Programme Accreditation in the Netherlands

NVAO

Topics

I. Introduction NVAO

II. Some key figures

III. Higher education in the Netherlands

IV. Accreditation system

V. Quality Assurance System

VI. Accreditation framework

VII. So far ...

VIII. Next accreditation system

I.   INTRODUCTION NVAO

- The accreditation organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium)
- Set up by international treaty (°2003)
- Independent (towards government and HEI's) in
  - procedures,
  - methodologies,
  - decision making
- Funded by the Netherlands and Flanders government (60/40)

II. Key figures

Inhabitants	>16 million
Universities	22
Hogescholen	113
Students	>550 000
Bachelor Degr.	2050
Master Degr.	950

III.   HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Degree structure

- professional bachelor and master degrees (universities of professional education)

- academic bachelor and master degrees (universities and universities of professional education)

2. Degree structure in line with Bologna Process

- Dublin descriptors

- Overarching Qualifications Framework in EHEA (adopted in Bergen, 2005)

IV. ACCREDITATION (I)

Programme accreditation is the core

- Dutch quality assurance system before Bologna:
  - focus on programmes
  - external assessment of programme
- Bologna process:
  - international transparency
  - benchmarking bachelor & master degrees
- Same requirements for public & private providers
- **Embedding QA culture in the programmes before shifting to accreditation on a higher level**

IV. ACCREDITATION (II)

Elements of programme accreditation

- accreditation decision = yes / no
  - no ranking
- validity 6 years
- accreditation necessary to obtain:
  - public funding
  - recognition of degrees
  - student support (eg. grants)

IV. ACCREDITATION (III)

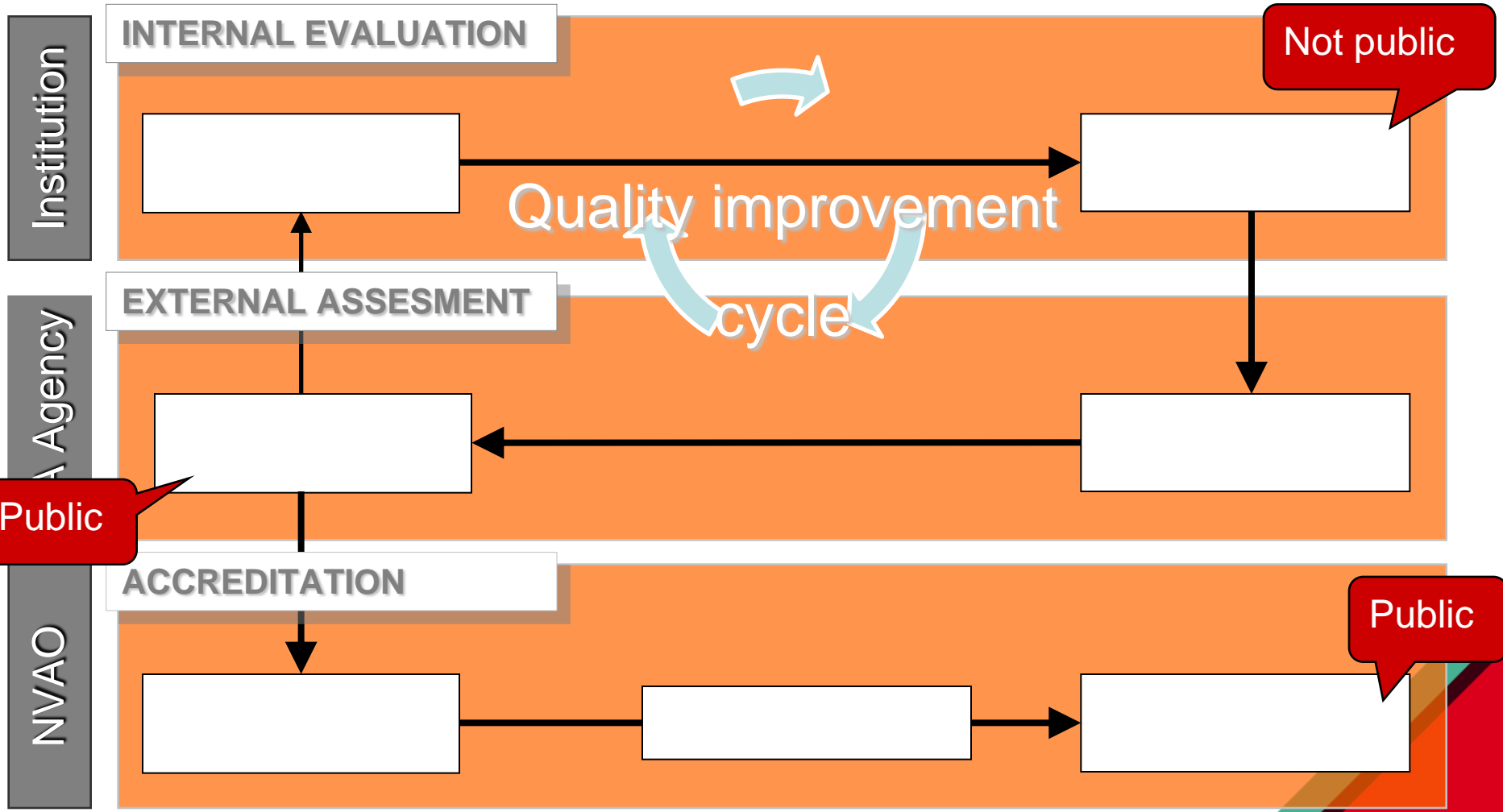Initial accreditation (of 'new' programmes)

- Assessment of the potential quality of a new programme
- (Assessment of macro-efficiency by ministry for publicly funded new programmes)
- Initial accreditation necessary for:
  - public funding
  - recognition of degrees
  - student support

IV. ACCREDITATION (IV)

Quality assurance agencies

- NVAO does not itself take responsibility for preparing assessment reports
- NVAO decisions: based on assessment reports by QA agencies
- NVAO protocol for QA agencies
- NL: list of QA agencies ("VBIs")

V. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

INTERNAL EVALUATION

Institution

Not public

Quality improvement cycle

EXTERNAL ASSESMENT

Agency

Public

ACCREDITATION

NVAO

Public

VI. ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

1. Assessment framework:

   6 themes → standards → criteria
   - Themes:
     - aims and objectives of the programme
     - curriculum
     - staff
     - facilities
     - internal quality assurance system
     - results

VI. ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

Example: *theme "internal QA system"*

Standard 1: Internal quality assurance system
> the programme and the curriculum is evaluated periodically, in the light of empirical targets

Standard 2: Improvement measures
> the outcomes of the evaluation form the basis for measures for improvement that contribute to realising the targets

Standard 3: Involvement of personnel, students, alumni, professional field
actively involved in internal quality assurance

VI. ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

2. Assessment rules

Assessment of standards → Assessment of themes	
Excellent	
Good	→ Positive / Negative
Sufficient	
Insufficient	

→compensation possible

→ a 'negative' theme results in a negative accreditation decision

VI. ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

2. Assessment rules
   - *Example*: *Theme "internal QA system"*

Assessment of standards → Assessment of themes	
Example 1	
Standard 1: Good	
Standard 2: Sufficient	→ Positive
Standard 3: Excellent	
Example 2	
Standard 1: Sufficient	
Standard 2: Sufficient	→ Positive/Negative
Standard 3: Insufficient	

VI. ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

How does NVAO decide on accreditation?

scope 1:

→ the assessment panel

- quality and composition of the assessment panel
- QA protocol of assessment agency
- assessment framework used
- assessment rules used

VI. ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

How does NVAO decide on accreditation?

scope 2:

→ the assessment report

- assessment of every standard and every theme
- assessment based on (objective) facts and (subjective) evaluations
- comparisons with similar degree courses
- international standards
- final conclusion

VII. SO FAR …

Today NVAO has assessed a total of 3135 programmes: 2 from the Netherlands Antilles, 2677 from the Netherlands and 456 from Flanders.

VII. SO FAR …

Strengths

- An enormous drive for quality, especially within universities of professional education

- Focus on education

- Staff involvement at program level

- Bad quality providers are being detected

- Increased international credibility of Dutch HEIs

- Huge political support for the system

- Information tool for students and stakeholders, comparison of programmes possible

VII. SO FAR …

Weaknesses
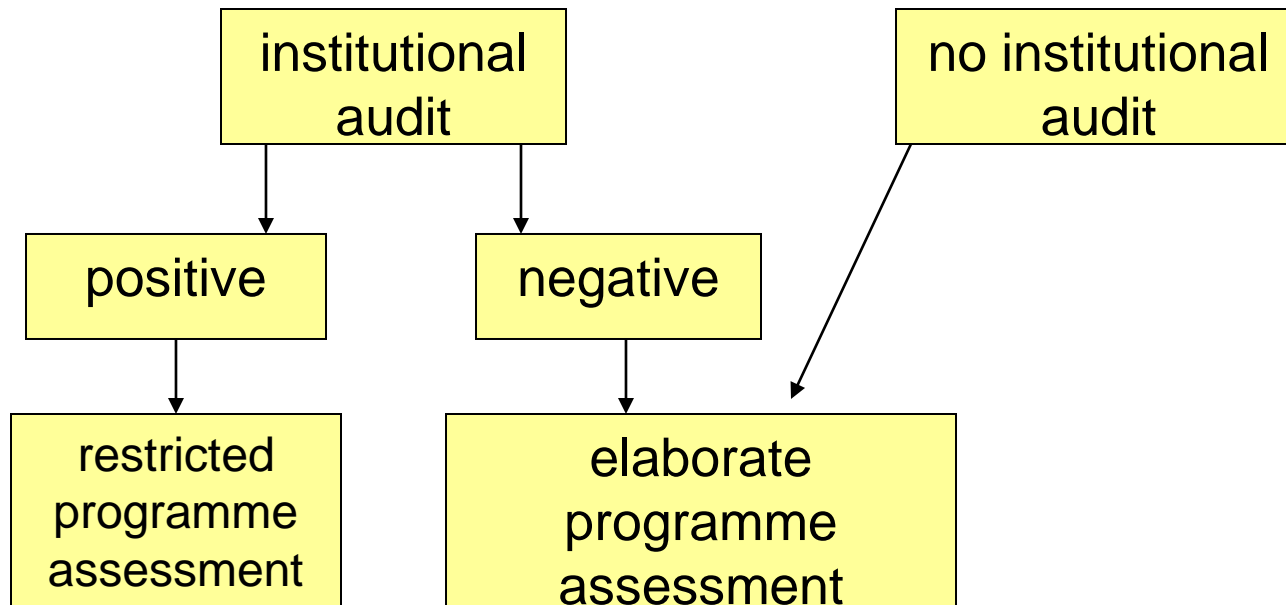
- "Safety first" behaviour
    - Production of a lot of paperwork by HEIs
    - System stimulates bureaucratic behaviour
    - "Improvement function" is less visible
- Roles and positions of NVAO and QA agencies
    - Dilemma QAAs: listening to HEI vs. "obeying" NVAO
    - Operationalisation of accreditation frameworks by QAAs
- The system is very expensive
- The system needs frequent updates

VIII. Next accreditation system

After the first cycle (10 years): development towards institutional audit

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            ┌─────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────┐
            │  institutional  │                    │ no institutional│
            │      audit      │                    │      audit      │
            └────────┬────────┘                    └────────┬────────┘
              │             │                                │
              ▼             ▼                                │
      ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐                           │
      │ positive │    │ negative │                           │
      └────┬─────┘    └────┬─────┘                           │
           │               │                                 │
           ▼               ▼                                 ▼
   ┌───────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
   │ restricted│      │  elaborate   │
   │ programme │      │  programme   │
   │assessment │      │  assessment  │
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Thank you

Further requests and information:
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