



NVAO O NETHERLANDS

PROTOCOL FOR EXTENSION OF REGULAR STUDY LOAD

MARCH 2022



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1 Background

Effective from 1 September 2021, the regulations of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (hereinafter: WHW) regarding the study load of programmes have been amended by the Varia Act.

Section 7.5 of the WHW determines the regular study load for associate degree programmes, bachelor's programmes and master's programmes at Dutch universities of applied sciences (professional orientation) and research universities (academic orientation). Sections 7.5a up to and including 7.5d of the WHW provide for exceptions to the regular study load of programmes.

In Section 7.5c of the WHW, it is stipulated that an extension of the regular study load can be requested from the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science. A higher education institution's request to this end must be accompanied by a recommendation from the NVAO. This protocol explains the criteria NVAO applies to formulate its recommendation. It also provides an overview of all provisions concerning the study load for study programmes, including special study load.

2 Scope of the protocol

Requests can be submitted for the following programmes:

Professional orientation:

- professional master's programmes with a study load of 120 credits;
- joint professional master's programme as referred to in Section 7.3c of the WHW if the programme is provided in collaboration with an institution abroad, for a study load of 90 credits.

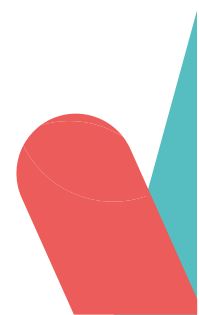
Academic orientation:

- academic bachelor's programmes for a study load of more than 180 credits but no more than 240 credits;
- academic master's programmes with a study load of 120 credits;
- academic master's programmes that are partially oriented towards religious or philosophical professions with a study load of 180 credits;
- joint academic master's programme as referred to in Section 7.3c of the WHW if the programme is provided in collaboration with an institution abroad, for a study load of 90 credits;
- academic master's programme leading to a teaching qualification in secondary school subjects, for a study load of at least 120 credits and no more than 180 credits. The board of the institution determines the study load of the programme within that range.

3 Criteria for extension of regular study load

When requesting an extension of the regular study load, one of the following criteria must be met:

- is the increased study load necessary to achieve the desired final level in an international perspective? (*international*) Or



- is the increased study load necessary to achieve the final level set by the professional field? (*professional field*¹)

4 Process NVAO recommendation

The extension of the regular study load can only be requested concurrently with an initial accreditation of a programme or an application for accreditation of an existing programme.

When making the request, the onus is on the institution to demonstrate that either of the above criteria has been satisfied. As there is no further elaboration of the criteria, it is up to the institution to convince the panel, in the application and during the site visit, that there is a necessity for an increased study load. The panel takes the criteria into account when assessing the programme. In the report, the panel must explicitly recommend an increased study load based on either or both of these criteria.

If NVAO is of the opinion that a programme meets either or both criteria, it will include a positive recommendation in the accreditation decision.

Transitional arrangement (interim request):

An interim request is only possible for master's programmes (professional orientation) of more than 60 credits that were accredited before 1 September 2021. In the case of an interim request (separate from an accreditation request), the responsibility for demonstrating that one of the above criteria has been met lies with the institution. To this end, the competent authority of the institution submits an application with a report in which a panel gives its opinion on the extension of the study load on the basis of the criteria mentioned in this protocol. The institution submits the composition of the panel to the NVAO prior to the assessment. On the basis of this report, NVAO issues a recommendation on extension of the study load and sends this to the institution.

5 Follow-up

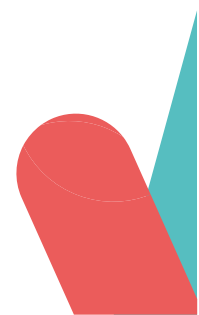
The institution can only submit a request for extension of study load to the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science on the basis of a recommendation from NVAO. The board of the institution should send a written request to the following address:

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
Attn. HO&S Directorate
Postbus 16375
2500 BJ Den Haag

6 Entry into force of the protocol

This protocol comes into force with retroactive effect as of 1 September 2021.

¹ The Explanatory Memorandum (Parliamentary Papers II, 2020-2021, 35582, no. 3) refers to professional requirements.



Appendix: Other provisions on study load

In addition to the request for extension of regular study load, other provisions on study load are laid down in the law. An overview of these provisions is provided below.

- Regular study load determined under Section 7.5 of the WHW

In the Act, the regular study load is determined as follows:

a. academic bachelor's programme	180 credits
b. academic master's programme	60 credits
c. professional bachelor's programme	240 credits
d. professional master's programme	60 credits
e. associate degree programme	120 credits

- Special study load determined under Section 7.5a and 7.5b of the WHW

The Act stipulates that a deviating study load applies to the following programmes:

Academic master's programmes:

- for an educator for the period of preparatory higher education in secondary education subjects, the study load is at least 60 credits and at most 120 credits. The board of the institution determines the study load of the programme within that range;
- for the profession of philosopher in a given field of science, the study load is 120 credits;
- for the profession of general practitioner, veterinary surgeon, pharmacist, dentist and clinical technologist, the study load is 180 credits;
- for medicine, clinical researcher, the study load is 240 credits.

Professional master's programmes:

- for the arts, the study load – to be determined by the board of the institution – is at least 60 credits and no more than 120 credits;
- for first-degree secondary school teacher in general subjects, the study load is 90 credits;
- for advanced nurse practitioner, the study load is 120 credits;
- for physician assistant, the study load is 150 credits;
- for architecture, the study load is 240 credits.

Professional bachelor's programmes

The study load of an accelerated programme (Section 7.5b of the WHW) is 180 credits.

- Special study load determined by institutions

The board of the institution may determine that:

- an Academic or Professional master's programme has a study load of more than 60 credits;
- an associate degree programme has a study load of more than 120 credits;
- in special cases, to be determined and clarified by the board of the institution, the study load of an accelerated study programme as referred to in Section 7.9a of the WHW is 240 credits, in deviation from Section 7.5b(2).

This special study load does not require a decree from the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science or a recommendation from the NVAO. The institution does not qualify to receive funding for this special study load.

