

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences

Master in International Leisure, Tourism & Events Management

Limited programme assessment

Summary

In November 2025 the Master of Arts programme in International Leisure, Tourism & Events Management (MILTEM) was visited by an audit panel from NQA¹. This is a one-year full-time programme, taught in English at the main location in Leeuwarden. The audit panel assesses the quality of the study programme as **positive**.

In MILTEM, the panel encountered a study programme that has faced many challenges in the recent years (including organisational issues, political context, declining student numbers). The staff has worked hard to strengthen the educational programme while maintaining a student-centred approach. The panel appreciates the efforts of staff and management and concludes that **MILTEM meets the generic requirements across all four standards** and is on a positive path towards further developments.

Standard 1: Intended Learning Outcomes

The programme's self-developed and unique professional profile is strong and aligns well with the desired Master's level, the demands of the aspired professional field, international requirements and professional orientation. There is a strong focus on sustainability. This profile could be expanded to a national educational profile in cooperation with other related study programmes. The intended learning outcomes are set at master's level (NLQF 7) and recognised by industry representatives, alumni and students, with emphasis on independent thinking, research skills, a hands-on approach, soft skills, and intercultural sensitivity.

Standard 2: Teaching-Learning Environment

MILTEM offers a state-of-the art curriculum, which is research-driven and has a clear and well-balanced set-up. The first semester is more strategic and theoretical in content. The second semester is more practice-oriented. Students are offered great opportunities to develop the learning outcomes at master's level, with elective modules for individual specialisation. The Design Based Education-concept strengthens the connection with industry practice. The staff is highly qualified and with a strong commitment to supporting students. The panel appreciates the iterative process in which the teaching staff adjust the curriculum based on student feedback. Student guidance is rated very positive by students and contributes to a strong sense of community.

Standard 3: Student Assessment

Student assessment is well organised, with a variety of assessment forms and clear calibration procedures in place. The shift towards more oral and individual testing is regarded as positive. However, the weighting of the oral defence in the overall final grade could be clarified further in the grading forms. The panel observed an open and pro-active approach to testing, with examiners following an iterative process in the development and refinement of the rubrics. The use of external examiners shows an open attitude towards industry-driven education. The Exam and Testing committees are in place and work in close collaboration with examiners to maintain the quality of assessments.

¹ NQA: Netherlands Quality Agency

Standard 4: Achieved Learning Outcomes

The panel has no doubts regarding the achievement of Master's level standards and the intended learning outcomes. This is also evidenced by the subsequent career paths of alumni. MILTEM offers clear graduation phase set-ups for both the old and the new curricula. The panel finds the shift from academic towards a more practice-driven research (as demonstrated in the Design Based Research pilot, DBR) interesting and positive. The panel advises to clarify DBR further, to gain more experience in its application and to keep exploring the possibilities. The panel advises that students are offered a choice between a more academic or a more practice-driven research trajectory. A point of attention concerns the need for clarification and stronger underpinning of student's choices in the introduction and research methods chapters of the graduation reports.

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Introduction

This assessment report constitutes the assessment of the Master of Arts in International Leisure, Tourism & Events Management (MILTEM) at NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (NHL Stenden). The assessment itself was 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 NVAO² prior to the assessment process.

In this report NQA describes its findings, considerations and conclusions. It also provides 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*. The site visit took place on 19 November 2025, in combination with the audit of the European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI) Research Unit.

The audit panel consisted of:

Prof. dr. S. Vos, (chair/domain expert), Professor Design & Analysis of Intelligent Systems for Leisure Time Sports & Vitality, Eindhoven University of Technology and professor at Fontys University of Applied Sciences;

Dr C. Maxim, Associate Professor in Tourism Management, University of West London, United Kingdom ;

Drs. H.L. van Oord, Manager Labour Market, Training & Education Water Sports (industry) and Recreation;

P. (Petra) Rešetková, (student panel member), Bachelor Student Tourism at HZ University of Applied Sciences.

Ir. M. Dekker-Joziase, NQA Senior Auditor, acted as secretary to the panel.

The MILTEM programme was part of the audit cluster 'HBO Master Toerisme'; submission date with the NVAO: 1st May 2026.

The audit panels of this cluster have been aligned with one another, primarily through the instruction of panel members about the NVAO assessment framework. From the start, this alignment has been ensured by the overlap between the composition of all the panels. Although each programme assessment is conducted individually, the overlap in panel composition has enabled ongoing reflection on earlier site visits within the audit cluster, where relevant.

Furthermore, the alignment between panels is guaranteed by the support of the same panel secretary whenever possible, from NQA and other quality agencies, and by employing well-trained panel chairpersons.

Method of working of the panel and process

The study programme has provided a critical self-reflection with supporting appendices for this assessment. To evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes, the panel reviewed fifteen graduate products from graduates who have recently completed their studies. These graduate files have been selected from the alumni of the last two academic years. In this selection, the variety in grading, modes of study and learning pathways have been taken into account.

² NVAO: Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation

The core of the assessment was the site visit by the panel, consisting of expert peers. To prepare the visit, the panel held a preliminary meeting. In the preliminary meeting the panel members were 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 the site visit, the panel members continuously shared their findings with each other.

During the site visit the panel spoke with various stakeholders of the study programme, such as students, lecturers (assessors) and representatives from the professional field and reviewed several documents (see Appendix 2). At the end of the site visit the panel integrated all the information obtained into an overall picture and a well-argued provisional assessment. In the final oral feedback session the chairperson of the panel communicated the panel's conclusive assessment and its key findings to the programme's representatives.

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 prepared and first presented to the panel. Based on the panel's input a second draft was produced, which was then shared with the study programme for a check on factual accuracy. The panel members reviewed the reactions from the representatives of the study programme and, wherever necessary, revised the report accordingly. Subsequently, the report was made final. Based on all information provided (orally and in writing) the panel has been able to reach a well-considered judgement.

The audit panel declares that the assessment of the study programme 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 Programme

The MILTEM study programme is part of the Academy of Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences. To strengthen its profile, MILTEM has strong partnerships with the European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI), the Centre of Expertise in Leisure, Tourism and Hospitality (CELTH), and the RUN-EU³ network. MILTEM collaborates with other master study programmes within NHL Stenden (e.g. Master International Service and Hospitality Management), within the Netherlands (Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUAS), and internationally (Edinburgh Napier University). A Joint Degree partnership with the University of Derby ended in 2019 and the MILTEM programme in Qatar also stopped. MILTEM's membership of the International Tourism Master Network has opened new avenues for curriculum dialogue, which will be explored in the upcoming years.

Since 2017 the numbers of student has grown, partly due to the start of government funding. From 2019 to 2022 student numbers declined due to a combination of Covid-19 and political changes. Between 2022 and 2025 student numbers show a steady growth up to 40-50 students in 2024/2025.

The study programme has launched a new curriculum in 2024 aligned with the NHL Stenden central didactical approach of Design Based Education. During this audit, the panel assessed both the implementation of the current curriculum and the graduation products from the old curriculum.

Basic Data of the Study Programme

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

Programme	
First name in RIO	International Leisure, Tourism and Events Management
Location	Leeuwarden (The Netherlands)
RIO registration number	49135
Orientation and Level	Professional Master
Research Master	-
Language of Instruction	English
(Legal) professional requirements	-
All programmes, majors and specialisations	-

³ RUN-EU: Regional University Network-European University

Joint Programme	-
Degree and Degree Addition	Master of Arts
Study Load in EC	60 EC
Variant(s)	Fulltime
Working with units of learning outcomes	-
Audit cluster	HBO Master Toerisme
Submission date with NVAO	1 May 2026
Date of site visit by audit panel	19 November 2025
Special Feature Sustainability	KIWA-Hobéon certificate four stars, Date of issue: 09-02-2024 Date of expiry: 09-02-2027

Retrospective View of the Previous Accreditation

The audit panel of the previous accreditation November 2019 had the following recommendations for the study programme:

Standard 1

- The panel recommends that MILTEM continues the good contact with the TLE professional field in order to stay aligned with the skills required in this fast-evolving domain.

MILTEM has invested in its DBE-curriculum and works in good co-creation with industry partners in the Design Challenges with focus on real-world problem-solving. This is also supported by the contacts in the broader LTE ecosystem, including contact of the Research Unit ETFI, contact with international benchmark partners and networks of related education programmes. MILTEM is renewing its Academy Advisory Board, which will help to stay on track with regional, national and international developments.

Standard 2

- The panel recommends that MILTEM safeguards the working conditions of staff and monitors if the open-door policy and the highly student-centered approach remains workable in future with the growing student population.

MILTEM has invested in the staffing structure and team-dynamics. Within the new Academy structure, a single team leader has been appointed to oversee both MILTEM and the Master International Service and Hospitality Management (MIHSM). This role focuses on strengthening the academic quality of both programmes, improving operational efficiency, and fostering a cohesive, results-driven team culture across the Master's portfolio. There is a renewed focus on team dynamics and the establishment of new goals through a series of mediated discussions, with attention to working conditions.

Standard 3

- The panel advises MILTEM to continue with the calibrations and develop clear guidelines for grading. With a growing Master programme not all assessment decisions can remain discussion-based. Some formalization might be needed, particularly to provide a clear framework for new staff members.

Discussing samples of student work and calibration of assessments by examiners has become standard practice within the teaching units and for the theses. That helps to minimize differences in expectations and perceptions between examiners and to maintain a common level. MILTEM

has invested in the formalisation of assessment procedures, by developing testing matrices and rubrics with standardized test criteria. Assessment has become a more cyclical process.

Standard 4

- The panel advises MILTEM to establish an alumni monitoring system, to track the careers and positions of the alumni and to maintain a connection with the fast-developing TLE-domain.

MILTEM has set-up a database with information on almost 400 alumni reaching back to the cohort of 2017. In the database the career paths are being monitored. An alumni-coordinator has been appointed to improve and maintain the relation with alumni. Input from occasional alumni surveys is used for curriculum improvement and provides information on the extent to which graduates feel prepared to work in the sector. Alumni are structurally involved in current education through guest lectures, "speed-dating" sessions with current students and networking events.

The panel finds that MILTEM has implemented the recommendations from the previous 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. MILTEM has created their own and strong professional profile, since no National Profile is available. The profile was set up after comparison with other related study programmes at universities of applied sciences. The profile is well in line with the aspired professional orientation, the master's level and international requirements. There is a strong focus on sustainability. The panel encourages further expansion of the profile, in cooperation with related study programmes, and the development of a National Educational Profile.

The intended learning outcomes are clearly aligned with the indicators for the required master's level (NLQF 7). Students and graduates get praise for their independent thinking, research skills, hands-on approach, soft skills and intercultural sensitivity. The programme's professional profile and the learning outcomes have been developed in collaboration with partners from the professional field. The renewal of the Academy Advisory Board will help to stay on track with regional, national and international developments.

Substantiation

Professional orientation

MILTEM has created its own professional profile, and has derived their programme and learning outcomes from it, since no National Educational Profile is currently available. In 2023, curriculum mapping was conducted with Edinburgh Napier University, followed by a more extensive benchmarking collaboration with Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUAS). The panel finds this as good practice and encourages MILTEM to further expand this collaboration and comparison with related programmes, with the aim of developing a National Educational Profile. The programme profile aligns well with the professional field for which MILTEM prepares its students.

MILTEM aspires to be globally recognised as a leading master's programme in sustainable leisure, tourism, and events (MILTEM's 2032 vision). MILTEM focuses on the education of "resourceful professionals striving for an equitable leisure, tourism and events future" and "prepares students to become responsible and resourceful managers in the dynamic leisure, tourism, and events sector (LTE), addressing complex global challenges like climate change, over-tourism, and inequality". According to the panel the focus on Societal Impact and Quality of Life aligns well with NHL Stenden's institutional focus on Shared Prosperity and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This is supported by a strong research foundation and

partnerships (e.g., ETFI, CELTH⁴, RUN-EU⁵). MILTEM was also accredited by THE-ICE⁶ in July 2020, which goes to show that MILTEM meets international expectations, promotes ethical practices, and prepares graduates to lead initiatives that improve the quality of life.

MILTEM was accredited with a four-star rating for Sustainability in Higher Education (SHE), awarded in October 2023 (valid until 9 February 2027). The focus lies on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's): 17 Partnership for the goals, 11 Sustainable Cities & Communities, 8 Decent Work & Economic Growth, 3 Good Health & Well-being and 4 Quality Education. The panel sees a strong focus on sustainability across the programme.

The panel commends MILTEM for creating its programme profile in collaboration with external parties and for the way it aligns with NHL Stenden's mission, international frameworks (THE-ICE) and sustainability goals (SHE). It provides a strong framework for the organisation and delivery of the MILTEM curriculum.

Intended learning outcomes

MILTEM defines a graduate as: "An innovative, resourceful and culturally sensitive professional with a pro-active attitude who stimulates a shared approach to producing highly valued and relevant professional products which contribute to a responsible development of the leisure, tourism and events industry." This graduate profile is an expression of the overall seven Programme Outcomes and derived twelve Learning Outcomes (see appendix 3). Additional learning outcomes are set for elective courses. In several documents the learning outcomes are clearly linked to the Dublin Descriptors at master's level and the Master Standard (NLQF level 7). The academic level of the learning outcomes and the curriculum is also assured through oversight by the Board of Study and the Education Committee and through (inter-)national benchmarks. MILTEM is also fully accredited by THE-ICE. The panel finds that MILTEM awards a Master of Arts degree that meets international expectations and has a strong research base.

Sustainability principles are explicitly embedded in the programme's Intended Learning Outcomes, in line with selected UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNESCO competencies of the Sustainable Professional. In October 2023, the MILTEM study programme was awarded a 4-star certificate in Sustainability in Higher Education (SHE) by Hobéon.

Consultation with the Professional Field

The MILTEM profile and learning outcomes are shaped within a broader ecosystem of influences from the professional field, including input from the Research Unit, international benchmarking partners, the International Tourism Master Network, alumni, and industry stakeholders. The MILTEM study programme is currently in the process of renewing its Academy Advisory Board. The panel encourages this, since it will help MILTEM to remain aligned with regional, national and international developments. The panel advises to take part in the 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.

⁴ CELTH: Centre of Expertise Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality

⁵ RUN-EU: Regional University Network-European University

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

Based on the discussions held and the documents revised, the panel concludes that industry partners and alumni recognise MILTEM students and graduates as being independent thinkers with research skills, a hands-on approach and well-developed soft skills and intercultural sensitivity.

Why the MILTEM programme is taught in English

The MILTEM programme is delivered in English to meet the global demands of the leisure, tourism, and events (LTE) industry, where English is the standard. This boosts students' international career prospects, supports collaboration with research partners such as ETFI and CELTH, and ensures access to key academic and industry resources. Graduates are well-positioned for leadership roles in a rapidly growing sector, especially post-pandemic. The panel considers this a logical choice given the international nature of the field of work for which the students are trained.

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 MILTEM study programme offers a state-of-the art curriculum, very academically driven and with a clear and well-balanced set-up. The first semester is strategic and more theoretical in content. The second semester is more practical. Students are offered great opportunities to develop the learning outcomes at master's level, with elective modules for more personal specialisation. Like other concepts (competency-based or problem-based forms of education) The DBE⁷-concept strengthens the connection between theory and industry practice and fits well with the master profile: education is founded in theory and put into practice in cooperation with industry and research partners. Teachers are well supported in the DBE-transformation. The panel compliments the study programme with the iterative process with teaching staff adjusting the curriculum based on the feedback from students.

Student guidance is rated as very positively by students and contributes to a strong sense of community. The staff are highly qualified and passionate, with a genuine commitment to supporting students.

Substantiation

Structure and Contents of the programme

The MILTEM curriculum is set up along the ITM core values: 1. Interdisciplinary knowledge and innovation; 2. Research-grounded; 3. Sustainability-driven; 4. Industry Relevance; 5. (Personal) Leadership; 6. Global Excellence; and 7. Community. Since 2024, this has been shaped through a Design-Based Education (DBE) approach, in which students take a central and proactive role in their learning process. A variety of educational forms is set in place: (guest) lectures, seminars, ateliers, consultancy sessions, research classes and excursions.

The 'old' curriculum consisted of four periods and three core modules of 10 EC each, and in period 4 the opportunity to select an elective course worth 5 EC. In the first semester there was a parallel research line of 10 EC. The second semester included the Master Thesis (15 EC) as a parallel line.

The 'new' curriculum consists of two units in the first semester: Contemporary Challenges in LTE and The Future, each unit having two supportive 6 EC courses. Running in parallel are the Research Topic Proposal (3 EC) and the Professional and Personal Development (3 EC). The

⁷ 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.

second semester offers 6 EC Electives alongside the Master's Thesis (21 EC) and the PPD (3 EC).

The panel concludes that the curriculum has a clear set-up. The panel sees improvements with the transition to DBE, as it allows for more personalised study trajectories and provides greater space for the graduation project. The education is based on real-life challenges and practice-oriented projects from the professional field, offering students a hands-on approach in combination with a clear grounding in knowledge and research. Based on the educational materials the panel had reviewed, the panel concludes that the first semester is more strategic and theoretical. All core content is addressed in the first semester, whereas the second semester has a more practical orientation. Management perspectives are integrated in periods 1 and 2. More focus is placed on transition and risk management in the LTE-sector. Together with the electives, students are offered ample of opportunities to attain the necessary knowledge and skills and to develop their professional identity and specialisation. The panel sees good balance and a well-thought out curriculum design. The later moment to choose the thesis topic, provides students with more time to work on their thesis research project and opportunities to deepen their knowledge and skills. The panel also observed good co-creation with industry partners through the Design Challenges with a focus on real-world problem-solving. The attention to soft skills and intercultural aspects is a clear plus, as demonstrated in the Nepal project where students had an opportunity to experience this hands-on. The PPD track offers good opportunities for career-relevant activities. The panel suggests setting-up a community or network for students to participate in local initiatives within the industry and to see if this could be awarded with ECs within the PPD-line.

Research Skills and Professorships Involved

The MILTEM curriculum has a strong research foundation and partnerships with ETFI, CELTH and by RUN-EU. This was clearly demonstrated in the show-cases the panel has witnessed, in the educational materials and in several theses, especially those that were carried out in cooperation with researchers from ETFI and CELTH.

The panel has seen that the research process, its phases and a variety of methods are addressed in the first semester, providing students with a solid research foundation. Since 2018, the focus has shifted from academic research to applied research, with more emphasis on the professional field. The panel observed a strong research-grounded approach throughout the programme. This is strengthened by the members of the ETFI research unit, who are involved in the development and delivery of the DBE-curriculum. Most lecturers are members of ETFI or another research group. Their participation in such research projects enables staff to continuously develop their academic and research competencies, while maintaining a strong connection to their subject areas, and remaining engaged with developments in the professional field. Members of the Advisory Board of the Academy also have a background in research and consultancy.

Internationalisation

The panel finds that the international and intercultural character of the MILTEM study programme is one of its defining strengths. The MILTEM programme clearly offers a globally oriented programme, which enables students to deepen their professional expertise in an international context. Students can form their own vision on globalisation processes and develop intercultural competencies. The student cohort of September 2024 comprised 41 students from 14 different nationalities. The staff list shows many different nationalities and staff with rich international

connections and knowledge and experience. MILTEM's alumni network spans the globe, reflecting its international reach and impact.

Since 2022, the international focus has been strengthened by offering elective modules with RUN-EU partner universities in Portugal and a global elective with GATE College in Nepal. Students have the opportunity to participate in international field trips, for example to Edinburgh, or to visit international trade fairs such as ITB Berlin or IMEX Frankfurt to network with professionals.

Admissions and Study Routes

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the policies of the Dutch government, the number of enrolling international students has dropped considerably after 2021. This increases the pressure to attract more local bachelor students and more EU students. In 2025, this appeared successful with an intake of 51 students.

Students with a bachelor's degree are eligible to enrol, preferably a Bachelor's degree in the domain of Leisure, Tourism, Events, Hospitality, Management, Marketing, Communication, Economics or Business Studies. Prospective students having other bachelor's degrees are evaluated on a case-by-case basis including an (online) interview. Candidates must present demonstrable knowledge and/or experience in three of the following domains: Leisure, Tourism, Events, Hospitality, Management, Marketing, Economics/Business or Research. Relevant work and extra curricular activities are also taken into account. The panel concludes that the MILTEM study programme takes the admission seriously and has a personal approach towards candidates.

Supervision

After a period with a somewhat higher drop-out rates (up to 15% in 2019) study coaching was re-introduced to the programme in 2022-2023, with a new PPD programme (6 EC) offering more contact time between coaches and students and greater support. The PPD programme supports students in their learning journey. At the same time, the PPD programme gave a better insight into student well-being and study progress, and contributed to lower dropout rates (5% in 2024). The aim is to stay under a 5% drop-out rate. MILTEM has the highest satisfaction rate of all Master programmes in its field.

The MILTEM study programme has a support system in place, consisting of study coaches, a study coordinator, and a study counsellor, which offers students a safe environment to discuss study related and more private issues. Each student is assigned a Study Coach who will guide them through the study programme and help them to strengthen their self-awareness. During study coaching meetings, students reflect on their study results and personal leadership skills, and identify areas for improvement. Personal development and study results are discussed in regular one-to-one meetings along with issues such as transitioning into the study programme, the educational system, study skills, styles and attitudes, planning and time management, group roles and teamwork. Furthermore, students are supported in the group processes by their supervisors. The study coordinator is the central contact person for study programme related issues. The study counsellor is the contact person for study related and more private issues (physical or mental disabilities, students' well being). The role of the study counsellor has been made more explicit to lecturers and students. Overall, students know where to get support and feel well supported, as they mentioned in the conversations with the panel. In the National

Student Survey 2023 students rated the study coaching with a score of 4 out of 5 points, indicating the student coaching as one of the strengths of the MILTEM study programme.

Lecturers

The teaching team consists of a small, dedicated core group with high academic standards and industry engagement. The team comprises 2.3 full-time equivalents divided over 6 staff members. As of September 2024, 50% of lecturers hold a PhD and 15% are PhD candidates. All lecturers are certified examiners, hold the Basic Examination Qualification (BKE), and are specifically trained in DBE, including team development days on the application of DBE at master's level. Two staff members hold a Senior Examination Qualification (SKE). All lecturers have international experience and are active in research through ETFI or other research groups. The programme is led by a Course Coordinator, who is responsible for the coordination and strategic direction of the curriculum. A Curriculum Committee supports the continuous development of the programme and ensures alignment with industry needs and trends. Administrative, communication, and organisational support for the MILTEM curriculum is shared with the MIHSM⁸ study programme. NHL Stenden supports ongoing professional development by offering a wide range of training opportunities. In 2023, for example, six staff members participated in the KAOS training in Denmark, aimed to support curriculum redevelopment. Staff are also encouraged to engage in international staff exchange programmes, such as those facilitated by the RUN-EU network, which further enrich their professional and intercultural experience.

The panel finds that the staff highly are qualified in both educational and academic standards and having demonstrable international industry experience. There is a low threshold for students to contact the study coaches and teachers. Students describe them as open, approachable, and supportive.

The panel sees challenges in managing student numbers and maintaining the quality of education with a rather small staff team of six staff members. The panel advises keeping an eye on this and considering further selection at intake. The panel is positive about the collaboration with the MIHSM programme. This joining of forces, experience and expertise might help to relieve the workload pressure within the academy.

The panel is of the opinion that the staff of the Academy LTH are highly competent in providing English language education. Six staff members are native speakers. Three staff members hold a PhD in English and three are teachers in English. Thirteen staff members have achieved the C1 or C2 level in English proficiency. Three staff members have done an Academic Writing Course in C1 and publish regularly in international academic journals and books. All staff members have demonstrable international experience gained in the professional field or in academia.

Programme-specific Facilities

The information provision by the programme is mostly clear to the students. Each semester is scaffolded 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. Essential facilities include well-equipped workshop classrooms

⁸ Master International Service and Hospitality Management

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 the Progress system. In the NSS students constantly give high ratings to the study facilities (4.1 out of 5 points).

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 MILTEM study programme has a good system of student assessment in place with a variety of assessment formats and clear calibration procedures. The panel is positive about the shift towards more oral and individual testing. The grading forms should become a better reflection of the way the oral defence within the PPD is weighed in the final grading. Examiners are pro-active and follow an iterative process in the development and use of the rubrics. The fact that external examiners are involved, shows an open attitude and willingness towards industry-driven education and graduation. The Exam and Testing committees are in place and interact and collaborate well with examiners to maintain the quality of assessment. The panel recommends setting up regulations and guidelines for the use of AI in testing.

Substantiation

Assessment Policy

With the transition to DBE, the assessment policy is based on 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. Partners from the field are actively involved in the assessment process. This also enhances the professional relevance of the assessment.

The MILTEM study programme includes a combination of formative and summative assessments (see table 4). Summative assessments assess understanding, application and integration of theory, analytical skills, critical thinking, the ability to argue or explain theoretical concepts. They analyse relationships between theoretical concepts, and the application of theory to practical situations. Testing rubrics are guarded by unit coordinators. Test validation is conducted by the Test Committee. The panel is positive about the fact that the testing rubrics were developed with input from the students and alumni. The examiners follow an iterative process to continuously improve the rubrics, showing good quality assurance practices. The panel finds the assessment policy clear, with strong guarantees for valid, reliable and transparent assessments in both programmes.

Execution of the Assessment Policy

In the old curriculum the assessments were spread across four formal moments. Activities included poster presentations, research plans, and proposals, starting from the first module. Research classes support research skill development. In the new curriculum, assessments are linked to the design challenges, with short-answer tests and essay tests to assess individual mastery. Professional and academic development is assessed through the PPD portfolio

assessment. The panel is positive about the assessments, noting a new balance between written work and oral presentations and defences, which help safeguarding individual mastery.

Formative assessments take place during supervision sessions and the PPD portfolio assessment. During presentations, students also receive feedback on their personal professional development, communication and internationalisation skills, and on their adaptation to different target groups and their use of audio-visual aids.

Table 1: overview of formative and summative assessments in the old and new MILTEM curricula.

Formative assessments		Summative assessments	
2023-2024	After 2024	2023-2024	After 2024
Feedforward and feedback during ateliers and presentations		Module assignments	Design Challenges
Feedback and feedforward during seminars		Essay Tests	Essay Tests Well-received in the new curriculum.
		Short Answer Test	Short Answer Test Consistently rated highly.
PPD meetings	PPD meetings		PPD presentation and portfolio
Feedforward and feedback during research hubs	Feedforward and feedback at presentation thesis topic and research hubs	MA Thesis	MA Thesis
	Feedforward and feedback during meetings		Graduation Project (Pilot)

The panel has been given an insight into a selection of assessments, besides the more extensive selection of thesis assessments, and has spoken with students, alumni, lecturers and external stakeholders on the topic of assessments. Overall, this confirms that students are well informed about the programme's assessments and the course matrices, the assessment rubrics and grading criteria. This information is accessible via the Teaching and Examination Regulations and via Blackboard. Rubrics are discussed in class to ensure transparency and alignment with the learning outcomes.

The panel concludes that good calibration procedures are in place. Examiners confer with relevant parties to improve assessments. The panel is positive about the shift towards more oral defences and the open discussions during PPD that offer valuable feedback and feedforward to students. The Test and Exam committees are well established and interact and collaborate well with the examiners to ensure rigorous testing. The panel recommends the programme setting up clear regulations and guidelines regarding the use of AI in testing.

The panel acknowledges that the MILTEM study programme offers a comprehensive and integrated assessment system, which combines summative and formative methods, individual and group work, and a variety of assessment tools (e.g., exams, reports, presentations, essays, journals). These assessments are designed to reflect real-world relevance and ensure that students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes are tested effectively. This approach is aligned with the professional master's character of the MILTEM study programme.

Assessment of Graduation products

The panel finds the grading and assessments to be mostly just, transparent, valid and reliable. Since the introduction of DBE, students are graded more on group products. A 60% individual and 40% group assessment split ensure fair evaluation in each unit. While DBE emphasises group competence, individual achievement must be clearly demonstrated. Regular monitoring and peer assessments help prevent free-riding and allow adjustments, if needed. This balanced approach supports sustained DBE activity and ensures all students meet the Intended Learning Outcomes.

Each professional product (especially the graduation thesis) is assessed independently by two graders, who determine to what extent the student has achieved the required level for this assessment. This is followed by a joint discussion to agree on the final grade. If the graders cannot agree on the final grade, a third examiner is going to be involved. An external UK-based assessor annually reviews samples of theses for quality, consistency, and international comparability. These calibrations also help to ensure that MILTEM maintains a culture of ongoing reflection and continuous review of its standards and procedures. An external assessor is also involved in the DBR-pilot (Design Based Research), where research is integrated into the design challenges.

In 2024–2025, following the introduction of the new curriculum, a holistic assessment rubric replaced the previous analytic one. The panel considers this appropriate and well aligned with the DBE-concept and the increased focus on professional products using Design Based Research (DBR, see also standard 4). The panel found the thesis grading to be in line with its impression of the graduation dossiers. However, the panel advises that the way pass/fail grading for PPD contributes to the overall final grade should be clarified. This can be made more clear in the grading sheets. Overall, the thesis grading process is robust, transparent, and in line with international standards. External reviewers contribute to maintaining quality and comparability, reinforcing a culture of continuous improvement. The panel advises that MILTEM continues exploring how the DBR graduation testing can be organised in a more holistic way and to gain more experience with it.

Quality assurance

The panel concludes that the MILTEM study programme pays attention to the quality assurance in assessment and testing. The quality of assessments at end level is safeguarded through the four-eye-principle: all assessments at end level are performed by two examiners, who find consensus regarding the final grade.

The Exam Committee (also for the MIHSM hospitality master) is in position and fulfils its legal tasks, such as appointing examiners based on qualifications, expertise, and training, and safeguarding the final Master level. The Exam Committee produces an annual report.

The Test Committee, a sub-committee from the Exam Committee, advises on the Testing & Examination Policy, test assessment programmes and competency matrices. It monitors the quality of tests and assessments through regular audits and gives advice to semester coordinators. The Test Committee also reviews complaints by students. In conjunction with the Exam Committee, annual reviews of end level assessments are carried out. The findings of an independent External Examiner are also taken into account, serving as a benchmark for the

calibration of examiners' judgements. Examiners conduct regular calibration sessions, and end-level graduation products are compared at the national level with those of other related bachelor's and associate degree programmes.

The panel concludes that the quality assurance committees fulfil their tasks adequately and maintain good contact with one another. From the meetings during the audit visit the panel concludes that the MILTEM study programme demonstrates an open and active quality culture at the levels of management, committees and lecturers/examiners.

Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Conclusion

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

MILTEM offers clear graduation phase set-ups for both the old and the new curriculum. The graduation phase in the new curriculum set-up provides students with more time to perform their research projects. The panel finds this as a positive development, together with the shift from academic towards a more practice-driven research methodology (Design Based Research pilot, DBR). The panel advises further clarification of DBR, gaining more experience with its application and continuing to explore its potential. The panel has no doubts regarding the achieved master's level and the achieved learning outcomes. This is also evident in the subsequent careers of alumni. The panel recommends the programme offering students a choice between a more theoretical (linear research) or a more practice-driven (iterative research) approach to their graduation research project. A point of attention is the clarification and the underpinning of student's choices in the introduction and research methods chapters of the graduation reports.

Substantiation

Graduation process

The graduation phase in the new DBE curriculum starts in the first semester with the Research Topic Proposal (3 EC) and continues in the second semester with the Master Thesis (21 EC). In the previous curriculum students spent 15 EC on the Master's Thesis. Students present their topic proposal during a mini-symposium for a pass/fail judgement. After the Master's Thesis report is assessed as being positive, an oral defence concludes the graduation phase.

The fact that in the new graduation phase students have more time to prepare and execute the Master's Thesis is a positive development according to the panel. It allows to deepen the research over a longer period and offers more focus for students. Parallel to the Master's Thesis students follow an elective course (6 EC), which they can choose from six offered electives. In the PPD line (3 EC) students round off their personal and professional development with a final reflection.

Recently, the MILTEM study programme started a pilot with Design Based Research graduation projects that result in professional products through a more iterative research approach. This is in contrast with the more standard linear research approach found in most theses. The panel recommends the team to offer students the choice of graduation form (linear or iterative) that fits best with their wishes, learning goals and choice of topic. Some students are more interested in a theoretical approach, while others are more interested in a practical approach. The choice should align with their future vision and personal learning goals. The panel trusts that, based on the initial

experiences and the broad experience in research, a balance can be achieved between both research approaches.

Thesis supervisors are matched to students based on topic-expertise fit. Students usually initiate contact with a preferred staff member and propose a thesis idea. After initial discussions, supervision is formalised in regular meetings. Each student receives approximately 20 hours of supervision, consisting of feedback on work that is handed in and feed-forward to steer students in the right direction. The panel finds that the discussions held during PPD, which help to pinpoint the thesis topic, make a positive contribution to achieving greater focus. Students and graduates provide very positive feedback on the supervision and thesis guidance.

Graduation products

The panel has selected and reviewed fifteen Master 's theses from a total of thirty graduates over the last two years. The panel has no doubts about the levels achieved, being at master's level. Most theses originate from the old curriculum and have a strong theoretical and linear research approach. The literature research is also at the master's level. Most of the reviewed theses are based on qualitative research methods. The manner of data-collection and relevance for the industry could be addressed more clearly in the discussion and conclusion chapters of the theses. The panel believes that the new DBR theses, with a shift from an academic to a more practically oriented approach to research, can show this in a better way. The panel compliments the MILTEM programme on requiring students to begin their thesis with a statement on AI-use and the originality of the research and reporting. This approach helps to raise awareness and promotes responsible academic practice.

However, the panel finds the choice of topics rather broad for the Leisure, Tourism and Events domain, as visible in for example some titles of theses:

- * A female example on male sex tourism in the Amsterdam's red-light district'
 - * The negotiation of an alternative collective memory of Dutch colonial history: Ketj Koti as a case study
 - * Exploring the effects of smartphone usage on Dutch backpacker's serendipity moments
- The panel advises the programme to guide students during the PPD-meetings in the first semester towards a stronger focus on the MILTEM-domain.

The panel sees that it remains challenging for students and supervisors to strike a balance between linear research (thesis) and iterative research methods (DBR). This is why the panel advises encouraging students to elaborate further on their choice of topic and selected research method in the introduction of their master's thesis reports. This can clarify the research approach and strengthen the connection with the topic proposal.

Graduates in the Professional Field

The MILTEM programme has a high overall success rate of 80%. MILTEM has analysed its database of almost 400 alumni contacts. Many alumni participate in such activities as alumni-networking events, guest lectures and speed-dating sessions with students for practical assignments in thesis projects. The panel understands that many alumni, after some years of working experience in the field, ultimately work in management positions. An alumni survey shows positive feedback on how the programme aligns with students and industry needs. The survey mentions paying more attention to career preparation as a point of attention.

Alumni find jobs in fields such as higher management, positions in leisure and tourism companies, research and education (lecturing or doing a PhD) positions, policy and planning roles (at local, regional and national levels), management consultancy in larger leisure and tourism companies, consultancy and development, management and coordination of the interests of different industries and stakeholders (in NGOs and other intermediary organisations), and event organisations (e.g. municipality events coordinator).

The panel concludes that the alumni are real ambassadors to the MILTEM study programme.

This is further enhanced by the appointment of an alumni coordinator, already resulting in more guest lectures and increased contacts with current students, offering them a better understanding of the future career opportunities.

Final Assessment

Assessments of the Standards

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

	Master International Leisure, Tourism and Events Management
<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>	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 International Leisure, Tourism and Events Management of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences as **positive**.

Recommendations

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

Standard 3

- The panel recommends setting up regulations and guidelines for the use of AI in testing.
- The panel found the thesis grading of the thesis to be in line with its impression of the graduation dossiers. But the panel advises clarifying how pass/fail grading (for PPD) is weighed in the total grading.

Standard 4

- The panel recommends clarifying DBR further, to gain more experience with it and to continue exploring its possibilities. The panel has no doubts regarding the achieved Master's level and the achieved learning outcomes. This is also evident in the subsequent careers of alumni. The panel advises to offer students the choice between more theoretical or more practice driven research. An attention point is the clarification and the underpinning of students' choices in the introduction and research methods chapters in the graduation reports.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Programme for the Site Visit

19 November 2025

Time		Participants
8.30-9.00	MILTEM Management Team, presentation and discussion	Programme Leader MILTEM Team Leader MILTEM
9.00-9.15	Explanation of the documents	Programme Leader MILTEM Head of department ETFI
9.15-10.00	MILTEM students and alumni	2 Students 3 recent Alumni from 2025 2 Alumni from 2024
10.00-10.15	Short break	
10.15-11.00	MILTEM Industry and alumni	Alumnus, Convention and Events Specialist at AtriCure Alumnus, Policy Advisor Tourism, Ministry of Economic Affairs Alumnus Destination Specialist and Sustainability Coordinator, Athens Industry partner, Manager Commerce & Business Development, Groningen Eelde Airport Industry partner, Advisor and Programme Manager, World Heritage Foundation Industry partner, Former Artistic Director Arcadia Industry partner, International Management Trainer
11.00-11.45	Lecturers and examiners MILTEM	Lecturer Risk & Transition Management Lecturer Public Policy Lecturer Performance Management & Experience Design, PPD Lecturer Performance Management & Experience, Design Pilot DBE Lecturer Research
11.45-12.00	Short break	
12.00-12.30	Committees MILTEM	Member Curriculum Committee Chair Exam Committee and Test Committee Member Test Committee, Admissions Committee and Participation Council Member Education Committee Secretary Exam Committee
12.30-13.15	Lunch	
13.15-14.00	ETFI Profile & Organisation, presentation and discussion	Professor of Transformative Foresight Head of Department ETFI Project Leader ETFI/Co-director CELTH Professor of Disruption, Innovation and New Phenomena

		2 Directors Academy of Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality Management
14.00-14.15	Short break	
14.15-15.00	ETFI Academic & Educational Impact discussion	Professor of Transformative Foresight Professor of Disruption, Innovation and New Phenomena 2 Researchers ETFI / Lecturer Tourism Management Researcher ETFI / Lecturer MILTEM Intern ETFI / Student Tourism Management Researcher ETFI / PD Candidate
15.00-15.15	Short break	
15.15-16.00	Industry impact discussion	Director Centre of Expertise in Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality (CELTH, BUAS) Head of Communications The Travel Foundation, Bristol, UK Industry partner MerkFryslân & Visit Wadden
16.00-17.30	Closed panel discussion	
17.30-18.00	Feedback by audit panel	

Appendix 2: Documents Examined

Self Evaluation Report Master International Leisure Tourism & Events Management
Core Ideology MILTEM
Course Document MILTEM 2022-2025
Master Course Document 2024-2028
Curriculum overview and blue prints modules
Course catalogues electives and compulsory modules
Module book PPD
Research Handbook with evaluation and revision 2024-2025
Selection of 5 Module Handbooks
Overview Staff Academy of Leisure, Tourism, Hospitality, ETFI
Selection of exams
Annual Reports Exam Committee
Minutes Curriculum Committee, Education Committee, Exam Committee, Test Committee
External Examiner's Reports 2023-2024
Modul Assignments Assessment Rubrics
Student Charters and Teaching and Examination Regulations 23-24 and 24-25
Thesis rubrics and Thesis Examiner Guidelines and Thesis Scoring rubric
MILTEM Alumni Reports and Actions 23-24 and 24-25
Module Evaluations 23-24 and 24-25
Industry feedback + expressions in media
MILTEM Performance Indicators
Fifteen graduation dossiers selected from the last two years, ranging from grading 6 to 9.

Appendix 3: Programme Outcomes and Learning Outcomes and Competencies

Programme Outcomes:

Programme Outcomes	Learning Outcomes Drop-out (n)		Competencies (Dublin Descriptors)
	2023-2024	2024-2025	
A MILTEM graduate is:			
focused on gaining a holistic and interdisciplinary overview of issues and challenges faced by the leisure, tourism and events sector;	1, 3, 6	1, 3, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4
able to carry out independent research to gain in-depth knowledge, and innovate in the leisure, tourism and events industry in a responsible way;	10, 11	7, 8, 9	5
able to develop a critical attitude towards existing quality of life in relation to leisure, tourism and events, and the ability to apply these understandings to practical situations;	2, 3, 5, 6	1, 3, 4, 5, 6	4, 6, 7
focused on producing relevant and innovative professional products that are valued by industry, with a focus on sustainable, regenerative, and responsible development;	2, 4, 10	2, 4, 7	4, 7
animated to take initiative, motivated to act, and able to inspire others to take action;	8	10	6
confident in channeling entrepreneurial ambition in their professional conduct, show respect to differences and foster and stimulate equality among different (groups of) people;	8, 9	11	6
active in stimulating a shared approach to development, through collaborative work practices, social bonding activities, and networking.	7, 9, 12-15	6, 11, 12	7

Learning Outcomes new curriculum 2024-2025

Learning outcome. The student is able to:	Educational units
1) critically evaluate the performance and impact of leisure, tourism and events on the quality of life of a chosen community.	Unit 1A Performance and Impact Management
2) critically evaluate and contrast key concepts within leisure, tourism and events theories related to the design of experiences.	Unit 1B Experience and Theory Design
3) demonstrates insights into concepts, models and methods for risk and transition management.	Unit 2A Transition and Risk Management
4) critically reflect from the perspective of practice on key concepts from literature related to risk and transition management.	
5) understand, discuss and critically evaluate theories, approaches and frameworks underpinning public policy making in the field of leisure, tourism and events.	Unit 2B Public Management
6) understand, discuss and critically evaluate public policy intervention in response to (transition) challenges in the field of leisure, tourism and events.	
7) select a relevant contemporary research topic that showcases a critical understanding of the initial phase of conducting academic research: defining a contemporary research topic.	Unit 3 Defining a Contemporary Research Topic
8) conduct applied research independently, resulting in solid discussions, conclusions and recommendations, which carries the potential to contribute to the contemporary professional and/or academic environment.	Unit 4 The Master Thesis
9) explain and defend the decisions made during the research process.	
10) show a high level of self-efficacy to acquire skills and tools to develop themselves further so that they will sustainably practice critical self-leadership.	Unit 5A Personal Professional Development 1
11) demonstrate engagement with their professional selves and the professional community and is able to acquire life-long skills related to their professional life.	Unit 5B Personal Professional Development 2
Electives. The student is able to:	Elective
a) to independently conduct a (research) project on a current issue in leisure, tourism and/or events with presentation of practical output to industry, in conjunction with ETFI, a research group, and/or a lecturer/researcher.	Research and Consultancy Projects (ETFI)
b) The student is able to critically argue on a self-constructed contemporary statement synthesizing well-founded original arguments in order to form a sound judgement that contributes to the critical event study body of knowledge.	Critical Events Perspectives
c) The student is able to critically assess the potential of heritage in contemporary society with specified application to the leisure, tourism and events industries.	Contemporary Issues in Heritage
d) The student is able to analyze the implications of entrepreneurship and innovation for developing a business in the service industry.	Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Learning Outcomes old curriculum 2023-2024:

Learning outcome. The student is able to:	Educational units
1) critically compare and contrast key concepts in the context of leisure, tourism and events, and explain their interrelatedness.	Module 1
2) develop meaningful and innovative experiences which are based on a critical evaluation of strategies and perspectives of key stakeholders, and which cope with some of the major challenges of sustainable development of leisure, tourism and events (SDGs).	
3) evaluate the contribution of the concepts of life-ability and live-ability on leisure, tourism and events and understand quality of life indicators as objective and subjective performance measures in the field of leisure, tourism and events.	Module 2
4) based on empirical research, identify objective and subjective performance measures and analyse the impacts of a leisure sector (tourism, recreation, arts, media, sports, events) on the quality of life of the residents of the host community of a selected destination.	
5) critique a tourism planning issue relating to transitions involving multiple stakeholders.	Module 3
6) understand and evaluate multiple futures – possible, probable and desirable – and create one's own visions for the future, apply the precautionary principle, assess the consequences of actions, and deal with risks and changes.	
7) communicate and exchange knowledge and innovations with students, lecturers, and the industry.	Module assignments
8) take responsibility and ownership of your own learning process.	PPD
9) cooperate successfully in an intercultural and international diverse group, fostering mutual respect and equality.	Module assignments
10) identify a contemporary research topic, critically evaluate the context, purpose, relevance, reason for investigation and problem statement of the topic, and evaluate the theoretical concepts, methods and procedures of the research.	Research Proposal
11) conduct an appropriate and accurate research and analysis resulting in solid discussions, conclusions and recommendations, which carries the potential to contribute to the contemporary professional and/or academic environment.	Master Thesis
Electives. The student is able to:	Elective
12) analyse the implications of entrepreneurship and innovation for developing a business in the service industry.	Entrepreneurship & Innovation
13) critically argue on a self-constructed contemporary statement synthesizing well-founded original arguments in order to form a sound judgement that contributes to the critical event study body of knowledge.	Critical Events Perspectives
14) independently conduct a (research) project on a current issue in leisure, tourism and/or events with presentation of practical output to industry, in conjunction with ETFI and/or Lectorates	Research and Consultancy projects of ETFI (Nepal)
15) critically assess the potential of heritage in contemporary society with specified application to the leisure, tourism and events industries in a given situation.	Contemporary Issues in Heritage