

**Bachelor  
International Teacher Education for Secondary Schools  
(ITESS)  
NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences**

*Report of the limited programme assessment  
12/13 April 2023 & 22 September 2023*

## Colophon

### Programme

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor International Teacher Education for Secondary Schools (ITESS)

Location: Groningen

Mode of study: fulltime

Croho: 35525

Result of institutional assessment: positive (5 July 2020)

### Panel

drs. G.M. (Mariëlle) Klerks, chair

drs. F.A.N. (Frans) Kranenburg, domain expert

drs. M.K. (Marieke) Folkers, domain expert

J.J.H. (Joris) Hahn, BSc, student

drs. T. (Tineke) Kleene, secretary

The panel was presented to the NVAO for approval.

The assessment was conducted under responsibility of

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## Summary

On 12/13 April and 22 September 2023 a panel of AeQui visited the Bachelor programme International Teacher Education for Secondary Schools (ITESS) of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences in Groningen. The panel judges that the programme meets the standards 1, 2 and 3 and partially meets standard 4; the overall judgment of the quality of the programme is **conditionally positive**.

### Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes are based on international and national requirements, frameworks and profiles and were developed in co-creation with the professional field. The panel commends the programme with its Advisory Board, that is very actively involved in the programme, and with an increased cooperation with the international education partners.

The programme has a clear and well thought-out vision on what type of teacher it intends to educate: school teachers who have a global and inclusive outlook and are culturally sensitive, with strong English language skills and knowledge, who support the learning needs of students in the international classroom, who are experts in a specific subject, are knowledgeable about and familiar with different international educational systems and curricula and who can develop motivating and high quality lesson materials. The panel appreciates the clear choices the programme has made in this respect.

The Learning Outcomes and competences suit the level and orientation of a bachelor programme of a university of applied sciences. The programme's learning outcomes, competences, course learning outcomes and Dublin descriptors are clearly aligned.

In view of the ambitions to develop towards an ITE expertise centre together with ITEPS, the committee supports ITESS' intentions to develop a shared common understanding and use of terminology together with the ITEPS programme. This will contribute to a clear ITE profile, as it will enhance the transparency of the relationship between the intended learning outcomes of both programmes. Moreover, it will facilitate collaborations between the programmes.

The panel assesses that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**.

### Teaching-learning environment

The programme adequately covers all the intended learning outcomes. The curriculum provides a shared base through the four years programme in the general courses and provides specific subject knowledge in the specialisation courses. Year 3 offers more flexibility by giving students the option to choose a minor during their second semester. The panel is positive about the contents of both the general and the specialisation courses and the balance between general courses.

The programme is solid and coherent. The three pillars of Educational studies, Teaching Practice and Professional Identity and Research Based Educational Design provide clear learning continuums. Design Based Education (DBE) runs through the veins of the curriculum, anchoring this into the students' identity. The curriculum strikes a strong balance between the how of teaching and subject knowledge.

ITESS is a small, close-knit community. Staff is very ambitious and focussed on development. The team is relatively small which sometimes leads to a high workload. The programme is aware of this, and the panel recommends keeping a close eye. There is an extensive and well-organised coaching system in place. Staff have the appropriate qualifications and background to offer the ITESS programme and are very supportive.

The fact that students have both research and Teaching Practice (TP) in each year of the programme and the enormous network of TP schools (which ITEPS shares with ITESS) are great assets. The ITESS building contains everything that is needed to offer the programme. Next year ITESS will move to the campus in Meppel where students and lecturers from both ITESS and ITEPS will form a community and where more facilities are provided. The panel thinks that the move is a good development.

The panel establishes that the programme **meets this standard.**

#### **Student assessment**

The panel appreciates the strong formative assessment and feedback culture at ITESS. There is a good balance between formative and summative assessments and within the assessment programme there is a good balance between the assessment of knowledge and the assessment of skills. Students often work on authentic and creative tasks which is in line with the university's and programme's educational principles, enhances motivation of students and prepares the students well for the professional field.

ITESS has an extended structure of quality assurance of assessments in place. The programme uses rubrics which have evolved from standard rubrics to activity suited rubrics using transparent grade level descriptors. The formulations of the rubrics could be made more specific and concrete. The programme has implemented several measures that contribute to the quality of assessment, such as the four-eyes principle and calibration. Assessments are transparent for the different stakeholders. In the Teaching Practice (TP) students are assessed by two ITESS-assessors, one of which is also the TP supervisor, in consultation with the TP school mentor. The Teaching Practice Guide assists the school mentors in giving feedback and assessing the students. The panel is positive about this guide.

The examination board (together with the test committee) performs its legal responsibilities with respect to safeguarding the quality of assessment. The panel appreciates the fact that the examination board and test committee sit together regularly and are both involved in calibration sessions. The panel praises both committees on their proactive way of working. The strong quality culture at ITESS has led to different adjustments enhancing the quality of assessments. In view of the panel's observations described in Standard 4, the panel recommends the Examination Board to pay increased attention to safeguarding the achieved learning outcomes in the theses specifically (cf. Standard 4).

The panel establishes that the programme **meets this standard.**

#### **Achieved learning outcomes**

The achieved learning outcomes are demonstrated in the Year 4 Teaching Practice and the thesis. The combination of Teaching Practice and research in the final phase of the programme suits the character of the programme well. The panel reviewed the final works of 23 graduates. The panel concluded that six out of 23 theses did not sufficiently demonstrate the intended learning outcomes of the programme with regard to the quality of various aspects of the research. According to the panel, the observations with respect to the quality of the theses are at least partially related to the quality and transparency of the assessment form. The assessment criteria and attainment level descriptors in this form can be formulated in a more specific and concrete manner in order to leave less room for interpretation and to make the distinction between the various attainment level descriptors of a criterion more clear. Furthermore, the descriptors for sufficient grades (A-E) can be formulated more at the bachelor's level of the intended learning outcomes. Also, the cut-off can be described more clearly, and the form can enhance transparency on how assessors arrive at the final grade.

The Teaching Practice works that the panel has read, were considered to be up to standard. The panel was very positive about the amount of feedback which is given on the TP forms and about the quality of the TP portfolios.

Graduates of ITESS are appreciated in the field. The panel is positive about the fact that ITESS intends to set up an alumni network and get alumni involved in a systematic way.

The panel thinks that being able to hand out qualifications to teach in international school in the Netherlands would add a lot of value to the diploma and hopes it will be possible for ITESS to award this qualification in due time.

In view of the panel's findings on the theses and given the fact that the intended learning outcomes of the programme are not fully covered in the

Teaching Practice alone and, hence, the achievement of the intended learning outcomes cannot be fully demonstrated in the Teaching Practice alone, the panel establishes that the programme **partially meets this standard**.

### Recommendations

For further improvement of the programme, the panel suggests the following:

- to keep a close eye on the workload of the very ambitious and small team;
- to improve the consistency in the communication with the students;
- to make the wording of the rubrics more specific and concrete;
- the Examination Board is advised to pay increased attention to safeguarding the demonstration of the intended end level in the thesis/final work research specifically.

### Conditions

The panel is confident that it is realistic and feasible for the programme to meet Standard 4 within a period of two years. It therefore formulates the following **conditions**:

1. The theses/final work research should reflect the research knowledge and skills at bachelor's level featured in the intended learning outcomes of the programme. Specific attention needs to be paid to:
  - The focus of research questions
  - The depth of critical reflection on literature and methods
  - The scientific rigor
2. The design of the thesis/final work research assessment form (rubric) needs to be improved:

- The level descriptors should adequately address all the various aspects of the assessment criterion they belong to (alignment);
  - The level descriptor for "sufficient" (E) should reflect the bachelor level of the intended learning outcomes. The cut-off should be more clearly defined in the rubric;
  - Assessment criteria and their level descriptors should be made more concrete in order to leave little room for interpretation. The distinction between the various level descriptors of a criterion should be unambiguous;
  - It should be made clear if (sub)criteria can compensate each other and, if yes, to what extent.
3. The quality of the (practice of) thesis/final work research assessment should improve with respect to the following aspects:
    - Grades awarded on assessment criteria should be in line with and substantiated by the written feedback of the assessors on that criterion (alignment);
    - A transparent and clear overview of the build-up of grades should be added;
    - The thesis/final work research assessment process should be transparent, also for external parties (such as the Examination Board or accreditation or midterm committees). This means making transparent (e.g. by a paper trail) that the first and second assessors independently come to their own individual assessment and how they, subsequently, arrive at a joint assessment and final grade.

Standards 1, 2 and 3 of the NVAO assessment framework (2018) are assessed positively. Standard 4 partially meets the standard; therefore the panel gives a **conditionally positive recommendation** for the accreditation of the programme. The panel is confident that the programme meets the abovementioned conditions within two years.

On behalf of the entire panel,  
Utrecht, October 2023

drs. G.M. (Mariëlle) Klerks  
Chair

drs. T. (Tineke) Kleene  
Secretary

## Introduction

### The institute

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (NHL Stenden) is firmly rooted in the northern part of the Netherlands, while at the same time maintaining a strong international focus. At all campuses and with its international network, NHL Stenden is always looking for new ways to successfully integrate education, research, and the latest developments in the professional world. Students, lecturers, and researchers work together in small teams on real-life assignments and share their innovative ideas in practice.

NHL Stenden aims at educating enterprising and resourceful professionals who know how to translate their knowledge into innovative solutions and who have the vision and courage needed to look beyond their own professional field.

### The programme

The ITESS programme, which started in 2018, is a four-year full-time bachelor programme amounting to 240 EC programme, taught in English. As English is an essential element for teacher training within the international schools' environment, the panel considers the use of English at the school and the English name of the programme justified. ITESS trains teachers for international secondary schools all over the world. ITESS is located in Groningen and will move to the ITEPS campus in Meppel. The first students graduated in 2022.

ITESS is part of the Academy VO & MBO of NHL Stenden. This academy consists of 27 programmes focussed on training students to teach in secondary schools and vocational study programmes mainly in the national context. ITESS is a unique programme within the academy due to the focus on the international school context. ITESS educates a diverse group of internationally oriented students to become open-minded teachers in international schools, comfortable with the needs of the world citizens of the future.

Together with International Teacher Education for Primary Schools (ITEPS) and an upcoming specialised Master track in International Teacher Education (MITE) ITESS forms the ITE consortium.

ITESS also collaborates with the Tweedegraads Learenopleidingen (TLOs – Second degree Teacher Training programmes) and the professorship Didactics for subject and profession and the professorship Design Based Education (DBE).

The ITEPS & ITESS programmes set up a shared Programme Committee, Examination Board, Test Committee and an Advisory Board. Both programmes offer a pathway for students to obtain the IB (International Baccalaureate) Educator Certificate in teaching and Learning and, at the time of the site visit, the programmes are conjointly working on obtaining the teaching qualification for both ITEPS and ITESS.

Teaching Practice (TP) coordinators work closely together as both ITESS and ITEPS have one network of TP schools.

The ambition for the future is to intensify the collaboration between ITEPS and ITESS further with the ultimate ambition to become the expertise centre of International Teacher Education in Europe and to play a leading role in the development of international school education.

### The assessment

NHL Stenden assigned AeQui to perform a quality assessment of its bachelor programme International Teacher Education for Secondary Schools (ITESS). In close co-operation with the programme management, AeQui convened an independent and competent panel. A preparatory meeting with representatives of the programme was held to exchange information and plan the date and programme of the site-visit.

In the run-up to the site visit, the panel has studied the self-evaluation report on the programme and reviewed a sample of student work. The findings were input for a preparatory internal panel meeting and for the discussions during the site visit.

The site visit was carried out on 12 and 13 April and on 22 September 2023 according to the programme presented in attachment 2. By the end of the site visit in April, the panel concluded that standards 1, 2 and 3 met the requirements, but that, to come to a careful judgement of the current situation with respect to the achieved learning outcomes (Standard 4), it needed to expand its selection of final works, including the theses of the most recent cohort and including more specialisations of the programme. Therefore, in consultation with the ITESS programme management, it was decided that the panel would study

the final works of 20 additional graduates from the June 2023 cohort featuring all the programme specialisations that had delivered graduates at that time. This made that the panel studied the final works of 23 graduates in total. An extra online session was held on 22 September 2023 to communicate the panel's findings with respect to the final work, to ask clarifying questions and to communicate the panel's final judgement with relevant representatives of the programme (cf. Appendix 2). The panel has assessed the programme in an independent manner.

In this document, the panel is reporting on its findings, considerations, and conclusions according to the 2018 NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. A draft version of the report was sent to the programme management team for a check on factual inaccuracies; its reactions have led to this final version of the report.



## 1. Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes are based on international and national requirements, frameworks and profiles and were developed in co-creation with the professional field. The panel commends the programme with its Advisory Board, that is very actively involved in the programme and with an increased cooperation with the international education partners.

The programme has a clear and well thought-out vision on what type of teacher it intends to educate: school teachers who have a global and inclusive outlook and are culturally sensitive, with strong English language skills and knowledge, who support the learning needs of students in the international classroom, who are experts in a specific subject, who are knowledgeable about and familiar with different international educational systems and curricula and who can develop motivating and high quality lesson materials. The panel appreciates the clear choices the programme has made in this respect.

The Learning Outcomes and competences suit the level and orientation of a bachelor programme of a university of applied sciences. The programme learning outcomes, competences, course learning outcomes and Dublin descriptors are clearly aligned.

In view of the ambitions to develop towards an ITE expertise centre together with ITEPS, the committee supports ITESS' intentions to develop a shared common understanding and use of terminology together with the ITEPS programme. This will contribute to a clear ITE profile, as it will enhance the transparency of the relationship between the intended learning outcomes of both programmes. Moreover, it will facilitate collaborations between the programmes. The panel assesses that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**.

### Findings

The goal of ITESS is to train international secondary school teachers that have a global and inclusive outlook and are culturally sensitive, with strong English language skills and knowledge. They support the learning needs of students in the international classroom and are experts in a specific subject (English, Maths, Science, Social Studies: Geography or Social Studies: History). They are familiar with different international educational systems and curricula and can develop motivating and high-quality lesson materials. Graduates include students from different cultural backgrounds with diverse values and assumptions, while at the same time addressing local issues. In their work they contribute to international mindedness, appreciate the importance of diversity to professional practice and citizenship, inclusive education, and foster attitudes of respect and tolerance.

For the description of the intended learning outcomes ITESS uses the metaphor of a "learning

tree" the trunk of which consists of three Programme Learning Outcomes.

1. By applying the Design Based Education (DBE) approach and academic research skills, the student is able to conduct a research project within the context of their subject that integrates personal and professional interests and results in an evidence-informed educational design based on a practical problem that relates to their subject.
2. The student is able to perform all responsibilities of a teacher within the context of international education. They create an inclusive, safe and engaging learning environment by integrating cultural values and global events into lessons, encourage their students to become active international citizens and support them for their future careers. The student is able to work through an evidence informed approach.
3. The student is able to reflect on their professional identity as a teacher in their subject and plans how to continue their career as a teacher in an international context.

The big branches are the 8 underlying competences a student teacher needs to master.

1. Intercultural competence
2. Interpersonal competence
3. Pedagogical competence
4. Subject knowledge & didactic competence
5. Organisational competence
6. Competence in collaborating with colleagues
7. Competence in external communication and cooperation
8. Competence in research, reflection and professional development

The competences were developed together with the professional field. Among others, school leaders, teachers and experts in the international school context were interviewed and the ITE advisory committee played an advisory role.

The smaller branches reflect the course learning objectives. The roots reflect the Dublin descriptors.

The programme learning outcomes are in line with the Dublin Descriptors at Bachelor level, the ITE framework and the National Dutch requirements (bekwaamheidseisen) for TLO.

#### *Keeping the competences up to date*

The programme is connected to the professional field in different ways: via the network of TP schools, via collaboration of ITESS teachers with the mentor-teachers in international schools, by visiting partner schools once a year, via the collaboration with reputable international partners (e.g. IB, IMYC) and by meeting the International Advisory Board twice a year. On top of this, ITESS keeps track of developments in the professional field through contact with their network, staff's network, TP supervisors within international schools and the attendance of conferences and fairs.

All of the abovementioned activities help to keep the intended learning outcomes aligned with the requirements of the professional field.

In the self-evaluation report ITESS indicated that it would like to work on more common language, terminology and the use of the ITE framework with regard to the learning outcomes, together with ITEPS to facilitate the collaboration further between ITEPS and ITESS.

#### **Considerations**

The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes of the programme are based on international and national requirements, frameworks and profiles and have been developed in co-creation with the professional field. The panel is impressed by the way the Advisory Board is actively involved in the programme and with an increased cooperation with the international education partners.

The panel considers that the programme has a clear and well-thought-out vision on what qualities it considers necessary for an international secondary school teacher and on how it intends to educate its students correspondingly. The panel appreciates the clear choices the programme has made in this respect.

The panel is positive about the ITESS learning outcomes and competences. The Learning Outcomes and competences suit the level and orientation of a bachelor programme of a university of applied sciences. The panel likes the alignment tree which shows clearly how programme learning outcomes, competences, course learning outcomes and Dublin descriptors are aligned. The three intended learning outcomes are also aligned with the Dutch National Requirements for TLO (bekwaamheidseisen).

In view of the ambitions to develop towards an ITE expertise centre together with ITEPS, the committee supports ITESS' intentions to develop a shared common understanding and use of terminology together with the ITEPS programme. This will contribute to a clear ITE profile, as it will enhance the transparency of the relationship between the intended learning outcomes of both

programmes. Moreover, it will facilitate collaborations between the programmes.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the panel establishes that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**.

## 2. Teaching-learning environment

The programme adequately covers all the intended learning outcomes. The curriculum provides a shared base through the four years programme in the general courses and provides specific subject knowledge in the specialisation courses. Year 3 offers more flexibility by giving students the option to choose a minor during their second semester. The panel is positive about the contents of both the general and the specialisation courses and the balance between general courses.

The programme is solid and coherent. The three pillars of Educational studies, Teaching Practice and Professional Identity and Research Based Educational Design provide clear learning continuums. Design Based Education (DBE) runs through the veins of the curriculum, anchoring this into the students' identity. The curriculum strikes a strong balance between the how of teaching and subject knowledge.

ITESS is a small, close-knit community. Staff is very ambitious and focussed on development. The team is relatively small which sometimes leads to a high workload. The programme is aware of this, and the panel recommends keeping a close eye.

There is an extensive and well-organised coaching system in place. Staff have the appropriate qualifications and background to offer the ITESS programme and are very supportive. The fact that students have both research and Teaching Practice (TP) in each year of the programme and the enormous network of TP schools (which ITEPS shares with ITESS) are great assets.

The ITESS building contains everything that is needed to offer the programme. Next year ITESS will move to the campus in Meppel where students and lecturers from both ITESS and ITEPS will form a community and where more facilities are provided. The panel thinks that the move is a good development.

The panel establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.

### Findings

ITESS offers an international, open-minded community to students and staff, in which people feel included, safe and welcome. This was confirmed by the student chapter (which was delivered in the form of a podcast) and the students the panel talked to at the site visit. Students say they regard ITESS as an open minded family where people do not judge each other. The international community is very inclusive. Teachers are very approachable and enforce the sense of community.

Students take an active role in the community inside and outside the campus. The programme models the international education environment, so students experience what it's like to be part of such an environment. According to the podcast, students appreciate the international environment very much.

### Educational concept

Design based Education (DBE) plays an important role in the ITESS curriculum. This teaching and

learning approach aims to empower the learning process of all stakeholders in (higher) education: a triological process between students, the professional field and lecturers. Actual and complex issues are faced via iterative processes to bridge the gap between a current situation and an intended situation. DBE consists of five facets:

1. Multidisciplinary collaboration
2. International and intercultural
3. Design thinking
4. Personal leadership
5. Sustainable education

The DBE facets are embedded in courses, community, and way of teaching. The design cycle is an inherent part of learning how to create lessons and materials. Design thinking is explicitly taught in the DBE labs and research courses.

The ultimate expression of the DBE facets takes place in the Teaching Practices (TP) in which students work in an authentic setting; design and ex-

ecute lessons in co-creation with peers and mentor teachers. Students conduct research prior and during the Teaching Practice, collaborate with several stakeholders, take the lead in their learning process and development, and reflect on their practice.

To aid teachers, the teacher's Professional development day focussed on concept centred and inquiry-based teaching and learning.

It is a deliberate policy to mix ITESS students from the different specialisations in the curriculum (cf. Contents) in one classroom to enhance multidisciplinary collaboration. By talking about education, developing materials, and discussing perspectives, the programme trains/facilitates students to become adaptable, flexible, creative professionals.

## Contents

### *Concept based curriculum*

The programme has taken the first steps towards a more concept-based curriculum. It has assigned the IB Middle Year Programme (MYP) key concepts to quarter terms and made them visible in the course objectives. The 16 MYP key concepts were used as model.

ITESS selected a different key concept to determine an inquiry focus for each term. This enables teachers to provide a focus to lead an inquiry route through the knowledge and understandings to be obtained.

Concepts are broad and far-reaching but provide links between subjects and modules to focus on trans- and interdisciplinary understandings. Each term over the four years is linked to an overarching key concept. The focus of that term is to include the concept to encourage deeper analysis within the subject block/course (Key concepts ITESS). The first steps to use these concepts have been taken in the review year but will be developed further and visibility will be enhanced in the following years.

Using the MYP concepts is a step toward the IB authorisation that ITESS is aiming to achieve.

## Orientation

The curriculum was designed in co-creation with ITEPS, international school consortia, accreditation organisations of international schools and Bath University.

Teaching Practice (TP) is an essential part of the programme. Students go on TP every year to make the transfer from theory to practice and to experience the international education context and to build their network. The division of TP from year 1 to year 4 is: 3 – 8 – 9 - 11 weeks. The level of complexity and the duration of the TP increases and the roles that students have in the international classroom change over the subsequent years. According to the student chapter, students regard the possibilities of going abroad as a USP of the programme.

In the student chapter and during the site visit, students expressed their appreciation for this build-up of the programme.

The curriculum covers all the intended learning outcomes of the programme. It consists of general courses and specialisations courses. Students follow these courses simultaneously. The 1<sup>st</sup> two years are divided into 30 EC general courses and 30 EC specialisation courses. The specialisations include some weeks of Teaching Practice (TP). Year 1 contains 3 weeks TP and year 2 contains 8 weeks TP. Year 3 contains a 30 EC minor, a 15 EC module Research-Based Educational design, a 5 EC DBE lab and 10 EC (7 weeks) teaching practice. Year 4 consists of 30 EC specialisation and 30 EC graduation (bachelor thesis and 11 weeks TP).

The programme offers five specialisations:

1. English
2. Maths
3. Science
4. Social studies – geography
5. Social studies - history

Besides the 120 EC of general courses, students also take 90 EC of courses in their chosen specialisation. These 90 EC are equally distributed over year 1, 2, and 4; the focus is on content knowledge and subject didactic knowledge.

There are three learning continuums within the programme:

1. Educational Studies (years 1-4)
2. Research-Based Educational Design (RBED) (year 2-4)
3. Teaching Practice & Professional Identity (years 1-4).

In the DBE labs, students work interdisciplinary on authentic issues, supervised and coached by an ITESS teacher, using the design cycle to solve problems of the international field. There is alignment between the labs and the specialisation courses, which provide subject specific pedagogical and content knowledge for the products the students are working on during the labs. The international and intercultural dimension is embedded throughout the entire programme both through the contents as well as through the teaching methods.

Because of the focus on personal development and the broader society, the programme also pays attention to topics such as Bildung, international mindedness and digital literacy.

### **Recent developments**

During covid ITESS was seriously disrupted, as many international students and teachers were isolated from their home and many students were not able to go on TP, although some of them still were (either physically or online). ITESS developed new ways of teaching and went to great lengths to keep on delivering the programme the best it could. Teachers managed to keep in personal touch with the students. Apart from this, coaching was intensified. Not only education at ITESS was disrupted, but also the many relationships with TP schools across the world. These relationships have now been restored.

### **Incoming students**

Prospective students need a diploma at minimally NLQF 4/EQF level. After admission, applicants send a letter of motivation and resumé. Based on these documents the staff assesses whether an additional intake interview is needed to check their suitability for ITESS and their chosen specialisation.

### **Staff**

The ITESS teaching team consists of a core of 14 teachers (10,2 FTE) and 8 additional teachers (1,2 FTE) coming in from secondary schools and NHL Stenden to teach specific courses. The team is diverse, with different nationalities and expertise. Teachers have experience in the different school contexts, and they all have a Master's degree.

All team members have taken part in professionalisation activities and those who do not yet have a Teaching Qualification (BDB) and/or Examination Qualification (BKE) are working on this. Several professionalisation activities take place in collaboration with ITEPS, like the ones in which staff is being trained in concept-based and inquiry-based learning. Staff members are experienced with the Design Based Education approach.

Teachers collaborate closely, sharing expertise and knowledge, e.g. via workshops and peer-counselling sessions. During the professional development days in 2022-2023, the team attended multiple workshops and trainings about concept-based learning. There are several members of staff who are experienced experts in the field of concept-based education. The panel appreciates the way in which both management and lecturers are continuously focussed on improvement and establishes that there is a genuine culture of quality.

Several staff members are involved in the professorships Didactiek voor Vak en Beroep (Methodology for subject and profession) and Design Based Education (DBE) and have a PhD.

The ITESS staff are approachable for students and students state that they are always able to find a teacher to help them when needed.

### **Language**

English is the language of instruction as well as the language used inside and outside the classroom. The English proficiency level of the staff is minimal C1 level. The use of English is inherent to international teacher training, and therefore crucial for the quality of the programme and the quality of the students. Students need to obtain a high level of English to be able to use this in their future classrooms. It is the default language in the international school context. ITESS advocates the importance of using English inside and outside of the classroom not only to support the students' proficiency but also to support inclusivity. In the panel's view, the abovementioned also justifies the name of the programme being in English.

### **Infrastructure**

ITESS is located in Groningen and shares its location with the Dutch bachelor and Master programmes in Secondary Teacher Education and one of the national primary school teacher programmes (PABO) departments. The location is equipped with practical teaching rooms. There are spaces in which students can study in silence and have access to computer facilities. There is a specific room for the Social Studies: Geography lessons. The Science students go to Leeuwarden once every quarter for a Lab Day. In year 2 the Science students take part in a DBE Lab at the International School in Groningen, which gives them the opportunity to work in a lab with students.

There is a library in the building, with a modest section for the ITESS students with books in English and focussed on relevant topics for their learning and development. The ITESS library is expanding with books, magazines and games. Students are supported by the library in an online environment, with links to relevant websites, research databases and online magazines.

There is a staff room in the building for teachers and support staff.

As students go abroad several times during the programme, they are supported with digital means of communication (e.g. Teams) and have access to online resources (e.g. the ITESS digital library).

### *Recent developments*

With the intended move to Meppel, ITESS will have its own building modelled to the educational needs of the programme and reflecting the international school context and specialisations. There will be adjustable rooms and a library, shared with ITEPS, which will be focused on international education. The programme is setting up a collaboration with a local secondary school for access to a science lab.

### **Tutoring and student information**

Every student is part of a study coach group of 6 to 8 students, guided and supported by a study coach. Different ITESS lecturers support the students in the successive phases of the programme. The study coaches work closely together within the year teams, across the year teams and with the student counsellor.

Study coaching sessions focus on students' academic and personal challenges and students' professional identity development are organised each term.

According to the student chapter, students have the impression that the quality of support varies between different study coaches and subject matters. In general, however, students feel that teachers are very supportive.

### *Supervision of TP*

Students follow the TP under supervision of a mentor-teacher in the TP school. They are supported by an ITESS supervising lecturer. During TP, the coaching of students is focussed on developing the professional identity of the students.

### *Information provision*

All students have access to blackboard on which information about the courses is shared (hand-books, assessment etc). According to the student chapter the programme is well-organised, but consistency in the communication is an attention point. In the students' opinion, this is related to the fact that the programme uses various information provision programmes.

### **Considerations**

ITESS is a small, close-knit community in which students and staff members are always ready to help each other. The ITESS team is well-equipped, very supportive and open for feedback. The staff members regularly participate in professionalisation activities. Staff is very ambitious and focused on development. The fact that the team is relatively small also makes it vulnerable. Staff members consider the workload to be rather high. The programme is aware of this. The panel recommends the programme to keep a close eye on this.

There is an extensive and well-organised coaching system in place and a low threshold for students to seek help or ask for support. Students appreciate the support system and feel they are listened to.

Just like the students, the staff have a very diverse background. They understand the context of (international) schools and have diverse experiences in the field of education. The overview of staff shows they have the appropriate background (level, education, and experience) to offer the ITESS programme.

The programme adequately covers all the intended learning outcomes. The curriculum provides a shared base through the four years programme in the general courses and provides specific subject knowledge in the specialisation courses. In year 3 ITESS offers more flexibility by giving students the option to choose a minor during their second semester. Not many students

choose to do a minor within the ITESS programme (an additional specialisation). The panel is positive about the contents of both the general and the specialisation courses and the balance between the general courses.

The panel establishes that the programme is solid and coherent. The three pillars of educational studies, Teaching Practice and Professional Identity and Research Based Educational Design provide clear learning continuums for placing courses. Design Based Education (DBE) appears in every year and runs through the veins of the curriculum, anchoring this into the students' identity. The curriculum strikes a strong balance between the how of teaching and subject knowledge. The panel appreciates the choice to focus more on the HOW than on the WHAT of teaching. This enables students to become professionals who are able to adapt and adjust to different educational environments and educational systems and their requirements and develop into the type of teacher the programme envisions them to be.

The programme offers different opportunities for students to match the content to their own interests. In year 1 and 2 there are two 30 EC specialisation modules, year 3 contains a minor and year 4 another 30 EC specialisation course. Also, within many other parts of the programme students have opportunities to add a personal touch.

The panel regards the fact that students have both Research and Teaching Practice (TP) in each year of the programme as a strong characteristic. Also, the enormous network of TP schools (which ITESS shares with ITEPS) is a great asset.

The ITESS building contains everything that is needed to offer the programme and for students and lecturers to meet and entertain. Next year, ITESS will move to the campus in Meppel where students and lecturers from both ITEPS and ITESS will form a community. On the ITEPS campus there will be more facilities.



As English is an essential element for teacher training for the international schools' environment the use of English at school and the English name of the programme are justified.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the panel establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.

### 3. Student assessment

The panel appreciates the strong formative assessment and feedback culture at ITESS. There is a good balance between formative and summative assessments. Within the assessment programme, there is a good balance between the assessment of knowledge and the assessment of skills. Students often work on authentic and creative tasks which is in line with the university's and programme's educational principles, enhances motivation of students and prepares the students well for the professional field.

ITESS has an extended structure of quality assurance of assessments in place. The programme uses rubrics which have evolved from standard rubrics to activity suited rubrics using transparent grade level descriptors. The formulations of the rubrics, however, could be made more specific and concrete. The programme has implemented several measures that contribute to the quality of assessment, such as the four-eyes principle and calibration. Assessments are transparent for the different stakeholders. In the Teaching Practice (TP) students are assessed by two ITESS-assessors, one of which is also the TP supervisor, in consultation with the TP school mentor. The Teaching Practice Guide assists the school mentors in giving feedback and assessing the students. The panel is positive about this guide.

The examination board (together with the test committee) performs its legal responsibilities with respect to safeguarding the quality of assessment. The panel appreciates the fact that the examination board and test committee sit together regularly and are both involved in calibration sessions. The panel praises both committees on their proactive way of working. The strong quality culture at ITESS has led to different adjustments enhancing the quality of assessments. In view of the panel's observations described in Standard 4, the panel recommends the Examination Board to pay increased attention to safeguarding the achieved learning outcomes in the theses specifically (cf. Standard 4). The panel establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.

#### Findings

##### *View on assessment*

ITESS places a strong emphasis on assessment as a means to support student learning. The programme uses formative evaluation to support student learning, leading up to summative assessment. In line with this vision, the programme features and fosters a strong (peer) feedback culture.

##### *Assessment programme*

ITESS uses a combination of formative and summative assessments. There is one summative assessment per module. An assessment may consist of more than one element, but there is one end-result per module. There is a maximum of three assessments per quarter. The TER contains a complete overview of all assessments.

##### *Assessment of TP*

The assessment of TP is a big part of the assessment programme. ITESS holistically assesses the

students' professional behaviour with a variety of evidence in the TP portfolio and feedback from pupils, peers, mentor-teachers and ITESS teachers.

##### *Assessment methods*

In line with the university's and programme's educational principles, ITESS favours authentic and creative tasks, agility in the use of acquired knowledge and skills in new situations and transfer between the learning continuums. The programme uses a variety of assessment methods, such as oral tests, interviews, professional products and written papers.

##### *Grading system*

Student work is assessed with rubrics, except for specific written tests. One important development is that ITESS has stopped using a standardised rubric for courses within the programme, resulting in more flexibility for teachers who can now choose a suitable rubric for the assessment

of the course. According to the student chapter (which was a podcast), the rubrics are clear but could be phrased in a more specific way.

Students are graded with the grade system A-F. Recently, the ITESS team developed a specified description of these grade levels, that has been approved by the Examination Board, to make the grades clearer and more transparent. These grade level descriptors will be further implemented in the upcoming academic year. The grade level descriptors will be disseminated in the ITESS course and among the teachers in the upcoming academic year.

#### *Construction of assessments*

Constructing the assessment is the task of lecturers of the courses. The assessment is constructively aligned with the learning outcomes of the course. Assessments are developed based on the course objectives and the aligned assessment criteria (validity).

#### *Quality assurance of assessments*

ITESS uses the four eyes-principle in assessments. Examiners always work in teams of two or more, in which at least one has a BKE. Written tests are given to colleagues for feedback and assessments of assignments are done by two teachers. Calibration sessions are organised to increase the validity and reliability. The reliability of the assessments is further ensured by using feedback from several sources like teachers, students and TP assessors.

In order to make the assessment programme transparent to students, ITESS teachers distribute information regarding objectives, the teaching methods and the assessment methods and criteria before the start of the course. Formative evaluation is also used to clarify the assessment criteria and learning outcomes during the courses.

To achieve clarity of expectations and assessment criteria in TP, the criteria and the roles of the people within TP were adjusted in the TP guide. This helps the mentor-teachers with their role in the

assessment of student teachers during TP. Information sessions at the beginning of TP are organised to clarify the assessment of the students to the mentor-teachers at the TP schools.

#### *External validation*

One of the safeguards for the quality of the assessment is that it is externally validated by professional experts. This is done in the following way:

- Development of the curriculum and design of the programme in close consultation with the Advisory Board.
- External member instated in the Examination Board.
- The assessment cycle is performed by the ITESS teachers with expertise of their specialisation.
- During TP, students are formatively evaluated by field assessors, the final summative evaluation is always done by two ITESS examiners.

#### *Examination board and test committee*

ITESS shares an examination board (EB) with the ITEPS programme. Together with the test committee (TC) the EB ensures the quality of assessments. In this context, every year the TC undertakes several specific actions. Last year, the committee reviewed the rubrics and at the thesis evaluation procedure, developed some new (more mentor friendly) TP evaluation forms and elaborated the descriptors for the thesis. Every year, the EB looks at a selection of theses, especially the ones with lower grades, to see if every student deserves the diploma. Other tasks of the EB are to approve minor programs, act in cases of fraud, exempt students from course units and check other assessments of non-final works within the ITEPS programme. The EB works proactively and gives suggestions to the Programme Committee (PT).

The test committee (TC) works commissioned by, under supervision of and in collaboration with the EB to ensure the validity and reliability of assessment within the programmes. Together, both committees agree on a set of tasks or focus points

for the year. The TC meets once a month and updates the EB periodically. At the end of the year, the test committee provides a summary of their findings and recommendations to the EB for approval.

The course document contains an overview of all stakeholders in the assessment organisation together with their responsibilities.

### Considerations

The panel appreciates the strong formative assessment and feedback culture at ITESS. There is a good balance between formative and summative assessments and within the assessment programme there is a good balance between the assessment of knowledge and the assessment of skills.

The panel is also positive about the fact that students often work on authentic and creative tasks in which the emphasis is on product and performance assessment. The authenticity of the assessment tasks ensures motivation of students and prepares them well for the professional field.

ITESS has an extended structure of quality assurance of assessments in place. The programme uses rubrics which have evolved from standard rubrics to activity suited rubrics using transparent grade level descriptors. The panel agrees with the students that the formulations of the rubrics could be made more specific and concrete. Time is made available for different quality procedures like the four-eyes principle and calibration. Assessments are transparent for the different stakeholders.

In the assessment of Teaching Practice (TP), the four-eyes principle is used as well: students are assessed by two ITESS-assessors, one of which is also the TP supervisor, in consultation with the TP school mentor. There is a Teaching Practice Guide available to assist the school mentors in giving feedback and assessing the students. The panel is positive about this guide.

The panel appreciates the fact that the examination board and test committee sit together regularly and that they are both involved in calibration sessions. In general, these committees both play a proactive role in safeguarding the quality of assessments and the panel praises them on this.

The panel has noticed that, just like in the other aspects of the programme, there is a strong quality culture regarding assessment. Lecturers and students do not only talk about the quality of assessment (and how that can be approved) at formal moments, but also informally a lot of information is shared and discussed. This has already led to different adjustments enhancing the quality of assessments. Notwithstanding the fact that the panel is positive about all the activities that various stakeholders in the programme undertake with respect to safeguarding the quality of assessment, and in view of the panel's observations described in Standard 4, the panel recommends the Examination Board to pay increased attention to safeguarding the achievement of the intended learning outcomes in the theses specifically (cf. Standard 4).

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the panel establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.

## 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The achieved learning outcomes are demonstrated in the Year 4 Teaching Practice and the thesis. The combination of Teaching Practice and research in the final phase of the programme suits the character of the programme well. The panel reviewed the final works of 23 graduates. The panel concluded that six out of 23 theses did not sufficiently demonstrate the intended learning outcomes of the programme regarding the quality of various aspects of the research. According to the panel, the observations with respect to the quality of the theses are at least partially related to the quality and transparency of the assessment form. The assessment criteria and attainment level descriptors in this form can be formulated in a more specific and concrete manner in order to leave less room for interpretation and to make the distinction between the various attainment level descriptors of a criterion more clear. Furthermore, the descriptors for sufficient grades (A-E) can be formulated more at the bachelor's level of the intended learning outcomes. Also, the cut-off can be described more clearly, and the form can enhance transparency on how assessors arrive at the final grade.

The Teaching Practice works that the panel has read, were considered to be up to standard. The panel was very positive about the amount of feed-back which is given on the TP forms and about the quality of the TP portfolios.

Graduates of ITESS are appreciated in the field. The panel is positive about the fact that ITESS intends to set up an alumni network and get alumni involved in a systematic way.

The panel thinks that being able to hand out qualifications to teach in international school in the Netherlands would add a lot of value to the diploma and hopes it will be possible for ITESS to award this qualification in due time. Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the panel establishes that the programme **partially meets this standard**.

### Findings

The graduation programme consists of the two following parts:

1. Bachelor Thesis (15EC)
2. Year 4 Teaching Practice & professional identity (10EC)

During the process of both TP and the writing of the Bachelor Thesis, the students receive feedback at set times during the process.

#### *Bachelor thesis*

The Bachelor Thesis is the final product of the learning continuum Research-Based Educational Design (RBED). It brings together the design cycle and research methodologies and methods, to provide an evidence-informed original piece of educational design responding to a practical pedagogical problem. The course catalogue and the Bachelor Thesis Guide give an extensive description of the thesis process and requirements.

Grading is done by two independent assessors (four eyes-principle) who first grade the thesis independently (using the thesis rubric) and then determine the final grade of the thesis in consensus.

Calibration sessions are organised for the thesis assessment for both supervisors and assessors.

#### *Teaching practice (TP) year 4*

During TP, several people are involved in the assessment: teachers of ITESS and a mentor-teacher, who works at the TP school. The mentor-teacher fills out the final evaluation (feedback & feedforward) of Teaching Practice on which the performance of the student is evaluated. This form is discussed together with the student and the ITESS teacher in their role of assessor. After this discussion two ITESS assessors (four eyes-

principle) assess the students' performance during TP in year 4 holistically based on the final evaluation and the portfolio and conclude on the final grade.

The mentor-teachers at the TP school are informed about the ins and outs of TP by the (recently updated) TP guide. Since this year, ITESS also provides information sessions for mentor-teachers to discuss issues like assessment criteria.

According to the application the TP schools in which students did their (final) TP are very satisfied with the level of the students as shown in testimonials set up by several international schools.

Students are regularly asked to join a team of an international school after graduation, sometimes even in TP in year 2 and year 3. The fact that graduates do not receive a Teaching Qualification does not seem to hinder hiring them within the international schools in many countries.

#### *Alumni policy*

ITESS connects to professionals, students and alumni via an ITE LinkedIn page which was set up together with ITEPS. Additionally, ITEPS and ITESS keep the ITE alumni involved through the ITE Magazine. Together with ITEPS it's the ambition to draw up a formal alumni policy.

#### **Considerations**

The panel establishes that graduates of ITESS are appreciated in the field. The fact that graduates do not get a teacher qualification to teach in the Netherlands does not seem to hinder graduates. Students are aware of this when they start the programme. However, the students are eager to get such a teaching qualification. This is needed as acknowledgement for the study they completed. The panel agrees with the management that this qualification would add a lot of value to the diploma and hopes it will be possible for ITESS to award this qualification to teach in international schools in the Netherlands in due time.

The panel thinks that the combination of Teaching Practice and research in the final phase of the programme suits the character of the programme. The panel reviewed the final works of 23 graduates in total. This selection represented three of the five specialisations (Social Studies: Geography and Science were not represented), since, at the time of the site visit, not all specialisations had delivered graduates yet. The panel concluded that six out of 23 theses did not sufficiently demonstrate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programme, regarding various aspects of the research: the focus of research questions, the depth of critical reflection on literature and methods and the scientific rigor. In many theses it was not clear to the panel how the literature research had an impact on or was connected to (the focus of) the research question and sub-questions. Furthermore, in some of these theses, the RBED cycle was not visible although two assessment criteria refer to this. According to the panel, the quality of the theses is at least partially related to the quality and transparency of the assessment form. The assessment criteria and attainment level descriptors in this form can be formulated in a more specific and concrete manner in order to leave less room for interpretation and to make the distinction between the various attainment level descriptors of a criterion more clear. Furthermore, the panel points out that the fact that several criteria address more than one aspect (e.g. the second assessment criterion that focuses on both theoretical framework and research methodology) bears the risk of unintentional compensation within a criterion.

Furthermore, the descriptors for sufficient grades (A-E) can be formulated more at the bachelor's level of the intended learning outcomes, notably for the description of the attainment level for E (sufficient). In various criteria (such as criteria for research questions, quality of resources, research methodology, description of data, validity and reliability and reference and citation), these are now rather formulated as a "fail" than a "pass".

Also, the cut-off (the boundary between insufficient and sufficient) can be described more clearly, and the form can enhance transparency on how assessors translate the different scores A-F into the final grade. Therefore, the panel urges the programme to improve the transparency, validity and reliability of the thesis assessment and the assessment procedure, for example by setting up a paper trail.

All TP portfolios the panel studied were considered to be up to standard. The panel was very positive about the amount of feedback which is

given on the TP forms and about the quality of the TP.

The panel is positive about the fact that ITESS intends to set up an alumni network and get alumni involved in a systematic way.

Regarding the panel's findings on the theses and given the fact that the intended learning outcomes are not fully covered and evidenced in the Teaching Practice, the panel establishes that the programme **partially meets this standard.**

## Attachments



## Attachment 1 Assessment panel

drs. G.M. (Mariëlle) Klerks, chair

Mariëlle Klerks is an NVAO-trained chair at AeQui and also active as an educational advisor

drs. M. (Marieke) Folkers

Marieke Folkers is Head of School of the International School Utrecht

drs. F.A.N. (Frans) Kranenburg

Frans Kranenburg is lecturer/ teacher trainer at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, institutional trainer at (Esprit) schools in the Amsterdam region and chair of the TTO-audits and global citizenship expert at Nuffic

J.J.H. (Joris) Hahn BSc, student-member

Masters' student Spatial Economics at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Before this studied Business Economics at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

The panel was supported by drs. T. (Tineke) Kleene, external secretary certified by NVAO and independent educational consultant in higher education in the Netherlands.

## Attachment 2 Program of the assessment

April 12 and 13, 2023

Arrival & Preparation Panel – Meppel April 11 <sup>th</sup>	
Hotel te Meppel	
17.00 - 17.15	Arrival panel Check in hotel
17.15 – 19.15	Panel meeting
As from 19.15	Diner

Day 1 – NHL Stenden Meppel, April 12 <sup>th</sup>	
9.15	Welcome panel
9.30 – 10.00	Preparation meeting panel & documents
10.00 – 10.30	Presentation ITE
10.30 – 11.30	Panelmeeting Management ITE
11.30 – 11.45	Break
11.45 – 12.30	Presentation ITEPS by students & lecturers
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch break
13.30 – 14.30	Panelmeeting ITEPS lecturers, incl graduation examiners
14.30 – 14.45	Break
14.30 – 14.35	<i>Meeting chairperson &amp; contactperson</i>
14.45 – 15.45	Panelmeeting ITEPS students
15.45 – 16.00	Break
16.00 – 17.00	Panel meeting workfield and alumni ITE
17.00 – 17.15	Break
17.15	<i>Q&amp;A possibility panel with e.g. management, lecturers</i>

Eind dag 1 reizen op eigen gelegenheid naar Groningen  
Hotel van der Valk Groningen/Hoogkerk

Day 2 – NHL Stenden Groningen, April 13 <sup>th</sup>	
8.15	Welcome panel
8.30 – 9.00	Preparation meeting panel & documents
9.00 – 9.15	Presentation ITESS by students
9.15 – 10.00	Panel meeting ITESS lecturers – general course
10.00 – 10.15	Break
10.00 – 10.05	<i>Meeting chairperson &amp; contactperson</i>
10.15 – 11.00	Panel meeting ITESS lecturers – specialisations
11.00 - 11.15	Break
11.15 – 12.30	Student fair Panel talks with students
12.30 – 13.15	Lunch & Panelmeeting
13.15 – 14.15	Panelmeeting ITE examination Board and Test committee
14.15 – 16.00	Panel reflection
16.00 – 16.30	Feedback panel ITEPS and ITESS
16.30 – 16.45	Break
16.45 – 17.45	Development Interview

22 September 2023

<b>Digital meeting</b>	
15.00 – 15.30	Panel meeting assessors ITESS
16.00	Feedback by the chair of the panel

## Attachment 3 Documents

1. Course Document ITESS
2. Strategic plan 2019-2024
3. Strategic Education Policy 2019-2024
4. Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER)
5. Teaching Practice Guide
6. Curriculum Schedule (Leerplanschema) ITESS (Appendix 4 TER)
7. Overview ITESS staff
8. Teaching Practice Guide
9. Course Catalogues
10. Curriculum Outlines 2022-2023/ 2023-2024
11. ITESS policy extra courses 2022-2023
12. Toetsbeleid TLO
13. Grade descriptors
14. Calculation of average grades
15. Course Catalogues general courses year 4
16. ITE magazine Vo 1 and Vo 2
17. Bachelor Thesis Guide
18. 23 graduation works of students who graduated in 2022 and 2023