

BACHELOR

International Communication and Media

Report Educational Mirror

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1. Structure of the educational mirror

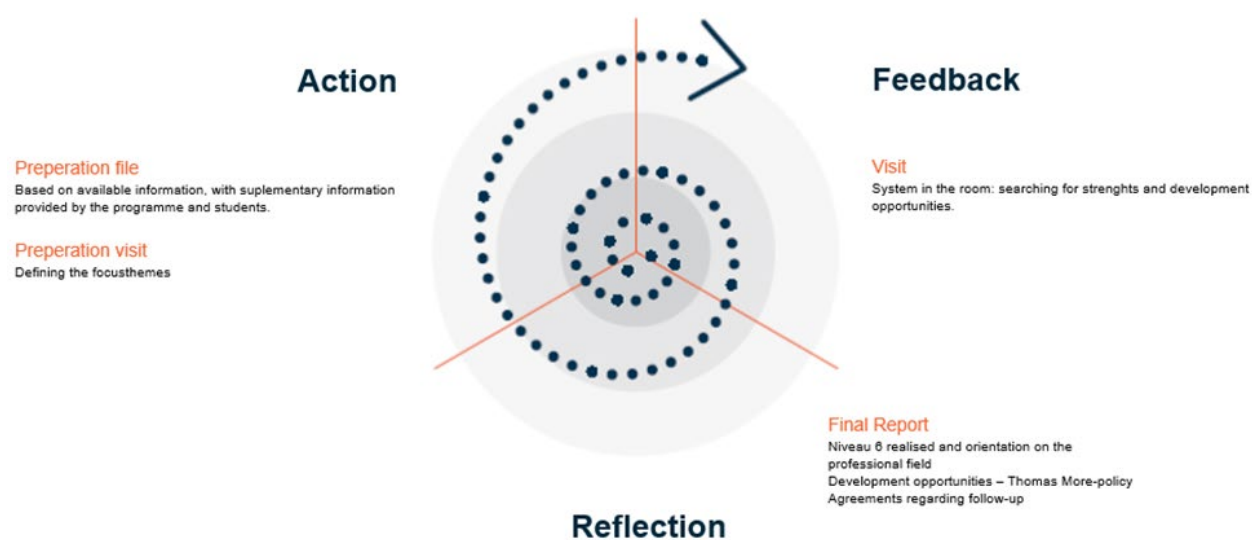
READING GUIDE

The report starts, after a schematic representation of the educational mirror process (in section 1), with the general conclusions of the panel (section 2).

The discussion of each theme (section 3) helps to frame and substantiate these conclusions. Partly based on the results of the educational mirror, the programme has formulated its ambitions (point 4). 4).

The annexes provide additional information on the composition of the panel, the programme of the visit and the way in which we assessed level 6 of the Flemish qualifications structure.

PROCESS OF THE EDUCATIONAL MIRROR



Action	Feedback	Reflection
<p>Preparation file</p> <p>Based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading guide - Documents Policy Compass - Explanation of international internship + related info - Assessment products - Thomas More dashboard - ECTS sheets <p>Preparation for visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - themes: sustainable development of the international network, LABS as mirror, Profiles of the programme - level 6 	<p>Visit</p> <p>Date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 26th of april 2023 <p>Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frank Vonk - Kirsten Vandermeulen - Joep Peeters - Jordan Audenaert - Kali Donckers 	<p>Final report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report: 31st of May 2023 - Discussion: 5th of June 2023

2. General conclusions of the panel

Upon completion of the visit, the panel has concluded that the programme achieves the final level (6) with the required professional orientation. The panel appreciated the time and effort that this growing program put into this educational mirror.

During the visit, the panel was impressed amongst others by:

- the involvement, engagement and maturity of the entire team and students;
- the student-oriented and holistic approach;
- despite being a young programme: the proven ability to further develop their education to a high standard;
- the learning attitude in all endeavours;
- presence of dedicated team-coaches;
- use of real-life assignments, including a realistic and authentic final assessment;
- representation of both tracks in the program and beyond;
- Strong collaboration with the working field.

“Through experience, we have learned a great deal, incorporating valuable feedback from students. Initiatives like ICM café, internships, and curriculum adjustments have played a significant role in our growth.” (Ann Van Damme, program manager)

An outline of the main conclusions and recommendations for follow-up:

- The panel sees a paradox in matching the specialisation within the two tracks with the broad spectrum of jobs and companies the graduate can end up in. A **clear vision** on this could be explored further.
- The development of the **evaluation policy** will need structural attention in the coming years.
- The panel sees an opportunity in **including the search for an internship in the learning process**.
- The program needs to make sure that there is a **consistency in the grading system** of the end level and document this as such.

For these suggestions the panel is curious to see the developments in the near future which will be followed up. We are confident huge strides can be made within the timespan of one year.

3. Discussion of each theme

3.1. Level 6 and professional orientation

The panel concludes that the programme realises level 6 with the right professional orientation. This conclusion is supported by the following observations:

- The panel is more than convinced of the quality of the education and the team behind the programme.
- The belief that the programme is mature enough to shape its assessment policy to a high standard.
- The realistic and authentic final assessment.
- The graduates we met exude confidence and feel ready to enter the work field. The students demonstrated that they have a strong graduation profile.
- The evaluation of International Pitch is transparent and well thought out.

“The graduates of the ICM programme are qualified for the professional practice because of their knowledge, their diversity and versatility in their technical skills, their experience with group dynamics and their hands-on attitude.” (Alumnus and working field)

The panel has seen a number of **positive points** in terms of the sustainability of the final level:

- The panel is more than convinced of the quality of the education within the programme and the team behind it.
- The lecturers go the extra mile for their students. The program team is perceived to be very approachable and willing to help beyond the requirements.

“The international aspect is at the heart of the programme, not just the English-speaking part! The students can choose their own path.” (lecturer)

In addition, the panel sees some development opportunities:

- There is some uncertainty regarding the presence of **uniformity in the evaluation** of the final level as students have the freedom to select their own objectives for the internship. There are no restrictions on what they can choose. The panel feels like the “anything goes” aspect could benefit from a more structured approach.
- It is evident that there is a need to focus on developing an **assessment policy** that is both sustainable, valid and widely accepted. As mentioned before, the panel firmly believes in the capability of the program to successfully accomplish this.
- **The evaluation narrative of the internship is a work in progress.** It does make it vulnerable.
- Clarification as to what the alternative assignment entails in case of individual failure of the end level evaluation.
- Structural integration of a **framework involving the field of work and student engagement** in shaping the graduation profile and its associated evaluation.

3.2. Focus theme 1: sustainable development of the international network

The panel heard about many interesting initiatives concerning international network building that are already in place (for instance: “WHAM”). The enthusiasm of the team and the current students was very apparent during the conversation about this theme.

“We feel a connection with the programme and the people in it. It feels like family.” (lecturer)

The panel is convinced that a clear vision on international community building can provide clear guidance . Clarifying the trajectory for the student right from the start of the programme is crucial. Some clear guidelines concerning expectation management might also help with this. The panel does however acknowledge that a lot depends on the personal ambition of the students.

“What I would say to new students is: also build your own international network and leave your comfort zone.” (student)

The role of “student ambassador” should definitely be explored further. For instance, the path of the student ambassador could be included in the learning path of the student. The students seem keen to play an active role in expanding not only their own international network but also to further help put the programme on the map. Especially tapping into their connections with their former secondary schools and other organisations could be beneficial for the programme.

The panel also sees an opportunity in bringing current and former students together to learn. The alumni strongly feel that they could be of great use for the programme. They WANT to be used. A stronger (international) connection between the programme, its students and this group of stakeholders could be achieved within a relatively short period of time and give added value to the programme.

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do much more. That is the power of community.” (working field)

The panel is excited to see the programme move even more forward within this topic. It is clear that the programme is already ahead of the pack within the global organisation concerning internationalisation. Even so, we encourage the programme-team to keep looking forward and to keep pushing boundaries (and borders). The international organisations certainly seem to want to be involved in future discussions around this topic. Some suggestions for quick wins:

- Creating a platform for students to build and maintain their international network.
- Actively making good use of the alumni in building the international network of the students and program.
- Further developing the possibility of using the students as ambassadors for the program in their internships
- A dedicated coordinator for network building within the program to create added value for all those involved.

“Merge internationalisation and professionalism as a destination.” (Alumnus and working field)

3.3. Focus theme 2: LABS as a mirror

It is apparent that the LABS are a success story and that they are very much appreciated by the students. They are obviously built by a committed team of lecturers. This resulted in an active and inspiring discussion. However, the panel would have liked to see some work field representation in the conversation that has experience in providing projects for the students to work on.

The panel acknowledges the major progress that has been made over the past few years to make the LABS a success. The panel appreciates the clear progression in terms of complexity and level of coaching within these course components. The alignment is very apparent.

“The LABS are really something I should and want to invest in.” (student)

One aspect to pay attention to is the quality control during the selection of projects in phases 2 and 3. The use of rubrics in phases 1 and 2 has been a strong point. However, it is important to consider whether these rubrics will still be used and further developed in phase 3 or if they will be abandoned. Furthermore, it is necessary to address the validation aspect of the rubrics and ensure they are applicable to the final level theme for every student. This aspect will be further addressed in part 3.1.

Another important point to consider is to avoid falling victim to the success of the programme. As the program expands and attracts more students, it is crucial to ensure that there are adequate resources such as classrooms and coaching available to meet the growing demand. Additionally, it is important to address the coach-to-student ratio and find ways to decrease it, particularly when collaborating with partner organizations and schools.

“Together with your teammates you come to the best results. One of the best parts of the LABS!” (student)

The panel sees an opportunity in identifying, finetuning and marketing the distinguishing characteristics of the LABS. For example:

- the understanding of the business value and return on investment associated with the ideas generated within the LABS. Students need to realize that this goes beyond mere "nice ideas." The focus should be on delivering real value to the clients and driving meaningful impact. There is room for further enhancement in the professional dimension to meet these expectations.
- the link with the international aspect of the projects and the digital cooperation that is needed in the world we live in today.
- clear prioritization within a project, taking the budget into account.
- “just in time” teaching to simulate real life cases and dynamics.

“I am very proud of the content our students create.” (lecturer)

The panel proposes that the program considers the potential for expanding these labs even more extensively within the curriculum. It is evident that students highly value these valuable learning opportunities, as they provide a solid foundation for future internships and professional experiences.

3.4. Focus theme 3: profiles of the programme

When it comes to the program, there is a clear preference for the existence of two tracks, and the panel was pleasantly surprised that this feeling is consistent among all stakeholders involved. The possibility of even more tracks (which ones?) raised the curiosity of the panel.

“The majority of the students know what they want. The programme is for those with a clear goal and not for someone who does not know what they want to do.” (student)

At the start of the program, it is crucial to provide students with a well-balanced exposure to both tracks within this programme. While there may be overlapping elements between the tracks, having two distinct paths might also narrow down the students' vision on the programme as a whole. The panel advises:

- firstly, to confront the students with the specifics of the two tracks early on. A special mention here is the need for stronger brand development of the public and corporate affairs track.
- secondly, to ensure that practical considerations, such as the timing of internships, do not unduly influence the choice of track.

“(New) Developments within the programme should put the student first.” (lecturer)

“We have the opportunity to be really flexible to the feedback of the students and workforce. It only gets better with yearly change. We like change.” (Lecturer)

Furthermore, it is worth exploring the extent to which the chosen track determines one's future career. Can individuals with the same set of generic skills pursue different tracks and still find employment in the same job? To address this, it may be beneficial to consider a major-minor concept that offers more flexibility and opportunities for students.

“ICM is a pathway to the future in communication. It is the students pathway to the world. It allows you to create your own path.” (Alumnus and working field)

4. Ambitions of the programme

Evaluation Policy

Ambition:

- The development of the assessment policy will need structural attention in the coming years.
 - The programme needs to make sure that there is consistency in the grading system of the final level and document this as such.
 - Elaboration of an assessment matrix.
 - Developing a system for quality control of assessments.
 - Uniformity in the evaluation of the final level.
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International Network

Ambition:

- Further expansion of a sustainable international network with colleges/universities and the professional field.
 - Extending the database of international internships and defining even sharper screening criteria.
-

Vision on design (tracks)

Ambition:

- To Update the curriculum of both tracks by academic year 2024-2025.
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Positioning of the PBA

Ambition:

- Sharp positioning and unique profile as a part of the Media & Communication Unit strategy.
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5. Annexes

5.1. Panel composition

For the educational mirror, Thomas More works with a panel consisting of a chairperson, familiar with higher education, a domain expert, active (or having been) in the same or a related study programme, a representative of the industry, a student and an internal education expert.

The members of the panel are in any case independent of the study programme. They are neither involved in the programme as a supervisor/coach, nor as a teacher or evaluator, nor as a student.

Composition of the panel for the programme of International Tourism & Leisure:

- **Frank Vonk**, chair: Frank is a MA, PhD, philosopher and Germanic scholar. He works as a policy advisor for quality assurance in education and research. He regularly chairs panels during internal audits at various programs of the Hogeschool van Arnhem en Nijmegen (Netherlands), assists research units in writing their Critical Reflections for external assessments, and is a trained auditor using the appreciative inquiry method. Additionally, he serves as the chairman of the board of examiners of the Academy of Organization and Development. He still teaches courses in ethics.
- **Joep Peeters**, domain expert. As a Senior Lecturer and Course Manager in Creative Advertising at Fontys Hogeschool, Joep has been instrumental in delivering high-quality education to students in the field of creative advertising. He is an open- and international-minded marketing/sales professional with a strong focus on the current shift in business logic. He possess a deep passion for training and coaching, and have gained experience in both the FMCG and educational sectors.
- **Jordan Audenaert**, industry expert. President of E3 International Agency Network. He is a highly accomplished leader with a wealth of experience in the marketing and advertising industry. With a background in client management, brand strategy, and global marketing campaigns, Jordan has held prominent positions throughout his career. His previous roles include key responsibilities in client relations, where he honed his expertise in delivering exceptional results. With a proven track record in building strategic alliances and driving transformative growth, Jordan's leadership has been instrumental in propelling E3's success. Under his guidance, E3 continues to excel, providing innovative solutions to clients worldwide and fostering a collaborative network of industry professionals.
- **Kali Donckers**, student. She is a student in the Bachelor's program in Applied Psychology, specializing in School and Educational Psychology. She serves as the chairperson of the general student council, advocating for the students' interests at all levels of the university (executive board, academic council, student council, and student representation within her program).
- **Kirsten Vandermeulen**, education expert. Kirsten Vandermeulen holds a Master's degree in Training and Educational Sciences. She has been working in higher education since 1995, initially as a lecturer in the orthopedics program. Later on, she served as the Deputy Department Head and Program Head for Occupational Therapy and Orthopedics. Since 2016, she has been balancing a limited teaching assignment in Orthopedics with a position as an education support staff member in the education department.

5.2. Programme visit

- 08.30-09.00 Preparation panel
- 09.00-09.15 Explanation by the programme
- 09.15-10.15 *theme 1: Sustainable development of the international network*
- 10.15-10.45 Debriefing
- 10.45-11.45 *theme 2: LABS as a mirror*
- 11.45-12.15: Debriefing
- 12.15-13.30 Lunch ; Visit to the infrastructure
- 13.30-14.30 *theme 3: Profiles of the programme*
- 14.30-15.00 Debriefing
- 15.00-16.00 *Final level*
- 16.00-16.30 Space for any additional demand for information
- 16.30-17.30 Internal consultation
- 17.30-18.00 Feedback

5.3. Assessment level 6 Flemish qualification structure and professional orientation

Thomas More monitors the final level of the study programme through different perspectives and thus involves all relevant stakeholders in this assessment.

PROFESSIONAL FIELD SURVEY

This gives an indication of the satisfaction of the professional field about the graduates/students just before graduation. The survey measures the general satisfaction with the graduates as starting professionals; the professional knowledge and skills; the problem-solving capacity; the professional attitude and the degree to which the graduates keep up with the evolutions in the domain.

THE PROGRAMME SPECIFIES THE WAY IN WHICH IT ASSESSES THE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THE FINAL LEVEL OF ITS STUDENTS

The programme Bachelor International Communication and Media assesses the learning outcomes and the final level of its students by.

- International Internship
- International Pitch

REVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT BY A STAFF MEMBER OF THE EDUCATION TEAM

In preparation of the visit, the education expert in the panel examines the available documents related to the assessment of the final level: e.g. the ECTS sheets, manual, evaluation forms, products of the final assessment. The most important findings from this preliminary investigation are:

- the DLR are translated into OLR in the function of the current and future professional context ;
- the 13 DLR are translated into 9 "roles" (OLR) with behavioural indicators at 3 levels (basic, deeper and final). The final level is defined differently for the 2 graduation tracks;
- there is a clear profile of the graduate in which international competencies are the key factor;
- those international competencies are visible in OLR 9: global native and reflects in several forms of internationalisation (@home, COIL, BIP, Erasmus,);
- an overview of the OLR is visible via the act-E program. This seems to be a work in progress, not all courses are already mapped and I can't find a way to view the OLR on the three levels of behavioural indicators. It seems that some OLR's are tested in many OPO's. Is this realistic/necessary?;
- what about the assessments? How do you use the testing matrix as a work instrument. Is the assessment policy in line with the assessment policy of Thomas More? Especially for the final assessment how do you realise the quality of testing? (valid, transparent, reliable, informative & efficient?;
- the content of the courses Expert Classes and Expert Skills are updated annually to ensure they remain in alignment with current topics;
- students have the opportunity to work on authentic projects during the 3 phases (labs). There are increasing levels of autonomy and complexity through the different phases of the programme;

ASSESSMENT OF THE PRODUCTS IN REGARD OF THE FINAL LEVEL AND DISCUSSION WITH RECENT GRADUATES DURING THE VISIT

The panel talked with

- recent graduates about their final assessment;
- industry partners about their experiences with recent graduates;
- lecturers and the programme manager about the final assessment in general.

During the interview, the following aspects were discussed: guidance, effectiveness in function of the profession, experiences as a starting professional, the “paradox” of the two tracks, validity of the end evaluation, sustainability, testing policy and the possibility to include the search for an internship into the learning path.

The panel also reviewed products of the final assessment of a number of recent graduates.

5.4. Descriptors of the Flemish Qualifications Framework level 6

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

- critically evaluate and combine knowledge and insights from a specific domain
- apply complex specialised skills linked to research results
- collect and interpret relevant data and use selected methods and tools innovatively to solve complex problems that are not familiar

CONTEXT, AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- act in complex and specialised contexts
- operate with full autonomy and initiative
- take co-responsibility for determining collective results



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