MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between

the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, United Kingdom

and

The Dutch Department of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders

This Memorandum of Understanding is made between the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 1UB, United Kingdom (UK), hereafter referred to as QAA, and

The Dutch Department of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders, Parkstraat 83, 2514 JG The Hague, Netherlands, hereafter referred to as NVAO

QAA and NVAO are referred to collectively as 'both Parties'.

Whereas

QAA was established in 1997. Its purpose is to maintain academic standards and enhance the quality and global reputation of UK higher education. QAA does this by working with higher education providers, regulatory bodies and students, with the shared objective of supporting students to achieve positive educational outcomes. As a membership organisation, QAA represents and supports its university and college members, working in partnership with them to enhance the quality of their provision.

QAA works to secure academic standards in UK higher education wherever it is delivered across the globe and take a leading role in international developments in standards and quality, maintaining close relationships with many international quality assurance agencies, governments and higher education institutions.

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) is a quality assurance agency that safeguards the quality of higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders, in an expert and independent manner, and that fosters the quality culture pursued within the higher education institutions in the Netherlands and Flanders. It accredits existing and new programmes and assesses the quality assurance of higher education institutions.
NVAO thus monitors the quality of higher education. NVAO decisions serve as the basis for the recognition of degrees and titles, and wherever applicable, public funding of programmes. NVAO bases its assessments on the recommendations of recognised experts.

NVAO aims to help ensure that the quality of higher education in Flanders and the Netherlands is recognised as up to par from an international perspective, is acknowledged as socially relevant, and enjoys the trust of students, employers, and society. Within the tasks assigned to NVAO in the accreditation treaty between the Netherlands and Flanders, it aims to safeguard the quality of higher education, encourage improvements, and promote a quality culture.

NVAO was established in 2005 by Treaty between the Netherlands and Flanders. The responsibilities of NVAO have been set down in law.

The NVAO office is located in The Hague, the Netherlands. NVAO exchanges views and collaborates with stakeholders such as governments, universities, university colleges, and representatives of student and umbrella organisations in the Netherlands, Flanders, Europe, and beyond.

**QAA and NVAO**

Having comparable missions and institutional objectives in the assurance of quality in higher education, both parties wish to continue and deepen further their cooperation upon the terms contained herein.

**Key principles: QAA and NVAO**

Both Parties understand and mutually acknowledge their respective independent regulatory responsibilities as authorised by the separate national governments and/or as membership organisations recognised by national governments.

Both Parties are members of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), with comparable missions and organisational objectives in the assurance of quality in higher education, and now wish to establish a closer professional relationship as equal partners within a collaborative framework.

Both Parties envision benefits to be achieved through dialogue and cooperation, with benefits accruing to both agencies and to the institutions under their purview.

Both Parties understand the critical necessity of maintaining the confidentiality of information related to institutions, as well as to the agencies themselves as developed through accreditation activities.

Therefore, both Parties agree to the following framework for mutually supportive and collaborative engagement.

This Memorandum of Understanding is not exhaustive and is not intended to be legally binding between QAA and NVAO, except where specifically stated.
Areas of cooperation and collaboration

To these ends, QAA and NVAO, in accordance with the framework of British and Dutch laws and regulations, will pursue the following objectives for their mutual benefit:

(a) Mutual understanding
Work to enhance their understanding of each other's approach to assuring quality in higher education, the respective systems in place for quality assurance and enhancement in higher education, and the critical matters relating to quality and standards in higher education in both countries.

(b) Information exchange
Exchange information and offer professional advice about each other's activities and processes, about developments in their respective country's higher education systems, and about cross-border providers operating in both jurisdictions, having regard for the confidentiality of the information and relevant Data Protection legislation.

(c) Staff development
Where appropriate and possible, support the development of staff from the two agencies through activities such as staff exchange, observing each other's review processes, and provision of training.

(d) Use of each other's reviewers
Where appropriate and possible, draw on reviewers or other specialists from each other's system to strengthen the international dimension of each other's review processes.

(e) Recognition
Where appropriate and possible, in operations relating to quality assurance of higher education within one Party's jurisdiction but originating from the other Party's jurisdiction, have due regard to the relevant decisions and judgements of the other Party.

(f) Collaboration
Where appropriate and possible, collaborate in relation to mutually agreed projects and activities for the benefit of both Parties, including the quality enhancement of transnational education, the identification of fraudulent institutions, awarding bodies or accrediting agencies in the UK and in the Netherlands, supporting student mobility and undertaking research on quality assurance related issues.

More specifically, at the end of this agreement, QAA and NVAO aim to have achieved concrete collaboration in the following:

- Observing and sharing experiences from each other's approaches to quality assurance and enhancement of higher education, specifically around institutional evaluation and accreditation.
- Sharing experience, approaches to reviewing, and exploring opportunities around transnational education.
- Enhancing approaches to student engagement in matters of higher education quality.
- Research and developments related to micro-credentials.
- Sharing experiences and approaches to partnership working with international accreditation bodies and professional, statutory and/or regulatory bodies globally.
- Exploring opportunities for mutual staff development and learning initiatives.
- Exploring opportunities for joint working in matters of international accreditation of higher education institutions.
- QAA offering one free delegate place annually to a nominated NVAO representative to attend its Annual Conference.
If any additional costs will be incurred as a result of the collaboration, agreement to progress any allocation/reimbursement of costs should be agreed between QAA and NVAO before any work is undertaken.

Confidentiality
Both Parties agree to ensure that any information of a confidential nature (‘confidential information’) that is shared between Parties is safeguarded and remains confidential. Both Parties agree not to disclose confidential information received from the other without the written consent of the disclosing Party. Both Parties acknowledge that, in appropriate cases, they may reach a separate written agreement about the handling of particular confidential information or classes of confidential information. Both Parties agree that this paragraph is legally binding.

Retention of information
Information exchanged under this Memorandum of Understanding will be held and disposed of in accordance with QAA’s and NVAO’s retention schedules. For both QAA and NVAO, this will be up to five years.

Intellectual property rights
Any reports, notes, records, correspondence, documents, computer and other storage, such as disks or other documents and materials used in this Memorandum of Understanding, which has been generated or is already owned by either organisation, shall be, and shall remain, the property of that organisation.

The settlement
In the event of a dispute between both Parties, it shall be resolved by friendly consultations.

Duration of Memorandum
The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect from the date of its signature and shall continue for 3 years unless it is terminated by the giving of three months’ notice by either Party. It may be extended on mutual agreement of both parties.

Alteration of Memorandum
This Memorandum is signed by the parties in a spirit of amicable cooperation. The terms of the Memorandum may be altered with the written approval of both parties.

Management and liaison arrangements for the Memorandum
The Chief Executive Officer of QAA (at the time of signing, Ms Vicki Stott) and the Director of the Netherlands of NVAO (at the time of signing, Mr Luut Kroes) will have responsibility for managing the implementation of the terms of the Memorandum and taking stock of the terms of the Memorandum on an annual basis. This responsibility may be delegated to relevant members of the agencies’ staff in relation to particular areas of cooperation.

Resources
Unless alternative arrangements are specifically agreed to meet particular project requirements, each Party will normally cover their own costs of implementing the terms of the Memorandum. For particular areas of cooperation, donor funding may be sought from other sources.
Signed in The Hague, on 4 July 2022.

Signatures of the Parties:

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