

Hotel Management School Maastricht

Minutes

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Date of creation
24 05 2024

Last amendment
01 07 2024

Accreditation Panel Advice during Development Discussion

As part of the accreditation visit on 15 and 16 May 2024, HMSM asked the panel set up by Aequi for advice on 3 subjects defined and communicated in advance: Diversity & Inclusion; Training professionals for the hotel industry; and Staff work pressure. Below we outline how we presented the questions and the advice we received from the panel.

The discussion took place on 16 May, from 9 AM to 10.30 AM.

Participants:

Aequi panel:

- Bert Reul (chair)
- Lieke Sauer (industry expert - FHWien)
- Florian Aubke (Education expert)
- Lea Kleiber (Student BUAS)
- Linda van der Grijspaarde (secretary Aequi)

HMSM:

- Bas Vogelsangs (Directeur)
- Marja Windhorst (Head of Programme "Post Propedeuse")
- Josje van Dongen (Head of Programme "Tracks")
- Ankie Hoefnagels (Chair research center Global Minds at Work)
- Alf Keulen (Curriculum Board Member)
- Luc Houben (Head of Programme "Propedeuse")
- Clara Edouard (Accreditation PM)

1/ Diversity and Inclusion

Question: What is the panel's view on the feasibility of making the student population of HMSM more diverse? And what can we do to accommodate and integrate these students into our community?

Relevance to our institution: *Diversity and Inclusion are integral to our ethos and vision: firstly, because we teach hospitality management, and this starts with being open to diversity. It is embedded in our values, with the value 'connection' where we define ourselves as 'an international school where diversity and inclusivity are embraced', but also with the value of 'courage', where we value students who have shown the ability to overcome obstacles. This is in line with the aims of the "Position Paper" of the Vereniging Hogescholen: "Samen werken aan inclusieve hogescholen met oog voor diversiteit" (2022). As a University of Applied Science, we are indeed committed to serving both society and the economy, and to adapting to the changing needs of both. We recognise that diversity is a critical aspect of the hospitality industry, and since 'you cannot be what you cannot see' (Agirdag, 20221), we have made it a central part of our mission. **What we have done so far:** Initially, our focus was on internationalisation, as demonstrated in the Self Evaluation. However, we have broadened our scope of diversity in such a way that it reflects our current society better. Additionally, we strive to embed the SDG goals pertaining to diversity (SDG 10 and 5) in our curriculum. We are currently actively researching the issue of diversity of the student population. The research centre Global Minds at Work has conducted a study on why young people with a migrant background do not choose a hotel management course. Moreover, a study is conducted to redesign the profile(s) of the future hotel management student (Student Profiles); our vision of the students we would like to prepare for the hospitality industry of tomorrow. This initiative will in turn inform our recruitment and selection processes.*

Aequi panel's advice:

Overall, the advice underscores the importance of actively addressing barriers to diversity and inclusion within educational institutions and implementing targeted strategies to promote access and representation for all students.

- **Recruitment and admission**
 - Increase the visibility of diversity in marketing materials to attract a wider range of applicants.
 - Develop a recruitment strategy targeting diverse communities and locations where potential students are found.
 - Adapt the admission system to offer different routes for students from diverse schooling backgrounds, potentially through quotas or alternative admission pathways.
- **Accessibility:**
 - Identify barriers such as the cost of internships and mandatory first-year housing
 - Communicate about available financial assistance options.
 - Raise funds to assist with tuition fees for students from underprivileged backgrounds.
 - Think wider (for instance, increase the building's accessibility)
- **Curriculum Diversification:**

- Diversify the curriculum by developing an associate degree program to appeal to students from vocational backgrounds who may not be able to commit to a full four-year program.
- Develop micro-credentials as an entry point to the full program to accommodate students with varying time commitments and backgrounds.
- Don't create separate classes.
- **Integration**
 - Integrate diverse students into the community by changing the mindset and fostering inclusivity, rather than creating a separate community.
 - Utilize extracurricular activities to integrate students from diverse backgrounds into the community.
 - Try not to emphasize differences, but rather focus on common goals and experiences.

2/ Training professionals for the hotel industry:

Question: Our question to the panel: How can we enhance the percentage of students choosing the hotel management field upon graduation?

Relevance to our institution: *The primary mission of our school is to develop students into well-prepared managers for the hospitality industry, including hotels. To achieve this goal, our programme is closely aligned with industry objectives (as defined in the PEP) and with the input of our industry partners (IHAB and sounding boards). Despite our commitment and the general recognition that our students are prepared for a successful career in hotel management, over the years the percentage hasn't changed much (\pm 30-40%) and is similar to the other Dutch HBO hotel schools, despite all the efforts taken. In addition, nearly 30% of our students choose to pursue a Master's degree after graduation, often leading to a change of direction within the hospitality industry. This trend, exacerbated by the COVID crisis and the transferability of hotel management skills and knowledge, poses a challenge. While we recognise that this phenomenon goes beyond our school, our mission and the presence of 'hotel school' in our name require us to address the talent needs of the industry. **What we have done so far:** Our faculty includes numerous hotel professionals, ensuring that students benefit from first-hand industry experience. Our teaching methods are closely linked to real-world scenarios, starting with the first year, which is structured around work placements in our training hotel. The curriculum incorporates case studies, a problem-based approach, simulations and extensive interaction with industry. We offer a dedicated hotel management track with interesting minors, developed in partnership with our hotel sounding board. The programme includes a year-long placement with industry partners, site visits, real-world consulting projects, guest lectures and collaborations with prestigious hotel chains such as Marriott International, Hilton, IHG hotels & resorts, Accor, Zoku, CitizenM and many others. We also maintain a close relationship with successful alumni in leadership positions in the hotel industry.*

Aequi panel's advice:

Overall, the advice emphasizes the need for collaboration between educational institutions and the industry, focusing on practical experiences, shifting student mindsets, and adapting to evolving industry trends to address the challenge of students not entering the hotel industry post-graduation.

- **Working with industry partners**

- Leave it to the hotels to position themselves as an attractive employer and work on the issue of salaries / working conditions / cost reduction.
- Offer guest lectures on changing lifestyles and how this affects the way the industry works.
- Communicate about different career paths in the industry, e.g. during recruitment.
- **Adapt internship strategy**
- Recognise that internships are a deal breaker that often discourages students from pursuing a career in hospitality.
- Don't prioritise large companies for internships, promote innovative companies with a mission
- Don't promote internships based on location, but on function first
- Offer dual programme: 2.5 days in industry / 2.5 days in university (also linked to diversity issue): this will allow the companies to retain the students as future employees.

3. Staff work pressure :

Question: How can we improve and alleviate the work pressure on the staff? Would you have best practice examples to share from other higher education institutions?

Relevance to our institution: *There is a considerable level of work pressure among our staff, as shown in the staff survey of '22. This issue is not unique to our institution, but is a widespread problem in education, both in the Netherlands (see the survey at <https://zestor.nl/tijdsbesteding-hbo-docenten>) and abroad (see the UK report at <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/news/campaigns/teacher-wellbeing-survey.html>). However, our distinctive vision on education and the intensive, small-scale approach, underlines the importance of addressing this phenomenon. We want to enable our colleagues to give students extra personal attention, and to be attentive to their wellbeing and intellectual growth. However, we must proceed with caution. This commitment requires that our colleagues have the necessary time and develop coaching skills without adding an undue burden to their workload.*

What we have done so far: *We have taken several steps to address this issue. All tasks, including teaching, assessment, training, meetings and coaching, are allocated hours in individual work plans. These plans ("taakbelastingformulier") are set up before the start of each semester, after consultation between the educational manager and the individual team member, taking into account the organizational needs and personal preferences of the team member in question. Our approach includes offering a variety of tasks and development opportunities, and interested colleagues can participate in projects based on their expertise and interests. There are also opportunities for further training, which are counted as working hours (from short training courses in partner hotels to Masters or professional doctorates). Our efforts have shown positive results, with recent surveys indicating improvement: The results of the Medewerkeronderzoek 2022 for Hotel Management School Maastricht show an improvement in all workload-related topics compared to the previous period (2019). For example, 69% of the respondents declare that their workload is 'good', significantly more than the 49% in the previous survey and the current 53% of the benchmark higher education institutions. However, we recognise that workload remains a point*

of serious attention and therefore, we recently conducted a study executed by an external research agency to investigate further work-related causes of workload in our organisation. The results should be available by the time of the visit.

Aequi panel's advice :

Overall, the advice centres on understanding the diverse workload experiences of staff members, providing tailored support and resources to address specific challenges and promoting a healthy work-life balance.

- According to staff feedback during panel discussions, focus efforts on first few months
- Look at individual efficiency with the help of an external person, e.g. time management expert (for example: cut 25% of all meeting time)
- Establish the same clear division of time for everyone (for example: 10% professional development + 10% meeting + 40% teaching + 40% preparation)
- Focus on maintaining motivation after the first few years in the institution
- Work on work-life balance (e.g. late emails, use of work phones...)
- Manage students' expectations