

BACHELOR

International Journalism

Report Educational Mirror



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1. Structure of the Educational Mirror

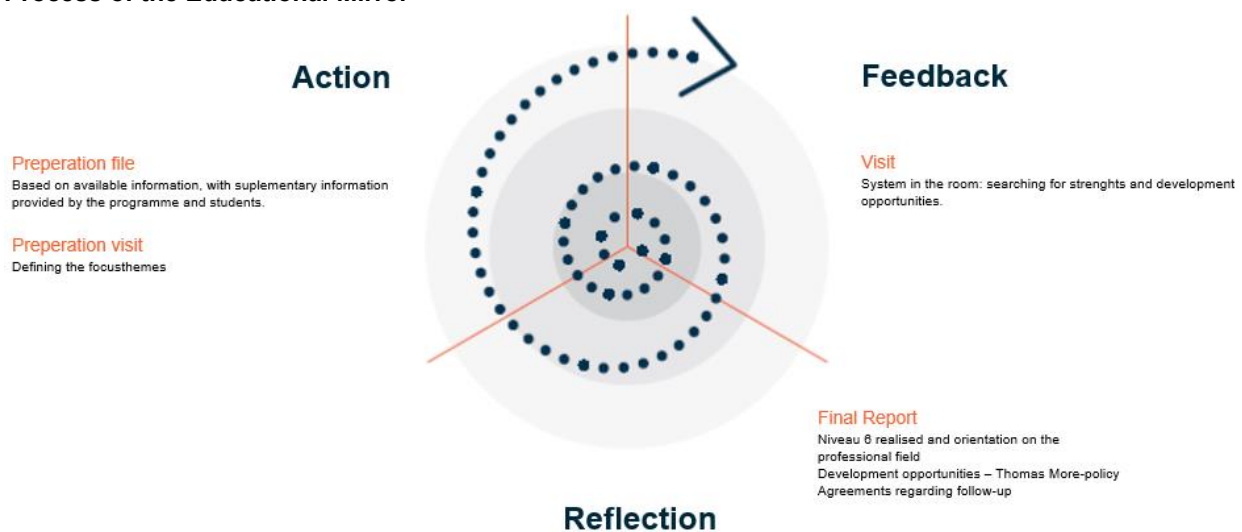
Reading guide

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).

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 News Lab, Internship and Final Work+ related info - Assessment products - Thomas More dashboard - ECTS sheets <p>Preparation for visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - themes: Promoting global outlook among students, Collaboration with the international and English-speaking field within internships, Profiling the programme to international students - level 6 	<p>Visit</p> <p>Date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 17 May 2023 <p>Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lieke Mensink - Niek Hietbrink - Stefan Blommaert - Liselore Curinckx - Isabel Deprez 	<p>Final report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report: 24 May 2023 - Discussion: 2 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.

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

- The strong infrastructure that contributes to students' practical and technical excellence.
- The strong practical and technical students the programme produces. It does call for continued attention to the development of general journalistic knowledge among students.
- The close relationship between students and teachers. The intermediate feedback students receive also contributes to this. Students clearly appreciate this.

" I'm very happy with my degree. The programme is like a road where I have picked up things that I can use in my work." (alumni)

An outline of the main conclusions of the conversations is provided.

The programme achieves the final level with the right professional orientation. The panel does offer some critical advice for the programme to strengthen the sustainability of the final level.

The programme strongly encourages the development of a global outlook in its students. It does this partly by focusing on an open discussion culture. In addition, the panel sees opportunities to integrate this even more into the study programme's DNA by focusing on practical courses. Defining what constitutes successful action in terms of a global and international outlook is an opportunity to be taken, according to the panel.

With regard to the further development of cooperation with the international and English-speaking work field in function of internships, the panel sees opportunities to focus on creating a future-proof policy that helps lecturers to further develop and shape such cooperation. Playing to the strengths that the programme and its students possess is part of this.

In terms of raising the programme's profile towards international students, the panel sees the hands-on classes as a strength. After all, students say they appreciate this enormously and ask for it to be included even more in the curriculum. The panel sees maintaining focus, with this topic being developed through a step-by-step and multi-year plan, as an important step. Focusing on what distinguishes this programme from other International Journalism programmes is part of this.

3. Discussion by 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:

- Alumni indicate that they are sufficiently prepared to enter the work field as entry-level professionals. In this respect, they appreciate the practice-oriented nature of the programme.
- The work field partners who participated in the conversation regarding the final level confirm the starting competence of International Journalism alumni.
- The programme is sufficiently up to date and trains students to become the entry-level competent professional. Alumni confirm this during the conversation regarding the final level. Examples include the programme's commitment to: hands-on experience and journalistic mindset.
- The programme uses a multi-weight principle to arrive at an assessment of Final Work and Internship.
- The story in which there is progression from the course News lab to Internship to Final Work is a strong narrative to achieve the final level. The panel does like to give the feedback that this construction did not emerge sufficiently from the reading guide.

"I was pretty far ahead in terms of practical knowledge. [...] Also the technical part is ok" (alumni)

In terms of the sustainability of the final level, the panel saw a number of **positives**.

- For instance, the panel considers the four-eyes principle through a Jury to be positive. After all, several people come together in consultation to arrive at a reasoned grade.
- The panel considers looking for a good match between student and internship placement in Flanders to be strong. The panel notes that this could inspire the development of international internships.
- The course News lab is a strong element to prepare students adequately and give them a push, so to speak, to go on internship. The panel feels that this offers strong encouragement to students in preparation for the courses at the end of phase 3.

"News Lab is a course in the first semester. We see this course as a preparation of the student for Final Work and Internship. It is in a protected environment where they have to on the 21bis platform." (lecturer)

With regard to the **sustainability** of the assessment of the final level, the panel states that the programme still has a major development to make here. To this end, the panel asks the programme to work on the critical advice below.

If the new mission and vision recently shaped by the programme, 'New world, new narratives, new voices', is realised, the panel considers it important to revisit the final level and the way it assesses this final level within certain courses. The panel therefore asks that this exercise be shaped with due consideration and different actors of the programme.

In doing so, make use of the potential that lies around the programme. The panel considers the proverbial breaking out of the study programme important in this respect. After all, the new mission and vision offer opportunities to shape a new and powerful curriculum for the study programme that can be detached from how it is currently shaped. The panel also saw several examples come up during the conversations, such as the incorporation of longer (final) internships.

The panel notes that the processes, instruction, assessment methods and how they are used in relation to the final level are clear to the interlocutors in the discussion about the final level. The panel notes that from the reading guide and the materials provided, this is not the case. After all, the explanation during the conversation was necessary to outline clarity. The panel additionally notes a discrepancy and differentiation in the assessment form regarding Final Work. After all, the ECTS sheet indicates at which levels certain criteria should be achieved. However, the panel notes that this does not correspond to the level of students achieved on the assessment form. In addition, the ECTS sheet mentions an advanced level that is not reflected on the assessment form.

The panel asks the programme to take a critical look at the design, construction and testing of the final level, fine-tune it and, as such, make it more explicit in a clear and straightforward set of instruments that can serve the work field, students and teachers.

The programme indicates in its reading guide that both the course Internship and the course Final work test all programme specific learning outcomes (OLR). During the interview, the panel notes that within these courses, not all OLR can be tested within each internship and/or final work. Internship reports also show that internship mentors cannot assess every facet that should be assessed according to the assessment form. For example, they indicate that certain aspects cannot be assessed because they were not covered within the internship. The panel notes that there is overlap in the educational construction of these courses with regard to the assessment of OLR's. Here, too, the panel asks the study programme to make explicit in a clearer and unambiguous way what is assessed where at the individual level. The panel considers it important to ensure that Internship and Final work are complementary in the assessment of certain OLR's and in the way the instruments are designed. This way, it can be different for each student what is tested for a particular student on Internship and Final Work. As a first start the panel sees a discussion between the programme and the internship mentor on which learning outcomes are assessed during the internship as important. As such there is a clear view of which learning outcomes can be tested within a certain internship context and alternative assignments can be offered if a required learning outcome is not offered or tested.

Throughout the day, the panel noticed the lack of a framework that defines what a qualitative internship should meet. This makes it difficult for students to find a qualitative internship, especially if it is an international internship. The panel notes that currently, determining a qualitative internship is done in reverse. After all, the student lays down internship tasks together with the company's supervisor. These are screened and as such, the internship is good. The panel asks the school to reverse this procedure and establish clear criteria that a qualitative internship must meet. The panel considers the use of assessable criteria based on what a student must effectively demonstrate at an internship as a starting point to shape this. In addition, the panel sees an opportunity to shape this in the light of the programme's new mission and vision and its ambition to transform into a fully English-language programme.

Furthermore, the panel notes a wide variety in internship reports. The panel sees opportunities to overcome this by formulating a set of fixed themes, linked to the learning outcomes, that every student should incorporate into the internship report at a minimum adequate level.

In addition to the above strengths and critical advice, the panel also sees a **development opportunity** for the programme. For instance, it sees an opportunity for the programme to make stronger links between what happens during the curriculum and how this relates to what they are being trained for. After all, this ensures that students throughout the programme have sufficient clarity about what they are being trained for, which can increase students' intrinsic motivation.

"I was always the one who complained about the courses. And until my internship, the puzzle pieces fell. Then I actually got to use it all in practice. I missed the direct link of how we are going to be using this in the actual work field." (alumni)

3.2 Focus theme: Encouraging global outlook in students

The programme wants to train its students with a broad view of the world that allows them to break away from their own region-bound frame of reference. After all, the programme feels that within an international programme, the student population is becoming more and more diverse. The panel is engaging with the programme to find ways to guard the balance between students' frame of reference on the one hand and teaching a global perspective on the other.

It is clear from the conversation that the programme is committed to encouraging a global view by installing an open discussion culture where engaged confrontation is paramount. The panel appreciates that the programme encourages students to seek other perspectives and thereby also to break free from their own frame of reference.

The panel feels that the panel's strength lies in shaping this through debates or seeking knowledge about other frames of reference. The panel does ask that sufficient attention be paid to the mental wellbeing of young students when confronting them and that sufficient sensitivity be shown towards cultural and political backgrounds.

Additionally, the teaching team is helping to ensure that students dare to critically examine their own frame of reference. After all, the panel notes from the conversation that lecturers are very keen on the idea of betting on a global view. In doing so, the panel also notes that lecturers exude this, so to speak.

*"We don't have to focus too much on the idea of bias. We have this perspective, we also have other perspectives and layers of ideas. If we have a diverse body of students and lecturers then we should use them. That's what they could bring to the table."
(lecturer)*

The panel appreciates that the programme formulates fostering a global view as a core objective of the programme. As a result, the panel sees opportunities to strengthen the deployment and stimulation of the global view at the policy level within the programme. In doing so, the panel is happy to explain several aspects that tie in with this development opportunity. First, the panel feels from the conversation that lecturers exude the 'international' and 'global' but that this still depends heavily on the individual lecturer. Embedding it in the programme and in the curriculum so that it actually becomes the DNA and a way of working of the entire programme, is considered an opportunity to be grasped. In doing so, it sees the role of practical courses as incredibly important. Involving lecturers of more theoretical and reflective-oriented courses in these practical subjects is something the panel sees as an opportunity to be taken.

"Well definitely a class that teaches you to think further than your own worldview. [...] Workshops that stimulate to work together with international students. [...] I missed interaction with students from all over the world in any way possible. Like maybe even online." (students)

Furthermore, the panel considers it important to concretise what successful student action in terms of a global and international outlook means. The panel sees critical questions such as: what if a student does not show the global view or international character that the programme aims for, how quickly should students show the learning process with regard to this aspect, what are the expectations in this respect, ... as important. In doing so, the panel encourages the programme to look over the wall at other programmes, collect good practices as well as generally encourage this outlook through e.g. guest lectures, analysis of international articles, its own student population, ...

In addition, the panel encourages the programme to proactively seek international students and encourage the international context in function of the started development of the English-language programme. After all, the proportion of international students is not necessarily guaranteed. As a starting point, the panel

would like to suggest that the programme considers what it can already in regards to the international perspective. There are already several ideas among students that the programme could easily seize upon, such as the use of a buddy system.

It would be nice to see different ways of thinking, analyse how websites of other media work and do journalism. (student)

3.3 Focus theme: Cooperation with the International and English-speaking field within internships

The programme is looking for new insights into how to strengthen its relationship with the international and English-speaking field. The programme considers this important as a function of offering qualitative internships. Realising a win-win is paramount in this respect. Together with the panel, the study programme would like to get insights into how it can develop further relationships with the international and English-speaking work field.

It is clear from the conversation that there is a great openness among teachers to think of ways to improve and strengthen cooperation. The panel appreciates the different ideas it heard during the conversation. In doing so, it sees enthusiastic teachers who want to start working on these partnerships. As a result, the panel encourages the programme to play to the strengths of the programme and its students even more in the quest for closer cooperation with the field. After all, students are found to be strong by the work field partners.

Overall, the panel considers it important to develop a plan of action that will guide the search for and strengthening of cooperation with the international and English-speaking field. Indeed, the panel notes highly individual perspectives as well as individual drive of lecturers to build and strengthen collaborations. The panel appreciates this but deems a future-proof policy within which lecturers can navigate to build and shape collaborations necessary.

"We need more structural partnerships. Now it's more of ad hoc." (lecturer)

As a function of and closely in line with the above development opportunity, the panel encourages choices to be made at the policy level that encourage the further development of the programme in its new format. The strength of reforming the programme lies in the idea that a new and innovative approach can be adopted. This is therefore also true in seeking new collaborations as well as strengthening existing ones. This implies thinking out of the box, critically examining the curriculum as well as existing partnerships so that the network can grow further. The panel sees a first step to be taken in making an analysis of the sector and companies and mapping their expectations so that these can be matched with expectations from the study programme.

I think we have to intensify it. Have partnerships with other countries to develop our network. This requires a better insight in the international media landscape. A study of what interesting companies are for our students is important (lecturer)

In addition, according to the panel, there are opportunities to enter into long-term collaborations and build partnerships to further shape the network structurally. Calling on the expertise of other programmes, the unit in which the programme is embedded and the university of applied sciences can be helpful in this.

In addition, the panel encourages the study programme to make the internship concept more robust by, among other things, incorporating consultation before and after the internship in terms of qualitative internship placements, establishing criteria as previously described in this report, as well as bringing

forward the timing of students' contacting internship placements. Students and professionals indicate that this is often started too late to find a suitable international internship. The length of the internship also plays a role.

These international internships aren't easy to find. Students need help. They need to find in theory an internship themselves. That's not easy to find abroad. We need to help them. (lecturer)

3.4 Focus theme: Profiling the programme towards international students

The programme is looking for ways in which it can correctly represent its strengths and strengths to (potential) international students. It aims to properly inform prospective students. Together with the panel, the programme is looking for ways to strengthen a good match between international students and the programme.

The programme has several strengths that it can use in function of profiling the programme to potential study candidates. For instance, during the conversation, students indicated that the programme is very practice-oriented and strongly committed to offering practice-oriented classes.

"[About the strengths of the programme] It's practical classes. I really had the opportunity to train my skills." (student)

Its location is also seen by students and the work field as a strength that the programme can further deploy. In addition, the panel recognises the strength of the international students already present. The panel sees an opportunity to build on these students. After all, profiling the study programme in places where it is already active can be a first accessible step. The panel urges the programme to take steps in this regard.

Among the different actors around the table, there are several ideas to further develop the profiling of the programme. One example that the panel heard during the discussion is the possibility of targeting refugees and young people with migration backgrounds.

"We need to have more people from a migratory background who are based in Belgium. Living in Belgium but raised in Belgium." (lecturer)

In addition, the panel sees the pitfall of focusing too broadly. After all, international is a large domain. The panel encourages the programme to maintain sufficient focus through a well thought-out step-by-step plan built into a multi-year plan. This laying down provides the programme's actors with structure regarding the choices to be made and made.

Closely related to the above opportunity, the panel sees the opportunity for the programme to sharply define what distinguishes and makes them strong compared to other international Journalism programmes. The panel also considers the touchstone of how this relates to the newly established mission and vision to be relevant in this regard. The panel encourages the programme to undertake this exercise and be inspired by it. As already mentioned, the panel notes that several elements are already present in the programme that could sharpen its profile towards international students.

4. Ambitions of the programme

Initially, the programme will focus on the advice given regarding the final level. As a first step, the phrasing of the OLR will be reviewed in function of the new mission and vision. The aim is then to formulate it more towards the International Journalism programme.

From the above exercise, the specific OLRs linked to final work, Internship and News Lab will be reviewed with the aim of formulating them more clearly.

After that, other development opportunities and advice will be worked on, such as looking at the format for internship reports, further developing a framework for qualitative internships, ...

5. Annexes

5.1 Panel composition

For the education mirror, Thomas More works with a panel consisting of a chair, familiar with higher education, a domain expert, active (or having been active) in the same or a related 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 International Journalism:

- Lieke Mensink, chairman. Lieke Mensink is Educationalist and lecturer Professional Development at Breda University of Applied Sciences.
- Niek Hietbrink, domain expert. Niek Hietbrink is lecturer in Journalism Studies at the journalism programme and researcher at the Constructive Journalism lectorate, both part of Windesheim University of Applied Sciences. He collaborated in teaching exchange students and the Dialogue project (for participating partner institutions see dialogue-journalism.eu).
- Stefan Blommaert, work field representative. Stefan Blommaert is a former Flemish news anchor and journalist at VRT's foreign affairs department.
- Liselore Curinckx, student. Liselore Curinckx is an International Business Management student at Thomas More in Mechelen.
- Isabel Deprez, internal education expert. Isabel Deprez holds a master's degree in Pedagogical Sciences. She has been education development coordinator at Thomas More college since 2014. Since 2016, she has been director of education and internationalisation.

5.2 Programme visit

- 08.30 - 09.00 | Preparation panel
- 09.00 - 09.15 | Explanation by the programme
- 09.15 - 10.15 | Encouraging global outlook among students
Core: The programme aims to educate its students with a broad view of the world that enables them to break away from their own region-bound frame of reference. Thus, the programme strives to bring a non-eurocentric approach into its curriculum. The programme feels that within an international programme, the student population is becoming more and more diverse. In a globalised world, this results in different perspectives and cultural backgrounds coming together. The programme wishes to engage in a dialogue and jointly look for ways in which it can guard the balance between students' frame of reference on the one hand and teaching/managing a global perspective on the other.
 - How can the programme encourage students to become sufficiently detached from their own perspective?
 - What role can the diversity among the student and faculty population that the programme has play in this?
 - How do we achieve a non-eurocentric approach without losing the European perspective?
- 10:45 - 11:45 | Collaboration with the international and English-speaking field within internships

Core: The programme would like to gain new insights into how to strengthen its relationship with the international and English-speaking work field. This is important in terms of offering quality internships in an international context and realising a win-win for all parties.

- How can the programme strengthen its relationship with the international/English-speaking work field with a view to quality internships?
 - What opportunities remain to be seized?
 - What is needed in education and the field to further develop this collaboration?
 - What expectations from the international field should the programme take into account in terms of internships?
- 12.15 - 13.30 | Lunch and tour of infrastructure
 - 13.30 - 14.30 | Profiling the programme to international students
Core: The programme knows its strengths and strengths. The challenge is to land this correctly with the international student to enable him to make an informed choice to enter the programme. The programme is looking for a good match between the international talents and the programme.
 - Can the programme ensure that its international intake is increased through proper profiling? What is required for this? In what way does this land in an ideal case?
 - What does the foreign student need to make the decision to enter this programme? What can the programme excel at to recruit these students? What can still be developed? What is strong about the programme that is quite obvious to a Flemish/Dutch student?
 - How can the programme balance the needs of the international potential entrant with the profile of the programme in the international education market as a qualitative training pathway?
 - 15.00 - 16.00 | Final level
core: Can the programme guarantee the level 6 and professional orientation of its graduates? Are they prepared to start as entry-level professionals?
 - Prepared as an entry-level professional?
 - Sufficiently strong foundation in terms of professional knowledge and skills?
 - Keep up with evolutions in the field?
 - 16.30 - 18.00 | Internal consultation
 - 18.00 - 18.30 | 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 International Journalism programme assesses students' final level through News Lab, Final Work and Internship.

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 programme has made the domain-specific learning outcomes (DLR) concrete in 3 proficiency levels and indicated in which course units the relevant DLR is made concrete in learning objectives. The way this is presented is not very insightful. It requires a thorough study to ascertain the extent to which the DLR are gradually developed to final level.
- With regard to the final level achieved, it is unclear in advance to what extent learning outcome 10 (Familiarity with Journalism sector) in one of the three course units has been concretised in corresponding learning objective(s) at final level.
- With regard to sustainability, a lot is unclear beforehand, even after requesting additional information:
 - Regarding internship:
 - the link between learning objectives and assessment criteria is not clear
 - unclear quality criteria for internships
 - unclear criteria to be met by the self-evaluation of the internship
 - unclear how the final assessment of the student is established
 - Regarding Final Work
 - the link between the learning objectives and the assessment criteria is not clear
 - unclear criteria on which basis the topics for final work are approved
 - unclear criteria with which final products must comply
 - unclear how the final assessment of the student comes about
- During the conversation, the ambiguities regarding the final level achieved were answered.
- During the conversation, the ambiguities regarding the sustainable character were partially answered..

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 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 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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