

Avans University of Applied Sciences

M Animation

Limited programme assessment

Summary

In January 2026 Master programme Animation was visited by an audit panel from NQA. This is a one-year full-time programme, taught in English at the EKP-location in Den Bosch. The audit panel assesses the quality of the study programme as **conditionally positive**. The panel recommends imposing conditions for improvement, as described under Standard 4. The panel considers it feasible for the programme to realise the necessary improvements within a period of two years.

The Master of Arts in Animation is an intensive programme aiming to give students the tools they need to find their way in the animation industry. Throughout the year, students go through the entire production process and become familiar with its various components. The programme focuses on the development of the students and supports them in achieving their individual goals.

Standard 1: Intended Learning Outcomes

The programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 1. The programme is industry-focused, striving to equip students with the tools to be successful creative entrepreneurs, as well as to stimulate them to find their own voice as a creator. The programme ensures that alumni are well prepared to find their way in the industry. The programme has defined its end level in accordance with the Dutch Visual Arts & Design Professional and Educational Profile as published in 2014, describing them at master's level (NLQF 7). The programme is clearly relevant to the animation industry, with which it is well connected. The panel recommends making the already existing ties with the industry more formal (for instance by forming an Advisory Board) to make the contacts with the industry less dependent on personal relationships and to create a structural basis to discuss the programme's orientation at a more strategic level with the industry partners.

Standard 2: Teaching-Learning Environment

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for standard 2. The programme has a clear structure, with clearly defined units that guide the student's development during the year. The panel recommends the learning outcomes per unit for the four learning tracks be elaborated in more detail to make the progression towards master's level more visible and transparent. Regarding the Research&Positioning learning track, the panel recommends focusing on a more methodological approach such as artistic or design research, which is interconnected with the creative process of making. The programme is clearly tailored to each student's individual learning goals. Students appreciate not only the tutor's expertise and professional experience, but also their responsiveness and their efforts to support students in achieving their personal learning goals. The panel values the international orientation of the programme, including the choice for English as the language of instruction, which is clearly relevant to effectively introduce students to the internationally oriented animation industry.

Standard 3: Student Assessment

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for standard 3. The panel finds that the assessment system, with formative and summative assessments, effectively supports the student's learning process. The panel appreciates the involvement of external field experts, who report on the quality of the assessment procedure and the overall standard of the programme. The panel advises the programme to adopt a more structured approach to address the areas for

improvement identified by these external experts. For the assessment system the panel recommends the programme to provide a more specific substantiation of the criteria and their relative weighting in the assessment forms, aligned with the learning outcomes per unit for each of the learning tracks. This will make the assessments more traceable and will clarify how the performance of students is linked to the master's level.

Standard 4: Achieved Learning Outcomes

The programme **partially meets** the generic quality requirements for standard 4. The panel has reviewed fifteen graduation projects, each of them consisting of a short film, a presentation and a research paper. As for the films and the presentations, the panel finds that in general students achieve the required level, although the results vary greatly in quality. However, the research reports do not meet the criteria of what can reasonably be expected of master's level research in the arts. The majority of the reports do not provide a theoretical foundation for the creative work and are not connected with the creative process of making. The panel finds it necessary for the programme to show improvements on this issue to meet the requirements for this standard. The performance of graduates in practice demonstrates that they are very well prepared for careers in the industry, where they are highly regarded for their level of professionalism, their taking responsibility and demonstrating a passion for the field of animation.

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Introduction

This assessment report contains the assessment of the Master of Arts in Animation programme at Avans University of Applied Sciences. The assessment was done by an audit panel compiled by Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA) and commissioned by Avans University of Applied Sciences, in consultation with the programme representatives. The audit panel was approved by NVAO prior to the assessment process. The Master programme Animation is the only programme in the audit cluster HBO Animatie Avans and is therefore not part of an audit group.

This report describes the findings, considerations and conclusions from the audit panel. It also gives some recommendations and the condition for improvement that the panel recommends to impose. This report has been drawn up in accordance with the *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* of NVAO and the *NQA Guideline 2025 for Limited Programme Assessment*.

The site visit took place on January 29, 2026. The audit panel consisted of:

Name	Role	Job summary
Drs. J.E.D. Ossewold	Chair/Domain Expert	Owner/Director Concepts of Change; guest lecturer Creative Concept Development Researcher/Expert form the professional practice Professorship Transforming the Economy at Fontys University of Applied Sciences
M. Joustra	Domain Expert	Head of BA Animation Design, BA Comic Design and MA Illustration Based Narrative, ArtEZ
Drs. J.P. van de Kerkhof	Domain Expert	Head of Department, Production Animation Department, Submarine Animation BV
A. O'Meagher	Student Member	Student at Master programme in Fine Arts, Piet Zwart Instituut, Rotterdam

Mr. drs. M. van der Weij, NQA auditor, acted as secretary to the panel.

Method of working of the panel and process

The study programme has delivered a critical reflection with appendices for this assessment. For the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes, the panel has studied fifteen graduate products of graduates who recently finished their studies. These fifteen graduate files have been

selected from the list of alumni of the last two academic years. In this selection, the variety in grading has been taken into account.

The core of the assessment was the site visit by the panel, consisting of expert peers. Two weeks before the site visit the panel held a preliminary meeting and studied the available documents on site. The panel already met with a number of representatives from the study programme, during the so-called 'preparatory audit'. In the preliminary meeting the panel members have been instructed about NQA's method of working and about the *NVAO-Assessment Framework*. In this meeting the panel members also discussed their tentative findings. During both the preliminary meeting and during the site visit, findings the panel members shared their findings with each other continuously.

During the site visit the panel spoke with various stakeholders of the study programme, such as students, lecturers (examiners) and representatives of the work field and it studied several documents, see Appendix 2. At the end of the site visit the panel incorporated all the information it had obtained into an overall picture and into a provisional assessment, well-argued. In the final oral feedback session, the chairperson of the panel communicated the panel's conclusive assessment and its major findings to the programme's representatives. The site visit was rounded off with a development meeting in the shape of a dialogue between the panel and representatives of the study programme.

Staff members and students of the study programme have had the opportunity to approach the panel (via e-mail) in confidence to bring to the attention of the panel those matters they consider important to the assessment. However, nobody made use of this opportunity.

After the site visit a draft report was drawn up, which was first presented to the panel. On the basis of the panel's input a second draft was made, which was then presented to the study programme for a check on factual inaccuracies. Following the response from the programme, adjustments were made where necessary. The report was then finalised. With all information provided (orally and in writing) the panel has been able to make a well-considered judgement.

The audit panel declares that the assessment of the study programme was carried out independently.

Utrecht, April 2026

Chair

Secretary

drs. J.E.D. Ossewold

mr.drs. M. van der Weij

Characteristic Features of the Study Programme

The Master of Arts in Animation (MAAN) is an English-taught, full-time one-year programme that was founded in 2010. The Dutch animation industry has a long and distinguished history and is well developed, with smaller and larger studios and numerous educational programmes. This master programme is the only artistic one at master's level. After various organisational changes, the programme is accommodated by the academy Avans Creative Innovation (ACI). The programme is housed in the EKP-building in Den Bosch. The building has been undergoing renovation for several years, which has put pressure on the teaching and study facilities. Shortly after the visit, the programme will move to the main Avans location in Den Bosch at the Statenlaan.

The programme works together closely with the Master in Fine Arts and Design (MAFAD), which is part of the same academy. Not only do the programmes share the same building, but they also have joint staff for support functions, such as coordinator, producer and quality assurance officer. The recruitment and selection of students, the introduction week, and student support are also organized jointly with MAFAD. The two teaching teams consult regularly. There is one Study Programme Committee (SPC, the Board of Study) for both MAAN and MAFAD.

In the academic year 2025-2026, 27 students have been enrolled in the programme. Each year, the programme receives approximately 130 applications from the Netherlands and abroad, of which an average of 35 are admitted, and approximately 23 students of them actually start the programme. With the upcoming move to the new location the programme is considering the possibilities of admitting more students in the future.

Basic Data of the Study Programme

Institute	
Name in RIO	Avans University of Applied Sciences
Address	Hogeschoollaan 1, Breda, The Netherlands
Website	Avans.nl
BRIN-number	07GR
Status	Funded
ITK	Positive

Programme	
First name in RIO	Animatie (international name: Animation)
Location	's-Hertogenbosch
ISAT-code	49123
RIO-sector	Language & Culture
Orientation and Level	Hbo Master (master at a University of Applied Sciences)
Language of Instruction	English
Professional requirements	-
All programmes, majors and specialisations	-

Joint Programme	-
Degree and Degree Addition	Master of Arts (MA)
Study Load in EC	60
Variant(s)	Fulltime
Audit Cluster	HBO Animatie Avans (Uniek)
Submission date assessment report	1 May 2026
Date of site visit by visitation panel	29 January 2026

Retrospective View of the Previous Accreditation

In 2020, the programme was visited by an audit panel. At the time the panel made several recommendations. Below is a brief overview of how these recommendations have been addressed by the programme. The chapters per standard describe this in more detail.

Standard 2

The panel recommends improvement of the audio studio facilities for animation.

Students have been able to use the sound studio facilities at the location of St. Joost School of Art & Design in Breda.

Standard 4

The panel recommends making the research more contributing to the self directed animation work.

Since the previous audit, the programme has redeveloped and strengthened its research education. The present audit panel considers it necessary that the programme strengthens the research learning track further, to ensure that it has the theoretical depth and methodological approach which are required at master's level in the arts, and that it is integrated with the creative process of making.

Assessments of NVAO Standards

Standard 1 Intended Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and international requirements.

Conclusion

The programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 1. The programme is industry-focused, striving to equip students with the tools to be successful creative entrepreneurs, as well as to stimulate them to find their own voice as a creator. The programme ensures that alumni are well prepared to find their way in the industry. The programme has defined its end level in accordance with the Dutch Visual Arts & Design Professional and Educational Profile as published in 2014, describing them at master's level (NLQF 7). The programme is clearly relevant to the animation industry, with which it is well connected. The panel recommends making the already existing ties with the industry more formal (for instance by forming an Advisory Board) to make the contacts with the industry less dependent on personal relationships and to create a structural basis to discuss the programme's orientation at a more strategic level with the industry partners.

Substantiation

Educational vision

The Master of Arts in Animation aims to be an industry-focused, intensive programme that fosters individual creative potential. It focuses on the one hand on stimulating students to find their own voice as a creator. On the other hand, it strives to introduce students to the creative industry, making it possible for them to be successful creative entrepreneurs, as well as artists. The programme is multidisciplinary, composed of a broad spectrum of art and design activities (performing arts, digital media, situated design, interaction, and aesthetics) within the field of animation. It requires students to go through the entire production process of an animated film several times, to provide them with the ability to oversee the complete production process and the possible choices along the way. Students are made aware of the topics that are important in the industry and are thus well prepared for professional life after their studies. The panel acknowledges that together with the emphasis on personal growth and development, the industry-oriented focus of the programme enables students to develop a strong connection with the industry and a clear picture of their own potential role within it.

Alignment with professional and educational profile

The programme has defined seven core competencies for students to acquire: Creative ability, Research ability, Ability to grow and innovate, Organisational ability, Communicative ability, Field orientation, and Collaborative ability. With these competencies, the programme is in line with the Dutch Visual Arts & Design Professional and Educational Profile, as published in 2014. The panel notes that the description of the competencies, as defined by the programme, aligns with the master's level that is described in the Professional and Educational Profile, which is in line with level 7 of the Dutch Qualification Framework, or NLQF 7. In a recent (2025) update of the Profile,

the competencies have been redefined. The panel advises the programme to align the core competencies to this updated version of the Profile.

Connection with the animation industry

According to the panel, the programme is clearly relevant to the industry. The programme has an excellent link to the professional practice, fostering connections with leading industry partners both in the Netherlands and abroad. The tutors combine their teaching role with work in the creative sector and have a strong professional network. Furthermore, a number of guest lecturers from various partners in the industry contribute regularly to the programme, conducting workshops or giving lectures. A significant proportion of the guest lecturers are alumni, with whom the programme maintains good contact.

The programme seeks to involve the industry on a more strategic basis in the orientation of the programme, for instance in an Advisory Board ('werkveldadviesraad'). The panel recommends making this a priority, as organising the contacts with the industry in a more formal way will make them less dependent on personal relationships, bringing more consistency in the connections with the industry and creating a structural basis to consult industry partners at a more strategic level. The panel has already identified an important topic to discuss with the industry on a strategic level: the programme has made the well-considered choice to educate generalists, rather than specialists. The goal of the programme is that students are able to oversee the entire production process and fully understand all aspects of the animation industry. The panel respects this choice but notes that it is subject to debate, because employers and clients in the field of animation are often looking for specialists who are experts in a single aspect of the production process. The panel advises the programme to initiate an open discussion on this matter with the industry.

Standard 2 Teaching-Learning Environment

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for standard 2. The programme has a clear structure, with clearly defined units that guide the student's development during the year. The panel recommends the learning outcomes per unit for the four learning tracks be elaborated in more detail to make the progression towards master's level more visible and transparent. Regarding the Research&Positioning learning track, the panel recommends focusing on a more methodological approach such as artistic or design research, which is interconnected with the creative process of making. The programme is clearly tailored to each student's individual learning goals. Students appreciate not only the tutor's expertise and professional experience, but also their responsiveness and their efforts to support students in achieving their personal learning goals. The panel values the international orientation of the programme, including the choice for English as the language of instruction, which is clearly relevant to effectively introduce students to the internationally oriented animation industry.

Substantiation

Curriculum structure and content

The curriculum (60 EC) comprises two semesters, starting early September and ending late August. Spread across the two semesters there are five periods and corresponding units of study. Each unit has a theme, in which the four learning tracks have been integrated. The learning tracks are Design&Storytelling, Producing, Research&Positioning, and Professional Practice. The two learning tracks Design&Storytelling and Producing converge in the assignments of the successive units, whereas the learning tracks Research&Positioning and Professional Practice have separate assignments.

Semester	1	1	2	2	2
Study Period	1	2	3	4	5
Learning Tracks	Unit 1: Worldbuilding	Unit 2: Animation Handwriting	Unit 3: Project SOHO	Unit 4: Preproduction/ Production	Unit 5: Production
Design & Storytelling	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment 10 EC	Formative Assessment (peer review)	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment 10 EC
Producing	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment 10 EC	Formative Assessment (peer review)	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment 10 EC
Research & Positioning	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment 7 EC	Formative Assessment (peer review)	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment 7 EC
Professional Practice (module)		Formative Assessment		Summative Assessment 6 EC	
Semester EC		27 EC		6 EC	27 EC
Total		60 EC			

Overview of the curriculum M Animation. Source: *Master of Arts in Animation Self-Evaluation Report 2026*, p. 9.

Unit 1, *Worldbuilding*, focuses on the exploration of storytelling in animation. Students work on a short form animation, the main aim being to identify and develop skillsets in narrative storytelling in animation. In the Research&Positioning learning track, students develop an understanding of where to position themselves and their practice in relation to the field. They formulate research questions and write research reports. In the Professional Practice learning track, students learn how they can present themselves in public, discover a variety of artist positions in conjunction with Facets of Artishood, and create network maps.

In unit 2, *Animation Handwriting*, students produce the project they started in the first period. They develop a variety of animation skills, focusing on animation principles, acting & performance, modelling, workflow and sound design. In the Research&Positioning learning track, students delve deeper into the relevant discourses of their research topic and present their findings in peer-to-peer seminars. In the Professional Practice learning track, students position themselves as visual artists in a self-formulated context.

In unit 3, *Project SOHO*, students create a virtual animation studio as a team, working on assignments from real clients. In this unit, the focus is on collaboration and exploring the different roles in a team, giving students the opportunity to discover which role suits them best and what skills they need to further develop. In the Research&Positioning learning track students explore what they can contribute to the professional field of animation and incorporate this into their research report. The Professional Practice learning track in this unit focuses on entrepreneurship, letting students develop a financial and business plan.

In unit 4, *Preproduction*, students develop their graduation projects, paying attention to the concept/story, the visual direction and the sound design. In the Research&Positioning learning track, students finalise their research reports and present them in front of peers. With their presentations, they conclude this learning track. The Professional Practice learning track is concluded in this unit, with a summative assessment.

Unit 5, *Production*, is in the summer period, and is designed for self directed study. During this period students produce and finalise their graduation projects, taking into account the feedback they received during the formative assessment in unit 4. They can seek advice from their tutors on specific dates. Student who did not pass the formative assessment of the Research&Positioning learning track in unit 4, can use this period to adjust their research reports for a resit. The same applies to the Professional Practice learning track: students who did not pass the summative assessment in unit 4 can use this period to re-submit their documents for a re-assessment of this learning track.

The panel considers that the units and learning tracks provide a clear structure in the curriculum, which enables students to develop their knowledge and skills in the various learning tracks across the successive periods. However, the panel notes that the learning outcomes per unit for the different learning tracks are formulated in an abstract manner, allowing ample room for interpretation. As a result, the programme specification does not provide clear and transparent criteria for the development of the students' level throughout the programme. Therefore, the panel recommends that the core competencies forming the intended learning outcomes (as described in standard 1) be elaborated in more detail, and with explicit indicators for demonstrating the learning outcomes at a certain level in each of the assignments per unit. For both tutors and students, a detailed elaboration is needed for the competencies in learning outcomes per unit and per learning track, with a clear description of the successive levels the student is expected to achieve. This will be necessary to provide a concrete substantiation of the student's development towards master's level.

In the Research&Positioning learning track, the core course description states that students conduct theoretical and contextual research to gain insight in theories and current debates that underlie the practice of animation. Students learn to take a position in these debates and relate this to their own artistic practice. The panel acknowledges that this may well result in research that meets the requirements for the competency 'Research ability' at master's level. However, the panel signals that in practice students often conduct their research in relation to their activities in the Professional Practice learning track, using the research for personal professional positioning within the field of animation and thereby to prepare themselves for careers as animators, for instance by interviewing people in the industry about how they raise funds for making experimental animation, or researching the market for stop-motion artists.

The panel recommends the programme to further strengthen the research learning track, focusing on a more methodological approach such as artistic or design research, which is interconnected with the creative process of making. According to the panel, this may be achieved by defining the learning outcomes for the Research&Positioning track in more detail, in accordance with the recommendation made above. Given the position of the programme as a unique programme at master's level in the field of animation, the panel considers that the programme could develop its own methodology for research, specifically tailored to the field of animation, taking convincing leadership and adding a theoretical basis to the industry. The recently updated Educational and Professional Profile for Visual Art and Design can provide inspiration for this, as well as developments in other related fields.

Learning environment

The panel considers it a strong point that the programme succeeds in creating a close-knit community, with good contact between tutors and students, and among students as a group. The programme is clearly tailored to the individual students' needs and tutors make every effort to support students in achieving their personal learning goals. The panel concludes from the conversation with students during the audit visit, that students are very positive about their tutors. They appreciate their responsiveness and find it easy to reach out to them. Students are also positive about the guest lecturers and benefit greatly from the experience and the skills they bring to the programme in workshop and lectures. Students are stimulated to build a professional network and to reach out to experts in the industry to ask specific questions.

The programme is intensive, with peaks in the study load that can be quite challenging for the students. Both tutors and students refer to the programme as a 'pressure cooker' which demands a strong motivation and work ethics. Especially the SOHO project in unit 3 puts pressure on the students because they have limited time to complete their work and present it to the client. On the other hand, students acknowledge that the SOHO project is a valuable experience that presents them with good opportunities to connect with the industry.

Student support and facilities

The pressure that students experience during the busier periods in the curriculum can have a negative effect on their wellbeing. In recent years, students have put mental health issues on the agenda. In the current academic year, the programme has improved the provision of information about student counselling: at the beginning of the year students are given a tour around the Avans-buildings where they get acquainted with the possibilities for support and facilities for students with functional impairments. During this tour, the students also meet student counsellors. The panel understands that this helps students to find effective support when they need it. Students find the provision of information in general adequate, enabling them to prepare for the various activities during the curriculum.

The availability of the personal studio facilities has recently been reduced because of the renovation of the EKP-building where the programme is located. Students would prefer to have longer hours to access the building, including the studios and workshops. Many students do not have the opportunity to work at home and depend on a personal studio within the building to be able to work on their projects. The panel advises the programme to better integrate the use of the studios and workshops in the curriculum and to provide personal studios with reasonable opening times for students who need those. The panel is pleased to hear that the programme will relocate soon and will have the necessary studio facilities at the new location. As for staffed workshops, student can presently make use of the audio studios at the St. Joost location in Breda. In practice students do not use these studios as much as they would want to, because the trip is expensive and time-consuming, whereas they have too little time outside of classes to work in the studios.

Intake and selection process

The programme is open to both Dutch and international students from within and outside the EU. When applying, students submit a CV, a personal statement, a practice portfolio and a research proposal. Based on these documents, an admission committee selects students for an online interview. Prospective students must have a bachelor's degree in Animation, Illustration or a similar programme. In addition, they must have a sufficient command of English, preferably

demonstrated by an IELTS, TOEFL or Cambridge certificate. The number of applications has stabilised in recent years at around 130 applicants per year. About 35 students are admitted each year (resulting in an admission rate of about 26%), of whom 20 to 25 actually start the programme. The programme aims to ensure that approximately half of the admitted students is Dutch. The other half are from a wide variety of countries, such as Germany, Poland, Iran, China or the USA.

The panel notes that, although most students have a relevant background in the field of visual arts and design, e.g. illustration, relatively few students have a bachelor's degree in animation. This makes it necessary to teach basic animation skills in the programme. It also creates a high level of study pressure for students, because it takes a lot of time to acquire the animation skills, they need to be able to deliver a complete film at the end of the year. The panel is convinced that being admitted to the programme without any previous education in animation skills, affects the end level students can achieve. The panel invites the programme to think carefully about their admission requirements. If the programme requires that students who do not have any experience in animation must at least excel in a different field that is relevant to the programme, e.g. storytelling, directing or artistic research, students would be able to divide their time better between the various components of the curriculum. Another option might be to let students who lack animation skills take a preparatory course. The panel advises the programme to carefully consider the profile of the students they want to admit and to consult the professional field on this matter, especially in the light of the intention to admit more students in future.

Teaching staff

The teaching staff consists of two theory tutors, three studio tutors and one professional practice tutor, with appointments ranging from 0.17 to 0.2 fte (0.4 in case of the pathway leader). Most tutors combine teaching with their main occupation in the creative industry. One of the tutors combines teaching with a small appointment as a researcher with the Avans Centre of Applied Research for Art, Design and Technology (CARADT). The tutors all are proficient in English, have a relevant bachelor's or master's degree and several years of teaching experience. The panel notes that didactical training is not very well facilitated for staff members with small appointments. Therefore, not all tutors have a teaching qualification such as the BDB-, BKO- or BKE¹-qualification. The panel is pleased to hear that one tutor is currently training to get a BKE-qualification. Another tutor will start with the BKE-training once he gets his tenure. The panel encourages the programme to make didactical training geared towards arts education a priority, even though tutors have relatively small appointments. Similarly, the panel stresses that it is important that tutors are facilitated to participate in non-teaching tasks, such as taking part in the Study Programme Committee or attending professional development courses.

In addition to the teaching staff, guest lecturers play a significant role in the programme, meeting with students to give insights into their professional practice, and teaching workshops in specific areas such as storyboarding, motion graphics software After Effects, or 3D creation software Blender. A significant proportion of guest lecturers are alumni, and alumni lectures are an established part of the programme.

¹ BDB: Basis Didactische Bekwaamheid, BKO: BasisKwalificatie Onderwijs, BKE: BasisKwalificatie Examinering

International orientation and English language

The programme is fully English taught, reflecting the international orientation and distribution of the professional field both in the Netherlands and abroad. The programme aims to introduce students to the internationally oriented industry, facilitating them to build the international network that is necessary to pursue their professional careers. This network consists not only of international partners in the industry, but also of the community of fellow students and alumni which is formed by bringing together students of all nationalities. Especially students at master's level are required to reflect on their professional practice in an international context and to position their own practice in the international professional field (as is underlined in the Dutch Educational and Professional Profile for Visual Arts and Design). The panel therefore considers it a good choice to teach the programme in English and to admit both Dutch and international students.

Standard 3 Student Assessment

The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Conclusion

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for standard 3. The panel finds that the assessment system, with formative and summative assessments, effectively supports the student's learning process. The panel appreciates the involvement of external field experts, who report on the quality of the assessment procedure and the overall standard of the programme. The panel advises the programme to adopt a more structured approach to address the areas for improvement identified by these external experts. For the assessment system the panel recommends the programme to provide a more specific substantiation of the criteria and their relative weighting in the assessment forms, aligned with the learning outcomes per unit for each of the learning tracks. This will make the assessments more traceable and will clarify how the performance of students is linked to the master's level.

Substantiation

Assessment Policy

The programme's assessment vision and policy are described in the Masters Assessment Policy, which has been drawn up for both the Master of Fine Art & Design and the Master Animation. This vision emphasises that assessments focus on the students' development, in line with their personal ambitions. Assessments are practice-led, in the sense that the creative practice of students is central in the assessment process. The principal goals of assessments are that they should increase students' independence and encourage students' critical reflection on their progress. Skills are assessed holistically, in interrelated assessments that are in constructive alignment with the curriculum.

Assessment system

At the start of the programme, students are informed about the assessment planning, procedure and criteria. At the end of each unit (except for unit 3, project SOHO), students hand in their film (or project files on a film to be made), their presentation and a research report. Students present their work to an assessment committee, usually formed by all tutors. The presentations are open to all current students and students are encouraged to attend each other's presentations. The assessment of units 2, 4 and 5, are also attended by an external expert. The external expert does not assess the work of individual students but looks into the assessment process and the overall standard of the assessments, providing the programme with advice on the areas of improvement from the point of view of the industry. During the SOHO project in unit 3, students work in small studios (4-6 students each) for real-life clients, who have a role in the assessment of the project as practical expert assessors. Students also give peer feedback on each other's work, which is taken into account during the assessment. The panel welcomes the involvement of external experts from the industry in the assessment procedures.

An important aspect of the assessment programme is the balance between formative and summative assessment: in units 1, 3 and 4 the student work is assessed formatively, units 2 and 5 are concluded with a summative assessment, with the exception of the Professional Practice learning track, which is summatively assessed in unit 4. The panel values this rhythm of alternating formative and summative assessments, seeing that it is beneficial to the students' learning process. Not only during formal (formative or summative) assessment moments, but throughout the entire programme, students receive extensive feedback and feedforward to support their development. In their conversation with the panel, students indicate that they are very satisfied with the feedback, which is focused on the students' personal learning goals and challenges them to refine and further develop their projects.

Graduation procedure

The end level of the programme is assessed in unit 4 and 5. The research report for the Research&Positioning track must be handed in in unit 4 and is summatively assessed in unit 5. The Graduation Project consists of a completed graduation film, in which students show their application of storytelling, visual direction and sound design. They present their graduation films in late August to a committee of examiners, including an external expert. The graduation film and the presentation combined are the basis for the assessment of the learning tracks 'Production' and 'Design&Storytelling'. For each learning track there are three criteria which are weighed against each other. Within a learning track, one of the criteria may be insufficient, but students can still pass the learning track if the overall score is sufficient.

There is a formative assessment of the graduation project in unit 4, serving as a 'green light' moment. After this formative assessment, students are given the opportunity to improve their work. In late August, the final result must be presented to a committee of examiners including an external examiner. At this point, the assessment forms are filled out by the examiners, and a grade is assigned to the work. After the official assessment, students get the opportunity to showcase their work at the Graduation Show in the Verkadefabriek.

The panel has seen several assessment forms and appreciates that the feedback in those forms is strongly development-oriented and focused on the student's personal performance. The panel notices that the assessment forms do not contain a detailed elaboration of the criteria. The panel agrees that a detailed rubric is not fitting for holistic assessment. However, in many cases the panel finds the substantiation of the criteria and their relative weighting lacks detail, which makes the assessment less transparent. In line with the recommendation under standard 2 to elaborate the competencies at master's level in more detail into learning outcomes per unit, the panel recommends for the assessment system that the programme provides a more specific substantiation of the criteria and their relative weighting in the assessment forms. This will make the assessment traceable and will clarify how the student performance is linked to the competencies at NLQF level 7. This is not necessarily done by drawing up a detailed rubric; the criteria and their relative weighting can be made explicit and traceable in a way that suits the programme. According to the panel, this will help examiners to provide a more transparent and traceable substantiation for the grading, so that it is clear why a student's work is assessed as 'sufficient' or 'good'.

Quality assurance

The primary responsibility for the quality of assessment lies with the tutors. Because generally the entire teaching team is involved in assessment (except for the assessments for the Professional Practice learning track), internal calibration of the (end) level is ensured. In addition, external experts are present at several assessment moments throughout the year to reflect on the quality of the assessment. The panel approves of the programme's approach of seeking feedback on the assessment procedure and the overall standard of the programme from experts in the field. The reports from experts that the panel has been able to review contain valuable points for attention, for instance the question when a work is considered to be 'finished', related to the intended learning outcomes. The panel advises the programme to adopt a more structured approach to address the areas for improvement identified by the external experts and to closely monitor the improvements that are implemented in response to this.

As a result of a structural reorganisation within Avans, in the 2024-2025 academic year the programme has been placed under a newly formed Examination Board. This Examination Board has been temporarily established for all master's programmes, to bring the necessary knowledge about quality assurance at master's level together in one body. It is intended to first create a solid foundation for quality assurance for the master's programmes, after which they will once again fall under the academy's Examination Board. The Examination Board has appointed an expert in research in the field, a lector from the Centre of Applied Research for Art, Design and Technology (CARADT), as a quality assurance officer to report on the quality of assessment within the programme.

An assurance agenda has been drawn up and in January 2025 the quality assurance officer attended six examinations. The points for attention that emerged from this were discussed with the programme. During the audit, the panel has discussed the development of criteria for assessment at NLQF level 7 with the Examination Board. In general, the panel encourages the Examination Board to more closely monitor the quality of assessment within the programme and thereby support the programme in ensuring the quality of assessment, with an eye for the specific demands of arts education.

Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are realised.

Conclusion

The programme **partially meets** the generic quality requirements for standard 4. The panel has reviewed fifteen graduation projects, each of them consisting of a short film, a presentation and a research paper. As for the films and the presentations, the panel finds that in general students achieve the required level, although the results vary greatly in quality. However, the research reports do not meet the criteria of what can reasonably be expected of master's level research in the arts. The majority of the reports do not provide a theoretical foundation for the creative work and are not connected with the creative process of making. The panel finds it necessary for the programme to show improvements on this issue to meet the requirements for this standard. The performance of graduates in practice demonstrates that they are very well prepared for careers in the industry, where they are highly regarded for their level of professionalism, their taking responsibility and demonstrating a passion for the field of animation.

Substantiation

Products by Graduates

The panel has reviewed fifteen graduation projects from graduates from the two most recent academic years. The selection of graduation projects took into account a spread across sufficient, good, and very good works. Each graduation project consists of a research report for the assessment of the Research & Positioning learning track, a presentation of the production process and a film for the Design & Storytelling and the Production learning tracks.

The *graduation films* viewed by the panel varied greatly in quality. There were some very good films and some of lesser quality. There were many films in which some elements worked well, but there were few productions that were good in all respects. For example, the concept might be good while the design might be less original, or the animation might be very good whereas the story is not told very well. The panel appreciated some of the films for their relevance and originality, whereas other films stood out for their technical quality or for their style and atmosphere. Of the fifteen graduation films, there was one which the panel considered to be of insufficient quality. The *presentations* show that students are generally well able to organise their work, manage the production process and deliver their work on time.

One of the criteria for the *research report*, is that students show that they are able 'to deliver an informed, well-argued and innovative practice-led research that is situated in contemporary discourse within the interdisciplinary contexts of animation'. Another criterion is that the student's work demonstrates a clear connection between the research, the positioning and the graduation production and film. In the panel's opinion the research reports which the panel has reviewed, do not show that these criteria have been met. The majority of the research reports do not provide a theoretical substantiation of the creative work and are only superficially related to the student's

practice. In many cases, the research reports were more like a reflection report in which the students reflected on their personal development and professional interests, and the research was focused on their personal professional positioning within the field of animation.

The panel has addressed this during the audit with the programme, the tutors and the students. When asked about research in the curriculum, students say that research and making are two different things. Although the tutors encourage them to bring the two together, they do not feel that this is necessary for the process of making creative work. One of the external experts who was present at the assessments, has advised the programme to encourage the students to integrate their research into their animation process to strengthen the relevance of graduation projects. Tutors agree that some students find it difficult to see the relevance of research for their creative work. This may follow from what the panel has observed in standard 2, that the research seems to be closely linked to the Professional Practice learning track and that it is not approached as an essential part of the process of making, as is the case in artistic or design research. The panel does not consider the research part of the graduation projects to be at master's level and finds it necessary that the programme shows improvement at this point to meet the requirements for this standard.

Graduates in the Professional Field

The panel has consulted with professionals in the field and concludes that the programme has a very good reputation in the animation industry. The programme functions effectively as a bridge between the bachelor's degree and the industry. According to the panel, the emphasis on personal development, taking responsibility, organisational skills and situational awareness in the programme is exceptionally good. As one professional put it: "the soil is good for people to grow". Alumni are very aware of the topics that are important in the field of animation and the industry and are well prepared for professional life after their studies. Employers and clients recognize the master's level in the level of maturity and professionalism that graduates have, combined with a passion for the industry and the ability to work hard. The programme does not have a formal alumni policy but maintains informal contact with a large number of alumni, following their careers and keeping in touch with them at festivals and other events. Alumni are frequently invited as guest lecturers. The programme is rightly proud of the alumni whose graduate films are screened at renowned (international) festivals, such as Kaboom Animation Festival, Anima Brussels or the Annecy International Animation Film Festival.

Final Assessment

Assessments of the Standards

The audit team comes to the following judgements about the standards:

	M Animation Avans University of Applied Sciences
<i>Standard 1 Intended Learning Outcomes</i>	Meets the generic quality requirements
<i>Standard 2 Teaching-Learning Environment</i>	Meets the generic quality requirements
<i>Standard 3 Student Assessment</i>	Meets the generic quality requirements
<i>Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes</i>	Partially meets the generic quality requirements

The judgements have been weighted in accordance with the NVAO assessment rules. On the basis of this, the audit panel has assessed the quality of the existing Master study programme Animation of Avans University of Applied Sciences as **conditionally positive**.

In order to give a positive assessment, the panel considers it necessary for the programme to demonstrate improvement in the shortcomings that have been identified in the relevant standard (standard 4), that the panel does not consider the research part of the graduation projects to be at master's level. The panel is confident that the programme will be able to achieve this improvement within two years. The panel therefore recommends granting a two-year improvement period and imposing the following condition:

The research conducted by students during the programme, which is described and substantiated in the research report, is clearly at master's level and forms an adequate theoretical foundation for the artistic work, using a methodological approach that is relevant to the field of animation.

Recommendations

The audit panel has the following recommendations for the study programme:

Standard 1

- The panel recommends organising the contacts with the industry in a more formal way, creating a structural basis to consult industry partners at a more strategic level.

Standard 2

- The panel recommends the core competencies forming the intended learning outcomes to be elaborated in more detail, and with explicit indicators for demonstrating the learning outcomes at a certain level in each of the assignments per unit.
- Regarding the Research&Positioning learning track, the panel recommends the programme to focus on a more methodological approach such as artistic or design research that is interconnected with the creative process of making.

Standard 3

- The panel recommends the programme to provide a more specific substantiation of the criteria and their relative weighting in the assessment forms, aligned with the learning outcomes per unit for each of the learning tracks. This will make the assessments more traceable and will clarify how the performance of the student is linked to the master's level.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Programme for the Site Visit

Visitation Master Animation, Avans Hogeschool

Time	Topic	Participants
10.00-10.30	Conversation with programme management	Manager Programme coordinator
10.30-11.30	Conversation with tutors and examiners	Tutors and examiners (5)
11.30-11.45	Break	
11.45-12.30	Conversation with students	Students (5)
12.30-13.00	Lunch break	
13.00-13.45	Conversation quality assurance	Chair Exam board Quality assurance officer / Lector CARADT students from Study Programme Committee (2)
13.45-14.30	Conversation work field	Representatives work field: (alumnus) (alumnus) (work field)
14.30-14.45	Break	
14.45-15.15	Conversation with programme management	Manager Programme coordinator Tutors (2)
15.15-16.15	Review meeting panel	Panel
16.15-16.30	Feedback	All
16.30-16.45	Break	All
16.45-17.30	Development conversation	Tutors (5) Programme coordinator

Appendix 2: Documents Examined

Self Evaluation Report 2026, Master of Arts in Animation
Organogram Avans Creative Innovation
Programme Specification MAAN 25-26, 24-25 and 23-24.
EER Master Animation 25-26
Masters Assessment Policy 2025-2028
Survey Staff MAAN 2025-2026
Guest teachers overview
National Student Survey 2024 and 2025, MA Animation
Study Programme Committee MAAN-MAFAD minutes 2024-2025
Protocol Formative summative assessments MAAN 2025-2026
Examencommissie Masters Jaarverslag 2024-2025
Borging assessments MAAN
Borgingsagenda 2025-2026
MAAN literatuurlijst
External examiner report 2024 and 2025
Mapping MAAN competencies NLQF 2025-2026
Protocol studeren met een functiebeperking

Graduation projects of fifteen graduates from the last two years

Selection of assessments files, including student's work and evaluation