

External review of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

## Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE

February 2012

### 1. Background and Context

NVAO independently ensures the quality of higher education by assessing the quality control of higher education institutions in the Netherlands and accrediting higher education programmes in Flanders and the Netherlands. In addition, NVAO encourages quality awareness within higher education institutions and advances higher education in its national and international context.

The organisation was established in 2005 by treaty between the Netherlands and Flanders as an independent quality assurance agency.

NVAO was reconfirmed Full membership of ENQA on 20 December 2007 as a result of a review coordinated at national level.

### 2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This is a type A review, as defined in the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*. It will evaluate the way in which and to what extent NVAO fulfils the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*. Consequently, the review will also provide information to the ENQA Board to aid its consideration of whether NVAO should be reconfirmed Full Member of ENQA. The review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgements as regards granting NVAO Full Membership in ENQA.

In addition to analysing NVAO compliance with the ENQA membership criteria, and thus with the ESG, the review aims to give a first external reflection on the new accreditation system in the Netherlands.

### 3. The Review Process

The process is designed in the light of the *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following steps:

- Formulation of the Terms of Reference and protocol for the review;
- Nomination and appointment of the review panel;
- Self-evaluation by NVAO including the preparation of a self-evaluation report;
- A site visit by the review panel to NVAO;

- Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report by the review panel;
- Scrutiny of the final evaluation report by the Review Committee of the ENQA Board;
- Analysis of the scrutiny by the ENQA Board and their decision regarding ENQA membership;
- Follow-up of the panel's and/or ENQA Board's recommendations by the agency.

### **3.1 Nomination and appointment of the review team members**

The review panel consists of five members: Four external reviewers (one or two quality assurance experts, representative(s) of higher education institutions, student member) and a review secretary. Three of the reviewers (including the review secretary) are nominated by the ENQA Board on the basis of proposals submitted to ENQA by the national agencies, and are drawn from senior serving members of Board/Council or staff of ENQA member agencies. The fourth external reviewer is drawn from a nomination provided by the European University Association (EUA). The nomination of the student member is asked from the European Students' Union (ESU). One of the panel members serves as the chair of the review.

Current members of the ENQA Board are not eligible to serve as reviewers.

ENQA will provide NVAO with the list of suggested experts with their respective curricula vitae to establish that there are no known conflicts of interest. The experts will have to sign a non-conflict of interest statement as regards the NVAO review.

### **3.2 Self-evaluation by NVAO, including the preparation of a self-evaluation report**

NVAO is responsible for the execution and organisation of its own self-evaluation process and shall take into account the following guidance:

- Self-evaluation is organised as a project with a clearly defined schedule and includes all relevant internal and external stakeholders;
- The self-evaluation report is broken down by the topics of the evaluation: background description of the current situation of the Agency; analysis and appraisal of the current situation; proposals for improvement and measures already planned; a summary of perceived strengths and weaknesses;
- The report is well-structured, concise and comprehensively prepared. It clearly demonstrates the extent to which NVAO fulfils its tasks of external quality assurance and meets the criteria for the ENQA membership and thus the ESG. The report is submitted to the review panel a minimum of four weeks prior to the site visit.

### **3.3 A Site Visit by the Review Panel**

NVAO will draw up a draft proposal of schedule of the site visit to be submitted to the review panel at least three months before the planned dates of the visit. The schedule includes an indicative timetable of the meetings and other exercises to be undertaken by the review panel during the site visit, the duration of which is 2 days. The approved schedule shall be given to NVAO at least two months before the dates of the visit, in order to properly organise the requested interviews.

The review panel will be assisted by NVAO in arriving to The Hague, Netherlands.

Where appropriate, the site visit will close with an oral presentation and discussion of the major issues of the evaluation between the review panel and NVAO.

### **3.4 Preparation and completion of the final evaluation report**

On the basis of the review panel's findings, the review secretary will draft the report in consultation with the review panel. The report will take into account the purpose and scope of the evaluation as defined under article 2. It will also provide a clear rationale for its findings with regards to each ENQA membership criteria. A draft will be submitted for comment to NVAO within two months of the site visit for comment on factual accuracy. If NVAO chooses to provide a statement in reference to the draft report it will be submitted to the chair of the review panel within two weeks after the receipt of the draft report. Thereafter the review panel will take into account the statement by NVAO, finalise the document and submit it to NVAO and ENQA.

The report is to be finalised within three months of the site visit and will not exceed 40 pages in length.

## **4. Follow-up Process and Publication of the Report**

NVAO will consider the expert panel's report and inform ENQA of its plans to implement any recommendations contained in the report. Subsequent to the discussion of the evaluation results and any planned implementation measures with ENQA, the review report and the follow-up plans agreed upon will be published on the NVAO website.

## **5. Budget**

NVAO shall pay the following review related fees:

- Chair: 5,000 EUR
- Review secretary: 5,000 EUR
- Other panel members (3,000 EUR for each of the three panel members): 9,000 EUR
- Administrative overhead for ENQA Secretariat: 5,000 EUR
- Travel and subsistence expenses (approximate): 6,000 EUR

This gives a total indicative cost of 30,000 EUR for a review team of 5 members. In the case that the allowance for travel and subsistence expenses is exceeded, NVAO will cover any additional costs after the completion of the review. However, the ENQA Secretariat will endeavour to keep the travel and subsistence expenses in the limits of the planned budget, and will refund the difference to NVAO if the travel and subsistence expenses go under budget.

## 6. Indicative Schedule of the Review

The duration of the evaluation is scheduled to take about 10 months, from January 2012 to October 2012:

NVAO begins self-evaluation	October 2011
Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	January 2012
Appointment of review panel members	February 2012
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	March 2012
NVAO self-evaluation completed	end April 2012
Briefing of review panel members	end May 2012
Review panel site visit	end June 2012
Draft of evaluation report to NVAO	August 2012
Statement of NVAO to review panel if necessary	August 2012
Submission of final report to NVAO and ENQA	September 2012
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of NVAO	September 2012
Publication of report and implementation plan	October 2012