SELF-EVALUATION FONTYS UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
NVAO - INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT QUALITY ASSURANCE

THINK BIGGER

Fontys | UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

Let's travel back in time for a moment: in 2013, the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO) sent an inspection panel to visit Fontys Universitiy of Applied Sciences[1] as part of the Instellingstoets Kwaliteitszorg (ITK) [Institution Checks on Quality Assurance]. Now, nearly six years later, we are preparing for our next visit from the NVAO panel. In those six years, much happened, much was done and much changed. Of course, not everything went entirely to plan and there is, of course, still plenty of room for improvement. Nonetheless, the overall picture looks good: Fontys is in good shape and that should become obvious during the new ITK in February and March 2019 when the inspection is carried out.

In this web environment, we shall use four related questions (the NVAO standards) to explain how our institution and our quality assurance system are arranged. We shall also explain our sustainable efforts to development and improve our education and research. The inspection will be conducted in Dutch and all source documents and video footage are in Dutch, but we have chosen to offer a limited part of this Self Evaluation document in English. It means that students and staff who are not fluent in Dutch still have the opportunity to learn how Fontys has organised its quality assurance.

The key questions we want to answer are: will quality assurance ensure that we can achieve our ambitions for good education and research? And: are our institution's development and improvement efforts sustainable? As this Self Evaluation document reveals, we have a positive view of Fontys' focus on quality. Overall, our performance is satisfactory to good. Our students, the professional field and our staff all work together, all the time, to improve the quality of our education and research. At the same time, we face a number of challenges. However, we have not ignored them; in fact, we would be happy to discuss them. That is why we have invited the NVAO inspection panel, who are coming to check our standards, to explain the following current themes to us.

- How can we increase the learning ability of our organisation? How can we develop innovative solutions that have more impact on social issues?
- How can we accelerate the implementation of our socially relevant vision "TEC for Society" and broaden its scope?

We are particularly proud that both students and professionals in our Fontys community are challenged to grow, every single day. Our students, teachers, lecturers, staff and alumni often recall their personal experiences on their personal accounts on Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. At **#wijzijnfontys**, we have collected their stories – that is why we have chosen to use the same title for our Self Evaluation document. It allows us to create an authentic picture of what it is like to follow education at, and work for, Fontys. We are delighted to invite you to experience our education and look forward to welcoming you in February and March 2019!

The Executive Board,

Nienke Meijer
Hans Nederlof
Joep Houterman

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1   We shall refer to Fontys Universitiy of Applied Sciences as Fontys from now on in this self-evaluation document.

"We geven studenten de kans om zichzelf naast het reguliere curriculum extra te ontwikkelen."

Janco Duijs en Guido Dilweg
Docenten Fontys Hogeschool Marketing en Management

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Studenten die sterk gemotiveerd zijn om zichzelf extra te ontwikkelen, kunnen zich aanmelden voor deelname aan het Honoursprogramma vanaf het tweede studiejaar. Zo ontstaat een community van gelijkgestemden die extra willen leren in een zelfgekozen richting. Docenten treden op als coaches en verzorgen workshops en masterclasses. Dat zorgt voor plezier in het werk voor student én docent.

#wijzijnfontys

"We give students the opportunity to develop themselves in addition to the regular curriculum."

#wearefontys

Strongly motivated students who wish to develop themselves further, can register for the honors program in the second academic year. This way a community of like-minded people develops. Students who want to learn additional in a certain chosen direction. Lecturers provide coaching and offer workshops and masterclasses.

1. EXTRACT

A short description of Fontys might be: an institution that provides higher professional education – inspirational, challenging and top-quality education. It is an institution that strives to develop the talents of its 44,000 students as best possible. It is also an institution that encourages the personal and professional growth of its 4,500 members of staff; an institution, too, that produces innovations in close collaboration with the (regional and international) professional field, often with practice-oriented research, which we hope will contribute to advances in our society.

Triangle
Students, staff, professional field: our ambitions, described in our strategic plan, Fontys Focus 2020, are based on this "collaboration triangle". To achieve those ambitions, we need a solid, effective and measurable quality policy. Fontys strives for quality in all areas: first and foremost, in education and research. However, we are also aiming for equality in our staff policy and in our relationship with stakeholders, in our facilities and, of course, in our operations and governance. These ambitions are based on our innovative, learning organisation. Our culture of quality is characterised by our motivation to constantly learn and innovate.

Developments since 2013
We have not been wasting time at Fontys since the previous ITK. Much has happened, much has changed and much has improved (in most cases). Those developments have led to the expansion of our professional learning communities. In those communities, our students, the professional field and our teaching staff jointly give shape to our education and research. It is our hope that they learn and work *with* each other in an environment that is both clear-cut, recognisable and based on the human dimension. This environment should stimulate innovation and place solutions for social issues within reach.

However, Fontys is changing as an organisation too. In recent years, inevitably yet with excitement, we have moved away from an "organisation whose government is decentralised". We have turned 28 different and largely independent institutes and seven agencies into an "ecosystem" with an internal and external connection. In this organisation, people work together and create ever-changing coalitions. In short, it is an organic structure, in which we try to put our "culture of difference" – i.e. each other's strengths, expertise and networks – to the best possible use.

Other relevant developments since 2013 have been: a shift from a focus on marks to a focus on content ("from numbers to values"), the criteria for "ownership" and "small-scale operations" have been extended and – last but not least – here at Fontys, we have turned our eyes ever more outward (society) instead of inward (our internal organisation).

Key questions
In this Self Evaluation document, Fontys will reflect on the following key questions: will our quality assurance (the system *and* culture) ensure that we achieve our ambitions for good education? And: are our institution's development and improvement efforts sustainable? Using these four standards, we have come to the following insights.

Standard 1 - Vision and policy

> Our institution has a widely supported educational vision and a policy that follows from it that focuses on the internal quality assurance of our education.

Firstly: there is plenty of support within Fontys for our strategic plan, Fontys Focus 2020. The plan was drawn up with the help of the people involved, at Fontys and outside Fontys. It describes nine development goals. Within those parameters, each institute bases its work on its own vision of education. Each educational vision is defined in with plenty of help from the professional field and has the students at its heart. An inventory of those visions produces a list of five criteria for learning. The main focus, TEC for Society, allows us to explore the question: which knowledge, skills and attitude is important to students and professionals.

Our recently updated quality policy embraces all the building blocks related to the quality of education and research that have been developed in previous years. It connects the quality criteria and emphasises the importance of encouraging a culture of quality (including the creation of the set of values). Internal quality assurance is part of our management control system. Our quality assurance is anchored in our planning & control cycle. We are now starting to implement the generic principles behind the strategic programme for the quality portfolio, which we have been working on since 2016, into our organisation.

Our challenge
We want to embed the criteria for learning and for the TEC skills more solidly and more rapidly in our educational curricula.

Standard 2 – Execution

> The institution is accomplishing its educational ambitions very effectively. This is evident from suitable policy actions and processes, specifically those concerning staff, tests, facilities and students with a functional impairment.

The triangle students-professional field-staff is the core of our strategy. In reality, it means that the interests of the students, the staff and the professional field are always our first priority in all areas. That is also evident in our policy actions and processes. For students, we focus on talent development and measures that stimulate their success rates. That focus includes support for students with a functional impairment. For our own staff, we work hard to encourage personal and professional growth and to provide facilities that contribute to high-quality education and research. For the professional field, we are doing our best to be a knowledge partner and to facilitate practical research.
Our Study Success programme has helped us increase the personal attention to students. It has also allowed us to make our degree programmes more feasible. Our students' success is the key focus of our policy actions. Actual measures are: small-scale education, professionalising student supervision by means of student coaches and student psychologists, etc., and more facilities to make studying possible in exceptional circumstances.

At Fontys, we work on the principle of practising what you preach. We encourage – in this order – a professional feedback culture and the development of teams, which will eventually lead to improvements in the quality of our programmes and institutes. In reality, it has produced a wide range of professionalisation activities, such as Fontys Kwalificaties Onderwijs, the management event, the lecturer event, talent development for non-teaching staff (GrOw) and our leadership development process.

When we speak of facilities in this context, we are mostly referring to information management, accommodation and educational tools. We have linked the policy in this area as much as possible to the criteria for learning. However, that demands an ongoing coordination process. In other words: Fontys facilitates students' talent development and the staff's talent development with a number of facilities.

Within Fontys, there is a range of options for internationalisation; the institutes can make their own choices, related to their context, within those parameters. An inventory reveals that they are particularly interested in international partnerships and international internships for the students. The institutes are also interested in making the degree-programme curriculum more international and encouraging staff to join international networks, but perhaps to a lesser extent.

Fontys facilitates students' talent development and the staff's talent development by providing a number of facilities. Fontys Focus Informatievoorziening describes the vision and strategy we need to achieve the ambitions and goals for information provision that are listed in Fontys Focus 2020. Our information provision is aimed at facilitating students and staff. Interviews with the staff have revealed that information could be provided more efficiently.

Fontys offers students a stimulating and inspirational educational learning environment aimed at encouraging small-scale operations. We have plenty of workstations for students and staff, good facilities and a contemporary ambience. In 2013, we positioned the resource centres closer to the education (the ownership is held by the institution). The resource centres, which are facilities, are now embedded in the institution's primary process. It means that these services are more in line with the specific needs of each institute.

Our challenge
Fontys' size, its geographical spread and the diversity of our range at the institute level mean it is quite a challenge to constantly align the policy, processes and systems with criteria for learning as well as our ever-changing environment. The second challenge is to intensify our internationalisation activities. A third challenge is to understand how we can take the steps needed for improving our information provision and for digitizing our processes. In other words, the third challenge is mainly about improving the way we share and distribute essential knowledge as well as our digital infrastructure and the digitization of our education and processes.

Standard 3 - Evaluation and monitoring

> The institution systematically evaluates whether we have achieved our policy targets for educational quality, to which end we involve relevant stakeholders.

We can be certain about our facts if we check the figures. That is why we use a number of instruments to monitor and evaluate how much we have achieved for our (quality) targets. Effective feedback instruments help us to identify and report on the risks and that helps us to improve the quality even more. These evaluations and interventions produce necessary insights on all levels and about all the relevant parties involved (institution, institutes, programmes as well as the participation bodies and the professional field). We need a well-organised and effectively operating management control system so we can monitor quality, but we also need to pay attention to the dialogue about our set of values and to the differences within Fontys.

Our challenge
The feedback and insights regarding quality should produce improvements and innovations. That is one thing. In addition, we must be able to share information within the organisation. It must be practical and applicable to

other disciplines in the professional field, to institutes and domains too. We want to be able to take better advantage of the opportunities for sharing information about the quality results (good and better learning practices), so that we can truly develop better education. This is one reason we are pleased to see that more institutes are joining the quality portfolio programme.

Standard 4 – Focus on development

▌ The institution is focused on development and we work systematically to improve our education.

There are plenty of examples that show how Fontys is working on improving and developing education, research and organisation. Not surprisingly, one of our nine development goals is to become a learning organisation. We are always searching for the best way to be of use to society. That is why we have a relevant educational portfolio and high-grade research and education. Our primary process is the object of reflection, research and innovation. We systematically and methodically study education so that we can take a leading role in both primary processes: educational innovation and innovation in practice-oriented research.

However, we also constantly focus on development and improvement at the organisational level. The most important example of this is the shift from an "organisation with a decentralised government. Fontys has become an organisation with very different and largely independently operating institutes. It is an "organic ecosystem" that focuses on connection, mutual collaboration and utilising one another's strengths.
We are improving the accessibility and the feasibility of our education with quality programmes, rolled out throughout Fontys, for better success rates. We are also making our part-time education more flexible and developing our quality portfolio.

Our challenge
We are always evaluating our balance between improving and prolonging processes on the one hand and modernising and innovating on the other. We have realised that there is a greater demand for peace and quiet and space for reflection, so we can develop our policy and implement (modernising) processes effectively and finalise innovation processes properly.

Conclusions
To return to the key questions: will quality assurance ensure that we can achieve our vision of good education and research? And: are our institution's development and improvement efforts sustainable? We can answer both questions with "yes".

As our results have improved (please see section 3.6) since the previous ITK, we believe that we have set the right policy actions and processes in motion. The improved structure of our governance and its improved application will lead to better quality education and research. Fontys innovates and develops all the time, in line with our environment. Overall, our performance is satisfactory to good. Our students, the professional field and our staff all work together, all the time, to improve the quality of our education and research.
At the same time, we are not ignoring the challenges we face, and we would be happy to discuss them with you.

2. CONCLUSIONS

At Fontys, we aim to provide education and support research that is focused on talent. We do so by working closely with the professional field. In fact, the triangle students-professional field-staff is typical of the way Fontys works to provide good education and research. The Self Reflection document reveals that the institutes within the Fontys organisation can make their own choices within that triangle – the parameters set by Fontys Focus 2020. The institutes' contracts are based on the annual "Framework Letter", which the Fontys Executive Board writes to explain our institution's plans and governance. The Fontys institutes have a relatively large degree of freedom and independence. Although that can lead to differences in the pace of the developments, the institutes' foundations are solid and those differences are known and acceptable.

We shall briefly touch on the two key questions of this report again:
- *Will quality assurance ensure that we can achieve our vision of good education and research?* We can answer that question positively, even though Fontys is not an institution where the policy output can simply be "rolled up". After all, the institutes are focused mainly on developments that are relevant to *their* students and *their* professional field. In fact, that is how the aforementioned differences arise. However, the way in which Fontys has arranged hard and soft controls guarantees that we can achieve our ambitions for good education and research. It is important to mention here that both our vision on good education and research and the quality assurance are changing a lot. It is a challenge to anchor elements such as TEC skills and the importance of dialogue with internal and external stakeholders in all layers of the organisation.
- *And: are our institution's development and improvement efforts sustainable?* We can answer that question with a "yes" too. The development targets listed in Fontys Focus 2020 (the criteria for learning and the emphasis on the main focus TEC for Society) have led the Executive Board to set up various development processes for better performance. In addition, the support within the organisation is an important criterion and should guarantee good connections and good collaboration between the institutes. Here, again, is another challenge for us: we must systematically learn from each other. That is why we have invited the NVAO inspection panel, who will be checking our standards, to explain the following current themes to us.
- How can we improve the learning ability of our organisation? How can we develop innovative solutions that have more impact on social issues?
- How can we accelerate the implementation of our socially relevant vision "TEC for Society" and broaden its scope?

Lastly, we would like to say that the run-up to the ITK has been a valuable process for the entire organisation. After all, this report was not just written by analysing documents. It is also based on a large number of interviews with our students and staff, so it contributes to more knowledge-sharing between students, staff, institutes and services. It reflects how Fontys wants to improve quality of its education and research: by meaningful dialogue with everyone involved.

3. CENTRAL PARTICIPATION BODY

The Central Participation Body's advice
Written by the Central Participation Body on 6 December 2018.

We agree that Fontys is right to emphasize "we" in our motto "#wijzijnfontys", (we are Fontys). Fontys has always believed in the importance of equality of the various parties. Our Central Participation Body (CMR) is a good example but the degree-programme committees also have participation bodies and, recently, one was set up for the Examinations Appeals Board. These examples are representative of both the variety of degree programmes at Fontys and the different stakeholders at Fontys and outside Fontys.

The themes
CMR can recognise the picture presented in the Self-Evaluation document. As a "critical friend", the CMR would like to see more attention paid to certain aspects. Fontys likes to work with themes that are also often relevant in the long term. For example, the theme "research" is firmly embedded in the different institutes. However, there are large differences in how much priority the institutes and domains give to the theme "internationalisation". The ambitions and vision for this theme are not well defined and they are mostly aimed at Dutch students. We believe that this theme deserves to be regarded as a policy. There is also more and more room for new themes, such as the TEC skills. The individual domains address and apply the TEC skills in different ways, according to Fontys' decentralised government philosophy. But that also means that attention should be paid to finding support for them at the institutes and to finding more options for them at the institutes where TEC for Society is less obvious.

Communication and information transfer
Communications and the transfer of information from central management to local parties could be improved. Management could assume a leading role in this area. If we want more interdisciplinary collaboration, we need to encourage parties to learn from each other and initiate relevant processes. Lecturers could lead by example and offer support when students set up collaboration projects. TEC for Society could be a driving force: it prevents fragmentation among the institutes so that there is more focus on research.

Conditions for learning
We can recognise the educational philosophy described. That philosophy focuses on the triangle "student-professional field-staff". Collaboration and interaction between the students, the professional field and the staff in a professional learning community ensure that the students acquire a better picture of the world. Investing in personal leadership produces a better connection with the degree programme and stimulates personal development. Those aspects follow the belief that it is important to work on innovations for the professional field and on talent development among students. All of this follows the fundamental idea of our higher professional education: practical education for real applications. The involvement of the professional field is gradually taking shape at the individual institutes. It is being built into their degree programmes. Nonetheless, we should encourage efforts to make the collaboration more permanent. Although the students who enrol in degree programmes come from diverse backgrounds, the actual aim should be to help all students become creative, enterprising professionals who can contribute to innovations in their professional fields.

Students as partners

The structure of our educational processes includes the view that students are full partners. As a result, there are options for participation at several levels. Our views on equality reflect the opportunities the students have to express their opinions and join in decision-making processes. We are sorry to say that our students do not always take full advantage of these opportunities. It might help if the frameworks are more clearly defined so our students understand where and how they can participate. In addition, it is essential that they receive clear, active feedback on their contribution. For an evaluation process to work properly, both students and the staff on the degree programmes must take responsibility. At Fontys, much thought is given to supporting students with an impairment. Monitoring success rates has a high priority. Within this context, Fontys recently launched a new instrument: the start thermometer. There is also more awareness for the option of switching degree programmes: if it is arranged in time, students can move from one institute to another.

The Improved Governance (Higher Education) Act

The introduction of the Improved Governance (Higher Education) Act (Wet versterking besturing) demands more responsibility and involvement from governors, staff and students. Fontys can provide suitable facilitation and improve the information provision to stimulate the necessary involvement. This will also mean more focus on aligning the perspectives, interests and time-scales of the different stakeholders. The provisional changes to the Higher Education and Research Act (Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderwijs) mean there is room for our Flexibility Programme, which may help meet the needs of potential – often older – students. However, in reality, one or two difficulties have arisen, so sometimes we have not always accomplished the quality improvement we wanted.

Intensive Collaboration

All in all, the CMR can recognise the picture presented by the various standards. Standard 1 reviews the educational vision, which is clear and mindful of the future. Standard 2 is based on a high degree of involvement of, and the room allowed for, all stakeholders: students, staff and the professional field. The expectations listed for Standard 3 reveal the intention to improve the processes. It also means that issues identified by all of the parties involved are taken seriously. Lastly, all these aspect are being applied to actions that should bring about improvements, which is as it should be, and applies to Standard 4 too.

Fontys aims to be a large but agile fleet of different ships. That demands intensive cooperation, but we are seeing more and more evidence of that cooperation. It is, of course, the factor that connects the four standards and which will, eventually lead to "quality that inspires!"