Establishment of a research master's programme

Universities and university colleges may organise a research master's programme with a workload of 120 credits. This involves an expansion of an existing 60-credit master's programme within the same discipline. To set up such a programme, institutions 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 for the organisation of a research master's programme carrying 120 credits. This involves an expansion of an existing 60-credit master's programme within the same discipline. A research master's programme is provided either in addition to the original 60-credit master's programme, or in addition to an extensive master's programme carrying 90 or 120 credits.

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 organisation of research master's programmes:

- Expected transfer rate to a research career;
- Alignment with the research focus areas of the institution;
- Intended exit level ties in with what is customary from an international perspective;
- Capacity criterion: the institution has demonstrated that its available capacity is sufficient for ensuring the educational quality of the research master's programme.

The institution must demonstrate what its aims are with respect to the research master's programme, how it intends to realise such aims, and how it will monitor such realisation. It must also indicate how it will involve doctoral trajectories in the programme.

STEPS

1

INFORMATION FILE

The information file enables the panel to formulate its advice regarding the institution's reasons for organising a research master's programme. Th...
The information file enables the panel to formulate its advice regarding the institution's reasons for organising a research master's programme. The information file must clearly reflect the position of students regarding the organisation of a research master's programme. The information file 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. Institutions inte...
The VLUHR coordinates the application and is responsible for its submission to the Flemish Government, by no later than 30 April. Institutions intending to provide a jointly organised research master's programme must submit a joint application. When drawing up its application dossier, the institution asks its 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; it comprises an application letter signed by the board(s) of the institution(s), the information file, 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 fifteen calendar days.

5

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

An assessment panel comprises a minimum of four experts, among whom are at least three internationally authoritative experts from the discipline an...
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. 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 institution that is 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 organisation of a research master's programme is EUR 2500.

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