Report AACSB-NVAO Development Meeting

Date and time: 30.09.2024, 03.00 – 04.00 pm
Place: Online (NSM attendees at Radboud University, Nijmegen School of Management, Elinor Ostrom building, Heyendaalseweg 141, 6525AJ Nijmegen)
Prepared by: Elise van Casteren, project manager international accreditations
Attendees: Accreditation panel: Timo Korkeamäki (chair) and Philip Vergauwen (NVAO). Panel secretary: Mark Delmartino. Programmes: Ayse Saka-Helmhout (BSc Business Administration), Marloes van Engen (MSc Business Administration), Jan Verhoeckx (BSc Economics and Business Economics), André van Hoorn (MSc Economics), Roel Schouteten (MSc Business Administration (parttime). NSM: Liesbeth Gulpers (director of Education) and Elise van Casteren (project manager international accreditations).

This development meeting took place on 30.09.2024, three months after the AACSB-NVAO accreditation panel (Peer Review Team) visited Nijmegen School of Management. During this site visit (in June 2024), the five BSc and MSc Business Administration- and Economics & Business Economics programmes of Radboud University were accredited. This report was drawn up by the programmes together and submitted to the panel for approval.

Introduction
The programmes prepared three topics to be discussed with the panel:

1. Profiling

What is the best strategy for a relatively small school such as ours to attract students to our mission-driven BSc, MSc and post-initial programmes? Should our programmes be relatively broad to suit the interests of many or narrow to fill a niche not filled by other schools in the Netherlands and Europe? We see room for improvement in both our educational offering and visibility. How do we make this decision as a school, and secondly get the majority of our staff on board?

2. Soft Skills

How can we better operationalise soft skills as communication and self-reflection, and monitor student progression on these skills (Assurance of Learning)? How can we impart to- and monitor students on critical thinking skills and application of knowledge?

3. Measuring Impact

What are good KPI's for measuring impact on programme level, given our unique profile? How do we measure whether we achieve our goals?

Topic 1: Profiling
On the first topic, the Panel Review Team (PRT) believes that it is most important to stick to the strong profile and unique features of NSM. It is advised to think of what NSM and the region stand for, and to find alignment in what you can mean to the region and students from outside the region. The panel stresses NSM's strong position to profile based on its strengths, resources and abilities, to differentiate from others, and to choose the impact one wishes to have.

In the discussion on serving regional vs. (inter)national students, the panel believes it is possible to serve both; the one doesn't exclude the other. It is important to align the regional with the national.

During the site visit, the Peer Review Team has seen the improvements that have been realised by revising the BSc programme in Business Administration. The PRT does advise NSM to further work on strengthening the profiling of the MSc programmes in Business Administration and Economics & Business Economics. The overarching NSM vision on 'responsible governance for sustainable societies' could bind different specialisations. Think of the roles and functions of sustainability, of how different specialisations offer different perspectives on governance for sustainability, and how to achieve sustainability. NSM could align the different learning lines within programmes accordingly. Clarifying the portfolio will make it more attractive to students. Where students eventually come from, does not really matter.

The PRT points out it is wise to invite and allow all NSM colleagues to come up with concrete projects that support the mission. Stimulate quick-wins that come bottom-up and make sure that everyone recognizes themselves in a new strategy. The PRT stresses that is important to have support from the critical mass. This can be achieved by informing colleagues, listening, and providing opportunities to get involved. At the same time, all colleagues' work should at least be complementary to achieving the school's mission and vision, even if it is not fully in line with it. Colleagues may have strong ownership for their own field and it may take more time for them to see the bigger picture. Lastly the panel advises against making decisions and changes too top-down.

Topic 2: Soft Skills

With regards to soft skills as communication and self-reflection, the Peer Review Team believes a school needs to have enough work in small groups to really see what the abilities of students are, and which students still need help. In the near future, more and more of the hard skills are going to be done by technology or artificial intelligence. Therefore programmes should teach their students on the soft skills that are necessary to support technology.

With respect to the teaching staff, the PRT advises to create a strength-based overview and allocation of teachers to courses and work forms like lectures. Not every teacher is best suitable to teach soft skills, some teachers excel in classic lectures. This is also applicable to courses: not every course links directly to soft skills. Select the right courses and show how the processes involved, work. Use best practices and teach each other. Also, think of the long-term strategy for teachers of the future, and create diversity in- and a mixture of learning environments. Furthermore, the panel would place trust in students and make use of peer assessment and peer-reviewing.

Finally, the PRT recommends to work with the other NSM departments and faculties of Radboud University, to combine expertise and good practices on soft skills. It is wise to make students work together across faculties; they will also work together with colleagues/stakeholders from different backgrounds in their future work lives.

Topic 3: Measuring Impact
Measuring impact at programme-level is challenging. At the moment, within AACSB, the emphasis lies on cases: illustrating your impact work through good examples. The PRT advises to decide on the area in which you want to have impact. Do you aspire impact in your region, the Netherlands, a global impact? The answer to this question will guide how you measure impact.

The PRT stresses it is important to end up with a set of KPIs that is consistent and coherent. The panel recommends creating a limited set of KPIs that is not entirely new, that aligns with what NSM does, and to work with the processes already in place. The PRT advises programme management to assess regularly with the other NSM programmes and the university: how do the programmes reach impact, and what do we aspire as a collective? Make sure to include long-term impact, e.g. by measuring where students end up, how students are valued, and what NSM is known for. As for research: consider elaborating on your long-term research contribution.

One may also pose a counterfactual impact question: what would the region be without your programmes and your students? You could send out surveys to alumni and stakeholders. Alternatively, one could elaborate on what impacts us as an academic community. By asking the academic and professional staff what impacts them, leveraging the positive influences and mitigating the negative influences, we can deliver impact together. By getting rid of the negative impact, one will instantly have more positive impact. The panel recommends to gain answers to: what keeps everyone motivated, how can we measure the impact that NSM wants?

Closing
The Peer Review Team thanks NSM for preparing this meeting and for creating the opportunity to discuss the future developments from a combined NVAO and AACSB perspective. The programmes thank the panel for the fruitful discussion and their valuable advice.