

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences

Associate Degree Tourism Management and Bachelor Tourism Management

Limited programme assessment

Summary

In November 2025 the Associate Degree (AD) and the Bachelor (BA) programmes Tourism Management of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (NHL Stenden) were visited by an audit panel from NQA. The AD is a two-year full-time programme, taught in English at the NHL Stenden locations Leeuwarden and Emmen. The BA is a four-year full-time programme, also taught in English at the Leeuwarden location. The audit panel assesses the quality of both study programmes as **positive**.

The panel has visited two Tourism Management programmes that stand on the brink of renewing their curricula, in line with the Design Based Education (DBE¹) model, towards more industry-driven content and graduation. The panel is impressed with the cooperation with industry partners. The full effect will show after 2026-2027. Until then students follow the 'old' programmes, which are also practice-oriented, but more classical in the graduation phase.

Both programmes meet the generic quality requirements for all four standards.

Standard 1: Intended Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes of both programmes are derived from the *National Educational Profile for Tourism Management*, are in line with the intended qualifications (NLQF levels 5 and 6) and are aligned with industry demands. The Bodies of Knowledge and Skills for both programmes have been derived from the learning outcomes. The AD learning outcomes can be reformulated: the panel finds that the AD level is clearly described at the module level, which is a good basis to also define this more clearly at the programme level and more distinctive from the BA. The AD programme could base this on a National Educational Profile at the AD level, after which more specific learning outcomes can be formulated, reflecting the NHL Stenden specific *couleur locale* for the AD. The fact that both programmes are taught in English suits well with the educational goals and offers good opportunities for students and alumni to succeed in the (inter)national tourism industry. The representation of the AD programme in the Advisory Board could be enforced.

Standard 2: Teaching-Learning Environment

The AD and BA educational programmes are delivered by a highly motivated staff in a strong and well-qualified team with a passion for student-centred education and student guidance. The education is practice-oriented, well-balanced and covers the full range of the tourism industry. The advice is to strengthen the involvement of industry partners even more, especially from Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. The research line in the curricula is strong and is set up in collaboration with NHL Stenden's research groups. Students can attain essential professional skills and develop awareness regarding the use of AI, along the lines of the UNESCO Digital Skills Framework. All in all, the panel states that both study programmes offer an attractive and stimulating teaching-learning environment.

¹ Education at NHL Stenden is based on the educational concept of Design-Based Education (DBE). This concept envisions education as an iterative process of research, solution generation, evaluation, and adjustment. This emphasizes a strong connection with the professional field and students' self-direction over their learning process.

Standard 3: Student Assessment

The assessments of both the AD and the BA programmes fit well with test and assessment policies and with the practice-oriented DBE didactical approach. Assessment is mostly based on professional products and therefore linked to professional practice. Partners from the field are actively involved in the assessment process. Students are well informed, know what to expect and how to prepare for tests and assessments. There is a good balance between both formative and summative testing and between individual and group testing. A point of attention lies with the (digital) archiving and standardisation of all assessments. The panel finds the assessments appropriate for the content and levels of both programmes. The Progress Test might be integrated more with elements from Personal and Professional Development. The panel perceived an open and active quality assurance culture.

Standard 4: Achieved Learning Outcomes

The graduation dossiers reflect the intended BA and AD levels. However, the chosen topics address a broad spectrum, where the relevance for the tourism sector could have been stated more clearly in the BA-reports. The panel encourages the movement towards more industry-driven graduation products, such as business and consultancy reports in combination with criterion-based interviews. This gives more room to educate the change agents that both programmes have in mind. Alumni are successful in the tourism industry and fulfil positions that suit the respective AD and BA levels.

Contents

Summary	3
Contents	5
Introduction	7
Characteristic Features of the Study Programmes	9
Basic Data of the Study Programmes	10
Actions on Recommendations previous audit 2019	11
Assessments of NVAO Standards	13
Standard 1 Intended Learning Outcomes	14
Standard 2 Teaching-Learning Environment	18
Standard 3 Student Assessment	26
Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes	30
Final Assessment	33
Recommendations	34
Appendices	35
Appendix 1: Programme for the Site Visit	36
Appendix 2: Documents Examined	38

Introduction

This assessment report constitutes the assessments of both the Associate Degree (AD) Tourism Management study programme and the Bachelor of Arts (BA) Tourism Management study programme at NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (hereafter: NHL Stenden). These assessments have been done by an audit panel compiled by Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA) and commissioned by NHL Stenden, in consultation with the programme representatives. The audit panel was approved by NVAO prior to the assessment process.

In this report NQA describes its findings, considerations and conclusions. It also gives some recommendations for the programme. 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 2024 for Limited Programme Assessment* (2024). The site visit took place on 17 and 18 November 2025.

The audit panel consisted of:

Mr Prof. Dr. S. Vos, chair and domain expert,

Professor Design & Analysis of Intelligent Systems for Leisure Time Sports & Vitality,
Technical University Eindhoven and lector, Fontys University of Applied Sciences;

Mr Drs. H.L. van Oord, panelmember and domain expert,

Manager Labour Market, Training & Education at HISWA-RECRON;

Mr J.A. Verwijmeren MSc, panelmember and domain expert,

Senior staff member, Saxion University of Applied Sciences;

Mr S.A.W. Valentijn MSc (student panelmember),

Student MSc Marketing Analytics Tilburg University and alumnus Bachelor International
Tourism Management and MSc Leisure & Tourism Breda University of Applied Sciences.

Ms Ir. M. Dekker-Joziassse, NQA senior auditor, acted as secretary to the panel.

The AD and the BA programmes Tourism Management are part of the audit cluster group HBO Tourism. The audit panels of this cluster have been aligned with each other, in the first place through the instruction of their members about the NVAO assessment framework. From the start this alignment has been guaranteed by the overlap in the composition of all the panels. In addition, considering that each assessment of a study programme is an individual assessment, and as a result of the overlap in the composition of the panels, there has been progressive reflection on previous site visits within the audit cluster wherever relevant. Furthermore, the alignment between panels is guaranteed by the support of the same panel secretary as often as possible, from NQA and other quality agencies, and by employing well-trained panel chairpersons.

Method of working of the panel and process

The study programmes have delivered a critical reflection with appendices for this assessment. For the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes, the panel has studied sixteen AD and fifteen BA graduation products. These graduation products have been selected from the lists of alumni of the last two academic years. In this selection, the variety in grading, modes of study and learning paths has been taken into account.

The core of the assessment was the site visit by the panel, consisting of expert peers. On 30 October 2025 the panel held a preliminary meeting on site where the panel met with a number of representatives from the study programme, during the so-called 'preparatory audit'. In this meeting the panel members discussed the methods of working according to the *NVAO-Assessment Framework* and discussed their tentative findings based on the documents provided by NHL Stenden. During both the preliminary meeting and the site visit, the panel members shared their findings with each other continuously.

During the site visit the panel spoke with various stakeholders of the study programmes, including students, lecturers (examiners), alumni and representatives of the professional 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 well-argued provisional assessments. In the final oral feedback session at the end of the visitation day, the chairperson of the panel communicated the panel's conclusive assessments and its major findings to the representatives of the programmes.

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

After the site visit, a draft report was drawn up, which was first presented to the panel. Based on the panel's input, a second draft was made, which was then presented to the study programmes for a check on factual inaccuracies. The panel members have taken note of the reaction of the representatives of the study programmes and adapted the report, where necessary. Subsequently, the report was made final. With all information provided (orally and in writing) the panel has been able to make well-considered judgements.

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

Utrecht, March 2026

Panel Chair

Secretary to the panel

Prof. Dr. S. Vos

Ir. M. Dekker-Joziasse

Characteristic Features of the Study Programmes

The AD and BA Tourism Management programmes have a long history. The BA study programme started in 2001 at the location in Leeuwarden. The AD-variant started ten years later in 2011 at the location in Emmen, and was extended in 2017 to the Leeuwarden location. In 2018, the AD became an independent NVAO-certified study programme. Currently, the Tourism Management study programmes count 509 students: 408 BA and 101 AD. Within the BA study programme students with pre-university education (VWO) could follow a 3-year Fast Track route. Furthermore, talented students can follow a Short Track route based on personal accreditation by the intake committee of prior learning or work experience. From 2020-2024, 29 students started in the Fast Track route. The Fast Track intake has been suspended since September 2024. From 2020 to 2024, 48 students followed a Short Track route. The Fast and Short-track variants have attracted high-quality students, particularly from Germany, Austria, and Italy for a long time.

Both programmes were part of the Academy of Leisure & Tourism and are now navigating through a period of transition and renewal. Since mid-2023, the Academy of Leisure & Tourism has gone through a phase of leadership changes, with four interim directors in succession. Since 1 January 2025, the Academy of Leisure & Tourism has been merged with the Hotel Management School into the new Academy of Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality with two newly appointed directors.

In September 2026, the new Horizon 2030+ AD and BA curricula will be launched. These are being built on a new *Strategic Plan of NHL Stenden UAS* and the updated *National Educational Profile for Tourism Management*. The curricula will be gradually implemented in the years to come.

The intake of students declined in the last few years, due to the Covid-19 period, setbacks in the tourism industry and demographic changes. The decline in student intake and related tightening of budgetary conditions led to interventions to improve both operational and educational efficiency. One major intervention involved restructuring the 3rd and 4th years of the BA programme with the requirement for students to complete their dissertation under close supervision before departing for placements and minors. This change already appears to be promising in having reduced delays and improving graduation rates. To further improve programme throughput and reduce delays, the placement period will be reduced from 42 EC to 30 EC starting in September 2026. Other changes in recent years include: the suspension of the AD programme in Emmen in 2022 and the cancellation of a pre-master track.

Since 2019, the curricula have also undergone major educational changes, most notably due to the adoption of Design-Based Education (DBE) (Standard 2). The revised AD and BA programmes were launched in September 2021. A revised Year 3 BA programme started in September 2025. The current audit has its focus on the ongoing curricula for the period 2023-2025, taking into account the context of the previous history and future plans.

Within the Academy of Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality the AD and BA study programmes together are also referred to as ITM (International Tourism Management). ITM works in close cooperation

with MILTEM (Master of Arts in International Leisure, Tourism & Events Management), ETFI (European Tourism Futures Institute) and CELTH (Centre of Expertise Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality). Lecturers participate in the research of ETFI and CELTH and integrate outcomes of research into the AD and BA curricula. ETFI and CELTH also function as early warning sentinels to scan for current trends and societal developments that can be integrated in education, thus anchoring the relevance of the education for the tourism industry.

Basic Data of the Study Programmes

Institute	
Name in RIO	NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences
Address	Rengerslaan 8-10, Leeuwarden
Website	www.nhlstenden.com
BRIN-number	31FR
Status	Funded
ITK	Positive, valid until July 2026

Associate Degree Programme	
First name in RIO	Tourism Management
Location	Leeuwarden, Emmen
RIO-registration number	80009
Orientation and Level	HBO Associate Degree
Research master	No
Language spoken	English
(Legal) industry demands	No
All programmes, majors and specialisations	No
Joint Programme	No
Degree and Degree Addition	Associate Degree
Study Load in EC	120 EC
Variant	Fulltime
Set-up with Unities of learning outcomes	No
Visitation group	HBO Tourism Management
Submission date	1 May 2026
Date of site visit	17 en 18 November 2025
Special Feature Sustainability	KIWA-Hobéon certificate four stars, number 2024-DHO-002 Date of issue: 09-02-2024 Date of expiry: 09-02-2027

Bachelor Programme	
First name in RIO	Tourism Management
Location	Leeuwarden
RIO-registration number	35524
Orientation and Level	HBO Bachelor

Research master	No
Language spoken	English
(Legal) industry demands	No
All programmes, majors and specialisations	Fast track, 3 years, intake ended September 2024
Joint Programme	No
Degree and Degree Addition	Bachelor of Arts
Study Load in EC	240 EC
Variant	Fulltime
Set-up with Unities of learning outcomes	No
Visitation group	HBO Tourism Management
Submission date	1 May 2026
Date of site visit	17 and 18 November 2025
Special Feature Sustainability	KIWA-Hobéon certificate four stars, number 2024-DHO-002 Date of issue: 09-02-2024 Date of expiry:09-02-2027

Actions on Recommendations previous audit 2019

According to the audit panel the various recommendations for AD and BA of the 2019 audit appear to have been followed up well and have resulted in clear adjustments in educational approach and procedures.

General

The previous general advice to continue the partnership and benchmarking with Haaga-Helia is proven by the continuance of the partnership with Haaga-Helia University, ongoing staff and student exchange and a second curriculum benchmark in 2023-2024. A double degree partnership is still in consideration, awaiting the development of policies regarding international partnerships within NHL Stenden.

Standard 1

The recommendation to strengthen the connections with external partners has been given more body within the curricula, following the implementation of DBE. Both the AD and the BA programmes have invested in the engagement of external partners in education, particularly through Semester Coordinators and individual lecturers. The Academy is working to centralise and coordinate these initiatives and connections. Both AD and BA monitor industry trends with members of the Leisure & Tourism Advisory Board and LOTM (Landelijk Overleg Tourism Management) and collaborate with industry partners in the practice-oriented programmes. The programmes also benefit from the activities and external networks of ETFI and CELTH. The dedicated team of lecturers upholds connections with industry partners to ensure alignment with sectoral and societal needs.

Standard 2

There is a clear follow-up of the recommendation to keep the Body of Knowledge and Skills (BOKS) up-to-date. The programmes have taken the more detailed BoKS of the National Educational Profile as a central pillar in the new curricula. The Progress Test Committee has recalibrated the BoKS. The programmes continue to place a strong emphasis on Lifelong Learning (LLL), in line with recommendations from the previous audit. Opportunities for further expansion of LLL are being explored, including collaborations within the RUN-EU network and crossover projects with other academies.

The programmes have given good attention to the recommendation to enhance the possibilities for digital didactics. Many digital didactic practices, developed during the Covid-19 pandemic, have been retained. On-campus education is still preferred, but digital methods help for example to guide and support delayed students.

Standard 3

The advice to keep paying attention to calibration among examiners is turned into standard practice in each semester during assessment preparation and grade awarding for both programmes. An external examiner reviews annual samples of BA graduate dissertations. At national level, graduate dissertations are also compared in LOTM meetings three times per year. AD graduate assignments were reviewed by an external examiner in 2024 and this has contributed to redefining assessment criteria for the new curriculum.

Standard 4

The previous audit panel placed an encouragement regarding the profiling of the AD study programme, whereas the current audit panel thinks this is better placed under standard 1. The current panel concludes that the profiling of the AD with regards to the BA, is still a work in progress (see standard 1). The encouragement in 2019 to enhance the independent position of the AD-programme is worked on and this will lead to more AD-specific features and opportunities in the new curriculum per September 2026, with a focus on the programme's identity and relevance. This will establish a clearer distinction between the AD and the BA programmes, and is presented with a clear development plan for the upcoming years. The panel has seen confirmation of the developments in the documents provided. It is strongly encouraged for the AD study programme to think out-of-the-box and adjust the graduation project even more to align with the goals of the AD and demands from the tourism industry, more industry-driven. Overall, this will strengthen the independent profile for the AD.

The panel finds that the AD and BA programmes have implemented the recommendations of the former audit sufficiently.

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 requirements for Standard 1.

The intended learning outcomes of both programmes are derived from the *National Educational Profile for Tourism Management*, are in line with the expectations of the tourism industry (including an international perspective) and describe the appropriate AD and BA levels (NLQF 5 and 6 respectively). The Programme Learning Outcomes are further elaborated in Subsidiary Learning Outcomes, which serve as the framework for the Bodies of Knowledge and Skills for the AD and the BA programmes. The learning outcomes are linked to NHL Stenden's strategic ambition of "promoting shared prosperity" (new curriculum) / "working on world-wide innovation" (current curriculum) and the core value of "sustainability."

The panel recommends redefining the AD learning outcomes, in line with the learning outcomes at module level (see standard 2). The panel advises to develop these based on a National Educational Profile for the AD level, after which NHL Stenden can formulate its own learning outcomes, reflecting its specific *couleur locale*. The programme's broad network within the industry will help to succeed in this. The panel recommends strengthening the Advisory Board with more representatives from the AD professional field. The fact that both programmes are taught in English suits well with the educational goals and offers good opportunities for students and alumni to succeed in the (inter)national tourism industry.

Substantiation

Professional orientation

The Tourism Management programmes aim to educate future leaders in shaping responsible tourism development. The BA study programme aims to educate graduates for strategic/tactical management levels. The AD study programme aims to educate graduates to become linking pins between strategy and operations.

BA-programme

The BA curriculum prepares students for entry-level management roles in the international tourism industry. The BA graduate will have the ability to inspire creativity and change in tourism, leading enterprises to act in a socially inclusive manner, in balancing the interests of economics, ecology and ethics. They will be proactive, innovative, analytical, engaged and knowledgeable professionals, besides being confident about their practical abilities, and reflective on their actions and personal development as independent professionals.

AD programme

The AD curriculum prepares students for supervisory roles, primarily within the Dutch tourism sector. As Assistant Managers in Tourism & Recreation at tactical/operational level they are responsible for the day-to-day operations of a team or small unit. They are involved in monitoring processes in line with the commercial, financial, personnel, and quality-related targets. They oversee the implementation of procedures, compile short-term plans and show decision making skills.

The current study programmes are built on the National Educational Profile for Tourism Management (NEP, 2018) and are in line with NHL Stenden's ambition to work on world-wide innovation. The updated NEP (2024) and the new NHL Stenden strategic goal: 'Promoting Shared Prosperity', are the starting points for the revision of both study programmes, resulting in the Horizon 2030+ curricula that will start in September 2026. These new curricula will promote values, standards, and ethical considerations relevant to the tourism industry, many of which are already embedded in the existing curricula.

Both study programmes are also built on the core values of sustainability², five generic skills derived from the 21st century skills³ and the framework of the Pact for Next Tourism Generation Skills (NTG).

The panel sees well described professional profiles for both study programmes at respectively more strategic (BA) and more operational levels (AD). These profiles have been directly derived from and well-aligned with the NEP and the university's goals and ambitions and suit the (inter)national tourism orientation. ITM is partner of and accredited by the International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE).

Intended learning outcomes and levels

The NEP with four core tasks⁴ and twelve BA learning outcomes forms the foundation for the Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and underlying Subsidiary Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for both the BA and the AD programmes. The SLOs have been worked out into competencies and into the Bodies of Knowledge and Skills (BOKS) for both study programmes.

BA level

The twelve BA competencies are described at NLQF level 6 (Dutch Qualification Framework), which matches level 6 of the European Qualification Framework and the Dublin Descriptors at bachelor level. In the AUCOM model⁵ the BA programme works towards level 3, which is described as 'being capable of executing a complex task independently in a complex and unpredictable situation'.

² SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production

³ Generic skills: Digital skills, Sustainable skills, Social/cultural skills, Resilience skills, and Research skills

⁴ Four NEP core tasks: Initiating and Creating, Realising and Implementing, Marketing and Advising, Organising and Managing a Business.

⁵ AUCOM-model: Framework for defining the Autonomy and Complexity of performing tasks

AD level

The AD competencies are derived from the BA level (Level 6) and transformed to the AD level (Level 5) according to NLQF standards. Ongoing refinements to the AD programme and the learning goals at module level continue to enhance its distinctiveness. However, recent national guidelines on facilitating smooth transitions from AD to BA highlight the need for continued alignment between the two programmes particularly in terms of PLOs and BOKS. In the AUCOM model the AD programme works towards level 2, which is described as follows: 'independent performance of complex but structured tasks along standard procedures in relatively straightforward situations or can function under supervision in a complex and unpredictable situation'.

The panel recommends the AD study programme to continue working on more distinctive AD-learning outcomes. The AD learning outcomes should address the more specific competencies, knowledge and skills for attaining the AD level. The panel finds that the AD level is already clearly described at the module level, which is a good basis to also define this more clearly at programme level. The panel was informed that the programme had started to cooperate with related AD programmes at other universities of applied sciences (BUAS and Zuyd Hogeschool) to formulate a specific National Educational Profile at the AD level. Linking the outcome of this collaboration to NHL Stenden's programme-specific professional fields can add a distinct local and regional *couleur locale* to the AD profile at NHL Stenden.

In the light of the restructuring of AD and BA programmes the panel advises to use the same terminology throughout the whole of the two programmes. Currently, it seems with the 'old' and 'renewed' curricula that the terms competencies, learning outcomes and core tasks are used in parallel, which can be confusing.

Consultation with the Professional Field

Both programmes have a strong network in the tourism industry through the DBE-projects and industrial placements. Staff also bring in numerous contacts with industry partners from previous and current work experience and from their participation in research projects of ETFI and CELTH. In addition, more formal and structured input is gathered by the Leisure & Tourism Advisory Board and through benchmarking with Haaga-Helia University in Finland and partners in THE-ICE⁶. The Advisory Board offers recommendations and advice on the structure and on the content of the programmes, the BOKS and Learning Outcomes and helps to ensure that the curricula represent the current needs and ambitions of the industry and the wider community. The industry trends are also monitored through the LOTM.

According to the panel the AD and the BA programme are in close contact with the professional field and base their ambitions and goals on the needs of the tourism industry. The panel recommends a stronger representation of the AD-programme in the Advisory Board to obtain more specific information to further specify the AD learning outcomes and BOKS. The AD programme is not yet well known in the tourism industry. More awareness can be created by emphasising the importance of AD graduates to the Dutch tourism industry, especially among SMEs. The panel finds it important to have a good representation of the regional, national and international professional fields in the Advisory Board. The panel advises to take part in the

⁶ THE-ICE: International Centre of Excellence in Tourism & Hospitality Education

national Hospitality Pact together with other educational institutions to stay on top of new developments and join forces to incorporate these in a way that the profile LTH can be enhanced.

English name / Teaching Language

To serve the needs of a truly global industry and to support students in achieving their career ambitions, ITM offers both the Associate Degree and Bachelor of Arts programmes in English. ITM states: “ *the English-language curriculum has made the programme more accessible and inclusive, particularly for international students. Learning in English provided graduates with communication skills appropriate for the global nature of the tourism industry, allowing them to interact across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Several alumni mentioned how using English helped them prepare for work in international settings, improving their language skills and facilitating professional opportunities abroad*”.

As stated by alumni in an alumni survey:

“... the English-language curriculum made the programme more accessible and inclusive, particularly for international students. Learning in English provided graduates with communication skills appropriate for the global nature of the tourism industry, allowing them to interact across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Several alumni mentioned how using English helped them prepare for work in international settings, improving their language skills and facilitating professional opportunities abroad”.

The panel finds it logical that the AD and BA programmes are taught in English, as the world of tourism is highly international by nature. This suits the NHL Stenden strategic themes ‘Working on World-wise Innovation’ and ‘Shared Prosperity’. The choice of the English language enhances international accessibility, offers students and alumni better opportunities and networks internationally and strengthens connections with the Research Unit, ETFI, and the global strategic partners.

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 AD and BA educational programmes are delivered by highly motivated staff and strong team. Teachers maintain strong connection with students in an open atmosphere. The teaching staff is well-qualified for carrying out the curricula and the DBE didactic approach. The education is practice-oriented, allows students to learn in practice and build on their industry experience and network. The programmes are well-balanced and cover the broad range of the tourism industry. The advice is to reinforce the involvement of industry partners even more, especially from the SMEs. Contacts with the tourism industry and NHL Stenden's research groups are strong, assuring practice-and research-oriented education. The study programmes offer good opportunities for students to develop essential professional skills and makes students aware of the benefits and challenges of AI, along the lines of the UNESCO Digital Skills Framework. The panel sees future opportunities to create more interdisciplinary cooperation with related programmes within and outside the domain/academy and to offer Dutch language courses to foreign students to stimulate their integration in the Dutch professional field. All in all the panel states that both study programmes offer an attractive and stimulating teaching-learning environment.

Substantiation

Didactic Concept DBE

Since 2021 the AD and BA curricula are designed along the principles of Design Based Education (DBE), a learning model that aims to enable students to solve real-life problems by integration and implementation of knowledge. Students often work closely together in project groups and follow the design steps: empathise with the problem, define the question, generate ideas, prototype and test. Students work together on real-life challenges and assignments in the Tourism Hub, a physical space where student groups work together in collaborative and creative projects (green in the figure below). Students are supported by structured subjects and skills workshops (blue in figure 1), which focus on more theoretical topics such as Business Economics, Management, Communications or Research. During Personal and Professional Development (PPD, red in the figure) students work on personal reflection and the development of personal values.

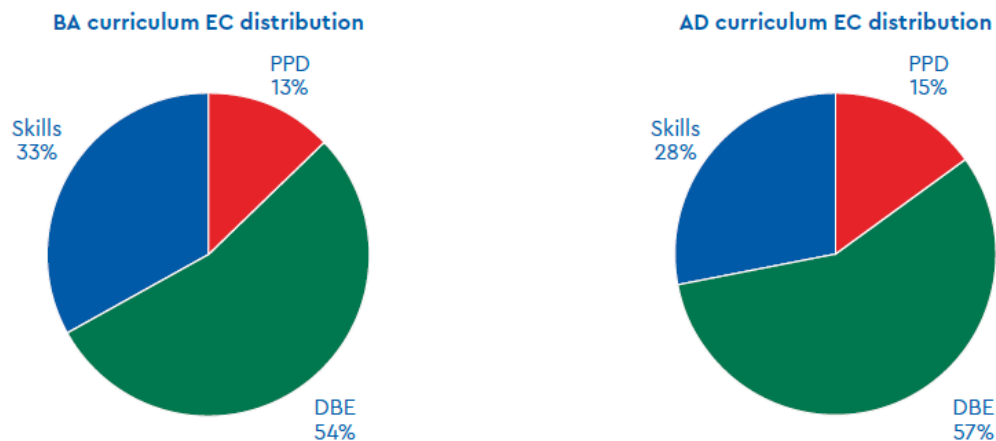


Figure 1: division of DBE, Skills and PPD

The panel finds that DBE is a modern practice-oriented education concept that allows students to learn in industry authentic settings and that promotes creative and critical thinking skills. Students complete their projects with professional products, for example a business model, infographic, or an innovation proposal. A point of attention is the full involvement of the SMEs in DBE. The panel recommends broadening the involvement of the professional field with SMEs, especially for suitable AD projects/challenges.

The panel finds it positive that the programme adopts an interdisciplinary approach, engaging students with authentic, industry-generated dilemmas in close interaction with peers, lecturers and with the involvement of industry partners. This is reflected in the careful balance among academic challenge and practical relevance, group collaboration and individual development. The programmes learning environment fosters innovation, creative thinking, and critical judgement in the eye of the panel.

Structure and Content of the Programmes

Both curricula (AD and BA) are structured along a sequence of industry-themed, multidisciplinary semesters of 30 EC each.

AD curriculum

The AD-curriculum focuses on combining business knowledge with practical skills and substantial hands-on experience. There are two themes/central projects in the first year: Unpacking Tourism (12 EC) and Innovations & Marketing (15 EC). These are supported by underlying modules (3-9 EC). The second year starts with an internship (30 EC), at local, regional, national and international tourism enterprises. In the fourth semester students work on a Graduation Assignment (6 EC), knowledge and skills in Tour operating (15 EC), and acquire key management skills (3 EC). At the end of each year students do a Progress Test and work on their PPD portfolio.

YEAR 1	
Unpacking Tourism incl. Wayfinder (15 EC) Communications (9 EC) MyMIS Excel (3 EC) Financial Administration (3 EC) Personal & Professional Development 1 (3 EC)	Innovations & Marketing (12 EC) Communications (3 EC) Qualitative Research (3 EC) Management Accounting (3 EC) Intercultural Communication (3 EC) Progress Test 1 (3 EC)
YEAR 2	
Internship (30 EC)	Managing Talents & Satisfaction (15 EC) Management Skills: Leading Organisational Culture (3 EC) Personal & Professional Development 2 (3 EC) Progress Test 2 (3 EC) Graduation Assignment (6 EC)

Table 1: AD curriculum

BA curriculum

The BA curriculum offers a broad foundation in Year 1, identical to the first year of the AD programme. Year 2 is built on the semester themes: Rethinking Tourism Destinations (12 EC) and Managing Talents & Satisfaction (15 EC). Second year topics are more specialised. Students can choose electives to deepen their management or leadership skills. Year 3 focuses on advanced research in the Tourism Research Project and in the Strategic Management module, in combination with the progress test and PPD activities. In a minor of their choice students can specialise or broaden their knowledge. The fourth year comprises a Placement (42 EC) and an academic graduation thesis (18 EC). The topics for the placement and graduation are often related.

YEAR 1		
Unpacking Tourism incl. Wayfinder (15 EC) Communications (9 EC) MyMIS Excel (3 EC) Financial Administration (3 EC) Personal & Professional Development 1 (3 EC)		Innovations & Marketing (12 EC) Communications (3 EC) Qualitative Research (3 EC) Management Accounting (3 EC) Intercultural Communication (3 EC) Progress Test 1 (3 EC)
YEAR 2		
Rethinking Tourism Destinations (12 EC) Finance (3 EC) Management Skills: Responsible Leadership (3 EC) Quantitative Research (3 EC) Personal & Professional Development 2 (3 EC) Elective (6 EC)		Managing Talents & Satisfaction (15 EC) Financial Accounting (3 EC) Management Skills: Leading Organisational Culture (3 EC) Progress Test 2 (3 EC) Elective (6 EC)
YEAR 3		
Tourism Research Project (9 EC) Leadership Skills (3 EC) Personal & Professional Development 3 (3 EC)	Strategic Management (12 EC) Progress Test 3 (3 EC)	Minors (30 EC)
YEAR 4		
Placement (42 EC) & Dissertation (18 EC)		

Table 2: BA curriculum

The panel sees well-structured AD and BA curricula that cover the full range of the tourism professional field and underlying fields of expertise. Students develop relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills through a diverse mix of didactic methods, including (guest) lectures, workshops, individual assignments, practical activities, field trips, online and self-directed study. Some topics such as destination management and finances are not explicitly mentioned in the semester or module titles but a screening of the module descriptions and educational materials show that they are covered in the supporting modules in both study programmes.

The panel has seen and heard multiple examples of continuous adjustments to the curricula, confirming the quality culture within the study programmes and the readiness to optimise the quality of the educational programme. For example, more emphasis was put on knowledge exchange to provide a clearer structure and formative stimulus to students and to create more cohesion in the curricula. To improve educational efficiency and success rates the third and fourth years of the BA programme are being restructured. Students are now required to complete their dissertation before the start of their placements and minors. The placement will be reduced from 42 EC to 30 EC, starting in September 2026. The programme has already piloted some of the ideas for the renewed programme of the fourth year. The first results of this show a positive effect in the decline of delays and improved graduation rates.

Knowledge and professional Skills

As already mentioned above the panel is of the opinion that both curricula offer a sound knowledge base that covers the full range of the tourism professional field and that is fitting for the AD and the BA levels of education, respectively. The BOKS has been worked out well and is comparable to other tourism management programmes.

The PPD line in both programmes offers a multi-year, structured learning journey designed to let students develop a value-driven approach to their personal and professional growth and the development of leadership skills. Students develop reflective skills, self-awareness and the capacity to steer their own development and learning paths. This is supported by workshops, lectures, job orientation, job application training, and a workbook with dedicated assignments.

In both the BA and AD programmes, close engagement with industry is a key feature for shaping the practice-oriented education and for ensuring that students can obtain the required knowledge and skills. The panel sees this confirmed by the strong involvement of the professional field in the DBE projects and by the considerable amount of time students spend in the field during internships (AD 720 hours and BA 1000 hours). The fact that industry professionals deliver constructive feedback to students in direct contact and that they provide input for the assessments, contributes to the real-life learning experience of students. The wrapping up of the placements also includes students' Personal and Professional Development, where students have to reflect on their growth in professional skills and how they attained the learning outcomes.

Development of practical and professional skills is facilitated through: management and leadership skills workshops, Competence in Practice (CIP⁷) activities and industry placements.

⁷ an integral part of the Personal & Professional Development (PPD) programme, where students earn credits (EC) by participating in extracurricular activities that further their professional development and practical and professional skills.

This helps in empowering students to shape the future of tourism. The support of the student's personal growth and professional direction is a key feature to attain this. Similarly, professional contact with alumni, field trips and guest lectures contribute to the development of practical and professional skills.

With regard to the attainment of digital skills the panel sees clear steps to enhance awareness among students that Generative Artificial Intelligence is a tool they must use in a responsible and accountable manner. This is addressed in several assignments throughout the curriculum, along the lines of the UNESCO AI Competency Framework. The panel rates this as very positive.

The panel sees two opportunities to strengthen the development of professional and practical skills of students. Firstly, with the shaping of the new Horizon 2030+ curricula the panel recommends focusing more on multidisciplinary collaboration with related study programmes within and outside the Academy.

A second opportunity is to introduce dedicated Dutch language courses for international bachelor students. During the audit with the current students, the international students explicitly stated the wish to improve on speaking Dutch. As such, it was unknown to these students that there is a language centre at NHL Stenden, which caused the panel to see opportunities in further facilitating these opportunities to students. This can boost their chances in the Dutch professional field, improve the contact with more local/regional small and medium enterprises and promote their integration into the local community of Leeuwarden and the Friesland region.

Research Skills

Research is one of the seven central disciplines in the BOKS. Research is integrated in the curricula via the blue skills parts of the curriculum (figure 1). Both programmes have strong ties with ETFI and CELTH because of the lecturers that participate in the projects of these research groups. Lecturers and professors integrate research skills into their educational activities, with scenario planning as a central line to enhance an investigative attitude among students. There is good collaboration with ETFI in the definition and lay out of the research line in the curricula and the build-up of research skills. Research modules and lectures cover topics such as quantitative and qualitative research methods, techniques for analysis/data science, tourism prognosis and scenario planning, methodical work and design thinking, consulting and advisory skills. Students are trained to identify and analyse problems and, through applied research, make well-founded contributions to solutions. An investigative attitude (inquiry for instance) is a fundamental principle underlying the initiation and creation of new products, services, or policies. Some students participate directly in the research projects of ETFI and CELTH.

The panel is positive about the practice-oriented approach to research. Skills such as critical thinking, a solution-driven attitude, out-of-the-box thinking and the implementation of knowledge are recognised in the students' final products.

Sustainability

In October 2023, the AD and BA study programmes were assessed by Hobéon using the Sustainability in Higher Education (SHE) audit framework and were awarded the 4 stars certificate. This assures the embedding of sustainability in education. Students have the opportunity to follow an online training package of Travellife Sustainable Tourism leading to a personal certificate.

The panel has seen that attention for the SDG's is integrated into the learning outcomes and courses, with an emphasis on SDG 11 'Sustainable Cities and Communities' and SDG 12 'Responsible Consumption and Production'. The panel had expected this to be reflected more explicitly in the graduation projects and advises the programme to make this more visible, for example through an explicit explanation in the graduation projects.

Internationalisation

The international character of ITM is one of its most valued attributes. The BA programme, in particular, has been designed to align with international standards and expectations. This is acknowledged by the positive and full accreditation of THE-ICE in 2013 and 2020 and in the benchmarking with the Haaga-Helia University in 2023. Students can gain international experience by participating in the NHL Stenden Grand Tour®, RUN-EU initiatives, and student exchange programmes. These are complemented by 'Internationalisation at Home' elements, such as Intercultural Communication workshops and English language development. On average, 45 BA students per year participate in the Grand Tour minors in Aruba, Bali, Thailand, South Africa or Italy, motivated by the opportunity for international and intercultural experiences. A smaller, yet consistent, group of students (25-30 per year) engages in international exchange and RUN-EU⁸ programmes for similar reasons.

The AD students are mostly Dutch speaking. The education is offered in English and in the first year students may use the Dutch language. In the meanwhile they get more familiar with the English language. In the second year all reports and presentation must be performed in English. Students follow workshops on intercultural competencies, with attention for intercultural aspects.

The panel finds that students have ample opportunities to obtain intercultural skills and international experiences. After a sharp decline in the Covid-19 period and contrary to the political context relating to foreign students, the opportunities to engage in internationalisation activities and experiences continue to expand (including field trips, and an increasing offer of RUN-EU programmes). The study programmes and the Academy seek to maintain the commitment to internationalisation as described in the ITM Internationalisation Strategy & Plan (2023). The current strategy focuses on stabilisation and enhancing the programme's international character internally, while expanding its external connectivity and profile in a global context. Strengthening ties with (international) educational and research partners, industry stakeholders, and alumni is central to this ambition.

Admissions and Study Routes

Both programmes admit students in accordance with the NHL Stenden admissions rules: a diploma at least equivalent to NLQF/EQF 4 level or comparable foreign diplomas. Foreign diplomas are checked by an Admission Officer from the Central Student Administration and compared to list of acceptable international diplomas. In case of doubt diplomas will be verified by Nuffic. Students with 21+ age can undergo an assessment with a check on relevant experience and knowledge. All non-EU/EEA applicants are required to submit a recent English proficiency test, unless they come from a country with English as the official educational language or have attained English taught educational programmes such as baccalaureate programmes. The panel finds the admission rules clear and has heard no complaints of students regarding the enrolment procedures.

⁸ RUN-EU: Regional Universities Network - EU

In previous years the BA study programme offered talented and high-quality students the option to follow a Fast Track or a Short Track programme. The Fast Track started in 2015 especially for students with a VWO (pre-university education) diploma. Students received dispensation for the first semester and the minor. Due to low intake numbers, the Fast Track was suspended in 2024 and the future is under discussion, with the intention to relaunch it whenever feasible. For similar reasons, the pre-master track for the MSc Cultural Geography programme has also been stopped.

The Short Track programme offers an accelerated route for high-quality students, particularly from Germany, Austria, and Italy. It is a customised study track with individually agreed study tracks. The Admissions Committee assesses and accredits the prior learning and/or work experience per student. While students find the curriculum insightful and relevant, the operation of the Short Track presents specific challenges related to integration and communication. Students rate the Short Track programme positively and deem it valuable for their professional and academic development. Because of the individual study routes students had to mix with different semester groups, which sometimes led to challenges in communication with lecturers, sometimes leading to confusion over course requirements. This is addressed in evaluations and measures for improvement are being implemented into the new curriculum. During talks with students it was clear that continuous improvements will be implemented in subsequent years. In the self-evaluation report students state that 'semester improvement is an ongoing priority for the teaching staff. Feedback is gathered through meetings with class representatives and open feedback forms.

The AD study programme Tourism Management offers entry into the third year of the BA study programme, after demonstration that a student has achieved all the learning outcomes of the bachelor's first years. In this specific route the minor is replaced and students strengthen their knowledge and skills by first following the fourth semester of the BA programme. The transition for students from AD to BA will be more clearly defined in the new Horizon 2030+ curricula starting in September 2026. The panel finds the transition from AD to BA well thought out and based on creative and deliberate choices to strengthen the starting position for students.

Supervision

The panel notes that students are very positive about the study guidance and the PPD line in both curricula. Each student is paired with a dedicated Study Coach, who serves as their primary point of contact throughout the programme. In regular one-on-one meetings with the coach a wide range of topics is addressed, including academic transitions, study strategies, time management, teamwork, cultural intelligence, and interpersonal skills. Students in the first year are paired with a peer mentor from the second year, who can guide them and also helps them to strengthen social interaction and community cohesion. The ITM Student Affairs Coordinator plays a proactive role in identifying students at risk of falling behind.

For more serious or personal concerns, or for students requiring accommodations due to disabilities or other challenges, support is available through the NHL Stenden Student Counselling Service. Effective and reasonable adjustments to education and testing are offered to students with a disability or chronic illness. For more specialized support there is the Student Counselling Office, which offers help with financial problems, illness or exceptional personal circumstances.

Staff

The educational programmes of the AD and the BA are provided by a team of 42 teachers, with a total of 28.2 FTE, based on a 1:24 staff-student ratio. The team brings diverse international experience across industry and tourism sectors. Additional curricular input is provided by partners such as ETFI. All teaching staff are expected to hold a Master's degree and approximately 17% holds a PhD degree; this is above the national average and above the institutional policy. All teachers are didactically qualified (BDB⁹ certified) and qualified for examination (BKE¹⁰). Approximately 17% of teaching staff have senior qualifications for examining (SKE¹¹). Exam and Test Committee members are expected to attain the Senior Examination Qualification (SKE). The team has six native English speakers and many teachers show high levels of proficiency in English (C1, C2 level), thus providing guarantees that the command of the English language in delivering the educational programmes is more than sufficient. While staff may teach across both BA and AD programmes, ITM has established a dedicated AD team to better support those AD-students' specific needs (following a recommendation from the previous audit). This shows dedicated actions to improve communication, contact and guidance for AD students, according to the panel.

The panel has met a strong ITM team with highly motivated staff members. Staff is well-qualified and show extensive experience in and knowledge of the tourism industry and education. Teachers are in good and direct contact with the students and facilitate an open atmosphere. Students call them approachable, knowledgeable, student-oriented and supportive. This works well with the DBE educational approach.

The panel compliments the team on how it has succeeded in keeping the education ongoing, while restructuring the curricula at the same time, and all of this during a period of reorganisation, a decline in team composition and multiple short-term successive leadership changes.

Programme-specific Facilities

A high-quality student experience depends on the learning environment and support systems. Essential facilities include well-equipped Hub spaces, workshop classrooms with modern ICT-infrastructure (e.g., laptop connections, beamers, smart boards, and audiovisual tools), lecture halls, a test hall, a library, and inviting community and refreshment areas. Study progress is tracked through Progress, a digital monitoring system.

The information provision is mostly clear to the students. Each semester is supported by: clearly defined Learning Outcomes, a published syllabus (online) and supporting materials via Blackboard, including literature, instructions, and clarifications. Students have continuous access to their academic records and can monitor programme-related activities via the YOS (Your Own Space) app. However, students wish for more encouragement to regularly track and justify how they meet the learning outcomes. This could increase the awareness of their study progress and ensure more consistent achievement throughout the programme. The panel advises to incorporate this more explicitly in the instructions on Blackboard and in the PPD elements.

⁹ BDB: Basic Teaching Qualification

¹⁰ BKE: Basic Qualification Examination

¹¹ SKE: Senior Qualification Examination

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.

Student's assessment of both AD and BA programmes is in line with test and assessment policies and the practice-oriented DBE didactical approach. Assessment is based on professional products. This ensures that the assessment is closely linked to the professional practice for which the programme prepares their students. Partners from the field are actively involved in the assessment process. This also increases the professional relevance of the assessment. Students are well informed, know what to expect and how to prepare for tests and assessments. There is a good balance between both formative and summative testing and between individual and group testing. The assessments are valid, reliable and transparent to students and lecturers. Final graduation levels are always assessed on an individual basis. A point of attention is the archiving and standardisation of assessments, since some graduation dossiers were not entirely complete. The panel finds the assessments appropriate for the content and levels of both programmes. Traditionally, a Progress Test has been part of the assessment programme. The panel recommends examining the possibilities for further integration of the Progress Test with PPD-elements. The quality assurance committees are in place and execute their tasks properly. The panel perceived an open and active quality assurance culture. The panel advises the Exam Committee to explicitly mention its judgement about the quality of the assessments and the quality of the achieved graduation level.

Substantiation

Assessment Policy

The *ITM Testing and Assessment Policy* forms the backbone of both programmes, ensuring alignment with the learning outcomes. It is built on four core principles: method mix, realistic context, testing for learning, and a balance between individual and group assessments. The ITM assessment policy is grounded in the *NHL Stenden Testing Guide*. In line with the DBE framework assessments focus on the creation of professional products that simulate real-life challenges. This ensures that the assessment is well linked to the professional practice for which the programmes prepare their students. Partners from the professional field are actively involved in the assessment process in an advisory role. This also increases the professional relevance of the assessment.

Both programmes work with a combination of formative and summative assessments; formative assessments that support professional growth and summative assessments that guarantee the mastery of the programme learning outcomes. Professional growth is mainly assessed via the DBE-projects, including a focus on soft skills, communication skills and intercultural sensitivity. Whereas group work promotes collaboration and social learning, individual assessments ensure personal accountability and mitigate the risk of freeriding. The individual Progress Test facilitates

the individual assessment of the BOKS. In itself, attitude is difficult to assess, but it is reflected upon, for example in PPD (self- and peer-assessment) and during the placements. Students are well informed about the assessment programmes, the course matrices, the assessment rubrics, and the grading criteria. Information can be found in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (for both BA and AD), on Blackboard and Teams, and in the syllabi per course. Rubrics are discussed in class to ensure transparency and alignment with the learning outcomes. The panel finds the assessment policy clear with good guarantees for valid, reliable and transparent assessments in both programmes.

Execution of the Assessments

Study of the course materials and a representative selection from all study years of assessment materials gave confirmation that the assessments are in line with the learning outcomes. The panel finds the assessment dossiers mostly complete, valid and transparent to students and lecturers for both programmes. Lecturers know to which learning outcomes they must direct the assessment and students know what to expect from the assessments. A point of attention lies with the archiving of assessments. In previous years this did not always have a central focus. The panel recommends strengthening the focus on standardising and digitalising the registration of assessments.

The panel is positive about the level and the practice-oriented character of the assessments and the deliverables that students work on for both programmes. This shows good alignment with the professional practice and an eye for impact in the tourism industry. There is a good balance between group and individual assessments. The panel advises to investigate whether the number of deliverables can be reduced in the future, possibly with a more holistic approach.

The Progress Test is a major part of knowledge testing. Students express dissatisfaction with the Progress Test. They find it very difficult and they have to find their way in preparing for it. The panel acknowledges that the Progress Test is based on a well set-up database. It is in line with the BOKS for both the AD and the BA. The programmes have invested in better preparing students for the test and improving ways to understanding of the test. The necessity of communicating this regularly to students is evident and remains a challenge. The panel finds it positive that within the AD programme an extensive analysis of the Progress Test was carried out. This led to efforts to provide greater clarity, recognition and assurance regarding the goals, content and execution of the test. Hopefully this will lead to better results and appreciation by AD students in the near future. The panel suggests retaining the content and benefits of the Progress Test, but to consider positioning it differently: the panel sees opportunities to connect it more with the PPD activities and to let students reflect more on their results and their growth in mastery of the BOKS.

The panel advises the programmes to consider enabling learning pathway independent assessment, in line with recent amendments to the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act. That would fit better with the central learning outcomes and might offer opportunities for trajectories of Lifelong Learning and Development.

Assessment of the graduation level

In the AD programme, the Graduation Assignment, Placement Report and Final Evaluation are important end-level individual assessments. For the BA programme, the end-level individual

assessments are the Placement Report, Final Evaluation and the Dissertation. The supervision and assessment of final-level work are structured in the same way within both the AD and the BA programmes. In both programmes students get guidance from a supervisor, who is also an examiner. A second examiner is involved in crucial moments: a go/no go decision for the proposal, the final reports/dissertation and the defence sessions during which students clarify and defend their project results and conclusions to show mastery of the subject. After the defence both assessors compare their grading rubrics, decide on the final mark in a consensus meeting, and fill in a third rubric with the shared and final grading. Feedback is given to the student in the form of completed scoring rubrics. Examiners conduct regular calibration sessions and at national level graduation products are compared to those of other related bachelor and associate degree programmes.

In the Bachelor programme an external examiner is involved. This person annually assesses samples of BA theses (including high, mid, and low graded theses) to evaluate the consistency of scores and overall standards. The external examiner concludes that the process is transparent, that individual grading sheets were produced independently by the two assessors and that grades align with the quality of the BA dissertations. The external examiner found the topics challenging and original in the choice of subject matter and approach. The steps for doing research were well followed: problem statement, literature review, conceptual framework, choice of methodology, data collection and analysis, conclusions and recommendations. Advice was given to focus more on the structuring of the dissertation and the quality of supporting information in the appendices.

The panel finds the assessments of the AD and BA graduation products clear and well performed. The grading fits with the panel members' own impressions of the quality and level of the graduation files.

Quality assurance

The panel concludes that both programmes pay good attention to the quality assurance of the assessments. The quality of assessments at end level is guaranteed by the four-eye-principle: all student assessments at end level are performed by two examiners who reach consensus regarding the final grade.

There is one Exam Committee for Tourism and Leisure, BA and AD programmes. This Exam Committee is in position and fulfils its legal tasks, such as appointing examiners based on qualifications, expertise, and training, and guarding the assessment quality and final levels of both programmes. The panel finds the annual report of the exam committee rather procedural and recommends elaborating more on the conclusions regarding assessment quality and attained final levels and on subsequent actions. Students informed the panel that they were not familiar with the role of the Exam Committee. Therefore, the panel recommends that the Exam Committee shows more clearly what it can do for students and that it has an important role to ensure that all students are assessed fairly.

The Test Committee, a sub-committee of the Exam Committee, advises on the Testing and Examination Policy, the test programmes and the competency matrices. It monitors the quality of tests and assessments via regular audits and provides advice to semester coordinators. The Test Committee also examines complaints by students regarding testing. In combination with the Exam Committee annual reviews of end level assessments are carried out. The findings of an independent External Examiner are taken into account; this also serves as a benchmark for calibration of examiners' judgements. Examiners conduct regular calibration sessions and at

national level graduation products are compared to those of other related bachelor and associate degree programmes.

The quality of the Progress Test is guarded by a specific Progress Test Committee (PTC). The PTC checks the alignment with the BOKS, and the validity of all test items. Additionally, the PTC has conducted an in-depth analysis of every student's performance across all tests over a 10-year period. Annual tracking of individual student performance against the cohort continues as standard practice.

The panel concludes that the quality assurance committees fulfil their tasks and are in good contact with each other. Based on the meetings during the site visit, the panel concludes that both programmes show an open and active quality culture at the level of management, committees and lecturers/examiners.

Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes

<i>The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.</i>

Conclusion

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for Standard 4.

The graduation dossiers reflect the intended BA and AD levels. The chosen topics address a broad spectrum, yet the relevance for the tourism sector could be stated more clearly in the reports. As the graduation assignments seem to become heavily theoretical at this moment, the panel encourages the movement towards more industry-driven graduation products, such as business and consultancy reports in combination with criterion-based interviews. Industry-driven graduation products add direct extra value for clients and fit better with industry demands than the current more traditional graduation products. This also fits with the DBE concept and assesses the real mastery of learning outcomes. It gives more room to educate the change agents that both programmes have in mind. Finally, alumni are successful in the tourism industry and fulfil positions suitable for the respective AD and BA levels.

Substantiation

The supervision and assessment of end-level work are structured in the same way within both the Associate Degree (AD) and the Bachelor's (BA) programmes.

The AD end-level individual assessments are the Graduation Assignment (6 EC), the Placement Report (30 EC) and the Final Evaluation. Students demonstrate their knowledge and problem-solving competencies in a practical application and implementation plan. The work done must be substantiated by literature and appropriate practical research methods.

The BA end-level individual assessments are the Dissertation (18 EC), the Placement Report (42 EC) and the Final Evaluation. During their placements students develop industry specific professional skills. Within the Dissertation theoretical knowledge and research skills must be demonstrated in the form of an in-depth academic report, a consultancy plan or a business plan. Starting from September 2026, the BA Placement will be reduced to 30 EC and the Dissertation will be replaced by the end results from the two practice-oriented courses 'Strategic Change Agent' and 'Designing Tourism for Tomorrow'. In both programmes the Final Evaluation concludes the PPD line. Students compile a reflective report/portfolio in which they gather evidence of their achieved final level and specific learning outcomes. A presentation by each student is assessed by two assessors.

The panel concludes that the graduation phases are well structured and described in the student graduation manuals of the relevant courses. The end-levels are assessed individually and cover the learning outcomes and intended knowledge, skills and professional attitude. The set-up of the current graduation reports is rather traditional, with a strong emphasis on extensively documented and analytical written reports.

This is why the panel is positive about the development, with the new curriculum and a pilot project, towards more industry driven graduation products, such as a consultancy report, in combination with a final evaluation in the form of a criterion-based interview. This shows good alignment with the DBE didactical approach and demonstrates professional authenticity which is valuable and interesting for the industry. The panel advises teaching students to keep the consultancy reports concise and to place accountability mainly in the appendices or in a separate substantiation document. The response from students, teachers and the industry to the new set-up is unanimously positive.

Products by Graduates

The panel has studied fifteen AD and fifteen BA graduation reports of the last two graduation cohorts (see appendix 2), and one exemplary consultancy report from a pilot with the new BA graduation set-up. For the AD an extra dossier (16th) was consulted as additional assurance, because some other dossiers were not entirely complete, due to various reasons.

The panel finds the graduation products adequate for the expected AD and BA levels. The choice of BA topics is broad, including topics such as a study to talent retention in the tourism industry, the interest for postpartum retreats, influences on an air loyalty program, and job satisfaction in the hotel industry. The choice of topic, and the relation to tourism themes, can be highlighted more clearly in several reports. The AD graduation products are more hands-on and many focus on customer satisfaction survey and related consultancy recommendations for improvement. Partly due to the practice and context-oriented nature of the AD graduations, the panel saw a reasonable variation in the level of the graduation products. A guiding format for graduation products at AD level could help steering students to a more equal level.

The panel finds the graduation products in line with the graduation set-up in the old curriculum, with a more traditional approach and way of reporting, often following the standard step of research-oriented reports: problem definition, theory review, methodology, results, analysis, conclusions and recommendations. The panel was very pleased with the exemplary consultancy report. This report was clearly directed at adding value for a company/the industry, partly due to the attention to business and financial aspects of certain recommendations. The panel encourages the study programmes to progress on this path of industry-driven graduation products that deliver extra value to clients. The report was well written, compact with clear explanations and substantiations in the appendices.

Graduates in the Professional Field

The BA study programme has monitored alumni career movements from its first cohorts onwards. A database of alumni and contacts with the active alumni body show that most alumni work in the Netherlands and Germany, and half of them work in tourism-related companies. Other alumni have migrated to retail or services sectors. Approximately 5 students per cohort choose to continue their studies, directly after graduating or after having worked for several years, in a Master's programme in the Netherlands or abroad. Alumni reflect positively on the BA programme, mentioning its strong theoretical knowledge and practical skills-building. Many note that the value of management courses became fully apparent from them after their entering job market. The attention paid to soft skills, such as intercultural communication and language proficiency, is mentioned as a crucial asset. They mentioned practical training in industry-standard booking systems and attention to AI influences as points for improvement.

In 2025 the AD study programme analysed the data from AD alumni. About half of the alumni responding were still active in tourism. About a quarter continued with the NHL Stenden BA programme and ten per cent had continued their studies elsewhere. The AD programme and its alumni are not yet very well known by industry partners. The panel advises the programme to create personas of AD alumni and their workplaces and to use these in information campaigns. More creative ways to market the AD programme could be put in place.

An enquiry among industrial partners that offer placements indicates that students are well prepared, assertive and generally appreciated by companies. It was mentioned that students have a strong work ethic and open attitude, they show independence and curiosity and dare to take responsibility.

The panel is positive regarding these outcomes and sees them reflected in overall positive National Student Survey outcomes and in benchmarks with Haaga-Helia University and other partners in THE-ICE. The student activities in placements often serve as pathways to employment positions later on, showing that alumni integrate well in the tourism industry nationally and internationally. The panel suggests using the alumni even more as ambassadors for the study programmes

Final Assessment

Assessments of the Standards

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

	Bachelor Tourism Management	Associate Degree Tourism Management
<i>Standard 1 Intended Learning Outcomes</i>	Meets the generic requirements	Meets the generic requirements
<i>Standard 2 Teaching-Learning Environment</i>	Meets the generic requirements	Meets the generic requirements
<i>Standard 3 Student Assessment</i>	Meets the generic requirements	Meets the generic requirements
<i>Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes</i>	Meets the generic requirements	Meets the generic 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 Associate Degree Tourism Management and Bachelor of Arts Tourism Management study programmes of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences as **positive**.

Recommendations

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

Standard 1

- In cooperation with other related AD study programmes, continue to define AD learning outcomes that are more distinctive from the BA learning outcomes. Make more use of NHL Stenden's context to add a specific couleur locale.
- Strengthen the Advisory Board with more representatives from the AD work field to obtain more specific information to further specify the AD learning outcomes and BOKS.

Standard 3

- Examine the possibilities to further integrate the Progress Test with PPD elements and thus to reposition the attention to the Body of Knowledge and Skills within the programme.
- Strengthen the focus on standardising the archiving of assessments in a digital environment.
- Enhance the contents of the Examination Board's annual report, with explicit conclusions about test quality, final level and follow-up actions, thus making it less procedural.

Standard 4

- Continue the movement towards more industry-driven graduation products, such as business and consultancy reports, in combination with criterion-based interviews.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Programme for the Site Visit

Agenda setting audit, 30 October 2025

Time		Participants
10.00 – 10.30	Welcome and presentation management AD and BA	2 Directors Academy Leisure, Tourism, Hospitality Team leader AD Tourism Management & AD Leisure & Events Management Team leader ad-interim Bachelor Tourism Management
10.30 – 13.30	Closed panel discussion and material study	
13.30 – 14.00	Discussion with management	

Audit visit, 17 and 18 November 2025

<i>17 November - Monday</i>		
11.30 – 12.30	Students AD and BA	AD yr 1 and 2 AD yr 2 BA yr 1, yr 2, two yr 3, yr4 Fast track student/president StuRa Short track student
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch	
13.30 – 14.30	Alumni and Industry partners AD and BA	AD alumnus 2022 3 BA alumni 2021, 2017, 2024 3 industry representatives
14.30 – 15.30	Lecturers AD and BA	AD yr 2, BA yr 2/RTD BA yr 4/placement/alumni lecturer-researcher, lecturer Communications and PPD, BA yr 1/I&M/fieldtrips BA yr 2and 3
15.30 15.45	Break	
15.45 – 17.00	Showcase	3 Ad students yr 1 and 2 2 BA students yr 3 and 4 Fast track student Lecturer BA yr 2 Lecturer Ad yr 1 Coordinator HEM and CIH elective 3 Alumni Student HEM Programme leader MILTEM Professor of Transformative Foresight Head of Department ETFI Researcher ETFI

18 November – Tuesday		
9.00 – 10.00	Committees AD and BA	Chair exam committee/test committee Exam committee Education committee student and lecturer 3x Curriculum committee
10.00 – 10.15	Break	
10.15 – 11.00	Management Team	Team leader AD Interim Team leader BA 2x Director of Academy Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality Management
11.00 – 12.00	Closed panel discussion	
12.00 – 12.30	Feedback from the panel	

Appendix 2: Documents Examined

Self-Evaluation Report Tourism Management BA & AD
National Educational Profiles Tourism Management, 2018 and 2024
Landelijk opleidingsprofiel Tourism Management 2024
AD Management Course Document
Horizon 2030+
ITM Vision and Values 2023
Course descriptions AD and BA
Study information guides AD and BA 23-24 and 24-25
Teaching and Examination Regulations AD and BA 23-24 and 24-25
Overview staff ITM
Testing & Assessments Policy 2025
Curriculum matrices AD and BA, ITM Matrix Competence assessment mapping and evaluation
Quality assurance and Student Communication regarding Progress Test
Calibration reports and report External Examiner
Representative selection of assessments:
 -AD: Research 1 and PPD
 -BA: yr 1: Communications, Research 1, Tourism Hub Components
 Yr2: Finance, Financial Accounting, Management skills leading organisational culture, Management skills Responsible leadership, Research 2, Rethinking Tourism Destinations
 Yr 3: HEM minor, Strategic Management, Tourism Research Projects
 Yr 4: End level dissertation, blue print and syllabus
Annual reports Exam Committee
National Student Survey reports and collected outcomes from THE-ICE, Studiekeuze123 and Keuzegids
Alumni report AD and BA
Certificates for Sustainable Education for AD and BA, expiry date 09-02-2027

Selection graduation dossiers:

	23-24	24-25	Pilot new graduation BA, 2030
AD	10	6	
BA	11	5	1