

To be interviewed by a visitation panel

What do you need to know?

If you are reading this, you have probably been approached by your study program or institution with the question whether the visitation panel that visits your study program / institution can ask you a few questions in the context of accreditation. This document briefly explains what accreditation actually entails, what you can expect from the interview and what things you could pay attention to.

Accreditation in short

Programs at Dutch higher education institutions are assessed every six years for quality by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO). If the program meets the requirements, it will be accredited. This means, for example, that the study program is paid for by the ministry.

The accreditation process consists of three steps. The first step is the self-evaluation, written by the program itself. The second step is the visit of a panel of independent experts approved by the NVAO. One of the panel members is a student him- or herself. During the visit students will be interviewed, and you are one of the students who have been approached for this. The panel then writes a visitation report with their assessment. The third step is the final decision of the NVAO, based on the visitation report.

The role of the panel interview

The role of the panel interview in the accreditation process is simple: the panel wants to form the most accurate and complete picture of a study program or institution. What is going well, what can be improved and how is this being worked on? A conversation with students should of course not be missing in that process. Panels are looking forward to this conversation, because the opinion of students is very important to them. After all, education exists for students, not the other way around.

What do I have to take into account?

Inform yourself

It often happens that only the better performing or the most visible students are invited to the interview, because in principle the study program or institution is allowed to select the students themselves. So, ask yourself in advance why you were approached. Also consider what you want to let the panel know. Do you see that your fellow students are dissatisfied or very satisfied with certain aspects of the study program or institution? Make sure the panel hears these perspectives!

Read the self-evaluation

It is also advisable to read the self-evaluation beforehand, in particular the student chapter. If necessary, you can still inquire about certain matters from students who were involved in creating the student chapter, for example whether certain things that are indicated in the chapter are widely supported by students. The student chapter is part of the self-evaluation (step 1 in the accreditation process) and is made entirely by students. If you do not know where to find the self-evaluation, ask your program director (or director of education) for this. In principle, the student chapter contains what students think about the study program / institution. You can therefore use it to see if your opinion corresponds with this, and if not, on which points it differs and why.

Make sure you can tell your story

It sometimes happens that there is actually not enough time available to tell your story. For example, when a panel only has 45 minutes to speak to as many as eight students. This causes the conversation to be shallow and that is a shame. If you suspect that there will be too little time, discuss this with the quality assurance staff of your study program / institution and discuss the options.

What can I talk about?

The most important thing to keep in mind is to tell your own story: do not let your words be influenced by your program director or the Executive Board. A positive-critical and relaxed attitude is the most constructive and helpful for the panel. In principle, the panel will lead the conversation by asking questions. If this does not happen, or if you are not satisfied with their questions, you can indicate that you want to discuss something else. As an example, you can think of the following topics:

- Teacher quality
- Personal study guidance
- Student involvement
- Study places and areas

The panel will conduct the interviews confidentially. The content of the report is in no way linked to student names.

Good luck!

To many students, accreditation may seem like an abstract and far-flung event. That's okay: know that there are always people available who can help. In principle, the visitation panel will get you started. If not, ask for help from your central council. Questions or comments about this document? Send an email to iso@iso.nl.