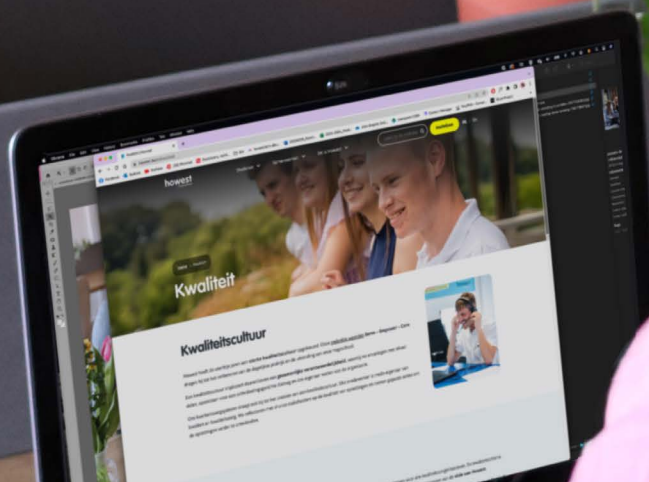


QUALITY CRITERIA FOR STUDY PROGRAMMES



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INTRODUCTION REFERENCE FRAMEWORK



Howest offers high-quality study programmes. In order to guarantee this high-quality, each study programme must meet a number of criteria that describe the basic quality of a study programme. As part of its internal quality assurance, Howest applies eight quality criteria. These quality criteria include the elements that are important for realising Howest's vision and the European standards for high-quality higher education. The criteria are also grafted onto the eight quality characteristics set by decree.

The eight quality criteria are formulated generically and transcend differences in content and differences in teaching and testing concepts. As a result, they apply to all study programmes within the university of applied sciences. Differences in expectations depending on the Flemish Qualifications Framework (FQF) level are, where relevant, indicated in the framework.

Each criterion defines what constitutes basic quality for a study programme. It is essential that programmes focus on achieving basic quality for each criterion. Meeting the quality expectations of the aspects that guarantee the outcome level is fundamental.

The reference framework functions as a guide for the study department to critically evaluate its own approach. The criteria guide study departments in the context of all internal quality assurance activities. It is therefore important for the study department to integrate the reference framework into its day-to-day operations and to pay attention to closing the PDCA cycle. Frameworks that support the study departments in doing so can be found on the [page of the Quality Assurance Department](#). The quality criteria are also used by the audit panel of the external study programme audits, the Howest study programme tests and the pilot accreditations.

During quality assurance processes, the aim is to highlight the study programme's strengths and to detect areas of concern. In addition, the content of the framework also challenges the study programme to maintain its profile in the educational landscape and to bring out the best in itself.

Using this reference framework and evaluating one's own approach is very important to continuously improve the quality of the study programme and to achieve the best results for its students. This contributes to the further development of Howest as a high-quality university of applied sciences.

To support study departments, the Educational Development & Study Programme Quality Assurance Department has developed various guidelines and frameworks that can be **found** on the [Sharepoint page](#). Per quality criterion, you can find the Howest-wide frameworks and procedures. In addition, some questions are also formulated per quality criterion that can guide and support the study department in its reflection.

THE QUALITY ASSURANCE REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

QUALITY CRITERION 1:

VISION AND POLICY

In its vision, the study department makes a clear choice as to which **profile** it educates and which (international) profession-specific and social developments it responds to. In its **didactic concept**, the study department specifies how it designs and organises its education (teaching concept) and how **testing** is organised (testing concept).

The study department has a clear vision of how it involves the professional field in organising education. The department's vision is **grafted onto the Howest vision**.

The vision on the study programme is known and supported by the core team members and checked off with the professional field. The vision guides the policy. The study department has a policy in which **study department-wide agreements** are made in accordance with the Howest educational frameworks.

The **vision** is **implemented** by the core team members and is **known** to non-core team members. Students can articulate the study department's vision in their own words. Work field partners recognise themselves in this vision.

The **policy plan** of the cluster to which the study department belongs includes policy projects that provide a realistic response to the study department's medium-term challenges. The study department's policy projects contribute to the achievement of the study department's vision and the **Howest strategic plan**.

The policy projects are **evaluated** and adjusted **annually** with the involvement of the team, and based on input from stakeholders (students, team members, professional field and management).

The **policy projects and the annual report** are **known and supported** by the core team members. Both give direction to the operation of the study department team and are translated into realistic and followable actions.

QUALITY CRITERION 2:

TARGETED OUTCOME LEVEL

The study department has **insight into the required entry-level competences of newly graduated students** and the competence profiles of related study programmes in Belgium and/or abroad.

The competence profile matches the **expectations** of the **field**. The work field surveyed represents the actual situation and needs.

The competence profile complies with the **decree provisions** on FQF level and orientation and specific laws and regulations applicable to the study programme.

The competence profile is **known and supported** by those providing education in the study programme (core team members, non-core team members and professional field involved in specific programme components). The competence profile **guides** education.

Students can formulate in **their own words** the competence profile they are being trained for.

QUALITY CRITERION 3:

STUDY PROGRAMME

The vision on the study programme **guides decisions on study programme** content, coherence and organisation.

The study programme is **up-to-date** and includes **relevant, authentic applications**.

The study programme provides space to include **relevant evolutions** in line with profession-specific and societal developments in the professional field that the study programme wants to respond to. The study programme offers possibilities for multidisciplinary projects.

The study programme meets the relevant **decree obligations** (including workplace learning, number of hours of internship, etc.).

There is **content coherence** within and across semesters. The intended **learning outcomes** can be acquired in a step-by-step, logical manner and within the allotted time. **Students** see how course units contribute to achieving the learning outcomes. Each team member knows the place of his/her course units (OLOD) within the **competence pathways** and can articulate his/her contribution to the competence profile. **Sequentiality** between course units is deliberate.

The study programme and its organisation allow students to follow their **individual pathways**.

The study programme consists of a **clear** number of **course units** and is manageable for all persons involved. In organising the study programme, the study department makes optimal use of the available teaching time.

The study programme pays attention to the development of **international and intercultural competences** and facilitates this through various opportunities for international cooperation and mobility in line with the competence profile of the study programme and the level of education. Short-term mobilities, internationalisation@home and long-term individual mobility windows for study and/or internship are part of the bachelor's study programme.

The study department knows which target group(s) it is addressing and tailors the offered **study programme variant(s)** to the intake profile of the target group(s).

Students are involved in the evaluation and **adjustment of the study programme's** coherence and organisation. The study programme team and the professional field are involved in the evaluation and adjustment of the content quality of the study programme.

QUALITY CRITERION 4:

POWERFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The **vision** of the study department **guides decisions** on the powerful learning environment.

At the level of each course unit, the team or individual lecturer, respectively, creates a learning environment that enables students to achieve the assigned learning outcomes. Lecturers use appropriate **work formats, grouping formats, learning content, media and assessment formats** that are mutually aligned and responsive to the initial situation of the student group.

Within the study programme, different **work and evaluation formats** are always used in a well-considered way, in relation to the predefined objectives and the initial situation.

Students learn from and with each other and from and **with the professional field**.

Study materials are didactic and meet all quality standards as to content and accessibility, they are available in time and contain relevant, authentic applications.

Students receive regular and timely task- and process-oriented **feedback** in the course of their learning process and upon assessments.

The **evaluation** is valid, reliable and transparent.

Students are involved in the **evaluation and adjustment of study material, studyability, working, grouping and evaluation formats**. The professional field is involved in the evaluation and adjustment of the quality of the content of study materials.

Associate Degree students are facilitated in their demand for **international internship experiences and intercultural learning experiences**, in line with the study programme's competence profile.

Bachelor students are actively encouraged to engage in **international and intercultural learning experiences**.

QUALITY CRITERION 5:

STUDENT GUIDANCE

The **vision** of the study department **guides** decisions on student guidance. Student guidance starts from the Howest values 'serve- empower-care'.

The study department offers **prospective students** a **realistic picture** about all facets of the study programme and Howest.

The study department takes targeted measures regarding **social bonding** within the student group and integration into the university of applied sciences among students.

The study department has an overview of the profile of its entrants and deploys appropriate initiatives for **guidance of incoming students**.

The study department itself provides **accessible services** for all students with regard to subject-matter-related guidance, process guidance and pathway guidance. If necessary, it **refers students to** specific bodies inside and outside Howest for study skills, reorientation and/or psychosocial problems. The study department responds to students who are in danger of dropping out or need extra guidance (**coaching, reorientation, differentiation**).

The study department provides proper guidance for **outgoing and incoming student mobility**. The study department guides graduates to **initial work experience or further study**.

Students are involved in the **evaluation and adjustment of student guidance**.

The study department has insight into why students leave the study programme **early**.

The study department monitors **educational achievement** and makes adjustments with a view to (re)orientation and progression/graduation.

QUALITY CRITERION 6:

COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL FIELD

The **vision** of the study department **guides** decisions on cooperation with the professional field.

Cooperation with the professional field is **structurally** present in the study programme (and in accordance with relevant regulations) and in the design of the course units from the start of the study programme.

Within the cooperation with the professional field, the study department **monitors** the **quality** of the partners from the professional field (in content input, guidance, evaluation, among others).

Students and the professional field are involved in the **evaluation and adjustment** of collaborations with the professional field.

There is **alumni collaboration** with added value for both the alumni and the study department.

The study department is a **relevant cooperation partner** of the professional field.

The bachelor study programme is a **relevant knowledge partner** for the professional field.

Research, services (of the study department or cluster) and **teaching** are demonstrably reinforcing each other.

The **vision** on the bachelor study programme **guides** decisions on the choice of (participation in) service projects and research projects.

QUALITY CRITERION 7:

ACHIEVED OUTCOME LEVEL

The **vision** of the study department is **guiding** decisions on final assessments.

After completing the study programme, students have **acquired** the **learning outcomes** and are immediately employable.

The study department has **several assessments at final level** in which each learning outcome is tested **at least once** at associate degree level (FQF 5) or at bachelor level (FQF 6). The study department has final assessments that meet the conditions as described in level 5 or 6 in the Flemish Qualification Framework.

The **professional field** is **involved in** the evaluation of the final tests. **Assessment documents** are manageable for all assessors in terms of the number of criteria and clear in their wording and weighting.

The **assessment procedures** for final tests are transparent and clearly described for students and the professional field. Equivalent consultation takes place between the different assessors in which everyone substantiates their assessment.

The **professional field** is involved in the **development, evaluation and adjustment** of assessments at final level. **Students** are involved in the **evaluation and adjustment** of final tests.

QUALITY CRITERION 8:

STUDY DEPARTMENT TEAM

The **vision** on the study programme **guides decisions on the** composition, functioning and development of the study department team.

The study department team is **complementary** and has the necessary (substantive, didactic and/or research-related) competences to realise its vision, policy and study programme.

Team members are in **touch with** the professional field.

Team members continue to **develop or refine** their **competences** in line with the needs of the study programme. The study department ensures the quality of the language proficiency level of the lecturers within foreign-language course units.

Team members are actively encouraged to have **international/intercultural experiences** in Belgium and abroad.

There is an ongoing **dialogue** between team members and their manager regarding (teaching) professionalisation, job planning, job content and evaluation.

The study department team is a **community** where reigns a culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration.

Communication within the team and to students is smooth and transparent.

The study department team shares and promotes the **Howest values** of 'serve-empower-care'.

The team is **self-critical** and always looking for further improvements for the study programme based on feedback from stakeholders.

