International Workshop
“What do we talk about when we talk about social impact?”

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The context of NVAO

• Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)
• Founded in 2005 by Treaty between NL and FL
• Development from programme accreditations to combinations with institutional reviews/audits
• International projects:
  o Framework Agreement with Luxembourg
  o Assessments in the Dutch Caribbean
  o European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes
  o QA of European Universities Alliances (EUniQ project)
  o Fostering high-quality blended student mobility in HE (HIBLend project)
• Since 2017 Dutch and Flemish departments
Flanders in figures

- 6.7 million
- 38
- 1766
- 276,523
QA System for Flemish Universities and University Colleges

INITIAL ACCREDITATION (customised to IQA)

PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION (customised to IQA)

System-wide analysis

Programme assessments by university/university college

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (positive)
Prescriptive >> Descriptive >> Defining quality by HEIs

- no standards/criteria but
- 4 coherent questions;
- holistic judgements;
- Appreciative Approach
Institutional Review and Social Impact

Institutional Review:

• assesses whether a HEI pursues its educational policy in a qualitative manner, including the conduct for confirming the quality of its programmes.
• also takes into account the institution's policy processes to support the education that it offers in its programmes in accordance with its missions in the field of research and social and scientific services.
• assessment comprises an examination of the link between the educational policy and the educational vision of the institution and the societal challenges that it faces in its own context.
Institutional Review and Social Impact (cont.)

- IR consists of exploratory visit (1 day) and in-depth visit (typically 2.5 days)
- Panels may focus on social impact issues if this is part of or links to educational policy of the HEI
- Panel is in charge of the evaluation, guided by NVAO process coordinator and in dialogue with HEI
- Panels always have an expert from professional field and are trained both online and onsite
- Review trails can take place on all institutional levels
- Panel reports follow “the lines of investigation”, describing “the journey” of the panel and the dialogues
Examples of attention for social impact in institutional reviews

- Institutional mission to become an Urban Engaged University
- Institutional mission to be a Civic University; education and research should contribute to solutions of regional societal problems (review trail and panel recommendation)
- Progression of students with migration background
- Panel recommendation on improving work-based learning
- Review trail on nexus education-research-professional field, including e.g. expertise centres, cooperation agreements
- Review trail on communication policy, also with external stakeholders
- Review trail on diversity policy (institutional strategy links diversity and social mobility)
System-wide analysis

• Provide insight into a theme related to educational policy and make such information available to the higher education community, external stakeholders such as the professional field, and, by extension, to society at large.

• To share good practices and learn from each other

• The annual themes are determined by a consultative body including NVAO, representatives of government, umbrella organisations of the institutions, and the Flemish Association of Students

• Current themes:
  • Co-creation with the professional field (2020-2021)
  • Internationalisation of the curriculum/collaborative online international learning (2021-2022)
  • Inclusion, differentiation and diversity (2022-2023)
System-wide analysis (cont.)

- NVAO sends out an invitation to participate once a year; universities and university colleges are required to participate twice in every six year-cycle (no fees charged)

- Steps:
  - Registration and participation
  - Composition of the working group
  - Define the good practices
  - Peer-to-peer event including international experts
  - Overview report
  - Dissemination of the outcomes: public dissemination event and publication of report

- Commendation in ENQA Targeted Review 2022: NVAO-FL has published an excellent first annual system wide analysis, commended by and commented on by many stakeholders
Conclusions

• HEIs determine definitions/dimensions (if any) of social impact (in line with ESG principles that HEIs have primary responsibility for QA and QA should respond to diversity of HEIs)

• Institutional review trails and topics of system-wide analysis are chosen in dialogue with HEI

• Attention for social impact has enhancement purpose and the main beneficiary is the HEI itself

• Methods are self-evaluations and appreciations by panel, peer review, review trails with focused data, exchange of good practices

• Whether the research and societal missions can have increased focus in NVAO institutional reviews is a point for discussion; interested in international developments