

# The Framework for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Flanders (Belgium)

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# Introduction (1)

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- Quality assurance = basic condition for good and reliable education
- Basis of formalization of Quality assurance in higher Education in Flanders (Belgium):
  - University decree (1991)
  - University Colleges decree (1994)
  - Structural decree (2003)
  - ⇒ Government oversees quality assurance
  - ⇒ Active governmental policy

## Introduction (2)

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- Does not mean that QA did not exist before the '90's!
  - Long tradition of Quality assurance without governmental support/supervision
    - '80's UGent:
      - ✓ measuring of student workload
      - ✓ Initiatives for training of educational staff
- ⇒ University decree of 1991 and University Colleges decree of 1994 institutionalized QA
- ⇒ Structural Decree of 2003 harmonized QA-regulations in accordance with Bologna-declaration

## Introduction(3)

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- 2 (linked) types of quality assurance
  - Internal Quality assurance:
    - All activities focusing on the improvement and embedding of quality within the institution
  - External Quality assurance: legal obligation
    - Visitation
    - Accreditation
- ⇒ Link between internal-external QA = self evaluation report (internal) as the basis for the visitation process and accreditation (external)

# Internal Quality assurance

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- Internal Quality assurance encompasses all activities focused on the improvement and embedding of quality
  - Each institutions uses its own quality assurance system (e.g. based on the EFQM-model)
  - Dual focus: improvement *and* embedding
  - Quality culture symbolized by PDCA-cycle:  
Plan-Do-Check-Act

# Internal Quality assurance

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- All different institutional systems of internal quality assurance have a number of common items:
  - Student workload measurement
  - Evaluation of education / teachers by students
  - Staff Training activities
  - Amelioration tracks
  - ...
- Internal quality assurance is reflected in a self evaluation report in preparation of visitation and accreditation

# External Quality assurance

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- 2 Pillars:
    - Visitation
    - Accreditation
- ⇒ Legally embedded in the Structural Decree of 4 April 2003



## External Quality assurance: visitation

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- Visitation = an evaluation by external experts
- At the level of an educational programme/department (all within 1 academic year)
- Legally required: every 8 years
- Organised by
  - Flemish Council of University Colleges
  - Flemish Inter-University Council
- On the basis of a strict scenario (protocol)
- Costs: to be paid by institutions

# External Quality assurance: visitation

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- Steps within a visitation process:
  - Self evaluation:
    - 2 years before the visitation, the department starts preparing this by writing a self evaluation report
    - ⇒ Self evaluation report = basis of the visit
  - Visitation:
    - Field Experts Commission (working field, students, educational specialists)
    - Evaluate quality of the programme and the educational process
    - Visit the institution and interview all stakeholders
    - Write a report with an evaluation

## External Quality assurance: visitation

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- Evaluation framework (6 subjects):
  - goals of the programme
  - programme content
  - personnel effort
  - facilities
  - internal quality assurance
  - results
- 21 items developed according to criteria
- Differentiation of criteria according to level (ba-ma) and orientation (professional - academic)
- Optional: specific quality hallmark

## External quality assurance: visitation

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- Reporting:
  - Oral report: at the end of the site visit
  - Written report:
    - Within a few months
    - Possibility to react
    - Final public report (→ also: press)
- Follow up
  - QA = continuous process
  - Institutional responsibility
  - Institutions take the initiative to apply for accreditation

# External Quality assurance: accreditation

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- Accreditation = “awarding a quality mark indicating that certain standards have been met”
- Accreditation in Flanders: at the level of the programme
- Comparable, internationally acknowledged standards
- Accreditation = basic condition
  - For governmental financing
  - To be allowed to award degrees
- Organisation of accreditation: NVAO (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditation Organisatie ;Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation)

# External Quality assurance: accreditation

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Steps in the accreditation request-procedure:

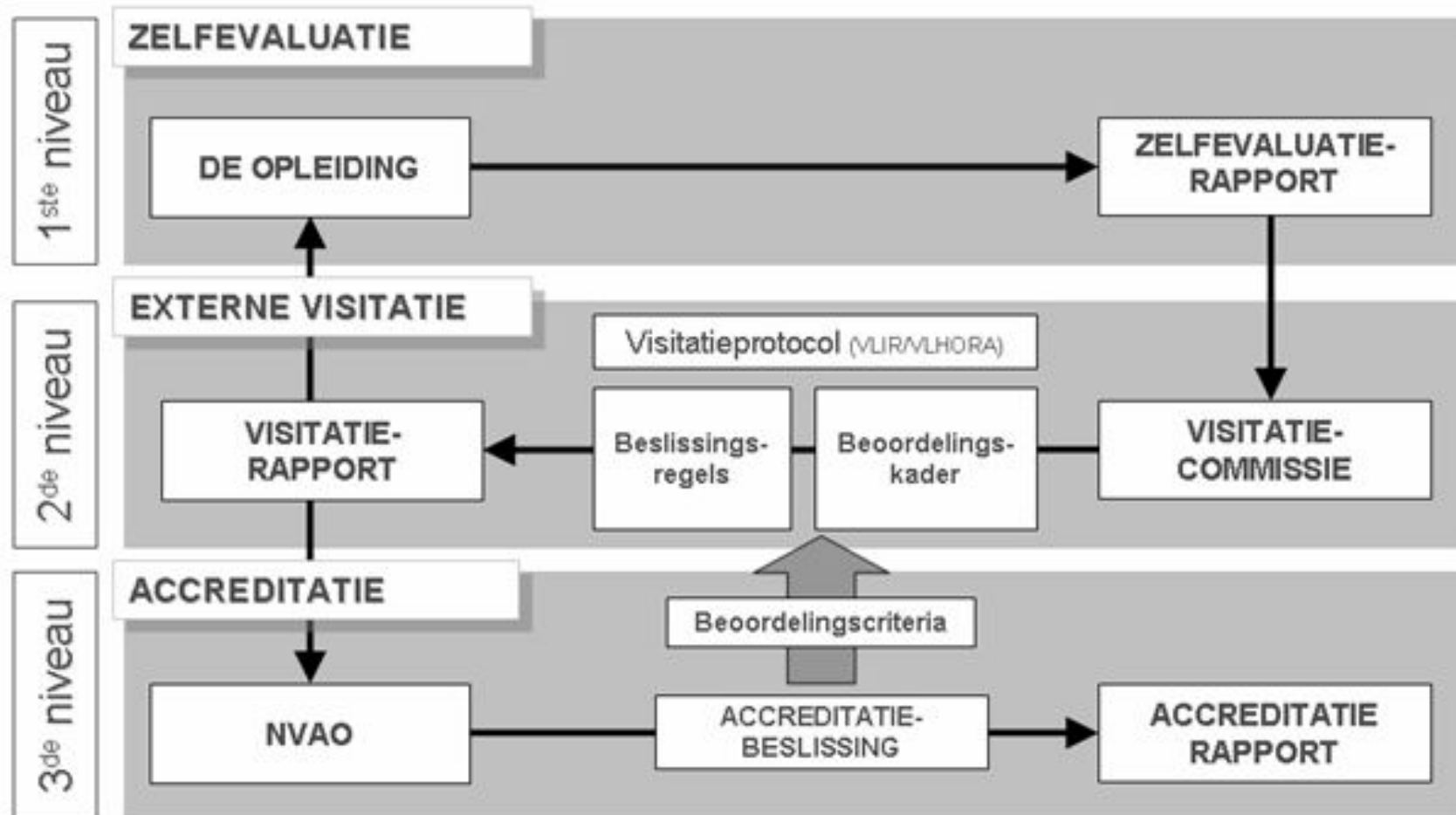
- Application submitted by the board of the institution
- NVAO decides form and content of the application file
  - At least: the external assessment = Visitation report
- Timing: application within 2 months after publication of visitation report or 6 months before accreditation expires
- Cost: 500 € per accreditation request

# External Quality assurance: accreditation

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- After max. 4 months: decision by NVAO
- Positive accreditation decision:
  - Accreditation for 8 academic years
- Negative accreditation decision:
  - Appeal possible with Flemish government or
  - Request for a temporarily recognition (max. duration of 3 years) on the condition of an accepted improvement track [feasibility = checked by Homologation Commission]
  - After a given period of time: new application for accreditation in which it is proven that the shortcomings have been dealt with

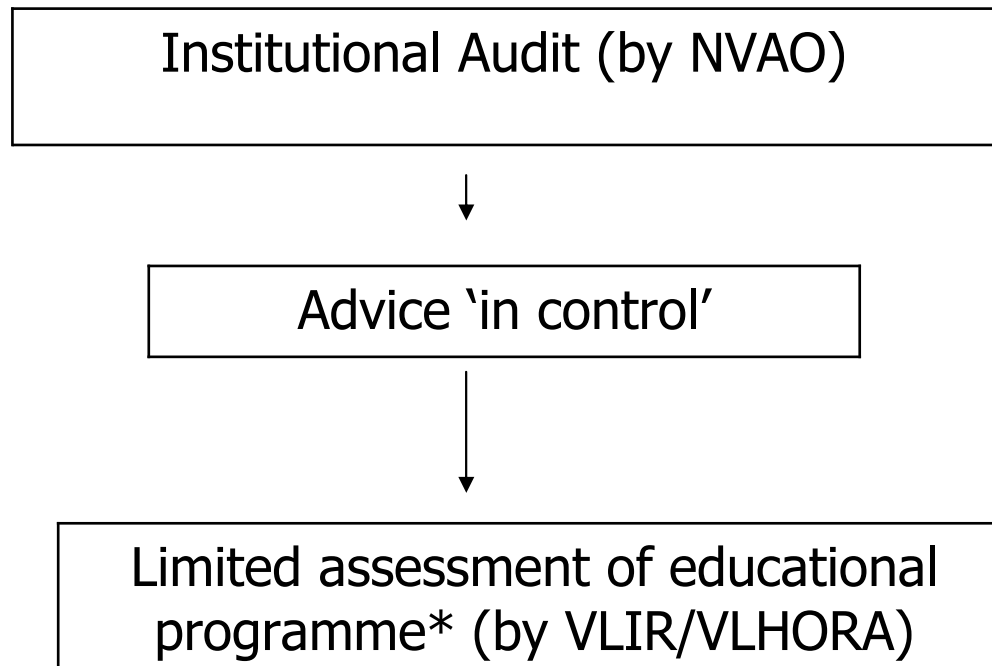
# External quality assurance: survey





# New Accreditation System

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\* Trails of attention if institution gets a negative advice

# Institutional Audit

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- 5 standards
    - Vision of institution on quality of education
    - How does the institution realise its vision
    - How are the realisations measured?
    - Improvement plans
    - Responsibilities within the institution for QA
- ⇒ satisfaction, partly satisfaction, unsatisfactory

# Assessment of programme

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- 3 standards
    - Goals of the educational programme
    - Plan of realization of the goals
    - Achievement of the goals
- ⇒ insufficient, sufficient, good, excellent

Thank you for your attention!

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