The Dutch and Flemish accreditation system

The accreditation experience of
the Graphical and digital media department of
the University College Arteveldehogeschool - Ghent, Belgium

Linda Bogaert - Graphical and digital media department - University College Arteveldehogeschool - Ghent, Belgium

What is (initial) accreditation?

Assessment of the **quality** of a degree program

Accreditation of offered and registered programs in the official register of *recognized* programs in the Netherlands and in Flanders

Initial accreditation to recognize *new* programmes

(Initial) Accreditation Frameworks

Drawn up by the **NVAO** (www.nvao.net), the Dutch and Flemish accreditation organisation

NVAO **stipulated** the
- accreditation procedure,
- quality standards,
- assessment rules.

Different, though as analogous as possible, frameworks for the Netherlands and Flanders due to disparities in the higher education systems

All-purpose, accessible, universal frameworks to accomodate the **diversity** of programs and the **autonomy** of institutions

Initial Accreditation Frameworks

In the **Netherlands** …
6 themes subdivided into 19 standards

In **Flanders** …
the same 6 themes subdivided into 21 standards

Assessment on a **2-point scale**: 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory'

'**ex ante**' assessment as a more extensive assessment of learning outcomes cannot yet be undertaken

Accreditation Frameworks

In the **Netherlands** …
6 themes subdivided into 21 standards

In **Flanders** …
the same 6 themes subdivided into 23 standards

Assessment on a **4-point scale**:
- 'unsatisfactory',
- 'satisfactory',
- 'good' ,
- 'excellent'.

Differences between frameworks

Main difference …
the theme '**Results**'

For a program that is already offered …
assessing whether it achieves its previously set objectives, i.e its **learning outcomes**.

- *Does a program deliver what it promises to deliver?*

For new programs …
called '**Conditions for Continuity**'

- *Is the institution sufficiently solvent?*
- *Are sufficient financial resources invested?*
- *Are students guaranteed that they'll be able to complete the program and find employment?*

Focus on learning outcomes

Development to a **competence-based education** system since the early '90s

The **focus of education** moved …

… from the *teaching* process with a bias on transfer of knowledge, *input*-based process expressed in workload and length of studies

… to the *learning* process with a bias on adequate performance in a working context, *output*-based process expressed in the competences achieved

Learning outcomes at 3 levels

Are **INTENDED** learning outcomes in line with the required level and subject of the program and with what is (inter)nationally expected of a program in that subject?

Judging the **POTENTIAL** learning outcomes, the competences a student can achieve in the program as it is offered.

Assessing the **ACHIEVED** learning outcomes, the competences a graduate has actually acquired during his/her studies.

Accreditation steps

The institution/program carries out a **SELF-EVALUATION** of the program concerned. A report is delivered to an assessment panel according to the themes, standards and criteria of the relevant framework.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT to verify the assertions contained in the report. The assessment panel writes down its objective findings, subjective considerations and conclusions in an assessment report.

The institution submits an application for **ACCREDITATION** to NVAO by sending in the assessment report.

Self-evaluation: our experience (1)

Importance of an **internal supporting quality assurance service**

A **time and labour consuming** process

In December '09 a report comprising no less than **168 A4 pages** (attachments not included) was delivered to the assessment panel

The **6 themes** of the framework were carefully explored:

1. *Targets of our education*
2. *Our program/curricula*
3. *Personnel availability*
4. *Facilities*
5. *Internal quality assurance*
6. *Results*

Self-evaluation: our experience (2)

Pitfall …
People might start to 'force' the text in the direction of the proposed framework.

The framework cannot *entirely* be realized.

Describe *realistically* what exists.

Deduce in the framework which elements one can use to describe the *strengths* and *points of attention*.

Self-evaluation: our experience (3)

We reflected upon '**the scene**' of our education positioning it in a broad spectrum paying attention to the educational and international context, labor market, partners, etc.

We had to demonstrate that we share a **vision** and **strategic plans** (how and why?) gaining the required results.

We had to **justify choices** in terms of curricula, learning paths, methodology, material means and personnel issues.

We had to clarify the **results** of our educational activities. We measured the effects, focused on educational research and quality control, etc.

Self-evaluation: our experience (4)

The report should be **correct**, **complete** and '**recognizable**', i.e all staff members should be able to identify themselves with the text.

Harmony between the text and the perception of it by the owners of the process/product is crucial. Feedback of all text parts is therefore to be constantly communicated.

The report is fine-tuned by **reading committees**, both internal and external parties incl. the field and alumni.

External assessment: our experience (1)

28-30 June '10: an assessment panel visited our department. It will visit later this year Flemish institutions offering a similar program.

The entire **program** of this visit was laid down by the commission itself.

A thorough **preparation** was required.

The **composition of the assessment panel** was in line with NVAO requirements and included a large representation of the field and one education specialist

External assessment: our experience (2)

Finding a relevant and supporting sample of **discussion partners** was highly significant.

The commission also invited for a discussion:
- 10 *representatives of the professional sphere of action*,
- 10 *graduates* ,
- 20 *students*,
- *lecturers* and *technical staff.*

4 international strategic partners of the department joined the discussion when it came to assessing the international dimension of our curriculum.

It was crucial to keep all parties concerned **highly involved** and **motivated**.

Accreditation decision (1)

If **positive** …
the program is accredited, i.e included in the official register:
the degree awarded is recognized by the national authorities.

An accredited program receives public funding and students
enrolled receive support (e.g. grants).

A positive accreditation decision has a fixed period of validity:
6 years for the Netherlands and 8 years for Flanders.

A well-functioning **internal quality assurance system** is to
ensure that the program retains its quality during this period.

Accreditation decision (2)

If **negative** …
the program loses accreditation, i.e. is deleted from the official register and can no longer be offered.

However, there is a possibility of **temporary recognition** during a recovery period (1 to 3 years in Flanders, 2 years in the Netherlands).
The institution submits an application for temporary recognition. As well a detailed plan for improvement should be put forward.

Institutions can lodge an **appeal against accreditation decisions** taken by NVAO.

Accreditation decision (3)

The panel's assessment report and NVAO's accreditation report (including the accreditation decision) are **published** by NVAO.

The public accreditation report includes a **ranking** and **descripton** of similar programs offered in Flanders.
It offers transparancy and clarity about the programs' quality etc. to all target groups involved.

Conclusion:
our accreditation experience

A time and labor consuming operation, though very
REWARDING

- *It pushes the department to define and explicate its vision and policies and to defy external scrutiny of it.*

- *It requires the department to share this information with staff and external organisations/contacts*

- *It compels the department to keep hold and stock of the results of its policies, activities and resource management.*

- *It offers the department a unique opportunity to amass and share information that previously might be dispersed. It provides both the commission, management and all staff with a thorough and substantiated overview.*

- *It offers the department some crucial, external expert advice regarding its key processes.*

- *It constitutes the kick off point from where a new series of continuous internal quality assessment processes will start.*

Any questions?

Thank you for your attention

More info: linda.bogaert@arteveldehs.be

Linda Bogaert
Departmental International Coordinator
Lecturer English and Communication
Graphical and digital media department
University College Arteveldehogeschool - Ghent, Belgium
www.arteveldehs.be