



Overlegplatform Associate degrees

Guidelines and National Framework Agreements for the Transition from Associate degree to Bachelor

National Consultation Platform Associate degrees | Think Tank on Ad-Bachelor Transfer





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Colophon

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Think Tank on Ad-Bachelor Transfer

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FOREWORD

Here is the Advisory and National Framework for Transfer Agreements from Associate degree to Bachelor programs(Ad-Bachelor). This document describes how Associate degree graduates can progress to related, partially related, and unrelated bachelor's programs at Universities of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. For transfers to related bachelor's programs, this document establishes a framework that programs adhere to, ensuring a nationally uniform transfer process for Associate degree alumni. For transitions to partially or unrelated bachelor programs, a set of recommendations is provided in this document. See the diagram below:

	Related	Partially related/Unrelated
Status	Framework	Advice
Application	The same transfer agreements apply to all programs in the Netherlands.	Programs are strongly <i>advised</i> to establish comparable transfer agreements.

The following examples illustrate this.

"Sami, 28, is currently enrolled in the Associate degree "Pedagogical Educational Professional". He's interested in furthering his studies at PABO (Primary School Teacher Training Academy). In his current UAS this would take an additional 3.5 years, while enrolling at another UAS would mean 2 more years of study. Given the practical considerations, Sami has decided not to continue his studies right now but may consider it in the future."

"Alvira, 21, is a second-year student in the Associate degree Business Administration at her University (UAS). Her study coach actively encourages her to consider progressing to a bachelor's program, though Alvira initially doubts she's ready. Her coach suggests trying a bachelor-level module, which Alvira finds both challenging and enjoyable. Inspired, she decides to pursue her bachelor's degree. At her university, she has four pathways to complete her degree in two additional years and ultimately chooses the HRM bachelor's program, feeling confident in her decision."

"Flidder, an Associate degree graduate in Entrepreneurship, has successfully established a mobile phone accessories business. However, he wants to deepen his knowledge in sustainability and is considering a more technical bachelor's degree. Since a direct transfer isn't possible, he would need to start the bachelor's program from the beginning, with only occasional course exemptions. For him, this approach isn't worthwhile at this time."

"Lydia has completed her Associate degree Social Work, and her employer supports her interest in pursuing a bachelor's degree to expand her skills. Eager to deepen her knowledge, Lydia explores three local Universities (UAS), each offering a two-year program tailored for her field. She ultimately selects the college that best aligns with her interests and offers a well-structured part-time program."

The examples highlight the national and regional variations, as well as significant differences among Universities of Applied Sciences. These varied regulations and practices create confusion and result in unequal opportunities for students.

For seamless transitions, it is essential to provide clear information on the pathways for students to continue into a bachelor's program after completing an Associate degree. A standardized approach and consistent agreements are key to achieving this. Without widespread support, solutions will remain fragmented, leaving students dependent on the specific expertise, resources, and regulations of individual Universities of Applied Sciences and the decisions of their examination boards.

Roland van der Poel,

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Summary and recommendations

This document outlines the pathways for Associate degree graduates to transfer to related, partially related, and unrelated Bachelor's programs in the Netherlands. For transfers to related Bachelor's programs, the adoption of this document establishes a framework that programs must follow, ensuring a uniform transfer process for Associate degree graduates nationwide. For transfers to partially related or unrelated Bachelor's programs, this document provides a set of recommendations.

To optimize the transfer from an Associate degree program to a Bachelor's program, the necessary conditions are implemented in several steps.

Related and Partially/Unrelated:

1. Associate degree programs prepare their students for, and facilitate, an optimal transfer to a Bachelor's program, ensuring that the respective Bachelor's programs recognize the diploma already obtained, acknowledge its value, and are thus focused on academic success.
2. Universities of Applied Sciences determine which Ad-Bachelor pairs are considered 'related' partners, allowing them to guarantee over a long period that the Ad pathway, plus the additional Bachelor's program, totals 240 study credits.
3. The National Ad Consultation groups (LAdO's) lead the process of categorizing related and partially/unrelated programs. The National profiles of the Ad programs specify which higher education sectors are considered 'related,' where students can earn both an Ad diploma and a Bachelor's degree in a four-year route.
4. The result is a nationwide determination of relatedness: pairs of Ad and Bachelor programs that are established as being sufficiently aligned at all universities of applied sciences, ensuring that the additional program spans two years in length.

Not / Partially Related:

1. Where there is no direct relatedness, a program is established in collaboration with the LAdO's that aligns with the learning outcomes of the previously obtained Ad diploma.

We would like to clarify that points 1 to 4 are framework-setting (mandatory), and for point 5, we would like to provide a number of recommendations.

1. Introduction.

The reason for this document is the formalization/ independent status of the Associate degree, which was enshrined in Dutch law in 2018.

The impetus for this document is the formalization of the Associate degree in 2018. The Ad Monitor (Rijksoverheid, 2021, p.23) examined the possible motivations of students for choosing an Associate degree (Ad program): "Individuals opt for an Ad program because it provides a higher education qualification in a relatively short period. *Furthermore, an Ad program offers the opportunity to continue studying, which keeps the horizon broad from the outset.*"

Since 2018, the Associate degree has had its own formal status and independent position (see Appendix 1). This also means that there is *no* legal requirement to have a substantive connection with at least one Bachelor's program. As a result, the content differences can be quite significant and may even increase in the future.

The explanation in the 2018 amendments to the Act state: "*The institution offering the Associate degree program and the institution offering the higher education Bachelor's program both have a duty in supporting the Associate degree graduate who wishes to transfer.*" It can then be stated that a large part of the responsibility and the formalization of the agreements regarding this lies with the Associate degree programs: "*The education and examination regulations of the Associate degree program describe the options available for a graduate with an Associate degree to transfer to a Bachelor's program.*"

Currently, there is a strong dependence on both the organizational structures and the examination boards of the different universities of applied sciences for these transfer opportunities. This document responds to the task given to the National Consultation Platform for Associate degrees to establish frameworks for the transfer from an Associate degree program to one or more Bachelor's programs, thereby providing support for the challenges that can be observed.

1.1 Independence of the Associate degree

The Associate degree program is still often seen as needing to be linked to the Bachelor's program and as a stepping stone towards it. As a result, the Associate degree is not yet considered by everyone as a form of final education with its own relevance for the labor market. Until 2013, the formal link to the Bachelor's program existed, after which the Associate degree gained more independence until 2018. However, this idea is not entirely unexpected. This was partly due to the limited use of the legal framework and the small number of students who transferred to the Bachelor's program.

However, the Associate degree has now become an independent higher education program (so-called professionally qualifying final education). The Associate degree, as the third formal program in the higher education portfolio, has secured its own place but continues to develop, especially regarding the status of the Associate degree as final education, meaning a direct entry into the workforce. The Associate degree programs have evolved into higher education programs that are relevant for roles, tasks, and professions at NLQF level 5.

The Associate degree, alongside the option to continue towards a Bachelor's degree (NLQF level 6), is intended as professionally qualifying final education. The full-time Associate degree programs are designed so that graduates can immediately enter the workforce after earning their diploma. The dual and part-time Associate degree programs are also structured as final education, offering a two-year program for upskilling, further development, specialization, or retraining to NLQF level 5. This means that for prospective students, there are three options for higher education: the Associate degree, Bachelor's degree, and Master's degree.

With the Ad, the following entry-pathways are possible based on specific prior education:

- The Associate degree
- The Bachelor's program
- The Associate degree followed by a Bachelor's program

After obtaining the Associate degree diploma, the following options are available:

- Start working (or continue working if the study is combined with a job)
- Continue studying and enroll in a Bachelor (possibly combined with work)
- Work and later enroll in a Bachelor (possibly combined with work)
- Continue education, but not with the goal of obtaining a Bachelor's degree

As part of lifelong development, it is important for Associate degree graduates to be aware of the opportunities available after obtaining their Ad diploma and to know the options for further development and later entry into a Bachelor's program (both publicly funded and possibly private). Therefore, for the independence and positioning of Associate degree programs, it is essential to provide optimal transfer opportunities for graduates, whether they transfer directly or choose to continue their studies at a later point in their lives.

1.2 2+2 structure

Universities of Applied Sciences are still facing challenges in properly organizing the transition from the Associate degree (Ad) program to the Bachelor's program. While some Universities of Applied Sciences have structured this independence of the Ad program in such a way that it becomes nearly impossible for an Ad student to progress, others organize the Ad and Bachelor's programs in a very closely related manner, often in 2+2 constructions. However, there is a risk that the Ad program may not sufficiently differentiate itself in terms of the professions, roles, and tasks at level 5 if, for example, Ad graduates are forced to join third-year Bachelor's students without being offered a tailored program that builds on their Ad studies. This could undermine the recognition and positioning of the Associate degree within the professional field and among prospective students, weaken the independence of this type of program, and hinder the promotion of equity and student success.

- Since the Associate degree and the Bachelor's program are effectively different programs, with distinct didactics, approaches, and final learning outcomes, it could be detrimental to the success of Ad students if they study alongside Bachelor's students using the same approach.
- If the Ad program includes components that actually belong to a related Bachelor's program, this may impact the accessibility of the Associate degree. It could create barriers, making individuals hesitant to take the step towards a higher vocational program. In the context of equal opportunities and access to higher vocational education for all, this is an undesirable situation.

As a result of, among other factors, the issues and developments mentioned above, Universities of Applied Sciences do not always sufficiently fulfill their role in promoting the transition from Associate degrees to Bachelor's programs, and opportunities for students in the context of Lifelong Learning remain unfulfilled.

1.3 Optimal transfer

The purpose of this Framework for Transfer Agreements is to assist Universities of Applied Sciences in developing effective transfer options for Associate degree (Ad) students and communicating these options clearly to prospective students, Ad students, and Ad alumni. These agreements will be outlined in a framework (for related programs) and a guide (for partially or non-related programs), combining the legal right to transfer with all possible options for students to obtain a Bachelor's degree in the best possible way. The interests of the prospective student, who is at the beginning of their studies, and the Ad student are the starting point.

This document formulates a number of points to be considered when developing transfer scenarios for graduating Ad students. Here is a brief summary of the points for consideration:

- The transfer options should be designed in the best interest of the Ad student, based on and considering the uniqueness of both the Ad program and the Bachelor's program (including their own relevance and effectiveness, final level, and program/domain-specific characteristics).
- Entering a Bachelor's program is not limited to simply 'advancing along the content ladder.' After obtaining the Ad diploma, an individual may choose a different path, including outside the field of study (similar to graduates of secondary vocational education).
- The University of Applied Sciences makes efforts to design relevant transfer scenarios that allow Ad graduates to obtain a Bachelor's degree efficiently.
- While the initiative for an efficient transition is often taken by the Ad program (in consultation with the student), the receiving Bachelor's program(s) and the relevant examination board(s) are also expected to make an effort to organize a relevant and efficient transfer between the Ad and the Bachelor's degree.
- It is strongly preferred that the University of Applied Sciences (from the perspective of the Bachelor's programs) coordinate the transition from Ad programs to Bachelor's programs in consultation with the National Ad Counseling Centers (LAdOs).

2. Motive and context

The playing field is complex, and the student's perspective is paramount. A good policy should help the student choose the right and most suitable study path. However, this must align with the policies of the respective University of Applied Sciences, where Ad programs are organized in various ways. Sometimes they exist as separate units within a University of Applied Sciences, but more often they are part of an institute or academy for Bachelor's education. This structure should not be an obstacle for a student enrolled in an Ad program.

An Ad program is sometimes more regionally oriented than a Bachelor's program. It is important that this does not negatively impact the Ad student's ability to transfer directly to a Bachelor's program. We are not discussing competition, but rather the continuation of an Ad student's academic career at a University of Applied Sciences, whether regionally or elsewhere in the country.

Furthermore, collaboration with the Associate degree Consultation Platform, the National Ad Consultation groups (LAdOs), and various Bachelor's program stakeholders, such as the Sectoral Advisory Councils (SACs), is essential to organize the most effective residual program.

2.1 Desirability of transfer opportunities for Ad graduates

Ad graduates have successfully demonstrated their ability to learn and work in complex settings at the higher vocational education level. They possess the necessary generic competencies and study skills to thrive. This experience justifies seeking as seamless a transfer as possible between an Ad program and a Bachelor's program, maximizing the value of the Ad diploma.

In the context of Lifelong Development, upskilling appeals to individuals who later in life recognize that they want and are capable of doing more. In professional practice, someone may feel the need to further develop by tackling more complex issues that require greater independence, complexity, and deeper knowledge. Upskilling and retraining support the transition of workers from one (shrinking) sector to another (growing) sector (work-to-work), using transversal skills to advance in unrelated educational fields. New technologies and increased stakeholder involvement in various issues (more stakeholders, more exposure via social media) lead to greater complexity and a need for broader, integrated knowledge, alongside advanced specialized knowledge on specific topics. As a result, there is expected to be a growing demand for pathways to progress into (parts of) Bachelor's level programs (NLQF 6).

Playing field

Ad programs already have several National Ad Program Profiles. This means that a Bachelor's program can expect at least the learning outcomes outlined in the National Ad Program Profile to be assessed at NLQF 5 level. Within educational institutions, Ad programs are sometimes housed in separate institutes, while in other cases, both Ad programs and Bachelor's programs are organized within a single institute that offers programs for a particular field (e.g., health, engineering, etc.). Typically, all programs within an institute fall under a single examination board.

Both Ad and Bachelor programs are responsible for ensuring successful progression. At the sectoral level, a Sectoral Advisory Committee (SAC) could assess the alignment between Ad and Bachelor programs. Additionally, there may be requirements for alignment between national program profiles at both Ad and Bachelor levels for programs identified as related by the SAC.

Within a University of Applied Sciences, cooperation between Ad and Bachelor programs can be facilitated by the Executive Board. Examples of this can be found at Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Avans Academy in Breda, and the Ad Academy in Roosendaal.

2.2 Laws and regulations

When the law enabling the introduction of the Associate degree as a separate program was being debated, the desirability of creating (shortened) transfer pathways was explicitly mentioned. The Explanatory Memorandum to the Associate Degree Introduction Act states the following about this relationship:

"The Bill provides for a role for institutions to promote the progression of Associate degree graduates. This is a task for both the institution offering the Associate degree program and the institution offering the Bachelor's program to which the Associate degree student wishes to progress. The institution offering the Associate degree program assists the student in his or her orientation towards the higher vocational bachelor's program. In the teaching and examination regulations, this institution also describes the possibilities for graduates of this Associate degree program to transfer to the Bachelor's program. The employee representative body has the right to approve the relevant part of the teaching and examination regulations."

Institutions offering higher vocational bachelor's programs to which the associate degree graduate is considering transferring shall ensure that the student is able to take note of the content and duration of the remaining part of the higher vocational bachelor's program. These institutions shall also ensure that the Associate degree graduate who chooses the higher vocational bachelor's program is able to complete the remaining part of the program as efficiently as possible, preferably in a shorter period of time (emphasis added). It should be noted that it is ultimately up to the examination board of the relevant (group of) higher vocational bachelor's programs to determine which program components the Associate degree graduate still has to complete in order to obtain a higher vocational bachelor's degree."

"The education and examination regulations of the Associate degree program describe the options available to a graduate of the institution with an Associate degree to transfer to a Bachelor's program." (Examination Board Handbook)

These laws and regulations clearly indicate that both parties (the Ad program and the receiving Bachelor's program) are expected to make best efforts in facilitating the transfer process.

3. Framework and advice

To support the commitment of both Ad and Bachelor programs described in the previous chapter, a framework has been established for related programs, and recommendations have been formulated for partial/non-related programs.

To promote optimal throughput, the following steps should be taken:

1. Apply the three basic principles and guidelines outlined below.
2. Establish the affinity between Ad and Bachelor programs at the national level and determine whether they are related or partial/non-related.
3. Facilitate and optimize the transfer from Ad to Bachelor.

3.1 Principles and starting points for progression from an Associate to a Bachelor program

As the Consultation Platform for Associate degrees, we aim to contribute to the optimal development of our students' talents and opportunities for growth, thereby supporting their success. This vision for the Ad student aligns not only with the spirit of the law on the introduction of the Ad degree, which focuses on up-skilling, but also with the social and regional challenges outlined in the SER documents and the Human Capital Agendas. The formal process is carried out by the examination board of the host bachelor's program.

By applying the three basic principles outlined below, we seek to establish national uniformity, ensuring a smooth transition for students from Ad to Bachelor programs across the country. The Consultation Platform Associate Degrees sets out the following basic principles for transferring from an Associate degree to a bachelor:

- I The same criteria (the capabilities a student must possess) and standards (the level at which the student must demonstrate these capabilities) are applied to all students with an Associate degree. The methods of assessing these criteria may vary, depending on the program's interpretation of the Bachelor's curriculum content.
- II. Students from their own institution who hold a related Associate degree will not be subject to fewer or different criteria than students with an Associate degree from another University of Applied Sciences or comparable EQF5 program within Europe.
- III. It is essential that students are treated collectively in this regard (e.g., through extensive experience with students who have the relevant Ad/bachelor linkage or through existing recognition agreements). Where necessary, admission will be considered on an individual basis.

These guiding principles are inspired by the admission requirements set out by the VSNU Master's degree admissions task force (2018). It is crucial to establish national affinity between Ad programs and Bachelor programs. The LAdOs aim to ensure that the National Program Profiles of an Ad program are at least aligned with the National Program Profiles of Bachelor's programs that have been identified as related by a SAC, in order to facilitate the most barrier-free scenario possible.

3.2 Determining the degree of relatedness

Ad and bachelor programs have different degrees of relatedness. This degree of relatedness is defined in the National Program Profile. The degree of relatedness determines the scenario for progression from an Ad program to a Bachelor program.

There are three types of relationship and therefore three scenarios:

1. **Related:** The associate degree has closely related bachelor's program(s) within and outside the UAS. The national program profile of the associate degree program explicitly refers to one or more national program profiles of related bachelor programs. There is both a sectoral affinity and a strong content affinity.

Framework: Transfer to a related bachelor program in 120 credits.

We aim to achieve as seamless a transfer as possible between the Ad and the Bachelor's programs, so that a graduating Ad student can complete their Bachelor's degree in 120 credits when they join a directly related Bachelor's program.

2. **Partly related:** The Associate degree has partially related Bachelor's program(s) within and outside the university of applied sciences. The affinity is sectoral (graduates of the programs partly work in the same professional context) or content-related (partly overlapping Body of Knowledge and Skills within the curricula of the programs).

Recommendation: transfer to partly related bachelor's degree in 150 to 180 credits.

If the Associate degree and the Bachelor's program are in the same sector, the 120 credits for direct affinity generally apply. However, exceptions may be made in appropriate cases. If the sectoral or substantive affinity is not strong enough, it is considered a partially related Bachelor's degree, meaning the Ad graduate can, in principle, obtain their Bachelor's degree in 150 credits. In the case of a cross-sector Ad, the basic principle is that there is direct affinity with all the underlying sectors.

3. **Unrelated:** The Associate degree has no directly related Bachelor's programs either within or outside the University of Applied Sciences. However, the transversal skills described in the Ad-profile (problem-solving ability, learning ability, methodical approach, cooperation, and communication) provide a solid foundation for the generic higher vocational competencies, such as research competence and professional craftsmanship, as outlined in the higher education standard.

Advice: transfer to an unrelated Bachelor's degree in 180 to 210 credits.

the case of transferring to an unrelated Bachelor's degree, the basic principle is that the graduating Ad student can obtain their Bachelor's degree in 180 credits, with 60 credits being exempted. If this principle does not apply in specific situations, the Ad can be incorporated into the profiling space of the Bachelor's program, potentially leading to an acceleration of 30 credits. In this case, the graduating Ad student can obtain their Bachelor's degree in 210 credits.

3.3 Facilitating and optimizing the Ad-Bachelor transfer

Universities of Applied Sciences are expected to facilitate and, where possible, optimize the transfer from an Ad program to a Bachelor's program. Ideally, this will be done within the current offerings and based on an equal approach.

Each University of Applied Sciences will, of course, approach this in its own way within its own organizational context. However, for the sake of uniformity in cases of non-direct affinity, three variants of a bridging program have been proposed as suggestions: 1) within the free space/profiling area of the Bachelor's program, 2) within the free space/profiling area of the Ad program, or 3) as a bridging program within the Bachelor's program.

Suggestion 1: Use the free space/profiling area in the Bachelor's program.

The above-mentioned transfer program can be organized in the bachelor program. This is a good option when transferring from several Ad programs to a Bachelor program. Any additional requirements of a bachelor's program are then included in the bachelor's program or organized in a transfer minor (15 EC or 30 EC) developed for the Ad graduate as a profiling space in the bachelor's program. This can also be seen as a 'pre-bachelor'.

Example

Students of the full-time Ad-program Commercial Economics, outflow profile cross-media marketing, can transfer in the third year of the Commercial Economics program. In order to eliminate deficiencies, students must take and pass the compulsory transfer minor of the Bachelor's Sales and Account Management.

Both in the TER of the Ad-program and of the Bachelor's program, the transfer route (content and size in credits) is described after adoption by the examination board. In this way, the Ad student can still obtain a Bachelor's degree within four years. Potential Ad or Bachelor students can then also be properly informed in advance about the options these students have in choosing a suitable higher education program.

A number of advantages of designing an efficient bridging program:

- The Ad program remains accessible and focused on Ad student success.
- It is a valuable contribution to efficient further study.
- The student who wants to do more can also do so additionally or subsequently.

A pathway can be created that facilitates the transition from more than one Ad program to a Bachelor's program.

Suggestion 2: Use a bridging program in case of insufficient affinity.

The design options described above aim to make the most of opportunities to allow the Ad student to obtain their Bachelor's degree within four years.

However, if the Ad program has insufficient affinity to make this transition smoothly, an additional (bridging) program can be chosen. In a program of 15 or 30 EC (bridging program) or 60 EC (bridging year), the components that the Ad graduate must complete in order to enter the remaining part of the Bachelor's program can be scheduled.

The Bachelor's program and the Ad program(s) should carefully consider how to best structure this bridging program. It is important not to create "tick lists" to reprogram all the components of the Bachelor's program into the bridging program. The goal is to determine, based on the final qualifications of the Ad graduate (learning outcomes), at which point the student can enter the Bachelor's program, and which learning outcomes still need attention or are underdeveloped.

This requires a holistic approach to learning outcomes/competencies and exemptions. It is essential that this process is carried out carefully in collaboration with the examination board of the relevant Bachelor's program. The setup should ideally be robust and sustainable.

Suggestion 3: Utilize Profiling Space in Ad Programs

If there is profiling space in the Ad program and a 2+2 structure proves to be very challenging, one option could be to create a pre-bachelor in the profiling space of the Ad program. This approach allows for a logical or necessary connection to a (partially) related bachelor's program. In other words, if profiling space in the Ad program can be allocated, for example, 15 credits, then the link to the bachelor's program could be organized within that profiling space. This space could, for example, be used to demonstrate learning outcomes that facilitate the transition to the bachelor's degree.

However, this option would not need to be chosen by an Ad student who does not intend to transition to the bachelor's program. It could be a valuable option for students who later realize they want to pursue a bachelor's degree, enabling them to take this step as efficiently as possible.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

To optimize the transition from an Ad program to a Bachelor's program, the conditions are realized in several steps.

Related and Partially/Not Related: Framework

- Ad programs prepare their students for and facilitate an optimal transition to a Bachelor's program, ensuring that the relevant Bachelor's programs recognize the value of the earned diploma, acknowledge its worth, and focus on study success.
- Universities of Applied Sciences determine which Ad-Bachelor pairs are considered 'related' partners, thereby guaranteeing that the learning path of the Ad program plus the supplementary Bachelor's program encompasses 240 credits over a longer period.
- The National Ad Consultations (LAdOs) lead the categorization of related and partially/not related programs. The National profiles of Ad programs specify which higher education sectors are considered 'related' and where students can achieve both an Ad diploma and a Bachelor's degree in a four-year route.
- The outcome is a national determination of relatedness; pairs of Ad and Bachelor's programs that are confirmed to be sufficiently aligned across all universities of applied sciences, ensuring that the supplementary program has a duration of two years.

Partially/Not Related: Advice

- Where there is no direct affinity, a program is established in collaboration with LAdOs that aligns with the learning outcomes of the previously obtained Ad diploma.

In outline:

	Related	Partially/not related
Definition	The Ad's program profile refers to this bachelor's degree. Sectoral and strong content relatedness.	There is no specific reference to this Bachelor in the Ad's program profile. There is (cross-)sectoral and partly content-related affinity (partly related) or no sectoral and content-related affinity (not related).
Status	Framework	Advice
Application	The same transfer agreements apply to all courses in the Netherlands..	Courses are strongly advised to make similar flow-through agreements.
Transfer	Bachelor's program in two years / 120 credits	Partly related: Bachelor program in two to three years (150 to 180 credits) Unrelated: Bachelor program in three to three and a half years (180 to 210 credits)

We call for the creation and monitoring of an overview that includes the established relationships, and for these to be reviewed and updated at appropriate intervals, considering national and societal developments.

Additionally, our suggestion is to describe the implications of this process in a guide for examination boards

5. Further reading...

In addition to the three scenarios and design suggestions, here are a few more guidelines that may be helpful when designing effective transitions from Ad to Bachelor's programs.

Description Level 5 Associate degree

On the website of the Consultation Platform Associate degrees of the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, you will find the Description Level 5 Associate Ddegree. This includes more generic frameworks and descriptions (such as EQF level 5 and 6, NLQF level 5 and 6, SCHE, and the Dublin Descriptors) specifically tailored to the Associate degree.

Research-Oriented Attitude at Level 5

On the same website, you will find the Guideline for a Research-Oriented Attitude at Level 5. This guideline addresses the place of the research-oriented attitude within the learning outcomes of the Associate degree.

Domain-Wide National Ad Consultation groups (LAdO's)

Since multiple Ad programs sometimes serve the same domain, there are domain-wide National Ad Consultations to ensure that related Ad programs are well coordinated. This enables collective work on nationally established program profiles that are guiding for (prospective) students, employers, and quality assessments by the NVAO. Information about the LAdO's can be found on the website of the Consultation Platform Associate degrees.

Communication

A important aspect when it comes to transition options for Ad alumni is communication. It is essential that students are provided with the right information so they can make the best choice for themselves in higher education. This is related to the Ad at three key moments.

1. Communication/Information during the orientation: before the first ftep

During the orientation for the first step in higher education, it is no longer just about the domain or program choice and the mode (full-time, part-time, or dual) but also about informing the prospective student on how and with what ambition they wish to transition to higher education:

- Choosing a bachelor's program
- Choosing an Associate degree
- Choosing an Associate degree with the possibility of later transitioning to a bachelor's program

An important difference compared to the situation before 2018 is that the graduated Ad student, after completing their Ad program, can make a new choice that is not limited to whether or not a related bachelor exists. Especially due to the latter option, it is crucial that the prospective student can take into account the opportunities available after the Ad in their considerations.

The prospective student can better align their choice of a bachelor or an Ad with their capabilities and ambitions when provided with the right information.

2. Communication information for Ad-students

Some Ad-students may reconsider their initial choice of the Ad as a terminal qualification during their studies. For example, they may realize they have successfully made the transition to higher education and want to know what options are available for entering a bachelor's program (full-time, part-time, or dual) after obtaining their Ad diploma, either immediately or at a later time.

Therefore, it is important for Ad-students to be aware of the options available for entering a related or less related bachelor's program. Universities of Applied Sciences should map out the options for entering a bachelor's program at their own or other institutions and clearly communicate these to students.

3. Communication/Information for Ad-Alumni: Lifelong Learning

We know that a substantial portion of Ad-students are employed. Full-time Ad-students will typically enter the workforce after graduation. These Ad-alumni, from full-time, part-time, or dual Ad programs, may not have initially chosen to continue studying upon graduation but may choose to do so later on. Ad-alumni are thus an ideal target group who should continue to be informed about the possibilities of entering a part-time or dual bachelor's program later on. This is a concrete example of Lifelong Learning. For this group, it is also important that the university communicates well about opportunities for Ad-graduates. What is crucial here is that the alumnus has insight into the duration of the remaining program needed to complete the (related or unrelated) bachelor's degree. Perhaps even more importantly: this group is generally employed and will likely prefer to choose a shorter duration for their studies.

Abbreviations used

Ad	Associate degree
CvB	Board of Governors
EC	European credits
EQF	European Qualification Framework
Hbo	Higher professional education
LAdO	National Ad consultation group
NLQF	Netherlands Qualification Framework
NVAO	Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation
OER	Teaching and examination regulations
Sac	Sectoral Advisory Board

ANNEX 1 Associate degree program

introduction act

17-02-2017 – Parliamentary Paper 34 678: Amendments to the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act and Other Laws to Establish the Associate degree Program as an Independent Program (Associate degree Program Introduction Act 4.4 After Completion of the Associate degree)

4.4 After Completion of the Associate degree

The Associate degree program leads to level 5 of the EQF and NLQF and is completed with the award of the Associate degree. The institutional board may specify the field of study or professional area to which the degree relates. The Associate degree program is designed to enable graduates to enter the labor market in positions at level 5 and (like the current Ad program) to serve as a stepping stone to higher vocational education Bachelor's programs for students who, having been introduced to higher education, wish to continue their development.

The Act provides for institutions to play a role in supporting the further education of Associate degree graduates. This responsibility lies both with the institution offering the Associate degree program and with the institution offering the Bachelor's degree program to which the Associate degree student aims to progress.

The institution offering the Associate degree program will assist the student in exploring higher vocational education Bachelor's programs. In its teaching and examination regulations, the institution will also describe the pathways for Associate degree students to progress to a Bachelor's degree program. The employee participation body has the right to approve the relevant sections of the education and examination regulations.

The institutions offering Bachelor's programs to which the Associate degree student wishes to transfer will ensure that the student is informed of the content and duration of the remaining portion of the Bachelor's program. These institutions will also ensure that the Associate degree graduate who chooses to enter the Bachelor's program can complete the remaining parts as efficiently as possible, preferably in a shortened time frame. It is important to note that the examination board of the relevant Bachelor's programs ultimately determines which components the Associate degree graduate still needs to complete in order to obtain the Bachelor's degree.

It is desirable for universities of applied sciences to jointly offer a wide range of Bachelor's programs to which Associate Degree graduates can transfer. This will respect the profiling of the student and uphold the emancipatory function of the Associate degree program.

Section 4.4 Explanatory Memorandum - Amendment to the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act and Other Laws to Establish the Associate degree Program as an Independent Program and Add Non-Funded Education to the Diploma Register (Associate degree Program Introduction Act) – Parliamentary Monitor