

New Ways
NVAO Annual Report 2016

June 2017

New Ways

Last year, the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) focused on the development of the route it is to take over the 2017-2020 period. As requested by the Committee of Ministers, it outlined a new vision for the organisation's future with associated organisational changes. In this new strategy, it was inspired by developments in the Netherlands and Flanders that NVAO has helped substantiate in recent years, such as the evaluation of the organisation in 2013, the institutional review pilot in Flanders in the 2015-2017 period, and the new Dutch assessment framework in 2016, in addition to the pioneering work conducted in the area of joint degrees and the mutual recognition of accreditations internationally, and the design of a self-evaluation process in preparation for the external review in 2017. During these developments, NVAO communicated intensively with the external parties involved in order to take their ideas on board and expand the support basis. NVAO staff also contributed to the new ways of NVAO.

At the same time, NVAO was fully engaged in 2016 in the implementation of the quality assurance system in Flanders with the institutional review pilots, based on its "evaluating approach", in addition to the normal accreditations for new programmes, programmes going through improvement periods, international collaborations, and institutions not participating in the pilots. NVAO also took the first initial steps towards the evaluation to be conducted at the end of 2017 as a basis for achieving a new quality assurance system by 2020. In the Netherlands, in addition to the regular accreditations and initial assessments of new programmes, attention was given to the development of a new assessment framework in preparation for the next step in the system. For the new framework, extensive discussions were held with the government and representatives of the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (VH), the Platform of Recognised Private Training Institutions (NRTO), quality assessment agencies, student organisations, employers, and trade unions. Preparations were also made for the start of the second round of institutional audits in 2017. In both regions, "trust" is once again the primary focus, while fostering autonomy and ownership of the quality assurance system among higher education institutions. At the same time, attention is being given within both systems to reducing the administrative burden and establishing a differentiated set of instruments.

NVAO hosts a range of different international delegations each year to provide information on the quality assurance systems in the Netherlands and Flanders, and on its tasks and activities. At the end of 2016, we were honoured to welcome His Majesty King Philippe of Belgium as an official part of the three-day state visit of the Belgian royal couple to the Netherlands. His Majesty the King was accompanied by the Minister-President of Flanders, Geert Bourgeois, and the Minister-President of the German-speaking Community in Belgium, Oliver Paasch.

Within our own organisation, we were happy to see the Board of NVAO complete once again with the arrival of the undersigned as the new Vice Chair and Marc Luwel as a board member. Between 2002 and 2007, Marc Luwel was a member of the Executive Board and Vice Chair of NVAO.

In the coming year, NVAO will focus on implementing its newly chosen direction, further strengthening trust in the quality assurance system, and putting this in the spotlight internationally. This annual report contains a report on its activities in 2016.

Anne Flierman, Chair
Ann Verreth, Vice Chair

Contents

	Page
Five main themes	4
Results of main tasks	5
• The Netherlands	5
• Flanders	10
• Other activities	12
• International aspects	12
Collaboration with stakeholders	14
Organisation	15
• NVAO Board and Advisory Council	15
• Organisation	16
Definitions and abbreviations	21

Five main themes

As an organisation, in addition to its main tasks, NVAO focused last year on five main themes: 1) outlining a new vision for the organisation's future in response to the request from the Committee of Ministers; 2) a change in the organisation; 3) revising the NVAO strategy; 4) writing a self-evaluation in preparation for the external review in 2017; and 5) developing a new Assessment Framework for the higher education accreditation system in the Netherlands, and in Flanders starting the preparations for a new quality assurance system, in addition to continuing the institutional review pilot, as elaborated on pages 8 and 10.

In light of the various policy developments in Flanders and in the Netherlands, the Committee of Ministers requested NVAO at the end of 2015 to explore the **prospects for NVAO**, in response to the wish to be expand the options for customisation in the development of the Dutch and Flemish quality assurance systems. Quality assurance for Flemish and Dutch higher education is based on the same internationally established basic principles, but as a bi-national organisation, NVAO works within culturally and politically different systems that (can) interpret these principles differently. For this reason, the quality assurance systems in Flanders and the Netherlands have each developed further in accordance with their respective approaches in recent years. NVAO shall support the development of these two systems in 2017 by setting up a **Flemish department and a Dutch department** under a single board, supported by a joint department for facility matters. This will enable the organisation to focus on the specific wishes within the different regions and to take up the related tasks in the most efficient manner. At the same time, NVAO attaches great value to its bi-national character. It continues to express this through its international board, its mixed teams of employees, and through collaboration in joint projects.

NVAO has developed a **new strategy paper** for the years 2017-2020, which was finalised at the start of 2017. The Executive Board and the Management Team organised various strategic meetings in the report year to enable the results of the internal interim evaluation of NVAO's management structure to coincide with the new strategic policy objectives and the planned new administrative structure. Various strategy days were held with the staff in order to further develop the policies.

Attention was also given in 2016 to composing the self-evaluation for the **external review** to be conducted by ENQA in March 2017. An employee was made available to compose the self-evaluation report. The draft versions of the self-evaluation were discussed internally. At the start of November 2016, NVAO published its self-evaluation report. In January 2017, a trial audit was organised in which the panel spoke with representatives of the Dutch and Flemish Ministries of Education; external *critical friends* acting on behalf of the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR), the KU Leuven Association, the University of Groningen, Motivaction consultancy, and members of the Board, the Executive Board, and the Management Team of NVAO. At the review in March 2017, an open meeting will be organised.

Results of main tasks

In 2016, a total of 496 Dutch and Flemish applications were processed, versus 652 in 2015 (see Table 1). The accreditation applications processed for the Netherlands totalled 260 (2015: 397). The number of initial accreditations (new programmes) rose from 68 in 2015 to 89 in 2016. Flanders saw 141 existing programmes (2015: 169) and three new programmes assessed (2015: 14).

Table 1: Total applications processed in the Netherlands and Flanders as of 31 December

	Final total	The Netherlands		Flanders		
		Existing programmes (accreditation)	Institutional audit	New programmes (initial accreditation)	Existing programmes (accreditation)	New programmes (initial accreditation)
2016	496	260 ¹	3	89 ²	141 ³	3
2015	652	397 ⁴	4	68	169	14
2014	807	646 ⁵	15	60	74	12
2013	801	515	24	50	206	6
2012	578	339	5	55	166	13

The Netherlands

In 2016, the quality of higher education programmes in the Netherlands rose. Nearly all accreditation applications from academic programmes were assessed positively (98 per cent). This positive picture continued with the professional programmes (97 per cent satisfactory).

The number of accreditation applications processed from **existing programmes** last year totalled 260 (2015: 397), see Table 2 for details. The majority of these were assessed as “satisfactory” (over 78 per cent). The proportion of programmes that received a “good” assessment level rose last year from 13 to 18 per cent (47 programmes). No assessment of “excellent” was awarded in the report year.

Among the research universities, the percentage of improvement periods fell from 11 per cent in 2015 to 2 per cent in 2016. The standard of student assessment procedures has improved and the quality of final projects has increased. The proportion of academic programmes assessed as “good” rose from 6 per cent in 2015 to 24 per cent in 2016.

¹ Including 73 Research Master’s programmes

² Including 21 Associate Degrees; 2 Master’s in Education; 1 extra-intensive initial accreditation, and 17 assessment procedures that meet conditions

³ Including 2 after limited validity period

⁴ Including 73 Research Master’s

⁵ Including 12 Research Master’s

At universities of applied sciences, 16 per cent of the programmes received an assessment level of “good” in 2016 (2015: 22 per cent). The proportion of improvement periods fell to 2 per cent (2015: 3 per cent).

Table 2: Total of processed accreditation applications in the Netherlands as of 31-12-2016

	Final total	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Improvement period	Application withdrawn
2016						
Academic higher education						
Publicly funded	83	61 ⁶	19 ⁷	-	2	1
Privately funded	3	2 ⁸	1	-	-	-
Academic higher education overall	86	63	20	-	2	1
Professional higher education						
Publicly funded	160	131 ⁹	27	-	2	-
Privately funded	14	10 ¹⁰	-	-	1	3 ¹¹
Professional higher education overall	174	141	27	-	3	3
Total 2016	260	204	47	-	5	4

The total number of processed applications for **initial accreditation** rose in 2016 to 89 (2015: 68), see Table 3 for details. More conditions were set for initial accreditation in 2016. Three-fourths of new academic programmes immediately received a positive assessment. The remainder (4 programmes) received a “conditionally” positive assessment (accreditation for a limited period, after which the improvements made are assessed). Nearly 80 per cent of the new academic programmes received a “satisfactory” assessment directly. Over half of the new programmes at the universities of applied sciences were assessed positively.

⁶ 27 of which after improvement

⁷ 2 of which after improvement

⁸ 1 of which after improvement

⁹ 8 of which after improvement

¹⁰ 1 of which after improvement

¹¹ 3 of which after improvement

In 2016, three applications for an **institutional audit** were processed. Currently, a total of 35 Dutch higher education institutions possess a positive institutional audit decision; see Table 4 for details. Conditions were set initially for ten institutions. All institutions have now met these conditions.

Five institutions have withdrawn their application. The second round of institutional audit assessments will commence in 2017.

In 2016, five Dutch programmes received a **distinctive feature** from NVAO, i.e., for Sustainable higher education; Certification of Honours education and three times for Internationalisation. With respect to the distinctive (quality) feature of Internationalisation, NVAO has followed the ECA Framework for the Assessment of Quality in Internationalisation since 2016, through which programmes can apply for the European Certificate for the Quality of Internationalisation (CeQuInt).

Table 3: Total processed initial accreditations in the Netherlands as of 31-12-2016

	Final total	Positive	Conditionally positive	Conditions met	Application withdrawn
2016					
Academic higher education					
Publicly funded	16	11 ¹²	4 ¹³	1	-
Privately funded	-	-	-	-	-
Academic higher education overall	16	11	4	1	-
Professional higher education					
Publicly funded	22	8	7	4	3
Privately funded	30	7	6	12	5
Professional higher education overall	52	15	13	16	8
Associate degree					
Publicly funded	17	12	5	-	-
Privately funded	4 ¹⁴	3	-	-	1
Associate degrees overall	21	15	5	-	1
Total 2016	89	41	22	17	9

¹² 1 of which a Master's in Education

¹³ 1 of which a Master's in Education

¹⁴ 1 of which subjected to extra-intensive procedure

Table 4: Total processed institutional audits as of 31-12-2016

	Total	Positive	Conditionally positive	Positive after cond.
Academic higher education				
Publicly funded	14	10		4 ¹⁵
Privately funded	1	-	-	1
Academic higher education overall	15	10	-	5
Professional higher education				
Publicly funded	19	14	-	5
Privately funded	1	1	-	-
Professional higher education overall	20	15	-	5
Total	35	25	-	10

¹⁵ 1 of which receives final decision in January 2017

In addition to the regular accreditation processes, NVAO focused considerable attention in the Netherlands in 2016 on the development of the **Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands 2016** (Framework 2016). The new framework has been optimised within current legislation. It affords programmes and institutions greater freedom, strengthens the position of students and the purpose of quality improvement, and limits the assessment burden. The framework was created after close consultation with the umbrella organisations Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), Flanders Association of University Colleges (VH), and the Platform of Recognised Private Training Institutions (NRTO); the student organisations Dutch National Students Association (ISO) and the Dutch National Union of Students (LSVb); and quality assessment agencies, employers, trade unions, and government bodies. The Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Jet Bussemaker, published the framework on 20 December 2016 in the Government Gazette (stcrt-2016-69458) after its adoption by Dutch Parliament. The framework took effect on 1 January 2017 and contains a transitional arrangement.

In 2016, with the publication of two system-wide analyses of the accreditations of university teacher training programmes and the grade two teacher training programmes, NVAO was able to complete the accreditation round of the **Dutch teacher training programmes** that commenced in 2014. Its findings from 2015 on the accreditations of the teacher training programme for primary education (PABOs) provide a good picture of the quality of all teacher training programmes. In NVAO's view, these programmes make an important contribution to the Teachers Agenda 2013 - 2020 set down by the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Jet Bussemaker.

In March 2016, NVAO published the system-wide analysis of the accreditations of the *university teacher training programmes* (ULOs). In order to boost the knowledge and skills of teachers and thus the quality of education, NVAO presented a joint memorandum, together with the Education Inspectorate, entitled "From the past to the future: the university teacher training programmes" (*Van verleden naar toekomst: de universitaire lerarenopleidingen*) in November 2016. In this memorandum, NVAO and the Education Inspectorate established that the ULOs have different modes of study and programme pathways, and that they are moving forward and will continue to do so. This calls for a tailored approach and attention to the differences between students within the curriculum. Finally, NVAO and the Education Inspectorate also asked that attention be given to strengthening the teaching methods and the continual staff development of the university teacher training programmes.

In November 2016, the system-wide analysis of the accreditations of the *grade two teacher training programmes* was published. A total of 126 professional grade two secondary school teacher training programmes were assessed. In a vast majority of the programmes (120), one or more criteria ("standards") were assessed as "good", while 24 programmes received a final conclusion of "good" (19 per cent). For the period ahead, NVAO recommended that the programmes focus on: 1) further substantiating the specialisations of general education and vocational education; 2) acquiring greater expertise in the area of vocational education; 3) minimising the differences between the quality of work placements at a regular teaching practice school and a "training school"; 4) further developing the research learning pathway; 5) removing any deficiencies in language skills; and 6) jointly monitoring and evaluating the experiences with the

specialisation check and decentralised selection in order to exchange study success factors.

In 2016, NVAO further developed the **additional criteria to assess Research Master's programmes** in close consultation with the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and as a follow-up to the existing directive after the end of the involvement of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) in the assessment of Research Master's programmes.

Flanders

In 2016, NVAO reviewed 141 **existing programmes** in Flanders, 110 of which were academically oriented programmes and 31 of which were professionally oriented programmes. In total, 40 programmes were assessed as "good" and 78 programmes were assessed as "satisfactory" (see Table 5).

Table 5: Total processed accreditation applications in Flanders as of 31-12-2016

	Final total	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Limited validity period
2016					
Academically oriented programmes					
Statutory registered institution	107	1	37	66	3
Registered institution	3	-	-	-	3
Academically oriented programmes overall	110	1	37	66	6
Professionally oriented programmes					
Statutory registered institution	30	-	3	12	15
Registered institution	1	-	-	-	1
Professionally oriented institutions overall	31	-	3	12	16
Total 2016	141	1	40	78	22

The advanced master's programme Master of Science in Public Health provided by the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp received an "excellent" assessment in August 2016. This final conclusion is fairly unique and it means that the quality of the programme is well above the generic quality standard. Only the University of Ghent preceded the Antwerp institute in 2013 with an "excellent" for its joint degree programme European Master of Law and Economics.

Last year a total of 22 existing programmes received an assessment of "**satisfactory with limited validity period**", particularly professionally oriented Bachelor's programmes in nursing. These programmes now take four rather than three years to complete in order to meet the European directives. The expansion of the credit load was coupled with a considerable reform of the curriculum and accreditation was granted with a limited period of validity, in order to be able to keep a close eye on the impact of this reform.

Last year, three applications for **new programmes** were assessed for initial accreditation. All of them were told that they may commence (see Table 6). The number

of applications for initial accreditation is small due to the fact that there is a moratorium in place for university colleges and universities with respect to new programmes.

Table 6: Total processed initial accreditations in Flanders as of 31-12-2016

	Final total	Positive	Application withdrawn
2016			
Academically oriented programmes			
Statutory registered institution	1	1	-
Registered institution			
	2	2	-
Academically oriented programmes overall	3	3	-
Professionally oriented programmes			
Statutory registered institution	-	-	-
Registered institution	-	-	-
Professional oriented programmes overall	-	-	-
Total 2016	3	3	-

In 2016, the first 12 **institutional reviews** took place out of a total of 18 institutional assessments. Since the 2015-2016 academic year, NVAO has assessed the quality at the university colleges and universities in Flanders via an institutional review pilot. This gives institutions the opportunity to demonstrate that they have a highly developed educational policy in place at the institutional level, which enables them to develop the quality of their programmes and to guarantee this quality. Previously, they had to demonstrate the quality of each programme during separate assessment procedures. All Flemish (statutory) registered university colleges and universities are taking part in this pilot review.

NVAO has developed the **evaluating approach** for the institutional review. This approach acknowledges the responsibility that the institutions have taken upon themselves in recent decades with respect to their own educational policy and their efforts to guarantee quality at the programme level. This approach is expressed in a focus on “success factors”, what is going well and why, without turning a blind eye to what can be improved. The context of the institution, the chosen educational policy, and the direction ensuing from it are consistently seen as the points of departure. NVAO has substantiated all the elements of the assessment process in an evaluating manner: from the initiation of the committee members, the organisation of the site visits, and the consistent approach to the final report.

All institutional assessments will be completed by the summer of 2017. NVAO will then publish the decisions and underlying reports, together with a general overview. These assessments constitute a baseline measurement and form the basis for a thorough evaluation of the current quality assurance system. This could pave the way to a new system in 2018 with the goal of launching it effectively in 2020. In the meantime, the accreditation periods of the existing programmes have been extended. The moratorium on new programmes is still in effect.

NVAO keeps interested parties abreast of the newest developments via a monthly newsletter. **SAMENaries** (a play on Dutch word SAMEN = together, and seminar) give involved institutions the chance to share their experiences with institutional reviews with one another and NVAO.

Other activities

In Flanders, NVAO also processed two applications for changing the credit load in 2016 (2015: 2) (in 2017 more applications are expected), five applications for validation of subject-specific educational achievements, and one objection to a NVAO decision. The ruling on this will be made in 2017.

In the Netherlands last year, NVAO gave the go-ahead to 23 applications for the merger of programmes (planning-neutral conversion), and processed one application in the context of the procedure for creating a legal entity for higher education (based on the negative recommendation of the panel, the institution withdrew the application). Three requests were also processed on the basis of the Government Information (Public Access) Act (*Wet openbaarheid van bestuur* - WOB). A decision was taken in one of these cases in the report year against which no objection was lodged. The other two procedures will be completed in 2017.

In 2016, NVAO did not process any objections in the Netherlands within the context of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek* - WHW). One appeal was lodged against a decision of NVAO with the Administrative Judicial Division of the Council of State in the context of the “complete cycle requirement” in the procedure in order to create a legal entity for higher education. The Administrative Judicial Division ruled against NVAO in April 2016. The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science indicated that it would repair the “complete cycle requirement” in question via the Act for the Protection of Names and Degrees in Higher Education (*Wet bescherming namen en graden hoger onderwijs*) (this Act was published at the start of 2017 in the Government Gazette - Stb. 2017-97 and it will take effect by Royal Decree). There were no rulings handed down by other Dutch judicial bodies during the report year.

Finally, NVAO played an active and often guiding role last year in the Netherlands with respect to the new degree titles in higher professional education; the establishment of assessment teams and keeping the assessment schedule up to date; the development of the assessment framework; and the flexibilisation experiment. Attention was also given to the training of chairpersons, secretaries and student members of panels.

International aspects

NVAO is bi-national and collaborates with others internationally. It fulfils its tasks in the context of the European Bologna process. International cooperation provides NVAO the opportunity to exchange knowledge and best practices, to learn from one another's experiences, and to build relationships with international experts.

NVAO participates in **three international networks** of quality assurance organisations in higher education: 1) the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA); 2) the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA); and 3) the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

NVAO provides the ECA secretariat and sits on the ECA board. Vice Chair Ann Verreth joined the ECA board in March 2016. NVAO directors and staff sit on the board and working groups of ECA and ENQA.

NVAO is registered on the **independent** European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

In 2016, NVAO signed the **international cooperation agreements** with the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI); the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA), and the International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE).

The cooperation agreements were concluded in follow-up to earlier agreements with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB); the German Akkreditierungsrat, and the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD). The goal of such agreements is to streamline and combine different accreditation processes in order to make double accreditation possible for the programmes through a joint process and to reduce the administrative workload considerably.

In June 2016, NVAO was able to accredit 18 programmes within the disciplines of business administration, economics, and econometrics offered by the University of Amsterdam (UvA), which were assessed on the basis of the cooperation agreement with AACSB. NVAO would like to enter into more of these international agreements in the coming years, in harmony with the wishes of higher education institutions themselves.

Board members and employees of NVAO attended meetings of international accreditation networks last year. **Work visits** were also made to Dutch and Flemish institutions and fellow organisations in England and Norway.

NVAO received **foreign delegations** in 2016 from Armenia (ANQA, higher education institutions, Ministry of Education); Bhutan (Royal University of Bhutan); China (via Nuffic); Curaçao (Ministry of Education); Denmark (The Accreditation Institution); Germany (Akkreditierungsrat, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich); Israel (Council for Higher Education); Croatia (Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education, Ministry of Education); Mali (Ministry of Education); Norway (NOKUT), and Saudi Arabia (Equivalence Office King Saud Medical City).

NVAO itself organised two **international congresses**. In May 2016, the seventh edition of the Good Practices Workshop (GPW) was held on “Good practices in internationalisation” at Hogeschool VIVES in Kortrijk in cooperation with the Flemish Knowledge Area (Flanders) and EP-Nuffic (the Netherlands). In December 2016, NVAO and ECA organised the annual Winter Seminar in the Kurhaus in Scheveningen focused on the theme of “Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education” for over a hundred national and international participants.

Collaboration with stakeholders

NVAO periodically consults with the Flemish and Dutch Ministers of Education. Twice a year, the NVAO Executive Board participates in the consultation held between the two Ministers (Committee of Ministers). Official consultation is also held with the Dutch and Flemish Ministries of Education.

In Flanders, NVAO has set up a sounding board to confer with the Ministry of Education and Training (*Departement Onderwijs en Vorming*), the Cabinet of the Flemish Minister of Education, the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR), the Council of Flemish University Colleges (VLHORA), and the student organisation VVS (National Union of Students in Flanders) about the development of the Flemish accreditation system and themes that require consultation.

NVAO is an observer in the Learning Outcomes Steering Committee of the Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges (VLUHR). With the Flemish VLUHR-KZ quality assessment agency, NVAO periodically discusses the performance of assessment procedures. NVAO works with the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR); the Council of Flemish University Colleges (VLHORA); the Flemish National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC Vlaanderen); the Flemish Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Scholarships (AHOVOKS); and the Flemish Education Council (VLOR).

At various levels in the Netherlands, NVAO maintains contact with the Dutch and Flemish umbrella organisations Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU); the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (VH); the Platform of Recognised Private Training Institutions (NRTO); the Education Inspectorate; the Education Council; the Expertise and service centre for internationalisation in Dutch education (EP-Nuffic); the Information Centre for Degree Accreditation (IDW); the assessment agencies AeQui, assessment agency for higher education, Certiked, Hobéon Certificering bv, MusiQuE - MusiQuE Quality Enhancement, NQA Netherlands Quality Agency and QANU Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities; the Dutch National Students Association (ISO); and the Dutch National Union of Students (LSVb).

Organisation **NVAO Board and Advisory Council**

Following the departure of Vice Chair Ann Demeulemeester and board member Lucien Bollaert, Ms *lic. A. (Ann) Verreth* and Dr *M.J.J. (Marc) Luwel* were appointed as the new Flemish members of the Board of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands & Flanders (NVAO) as of 1 January 2016 on behalf of the Committee of Ministers and on the recommendation of Hilde Crevits, Vice Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister of Education. Both of them also joined the Executive Board; Ann Verreth as the new Vice Chair and Marc Luwel as a board member. Mr Luwel also served as a member of the Executive Board and Vice Chair of NVAO between 2002 and 2007.

As of 2017, Ms *Claire Tillekaerts* and Messrs *Bruno Bruins*, *Koen Geven* and *Ruddy Doom* are retiring and/or eligible as a member of the Board. Several changes were also made in the Advisory Council in 2016. NVAO would like to thank all board members for their efforts over recent years. In filling the vacancies, consideration will be given to the organisational development of NVAO in 2017.

The Board met monthly in 2016 and the Advisory Council met twice in 2016. The Executive Board of NVAO met each week. The Executive Board also organised meetings on strategic policy subjects in the report year. Members of the Management Team attended these meetings.

Composition of the NVAO Board (as of 31 December 2016)

Anne Flierman (Chair)
Ann Verreth (Vice Chair)
Bruno Bruins
Ruddy Doom
Mia De Schamphelaere
Koen Geven
Marc Luwel (member of Executive Board)
Bart Maes
Paul van Roon
Claire Tillekaerts
Jasper Tuytel
Lieteke van Vucht Tijssen
Paul Zevenbergen (member of Executive Board)

Composition of the NVAO Executive Board (as of 31 December 2016)

Anne Flierman (Chair)
Ann Verreth (Vice Chair)
Marc Luwel
Paul Zevenbergen

Composition of NVAO Advisory Council (listed alphabetically, as of 31 December 2016)

Jarmo Berkhout (Dutch National Union of Students - LSVb)
Pim Breebaart (Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences)
Tom Demeyer (Flanders Social and Economic Council - SERV - employers)
Bart Feys (National Union of Students in Flanders - VVS)
Ton van Haften (Association of Universities in the Netherlands - VSNU)
Harry Martens (Flemish Interuniversity Council - VLIR)
Truus Omta (Platform of Recognised Private Training Institutions - NRTO)
Jan Sinnige (Dutch National Students Association - ISO)
Jan Soons (Flanders Social and Economic Council SERV - employees)
Luc Van de Velde (Council of Flemish University Colleges - VLHORA)

Deputy members

Dorien De Pauw (National Union of Students in Flanders - VVS)
Ann De Schepper (Flemish Interuniversity Council - VLIR)
Hugo Deckers (Flanders Social and Economic Council SERV - employees)
Nele Muys (Flanders Social and Economic Council SERV - employers)
Machteld Verbruggen (Council of Flemish University Colleges - VLHORA)

Organisation

Internal quality assurance

In the area of **internal quality assurance**, NVAO continued its evaluation of the primary work processes involved in accreditation, initial accreditation, and the institutional audit in 2016 following the completion of each application. The evaluation of the Flemish institutional review commenced in 2016. Points for improvement taken from these evaluations are periodically discussed with the staff and Management Team, and are included every six months in an improvement agenda that is followed up by the Management Team.

In the second half of 2016, following a pitch at three research firms, NVAO set up a qualitative study via Motivaction into the image of NVAO among its external stakeholders in the Netherlands and Flanders. It received the final report, "Reputation Study among Stakeholders" (*Reputatieonderzoek onder stakeholders*) at the start of December 2016. The results of the study will be included in the communication plan for 2017-2020.

Communication

In terms of communication, **reporting** took centre stage in 2016, focusing on the completed decision-making; the self-evaluation; the monthly developments around the new higher professional education (hbo) degree titles; the results of the accreditation rounds of the academic and grade two teacher training programmes and the system-wide analyses of these rounds; the expansion of the length of study in nursing programmes in Flanders; the international cooperation agreements; and the developments around the Flemish institutional reviews and the new Dutch assessment framework. In April 2016, information was provided separately on the withdrawal of accreditation from the International Business and Management Studies (IBMS) programme at the Europort Business School by the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science on the recommendation of NVAO. The quality of the programme appeared to be insufficient.

NVAO could also report last year that the 26 Bachelor's and Master's programmes in the Humanities discipline that were granted an improvement period in 2014 had implemented the desired improvements (25 programmes in June 2016 and one programme at the end of the year). For all programmes, the accreditation period could be extended to the regular six years.

In January and July 2016, NVAO published its **(semi-)annual report** on the progress of the applications at the institutional and programme levels (existing and new programmes). In March 2016, the Flemish student magazine *Veto* published an interview with NVAO Vice Chair Ann Verreth and board member Marc Luwel concerning the quality of higher education and the new institutional reviews ("NVAO on Flemish higher education: 'Simply put, we are good'"). In May 2016, the interview "More space for individual quality" with NVAO Chair Anne Flierman was published on the higher education platform *ScienceGuide*.

NVAO was honoured in the report year to welcome **His Majesty King Philippe of the Belgians** on 29 November 2016 as a part of the three-day state visit of the Belgian royal couple to the Netherlands. His Majesty the King was accompanied by the Minister-President of Flanders, Geert Bourgeois, and the Minister-President of the German-speaking Community in Belgium, Oliver Paasch. After a word of welcome from NVAO Chair Anne Flierman and a speech by Minister-President Bourgeois, Mr Freddy Coignoul, CoQER president and honorary vice rector of the University of Liege, Ms Yoneko Nurtantio, project manager at AEQES, and Anne Flierman presented the recent developments in the area of quality assurance within higher education and the activities of their own accreditation organisation in the French-language Community of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Flanders. Prior to the royal visit, a Flemish-Dutch academic delegation discussed the performance agreements and the guarantee for the quality of higher education based on a contribution from Prof. Dr Arie Nieuwenhuijzen Kruseman. The discussion was led by Flemish journalist Guy Tegenbos.

In February 2016, the second **SAMENarie** was organised for the Flemish contact persons in the context of the institutional reviews. Discussions were held with participants and the student organisation National Union of Students in Flanders (VVS) on what the evaluating approach entails for the site visit and the reporting. Round table discussions explored the impact of the evaluating approach within the institutions, and a speed date session reviewed how the institutions are planning to provide public information concerning their quality in 2017.

The Dutch quality assurance employees and secretaries were updated in March 2016 in **three regional meetings** about the new assessment framework and the progress surrounding the development of the accreditation system.

In July 2016, NVAO organised a *meet & greet* for its relations at its office in The Hague.

Computerisation

In the area of computerisation in 2016, in addition to normal IT management, the Dutch and English language search engines of the NVAO databank were upgraded. A start was made on adapting the internal databank and workflow systems to the new Dutch framework, along with the optimisation of the work processes.

In the NVAO databank, the accreditation data of the Dutch and Flemish institutions and programmes are enriched with data from the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO) and the Higher Education Register (HOR).

HRM

With the **Staff Representatives**, NVAO held bi-monthly consultations in which the organisation development was an important point on the agenda. The staff representatives provided advice to the employer about the HRM policy envisaged, the new organisation structure, and the vacancies for the managing directors in the Netherlands and Flanders, and the department head in the Netherlands.

In April 2016, drs. R. Hageman took up office as a team leader and member of the Management Team.

Composition of the Management Team (as of 31 December 2016)

Rudy Derdelinckx (Managing Director)
René Hageman (team leader for policy)
Nancy Van San (team leader for planning)
Adri Wildeboer (head of operations ad interim)

In 2016 **46 people were on staff** at NVAO (2015: 43) (see Table 7). In the report year, one Flemish and four Dutch policy advisors were recruited to succeed departing staff. A head of operations/HRM coordinator was recruited on an ad interim basis. In the report year, a small group of fixed temporary and stand-by workers were again used as backups for operations, catering/logistics, and IT. At the end of the year, a recruitment procedure was launched for two managing directors for the Netherlands and Flanders, to take up office at the beginning of 2017.

The limited number of staff available to process applications and handle other projects involved in the Flemish and Dutch systems are faced with a heavy workload. This workload is not expected to lessen in the coming years, considering the range of tasks and the requirements.

Table 7: FTEs per position, as of 31 December 2016 (excl. administration and temps)

Position	FTE employed 2016	FTE seconded 2016	Total 2016	FTE employed 2015	FTE seconded 2015	Total 2015
Executive Board						
Board	2.0	2.0	4.0	3.0	-	3.0
			4.0			3.0
Management Team						
Management	-	1.0	1.0	-	1.0	1.0
Head of operations	-	1.0	1.0	1.0	-	1.0

Team leaders	2.0	-	2.0	1.0	-	1.0
			4.0			3.0
Staff						
Communication	1.1	-	1.1	2.1	-	2.1
Lawyer	0.8	-	0.8	0.8	-	0.8
			1.9			2.9
Policy advisors						
Policy advisors	14.8	2.0	16.8	13.7	1.0	14.7
International policy advisors	2.2	1.0	3.2	1.2	1.0	2.2
			20.0			17.9
Operations and support						
Finance	2.1	-	2.1	2.1	-	2.1
Human Resources	1.0	-	1.0	1.0	-	1.0
Support	8.8	-	8.8	9.5	-	9.5
IT	2.1	-	2.1	2.0	-	2.0
Catering and logistics	2.2	-	2.2	1.1	-	1.1
			16.2			15.7
Total	39.1	7.0	46.1	39.5	3.0	42.5

CDHO - CMMBO

The NVAO building in The Hague is also home to the Committee for Effective Higher Education (CDHO) and the Committee for Macro Efficiency in Vocational Training (CMMBO) (see Table 8). These committees operate independently. NVAO bears responsibility for the logistics, facilities, and staffing of the committees. In 2016 a part-time employee was recruited for CDHO, partly to replace an employee on maternity leave.

Table 8: CDHO and CMMBO FTEs per position, as of 31 December

Position	FTE employed 2016	FTE seconded 2016	Total 2016	FTE employed 2015	FTE seconded 2015	Total 2015
CDHO	3.75	-	3.75	3.75	-	3.75
CMMBO	2.46	-	2.46	-	1.0	1.0
Total	6.21	-	6.21	3.75	1.0	4.75

Abbreviations

AHOVOKS	Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs, Kwalificaties en Studietoelagen <i>(Flemish Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Scholarships)</i>
CeQuInt	Certificate for the Quality of Internationalisation
CDHO	Commissie Doelmatigheid Hoger Onderwijs <i>(Committee for Effective Higher Education)</i>
CMMBO	Commissie Doelmatigheid MBO <i>(Committee for Macro-Efficiency in Vocational Training)</i>
CROHO	Centraal Register Opleidingen Hoger Onderwijs <i>(Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes)</i>
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EP-Nuffic	Expertise- en dienstencentrum voor internationalisering in het Nederlandse onderwijs <i>(Expertise and service centre for internationalisation in Dutch education)</i>
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
HOR	Hogeronderwijsregister <i>(Higher Education Register)</i>
IDW	Informatiecentrum Diplomawaardering <i>(Information Centre for Degree Accreditation)</i>
Inspectie	Inspectie van het Onderwijs <i>(Education Inspectorate)</i>
INQA AHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
ISO	Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg <i>(Dutch National Students Association)</i>
KNAW	Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie voor Wetenschappen <i>(Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences)</i>
LSVb	Landelijke Studenten Vakbond <i>(Dutch National Union of Students)</i>
NARIC	NARIC Vlaanderen <i>(Flanders National Academic Recognition Information Centre)</i>
NRTO	Nederlandse Raad voor Training en Opleiding <i>(Platform of Recognised Private Training Institutions)</i>
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie <i>(Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands & Flanders)</i>
PV	Personeelsvertegenwoordiging NVAO <i>(NVAO Staff Representation)</i>
SERV	Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen <i>(Flanders Social and Economic Council)</i>
VH	Vereniging Hogescholen <i>(Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences)</i>
VLHORA	Vlaamse Hogescholenraad <i>(Council of Flemish University Colleges)</i>
VLIR	Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad <i>(Flemish Interuniversity Council)</i>

VLOR	Vlaamse Onderwijsraad <i>(Flemish Education Council)</i>
VLUHR	Vlaamse Universiteiten en Hogescholen Raad <i>(Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges)</i>
VLUHR-KZ	Flemish quality assessment agency
VSNU	Vereniging van Universiteiten <i>(Association of Universities in the Netherlands)</i>
VVS	Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten <i>(National Union of Students in Flanders)</i>
WHW	Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek <i>(Dutch Higher Education and Research Act)</i>
WNT	Wet Normering topfunctionarissen publieke en semipublieke sector <i>(Act on standardisation of salaries of top officials in the public and semi-public sectors)</i>

NVAO

The carefully developed and independent assessment of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands & Flanders (NVAO) strengthens the internal quality culture of higher education institutions, and provides programmes with the accreditation quality mark necessary to participate in higher education. It also provides students with a recognised degree. NVAO is a bi-national organisation and also engages in international collaboration.

NVAO. Trusting in quality.

Acknowledgements**New Ways
NVAO Annual Report 2016**

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