



EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT LIMITED PROCEDURE **Vesalius College**

Bachelor in Business Studies, Bachelor in Global Communication and
Bachelor in International Affairs at Vesalius College

www.vluhr.be Brussels - July 2018

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**EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT - LIMITED PROCEDURE
BACHELOR IN BUSINESS STUDIES, BACHELOR IN GLOBAL COMMUNICATION AND
BACHELOR IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS - VESALIUS COLLEGE**

Ravensteingalerij 27
1000 Brussel
T +32 (0)2 792 55 00
F +32(0)2 211 41 99

The report is available electronically at www.vluhr.be

Legal deposit number: D/2018/12.784/14

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SECTION 1

General Section

EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT LIMITED PROCEDURE

Bachelor in Business Studies,
Bachelor in Global Communication and
Bachelor in International Affairs

1 Introduction

In autumn 2014 an assessment panel reviewed three bachelor programmes of Vesalius College: Bachelor in Business Studies, Bachelor in Communication Studies and Bachelor in International Affairs. The panel's conclusions were published on May 21, 2015 in the report 'Educational assessment Vesalius College – An evaluation of the quality of the Bachelor in Communication Studies, the Bachelor in Business Studies & the Bachelor in International Affairs, Vesalius College'.

Based on this report the study programmes applied for an accreditation from the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). In accordance with the Decree on the Structure of the Higher Education in Flanders, Vesalius College submitted a request, accompanied with an improvement plan. The three bachelor programmes received an accreditation with limited validity, until the end of the academic year 2017-2018 (i.e. October 1, 2018).

2 Limited procedure

Before the expiration of the accreditation date, the study programmes must reapply for accreditation. This limited accreditation procedure entails a self-evaluation report by the study programmes, a site visit carried out by an independent panel of expert peers, and the publication of the panel's findings in an assessment report. With the resulting assessment report, the study programmes can apply for accreditation by NVAO.

The reassessment is limited to the standards that were evaluated as unsatisfactory in the first assessment:

- Bachelor in Business Studies: standard 2 'Educational learning environment', standard 3 'Outcome level achieved' and standard 4 'Structure and organisation of internal quality assurance';
- Bachelor in Communication Studies: standard 2 'Educational learning environment', standard 3 'Outcome level achieved' and standard 4 'Structure and organisation of internal quality assurance';
- Bachelor in International Affairs: standard 3 'Outcome level achieved' and standard 4 'Structure and organisation of internal quality assurance'.

3 Composition of the assessment panel

The assessment panel for Vesalius College consisted of 5 members. Four of them were also a member of the previous assessment panel in 2014. The composition of the assessment panel was ratified on October 26, 2017 by the VLUHR Quality Assurance Board. The NVAO sanctioned the panel composition on February 26, 2018. The VLUHR Quality Assurance Board subsequently installed the assessment panel by its decision of April 10, 2018.

The assessment panel was composed as follows:

- Chairman
 - **Prof. dr. Rudy Martens**, Professor of Strategy and Dean of the Faculty of Applied Economic Sciences, University of Antwerp
- Panel members
 - **Prof. dr. Geoffrey Edwards**, Professor and Senior Fellow at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge
 - **Prof. dr. Steven Eggermont**, Professor and Programme Director at the School for Mass Communication Research, Department of Social Sciences, KU Leuven
 - **Prof. dr. em. Hans van Hout**, Professor Emeritus of Education Sciences, University of Amsterdam¹
 - **Dylan Couck**, master's student in Law, Ghent University

Klara De Wilde, quality assurance coordinator of the Quality Assurance Unit of the VLUHR, was the project manager and secretary of the panel.

The curricula vitae of the panel members are attached (see Appendix 1).

4 Task of the assessment panel

For this reassessment, each of the programmes prepared a self-evaluation report. The VLUHR Quality Assurance Unit received these reports on March 15, 2018 and distributed them to the panel members. Hence, the assessment panel had the opportunity to study the information stated in the self-evaluation reports and to prepare the visit accurately.

The panel visited the College and assessed the three programmes on May 14 and 15, 2018. During the visit, the panel had meetings with the programme management, students and teaching staff. The panel had also the opportunity to consult a representative set of study materials. The discussions were held in a very constructive way. The visit schedule is attached (see Appendix 2).

Finally, the panel presented its findings and conclusions regarding the assessed standards in a draft report. This was done in accordance with the "VLUHR Manual for the external quality assurance in Flemish higher education, 2015". The draft was sent to the management of Vesalius College under embargo for a response. The panel incorporated the reaction of the programmes in its final report insofar it agreed with the remarks.

¹ Prof. van Hout couldn't attend the site visit due to illness but gave his reflections to the panel members before the site visit.

SECTION 2

Report of
the study programmes

VESALIUS COLLEGE

Bachelor in Business Studies
Bachelor in Global Communication
Bachelor in International Affairs

INTRODUCTION

The Bachelor in Business Studies (hereafter referred to as BUS), the Bachelor in Global Communication (hereafter referred to as CMM) and the Bachelor in International Affairs (hereafter referred to as IA) are academic bachelor programmes, organised by Vesalius College.

Vesalius College is situated in Brussels and was founded in 1987 by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Boston University's Metropolitan College. The College offers undergraduate programmes based on interactive teaching and taught entirely in English. The College became independent from the VUB in 2000.

The three bachelor programmes were assessed in 2014 and provided the programme management with a large amount of feedback resulting in an improvement plan. After evaluation of this improvement plan, NVAO decided to grant the programmes an accreditation with limited validity, until the end of the academic year 2017-2018.

The panel is impressed by the many actions Vesalius College has undertaken to meet all the recommendations of the previous assessment report. The panel particularly appreciates the fact that the College did not limit the improvement actions merely to the standards that were evaluated as unsatisfactory, but that improvements were introduced even for standards that had been evaluated as satisfactory. Following the improvement plan, several far-reaching reforms were made both at the college and the programme level in order to address all the recommendations of the assessment panel. The curricula of the three bachelor programmes were redesigned and were given a global scope, in line with the repositioning of Vesalius College as a college of Global Affairs. As a result, the name of the bachelor programme Communications Studies was changed into Bachelor in Global Communication. The new bachelor programmes started in the academic year 2016-2017, so that the first and second year have been offered according to the new curricula and that the new third year will be offered for the first time in 2018-2019.

In Spring 2018 Vesalius College was made up of 20 students for CMM, 55 for BUS and 40 for IA.

GENERIC QUALITY STANDARD 2: EDUCATIONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The assessment panel evaluates the educational learning environment for the Bachelor in Business Studies and the Bachelor in Global Communication as “satisfactory”.

Assessment 2015

The panel was of the opinion that for CMM the content as well as the academic rigour of the programme needed to be thoroughly strengthened before the level expected from an academic bachelor's programme could be attained, while for BUS the academic rigour of the programme needed improving. Students did not use the academic skills they should achieve in an academic Bachelor's programme. Consequently, the panel evaluated the learning process² as below threshold level. Furthermore the panel was of the opinion that substantial changes had to be made, not only in the programmes, but also in the managerial structures of the College in order to remedy the shortcomings of CMM and BUS.

For IA, the panel was of the opinion that the research base was much more academically oriented, and the quality of the learning process was in line with the level of an academic bachelor's programme. This was clear from the course materials, the workload and IA student's work and assignments. Consequently, the panel evaluated the learning process for the IA programme as at threshold level.

Reassessment 2018

The programme learning outcomes (PLO) of BUS, CMM and IA were revised and it is the opinion of the panel that they fit better the new global perspective to which Vesalius College is aiming. Also, the academic orientation is strengthened. The PLO of BUS adheres to the domain specific learning outcomes (DLO) of 'Handelswetenschappen' (business administration). The PLO of CMM mirror the DLO for Communication Sciences and the PLO of IA easily match those of other universities with IA degrees.

The curricula of the three programmes were substantially reformed and guarantee more the targeted learning outcomes:

² Since the adjustment of the decree concerning quality assurance in higher education in 2015, standard 2 is titled the educational learning environment.

Curriculum of Global Communication

Methods	Theory		Auxiliary Sciences	Elective Courses
	Basic Theory	Global Analysis		
Introduction to Academic Writing and Critical Thinking (HUM101G)	Human Communication (CMM101G)	Intercultural Communication (CMM106G)	Global Politics (POL101G)	Three Major Electives + Four Free Electives
Introduction to Statistics (STA101G)	Mass Communication (CMM102G)	Global Communication (CMM221G)	Introduction to Economics (ECN101G)	Global Communication Electives:
Intermediate Quantitative Research Methods (SSC271G)	Rhetoric (CMM211G)	Global Advocacy (CMM253G)	Global Ethics (HUM103G)	<i>Media Studies:</i>
Intermediate Qualitative Research Methods (SSC272G)	Communication Audiences & Effects (CMM323G)	Communication Effects Across Cultures (CMM324G)	Global Ethics, Leadership & Personal Development I (HUM203G)	World Cinema (CMM261G) Topics in European Film History (CMM262G)
Adv. Quant. & Qual. Comm. Research Methods (CMM372G)	Communication Law & Policy (CMM352G)	Comparative Media Systems (CMM353G)	Global Ethics, Leadership & Personal Development II (HUM303G)	Convergence Culture & Transmedia Narratives (CMM263G) International Journalism (CMM331G) Photojournalism (CMM233G)
Capstone in Communication Studies (CMM391G)				Strategic Communication: Political Communication & Public Diplomacy (CMM251G) Global Practice of Corporate Communication & PR (CM-M242G)
BA Thesis in Communication Studies I (CMM395G)				Lobbying in the EU (CMM252G) Marketing Communication & Advertising in a Global Context (CMM341G)
BA Thesis in Communication Studies II (CMM396G)				Gamification in Politics, Business and Communications (CMM214G)

Curriculum of Business Studies

Major Requirements- Principles (36 ECTS)	Major Requirements- Advanced (36 ECTS)
BUS101G – Introduction to Business BUS131G – International Marketing BUS142G – Financial Accounting BUS162G – Introduction to Entrepreneurship ECN101G – Introduction to Economics MTH140G – Mathematics for Business and Entrepreneurship	BUS216G – Strategic Management BUS222G – Corporate Financial Management BUS262G – Social Entrepreneurship BUS264G – Scenario Thinking ECN201G – Intermediate Macroeconomics ECN211G – Intermediate Microeconomics
Summative Courses – Academic Research (12 ECTS)	Summative Courses- Business Research (12 ECTS)
BUS395 – Thesis in Business Studies – Seminar I BUS396 – Thesis in Business Studies – Seminar II	BUS393 – Capstone in Business Studies I BUS394 – Capstone in Business Studies II
Academic Core (24 ECTS)	Academic Core-Personal Development (18 ETCS)
HUM101G – Introduction to Academic Writing and Critical Thinking STA101G – Introduction to Statistics SSC271G – Intermediate Quantitative Research Methods SSC272G – Intermediate Qualitative Research Methods	HUM103G – Global Ethics HUM203G – Global Ethics, Leadership and Personal Development I HUM303G – Global Ethics, Leadership and Personal Development II
Major Electives (24 ECTS)	Free Electives (18 ECTS)
Major Elective I Major Elective II Major Elective III Major Elective IV	Free Elective I Free Elective II Free Elective III

Curriculum of International Affairs

Academic Core (24 ECTS)	Academic Core (Global Ethics, Leadership and Personal Development) (18 ETCS)
<p>HUM101G – Introduction to Academic Writing and Critical Thinking</p> <p>STA101G – Introduction to Statistics</p> <p>SSC271G – Intermediate Quantitative Research Methods</p> <p>SSC272G – Intermediate Qualitative Research Methods</p>	<p>HUM103G – Global Ethics</p> <p>HUM203G – Global Ethics, Leadership and Personal Development I</p> <p>HUM303G – Global Ethics, Leadership and Personal Development II</p>
Major Requirements (Introductory) (30 ECTS)	Major Requirements (Intermediate and Advanced) (36 ECTS)
<p>ECN101G – Introduction to Economics</p> <p>HIS101G – Global History since 1945</p> <p>LAW101G – Introduction to International and European Law</p> <p>POL101G – Global Politics</p> <p>POL111G – Introduction to Comparative Regional Studies</p>	<p>HIS203G – International Relations between the Wars</p> <p>HIS261G – Regional History of International Relations: Africa or</p> <p>HIS262G – Regional History of International Relations: Asia</p> <p>LAW201G – Humanitarian Law</p> <p>POL201G – Comparative Political Systems</p> <p>POL212G – Theories of International Relations</p> <p>POL303G – Advanced International Relations Theories</p>
Summative Courses (Research) (12 ECTS)	Summative Course (Practice) (6 ECTS)
<p>POL395G – BA Thesis in International Affairs (Seminar I)</p> <p>POL396G – BA Thesis in International Affairs (Seminar II)</p>	<p>POL391G – Capstone in International Affairs</p>
Major Electives (30 ECTS)	Free Electives (24 ECTS)
<p>Major Elective I</p> <p>Major Elective II</p> <p>Major Elective III</p> <p>Major Elective IV</p> <p>Major Elective V</p>	<p>Free Elective I</p> <p>Free Elective II</p> <p>Free Elective III</p> <p>Free Elective IV</p>

It is the panel's opinion that the coherence of the curricula has improved substantially, which the students confirmed during the interviews. There is a clear and logical structure within the programmes. There is also a good balance between compulsory courses and elective ones. To broaden or deepen their knowledge and skills, students can choose elective courses within their major as well as College-wide courses. Specific to the CMM programme is the focus on global communication which helps to reduce the range of disciplines covered in the old curriculum. The CMM's elective courses are now better structured in two majors: media studies and strategic communication.

Furthermore, the academic and research dimensions for BUS and CMM are clearly strengthened. First year students get an introduction in statistics. In the second year students receive a thorough introduction into quantitative and qualitative research methods. The CMM programme even has an advanced methodological course in the third year. Also in the curriculum of IA – that was already in line with the level expected from an academic bachelor – the academic and research dimensions were further strengthened. In the third year, students of all majors have to write a bachelor thesis, which is effectively organized in a step-by-step process so that students are able to write a thesis of academic quality. The splitting up of the bachelor thesis in part I and part II guarantees a good and equal start for all students in writing their bachelor thesis. Although 3rd year students were not yet available for being interviewed by the panel – as these programmes only started in the 2016-2017 academic year and so far does not have any 3rd year students yet –, the course outline of the bachelor's thesis that the panel could look at, clearly indicates that students will make use of the academic research skills they have acquired during their bachelor programme.

Vesalius College has chosen to offer programmes with a vocational and academic orientation. It is the panel's opinion that the balance between the academic and the vocational focus is good. The panel agrees that vocational courses are of added-value and encourages the faculty of the programmes to maintain the academic approach in the (vocational) courses. Even third year students of the old programme, who were interviewed by the panel, have taken some of the new methodology-oriented courses and were very enthusiastic about this. They also don't see the vocational and the academic focus of the programme as two opposing dimensions but as something which can be easily integrated. For example, the capstone has a vocational focus but for their capstone assignment the students apply research methods. So the panel encourages the programmes to maintain the current track of integrating academic research-oriented reflections in the (vocational) courses.

The panel has examined the course materials via the electronic learning environment Pointcarré and the folders on display during the site visit. The content is what can be expected of academic bachelor programmes. The progression in the courses from level 100 to 300 is clear. The courses have specific learning objectives which are linked to the PLO. All course folders are made uniformly, following the guidelines of the teaching manual (see GQS 4).

The College is committed to teaching guided by the TPEL objectives (Theory-Guided, Practice-Embedded and Experiential Learning). It is the panel's opinion that TPEL is now more explicit and the programmes are more aligned to these objectives. The classes are small and students confirm that the lessons are interactive. All information about the courses and what is expected of the students, can be found in the course syllabus. Especially the rubrics (see GQS 3) are very useful for the students to prepare for the assignments. Furthermore professors point out what is expected of the students at the start of each course and just before the exams. In the interviews, the panel heard that there are enough possibilities for formal and informal feedback during the courses but also before and after the assessments. The students highly appreciate the time and feedback given by the teaching staff. This gives them a clear view on their learning path progression.

It is the panel's opinion that the three programmes have a good to strong core faculty who are teaching most of the core courses and most of the major requirements. The core faculty of the College comprises 15 professors teaching in CMM, BUS and IA (12,3 FTE in terms of professors, associate and assistant professors). One of them is on research leave for the period 2017-2019. In addition there are 29 adjunct professors (lectors). These adjuncts combine their mandate in the College with other assignments in industry, policy or other higher education institutions. Since the previous assessment, more research-oriented academics have been hired and they have facilitated the new academic and research orientation of the programmes. As was clear in the interviews, these academics have participated fully in taking responsibility for implementing the new strategy. A lot of talented professors are fully committed to delivering high quality teaching and to strengthening the nexus research-education, resulting in a more academic and research-oriented culture in which students are better prepared for achieving the learning outcomes.

Although the panel is pleased with the more research oriented profile of the faculty, it was initially also concerned if the faculty would have enough time and funding for research. The panel was satisfied that the College has a system to balance the work load for teaching, research and coordinating/supporting activities. The faculty members who were interviewed, convinced the panel of their commitment to research. Furthermore, the panel heard that discussions on part time ZAP appointments to the VUB are ongoing, which would open up access to further research grants and increase the research capacity of Vesalius College even further.

Another concern of the panel was the high number of adjuncts. The panel agrees that adjunct positions allow for flexibility in the course offerings and for the addition of specific expertise but wondered how the College would align this with its teaching and assessment policy (ensuring the standard of teaching, coherent and consistent levels of assessment, levels of feedback...). According to the interviewed faculty members, this is no longer a big issue. New faculty members must attend a compulsory seminar where the teaching manual and all requirements, including syllabus policy and rubrics, are explained and trained. All faculty members, including the adjuncts, need to attend the yearly departmental training workshops. Streamlining the progress in the courses and the way of teaching in workshops for the teaching staff, is for the panel a good way to keep the programme aligned. Furthermore the teaching manual contains clear guidelines. The adjuncts who were interviewed by the panel agreed that the standards of the College are high and time consuming but were convinced of the added value; some of them even apply (parts of) the standards in their other working environment. Finally, the adjuncts confirmed that they can always count on the support of their colleagues.

The number of faculty is more than sufficient in relation to the number of students. The student numbers in the three programmes have declined the last years. Part of this was anticipated: the impact of the previous assessment, implementation of the new curricula including more stringent academic requirement, a stricter admission policy and deflating grades. Also external factors (such as the terrorist attacks in Brussels) influenced the number of enrolling students. The panel is concerned about this low number of students and discussed it with the College management. The panel heard that the past years the College focussed on the improvement plan but that it plans to give the marketing of the College and the programmes a higher priority. The College aims at a steadily growth of 3 to 4 students per programme and per year. The panel welcomes the plan and finds it a feasible plan. The programmes offered at Vesalius College have some very strong points and a unique profile in Belgium. The panel suggests the College should reach out stronger to international organisations, embassies and multinationals, so that the international community working in Belgium is aware of the high value of the programmes being offered by Vesalius.

To conclude, the panel is impressed by the many changes that have taken place in Vesalius College. These changes are in line with the recommendations of the previous panel. The panel has experienced a much stronger academic and coherent culture at Vesalius College compared to the visit in 2014. The curricula are now in line with the level of an academic bachelor's programme. The research orientation has improved and is in balance with the vocational focus, although there is still room for more integration. More research-oriented academics have been hired and they have facilitated the new academic and research orientation of the programmes. This increased research-orientation and the strong educational culture seem to be supported by all faculty members. It is the panel's opinion that this improved structure and culture is of considerable help to students in achieving desired learning outcomes. Therefore the panel evaluates GQS 2 'educational learning environment' as satisfactory for all three programmes.

GENERIC QUALITY STANDARD 3: OUTCOME LEVEL ACHIEVED

The assessment panel evaluates the outcome level achieved for the Bachelor in Business Studies, the Bachelor in Global Communication and the Bachelor in International Affairs as "satisfactory".

Assessment 2015

The panel concluded that there was no coherent evaluation policy at the College. At the time of the site visit, the outcome level achieved by the three programmes was situated below the threshold level expected from an academic bachelor degree as the testing system was inadequate to safeguard the quality of evaluation. The quality of testing was too diverse and overall too low. The grading was often too high and the 'evidence' for critical thinking and application of research methods was in general too poor in the capstone and honours papers. Although the alumni were pleased with their education and were able to start a professional career or continue a master's programme, the panel was not convinced that all the intended learning outcomes were acquired at the bachelor's level. The College needed to develop a genuine evaluation and assessment policy, particularly addressing the validity and reliability of the testing and examination methods. The staff should then adopt this strategy in its everyday teaching and evaluation practice.

Reassessment 2018

Vesalius College has undertaken several actions to improve the quality of the assessment, testing and examination. First, at College level a teaching manual has been drafted which describes an explicit approach to assessment, testing and examination of students. This manual is a comprehensive document that enables a greater coherence in assessment, testing and examination across and within the programmes. The manual contains a syllabus template for course development and it makes clear that grading rubrics are mandatory. These rubrics are linked to the course-related learning objectives which fit the programme learning outcomes. Furthermore the manual outlines the criteria that assignments should meet to obtain a given grade; the major-specific progression in testing across the 100, 200 and 300 levels; guidelines regarding the types of assignments at each of these levels and exam templates. All faculty members have received training on how to set good course objectives (geared to programme learning outcomes) and assessment methods. The teaching and assessment approach is further discussed in the yearly departmental teaching working classes. Second, course folders including the exam questions and assignments, are assessed by several persons, including an external examiner. This check is done before, during and after each semester (see GQS 4). Third, an Academic Quality Committee was created, which is responsible for coordinating all quality insurance and improvement measures (see GQA 4).

It is the panel's opinion that Vesalius has taken a huge step. The College has introduced an appropriate assessment system which is applied to all programmes and courses. All courses now use rubrics, linked to the course-related objectives, which fit the programme learning outcomes. Faculty members are now able to give much more precise feedback to students on how they can progress. Students appreciate the use of these rubrics; a higher level of transparency of the grading is now in place and feedback on the grading to students has improved a lot. The self-evaluation reports indicate that Vesalius College is attentive to the feedback of students, some of which indicated that the amount of feedback had decreased somewhat. However, the students that were interviewed by the panel contested this.

For the faculty the changes had demanded considerable effort, especially on the part of the adjuncts, but during the interviews everyone stressed the usefulness of the new system. Therefore the panel suggests thinking about fine-tuning the assessment system to help reduce the workload of professors while at the same time maintaining the very good level of effective feedback to students.

The panel examined the course folders and looked at the assignments and exams and observed that these correspond with an academic bachelor's level. One of the improvements was the reduction in the number of assignments. To some extent, the programmes succeeded but it is the panel's opinion that there is still room for improvement, e.g. more integrated assignments. In the third year the students have to write a capstone paper and a bachelor thesis. The capstone paper represents the vocational focus; the thesis the academic research-oriented focus. As mentioned before, the third year will be organised for the first time in 2018-19, so the theses and capstone papers of the new programme are not yet available. Based on the course outline of the bachelor's thesis and the corresponding rubrics, the panel has confidence that the theses will meet the academic bachelor's standards. The panel has looked into a sample of capstone papers of the old programme. The quality of these papers has improved substantially compared to the previous assessment. In most of these papers, students have used clear research methods and have reflected on the best approach to tackle specific tasks. As mentioned before, it is the panel's opinion that there is still room for integrating more the vocational and academic approach in courses, e.g. bringing in methodological insights in the capstone.

Based upon the interviews the panel had with about 15 students, it seems that most are aiming to continue their studies with an academic master's programme. The panel would like to stress that they hope that Vesalius College will maintain and further strengthen the current more academic-based approach in their programmes. A good research-oriented programme guarantees the performance of the Vesalius students during their master studies.

To conclude, it is the panel's opinion that Vesalius College has introduced an adequate assessment system which is applied in all programmes and courses. All courses are now using rubrics and the criteria are linked to the course-related objectives, which are geared to the programme learning outcomes. The rubrics make the grading more transparent and valid. Appropriate actions have been taken to monitor the quality of the assessments, although further fine tuning should help to reduce the workload of professors, while maintaining a very good level of effective feedback to students. Although the panel could not yet examine the third year's assessments of the new programmes and in particular the bachelor's theses since these reformed programmes have so far only students in the second year, based on the available documents, everything is in place for the students to reach the academic bachelor's level. Therefore, the panel evaluates standard 3 'outcome level achieved' as satisfactory for all three programmes.

GENERIC QUALITY STANDARD 4: STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

The assessment panel evaluates the structure and organisation of internal quality assurance for the Bachelor in Business Studies, the Bachelor in Global Communication and the Bachelor in International Affairs as “satisfactory”.

Assessment 2015

The panel was of the opinion that the College had some pieces of the puzzle and some rudimentary mechanisms in place to start building an internal quality assurance mechanism, but it was convinced that these still needed to be fitted into one coherent approach. There was not yet a coherent system in place to safeguard the internal quality assurance and its core processes, neither at the College level nor at the programme level. Moreover there was an urgent need to establish a culture of quality in the College, gathering all staff members and supporting them in the deployment of the everyday quality functioning of the college. Particularly the different stages of the PDCA-cycle needed to be defined, appropriate mechanisms needed to be designed, and action to be taken based on the measurements and knowledge gained from the internal quality assurance instruments, all of which needed to be fed into the system to improve the quality of the programmes.

Reassessment 2018

Following the recommendations of the previous assessment, a comprehensive governance reform was initiated in order to implement an adequate internal quality assurance system. The newly created Academic Quality Committee (AQC) coordinates all quality assurance and improvements measures. Two new positions of associate dean were created. The associate dean for teaching (ADT) convened the teaching excellence committee with professors from different programmes who discuss the educational approach and assessment procedures. These discussions led to the creation of the teaching manual (see GQS 3). The associate dean for research and grants sets the minimum expectations for research output and supports the faculty in their grant application activities. Furthermore the position of director of student learning and educational development was created, who should combine the position of a study counsellor with the additional task of supporting faculty development related to teaching excellence. Unfortunately there was some staff turnover. The College plans to take a fresh start with the newly hired director.

The College put in place the necessary tools for the PDCA-cycle. The teaching manual describes the common standards for syllabi, course content, student progress, exams, tests and assessments. Before the start of the semester, professors submit the course folders to their Head of Department (HoD) and to the ADT. They check whether the courses meet the standard. The advice for corrections must be implemented before the start of the semester. Students have an opportunity to submit an ‘early evaluation’ in Week 4 about basic aspects such as whether the syllabus is respected and whether they are satisfied with the course so far. These brief early evaluations allow the HODs and AQC to spot any potential problems early on and act while the course is still ongoing. Mid semester, the professors submit their exam questions to the HoD and the AQC, who check whether the exams are compliant with the college standards using a template. After the semester, students evaluate again all courses but more comprehensively. After the exams, the AQC and external examiners (EE) review all folders and check the course content, the quality of the graded assignments and the overall quality of the courses. The external examiners submit a written report of their findings, indicating that a course is ‘in need of improvement’, ‘adequate’ or ‘excellent’. The results of the check of the courses by the EE and the HoD, together with the results of the student evaluations, are discussed with each professor. If a course is given the

recommendation ‘in need of improvement’, the HoD and the professor agree on an improvement plan that is closely monitored. The AQC uses the reports of the EE to identify areas for college wide improvement and organises teaching workshops to tackle these topics.

The panel was in particular interested in the review of the external examiners. For each programme an EE is appointed for three years. The EE are invited twice a year to the College to examine all course folders. In the interviews the EE explained that they not only check the grading and exams but assess all elements in the course folders. In the meetings with the AQC the findings concerning individual courses are discussed but the EE also give feedback on the level of the programme. The EE confirmed in the interviews that the College takes their suggestions into consideration and they see a substantial improvement of the courses over the three last years. For BUS, after the first meeting of the AQC in Spring 2015, 50% of the courses were “in need of improvement”; in Fall 2017 only 13% of the courses were in “need of improvement”. For IA, in Spring 2015, 43% of the courses were “in need of improvement”; in Fall 2017 all courses were evaluated as “adequate” or even “best practice”. For CMM, in Spring 2015, 50% of the courses were “in need of improvement”; in Fall 2017 only 8% of the courses was “in need of improvement”. This indicates that the teaching staff are clearly implementing the new quality standards.

The panel is very positive about the implementation of the new quality management approach. A lot of work has been done in the past years. The changes were implemented top-down but the AQC seems to have done a great job in getting everybody on board. The teaching staff confirmed in the interviews that the approach was effective and necessary in order to bring about a culture of quality. The panel agrees that – now the system is in place – there is room for fine-tuning (e.g. EE might not need to assess all course folders each year; they might look each year at a different sample of courses) and developing a more bottom up approach, like the peer reviews that have been implemented last academic year.

Based on the interviews the panel is satisfied that the stakeholders are involved in the internal quality assurance. Since the assessment of 2015, a lot of consultation has been done between the staff through faculty and department meetings. This is complemented by individual follow-up meetings. Additionally, the teaching workshops provide not only opportunities for training but also for feedback to the HoD and the AQC. The students are represented in faculty and department meetings. Students can give further feedback through student evaluations. The panel hasn’t interviewed alumni or representatives of the professional field, because there are not yet graduates of the new programmes. In the 2015 visit, the alumni and the professional field representatives were all very positive about study-related or job-related opportunities for Vesalius alumni. Based on the documents, the panel observed that alumni are represented in the Faculty meetings and that they can give further feedback through periodic alumni surveys. The panel heard in the interviews that the College plans to strengthen the alumni representation at college level, following the implementation of the new programmes. The College gets feedback of the professional field through the assignments of the capstone and the internships but also through the adjuncts.

To conclude, it is the panel’s opinion that the quality culture has clearly improved, due to the attention given to the main issues indicated by the panel in 2015. The College has been reforming its governance structure for internal quality assurance drastically. New functions have been created such as Associate Dean for Teaching, Associate Dean for Research and External Grants and a Director for Student Learning and Educational Development. A new Academic Quality Committee has been set up which is controlling all programmes and courses to be sure that the programme learning outcomes and course objectives are met, based upon a transparent and reliable assessment system. All the necessary tools are now in place to implement the PDCA-cycle.

Course folders are being assessed by several persons, including an external examiner. The results are discussed with the professors and improvement actions are taken if necessary. The results of the evaluation of the external examiners indicated that the teaching staff is implementing the new quality standards. The panels encourages the College to develop even further the current strategic direction that will strengthen the profile of Vesalius College. Therefore, the panel evaluates standard 4 'structure and organisation of internal quality assurance' as satisfactory for all three programmes.

FINAL JUDGEMENT OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

	GQS 1 Targeted outcome level	GQS 2 Learning environment	GQS 3 Outcome level achieved	GQS 4 - Structure and organisation of quality assurance	Final opinion
Bachelor in Business Studies	S (2015)	S (2018) ³	S (2018)	S (2018)	S
Bachelor in Global Communication	S (2015)	S (2018)	S (2018)	S (2018)	S
Bachelor in International Affairs	S (2015)	S (2015)	S (2018)	S (2018)	S

As Generic quality standard 2, 3 and 4 is evaluated as satisfactory and given the positive judgement of the assessment 2015 the final judgement of the assessment panel on the Bachelor in Business Studies is satisfactory.

As Generic quality standard 2, 3 and 4 is evaluated as satisfactory and given the positive judgement of the assessment 2015 the final judgement of the assessment panel on the Bachelor in Global Communication is satisfactory.

As Generic quality standard 3 and 4 is evaluated as satisfactory and given the positive judgement of the assessment 2015 the final judgement of the assessment panel on the Bachelor in International Affairs is satisfactory.

³ The generic quality standards are assessed according to a two-point scale: satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Curricula vitae of the members of the assessment panel

Dylan Couck

Dylan Couck is a master's student in Law at the Ghent University. He is a student representative in several committees at the university and at the Faculty of Law and Criminology. He is also a Board member of the Flemish Student Council.

Geoffrey Edwards

Prof. dr. Geoffrey Edwards is a Senior Fellow in the Department of Politics and International Studies and Reader Emeritus in European Studies at the University of Cambridge, and an Emeritus Fellow of Pembroke College. He was made a Jean Monnet chair in Political Science in 1996. He has a PhD from the London School of Economics and worked at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office as well as in various think tanks, including Chatham House, before taking up his post in Cambridge. His particular research interests are the EU's foreign, security and defence policies and its institutional development.

Steven Eggmont

Prof. dr. Steven Eggmont is research director of the Leuven School for Mass Communication Research and programme director of the Bachelor and Master in Communication Sciences at the University of Leuven. His work draws from literatures in communication science, developmental psychology, and social and health behavior sciences. It focuses on media use during the life course and effects of exposure to the media on perceptions and behaviors. Eggmont has published widely on children's and adolescents' media use, sexual media contents, media use and health behaviors, and media effects. He is principal investigator of several fundamental and applied research projects within the field of communication sciences and has a large international network. As a visiting scholar he has spent periods at renowned institutes such as the Annenberg School for Communication (University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A.), the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media (University of London, U.K.) and the University of Amsterdam.

Rudy Martens

Prof. dr. Rudy Martens is full professor in strategic management and, since 2011, dean of the Faculty of Applied Economics at the University of Antwerp. Before 2011 he was vice dean of the Faculty of Applied Economics and chairman of the department of Management. He was also director for post-experience education at the Antwerp Management School from 2000 till 2005. He obtained his PhD in strategic management in 1988 at the University of Antwerp. He was a visiting research fellow at INSEAD with an ICM doctoral fellowship from 1985 till 1987. His teaching is situated in the field of strategic and general management at the graduate and postgraduate level. His research focuses mainly on strategy processes, knowledge management and management of SME's. He is actively involved in the AACSB network and also participating in the EFMD network to help increase the effectiveness of educational processes in business schools.

Hans van Hout

Prof. dr. em. Hans van Hout has been emeritus professor in Higher Education, University of Amsterdam, department of Educational Sciences since 2007. He is an expert in quality assurance, assessment of learning results and study careers in higher education. He was a member of different assessment panels of NVAO, Qanu and Certikid. He had appointments at the University of Twente (1968–1976), University of Nijmegen as a director of a Center for Educational Research and Development (1976–1993) and the University of Amsterdam as a professor in Higher Education and Vicechancellor for academic affairs (1993–2007). He is an external member of the Examination Committee of the Medical School of the Free University in Amsterdam and member of the Supervisory Board of the Vocational College Midden Nederland in Utrecht (Secondary Vocational Education). He also is programme manager of courses in Educational Leadership for educational directors of the Center for Excellence in University Teaching of University Utrecht.

APPENDIX II

Time schedule of the site visit

Monday May 14, 2018

10:00– 12:30	internal consultation and lunch
12:30– 14:00	dean, programme management and QA management (all programmes)
14:00– 14:45	students of BUS
14:45– 15:00	internal consultation
15:00– 16:00	teaching staff of BUS
16:00– 16:30	internal consultation
16:30– 17:15	students IA
17:15– 17:30	skype discussion with external examiner BUS
17:30– 18:30	teaching staff IA
18:30– 19:00	internal consultation
19:00– 19:45	external examiners IA and CMM

Tuesday May 15, 2018

08:45– 09:15	internal consultation
09:15– 10:00	students CMM
10:00– 10:15	internal consultation
10:15– 11:15	teaching staff of CMM
11:15– 12:00	free consultation round
12:00– 13:00	internal consultation and lunch
13:00– 13:30	dean, programme management and QA management (all programmes)
13:30– 15:00	internal consultation
15:00	presentation of the first findings