Quality assurance

Educational Quality Assurance Handbook
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1 Introduction

We are pleased to present a revised version of the Educational Quality Assurance Handbook of Radboud University Nijmegen. This fourth version of the Handbook is a direct response to the new Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands, which took effect on 1 September 2019. The handbook contains instruments that programmes can use to further improve their present quality, to more effectively demonstrate that quality and to ensure that it aligns with the requirements of the Assessment Framework. This handbook is therefore a practical tool for everyone involved in education and in improving educational quality.
The accreditation system involves institutional audits and programme accreditations. An institutional audit investigates whether research universities and universities of applied sciences use a satisfactory system of quality assurance to monitor the quality of the programmes they offer. In addition, programmes are assessed every six years in order to retain their accreditation. Programmes offered by institutions that have passed an institutional audit, as Radboud University did in 2017, may apply for a 'limited programme assessment'.

The emphasis of a limited programme assessment is on programme content, with the assessment panels focusing on the quality that is actually achieved. Or, as stated in the Assessment Framework: ‘Teachers can put their energy into suggestions for improvement from experts who address the core of their teaching’. The accreditation system aims to reduce the administrative burden of programme assessments. Radboud University supports this principle and strives to ensure that programme assessments are of a limited nature wherever possible.

The Quality Assurance Handbook is structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents a general introduction to quality assurance. It briefly discusses the relationship between the internal and external quality assurance cycles and the importance of using both proactive and reactive instruments.

Chapter 3 presents instruments that can be used in the internal quality assurance cycle. If used properly and systematically, the instruments will ensure that the programme also meets the criteria for external quality assurance. This handbook is not intended as a blueprint for the ideal quality assurance system. The programmes themselves can adapt these instruments to their own culture and organisation. And as often happens, programmes may also decide to use other appropriate instruments. In a few instances, however, the law and the policy frameworks of Radboud University leave no room for choice. In such cases, such as the annual programme report and course evaluations, the mandatory nature of these instruments is clearly stated.

Chapter 4 looks more closely at several current key themes in higher education: the role of examining boards in safeguarding the quality of assessment and the interrelationship between teaching and research.

Finally, Section 5 discusses preparations for the external assessment process and writing a critical reflection.
2  What is quality assurance?

2.1  Systematic focus on quality of education

Quality assurance is an umbrella term for all the activities aimed at maintaining, and where necessary improving, the quality of education. To attain and maintain a position as a top programme or institution, there needs to be a constant focus on quality. Many quality assurance systems have therefore been designed as a cycle in which measuring moments alternate with moments for improvement opportunities. A well-designed quality assurance system involves not only taking the right actions to ensure the quality of education, but also doing so systematically, preferably with a minimum degree of effort on the part of the programmes and institutions. A good quality assurance process is therefore not only cyclical, but also smart and targeted. This is because quality assurance is not an end in itself but a means by which a programme or institution can focus on it what it considers important in order to position itself and improve its education. In this way, quality assurance will facilitate education.

2.2  Internal and external quality assurance

Internal quality assurance occurs at different levels. At course level, for example, teachers regularly carry out evaluations and take steps to improve the quality of their teaching. At programme level, various actors are systematically engaged in educational quality, whether or not in accordance with a quality assurance plan. Quality assurance also occurs at faculty level. One example is the annual faculty report that the faculty board submits each year to the executive board. This Quality Assurance Handbook is an example of an initiative at the institutional level.

The six-yearly assessment and accreditation cycle is a form of quality assurance that transcends the institutional level. This is an external, independent assessment of each programme and of the institution as a whole conducted by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). In the institutional audit, the institution accounts to society for the quality of the education it has provided; formal rights can be derived from it. Nevertheless, the goal is ultimately the same: to safeguard the quality of higher education in the Netherlands.

Four different assessment frameworks can be identified within the accreditation system at programme level:

- the assessment of a new programme with a limited framework
- the assessment of a new programme with an extensive framework
- the assessment of an existing programme with a limited framework
- the assessment of an existing programme with an extensive framework.

This handbook does not address the assessment frameworks for a new programme. Programmes offered by institutions that have passed an institutional audit (as Radboud University did in 2017) may be assessed in accordance with the limited framework with four standards (see section 3.1).
This limited programme assessment focuses on the substantive quality of the programme. The framework explicitly asks programmes to position and to differentiate themselves from similar programmes in terms of content and quality.

Although internal and external quality assurance are in principle two separate quality assurance systems, programmes will benefit from seeking the connections and carefully coordinating the activities required for each system. If internal quality assurance is organised in a targeted, cyclical manner, the programme will have collected all the information needed for the critical reflection in the years prior to writing that report. The following chapter contains concrete tips on how to achieve this.

### 2.3 Concept of quality

The aim of quality assurance is to continue to provide good education. The way to achieve this aim is to determine in advance exactly what is meant by 'good education'. NVAO has translated its points of reference for educational quality into an assessment framework, whereas an institution might do so in a strategic plan. It is also a good idea for each individual programme to formulate a concept of quality by drawing up a vision document that answers the question 'what do we mean by good education?' The answer may differ from one programme to the next as it depends on factors such as the discipline in question or programme emphases in terms of content or design. In its concept of quality, a programme can therefore differentiate itself from other programmes within and outside the institution.

A programme is not entirely free to determine its concept of quality, of course. It has to take account of the frameworks set by the government and by its own institution. For example, if Radboud University’s strategic plan emphasises the interrelationship between teaching and research, this clearly needs to be reflected in the concept of quality of all its programmes. The NVAO Assessment Framework (2018) and the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act provide further guidance for a programme when determining the concept of quality.

### 2.4 Proactive and reactive instruments

Once the concept of quality has been established, instruments can be developed to achieve the intended quality. These instruments can be both proactive and reactive in nature. Proactive quality assurance entails translating your vision of educational quality into concrete educational policy, for example in the areas of assessment, study success or professional development. With proactive instruments, targets are formulated in a way that can be tested.

Reactive quality assurance instruments are used to determine whether the targets set out in the policy have actually been met. It is important to canvas various stakeholders about the quality of education. At programme level, for example, the perceptions and experiences of (a sample of) students, teaching staff, management and the relevant professional field are important.
If targets have not been (fully) achieved, improvement measures can be instituted. These in turn are laid down in new proactive instruments with new targets. Quality assurance thus automatically takes on a cyclical character. Proactive and reactive instruments can be deployed at all levels. As with the concept of quality, the instruments that a programme uses should align with the policy frameworks set by the institution and the faculty. The following chapter presents examples of instruments that programmes can use to shape their internal quality assurance.

### 2.5 Tasks, powers and responsibilities

A critical success factor for quality assurance in general (both proactive and reactive) is to clearly define who performs which tasks and who is responsible for what. It is therefore important to establish which actors will implement each instrument and where the accountability lies. An annual schedule can be used to help safeguard the cyclical nature of quality assurance. Concrete tips and suggestions are provided in the next chapter.
3 Instruments

3.1 Introduction

The assessment and accreditation process (in other words, the external quality assurance system) tests the quality of an existing programme in accordance with the four standards of the limited framework:

- intended learning outcomes (section 3.2)
- teaching-learning environment (section 3.3)
- assessment (section 3.3)
- achieved learning outcomes (section 3.5).

Each standard can be assessed as either (conditionally) positive or negative. If a programme satisfies at least the minimum requirements of each standard, its quality is considered satisfactory.

Table 1 shows which themes and frameworks play a role in each standard (the 'what'), which instruments can be used to meet the requirements of the four standards (the 'how'), and which actors are important in this process (the 'who').

This chapter focuses on the 'how'. Each section gives examples of instruments for each standard that a programme can use to maintain or improve quality. For each assessment standard, the different sections give examples of instruments that are available to maintain or improve the required programme quality. Some instruments can be used for multiple standards in the Assessment Framework and are therefore mentioned several times.

As explained in the previous chapter, a programme will benefit immensely if the internal and external quality assurance cycles are organised in such a way that they intermesh. The instruments proposed in this section are helpful in this respect. On the one hand, they tie in with the requirements imposed by Radboud University on the internal cycle, as reflected in the format for the annual programme report. On the other hand, a programme can use these instruments to safeguard the quality of education in a way that satisfies the requirements of the external cycle.

Taking the instruments as our point of departure has led to a somewhat fragmented discussion of the roles of the different actors. This chapter therefore concludes with Table 2, which sets out the tasks and responsibilities of the various actors in the quality assurance system.
Table 1 Themes, frameworks and instruments for the four standards.

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¹ The educational organisation is different for each faculty. Here, director of education refers to the person who is directly responsible for organising and implementing the teaching in a programme. In some faculties this is the director of a programme or educational institute. Other faculties have a director of education at faculty level or a vice-dean of education. In some faculties, the programme coordinators have direct responsibility for the implementation of teaching.

² Quality assurance coordinator is not necessarily a full position. This person could also be a programme coordinator, policy officer or study advisor with quality assurance as one of their roles.
3.2 Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes
The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

3.2.1 Themes

For each programme, the learning outcomes set out the knowledge and skills that students should possess on successful completion of the programme. The programme formulates its own learning outcomes in a way that matches its profile. However, the programme is also bound by the following guide frameworks:

- **Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW):** A degree can only be granted if certain statutory requirements have been met. With regard to the learning outcomes, the Act stipulates that a programme should focus on ‘the achievement of well-defined objectives in the areas of knowledge, understanding and skills that the person completing the programme should possess’.

- **Radboud University policy frameworks:** the programme’s learning outcomes and profile should tie in with the policy frameworks of the faculty and university.

- **domain-specific frame of reference:** the learning outcomes should tie in with the current requirements of the professional field and the discipline, both nationally and internationally, with regard to programme content.

- **Dutch Qualifications Framework:** in terms of level (Bachelor’s or Master’s) and orientation (university/WO), the learning outcomes should tie in with the Dutch Qualification Framework. More information about this Framework can be found at www.nlqf.nl. The Framework sets out the skills and competences that a student should possess upon completing the programme, independent of the specific subject-related requirements.

- **Dublin descriptors:** the level of learning outcomes should be in line with the Dublin descriptors for Bachelor’s or Master’s programmes.

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3 As a private university, Radboud University is not directly subject to the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). Nevertheless, there is a link between this Act and Radboud University’s two-tier system.
3.2.2 Instruments

Vision document
The quality assurance cycle begins with the programme's ambitions and objectives, which should be explicitly stated in a vision document. This is the responsibility of the director of education. The vision must of course enjoy support from within the programme and have been discussed with teaching staff and the programme committee.

Disciplinary consultative body
Many academic disciplines have national and international consultative bodies that discuss developments within the field. One such body is the disciplinary consultative body (sometimes referred to as the VSNU Chamber). This body can draw up guidelines on learning outcomes in order to align the programme's learning outcomes with the latest developments in the discipline or academic domain. These general principles form the domain-specific frame of reference. The programme's learning outcomes must meet the criteria of this frame of reference, although the programme may of course decide on its own emphases and profile.

Benchmarks
A programme should be outward-looking and keep an eye on developments in the field and in similar programmes. When drawing up the learning outcomes, it is useful to compare the learning outcomes with those of sister programmes in order to clarify the positioning and legitimacy of one's own programme. A comparison with programmes abroad is also advisable. Because academic research is international in character, the NVAO Assessment Framework explicitly states that a programme's learning outcomes must meet international requirements.

Dublin descriptors and criteria for university Bachelor's and Master's curricula
A programme's learning outcomes must meet the requirements set out in the Dutch Qualification Framework for the level of a university Bachelor's or Master's programme. The most common way to make this comparison is to compare the learning outcomes with the Dublin descriptors.

Education Day
In addition to periodic staff meetings, a programme should organise an Education Day for teaching staff at least once a year, when all aspects of teaching and the programme can be discussed. Education Day is thus a useful instrument for safeguarding the quality of all four standards in the Assessment Framework.

The Education Day is an opportunity for staff to provide input on drawing up or modifying the learning outcomes. The learning outcomes do not need to be reviewed every year. Once every three years is probably sufficient to check whether the learning outcomes still match the programme. In a good programme, the curriculum and learning outcomes are closely aligned (see also section 3.3). If changes are made to the learning outcomes, it is important to also take a look at the curriculum. The reverse is also true: in the event of a major curriculum change, it is essential to check whether the learning outcomes also need adjustment.
External advice
A programme can choose to set up a sector advisory committee or external advisory board. An advisory board can help determine whether the learning outcomes of Master's programmes in particular meet the requirements of the professional field. The advisory board should include individuals who work for relevant and representative employers in the field. They know from practical experience what knowledge and skills employers expect from recent graduates and can indicate the extent to which the learning outcomes meet these expectations.

The role of an advisory board goes beyond advising on learning outcomes. The board may be approached for advice on a wide range of matters. In the context of quality assurance, for example, the board may be consulted on major curriculum changes, preparations for an external assessment or assessing exit levels (see also section 3.4). An advisory board can also make suggestions to the programme on its own initiative in the event of important developments. The advisory board may be convened on a regular basis once or twice a year. The board's involvement in the programme can be increased by appointing one or more programme alumni to the board.

In addition to routine advice from the advisory board, advice may also be sought from external experts on an ad hoc basis. They could be staff at Radboud University, such as educational advisors and education policy staff at Academic Affairs. External advice may also be obtained from experts from outside one's own institution.

3.3 Teaching-learning environment

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment
The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3.3.1 Themes

The programme, staff and facilities should provide a coherent learning environment that enables incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

- **Curriculum**: a good curriculum is structured in such a way that the learning objectives of each course contribute to the learning outcomes of the programme. The modes of instruction and the content align with the learning objectives of the course and match the content and profile of the programme. In addition, a good programme is doable for students.

- **Staff**: the teachers in the programme have sufficient teaching skills (as evidenced by UTQ and ETQ qualifications) and the necessary subject-matter expertise. In principle, the teachers in the programme are also affiliated as researchers to a research institute and they make use of their research output and research activities in their teaching.

- **Facilities**: the programme should have sufficient programme-specific facilities.
3.3.2 Instruments

The instruments described here to improve the teaching-learning environment relate firstly to the programme curriculum, then to staff and finally to facilities.

3.3.2.1 Curriculum

Teaching concept
In a good curriculum, the structure and coherence of the components are designed in such a way that students are able to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. The programme should draw up a teaching concept explaining the curriculum structure and the modes of instruction. The teaching concept matches the programme's profile, and also aligns with the principles of Radboud University's educational vision, which is to provide activating and challenging education, a close relationship between teaching and research, and sufficient contact hours at all stages of the programme. The director of education is ultimately responsible for drawing up the teaching concept. Naturally, this involves input from teaching staff and advice from the programme committee.

Study guide and Education and Examination Regulations (EER)
The programme is described in detail in the study guide and the EER. Both documents are proactive quality assurance instruments as well as important sources of information for students. The EER in particular sets out the rights and obligations of students and the programme. The EER for the programme is based on the model EER drawn up by Radboud University. The dean adopts the EER following approval by the Faculty Joint Assembly (FGV). There is a legal obligation to submit the EER to the programme committee for advice before it is adopted.

Course evaluations
All programmes at Radboud University are required to periodically evaluate curriculum components. This does not mean that all parts need to be evaluated each year. It is advisable to draw up an evaluation schedule that sets out when and how each component will be evaluated. It is also recommended that any new components, or components that have been radically changed, should always be fully evaluated. This also applies when a previous evaluation has given cause for a further course evaluation or if problems have been identified in the course. A quality assurance coordinator can ensure that the right courses are evaluated each year.

In a good evaluation system, a programme sets verifiable targets regarding the results of the evaluations. It is also advisable to look closely at the quality of the questions and the scope of the evaluation. A good evaluation can be limited in scope. In order to make the most of course evaluations, the teacher(s) involved should reflect on the results. The students' course evaluations and the teacher's response (also called the teacher report) can then be discussed in the programme committee, which reports its findings to the director of education and the faculty board. If a course evaluation shows that action must be taken, the director of education bears ultimate responsibility for taking appropriate measures and for checking whether they have been followed up in practice.

Of course, students have an important role to play here. They are expected to take part in course evaluations as this will help to improve the quality of the programme. The programme, in turn, is expected to inform students about the results and any improvement actions.

Course dossier
Various programmes at Radboud University have experience with creating (digital) course dossiers. A course dossier should include at least:

- a description of the content and learning objectives of the course
- the examinations and other assessment assignments with the corresponding answer keys or assessment criteria
- (a summary of the results of) the evaluation plus the response of the teacher(s).

Because a complete course dossier contains all the relevant information about a course, it can be used for many purposes. It can, for example, serve as a starting point each year for course preparation. Teachers applying for a UTQ or ETQ can use it in their portfolios. And it comes in handy if there is a change of teachers in a course. It also enables the examining board to effectively carry out its task with respect to safeguarding the quality of assessments (see also section 3.4). In addition, a course dossier system provides all the information about courses that is required by an external assessment panel.

The course coordinator is responsible for compiling the dossier. Under the responsibility of the director of education, a quality assurance coordinator can ensure that all dossiers are complete and that all agreed-upon actions for improvement are carried out.

**Curriculum evaluations**

Course evaluations provide information about the quality of individual courses, whereas semester, annual and curriculum evaluations reflect the structure and coherence of a programme. Teachers can evaluate the curriculum on Education Day, while students can evaluate it in periodic panel discussions, in which a particular academic year is discussed by a specific year group. The entire curriculum can be evaluated by students who have almost completed the programme; this is called an exit evaluation. A programme can also opt to have all students evaluate the curriculum in writing, followed by a discussion of the results with a small group of students.

In addition to a periodic evaluation, a programme can also evaluate the curriculum when there is just cause to do so, for example if various course evaluations have revealed poor coordination between the courses. Because teachers only see the evaluation for their own course, it is the task of the quality assurance coordinator to assess course evaluations in their broader context.

As with course evaluations, the results of curriculum evaluations are discussed in the programme committee, which can advise the director of education on any measures for improvement.

**Academic counselling**

Increasing the study success rate is a challenge for the programme and it is important to properly document the measures that have been taken in this regard. Mentoring is one of the instruments that Radboud University uses for this purpose.

All programmes are required to implement the mentoring system in the first academic year of the Bachelor's programme. They may also choose to continue it in the second and third years. For the mentoring system to function effectively, it is important that mentors know what is expected of them. This can be spelled out in a manual. In view of the impact that academic counselling can have on student well-being and study results, it is recommended that mentors be given a short training programme or instruction to prepare them for their role. Student evaluations and swapping experiences on Education Days can be used to gauge whether mentoring is working effectively.
Annual programme report
All Radboud University programmes are required to draw up an annual report in accordance with a fixed format. The annual report reflects on the results achieved in relation to the ambitions. The Executive Board discusses the annual report with the faculty board and the directors of education; it is therefore an important quality assurance tool. The annual programme report and the resulting agreements made in discussion with the Executive Board provide input for any adjustments to the programme's quality policy.

3.3.2.2 Staff

Staffing plan
The quality of the teaching staff has a major impact on the quality of a programme. It is the responsibility of the director of education to ensure that teachers have sufficient teaching skills and content expertise. A staffing plan can set out the objectives of a programme or faculty in relation to the content expertise and teaching skills of staff (such as the number of UTQ and ETQ qualifications). Since the interrelationship between teaching and research is an important feature of an academic programme, staff research, such as intended output and membership of research institutes, should also form part of the staffing plan. Section 4.3 looks in greater detail at the interrelationship between teaching and research.

Annual appraisal interviews
Each teacher has an annual appraisal interview with their manager to evaluate how they are functioning and to make agreements about further activities and development. Annual appraisal interviews are useful instruments for monitoring, and where necessary improving, staff skills. Students' views as expressed in course evaluations are a source of information that can be used as input in the discussion of a teacher's teaching skills and subject-matter expertise. Another source is the teacher portfolio that has been created as part of a professional development programme. Information about teacher satisfaction may also emerge from the interviews.

Annual faculty report
As part of the annual planning and control cycle, each faculty draws up an annual report. One of the aspects addressed is the faculty's staffing policy. The Executive Board discusses the annual reports with the faculty board, thereby ensuring that the staffing policy is also evaluated annually and agreements can be made for the coming year.

3.3.2.3 Facilities

Most of the material facilities used by a programme belong to the faculty or university. It is the responsibility of the faculty or university to ensure the availability of sufficient good quality facilities to deliver the desired education. In some cases, the programme has specific facilities such as laboratories or workshops. These programme-specific facilities are subject to inspection during the programme assessment. The director of education is responsible for ensuring that these facilities are available and of good quality.

Education Day and course evaluations
Education Day and course evaluations have already been mentioned above. These instruments can also be used to check whether the programme facilities are sufficient to deliver education in the manner envisaged by the programme. The programme committee also has a role in identifying problems with facilities and providing advice.
3.4 Assessment

Standard 3: Assessment
The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

3.4.1 Themes

During a programme, students complete assessments that enable the programme to measure their progress and level. This third standard evaluates whether the assessment is of good quality and whether the programme has an adequate assessment system.

The themes covered by this standard are:

- **system of assessment**: the assessment methods and modes of instruction used in a course are derived from the learning objectives of the course. The programme as a whole uses a varied and coherent set of assessment methods.
- **quality of assessment**: each assessment is valid, reliable, transparent and practicable. The criteria on which a student is judged in an assessment are announced in advance.

3.4.2 Instruments

**Assessment policy**
A programme must have an assessment policy that explains the aims of assessment and quality of assessment in relation to learning outcomes. The assessment policy should also state how the programme seeks to achieve these objectives and how the quality of assessments is safeguarded. The assessment policy can also include tips and suggestions to help teachers design good assessments.

Teaching staff, the examining board and the director of education share responsibility for assessment and assessment quality, each based on their own position and role. The assessment policy needs to have sufficient support from within the programme as well as the approval of the examining board. Dutch law stipulates that the examining board is legally responsible for safeguarding the quality of assessments. To help teachers design good tests, the examining board can translate the assessment policy for teachers into concrete guidelines for designing assessments that tie in with that policy.

**Checking the quality of assessments**
Teachers hold primary responsibility for the quality and level of the assessments that they design. The examining board is responsible for safeguarding that quality. One way to perform this role is to conduct random, retrospective quality checks in accordance with a procedure set out in the assessment policy. This can only be done if the examining board has access to the information in the course dossier, as described in section 3.3, and to students’ assessments.

There are also other ways to organise the quality assurance of assessments. For example, the examining board can delegate the random checks of assessment quality to a special assessment (advisory) committee, which then reports its findings to the examining board. A further option involves an advance quality check,
which is made as the assessment is being designed. The assessment policy can stipulate the need for a form of collegial consultation when an assessment is being designed, or that assessments should be submitted in advance to the assessment (advisory) committee. The examining board must be able to ascertain later whether the peer review took place and what form it took.

Bachelor's or Master's theses are always assessed by two assessors with the aid of an assessment form. As with other forms of assessment, the examining board is responsible for ensuring the quality of final projects. It can do so by regularly conducting its own random checks of theses. The examining board or assessment (advisory) committee can also carry out these checks.

As with course evaluations, there is no need to subject all assessments to a quality inspection each year. The examining board can draw up a schedule of courses for which assessments will be checked. In addition to regular, periodic checks on assessments, the examining board may carry out a check if it identifies a need to do so, such as in the event of surprisingly high or low results in a particular exam or a large variation in test question scores.

In addition to regular monitoring of the quality of assessment, the examining board also deals with the complaints and problems of individual students.

Course and curriculum evaluations
Course and curriculum evaluations also provide information about the quality of assessments. Thus, the results of an evaluation may prompt an additional check on some assessments. In order to do its job properly, the examining board needs to have access to the parts of the evaluations that relate to assessment. This can be achieved by having the quality assurance coordinator or the programme committee provide this information to the examining board.

Annual programme report
Regardless of the chosen method for safeguarding the quality of assessment, the examining board must ultimately report its findings in writing to the director of education and include them in an annual report. The annual report of the examining board is part of the annual programme report.

The role of the examining board in safeguarding the quality assurance of assessment is discussed in detail in section 4.2 below.

3.5 Achieved learning outcomes

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes
The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

3.5.1 Themes

Standard 4 tests whether the programme has achieved the set learning outcomes. One way to measure whether students have indeed achieved the intended learning outcomes by the end of the programme is to examine the quality of final papers and how graduates function in postgraduate study or professional practice.

The themes covered by this standard are:
• **Final projects**: almost every programme concludes with an individual final assignment at a sufficiently academic level. For this component, an appraisal is made as to whether the student can apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired independently and in relation to each other.

• **Postgraduate programme or profession**: upon graduating, the student has sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to make a successful transition to further study or to the job market.

### 3.5.2 Instruments

**Final projects**

Final projects are used to test the exit level. The panel selects at least 15 final projects in advance, which they inspect in terms of exit level. These projects include a representative proportion of projects assessed as being satisfactory, good and very good.

**External advice**

The programme can obtain feedback on the quality of graduates by enlisting the services of the advisory board referred to in section 3.2. The board can be asked to compare the competences displayed by graduates with the learning outcomes and the expectations that prospective employers have of alumni of the programme. External advice about the quality of assessment can also be obtained from the Education Support department of the Academic Affairs division.

**Alumni monitor and career survey**

A graduate questionnaire, the alumni monitor, can also be used to measure the exit level of graduates. Until two years ago, Radboud University surveyed its recent graduates every year. The results of this monitor are made available to all faculties, which can opt to conduct a further career survey of alumni over a longer period of time.

### 3.6 Actors

The previous four chapters have presented a range of instruments that programmes can use as part of their quality assurance policy. The people or bodies that play a role in deploying each instrument were identified. Table 2 below summarises the tasks and competences of everyone involved in improving the quality of a programme. Here, the actors are taken as the point of departure, not the instruments.

This chapter elaborates further on three themes: (a) safeguarding the quality of assessment and, in particular, the role of the examining board, (b) the interrelationship between teaching and research, and (c) suggestions for improving study success rates.
Table 2. Summary of tasks and responsibilities of actors in the quality assurance of the programme.

<p>| Student | Is actively involved in the programme and provides input that can help enhance the quality of the programme by taking part in course and curriculum evaluations and in the programme committee |
| Teacher | Provides input for policy (papers) Draws up learning objectives for the course that align with the programme's learning outcomes Delivers teaching using appropriate modes of instruction Responds to students' course evaluations (teacher report) Compiles the course dossier Keeps a teacher portfolio Has primary responsibility for the quality and level of assessments |
| Director of education | Draws up learning outcomes and ambitions in line with Radboud University policy frameworks, the domain-specific frame of reference, the Dutch Qualifications Framework and requirements of the professional field (vision document) Organises an Education Day Appoints an external advisory board Writes the annual programme report Monitors cohesion within the curriculum Draws up a teaching concept together with the staff team Is responsible for the quality of the study guide Draws up the EER Is responsible for a satisfactory evaluation system Is responsible for the quality of programme-specific facilities |
| Quality assurance coordinator | Monitors the system and quality of course and curriculum evaluations Monitors the compiling of course dossiers Informs the examining board about the results of evaluations in terms of assessment Collects and distributes study success figures |
| Programme committee | Advises the director of education on learning outcomes Advises on the EER Advises the director of education on the curriculum and on curriculum changes Discusses course and curriculum evaluations and reports to the director of education Where appropriate, provides unsolicited advice on matters relating to the programme |
| Examining board | Is responsible for safeguarding the exit level of students Is responsible for the quality assurance of assessments and theses, and reports on this in the annual report Monitors the implementation of the assessment policy Translates the assessment policy into concrete guidelines for teachers Handles the requests, complaints and problems of individual students |
| External advisory board | Provides the programme with solicited and unsolicited advice on learning outcomes and the exit level achieved |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Adopts the EER</td>
<td>Has final responsibility for the quality of faculty teaching, research and staffing policy and non-programme-specific facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Joint Assembly (FGV)</td>
<td>Approves the EER</td>
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</table>
4 Special themes

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses a number of themes that deserve special attention in the context of quality assurance at Radboud University. Firstly, it is important to consider the wide-ranging tasks and powers of the examining board under the Higher Education and Research Act. Section 4.2 describes how the examining board can flesh out its role in safeguarding assessment quality, while Section 4.3 discusses how to safeguard the interrelationship between teaching and research, which is one of the university's priorities.

4.2 Examining boards and assessment

First, we explain the frameworks within which examining boards operate. This is followed by an explanation of the independent position of examining boards and a description of some of their tasks, with concrete tips on how the boards can fulfil these tasks. This section ends with some comments on the composition of examining boards.

4.2.1 Frameworks

Firstly, when performing their tasks, examining boards are bound by a number of frameworks, including statutory frameworks. According to the legal provisions for examining boards, which took effect on 1 September 2010, examining boards have two types of responsibility: procedural responsibility for assessment, testing and graduation ceremonies on the one hand, and substantive responsibility for the quality of assessment and testing on the other. Both types of responsibility involve proactive and reactive tasks. The law also requires examining boards to report their activities annually to the institution's board.

Secondly, there are local frameworks established by the university and faculty. As laid down in the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act, Radboud University has drawn up a rules and guidelines model, which can be fleshed out further by each examining board. Under this model, the examining board must ensure that the examiner draws up standard answers to enable a uniform assessment. The examining board is also required to report annually to the faculty board in the form of an annual report. This annual report is part of the annual programme report. A format has been drawn up for the latter, explicitly focusing on activities carried out in the context of quality assurance of assessment.

Thirdly, each examining board acts within the framework of its own programme. This framework is formally laid down in the Education and Examination Regulations (EER). Radboud University uses a model EER that is further fleshed out by the programmes. This programme-specific EER is binding and determines the rules for all actors within the programme, including the examining board. As stated above, the examining board also draws up its own rules and guidelines, based on the model that the university makes available for this purpose.
4.2.2 Independent position

The Dutch Higher Education and Research Act stipulates that the examining board must be able to operate independently of the board of the institution. Although the examining board is set up by the executive board (in specific terms, the dean of the faculty), the executive board is tasked with ensuring that examining boards can perform their work independently within the institution. The reasoning behind this is that the decisions of the examining board, for example about the number of students who pass an exam or interim exam, must not be influenced by such matters as financial considerations or study success rates. The decisions of the examining board must be based solely on substantive criteria.

This independent position may have implications for the composition of the examining board. For example, it is inadvisable for someone in a management position with responsibility for the institution’s financial situation to be a member of the examining board.

4.2.3 Tasks

The tasks and powers of the examining board are summarised below, broken down into the type of responsibility (procedural or substantive) and the nature of the action (proactive or reactive). The tasks marked with an asterisk (*) are explained in more detail in this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Tasks and powers of the examining board.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proactive</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedural responsibility</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Substantive responsibility (quality assurance)</td>
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The tasks of examining boards have been expanded so that they can continue to perform both their substantive and procedural tasks. To this end, the faculty board and programme management need to ensure that the examining board is properly equipped in terms of time, facilities and professional development.

**Appointing examiners**
By law, the examining board appoints examiners and gives them the power to administer assessments and to determine the results. It is standard procedure in many programmes for the teacher in a particular course component to also automatically be the examiner for that component. This is not always the case, however. There may be reasons for examining boards to appoint someone other than the teacher as the examiner in order, for example, to separate the supervision and assessment roles.

**Enhancing testing expertise**
The examining board is responsible for the testing expertise of examiners. Even when there is an automatic link between teacher and examiner, the examining board must ensure that the teachers concerned are able to design high-quality tests and arrive at a reliable assessment. Where this is not the case, the examining board must take action to remedy the situation. This could take the form of agreements with the director of education and/or the faculty board about possible training for examiners or helping examiners develop their test expertise.

The examining board is advised to draw up substantive guidelines for assessment and testing within the programme (see below). If it emerges that an examiner – despite training and/or supervision – cannot or will not comply with these guidelines, the examining board must intervene. Dismissing a teacher from their position as examiner is, of course, a drastic measure. To avoid this, the examining board can work with limited appointment periods, such as one year.

**Implementing assessment policy**
What makes a good assessment partly depends on the type of course and programme. However, there are generally applicable quality criteria, such as validity, reliability, transparency and usability, that apply to all forms of assessment. These general requirements are explained in more detail below (van der Veen, 2016; Berkel, Bax and Joosten-ten Brinke, 2017).

- **Validity** is above all a content criterion. It means that an assessment must measure what it is supposed to measure. In other words, it must relate to the learning objectives of the course in question. A valid assessment covers all the learning objectives of the course in accordance with their relative weight. Validity also means that the assessment method is appropriate to the learning objectives. An assessment matrix can be used to check the validity of the assessment. Validity is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a good-quality test.

- **Reliability** is a methodological criterion. It means that the test will yield the same results regardless of who assesses the performance of those students and the circumstances. It also means that the right students pass (and fail) the assessment. In other words, only students who have achieved the learning objective earn a pass. For the purpose of reliability, it is important that students are judged on their individual performance, even if the assessment involves group work. Examiners should be aware that no assessment can be 100% reliable. However, efforts should be made to maximise reliability.
• **Transparency** is important not only for those who design the test, but also for those who evaluate it. This means that clear and explicit agreements need to be made about all aspects of the assessment. For example, it must be made clear in advance what the test will cover (learning objectives and content), what form the assessment will take, what the minimum requirement is to achieve a pass, how many marks are awarded in each part, how much time is available for the test, and what aids can be used. In the case of written exams, it is therefore desirable for students to have access to questions from test exams.

There needs to be retrospective transparency about how the final mark was achieved. How was the scoring done and how did the teacher calculate the final mark? Where there are multiple assessment methods, the teacher must indicate the weighting of the assessment components.

• **Feasibility** is a practical requirement for assessments. Students who have achieved the learning objectives should be able to complete the assessment within the given time limit. Teachers should also be able to administer and mark the test within the available time.

A programme must state in its assessment policy the programme-specific and general principles it uses with regard to assessment and testing. As with any kind of policy, these principles need to be translated into specific targets, for example for assessment methods (e.g. oral exam, written exam, case study, essay) and with regard to the general quality criteria mentioned above.

The assessment policy also contains procedural instructions for assessment and testing. For example, it may stipulate that an assessment matrix be created for each exam, the assessment forms or rubrics to be used by thesis assessors, and how a second assessor should be nominated. The assessment policy can also specify how the examining board should approach the periodic checks of test quality. (see 'Checking the quality of assessments' later in this section).

The ‘four-eyes principle’ is an important precept for a good assessment system. This entails making sure that an assessment is viewed by more than one individual teacher. It is a useful instrument to safeguard the quality of assessments and can be applied to both test design and the evaluation of student performance.

**Drawing up guidelines for assessment and testing**

The examining board can derive specific guidelines from the assessment policy to help examiners design a good test and arrive at a fair assessment. These guidelines are a means by which the examining board can provide teachers with tools that enable them to monitor the quality of their own assessments. There are various ways to implement the four-eyes principle, such as consultation with colleagues when designing assessments or meetings in which teachers use a peer review system to take a retrospective look at each other’s assessments and offer suggestions for improvement.

More information on test development can be found on the Radboud University lecturers’ page: https://www.ru.nl/docenten/onderwijs/toetsen-en-beoordelen/.
Checking the quality of assessments

In its role to safeguard the quality of assessment, the examining board should carry out periodic checks of assessments (exams, papers, practical assignments). It can do so using a predetermined schedule. The section below assumes that the examining board will carry out the check itself, but it may also delegate this task to an assessment (advisory) committee.

Special attention should be paid to the quality control of Bachelor's and Master's theses, in terms of both quality of content and the reliability of the assessment. An important prerequisite for making a proper assessment of theses is the use of standard assessment forms or rubrics and to have two assessors. The examining board can examine a random sample of Bachelor’s and Master’s theses each year. The final projects should be spread across the different specialisations within the programme. The sample should also include theses that have earned both high and low marks.

A checklist as described above is not only a useful guide for teachers but is also a means by which the examining board can randomly and periodically check the quality of assessments. Even if the members of the examining board are not familiar with the subject matter of the assessment, they can still use the checklist to ascertain whether the established agreements have been met.

For the checks, it is recommended that reports on assessment quality be discussed at regular intervals (e.g. twice a year) in the meetings of the examining board. The examining board can draw up a schedule so that it is clear to everyone involved which courses/exams will be checked when. In the event of negative indications of assessment quality (e.g. from course or curriculum evaluations), the examining board can carry out further checks. The examining board must report on these activities in the annual report.

The examining board can only check assessments if it has access to them, including the associated learning objectives, assessment criteria and/or answer keys. One way to make this information available is through the course dossiers mentioned in Chapter 3. A culture needs to be gradually created in which period checks of assessments by the examining board, or the assessment (advisory) committee to which it has delegated this task, is standard procedure. One way to achieve this is to first familiarise teachers with the guidelines at a study afternoon, in which they compare their own assessments and those of their colleagues with these guidelines. It is important for teachers to be able to learn from the examining board's suggestions for improvement. These checks must not be carried out in an atmosphere of judgement or mistrust.

It goes without saying that checks of assessment quality have little point if the results are not reported back. The results must be reported to the director of education, the programme committee and in particular to the relevant teacher/thesis supervisor. Clear agreements should be made within the programme about how this feedback should be given. For example, a programme may choose to pass on the full results of the check to the teacher concerned (e.g. in the form of a completed checklist) and a summary of the results to the director of education and the programme committee. If problems have been identified, the examining board can make agreements with the teachers concerned about possible improvement measures. These also need to be communicated to the director of education.

4.2.4 Composition of the examining board

Members of the examining board should be appointed primarily on the basis of their subject-matter expertise in the relevant programme, in terms of both content and level. In addition, examining boards should have expertise with respect to the relevant laws and regulations, the EER of the programme, and
assessment and testing. Not every member of the board needs to have expertise in all these different areas, but it is important that the board as a whole has all these competences. When new members are appointed to the examining board, consideration can be given to the areas of expertise that need to be strengthened. The training of newly appointed members can also help to ensure the necessary expertise. Attention can also be given to enhancing the expertise of existing board members, for example at an annual meeting of examining boards within a faculty.

The appointment of external members (i.e. members who are not programme or faculty staff) is not a statutory obligation but it is recommended, for example by the Dutch Education Council. The benefit of having external members is that they increase the independence of the examining board and its decision-making. The appointment of external members also gives the board an opportunity to supplement any expertise that might be lacking in the programme. Thus, a testing or legal expert could be appointed to the board, or a specialist in the discipline, or a fellow lecturer from a similar programme within or outside Radboud University. Another way to tap into external expertise is to consult external parties on occasions.

4.3 Interrelationship between teaching and research

The interrelationship between teaching and research is regarded as a key characteristic of academic education. Radboud University therefore promotes itself as a ‘student-oriented research university’. In most programmes, there is an automatic link between research and teaching in that, in principle, all teachers have a research role in addition to their teaching role. Nevertheless, this theme deserves special attention, including in a system of quality assurance. This is because quality assurance is not an end in itself but serves to ensure that programmes focus on what they believe to be important.

A programme should determine in advance how it intends to ensure the interrelationship between teaching and research for all four assessment standards in the NVAO Assessment Framework. In other words, it is important for the programme to set specific targets regarding the way in which academic research is reflected in learning outcomes, the teaching-learning environment, assessment and the achieved learning outcomes. It is then important to periodically check whether these targets are being met.

A model that can serve as a guide here is that of Healey (2005), who describes the possible relationships between research and teaching in two dimensions. The horizontal dimension, which includes research products and research processes, shows what teaching focuses on in terms of content. The vertical dimension focuses on the role of students, as audience or as participants in research. These two dimensions divide the plane into four quadrants, which Healey views as four qualitatively different ways of incorporating research into teaching (see figure below).

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The four quadrants describe four ways in which students can encounter research during their studies:

- **Research-oriented** (bottom right): students are trained in research methods. They study the research methods and techniques commonly used in their subject area. This can occur through handbooks and lectures, as well as through articles by researchers in the discipline. The focus is on methodology.
- **Research-led** (bottom left): students are acquainted with research findings through lectures, articles and handbooks. The emphasis is on the knowledge acquired through this research.
- **Research-tutored** (top left): students learn to critically assess and analyse research findings. These findings are discussed and analysed, preferably in smaller groups.
- **Research-based** (top right): students learn to carry out their own research. The emphasis is on setting up and conducting their own academic research and reporting on it in an appropriate academic manner in accordance with the methods commonly used in the discipline.

A good curriculum, in which teaching and research are indeed interwoven, will address all four quadrants. The quadrants do not necessarily reflect an increasing level of difficulty, however, and do not have to follow one another in a fixed sequence.

The importance in an academic education of doing your own research (top-right quadrant) cannot be overstated. Radboud University considers it essential that every student take the plunge, even just once, and be obliged to fend for themselves. In many cases, this happens as part of the Bachelor’s and/or Master’s thesis. Here too, however, it is important to find a balance between studying existing research findings (the corpus of the discipline, represented in the left-hand quadrants) and new findings generated by the students themselves. This balance can of course differ according to the discipline.
5 Preparing for a programme assessment

5.1 Recent developments

The NVAO drew up a new Assessment Framework (September 2018) on the basis of the Dutch Accreditation Act that was introduced in February 2019. The main changes with respect to the earlier situation are:

Undifferentiated conclusions
Programmes and programme quality are no longer rated as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. NVAO’s assessment confines itself to the basic quality, with NVAO issuing one of the following judgements: ‘meets the standard’, ‘partially meets the standard’ or ‘does not meet the standard’. This avoids a situation in which the panel devotes too much attention to the precise quality of a programme, allowing more room for inspiring discussions between the programme and the panel.

Justifying a language other than Dutch
A new provision has been added to Standard 2 (Teaching-learning environment): if the programme is taught in a language other than Dutch, the programme must justify its choice. This also applies to programmes that bear a foreign language name. The teaching staff must have a sufficient command of the language in which they are teaching.

Development dialogue
In the new Framework, the site visit still consists of two elements. In addition to assessment in the context of accreditation and improvement, the programme conducts a ‘development dialogue’ with the panel, discussing potential improvements from a development perspective. Both the panel and the programme can place items on the agenda. The panel (previously the programme) records the outcomes of the development dialogue in a separate document that is not part of the accreditation application. The law stipulates that the annex containing the outcomes of the development dialogue must be made public by the institutional board within one year of the accreditation body adopting the accreditation decision.

Student contribution
The self-evaluation contains a contribution submitted by students of the programme (previously known as the student chapter). The institution must give students an opportunity to make their contribution and must ensure that it is independent and representative. Apart from the slightly different title (student contribution rather than student chapter), there are no further changes in terms of content and how this chapter is produced.
Shared participation
The person responsible for the programme (the director of education) must share the assessment report with the programme committee of the relevant programme one week after the report has been received.

Accreditation for an indefinite period
The accreditation period was previously set at six years. Under the new Framework, the accreditation of an existing programme is valid for an indefinite period of time and does not expire. To retain its accreditation, the programme must undergo an assessment as part of an assessment cluster and submit the assessment report to NVAO before the submission deadline. This is simply a cosmetic change, however: the programme still has to apply for accreditation every six years.

5.2 Preparing for a programme assessment

The preparation for an external assessment begins about 18 months before the submission date set by NVAO. In principle, NVAO accredits programmes for an indefinite period of time. The programme must submit an assessment report to the NVAO every six years. NVAO will decide, based on the report, whether the programme will retain its accreditation. The submission date for the assessment report is set by NVAO.

Timetable for programme assessment process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial session</td>
<td>Oct – Nov year n-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment of process coordinator/contact person</td>
<td>Oct – Nov year n-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of quality assessment agency</td>
<td>Oct – Nov year n-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation of tasks and information gathering</td>
<td>Oct – Nov year n-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition of assessment panel</td>
<td>Oct – Nov year n-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the critical reflection</td>
<td>Dec year n-1 – April year n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitting the critical reflection</td>
<td>1 July year n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial assessment</td>
<td>Sept – Oct year n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site visit by assessment panel</td>
<td>Sept – Oct year n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment report (+ opportunity to respond)</td>
<td>1 April year n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of assessment report for accreditation</td>
<td>1 May year n</td>
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</table>

Initial session
The external assessment process starts with a discussion between the director of education, programme coordinators and the person who will coordinate the external assessment on the one hand, and an education policy officer and education advisor from Strategy, Research and Education. They discuss the assessment process and make agreements about what needs to happen next, such as the timetable, writing the critical reflection, the student chapter and the trial assessment.

Selection of quality assessment agency
A quality assessment agency can be hired to carry out the external assessment. The agency plans the site visit, approaches the members of the assessment panel and provides the secretary for the panel. Although it is not strictly necessary to engage an agency, it is strongly recommended to do so, especially for cluster assessments involving multiple programmes. The agency can save the programme a lot of work. For
programmes that are assessed within a cluster, there are nationwide agreements as to which agency to engage.

**Delegation of tasks and information gathering**
Preparation for the external assessment starts with making agreements in a timely manner. Who will coordinate the organisational aspects of the assessment process? Who will provide the necessary quantitative data? Which individuals will write the critical reflection? Who else will read it? Who is responsible for the writing and for coordinating the writing? All the basic information about the programme needs to be available before a start is made on writing the critical reflection. If the internal quality assurance is systematically organised, this information will automatically be available in existing policy documents, notes, annual programme reports, evaluations and course dossiers. An assessment panel will take a close look at the quality of final projects.

**Panel composition**
The panel that assesses the programme must have the right expertise to form an opinion on the quality of the programme. If the programme is assessed as part of a cluster of similar programmes, the composition of the panel is coordinated in the disciplinary consultative body and/or the deans’ consultation. It is important that the programme nominates candidates for the panel in these consultations. However, independence must be taken into account: a panel member must not have had any direct ties with the institution or programme for the past five years. All requirements imposed by NVAO on the composition of the panel are set out in the Assessment Framework.

**Domain-specific frame of reference**
As outlined in the previous chapter, the learning outcomes of the programme should tie in with the current requirements of the international professional field. If a nationally agreed-upon frame of reference is available, it is advisable to relate the learning outcomes to this in order to position and legitimise the programme in the Dutch context. If the frame of reference also looks at the international context, this can also support the programme's international position. The frame of reference is established in consultation with sister programmes in the disciplinary consultative body. The programme needs to be actively involved if, in the run-up to the external assessment, consultations are held within this body as to whether the existing frame of reference should be adapted in line with recent developments within the discipline.

It can be difficult to draw up a domain-specific frame of reference for programmes with a strong interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary character or programmes that are unique in the Netherlands. For such programmes, the emphasis will of course be on a comparison with programmes abroad, in which case the frame of reference will take the form of an international benchmark.

**Writing a self-evaluation**
The self-evaluation is the basic document in the information that the programme makes available to the assessment panel. The self-evaluation is a standalone document describing the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes. Using the four standards in the framework for the limited programme assessment (intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, assessment, achieved learning outcomes), the self-evaluation presents a picture of the programme and of past choices. The self-evaluation also outlines the programme's ambitions for the future.

The document for the limited framework should be no longer than 15 pages (excluding annexes) for each programme. NVAO's Assessment Framework clearly defines the mandatory annexes to be included in the critical reflection. One of these is the student chapter, which is a contribution drawn up by students. The programme must ensure that this contribution is independent and representative.
It is important that teaching staff and students are actively involved in the critical reflection and that a first draft is widely distributed to various bodies within and outside the programme for feedback purposes. The draft report should of course be submitted to the programme committee for advice. Given the important role of the examining board in safeguarding the quality of assessment, it is also advisable to submit the draft to the examining board. Once advice has been received from the programme committee and examining board, the document can be submitted to the faculty board. The advisory board can also be asked to comment on the draft.

Because of the major consequences if a programme fails to retain its accreditation, it is mandatory to submit a draft of the critical reflection to the Education Affairs department of the Academic Affairs division. This department has considerable experience with assessments and accreditations and can judge whether the critical reflection meets the set requirements.

Once all responses to the draft document have been gathered, the writers can create a final version. The self-evaluation can then be adopted by the director of education, after which the faculty can send it to the quality assessment agency with the assent of the Education Affairs department. Ideally, all teachers in the programme should receive a copy of the self-evaluation. At the very least, the staff and students who have taken part in a discussion with the assessment panel during the site visit should receive a copy.

Site visit by assessment panel
The process coordinator prepares the site visit. The following topics form an important part of the preparations for the panel’s visit.

- Additional information
  After reading the self-evaluation plus annexes, the panel may ask for additional information. This may emerge from the preliminary discussion with the panel secretary, which takes place a few weeks before the site visit. Additional information may also be requested during the site visit itself. Apart from the questions that the panel may have, it is helpful if the programme makes relevant information about the programme available for inspection during the visit.

- Programme for site visit
  In the run-up to the site visit, the assessment coordinator organises everything that the panel needs, such as an office, a room where the oral reports can be held, catering, computer facilities and documents for inspection. The coordinator also liaises with the panel secretary and discusses with him or her the schedule and the exact timetable for the site visit. The programme can decide on the groups of discussion partners, bearing in mind that they should be as representative as possible. It is also important to widely communicate the programme for the site visit in a timely manner to teaching staff and students. Education Affairs should also be informed about the site visit programme and the venue for the oral reports.

- Trial assessment:
  It is highly recommended that a trial assessment be conducted. Education Affairs can be asked to organise and supervise it. In a trial assessment, discussions are held with programme staff, students and management on the basis of the critical reflection in preparation for the actual assessment. It is best to hold the trial assessment two to four weeks before the site visit.
During the site visit itself, the assessment coordinator (or deputy) must be available as a point of contact for the panel. The coordinator also ensures that all discussion partners are present on time.

Assessment report
A few months after the site visit, the programme will receive a draft version of the assessment report. The programme will be given an opportunity to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report. Education Affairs will receive a copy of the response. Once the final version of the assessment report has been adopted, it will be sent to the Executive Board. On the basis of this report, the Board will apply to NVAO for retention of its accreditation.
Literature

Relevant websites

NVAO
www.nvao.net

NVAO – accreditation of existing programme
https://www.nvao.net/nl/procedures/nederland/accreditatie-bestaande-opleiding

NVAO – Assessment Framework 2018 (PDF)

Radboud Universiteit – Overview of Education and Examination Regulations

Radboud Universiteit – Lecturers’ page Teaching and Learning Centre
https://www.ru.nl/docenten/

Relevant documents

Radboud University – Model EER
https://www.radboudnet.nl/onderwijs/werkwijze-regelingen/.

Radboud University – Rules and procedures relating to education
https://www.radboudnet.nl/onderwijs/werkwijze-regelingen/.

Radboud University – Format for annual programme report
Annex 1

Dublin descriptors
Annex 2
1 Format for annual programme report
FORMAT OF ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORTS FOR 2019-2020 ACADEMIC YEAR

Deadline for submitting the annual programme reports: at the same time as the faculty annual report

1. Introduction (½ page max.)

Which programmes are involved? How was the report compiled? No matters of substance.

2. Reflection on the year under review (3 pages max.)

• Discuss key events, such as adaptations to the teaching concept, major programme changes, educational innovations and external assessments.
• Describe progress on implementing improvement actions in the light of the most recent external assessment, preparations for an upcoming assessment and for the implementation of assessment policy and the assessment programme.
• State which improvement measures were taken in the year under review in the light of the results of student monitoring and evaluations, such as course evaluations, interviews with Bachelor’s and Master’s students and the National Student Survey (NSE).
• Reflect on how the Covid-19 crisis has affected teaching and your dealings with students. How have teaching and assessment been adapted? What were the biggest challenges, what went well and where did the biggest problems lie?

3. OPTIONAL: reflection on core education data (2 pages max.)

Reflect on the most conspicuous trends revealed by the key indicators and say which improvement actions have been taken or will be initiated in the coming period in response to these indicators. This is not a mandatory part of the annual programme report.

4. Programme committee (2 pages max.)

• A report on the key recommendations of the programme committee and the resulting actions. Specifically mention the extent to which the programme committee is involved in implementing the quality agreements.
• A reflection on the course and curriculum evaluations: what are the key findings and how are they communicated back to the teaching staff in question? What’s required here is the general picture; there is no need to go into the results of individual evaluations.
• In many programmes, the teaching and assessment have been adjusted during the Covid pandemic. How was the programme committee involved? How did the committee fulfil its role during the pandemic?

5. Examining Board (3 pages max)

Report on the work of the Examining Board. Topics to be addressed:

• Composition of the Examining Board, stating the role and position of the individual members.
• Activities as part of safeguarding the quality of assessment:
  o How did the Examining Board investigate the quality of final projects and other assessments? What are the findings and what actions did this lead to?
  o What other activities has the Examining Board undertaken to promote the quality assurance of assessment and to increase the assessment expertise of teachers?
  o The Covid pandemic has had a major impact on the (method of) assessment. What actions or measures has the Examining Board taken to ensure the quality of assessment? How is the Examining Board seeking to minimise the risk of fraud in remote assessment?
  o Have there been any noticeable changes in assessment outcomes or success rates since the Covid-19 outbreak? If so, what are they and have they prompted any action on the part of the Examining Board?
• How are examiners appointed?
Include in the Annex a quantitative summary of requests and objections that have been handled. State how many of those requests have been granted/rejected. This relates to the following:

- requests for admission
- requests for exemption
- requests for additional exam opportunities
- requests for additional exam facilities
- other requests
- objections/complaints about exam assessment
- issues of fraud and plagiarism
- other
2 Dublin descriptors
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DUBLIN DESCRIPTORS</strong></th>
<th><strong>Bachelor's Qualifications</strong></th>
<th><strong>Master's Qualifications</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge and understanding</strong></td>
<td>Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study.</td>
<td>Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Applying knowledge and understanding</strong></td>
<td>Can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study.</td>
<td>Can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study; have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity.</td>
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<td><strong>Making judgements</strong></td>
<td>Have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues.</td>
<td>Have the ability to formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Can communicate information, ideas and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.</td>
<td>Can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning skills</strong></td>
<td>Have developed the necessary learning skills for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.</td>
<td>Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.</td>
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</tbody>
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