CREATING A CULTURE OF QUALITY
Quality assurance at the University of Groningen (NL)

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Introduction
In January 2003 the Sunday edition of the New York Times published a two page article headed *The New E.U.* which opens as follows: ‘For a college founded in 1614, the University of Groningen in the northern Netherlands is surprisingly open to change. This fall, it divided its five-year undergraduate program into separate bachelor’s and master’s degrees. It will soon adopt a new European credits system. And its recruiters are busy wooing young Asians and Eastern Europeans to do their postgraduate studies – in English, naturally – in this friendly medieval city.’ The article focuses on the revolution that is shaking up European universities with the objective to create a united higher education system that is globally competitive.

Groningen and other Dutch universities have always been strongly influenced by foreign models and developments. In particular the German model and later the Anglo-Saxon one, shaped present Dutch higher education to a large extent. The Netherlands has a reputation for being international oriented. Dutch economy is very much tied up with many European countries as well as the United States. Given the international orientation of the country, it is no surprise that the Bologna Declaration of 1999 was very much welcomed by Dutch universities. The need for more harmonization of European higher education systems was already felt for some time. This feeling had been stimulated by the tremendous success of international student mobility programmes, foremost Erasmus, since the second half of the 1980s. Although it copied foreign models and approaches and developed these further in the Dutch setting, the Netherlands also was a forerunner for a number of aspects. As one of the first countries in Europe it launched a national credit transfer and accumulation system, now more than twenty years ago. It was also among the first countries that set-up a national quality assurance system based on external peer reviews. Both systems were created to boost quality and to make study programmes more effective. Traditionally Dutch higher education students took (and still take) their time to study. An average student used (and still uses) 50% more time than officially planned. Around 1980, as an effect of the oil crises in the 1970s and the level of the wages compared to other countries, the Dutch economy was in disarray. This forced the government to take action, because there was an obvious lack of tax money to pay for the growing number of students who wanted to go to university. The number of university students more than doubled between 1970 and 1992 from 123.900 to 256.731. Government shortened the official length of studies with one year and based them on credits. When this did not lead fully to the expected results, the instrument of quality assurance was introduced.

Since the launch of the Dutch quality assurance system all higher programmes have been assessed at least twice by external committees. Before this external review system was established, a heated debate took place between the higher education sector and the

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government. The central point in this discussion was not so much whether the Netherlands should opt for an accreditation model or a quality assurance model, but much more what kind of body should be responsible for organizing the external quality assurance reviews, an independent agency installed by the government or the sector itself. A compromise was found implying that the universities themselves were made responsible to set-up their own system. However, the system itself as well as the outcomes of the review process would be monitored by the Inspectorate of Education, a separate and independent body of the Ministry of Education. It was prescribed that the main outcomes and conclusions of the external reviews should be published in a public report. For some fifteen years this system worked remarkably well, although not all reports met the same standards. For each subject area or sometimes a combination of subject areas a separate committee was established consisting of independent experts in the field as well as one educationalist. These experts were mostly a group of retired professors completed with a number of active Dutch professors working abroad or foreigners acquainted with the Dutch system. Some review committees decided to compare and rank the disciplines assessed, others decided not to. If not, this was done by the public press anyway, that showed great interest in the outcomes of the external review processes.

Given the fact, that the Netherlands has a binary higher education system, in practice two bodies were made responsible for organizing the external review processes: the VSNU, the association of universities for the research or traditional universities, and the HBO-raad, the association of universities of professional education for its own membership. According to the system every subject area had to be externally reviewed in terms of required quality standards as well as comparability every five to six years. Because a binary system is not known in a number of countries, it might be useful to explain the features of the Dutch higher educational system. It is important to stress here that the Dutch secondary educational system is a selective one. After primary school pupils go to different secondary schools which match their intellectual and practical level. Two types prepare for higher education: HAVO (Senior General Secondary Education), which covers five years of full time learning and VWO (University Preparatory Education including Gymnasium) which covers six years of full time learning. HAVO gives direct access to universities of professional education and VWO gives access to research or traditional universities. HAVO plus one year of study at a university of professional education also allows for entrance at a research university. Universities of professional education offer undergraduate programmes which last four years of full-time study. For some subject areas one year postgraduate programmes are offered. This situation already existed before the introduction of the Bologna two cycle system. The Dutch higher education system is reflected well in the following model prepared by Eurydice, a service of the European Commission:
In 2002 Dutch parliament passed two important laws on higher education. The first one re-introduced a two cycle system and a second one introduced a quality assurance system based on accreditation of study programmes. The term re-introduction suits here, because before the shortening of university programmes to one cycle programmes of four year, the system was based on a three year’s undergraduate phase (kandidaat) and a postgraduate phase of at least two years (doctoraat). By passing the law, the Anglo-Saxon terminology was officially introduced in Dutch higher education. The use of the bachelor-master terminology did not imply however, that another important feature of the British-American system was also expected to be introduced shortly: ‘selection at the gate’. Since the 1970s equality had been one of the main features of higher education in the Netherlands. Until recent, the issue of selection and differentiation in higher education was experienced as a taboo. However, the discussion about a knowledge-based economy challenges the existing tradition of egalitarianism and equalizing. Initiatives are developing now which will stimulate competition between students as well as between higher education institutions. In this setting the recently introduced system of evaluations and accreditation is taking shape. Against this background the University of Groningen has organized its present quality assurance system and is busy developing a system of quality culture, based on a continuous process of quality enhancement.

**Quality assurance at Groningen University: past and present**

As in other Dutch universities, the introduction of an external review system has drawn more attention to the issue of quality assurance. Since decades student evaluations are an integrated and fully accepted element of the educational process. Each faculty has its own system, but the set of questions is more or less comparable. Each questionnaire has a length of around fifteen standard questions focusing on the educational module or unit and the performance of the teacher, but also allows for more precise added questions as well as student comments. Also the member(s) of staff are asked to reflect on the unit itself and the performance of the students that have participated in it. The outcomes of evaluations are discussed in so-called programme committees, in which students and staff are represented equally in terms of numbers. Each study programme has - according to law - its own programme committee, which act as an advisory board for the authorities who are held responsible for the delivering and the quality of a study programme. Besides the chair professors, who officially are
responsible for the content of learning, these are the executive board of the faculty and the director of undergraduate and/or graduate studies. The director has the day to day supervision and is accountable to the executive board.

Much less developed so far is the instrument of programme evaluation. In practice the curriculum is evaluated only during an external review process. As part of this review process a so-called self evaluation report is produced, which contains information about the programme itself, the choices made, as well as statistical data concerning the number of successful students, the drop-out rate, the average duration to finish the programme, and the student-staff rate. In the past the model for organizing an external review was prepared by the sector itself at national level. Although a basic outline was followed, each subject area had the possibility to adjust the model to its own wishes. Since the introduction of a new quality assurance system this is no longer the case. This system, operational since 2004, is based on a double model. As a first step an independent quality assurance agency prepares a report. On the basis of a positive report the higher education institution will ask for accreditation of the study programme involved. The quality assurance agency, the so-called VBI, bases its report and therefore its questions, on the guidelines given by the accreditation authority. This authority is called the NVAO, the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization. Although this organization has been created by the Dutch and the Flemish Ministries of Education, it operates independently. The already mentioned Inspectorate of Education checks whether the organization does its work correctly.

The previous policy that every study programme has to be assessed every five to six years has been kept in the new system. However, because of the possibility that a programme is assessed unsuccessfully and therefore can not be accredited, the status of the whole process has been raised. In practice the new system has proven to be much more time consuming and costly. As part of the new style external review system again a self-evaluation report has to be written for each study programme. But because the existing study programmes has been split into two separate ones, the bachelor and the master, and many formal specializations have been transferred into separate master programmes, the number of programmes to be evaluated has grown with some 300% as has its costs. At present for each external evaluation report the higher education institution has to pay the amount of 10.000 to 12.000 euros. The Groningen Faculty of Arts, of which 19 bachelors and 26 master programmes are assessed in 2005, expects to pay some 440.000 euros to the quality assurance agency and more than 20.000 euros to the NVAO to get its programmes accredited. The size of the total amount has already led to the conclusion that this system can not be maintained in the future. Both the government and the NVAO have announced that the system will be changed after the first round of accreditations. It is expected now that the present system of programme evaluation and accreditation will be replaced by a system of so-called domain (a combination of subject areas) evaluation and accreditation or by a system of institutional evaluation and accreditation. The higher education sector as well as the NVAO opts for the last possibility because it is less costly and fits better in the present European state of affairs. The introduction of the present external quality assurance system and the change to a domain or institutional based evaluation and accreditation system has made one thing crystal clear for everyone involved: the urgent need for a complete internal quality assurance and enhancement system which makes quality assurance a routine matter instead of a sort of plaque returning every five to six years.

Quality assurance at Groningen University: future perspectives
Most faculties as well as the central university level are preparing plans to develop this so-called integral quality culture system which will be a pre-condition for institutional evaluation and accreditation. Before this option was launched already the faculties that were recently visited by external review committees, like Law, Economy and Business Administration as well as Arts concluded that a more structured approach regarding quality assurance procedures is required. The preparation for the visits was experienced much more as a burden than a chance to improve educational programmes, due to the reports to be prepared and the material to be collected. Because of the broadening and deepening of the procedures as a result of the new external assessment model much more data and documents have to be gathered now than ever before. For this reason some faculties have taken the initiative to develop a plan for setting-up a special data base for quality assurance, an initiative that has been welcomed by most other faculties and by the university authorities. At present the necessary features of such a database are developed and it is expected that soon a decision will be taken to either buy an existing software system or to develop such a system by the university itself.

The present external review system is based on 21 facets or aspects of the educational process, ranging from domain specific requirements, level, profile and study load to the outcomes of the learning process, the internal quality assurance system, the policy regarding internationalization of education and the maintenance of the programme. Although peer review committees have already stated that the number of facets to be assessed is far too high, in practice they play an important role in the development of a university wide quality culture system. In the academic year 2004-2005, reports were prepared both at faculty and central level to identify the central elements of a framework for a quality culture. The different reports prove to have much in common.

There is a general feeling that quality in the design and delivery of programmes has developed to one of the most central focus points in higher education, both nationally and internationally. This is underlined by the outcomes of the Bergen summit of ministers of education, which took place on 19 and 20 May 2005. At that conference, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance, ENQA, endorsed by the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, were accepted by the European ministers of education. At national level government and public expect increased accountability for the money spent. One of the ways to show accountability is a transparent quality assurance system.

Another important reason to stress quality in higher education is mutual trust and confidence. Cooperation between teachers within a unit, school, department, faculty and university as well as between universities requires trust based on argumentation and proof in terms of the design, implementation and delivery of a study programme, as well as its outcomes in terms of attractiveness, profile, learning outcomes but also employability.

In March 2005 the executive board of the university has published its protocol for internal quality assurance. It offers a model, a quality assurance cycle system, for guaranteeing the quality of study programmes. This cycle contains the following steps: 1. checking or evaluating; 2. development of plans for improvement (if required); 3. implementation of improvements; 4. checking the effectiveness of improvements made. It identifies, furthermore, the main elements for quality assurance:

- study programme (curriculum) and its modules or units
- teaching staff
- outcomes of the learning process
- facilities and means to organize and deliver the programme
- internationalization

These elements, which have to be evaluated regularly, contain the following topics:

Curriculum:
- Aims / profile of the programme and its learning outcomes
- Study programme
- Assessment and assessment policy
- Educational concept
- Evaluation of modules / units
- Placement (if included in the programme) and final project or thesis

Teaching staff:
- Didactic qualities
- Research qualities
- (Project) counselling
- Quantity (staff – student ratio)

Teaching and learning facilities
- Accommodation
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Library
- Recording system(s)
- Information system(s)
- Time tabling
- Student counselling and support
- Student reference service (for failing students)
- Quantity of supporting and technical staff

These elements or facets have to follow the already mentioned quality cycle. This implies that for these facets the following has to be established:

- Moment of evaluation and the authority responsible
- Mode of evaluation, the instruments to be applied and the persons to be interviewed
- Mode of assessment of the outcomes and the authority responsible
- Plans for improvement and the persons responsible for developing and implementation these plans
- Checking of implementation process

The protocol also requires a system of regular reporting about the internal quality assurance procedures. The university protocol is intended to be a binding guideline which can be filled in by the individual faculties.

An effective implementation of the quality assurance cycle system requires that the persons, boards, etc. responsible are clearly identified. The overall responsibility lies with the director of studies and/or the faculty executive board (depending on the situation). They are responsible for the functioning of the programme. They are also expected to draw-up a yearly working plan for quality assurance. In practice an important role in the process is played by the already mentioned programme committee and by the examination board. As an option it is suggested to install a special committee for quality assurance or to appoint a quality assurance officer. This model is reflected in the following scheme:
The accreditation framework requires that all aspects are evaluated every six years. From 2010 it is expected that this review is no longer an external one but will be organized completely internally for all programmes. At Groningen University it is foreseen that this internal quality system will already be in operation in 2006. In the university template the following scheme is suggested to organize the evaluation process. This schedule distinguishes also the role and level of students, because in practice they are important factors for the success of a programme. The facet ‘students’ should be seen as a subdivision of the facet ‘programme’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Groups / persons to be interviewed</th>
<th>Evaluation period (minimum requirements)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims/profile and learning outcomes (competences to be obtained by the students)</td>
<td>Alumni, External stakeholders (professional organizations and employers), Programme committee, Teaching staff, External experts, Educationalist(s)</td>
<td>Every six years; intermediate improvements every three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study programme</td>
<td>Teaching staff, Educationalist(s), Programme committee, External stakeholders</td>
<td>Every three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and assessment policy</td>
<td>Teaching staff, Educationalist(s), Students</td>
<td>Every three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational concept</td>
<td>Teaching staff, Programme committee, Educationalist(s), Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of units / modules</td>
<td>Students, Teaching staff</td>
<td>Every three years or more often when new or unsatisfying outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement / Final project or thesis</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Every three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>Examination board</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance level</td>
<td>Educationalist(s)</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation secondary education – university education</td>
<td>Secondary and university teaching staff</td>
<td>Every three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation university of professional education – research university education</td>
<td>Teaching staff universities of professional education and research universities</td>
<td>Every three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>Programme committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didactic qualities</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Educationalist(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research qualities</td>
<td>Responsible executive</td>
<td>Researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Project) counselling</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of teaching staff</td>
<td>Director of studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching and learning facilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording system(s)</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information system(s)</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Supporting staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time tabling</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student counselling and support</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student reference service</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Student counsellors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of supporting staff</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity of supporting staff</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>Programme committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the anticipated learning outcomes (competences to be achieved by the students)</td>
<td>Educationalist(s)</td>
<td>External stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output (in terms of successful students)</td>
<td>Programme committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of studies</td>
<td>Programme committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this schedule the evaluation of the curriculum plays a central role as point of reference for the quality assurance system of the faculty. The faculty, in practice its executive board and director of studies, are responsible for the transparency of process and information towards the parties involved.

**Quality assurance and enhancement at faculty level: the example of the Faculty of Arts**

As stated before, in Groningen a central role in the quality assurance process is given to the faculty level. This reflects the decentralized system for designing, implementing, organizing and improving programmes. The faculty executive board has the authority to approve study programmes after having received a positive advice from the director of studies and the faculty board. The approved programme is formally confirmed in the Education and Examination Regulation. The law requires that every programme is based on such a regulation. Because all Groningen faculties have their own peculiarities it is of interest in the framework of this paper to look more closely to the process of quality assurance at that level. The choice here is made for the Faculty of Arts, because it seems to have the most advanced policy and strategy not only in terms of quality assurance, but also in terms of quality enhancement. It is one of the few faculties in Groningen, but also in the Netherlands that has completely restructured all its study programmes and course units when introducing the bachelor – master structure. In this process, the faculty has focused very much on the enhancement of its programmes to create a good basis for quality assurance at a later stage.

The Faculty of Arts based the shift from single four years’ degree programmes to two-cycle programmes on the approach of the project Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. For the design of 19 bachelor and some 25 master programmes special committees were established, with the task to develop detailed proposals. These committees received a set of guidelines to follow. In these guidelines the concept to be applied was explained in detail. This was necessary because not only the change to a two-cycle system was made, but also the shift from a semester to a trimester system, the transition from a staff oriented to a student-centred approach and the introduction of a modularized system and a major-minor system. Detailed information was given about cycle descriptors and intermediate level descriptors to be used as one of the basic elements in the design of the programmes as well as information regarding a step-by-step approach to calculate student workload.

As a first step the committees were asked to identify the profile of each of the programmes and to translate these in terms of learning outcomes expressed in subject specific competences (knowledge and technical skills) and generic competences to be obtained by the student. The profiles and the accompanying learning outcomes at programme level were checked by the responsible authorities before the next step could be made: the conversion of these outcomes into modules. For each of the modules it was asked to identify the competences to be trained. These had to be visualized in a grid, which should show that not only all learning outcomes were covered, but also that progress was guaranteed with regard to the learning outcomes to be achieved and the competences to be obtained during the programme. Before individual staff members were asked to design the course units in terms of teaching, learning and assessment approaches, the overall design of the degree programmes was assessed internally and, if required, adjusted.

The design of the course units again was based on the concept of learning outcomes and competences taking into account the number of ECTS-credits designated to each of the modules and their accompanying student workload. The process described above took place during the period spring 2001 until the winter of 2002/2003. In September 2003 all existing
programmes were replaced completely by the new programmes. For current students transitional arrangements were made. In 2004 the benefit of the approach used was proven when the external review of programmes had to be prepared. It proved relatively simple to prepare the self evaluation reports because most of the material and information required to answer the questions was already available. In this respect, it was also very valuable that the programme design committees had been asked to base their programmes on national and international reference points. As a follow-up of the reform as well as the external evaluation of its degree programmes, the Faculty of Arts developed its own internal quality culture system which will become operational in the autumn of 2005.

Although this faculty system is in line with the university template or protocol it clearly has its own features. Much more than the university model it aims to integrate the different aspects or facets that are of relevance for quality assurance. The Arts model makes use of a well-known distinction:

- Education as process
- Education as outcome
- Organisation and facilities

Furthermore a clear distinction is made between the course unit or module and the study programme as a whole. This can be shown in the following scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational process</th>
<th>curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course unit or module</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- learning outcomes of a course unit and its relationship with the learning outcomes of the curriculum</td>
<td>- degree profile (aims educational programme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- modes of instruction (types of teaching and learning activities)</td>
<td>- learning outcomes and competences to be achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- methods and techniques of instruction and learning</td>
<td>- degree/educational programme build-up and order of programme components (to realize progression)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ways of assessment</td>
<td>- coherence of degree / educational programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- performances / counselling by the teacher</td>
<td>- division of workload over the semester and academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- feedback on the process of learning</td>
<td>- feasibility of programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- syllabus</td>
<td>- teaching, learning and assessment methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- course material</td>
<td>- connection of secondary and higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- student load</td>
<td>- international cooperation and student mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- efforts and responsibilities of the teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Educational outcome | |
|---------------------| |
| - registration | - study rate |
| - assessment participation | - drop-out rate |
| - percentage of successful student | - rate of switch-overs |
| | - output of 1st and 2nd cycle |
| | - employability |

| Organisation and facilities | |
|-----------------------------| |
| - quality and quantity of teachers and supporting staff | |
| - time tabling of study programmes and examinations | |
| - quality of class rooms | |
| - ICT and multi-media facilities | |
| - Information and registration systems | |
| - Study programme information | |
| - Student counselling and advising | |
| - Student support | |
According to the chosen educational concept the study programmes are output based. Central is what the student should know, understand and be able to do after a process of learning. For each programme it has been tried to find the right balance between subject specific competences and generic competences. These competences are taught, learned and trained together on the basis of a domain of knowledge. Bachelor and master are clearly distinguished and are seen as entities in itself having their own learning outcomes.

Compared to the university model the Arts model focusses much more on quality enhancement than on quality assurance. This is reflected in the way the internal evaluation system is organized. The evaluation focusses in particular on the design and delivery of the study programme. Contrary to the university model, the curriculum evaluation is executed yearly on the basis of a set of fourteen premises and questions, which covers all relevant aspects. The questionnaire that has been designed for this purpose has been included in this paper as an annex. The Dutch version of this questionnaire contains a detailed explanation how to understand the questions and what available material to be used to that end. The programme committees have been made responsible to produce a yearly report based on the answers to the questions, that is made available for all involved in the educational process. To do their work properly the committees receive all relevant information directly or from the director of studies, like the outcomes of course unit evaluations, course unit syllabi, information material concerning the study programme, the outcome of questionnaires to measure the rate of satisfaction among students, statistical data concerning the success rate of the programme and its units, reports concerning the connection of secondary and higher education, outcomes of questionnaires for alumni, reports concerning employability, etc.

Conclusion
As a result of the Bologna Process and the introduction of a new national quality assurance system, based on external evaluations and accreditation of study programmes, the University of Groningen has decided to develop its own quality culture in education. The reasons for doing so are diverse. First of all the university wants to be seen as a reliable partner by other universities inside and outside Europe. The institution plans and delivers a growing number of joint degree programmes. Also it wants to show accountability for its programmes in a transparent way. A good system of quality assurance and enhancement guarantees that the programmes are of good quality and therefore attractive for potential students. Another, more implicit reason for setting-up a quality culture system, is to anticipate external reviews in the most effective way, whether these are based on the evaluation of the institution as a whole, a domain or individual study programmes. By investing in this quality culture now, the institution expects to limit the cost for quality assurance in the (near) future. By making quality assurance a routine process, teaching and supporting staff as well as students become fully aware of the importance of quality in the design and delivery of study programmes. This is good for the institution itself, but also for society as a whole.

The final responsibility for the quality of programmes lies at the level of the faculty as an organization. This shows that there is some tension between the desired system of institutional evaluation and accreditation and the level of formal responsibilities. In Groningen this potential tension has been avoided by the university authorities by developing a template or protocol that should serve as a model from which a faculty can deviate. The example of the Faculty of Arts shows that each faculty will set there own priorities, inspired by its internal culture and its will and possibilities to develop and enhance programmes. It proves the Groningen tradition to respect diversity within its own institution by accepting its common identity and its aims and objectives. The University of Groningen has chosen for educational
reform as the article in the New York Times shows, because it is an instrument for creating a European identity, but also for making Europe more competitive. Its newly created culture of quality is one of the major instruments that will make the University even more competitive within but also outside the European Higher Education Area.
Annex

CHECKLIST FOR CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following elements can be distinguished within the framework of curriculum evaluation: the educational process, the educational outcome and the means and facilities required for programme delivery.

**Educational Process:**
- degree profile (aims educational programme)
- learning outcomes and competences to be achieved
- degree/educational programme build-up and order of programme components (to realize progression)
- coherence of degree / educational programme
- division of workload over the semester and academic year
- feasibility of programme
- teaching, learning and assessment methods
- connection of secondary and higher education
- international cooperation and student mobility

**Educational product / outcome:**
- study rate, cessation of study and switch-overs (output)
- output of 1st and 2nd cycle
- employability

**Required facilities and means**
- structural and technical facilities
- staff and material means
- student support: student counsellors

EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

1. **Degree / programme profile**
   
   **Premises:**
   The degree programme has a clearly defined profile which is based on the demands set by an academic degree on the one hand, and by the needs of society on the other hand by taking the future labour-market of graduates (of that particular programme) into consideration.

   **Questions:**
   To what extent do the available data show that the programme profile meets the demands set to it? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

2. **Learning outcomes and competences at programme level**
   
   **Premises:**
   The degree programme has clearly defined learning outcomes that reflect the programme profile. The learning outcomes are described in terms of competences to be attained by the students (knowledge, understanding and skills).

   **Questions:**
   To what extent do the learning outcomes and competences to be attained by the students correspond with the programme profile? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

3. **Learning outcomes and competences of the (separate) programme components**
   
   **Premises:**
   For each degree programme component a total of about five learning outcomes has been formulated, which clearly contribute to realizing the learning outcomes at programme level. The learning outcomes are described in terms of competences to be attained (knowledge, understanding and skills)

   **Questions:**
Are the learning outcomes (explicitly) mentioned in the course syllabus of each programme component (module or course unit), and explained further when required? To what extent is it clear from the descriptions that specific competences are practised? Is indicated which level of the competences is aimed for.

4. Curriculum set-up and the sequence of programme components / educational modules

Premises:
The curriculum is structured in such a way that coherence is assured within the total programme, in the various phases of the programme, and the separate programme components, and continuous progression is made with regard to the generic and subject-specific competences that have to be attained in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills.

Questions:
To what extent is it clear in practice that the programme is structured in such a way that coherence is assured and that progression is made with regard to knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the learning outcomes and competences to be attained? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

5. (Division of) workload

Premises:
The programme is structured in such a way that a well-balanced division of the total workload is realized for the programme as a whole, for and within the separate academic years, and for and within both semesters. The calculated workload per programme component must correspond with the time that a typical student needs to attain the required learning outcomes.

Questions:
To what extent is it shown in practice that the total workload is divided according to the premises in the above? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

6. Feasibility of degree programme

Premises:
The programme is set up in such a way that it is feasible for a typical student (to complete the programme within the given time frame). This implies a good mixture of teaching, learning and assessment methods, no unnecessary impediments between programme components, and sufficient supervision/tutoring by the teaching staff.

Questions:
To what extent are guaranteed that a well-balanced combination of teaching and learning and assessment methods is applied, sufficient supervision by teaching staff is available, and entrance requirements for programme components are only required when a motivation with regard to educational content can be given? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

7. Teaching, learning and assessment methods

Premises:
The teaching, learning and assessment methods used are varied and have been chosen because they are particularly well-suited to achieving the formulated learning outcomes and competences.

Questions:
To what extent does the available information, in particular the educational and assessment regulations and course syllabi, assure that the formulated premises are being met? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

8. Connection of secondary and higher education

Premises:
The programme has been set up so that it takes into consideration the entrance level of students. For first cycle programmes it concerns the connection to secondary education, and for second cycle programmes it concerns the connection to first cycle programmes (that give entrance to the second cycle programmes).

Questions:
To what extent is made certain that the programme is set up in such a way that a good transition is provided with regard to entrance qualifications for first and second cycle? If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

9. International cooperation

Premises:
There is structural cooperation with foreign partner institutions. This cooperation can be joint degree programmes and/or facilitating student exchanges and recognizing the academic achievements undertaken at the partner institutions.

Questions:
In what way is it guaranteed that students do not get behind schedule if they take part of their programme at a foreign partner institution, except when they are responsible for it themselves (e.g. because they have changed their programme without consultation, or because they have not completed programme components successfully). If necessary, which adjustments are thought to be desirable?

EDUCATIONAL PRODUCT

10. (Realized) output of 1st or 2nd cycle

Premises:
The Faculty/School aims to achieve the following aims: successful completion of the first year of study xx% (maximum two years after starting the programme), completion of a first cycle degree based on a completed first year xx% (four years after starting the educational programme), completion of a second cycle degree xx% (two or three years after starting the educational programme).

Questions:
Does the programme realize the set percentages? If not, why? Which suggestions are made in that case to bring about improvement?

11. Employability

Premises:
The degree programme meets a need in society which can be concluded from the fact that the transition to the labour market in a broad sense is good.

Question:
Do graduates find (suitable) employment within a reasonable period of time that fits the profile and level of the degree programme?

REQUIRED FACILITIES AND MEANS

12. Structural and technical facilities

Premises:
Sufficient structural and technical facilities and provisions are available for the delivery of the degree programme.

Question:
Are any bottlenecks apparent in practice in the delivery of the programme with regard to facilities and provisions?

13. Material and personnel means

Premises:
For the delivery of the programme sufficient quantitative and qualitative personnel means are made available in terms of teaching and supporting (administrative and technical) staff. Each programme / organizational unit has sufficient means for the delivery of the programme (guest lecturers, materials etc.)

Question:
To what extent are the assigned means sufficient in practice to deliver the programme according to its original premises and set-up?
14. Student support, advising and tutoring
Premises:
A system for student support, student advising and tutoring is available to students for the benefit of programme delivery.

Question:
In what way is the demand/need met for an adequate system of student support, advising and tutoring?