

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Programme Reviews in Flanders (2020-2023)

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Introduction

Since January 2020, VLUHR QA has been using a programme review manual that aligns with the regulations adapted in 2019. Against this background, VLUHR QA chose to carry out a thematic analysis of the programme reviews it conducted within the framework of the current quality assurance system in Flanders. A total of seven review reports were published between May 2021 and May 2023. With this analysis, VLUHR QA seeks to answer two broad research questions:

1. How is the VLUHR QA Manual for Programme Review (2020) put into practice? How are the methods and practices described in the manual applied to the context of one specific programme? What evidence do the review reports provide on the review principles underpinning the holistic final review?
2. Are there any common elements discernible in the review reports? Are there good practices and/or areas for improvement that link the different programmes and institutions?

VLUHR QA not only wants to strengthen its internal quality assurance through this analysis, but also to gain knowledge and a deeper understanding of the Flemish educational landscape within which it carries out its activities.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. First, the seven review reports were thoroughly analysed in terms of content. This also includes a comparison of good practices and recommendations listed at the end of each report. Next, administrative and factual information was collected on the programmes, institutions, and panels. These data were quantified in tables. Finally, the reports were examined for evidence of the review principles by tallying the quality features mentioned by the panel within each paragraph. This information was tabulated as well.

Regarding the structure of this report, some information is first provided on the context in which the analysis was conducted. The focus here is on the Flemish quality assurance system and how VLUHR QA conducts programme reviews within it. This is followed by an overview of the seven review reports, which are the principal source of information. The analysis successively discusses the characteristics of the review procedure (with attention to the circumstances during the pandemic), the composition of the panels, and the programmes themselves. It concludes with a focus on the review principles and how they are addressed in the review reports.

Context

Since 1 September 2019, a new quality assurance system has been in place in Flemish higher education, which led to an adjustment of the accreditation framework for programmes at institutions that are not subject to an institutional review.¹

This quality assurance system focuses on the quality of the individual study programme, which must demonstrate compliance with eight quality features. These features in turn find common ground with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015)².

¹ This refers specifically to registered institutions, public institutions for post-initial education, scientific research and scientific education, and the recognised faculties of Protestant theology.

² The ESG are published on the website of The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA): <https://www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area/>.

The new accreditation framework stipulates that institutions not subject to institutional review must, as in the past, use an external evaluation body to assess their programmes. The evaluation body then assembles an independent, authoritative, and expert panel that visits the programme and formulates its findings, considerations, and recommendations in a review report. That report is the basis for accreditation by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO).³

Programmes have to be assessed and accredited once every six years.⁴ Since the institutions in question usually offer a small number of programmes, the frequency with which they come into contact with external programme reviews is rather limited.

VLUHR QA's methods

VLUHR QA, the independent quality assurance agency of the Flemish Higher Education Council, also conducts programme reviews within the new quality assurance system mentioned above. They developed a manual describing the methods and practices for conducting programme reviews within this system.⁵ The manual includes the review principles consisting of the eight quality features, a transparent procedure for the selection of panel members, a standardised training for panels, as well as an updated format for site visits and transparent reporting with a traceable and comprehensible substantiation.

The VLUHR QA Manual for Programme Review (2020) provides guidance and direction to institutions and programmes as well as panel members. It lays down the minimum framework to be met and allows for a flexible approach. A VLUHR QA staff member acts as project manager and secretary of the programme review. They oversee the correct and qualitative implementation of the manual, taking into account the individual nature of the programme(s) in question. They also act as a point of contact for all parties involved and coordinate the entire procedure, from the initial start-up meeting to the follow-up. As a final step in the process, the report is submitted to the VLUHR Quality Assurance Board, which carries out the last quality check and verifies whether the review report was prepared in accordance with the manual.

³ VLUHR QA recently published an article on the evolution of quality assurance in the Flemish higher education landscape and the system of programme reviews: <https://www.qualityassurance.vluhr.be/files/Docs/programme-reviews-in-Flanders.pdf>.

⁴ Until 2019, this was once every eight years.

⁵ The manual can be consulted on the VLUHR QA website: <https://www.qualityassurance.vluhr.be/files/Manual-Programme-Review.pdf>.

The review reports

On 1 January 2020, the new VLUHR QA manual for programme reviews came into force. The first programme reviews within this new quality assurance system in Flanders were initiated in 2020 and led to the publication of the report in May 2021. Since then, VLUHR QA conducted a total of seven such programme reviews, as shown in Table 1.

Report	Publication	Institution	Programme(s)
Fluid Dynamics	12 May 2021	von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics	Research Master in Fluid Dynamics
Vesalius College	20 May 2021	Vesalius College	Master of Arts in Diplomacy and Global Governance Master of Arts in Global Security and Strategy
Enterprise Architecture	12 May 2022	Inno.com	Master of Science in Enterprise Architecture
Drama	16 December 2022	Artesis Plantijn University College	Bachelor of Arts in Drama Master of Arts in Drama
Vesalius College	12 May 2023	Vesalius College	Bachelor of Arts in Global Business and Entrepreneurship Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs
Protestantse theologie en religiestudies - FPTR	15 May 2023	Faculté Universitaire de Théologie Protestante	Bachelor of Arts in de Protestantse Theologie en Religiestudies Master of Arts in de Protestantse Theologie en Religiestudies
Theologie en religiewetenschappen - ETF Leuven	22 May 2023	Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Heverlee	Bachelor of Arts in Theology and Religious Studies Master of Arts in Theology and Religious Studies

Table 1. Overview of programme reviews conducted within the new quality assurance system (2020-2023).

The seven reports that are the subject of this analysis cover a total of twelve programmes at six different higher education institutions. With the exception of Artesis Plantijn University College's bachelor's en master's programmes in drama, the reports concern programme reviews at institutions not subject to the institutional review system. All but one of the programmes received a positive final judgement from the external panels. One programme received a positive judgment with conditions.

Thematic analysis

Flexibility of the review procedure

The manual indicates that room is made for the individuality of a programme within VLUHR QA's procedures. This flexibility manifests itself, among other things, in the **language** in which the programme review takes place. Usually this is in the language of the programme. However, adjustments can be made to accommodate an international panel, for example. Of the seven reports in question, three were written in Dutch and four in English, in line with the language in which the programmes are taught.

The aforementioned flexibility is also manifested in **self-assessment and reporting**. At one institution, it is desirable to write a separate self-assessment report for each individual programme, while at another it is appropriate to write only one report because of the similar nature of the programmes involved. The same applies to the organisation of the site visit, where interviews with stakeholders from different programmes are organised separately or clustered together. Attention is always paid to ensuring that, even when clustering programmes, the panel receives sufficient information to form a sound and substantiated judgment on each individual programme.

Table 1 shows that five of the seven review reports cover **multiple programmes**. These self-assessment reports were compiled in a similar way: each institution submitted one report for two programmes to be assessed. The reports on the programmes of Artesis Plantijn University College, the Faculté Universitaire de Théologie Protestante and the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Heverlee concerned the review of an initial bachelor's and subsequent master's programme. The reports for the programmes at Vesalius College were compiled at the request of the programmes because, given the small scale of Vesalius College as an institution, they indicated considerable overlap.

Impact of COVID-19

Looking at the higher education landscape in the period from 2020 to now, the influence of COVID-19 cannot be ignored. This impact was also felt in the external quality assurance of programmes. Given the measures in force in spring 2020, VLUHR QA was compelled to adapt its manual to ensure the quality and proper conduct of programme reviews. The adapted manual stipulates:

During a programme review organised by VLUHR QA, an independent panel of experts interviews the stakeholders of the programme. Normally, these interviews take place during an on campus visit. If a this is not possible due to COVID-19 measures taken by governments and/or institutions, the on campus visit can be replaced by an online visit, where the panel interviews the stakeholders of the programme to assess the programme. The combination of an on campus and online visit is also possible.

In spring 2021, the first two reviews within the new system took place entirely online. From September 2021, activities within the review procedures generally take place physically again, with the exception of training for panel members. This half-day training is still offered online when there are several international experts in the panel, as practice during the pandemic showed that the quality and interactivity of the training is maintained within the online format.

The review reports also reflect the changed circumstances during the corona period. In almost all reports, this topic is covered in a positive way,, with the appointed panel noting that the courses coped well with the challenges posed by the pandemic. They not only managed to safeguard the quality of

their education, but often improved it by successfully deploying the (technological) insights and experiences gained during the epidemic. Some panels mentioned the risk that moving all learning activities to the online environment poses to the learning trajectory and supervision of students. However, the input from the panels concerns only a few observations per report. All in all, the impact of the pandemic on the conduct of reviews and the content of reports seems limited.

Composition of the panels

In addition to the requirements in terms of independence, the VLUHR QA manual for programme review states the following regarding the criteria for selection of a panel:

The expertise present on the review panel must encompass the entire subject area covered by the programme, must include insight into national and international developments in the discipline, must pay attention to the educational structure and internal quality assurance system of the programme and must have sufficient insight into the structure of higher education system in the involved countries.

Each panel includes a combination of the following **areas of expertise**: subject-specific, professional field, educational, student-related, evaluation, and international expertise. The Quality Assurance Board ensures that all expertise is present in each panel by performing a final check before ratifying a panel composition. At VLUHR QA, panels consist of a minimum of four members, including a chairperson and (at least) one student. For the programme reviews in question, a total of 28 panel members were appointed. As shown in Table 2, this results in exactly four experts per review.

Report	M	F	X	VLA	NLD	DEU	GBR	AUT	CHE	ITA	LUX
Fluid Dynamics (2021)	4			1	2				1		
Vesalius College (2021)	2	2		2			1	1			
Enterprise Architecture (2022)	2	2		3							1
Drama (2022)	2	1	1	3	1						
Vesalius College (2023)	2	2		2			1			1	
FPTR (2023)	2	2		2	2						
ETF Leuven (2023)	1	3		1	1	2					
	15	12	1	14	6	2	2	1	1	1	1
	54%	43%	4%	50%	21%	7%	7%	4%	4%	4%	4%

Table 2. Overview of panel members per programme review, with info on gender and country of employment.

Table 2 also includes information on the panels' country of employment, which shows an even distribution between **national and international** panel members. Half of all experts were working or studying in Flanders at the time of review. The other half held jobs in companies or higher education institutions abroad, most of them in the Netherlands (20%), Germany (7%) and Britain (7%). The programme reviews concerned did not involve experts with employment outside Europe. Practice shows that this is mostly budget-driven. Programmes are responsible for selecting candidate panel members and panel members from outside Europe usually have higher travel and accommodation costs, which are covered by the programmes being assessed. Another explanation is that most academic networks of institutions are within Europe.

A subsequent element taken into account in the formation of panels is language proficiency. The VLUHR QA manual for programme reviews states the following in this regard:

Each panel member has an active knowledge of the language in which the procedure will be carried out.

Language proficiency is mainly determined based on the curriculum vitae of prospective panel members. An analysis of this shows that more than 70% of all experts involved are fluent in Dutch. In Flanders, this remains important as a lot of education-related information (such as course material, final papers, etc.) and administrative documents (such as education and examination regulations, minutes of quality and education committees, etc.) are often exclusively available in Dutch. Without this information, it would be difficult for a panel to form a well-founded judgement on the quality of the programme. The percentage above shows that language skills are adequately taken into account within VLUHR QA.

The VLUHR QA manual does not contain any explicit criteria regarding **gender diversity**, but it does state that panels should be "as balanced as possible to incorporate various perspectives". However, table 2 shows that in practice there is a gender balance among panel members. An element that plays into this is that quite a few programmes and institutions already take gender diversity into account when proposing concrete candidate panel members. In addition, the minutes of VLUHR's Quality Assurance Board show that they take this aspect into account when ratifying the composition of panels. For example, a meeting report from 23 October 2020 reads:

The Board approves the nomination of the panels [...], but asks for watchfulness on the gender balance in the final composition.

In doing so, the Quality Assurance Board successfully sets the tone for the day-to-day operations of VLUHR QA, as the figures show. To complement Table 2, which does not explicitly indicate the gender distribution among panel chairs, it may be mentioned that six out of seven panel chairs are men.

Uniqueness of programmes

A programme review at an institution that is not subject to an institutional review has some particularities that are different from a programme review at a university or university of applied sciences and arts.⁶

The programmes and institutions concerned always focus on a **specific field of study or 'niche'**. This uniqueness has its origins in the restructuring of higher education in Flanders back in 2003. This decree allows (existing) niche players in Flemish higher education to offer a bachelor's or master's degree, on condition of registration. In this way, domestic and foreign providers can set up non-subsidised programmes and thus bring their specific expertise into the Flemish education area, without the government having to fund this, or the presence of this expertise putting a strain on the universities and universities of applied sciences (and arts). Practice shows that this system has been working, as most of these institutions offer courses that are unique in Flanders and often even worldwide. Consequently, most of the review reports of these programmes reflect on this element of uniqueness.

⁶ This segment is not applicable to the report of drama programmes at Artesis Plantijn University College, as it focuses on the unique characteristics of programmes at registered institutions.

The **scale** of these institutions is significantly smaller. Institutions not subject to institutional review typically offer one or two programmes. Only a third organises five or more accredited programmes.⁷ Not only do these institutions have a smaller programme offering than universities and universities of applied sciences (and arts), but typically the small scale also extends to the student population, the teaching staff, and the administrative and educational support of the programmes. Table 3 shows how many accredited programmes offered by the institutions that are the subject of this analysis in the 2023-2024 academic year.

Name institution	Type institution ⁸	Programmes
Artesis Plantijn University College	University of applied science and arts	68 accredited programmes (including associate's degree programmes)
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Heverlee	Statutory registered institute	3 accredited programmes
Faculté Universitaire de Théologie Protestante	Statutory registered institute	2 accredited programmes
Inno.com	Non-statutory registered institute	1 accredited programmes
Vesalius College	Non-statutory registered institute	5 accredited programmes
von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics	Non-statutory registered institute	1 accredited programmes

Table 3. The institutions, their type of accreditation, and the number of accredited programmes they offer in the 2023-2024 academic year.

This overview confirms the substantial difference between the scale within which universities of applied sciences (and arts) such as Artesis Plantijn University College operate compared to registered institutions with only one or a few programmes.

A substantive reading of the various reports shows that this small scale can offer several **advantages** for programmes. The review reports and enclosed good practice overviews mention the following points:

- The small scale accommodates frequent personal and often informal contact between teaching staff and students. This creates an open and activating learning environment in which questions and concerns can be easily addressed.
- Small class groups leave plenty of room for interaction during lessons and accommodate the use of activating didactic work forms, such as group work and presentations. In some

⁷ At the time of writing, the Antwerp Management School is the registered institution - excluding universities and universities of applied sciences (and arts) - with the largest number of programmes. They offer a total of nine master's programmes in the 2023-2024 academic year.

⁸ More information on the different types of higher education institutions can be consulted on the website of the Flemish government: <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs-het-hoger-onderwijs#instellingen-hoger-onderwijs>. (in Dutch) Technically, universities and universities of applied sciences (and arts) are statutory registered institutions as well, as determined by decree. However, on this webpage, they are listed separately: <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/directies-en-administraties/hoger-onderwijs/contactinfo-hoger-onderwijs/instellingen-en-organisaties>. (in Dutch) This thematic analysis adopts the latter mode of reference. 'Registered institutions' is used as a collective term for all 'other' statutory registered institutions and non-statutory registered institutions, where universities and universities of applied sciences (and arts) are categorised as separate types.

programmes, teaching staff take advantage of the small scale to give students' work experience a place within the curriculum and use it as input for discussions, reflection, assignments, etc.

- Several programmes and institutions offer students a flexible and individualised learning pathway. Given the small number of applications, they can also work with a robust intake procedure, thus ensuring that the intake is properly selected and supervised.
- Usually, teaching staff (whether or not including the programme manager) are mobilised as study trajectory counsellors. This provides students with comprehensive tailor-made guidance, both subject-related and for their study pathway.
- Through the use of guest lecturers, often from the professional field, programmes provide strong content enrichment. This way of working also promotes the link between the study programme and the professional field through interpersonal and (mainly) informal contacts.

These strengths of small-scale learning generally go hand in hand with specific **challenges** faced by these programmes and institutions. The reports mention the following recommendations and areas for improvement:

- The day-to-day operations of small programmes and institutions tend to be informal and ad hoc. The reports mention this in relation to programme management, curriculum development, assessment policy, information sharing, and quality assurance procedures, among other. In practice, this does not necessarily lead to problems. However, it does mean that the proper functioning and quality of a programme depends heavily on the commitment of individuals, which entails a certain risk in terms of continuity. Almost all reports recommend formalising these processes, where and when necessary.
- Given that most programmes are provided by a limited number of tenured teaching staff, they often face a high workload. The full-time staff is supplemented within several institutions by a (sometimes considerable) number of part-time guest lecturers. This practice, as indicated above, is enriching for the programmes in question, but can also put pressure on the overall functioning of the programmes and the coherence of the curriculum.
- Some institutions have limited administrative and educational support. This not only has an impact on the daily operation of the programmes, but also on the professionalisation of teaching staff. Several reports focus on setting up an active policy on pedagogical-didactic training of (guest) staff on curriculum development, evaluation and feedback, supervising students, etc.
- Teaching staff are heavily involved in supervising students. Within some institutions, a group of students is explicitly assigned to a specific staff member, within other institutions this supervision takes place in an (even) more informal way. Almost all reports indicate that guidance strongly depends on the individual. To monitor both the even support of students and the workload of teaching staff, it is recommended to further formalise this process and provide a clear and detailed description of this role as counsellor.
- Given the scale, it is not always evident for some small programmes and institutions to provide the necessary educational infrastructure for students. Especially regarding access to scientific works and other sources, it is reported that the services offered from the programme could be improved - for example, by collaborating with larger institutions.

Eight quality features

As mentioned earlier, in Flanders the quality of programmes is demonstrated by eight quality features that tie in with the ESG. The VLUHR QA manual states that the presence of these features is guaranteed for each programme whose quality is satisfactory.⁹ The holistic judgment from which a review report is composed must therefore provide sufficient evidence for each of these quality features:

1. The programme's learning outcomes constitute a transparent and programme-specific interpretation of the international requirements regarding level, content, and orientation.
2. The programme's curriculum ties in with the most recent developments in the discipline, takes account of the developments in the professional field, and is relevant to society.
3. The staff allocated to the programme provide the students with optimum opportunities for achieving the learning outcomes.
4. The programme offers the students adequate and easily accessible services, facilities, and counselling.
5. The teaching and learning environment encourages the students to play an active role in the learning process and fosters smooth study progress.
6. The assessment of students reflects the learning process and concretises the intended learning outcomes.
7. The programme provides comprehensive and readable information on all stages of study.
8. Information regarding the quality of the programme is publicly accessible.

In addition, a programme ensures the involvement of internal and external stakeholders on the one hand and external and independent peers and experts on the other hand, in a continuous pursuit of quality development. If applicable, the programme must also comply with relevant regulations with respect to the admission of graduates to corresponding posts or professions.

To check the **evidence per quality feature**, the content of the seven review reports was analysed by listing per paragraph the feature(s) mentioned by the panel. The data collected was also used to compare the presence of the different features between reports. For this comparison, both the absolute and relative values of each report were analysed. The relative values can be found in Table 4. In the last column, the absolute total values are provided, to give an idea of the scale of the data.

Report	QF1	QF2	QF3	QF4	QF 5	QF 6	QF 7	QF 8	Total
Fluid Dynamics (2021)	6%	30%	22%	6%	25%	5%	5%	0%	63
Vesalius College (2021)	6%	23%	17%	15%	19%	15%	4%	2%	48
Enterprise Architecture (2022)	16%	21%	16%	8%	24%	11%	3%	3%	38
Drama (2022)	9%	39%	13%	18%	14%	4%	2%	2%	56
Vesalius College (2023)	11%	25%	14%	17%	19%	6%	6%	3%	36
FPTR (2023)	8%	25%	11%	15%	25%	6%	9%	2%	53
ETF Leuven (2023)	14%	27%	14%	9%	18%	11%	5%	2%	44
	10%	27%	15%	13%	21%	8%	5%	2%	48,29

Table 4. A mapping of the relative presence of the quality features per report, complemented by the absolute total values in the last column. The average presence of every feature is provided in the bottom row.

⁹ The quality features are listed on pages 3-4 of the VLUHR QA manual: <https://www.qualityassurance.vluhr.be/files/Manual-Programme-Review.pdf>. Additionally, the review principles are also mentioned at the beginning of each review report.

A **first observation** is that all seven reports consistently address the eight quality features, confirming that the reports indeed cover the review principles in their entirety. In addition, there is evidence in each report regarding the involvement of internal and external stakeholders. The panels, which themselves consist of external and independent peers and experts, examine this specifically within the context of the internal quality assurance of the programme(s) in question.

There is only one exception to this first observation: the 'Fluid Dynamics' report (2021), the first programme review conducted by VLUHR QA within the new quality assurance framework, does not provide evidence on quality feature eight. The feature was considered inherently present, as all review reports are published on the VLUHR QA website and the requirement is thus technically met. However, after the publication of the report, the VLUHR Quality Assurance Board decided that it was henceforth necessary to explicitly mention the feature in every review report. The data in Table 4 confirm that this decision was indeed implemented.

A **second observation** is that the features are generally present with very similar frequency in the different reports. A ranking of the quality features from most to least frequent:

QF2 > QF5 > QF3 > QF4 > QF1 > QF6 > QF7 > QF8

Quality features two and five concern the curriculum and the learning environment, respectively. These features receive by far the most attention in reports, seeing as they are addressed in almost half of all paragraphs. These primary educational processes are an important part of programme reviews, as they have a high impact on the quality of education. In addition, they can be broadly interpreted, which allows panels to gather more evidence by examining many different aspects and elements.

Quality features seven and eight are by far the least addressed. These cover, on the one hand, the information provided by programmes on the different stages of the study pathway and, on the other hand, the information published on the quality of the programme. Since these features cover very factual topics, it is reasonable that they appear in fewer paragraphs than the other elements of the review principles. Panels can provide sufficient evidence by formulating their findings on these features briefly and concisely.

A **third observation** is that the distribution of quality features on the 'Drama' review report is very similar to the other six reports, despite the fact that this is a programme from a university of applied sciences and arts and the other reports cover programmes from (non-)statutory registered institutions. Given the nature of the review, which is thematically structured unlike the other reports, a slight shift did occur between quality features four and five. In consultation between the panel, the programme, and VLUHR QA, the choice was made to look more closely at the programme's specialisms and interdisciplinarity, its policies on diversity and inclusion, and the pedagogical reform the programme intends to implement. This specific focus means that this report paid more attention to the counselling of students than to activating them within their learning environment.

Conclusion

VLUHR QA tried to answer two research questions with this analysis of review reports published within the current quality assurance system in Flanders:

1. How is the VLUHR QA Manual for Programme Review (2020) put into practice? How are the methods and practices described in the manual applied to the context of one specific programme? What evidence do the review reports provide on the review principles underpinning the holistic final review?

The premise of the VLUHR QA Manual for Programme Review (2020) is that flexible alignment of the review procedure - within the margins of what is possible, of course - is the key to a successful experience for the programme, the institution, and the panel members. The emphasis is on customisation, focusing on the uniqueness of the programme and the institution. The way VLUHR QA implements this manual also ensures structural diversity of and within the panels. The panels consist of external experts with different backgrounds, language skills, expertise, etc. who together ensure a thorough programme review. VLUHR QA's project managers play an important role in this process, as they prepare and guide the panel members through the review procedure.

Mapping the evidence related to the review principles in the reports confirms the hypothesis that the procedures in the VLUHR QA manual, and the way they are put into practice, are fulfilling their purpose: they provide a sound framework for conducting qualitative programme reviews. The analysis shows that all quality features are consistently addressed in the holistic reviews, with sufficient space for panels to provide the necessary substantive emphasis and evidence on how programmes engage both internal and external stakeholders in their quality assurance.

These insights confirm that VLUHR QA procedures can be applied flexibly, as they have been qualitatively and successfully applied to both programmes at universities of applied sciences (and arts) and programmes at institutions not subject to institutional review. The analysis of the reports clearly shows that programmes at these two types of institutions operate within very different contexts and consequently have different characteristics. Nevertheless, VLUHR QA's manual appears to address the needs of both groups in terms of external quality assurance.

2. Are there any common elements discernible in the review reports? Are there good practices and/or areas for improvement that link the different programmes and institutions?

Content analysis of the review reports shows that the reports of programmes at registered institutions (who are not subjected to institutional review) share some common characteristics. Several panels made not only note of the uniqueness of these programmes, but also formulated similar findings, commendations, and recommendations related to their small scale. Registered institutions usually have less experience with the practices and procedures of a programme review, which they have to go through six-yearly for only one or a few programmes. These findings confirm the need to sensitise panel members to the role the uniqueness of the programme plays within a review and the challenges posed by their scale.

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VLUHR QUALITY ASSURANCE

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