topics. In 2008 a workshop was organised on *teaching the intercultural classroom*; facilitating different learning styles. More lectures and workshops about internationalisation are foreseen for the future. An English language track is available throughout the day to accommodate for the international staff.

In sum, the panel established that the support to staff is quite impressive both in language proficiency as in content and pedagogical issues. This leads up to a staff which is very competent in the international and intercultural realm as well as enthusiastic and motivated.

Students

During the site visits we have met many enthusiastic students and alumni who clearly benefited a lot, both in terms of professional and personal development, of their internationalisation experiences and/or the internationalisation dimension of the programme.

Some programmes managed, in many cases not without a lot of effort, in achieving very well mixed student groups. Others excelled in offering students possibilities to study abroad or do international internships. Yet other programmes were well advanced in offering their students valuable "internationalisation at home"-possibilities.

In general one can say that the students and alumni of the programmes in the pilot programmes gave a very positive impression.

Good practices Students

EXAMPLE 1

The student group of this programme is very international. Overall, about 60 % of the students enrolled are of foreign origin. Out of these there are students from a high number of different countries, both within and outside of Europe. The Faculty believes that it is of uttermost importance to attract an international student group in order for the students to realise the

learning objectives of the programmes. For this programme this happens automatically due to the nature of this joint programme (with a US university).

The expert panel finds that the composition and engagement of the student group is excellent. The fact that the programme is able to attract such a high number of foreign students is very good. Furthermore; the composition of the student group facilitates achievement of international and intercultural learning outcomes. The composition of the student group is therefore a great aid for the teaching staff if they want to focus on such learning outcomes.

It needs to be added however, that the university's changed policy regarding student fees for international students can jeopardize this currently excellent student mix and hence the panel has asked to closely monitor the possible effects of this in order to safeguard the necessary balance.

In the self evaluation report it is explained that having an international student body enrolled in the programmes is on the one hand enhancing the realisation of the various learning objectives. On the other hand a diverse student group is a challenge for the staff. The teaching staff is attempting to enrich the teaching through taking advantage of the international classroom. The staff has also learned that proficiency in English is a prerequisite to realising the international and cultural learning outcomes. The Faculty has therefore set down a minimum requirement of command of English by foreign students.

The programme hence seems to be aware of the main advantages and challenges related to having a diverse student population. The expert panel is of the impression that the staff members are really attempting to make sure that the students are having an international experience during their studies. The students' exposure to students with other cultural backgrounds is very good. The students are forced to adjust to a different way of thinking by living in another country with a different legal system. From this the students gain a lot of international experience and their international and intercultural skills are challenged.

All students are attending one semester abroad. This is considered important in order for the students to meet the requirements of this programme. Through the joint set up of this programme it is ensured that the students attend a coherent programme. As previously noted; almost 60 % of the student population are of foreign origin. This realizes both the aims for inbound mobility of the University and the aims of the Faculty.

EXAMPLE 2

Each year, an average of 100 students from abroad are welcomed at the programme. In addition, the programme receives a large amount of exchange students who are mixed with own students. Students originate from a wide range of different countries (containing more than 50 nationalities). In the recruitment strategy, the selection of these countries was based on the wish to match the student population better with the curricular focus on Europe.

The programme aims to have no more than five students of the same nationality in each groups of eighteen students and mingles incoming exchange students with the own students.
From the discussion with the students, the panel did not receive any information that gives reason to doubt the extent to which Dutch students are mingled with foreign students in any of the programmes. Most of the students indicate that they have chosen the programme because of its international orientation and that they are very committed to it. The work in project groups with students from other cultures is highly valued. In the third year all students cooperate in project groups in an international project. Each group is given an assignment from, preferably, a foreign company. The examination of the project is performed by a jury in which one of the members is from abroad.

During the site visit the panel found out that students gain sufficient international experience. Students are confronted with other cultures in the classroom. Throughout the curriculum and the teaching methods, the students learn how to cooperate and communicate with other students from abroad. Besides the experiences in the classroom, students are obliged to spend at least one semester in a foreign country. They reflect on their experiences in a report that they discuss with their tutor. In this way, students get a better understanding of their own culture and of other cultures as well. Students say that the programme has taught them to be open-minded and less prejudiced with regard to people from other cultural backgrounds. In addition, they have experienced that they are well able to communicate with people in a foreign language. Also the students have experienced that this ability improves particularly when they have visited a country in which the language is spoken.

The programme has also developed a number of country specific projects in which the students go on a week or two-week excursion to that country. During this trip they visit several institutions and organisations. The students report that these projects added to their insights into this specific country. Students organise extra-curricular activities in which they widen their international social activities, such as the intercultural market.

The programme obliges Dutch students to go at least one period abroad for study or an internship. In addition, it motivates international students to go abroad. In 2009-2010, 35% of the foreign students went abroad. In the same year, the programme received 192 exchange students for one or two semesters.

The programme has a wide network of partner universities and businesses. Each year, the country tutors give a presentation on the study and placement possibilities in their country/region. Students can decide to visit one of the partner-organisations or universities or look for places to study or work themselves. Students discuss with their tutor what courses are relevant and as a consequence, the credits they earn for completing these courses are recognised by the programme. Students who visit a country where the native language is one that they study, improve their language skills to a major extent. Other students may lack this experience, but can practice their language skills with native speakers in their classroom and through the language buddy system.

The programme provides students with ample opportunities to go abroad. It supports students with finding an interesting location but also with administrative matters. In addition, students are monitored sufficiently when abroad. When students return, they have to write a report on their experiences which they discuss with the country tutor.

The review panel is of the opinion that the student group displays the required academic abilities, sufficient proficiency in English, and the essential international and intercultural background and motivation. The programme provides ample opportunities for students to broaden their international experience. Procedures are in place to make learning abroad easily accessible to students. Nonetheless, students' mobility is still a challenge.

Self-evaluation reports

This struggle could also be noted in the variety of self-evaluation reports, both in qualitative and in quantitative terms.

Of course, we have to bear in mind that this was a pilot which explains probably why it was clear that the reports in several cases had to be made in too little time and that the participating programmes were lacking experience in the (self-)assessment of

internationalisation. Overall, the reports were (as a result of this?) rather descriptive and not that analytical or (self-)critical. Sometimes the reports were too much focussed on the programme as such and too little on its internationalisation (this was especially clear in the chapter on vision/mission/policy).

Some programmes read the NVAO-framework too narrowly and literally and by that left out relevant information (for instance no reference to institutional context, no information on employers and alumni perspectives,…), others took a too broad scope, focussing more on the programme than on its international dimension (cf. above).

The NVAO framework

This last point brings us to a delicate yet important matter which was clearly a stumbling block for programmes as well as for some panel members: does the NVAO-framework straitjacket the programmes in the way in which they want to present their internationalisation as a distinctive (quality) feature? In other words: does the framework impose a certain vision on internationalisation?

The design of the framework deliberately wanted to avoid this. Which means that the programmes ánd the panel members have to be aware that neither NVAO nor the members of the panel can and will impose their vision on internationalisation, but that the assessment is made on *'if and how the programme has defined its internationalisation vision/mission/policy and implements it'* and everything that underpins and flanks this.

It was clear that several programmes had difficulties with that approach, in particular those which were less successful in stating explicitly their own vision/mission/policy. The chairs remain convinced however that for the purpose of the assessment exercise it is important to keep this neutral approach, also and perhaps even especially given the broad scope of internationalisation in higher education. The latter raises of course also the issue of the relationship between internationalisation and research. Some programmes wanted to have this explicitly taken on board for the evaluation exercise. But since the framework is conceived as a tool offering the possibility to be used in conjunction with a regular 'accreditation', we believe the focus should remain on the programme, viz. the education provided.

Of course this focus brings about some specific difficulties as well. Hence it was not always clear what needed to be assessed: one programme; an English and/or Dutch version of a programme; the bachelor and/or master programme; a whole "school" (faculty, department,…). But this should be avoided by making more explicit agreements in the contact between NVAO and the programme at the start of the process.

This means that we leave it open whether it wise or not to have two or more closely related programmes in the same "school" assessed at the same time, and if so how separate the assessment should be in the case of a joint assessment.

Part 3.   The way forward

3.1   A revised framework

Below you can find a presentation of the framework used during the pilot procedures and the framework that was finally adopted as the framework for the assessment of internationalisation as a distinctive quality feature. The revision was intended to make the framework meet the evaluation results, to enhance the interpretation of the criteria and to achieve a better balance between the standards and their underlying criteria.

Framework pilot procedures (2010)	Framework (2011)
1. Vision or policy on internationalisation a. The programme has a vision or policy on internationalisation. This vision/policy has been made explicit, is shared by the staff members, and stakeholders have been consulted during the formulation or revision of the vision/policy. b. The vision/policy on internationalisation includes verifiable objectives and benchmarks. c. The elements of the vision/policy on internationalisation (such as objectives and benchmarks) are evaluated periodically and form the basis for improvement measures.	**1. Vision on internationalisation** *1a: Shared vision* The programme has a vision on internationalisation. This vision is supported by stakeholders within and outside the programme. *1b: Verifiable objectives* The vision on internationalisation includes verifiable objectives. *1c: Improvement-oriented evaluations* The vision on internationalisation is evaluated periodically and this evaluation forms the basis for improvement measures.

Revision information:
>   The standard and underlying criteria were revised to make its interpretation clearer. The reference to an explicit vision or policy was removed because also less explicit demonstrations of vision or policy where used and deemed acceptable by the panels in the pilot procedures.

2. Learning outcomes	2. Learning outcomes
a. The vision/policy on internationalisation has been adequately transferred into the intended learning outcomes of the programme.	*2a: Intended learning outcomes* The intended international and intercultural learning outcomes defined by the programme are a clear reflection of its vision on internationalisation.
b. The programme can demonstrate that the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes are achieved by its graduates.	*2b: Student assessment* The methods that are used for the assessment of students are suitable for measuring the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.
	2c: Graduate achievement The programme can demonstrate that the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes are achieved by its graduates.

Revision information:

The original criteria were kept. The first criterion was rewritten to better reflect how the panels approached intended learning outcomes.

The element assessment was included here since it links to learning outcomes and to have three underlying criteria for each standard.

3. Teaching and learning	3. Teaching and Learning
a. The programme's curriculum, educational practice and assessment of students are in line with the vision/policy on internationalisation and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.	*3a: Curriculum* The content and structure of the curriculum enable the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.
	3b: Teaching methods The teaching methods enable the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.
	3c: Learning environment The learning environment is suitable for achieving the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.

Revision information:

The one underlying criterion of the standard was evaluated as too broad. The elements in the criterion were split up into separate criteria. Education practice was originally presented as teaching and learning. This has been made explicit in the new criteria.

The element assessment was moved to the standard on learning outcomes.

4. Staff	4. Staff
a. The engagement and composition of the staff (in quality and quantity) makes the achievement of the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes possible.	*4a: Staff composition* The composition of the staff (in quality and quantity) facilitates the achievement of the intended international and intercultural learning outcomes.
b. Staff members have sufficient international experience, intercultural competences and language skills to make the achievement of the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes possible.	*4b: International experience and competence* Staff members have sufficient international experience, intercultural competences and language skills.
	4c: Services provided to staff The services provided to the staff (e.g. training, facilities, staff exchanges) are in line with the staff composition and facilitate international experiences, intercultural competences and language skills.

Revision information:

The reference to the engagement of the staff was seen as not necessary and therefore removed in the first criterion.
The services to staff were included in a separate standard but deemed more appropriate under this standard.

5. Services	
a. Services provided to national and international students (information provision, counselling, guidance, accommodation, library, Diploma Supplement, …) are sufficient in view of the vision/policy on internationalisation and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes. b. Services provided to the staff (information provision, training, facilities, …) are sufficient in view of the vision/policy on internationalisation and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.	

Revision information:

The services were included in a separate standard but this was deemed unnecessary. Since both underlying criteria referred to elements in other standards these criteria were moved there. The whole standard was therefore deleted.

6. Students	5. Students
a. The engagement and composition of the student group is apt for achieving the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes. b. The international experiences gained by the student group are in line with the international vision/policy and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes. c. The inbound and outbound mobility of students (degree and credit mobility) is in line with the international vision/policy and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.	*5a: Student group composition* The composition of the student group (diversity of national and cultural backgrounds) is in line with the programme's vision on internationalisation. *5b: International experience* The international experience gained by students is adequate and in line with the programme's internationalisation vision. *5c: Services provided to students* The services provided to the students (e.g. information provision, counselling, guidance, accommodation, Diploma Supplement) are adequate and in line with the composition of the student group.

Revision information:

The reference to the engagement of the student group was seen as not necessary and therefore removed in the first criterion. The criterion also refers to the intended learning outcomes. It was deemed clearer to relate the composition to the programme's policy on internationalisation.

The criterion on mobility was deleted since the panel members agreed that this led to the assessment of the same elements included under the criterion on international experience.

The services to students were included in a separate standard but deemed more appropriate under this standard.

3.2   Lessons learned

Karl Dittrich

The NVAO looks back to the pilots with respect, joy and satisfaction. Respect because of the enormous interest Dutch and Flemish higher education show for internationalisation. Joy because of the outcomes of the pilots: the framework and the panels functioned well. Satisfaction because the higher education institutions show an enormous difference and diversity in the ways they deal with internationalisation. So far so good. NVAO is happy that the attention NVAO thinks is necessary for the internationalisation of Dutch and Flemish higher education has got a positive response from the institutions themselves.

But not everything already is in order. Panels and NVAO have seen with some concern that still some institutions and programmes think that internationalisation is a self-fulfilling prophecy: "we are international, because we are an international programme" or even worse "we are international, because we have international students" or "we are international, because our students are going abroad". Like all profiles and characteristics also internationalisation is the result of a policy, a deliberate choice for breeding new generations of students in an international flavour. That is not to say that there is only one way to achieve this. But to our minds, being convinced that internationalisation is important for a programme and thus for its students has considerable consequences:

- What means "internationalisation" in a specific discipline or field?
- How do we translate this meaning in "international or intercultural learning outcomes"?
- How do we assess these learning outcomes?
- How do we know that the discipline or the professional field wants these specific learning outcomes?
- What does it mean for the teachers?
- What does it mean for the students?
- Do we want to save time in the programme for a certain period abroad?
- Are we looking for some specific forms of internationalisation at home?
- What does it mean for the students' services?
- What does it mean for the languages our students should be able to speak and understand?

It is remarkable that in recent years many instruments have been developed to help institutions and programmes to think about the consequences of internationalisation. These instruments indeed are helpful and even necessary, but the most important one of course is that management and leadership are convinced of the necessity and the desirability to become "international"!

NVAO and panels are convinced that it will take some time to establish a set of international and intercultural learning outcomes for each and every programme that considers itself to be international. It will be important to involve stakeholders from the disciplines and the professional fields.

After all, learning outcomes should be useful and the discipline or the professional field should be convinced that they are necessary to further develop the field. For NVAO this is

not a question mark but a note of exclamation: Dutch and Flemish labour and scientific markets have to be international and intercultural, simply because of the countries' dependence on developments in the rest of the world. Both countries are no autarchies and will grow and flourish through their trade, their services, their knowledge and their transport. This means that both countries will have to lean very heavily on developments abroad and on their good relationships with foreign worlds. And therefore an "international and intercultural" labour force is a necessity. That means that stakeholders have to be involved in defining developments in disciplines and professional fields.

We have learned that is not that easy to give a judgment on the achieved international and intercultural learning outcomes. The problem is not so much with the cognitive elements of the learning outcomes, but with the achievement of the intended skills and certainly the attitudes. Apparently part of these will only become visible during the professional careers of the students. It might therefore become necessary to gather material on the performance of the alumni, and to involve them in changing or fine-tuning the curricula. That might become a true investment for some of the programmes!

There is growing recognition among most of the programmes taking part in the pilots that trustworthy internationalisation will rely on the quality and the power of partnerships. The certificate as a "distinctive feature" of internationalisation might develop into a powerful instrument to establish alliances and partnerships. After all most of the programmes will flourish from international contacts for their students with programmes that take internationalisation as serious as themselves. So the certificate might lead to a group of "elite-programmes" on the theme of internationalisation.

After the pilots we are absolutely convinced that the evaluation of the internationalisation of the programmes (let alone institutions!) should be done by a group of well trained experienced panel members. NVAO is convinced that it will not be possible to have a certificate developed on the basis of only national panel members. The standard of the certificate should be high-level and should be consistent on that high level. That can only be conceived if parts of the panel know exactly how the programmes should and have been evaluated. NVAO therefore holds a plea for using the E-TRAIN-project for training panel members in this respect. Panels should be partly composed from a pool of thus trained experts.

NVAO has been surprised that such great differences have been discovered between the achievements of the programmes that took part in the pilot. It was a surprise to us, but also to some of the programmes themselves. After all, participants in a pilot should be convinced that they are interesting examples of internationalisation, to say the least. Some of the programmes seemed very disappointed about the judgements of the panels. Some even had the impression that the panel did not understand and appreciate their efforts in developing international programmes. NVAO supports the panels in this respect: the certificate should not be a reward for efforts, plans or even enthusiasm, but only for achievements. The panel reports show very clearly in what respects some programmes have to make considerable improvements.

From the international interest for the pilot we have learned that the development of the certificate will be important and find response in a number of countries. We were happy to learn that those people we asked to become panel members didn't hesitate for a second; we were as well happy to learn that others asked to have the possibility to take part in the evaluation processes as observers.

Through the participation of QA experts from other countries we have been convinced that NVAO is using high standards. Some of our colleagues admitted that they didn't see any of the programmes in their countries to be able to fit to these standards. The same colleagues convinced us that it will be necessary to have the standards as high as we used them in order to make a European certificate something extraordinary. We are therefore extremely happy that ECA decided to take the initiative to develop a ECA certificate on internationalisation.

After the pilot NVAO has learned from a number of programmes that awarding the certificate gave these programmes new or extra chances to develop themselves even further within their institutions. Apparently the certificate has been seen as an appraisal (which it is), which might serve as an example for other programmes in the same institute or as a special token for branding the programme. The programmes concerned were very happy with these chances and in some cases these even led to new research and teaching possibilities across borders!

Finally, NVAO thinks that the pilots, the evaluation and the information about the results of the pilots have shown that there is broad interest in implementing internationalisation in programmes. We realize that this is not an easy task and that teachers, management, researchers and QA staff will need advise and examples of good practices. That is one of the reasons NVAO developed a "digital marketplace" for presenting good practices of internationalisation. NVAO also will react positively on the requests for organizing workshops and seminars for staff members of programmes and institutions to share good practices and to discuss new possibilities and developments.

Annex A

Framework used for the pilots (2010)

Programme accreditation and internationalisation
- A distinctive (quality) feature for internationalisation -

It is by now quite clear how broad and multifaceted the concept internationalisation has become. Higher education institutions and programmes of course need to realise this. Time and time again they will need to question the "internationalisation" objectives they pursue, how they wish to achieve these objectives and whether their internationalisation leads to the desired effect.
The NVAO and the Dutch and Flemish higher education institutions are convinced of the importance of internationalisation for education. They view it as an additional contribution to the development of both regions. The Netherlands and Flanders are both indeed very dependent on trade and services and both small regions here depend on good international relations. Internationalisation is therefore self-evident for nearly all professions and disciplines and education would fail terribly if this was not taken into account.

To underline the importance of "internationalisation" NVAO intends to develop a certificate. Within Dutch and Flemish accreditation frameworks this is referred to as a distinctive (quality) feature. The development, assessment and award of such a certificate should preferably take place in an international context.

The NVAO therefore proposes the following principles:
1. The certificate is based on the ambition level of the programme as defined in a policy statement;
2. The certificate is assessed and awarded at the level of the programme;
3. The programme's desired internationalisation must have a significant impact on the overall quality of the programme;
4. The internationalisation of the programme is reflected in the intended and achieved learning outcomes;
5. The operationalisation of "internationalisation" should be reflected in standards that relate to teaching and learning, staff, services and students;
6. The assessment of internationalisation should be undertaken by a panel that has the appropriate expertise;
7. The assessment takes place on a four-point scale: unsatisfactory - satisfactory - good - excellent.

The following elements should clarify this concept:

1. Because of the multiplicity of issues related to internationalisation the NVAO considers it reasonable that "internationalisation" (type, level, …) of each programme will vary greatly. Some programmes focus on an international professional field (e.g. international business), others are based on a discipline which because of its nature has no boundaries (e.g. physics), and even others integrate internationalisation by internationally benchmarking their nationally oriented programme. Such diversity cannot be reflected at the institutional level. At the institutional level we can at best assess institutional policy and centrally managed activities or developed facilities.

2. The NVAO considers it important that a programme clarifies the impact internationalisation will (or should) have on the overall quality of education. An example to clarify this point: offering a master's programme in English to foreign students only has an added value if this programme and the students and teachers involved have significance for the education provided and the totality of the student population.

3. Because of the desired international cooperation, we strive to maximise clarity about the level, discipline and orientation of the programme. It is reasonable to do so through the intended and achieved learning outcomes , especially as learning outcomes increasingly gain in importance, and keeping in mind the Leuven communiqué of May 2009. Moreover, this approach invites a programme to think as a team and formulate the desired learning outcomes jointly.

4. The multifaceted concept of internationalisation makes it likely that its operationalisation will take place in very different ways. The NVAO sees four elements in which this operationalisation will take place:
   - The teaching and learning provided by the programme;
   - The way the quality of the staff is specifically suited for internationalisation;
   - The way the students are engaged in internationalisation;
   - The necessary services to make internationalisation function properly (this ranges from library facilities to student counselling and the use of the Diploma Supplement)
   These elements have been developed further and included in an assessment framework. Here it will become clear that not every programme will have to comply with all the possible criteria.

5. The NVAO considers it very important that the assessment of internationalisation is done by panels that have the right expertise. It might be necessary to convene separate, international panels, but it might also be a possibility to draw up detailed rules for the composition of these panels or to include experts certified for this purpose.

6. Finally, the NVAO considers it useful to assess the standards for internationalisation on a four-point scale, a scale also used in the current accreditation frameworks. This provides the opportunity to clearly demonstrate the level of internationalisation of a particular programme. It also incorporates a strong element of improvement into the system: a programme may indeed be challenged to progress from satisfactory to good or even excellent.

Framework for the assessment of internationalisation as a distinctive (quality) feature

The framework for the assessment of internationalisation as a distinctive (quality) feature consists of six standards and each of these standards has at least one criterion.

1. **Vision or policy on internationalisation**
   a. The programme has a vision or policy on internationalisation. This vision/policy has been made explicit, is shared by the staff members, and stakeholders have been consulted during the formulation or revision of the vision/policy.
   b. The vision/policy on internationalisation includes verifiable objectives and benchmarks.
   c. The elements of the vision/policy on internationalisation (such as objectives and benchmarks) are evaluated periodically and form the basis for improvement measures.

2. **Learning outcomes**
   a. The vision/policy on internationalisation has been adequately transferred into the intended learning outcomes of the programme[2].
   b. The programme can demonstrate that the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes are achieved by its graduates.

3. **Teaching and learning**
   a. The programme's curriculum, educational practice and assessment of students are in line with the vision/policy on internationalisation and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.

4. **Staff**
   a. The engagement and composition of the staff (in quality and quantity) makes the achievement of the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes possible.
   b. Staff members have sufficient international experience, intercultural competences and language skills to make the achievement of the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes possible.

---

[2] In the rest of the framework we refer to intended international & intercultural learning outcomes to single out the intended learning outcomes which result from the vision/policy on internationalisation.

5. **Services**
    a. Services provided to national and international students (information provision, counselling, guidance, accommodation, library, Diploma Supplement, …) are sufficient in view of the vision/policy on internationalisation and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.
    b. Services provided to the staff (information provision, training, facilities, …) are sufficient in view of the vision/policy on internationalisation and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.

6. **Students**
    a. The engagement and composition of the student group is apt for achieving the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.
    b. The international experiences gained by the student group are in line with the international vision/policy and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.
    c. The inbound and outbound mobility of students (degree and credit mobility) is in line with the international vision/policy and the intended international & intercultural learning outcomes.

Panel composition
The main requirement for the expert panel is expertise in internationalisation. This refers to experts with international experience and with knowledge of internationalisation (policies) in the relevant discipline/subject.

Grading and assessment rules
Each standard needs to be explicitly assessed as either unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent. If a standard is assessed as excellent this means that the panel considers the programme's initiatives and activities to meet that standard an exemplary practice. These can therefore serve as an example for other programmes.
The assessment at the level of the standards leads to an overall assessment of the programme.
- A programme's internationalisation is considered to be excellent if standard 1 and 2 are assessed as excellent, if two of the remaining four standards are also assessed as excellent and if none of the standards are assessed as unsatisfactory.
- A programme's internationalisation is considered to be good if standard 1 and 2 are assessed as good, if two of the remaining four standards are also assessed as good and if none of the standards are assessed as unsatisfactory.
A certificate or a distinctive (quality) feature is awarded if a programme's internationalisation is considered as either good or excellent.

Annex B

Schedule for the site visit

Site-visit Pilot project "Distinctive Quality Feature Internationalisation"

[Name of programme and HEI, city, location]

Panel:
…, Chair
…, International expert
…, Subject specific expert
…, Student expert

…, Process coordinator
…, Secretary

Day 1

15.45- 16.00: Arrival of experts
15.30- 16.00: Meeting of process coordinator and secretary with contact person of HEI
16.00-18.00: Review of materials and preparatory panel meeting
19.00 - …   : Dinner (including further preparations for the next day)

Day 2

9.00-10.00:   Meeting with management (Include names and positions)
10.00-11.00: Meeting with students (Include at least 6 names)
11.00-12.00: Meeting with teaching staff (Include at least 6 names and position)
12.00-13.00: Lunch including review of materials
13.00-13.30: Meeting with alumni (Include at least 6 names and position)
13.30-14.00: Meeting with professional field (Include at least 6 names and position)
14.00-14.30: Meeting with representatives international services
14.30-15.30: Panel discussion on the outcomes of the assessment
15.30-16.00: Final meeting with management (Include names and position)
16.00:   End of site visit and departure