



## UG Framework for the Societal Anchoring of Education October 2018

### Introduction

In 2011, university-wide policy was created with regard to the establishment of Advisory Boards in the faculties. Established in the UG Framework for the Societal Anchoring of Education [2011], this policy was evaluated in April 2018. The most important recommendation from this evaluation is to largely maintain the existing policy. Only two substantive changes have been made compared to the old framework. First, faculties are explicitly asked to make the functioning of their Advisory Boards part of the faculty employability strategy. In addition, a section has been added to state when the policy will be reviewed again.

### **Background**

#### Importance of the societal anchoring of education

As an academic institution whose core tasks are teaching and research, the UG is positioned at the centre of society. In education, the societal relevance of the university is reflected in many ways, including in the transfer of knowledge from the institution to students, who then go on to apply their knowledge in society.

Since the introduction of the Bachelor's–Master's structure, the Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes at the UG have been independent degree programmes with their own learning outcomes, final degree certificates, and a labour-market qualification. In addition to acquiring disciplinary knowledge, the degree programmes emphasize the acquisition and development of academic and personal competences. By teaching an academic manner of thinking and working together with disciplinary knowledge, students are given a good starting position for their further development. Both the Bachelor's and Master's phases are aimed at preparing students for a successful career, either in science or elsewhere in society. In the Bachelor's phase, preparation is also focused largely on the successful transition to a Master's programme.

#### Relationship between education and the professional field

Society and the needs of the professional field are subject to continuous development and change. Given the societal relevance of universities, it is important to offer academic degree programmes that guarantee a good fit with the potential working fields of their graduates in terms of both profile and content. One potential problem in this respect lies in the fact that many degree programmes are not quite sure what the labour market looks like for their graduates, and the market is so dynamic and diffuse that it is becoming impossible to monitor. Regular communication with the professional field is therefore essential for degree programmes.

The importance of attending to the relationship between academic degree programmes and the professional field is also explicitly reflected in the accreditation system, one requirement of which is that the quality of teaching must be evaluated amongst various stakeholders—not only amongst students and staff, but also amongst alumni and the professional field.<sup>1</sup> This is a requirement for accreditation at both the national and European level.<sup>2</sup>

Given the dynamics in society and the professional field, it is important for degree programmes to maintain structural contact with relevant groups (i.e. lecturers, students, alumni, and the

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<sup>1</sup> *Beoordelingskader accreditation system hoger onderwijs Nederland [Assessment framework for the higher-education system in the Netherlands]*, NVAO, 2016

<sup>2</sup> *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, Brussel, 2015



professional field), as well as to evaluate the quality of teaching with them. In this way, degree programmes, faculties, and the UG can guarantee scientifically and societally sound curricula that will prepare students well for their careers. There is still room for improvement with regard to the university's contact with alumni and the professional field.

#### Advisory Board

One effective and efficient method for involving alumni and organisations from the professional field is to establish an Advisory Board consisting of both groups. The Advisory Board is periodically invited to advise on education from the perspective of the professional field. For example, it could issue advice on the extent to which the interplay of specific academic skills (disciplinary knowledge and skills) and the broader societal competences (general academic skills) in the curriculum sufficiently prepare students for careers in science or elsewhere.

### **UG Framework for the Societal Anchoring of Education**

#### Establishment of Advisory Boards

Every faculty must have an Advisory Board. Depending on the vision of faculties, degree programmes, both individual and in clusters, and the professional field, Councils are set up at the level of the faculty or the degree programme.

#### Composition of Advisory Boards

The Advisory Board should at least consist of representatives from the professional field and alumni of the degree programme, so that substantive knowledge of teaching and the transition to the professional field, as well as the needs of the professional field are combined in the Advisory Board. The exact composition of the Advisory Board should properly reflect the vision and ambition of a faculty/degree programme/cluster of degree programmes and the current professional field. Considerations for degree programmes in this regard include the involvement of the international professional field, people in strategic positions or, on the contrary, people working in ordinary practice.

The size of the Advisory Board is determined by the faculty, taking into account the size of the degree programme and diversity in the professional field.

The link between degree programme and Advisory Board can be shaped in two ways:

- 1) by adding a delegation from the faculty (lecturers/stakeholders) to the Advisory Board;
- 2) by inviting a delegation to Advisory Board meetings as a discussion partner.

#### Frequency and term of office

To ensure the engagement of the Advisory Board and develop a frequent evaluation and feedback cycle, meetings should be organised at least annually. The development of a community, digitally or live, that facilitates the communication of information on current issues and developments to—and ideally from—members is recommended. The use of such a tool could intensify engagement and input without creating problems relating to scheduling, travel, or implementation.

Members of an Advisory Board should be asked for a defined term, aligned to the pace of developments in the curriculum, research, and the professional field. For example, it would be possible to install a structural Advisory Board with a shifting composition that is aligned with the current themes within a degree programme at a given time.

#### Objective of Advisory Board meetings

The conversations between the Advisory Board and the university, faculty or degree programmes—individual or in clusters—are intended to evaluate the connection between the degree programmes and the professional field in terms of experiences, evaluations, research,



and plans. Topics could include developments in society or science, plans for educational innovation, outcomes of the alumni monitor, outcomes from visitations, the educational vision, the vision on internships, or Career Services, amongst others. It is important that meetings with the Advisory Boards do not have a formal bureaucratic character, but focus on providing joint input. This ensures that they can work towards the further development of modern and academic degree programmes that are relevant to the labour market.

To make best use of the Advisory Boards as a tool to promote the connection between degree programmes and the labour market, faculties are requested to make the Advisory Boards part of the faculty employability strategy in their Faculty Strategy Plans for 2020–2025.

#### Evaluation policy

The policy that was introduced in 2011 was first evaluated in April 2018. At that time, it was concluded that the policy works well, but that several faculties are still in the process of establishing and optimising their Advisory Boards. Following this review, it was decided to re-evaluate the policy, as set out in this new Framework, in 2020. This evaluation will be conducted by the Education and Students Section.