2020

Higher education study efficiency

Study efficiency in higher education is enhanced by good orientation and rapid reorientation, thus avoiding disappointment and increasing students' chances of success. The orientation is reinforced by taking into account the learner's secondary education results, the advice of the class council, the results of the Columbus exploration tool and the results of the compulsory but non-binding admission tests. Students will be reoriented more quickly if they fail after an initial evaluation period. The approach of the non-binding admission tests for higher education as a whole will be generalised.

2019

Access and the democratisation of higher education

Higher vocational education (HBO 5) courses have been considered as a fully-fledged component of higher education for some years. These courses, which could be organised by university colleges and centres for adult education, as well as secondary schools for HBO5 in nursing, will in the future only be offered by university colleges (see the 2018 annual review).

As a result of this reform, these graduate courses will attract students who do not opt for higher education today and thus contribute to the further democratisation of Flemish higher education. The future graduate courses will be funded through open-end financing.

The increased inflow and the need for specific equipment and new classrooms needed to organise the new training courses call for extra budget. From 2019 onwards, the Flemish Government will invest an extra 10 million EUR toward resources for university colleges so they can adjust their infrastructure or provide extra classrooms and practice rooms.

6.5 million EUR for new energy-saving measures in buildings of colleges and universities

With its extensive building stock, Flemish higher education institutions have an important responsibility when it comes to the efficient use of energy. Today, much attention is being paid to energy efficiency in new construction and renovation projects. The Flemish government also provides subsidies for energy conservation measures.

In 2019, the Flemish Government is investing 6.5 million euros in energy-saving measures in higher education. This is the third call that specifically targets university colleges and universities to insulate their existing buildings and thus save energy. The institutions can submit project proposals until 15
October 2019. The projects that generate the most CO2 savings per subsidised Euro are eligible for a maximum of 50% subsidy of the total cost of the project. The projects will be realised in the course of 2019-2021.

2018

Sick students retain scholarship

To receive a study allowance, a student must take at least 27 ECTS credits (out of 60). Even if a student who do not take 27 study points due to illness will not receive a study allowance and whoever reduces his or her study credits or will have to pay back part of the study allowance. This minimum requirement of 27 credits will be abolished for sick students from the next academic year.

Compulsory non-binding admission test veterinary medicine

From the academic year 2019-2020, students who wish to follow the veterinary training course must take part in a mandatory non-binding admission test. Currently there are mandatory non-binding admission tests for students who want to start a teacher training program and students who want to start a civil engineering or civil engineering architect at the university.

With the admission test, the minister wants to make the intake in the program more qualitative and wants to increase the chances of success. The test will consist of questions mathematics, physics, chemistry and a non-cognitive questionnaire, based on elements from the already developed calibration tests and also the SIMON-test of Ghent University.

New quality assurance system higher education

On 15 December 2017 the Flemish Government attached its approval on principle to the draft decree laying down the quality assurance system in higher education. After advice by the Flemish Education Council (VLOR) and the Flanders Social and Economic Council (SERV) the draft decree was subject of a second approval on principle on 9 February 2018, after which it was handed over to the Council of State for advice. On 6 April 2018 a final approval by the Flemish Government followed, after which the draft degree was submitted to the Flemish Parliament. The draft decree anchors the integrated system of external quality assurance at institution level definitively in the Codex Higher Education for university colleges and research universities.

Since the nineties every programme at a university college or research university in Flanders is subjected to an assessment by an external evaluation organ. This mode of operation guaranteed that all programmes met the same minimal standards with regard to quality. After three decennia a new system was elaborated in close cooperation with the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders, the research universities, university colleges and students. Basis of the new system is the institution review, which grants more autonomy and trust to the institutions, who become themselves responsible for the quality of their offer.

The new Quality Assurance System 2019-2025 stipulates that from 2020 onwards all university colleges and research universities in Flanders will be subject of an institution review every six years. This review will assess on the one hand the implementation and adjustment of the educational policy. On the other hand the institution must demonstrate that they are themselves capable to guarantee the quality of their programmes. In case of a positive evaluation all various programmes will no longer be periodically be re-evaluated by an external evaluation organ. In case of a negative institution review the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders will again assess the quality of individual programmes via external commissions.
Het new quality assurance system will be applied to existing programmes. New programmes are still obliged to submit to a first recognition and must receive a positive assessment at the programme level, before an institution may guard itself the quality of these new programmes.

All university colleges and research universities in Flanders took part in 2016-2017 in a ‘pilot institution review’. For the first time the efficiency of the educational policy of the research universities and university colleges was assess globally and no longer by programme individually. The evaluation showed that all parties involved were favourable to this new mode of operation.

**Strengthening teacher education programmes**

On 22 December 2017 the Flemish Government attached its second approval on principle to the draft decree on the elaboration of the associate degree programmes within the university colleges and the strengthening of the teacher education programmes within university colleges and research universities. The decree also comprises a number of measures on the transfer of the teacher education programmes from adult education to higher education (see 2017 – Reform of teacher training programme). A final approval by the Flemish Government followed on 2 March 2018, after which the draft degree was submitted with the Flemish Government.

**Higher vocational education**

On 22 December 2017 the Flemish Government attached its second approval on principle to the draft decree on the elaboration of the associate degree programmes within the university colleges and the strengthening of the teacher education programmes within university colleges and research universities (see 2017 – Higher vocational education). A final approval by the Flemish Government followed on 2 March 2018, after which the draft degree was submitted with the Flemish Government.

**Training for teacher trainers**

In February 2018, on the initiative of the Flemish Minister of Education, a new and unique training for teacher trainers started in Flanders. Goal of the programme is supporting and professionalising instructors who are teaching in a teacher training programme.

The project is a result of a close collaboration of various institutions. All Flemish institutions offering the teacher training programme cooperate in the organisation of the training. The universities, university colleges, representatives of the Adult Education Centres, the professional association VELOV and the Flemish Department of Education have a seat in the supporting steering committee.

The teacher trainers is offered the opportunity to take part in a training programme which lasts one or two years. The training departs from the own practical experience of the teacher trainers and contains five training components:

1. Professionalisation of the teacher trainer
2. Development of the curriculum
3. Practical research
4. Coaching and guidance of experience-based learning
5. Learning together, teaching together

The programme pays attention to both practice as well as theory. After successfully finishing the permanent training the participant is granted the Certificate Training of Teacher Trainers.
**Orientation and guidance**

Since the spring of 2017 all pupils in the final year of secondary education who took part in **Columbus** receive general feedback and tips to engage in a more conscious choice of study. Columbus is the digital, non-binding orientation test which guides pupils in their choice of study towards higher education. In the autumn of 2017 the feedback module was expanded which allows participants to receive a more refined and tailor-made form of feedback. Each participant receives information on where (s)he finds him-/herself in comparison to other pupils in Flanders, where a.o. the position towards pupils within the same type of secondary education (gse, vse, ...) is communicated. New is also the fact that Columbus is now open for pupils in their pre-final year of secondary education.

A the beginning of 2018 the Flemish Ministry of Education launched the website [education in numbers](#1). The site was developed in consultation with the university colleges, universities, the Flemish Association of Students, the Flemish Pupil Council and the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders. Departing from a database the website provides in a uniform way information on all programmes and institutions of higher education in Flanders. For the first time this valuable information is shared with (future) students on one digital platform. The goal of the website is to further support students in their study choice process and to offer more information on the programme and institution of their choice.

In the framework of good diagnostics at the start of higher education Flanders is developing **compulsory, non-binding tests per programme** or cluster of programmes. Since school year 2017-2018 generic, institution-neutral orientation tests are obligatory for students starting an integrated teacher training programme. These tests were introduced with the aim of strengthening the profile of the students entering these programmes. On 23 February 2018 the Flemish Government decided that from academic year 2018-2019 onwards non-binding orientation tests will also become obligatory for the bachelor programmes of civic engineer and civic engineer-architect, organised by a research university.

The non-binding orientation tests aim at strengthening the choice of study, not at limiting the intake of new students. In Flanders a binding entrance exam exists only for the programmes of doctor and dentist and programmes in the arts. Participation in an orientation test is/will become an enrolment condition for the integrated teacher training programmes and the programmes of civic engineer(-architect), but the result is not binding. A student who does not pass the test is still granted access to the programme. An institution may however decide to impose remedial actions.

**2017**

**Reform of the teacher training programme**

In consultation with various stakeholders the Flemish Minister of Education is elaborating a reform of the teacher training programme in Flanders. The framework for this reform was established in a concept note adopted by the Flemish Government in March 2016. A draft decree, based on an elaboration of the framework in seven working groups, was adopted a first time on principle by the Flemish Government on 14 July 2017. On 22 September 2017 the Flemish Government adopted draft amendments introducing a number of additions to the draft decree. The legislative process allowing for the adoption and implementation of the new decree will be further elaborated with a view to introduce the renewed teacher training programmes in Flanders in academic year 2019-2020.

The reform of the teacher training programme aims at raising the profile of new entrants to teacher
education programmes and at streamlining the programmes and enhancing the quality of the teacher training. Some measures are already implemented, such as the introduction of a (non-binding) entrance test for students at the beginning of initial teacher training offered by university colleges.

From 2019-2020 onwards teacher training programmes will be offered solemnly by research universities and university colleges. Currently a university student needs to obtain a master degree in its own subject before (s)he can choose to become a teacher by completing an additional one year teacher programme at master level. In the future bachelor graduates in the various subjects will be able to transfer directly to a teacher programme at master level, without holding a master in their own subject material.

The bachelor programmes for teachers in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, organized at university colleges, will remain. Since 2017 these programmes are only accessible for students taking a compulsory, non-binding orientation test. The latter has been introduced to allow for a good diagnostics at the start of higher education. The test was organised for all students who enrolled for academic year 2016-2017. The orientation test was made available via a digital platform for students who wanted to enrol in the teacher training programme in academic year 2017-2018. After completing the various modules of the test these students received feedback as well as a prove of participation.

In addition to completing a master or bachelor programme in education becoming a teachers will also be possible for experts with a relevant professional experience of at least 3 years. They will be able to obtain the qualification of teacher after successfully completing an associate programme in education (higher vocational education), organised by a university college.

With regard to the content of the teacher training programmes an enhanced focus will be put on themes such as didactics, class management, teaching in an urban context, language skills, multilingualism and diversity. The teacher training institutions will not only focus on future teachers, but will also support the professionalization of acting teachers, e.g. by offering activities of continuous professional development.

**Higher vocational education**

On 25 March 2016 the Flemish Government approved the concept note ‘Developing higher education’. From academic year 2019-2020 higher vocational education will become a fully-fledged component of higher education. Course participants will become students, entitled to study grants and students services.

The principles of the concept note are being converted into regulation. A first Emergency Ordinance on adult education and higher vocational education was approved by the Flemish Government in December 2016.

On 28th of April 2017 the Flemish Government approved a new framework for quality assurance. In order to be incorporated into higher education all recognised HBO5-programmes will have to be transformed and be based on one or more professional qualifications. The HBO5-programmes will become subject of a ‘Test New Programme’. Parallel to the bachelor and master programmes they will be evaluated by the Dutch Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). The framework which was approved in spring 2017 pays attention to the educational content, the educational process, material facilities, the quality of staff and internal quality assurance.

On 14 July 2017 the Flemish Government attached its first approval on principle to a draft decree which defines the structural development of HBO5-programmes within the university colleges. The
decree also contains a set of rules for the transfer of the teacher training from adult education to higher education. The legislative process allowing for the implementation of the new decree is still to be finalised to allow for an implementation of the renewed HBO5-system on 1 September 2019.