

College of Europe

Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs

Initial accreditation

19 April 2017

Panel report

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1 Executive summary

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) received a request for an initial accreditation from The College of Europe for an initial master after master programme. Together with The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, The College of Europe seeks initial accreditation for the proposed joint degree “Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs”.

The expert panel was convened by the NVAO and agreed to by both institutions. The panel has examined the available information and discussed the proposed programme with representatives of the institution and the programme, students and representatives of the professional field during a site visit. Based on this information the panel has written this report to the board of the NVAO.

In the 21st century, the US and the European Union (EU) face increasingly complex political, economic and societal challenges which – given their common interests and shared values – they best address in common. A genuine transatlantic degree aimed at the preparation of future leaders in transatlantic affairs in a broad sense seems very timely given the increased interest in transatlantic relations. Therefore, The College of Europe in Bruges (Belgium) and Natolin (Warsaw, Poland) in collaboration with The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, in Medford (greater Boston area, USA) intend to seek initial accreditation for the proposed joint degree “Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs” (MATA). This degree would constitute the first joint degree of both partner institutions, bringing together the world’s first higher education institute of postgraduate studies in European affairs (founded in 1949) and the first graduate-only school of international affairs in the United States (founded in 1933).

By achieving the learning outcomes, graduates of this study programme will be prepared for careers in positions of leadership in a variety of areas – ranging from international and national public sector functions to responsibilities in the private and not-for-profit sectors –, with an international outlook and capable of dealing with cross-border issues in a multidimensional way. The focus of the programme is on *affairs* rather than *relations*. The panel was pleased to learn that there is a close link between the professional field and the institutes, which is in line with the professional focus of the master’s programme. However, it also strongly recommends to keep options open for students who aim for an academic career and is positive about the mentioned doctorate programme with Fletcher School. The panel concluded that the professional level of intended learning outcomes of the master’s programme is according to international standards. Overall with respect to level, orientation and content, the panel considers the intended exit level reflects the current requirements that are set for the programme at an advanced master’s level from a professional and international perspective.

The panel considers that the programme is built in a coherent way and the curriculum contents cover the envisaged learning outcomes.

Admission to the MATA programme requires at least four years of university studies and a final university degree comprising at least 240 ECTS (in, for example, international relations, political science, diplomatic studies, Law, Economics or Business Administration, European or American Studies or Contemporary history) and at least six months of relevant working experience. In addition, students should have a strong interest in transatlantic affairs and basic knowledge of the European Union and the US. Finally, the applicants need to demonstrate a very good mastery of the English language (C1).

The two-year MATA programme is an advanced master after master study programme, which will amount to 120 ECTS. The structure of the curriculum foresees a first year of studies at one of the two institutions. In either of the two scenarios, all MATA students follow an additional joint transatlantic course ("Transatlantic Affairs in the 21st Century"), during the first semester, and work with the other MATA students on a joint transatlantic project during the second semester. The second year of studies begins with a 3-4-month high-level internship during semester 3. The fourth and final semester is spent at the other institution. Regardless of whether students start the programme at the College of Europe or at The Fletcher School, they will be able to opt for internships in the United States or Europe, as long as these internships are related to transatlantic affairs. However, it is strongly recommended that the high-level internship is carried out on the side of the Atlantic where the MATA student will spend his or her last semester in order to ensure that each student spends one year on both sides.

The panel was impressed by the staff involved in the programme, both in terms of quality and quantity. Lecturers are invariably established experts in their own field, while support staff is dedicated to their tasks and very professional. According to the panel, the student will benefit from the good quality and services that are already available on both institutions. In sum, the panel concludes that a few months prior to the envisaged starting date of the master's programme, the curriculum contents have been developed to a large extent. The panel advises the programme management to pay specific attention to the organization of the compulsory internship as this may be quite a challenge. The Joint MATA Committee's and support staff's commitment for assisting students in finding a suitable internship convinced the panel that this challenge can be met.

According to the panel the assessment systems in the two institutions are comparable, compatible, and of high quality. The teaching staff is first in line to ensure the validity of an exam and is responsible to guarantee fairness and sufficient comparability. Although this requires constant attention, the panel believes this requirement is met through several ex ante and ex post methods of ensuring the validity and reliability of the assessment, even though these methods may differ for both institutions. Moreover, the panel is assured that students are able to receive feedback, that appeal is sufficiently possible and that the supervision and evaluation of the internship and MA thesis is well-organised. Specific attention is and must be paid to the joint elements involving co-examination and to the length of the thesis being in accordance with the chosen study track.

The panel considers the system for quality management to be up to standards. The information dossier already contained many provisional measures for the internal quality assurance. During the site visit the panel became convinced that the layered strategy for continuous monitoring and enhancement of the quality of the programme is solid. The direct accessibility of the (local) MATA Committees is advantageous for the students for direct and more informal feedback on the quality of the programme. Moreover, the panel has established that staff, students and the professional field are sufficiently involved in the internal quality assurance process. The panel appreciates the external peer review by means of a critical friends exercise and advises that this exercise should be organised soon after the start of the programme.

The panel is confident that the programme, once started, will meet the international quality standards that can be expected from an advanced master after master programme in Transatlantic Affairs.

The Hague, 19 April 2017

On behalf of the expert panel convened to assess the joint degree "Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs" (master after master),

Prof. dr. M.H. Smith
(panel chair)

Mrs. E.W.H. Kozłowska MA
(secretary)

2 Assessment per generic quality guarantee

This chapter presents the evaluation by the assessment panel of the four generic quality guarantees, which the NVAO Assessment Framework is composed of. The panel has reproduced the criteria for each generic quality guarantee. For each generic quality guarantee the panel presents (1) a brief outline of its findings based on the programme documents and on documents provided by the institution and the site visit, (2) the considerations the panel has taken into account and (3) the conclusion of the panel. The panel presents a conclusion for each of the four generic quality guarantees.

2.1 Intended exit level (generic quality guarantee 1)

With respect to level, orientation and content, the intended exit level reflects the current requirements that have been set for the programme by the professional field and/or discipline from an international perspective.

Outline of findings

In the 21st century, the US and the European Union (EU) face increasingly complex political, economic and societal challenges which – given their common interests and shared values – they best address in common. Their public administrations, economies, militaries and civil societies need well-educated graduates with an excellent understanding of their respective political and legal systems, economies and foreign policy as well as global governance and with highly developed professional skills. A genuine transatlantic degree aimed at the preparation of future leaders in transatlantic affairs in a broad sense seems very timely given the increased interest in transatlantic relations, inter alia due to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership negotiations, the revival of NATO and the challenges posed to a rules-based international system by new dynamics of great power politics and the destabilizing effects of failed states and of emerging non-state actors such as terrorist networks.

Therefore, The College of Europe in Bruges (Belgium) and Natolin (Warsaw, Poland) in collaboration with The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, in Medford (greater Boston area, USA) intend to seek initial accreditation for the proposed joint degree “Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs” (MATA). This degree would constitute the first joint degree of both partner institutions, bringing together the world’s first higher education institute of postgraduate studies in European affairs (founded in 1949) and the first graduate-only school of international affairs in the United States (founded in 1933).

The panel studied the general mission and the formulated learning outcomes, developed by both institutions. The general mission, to prepare graduates for positions of leadership in various areas, with an international outlook and capable of dealing with cross-border issues in a multidimensional way, entails that graduates of the two institutions are capable of analysing complex challenges, identifying adequate solutions and assuming the responsibility for implementing such solutions. The programme management translated the mission into a set of ten programme-specific learning outcomes that can be grouped into two clusters around knowledge and skills (see Annex 2).

Prior to the site visit the panel had some questions and concerns about the 'transatlanticness' of the programme. The information dossier states that the term 'transatlantic affairs' has to be understood in the broad sense as comprising the current and past economic, legal and political relations between the United States and the European Union and its member states in both a bilateral and in a multilateral context. During the site visit the programme management explained that the focus of the programme is on *affairs* rather than *relations*.

The panel also expressed its concern about the transatlantic student experience: how can the transatlanticness, for example, be guaranteed for a single student in Natolin? During the site visit it became clear that 'isolation' of students is a point of attention during the selection procedure. Besides, every campus will bring its own perspective into the programme and the Natolin Eastern Europe perspective is considered of great importance for the US students.

By achieving the learning outcomes, graduates of this study programme will be prepared for careers in positions of leadership in a variety of areas – ranging from international and national public sector functions to responsibilities in the private and not-for-profit sectors –, with an international outlook and capable of dealing with cross-border issues in a multidimensional way. The panel is aware of the professional focus of the master's programme, but discussed the possibility and accessibility of an academic research career path during the site visit. The programme management confirmed that the focus of The College of Europe itself and the Transatlantic programme is on professional careers, although the programme provides a research seminar and the student is obliged to write a master thesis based on academic criteria. The panel strongly recommends to keep options open for students who aim for an academic career and is positive about the mentioned doctorate programme with the Fletcher School.

The panel was pleased to learn that there is a close link between the professional field and the institutes.

Considerations

The panel concluded that professional level of intended learning outcomes of the master's programme is according to international standards; the panel recommends to pay attention to the academic career possibility. The necessary competences are presented in the information dossier and are discussed during the site visit. The close link between the professional fields and the institutes is highly valued.

Overall with respect to level, orientation and content, the panel considers the intended exit level is reflecting the current requirements that are set for the programme at an advanced master's level from a professional and international perspective.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the generic quality guarantee 1 *Intended exit level* as **satisfactory**.

2.2 Teaching-learning environment (generic quality guarantee 2)

The teaching-learning environment enables the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Outline of findings

2.2.1 Admission and intake

Admission to the MATA programme requires at least four years of university studies and a final university degree comprising at least 240 ECTS (in, for example, international relations, political science, diplomatic studies, Law, Economics or Business Administration, European or American Studies or Contemporary history) and at least six months of relevant working experience. Besides, students should have a strong interest in transatlantic affairs and basic knowledge of the European Union and the US. Finally, the applicants need to demonstrate a very good mastery of the English language (C1).

Students who want to spend their first year at The Fletcher School will directly apply to Fletcher, students wishing to begin their studies at the College of Europe will apply to the College. Based on a preselection involving the mutual sharing and joint assessments of the application files, the two institutions closely coordinate the ultimate selection of candidates to ensure that these are suited to successfully pursue their studies at both institutions. This is done based on a catalogue of jointly defined admissions criteria. They include, besides the criteria mentioned above, also an adequate disciplinary background for the chosen study track, a clearly articulated and strong motivation for pursuing this study programme and indications of a mature and open-minded personality. Interviews with short-listed candidates will be conducted by the College of Europe.

The College of Europe and the Fletcher School intend to cap admissions during the first two years at around ten students, with five students in each of the two partners institutions. During the site visit the panel learned that there has been a huge interest from potential students and that interest is coming mainly from the European side. The programme management explained that a number of 70 (completed) applicants is expected and although the management aims to be flexible, the number of 10 students will be maintained to ensure a manageable start of the programme with high-quality students.

2.2.2 Curriculum and collaboration between the two institutes

The two-year MATA programme is an advanced master after master study programme, which will amount to 120 ECTS. It follows a common structure, while the specific courses that students follow will differ depending on whether they choose to spend their first year of studies at the College of Europe or at The Fletcher School, and on the specific study track.

The structure of the curriculum foresees a first year of studies at one of the two institutions. If this year is spent at the College of Europe, students will integrate one of the Departments (European Economic Studies; European Interdisciplinary Studies (NatoLin); EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies; European Legal Studies; European Political and Administrative Studies) and follow a subset of courses from the programme offered by this Department. The number of courses may differ according to the study track, but amount to 36 ECTS in total for the year. If the first year is spent at The Fletcher School, students will follow three courses in the first semester plus four courses in the second semester, and the total workload of these courses will amount to 42 ECTS. These courses can be chosen from the three divisions of The Fletcher School (International Law and Organizations; Economics and International Business; and Diplomacy, History and Politics), according to the same distributional requirements expected of all one-year Fletcher MA students, taking into account the requirements and recommendations for the chosen study track at the College of Europe. At the end of each semester, students sit exams at their respective institution.

In either of the two scenarios, all MATA students follow an additional joint transatlantic course ("Transatlantic Affairs in the 21st Century"), during the first semester, and work with the other MATA students on a joint transatlantic project during the second semester. The transatlantic course will comprise 20 hours of lecture-based instruction on the EU's and US political systems as well as on the history and on the cultural, economic, legal and political aspects of current transatlantic relations. It will be co-taught by professors from each institution. The course will be delivered via video-conferencing between the campuses. It represents an indispensable prerequisite for all students to learn the basics of transatlantic affairs, the EU and the US political systems. Moreover, it will allow students to get to know each other virtually across the campuses so as to form a community spirit within the MATA programme. The course carries 5 ECTS points.

The transatlantic project is closely interlinked with and builds on this course and what students will have learned during the first semester. It will take the form of a capstone project (3 ECTS) in which students will have to jointly engage in solving a problem of a transatlantic nature. The contact hours for this course will be limited to 15, but students will extensively collaborate and present their project at the end of the first year at a joint conference. This event will alternately be organized on either side of the Atlantic. The project will be assessed by the professors supervising the project.

For every student, the second year of studies begins with a 3-4-month high-level internship during semester 3. The internship is an intrinsic component of this programme. Students will, in principle, be responsible for identifying and organizing their own internships in different sectors (public, private, nonprofit), as appropriate to their interests, with advice from the Careers Offices of The Fletcher School and the College of Europe. The internship will have to be related to transatlantic affairs, and approved by the appropriate person or bodies at each institution (the Directors of Studies of the programmes at the College of Europe, Fletcher's local MATA programme committee).

Regardless of whether students start the programme at the College of Europe or at The Fletcher School, they will be able to opt for internships in the United States or Europe, as long as these internships are related to transatlantic affairs. However, it is strongly recommended that the high-level internship is carried out on the side of the Atlantic where the MATA student will spend his or her last semester in order to ensure that each student spends one year on both sides. Students will be required to write a report of about 6000 words on their internship, describing their contributions and critically evaluating their experience.

The panel is convinced that the internship is a significant part of the programme but has some concerns. First, the period of time is limited. Since students are expected to follow a high-quality internship, in a renowned organization, the organization of the internship may be quite a challenge. Second, it might be challenging to organize an internship in the US when studying in Europe and vice versa. The programme management admitted that this is the first time the College of Europe has worked with a compulsory internship and explained that the Joint MATA Committee is responsible for assisting students in finding a suitable internship. In the exceptional case where a student is unable to obtain an appropriate internship, it will be permissible to substitute it by one additional semester of coursework on the campus at which the student is spending the second year.

The fourth and final semester is spent at the other institution, meaning that students who started at The Fletcher School will continue their studies at the College of Europe. They will integrate one of the study programmes and follow courses with a workload of 18 ECTS. Students who started at the College of Europe will follow four courses at The Fletcher School during the fourth semester (for a total of 24 ECTS). Students can choose one course via cross-registering at one of the partner universities of The Fletcher School, such as the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. At the end of the fourth semester, students sit exams at their respective institution. The study programme ends with the MA thesis, which has to be submitted during the fourth semester. This MA thesis has to be a substantial piece of research on a topic of transatlantic relevance. It accounts for 26 ECTS.

2.2.3 *Staff*

The College of Europe faculty comprises top-level academics and instructors from the professional field, who are all dedicated to furthering the institution's educational vision. The faculty currently consists of 282 visiting professors (210 in Bruges and 72 in Natolin; 11 professors teach on both campuses), 6 directors of studies (5 in Bruges and 1 in Natolin), 4 permanent professors in Bruges and 1 in Natolin, 2 chairholders in Bruges and 2 in Natolin, and 35 academic assistants (25 in Bruges and 10 in Natolin).

Members of the Fletcher faculty are committed educators who are internationally respected for their work and are at the forefront of their fields. Their active engagement in the world translates to stimulating classroom discussion and curriculums that include practical and real-world skills. Fletcher's world-renowned faculty are distinguished researchers who regularly publish in leading scholarly and popular journals. The faculty consists of 87 staff members (44 full time, 34 part time, 9 with a Tufts University affiliation), the administration consists of 86 staff members (76 full and part time, 10 with a Tufts University affiliation).

As only one really new course shall be created in the early stages of the programme, the programme mainly relies on existing staff and the teaching of existing courses. Except for the availability of half an FTE for each of the institutions, no new resources will be devoted to the MATA programme.

During the site visit it became clear that both institutions highly value exchange of staff. The interaction and exchange of staff is a part of the signed Memorandum of Understanding and the panel would recommend to organize the planned joint events.

2.2.4 Facilities and student guidance

The College of Europe has two campuses, one in Bruges and one in Natolin (Warsaw). On both campuses, the students benefit from the same high-quality facilities that are also offered to the regular one-year MA students. In Bruges, the College is located in two administrative sites in the centre of the city.

The College of Europe houses most of its students in nine residences in the inner city of Bruges (currently 309 student rooms). All students have individual rooms with a wireless Internet connection as well as a private bathroom. In addition, communal leisure and entertainment facilities are available in each residence. Students in Bruges have access to the restaurant, Garenmarkt 15, for lunch and dinner upon presentation of their student C-Card. The Natolin campus with its historic Palace and 120-hectare park is probably one of the most beautiful student campuses in Europe. Students live in two residences, Włodkowic and Retinger, which have fully equipped single rooms with private bathrooms, television, telephone, fast internet connection, refrigerator and cleaning service.

The College of Europe has one library on each campus. The ICT Services of the College of Europe provide ICT & ICT-related services to staff, students and visitors. All buildings of the College are interconnected via a private network and to the internet via a high speed connection. Fully equipped computer rooms for students are available on both campuses.

In terms of student affairs, on both College campuses students are supported in all aspects related to their time spent at the College, particularly on administrative issues and everyday student life, by the respective Student Affairs Office. The Office assists students in the organization of conferences as well as a series of national events and other social activities celebrating the diverse cultural heritages of their respective countries. Student representatives are elected to represent student views and to serve as liaison between the administration and the students. Students enjoy privileged access to museums, concerts and sports facilities in Bruges and Warsaw.

Finally, students receive extensive support by the College's Careers Offices. They offer careers 'tools' training through workshops and individual coaching, where advice on how to enter the job market is provided. The workshops inter alia deal with how to draft a C.V. and a cover letter, how to prepare for a job interview, and the techniques of 'networking' or effective learning.

The Fletcher School is located on the Tufts University campus in Medford, Massachusetts, approximately four miles north of the city of Boston, and is comprised of four buildings. Fletcher's Student Affairs Office works closely with the Student Council and more than 60 student organizations to offer academic, professional, cultural and social activities. Additionally, students at The Fletcher School have access to the facilities and offerings at Tufts University. Fletcher's Office of Career Services (OCS) partners with students to empower them to realize life-long career success through education, networking and coaching.

The panel is convinced that both institutions provide for a comparable and very coherent learning environment of high standard and good quality.

Considerations

The panel considers that the programme is built in a coherent way and the curriculum contents cover the envisaged learning outcomes.

The panel was impressed by the staff involved in the programme, both in terms of quality and quantity. Lecturers are invariably established experts in their own field, while support staff is dedicated to their tasks and very professional. Hardly any new resources will be devoted to the MATA programme. The panel discussed whether this was realistic and believes this should suffice in the early stages of the programme. However, if the programme grows seriously in the future, new resources will be required to guarantee the quality of the programme. According to the panel, the students will benefit from the good quality and services that are already available on both institutions.

In sum, the panel concludes that a few months prior to the envisaged starting date of the master's programme, the curriculum contents have been developed to a large extent. The panel advises the programme management to pay specific attention to the organization of the compulsory internship as this may be quite a challenge. However, as it is the Joint MATA Committee's responsibility for assisting students in finding a suitable internship and as the academic and support staff are much aware of what the programme sets out to do, the panel is convinced that academic and support staff will be capable and keen to deliver it.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the generic quality guarantee 2 *Teaching-learning environment* as **satisfactory**.

2.3 Exit level to be achieved (generic quality guarantee 3)

The programme has an adequate assessment, testing and examination system in place to ascertain whether the intended learning outcomes are being achieved.

Outline of findings

At the College of Europe, the main rules with regard to the testing and examination of students are set out in the College of Europe's Study Regulations. At The Fletcher School, academic policies and procedures are outlined in the Student Handbook.

At the College of Europe, the students are evaluated in two examination sessions, taking place in November/December and in May/June. The examination in the winter is devoted to the first semester courses, and the examination round of May/June to those of the second (and in the MATA's fourth) semester. The students may access their corrected copies after the examinations and receive individual comments from the teaching assistants. It is possible to resist the examination. At The Fletcher School, students are assessed and graded in each course. During interviews the panel was assured that in both institutions students are able to receive (additional) feedback from a lecturer on the passed or failed examination.

The quality assurance of examination matters is addressed in several ways: at both institutions, the professor teaching a course is first in line to ensure the validity of an exam by duly taking into account the learning outcomes in relation to his/her course. While marks are the sole responsibility of the professors, at the College of Europe the academic assistants are present in the oral examinations and they supervise the written exams. Second, at the College of Europe an online post-exam evaluation survey allows students to comment on whether they felt well informed about the requirements, whether the exam questions reflected the contents of the course and whether the exam format was appropriate. In case of any problems related to examinations, the Academic Council has the final word. Only the Academic Council can, for instance, allow derogations from exam formats for individual students, based on medical certificates.

At The Fletcher School, students who would like to appeal a grade for any reason start by discussing the issue with the professor who awarded the grade. The student and professor shall confer to seek a mutually acceptable resolution. If no such resolution is achieved, the student may file a complaint with the Academic Dean for review. If the Academic Dean is unable to resolve the issue, the matter will be passed on to the Committee on Academic Integrity for review and a final decision. Both parties are able to appeal the decision. Appeals will be reviewed and decided upon by the Dean of The Fletcher School. In case of the jointly instructed courses in the MATA programme, the Joint MATA Committee substitutes the Academic Council at the College of Europe and the Committee on Academic Integrity at The Fletcher School as main appeals body.

The MATA programme uses various forms of teaching methods and thus also various methods of evaluation: active class participation, oral presentations (individually or in small teams), short papers, written exams (closed or open book) or oral exams (with or without a short preparation time), project work and internship reports. The assessment of the internship is described as follows: students will be required to write a report of about 6,000 words on their internship, describing their contributions and critically evaluating their experience. The internship report will be assessed by the Director of Studies (if a student spends semester 4 at the College of Europe) or Fletcher's MATA local programme committee (if the student spends semester 4 at Fletcher) on a pass/fail basis.

For the MA thesis, students will select the thesis topic already during their first semester of the programme. The thesis will be co-supervised, with one supervisor at each institution (College of Europe and Fletcher). Students can choose their own supervisor, but during the site visit it became clear that the choice for a supervisor is more flexible at Fletcher School (where any supervisor can be chosen) than at the College of Europe where the supervisor depends on the disciplinary focus of the student. By the end of the second semester students will have written a thesis proposal (with a maximum of 1,000 words) that is approved by the thesis supervisors on both campuses. Students will be expected to set up regular appointments with their thesis supervisors.

In agreement with the supervisors, the length of the thesis should range between 10,000 and 20,000 words. The panel raised some concerns about the length of the thesis. This range is justified by the fact that students integrate different study tracks and that in economics, for instance, they may work with quantitative methods and write shorter pieces, while in politics or interdisciplinary studies, they might focus on qualitative research requiring more detailed analytical and descriptive parts. The co-supervisors will deliberate on the basis of a joint thesis evaluation sheet and reach a consensus on the common mark for the thesis. In case of disagreement, the Joint MATA Committee will appoint a third professor to assess the thesis and decide on the final mark.

While each institution in the MATA programme will maintain its grading system and scale (and the grades will appear on the transcript as per institution), a conversion table will allow to make the two grading scales fully compatible. For instance, the range 17-20 ("excellent") in the College of Europe scale would then correspond to an A given at The Fletcher School. The panel wishes to draw attention to the grading tables on graduation forms and would recommend that the European as well as the US grades should be published.

Considerations

According to the panel the assessment systems in the two institutions are comparable, compatible, and of high quality. As the teaching staff is first in line to ensure the validity of an exam, it is also their responsibility to guarantee fairness and sufficient comparability, which requires constant attention. The panel believes this requirement is met through several ex ante and ex post methods of ensuring the validity and reliability of the assessment, even though these methods may differ for both institutions. Moreover, the panel is assured that students are able to receive feedback, that appeal is sufficiently possible and that the supervision and evaluation of the internship and MA thesis is well-organised. Specific attention is and must be paid to the joint elements involving co-examination and to the length of the thesis being in accordance with the chosen study track.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the generic quality guarantee 3 *Exit level to be achieved as satisfactory*.

2.4 Set-up and organization of the internal quality assurance (generic quality guarantee 4)

The set-up and the organization of the internal quality assurance are aimed at systematically improving the programme with the involvement of the relevant stakeholders.

Outline of findings

While the staff involved in the MATA programme of both institutions already partly is and certainly will be in constant informal contact at different levels of the programme, the main formal oversight body is the so-called Joint MATA Committee, composed of representatives from both institutions. The College of Europe is represented by one representative per Study Department (typically the Director of Studies or Permanent Professor), the Director of the Academic Office and the MATA Coordinator. Occasionally, the Rector may also join the discussions of the Committee. The Fletcher School is represented by its MATA programme committee comprised of three professors, the Academic Dean, the Registrar and Manager of Student Academic Programs and the Associate Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid. The programme committee's sole responsibility is oversight of the MATA programme, and it serves as The Fletcher School's representation on the Joint MATA Committee. The MATA programme committee works in close collaboration with the Dean and the Academic Dean of The Fletcher School. The Joint MATA Committee is co-chaired by one colleague from each institution.

It is the Joint MATA Committee's task to deal with all matters related to MATA governance in the broad sense of the term. In the build-up phase towards the start of the programme, this entails in particular the clarification of rules and procedures, but also devising and validating joint guidelines regarding, for instance, the internship component of the study programme or the joint rules relating to the co-supervised MA thesis. Once the MATA has started, this body will additionally be charged with regular programme review and shall deal with all cases of specific student issues. The Joint MATA Committee deliberates and takes decisions by consensus. It meets on a bi-monthly basis (via videoconference).

In order for both partner institutions to have a common understanding of the joint programme's internal quality assurance the joint strategy for continuous monitoring and enhancement of quality consists of three layers. First, the quality control measures of each institution provide an initial step to guarantee the continued quality of the programme. At the College of Europe the procedures comprise an annual review of the study programmes and the visiting faculty members and an annual meeting to discuss programme innovation, both conducted by the Academic Council, and regular discussions at department level to discuss programme innovation. Moreover, students are encouraged to raise any concerns, both by formal and informal means. At The Fletcher School quality assurance begins with student course evaluations and additionally, students can address particular issues either by direct contact with the Dean of Student Affairs or through representatives on the Fletcher Student Council. The panel was pleased by the fact that MATA students will also have direct access to the (local) MATA Committees. A second layer prominently involves both institutions and consists of an annual review of the programme by the Joint MATA Committee.

Confirmation of the relevance and quality of the programme by students, alumni and potential employers will be one of the issues. At the start of the programme also special attention will be paid to student mobility and the more innovative components of the programme such as the internship. A last layer involves external peer review by means of a critical friends exercise, involving two independent peers, one from the US and one from Europe, and delivering a report with recommendations for further improvement of the programme. The exercise could take place every three years and will be based on a self-reporting exercise validated by the Joint MATA Committee.

The panel was pleased to learn during the site visit that the representatives of the professional field felt involved in the development of the curriculum.

Considerations

The panel considers the system for quality management to be up to standard. The written information in the information dossier seemed to contain many provisional measures for the internal quality assurance. During the site visit the panel became convinced that the layered strategy for continuous monitoring and enhancement of the quality of the programme is solid. The direct accessibility of the (local) MATA Committees is advantageous for the students for direct and more informal feedback on the quality of the programme. Moreover, the panel has established that staff, students and the professional field are sufficiently involved in the internal quality assurance. The panel appreciates the external peer review by means of a critical friends exercise and advises that this exercise should be organised soon after the start of the programme.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the generic quality guarantee 4 *Set-up and organisation of the internal quality assurance* as **satisfactory**.

3 Assessment procedure

NVAO received a request for an initial accreditation procedure regarding the proposed joint degree “Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs”. The request was submitted by the College of Europe on 21 October 2016.

The panel based their assessment on the generic quality guarantees and criteria described in the NVAO Assessment framework for the initial accreditation of higher education programmes in Flanders 2015-2021, dated 28 May 2015.

The following procedure has been undertaken. The panel members studied the documents (please refer to Annex 5: Documents reviewed) with regard to the proposed programme. Their first impressions were sent to the secretary of NVAO, who listed these remarks and questions, to be clarified during the site visit.

Based on their preliminary findings, the panel held a preparatory meeting on 16 January 2017. During this meeting, the panel discussed their findings and listed a number of questions to be put to the programme’s representatives during the site visit. The site visit took place on 17 January 2017 at the Bruges campus (please refer to Annex 4: Schedule of the site visit). The discussions during the site visit were, in the panel's opinion, more informative than the application file, presented before the site visit. These discussions allowed the panel to obtain an in-depth view of the programme’s main characteristics and the programme’s dominant features.

Immediately after the site visit, the panel shared their assessments for the generic quality guarantees of the NVAO Assessment framework. These assessments were based on the findings during the site visit, building upon the review of the programme documents.

Thereupon, the secretary drew up a draft report, sending this to the panel members. The panel members forwarded their comments and amendments. These comments having been included in the text by the secretary, the report was finalised on 19 April 2017.

4 Overview of the assessments

The panel presents their assessments per generic quality guarantee, as outlined in chapter 2, in the following table.

Generic quality guarantee	Assessment
1 Intended exit level	Satisfactory
2 Teaching-learning environment	Satisfactory
3 Exit level to be achieved	Satisfactory
4 Set-up and organisation of the internal quality assurance	Satisfactory
Programme as a whole	Satisfactory

Annex 1: Basic data on the programme

Name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, website institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – College of Europe (coordinating institution) Dijver 11 B-8000 Bruges BELGIUM Tel.: +32 50 47 71 11 Fax: +32 50 47 71 10 Email: info.mata@coleurope.eu – The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University 160 Packard Avenue Medford, Massachusetts 02155 USA Tel.: +1 617-627-3700 Fax: +1 617-627-3712 Email: fletcheradmissions@tufts.edu
Status institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public interest foundation (Fondation d'utilité publique / Stichting van openbaar nut) (registration number: 0409.518.855) – Private institution accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE)
Name association	/
Name, function, telephone, e-mail address of contact person	<p>Prof. Dr. Dr. Jörg Monar Rector Tel.: +32 50 47 71 01 Email: rector@coleurope.eu</p>
Name programme (degree, qualifications of the degree, specification of the degree)	Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs
Level and orientation	Master after Master
Title that holders of the degree earned from this programme can place with their name	Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs
(Part of a) Field of study, fields of study in which the programme is classified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – International and EU Law; – History and Politics (US, EU and international); – International and European Economics.
The ISCED name of the field of study in which the programme is classified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 031 Social and behavioural sciences; – 042 Law.
Corresponding programme(s) (Flanders if any, or neighbouring countries)	<p>Joint degree: none.</p> <p>Dual/multiple degree programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “TAM-Transatlantic Masters” - University of North Carolina (UNC) - Chapel Hill in the US. It awards an MA entitled from UNC, and

	<p>consists of a semester of study at Chapel Hill, and two semesters overseas at one or two of the partner institutions in Europe (which for the 'transatlantic studies track' are the University of Bath, Free and Humboldt Universities in Berlin, Charles University in Prague, Complutense University in Madrid, Sciences-Po in Paris, and the University of Siena, see http://europe.unc.edu/transatlanticmasters), followed by a semester where students usually write their thesis in the location of their choice;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The "Atlantis Transatlantic Dual Degree program" based at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University in the US. Following a first year of study in Syracuse, students spend the first half of their second year at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin and their second semester at the Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University in The Hague (see http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/atlantis).
Specialisations	/
Language(s) used to teach	English (at the College of Europe, students who speak French may also choose courses taught in French)
Location(s) in which the programme is offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - College of Europe: campus Bruges, Belgium, or campus Natolin (Warsaw area), Poland - The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University: Medford (greater Boston area), Massachusetts, USA
Length of the programme expressed in credits	120 EC
New programme in Flanders	Yes
The required previous qualifications and admission requirements (master)	<p>Admission to the MATA programme requires at least four years of university studies, and a final university degree comprising at least 240 ECTS credits (or an equivalent degree) as well as at least six months of relevant professional experience. Students will typically have a university degree in one of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International Relations; - Political Science; - Diplomatic Studies; - Law; - Economics or Business Administration; - European or American Studies; - Contemporary (European or American); - History.

Annex 2: Programme-specific learning outcomes

Knowledge

1.1 The graduate masters the most important theoretical approaches and concepts of, depending on his or her disciplinary focus, Economics, International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, Legal Studies and/or Political Science relevant for the analysis of transatlantic affairs.

1.2 The graduate can describe, explain and illustrate the current state of scientific research in the field of transatlantic affairs in a broad sense and, is, in line with his or her disciplinary focus, able to critically assess the results of this research.

1.3 The graduate has good knowledge of, depending on his or her disciplinary focus, the political and/or legal systems, the decision-making processes, the economic structures and the main internal and external policies of the European Union and the United States.

1.4 The graduate has insights into historical, political, legal and economic aspects of transatlantic affairs as well as into those policy areas that are of essential importance to transatlantic affairs. He or she can use these insights to contextualize and interpret new developments.

1.5 The graduate is able to incorporate knowledge and understanding of various fields of transatlantic affairs and of different related disciplines (such as Economics, International Relations, Legal Studies, Political Science) as well as to adopt both a European and a US perspective on transatlantic affairs.

Skills

2.1 The graduate can approach the field of transatlantic affairs in a broad sense analytically by assessing the challenges in this domain with an open mind for diversity and for complex situations.

2.2 The graduate has the ability to critically reflect upon problems regarding an extensive range of transatlantic affairs, to adopt well-informed points of view and to communicate them effectively orally and in writing, whether working independently or in a team.

2.3 The graduate can independently transform complex transatlantic issues into a research question within the broader field of transatlantic affairs and, depending on his or her disciplinary focus, find, select and critically assess relevant sources, answer the question using appropriate concepts and methods and present the research results in line with the ethical rules of the chosen discipline.

2.4 The graduate is capable of processing a large amount of information and appropriately analyse relevant sources depending on his or her disciplinary focus within a short period of time and of suggesting possible actions that contribute to problem-solving in a creative way.

2.5 The graduate has the intellectual maturity and skills to take responsibilities and function autonomously in a professional environment at national or international level, and especially in a transatlantic context, and to work efficiently and effectively through planning, organizing, setting priorities, meeting deadlines, cooperating across cultural boundaries and networking.

Annex 3: Composition of the panel

The composition of the panel that assessed the quality of the Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs of The College of Europe was as follows:

Chairman:

Mr. Michael Smith is Professor in European Politics in the Department of Politics and International Studies, Warwick University, UK. Previously, he was Professor of European Politics and Jean Monnet Chair at Loughborough University, where he also was Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of International Governance and of a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. He was Chair of the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (1994-1997), of the Standing Conference of Heads of European Studies (2000-2002) and of the UK Research Assessment Exercise Sub-Panle on European Studies (2008). He has published extensively on EU external policies and on EU diplomacy, on the EU and world order, on EU-US relations and on EU-Asia relations. Among his major monographs (books) are: *The European Union's Roles in International Politics: Frameworks and Analysis* (edited with Ole Elgström) (Routledge, 2006); *The European Union and the United States: Competition and Convergence in the Global Arena* (co-authored with Steven McGuire, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008); *International Relations and the European Union* (coedited with Christopher Hill, Oxford University Press, second edition 2011 – third edition planned for publication in 2017); and *The Diplomatic System of the European Union: Evolution, Change and Challenges* (co-edited with Sophie Vanhoonacker and Stephan Keukeleire, Routledge, forthcoming 2015). He has also edited special issues of the *Journal of Common Market Studies* and the *Journal of European Public Policy* as well as contributing articles to those and to a range of other leading journals. He was principal investigator for the Jean Monnet Multilateral Research Network 'The Diplomatic System of the European Union: Evolution, Change and Challenges' (2009-2012), and principal investigator for a work package on EU diplomacy within the context of the INCOOP (Inter-Institutional Cooperation in the European Union) project under the Marie Curie Programme in FP7 (2010-2014). He has extensive experience of academic programme and research evaluation both within the United Kingdom and at the European level.

Member:

Mr. Pieter Jan Kuijper

Professor of the Law of International (Economic) Organizations at the Faculty of Law of the University of Amsterdam (UvA), the Netherlands, during 2007-2014. Currently he is Professor without chair at that Faculty and continues to teach and do research there. Prior to his appointment at the UvA, he was principal Legal Advisor and Director of the 'External Relations and International Trade' team of the Legal Service of the European Commission (2002-2007) and Director of the Legal Affairs Division of the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization (1999-2002). He is editor-in-chief of Legal Issues of Economic Integration and one of the editors of the Journal of International Economic Law. He also serves on the advisory board of the Common Market Law Review and of the International Organizations Law Review, and is an active member of various learned societies. He lectured at The Hague Academy of International Law (2015) on "Delegation in International Organizations." His most recent book publications are: The Law of EU External Relations. Cases, Materials, and Commentary on the EU as an International Actor, Oxford University Press, 2nd ed.

2015 (with Jan Wouters, Frank Hoffmeister, Geert de Baere and Thomas Ramopoulos) and *From Treaty-Making to Treaty-Breaking. Models for ASEAN External Trade Agreements*, Cambridge University Press 2015 (with James H. Mathis and Nathalie Y. Morris-Sharma).

Member:

Mrs. Madeleine O. Hosli

*Professor of International Relations at Leiden University (PhD 1992). She was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, assistant professor at the Free University Amsterdam (2001) and associate professor at Leiden University, where in 2007 she became full professor. She has held visiting positions at the University of Zurich, the Graduate Institute of International Studies (Geneva), the European Institute of Public Administration (Maastricht) and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is author of *The Euro: A Concise Introduction to European Monetary Integration* (Lynne Rienner, 2004), and a co-editor of *Decision-making in the European Union before and after the Lisbon Treaty* (with Amy Verdun, Amie Kreppel and Béla Plechanovová; Routledge 2015). She holds a Jean Monnet Chair Ad Personam and coordinated the Multilateral Research Group 'Decision-Making in the European Union Before and After Lisbon' (DEUBAL; Jean Monnet Programme, 2010-2012). In 2014-2015 coordinated the theme group 'Explaining Decision-Making in the European Union: Insights from the Natural and the Social Sciences' (EUDINS) at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS). Her main research interests are in international political economy, international organisations and European integration.*

Student member:

Ms. Ludmilla de Potter

LLM student at King's College London, International Dispute Resolution Pathway, London (England)

On behalf of the NVAO, dr. Dagmar Provijn, NVAO policy advisor, was responsible for the process-coordination. Liza Kozłowska, NVAO policy advisor, secretary, drafted the experts' report.

The panel's composition reflects the expertise deemed necessary by NVAO. All the panel members as well as the secretary have signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

Annex 4: Schedule of the site visit

The site visit by the panel to the programme was conducted on 17 January 2017 as part of the external assessment procedure regarding the Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs of The College of Europe. The schedule was as follows:

09:00h Meeting of the panel with the Board of the Institution (Rector, Directors of Studies, Permanent Professors) and with the MATA Programme Coordination

Participants (College of Europe):

Rector Prof. Dr. Dr. Jörg Monar, Prof. Dr. Michele Chang (Permanent Professor, POL Department), Prof. Dr. Eric de Souza (Permanent Professor, ECO Department), Prof. Dr. Sacha Garben (Permanent Professor, LAW Department), Prof. Dr. Sieglinde Gsthöhl (Director of Studies, IRD Department), Prof. Dr. Simon Schunz (MATA Coordinator, Permanent Professor, IRD Department), Prof. Dr. Pascaline Winand (Director of Studies, EIS Department, Natolin, via videoconference), Thierry Monforti (Director, Academic Office), Tomas Tatinec (Academic Director, Natolin, via videoconference)

10:30h Coffee Break

11:00h Meeting of the panel with the “Intended Teachers” of the MATA programme

Participants (College of Europe):

Prof. Dr. Michele Chang (Permanent Professor, POL Department), Prof. Dr. Eric de Souza (Permanent Professor, ECO Department), Prof. Dr. Sacha Garben (Permanent Professor, LAW Department), Prof. Dr. Sieglinde Gsthöhl (Director of Studies, IRD Department), Prof. Dr. Simon Schunz (MATA Coordinator, Permanent Professor, IRD Department), Prof. Dr. Pascaline Winand (Director of Studies, EIS Department, Natolin)

12:00h Lunch + consulting *Documents to be reviewed during the site visit* (Rector’s Salon, Garenmarkt 15)

14:00h Meeting of the panel with representatives of the professional field

Participants:

Roger Coelho (Acting Policy Director American Chamber of Commerce to the European Union, Brussels)
Jannik B. Knauer (Policy Advisor, Defence Investment Strategy Directorate, NATO, Brussels)

14:30h Meeting of the panel with students of the Bruges and Natolin campuses as well as of The Fletcher School

Participants:

Nicolo Bompieri (student, ECO Department, College of Europe, Bruges)
Aleksandra Brodowska (student, EIS Department, College of Europe, Natolin)
Rafael Loss (2nd year student, MA in Law and Diplomacy, The Fletcher School)
Mihai Mogildea (student, POL Department, College of Europe, Bruges)

15:00h Meeting of the panel with the Joint MATA Committee (including the colleagues from The Fletcher School) (Videoconference)

Participants (College of Europe):

Prof. Dr. Michele Chang (Permanent Professor, POL Department), Prof. Dr. Eric de Souza (Permanent Professor, ECO Department), Prof. Dr. Sacha Garben (Permanent Professor, LAW Department), Prof. Dr. Sieglinde Gstöhl (Director of Studies, IRD Department), Prof. Dr. Simon Schunz (MATA Coordinator, Permanent Professor, IRD Department), Prof. Dr. Pascaline Winand (Director of Studies, EIS Department, Natolin), Thierry Monforti (Director, Academic Office), Tomas Tatinec (Academic Director, Natolin)

Participants (The Fletcher School):

Prof. Dr. Steven Block (Professor of International Economics and Academic Dean), Prof. Dr. Lawrence Krohn (Professor of Practice of International Economics), Prof. Dr. Joel Trachtman (Professor of International Law and Chair of Joint MATA Committee), Mary Dulatre (Registrar and Manager of Student Academic Programs), Elana Givens (Director of Career Services), Laurie Hurley (Associate Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid), Reiko Morris (Assistant Registrar and International Student Advisor)

16:00h Closed meeting of the panel

Annex 5: Documents reviewed

During the site visit the programme management presented the following documents:

- Agenda (with names and functions)
- Short biographies of representatives of the professional field
- College of Europe study regulations
- Fletcher Student Handbook
- Minutes of 3 meetings: Action Points of Meeting 19-29 Sept., internal College of Europe meeting 25/11, Joint MATA Committee 30/11
- One exemplary course outline per department (5) and 3 Fletcher outlines
- Thesis Supervision Guidelines
- Student Selection Guidelines
- Brochures of the College and Fletcher
- Memorandum of Understanding between College of Europe and Fletcher School
- Textbooks of courses

Annex 6: List of abbreviations

EC	credits according to the European Credit Transfer System
MATA	Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs
NVAO	Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie)

The panel report has been ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the **Master of Arts in Transatlantic Affairs** by The College of Europe.

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