

*A next step*  
NVAO Annual  
Report 2014

June 2015

## A next step

Both in the Netherlands and Flanders, discussions are underway about a next step in the continuing evolution of the accreditation system. The concepts of “trust” and “reducing the burden” play key roles. In 2014, Flanders manifested these concepts by taking the next step in the accreditation system after the inauguration of the Bourgeois government. Ms Hilde Crevits, Vice Prime Minister of Flanders and Flemish Education Minister, set up a taskforce with representatives from universities, university colleges, students, the quality assessment agency of the Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges VLUHR-KZ, and NVAO in order to develop a proposal regarding the review of the higher education quality assurance and accreditation system. She thus accommodated the wish of the Flemish universities and university colleges to simplify the system and initiate a transition to a more integrated external quality assurance system.

The new Flemish accreditation system is based on trust and gives the institutions a greater measure of autonomy in the field of quality assurance, by making them accountable at the institutional level through the institutional review. The programme accreditations have been put on hold for the time being. In the very near future, the institutions will commence preparations for the transition to institutional accreditations by setting up pilots which NVAO will have assessed by way of an additional strand in the institutional review, on the basis of a new Quality Code. Institutions undergoing the corresponding assessment will be exempted from programme accreditations. The external programme assessments will be maintained for new programmes, programmes already engaged on an improvement period, international cooperatives and institutions not setting up pilots.

NVAO has devoted a great deal of attention to setting up the new Flemish system and developing the frameworks and the new Quality Code. The revisions to the system, the Frameworks and the Quality Code have been approved by the Flemish government and will be considered by the Flemish Parliament in 2015.

In the Netherlands, the Quality in Diversity Act, the Strengthening Quality Guarantees Act, the evaluation of the accreditation system by NVAO itself, and studies conducted by the Court of Audit of Belgium, the Dutch State Audit Office and the Education Inspectorate have induced NVAO to revise its assessment frameworks in the year under review and discuss the adaptations with its stakeholders. The number of documents to be submitted in programme assessments was cut back substantially and the number of standards to be assessed in extensive programme assessments was reduced, as was the required number of pages in the critical reflection of the programmes. The duration of site visits in extensive programme assessments was halved. The new assessment frameworks came into force on 19 December 2014.

In 2014, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Ms Jet Bussemaker, requested the Dutch "Accreditation system 3.0" Steering Group to draw up an advisory report regarding the development of the accreditation system, on behalf of her Strategic Agenda for higher education, that is expected after the summer of 2015. The Steering Group is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen), the Dutch Platform of Recognised Private Training Institutions (NRTO), the Dutch National Union of Students (LSVb), the Dutch National Students Association (ISO), the Education Inspectorate and

NVAO. The advisory report on the evolution of the system will be completed in early 2015.

These developments have prompted NVAO to adapt the system in both regions in such a way as to reduce the burden and to pursue further differentiation in the set of instruments.

The internal goals on which NVAO have focused during the past year include reducing procedural timeframes by slimming down procedures; reinforcing the quality of the internal assessment process and supporting the Dutch clustered assessments by appointing external assessment groups with appropriate assessment schedules, in consultation with the umbrella organisations of the universities of applied sciences and the universities. The clusters will enable NVAO to improve consistency and to develop comparative analyses.

In the year ahead, NVAO aims to further enhance the trust in and support for the accreditation system. It intends to flesh out the principle of “well-founded trust” by introducing a more flexible set of instruments. It will take measures to further expand the consistency of judgements, increase the accessibility of reports, reinforce the quality culture in higher education and expand its perspective by way of internationalisation, for which purpose it will utilise the added value of Dutch-Flemish and international collaboration. The annual report at hand reflects the activities it has undertaken in 2014.

Anne Flierman, Chair  
Ann Demeulemeester, Vice-Chair

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**Results** NVAO assesses and assures the quality of higher education and promotes the quality-oriented culture within the higher education systems of the Netherlands and Flanders.

### Assessment and assurance

With regard to assessment and assurance, 2014 was a peak year for NVAO; the number of Dutch and Flemish applications processed totalled more than 800 (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Total number of processed applications from the Netherlands and Flanders as of 31 December 2014**

	Final total	The Netherlands			Flanders	
		Existing programmes (accreditation)	Institutional audit	New programmes (initial accreditation)	Existing programmes (accreditation)	New programmes (initial accreditation)
2014	807	646 <sup>1</sup>	15	60	74	12
2013	801	515	24	50	206	6
2012	578	339	5	55	166	13

#### Existing programmes (the Netherlands and Flanders)

In 2014, NVAO processed 646 accreditation applications for existing programmes in the Netherlands (see Table 2). This is well over 100 more compared to the year before (515). NVAO was able to process all applications within the year. Of the existing programmes, more than 10 per cent were assessed as “good” or “excellent” in 2014. Some 8 per cent of the existing programmes (52) were granted conditional accreditation (improvement period).

The quality improvement in Dutch professional higher education (HBO) is continuing. In 2014, fewer improvement periods were granted in this sector (15 or approx. 6 per cent) compared to the year before (20 or approx. 11 per cent) (see Table 2). Conditional accreditation, for that matter, encourages many universities of applied sciences and research universities to take vigorous action in tackling the problems identified with respect to particular programmes. The programmes that have entered an improvement track generally achieve good results. In the reassessment, some score a “good” rather than a “sufficient”.

In June 2014, for the first time, NVAO published the results of the accreditation round in the Humanities cluster. Out of the 212 university bachelor’s and master’s programmes up for re-accreditation, 26 were assessed as sub-standard. NVAO granted these programmes a maximum improvement period of two years. For the years ahead, NVAO expects quality improvement in other sectors as well.

<sup>1</sup> Including 12 Research Master’s programmes

**Table 2: Total number of accreditation applications processed in the Netherlands as of 31 December 2014**

2014	Final-total	Sufficient	Good	Excellent	Improve-ment period	Application withdrawn
<b>Academic higher education</b>						
Publicly funded	387	311	37	1	36	2
Privately funded	2	1	-	-	1	-
<b>Academic higher education overall</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Professional higher education</b>						
Publicly funded	234	192	22	6	12	2
Privately funded	23	17	2	-	3	1
<b>Professional higher education overall</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2014 total</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>5</b>

In Flanders, accreditation applications for existing programmes fell from 206 in 2013 to 74 in 2014 (see Table 3). The reason is that the first programmes assessed within the framework of the accreditation system, eight years ago, were up for re-accreditation last year and at the time, in 2005, the system got off to a relatively slow start. The seven decisions involving a limited accreditation term pertained to specialised medicine master's programmes and two journalism bachelor's programmes, amongst others.

**Table 3: Total number of accreditation applications processed in Flanders as of 31 December 2014**

2014	Final total	Positive	Limited validity
<b>Academic sector</b>			
Statutory registered institutions	46	42	4
Registered institutions	7	6	1
<b>Academic sector overall</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Professional sector</b>			
Statutory registered institutions	20	18	2
Registered institutions	1	1	-

<b>Professional sector overall</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2014 total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>7</b>

*New programmes (the Netherlands and Flanders)*

With regard to the applications for initial accreditation in the Netherlands, half of the applications were judged positively while the other half still demonstrated insufficient quality (see Table 4). These applications needed to meet additional conditions or were withdrawn by the institutions.

**Table 4: Total number of applications for initial accreditation in the Netherlands as of 31 December 2014**

<b>2014</b>	<b>Final total</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Condit. positive</b>	<b>Cond. met</b>	<b>Cond. not met</b>	<b>Application withdrawn</b>
<b>Academic higher education</b>						
Publicly funded	21	11	2	2	-	6
Privately funded	3	-	1	1	-	1
<b>Academic higher education overall</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Professional higher education</b>						
Publicly funded	9	6	1	2	-	-
Privately funded	27	7	4	6	1	9
<b>Professional higher education overall</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2014 total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>

The number of new programmes in Flanders rose as a result of a large amount of positive macro efficiency decisions. In 2014, twice as many new applications were submitted compared to the year before (2014: 12; 2013: 6) (see Table 5). This is because the previous government issued a considerable number of positive macro efficiency decisions over the year under review, which enabled more institutions to apply for accreditation. Three applications that were withdrawn have now been re-submitted and judged positively.

In Flanders, few new programmes have been provided. Flemish programmes are broad-based, which allows the institutions to profile their distinctive features. In addition, a legislative amendment prohibits the introduction of new specialisations within existing programmes.

**Table 5: Total number of applications for initial accreditation processed in Flanders as of 31 December 2014**

2014	Final total	Positive	Application withdrawn
<b>Academic sector</b>			
Statutory registered institutions	3	2	1
Registered institutions	1	1	
<b>Academic sector overall</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Professional sector</b>			
Statutory registered institutions	8	6	2
Registered institutions	-	-	-
<b>Professional sector overall</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2014 total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>

#### *Institutional audits (the Netherlands)*

The transitional phase for the Dutch institutional audits was completed in 2014 when the last 15 applications were processed (see Table 6). Out of the total of 42 institutions that applied for an institutional audit, 8 withdrew for various reasons. The remaining 34 institutions warranted 24 immediately positive decisions by NVAO. Ten institutions were required to meet a number of conditions, which five of them have already managed. Thus, 29 Dutch higher education institutions boasted a positive institutional audit by the end of last year, while five institutions were still working to meet the conditions set.

#### *Institutional reviews (Flanders)*

In Flanders, an institutional review is mandatory for all statutory registered institutions (the registered institutions are exempted from this obligation). The preparations went into full swing in 2014, but the reviews themselves will start closer to the year 2016.

**Table 6: Total number of applications for institutional audits processed in the Netherlands as of 31 December 2014**

2014	Final total	Positive	Cond. positive	Positive after cond. / withdrawn	Withdrawn
<b>Academic higher education</b>					
Publicly funded	4	2	1	1	-
Privately funded	1	-	1	-	-
<b>Academic higher education overall</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Professional higher education</b>					
Publicly funded	9	3	2	3	1
Privately funded	1	1	-	-	-
<b>Professional higher education overall</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2014 total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

#### *Associate degrees (Flanders)*

Associate degree programmes, professional higher education at level 5 of the Flemish qualification structure, comprise professionally oriented programmes, such as fourth grade nursing, which do not directly lead to a Bachelor's or Master's degree. Associate degree programmes carry 90 to 120 credits and lead to the award of a graduate diploma.

In March 2014, NVAO attended the information session organised by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, the Higher Education, Adult Education and Student Finance Agency, in Brussels regarding the practical introduction of associate degree programmes. The first applications were received at the end of 2014.

#### *Modification of study load (Flanders)*

Universities of applied sciences (UAS) and research universities may apply to the Flemish government to modify the study load of certain existing (master's) programmes. NVAO advises the Flemish government whether the applications received meet the

criteria set down in law. In 2014, NVAO processed eight applications for modification of a study load; in three cases, a positive advice was issued.

#### *Distinctive (quality) features (the Netherlands and Flanders)*

In 2014, NVAO awarded a distinctive feature to 25 Dutch programmes. None of the Flemish programmes applied for a distinctive feature in the year under review. In recent years, institutions have tended to apply for distinctive (quality) features that are set down in frameworks or legislation, i.e., the features of “sustainability”, “internationalisation”, “small-scale and intensive education” and “entrepreneurship”.

Once the CeQulnt (Certificate for Quality of Internationalisation) pilot project, which is coordinated by NVAO, is completed next year (see page 12), a positive judgement with respect to the distinctive (quality) feature of “internationalisation” could result in a European certificate.

In 2014, NVAO awarded various distinctive (quality) features:

- “sustainability / sustainable higher education” to two programmes;
- “internationalisation” to eight programmes, of which one received the judgement of “excellent” and five with a score of “good”;
- “entrepreneurship” to two Dutch programmes;
- with respect to ten applications for “small-scale and intensive education”, NVAO submitted a positive advice to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

#### **Promoting a quality-oriented culture**

As part of the reform of the Flemish accreditation system, the concept of “quality-oriented culture” constitutes one of the key design principles for innovation in the recommendations the taskforce has submitted to the Bourgeois government.

In 2014, NVAO implemented a knowledge co-creation project, in collaboration with the Dutch National Consultative Body for Communication Programmes (*Landelijk Overleg Communicatie Opleidingen* - LOCO) to enable the teachers, students, programme managers and quality assurance staff involved in UAS bachelor’s Communication programmes to take further steps, together with representatives from professional practice, in optimising the quality-oriented culture within their own programmes. In November, following a joint meeting, NVAO chair Anne Flierman presented the publication entitled *Kenniscocreatie kwaliteitscultuur HBO-bachelors Communicatie* [Knowledge Co-Creation UAS Bachelor’s Communication Programmes Quality Culture] during the annual LOCO conference at Fontys UAS in Eindhoven. This publication comprises reflections by various authors, such as Jurriëne Ossewold (The Creative Media Consultancy) on Communication as a reflection tool in educational reforms; Majel Ruyters (Fontys Universities of Applied Sciences) and Marjon Elshof (Arnhem and Nijmegen University of Applied Sciences) on the quality (culture) of Bachelor’s Communication programmes, and NVAO board member Lucien Bollaert on the changing views concerning quality and quality improvement.

In 2014, the Flemish preschool and primary school teacher training programmes underwent external assessments. In December, the accreditation round for the Dutch cluster of teacher training programmes (university teacher training programmes, primary

school teacher training colleges and grade two teacher training programmes) began with the Primary School Teacher Training Programmes (PABOs).

In 2014, NVAO initiated a number of system-wide analyses that will yield results in 2015; this involves cluster analyses shared with the education sector concerned, such as the teacher training programmes.

Last year, NVAO organised a reflective meeting on quality-oriented culture for its own staff, in Scheveningen. During this meeting, Prof. Dr Dries Berings (Hogeschool-Universiteit, Brussels) spoke about quality, quality-oriented culture and changing cultures.

### **International perspective**

NVAO fulfils its tasks from an international perspective and within the context of the European Bologna process. NVAO is a member of three international networks of quality assurance organisations in higher education: the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

NVAO provides the secretariat and sits on the board of ECA. NVAO also participates in ENQA and ECA working groups. Active membership of these networks contributes both to building relationships with experts who can participate in different assessments, and to the exchange of expertise regarding quality assurance. NVAO is also registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) and supplies the Vice Chair of the Register Committee.

In the year under review, NVAO continued to align its international tasks with its strategic agenda. In addition to the collaboration between the Netherlands and Flanders and the collaboration within the international networks of quality assurance organisations, international cooperation with similar organisations provides opportunities to find the best possible forms of external quality assessment and to learn and profit from each other's experiences. For that reason, NVAO organised administrative-level working visits to its sister organisations in Norway and Denmark in 2014.

In November 2014, NVAO board member Lucien Bollaert presented his book *A Manual for Internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education – with a special focus on professional higher education* during the ninth European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) on "Changing education - QA and the shift from teaching to learning" in Barcelona (Spain). The book ensues from the Harmonising Approaches to Professional Higher Education (HAPHE) project of the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). It is not just a handbook, but also an inspiring guide for internal quality assurance in higher education.

During the NVAO-ECA Seminar "Employability and Quality Assurance" in December 2014, NVAO presented the study entitled "Employability of professional bachelors from an international perspective" which it had commissioned from the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) of Twente University.

CHEPS developed this study in order to gain insight into the achievement, organisation and safeguarding of the alignment of professionally oriented bachelor's programmes and the labour market in the Netherlands, Flanders, Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia) and Ireland. The study points out good practices and focuses on the knowledge domains of mechanical engineering, social work and tourism. For each domain, two study programmes were selected on the basis of the known and, if possible, proven application of "employability".

In 2014, NVAO carried out the following international projects:

### **ARQATA**

In May 2014, NVAO presented its final report on the ARQATA project (Armenia Quality Assurance Technical Assistance). During this project, between 2011 and 2014, NVAO and a team of international peers provided technical assistance to Armenian universities developing their internal quality assurance systems. Together with national and international experts, NVAO organised various pilots in two Armenian institutions, involving two institutional audits and three programme assessments. In addition, NVAO supported the Armenian quality assurance organisation ANQA (National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance) in its further professionalisation and preparations for an international external review based on the international criteria of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The ARQATA project was funded by the World Bank.

### **CeQulnt**

In 2014, the CeQulnt (Certificate for Quality of Internationalisation) pilot project was launched with pilots in 12 countries, coordinated by NVAO. Good practices were exchanged and an assessment framework with associated procedures was developed. This ECA project is funded by the European Commission. Once the project is completed, a positive assessment with respect to the distinctive (quality) feature of "internationalisation" could lead to a European-level certificate awarded by ECA.

### **MULTRA**

In September 2014, NVAO adopted the accreditations granted by its German counterpart to two European Studies joint degree programmes. This marked the first mutual recognition under the Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes (MULTRA). MULTRA was set up by the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA) to spare international joint programmes from having to undergo multiple accreditation procedures. The mutual recognition agreement has now been signed by 14 accreditation organisations from 11 countries. This experience with the accreditation of joint programmes (in particular the JOQAR project, which was completed in 2013) has resulted in the participation of NVAO in a group of experts set up by European Ministries, which has developed a proposal for a European approach to the accreditation of joint programmes. This proposal is expected to be adopted by the Ministers in May 2015, in Yerevan.

### **Other international activities**

- NVAO sat on the panel involved in the external ENQA review of AQ Austria.
- In 2014, NVAO received foreign delegations from Azerbaijan, Benin, Indonesia, Kenya, Tanzania, the US and Sweden.

- With Nuffic and Flamenco, NVAO participated on the steering committee that organised the fourth seminar on *Good Practices in Internationalisation* in 2014, held at Avans UAS in Breda, and the fifth workshop at Hasselt University, Belgium. Earlier seminars took place in Antwerp, The Hague and Mechelen.

### Other activities

In 2014, NVAO embarked on the dissemination of its information on accreditations and other assessments in the Netherlands and Flanders in annual and biannual publications. In addition, possible trends over the past period are highlighted in both regions.

In March 2014, NVAO established an overview of assessments of training schools and academic training schools in the Netherlands, with the associated external reviews of teacher training programmes or clusters of teacher training programmes. Academic training schools are assessed simultaneously with non-academic training schools. In 2014, NVAO developed frameworks and guidelines for the upcoming assessment of academic and non-academic training schools. In addition, the teaching specialisations associated with the academic Bachelor's programmes were subjected to external assessment last year, simultaneously with the university teacher training programmes, with a view to the NVAO assessment in 2015 following the accreditation applications for the university teacher training programmes.

After extensive consultations with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen) and the umbrella organisation for private institutions NRTO, NVAO established external assessment groups and an external assessment schedule for the Dutch higher education sector in November 2014 and informed the institutions accordingly.

Other accomplishments of NVAO in 2014:

- the validation of 46 discipline-specific learning outcomes in Flanders (out of a total of 180; of which 33 are professionally oriented Bachelor's programmes, 10 Advanced Bachelor's programmes, 28 academically oriented Bachelor's programmes, 72 Master's programmes and 37 Advanced Master's programmes). NVAO submits the data to the Flemish Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV) for registration on the qualification databank;
- a positive decision on all five applications from Dutch institutions for combining programmes (planning-neutral conversion);
- processing two applications within the framework of the procedure to be registered as a Dutch recognised private institution (aggravated extensive initial accreditation), with one positive and one negative result (the latter institution lodged an appeal against the decision, which will be considered in 2015);
- receiving and processing seven Dutch requests under the Open Government Act (WOB);
- processing a total of four Dutch appeals under the Open Government Act / Penalty Act and one appeal against a NVAO decision. The latter appeal has not resulted in a revision of the decision. No appeals were lodged with the Dutch Administrative Justice Division of the Council of State.

Other judicial agencies in the Netherlands did not give verdicts.  
In Flanders, no appeals were lodged against NVAO assessments in 2014.

In 2014, the NVAO board members published various articles and contributed to national and international gatherings:

- article “De Vlaamse Kaders: naar inhoud en cultuur?” [The Flemish Frameworks: by content and culture?], Lucien Bollaert, Tijdschrift voor Onderwijsrecht en Onderwijsbeleid, March 2014;
- presentation on Recognising International Activities of Quality Assurance Agencies in the EHEA report (RIQAA), Lucien Bollaert, EQAR seminar, Bayreuth, 29-30 April 2014 (in this LLL project, Lucien Bollaert sat on the support group);
- presentation during SBO conference “Toetsen en Examineren in het Hoger Onderwijs” [Tests and Exams in Higher Education], Paul Zevenbergen, 13 May 2014;
- presentation “EQF en leerresultaten als bouwstenen” [EQF and learning outcomes as building blocks], Lucien Bollaert, VLOR “Stuurt Europa het beroepsgericht onderwijs?” [Is Europe directing vocational training?] study day, Brussels, 4 June 2014;
- opinion “Goed onderwijs vraagt om de beste bestuurders” [Good education demands the best administrators], Anne Flierman, NRC Handelsblad, 25 August 2014;
- article “Quality Assurance in Europe (2005-2015): from internal and institutional to external and international”, Lucien Bollaert, Journal of the EHEA, September 2014/3;
- article “Qualitätssicherung in Europa (2005-2015): Von einer internen institutionellen zu einer externen internationalen Qualitätssicherung”, Lucien Bollaert, Bologna Handbuch, September 2014;
- article “Kan ons hoger onderwijs zijn toppositie behouden?” [Can our higher education retain its top position?], Ann Demeulemeester, Verso, September 2014;
- presentation “How to manage Quality Assurance in (Professional) Higher Education?”, Lucien Bollaert, Eurashe seminar 3-4 December 2014;
- presentation “External quality assurance and Evaluation of PhD programmes in the Netherlands”, Paul Zevenbergen, ANVUR Workshop “Teaching and Research Evaluation in Europe”, Rome, 4-5 December 2014;
- interview “Turbulente kwaliteit” [Turbulent quality], regarding the future of the Flemish accreditation system, Ann Demeulemeester, ScienceGuide, 18 December 2014.

### **Collaboration with stakeholders**

At the administrative level, NVAO holds regular consultations with the Vice Prime Minister of the Flemish Government, the Flemish Education Minister and the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science. Twice a year, NVAO participates in consultations between the two Ministers (Committee of Ministers). In addition, NVAO regularly consults with the Dutch and Flemish Ministries of Education.

In the Flemish feedback group, NVAO organises the consultations with the Ministry of Education and Training, the Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges (VLUHR) and the student organisation VVS regarding the development of the Flemish accreditation system. NVAO is an observer on the Steering Committee for learning outcomes of the VLUHR. With the Dutch quality assessment agencies and the Flemish quality assessment agency VLUHR-KZ, NVAO periodically discusses the performance of the assessment procedures.

At different levels, NVAO maintains contact with various Dutch and Flemish umbrella organisations: the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Flemish

Interuniversity Council (VLIR), the Council of Flemish University Colleges (VLHORA), the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (VH), the Dutch Platform of Recognised Private Training Institutions (NRTO), the Netherlands organisation for international cooperation in higher education (Nuffic), the National Academic Recognition Information Centre in Flanders (NARIC Vlaanderen); and with the student organisations – the Dutch National Students Association (ISO), the Dutch National Union of Students (LSVb) and the National Union of Students in Flanders (VVS). For student panel members, NVAO organises annual training and “reunion days”.

Furthermore, NVAO collaborates with the Flemish Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV); the Dutch Inspectorate of Education; the Flemish Education Council (VLOR) and the Dutch Education Council. In February 2014, NVAO signed a new collaboration protocol with the Dutch Inspectorate of Education. This protocol will apply until revoked.

## Organisation **NVAO Board and Advisory Council**

No changes were effected at the administrative level in 2014. Alongside the scheduled board meetings, the Executive Board regularly organised meetings on the strategic policy in the year under review. These were also attended by members of the Management team.

### *Composition of the NVAO Board (in alphabetical order, 31 December 2014)*

Anne Flierman (Chair)  
Ann Demeulemeester (Vice Chair)  
Lucien Bollaert  
Bruno Bruins  
Mia De Schamphelaere  
Ruddy Doom  
Koen Geven  
Bart Maes  
Paul van Roon  
Claire Tillekaerts  
Jasper Tuytel  
Lieteke van Vucht Tijssen  
Paul Zevenbergen

### *Composition of the NVAO Executive Board (in alphabetical order, 31 December 2014)*

Anne Flierman (Chair)  
Ann Demeulemeester (Vice Chair)  
Lucien Bollaert  
Paul Zevenbergen

### *Composition of the NVAO Advisory Council (in alphabetical order, 31 December 2014)*

Pim Breebaart (Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences - Vereniging Hogescholen)  
Luc Van De Velde (Council of Flemish University Colleges - VLHORA)  
Tom Demeyer (Flanders Social and Economic Council SERV - on behalf of the employers)  
Ton van Haaften (Association of Universities in the Netherlands - VSNU)  
Harry Martens (Flemish Interuniversity Council - VLIR)  
Truus Omta (Dutch Platform of Recognised Private Training Institutions - NRTO)  
Eduard Schmidt (Dutch National Union of Students - LSVb)  
Tessa Timmermans (Dutch National Students Association - ISO)  
Rudy Van Renterghem (Flanders Social and Economic Council SERV - on behalf of the employees)  
Gert-Jan Sprangers (National Union of Students in Flanders - VVS)

### *Deputy members*

Hugo Deckers (SERV - on behalf of the employees)  
Paul Geerlings (VLIR)  
Nele Muys (SERV - on behalf of the employers)  
Machteld Verbruggen (VLHORA)  
Edith Willekens (VVS)

## Organisation

The organisational structure was adapted in the year under review through the addition of a management tier. A Head of Operational Management was appointed and a management team was formed, composed of the Director, the Head of Operational Management and two team leaders, to support the operational management, HRM policy, policy preparations and the scheduling of activities, and to assist the Board. NVAO is initiating innovation in the labour organisation through “project-based working”.

Various staff reflection days were organised in 2014. As a result, project groups were set up and a start was made with the development of a structured HRM policy.

*Composition of Management Team (in alphabetical order, 31 December 2014)*

Rudy Derdelinckx (Director)

Stephan van Galen (Team Leader Policy)

Nancy Van San (Team Leader Planning)

Manon Wortel (Head of Operational Management)

In the year under review, NVAO employed 48 persons (2013: 51). In 2014, two Flemish policy advisers were appointed (see Table 7). Two external consultants in the field of computerisation and communication were called in (project), as was a small group of regular temporary and stand-by workers for operational management, catering/logistics and IT.

**Table 7: FTEs per position, as of 31 December (excl. Board and temporary staff)**

Position	FTEs employed in 2014	FTEs seconded in 2014	2014 total	FTEs employed in 2013	FTEs seconded in 2013	2013 total
<b>Executive Board</b>						
Board	3,0	1,0	4,0	3,0	1,0	4,0
			<b>4,0</b>			<b>4,0</b>
<b>Management team</b>						
Management	-	1,0	1,0	-	1,0	1,0
Head of Operational Management	1,0	-	1,0	-	-	-
Team leaders	2,0	-	2,0	-	-	-
			<b>4,0</b>			<b>1,0</b>
<b>Staff</b>						
Communication	2,1	-	2,1	2,1	-	2,1
Lawyer	0,8	-	0,8	0,8	-	0,8
			<b>2,9</b>			<b>2,9</b>

<b>Policy advisers</b>						
Policy advisers	16,6	1,0	17,6	22,7	1,0	23,7
International policy advisers	3,2	-	3,2	4,2	-	4,2
			<b>20,8</b>			<b>27,9</b>
<b>Operational management and support</b>						
Financial affairs	1,1	-	1,1	1,1	-	1,1
Personnel department	1,0	-	1,0	1,0	-	1,0
Support	9,5	-	9,5	9,1	-	9,1
IT	2,0	-	2,0	2,0	-	2,0
Catering and logistics	2,2	-	2,2	2,2	-	2,2
			<b>15,8</b>			<b>15,4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>44,5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>47,5</b>	<b>48,2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>51,2</b>

The NVAO building accommodates the Committee for Effective Higher Education (CDHO) and its staff. They operate independently, but utilise NVAO facilities (see Table 8).

In 2014, in terms of communication, NVAO focused on reporting on the completed decision-making process, the results of the accreditation round involving Humanities programmes in the Netherlands, and the publications and progress of various national and international projects. At the end of 2014, preparations commenced for the biennial NVAO conference held in January 2015 in the Flemish Parliament building in Brussels. The theme of the conference was the organisation's tenth anniversary. In the summer, the Intranet was launched as an internal component of the new NVAO portal.

With respect to computerisation, NVAO has worked on improving the institutions and programmes databank in 2014, in addition to its regular systems, workplace and applications management. To this end, data from the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO) and the Higher Education Register will be enhanced with NVAO data; also, the various internal and external databanks will be linked to one another.

## Definitions and abbreviations

AKOV	Agentschap voor Kwaliteitszorg in Onderwijs en Vorming ( <i>Flemish Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training</i> )
ANQA	National Center for Professional Education Quality Services
ARQATA	Armenia Quality Assurance Technical Assistance
CeQuInt	Certificate for the Quality of Internationalisation
CDHO	Commissie Doelmatigheid Hoger Onderwijs ( <i>Committee for Effective Higher Education</i> )
CROHO	Centraal Register Programmes Hoger Onderwijs ( <i>Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes</i> )
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
GPIP	Good Practices in Internationalisation Platform
HOR	Hogeronderwijsregister ( <i>Higher Education Register</i> )
Inspectorate	Education Inspectorate
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in HE
ISO	Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg ( <i>Dutch National Students Association</i> )
KIV	Wet kwaliteit in verscheidenheid hoger onderwijs ( <i>Quality in Diversity in Higher Education Act</i> )
LSVb	Landelijke Studenten Vakbond ( <i>Dutch National Union of Students</i> )
NRTO	Nederlandse Raad voor Training en Programme ( <i>Platform of Recognised Private Training Institutions</i> )
NOKUT	Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditationorganisatie ( <i>Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands &amp; Flanders</i> )
SERV	Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen ( <i>Flanders Social and Economic Council</i> )
VH	Vereniging Hogescholen ( <i>Flanders Association of University Colleges</i> )
VKW	Wet versterking kwaliteitswaarborgen hoger onderwijs ( <i>Strengthening Quality Guarantees in Higher Education Act</i> )
VLHORA	Vlaamse Hogescholenraad ( <i>Council of Flemish University Colleges</i> )
VLIR	Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad ( <i>Flemish Interuniversity Council</i> )
VLUHR	Vlaamse Universiteiten en Hogescholen Raad ( <i>Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges</i> )
VLUHR-KZ	Flemish quality assessment agency
VSNU	Vereniging van Universiteiten ( <i>Association of Universities in the Netherlands</i> )
VVS	Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten ( <i>National Union of Students in Flanders</i> )
WHW	Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek ( <i>Dutch Higher Education and Research Act</i> )

**NVAO**

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) was established by Treaty by the Dutch and Flemish governments to provide an expert and objective assessment of the quality of higher education in Flanders and in the Netherlands.

The tasks and working methods of NVAO are set down in law. Its main tasks are:

1. assessing and assuring the level and the quality of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders;
2. promoting the quality culture within the higher education sector.

NVAO carries out these tasks from an international perspective and within the context of the European Bologna process. In the performance of its tasks, NVAO is transparent towards society and all stakeholders in higher education, and respectful of the autonomy of the institutions and their primary responsibility for the quality of the education they provide.

**Colophon**    *A next step*  
**NVAO Annual Report 2014**  
**Summary**

June 2015

Compilation: NVAO

**NVAO**

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