



NVAO • NETHERLANDS

**PRACTICE-BASED ASSESSMENT:  
DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF “SMALL-  
SCALE AND INTENSIVE EDUCATION”  
GUIDELINES**





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GUIDELINES





These guidelines describe the procedure for the practice-based assessment relating to the “Small-scale and intensive education” distinctive feature.

## Guidelines for practice-based assessment: distinctive feature of “Small-scale and intensive education”

### Name of the procedure

Distinctive feature

### Applicable to

Distinctive feature of “Small-scale and intensive education”

### Relating to

Assessment framework for the Dutch higher education accreditation system 2014 (Government Gazette 2014 no. 36791)

Assessment framework for the Distinctive feature of “Small-scale and intensive education” 2011 (Government Gazette 2012 no. 4962)

Guidelines to the assessment framework for the small-scale and intensive education distinctive feature 2012

### Version

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### Expiry date

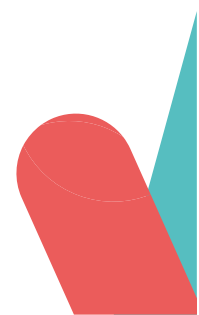
N.A.

### History

N.A.

### Assessment fee

[nvaio.net/nederland/tarieven](http://nvaio.net/nederland/tarieven)





## Introduction

Programmes or tracks that have been granted permission by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science to select students and impose higher statutory tuition fees must have a practice-based assessment conducted within six years after such permission has been granted. This assessment concerns the realisation of the ambitions set out in the original application. These guidelines provide information regarding the procedure that NVAO enforces with respect to the practice-based assessment.

### Points of departure

The framework pertaining to the distinctive feature<sup>1</sup> sets out the following regarding the assessment:

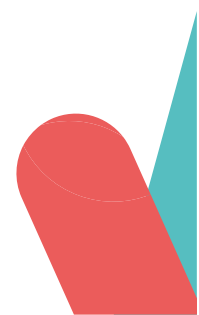
“The Minister will only grant approval based on a proposal of the institution and this approval is valid for an indefinite period of time. The advice of NVAO within the framework of this approval procedure is based on the proposal and not on previous experiences. For that reason, the institution should allow NVAO, on a one-off basis, to assess whether or not the ambitions (on which approval is to a large degree based) have been met (practice-based assessment by NVAO).

In principle, the practice-based assessment should be conducted six years after approval is granted. Important aspects of the practice-based assessment include, for example, the quality of graduates and the success rate of the programme, which are elements that cannot be assessed within the framework of the approval procedure. In principle, the timeframe for conducting such an assessment is tied to the duration of the accreditation period, i.e., six years.

After six years have elapsed, the assumption is that the institution has had time to realise its envisaged ambitions for which the approval was granted. The practice-based assessment can, however, take place earlier, provided the institution is able to demonstrate that it has realised its intended ambitions.”

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<sup>1</sup> Distinctive feature of “Small-scale and intensive education” (4 November 2011)

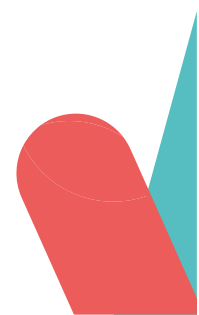






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# 1 Procedure

## 1.1 Application

The institution must explicitly apply for a practice-based assessment to NVAO. NVAO holds the view that, wherever possible, practice-based assessments must coincide with assessments conducted in the purview of accreditation. In its accreditation application, the institution must state that it is applying for a practice-based assessment as referred to in Article 6.7c of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) and additionally seeks re-granting of the distinctive feature of Small-scale and intensive education.

In the event that the practice-based assessment cannot be conducted within the context of an external assessment procedure, the institution must submit an application for separate assessment to NVAO at least eight months before expiry of the six-year term for the practice-based assessment. NVAO will then convene a panel to conduct the practice-based assessment. NVAO will charge the costs involved to the institution.

## 1.2 Panel composition

In its application for approval of the panel composition, the institution must indicate that the assessment involves the extension of the distinctive feature and a practice-based assessment. For practice-based assessments within the context of an external assessment procedure, at least one of the panel members must command specific expertise regarding small-scale and intensive education. The specific expertise of the panel member concerned must have been gained by way of an NVAO training or through experience with the assessment of an application for this distinctive feature in the recent past (less than two years ago). In its panel application, the institution must explain the reasons why it considers a proposed candidate suitable as a panel member.

## 1.3 Assessment

The practice-based assessment covers all the standards of the framework pertaining to the distinctive feature, including the realisation of matters that have been assessed on an ex ante basis in the initial assessment: the quality of the graduates, the broadening achieved, the success rates, and the ambitions of the programme or track. All the standards of the framework must be scored as “satisfactory” to warrant a final conclusion of “positive” by the panel.

With respect to standard H (Achieved learning outcomes), it is up to the programme or track to substantiate, in its self-evaluation, how it calculates its success rates and on what grounds it considers its success rates higher than those of other relevant programmes. The panel assesses this aspect on the basis of the information provided by the programme to this end.

When a distinctive feature is first granted on the basis of ambitions regarding small-scale and intensive education, the panel may formulate points for attention to be considered in the practice-based assessment. Such points for attention are adopted by NVAO and listed in its decision. NVAO expects that such matters are manifestly assessed in the advisory report drawn up by the panel.

## 1.4 Judgements and assessment rules

The practice-based assessment assumes that a programme or track has had a maximum of six years to work on achieving its ambitions with respect to small-scale and intensive education, including the above-average success rates and high level of the learning outcomes that this will generate.



The result of the practice-based assessment will be positive if all the conditions for small-scale and intensive education are in place, and the achieved learning outcomes are, as a minimum, in keeping with the expectations.

Based on this expectation, the following judgements and assessment rules apply to the practice-based assessment. The panel will score each criterion in terms of “meets the standard” or “does not meet the standard”. In addition, the panel will provide a final conclusion of “positive” or “negative”, which is defined as:

- Positive: all the criteria are scored as “meets the standard”;
- Negative: one or more of the criteria are scored as “does not meet the standard”.

On account of the serious impact that withdrawal of the distinctive feature may have, NVAO considers an opportunity for improvement reasonable. Such opportunity will only be granted if Standard H (Achieved learning outcomes) has been assessed as satisfactory and no more than two other standards have been scored as “does not meet the standard”. Furthermore, the panel must indicate that a positive final conclusion would be feasible within two years.

## 1.5 Reporting

The practice-based assessment within the context of an accreditation assessment is reported in a separate chapter in the assessment report. In this chapter, the panel gives a judgement regarding all the applicable standards, substantiated with findings and considerations, and a final conclusion. This conclusion also pertains to the re-granting of the distinctive feature. If the practice-based assessment is not included in an external assessment procedure, the findings must be set down in a separate report. Such a report must also contain a summary totalling some 500 words that is suitable for a wide range of readers.

As the result of the practice-based assessment may have serious consequences for a programme, the judgements awarded to the standards must be substantiated in a clear and convincing manner. NVAO sets stringent requirements in this regard. In its judgements of all the standards, the panel has room to indicate options for development and improvement. The panel is free to differentiate its judgements regarding the standards, including the one relating to the achieved learning outcomes, and state points for development along with positive elements. The judgement is based on a comparative assessment of the two aspects.

## 1.6 Decision-making

Following a positive final conclusion regarding a practice-based assessment within the context of an accreditation assessment, the NVAO decision will encompass the extension of the distinctive feature granted and a recommendation to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science regarding the continuation of the Minister’s approval pertaining to pre-selection and the imposition of higher statutory tuition fees.

Upon a negative final conclusion regarding a practice-based assessment, in which criterion H has been scored as “meets the standard” but one or two other criteria have been scored as “does not meet the standard”, and the panel indicates that a positive assessment (satisfactory score on all the standards) would be feasible within two years, NVAO will offer the programme or the track the option of having those standards scored as unsatisfactory re-assessed within two years. To this end, NVAO will extend the award of the distinctive feature. The programme or track must submit a report on the reassessment to NVAO. NVAO only allows a single reassessment.

Upon a negative final conclusion regarding the practice-based assessment without the possibility of a reassessment, NVAO will withdraw the distinctive feature and recommend that the Minister of Education, Culture and Science withdraw his permission for pre-entry selection and the imposition of higher statutory tuition fees.

Pursuant to the Dutch General Administrative Law Act, NVAO decisions are open to internal and external appeals. More information is provided in the Appeals Procedure Regulations AwB NVAO on the NVAO website ([www.nvao.net](http://www.nvao.net)).





## NVAO

The carefully developed and independent assessments of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands & Flanders (NVAO) strengthen the internal quality culture of higher education institutions. The assessments conducted by NVAO constitute the basis for recognition of higher education programmes and the conferral of worthy degrees. NVAO is a bi-national organisation and engages in international collaboration.

*NVAO. Confidence in quality.*



## Colofon

Practice-based assessment:  
Distinctive feature of “small-scale and intensive  
education”  
*Guidelines*

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