

BELGIUM – FLEMISH COMMUNITY

Legislation has been adapted higher education to comply with the aims of the Bologna declaration. The relationship between universities and other institutions of higher education ("*hogescholen*") is changing, esp. as they are organising themselves jointly in associations between universities and other institutions of higher education

With the approval of the "structure decree 4 April 2003, the Bologna process was formally fully implemented in the Flemish Community: a legal basis for the BaMa structure, accreditation and the creation of "associations".

Bachelor-Master structure

The introduction of the BaMa structure implies that the existing training programmes needed to be reformed. The division of higher education in 3 separate forms (academic (universities), academically oriented (*hogescholen*) and professional (*hogescholen*)) system is being reformed into a binary one. Both in its orientation (professional oriented (*hogescholen*) and academic oriented (both *hogescholen* and universities)) and in its cycles (Ba and Ma). Nevertheless only 3 out of the 4 possible quadrants are activated: professional bachelors, academic bachelors, academic masters. There is no development of professional oriented Masters.

The decree determines the generic descriptors of each of the 3 quadrants. The descriptors are based upon the Dublin descriptors, and liaise with the *European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education*.

Professional higher education is aimed at general training and acquisition of professional knowledge and competencies, based upon the application of scientific or artistic knowledge, creativity and practical skills.

Academic higher education is aimed at general training and acquisition of academic or artistic knowledge and competencies proper to the function of the domain of science or the arts. They are explicitly based upon scientific research.

We note that the distinction between professional and academic orientation is only made within the ISCED classification. The Dublin descriptors only refer to it.

The major challenge of 2003 was the reform of the academic oriented programmes of the *hogescholen* to accredited academic bachelors and masters. In many ways a logical development due to the reforms started in the 1990's (before Bologna).

Accreditation

Accreditation is formally given to programmes by the NVAO, the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation, or by a foreign accreditation organisation (member of ENQUA and only when recognised by the NVAO) on the basis of peer visitation reports. Accreditation is considered as a form of meta-evaluation of the external quality care. Since there is a legal basis accreditation frameworks were developed on the basis of 5 aspects:

(1) the educational contents, (2) the educational process, (3) the educational outcomes,

(4) the material infrastructure, the quality of staff, the organisation and the internal quality care, and (5) the methods of self-evaluation and generic quality guarantees. For each programme a transitory accreditation was provided. By the end of the academic year 2012-2013, however, every programme needs to be fully accredited. There is the possibility of an improvement track in case of a negative accreditation report. Accreditations are limited to 6 years, and for the programmes in reform to 4 years.

Peer visitations are organised by the VLIR (Flemish Universities Council) and VLHORA (Flemish Council of the *Hogescholen*). These organisations are amongst other responsible for the composition of the visitation committees. The Flemish social partners are members of the Advisory Council of NVAO. The employees are represented by Hugo Deckers (ACOD) en Rudy Van Renterghem (COC).

Associations

The new academic programmes of the *hogescholen* can only be programmed in the framework of an association between one university and one or more *hogescholen*. The associations are bound to assure the connection with research. Focus of the associations is the rational use of research capacity, but other responsibilities are also allocated. More and more the associations determine the programming of faculties and departments. A negotiation committee is also established on this meso-level.

BFUG

The Higher Education International Policy Working Group, established by the Flemish Education Council, Higher Education division, takes up the function of Flemish follow-up group. All stakeholders including the trade unions) are represented in the FEC and the HEIP WG. In the latter also the Flemish HERSC representatives Hugo Deckers (ACOD) en Rudy Van Renterghem (COC).

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