

# Special feature sustainable higher education

Dutch higher education programmes can present itself in the field of sustainability by applying for a special feature. A panel of experts will review the special characteristic independently or during the assessment of an existing or new programme. NVAO decides whether or not award the special feature.

## GENERAL INFO

The assessment of the special feature sustainable higher education gives programmes the possibility to present themselves national and international in the field of sustainability. A programme can request this special feature in two ways:

1. based on an assessment that follows the guidelines of the “Nadere uitwerking Bijzondere kenmerken” of NVAO, see “Special features General”
2. based on a label, such as the [SHE assessment framework](#) with at least three stars

In both cases, a panel of independent experts will review the special feature during the regular assessment of an existing or a new programme or at a different time. A panel of independent experts. When NVAO decides positive on granting a particular feature, the attribute will be included in the accreditation decision. When the programme wants to keep the special feature, the feature must be reviewed at the next visitation.

## STEPS

1

### SELF-EVALUATION FILE

In the self-evaluation file the institution describes in what way the programme meets the criteria of the applicable assessment framework for the s...

In the self-evaluation file the institution describes in what way the programme meets the criteria of the applicable assessment framework for the special feature. The file follows the guidelines of the same framework. The application can be combined with the accreditation procedure for an existing or a new programme.

2

### PANEL COMPOSITION

A panel of independent experts will review the application for the special feature. In case of a combination with the assessment of a new programme...

A panel of independent experts will review the application for the special feature. In case of a combination with the assessment of a new programme NVAO compose the panel. The programme itself compose the panel in case of combination with the assessment of an existing programme. The panel must have sufficient expertise with respect to the subject of the special feature.

3

### SITE VISIT

Part of the assessment of a special feature is a site visit. During this visit the panel speaks with the various parties involved in the programme....

Part of the assessment of a special feature is a site visit. During this visit the panel speaks with the various parties involved in the programme. Panel and programme make agreements about the program of the site visit, in accordance with the general assessment framework of NVAO.

## 4

### JUDGEMENT

The panel expresses a judgment on all criteria for the special feature, in accordance with the relevant framework for the special feature. The panel...

The panel expresses a judgment on all criteria for the special feature, in accordance with the relevant framework for the special feature. The panel substantiates the judgement in an advisory report. When the assessment of a special feature is combined with the accreditation procedure of an existing or new programme, the panel adds both judgements into a single advisory report

## 5

### APPLICATION AND DECISION MAKING NVAO

The programme submit an application to NVAO for the assessment of the special feature, including the advisory report in case of the assessment of a...

The programme submit an application to NVAO for the assessment of the special feature, including the advisory report in case of the assessment of a existing programme. Then NVAO decides on whether or not granting of the special feature. NVAO publishes its decision and the advisory report of the panel. The institution may object to the decision of NVAO.

## RATES

NVAO charges no fee for the assessment of a special feature in combination with a regular assessment of an existing or a new programme. The rate for a separate assessment of a special feature is described on the relevant pages of the website of NVAO. The rate in 2025 for extending a special feature is EUR 1.000.

## FAQ

### Does an institutional audit impact the assessment procedure for distinctive features?

Whether or not an institution holds a positive institutional audit decision is irrelevant to the assessment of a distinctive feature. The panel observes the criteria and guidelines applicable to the specific distinctive feature for which the programme intends to apply.

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