

Minutes Development Dialogue (in Dutch: *ontwikkelgesprek*) of the combined AACSB/ NVAO re-accreditation of the Faculty of Economics and Business (University of Groningen, the Netherlands)

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Date site-visit: 19 – 22 June 2022

Location: University of Groningen, Faculty Economics and Business, Duisenberg building, Nettelbosje 2, 9747 AE, Groningen, the Netherlands

Participants (and their role):

Participants on behalf of the peer-review panel: prof. Josep Franch Bullich (AACSB, chair), prof. Timo Korkeamäki (AACSB), prof. Ron Tuninga (NVAO), prof. Michael Ginzberg (AACSB), Jingyi Wang (student member NVAO).

Participants on behalf of the Faculty: prof. dr. Manda Broekhuis (vice-dean; chair), dr. Peter Smid (educational director), dr. Liane Voerman (BSc programme director), prof. Robert Inklaar (MSc programme director, chair C2024 curriculum innovation project), prof. Florian Noseleit (MSc programme director, member of FEB Institutional research board), dr. Miriam Ossevoort (department head educational quality, note-taker).

The Assessment framework for accreditation in higher education (NVAO, 2018) includes a development interview. During the development interview, the programme conducts a dialogue with the panel, during which possible improvements are discussed from a development perspective. The content of this interview is not part of the assessment, but it offers the programme the opportunity to discuss future-oriented questions. The programme may submit its own topics for discussion and debate with the panel.

This development dialogue took place within the framework of the external combined AACSB/NVAO re-accreditation of the Faculty and its above-mentioned study programmes on 19 June 2022, the first day of the site visit. Given the fact that 20 degree programmes were inspected during this visit, the topics discussed during the development dialogue were on Faculty rather than on programme level. The secretary of the peer-review panel was not present at the development dialogue. The head of the Educational Quality department wrote the report of the development dialogue and submitted it for approval to the peer-review team.

Minutes

At the beginning of the dialogue, the vice dean explained the purpose and agenda of the meeting. The Faculty had submitted two topics that will help determine its future direction:

- How can we activate students in a blended learning environment?
- How can we introduce our five societally relevant themes in our education by using interdisciplinary education and challenge-based learning?

How can we activate students in a blended learning environment?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we were forced to online teaching and examination. This led to multiple innovations and experiences, e.g. stimulated the use of technology-enhanced learning (TEL) tools. Going back to the campus, currently less students attend classes; this is a global problem. The question is what is the added value in the classroom? Was there already something wrong with the product before the COVID-19 pandemic (especially the lectures with > 250 students with sometimes low attendance rates)? The students nowadays are used to technology and used to learn in their own pace at their own time by watching recorded lectures. So, how can we develop an adequate blended learning approach and how can we activate students' learning and their motivation to come to the campus? After the constructive exchange of views, the panel recommended to rethink the course design and align it with students' motivation. One of the advices was to create an attractive atmosphere for instance by activating students in small groups using e.g. role play, cases, assignments. The panel acknowledged the impact this has on the workload in case of large courses (> 250 students) and many lecturers or student assistants need to be assigned to create small groups of around 20 – 30

students. In addition, students should feel the need to come to class to be able to pass the course; one could e.g. consider a ‘flipped classroom’. The panel does not recommend hybrid teaching – teaching students who are online and in the classroom at the same time – since it appears to be difficult to get online and on campus students equally active and involved; most probably, the energy it takes for a lecturer does not outweigh the effect on the students’ learning experience. It was also suggested to look at Maastricht as a benchmark, since they were very successful in bringing students back to campus, because of their problem-based learning methodological approach.

How can we introduce our five societally relevant themes in our education by using interdisciplinary education and challenge-based learning?

FEB’s current strategic plan states the ambition to implement all five themes in the degree programmes in our education, some in all degree programmes and other in minors and/or focus areas. It is an added value of approaching these themes from an interdisciplinary perspective and using real-life challenges. The panel gave several examples of interdisciplinary and/or challenge-based education, such as the vision on teaching of the university colleges in the Netherlands, and integrative projects in degree programmes. The challenge to embed this in an existing curriculum is to redesign the curriculum where choices must be made to avoid overburden the lecturers and the students; adding something means leaving something out. It is much easier to start a new curriculum. The panel recommends to start small with enthusiastic pioneers, ask them to show-case their course, and then others will follow. In addition, it is important to connect resources – who is doing what –, and use the bottom-up approach. The challenge of multi-disciplinary course is the fact that the academic lecturers are super specialist in their own discipline whereas real-life cases need a generalist view from different disciplinary perspectives. Furthermore, letting students from different disciplines work together in groups on an assignment at first might cause tension – they do not speak the same language – but at the end they will benefit from each other’s knowledge. Finally, do not overdo it by including a certain theme in every course name, it is enough if you can make the content of a course clear in other ways.

The discussion with the panel has strengthened the Faculty in the choices it has made and has yielded a number of concrete handles, which will be developed into future actions.