



NVAO

VERTROUWEN IN KWALITEIT

BESLUIT TOETS NIEUWE OPLEIDING

De NVAO besluit dat de opleiding

BACHELOR (OF ARTS/ OF SCIENCE) IN URBAN SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES

(ACADEMISCH GERICHTE BACHELOR)

aangeboden door

Universiteit Antwerpen in samenwerking met de Young Universities for
the Future of Europe (YUFE) Alliance partners¹

op internationaal aanvaarde wijze de potentiële kwaliteit biedt
om de graad van bachelor aan te bieden.

Het betreft een opleiding van 180 studiepunten aangeboden te Antwerpen; Rijeka; Toruń; Joensuu;
Colchester; Getafe (Madrid); Heerlen/Maastricht; Parijs; Bremen; Nicosia.

De NVAO komt tot dit besluit op basis van het oordeel positief van de commissie van deskundigen ingesteld
door de NVAO. Het beoordelingsrapport opgesteld door deze commissie maakt integraal deel uit van dit
besluit.

De NVAO neemt dit besluit met toepassing van de Codex Hoger Onderwijs, in het bijzonder artikel II.124/3,
en op basis van het door de commissie van deskundigen gevoerde onderzoek, in overeenstemming met de
European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, zoals opgenomen in het
beoordelingsrapport.

Den Haag, 2 april 2025

Wouter Duyck, vicevoorzitter

¹ University of Rijeka (Kroatië), Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Polen), University of Eastern Finland (Finland), University of Essex (Verenigd Koninkrijk), Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (Spanje), Maastricht University (Nederland), Sorbonne Nouvelle University (Frankrijk), University of Bremen (Duitsland) & University of Cyprus (Cyprus)



INITIAL ACCREDITATION DECISION

NVAO decides that the
**BACHELOR (OF ARTS/ OF SCIENCE)
IN URBAN SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES**

(ACADEMICALLY ORIENTED BACHELOR)

offered in the framework of

**University of Antwerp in collaboration with the Young Universities for
the Future of Europe (YUFE) Alliance partners²**

offers potential quality in an internationally accepted manner to award the bachelor's degree.

This concerns a study programme of 180 ECTS offered on locations in Antwerp; Rijeka; Toruń; Joensuu; Colchester; Getafe (Madrid); Heerlen/Maastricht; Paris; Bremen; Nicosia.

NVAO bases this decision on the positive assessment of the programme by the panel of experts convened by NVAO. The assessment report drawn up by this panel forms an integral part of this decision.

NVAO takes this decision in application of the Higher Education Codex, in particular the article 124/3, and on the basis of the investigation, in accordance with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, conducted by the panel of experts, as included in the assessment report.

The Hague, 2 April 2025

Wouter Duyck, vicechair

² University of Rijeka (Croatia), Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland), University of Eastern Finland (Finland), University of Essex (United Kingdom), Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (Spain), Maastricht University (the Netherlands), Sorbonne Nouvelle University (France), University of Bremen (Germany) & University of Cyprus (Cyprus)

Translated version; original version in Dutch prevails

BACHELOR OF ARTS/OF SCIENCE IN URBAN SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES

YOUNG UNIVERSITIES FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE (YUFE) ALLIANCE

MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY • NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ • UNIVERSIDAD CARLOS III DE MADRID •
UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP • UNIVERSITY OF BREMEN • UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS • UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND •
UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX • UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA • UNIVERSITY SORBONNE NOUVELLE

INITIAL ACCREDITATION • REPORT

FRAMEWORK FOR THE EUROPEAN APPROACH FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE OF JOINT PROGRAMMES

18 DECEMBER 2024



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1 Executive summary

The bachelor programme Urban Sustainability Studies is proposed as a joint, English taught programme by the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) Alliance, an alliance of ten universities and two non-academic partners. The self-assessment report, along with the extensive programme materials reviewed prior to the site visit and the conversations with dedicated stakeholders, has given the panel a comprehensive understanding of the programme. According to the panel, who based its assessment on the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, the Bachelor in Urban Sustainability Studies fulfils all standards.

The panel sees clear evidence that all university partners have been actively involved in the development of the joint bachelor programme and are very committed to its successful delivery. The Cooperation Agreement covers all essential aspects to set-up, govern and implement the Urban Sustainability Studies programme as a common effort between all participating universities.

The programme's learning outcomes span the spectrum of knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the multifaceted challenges of urban sustainability. The programme weaves together insights from fields ranging from social, natural and technical sciences as well as the humanities. The learning outcomes are grouped into building blocks of subject-specific competences, research skills, and transferable skills. Additionally, the programme has a strong commitment to the integration of generic skills in the curriculum. The panel thinks the intended learning outcomes are clearly formulated and easy to understand with a meaningful focus on learner autonomy. The panel sees evidence of careful thought and planning to ensure that students are able to make connections between disciplines and wants to stress that this will be critical to ensure that the intended learning outcomes relate to the disciplinary field of urban sustainability. The academic advisor plays a crucial role in ensuring that students make informed educational choices.

The curriculum of Urban Sustainability Studies is designed with a focus on integrating diverse academic disciplines and expertise from across the YUFE Alliance. The curriculum supports a progressive educational trajectory, starting in the first year with foundational knowledge, advancing through three YUFE Minors and elective courses, and culminating in a comprehensive bachelor dissertation research project. To enrich their learning experience and meet the programme's mobility requirement, students must choose at least two minors offered at different partner universities from the alliance, in addition to their starting university. The panel appreciates this blend of open curriculum design, multilateral mobility opportunities and challenge-based learning in multicultural teams.

Regarding the admissions procedures, the panel found these were adequate. It thinks it appropriate to organise non-binding interviews to ensure students are aware of the demands of the programme, such as the significant level of autonomy and the need to study abroad. This can however be a challenge to inclusivity and the panel encourages the programme therefore to maintain awareness of the potential for exclusion. As the panel met a very dedicated team that puts a lot of time and effort in setting up the student support services, it is confident this will be maintained. Students being well-informed on aspects such as finances, access to health care and support for accommodation is also very important for a successful student's journey in an open curriculum programme, as well as the intended creation of a sense of community.

The panel is convinced of the alliance's ability to deliver the programme at the right level and with the required quality due to the joint resources in the alliance, the competent staff involved in teaching and supporting the programme, the clearly designed responsibilities at central and local levels and the improvement-driven quality assurance system. The panel nevertheless has some recommendations to further enhance the programme. These suggestions comprise clarification of the degree awarding process towards a Bachelor

of Science or a Bachelor of Arts, increasing the overview on how achievement of all intended learning outcomes is ensured, maintaining awareness in future elements of the programme that the intended learning outcomes continue to relate to the disciplinary fields of urban sustainability, further specification of the role of the academic advisor and clarification of the involvement of students in the quality assurance process.

Regardless of these recommendations, the panel confirms it is very positive and enthusiastic about the quality and added value of the joint bachelor programme Urban Sustainability Studies.

The Hague, 18 December 2024

On behalf of the expert panel convened to assess the Bachelor in Urban Sustainability Studies,

Dr. Liz Marr
(panel chair)

Drs. P.R. Molegraaf
(secretary)

2 Assessment – Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

2.1 Eligibility

The panel assesses the Eligibility standard as compliant.

2.1.1 Status

The institutions that offer a joint programme should be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree(s) should ensure that the degree(s) belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based.

The bachelor programme Urban Sustainability Studies is conceived within the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) Alliance. YUFE is a European University Alliance of ten universities and two non-academic partners. The ten universities cooperating within the European alliance are all established and officially recognised universities, both in their respective countries and more broadly within the European (and international) field of higher education institutions.

The ambition of the YUFE Alliance is to offer an innovative and open bachelor programme that is designed to educate aspiring professionals equipped not just with domain-specific knowledge, but also to interlink subject disciplines and cultural perspectives. In doing so, it wants to respond to the need for interdisciplinary professionals in the field of urban sustainability. The foundational ideas for the bachelor programme were explored by all YUFE partners through the establishment in 2020 of the work package *YUFE Student Journey*. This package focused on offering free (physical, online, and blended) courses and activities to students from all partner universities. In 2023, the alliance started with the first YUFE Minors.

The joint bachelor programme is led by the University of Antwerp. Of the ten universities that jointly developed the Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Urban Sustainability Studies, seven act as degree awarding universities (University of Antwerp, University of Rijeka, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, University of Eastern Finland, University of Essex, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid and Maastricht University). The other three are so-called mobility partner universities (Sorbonne Nouvelle University, University of Bremen and University of Cyprus). Successful completion of the joint bachelor programme leads to a joint degree of all degree awarding partners, to the extent permitted by their national legislation. In the event that a partner university changes its role within the consortium from that of a mobility partner to a degree awarding partner, successful completion of the joint bachelor programme will also lead to a bachelor's degree equivalent of this partner university (article 1 and 21, Consortium Agreement). The Consortium Agreement specifies that partners can only change their role after the accreditation of the joint bachelor programme in compliance with the national and partner university regulations in each country.

During the site visit, the panel has spoken with delegates of the programme management, support staff and teachers and is impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of all participating institutions of the YUFE Alliance to set up this joint European bachelor programme based on shared learning and community engagement.

2.1.2 Joint design & delivery

The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme.

The governance structure of the bachelor programme ensures full partnership among all members in governance bodies, encompassing the already existing overall YUFE bodies. The programme's design integrates new and existing academic offerings from partner institutions into a unified structure. Partners contribute by delivering first-year courses (60 ECTS) and/or YUFE Minors (30 ECTS) alongside elective content (10 ECTS) tailored to support students' bachelor dissertation research projects (20 ECTS) in the final semester.

The organizational structure of the consortium shall comprise among others a Coordinating Committee, Programme Committee, Quality Assurance Board and a joint Examination Board. Other joint aspects are a mutually designed curriculum, agreed mobility periods, jointly developed learning outcomes, courses and minors, and a shared YUFE Virtual Campus. The programme also adheres to a joint Education and Examination Regulations (EER) and a collectively developed and shared Quality Assurance (QA) framework.

Based on the information in the self-evaluation report, the Consortium Agreement and the discussions during the site visit, the panel confirms that the programme is the result of intensive preparation and collaboration of the ten universities within the YUFE Alliance. The panel is positive about the phased approach, moving from initial engagement and community building to the development of a comprehensive bachelor programme. All partners are dedicated to make this bachelor programme a successful and joint effort.

2.1.3 Cooperation Agreement

The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement should in particular cover the following issues:

- *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme;*
- *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.);*
- *Admission and selection procedures for students;*
- *Mobility of students and teachers;*
- *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium.*

The panel has studied the Consortium Agreement which describes the principles of the bachelor programme Urban Sustainability Studies. The agreement and its annexes lay down the governance structure, financial arrangements and all necessary procedures determining the cooperation between the YUFE partners for the delivery of the joint bachelor programme.

The Consortium Agreement covers all relevant matters. It clearly specifies the organizational structure and different roles and tasks of the different committees and boards. The Coordinating Committee, Programme Committee and Examination Board all have representation of a member from each of the ten universities. The Coordinating and Programme Committee are also represented by a member of the Student Forum. The Consortium Agreement comprises annexes on the YUFE Central Office, the YUFE Executive Committee and Strategic Council and an annex on Conflict Resolution Mechanisms. An Education and Staff Implementation Agreement and Financial Implementation Agreement have also been drawn up.

The panel confirms that the Cooperation Agreement covers all essential aspects to set-up, govern and implement the joint bachelor programme. The panel concludes that the programme is fully compliant with the different criteria in the Eligibility Standard.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

The panel assesses the Learning Outcomes standard as compliant.

2.2.1 Level

The intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s).

The thirteen intended learning outcomes (ILO) of the bachelor programme Urban Sustainability Studies are aligned with the core qualifications of bachelor graduates as defined in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), level 6 (see annex 2).

The self-evaluation report demonstrates that alignment with the FQ-EHEA is ensured by using the Dublin descriptors as a starting point. As a result, the learning outcomes also align with the applicable national qualifications frameworks. As part of the accreditation process in Flanders, a slightly broader level of 'domain-specific learning outcomes' (DLR) was developed as an umbrella for the programme's intended learning outcomes. Adhering to Flemish legislation, these DLR were reviewed by a team of independent international experts in urban sustainability, consisting of both academics and professionals from the field. The validation of the DLR also validates the correct level of qualification and guarantees the relevance of the learning outcomes to the professional and academic field.

On top of this the YUFE Alliance ensured alignment of the learning outcomes with Bloom's taxonomy to ensure a structured progression of student competencies across the curriculum. This alignment spans from foundational levels in the introductory year, through intermediate levels in the YUFE Minors, to the achievement of the programme's overall intended learning outcomes in the final year.

The panel has seen sufficient evidence that the learning outcomes are defined at the right level.

2.2.2 Disciplinary field

The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).

The programme's learning outcomes are presented in the self-evaluation report as a design to span the spectrum of knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the multifaceted challenges of urban sustainability. The programme weaves together insights from fields ranging from social (economics, business, urbanism, sociology etc.), natural (environmental engineering, biology, ecology) and technical (civil engineering, mechanical engineering, artificial intelligence) sciences as well as the humanities. The learning outcomes are grouped into building blocks of subject-specific competences (ILO 1 to 5), research skills (ILO 6 to 9), and transferable skills (ILO 10-13). The subject-specific skills cover content related to supportive sciences, sustainability, urban studies and urban sustainability.

Additionally, the programme has a strong commitment to the integration of generic skills in the curriculum. The ambition is to equip students with comprehensive disciplinary knowledge, interdisciplinary application skills, critical thinking, and adaptability in international and intercultural contexts in order to support key ESG-goals. With this approach the YUFE Alliance wants to ensure students are well-prepared to meaningfully contribute to society, fulfilling the programme's commitment to employability, active citizenship, and personal development.

During the site visit the panel spent some time on understanding the intended learning outcomes in relation to the profile of the programme and the choices the programme made. The panel is positive about the programme's open curriculum and interdisciplinary approach which is suitable for the subject area. The formulated learning outcomes are broad but comprise of the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies in the field of urban sustainability. The input of international experts in urban sustainability to the development of DLRs and the alignment of these with the ILOs is further evidence for the panel of good practice in interdisciplinary curriculum development.

The panel sees evidence of careful thought and planning to ensure students are able to make connections between disciplines and develop and draw on necessary skills from each of the building blocks. As the panel thinks this will be critical to ensure the intended learning outcomes relate to the transdisciplinary field of urban sustainability, it wants to stress the importance of this process. It therefore encourages the Programme Committee to maintain awareness in future elements of the programme that the learning outcomes continue to relate to the disciplinary fields of urban sustainability. Additionally, the panel thinks the programme's introductory first year, which is designed to introduce students to the concept of urban sustainability and to prepare them for actively shaping their own learning process in the second and third year, forms a strong disciplinary base and should continue to do so. Nevertheless, it is wise to maintain a sufficient disciplinary level of substantive knowledge and skills throughout the entire bachelor's period.

Furthermore, the panel considers the learning outcomes to be a well thought through concept of teaching and combining different skill sets to ensure a well-rounded education, with a meaningful focus on learner autonomy.

2.2.3 Achievement

The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

The panel has discussed the intended learning outcomes during the site visit. Given the variety of personalized learning paths, the panel focussed in the dialogue on how programme and coordinating committees can be assured all learning outcomes will be covered in practice.

The exchange during the site visit was instructive and useful to a better understanding of the systems and processes that are in place to ensure all learning outcomes are achieved. The first year, that is delivered at the seven degree awarding partners, ensures that all students achieve equivalent learning outcomes at the end of this introductory year (see annex 2). During the programme's delivery, the QA Board is responsible for monitoring and enhancing quality of the programme. It will oversee the alignment of the first year ILOs with the academic content provided across institutions.

After the first year, students select three minors from the YUFE Minor portfolio. All minor frameworks share a core structure and overarching QA principles. Similar to Year 1, minor-specific ILOs have been formulated. While individual courses within the minors are primarily managed by the institution delivering them, designated minor coordinators will maintain the coherence and consistency of the minors themselves. They ensure that each minor aligns with the programme, enabling students to achieve the minor-specific ILOs. Alignment of the minor-level outcomes with the academic offerings of the various minors will also be monitored by the QA Board.

In the final semester, students primarily work at their starting university on their bachelor dissertation research project as the final proof of capability in achieving the programme's ILOs. The QA Board will have a key role in ensuring that students' learning experience is comparable and leads to the programme-level ILOs. The Examination Board confirms that the bachelor students meet the requirements for study progression and completion of the joint

bachelor programme at set points during the programme, which is defined in the Education and Examination Regulations.

The panel concludes that the structure of the programme is effectively designed to support the student in the achievement of programme ILOs.

2.2.4 Regulated Professions

If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account.

Not applicable.

2.3 Study Programme

The panel assesses the Study Programme standard as compliant.

2.3.1 Curriculum

The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The self-evaluation report and the additional documents give the panel an overview of the curriculum, its structure and its content. The programme will be taught in English. The panel agrees with the language policy as stated in the Consortium Agreement and considers this a logical choice, given the many international partners involved in the consortium.

The curriculum of Urban Sustainability Studies is designed with a focus on integrating diverse academic disciplines and expertise from across the YUFE Alliance. Central to this integration is the ILO framework. The curriculum supports a progressive educational trajectory, starting with foundational knowledge, advancing through three YUFE Minors and elective courses, and culminating in a comprehensive bachelor dissertation research project.

In addition to the content-related programme, mobility is central to the programme. To enrich their learning experience and meet the programme's mobility requirement, students must choose at least two minors offered at different partner universities from the alliance. This is in addition to their starting university. The panel appreciates the blend of open curriculum design, multilateral mobility opportunities and challenge-based learning in multicultural teams. In addition to this, the panel encourages the programme to think about the possibility to blend language courses into the curriculum, as they are now foreseen as extracurricular except for the 10 ECTS in the last semester.

The panel confirms that the curriculum structure with the building blocks and the content of the programme will allow students to reach the intended learning outcomes. The preliminary course list, which maps all courses against the programme ILOs, ensures that each component of the curriculum not only delivers specific knowledge and skills but also contributes to the cohesive educational journey. The panel thinks the journey through the programme structure is clearly described and presents a logical route from introductory level, through minor options to the final dissertation semester. The two collaboratively developed first year courses are useful for the students but also for the functioning of the programme.

The panel wants to stress that, due to the openness of the curriculum and the large volume of curriculum available, care needs to be taken to ensure minimal overlap and avoid conceptual gaps. From the conversations the panel had during the site visit, the panel is confident the bachelor programme is aware of this and trusts everything that is needed to monitor this, is accomplished when the programme starts: the Virtual Campus, clear and distinctive roles of

the advisors and coordinators, and up to date and accurate information for students.

The panel thinks the already available student-trajectory examples can be a very helpful tool for students to determine their learning pathway and be aware of study possibilities. These can also be helpful to make students aware of career prospects and masters opportunities. As access to certain masters is directly given by some minors, it is thus crucial to inform students about their masters opportunities from the very beginning.

2.3.2 Credits

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.

All partners adhere to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The curriculum spans six semesters and 180 ECTS. The total of ECTS per course is determined by clear learning outcomes and their associated workload. Students will be informed on credits assigned to the programme, courses and minors via the YUFE website and the Virtual Campus.

The University of Essex applies the ECTS indirectly, in which the alignment with the QF-EHEA and EQF is detailed in the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of United Kingdom Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ). At the University of Essex, as well as broadly in the UK, two UK credits are equivalent to one ECTS credit. Consequently, the degree in Urban Sustainability Studies at the University of Essex comprises a total of 360 UK credits, equivalent to 180 ECTS.

2.3.3 Workload

A joint bachelor programme will typically amount to a total student workload of 180-240 ECTS-credits; a joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60 ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA); for joint doctorates there is no credit range specified. The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored.

The programme has a study load of 180 ECTS and is a three-year bachelor programme. The number of credits awarded is in line with the ILOs and workload accomplished for each course.

The panel understands from the site visit and the self-evaluation that the programme recognises the challenges of an internationally organised programme on the workload for students. The required mobility with at least two exchange experiences abroad - and possibly extracurricular language courses - can result in extra workload. Apart from that the different cultural views on student workload, variations in students' entrance levels and English proficiency are also factors that can impact workload.

Monitoring the study load through surveys, interviews or focus groups is part of the programme's QA process. In addition, data analytics serve as the basis for assessing study effectiveness. Students' progress will be tracked from enrolment through all courses and minors up to graduation. At the end of 2022-2023, a survey and a focus group were organised to gather the experiences of students and staff involved in the first YUFE test minors.

The panel is convinced that the programme will carefully measure and monitor the workload for students, specifically during the first years of the programme.

2.4 Admission and Recognition

The panel assesses the Admission and Recognition standard as compliant.

2.4.1 Admission

The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.

Admission procedures and requirements are described in the Education and Examination Regulations. The entry requirements and admission criteria are the same for all students. These will be published on the YUFE website and the YUFE Virtual Campus. The general admission requirements for a bachelor's programme apply to enrol in the programme. In addition, students must prove their English language competence on level B2. Applicants aiming to start at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid must engage in an additional pre-admission process to meet local regulatory requirements.

The admissions process will also include a non-binding interview. This serves as an important step for the programme to ensure that prospective students are well-informed and that there is a good match between their aspirations and the programme's features, given the programme's open curriculum and mobility requirements. The panel found the admission requirements appropriate and clearly described. The non-binding interviews are a useful tool to ensure that students are aware of the demands of the programme, such as the significant level of autonomy and the need to study abroad. However, the panel does think this can be a challenge to inclusivity and encourages the programme to maintain awareness of the potential for exclusion. To also attract less adventurous students, a future possibility might be to communicate proven popular tracks, with corresponding master options.

Applicants begin their admission process via the YUFE Virtual Campus. They are asked there to indicate their preferred starting university from among the degree awarding YUFE partners. Expected students range between 20 to 30 per university but the number of enrolments is not limited to a maximum in Academic Year 2025-2026. The programme management anticipates that the number of applicants will not surpass the capacities of the participating institutions, based on historical data from each partner's experiences with launching new programmes. From the discussions during the site visit, the panel is confident the partners will monitor the process adequately and discuss ways of managing potential over-enrolment.

2.4.2 Recognition

Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

Applicants to the programme can use Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to demonstrate they meet admission requirements if they do not possess specific documentation. They can also use RPL to apply for exemption from a course, given previous study or work experience.

The programme is in the process of developing a uniform YUFE policy for RPL. The aim is to develop a more centralised and standardised approach across the consortium with focus on finding a model that is aligned with national regulations. During the interim period, the programme will rely on existing local procedures at each partner institution. This strategy will allow the programme to handle RPL cases during the start-up phase, ensuring that individual circumstances are considered fairly and transparently within current regulatory frameworks.

The panel has no doubts the programme has sufficient procedures in place to grant recognition of prior learning or qualifications. The participating universities are well

experienced in this and bound to the Lisbon Recognition Convention. As this is work in progress, the panel encourages the partners to share good practices in this area.

2.5 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The panel assesses the Learning, Teaching and Assessment standard as compliant.

2.5.1 Learning and teaching

The programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the learning and teaching approaches applied should be adequate to achieve those. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.

The Bachelor in Urban Sustainability Studies is set up in building blocks, see annex 2, to include a balance of academic (comprising content-focused and skill-based courses), vocational (through challenge courses) and experiential (through mobility opportunities) learning elements. The first year is a mix of new courses and adjusted existing offerings to align with the programme's ILOs for Year 1. In the second and third year, each minor includes a challenge course worth 6 to 8 ECTS, which plays an important role in the pedagogical approach of the programme. In these courses, students work in small teams to address real-world societal challenges relevant to the region of the host university. This hands-on learning method requires immediate application of theoretical knowledge and also acts as a practical assessment tool to ensure the achievement of the minor's learning outcomes. The sixth and final semester of the programme is dedicated to the bachelor dissertation research project, which involves 20 ECTS of challenge-based academic research. This project aligns with the integrative approach of the earlier challenge courses in the minors.

The panel has studied the programme outlines in detail and finds the philosophy towards learning very clear. With the open curricula, with great flexibility in educational pathways, the programme aims to foster an interdisciplinary and intercultural learning experience. The panel establishes that the didactical approach can be described in more detail, other than that the challenge approach is an essential part of the programme. The panel does find these challenge courses a strong feature and very suitable for this programme. They allow students to work with a broad range of stakeholders and get a better career prospect. During the site visit the panel has spoken with some very enthusiastic professional stakeholders who highly valued the cooperation with students within the project as well as the usability of the outcomes of it. The panel encourages the programme to keep actively involving local stakeholders as it also helps with career development prospects being built in in the curriculum.

The panel is of the opinion that with the open curriculum approach and the great variety of possible individual pathways, academic advising plays a crucial role in ensuring students make informed educational choices. As stated in the Education and Examination Regulations, the academic advisor guides students in tailoring their curriculum and selecting minors. This role commences during the application stage and continues throughout the entire programme of study.

From the documents and discussions during the site visit, the panel is convinced that the programme team is aware of its importance and is taking the necessary steps to make sure the role of academic advising is enhanced and refined before the start of the programme. This is especially important because the panel heard different interpretations and views on the role of the academic advisor during the conversations, as is also being specific about the advisor role's boundaries so this is clear for (upcoming) students and staff.

The panel is positive about the foreseen training programme for the academic advisors, with physical meetings and workshops in June 2025, and stresses the importance of continuous training and sharing of experiences during the start-up and after. Even more so because of the current differences in experience with the role of academic advisor between the partners.

The panel discussed the possibility of offering virtual mobility, this being more than signing in on online courses. According to the panel, this could be a valuable, inclusive and sustainable addition to the physical mobile experience, which is highly valued by students. If the programme team does seriously consider this, it would require careful thought and be something for the longer term.

2.5.2 Assessment of students

The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They should be applied consistently among partner institutions.

From the documentation studied, the panel sees that the framework of assessment within the Urban Sustainability Studies programme is rooted in the principles of constructive alignment, in which evaluations of student performance are reflective of the programme's ILOs. Intended learning outcomes are achieved via a set of assessment methods including written and oral examinations, papers, presentations and assignments. Comprehensive mapping has been carried out across the programme's three phases (the introductory year, the YUFE Minors, and the final semester focused on dissertation research) and has been uniformly applied across all partner institutions. Within this, the project-based challenge courses are designed to integrate knowledge and skills from the minor, the introductory year and previously taken minors. By doing so, they form an overarching continuous assessment. The assessment of the dissertation is conducted with multiple assessors from different partners to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the student's mastery of the ILOs. The rubrics used for the dissertation assessment, are the same as for the challenge courses, albeit adapted for the broader scope of the dissertation.

The YUFE Examination Board oversees the evaluation of methods, ensuring that all assessments, from course examinations to the evaluation of the bachelor dissertation research project, are conducted fairly and transparently according to the stipulated guidelines. Every partner university is represented by one member in the Examination Board. In addition to this safeguarding by the YUFE Examination Board, each course or educational unit is subject to the partner's local Education and Examination Regulations, which includes specific rules for examination scheduling, attempt frequency, and grading practices. To maintain consistency across the consortium, grades awarded by partners are converted using established YUFE conversion tables, which are openly shared and regularly reviewed for accuracy and fairness.

From the conversations during the site visit, the panel understands that feedback is to be an integrated part of all courses. The panel thinks this an important feature and advises the programme to make sure this is shaped consistently throughout the curriculum. The panel finds the challenge approach to project assessment clearly articulated and the final dissertation assessment well thought out and appropriate. The integrative approach of the project-based courses establishes a valuable form of continuous assessment.

The panel finds that the Examination Regulations are developed under existing approved and accredited institutions and sees the YUFE Examination Board is in place and reviewed annually. From the discussions during the site visit the panel learns that teaching staff already organises online meetings to calibrate on substantive topics such as statistics to align these and also the outcomes of specific course. The panel considers this to be very valuable and an important aspect of the QA of the assessments.

2.6 Student Support

The panel assesses the Student Support standard as compliant.

The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.

Student support services within the programme are both institution-specific and programme-wide. The panel is positive about the online and on-site access students will get from the start of their study to the services of all participating universities. Partner universities provide a wide range of student support services, such as counselling (psychological, learning, career), extracurricular activities and leisure or learning support. YUFE students have the same rights and access as the other students to these local support services and resources. All universities have experience with welcoming international students. Local mobility coordinators and international student office staff will be available to support YUFE students in the second and third year of the bachelor programme.

In addition to the local support services, YUFE offers alliance-level services to support students and create a sense of community. Next to the important roles of the academic advisor and minor coordinator, the YUFE decentral admission officers (DAO) play an important role. These are staff members already appointed at each partner university to administratively support student enrolment, progression and completion, and to facilitate communication with students and between partner universities. The DAOs serve as the first point of contact for students: university and course registration will be organised by the DAO, as well as welcoming the students in the university and providing them with information about the university and the bachelor programme.

The Virtual Campus will be the central online information point. Course and minor registration and study progress information will be facilitated through the Virtual Campus. This joint website is already active for the other YUFE activities and in development to be fit and available for the bachelor programme. The version the panel has seen during the site visit looks comprehensive and very accessible for students. Programme details will also be available on the YUFE website and the local websites of YUFE universities.

The panel has spoken with the support staff during the site visit and sees that the challenges - such as the further development of the Virtual Campus, streamlining information processes - are well identified. The panel has met with a very dedicated team that puts a lot of time and effort in setting up the support services, due to this being a new and innovative initiative. The panel wants to stress that it is important in this process that students are well informed on aspects such as access to health care, support for accommodation and have sufficient time to arrange things and make well-informed decisions. Monitoring of how support is organised and students received on all locations is therefore an important part of QA.

The panel thinks the creation of a sense of community is critical for open programmes of this type. Although the programme shall foremost attract independent and adventurous students, they can easily get lost or feel lonely without a fixed group or curriculum. The panel therefore appreciates the efforts that will be made to create community-building early on. Tools for this are the Goin' app which enable students to engage with each other before the start of their exchange. Furthermore, a Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) and other welcoming activities

in the first year will enable students to meet and form connections. Additionally, there will be three YUFE Student Forum representatives available as buddies at all locations.

Student representatives will be included in the Coordinating and the Programme Committee of the bachelor programme. This ensures that students' experiences and concerns will be heard and can be addressed.

2.7 Resources

The panel assesses the Resources standard as compliant.

2.7.1 Staff

The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.

The staff of the Bachelor in Urban Sustainability Studies derives from all partner universities. Accordingly, many academics are involved in the programme, from a wide range of expertise. The spectrum of staff specializations is sufficiently broad to cover all the learning outcomes. A sample of CVs suggests all academic staff are appropriately qualified and there is a comprehensive network of staff. Teaching staff are involved in academic research, publish in international journals and participate in international conferences and research networks.

The Education and Staff Implementation Agreement states that each partner university agrees to provide staff who possess the appropriate (national) qualifications and credentials necessary to deliver and manage the joint bachelor programme effectively. This includes ensuring all staff meet the relevant educational, professional, English-language and accreditation requirements as per the national standards of the country where the programme is offered.

The panel is pleased to hear and read that there will be significant emphasis on comprehensive onboarding and training for staff (see also 2.5.1). Staff involved are already experienced in teaching but not all yet acquainted with the open curricula philosophy.

According to the panel the programme has defined clear centralised, overarching roles to help unify the diverse educational approaches across the consortium and enhance the overall programme integrity and alignment. The need of students for advice and guidance is recognized and met through a range of roles such as the academic advisor, minor coordinator, challenge coordinator and decentral admission officers.

To maintain or enhance coherence and effectiveness of the programme design a Programme Committee is composed of representatives of each partner university. A programme coordinator will be appointed at each partner university who will be tasked with collaborating with other members of the committee, aiming to update the curriculum and programme structure.

The programme team explained in the self-evaluation report that the University of Antwerp will act as coordinating university till March 2030. They will handle the administrative and organizational processes of the programme, facilitate quality assessment procedures and keep partners informed on relevant matters. They will also issue the degree documents (Joint Diploma and Diploma Supplement), upon recommendation of the Examination Board.

2.7.2 Facilities

The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

The programme draws in the facilities of partner institutions all approved under national validation and accreditation. All partner universities will provide the comprehensive educational infrastructure necessary to support on-site and online teaching and learning for students enrolled in the bachelor programme. Students will be registered at all YUFE universities to be able to access resources and services in the same manner as their local peers.

An overarching online platform, the Virtual Campus, is under further construction. This will act as a central hub for students and staff, facilitating course and minor enrolments, and providing a view of students' academic progress. It will show an outline of each student's path toward meeting the 180 ECTS requirement. The panel thinks the YUFE Virtual Campus has good aims, and it is essential in getting the programme to work well. It sees staff are working hard to ensure the platform is fully in place on time and wants to stress the importance of students being able to start properly.

The panel concludes that all participating partners will offer sufficient and adequate facilities to students. It is confident that all participating universities in the programme will offer students good access to the necessary facilities such as classrooms, libraries, computer access etcetera. The panel is positive about the engagement of all partner universities to support incoming students, with orientation activities but also with advice on practicalities as housing, insurances etcetera.

2.8 Transparency and Documentation

The panel assesses the Transparency and Documentation standard as compliant.

Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

Potential students will be informed about the bachelor programme through the YUFE website. This website is already available for the open YUFE programme and will be supplemented with detailed information on the bachelor programme structure and curriculum, as well as detailed admission criteria and application procedures. It will also include a section where all partner institutions will be represented. The website also informs students about the background of the YUFE Alliance and its aims.

The Consortium Agreement and its annexes include relevant and detailed information on the diverse aspects of the collaboration of the partners for the organisation of the joint bachelor programme. Other relevant documents, such as the Education and Examination Regulations, complete essential information for students. Detailed information on the programme structure, courses and students' individual trajectories, will be available in the Virtual Campus. Study schedules will be available in the partner universities' platforms.

To attract potential applicants and extend the programme's reach, YUFE actively uses social media channels and will participate in education fairs. These efforts are complemented by interactive webinars and open days, both virtual and on-site across partner universities. The panel wants to stress that for student's future employment prospects, it is important to also communicate about the programme to stakeholders.

As mentioned before, the panel is positive about the open curriculum philosophy but observes that this can also lead to uncertainties for students. An important aspect of this is

the transparency of the awarded degree after completion of the programme: Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science.

Successful completion of the Joint Bachelor Programme leads to a Joint Degree of all degree awarding partners, to the extent permitted by their national legislation. The Joint Degree is thus a bachelor's degree equivalent to licencjat (NCU), graduado/a (UC3M), yhteiskuntatieteiden kandidaatin tutkinto (UEF), baccalaureus (UNIRI) and Bachelor of Science or Arts (UM, UE, UAntwerp).

For the panel it is not yet clear how the Examination Board will decide which degree is awarded: a Bachelor of Science or a Bachelor of Arts. This depends on the individual study trajectory but also on the regulations in the country of the individual student's degree awarding university. The panel urges the programme to specify and clarify this decision-making process so that students will not be surprised or (dis)advantaged at the end of their study. As this is also relevant for future master requirements, students need this information in time to make well-informed decisions about minors and their mobility paths.

The clarification of which study path leads to what degree can also be combined with providing students with concrete illustrations of different learning paths so that it becomes easily understandable how the programme will ensure that all intended ILOs will be achieved. As already mentioned in 2.3.1, such typical student journeys can also help students understand how to make their choice and what to consider for their mobility paths. This might also help attract potential students who are more hesitant to map out their individual career path.

From the discussions of the panel with student representatives who already followed YUFE Minors, the panel invites the programme to give special attention to the study's affordability, in order to try to attract all talents. Given the mobility component and the related financial consequences, the panel recommends the bachelor to be transparent on the costs of the programme for interested candidates and the possibilities for funding. The panel is positive about the efforts of the alliance to examine possibilities to grant YUFE scholarships to students with limited financial possibilities in the future.

With starting a programme like this, which is new and innovative, a lot of communication is necessary to students and between coordinators. This is time consuming and needs good monitoring and evaluation. The panel has seen a dedicated team in assuring information and communication processes are in place. A lot of this is done via (online) meetings and the panel wants to stress the importance of keeping an overview and recording workflows so these are not bound to individuals and key persons.

2.9 Quality Assurance

The panel assesses the Quality Assurance standard as compliant.

The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.

The common quality assurance policy for the YUFE Alliance is based on the expertise of all partners. To ensure this, all partner universities completed a survey to identify shared principles and values in their QA systems. Common principles and values are applied in the YUFE QA Framework, the five key aspects of which are: trust and appreciative approach; subsidiarity, decentralised responsibility, shared ownership; continuous improvement, sharing of best practices; transparency; involvement of stakeholders.

The panel acknowledges the quality assurance system adopted for the alliance and this programme has been well thought through and developed. It complements the individual

members own processes without over burdening them. The YUFE QA of the bachelor programme follows a six-year cycle and consists of continuous monitoring, mid-term reviews and external peer review.

Continuous monitoring will take place via evaluations, analyses, and follow-up both on the YUFE overarching level and at partner institution level. Given the novelty of open programmes for many YUFE institutions, during the early stages of the programme's delivery, evaluations will occur more frequently. Next to the standard evaluation topics, a YUFE specific QA layer is added focusing on overall student and staff experiences related to learning, teaching, support, resources, ILOs, and mobility.

Regarding quality assurance, the Consortium Agreement defines roles and responsibilities at central level between the Strategic Council, YUFE's highest decision-making board, the Coordinating Committee, the Programme Committee and the Quality Assurance Board. The Quality Assurance Board monitors the quality of the joint bachelor programme and advises the Programme Committee on the Education and Examination Regulations. The organisation is currently developing a QA Dashboard to monitor performance and to evaluate and identify points of improvement and opportunities in the overall YUFE Alliance, with a special focus on the YUFE student journey and all student-related activities.

YUFE also has an External QA Advisory Board, acting as critical friends with an external perspective, who will provide advice and support to the YUFE QA Board on a range of quality assurance topics, without decision-making authority.

From the self-evaluation, the Consortium Agreement, the YUFE QA Framework and the site visit the panel concludes all partners are committed to actively contribute to the continuous enhancement of the programme, by sharing and collectively discussing the output from all quality assurance activities that take place within the programme.

Adequate mechanisms are in place to monitor the programme at local and central level. The involvement of students is referred to, but the panel thinks this can be further clarified and reported than is now the case. Specifically, the programme team should be clear to students how they will actively participate in monitoring (surveys, evaluations etc), and how this will be organized.

3 Final judgement

The panel is positive about the Bachelor in Urban Sustainability Studies that is proposed as a joint, English taught programme by the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) an alliance of ten universities and two non-academic partners. There is no doubt that the programme satisfies all standards of the framework for the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

The panel is impressed by the commitment and energy of the management and staff of all participating institutions to prepare the set-up and implementation of this innovative joint programme. The embeddedness of the programme within the YUFE Alliance offers strong guarantees for its sustainability and the enduring commitment of the partner universities.

The panel is positive about the open and interdisciplinary curriculum philosophy with personalised learning paths. The structure of the programme is effectively designed to support the students in the achievement of the programme's intended learning outcomes. The journey through the programme structure is clearly described and presents a logical route from introductory level, through minor options to the final dissertation semester. Also, the applied challenge approach is very suitable for the programme. The student panel was confident and enthusiastic about the programme: the openness, the possibility to connect with many different cultures and the travel opportunities. They considered it to have a good balance between individual choices and mandatory parts.

The panel determines that the joint forces in the alliance and the competent staff involved in teaching and supporting the programme will deliver this programme at the right level and with the required quality and support services.

Regarding the Quality Assurance system, the panel finds it positive the alliance makes use of the infrastructure and experience from the YUFE organisation already in existence and the partner's existing quality assurance systems. At local and at central level the quality assurance process is clearly defined, with well-designed responsibilities and a structure that is rooted in improvement-driven processes.

The panel has nevertheless formulated a number of recommendations that could help the YUFE Alliance to fine-tune their programme.

Regarding the awarding of the bachelor's degree, the panel urges the programme to specify the decision-making process that leads to a Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts and to communicate this clearly to (potential) students. It is important that students are well informed, to be able to make the right decisions at the right time about minors, masters and their mobility paths.

In coherence with this the panel sees added value in the clarification of which study path leads to what degree, to be combined with providing students with concrete illustrations of different learning paths. These student trajectories can increase the overview on how the programme will ensure that all intended ILOs will be achieved.

Furthermore, due to the open curriculum and the large volume of curriculum available, the panel wants to stress that it will be critical to ensure that the intended learning outcomes relate to the disciplinary field of urban sustainability and maintain awareness of this in future elements of the programme.

In addition to this, the panel wants to stress the crucial role of the academic advisor to guide students in tailoring their curriculum and selecting minors. Care needs to be taken to ensure minimal overlap and avoid conceptual gaps. The panel suggests to further specify the role of the academic advisor and be specific about the advisor's boundaries, so this is clear for

(upcoming) students and staff.

The last recommendation focusses on the involvement of students in the quality assurance process. Their presence is apparent, but the panel thinks this can be clarified and reported in more detail than is now the case.

Regardless of these recommendations, the panel confirms it is very positive and enthusiastic about the quality and expected added value that the bachelor programme will bring to the field of urban sustainability.

4 Assessment procedure

The assessment was carried out in line with NVAO's 'Framework for the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes – November 2020'.

The panel prepared itself for the assessment on the basis of the Self-Assessment Report and annexes submitted by the institutions when applying for initial accreditation. Prior to the preparatory meeting of the panel, each panel member formulated initial impressions and questions to be discussed. During the preparatory online meeting on 7 November 2024, the panel discussed all information received with the application and also prepared the dialogue with the programme (institutions). Impressions and questions were collected and merged into a well-ordered and handy document before the dialogue with the institution.

The on-site visit took place on 20 and 21 November 2024. The dialogue included discussions with representatives of all cooperating institutions. During the dialogue the panel investigated the context of the joint programme and the institutions and collected all required information to make a judgement on the quality of the joint programme.

During a closed meeting of the panel on 21 November 2024 the panel discussed all information obtained and translated it into a judgement per standard and for the programme as a whole. The panel took this conclusion in full independence.

All information obtained led to a draft assessment report that has been sent to all panel members. The feedback from the panel members has been processed. The assessment report adopted by the chairperson was submitted to NVAO on 18 December 2024.

5 Overview of the assessments

The panel presents their assessments per standard, as outlined in chapter 2.

Standard	Assessment
1 Eligibility	compliant
2 Learning Outcomes	compliant
3 Study Programme	compliant
4 Admission & Recognition	compliant
5 Learning, Teaching & Assessment	compliant
6 Student Support	compliant
7 Resources	compliant
8 Transparency & Documentation	compliant
9 Quality Assurance	compliant
Programme as a whole	positive

Annex 1: General information on the programme

Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Antwerp (UAntwerp) • Maastricht University (UM) • Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (NCU) • Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M) • University of Eastern Finland (UEF) • University of Essex (UE) • University of Rijeka (UNIRI) • University Sorbonne Nouvelle (SNU, mobility partner) • University of Bremen (UB, mobility partner) • University of Cyprus (UCY, mobility partner)
Address, institution website	https://www.yufe.eu/students/yufe-bach/
Qualification	Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science in Urban Sustainability Studies
(Additional) title	<p>A joint degree of all degree awarding partner universities which is a bachelor's degree equivalent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licencjat (NCU) • Graduado/a (UC3M) • Yhteiskuntatieteiden kandidaatin tutkinto (UEF) • Baccalaureus (UNIRI) • Bachelor of Science (UAntwerp) • Bachelor of Science or Arts (UM, UE)
(Parts of) field of study(s)	<p>ISCED fields of study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0388: Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving social sciences • 0588: Inter-disciplinary programmes and qualifications involving natural sciences, mathematics and statistics
Specialisations	/
Programme routes	/
Location where the programme is offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Antwerp, Prinsstraat 13, 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium • Maastricht University, Minderbroedersberg 4, 6200 MD Maastricht, The Netherlands • Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Ul. Jurija Gagarina 11, 87100 Toruń, Poland

- Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Calle Madrid 126, 28903 Getafe (Madrid), Spain
- University of Eastern Finland, Yliopistonranta 1E, 70211 Kuopio, Finland
- University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, CO4 3SQ Colchester, United Kingdom
- University of Rijeka, Trg Brace Mazuranica 10, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia
- University Sorbonne Nouvelle (mobility partner), Rue de la Sorbonne 17, 75005 Paris, France
- University of Bremen (mobility partner), Bibliothekstrasse 1, 28359 Bremen, Germany
- University of Cyprus (mobility partner), Avenue Panepistimiou 2109 Aglantzi, 1678 Nicosia, Cyprus

Teaching language	English
Study load (in credits)	180 ECTS

Annex 2: Programme-specific Learning Outcomes

Dublin Descriptor	ILOs Students are able to...	Phase	Building blocks
1. Knowledge and Understanding + 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding	1	... critically evaluate the crucial historical, social, political, and economic processes and structures that have shaped the world.	Supportive sciences
	1.1	<i>BA1</i> ...review and describe some of the historical, social, political, and economic processes and structures that have shaped the world.	
	1.2	<i>Minor</i> ...evaluate relevant historical, social, political, and economic processes and structures that relate to their chosen areas of study.	
	2	...generate and critically evaluate different strategies, measures, and approaches to sustainable development, and assess their likely impact on stakeholders, regions and diverse communities.	Sustainability
	2.1	<i>BA1</i> ...review different approaches to sustainable living and development, and identify their likely impact on stakeholders, regions, and diverse communities.	
	2.2	<i>Minor</i> ...undertake critical analysis of strategies, measures and approaches to sustainability that relate to their chosen area of study, demonstrating the likely impact on stakeholders, regions, and communities.	
	3	...demonstrate a grounded understanding of and examine the similarities, differences, and connections between cities and regions with different levels of urbanisation across Europe.	Subject-specific skills Urban Studies
	3.1	<i>BA1</i> ...understand and describe theories and approaches related to urbanism and urbanisation.	
	3.2	<i>Minor</i> ...analyse and compare different cities and regions with different levels of urbanisation across Europe and apply the chosen areas of study to theories and approaches related to urbanism and urbanisation.	
	4	...describe and critically evaluate key concepts, theories, critiques, and debates about the natural, social, economic, developmental, and political environments as they relate to urban sustainability.	Urban sustainability
	4.1	<i>BA1</i> ...review and describe the underlying concepts, principles, academic literature and contemporary issues associated with urban sustainability.	
	4.2	<i>Minor</i> ...describe and apply underlying concepts and principles according to their chosen areas of study.	
	5	...illustrate and critically evaluate the relationships between, and sustainability of environmental, social, and economic systems, at scales from local to global levels.	
	5.1	<i>BA1</i> ...review and describe environmental, social and economic systems, identifying relationships between them.	
	5.2	<i>Minor</i> ...analyse and critically appraise the environmental, social and economic systems that relate to their chosen areas of study.	

Dublin Descriptor	ILOs Students are able to...	Phase	Building blocks	
3. Making judgements	6	...identify, analyse, and solve problems, applying relevant research methodologies, theories, information technology, data analysis and interpretation, and techniques of writing to present findings and solutions.	Research skills	
	6.1	BA1		...evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems, analysing data, and drawing sound conclusions in accordance with basic theories and concepts.
	6.2	Minor		...identify, analyse and solve problems, applying relevant research methodologies, theories, information technology, data analysis and interpretation, and techniques of writing to present findings and solutions.
	7			...apply the methods and techniques studied to review, consolidate, extend, and apply knowledge and understanding and to initiate, carry out and evaluate projects and research, including logistics, risk assessment and ethical approval where appropriate.
		BA1		<i>Not applicable as the challenge teams and research tasks begin in Year 2. There may be some limited examples in Year 1, but these could be covered by the suggested first year ILO above.</i>
	7.2	Minor		...under supervision, design, conduct and evaluate sustainability projects and research, including logistics, risk assessment and ethical approval where appropriate.
	8			...consider academic norms and ways of thinking across different disciplines and subject areas, bringing them into play as appropriate.
4. Communication + 5. Learning skills	9	...demonstrate intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and exercise independence of mind and thought.	Transferable skills	
	10	...communicate ideas clearly, coherently, and respectfully, in a range of disciplines and to various stakeholders, in both written and oral form, using appropriate language and referencing.		
	11	...demonstrate the flexibility and adaptability to collaborate in international and intercultural contexts, learning from others, recognising, and respecting diverse perspectives and needs.		
	12	...work independently, meet deadlines, manage their own time and workload, and demonstrate initiative.		
	13	...reflect on their own learning, to seek and make use of feedback on their own performance, to recognise when further knowledge is required and to undertake the necessary research.		

Annex 3: Composition of the panel

The composition of the panel that assessed the quality of the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science in Urban Sustainability Studies was as follows:

Dr. Liz Marr (chair), Fellow of the Centre for Online and Distance Education, University of London and a freelance lifelong learning consultant; she was 'Pro-Vice-Chancellor: Students' at The Open University until April 2023, United Kingdom;

Prof. dr. Sanna-Ala Mantila, Assistant professor at the Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science (HELSUS) / Faculty of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland;

Prof. dr. Rob van der Bijl, Visiting Professor Mobility Planning at Ghent University, director/owner RVDB Urban Planning / Lightrail.nl & BeterBus & GoDutchCycling, The Netherlands;

Léa Le Bars (student), MSc. in Biology – major systems biology, Swiss student union (VSS-UNES-USU) - Responsable QA & accreditation, Switzerland.

The panel was assisted by:

- **Dagmar Provijn**, policy advisor NVAO Flanders, process coordinator;
- **Patricia Molegraaf**, secretary.

All panel members and the process coordinator/secretary have signed NVAO's Code of Ethics.

Annex 4: Schedule of the site visit

The site visit by the panel to the programme was conducted on 20 and 21 November 2024 as part of the external assessment procedure regarding the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science in Urban Sustainability Studies. The schedule was as follows:

Time	Meeting
Wednesday 20 November 2024	
13.00-14.00	Session 1: Programme Management
14.30-15.30	Session 2: Students
16.00-17.00	Session 3: Professional field
17.30-18.30	Session 4: Teaching staff
Thursday 21 November 2024	
9.00-10.00	Session 5: Support staff
10.30-11.30	Session 6: Programme Management
15.00-15.30	Closing dialogue: Peer review team and programme representatives

Annex 5: Documents reviewed

Before the site visit the programme management presented the following documents:

Information file

- Self-Assessment Report (Self-evaluation report (SER))

Annexes to the information file

- Glossary of terms
- Domain-specific learning outcomes (DLR) and alignment to programme ILOs
- Student trajectory examples
- Preliminary course list
- Bachelor Year 1 overview
- Indicative list of minors
- Minor description examples
- List of potential master programmes
- Education and Examination Regulations
- Academic advising overview
- YUFE Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity
- Grading scale
- Support services available at YUFE partner universities
- Staff online CVs
- QA Framework
- QA of the YUFE partner universities

Documents digitally made available leading up to the dialogue

- Consortium Agreement
 - Annex on Central Office
 - Annex on Executive Committee
 - Annex on Strategic Council
 - Annex of Conflict Resolution Mechanism
- Education and Staff Implementation Agreement
- Financial Implementation Agreement
- Presentation YUFE Campuses
- Video YUFE Alliance
- Administrative information partner universities
- Cover letter to SER

Annex 6: List of abbreviations

YUFE	Young Universities for the Future of Europe
ECTS	European Credit according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie)
ILO	Intended Learning Outcomes
FQ-EHEA	Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area
UA	University of Antwerp
UNIRI	University of Rijeka
NCU	Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
UEF	University of Eastern Finland
UE	University of Essex
UC3M	Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
UM	Maastricht University
SNU	Sorbonne Nouvelle University
UB	University of Bremen
UCY	University of Cyprus
DAO	Decentral admission officers

The panel report has been ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science in Urban Sustainability Studies of the YUFE Alliance according to the Framework for the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint programmes.

Colofon

BACHELOR OF ARTS/OF SCIENCE IN URBAN SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES
YUFE ALLIANCE (VL03T-24)

Initial accreditation • Panel report

18 December 2024

Composition: NVAO • Vlaanderen



Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders

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