

howest
university of applied sciences

A young woman with curly hair is smiling and talking to a man in a meeting. They are sitting at a table with papers and a laptop. The background shows a window with a view of a city.

**STUDY PROGRAMME
QUALITY ASSURANCE
AT HOWEST**

STUDY PROGRAMME QUALITY ASSURANCE



At Howest, we consider quality care as a shared responsibility of all staff members at all policy levels. Based on the perception of our values serve, empower, care, every staff member is aware of his share and his role in the quality assurance story. Howest strives for a quality culture in which all stakeholders are closely involved in our quality assurance processes. We reflect with them on the quality of the study programmes and take appropriate actions to further develop these.

At the study programme level, the reference framework consists of the eight quality criteria. Formally, we work with a six-year quality cycle. A study programme assessment takes place every three years, alternating between a **Howest Study Programme Test (HOT)** and a **study programme audit**, in cooperation with an external partner. Day-to-day quality assurance includes the informal and formal **survey of stakeholders** (quantitative and qualitative). In the **annual quality assurance report**, each study department brings together all findings and analyses on all quality assurance processes. The annual report constitutes the stepping stone to the study programme's policy plans. Every year, the cluster draws up its **policy plan** for the coming years, which includes the study programme's policy projects that contribute to the realisation of the strategic goals Howest has set.

QUALITY CRITERIA



STUDY PROGRAMME QUALITY ASSURANCE CYCLE

6-year cycle

study
programme
audit



day-to-day
quality assurance
& annual report

Howest
study
programme
test

Howest study programme test

Every six years, a study programme goes through a Howest **study programme test (HOT)**. A panel of internal and external experts examines whether the study programme meets the quality assurance criteria. The panel examines **how the study programme monitors quality**, safeguards **strong points** and addresses **points of concern**. The survey is based on the annual quality assurance report and other available documents from the study department and the quality assurance process. The panel engages with study programme supervisors, lecturers and students. The strengths and development points are included in a **report** that is finalised in consultation with the study programme. The report is submitted to the Howest steering committee. This committee and the study department give appropriate follow-up to the comments and suggestions included in the report.

External study programme audit

Every six years, study programmes go through a study programme audit conducted by an **external partner** (until 2018: AeQui, as from 2019: VLUHR KZ). An external and independent panel conducts an **independent assessment** of the quality level of the study programme on **all eight quality criteria**. The assessment encourages further **development** of the study programme. The study department writes a critical reflection in which it reflects on the quality criteria. The assessment is based on this critical reflection, the study programme documents and discussions with **all stakeholders** of the study programme: the study programme supervisors, the study programme team, the students, the professional field and the alumni. The strengths and development points are included in a **report**. The report is submitted to the Howest steering committee. This committee and the study department give appropriate follow-up to the comments and suggestions made in the report.

Day-to-day quality assurance

Informal feedback by accessible study programme teams and the intertwining of the study programme with the professional field

Formal feedback by taking surveys and organising stakeholder consultations

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

- **Study programme council:** At least twice a year, formal consultations are held with a representative representation of students.
- **Professional field committee:** At least twice a year, formal consultations are held with a representative from the professional field.

SURVEYS

- **Student evaluation of course units:** *All course units will be surveyed at least once every three years (for bachelor study programmes) or once every two years (for associate degree study programmes).* Students give feedback on the quality of content, study materials, coaching by the lecturer, study load, evaluation and feedback on courses and assignments.
- **Survey upon enrolment:** *Annual survey. For all new students.* Students give feedback on the intake guidance within the study programme (e.g. welcome days) and the services provided by a number of service departments (regarding communication and enrolment procedure, among other things).
- **Survey graduates:** *Annual survey. For all students who just graduated.* Students give feedback on the study programme they followed. Several quality criteria are addressed including the study programme, the powerful learning environment and the guidance of graduation of students.
- **Survey upon de-enrolment:** *Students stopping their studies prematurely.* Students can indicate why they decided to stop their studies early.
- **The survey for incoming and outgoing exchange students:** *Every semester.* Students provide feedback on their destination and guidance and support during international mobility.
- **In-depth survey study and student counseling:** *Every three years. All students.* Students give feedback on study and student guidance at study programme level (mentoring, mentorship and pathway guidance) and over the entire university of applied sciences (talent coaching and student services).
- **In-depth survey on internationalisation:** *Every three years. Near-graduates.* Students provide feedback on the international dimension in the study programme.

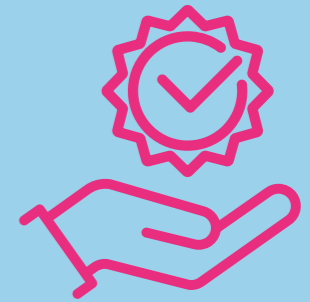
Annual quality assurance report

Every study programme draws up an annual quality assurance report. This brings together all findings and analyses concerning quality assurance. Relevant data from the educational achievement report are also included. The study department links a concrete action to each finding. The annual report is a stepping stone to the policy plans. To each finding, the study department couples a concrete action, owner of the action and time schedule.

Policy cycle

At Howest, we apply an annual policy cycle. When the policy plans are drawn up, it is indicated in what way the cluster and the study department contribute to the realisation of the Howest strategic goals. The policy plans are translated into concrete assignments or projects and are evaluated annually.

QUALITY SUPPORT



Quality assurance is interwoven in the very fabric of our university of applied sciences. It is characterized by the strong synergy between the Education Department, the Quality Assurance Department, the study programme coordinators, the quality staff in the study programmes and the policy. The **Quality Assurance Department**, together with the Education Department, coordinates all quality assurance processes and supports the study departments in implementing the quality assurance cycle. The **Education Department** supports the study departments in realising their educational projects. The departments provide frameworks and facilitate the study programmes.

In addition, there is sufficient room for initiative for the study departments to develop quality care systems that fit within the study programme culture. It is important that stakeholders feel involved, that quality assurance is integrated as much as possible into day-to-day operations and that innovation and creativity are stimulated. Here, the **quality manager** of the study department plays an important role. As the study programme coordinator's right-hand man, the quality manager helps define the study programme's quality assurance policy. The quality manager is an important key to strengthening the quality culture within the study department.

