Language and Communication

Faculty of Arts, Radboud University
Tilburg School of Humanities, Tilburg University

Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities (QANU)
Catharijnesingel 56
PO Box 8035
3503 RA Utrecht
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0) 30 230 3100
Telefax: +31 (0) 30 230 3129
E-mail: info@qanu.nl
Internet: www.qanu.nl

Project number: Q581

CONTENTS

Report on the master's programme Language and Communication of Radboud University and Tilburg University 5

Administrative data regarding the programme 5
Administrative data regarding the institution 5
Composition of the assessment panel 6
Working method of the assessment panel 6
Summary judgement 9
Description of the standards from the Assessment framework for limited programme assessments 12

Appendices 25

Appendix 1: Curricula Vitae of the members of the assessment panel 27
Appendix 2: Intended learning outcomes 29
Appendix 3: Overview of the curriculum 31
Appendix 4: Programme of the site visit 33
Appendix 5: Theses and documents studied by the panel 35

This report was finalized on 23 June 2016.

Report on the master's programme Language and Communication of Radboud University and Tilburg University

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for Limited Programme Assessments as a starting point (19 December 2014).

Administrative data regarding the programme

Master's programme Language and Communication

Radboud University

Name of the programme:	Taalwetenschappen (research)
CROHO number:	60817
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specializations or tracks:	not applicable
Location(s):	Nijmegen and Tilburg
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Expiration of accreditation:	13-03-2017

Tilburg University

Name of the programme:	Communicatie- en Informatiewetenschappen (research)
CROHO number:	60834
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specializations or tracks:	not applicable
Location(s):	Nijmegen and Tilburg
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Expiration of accreditation:	13-03-2017

The visit of the assessment panel Language and Communication to the Faculty of Arts of Radboud University and the Tilburg School of Humanities of Tilburg University took place on 21 and 22 April 2016.

Administrative data regarding the institution

Names of the institutions:	Radboud University and Tilburg University
Status of the institutions:	publicly funded institutions
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	positive

Composition of the assessment panel

The NVAO has approved the composition of the panel on 18 March 2016. The panel that assessed the master's programme Language and Communication consisted of:

- Prof. dr. Maarten Mous (chair), Professor of African Linguistics, Leiden University;
- Prof. dr. Susanne Janssen, Professor of Sociology of Media and Culture, Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. dr. Marie-Francine Moens, Professor of Language Intelligence and Information Retrieval, KU Leuven, Belgium;
- Prof. dr. Dominiek Sandra, Professor of Psycholinguistics and General Linguistics, University of Antwerp, Belgium;
- Saar Hommes BA, Student research master Language and Cognition, University of Groningen.

The panel was supported by dr. Marianne van der Weiden, who acted as secretary.

Appendix 1 contains the curricula vitae of the panel members.

Working method of the assessment panel

The programme Language and Communication
The research master programme Language and Communication is offered jointly by the universities of Nijmegen and Tilburg. Technically, Nijmegen and Tilburg each offer a separate programme with separate CROHO labels. This does not reflect the everyday reality for students and staff involved in the programme, however. Therefore, this report consistently refers to the programme Language and Communication where technically two separate programmes under two different CROHO-labels are involved. There are some minor differences in the learning environments and assessment systems of both universities, which are addressed in the panel's findings. None of these differences gave rise to different judgements per standard or for the programme as a whole.

Preparation
QANU received the critical reflection of the research master programme Language and Communication, offered jointly by the universities of Nijmegen and Tilburg, on 18 March 2016. After having established that the reflection fulfilled the criteria of relevance and completeness, the project manager sent it along with additional information to the members of the panel. They read the report and prepared questions, comments and remarks prior to the site visit. The project manager collected these questions in a document and arranged them according to panel conversation and subject.

In addition, all panel members read recent theses from the master programme. In consultation with the chair of the panel, fifteen theses were selected, covering the full range of marks given. In a research master programme, the thesis should be a substantial proof of research skills and have substantive value for the discipline. The panel, therefore, paid specific attention to the scientific level of the theses, the requirements, carefulness of judgement by the reviewer of the programme, and the assessment procedure used. An overview of all documents and theses reviewed by the panel is included in Appendix 5.

The project manager drafted a programme for the site visit. This was discussed with the chair of the panel and one of the coordinators of the programme. As requested by QANU, the coordinator of the programme carefully selected discussion partners. The panel agreed with the selection. A schedule of the programme with all partners is included in Appendix 4.

Site visit
The site visit took place on 21 and 22 April 2016 at the Radboud University. It started with a preparatory meeting on 21 April 2016, during which the panel was instructed, and its tasks and working methods were discussed. The panel members took note of the specific requirements for a research master programme and discussed their findings based on the critical reflection. Furthermore, the panel discussed its findings with regard to the theses and the questions and issues to be raised in the interviews with representatives of the programme and other stakeholders.

During the site visit, the panel studied documents provided by the coordinator of the site visit. They included minutes of the Programme Committee and the Examination Board, course descriptions, course materials, written exams, assignments and other assessments.

Furthermore, the panel interviewed the programme management, students, alumni, staff members, members of the Programme Committee and members of the Examination Board. Prior to the site visit, both staff members and students were informed about the opportunity to speak to the panel confidentially during the 'consultation hour'. No requests were received for the consultation hour.

After the concluding meeting with the management, the panel members extensively discussed their assessment of the programme and prepared a preliminary presentation of the findings. The site visit was concluded with a presentation of the preliminary findings by the chair. It consisted of a general assessment and several specific findings and impressions of the programme, as well as some recommendations.

Report
After the visit, the secretary produced a draft version of the report. She submitted the report to the panel members for comments. The secretary processed corrections, remarks and suggestions for improvement provided by the panel members to produce the revised draft report. This was then sent to the universities of Nijmegen and Tilburg to check for factual errors. The comments and suggestions provided by the universities were discussed with the chair of the assessment panel and, where necessary, with the other panel members. Based on the panel's decisions to incorporate or ignore comments and suggestions, the secretary compiled the final version of the programme report.

Decision rules
In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments, the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of both the standards and the programme as a whole.

Generic quality
The quality that can reasonably be expected in an international perspective from a higher education bachelor's or master's programme.

Unsatisfactory
The programme does not meet the current generic quality standards and shows serious shortcomings in several areas.

Satisfactory
The programme meets the current generic quality standards and shows an acceptable level across its entire spectrum.

Good
The programme systematically surpasses the current generic quality standard.

Excellent
The programme systematically well surpasses the current generic quality standard and is regarded as an international example.

Summary judgement

The research master's programme Language and Communication is a two-year programme, offered jointly by the universities of Nijmegen (Radboud University) and Tilburg (Tilburg University). Its aim is to develop its students into junior researchers in the domains of linguistics and communication sciences, able to successfully and independently initiate their own high-quality research. The research approach is characterised by a strong emphasis on empirical and quantitative data.

The programme's objectives have been formulated in ten learning outcomes. From these, the panel concludes that the academic master level is clear: students will have acquired general theoretical and methodological knowledge in the fields of language and communication and more thorough knowledge in their area of specialisation. The skills and abilities are strongly geared to research skills and a critical academic attitude. The panel recognises that the emphasis on these research skills and critical academic attitude distinguishes the research master's programme from the one-year master's programmes. The profile of the programme is less clear: the programme is registered under two separate CROHO labels and both universities have their own marketing strategies, administrative systems and regulations. Re-structuring the programme as a joint degree, possibly with one or more foreign partners, could strengthen the profile and visibility of the programme. The panel assesses Standard 1 as satisfactory.

On the basis of the written documentation and the meetings during the site visit, the panel has ascertained to which degree the teaching-learning environment enables the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel has paid special attention to the specific requirements for a research master programme. The curriculum consists of classroom-based substantive and methodological courses on the one hand and practical research involvement on the other. The contents of the curriculum provide a sound mix of breadth and depth and are up to date. Students have a large degree of freedom to build their own research profile by selecting from the broad offering of elective courses. These courses are either developed specifically for the research master students or require extra assignments in case they are also attended by students of a one-year master programme. In addition, the students define the topics for their term paper, internships, grant proposal writing and thesis. In practice, this freedom works well because of the quality and motivation of the students. The panel advises paying more explicit attention to programme-wide topics, such as ethics and data science. The didactic approach and study guidance are good, preparing the students for their role as researchers. They gain experience in all stages of the research cycle and are guided in their choices by a tutor and the programme coordinators. The admission procedures are appropriate. Selection is based on the academic background of the applicants (disciplinary and methodological knowledge and level of grades), their English proficiency and their motivation. It is clear that the programme has been able to attract a high-quality group of students, both from the Netherlands and from abroad. A minority of students completes the programme in two years. Generally, the delays are not caused by a lack of guidance. In fact, quite a few students make a strategic choice to extend their study time. Nevertheless, the panel advises monitoring the students' progress closely. Both the quality and quantity of staff are excellent. They are experienced researchers, participating in high- quality research groups, active in international projects and supervising a substantial number of PhD candidates. They are motivated to contribute to the research master programme. Their substantive expertise and didactic qualities, combined with the research activities such as seminars and colloquia, the cooperation with PhD students, and the experimental facilities, provide an excellent research context to the programme. The budgetary arrangements are satisfactory, the bilocation presents some

administrative problems. The panel advises stimulating more international exchange, especially for Dutch students. Summing up, the panel assesses Standard 2 as good.

The general assessment principles are described in the critical reflection. Both universities have their own Education and Examination Regulations. They agree on the main points, but there are slight differences, e.g. in the calculation of distinctions. The assessments are generally appropriate for the learning goals and allow the students to show their abilities. Most assessments are based on individual work, mostly a written report. A programme-wide assessment plan and assessment system are still under development. For a number of courses grading is on a pass/fail scale. The panel advises reconsidering this practice, partly because it may contribute to the very high number of distinctions, compared with other universities, but also because it does not allow sufficient differentiation among students. All students end the programme with a Research Master Thesis. The thesis is graded by the first and second reader independently, on the basis of the thesis assessment form. The forms used in Nijmegen and Tilburg are slightly different. The panel recommends developing one thesis assessment form to be used both in Tilburg and Nijmegen. The panel finds the thesis to be a valid indicator of the intended learning outcomes. The panel appreciates the role of the joint Examination Board, both as regards the admission procedure and the quality of assessment. The panel advises an additional role for the Examination Board in monitoring the coherence of the students' individual programmes. The work of the Examination Board would be less complicated if the research master programme would continue as a joint degree. The panel assesses Standard 3 as satisfactory.

In order to assess the achieved learning outcomes the panel has studied a sample of recent theses as an internal indicator, and has examined the graduates' success in a research career as an external indicator. The panel is impressed by the high quality and academic level of the fifteen theses it examined. The panel agrees with all grades and would have given almost identical marks. All students present the outcomes of an empirical study. The research hypotheses are well-formulated and are always followed by a state-of-the-art section. The methods sections provide clear descriptions of the data collection. Results are presented and discussed in a correct manner. Both alumni and staff members emphasize that the students are able to perform the (sometimes complex) statistical techniques for analysing the data. The limitations and implications of the research are clearly stated. The students also formulate pertinent ideas for future research. A number of theses could lead to an academic publication, in fact, some graduates succeeded in publishing articles in peer-reviewed journals based on their thesis. A number of theses is truly interdisciplinary, while most are either focused on linguistics or on communication, with a fairly high number of theses characterised by a cognitive approach. This reflects the research topics of the staff members involved in the programme and is in line with the freedom for each student to develop his/her own specialisation. This internal indicator is corroborated by the external indicator: the graduates' success in securing a PhD position or finding another appropriate employment. The programme is obviously able to provide the students with the necessary knowledge and skills and, in addition, the staff members play a positive role in helping graduates to get started in the career they aim for. The panel assesses Standard 4 as good.

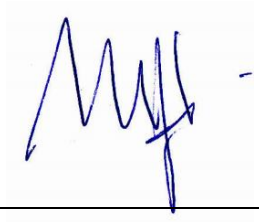
The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment framework for limited programme assessments* in the following way:

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	satisfactory
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	good
Standard 3: Assessment	satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	good
General conclusion	good

The chair and the secretary of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 23 June 2016

Prof. dr. Maarten Mous



Dr. Marianne van der Weiden

Description of the standards from the Assessment framework for limited programme assessments

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes
The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.

Explanation:
As for level and orientation (bachelor's or master's; professional or academic), the intended learning outcomes fit into the Dutch qualifications framework. In addition, they tie in with the international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations.

Findings

The aim of the Research Master Language and Communication is developing its students into junior researchers. The two-year programme is offered jointly by the universities of Nijmegen (Radboud University) and Tilburg (Tilburg University), combining their research and teaching capacity in the domains of cognition, the social context of communication, linguistic and communicative competence and the technological implementation of theories on language and communication. Their research approach is characterised by a strong emphasis on empirical and quantitative data.

The critical reflection states that, upon graduation, students can successfully and independently initiate their own high-quality research. They are able to compete for PhD positions in the disciplines represented in the curriculum or for other jobs that involve language issues, communication issues, or both, and that include a research component. This has been formulated in a set of ten learning outcomes (see Appendix 3). The panel has studied these learning outcomes and discussed them with staff and students during the site visit. The panel concludes that the academic master level is clear: students will have acquired general theoretical and methodological knowledge in the fields of language and communication and more thorough knowledge in their area of specialisation. The skills and abilities are strongly geared to research skills and a critical academic attitude, and a specific learning outcome focuses on academic and ethical standards. The panel appreciates that the critical reflection indicates in which curriculum components the various learning objectives are addressed. The panel finds that the learning objectives cover the full range of knowledge and skills to qualify students for a PhD-project in the domain of language and communication. The learning objectives allow students to specialise in this field and to define their own profile within the broad range of research groups in Nijmegen and Tilburg. The international orientation of the programme is there, implicitly through the mix of Dutch and foreign students (see paragraph Admission) and the international outlook of the research groups. Beyond that, the Dutch students seem rather reluctant to broaden their horizon internationally, for example, by an internship or thesis project abroad. International projects are allowed, but not explicitly stimulated. The panel advises considering the inclusion of international experience in the learning objectives.

During the site visit, the panel discussed the programme's profile at several occasions. Three different issues seem to play a role. In the first place, the programme mentions that its recruitment efforts are hampered because of Dutch legislation: the programme wishes to advertise its specific profile, i.e. the combination of language and communication, but these domains are registered under two different CROHO labels: Linguistics (in Nijmegen) on the one hand and Communication and Information Studies (in Tilburg) on the other. The panel agrees that a new label Linguistics and Communication Sciences would be clearer for

prospective (foreign) students. This could be requested in 2017, when a new national discussion about CROHO labels is expected to take place. Second, additional confusion may arise from the fact that students have to register at one of the two universities and are subsidiary students at the other institute. Each university organises its own recruitment, has its own rules and regulations and handles a separate administration. Combined with practical problems and costs (see paragraph Facilities), there seems to be sufficient reason to continue the research master as a joint degree programme. This would allow the programme to present a much stronger profile. Initial steps have been taken to investigate this possibility. The panel advises taking these discussions further and working towards a formal joint degree programme. The panel suggests considering the expansion of such a joint degree with one or more international partners, for example, as an Erasmus Mundus programme. Third, the panel discussed the aim and title of the programme in relation to the large degree of freedom for students to define their own profile. In the critical reflection the programme describes its focus in relation to similar research master programmes in the Netherlands. The panel wondered if this could be expressed more clearly than in the fairly general title Language and Communication. Adding the focus on cognition or on the empirical methodology to the title would better clarify what students can expect in the programme. Both staff and students, however, preferred the more open title. They argued that Dutch students usually do not look for a programme with a specific content, but that their main criteria are a programme's research focus and sufficient possibilities to pursue their own interest. This is in line with the observation that Dutch students, in general, seem to stick to the university where they followed their bachelor programme and hope to find a suitable research master programme there. The programme management thinks that recruitment of international students is best promoted by advertising the general fields of research, rather than by a very specific programme title. Both national and international students use the plentiful opportunities offered by the master programme to create their own research profile. The panel recognised the students' appreciation of this openness. Based on the discussions with staff and the examination of theses, the panel agrees that the individual profiles are sufficiently linked to the main aims of the programme, i.e. combining language and communication and training students to become high-quality researchers. The panel also comes to the conclusion, however, that the profile is not as clear as it could be.

Considerations

Based on the written documentation and the discussions with staff and students, the panel concludes that the research master programme Language and Communication is of the appropriate academic master level. The intended learning outcomes define the theoretical and methodological knowledge students must have attained at the end of the programme; the skills and attitudes are related to the different steps in a research cycle and thus prepare the students for a PhD research project or similar research job. The panel, therefore, considers the programme's aim to develop students into junior researchers as both ambitious and realistic.

The profile of the programme is clear upon close examination by the panel members and is also clear for insiders, but for recruitment purposes it could be strengthened. The panel expects that changing the programme into a formal joint degree programme and applying for a more appropriate CROHO label (combining linguistics and communication sciences) will be helpful. Students are stimulated to define their own research profile as part of their development into researchers. The fields covered by the relevant Nijmegen and Tilburg research groups are so broad that most student interests can be accommodated.

Conclusion

Master's programme Language and Communication: the panel assesses Standard 1 as 'satisfactory'.

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment
The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Explanation:
The contents and structure of the curriculum enable the students admitted to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The quality of the staff and of the programme-specific services and facilities is essential to that end. Curriculum, staff, services and facilities constitute a coherent teaching-learning environment for the students.

Findings

Curriculum

The two-year (120 EC) curriculum consists of classroom-based courses on the one hand and research activities on the other:

- A core substantive course (6 EC)
- A core methodological course (6 EC)
- Substantive elective courses (30 EC)
- Methodological elective courses (12 EC)
- Research skills cycle (36 EC)
- Thesis (30 EC)

A detailed overview is given in Appendix 3.

The two core courses provide the common ground for all students. The substantive course (Foundations of Language and Communication) motivates the combination of language and communication as the backbone of the research master programme, whereas the methodological course (Corpus and Experimental Methods) focuses on quantitative research methods. The panel studied the course materials for these courses and finds them to be state of the art texts and slides, a sound basis for the students to build on.

Students can select their substantive elective courses from a broad offering of 43 courses. The panel is impressed by this very wide range. In Tilburg, the elective courses are organised for combined groups of the 1-year regular and 2-year research master students. Research master students are required to do additional research-related assignments to earn the course credits. In Nijmegen, the elective courses are organised for research master students only. Given the large number of courses, this leads to courses with very small numbers of students, sometimes only one or two. Although this does not seem very cost-effective the panel learnt that staff members are eager to run such small courses: they appreciate working with the high- quality and highly motivated students. Such courses take the form of performing research under the guidance of the responsible staff member. Their teaching time in these courses is counted as research time. The students enjoy these courses as well. They indicate that there are enough opportunities to meet their classmates in the larger courses and in extracurricular activities. The programme has listed a number of thematic foci: psycholinguistics, language acquisition, language and speech technology, language and society, and communication. These are intended to guide students in their choice of electives, but the panel has the impression that, in practice, the tutors and programme coordinators help the students on an individual basis to select suitable courses from the broad range of possibilities. This seems to work well, given the positive feedback from students during the site visit. Nevertheless, the panel thinks that more explicit attention could be given to important common subjects such as multimodal communication, which is described as a central theme, distinguishing the master's programme in Language and Communication from other research masters in the Netherlands. An option could be the thematic clustering of courses on these topics and the requirement that students select part of their electives from such clusters. If necessary, a student can request permission

from the Examination Board to select a course from another university as part of his/her specialisation. The panel finds the broad range of high-level courses a strong point and recognises that it allows students to build their own curriculum, in line with their specialisation.

Students deepen their methodological training by choosing 12 EC worth of methodological courses in specialised skills or methods such as eye tracking, survey design, advanced statistics and ethnography. Students with insufficient skills in statistics have to successfully follow an introductory statistics course at the beginning of the programme, before the core course on methodology. The panel agrees that this range of courses is a good reflection of the empirical focus of the Nijmegen/Tilburg research master.

Hands-on experience in carrying out research is gained through the courses related to the research cycle. After the Term Paper (literature study) and the Research Orientation (seminars and colloquia), students proceed to participate in on-going research Lab Rotation I and II). They are required to design a project (Grant Proposal Writing, Valorisation A) and carry out an independent project (Thesis). Finally, they learn to communicate their findings to professional and lay audiences (Valorisation B). This is a well-considered set-up of courses, specifically designed for the research master programme: students gain first-hand experience with the practice of research in a structured manner. The panel learnt that data management and ethics are part of this set of courses, be it mostly implicitly. The panel advises making this more explicit, in line with the relevant learning objective.

It is possible for students to do an internship (Lab Rotation I or II) or their thesis project at a university abroad, but not many students seem interested to do so. The curriculum, with its large proportion of electives and a choice of Lab Rotation projects, provides sufficient freedom to accommodate such an international exchange. The panel states that this would be a useful addition to a Dutch student's portfolio, significantly widening the horizon beyond Tilburg and Nijmegen. The panel agrees that the diverse student population provides an international classroom (internationalisation at home), but does not consider this to be a full equivalent for an international experience.

Summing up the contents and coherence of the curriculum, the panel is very positive about the level and the range of courses. The materials are kept up to date and are closely linked to the work of the research groups that are involved in the programme. Within the programme's profile students are allowed a large degree of freedom to specialise and select their electives and projects, guided by their tutor and the programme coordinators. This is an ideal situation, especially suitable for the very good and very motivated students in this programme.

Didactic approach and study guidance

The didactic approach of the programme is geared towards turning students into researchers. Teaching methods are diverse, ranging from classroom activities such as lectures, seminars and colloquia, to involvement in practical research through Lab Rotations, Grant Proposal Writing, Valorisation A and B and the thesis project. The compulsory courses keep the students together as a group, whereas in other cases they work individually, in a kind of master-apprentice relationship. In their meeting with the panel, both the students and the alumni said they are included as part of the team in the research groups where they do their internships or electives. The students feel encouraged to publish; their work in lab rotations sometimes leads to joint publications. Quite a few students work as research assistants. In Tilburg, such research assistants share a room with a PhD candidate, which they find stimulating. Students appreciate being encouraged to attend colloquia organised by the research groups. The panel appreciates the various ways in which the students are included in the academic context.

Study guidance is an important feature of the programme. Some students know exactly what they want to do from the very beginning and are very focused, others are not yet quite sure about their specialisation. The many possibilities offered by the programme do not always make it easy to make the right choices. The students value the guidance that is offered to them by both the programme coordinators and the tutors. A tutor is assigned at the beginning of the programme, based on a student's substantive interest. If, in the course of the programme, a student chooses another direction or if student and tutor do not match personally, it is no problem to switch to another tutor. Many staff members are available for this role and take it up with enthusiasm. The previous committee found the study guidance to be fairly absent, leading to long study durations. The current panel observes that the study guidance works very well and, hence, that the programme has acted effectively upon the previous committee's comments on this topic. The panel recommends continuing this policy in order to increase the number of students who finish within the programme's formal duration of two years.

The students confirmed that it is possible to complete the programme in two years. Less than half, however, do so. In a few cases, the student switches to the one-year master programme, but in most instances the delay is a student's strategic choice. They add extra courses, apply for a job as a research assistant or extend the work on their thesis in order to finish it closer to the application date for a PhD position.

Admission

The research master programme Language and Communication is a selective programme. The applicant's file is considered by the Examination Board. Candidates are selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1. University level BA/BSc or MA/MSc degree covering sufficient knowledge of either linguistics or communication science. On the basis of the transcript the Examination Board assesses whether a suitable number of courses had a relevant content and whether the grades for those courses were high enough.
2. A GPA of 7.5 or higher and a grade of 8 or higher for the BA thesis.
3. For non-native speakers and for non-Dutch students, a good command of English, as proven by one of the appropriate tests (TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge) or by the completion of a degree programme conducted entirely in English, such as in Australia, Canada (except for Quebec), New Zealand, Ireland, United Kingdom or United States.
4. A strong motivation, as expressed in a motivation letter.

In the meeting with the Examination Board, the panel was informed in more detail about the way the procedure and criteria are applied in practice. The secretariats in Tilburg and Nijmegen prepare the application. In cases of foreign applications, advice is sought from Nuffic on the quality of the degree programme. Two staff members from Nijmegen and two from Tilburg, half of them members of the Examination Board, make up the selection committee. They study the files, assess the BA thesis or, if their previous programme did not include a thesis, another piece of written work and look specifically at the applicant's motivation for attending the programme. Most of the applicants are sufficiently aware of the specific profile of the research master programme. Prior to the application, some candidates have contacted one of the programme coordinators. These are able to advise if an application is worthwhile, sometimes on the basis of a (Skype) interview. It is up to the selection committee and, ultimately, the Examination Board to take the admission decision. Special cases are applicants with no previous academic training in statistics. These are admitted on condition that they successfully complete the course on statistics at the beginning of the programme. In exceptional cases, a student with a professional bachelor degree is admitted to the programme: the bachelor programme must be relevant, the student must have a grade of at least 9 for statistics and

methodology and must demonstrate a strong research motivation. In the annual reports of the Examination Board, the panel read that approximately one third of the applicants is admitted to the programme. The panel finds the procedures to be appropriate and ascertained that they are applied strictly.

In the critical reflection, the panel found detailed information on the background of the admitted students. Between October 2010 and 2015, 77 students were enrolled in the programme. The cohorts ranged from eight to fifteen students, with a peak of 21 students in the current academic year. Roughly two-thirds (52) were Dutch students, mostly from Nijmegen or Tilburg. Six obtained their BA degree from another university in the Netherlands. One third of the students (25) were of foreign origin. A small number of tuition waivers or reduced tuition fees are available to help attract non-EU students. Most students have a background in linguistics; over the years the percentage of students from communication and information studies has been relatively low. In this field, apparently, the research orientation of students is less outspoken than in linguistics. Staff members try to remedy this by presenting their communications research more strongly in the bachelor programme. During the site visit, the panel members could see for themselves how motivated and eager the students are. They are well-spoken, form a mixed group with diverse international and disciplinary backgrounds and are clearly suited for the ambitions of this research programme.

Staff

The panel has studied the information in the critical reflection and appendices and concludes that the quantity and quality of staff are excellent. Almost all staff members have a PhD degree and do their research as part of research programmes that have done well in the most recent assessments. Two teachers are near the end of their PhD track and are closely supervised by an experienced senior staff member. The lists of key publications and PhD supervisions, provided for each staff member in the critical reflection, show the range and depth of the available expertise. They also reflect the high quality of the research. The assessment reports of the research programmes and overviews of awarded grants and international collaboration were made available for the panel separately. These corroborate the strength of the research groups.

The research master is linked to a number of research institutes: in particular the Centre for Language Studies (CLS, Nijmegen) and the Tilburg center for Cognition and Communication (TICC, Tilburg). Both have been assessed as excellent in recent years. The QANU report of 2013 on TICC assigns scores between 4 and 5 on a 5-points scale to the different programmes for the different dimensions. In Tilburg University TiCC has the status of Centre of Excellence. One of the few critical notes is that some of the major players have left. However, this is not to the detriment of the research master programme at stake, because they left for Nijmegen. The 2013 research assessment of the CLS in Nijmegen likewise shows scores between 4 and 5 for all the various subprogrammes and dimensions. Both the researchers in Nijmegen and Tilburg are very successful in obtaining projects from a wide range of sources. The research context of the research master is excellent.

The teaching quality of the staff is stimulated in both Nijmegen and Tilburg. At both universities, staff hired since 2010 is obliged to acquire the 'University Teaching Qualification' (BKO) certificate. Currently, almost half of the staff members have obtained this certificate. The policy is that, ultimately, all teaching staff has earned the BKO. The panel recommends setting a more explicit goal and stimulating more staff members to earn the BKO within a specified time. Asked about the didactic quality of staff and their ability to teach in English, the students informed the panel that they are satisfied. They appreciate the availability and

willingness of staff to guide them and the intensive, sometimes one-to-one contact, with their teachers.

The panel understands that the staff input is difficult to quantify, since a substantive part of the teaching is done within the staff members' research time: supervision time for Term Paper and Lab Rotation, feedback on a grant proposal written for Grant Proposal Writing and, in Tilburg, the teaching of an elective course. For the Tilburg staff, the only teaching tasks included to calculate the formal staff-student ratio are the teaching of the two mandatory courses and the thesis supervision (30 hours per thesis). In Nijmegen, 0.81 FTE teaching time has been made available, distributed over teaching electives, thesis supervision and tutoring duties. The calculation leads to an average ratio of 1:16 over the years 2011-2014 for Nijmegen, but the outcome does not take into account that Nijmegen-based students take classes in Tilburg and vice versa. Although no exact figure can be produced, the panel has no concerns at all about the involvement of staff members in the research master programme. Supervision duties for thesis work are divided over many staff members, as can be seen in the list of theses in the critical reflection. The panel understands that second readers for the thesis and supervisors of Lab Rotations and Term Papers are equally diversified. From the meetings with staff members during the site visit, it was clearly visible that the programme builds on a substantive group of experienced and motivated researchers. This was supported by the feedback from students and alumni.

Facilities

The research environment (academic context) is not only embodied in the staff members and the curriculum, but also in the seminars, colloquiums and workshops that are regularly organised at the two locations. The students are stimulated to get involved in these activities, as they help them getting to know the scholars involved, the work they are currently doing, and the mores of academic culture. This is helpful when students need to take decisions about the topic of a paper or project or an assignment for an elective. As mentioned above (see Didactic approach and study guidance) a number of students work as a research assistant under the supervision of a senior researcher. It often leads to a conference presentation or a publication in a series of working papers or a bundle of proceedings. Students told the panel that they highly value these opportunities to enhance their CV and their portfolio.

In both locations, a Graduate School is responsible for the training of its PhD students. Research master students can take part in the modules on ethics and academic writing organised by the Graduate School and are informed about research activities. PhD students sometimes register for the elective courses taught in the research master programme. The contact between PhD and research master students supports the students' integration in the academic community.

Students are encouraged to participate in the courses and activities organised by the national research school, the Netherlands Graduate School for Linguistics (LOT). In some cases, the courses of other national research schools are more relevant. In such cases, a student can attend a course of another school, e.g. in Communication Sciences or Computational Linguistics.

Both in Nijmegen and Tilburg, students can make use of relevant facilities. These include a subject pool (mostly consisting of BA students) and labs for experimental research: a Baby Lab and advanced neuro-imaging equipment at the Donders Institute in Nijmegen, and a Virtual Reality Lab in Tilburg. The panel judges these facilities and the general research environment to be excellent. A point of attention, however, is the absence of an explicit internationalisation

policy. Students, especially the Dutch ones, should be stimulated to spend part of their programme at a university abroad.

Students at both locations have a modest budget for research and travel costs and for books. The panel heard during the site visit that the arrangements have recently been aligned, which is an improvement. Before, Tilburg-based foreign students, having no right to the free public transport facilities of Dutch students, spent their budget almost entirely on train tickets between Tilburg and Nijmegen, while Nijmegen-based foreign students had all domestic travel costs reimbursed. This is now also the arrangement for Tilburg-based students. The bilocation, however, still leads to some administrative problems. The registration systems are not connected and the differences in the rules and regulations not only require extra time for discussions, but also increase the risk of administrative errors. Changing the programme into a joint degree, as mentioned at Standard 1, could solve these issues.

Considerations
On the basis of the written documentation and the meetings during the site visit, the panel has tried to ascertain to which degree the teaching-learning environment enables the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel has paid special attention to the specific requirements for a research master programme. The panel comes to the conclusion that the contents of the curriculum are good: they provide a sound mix of breadth and depth and are up to date. The combination of substantive and methodological courses on the one hand and practical research involvement on the other hand is a strong point, as is the wide range of elective courses. Students have a large degree of freedom to build their own research profile. This works well because of the quality and motivation of the students. The didactic approach and study guidance are good, preparing the students for their role as researchers. The admission procedures are appropriate and it is clear that the programme has been able to attract a high-quality group of students, both from the Netherlands and from abroad. A minority of students completes the programme in two years. Since the previous assessment, the programme has intensified the system of tutoring and, generally, the delays are not caused by a lack of guidance. In fact, quite a few students make a strategic choice to extend their study time, to further improve their research and, therefore, their chances of a PhD position. Nevertheless, the panel advises monitoring the students' progress closely. Both the quality and quantity of staff are excellent. Their substantive expertise and didactic qualities, combined with the research activities such as seminars and colloquia, the cooperation with PhD students, and the experimental facilities, provide an excellent research context to the programme. The budgetary arrangements are satisfactory, the bilocation presents some administrative problems. The panel advises stimulating more international exchange, especially for Dutch students. Summing up, the panel assesses the various components of the teaching-learning environment from satisfactory to (very) good. The panel finds the most important aspects (curriculum, didactic approach, admission policy, staff and research context) to be strong points of the programme. The panel, therefore, assesses this standard as good.

Conclusion
Master's programme Language and Communication: the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'good'.

Standard 3: Assessment
The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.

Explanation:
The tests and assessments are valid, reliable and transparent to the students. The programme's examining board safeguards the quality of the interim and final tests administered.

Findings

The general assessment principles are described in the critical reflection. Each university has its own Education and Examination Regulations. They agree on the main points, but there are slight differences, e.g. in the calculation of distinctions. Most assessments are based on individual work. Group assignments are sometimes part of an elective's assessment. The assessments are generally appropriate for the learning goals and allow the students to show their knowledge and skills. Although faculty-wide policies encourage teachers to use diverse assessment methods, most courses are assessed on the basis of a written report. The panel appreciates that for each of the learning objectives it is clear in which course it is addressed and assessed. There is as yet not much coordination between staff members, however, to align their course descriptions, assessment methods and assessment criteria. Especially in Nijmegen such coordination is only just getting off the ground. This is on next year's agenda for the Programme Committee and Examination Board. The panel trusts that they will develop a programme-wide assessment plan, and advises to make use of the experience in Tilburg where the development is a step further than in Nijmegen. The expertise of the assessment specialist, who is an external Tilburg-based member of the Examination Board, would be useful, also in advising individual teachers on test construction and assessment procedures.

Part of the above-mentioned discussion should concentrate on the grading system. A number of courses (Research Orientation, Grant Proposal Writing, Valorisation A and B) is graded with a Pass or Fail. These grades are not used to determine the final GPA and the award of a distinction. Detailed feedback is given, as was confirmed by the students, but is not expressed in the course grade. The panel advises reconsidering the Pass/Fail grading system. The extremely high number of distinctions (ninety per cent), as compared to other universities, may partly be the effect of the lower number of scores (i.e. course results) on which it is calculated. Another reason, apart from the high quality and ambition of the students, may be that students continue working on an assignment beyond the deadline, until they expect, based on the teacher's feedback, that a grade of at least 8 will be given. Maintaining deadlines might give a better indication of the quality of work that a student is able to produce in a limited timeframe.

All students end the programme with a Research Master Thesis. The thesis is graded by the first and second reader independently, on the basis of the thesis assessment form. The forms used in Nijmegen and Tilburg are not identical. The Tilburg assessment form has a separate paragraph on the research process (e.g. independence of work) while this is graded as part of the other criteria on the Nijmegen assessment form. The assessors compare their notes and settle on the final grade. Both the final grade and the sub-grades for the different criteria are registered, including the motivation for each. The aspects to be assessed are the clarity and relevance of the research question, quality and poignancy of the literature review, adequacy of the description and the execution of the chosen method, orderliness of the presentation of the findings, level of ambition reflected by the analysis, degree to which the conclusion and discussion reflect the ability to critically engage with the literature in the light of the findings, whether structure and form of the thesis conform to academic standards. The panel agrees that these, taken together, show whether a student indeed has acquired the intended learning outcomes and demonstrate his/her skills as a (junior) researcher.

During the site visit the panel met with the Examination Board. The Board consists of six members: two from Nijmegen, two from Tilburg and two external members. This joint Examination Board is responsible for the research master's programme. Annual reports of the Tilburg part of the Examination Board over the past five years were available for the panel. These gave a good indication of the items on the agenda and showed, for example, the results of the admission procedures. The chair indicated that the Examination Board also deals with student requests to attend a course at another university. If properly motivated, this is normally granted. No cases of plagiarism have been put to the Examination Board over the last five years. The panel suggests that an additional role for the Examination Board could be to formally guarantee the consistency of each student's portfolio. An option could be to ask students to write a reflection on their personal learning goals, either as part of Research Orientation or at the end of the programme, to be checked by or on behalf of the Examination Board.

The panel concludes that the Examination Board takes its responsibilities seriously and that, generally, the assessment system is of sufficient quality. The Board is well aware of the drawbacks of working with the rules and procedures of two different institutions and tries to guarantee that these do not interfere with the quality of assessment. The Board is also aware of the steps to be taken to reach more coordination overall. A joint degree is expected to address some of the issues, such as the Education and Examination Regulations and a common thesis assessment form. The panel agrees that this should be explored seriously.

Considerations
The panel concludes that the assessments are generally appropriate for the learning goals and allow the students to show their abilities. A programme-wide assessment plan and assessment system are still under development. Especially in Nijmegen, quite a few items are on the agenda to be addressed shortly. The panel advises examining the cause of the very high number of distinctions (cum laude), more particularly, whether this is an artefact of the pass/fail grading for a number of courses and the lack of strict deadlines for assignments. The panel appreciates the role of the Examination Board, both as regards the admission procedure and the quality of assessment. Its work would be less complicated if the research master programme would continue as a joint degree. Overall, the panel assesses this standard as satisfactory.

Conclusion
Master's programme Language and Communication: the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'satisfactory'.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes
The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Explanation:
The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests, final projects and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes.

Findings
In order to assess whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved the panel has studied a sample of recent theses as an internal indicator, and has examined the graduates' success in a research career as an external indicator.

As described above (Standard 3), the thesis can be considered as a valid indicator of the intended learning outcomes. The panel is impressed by the high quality and academic level of the fifteen theses it examined. The panel agrees with all grades and would have given the same marks, deviating maximally by 0.5 only, sometimes giving a slightly higher or slightly lower

grade than the two original assessors. All students present the outcomes of an empirical study. The research hypotheses are well-formulated and are always followed by a well-elaborated state-of-the-art section. The students are able to situate their research question in the wider international literature. The methods sections in the theses provide clear descriptions of the data collection and/or experiments. These methods are found to be appropriate for the research question at hand. Obtained results are presented and discussed in a correct manner. All theses contain motivated and relevant discussions, leading to interesting conclusions. The limitations and implications of the research are clearly stated. The students also formulate pertinent ideas for future research. A number of theses could lead to an academic publication, but when asked about this, the students told the panel that they value the opportunity to describe their research in more detail than would be possible in a journal article. Some students rewrite their thesis into an article after graduation. A number of theses is truly interdisciplinary, e.g. combining neuroscience and computational linguistics. Most are focused either on linguistics or on communication, with a fairly high number of theses characterised by a cognitive approach. This reflects the research topics of the staff members involved in the programme and is in line with the freedom of each student to develop his/her own specialisation. The most distinctive feature of this research master's theses is the strong empirical approach.

Graduates are relatively successful in their subsequent research career. Of the 33 graduates of the cohorts since 2010, nineteen have moved on to a PhD position, whereas two others secured such a position without graduating. Six of the 21 were awarded a grant from NWO, the others successfully applied for vacant positions at universities in the Netherlands or abroad (Antwerp, London, Freiburg, Graz, Brussels and Warwick). Other graduates have found a position as a lecturer (three) or as a consultant, project manager or (re)search specialist in industry or other commercial organisations (eight), as can be read in the critical reflection. Students are obviously able to build an interesting portfolio for a further career in which they can make full use of their research skills. All students who met with the panel during the site visit, hope to find a PhD position after graduation. The alumni confirmed that this is the main career objective. They added that students are stimulated to publish, e.g. on their work during Lab Rotations. Grant Proposal Writing is very useful to prepare a 'real' project proposal, since the assignment is based on the NWO format. The panel is convinced that the broad range of the combined research groups of Nijmegen and Tilburg and the contacts of the individual researchers are very helpful for students of this research master programme.

Considerations

The panel has examined a substantial number of theses and fully agrees with the grades given by the programme staff: the theses are indeed very good pieces of research, both theoretically and methodologically, with the necessary carefulness for the validity of conclusions and further research questions. The findings are presented in well-structured reports. This internal indicator is corroborated by the external indicator: the graduates' success in securing a PhD position or finding another appropriate employment. The programme is obviously able to provide the students with the necessary knowledge and skills and, in addition, the staff members play a positive role in helping graduates to get started in the career they aim for. The panel, therefore, assesses this standard as good.

Conclusion

Master's programme Language and Communication: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'good'.

General conclusion

The panel assesses the intended learning outcomes as appropriate for a research master programme. The profile, however, could be strengthened. The teaching-learning environment is good: curriculum, didactic approach, study guidance and staff provide a strong research environment. The programme is able to select good and motivated students and helps them to develop into junior researchers. The programme allows students to choose their own profile and build a strong portfolio in their specialisation. Staff members bring in their expertise and are very eager to help students reach their goals. The high level of the theses and the graduates' success in their further career, mostly in academia, show that the programme is able to realise its intended learning outcomes. The bilocation in Nijmegen and Tilburg leads to a number of administrative problems and differences in rules and regulations that are difficult or even impossible to solve in the current constellation. Continuing the programme as a joint degree could help to resolve these matters. This does not detract, however, from the overall good quality of the programme. This quality could be strengthened even more by addressing a number of issues identified by the panel. The most important items are the lack of an explicit internationalisation policy and the fact that the assessment system is still under development.

Conclusion
The panel assesses the *Master's programme Language and Communication* as 'good'.

Measures for improvement

The panel recommends the following measures for improvement:

1. Re-structure the research master programme as a joint degree, combining the strengths of the two universities involved and avoiding the practical problems related to the separate administrations and differences in rules and regulations. Consider the expansion of such a joint degree with one or more international partners, for example, as an Erasmus Mundus programme.
2. Guarantee the consistency of each student's portfolio, for example, by the Examination Board, and make sure that important topics, such as the central theme of multimodal communication, are included in all of them.
3. Formulate an explicit internationalisation policy and stimulate (especially the Dutch) students to spend part of their studies at a university abroad.
4. Intensify the monitoring of student progress in order to increase the number of students who graduate within the formal programme duration of two years.
5. Stimulate staff members to earn the BKO (basic didactic qualification) within a specified time.
6. Develop and implement a programme-wide assessment plan and assessment system and examine the reason(s) of the very high number of distinctions.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Curricula Vitae of the members of the assessment panel

Prof. dr. M.P.G.M. (Maarten) Mous (chair) is professor of African linguistics at Leiden University and member of the Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen. His main research interests are Cushitic and Bantu languages, the interaction of language and identity (including mixed languages and urban youth languages), and complex morphology, in particular verbal derivations such as causative, middles and passives. He has done original research and published on the Cushitic languages Iraqw, Alagwa (both Tanzania), Konso (Ethiopia) and on the Bantu languages Tunen, Nyokon (both Cameroon), Ma'á/Mbugu, Pare, and Mbugwe (all Tanzania) and on Seereer (Atlantic, Senegal). He has supervised 34 PhD theses.

Prof. dr. Susanne Janssen is Professor of Sociology of Media and Culture and Chair of the Department of Media and Communication in the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication at Erasmus University Rotterdam. She directs the research master in the Sociology of Culture, Media and the Arts (Top-rated programme 2016) and is the founding Dean of the International Bachelor's in Communication and Media (2009) which received the European Certificate for Quality in Programme Internationalisation (2014), because of its focus on intercultural and international dimensions of communication and media and its highly diverse, international classroom. Janssen is founding director of ERMeCC, the Erasmus Research Centre for Media, Communication and Culture (2008). ERMeCC currently hosts 40 researchers and 30 PhD students from 10 different nationalities and various disciplinary backgrounds, and has grown into one of the largest research groups focusing on the social dimensions of media, culture and the arts worldwide. Janssen received a VICI grant (2003) for her Cultural Classification Systems in Transition project, a longitudinal, comparative study involving France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States. Between 2010 and 2014, she directed another large-scale international collaborative research project which was funded with a grant from the HERA Joint Research Programme Cultural Dynamics: Inheritance and Identity. In 2013, she received the Erasmus University Research Excellence Initiative Grant for the Transformations in the Production and Consumption of Media and Culture project. She also successfully applied for several smaller research grants. In 2010, she was appointed an Honorary Professor in the Centre for Cultural Research at Griffith University, Australia. From 2010-2012, Janssen was editor-in-chief of Poetics, the premier journal for empirical research on culture, media and the arts and a leading journal in sociology, for which she presently serves as associate editor. She performed manifold executive and advisory services in academia and the cultural sector. Current memberships include the Koninklijke Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen (KHMW), the Media and ICT division of the national creative industries task force, the editorial boards of Sociologie de l'Art and the International Journal of Music Business Research, the executive board of the Netherlands School of Communication Research (NESCoR), the advisory boards of the International Association for Popular Music (IASPM) and the Research School for Media Studies (RMeS).

Prof. dr. Marie-Francine Moens is a Full Professor and head of the Language Intelligence and Information Retrieval lab in the Department of Computer Science at KU Leuven, Belgium. She is the current head of the Informatics section of this department. She holds a MSc and a PhD degree in Computer Science from KU Leuven. Her main interests are in the domain of automated content recognition in text and multimedia data and its application in information extraction and retrieval using statistical machine learning, and exploiting insights from linguistic and cognitive theories. She teaches the courses Text Based Information Retrieval and Natural Language Processing at KU Leuven in the Faculty of Engineering Science. She has given several invited tutorials in summer schools and international conferences and regularly gives keynotes

at international conferences. In 2011 and 2012 she was appointed as chair of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics (EACL) and was a member of the executive board of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL). From 2010 until 2014 she was a member of the Research Council of KU Leuven and is currently a member of the Council of the Industrial Research Fund of KU Leuven. She is the scientific manager of the EU COST action iV&L (The European Network on Integrating Vision and Language).

Prof dr. Dominiek Sandra is a full Professor of Psycholinguistics and General Linguistics and a member of the Department of Linguistics at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Antwerp. He has been the president of the Department of Linguistics for two successive terms and director of the language centre of the university for six years, with a responsibility for teaching and research. As a psycholinguist he is one of the three professors who lead the Computational Linguistics and Psycholinguistics Research Center. In his teaching trajectory he has won student awards for the best professor in the teaching staff. In his research trajectory he has focused on several problems associated with the nature of lexical access and representation. He has published papers in a large number of international journals with blind peer-review and many review chapters in edited books. He also edited a special issue of an international journal and several books himself. He has been awarded many research projects and has successfully guided a lot of PhD students. After obtaining their PhD many of these students have remained in research (in Belgium or abroad) or succeeded in taking on another high-responsibility job. He also attaches a lot of importance to the dissemination of science among the general public. In line with this ambition, he has been successful for popularizing several of his research findings for the general audience, in the form of publications in journals that aim to popularise science (e.g., Eos, De Psycholoog) and in the form of radio and television interviews, both in Flanders and the Netherlands.

Saar Hommes BA (student-member) is a Research Master student Language and Cognition at the University of Groningen. Her main interests are communication and language acquisition. She works as a student assistant, teaching second year Bachelor students Statistics I. Furthermore, she is a research assistant currently working on a project aiming to identify a syntactic phenomenon (sluicing), which involves her collecting data from 4-year old participants. Saar also has international research experience, as she has done her research internship at the University of Greenwich (London) and the University of Cambridge. She is currently working on publishing two articles (one in the field of language acquisition and one in health communication) and hopes to pursue research by acquiring a PhD-position.

Appendix 2: Intended learning outcomes

Learning outcomes – Curriculum Components

Knowledge and Understanding
In general, students

1. have acquired general knowledge on the historical roots of and modern developments in the fields of Linguistics and Communication Science; they can describe and apply this knowledge, and are able to relate these fields to each other (*Foundations of Language and Communication; Electives*)

2. have a thorough and up-to-date understanding of general findings, the theories developed to account for them, and the current state of the art in the discipline(s) in which they have specialized. Graduates are specialists in an established area (for example language acquisition, persuasive communication, multimodal interaction, psycholinguistics, etc.) or in a more interdisciplinary field (*Electives, Term Paper, Lab Rotation, Grant Proposal Writing, Valorization, Thesis*)

3. have a comprehensive understanding of the relevant methodological approaches and techniques. This includes minimally those that support corpus-based, experimental, and/or computational research into language and communication, and in addition, where appropriate, methods basic to their area of specialization (*Corpus and Experimental Methods, the elective Skills/Methods courses, Lab Rotation, Thesis*)

Skills and abilities
In their chosen discipline, graduates of the research master will be able

4. to study independently in order to develop their knowledge beyond what was offered in classes and internships), and to evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in a critical manner (*Foundations, Electives, Term Paper, Thesis*)

5. to act autonomously in identifying useful research questions and in planning, organizing and implementing a research project that investigates these questions (*Lab Rotation, Grant Proposal Writing, Thesis, Valorization A*)

6. to select and apply the appropriate research method(s) given the research questions (*Corpus and Experimental Methods, the elective Skills/Methods courses, Grant Proposal Writing, Thesis*)

7. to communicate findings and conclusions to a scientific audience in clear and unambiguous form, in English, and orally as well as in writing; they can do this in the various forms that are conventional in academic discourse, including conference proceedings, peer reviewed articles, and presentations at a symposium or workshop (*Lab Rotation, Thesis*)

8. to communicate to a non-specialist audience in spoken and in written English, in a clear and unambiguous manner, the findings and conclusions of their research, as well as its significance beyond science; they can do this in the form of, for example, an article in the popular press, a blog, or a press interview (*Valorization B*)

9. to adopt the academic attitude that enables them to ask new questions, and to cast their ideas about new studies in the form of a fundable research grant proposal which they can successfully present and defend (*Grant Proposal Writing*)

Academic and ethical standards
Graduates will be able

10. to function in an academic environment; this entails that they at all times uphold the professional standards of academic life, i.e. adhere to ethical standards, and show curiosity, a critical mind, and an openness with regard to new views (*Corpus and Experimental Methods, Lab Rotation*)

Appendix 3: Overview of the curriculum

Curriculum Academic year 2015-2016

Year 1			
1st block			
Course title	*Teacher(s)*	*Cluster*	*Credits*
Foundations of Language & Communication	prof. A. Backus prof. W. Spooren	Tilburg and Nijmegen	6
Specialization course www.studiegids.science.ru.nl/2015/arts/prospectus/lc_cursus/info/45779/			6
Skills/methods course www.studiegids.science.ru.nl/2015/arts/prospectus/lc_cursus/info/45782/			3
2nd block			
Course title	*Teacher(s)*	*Cluster*	*Credits*
Corpus and Experimental Methods	prof. R. van Hout dr. M. Goudbeek	Tilburg and Nijmegen	6
Specialization course		6	
Research Orientation	Coordination: prof. A. Backus, dr. N. Oostdijk, dr. M. Goudbeek	Tilburg and Nijmegen	3
3rd block			
Course title	*Teacher(s)*	*Cluster*	*Credits*
Lab Rotation I	Coordination: prof. A, Backus, dr. M. Goudbeek, dr. N. Oostdijk	Tilburg and Nijmegen	6
Term Paper	Coordination: prof. A. Backus, dr. O. Crasborn	Tilburg and Nijmegen	3
Elective course		6	
4th block			
Course title	*Teacher(s)*	*Cluster*	*Credits*
Lab Rotation I (cont.)	Coordination: prof. A, Backus, dr. M. Goudbeek, dr. N. Oostdijk	Tilburg and Nijmegen	6
Term Paper (cont.)	Coordination: prof. A. Backus, dr. O. Crasborn	Tilburg and Nijmegen	3
Elective course			6
Total			*60*

Year 2			
1st block			
Course title	*Teacher(s)*	*Cluster*	*Credits*
Lab Rotation II	Coordination: prof. A. Backus, dr. M. Goudbeek, dr. N. Oostdijk	Tilburg and Nijmegen	6
Specialization course			6
Skills/methods courses			3
2nd block			
Course title	*Teacher(s)*	*Cluster*	*Credits*
Lab Rotation II (cont.)	Coordination: prof. A. Backus, dr. M. Goudbeek, dr. N. Oostdijk	Tilburg and Nijmegen	3
Grant Proposal Writing	Coordination: prof. R. van Hout, prof. M. Louwerse, prof. A. Backus		6
Valorization A	Coordination: prof. A. Backus, dr. N. Oostdijk	Tilburg and Nijmegen	3
Master Thesis		Tilburg and Nijmegen	3
3rd block			
Course title	*Teacher(s)*	*Cluster*	*Credits*
Master Thesis (cont.)		Tilburg and Nijmegen	15
4th block			
Course title	*Teacher(s)*	*Cluster*	*Credits*
Master Thesis (cont.)		Tilburg and Nijmegen	12
Valorization B	Coordination: dr. M. Goudbeek, dr. N. Oostdijk	Tilburg and Nijmegen	3
Total			*60*
Overall total			***120***

Appendix 4: Programme of the site visit

Venue: Erasmusbuilding, room 9.14

21 April 2016		
12.00	15.00	*Preparatory meeting and lunch*
15.00	15.45	Interview with the management RU: - Dr. Nelleke Oostdijk, programme coordinator (from Nov. 2013) - Prof. dr. Roeland van Hout, programme coordinator (2011 – Nov. 2013) - Drs. Christel Theunissen, study counsellor TiU: - Prof. dr. Ad Backus, programme coordinator - Dr. Martijn Goudbeek, programme coordinator
15.45	16.00	*Break*
16.00	16.45	Interview with students RU (Linguistics): - Merijn Beeksma - Ilona Plug - Inge Stortenbeker TiU (Communication and Information Studies): - Peta Baxter - Chiara de Jong - Ruben Vromans
16.45	17.00	*Break*
17.00	17.30	Interview with alumni RU: - Wessel Stoop, MA - Ingrid Masson Carro, MA TiU: - Yevgen Matusevych, MA - Adriana Baltaretu, MA - Zeynep Azar, MA - John Huisman, MA
18.30	21.00	*Dinner*

22 April 2016		
8.45	9.00	Arrival
9.00	9.45	*Preparatory meeting*
9.45	10.30	Interview with lecturers RU: - Prof. dr. Wilbert Spooren, Foundations of Language and Communication - Prof. dr. Ans van Kemenade, New Ways of Analyzing Syntactic Variation - Dr. Monique Flecken, Language & Thought - Dr. Esther Janse, Speech Comprehension TiU: - Dr. Per van der Wijst, Advances in Negotiation Studies - Dr. Maria Mos, Current Approaches to the Evaluation of Online Text / tutor - Dr. Paul Vogt, Evolution of Language
10.30	10.45	*Break*

10.45	11.15	Interview with Programme Committee RU: - Dr. Marianne Starren, lecturer - Prof. dr. Roeland van Hout, lecturer - Vinicius Macuch, student - Annika Schiefner, student TiU: - Dr. Martijn Goudbeek, lecturer, chair - Daniëlle Bleize, student - Pablo de Juan Bernabéu, student
11.15	12.00	Interview with Examination Board RU: - Prof. dr. Helen de Hoop TiU: - Prof. dr. Emiel Krahmer, chair - Prof. dr. Marc Swerts - Claudia Loijens MA, assessment expert
12.00	13.30	*Open access opportunity, lunch and preparation of final meeting with management*
13.30	14.00	Final interview with the management RU: - Prof. dr. Margot van Mulken, dean - Prof. dr. Odin Dekkers, director of education - Prof. dr. Antal van den Bosch, director of research - Dr. Nelleke Oostdijk, programme coordinator TiU: - Prof. dr. Paul Post, vice dean research - Prof. dr. Emiel Krahmer, director TiCC - Prof. dr. Ad Backus, programme coordinator - Prof. dr. Fons Maes, department chair
14.00	16.00	*Formulation of preliminary findings*
16.00	16.15	Presentation of preliminary findings (room E.2.53)

Appendix 5: Theses and documents studied by the panel

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied the theses of the students with the following student numbers:

502794	4065832	300008
487973	789066	510550
0701165	4066863	786474
916424	182129	655788
3011682	4065700	541900

During the site visit, the panel studied, among other things, the following documents (partly as hard copies, partly via the institute's electronic learning environment):

1. Learning outcomes of the programme;
2. Study Guide;
3. Teaching and examination regulations;
4. Overview of allocated staff with names, positions, scope of appointment, level and expertise;
5. A full and anonymized list of graduates for the last two completed academic years.
6. Drop-out rates, success rates and/or average duration of studies of graduates;
7. Teacher -student ratio achieved;
8. Teacher quality (proportion of teachers holding a master's degree and proportion of teachers holding a PhD);
9. The annual report by the examining board and the reports by the programme committee;
10. Test questions with relevant assessment criteria and mark system (answer models);
11. A representative selection of reference books and other study materials;
12. A list of the responsible and senior staff members who are actively involved in the research master's programme, and any expected significant changes in the staff. Each name on the list was provided with a brief resume (5-10 lines) and a list of five distinctive publications.
13. A description of the manner in which and the extent to which the (top) researchers involved in the programme actually play an active and executive role in the curriculum.
14. A list of the number of PhD students supervised by the staff members involved.
15. The most recent data from research assessments (QANU, KNAW), and a description of the relation between this data and the research master's programme, which shows that the level of the research groups concerned is demonstrably very good to excellent.
16. A list of active collaborations with research units at home and abroad, with a brief description of their nature and scope.
17. A list of the substantial subsidies acquired by the staff members involved in the programme in open competition.