

NVAO guideline for the assessment of final projects by panels during the external assessment procedures for accreditation and (if applicable) initial accreditation

The starting point is that a panel is in the best possible control of the selection and assessment of final projects. The panel respects the following guiding principles.

Beforehand

Every programme is expected to have the students complete a final project. This project does not always have the character of a thesis or a final research project in the traditional sense. It is also possible that such a final project provides less of an indication of the level of competence achieved than another meaningful assessment of competence by the programme would (e.g., a portfolio).

If this is the case, then the panel should explicitly report this and clearly substantiate which products it has used as a basis to establish the level of competence achieved in the programme. This situation could arise, for example, in Arts programmes, but as well as in other types of programmes.

This guideline intends to provide a clear understanding about which there can be no misinterpretation. Panel can nevertheless exercise some degree of freedom and act according to its own estimation, though always within the spirit of this guideline.

1. *List of graduates*

The panel will ask the programme to provide a full list of graduates for the last two completed academic years. This list should, as a minimum, contain: the name of the student, the student number, the graduation date, the mode of study and the location of the programme, the results achieved in the final study phase (assessment mark given for final project, mark for oral defence, final mark), the presence of completed and signed assessment forms.

2. *Selection*

Well before the external assessment, the panel should select, randomly and differentiated by marks achieved, 15 students from the largest mode of study in the programme based on the list named under point 1. Additionally, the panel will select a number of students from other modes of study within the programme, in proportion to the size of such other modes vis-à-vis the largest mode of study. The panel will ensure that the locations of each mode of study are equally represented in the sampling based on their size. The differentiation will primarily consist of including final projects with low (5.5 – 6.5), medium (7 - 8) and high (8.5 and higher) marks in the sampling. This will give the panel insight into the standards used by the examiners.

3. *Unsatisfactory assessment*

If the percentage of final projects that are assessed as unsatisfactory by the panel is higher than 10 per cent, the panel will expand the sampling to 25. The content of final projects that earn an unsatisfactory mark from the panel will be discussed with the assessors/examiners during the external assessment.

4. *List of final projects*

The panel report will contain a list of assessed final projects listed by student number. The name of the student and the title of the final project will not be included.

The following additions provide greater clarity concerning the manner in which the panel could proceed.

1. *Numbers*
If the number of graduates in the last two academic years totals fewer than 30, the panel can request a list containing the last 30 graduates or, if the total number of graduates is fewer than 30, a list of all graduates. Apart from this, the provisions under point 1 apply.
2. *Clusters*
The external assessment can consist of the assessment of several (small) programmes at the same time, such as the teacher training programmes in professional higher education (hbo) and academic higher education (wo) or a number of Bachelor's and Master's programmes (academic orientation) within a single discipline. In this case, the panel can expand the size of the selection, as it sees fit, from 15 students to a size that enables the panel to come to an adequate assessment of the level achieved by each separate programme. For each programme (each individual CROHO number), the panel should in any case assess 4 final projects.
3. *Final project*
For each student selected, the panel will examine the final project, including the completed and signed assessment forms. These documents will be supplied by the programme.
4. *Requirements*
During the preparatory meeting or in some other manner, the panel will reach agreement among themselves about the requirements that apply to a final project in the relevant type of programme. A good exercise would be to discuss within the panel the content of an (already) requested final project.
5. *Panel assessment*
Prior to the site visit¹, each final project will first be assessed by one panel member who is a subject-specific expert prior to the external assessment. This panel member will record his/her provisional assessment on an assessment form. Should any doubt arise concerning this assessment, a second panel member will be called upon. The panel's judgement is reached in a collaborative dialogue. This judgement will be recorded by the student number.
6. *Report of (un)satisfactory assessment*
The panel will report on the number of final projects that it has assessed as unsatisfactory and substantiates why it has eventually come to a satisfactory or unsatisfactory assessment regarding the level achieved by the programme.

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¹ The logistical drawback of sending theses can be overcome by working with digital versions that are sent by e-mail. NVAO has positive experiences with this option.