Modification of study load

Universities and university colleges may expand existing master's programmes from 60 to 90 or 120 credits, or reduce their study load from 90 or 120 credits to 60 or 90 credits. To this end, they must apply to the Flemish Government, that subsequently requests advice from NVAO.

GENERAL INFO

Universities and university colleges may submit an application to the Flemish Government to modify the study load of an existing master's programme. Such modification may involve an expansion from 60 to 90 or 120 credits, or a reduction from 90 or 120 credits to 60 or 90 credits. Depending on the situation, such applications may be submitted for a professional master's programme carrying 60 or 90 credits, or a master's programme carrying 90 or 120 credits comprising a professional component carrying 60 or 90 credits respectively, and a 30-credit differentiation focused on the acquisition of specific, professionally oriented competences other than those of teacher or an intensive professional specialisation.

The study load and the structure of programmes carrying the same qualification are set down collectively. The Flemish Council of Universities and University Colleges (VLUHR) coordinates the application and forwards it to the Flemish Government. The Flemish Government submits the application to NVAO for advice. NVAO bases its advice on an assessment by a panel of independent experts. Once the assessment report by the panel has been endorsed, NVAO will set down its advice (either positive or negative) regarding whether the application submitted satisfies the justification criteria as set out in the operational framework for the modification of study loads:

- Similar international programmes carry a different study load;
- Modification is tailored to attainment of the learning outcomes;
- Modification is geared to the labour market;*
- Capacity criterion: the institution has demonstrated that its available capacity is sufficient for ensuring the educational quality of the programme following modification of its study load.*

*Applicable to study load expansion only

STEPS

1

INFORMATION DOSSIER

The Information Dossier enables the panel to formulate its advice regarding the institution's reasons for modifying the study load carried by the p...

The Information Dossier enables the panel to formulate its advice regarding the institution's reasons for modifying the study load carried by the programme. The Information Dossier must clearly reflect the position of students regarding the modification applied for. The Information Dossier is a self-contained document. With a view to the international nature of the assessment, the dossier must be drawn up in English.

2

APPLICATION TO THE FLEMISH GOVERNMENT

By no later than 30 April

The VLUHR coordinates the application and is responsible for its submission to the Flemish Government, by no later than 30 April. Applications must...

The VLUHR coordinates the application and is responsible for its submission to the Flemish Government, by no later than 30 April. Applications must be prepared and drawn up collectively by all the Institutions providing the programme concerned. When drawing up its application dossier, the institutions ask their students for a substantiated viewpoint, in order to thus ensure wide support of the application.

3

REQUEST TO NVAO FOR ADVICE

The assessment procedure commences on the day on which NVAO receives a request for advice from the Flemish Government. The application must be subm...
The assessment procedure commences on the day on which NVAO receives a request for advice from the Flemish Government. The application must be submitted via the digital application form (see tab Submission of Applications); it comprises an application letter signed by the board(s) of the institution(s), the Information Dossier, and the required documents. As Dutch is the administrative language, the application letter and some of the required documents (as indicated in the operational framework) must be drawn up in Dutch. Applications may be withdrawn at any time.

4

VERIFICATION OF ADMISSIBILITY OF THE APPLICATION

Notification regarding admissibility no later than 15 calendar days after receipt of the application

NVAO will check the admissibility of the application. If the application is inadmissible, the institution will be informed accordingly within a tim...
NVAO will check the admissibility of the application. If the application is inadmissible, the institution will be informed accordingly within a timeframe of 15 calendar days.

5

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The quality assurance system of Flanders revolves around peer review. An assessment panel comprises a minimum of four experts, among whom are at le...
The quality assurance system of Flanders revolves around peer review. An assessment panel comprises a minimum of four experts, among whom are at least three internationally authoritative experts from the discipline and the professional field, and a student. It is assisted by an NVAO process coordinator who also serves as a secretary to the panel. The process coordinator does not sit on the panel. In order to warrant an objective and fair assessment, the panel must be able to work independently of the programme. This means that over the five years prior to the appointment of the panel, its members must not have had any connections or ties with the institutions that are providing the programme. All the panel members and the process coordinator must sign a code of deontology.

6

ASSESSMENT AND ASSESSMENT REPORT

5 months after receipt of the request for advice

Applications are assessed on a desk-research basis. Only in exceptional cases can a panel set up an explanatory interview. The panel draws up an ad...
Applications are assessed on a desk-research basis. Only in exceptional cases can a panel set up an explanatory interview. The panel draws up an advisory report in which it substantiates its positive or negative recommendation regarding the application, based on the justification criteria set out in the operational framework. Its recommendation is based on the assessment scale and assessment rules contained in the framework. On the basis of this report, NVAO advises the Flemish Government regarding the application.

RATES

Once the application has been found admissible, the institution will receive a request for full payment of the cost price of the advice. The fee applicable to this procedure is fixed by the Education Minister of Flanders. It covers the costs entailed in the work performed by the panel members (remuneration), which are paid by NVAO.

The rate for advice regarding the modification of study loads is EUR 2500.

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