

Avans Hogeschool

Bachelor International Business Breda

Limited Study Programme Assessment

Summary

In October 2019 the bachelor study programme International Business of Avans University of Applied Sciences in Breda was visited by an audit panel from NQA. This is a four-year fulltime study programme, which is taught in English. The audit panel assesses the quality of the study programme as **positive**.

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

The study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 1.

The ASIS IB study programme has a clear and comprehensive set of Programme Learning Outcomes (POs) as set out in the national *Framework International Business 2017*. The study programme has established an insightful taxonomy of the POs of the national framework to show their interrelationships and interdependencies. The POs meet the Dublin Descriptors and the HE standard, level 6. This means that they are at an internationally recognised professional bachelor's level. As of 2019-2020 all students have to accomplish the POs at the highest level, although this is not obligatory according to the national framework. The panel regards this as ambitious on the one hand, but also wonders whether this leaves students with enough options to distinguish themselves. The POs are in accordance with the professional orientation of the programme. The professional orientation is, according to the panel, carefully considered and up-to-date. With its generalist focus, it suits the rapidly changing international business world. However, it should also leave enough room for specialisation, in order for graduates to be able to enter the job market with more distinctive profiles. The work field was structurally involved in formulating the learning outcomes, on an international, a national and regional level and is still involved in the continuous review of them. To this end the study programme actively maintains a wide range of contacts with the (international) business world.

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

The study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 2.

Although the curriculum is going through a transitional phase and at the time of the site visit only a rough outline of the new curriculum (introduction 2020 – 2021) was available, the panel is of the opinion that based on the present curriculum and the rough outline of the new curriculum, the study programme enables students to achieve the learning outcomes. The curriculum offers a sound theoretical and practical basis for their future careers. According to the panel and students, still more real-life business cases and issues could be incorporated in the curriculum. It is a clearly international programme, fully taught in English. All content is linked to international business. Students spend at least one year abroad. In Breda the student and staff population is international. Research skills get proper attention in the programme. There are various opportunities for students to follow individual learning paths, in shaping their internships, the choice of minors or by following a dual degree programme. The panel wonders, however, if these opportunities fit in with the aim of the study programme to have its students achieve all POs at level 3.

According to the panel the didactical approach is clearly student-centred and fits in with the goals of the study programme. The study programme is successful in establishing small-scale education. Student counselling is adequate, but can be intensified in the last two years of the programme. The communication about curriculum changes needs further improvement.

The ASIS IB team of lecturers is dedicated and well qualified. The expertise of the staff covers the contents of the curriculum. The team has recently gone through a difficult period, but they are strongly convinced that the study programme is on the way up. The atmosphere has clearly improved; there is a much better team spirit and the internal communication has improved as well. There is much confidence in the new management. Students generally judge the lecturers positively and praise their willingness to help students. They are also positive about the input of the lecturers from their own experience in the work field.

Standard 3: Assessment

The study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 3.

The study programme has adopted an assessment policy which is well thought out and is aligned with its PLOs. The study programme applies sufficient integration in the assessments, with different assessment formats, but this can be further increased to cater better for the goal to educate generalist professionals who can tackle complex problems. The overall quality of the assessments is satisfactory. The grading of the assessments, however, can be more insightful. Students note considerable recent improvements of the assessments and of the provision of information about assessments and assessment criteria. The grading by lecturers can still be better attuned, according to the students. The panel is highly impressed by the quality assurance of assessments. Elements of the quality assurance are a comprehensive set of guidelines for assessments, the “BKE-qualification” of most lecturers, the use of assessment matrices and the consistent application of the four-eyes principle. The Examination Board and Assessment Committee are in one word excellent. They are very knowledgeable, they take up their responsibilities and roles very conscientiously and are truly pro-active. The Examination Board has proven to be undeterred to take drastic measures if necessary, and have the full backing of the management of the study programme.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

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

With its curriculum, the design of the graduation phase and the results of the graduates, the study programme demonstrates that the students achieve the intended outcomes. The graduation products meet the requirements of the professional bachelor level and show that all the intended learning outcomes have been achieved, except for those of the second foreign language. The latter are assessed before the graduation phase. By using different graduation products, the study programme is able to assess a diverse set of learning outcomes at the highest level, including those related to communication, collaboration and intercultural skills. The final theses are methodologically and theoretically well founded, although using the same tight methodological format. The subject matter of some of the theses could have more international focus. The grading can be made more insightful and the related feedback extended. Alumni are positive about the link between the programme and their jobs. The programme also turns out to

be a good preparation for a master's programme. The professional field is positive about the level of the IB graduates.

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Introduction

This is the assessment report of the bachelor study programme International Business Breda, offered by Avans University of Applied Sciences. The assessment was conducted by an audit panel compiled by Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA) commissioned by Avans University of Applied Sciences. Prior to the assessment process the audit panel was approved by NVAO.

In this report NQA gives account of its findings, considerations and conclusions. The assessment was undertaken according to the *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* of NVAO (September 2018) and the *NQA Guideline 2019 for Limited Programme Assessment*.

The site visit took place on 2 October 2019 (preparatory audit) and 24 October 2019.

The audit panel consisted of:

Ing. V.J.M. (Victor) Guyt (chair)

Dr. G. (Gerry) Geitz (domain expert)

Mr. Dr. B.F.W. Wernaart (domain expert)

I.H.W. (Ian) Wolters (student member)

Drs. M. (Mark) Fokkema, NQA-auditor, acted as secretary of the panel.

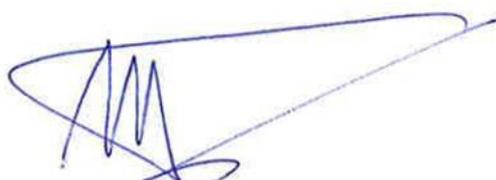
The study programme offered a critical reflection; form and content according to the requirements of the appropriate NVAO assessment. The audit panel studied the critical reflection and visited the study programme. The critical reflection and all other (oral and written) information have enabled the panel to reach a deliberate judgement.

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

Utrecht, 18 March 2020



Ing. V.J.M. (Victor) Guyt
Panel chair



Drs. M. (Mark) Fokkema
Panel secretary

Basic Data of the Study Programme

Administrative data

<i>Administrative data of the study programme</i>	
Name study programme as in CROHO	International Business
Orientation and level study programme	Higher professional education; Bachelor Education level 6
Grade	Bachelor of Business Administration
Number of study credits	240 EC
Graduation courses / 'tracks'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International Business Studies (until 2019 - 2020) - Asian Business Studies (until 2019 – 2020) - Cross Cultural Management and Languages (until 2019 – 2020) - Latin American Business Studies (2019 – 2020) Dual degree programmes with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NEOMA Business School, Reims, France - Reutlingen University, Reutlingen, Germany - Budapest Business School, Hungary - Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuoro, Piacenza, Italy - Universidad de Las Américas Puebla (UDLAP), Mexico
Location(s)	Breda
Variant(s)	Fulltime
Joint programme	-
Language used	English
Registration number in CROHO	30029

<i>Administrative institutional data</i>	
<i>Name institute</i>	Avans University of Applied Sciences
<i>Data institutional contactperson</i>	Yvonne Kanters (dean ASIS)
<i>E-mail address for copy of application</i>	aywm.kanters@avans.nl
<i>Status institute</i>	Funded
<i>Result institute audit</i>	Passed, valid until 2 September 2025

Short Outline of the Study Programme

The full-time International Business (IB) bachelor study programme in Breda is offered by the Avans School of International Studies (ASIS). ASIS is one of the 21 schools of Avans University of Applied Sciences (Avans UAS) and offers, in addition to IB, also the full-time Finance and Control International (FCI) bachelor study programme. At the time of the site visit the IB study programme had 913 students with an inflow of 257 students for the academic year 2019-2020. About 25% of the students is non-Dutch, representing 33 different nationalities. ASIS is closely related to the Avans Expertise Centre for Sustainable Business, which encompasses a number of research groups (lectoraten) with a business focus. Within Avans UAS also an IB study programme is offered by the Academy for Marketing and International Business (AMIB) in 's-Hertogenbosch. This study programme will be assessed separately.

The IB programme is the successor of the International Business and Management Studies study programme (IBMS), which was subject of accreditation in 2012-2013. The Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) of IBMS were derived from the national *Framework Competencies IBMS* of 2011. In 2018 the IBMS study programmes in the Netherlands became part of the IB study programme, together with the degree study programmes International Business and Languages (IBL), Trade Management for Asia (TMA) and International Business of Zuyd Hogeschool. In November 2017 the newly formed National Platform International Business, in which ASIS IB plays an active role, decided to use "International Business" as the new name for all the study programmes to stress the international character of the programmes and to indicate their wide perspective. The panel regards this name as self-evident. The platform published the national *Framework International Business* with a set of 24 IB PLOs. These PLOs form the basis for all IB study programmes in the Netherlands.

With the merging of the old IBMS study programme into the new IB study programme, ASIS has opted for a hard cut ('harde knip') in the expectation that the differences between the old IBMS competencies and the new IB PLOs would be marginal and would require limited curricular adaptations. This means that ASIS will offer the BBA-IB diploma to all students graduating as of 2018-2019. The study programme, however, has concluded that the differences have turned out more substantial than envisaged, which is why the programme is currently going through a transitional phase. Part of the IBMS curriculum has been adapted to align it with the new IB Framework. At the same time ASIS has started designing a new IB curriculum, which will be gradually phased in as of 2020-2021.

Since the previous accreditation in 2012-2013, ASIS has adapted its organisational structure in response to the growth it has been going through and has committed substantial resources to team development and curriculum innovation. ASIS has followed up on the recommendations of the 2012-2013 audit panel as follows. The didactic model has been clarified. The didactic principles underlying the current curriculum have been fully revised and brought in line with the Avans educational philosophy in the Programme Framework International Business. The study programme's response to evaluation results has been made more transparent to students by organising discussions with representative groups of students and by publishing student reports on Blackboard. The programme has strengthened the role of the Study Programme Advisory Board (Opleidingscommissie) and has appointed an IB Student Assessor. Furthermore, the Examination Board has been given a more proactive role. In 2017-2018 ASIS was confronted

with internal problems leading to a change of management in 2018. With the appointment of the new Dean, who started in August 2018, ASIS started a process of change: change of the organisational structure and culture and the start of curriculum development.

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

Based on the considerations mentioned below, the audit panel assesses that bachelor International Business study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 1.

The ASIS IB study programme has a clear and comprehensive set of Programme Learning Outcomes (POs) as set out in the national *Framework International Business 2017*. The study programme has established an insightful taxonomy of the POs of the national framework to show their interrelationships and interdependencies. The POs meet the Dublin Descriptors and the HE standard, level 6. This means that they are at an internationally recognised professional bachelor's level. As of 2019-2020 all students have to accomplish the POs at the highest level, although this is not obligatory according to the national framework. The panel regards this as ambitious on the one hand, but also wonders whether this leaves students with enough options to distinguish themselves. The POs are in accordance with the professional orientation of the programme. The professional orientation is, according to the panel, carefully considered and up-to-date. With its generalist focus, it suits the rapidly changing international business world. However, it should also leave enough room for specialisation, in order for graduates to be able to enter the job market with more distinctive profiles. The work field was structurally involved in formulating the learning outcomes, on an international, a national and regional level and is still involved in the continuous review of them. To this end the study programme actively maintains a wide range of contacts with the (international) business world.

Substantiation

Professional orientation

The IB study programme aims at training their students to become business generalists in the international arena. The study programme sees its graduates as the strategic and tactical motors of organisations, helping them cope with and flourish in the rapidly changing international business environment in an ethical and socially responsible way. They feel comfortable with any international business position at bachelor level, whether it is marketing, finance or operations. They combine a helicopter view of the entire international business operation with knowledge and skills in all the major functions. They are capable of identifying the full scope of complex problems and are able to solve them using an integrated approach. They understand the consequences of the actions of one business department for the entire business and all its stakeholders. Therefore, they can provide management with well-thought-out recommendations that take into consideration all the relevant business aspects. The ASIS IB graduate is focused on ensuring an international business' prolonged continuity through the right international positioning and structuring of the business. They are culturally sensitive and know how to work on foreign markets and work with international policies. They work in medium to large enterprises which are already doing business in the international market or wish to do so. As generalist-specialists, they often find themselves in project management or consultancy jobs.

The panel supports the professional orientation of the study programme, especially because of its generalist focus, which according to the panel suits the rapidly changing international business world. The orientation is carefully considered and up-to-date. Its focus on the long-term success of businesses, ethics, socially responsible ways of thinking and intercultural competencies is particularly appreciated by the panel. In addition to this generalist focus, in the opinion of the panel, there should also be enough room for specialisation, in order for graduates to be able to enter the job market with more distinctive profiles.

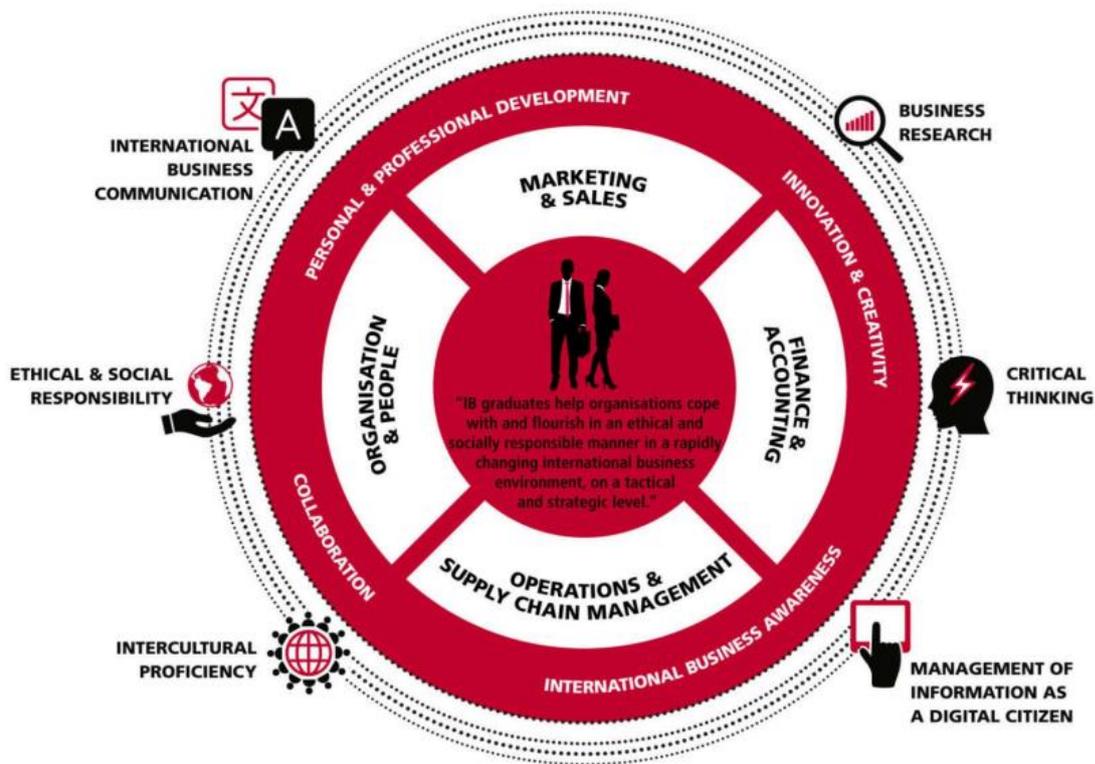
Final qualifications

The intended learning outcomes of the ASIS IB study programme are derived from the national *Framework International Business 2017* of the National Platform International Business. The national IB framework consists of 24 PLOs, clustered in the following four domains with related themes:

1. Ways of thinking
 - Critical Thinking
 - Innovation and Creativity
 - International Business Awareness
2. Ways of Working
 - International Business Communication
 - Collaboration
 - Management of Information as digital citizen
3. Living in the World
 - Personal & Professional Development
 - Ethical & Social Responsibility
 - Intercultural Proficiency
4. Tools for Working and Management
 - Marketing & Sales
 - Finance & Accounting
 - Operations & Supply Chain Management
 - Organisation & People
 - Business Research

The national framework is structured according to the KSAVE model – Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, Values and Ethics. This ensures that the IB study programme meets the Dublin Descriptors and the HE standard, level 6. This means that the national framework is at an internationally recognised professional bachelor's level.

The panel appreciates the construction by ASIS IB of an insightful taxonomy of the PLOs of the national framework to show their interrelationships and interdependencies, as specified in the figure below.



ASIS IB took the domain Tools for Working and Management as a starting point for a better understanding of the nature and context of each PLO. This means that the Breda IB graduates focus on all four business areas – Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management, Organisation & People – on a tactical and strategic level. They can focus on the business areas independently or in any combination. In order to achieve desired results they always employ Innovation & Creativity, International Business Awareness, Collaboration and Personal & Professional Development. In all their activities they will need to draw on the critical skills presented in the outer ring.

Based on the Bulthuis AuCom model of 2011, three phase levels of competence students go through have been attributed to the PLOs. Following the national framework, the IB study programmes can differentiate themselves from one another on the required competence level of the PLOs. All the PLOs should be accomplished at level 3, except for the second language competence and for three of the four themes of the Tools for Working and Management domain. At least one of the themes Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management and Organisation & People should be accomplished at level 3. The ASIS IB study programme has decided that as from 2019 – 2020 ASIS IB students will be required to accomplish all PLOs at level 3. Furthermore, it has been decided that the second foreign language will be compulsory for all students, while this is optional in the national framework.

The PLOs form a clear and comprehensive set of competencies, according to the panel. They fit the professional orientation of the programme and correspond with the level of a professional bachelor. The requirement for all PLOs to be accomplished at level 3 as of 2019-2020 is in the panel's view ambitious. The panel wonders, however, whether this is realistic in general, whether it suits the capabilities of all students and whether it gives students enough opportunities to

distinguish themselves. The requirement to incorporate second language training for all students has the full support of the panel, since second language proficiency is important in international business and it enhances the international career options of graduates.

Tuning with the work field

The panel is impressed with the way the study programme involves the work field in establishing the PLOs and keeping them up-to-date and in the design and contents of the curriculum. Moreover, the work field is also actively involved in the actual training of the students, see further Standard 2. The PLOs of the national framework have been established in cooperation with the (inter)national work field. ASIS IB has also consulted the regional work field in this process. On the basis of the reports of the work field advisory board and talks with some of its members, the panel concludes that this board is actively involved with the study programme and has a relevant, diverse composition. The study programme has many formal and informal contacts with the work field. For instance, students do internships and graduation projects in this work field and the work field provides various guest lectures enriching the programme with up-to-date knowledge from the business world. At the same time, most lecturers have recent experience in the work field or are still active in the work field. Furthermore, the cooperation with the Avans research centres (lectoraten), membership of professional bodies and attendance by lecturers of professional conferences and other meetings contribute to a solid network in which the professional world is increasingly intertwined with the study programme.

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

Based on the considerations mentioned below, the audit panel assesses that bachelor International Business study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 2.

Although the curriculum is going through a transitional phase and at the time of the site visit only a rough outline of the new curriculum (introduction 2020 – 2021) was available, the panel is of the opinion that based on the present curriculum and the rough outline of the new curriculum, the study programme enables students to achieve the learning outcomes. The curriculum offers a sound theoretical and practical basis for their future careers. According to the panel and students, still more real-life business cases and issues could be incorporated in the curriculum. It is a clearly international programme, fully taught in English. All content is linked to international business. Students spend at least one year abroad. In Breda the student and staff population is international. Research skills get proper attention in the programme. There are various opportunities for students to follow individual learning paths, in shaping their internships, the choice of minors or by following a dual degree programme. The panel wonders, however, if these opportunities fit in with the aim of the study programme to have its students achieve all PLOs at level 3.

According to the panel the didactical approach is clearly student-centred and fits in with the goals of the study programme. The study programme is successful in establishing small-scale education. Student counselling is adequate, but can be intensified in the last two years of the programme. The communication about curriculum changes needs further improvement.

The ASIS IB team of lecturers is dedicated and well qualified. The expertise of the staff covers the contents of the curriculum. The team has recently gone through a difficult period, but they are strongly convinced that the study programme is on the way up. The atmosphere has clearly improved; there is a much better team spirit and the internal communication has improved as well. There is much confidence in the new management. Students generally judge the lecturers positively and praise their willingness to help students. They are also positive about the input of the lecturers from their own experience in the work field.

Substantiation

Curricular adaptations

As stated in the *Short Outline of the Study Programme*, with the merging of the old IBMS study programme into the new IB study programme, ASIS IB opted for a hard cut ('harde knip') in the expectation that the differences between the old IBMS competencies and the new IB PLOs would be marginal and would require limited curricular adaptations. The study programme, however, has concluded that the differences have turned out more substantial than envisaged, which is why the study programme is currently going through a transitional phase. Part of the IBMS

curriculum has been adapted to align it with the new IB Framework. At the same time ASIS has started designing a new IB curriculum, which will be gradually phased in as of 2020-2021. For Standard 2, it means that as far as the structure and contents of the curriculum are concerned, the panel will focus on the curriculum as of 2018-2019, which still contains IBMS elements. At the time of the audit, a rough sketch of the new curriculum was available, which the panel has studied. According to the panel, this rough sketch shows that the new curriculum to some extent will be similar to the present curriculum.

Content and structure of the curriculum

The main design principles underlying the curriculum are:

Performing as an international business professional

Real life problems regarding international business form the basis of the curriculum, encouraging students to undertake problem solving activities and to understand how to integrate relevant knowledge and skills in their professional performance. Problems are always presented in their full complexity, but the level of difficulty increases throughout the programme, whereas the level of guidance decreases. Workshops and modules are offered to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to solve the problems.

Continuous development

Focus on the development of generic skills, metacognitive skills and higher order thinking skills to foster life-long learning and the ability to create (new) solutions to new complex problems. The development of self-confidence and autonomy of students is important to make them more eager to learn and open to change.

Diversity and Flexibility

The programme offers students a learning environment in which they learn to function actively and responsibly in the increasingly international and culturally diverse world. The instructional design is fully culturally inclusive. Various forms of individual coaching are available, aimed at empowering students to discover and expand their strengths and find ways to counter weaknesses.

The curriculum consists of three tracks: the professional track, the knowledge track and the language track. The first two tracks form the core of the curriculum and are the same for all students. All the mandatory PLOs are addressed in these two tracks. In the professional track, students work in projects on business issues. The projects lead to professional products, accompanied by a practical and theoretical justification and a reflection. Through the products students must prove that they have an adequate grasp of the theories underlying a product, how they can be applied and prove that they have appropriate skills and the attitude to apply them correctly. Not only do students acquire the experience in applying the theoretical concepts in a realistic setting, they also acquire generic and transferable skills like teamwork, leadership, planning and organizing, communication skills and cultural awareness as part of the professional setting of the project group. The Work Placement of Year 2 and the Graduation Internship in Year 4 are a continuation of this track in a real-life business environment. In the knowledge track, students acquire a solid understanding of the important theories and concepts of the different disciplines of International Business. Students also practise with the knowledge and skills to tackle the professional problems of the projects, usually in business cases and assignments.

Examples of subjects of the knowledge track are economics, marketing, financial management & accounting, service industry, (social) entrepreneurship, currency risk, supply chain management and corporate culture & management. Skills are trained, apart from in the projects and internships, in the language modules and in the modules about business communication, international business awareness, intercultural proficiency and consultancy skills. From Year 1 onwards, attention is also paid to research skills in the modules about business research and qualitative methods. Research skills are applied in the projects and internships.

In the language track students train to become proficient in at least one other language besides English Business Communication: German, French, Chinese, Spanish or Dutch; the last one for non-Dutch students.

The basic structure of the curriculum is as follows:

Yr 4	Strategic Business Decisions		Graduation internship	
Yr 3	International Business Operations		Minor/Semester exchange <i>Choice between the ASIS minors</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Entrepreneurship • International Public Affairs and Stakeholder Management <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semester exchange 	
Yr 2	Business Strategies	Business Vision	Work placement	
Yr 1	Business Organisation	Business Environment	Business Plan	Business Research
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4

The curriculum is related to the three phases of the Bulthuis AuCom model, see also Standard 1. The first level coincides with the first year, the second level corresponds to the second and third year and the third level to the fourth year.

The panel is of the opinion that the curriculum provides the students with an adequate theoretical and practical basis for their future careers as international business professionals. The curriculum relates to the PLOs of the programme. The subject matter of the knowledge track is broad and properly geared to the generalists the study programme wants to deliver. Judging from the module manuals, study materials and assessments, students get a thorough theoretical background. Although in the projects and internships students get sufficiently acquainted with the real business world, the panel thinks that more real-life cases and issues could be incorporated in the projects and modules. This recommendation is also supported by the students. The study programme offers a proper training of research skills, according to the panel and the alumni whom the panel spoke with. The curriculum has recently gone through and is still going through several changes. This process requires adequate and timely information for the students, something which needs further improvement, according to the students.

Language

The programme is fully taught in English and all lecturers must have mastered the English Language at CEFR level C1. The study programme presents the following reasons for using English as the teaching language. The study programme prepares students for the international labour market for which they need international and intercultural skills. It is aiming for an international teaching and learning environment/classroom of which an internationally and intercultural diverse student and staff population are crucial elements. Furthermore, the object of study and the targeted professional field are intrinsically international. For the same reasons the panel fully agrees with this choice of the teaching language.

Different learning paths

The curriculum offers students various opportunities to make their own choices in their learning paths. To a certain extent they can choose what kind of internship they want to do. They can choose between different minors, within ASIS IB or outside, or they can opt for an exchange programme. Until 2019 the study programme offered students the possibility to choose from the following different profiles: International Business Studies, Asian Business Studies, Cross-Cultural Management and Languages and Latin American Business Studies. From 2019 these profiles will be phased out. The more gifted and ambitious students can follow a dual degree programme. They can follow the last two years at a partner university of ASIS IB in France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Mexico. To be admitted to a dual degree programme, the student must have obtained high grades in the first two years and be well motivated. The quality and end levels of the dual degree programmes are governed by comprehensive partnership agreements ASIS IB has made with the universities concerned. On the one hand the panel is of the opinion that these opportunities for different learning paths are valuable, because they enable students to differentiate. On the other hand, it wonders whether the aim of the programme to have its students achieve all PLOs at level 3 leaves enough room for differentiation.

Internationalisation

Being an international study programme, ASIS IB has a high degree of internationalisation, according to the panel. This can be traced back in the content of the curriculum, which has a fully international scope. All PLOs are approached from an international angle, using for example international business cases, international literature or links to international legal challenges. As mentioned above, students also have to become proficient in at least one more foreign language, besides English. Intercultural proficiency runs as a common thread through the curriculum and is particularly acquired during the periods the students are abroad. All students have to spend a full year abroad: this can be any combination of the Work Placement in Year 2, the study abroad period in Year 3 and the Graduation Internship. The non-Dutch students can stay in the Netherlands during the entire course. The study programme also succeeds in creating an international and intercultural learning environment with almost 25% of the students being non-Dutch, representing 33 different nationalities and with 28% of the teaching staff being non-Dutch, representing 14 different nationalities. For the future number of non-Dutch students, the study programme has set a target of 50% in 2025. The panel is pleased with this valuable but ambitious target.

Didactic concept

The didactical approach of the study programme is based on the Avans educational vision *Achieving Your Full Potential Together*. Small-scale education is an important element. Students and lecturers know each other and knowing students personally is essential in order to be able to focus on their development, according to the study programme. A focus on the individual is therefore a key priority. With different teaching methods the study programme tries to activate the students and make them take the responsibility for their own development. The study programme has used recent insights from the field of educational sciences and neuropsychology for building blocks of learning: challenging, building on prior knowledge and skills, repetition, focusing, feedback on development and (multidisciplinary) collaborative learning. The work field is also involved in the rendering of the education. According to the panel the didactical approach is clearly student-centred and fits in with the goals of the study programme. On the basis of its talks with students, the panel concludes that the study programme is successful in establishing small-scale education. In a study programme with over 1000 students, this is quite an achievement, according to the panel.

Supervision, student coaching

Each student has a study and career counsellor/coach who monitors the student's progress and schedules a number of meetings with the student to discuss his/her academic progress and personal and professional development. In year 1, each student has at least one meeting per study period; in year 2, the student will be invited at least once. In the last two years the students have to take the initiative themselves to consult their study and career coach. Students can also consult the IB Study Advisor for advice on matters like educational issues, study planning or referral to other study programmes. The Avans Student Counsellors look after the interests of students and provide information about Avans UAS in general, other study programmes, financial matters and the rights and obligations of students. There is additional support for specific groups like students who perform top-level sport or who have the status of student-top entrepreneur and extra support for students who have a functional impairment. There is a special helpdesk for dyslexia, ADD and AD/HD. From student evaluations, the Student chapter in the Self-evaluation Report and the panel meeting with students, it appears that students grade the counselling as satisfactory, but they think that in the last two years this could be extended.

Staff

ASIS IB has 47 lecturers (38.92 Fte.). Almost all staff members have international experience, contributing to the international business orientation of the study programme; 13 lecturers are non-Dutch. Most lecturers have a master's degree or higher (37 out of 47). Nine lecturers hold a PhD degree, while two were pursuing a PhD at the time of the audit. Almost all lecturers (94%) have a BDB+ qualification, or equivalent; 86% of the lecturers have finished the Assessment module (BKE) of the BDB course. Others have followed the module on Education & ICT and a few the Brain & Learning module. Specific training has been undertaken by lecturers involved in supervising and assessing graduation projects. Lecturers are responsible for their own career development and employability. According to the lecturers the panel met, the programme provides enough development and training possibilities. Examples of recent individual training tracks are Green Belt, digitalisation courses, and personal career coaching. Some lecturers participate in one of the following research groups of Avans: Sustainable Finance and Accounting, International Business, Improving Business and Brain and Learning, while one lecturer is Associate Professor in the Expertise Centre for Sustainable Business.

The panel has met a dedicated and well-qualified team of lecturers. The expertise of the staff covers the contents of the curriculum. The team has recently gone through a difficult period, see also *Short Outline of the Study Programme*, but several members of the team have told the panel that they are strongly convinced that the study programme is on the way up. The atmosphere has clearly improved; there is a much better team spirit and the internal communication has improved. There is a better setting and atmosphere to hold each other accountable, according to the lecturers. Motivation is back. The staff have a lot of confidence in the new management. The panel was pleased to hear that there had been no staff turnover in the last year. Given the challenges of the study programme, the panel advocates the constant monitoring of staff workload. The panel is impressed by the training facilities for staff members and opportunities for further development. In this respect, the panel is especially positive about the attention paid to the subject of Brain & Learning. The involvement of lecturers in research groups and centres of expertise is favourable for the further improvement of the contents of the curriculum, keeping it up-to-date and strengthening the research component of the curriculum. The outcomes of recent student evaluations of the lecturers reflect the difficult time the study programme went through. However, students generally judge the lecturers positively and praise their willingness to help students. They are also positive about the input of the lecturers from their own experience in the work field.

Standard 3 Assessment

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

Conclusion

Based on the considerations mentioned below, the audit panel assesses that bachelor International Business study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 3.

The study programme has adopted an assessment policy which is well thought out and is aligned with its PLOs. The study programme applies sufficient integration in the assessments, with different assessment formats, but this can be further increased to cater better for the goal to educate generalist professionals who can tackle complex problems. The overall quality of the assessments is satisfactory. The grading of the assessments, however, can be more insightful. Students note considerable recent improvements of the assessments and of the provision of information about assessments and assessment criteria. The grading by lecturers can still be better attuned, according to the students. The panel is highly impressed by the quality assurance of assessments. Elements of the quality assurance are a comprehensive set of guidelines for assessments, the “BKE-qualification” of most lecturers, the use of assessment matrices and the consistent application of the four-eyes principle. The Examination Board and Assessment Committee are in one word excellent. They are very knowledgeable, they take up their responsibilities and roles very conscientiously and are truly pro-active. The Examination Board has proven to be undeterred to take drastic measures if necessary, and have the full backing of the management of the study programme.

Substantiation

Assessment policy

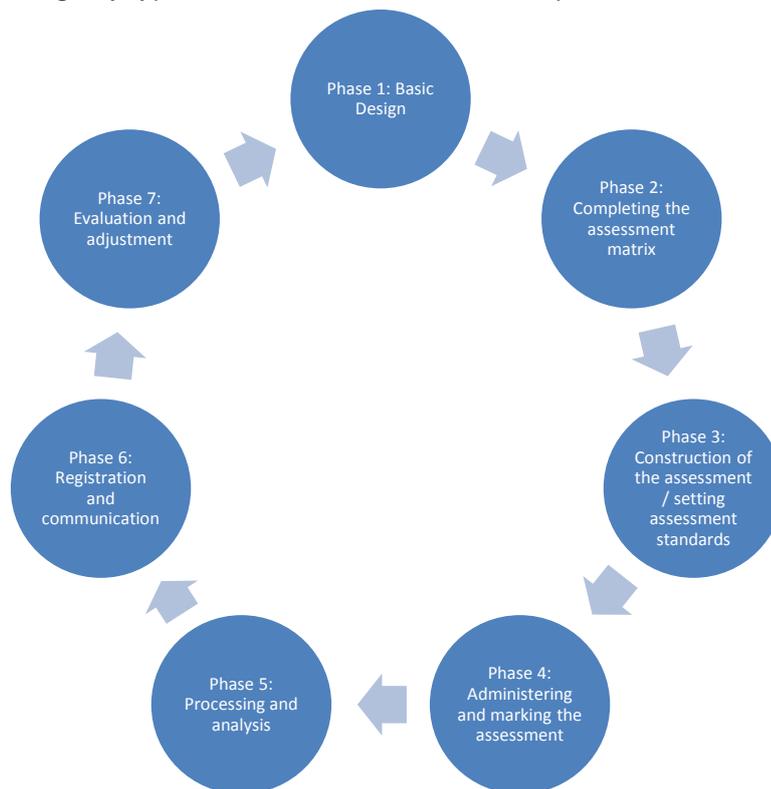
According to the panel, ASIS IB applies a sound assessment policy which is properly aligned with the PLOs of the study programme and the type of professional the study programme aims at. This assessment policy is based on the Assessment policy of Avans (*Toetskader Avans Hogeschool*). For ASIS IB, assessment is to ensure that all students meet the minimum requirements of the intended performance level (intermediate and end level) and to determine whether the starting professional has achieved the intended learning outcomes. Assessment is also intended to encourage learning by providing insight into the student’s progress towards the intended level. Assessment can be formative or summative or a combination of both.

Assessment within ASIS IB is geared towards determining whether the student is able to routinely execute professional tasks independently, solve problems project-based in the professional arena, reflect on his/her own professional performance, also from an ethical, academic and societal perspective and continuously improve his/her professional performance. Furthermore, it has to be determined whether the student is able to function in multidisciplinary, multicultural and international settings, in collaboration with or leading others. In addition to incorporating in assessments the integration of knowledge, insights, skills, attitudes, values and ethics, there is also sufficient attention for the assessment of conceptual knowledge, according to the panel. Students need to become aware of the importance of underlying conceptual knowledge for executing professional tasks and proper functioning in various professional contexts. To

accomplish this awareness, students are assessed in the mastery of conceptual knowledge (deep knowledge) especially in the first phase of the programme.

Execution of assessment policy

ASIS has drafted a comprehensive *Assessment Handbook* with guidelines for completing the assessment matrix, which is obligatory for every written assessment. The study programme uses the following test cycle, which covers the full process of constructing, administering, grading and evaluating any type of test and consists of seven phases:



According to the panel, IB ASIS applies a clear set of relevant assessment formats to suit different purposes: knowledge/skills assessment, case study assessment and project assessment. Knowledge/skills assessments are related to theories, principles, procedures and concepts, their relevance, application and their interrelationships. These assessments can have various forms, such as mc-exam, open question exam, essay, presentation, debate or conversation in a foreign language. In the case study assessments, students demonstrate that they are capable of recognizing and defining a relevant problem, analyzing and dissecting a professional situation and of taking on or solving a professional problem. A case study assessment can take a written or oral form and can be an individual or a team effort. In case of a team effort, there will always be an element through which each student's individual performance will be assessed (individual reflection, oral defence or a peer assessment). Project assessments relate to the same competences as those of the case study assessments. In addition, the students demonstrate their research, planning and reflection skills and their ability to construct knowledge using previously acquired knowledge. A project assessment can take a written and/or oral form. Although there is always a collaborative element to allow for assessing collaboration,

communication, reflective and intercultural skills, the individual performance of each student is also always assessed.

The panel has studied a representative selection of written assessments and the related assessment forms. According to the panel, the assessments meet the standards of bachelor assessments and meet the requirements of validity, reliability and transparency. The grading, however, was not always clear to the panel. Students judge the assessment system and the various assessments as satisfactory. They notice recent improvements in this respect and are pleased with more integration in the assessments. They are generally positive about the information about the assessment procedures and assessment criteria. This also holds for the feedback they get for the assessments. However, they indicate that the grading by lecturers can be better attuned. The panel also recommends more integrated assessments in alignment with the education of generalist professionals who can solve complex problems in an integrated way.

Quality assurance

On the basis of the description of the quality assurance system for assessments, interviews with relevant stakeholders and the reports of the Examination Board and of the Assessment Committee, the panel is highly impressed by the quality assurance of assessments within ASIS IB. The *Assessment Handbook* mentioned above, the assessment matrices for written exams and the basic exam qualifications (BKE) most lecturers have play an important role in this quality assurance. Assessments and scoring are always only conducted by lecturers who are qualified to do so (BKE-qualified or equivalent) and who have been appointed assessor/examiner by the Examination Board. Also the application of the four-eyes principle contributes to good quality assurance. All knowledge and language tests are peer-reviewed after construction. Written exams in general are scored by one assessor, after first having reviewed a few students' exams with other assessors. Oral assessments are always performed by at least two assessors or recorded for reference.

There is a clear division of tasks and responsibilities of the bodies and functionaries involved in the quality assurance of assessments. The Examination Board has the task assigned by law to safeguard the quality of exams, to appoint examiners and to establish whether a student can be awarded a degree. The ASIS IB Examination Board consists of a team of IB lecturers and an external expert and reports to the management of the study programme. The Examination Board has appointed a Quality Control Officer who independently conducts investigations into the quality of exams and exam procedures. The Education Committee (EC) of the study programme is responsible for the curriculum and the overall assessment programme. The Education Committee has delegated the examination control process to the Assessment Committee (AC). The AC has established guidelines and instructions in order to assess and establish the results of assessments and examinations (*Assessment Handbook*). It also verifies that the four-eyes principle is applied and carries out random samples each term.

Based on the study of the reports of the Examination Board and of the Assessment Committee and the meeting with several of their members, the panel is of the opinion that they both take up their responsibilities and perform their tasks in an excellent way. Recently, the Examination Board has proven to be undeterred to take necessary drastic measures when it discovered the basic quality of an assessment was at stake. It is also good to know that in these instances the Examination Board got the full support of the management, as the panel has established. The

Examination Board also plays an active role in safeguarding the bachelor level of the Dual degree programmes students can follow.

Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Conclusion

Based on the considerations mentioned below, the audit panel assesses that bachelor International Business study programme **meets** the generic quality for standard 4.

With its curriculum, the design of the graduation phase and the results of the graduates, the study programme demonstrates that the students achieve the intended outcomes. The graduation products meet the requirements of the professional bachelor level and show that all the intended learning outcomes have been achieved, except for those of the second foreign language. The latter are assessed before the graduation phase. By using different graduation products, the study programme is able to assess a diverse set of learning outcomes at the highest level, including those related to communication, collaboration and intercultural skills. The final theses are methodologically and theoretically well founded, although using the same tight methodological format. The subject matter of some of the theses could have more international focus. The grading can be made more insightful and the related feedback extended. Alumni are positive about the link between the programme and their jobs. The programme also turns out to be a good preparation for a master's programme. The professional field is positive about the level of the IB graduates.

Substantiation

Level of intended learning outcomes in graduation products

As part of the graduation all 24 IB PLOs are assessed in the following three integrated assignments.

International Business Case (12 EC)

The main topic of the International Business Case (IBC) module is corporate business strategy in an international context. All four business areas are incorporated on a strategic level (Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management and Organisation & People). Students show that they can make relevant recommendations for the company's strategy related to the four business areas through the analysis of a business case and they show they can apply strategic decision-making techniques. They receive a new business case every two weeks, thus experiencing different contexts and applying transferable skills. The International Business Case module is assessed individually through an international business case exam comprising a full day.

Project Strategic Business Decisions (12 EC)

Through the Project Strategic Business Decisions (SBD) students show they are capable of investigating the recent and future corporate strategy of an internationally listed business. Also, this module incorporates all four business areas on a strategic level. The final deliverables of the project consist of a recommendation report, an oral defence with two assessors and a reflection report. The project is carried out by groups of about four students. The oral defence and the reflection report are individual products.

Graduation Project (30 EC)

In the Graduation project students individually work on a complex business issue for an international company in the Netherlands or abroad in an internship of twenty weeks. Business issues can relate to any of the four above-mentioned business areas. In this project students also prove that they can carry out research at bachelor's level. Students have to find the companies or organisations where they wish to do their graduation internship themselves. They need approval of the graduation coordination team, who will assess the suitability of the company and the assignment offered. During the graduation project students are supervised by a school mentor and a company mentor.

The main deliverable is the thesis (80% of final grade). In the thesis, students present their solution to the business issue and give a research-methodological justification of the choices made. They are also required to pitch their digital presence in the work field. The reflection report is the second deliverable (20% of final grade). In this report students reflect on their personal and professional development by using the STARR-method. The thesis and reflection report are assessed by ASIS lecturers, one of whom is the school mentor, with the company mentor giving advisory input. In the oral defence, students have to present and defend their research, the research output, conclusions and recommendations before a panel of two ASIS assessors, one of whom the school mentor. They are advised by an external adviser from the work field. Students are only allowed to do their oral defence if the thesis and the reflection report are graded with a 5.5 or higher mark. The oral defence will result in a mark-up of 0.5 or no mark-up. As of 2019 - 2020 this mark-up will be abolished and the final grade will be based on the thesis, reflection report and oral defence.

According to the panel, the study programme has designed a proper graduation process with clear go/no go moments and adequate guidance and marking procedures. The deliverables together cover all PLOs, except for the PLOs relating to the second foreign language, which are assessed before Year 4. The panel is positive about using different graduation products to assess both individual work and teamwork, in order to be able to also assess PLOs related to collaboration, communication and intercultural skills.

The panel has studied 15 theses of students who graduated in the last two years, together with the related assessment forms. The panel also looked at a selection of exams of the International Business Case module and a selection of reports of the Strategic Business Decisions project. The theses, reports and exams meet the requirements of the professional bachelor level and show that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. As to the theses, the panel assessed all of them as satisfactory. According to the panel, the grading by the IB assessors was rather high and could be more insightful. The feedback with the grading could be further extended. The theses were all methodologically and theoretically well founded. However, it seems that all students have to follow strictly the same methodological format. The panel advocates more flexibility in this respect. For some theses, the subject matter could have had more international focus. The exams of the International Business Case are of a high level and especially allow for testing the students' skills in critical thinking. The reports of the Strategic Business Decisions the panel studied are satisfactory and give sufficient insight in the balance between teamwork and individual performance. The reflection reports, however, could be more specific. The panel was impressed by the high level of English of the graduation products.

Functioning of alumni in the work field

Recent surveys among alumni show that the alumni are satisfied with the programme. This was also confirmed by the alumni the panel met. The IB study programme offers appropriate preparation for the international labour market. Approximately 90% of the respondents of the surveys indicate that they work for an internationally operating company, 88% consider their job to be international, while about 50% work outside the Netherlands. Alumni are satisfied with the link between the programme and their job. Alumni who took up master's programmes believe that the programme offers a good preparation for a master's programme. Company surveys and feedback of external advisers show that the professional field is satisfied with the level of the IB graduates. The representatives of the work field the panel spoke with, were also positive about the IB graduates.

General conclusion

Assessments of the standards

The audit team comes to the following judgements with regard to the standards:

Standard	Assessment
<i>Standard 1 Intended Learning Outcomes</i>	Meets the generic quality standard
<i>Standard 2 Teaching-learning Environment</i>	Meets the generic quality standard
<i>Standard 3 Assessment</i>	Meets the generic quality standard
<i>Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes</i>	Meets the generic quality standard

Considerations and conclusion

Weighing of the judgements with regard to the four standards is based on the assessment rules of NVAO.

The bachelor study programme International Business of Avans University of Applied Sciences in Breda is going through a lot of changes, both in its organisation and in relation to its curriculum. There are many challenges for the study programme and its team. One could say that therefore, this audit was too early. Nevertheless, because of the changes in the organisation, management, culture and the changes in the curriculum, the panel is fully convinced that the study programme is able to tackle the challenges successfully. There is a sound basis for this trust. The present curriculum suits the PLOs and offers students an adequate theoretical and practical basis for their future careers. The programme is truly international. The study programme has close links with the work field. Students acknowledge the recent improvements and assess the study programme and the lecturers in general positively. The assessment system of the study programme is adequate. Within the team the team spirit is back and there is much confidence in the new management. The excellent Examination Board and Assessment Committee add to the positive assessment by the panel of the Breda IB study programme.

The audit panel assesses the quality of the bachelor study programme International Business of Avans University of Applied Sciences in Breda as **positive**.

Recommendations

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

Standard 1

- Re-assess the requirement for all students to accomplish all PLOs at level 3 in view of their opportunities to distinguish themselves sufficiently.

Standard 2

- Incorporate more real-life cases in the projects.
- Increase the cooperation with the relevant research groups of Avans (lectoraten) and make them more visible in the programme.

Standard 3

- Make the grading of assessments more insightful.
- Make sure the lecturers attune their grading with each other better.

Standard 4

- Consider introducing more different types of graduation products to make a better alignment with the goals of the study programme and the requirements of the work field.
- Make sure the subject matter of all theses is clearly international.

Appendices

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Student year 4</i>
11.30	Internal discussion/coffee break	NQA-panel
11.40	Lecturers Subjects are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - study programme – content and relevance - teaching and examination - work load - working environment, meetings - study abroad and dual degrees - competence and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair education committee, assistant professor research • Year 1, study coaching • Year 1 and 3,4 • Year 2, researcher • Year 3, researcher • Year 4, semester 1 • Year 4, graduation • Internationalisation • Lecturer, chair Study Programme Advisory Committee
12.30	Lunch and internal discussion Served in the audit room	NQA-panel
13.00	Assessment and Examination Subjects are : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment programme - graduation - diplomas and dual degrees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair examination board • Member examination board • Member assessment committee
13.40	Internal discussion	NQA-panel
13.50	Programme management Subjects are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programme policy, organisation - programme finances - team management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean ASIS • Team manager IB and FCI • Head of ASIS-Operations
14.30	Open consultation/pending issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - for students and lecturers who want to speak with panel - for panel to ask to (again) speak to panel members/others 	NQA-panel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Improving Business •
15.00	Internal discussion	NQA-panel
15.45	Development Consultation	NQA-panel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean ASIS • Team manager IB and FCI • Head of ASIS-Operations • Professor International Business
16.30	Feedback and preliminary results Drinks	NQA-panel Management, Students, Lecturers, Support staff, Examination Board
17.00	End	

Appendix 2: Documents examined

- Evaluation International Business
- ASIS HR Faculty Overview 2019
- ASIS Personnel and Training Plan 2018
- Education and Examination Regulations 2018-2019
- Handbook IB 2018-2019
- Handbook IB 2019 -2020
- Programme Framework International Business 2018
- Programme Framework IB, Attachment 1, PLO assessment matrix IB curriculum 2018-2019
- Programme Framework IB, Attachment 2, IB level descriptors final
- Overarching assessment matrix IB 2019-2020
- Selection of 15 theses: 5 of the academic year 2017-2018, 10 of the academic year 2018-2019
- Toetskader Avans
- ASIS Assessment Handbook 2018-2019
- Annual reports of the Examination Board 2017-2018 and 2018-2019
- Bylaws Examination Board (Huishoudelijk reglement)
- Annual reports of the Assessment Committee 2017-2018 and 2018-2019
- Evaluations by the Assessment Committee of exams of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019
- Achieving your Full Potential, Source: Educational Vision, Avans
- Ambitie 2020, Avans
- Quality in Motio, Quality Systems at Avans University of Applied Sciences
- Documents Business Advisory Board 2017 – 2020: reports, presentations, minutes of meetings, overview of members, information materials
- Gedragscode anderstalig onderwijs Avans
- ASIS Internationalisation Strategy 2025
- The Dual degree Tracks of Avans IB and its International Partner Institutes 2018
- Explanatory note Dual degree ASIS
- Module Manuals 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020
- ASIS Business Plan 2016-2020
- Business Plan ASIS 2019
- ASIS Organisation Plan
- ASIS Quality Management Plan
- Alumni Survey 2017
- Course Evaluations 2017-2018 and 2018-2019
- HBO Monitor 2014-2018
- NSE 2018 and reports of related NSE evaluation meetings
- Representative selection of assessments and related assessment forms