

REPORT OF DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

Associate Degree Social Work & Bachelor Social Work

*HAN University of Applied Sciences
Nijmegen, October 16, 2024*

Introduction

Following the program visitation of the Associate Degree Social Work and the Bachelor Social Work (full-time, part-time, dual & international), the program organized a development discussion with the panel. In this conversation, various themes were presented to the panel and intercollegial advice was requested for the further development of the program. This report is published publicly in accordance with the NVAO framework.

Participants

Present from the programs and academy: management, quality policy officer, accreditation steering group, educationalists, curriculum developers, lecturers, students, program committees & examination board.

Present from the visitation panel: Raymond Kloppenburg (chair), Berendineke Steenbergen (secretary), Yvonne Beek-Donkervoort (student Ba part-time Social Work, Ede University of Applied Sciences), Karin d'Haeseleer (education manager Social Work, Artevelde University of Applied Sciences), Jacoline van der Slot (lecturer Ad and Ba Social Work, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen).

Set-up of the conversation

The conversation was conducted with an inner and outer circle. The inner circle consisted of all panel members and the accreditation steering group. The outer circle consisted of accreditation participants and other interested colleagues from different parts of the programs and the academy. In the inner circle, one chair was kept free so that members from the outer circle could join the inner discussion. In this way, everyone had the opportunity to ask questions or bring in expertise. Among others, students, the examination board and curriculum developers made use of this.

Central themes

The programs had the following themes and questions for the panel:

- Flexibilization: Flexibility is an important theme in higher education. What advice does the panel give us on this topic?
- Generic versus specific: a document was provided with the HAN Social Work standpoint in the national profile discussion. What do you think of the choices we have made so far and the position we have taken nationally? What do you recommend for the next steps? What opportunities and threats do you see?

Conclusion

Theme 1: Flexibilization

The panel notes three perspectives on flexibilization: what, how, and when.

- What: there are multiple learning routes leading to multiple types of outcomes. Ultimately, it is about what Social Work as a profession and education stands for. It is essential to safeguard a strong core. Social Work often struggles to explain itself, so holding on to the professional core is crucial.
- How: students should be able to switch, take different routes, and engage in lifelong learning. Look at the diversity of students and facilitate accordingly.
- When: students learn at home, at work, and in the program. Giving students time to slow down remains important.

Equal learning outcomes

The program is moving towards equal learning outcomes in all variants. This can be tense, because full-time students are beginners, while part-time students often already work and can demonstrate competences directly. Learning outcomes are level-bound and sometimes may come too early. Students must first have opportunities to practice.

The panel observes that the program is already quite flexible. Advice: formulate a vision of how far you want to go, justify your choices, and consider workload for lecturers. Don't try to do everything possible—avoid fragmentation. Keep continuous learning pathways in mind (from Ad to Master).

Continuous learning lines

Ad-to-Ba transition does not need to be immediate. Bridging modules can be used. Think more in terms of qualifications and learning outcomes rather than only assessments. Develop conversion or bridging programs, while maintaining the identity of the Ad.

Theme 2: Generic versus specific

The HAN standpoint (see Appendix 1) favors fewer profile credits and more room for a generic basis.

The panel agrees: broad foundations are valuable, specializations can come later. Don't be driven by short-term pressures. The work field wants well-qualified graduates—achieved by lifelong learning and collaboration, not just formal registration.

Future orientation

The program wants to be future-oriented, focusing more on collective and preventive interventions. The work field is not always there yet. Students may feel caught between different profile needs, but this also offers opportunities if students can make route choices.

The panel emphasizes that not everything can be learned within four years. Skills like resilience, flexibility, and soft skills are crucial. Other competences can be acquired later.

Follow-up

The accreditation steering group will prepare advice on follow-up steps, which will also be discussed in the overarching Curriculum Committee. Together, a roadmap will be defined for the further development of the program within evolving demands of the work field and education.

Appendix 1: HAN SOW standpoint in national profile discussion (September 19, 2024)

- Current profiles are not sustainable: unequal distribution, poor alignment, heterogeneous.
- The program struggles with the balance between generalism and specialization. Full-time op for generalist years 1–2. Students need depth, but the current set-up risks being neither.
- Focus: preparing students as starting professionals. True specialization comes after graduation with work experience.
- Eliminating only the Welfare & Society profile (leaving Care and Youth) does not match work field needs.
- Favorable to phasing out profiles, but build in student choice (scenario 5). Consider 30–60 credits, not 90.
- Students are not yet 'registration qualified' at graduation; registration should follow later with work experience.

Summary:

- ✓ We educate starting professionals, not specialists
- ✓ Emphasis on generic basis
- ✓ Years 1–2 generalist, years 3–4 profiling
- ✓ Multiple graduation routes possible, aligned with HAN's identity
- ✓ Registration after graduation + work experience

Key themes:

- Enable specialization pathways across Ad, Ba, and Master
- One national professional profile, with regional identity
- Add 'Social Quality' to the national profile
- Add political engagement and experiential expertise to the national profile