Responsible bodies

Higher vocational education

The Higher Vocational Education Quality Commission issues advice on proposals regarding educational qualifications within the qualification structure [see 2.5] and more specifically on the following aspects:

- the desirability, the frequency and the regional spread of an offer of new higher-vocational education programmes which lead to a specific educational qualification;
- the study load of the higher-vocational education programmes leading to a particular educational qualification, expressed in credits;
- the translation of credits into teaching periods for the HBO5, Associate Degree programmes ‘nursing’ or the HBO5, Associate Degree programmes offered by the centres for adult education;
- the names of the higher-vocational education programmes and the branch of study under which they are classified.

The commission also advises on the macro effectiveness of a new programme and rules in favour or against the composition of the external assessment panels.

The commission consists of experts on:

- vocationally-oriented training in secondary education,
- higher vocational education within Adult Education,
- professional Bachelor's programmes,
- the training programmes offered by the vocational-training providers for adults,
- labour-market direction.

The commission also seats a number of alternate members who represent the vocational sector or sectors to which these higher vocational-education programmes lead to.

The evaluation of higher vocational education will start in 2013 at the latest.

Additional information (in Dutch) is available on the website [1].

Adult education

The Adult Education Steering Group [see 11.3.1.3] has been created for knowledge and expertise development in adult education; it is composed of representatives of the management teams and teachers at CABEs (3) and CAEs (3), designated by the representative sectoral organisations: VOCVO
(2) and the pedagogical counselling services (4).

The steering group also plays an important role in the organisation of the assessments in HVE (higher vocational education). [See 11.2-2.3.2].

Initial Teacher training programmes

The institutions that offer teacher training programmes were encouraged by the reforms to work together on teaching and research activities, quality assurance and the use of infrastructure, as well as to develop expertise networks or regional platforms. Extra subsidies have been made available for these purposes.

- **Expertise networks** (ENW) are set up within an association. No more than 2 expertise networks can be set up within one and the same association. Expertise networks comprise one university, at least one university college and a minimum of one centre for adult education. They have broad tasks stipulated by law:
  - The development of a strategic policy plan on teacher training, in-service training and the scientific and social services for the professionalisation of teachers
  - The cooperation and profiling of the various teacher-training programmes in relation to accessibility, target-group policy, flexible study learning paths and unqualified teachers;
  - The support and reinforcement of teacher training in the area of pedagogical, educational and subject-didactical research;
  - The synergy of the practical component and tutor training;
  - Tackling internal and external quality assurance.

- **A regional platform** works in a cross-associative fashion and must facilitate the cooperation between teacher-training programmes which form part of a pluralistic association and teacher-training programmes of the same ideological purport which form part of a different association.

Since 2007, four expertise networks and one regional platform have been developed, subsidised by the Flemish Government on the basis of a management agreement.

- **Expertise network School of Education** [2], Association K.U.Leuven'
- **Expertise network Teacher Training Courses Associatie UGent** [3] Ghent University Association
- **Expertise network Teacher Training Courses Antwerpen** [4] ELAnt (Association of University and University Colleges Antwerp)
- Regional Teacher Training Platform Limburg **NOvELLe** [5]
- **Brussels Expertise network** [6], BEO (Brussels University Association)

For the academic/school years 2008-2011, the Flemish Government allocates funds to **diversity projects** which, within the expertise networks or regional platforms and on an experimental basis, improve the intake, progression and outflow in terms of teacher-training programmes of the target groups which are currently proportionally underrepresented in higher education:

- students from an ethnic-minority background or
- students from families with a low socio-economic status and
- students suffering from function disabilities

(See the final report on diversity projects.)

Since 2011, these resources for diversity projects have been replaced by the Innovation Fund for Teacher Training Programmes (Decision of the Flemish Government, 9 September 2011). The Flemish Government's intention is to finance projects in this way that are beneficial to the quality of teacher
training. The innovation projects can be submitted by one or more initial teacher training programmes, one or more expertise networks or a regional platform or a combination of these. For 2012, applications can be made for projects relating to three themes: media studies; reading pleasure and reading experience in a digital culture; and investing in early childhood education.

WeTwijs - lerarenopleiding [7]

In October 2012, the Flemish Government formed a panel of independent experts to evaluate teacher training policy.

**Higher Education Recognition Committee**

The parliamentary act on the restructuring of higher education from 2003 sets strict conditions for offering new programmes by the university colleges and research universities. Thus an independent Recognition Committee [8] consisting of Belgian and foreign experts assesses whether the programme offers added value in the existing educational sector, and gives advice on the temporary recognition of programmes, requests to lengthen or reduce the load of study, etc. The Recognition Committee also assesses applications to establish programmes in foreign languages and the granting of dispensations. (See 7 Language regulations governing higher education programmes.)

**The VLUHR, Flemish Universities and the University Colleges Council**

By parliamentary act, the Quality Assurance Agency of the Flemish Universities and University Colleges Council (VLUHR [9]) is responsible for organising external quality assurance in Flemish higher education, and selects the assessment panels [see 11.2-2.3.2].

The VLUHR organises the external assessments of education at Flemish universities, university colleges and other officially registered institutions for higher education. Programmes offered by non-statutory (totally private) registered institutions may also use the VLUHR's services.

For accreditations granted from academic year 2013-2014 onwards, institutions may, for the organisation of the external assessment, use the services of another evaluation body that is registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) or that is recognised by the NVAO.

**NVAO, the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation**

On 3 September 2003 a treaty was signed between Flanders and the Netherlands relating to collaboration on the accreditation of programmes in higher education. This happened in the context of the introduction of the three-tier system (Bachelor-Master-Doctor structure) and an independent common quality assurance system, the joint Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO), as a result of the Bologna process. The NVAO closely examines whether there are adequate reasons to accept that the programme will be at the required minimum quality level. In 2011, the NVAO was also designated as the accreditation body for programmes leading to the Associate Degree - HVE (higher vocational education).

The NVAO was one of the first European quality assurance agencies (QAA) to be included in the independent European register of quality assurance agencies (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education - EQAR [10], which was published at the end of 2008. The final report of this international assessment panel confirmed that, through its accreditation, the NVAO complies with the European Standards and Guidelines of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). In 2009 VLIR and VLHORA, currently VLUHR, were also included in EQAR. The
NVAO is also affiliated to the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA). The NVAO is also a member of numerous international networks, such as INQAAHE [11], the international Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education which is a world-wide association of over 200 organisations active in the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education.

Approaches and methods for quality assurance

Evaluation of academic staff

University colleges

The evaluation regulations are laid down by the university-college board (Parliamentary Act of 13 July 1994). This evaluation is compulsory for each member of staff and is carried out at least every five years. However, there are a number of exceptions:

- When a member of staff is given an 'insufficient' evaluation, a new evaluation must take place after one year;
- As a deviation from the five-year rule, the first evaluation of the staff member takes place at the latest three years after he has been initially appointed, permanently appointed or promoted.

If an insufficient evaluation is given, the member of staff can appeal this decision to the evaluation appeal board. Evaluations marked 'insufficient' are considered to be final if the term provided to lodge an appeal has expired or once a final decision has been taken during the appeal procedure. Moreover, the staff member concerned is entitled to comment in writing on any evaluation which did not result in a final 'insufficient'. This written response is then added to the evaluation file.

If two consecutive evaluations result in a final 'insufficient' or if the member of staff receives five 'insufficient' markings in the course of his professional career, the board of governors can dismiss the member of staff in question. In these cases a notice term is observed which is equal to the period required to allow the member of staff to avail of social security and unemployment benefits. During this notice period the member of staff is considered to be appointed on a temporary basis and the board of governors may assign a different task to the member of staff concerned. In that case, the member of staff in question receives the gross salary of the office to which he was appointed. The member of staff can fully or partially waive this notice period.

Universities

In the course of an academic career, there are a number of evaluation moments:

- a temporary appointment,
- a contract extension,
- a permanent appointment and
- a promotion.

In light of the quality-assurance system, individual lecturers ("docenten") are also subjected to an evaluation and the ensuing results can be used within the context of permanent appointments and promotion.

The board of governors sets the regulations for the evaluation of the performance and functioning of academic staff (Parliamentary Act of 12 June 1991). Evaluations on the manner in which each member of the academic staff has fulfilled his assignment over the past period must be conducted at least every five years. After every new appointment, permanent appointment or promotion, an evaluation...
must be made after three years. The evaluation procedures must provide for the opportunity to lodge an appeal with an independent appeal body. The procedure must guarantee optimum protection of the staff member's rights.

- If the performance and achieved results are evaluated as being "substandard", the board of governors may decide, in view of the next salary scale, to halve the accumulation of seniority for a period of one year.
- If an evaluation is concluded with a final "insufficient" the board of governors may decide to halt the build-up of seniority, with a view to the next salary scale, for a period of one year.
- If two consecutive evaluations result in a final 'insufficient' or if the member of staff receives three 'insufficient' markings in the course of his professional career, the board of governors can dismiss the member of staff in question. In these cases a notice term is observed which is equal to the period required to allow the member of staff to avail of social security and unemployment benefits. During this notice period the member of staff is considered to be appointed on a temporary basis and the board of governors may assign a different task to the member of staff concerned. In that case, the member of staff in question receives the gross salary of the office to which he was appointed. The member of staff can fully or partially waiver this notice period.

Autonomous academic staff (ZAP) are also evaluated outside the university's statutory context, for example when vying for national and international research funding.

**Evaluation for the establishment of new Associate Degree courses**

The Flemish Government will compile a register of all higher-vocational education programmes.

New Associate Parliamentary Act programmes will first have to pass a macro-effectiveness test (from the Vocational-Education Quality-Assurance Commission) and a new Associate Parliamentary Act programme test (from the accreditation body) before they will be approved.

The evaluation framework comprises the following criteria:

- the educational content, which shall at least comprise the programme's qualification level, the competences that are acquired through the programme (which shall at least include all the competences of the educational qualification the programme leads to), proper coherence in the training programme, the study load of the programme and its components, expressed in credits, a clear relationship between the objectives and the content of the training programme and a relevant component on-the-job learning;
- the educational process, which shall in any case comprise:
  - the recommended pathways to facilitate entry into the programme,
  - the possible shortened or adjusted pathways in the Associate Degree programme,
  - the possible shortened or adjusted pathways in programmes which tie in with higher education,
  - adequate study guidance and a transparent evaluation and testing of the education provided,
  - the flexible organisation of the programme; as a minimum, the contents and the organisation of the programme should properly cater for the target group aimed at;
- the end result of the education provided, this in any case comprises the due social relevance of the qualifications graduates of the programme obtain and the cost-effectiveness of the programme;
- the facilities, the quality of the staff, the organisation and internal quality assurance.
The quality assurance system in higher education

The quality assurance procedure that applies to programmes leading to Associate Degree, Bachelor's degree and Master's degree is of course also applicable to the integrated teacher training programmes (as these are Bachelor's programmes). For the specific teacher training programmes, at present only the external review is applicable. The institutional review does not apply to the Associate Degree programmes.

Internal quality monitoring

The form of internal and external quality monitoring in higher education differs from the system of quality control in nursery, primary and secondary education.

The general framework is that the officially registered institutions primarily look after internal and external quality assurance for educational activities themselves. They oversee the quality of their own educational activities continuously and on their own initiative. They involve students, alumni and external experts from the professional field in the processes of internal and external quality monitoring.

The internal system of quality monitoring is no longer included in the generic quality guarantees of the programme accreditation, but feedback and monitoring systems and in particular the internal quality monitoring systems have become a part of the institutional review.

Institutional review

The institutional review is a periodic evaluation by an external panel of the policy processes that an institution sets up to ensure that it can carry out its core tasks of education, research and the provision of services to society to a high quality standard.

The concept of 'quality' is interpreted broadly, taking account not just of the strict quality processes, but also of policy processes such as internationalisation, the promotion of multi- and interdisciplinarity in the programmes, the stimulation of lifelong learning, the conduct of a language policy, the reinforcement of the social dimension, the manner in which the introduction of greater flexibility is given concrete form, the embedding of entrepreneurship and sustainability in curricula, Human Resource policy, the promotion of student-centred learning, the reinforcement of interaction between teaching and research, and so on; all of these processes have the potential to raise educational quality. All these aspects must be the subject of internal quality assurance (cf. European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education). In addition, an effectively conducted institutional review will make a number of policy processes more transparent and have the effect of raising quality within the institution and between institutions.

External review

The external review, which is conducted per programme or cluster of programmes, should take place at least once every eight years for Bachelor's and Master's programmes (Parliamentary Act on the restructuring of higher education in Flanders (4 April 2003). All institutions organising the programme or cluster of programmes in question are involved in the external review.

The external review procedure

The external review proceeds as follows:
1. The external assessment panel takes as its starting point the self-evaluation report.
2. The external assessment panel visits the institution in question. During its evaluation, the panel examines the programme, discusses the self-evaluation, visits the institution, talks to stakeholders in the programme (support staff, lecturers/professors, students, alumni, etc.) and evaluates work by the students. On the basis of the review activities, it reaches a consensus on the programme's strengths and the points on which the panel wishes to formulate recommendations for improvement. The visit phase is completed with an oral report on the main findings to those at the institution who are responsible for policy. The external review is oriented towards the process of quality improvement, and the panel uses the NVAO accreditation framework, which includes the following elements: (1) the criteria by which the presence of the three (or four) generic quality guarantees will be tested; (2) the conditions for awarding the rating insufficient, sufficient, good or excellent to the generic quality guarantees; (3) which verifiable facts can serve as the basis for awarding the ratings, and how a fact can be demonstrated.
3. The external assessment panels summarise the outcome of their evaluation in a public report.

The external assessment panel

The external assessment of the quality of programmes will be conducted by the panels in the second round of programme accreditations (running from academic year 2013-2014 to 2020-2021), coordinated in principle by the VLUHR as the quality assurance agency, though not exclusively so. The NVAO may always grant accreditation to a programme on the grounds of a pre-existing accreditation from another accreditation body (EQAR-registered or otherwise on condition that the accreditation has been carried out using a comparable methodological approach). The NVAO can also recognise other evaluation bodies (EQAR-registered or otherwise) for the conduct of external reviews and programme assessments. In any case, it is necessary to ensure in the new system that there is a higher proportion of international and independent experts on the external assessment panels. The panel must be capable of determining whether or not the programme complies with what is desirable and customary in the international context. All experts must have received the necessary training to carry out the evaluations. The external assessment panels include a student. These students are proposed by the VVS (the Flemish Union of Students).

The external assessment panel as a whole has the following capabilities at its disposal:

- Subject expertise
- International expertise
- Working field expertise
- Educational expertise
- Student-related expertise
- External review or audit expertise

External reviews for initial teacher training programmes

The professionally oriented Bachelor's programmes in integrated teacher training are externally reviewed and then accredited.

The specific teacher training programmes, including those for the Centres for Adult Education, are only externally reviewed. Any Centre for Adult Education that withdraws from this external review will lose its educational competence for the specific teacher training programme.
External reviews for higher vocational education

The external assessment panel is formed by the VLUHR [see 11.2.1.5] and the steering group for adult education. The external reviews are conducted per higher-vocational education programme or per cluster of programmes throughout all the institutions organising the programme or cluster of programmes in question. The VLUHR and the adult education steering group decide how programmes are clustered, in consultation with the inspectorate. Courses within one and the same branch of study are clustered automatically. External reviews result in a public external-review report. The external reviews themselves are coordinated by the VLUHR and the adult education steering group. They are conducted on the basis of a quality-assurance protocol, which is drawn up and published by the inspectorate, the VLUHR, the steering group and the accreditation body, in line with the criteria of the evaluation framework for higher-vocational education programmes the Flemish Government has defined.

Consequences of the external review

Starting with the second round of institutional reviews (early 2019-2020 until the end of academic year 2020-2021), the consequence of a positive institutional review will be that the institution concerned is no longer required to take part in external reviews organised by a quality assurance agency in order to apply for programme accreditations.

The programme accreditation

The initiative for an accreditation application lies at the institution offering higher education.

Together with the Higher-Education Reform Law of 4 April 2003, the Accreditation Treaty of 3 September 2003 forms the legal basis for the introduction of accreditation in Flanders. The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) has been operational in Flanders since 1 February 2005 and the first Flemish accreditation decisions were taken in 2006. The NVAO regulations were ratified by the Parliamentary Act of 27 January 2006.

The external review report constitutes the basis for the NVAO to arrive at an accreditation decision. To this end, the NVAO checks:

- whether the panel had sufficient expertise to make an expert and independent pronouncement about the programme,
- whether the panel has assessed all elements from the accreditation framework and
- whether the various judgements are properly and comprehensibly supported.

The NVAO has the opportunity to reject an external review report on grounds of insufficient quality. To this end, the NVAO considers whether the report is correct, of a high quality and complete.

A correct report

- complies with the forms indicated in the external review protocol;
- contains an assessment based on the generic quality guarantees defined in the accreditation framework approved by the Flemish Government;
- is based on verifiable facts;
- provides insights into the quality of the external assessment panel's composition.

The external review protocols and reports can be found on the websites of VLIR, VLHORA and VLUHR.
The previous accreditation system assesses the basic quality and envisaged that all Flemish higher-education programmes meet the basic-quality criteria by the end of the first accreditation round (2012-13). Quality assurance is defined as a process which confirms the stakeholders' belief that the education provided (input, process and results) meets the expectations or complies with the minimum requirements. On the basis of this faith in the basic quality, an (even) higher quality will be pursued. The Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Declaration (28-29 April 2009) marked a new stage in the Bologna Process, in which the objectively demonstrable quality of programmes and institutions is top of the agenda.

In Flanders, it took until the end of academic year 2012-13 before all the programmes had gone through the accreditation process (an eight-year accreditation cycle).

As in the previous system, the accreditation in the second round will be awarded on the grounds of the judgements contained in a report on an external assessment conducted by an external panel. The programme accreditation in the second round will only relate to subjects relevant to the primary educational process. It will be based on the following questions:

- What is the programme's aim? The intended final level, in light of what is desirable and customary at international level, as a translation of domain-specific learning outcomes;
- How does the programme achieve this? The programme's content and structure and its programme-specific provisions;
- Are the goals achieved? The final level achieved, in light of what is desirable and custom in the international context, the thoroughness of the assessment, testing and examination of the students and their employability.

These three questions are translated in the parliamentary act into three generic quality guarantees that are translated into the Flemish accreditation framework. The framework describes the criteria and decision-making rules that the external assessment panel must apply in order to arrive at its judgement. It also contains an explanation of the criteria and decision-making rules. The Flemish Government approved the accreditation framework for the programme assessments on the proposal of the NVAO and after consultation with the VLUHR and VVS.

The criteria relate to the quality and level of the education and directly linked matters such as programme-specific provisions which are important to the quality of the education. The combination of a limited but robust content-oriented framework, in which the aspects to be assessed are more closely related to the lecturers’ core business, and a panel of respected colleagues from the field, creates the opportunity for substantive discussion between colleagues about the quality of the programme, oriented at concrete improvements.

Among other things, the panel forms a judgement about the quality of final dissertations or other assignments. With a view to guarantee the final level, the assessment of the thoroughness of the examination/testing/assessment of the students is important. It is also important for the external assessment panel to form an accurate view of the employability of graduates on the labour market, including through surveys of graduates and employers. The NVAO also confirms (or not) that the programmes leading to the regulated professions stipulated in the European Directive 2005/36/EC (nurse responsible for general care, dental practitioner, veterinary surgeon, midwife, architect, pharmacist and medical doctor) complies with that European Directive.

The consequences of the NVAO's accreditation decisions are:

Positive if the programme is at least rated sufficient on the three generic quality guarantees.
- **Negative** if the programme, specialisation or programme variant is rated insufficient on one or two generic quality guarantees. A second chance is then possible after one to three years. If the re-evaluation is negative, the programme, specialisation or programme variant is then discontinued with effect from the following academic year.
- The same happens if the programme, specialisation or programme variant is rated insufficient on all generic quality guarantees.

**The institutional review**

Institutional reviews will be organised from academic year 2015-2016. An institutional review is a periodic evaluation by an external panel of the policy processes that an institution sets up to guarantee the quality of its education as well of the policy processes in the areas of research and the provision of services to society that are set up to support that quality. The purpose of the institutional review is not to assess the quality of the educational or research outcomes but to assess the internal policy processes, procedures and tools with which the institution aims to achieve its policy objectives or to achieve them even better in the future.

The topics that are covered in the institutional review are inspired by the institutional evaluation of the European University Association "EUA [12]".

1. What policy objectives does the institution want to achieve? (Misson, vision, goals, how the institution sees itself: in a regional, national, European or international context.)
2. How does the institution aim to achieve the policy processes? (Policy processes, procedures, policy practices and tools and an analysis of their effectiveness.)
3. How does the institution know that the policy actions are effective? (Feedback and monitoring system and in particular the internal quality monitoring systems.)

What does the institution do in order to change and innovate with a view to improving the policy processes and achieving the policy objectives?

The Flemish Government established an **institutional review assessment framework** on the proposal of the NVAO and after consultation with the VLUHR and VVS.

The **panels of experts** will largely consist of international members. A student will also be on each panel. The panel will also visit the institution and assess its functioning in practice. The review team uses the judgements 'sufficient', 'conditionally sufficient' or 'insufficient'.

The **NVAO** coordinates the institutional reviews and sets out in a protocol how it will carry them out in practice after consultation with the VLUHR. The reviews are valid for six years if the institution is found to be satisfactory in all aspects. The institution bears the cost of the institutional review, the amount being determined by the Flemish Government.

**Evaluation periods**

The **second round of programme accreditations** runs from academic year 2013-2014 until 2020-2021. During this period, all programmes will be subject to the new regime of programme accreditation. There will also be two rounds of institutional reviews.

The institutional reviews in the **first round (2015-2016 and 2016-2017)** will be carried out according to the defined assessment framework, and constitute a kind of zero measurement. No further consequences will be attached to them. However, the reports will be made public.
At the end of the **second round of institutional reviews (2019-2020 and 2020-2021)**, all programmes will be subject to an external assessment according to the new accreditation regime.

From the second round of institutional reviews, the judgements which are issued will have **consequences** for the institution concerned:

- If an institution is rated 'sufficient' on all criteria, it will no longer be required to participate in external reviews organised by a quality assurance agency in order to apply for programme accreditations.
- If an institution is rated 'insufficient' on one or more criteria, there is no further possibility to apply for new programmes. However, a second opportunity is possible after one to three years (the temporary period of validity of the institutional review in that case). If the evaluation of the second chance is negative, the institution's financing is withdrawn and it loses the right to award academic degrees.
- If an institution fails to satisfy any of the criteria, its financing is withdrawn and it loses the right to award academic degrees with effect from the following academic year.

If the judgements on all criteria of the institutional review in the second round are positive ('sufficient'), the programme accreditation may be awarded with effect from the third round on the basis of a portfolio submitted by the institution to the NVAO, in which the institution has carried out its own assessment of the presence of the generic quality guarantees, instead of on the basis of an external programme assessment and review. If the report of the institutional review is positive on all standards, it may be assumed that the institution has the minimum quality assurance standards and is able, with its policy concerning every part of its mission, to assure quality education. The Flemish government determines which substantial documents must be included in the file of the institution in support of its application for accreditation. The institution must be able to show how the institutional policy, regarding the various topics that are determinative for the quality of a programme, will be implemented. The file must in any case contain the results from an external peer review organised by the institution itself. External peer review is necessary to retain external confidence in the quality and accreditation system.

NVAO can refuse the file, whereby the programme will be subjected to a programme assessment by external evaluation according to the regime of the second accreditation round.

The **third round of programme accreditations** starts with the programmes whose accreditation duration expires at the end of academic year **2021-2022 and runs until 2028-2029**.

The **third round of institutional reviews** will be carried out from **2025-2026 to 2026-2027**. From the third round onward, intervals of six years will apply.

**The academic infrastructure for quality assurance in higher education**

This currently consists of the following:

- the **level descriptors** which determine generically what the purpose of a Bachelor's or Master's programme is, derived from the Dublin descriptors and in accordance with the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA);
- the **domain-specific learning outcomes**, which generically translate the level descriptors into domain-specific learning outcomes for a particular programme (introduced with the Qualifications Parliamentary Act of 30 April 2009). The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of Flanders is compatible with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF for LLL).
• the **generic quality guarantees**, whose presence is necessary to ensure that the programmes comply with the minimum quality requirements;

• the **accreditation framework** for existing programmes and the assessment framework for new programmes which further put into practice the generic quality guarantees with a view to the external assessment and the evaluation of the request for accreditation or of a request for a new programme assessment.

On the basis of the level descriptors as specified in Article 58, § 2, of the parliamentary act of 4 April 2003 on restructuring higher education, the institutions also jointly define the domain-specific learning outcomes under the coordination of the VLUHR. They also guarantee the application of Flemish, federal and international regulations on professional practice. This description of the domain-specific learning outcomes is validated by the Dutch-Flemish accreditation organisation, the NVAO.

**Accredited programmes**

Records of the accredited programmes are maintained by the NVAO in the Higher Education Register [13]. In Flanders, only (statutory and private) registered institutions are permitted to award Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees (and only universities in the case of doctorates). Since 2009, this is also the case for the Associate Degree in higher vocational educationen [see 7.2.2].