

AGREEMENT

AACSB & NVAO (NL)

Introduction

This agreement between AACSB and NVAO has been collaboratively developed by both organizations with input from a number of Dutch Business Schools. The goal of this agreement is to increase the efficiency and reduce the administrative burden for institutions in the accreditation process. It only applies to the Dutch institutions and programs that want to use AACSB's procedure and accreditation to also receive accreditation from NVAO.

This agreement applies exclusively to the activities carried out by the Dutch department of NVAO.

It is important to note that this agreement does not alter the formal responsibilities of the organizations involved (AACSB, NVAO, institutions). Its purpose is to set out the conditions and required procedures for applying for double accreditation, in order to ensure an efficient assessment and accreditation process.

An institution requesting a joint visit must inform both AACSB and NVAO in due time:

- when submitting the Letter of Application for Initial Accreditation for the AACSB Initial Accreditation Review
- when submitting the CIR application for the AACSB Continuous Improvement Review

1. Self-evaluation report

The self-evaluation report should provide information that meets both the AACSB assessment-frameworks as well as the NVAO assessment-frameworks for the limited and the extensive program assessment. The outline of the self-evaluation report depends on the type of AACSB assessment (initial or continuous improvement review assessment) (see paragraphs 3a and 3b). The NVAO framework requires that all standards from the assessment framework are covered in the self-evaluation report for all programs to be accredited by the NVAO. This can be fitted into the AACSB reporting requirements.

2. Joint panel & joint visit

The AACSB panel consists of experts from the AACSB-members pool. These experts will most likely meet the criteria for panel members the NVAO set out in its assessment-framework. A NVAO panel is composed of members with domain specific expertise, educational expertise, work field specific expertise, international expertise, audit expertise, and student-experience. Therefore, composing a joint panel on the terms of both AACSB and NVAO will probably be very well possible.

In order to comply with the NVAO accreditation framework and Dutch law, the panel must contain a student-member (preferably a business school student). Together with the approval of the panel, NVAO approves a secretary who is registered by NVAO. The role of the secretary and the requirements regarding independence and competencies are described in the NVAO-framework. The secretary is not a member of the panel. Preferably, the secretary will be the same for all joint visits involving AACSB and NVAO. An additional person, appointed by the institution and acquainted with the NVAO standards, will be part of the panel. His/her role will be:

- to guide and consult the panel on the institution's performance to NVAO standards for each program under review;
- to ask questions in order to judge the institution's alignment with NVAO standards;
- to interact and liaise with the thesis panel prior to the visit;
- to prepare answers to NVAO's questions after the visit. These answers will need to be endorsed by the panel.

The institution submits a proposal for the composition of a panel and the secretary to NVAO that meets the criteria of both AACSB and NVAO. The NVAO will assess the panel members and the secretary based on its procedure, looking at the different fields of expertise as well as at the independence of each panel member. The panel members and the secretary must comply with the requirements for independence as formulated in the NVAO framework.

The NVAO will decide on the proposed panel composition within four weeks. Any doubts or comments on its part regarding the panel must be clarified before approval of the panel. This may involve changes to the proposed panel composition.

All panel members will receive a training on AACSB's and NVAO's assessment frameworks before the visit occurs.

The joint visit will be planned according to the guidelines set by both AACSB and NVAO. Depending on the size of the institution, the visit may have to be extended with half a day or a day. A regular AACSB Initial Accreditation visit is typically two and a half days in length and a continuous review visit is one and a half day in length. The institution, in consultation with AACSB and NVAO, decides on the length of the visit and includes an opportunity for open consultation of the panel as required by the NVAO framework.

3. Assessment frameworks

The main difference between the assessment frameworks of AACSB and NVAO is their perspective: AACSB accredits at institutional level and the NVAO accredits at program level. The following paragraphs discuss the combining of the assessment frameworks. An important principle in the cooperation is that both levels (institutional and program) are assessed by the panel in order to ensure valid decision-making processes for both accreditation organizations.

3a. AACSB Initial Accreditation & NVAO

The AACSB assessment framework for the initial accreditation is an extended framework that covers, among other standards, the first three standards of the limited program assessment of the NVAO. The fourth standard of the latter mentioned framework, concerning achieved learning outcomes, is not covered in the AACSB framework. The panel will assess this standard according to the procedures described in the NVAO framework.

Workable conditions (the number of theses¹ the panel needs to assess) will be determined per audit. Following discussion with the review team the organization under review may decide to outsource the assessment of theses to a third party. In principle, the panel will assess at least 15 theses for each program. A reduction of this number can only be considered if programs share an Examination Board and if there is a demonstrable overlap of courses between the programs of at least one year or 60 EC for a bachelor's program and 20 EC for a master's program. In that case the panel will assess a minimum of 8-10 theses per program. NVAO must agree before the start of the assessment to the reduction in the number of theses to be assessed.

The extensive program assessment of the NVAO is also mostly covered by the AACSB initial accreditation framework. Standard 11 of the NVAO framework, concerning achieved learning outcomes, is the only standard that is not covered in the AACSB initial accreditation framework. The panel will assess this standard according to the procedures described in the NVAO framework. Workable conditions (the number of theses² the committee needs to assess) will be determined per audit. Following discussion with the review team the organization under review may decide to outsource the assessment of theses to a third party. The same rules pertaining to the possible reduction of the number of theses to be assessed that are stated above for the limited program assessment apply to the extensive program assessment.

In addition to the assessment of achieved learning outcomes, the NVAO framework requires programs to justify their choice for the teaching language if a program is taught in a language other than Dutch. This also applies if the program uses a foreign language name. The program should also demonstrate that teachers have a sufficient command of the language in which they are teaching. In addition, the extensive assessment framework of NVAO requires programs to demonstrate that staff policy is conducive in this respect. These elements are not covered in the AACSB-frameworks.

3b. AACSB Continuous Improvement Review & NVAO

The AACSB continuous improvement review (CIR) framework has, in contrast to the standard-by-standard approach of the initial accreditation framework, a more consultative and strategic approach and therefore less of a focus on the individual programs. In order to ensure that the NVAO standards are sufficiently addressed, the NVAO accreditation framework for the limited program assessment will be the leading framework for the double accreditation. The section *Learner Success* of the AACSB continuous improvement review is per program thoroughly addressed by the limited program assessment of the NVAO. This assessment should suffice for the AACSB CIR. However, none of the other areas listed in the continuous improvement review report outline are addressed by the NVAO limited program assessment and therefore will need to be addressed as indicated in the outline provided by AACSB.

In the case of the *extensive* program assessment of the NVAO framework, the NVAO framework will also be the leading framework for the double accreditation. The sections *Strategic Management and Innovation* (assuming that staff in the NVAO assessment includes professional staff and faculty) and *Learner Success* of the AACSB continuous improvement

¹ Theses or any other product or products that the program regards as the final product of a student.

² Idem.

review is per program thoroughly addressed by the extensive program assessment of the NVAO. This assessment should suffice for the AACSB CIR. However, none of the other areas listed in the continuous improvement review report outline are addressed by the NVAO extensive program assessment and therefore will need to be addressed as indicated in the outline provided by AACSB.

3c Distinctive feature Internationalisation (optional)

For the allotment of the distinctive feature Internationalisation, the framework used by the NVAO (Frameworks for the assessment of the quality of internationalisation) needs to be applied for the assessment. This means that the panel must comply with the guidelines set for this procedure and must assess and judge the standards from this framework. Following discussion with the panel, the organization under review may decide to outsource the assessment of the assessment for the distinctive feature Internationalisation to a third party. Adherence to the Frameworks for the assessment of the quality of internationalisation in force remains mandatory.

4. Assessment report

The assessment report is the outcome of the work of the review team and the accreditation organizations will make their decisions based upon the information in this report. NVAO and AACSB do accept a joint report, however, for the purpose of consistency, AACSB does require that the team follows the AACSB prescribed reporting outline. This report may include specific NVAO sections, as long as this is clearly indicated, and the report enables both boards/committees to make a substantiated decision. In the case of a joint team report all topics (standards) from both frameworks should be discussed.

The NVAO grants accreditation per program. Therefore, the report needs to state a judgment per program. Furthermore, the NVAO assessment framework prescribes the need for a judgment per standard (meets the standard, partially meets the standard, or does not meet the standard) and per programme (positive, conditionally positive, negative). For NVAO to decide on accreditation the panel needs to state and motivate these judgments in the report. In addition, a substantive summary of the report needs to be added to the report.

It is important to note that the reports used by the NVAO as the basis for its decision, are published on the NVAO website for any stakeholder to access and read. At least all sections of the report regarding NVAO standards, will be published. A format for this report will be provided. Institutions agree to the publication of the assessment report when opting for the joint process.

5. Duration of accreditation

AACSB grants accreditation for five years. The duration of the NVAO accreditation is six years for new programs and for an indefinite period for existing programs. All programs must be assessed by an NVAO approved panel of independent experts and apply for the continuation of their accreditation every six years. The institutions / programs themselves need to decide whether they will use the possibility of the joint process and therefore apply for NVAO accreditation within five years (instead of six).

6. Separate decision processes

The boards of the NVAO and AACSB will both make their own decisions and decide on the possible follow-up, based on the assessment report and the assessment frameworks applicable for their respective organizations.

This collaboration agreement between AACSB and the NVAO ensures institutions an efficient and effective procedure for acquiring double accreditation. The NVAO strives for as much reduction of the administrative burden of accreditation processes as possible and therefore strives, when possible, to combine all accreditation processes an institution is involved in.

The Hague, 18 May 2021 (update to the original agreement of 25 May 2015, which was updated on 25 April 2016)

On behalf of AACSB

On behalf of NVAO

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AACSB Chief Accreditation Officer

Dr. Anneke Luijten-Lub
Member of the Board
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Dr. Timothy S. Mescon,
AACSB Chief Officer- Europe, Middle East and Africa