

Questions & answers

REPORT OF THE SESSION FOR NAAs, Nesos, ALUMNI OFFICERS AND Nuffic HELD ON 6/11/2009 AT BEL AIR HOTEL

On the following pages Nuffic has elaborated on the questions that came up in the session for NAA's during the Holland Alumni conference. Nuffic is well aware of the importance of NAA's and its board members. We do hope the following answers and explanations give you, as a board member of an NAA, a clear insight in the possibilities of the Holland Alumni network.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Nuffic

Suzanne Körmeling

Shirley van Maren-Zoutendijk

Elsien Rauws

Aparajita Dutta

J.M. De Graaf – Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

Nuffic Neso officers

Brazil

China

Thailand

Indonesia

India

Russia

Vietnam

Mexico

Alumni officers

ITC

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Unesco-IHE

InHolland

PTC+

Radboud University Nijmegen

Wageningen University

ISS

RNTC

Universiteit Tilburg

Haagse Hogeschool

IHS

NAA Representatives

Argentina

Bangladesh

Colombia

Ecuador

Ethiopia

Ghana

Kenya

Macedonia

Nepal

Philippines

Russia

Sri Lanka

Syria

Thailand

Uganda

Background of the session

One Board member from the NAAs of various countries was invited to attend the Holland Alumni Conference – 2009. The NAAs appreciate and thank Nuffic for the opportunity extended for them to come together to discuss issues central to the day to day running and management of the NAAs worldwide.

However, the NAAs were little disappointed that there wasn't any planned session for the NAAs on the conference programme and that there appeared to be no set role for the NAA officers present at the conference, despite the availed opportunity to have direct interaction and discuss various issues with and amongst themselves.

While a number of Board members from various NAAs sat contemplating on whether Nuffic sees any future role of the NAAs on the backdrop of establishing Nesos and the Virtual Alumni Platform, Mr. Joep F. Houterman, Director for Capacity Building & Scholarships Directorate was contacted and helped in arranging a session for the NAAs, Nuffic, and the Alumni Officers of various institutes on the afternoon of 6th November leading to the discussions herein reported. Our gratitude to Mr. Houterman.

The session

The session began with introductory remarks from Shirley van Maren from Nuffic who called upon Suzanne Körmeling also from Nuffic to talk about the virtual platform.

It was explained that the Virtual Platform:

- Will host the alumni database held by Nuffic
- Will provide information about education in the Netherlands, alumni activities and other news from Nuffic, NAAs and the Institutions of higher education.
- Brings together Holland alumni networks; the network connects Holland Alumni to their former Dutch Higher Education Institution, Holland Alumni networks in their home countries (NAAs & HANs), Holland Alumni networks in their field of expertise and Holland Alumni networks form their scholarship.
- The network presented to the conference is a first version. Nuffic encourages NAAs, Holland Alumni and Dutch Higher Education Institutions to give feedback and input in what tools, information and functionalities to add in the virtual network.

Introduction of members present

- Each member present made a self introduction by giving their name, country, association/institution and a brief description of activities within their association/institution.
- Members also had opportunities to express the main concerns they held with regard to relations between Nuffic, the Institutions and NAAs

Report on NAA roles, opportunities and challenges

This was given by Dr. M.A Quassem of NAA-Bangladesh following deliberations by representatives of NAAs

It was reported that:

- NAA officials are volunteers who use their time, money and other material resources to run the activities of the alumni association and since NAA was initiated as local or country based link between the Dutch Institutes and their alumni in their own countries, there is need for financial facilitation to set up and run secretariats for efficient and effective coordination of alumni activities.

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs finances a number of alumni activities under the Netherlands Fellowship Programmes. A local Netherlands Alumni Association can, for example, apply for a starting-up subsidy. Any funding made available is primarily to be used to create the necessary infrastructure and to guarantee the basic conditions needed for a successful start. For more information on eligibility and procedure please check <http://www.hollandalumni.nl/Associations/AssociationsperScholarship/NFPalumni.aspx>. Unfortunately there are no funds available for the day-to-day running of an NAA.

The new virtual Holland Alumni network offers a variety of services that could benefit the NAAs, as for instance the online training modules on Fundraising and Networking. You can find these services at: <http://www.hollandalumni.nl/Services/Servicesforassociations.aspx>

- Direct link between the alma-maters/Dutch Institutions and the Institutions Alumni Chapters without reference to the umbrella NAA renders the role of the NAA redundant. This is because institutional Alumni Chapters (such as UNESCO-IHE AA, ITC AA, ISS AA etc) are a subset under the umbrella NAAs (such as NAA Kenya, NAA Argentina etc).

This is required so as to make meaningful collaboration between the Institutional Alumni Officers, Institutions alumni chapters (like UNESCO-IHE AA, ITC AA, ISSAA) and the NAAs on alumni activities

Nuffic will inform Dutch institutions on the importance of national NAAs and will urge them to contact the national NAA when starting an institutional Alumni Chapter.

- Let Institutions inform the NAAs of their intentions and activities with their specific alumni chapters on issues such as refresher courses, alumni gathering to enable joint planning and implementation of the same.

Nuffic will inform Dutch institutions on the importance of the use of the Holland Alumni network when communicating with their alumni. Publishing alumni activities on the Network

will increase the visibility and awareness of activities for alumni and will give the NAAs a possibility to discuss collaboration.

- Nuffic should require NFP beneficiaries to sign up in their NAA so that as they return to their countries they can use knowledge and skills gained for development as well as participate in NAA activities.

Nuffic and the Dutch institutions can inform alumni-to-be of the existence and activities of an NAA in their country. Nor Nuffic nor the institutions can force alumni-to-be to join an NAA. Again it is, however, very important to stretch the importance and benefits of joining an NAA.

- Nuffic should have a one-point Contact Officer for the NAAs.

For NAAs in countries on the NFP list, and co-funded by the Netherlands Fellowship Programmes, there are two permanent representatives within the Nuffic NFP-team: Elsie Rauws and Lenneke Haket. They are responsible for all alumni activities of the NFP, including Refresher courses. It is, however, possible that NAAs are occasionally contacted by other Nuffic staff, in the case of Nuffic-broad alumni matters.

- To attribute value added to the role of the NAAs , the following are suggested:
 - Applicants to participate in alumni conferences or any other alumni activity should be endorsed by their NAAs. Or NAA endorsed applicants should get preference in consideration for participation.

Nuffic acknowledges the importance of the existence of NAAs and will try to involve the NAAs, where possible, with selection procedures of alumni activities organised by Nuffic. Moreover, Nuffic should inform NAAs on alumni activities and the role of their associations in these activities through the Holland Alumni Network.

- After the participants come to the Institutes, they should be asked to forward their address and the e-mail address and Telephone No. to the NAAs.

Nuffic will inform Dutch institutions on the importance of national NAAs and will urge them to inform alumni-to-be of the existence and activities of an NAA in their country.

- NAAs organize reception (introduction to the Netherlands) or a pre-departure briefing for NFP beneficiaries and other students proceeding to the Netherlands for further studies. And it is suggested that Nuffic and local Dutch Embassies should facilitate this.

The pre-departure meetings that are organized by some NAAs (for example the NAA in Kenya) are very important and useful for future students. Unfortunately, there are no Nuffic funds available for such activities. The NFP does offer the possibility of co-financing of alumni activities, therefore if a pre-departure meeting is embedded in a larger alumni activity (a seminar, annual assembly, etc.) it is possible to request co-financing. Please check <http://www.nuffic.nl/international-students/alumni/holland-alumni-network/scholarship-programmes/nfp-alumni/> for more information on eligibility and procedure.

NAAs can act as contact point for Dutch visiting professors to countries where NAAs exist and the NAA can help organize a lecture or a placement at local universities for them.

NAAs should contact Dutch institutions and embassies about these matters. Nuffic will inform Dutch institutions and embassies on what an NAA could possibly mean/do for Dutch institutions and embassies (a la Nuffic Neso corporate brochure).

Institutes should provide some financial support to the NAAs towards organizing specific events on their behalf.

This point should be discussed directly with the Dutch institutions.

NAA-Neso collaboration

The case of successful collaboration between NAAs and Nesos was shared with specific example from Indonesia and Thailand.

Observations:

- They exchange ideas and information with regard to alumni activities and Education in the Netherlands
- The Neso facilitates some activities and events for the NAA.

Discussion

a. Databases

- There are 4 types (Nuffic, Institutional, Neso, NAA)
- Laws on information exchange hinder sharing information held across the various types of databases to the disadvantage of NAAs who hold outdated or limited information on NFP beneficiaries and alumni from Dutch institutions of higher education.

NAAs can now contact alumni directly through the Holland alumni website via report news and events.

- Nuffic and Dutch Institutes can help the NAAs in establishing, maintaining and updating the NAA databases.

This can now be done through www.hollandalumni.nl.

- From the Institutional point of view, it was observed that the issue of sharing contact information of an individual by an Institution to third parties is delicate as this is not permitted by law. A proposed solution to this issue is that, the institutions be informed about activities by the NAAs so that the Institution can send out the invitation to the relevant group of their alumni.

This can now be done through www.hollandalumni.nl.

b. The roles and expectations from NAAs, Nesos, Institutions and Nuffic with regard to alumni activities should be made clear and complementary.

Nuffic elaborates on this in the NFP alumni policy.

c. NAAs should be strengthened through collaborations with Nuffic, Institutions, Nesos (where they exist) as well by idea exchange and information sharing.

d. There is need to facilitate the activities of NAAs for annual alumni meetings, pre-departure briefings, publications, development of refresher courses and communication with members as they are ambassadors of the Dutch education and culture.

e. Participants to the alumni conference and other activities should be made know to each other so as to plan and prepare for the event together.

In the future, Nuffic will publish participant lists of Nuffic Holland Alumni events on www.hollandalumni.nl. This way NAAs and participants can e-mail each other and get into contact before the event.

f. Who is an alumnus/alumna?

There was a discussion as to when one is considered an alumnus/alumna, the following points were contested:

- By duration of study – Do participants of especially short stay programs lasting two weeks or less qualify to be alumni?
- Completion of enrolled programme – Can course dropouts and failures be considered as alumni?
- Anybody who is regarded as alumnus/alumna by the concerned NL institute/university.

Nuffic considers any international student who participated in a study programme at a Dutch higher education institutions, that signed the Code of Conduct, a Holland alumnus or Holland alumna. Nuffic will communicate this clearly on the Holland Alumni network. Please note that Dutch institutions may have other definitions of alumni.

g. What conditions should alumni fulfil in order to represent a country?

- It was mentioned the case a conference participant who did not know about the existence of his NAA. Some countries require NAA membership to participate in refresher courses, conference and other activities although this is not a Nuffic requirement.

This is not a Nuffic requirement. Nuffic cannot force alumni to join an NAA. All Nuffic alumni should be able to benefit from activities organised for alumni.

- From the Institutional point of view, it was observed that some alumni were better for representing their Institute and country and this should be taken into consideration during the selection of participants to future events.

Where possible, NAAs will be asked to assist with the selection of participants. However, all Nuffic alumni should be able to benefit from activities organised for alumni.

- NAAs and local Embassies know which alumni are of good standing, are active and deserving of participation to events as they can drive required processes. In this regard it is recommended that Nuffic consults NAAs and the Embassies in the process of selection of alumni to events.

Where possible, NAAs will be asked to assist with the selection of participants. This depends however on the type of event that is organised. With each event, Nuffic will decide whether NAA's have the required expertise to do so (for example: conference participants for events focussed on area's of expertise cannot be recommended by NAAs).

Issues for future discussion

- Support of NAAs
- How NAAs could take part and collaborate in Nuffic projects that impact on them

NAAs can benefit from online training courses, Refresher courses, training & workshops. Moreover, the Netherlands Fellowship Programmes offer the possibility of co-financing of alumni activities.

Several new recommendations for alumni activities have been set out in the NFP Alumni plan 2010-2012. More information will be available after approval of the alumni plan by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- The expectations of Nuffic from countries where NFP has been stopped. How can the NAAs of such countries maintain active alumni chapters and continued links with the Netherlands?

Nuffic will continue to support these NAAs by means of online trainings, the Holland Alumni Database and the Holland Alumni network. The goal is to make NAAs in former NFP countries financially self-supported. In this way the future existence of the NAA does not depend on Nuffic funds.

- Ensuring the return of alumni to their countries after completion for the initially anticipated contribution to development.

This is not the responsibility of the NAAs.

- Communication between Nuffic, NAAs and Institutions in order to reach as many alumni as possible with activities and programmes.

This can now be done through www.hollandalumni.nl.

- Mechanisms through which NAAs can promote Dutch Education in cost effective ways.

Nuffic can facilitate promotion of Dutch higher education by sending promotion materials and share presentations. Moreover, the Netherlands Fellowship Programmes offer the possibility of co-financing of alumni activities.

On behalf of the NAAs participating in the NAA session at the Holland Alumni conference 2009,

Dorine Lugendo

Secretary and Founder NAA – Kenya

c/o Royal Netherlands Embassy Nairobi