

SPECIAL FEATURES GENERAL

Dutch higher education programmes can present itself 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 on whether or not granting the attribute.

GENERAL INFO

The assessment of special features on a programme level is included in the quality assurance system, as these can contribute to the national and international profile of higher education programmes. Special features offer programmes the ability to present themselves on aspects that are not directly related to the level of programme itself, but, for example, have to do with the orientation, specific objectives or with the residential character of the programme.

Specific special features may be granted for:

- sustainable higher education ([SHE assessment framework](#), Hobéon)
- internationalization (CeQuInt)
- small-scale and intensive education
- entrepreneurship

For these procedures are specific frameworks drawn up by NVAO (small-scale and intensive education, entrepreneurship) or by external parties. In addition, programmes itself can provide a special feature. In that case, the panel uses the “Nadere uitwerking Bijzondere kenmerken” of NVAO. NVAO determines whether the granting of the special feature falls within its competencies.

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. 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

INFORM NVAO

Prior to the assessment of a particular feature the institution can request a ruling if the granting of the special feature falls within the compet...

Prior to the assessment of a particular feature the institution can request a ruling if the granting of the special feature falls within the competencies of NVAO. This is not necessary for the special features entrepreneurship; internationalisation (CeQuInt); small-scale and intensive education and sustainability in higher education.

2

SELF-EVALUATION FILE

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

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

3

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.

4

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.

5

JUDGEMENT

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

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.

6

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

In 2026, the NVAO does not charge any additional costs for the extension of a distinctive feature.

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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