QUALITY ASSURANCE VISION

Hasselt University has a strong tradition of quality assurance in which lecturers and study programme managers take ownership in order to guarantee the quality of education.

High-quality education

Hasselt University regards high-quality education as education that enriches the student with academic competencies and professional skills and values the student at a personal level. High-quality education keeps track of academic developments and developments in teaching and responds to social trends. Quality assurance strengthens the foundations of educational policy.

Quality culture

Hasselt University is making the transition from quality assurance to quality culture. We see quality assurance as a shared responsibility for institution, faculty and programme; everyone within the organisation is encouraged to assume responsibility for quality. There is an institution-wide educational vision that takes account of the specific nature of the programmes. At the programme level, the education management team (EMT) is responsible for the programme’s educational quality. At programme component level, the educational team is in charge of quality assurance. The different levels reinforce each other and work to ensure the ongoing process of developing the programmes further. In addition, students are involved at all levels in evaluating the quality of the programme components.
Each letter in the acronym represents a step in the process of safeguarding a programme’s quality.

Each programme’s managers organise a **vision committee** at least every six years. This committee includes subject experts, peers, representatives from the professional field and alumni, who take a critical but friendly look at the programme’s academic level and the up-to-dateness of its content. Their findings are included in the vision committee report by a staff member at the Quality Assurance Office.

A staff member at the Quality Assurance Office also draws up an **educational quality report** on the programme, analysing the quality of education and identifying potential opportunities for improvement.

The educational quality report, together with the vision committee report, provides input for the **strategy day** and the drafting of the programme’s **strategic plan**. During the strategy day, the programme managers work to define the programme’s overall strategy and policy and formulate strategic and operational objectives. This day initiates the strategy plan, which, on the basis of the strengths and points for attention identified in the vision committee report and the educational quality report, sets out a strategic policy in the area of education for the programme over the next six years. The plan serves as a navigation instrument, offering programme managers an insight into the plans and how to implement them.
The programme’s managers describe the implementation of its educational policy in the annual report. They also organise a programme forum at least once a year to evaluate the past year and discuss the approach for the following year.

The Quality Assurance Office draws up a status report every three years in which recommendations for educational development and quality assurance are set out. This report presents the latest state of play with the strategic and operational objectives as formulated in the programme’s strategic plan.

It also forms the basis for a six-year dialogue with policy-makers. This dialogue concerns any adjustments that are needed to the strategic plan; the programme managers then turn these into individual improvement actions.

The output from each step within the VISIO-O cycle is included in the programme portfolio, which itself serves as input for the various steps within the cycle.

Quality safeguarding decision

The educational quality report and the vision committee report form the input for the quality safeguarding decision memo. This memo is submitted as a recommendation to the Board of Deans. On the basis of this recommendation, the Board of Directors then takes a quality safeguarding decision. There are three possible decisions: positive, conditional or negative.

Public information

Under the Flemish Qualification System 2019-2025, Hasselt University (like other higher education institutions) accounts to the community for the quality of its education by publishing the information on the quality of each programme on the website. This public information can be found under ‘quality of the programmes’.

Peer review

To safeguard the quality of its own operations and to innovate, Hasselt University organises a peer review to evaluate the level and professionalism of the quality safeguarding process. The peer review committee formulates feedback and feed forward about this process, on the basis of internal documents for educational support, guidelines for reporting on educational quality, and discussions with staff and stakeholders of both services. The committee presents its findings orally and in a concise review report. The Education Board and the Board of Deans take note of this report. Subjects include professionalism, cooperation, communication and information exchange, process monitoring, support and output.
In addition to VISIO-O, Hasselt University also uses various quality assurance tools to chart the quality of the programmes and monitor education. Findings resulting from the use of these tools are included in various steps of the VISIO-O cycle.

**Evaluation meetings**
Hasselt University attaches great importance to evaluation meetings. At these meetings, students and lecturers exchange views about educational provision in an atmosphere of trust and discuss good practices and points for improvement in the various programme components. Each programme component is discussed at least every two years, allowing a quick solution to be found to any problem. The education management team (EMT) discusses the results and also reports on them to the students. This reflects the high importance that Hasselt University attaches to student engagement. In addition, lecturers are accessible to students, who are always free to raise questions or concerns with them or other staff members, including in an informal setting.

**Educational evaluations**
Through online surveys, students are given the opportunity to say what they think about the quality of education, at the level of both the programme and its components. Other stakeholders such as alumni, lecturers and people from the professional field are also involved in the evaluation of quality at programme level. The aim of these educational evaluations is to flag up and follow up on the positive points and points for attention within programmes and their components.

**Discussions with stakeholders**
Hasselt University also engages in ad hoc discussion with students, lecturers, alumni and the professional field about the programme strategy, programme profile and educational themes. Contact with the professional field about internships and Bachelor’s and Master’s theses also generates ideas for programme innovations.

**Business intelligence system**
Hasselt University has a central student and education administration database. Via the business intelligence system, it is possible to perform ad hoc data analyses, including for quality assurance purposes. The system comprises three tools: a dashboard (with information about student intake, progression and leavers, for example), a reporting tool for standard reports and an analysis tool for additional questions.

**Study time analysis**
The institution has a tool for conducting study time measurements. Among other things, programme managers use this tool to be able to estimate study time when updating the curriculum.

**Examination quality monitoring (exam analysis)**
Programme managers can analyse the results of multiple-choice exams using a tool, so that the statistical distribution of the exam results can then be discussed.

**Educational organisation database (study guide)**
In the study guide, programme managers and lecturers record information about study programmes in ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) information sheets about each programme component’s objectives, learning content, teaching methods, evaluation forms and so on. The student can compile his or her programme on the basis of this information.
QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMMES

faculty of architecture and arts

architecture (bachelor + master) - Dutch
interior architecture (bachelor + master) - Dutch
interior architecture (master) - English

faculty of business economics

business administration (bachelor + master) - Dutch
business economics (bachelor + master) - Dutch
business engineering (bachelor + master) - Dutch
business and information systems engineering (bachelor + master) - Dutch
management (master) - English

faculty of medicine and life sciences

medicine (bachelor) - Dutch
biomedical sciences (bachelor + master) - Dutch
biomedical sciences (master) - English

faculty of engineering technology

civil engineering technology (bachelor + master) - Dutch
civil engineering technology (bachelor + master) - Dutch
chemical engineering technology (bachelor + master) - Dutch
electromechanical engineering technology (bachelor + master) - Dutch
energy engineering technology (bachelor + master) - Dutch
electronics and ict engineering technology (bachelor + master) - Dutch
nuclear engineering technology (bachelor + master) - Dutch

school of transportation sciences

transportation sciences (bachelor + master) - Dutch
transportation sciences (master) - English

faculty of law

laws (bachelor + master) - dutch

faculty of rehabilitation sciences

rehabilitation sciences and physiotherapy (bachelor + master) - dutch

faculty of sciences

biology (bachelor) - dutch
chemistry (bachelor) - dutch
physics (bachelor) - dutch
computer sciences (bachelor + master) - dutch
mathematics (bachelor) - dutch
statistics (master) - english

school of educational studies

master of teaching in health sciences - dutch
master of teaching in design sciences - dutch
master of teaching in economics - dutch
master of teaching in science and technology - dutch

interuniversity master's degrees

master of science in occupational therapy - dutch
gender and diversity - dutch
global health - english
toerism - dutch
In addition to the quality assurance that takes place within Hasselt University, the quality of the institution is also monitored through the Flemish quality assurance system. This system is devised by the NVAO\(^1\), in consultation with all stakeholders, to monitor the quality of higher education in Flanders.

The underlying principle is that the quality of the institution must be accounted for. The following are among the procedures for doing this:

In the New Programme Assessment, an external committee (supervised by the NVAO) assesses the potential quality of new (as yet unstarted) study programmes. The result is set out by the NVAO in an assessment decision. On the basis of this assessment decision by the NVAO, the Flemish Government takes a final decision on whether or not to recognise the new programme.

This recognition is followed by a programme accreditation, in which the NVAO determines whether the programme meets the predefined minimum requirements as set out in the NVAO assessment framework. The programmes’ accreditation is then automatically extended if Hasselt University gains a positive final assessment in the institutional review.

The institutional review is performed every six years by an external committee (consisting of independent experts and a student and supervised by the NVAO), which checks the quality of the institution's educational policy, including its system for safeguarding the quality of its programmes. In the event of a positive final assessment, the accreditations of all programmes offered at the institution are automatically extended. You can find the results under ‘institutional review’.

More information about these and other procedures can be found at: https://www.nvao.net/en/procedures/flanders

\(^1\) The NVAO (Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation) is the quality assurance organisation that safeguards the quality of higher education in Flanders (and the Netherlands).
On 11 September 2017, the NVAO announced the results of its institutional review. These showed that the quality of Flemish higher education is good. Institutions have set out a strong vision of education and its quality and have developed policies in line with this.

The institutional review is a periodic review of the quality of a university’s or university college’s educational policy. Higher education institutions are nowadays expected to closely monitor and be publicly accountable for the quality of their programmes themselves.

In its discussions with senior academic policy-makers, lecturers and students, the review committee focused on four aspects: (1) the university’s vision of its education and the quality of that education, (2) how it plans to implement its vision, (3) how it measures the extent to which the vision of quality and policy is being implemented and (4) the university’s improvement policy.

**Intense engagement**

Because Hasselt University was rated ‘partially satisfactory’ on one of the four standards, the university received a positive assessment from the review committee, subject to certain conditions. According to the report, work is needed in particular to improve the monitoring of the educational policy.

In its report, the review committee is positive about what it calls ‘a widely supported educational vision’. The planned ‘bottom-up approach’ to the revision of the Education Policy Plan 2018-2021 will ensure greater support and synergy on the part of the programmes.

The review committee regards the education management teams (EMTs) and faculty staff members as ‘powerful tools’ in the implementation of the educational policy and the optimisation of programme quality. The review committee also cites the ‘intense engagement’ of students in the programmes, although further consideration needs to be given to their participation in the policy boards and evaluation committees.

**Monitoring**

The systematic and intensive evaluation and monitoring ensure that problems at programme level are dealt with quickly, according to the report. The expanding set of instruments that contribute to programme quality monitoring is also a factor here.

However, the monitoring system does not yet provide a comprehensive picture of the latest state of play with regard to the Education Policy Plan. The quality assurance tools that are currently being actively developed will ensure systematic monitoring at the institutional level in the near future. In addition, the committee recommends aligning programmes’ strategic planning cycle with those of the faculties and the institution.

One positive point is that issues with programme components flagged up by students do actually lead to improvements. The committee members also refer to the fact that ‘lessons are learned from previous experiences’ as a strong point.

**VISIO-O**

The review committee looked not just at educational vision and policy, but at the VISIO-O cycle (the system by which Hasselt University ensures the educational quality of its programmes). The committee members welcome the fact that it is made clear that the system is actively under development and that a learning process is obviously taking place.

The next institutional review is scheduled for 2020, and the University is making every effort to meet all the conditions.

**Want to read more?**

You can download and read the full evaluation report and VISIO-O advisory report. A decision is also available. These documents are only available in Dutch. Other reports can be read at [https://www.nvao.net/en](https://www.nvao.net/en)