academion

Contents

academion

Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The bachelor's programme Philosophy offered at Tilburg University is a broad programme in philosophy, which is characterized by its specific attention to the four systematic subdisciplines (1) ethics, (2) political and social philosophy, (3) philosophy of science and epistemology, and (4) philosophical anthropology and psychology. The programme follows Tilburg University's educational profile, summarized by the motto 'understanding society'. The panel feels the programme can take pride in its connection to Tilburg University's valuable 'understanding society' focus and encourages the programme to reflect this connection even more in the intended learning outcomes. Within the profile, the programme offers three specialisation tracks, which are clearly distinctive from each other. The panel recommends changing the names of two tracks as they do not cover the contents adequately: the PPE track and the Research track. The panel appreciates the programme's clear profile and specialisations. It finds that the programme ties in with international requirements formulated in the international framework British Subject Benchmark Statements for Philosophy, and that its profile is attuned to the professional fields linked to it through its alumni and the Social Advisory Committee. The intended learning outcomes are logically derived from the profile and are structured according to the Dublin descriptors for academic Bachelor's programmes. They are, with one exception, worded clearly and reflect the academic bachelor level.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel appreciates the teaching-learning environment offered by the programme. In a small-scale setting, staff is accessible and always willing to help students. Parttime students are guided specifically towards an educational schedule that matches their situation. Lecturers combine research expertise and didactical skills and are working closely together. This results in a well-structured and coherent curriculum where students can develop their academic knowledge and skills. The curriculum offers them both a solid foundation in philosophy and the opportunity to shape their own learning trajectories. Tilburg University's 'understanding society' profile is clearly recognizable in the curriculum. Professional skills are well addressed but could be made more visible in the curriculum. The panel advises the programme to formulate a vision on including non-western philosophy in the curriculum and implementing that vision consistently. The programme is taught in Dutch but includes English elements to prepare students for follow-up master's programmes. The language choices are valid according to the panel, and staff that teaches in English has a good command of English. In courses that are taught together with the premaster, students feel slowed down by the premaster students as the latter have less prior knowledge. The panel advises to address this.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The programme has a good system of assessment, which is transparent for students. Policy and regulations are adequately safeguarded in appropriate documents. Assessment types are varied and logically built up from knowledge-oriented exams to academically focused essays and papers. The assessment connects well to the intended learning outcomes and is valid. The system of midterm assessment gives students an impression of how they are doing, stimulate their continuous learning process, and spreads study load evenly. Grading is being done reliably, and students are well aware of the criteria that they have to meet. For assessments of significant weight, the four-eyes principle is applied in the development process or grading. The amount of written and oral feedback that students receive is impressive and stimulating for student's learning process. Thesis and internship assessment are well in place. The quality of assessment is safeguarded by the examination board. The panel recommends implementing a structural procedure for the independent quality safeguarding of theses.

academion

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

Students achieve the intended learning outcomes on the academic bachelor level and alumni are well-equipped to continue their studies in a master's programme. Theses show good writing skills, concern relevant topics, and have a clear structure. The understanding society' focus is clearly recognizable in the topics of the theses. Alumni are well-equipped for a wide range of jobs and master's programmes, and the programme keeps track of alumni and invites them regularly to provide students with information about their careers, which the panel encourages.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

B Philosophy / Filosofie

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
General conclusion	positive

Prof. dr. Martin van Hees   Drs. Marieke Schoots
Chair   Secretary

Date: 12 March 2024

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 2 and 3 November 2023, the bachelor's programme Filosofie / Philosophy of Tilburg University was assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the Philosophy cluster assessment. The assessment cluster consisted of 29 programmes, offered by Leiden University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Radboud University, University of Groningen, Tilburg University, University of Twente, Utrecht University, University of Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (September 2018).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster Philosophy. Fiona Schouten acted as both coordinator and secretary, and Irene Conradie, Mariette Huisjes, Marieke Schoots, and Anne-Lise Kamphuis acted as secretaries in the cluster assessment. They have been certified and registered by the NVAO.

Preparation

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members. It also took into account consistency within the cluster through overlapping panel participation. Martin van Hees, who chaired the panel at Tilburg University, was also panel chair for the visits to the universities of Leiden, Twente, Utrecht, Radboud University and Erasmus University Rotterdam. Mariette van der Hoven was a panel member for the Tilburg assessment as well as for the visits to Leiden University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and Radboud University. Sarah Boer was student panel member for the Tilburg site visit and also acted as student panel member at Leiden University, the University of Twente, Utrecht University and the University of Groningen. On 20 July 2023, the NVAO approved the composition of the panel. The coordinator instructed the panel chairs on their role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016).

The Philosophy programmes in Tilburg composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator (see Appendix 3). The programmes selected representative partners for the various interviews. They also determined that the development dialogue would take place at the end of the site visit. A separate development report was made based on this dialogue.

The programme provided the coordinator with a list of graduates over the period January 2021 – August 2023. In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses. They took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account, as well as the various tracks. No part-time thesis was available for the bachelor in the period chosen for thesis selection due to the small number of part-time students. The programme therefore provided the panel with a part-time thesis from 2019. As a result, 16 theses were read by the panel. The panel read 3 theses for the track Ondernemen, 2 for PPE and 11 for Research. Prior to the site visit, the programme provided the panel with the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. They also provided the panel with the self-evaluation reports and additional materials (see Appendix 4).

The panel members studied the information and sent their findings to the secretary. The secretary collected the panel's questions and remarks in a document and shared this with the panel members. In a preliminary meeting, the panel discussed the initial findings on the self-evaluation report and the theses, as well as the

division of tasks during the site visit. Prior to this, the panel was also informed on the assessment frameworks, the working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

Site visit

During the site visit, the panel interviewed various programme representatives (see Appendix 3). The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the preliminary findings. The panel offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. No consultation was requested.

For health reasons, the student member of the panel participated only in part of the conversations during the site visit, through an online video connection, and with approval of the programme. She handed in written questions for the other conversations in advance, which were covered by the other panel members. The student member provided her feedback on the panel report the same way the other panel members did.

Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to the Academion coordinator for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to Tilburg University for a factual check. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The panel then finalised the report, and the coordinator sent it to the Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences of Tilburg University.

Panel

The following panel members were involved in the cluster assessment:

- Prof. dr. Martin van Hees, professor of Moral and Political Philosophy, VU Amsterdam, and Dean of Amsterdam University College (AUC) – chair;
- Prof. dr. Gerd Van Riel, professor of Ancient Philosophy, KU Leuven – chair and panel member;
- Prof. dr. Mariëtte van den Hoven, professor of Medical Ethics, Amsterdam UMC;
- Prof. Thomas Reydon, professor of Philosophy of Science and Technology, Leibniz University Hannover;
- Em. prof. dr. Jos de Mul, professor of Philosophical Anthropology, Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. dr. Sonja Smets, professor in Logic and Epistemology, University of Amsterdam;
- Prof. dr. Bart Raymaekers, professor of Moral Philosophy and Philosophy of Law, KU Leuven;
- Prof. dr. Geert Van Eekert, professor of European Philosophy, University of Antwerp;
- Prof. dr. Martine Prange, professor of Philosophy of Humanity, Culture, and Society, Tilburg University;
- Prof. dr. Wybo Houkes, professor of Philosophy of Science and Technology, Eindhoven University of Technology;
- Prof. Federica Russo, professor of Philosophy and Ethics, Utrecht University;
- Dr. Victor Gijsbers, assistant professor Philosophy, Leiden University;
- Prof. dr. Vincent Blok, professor of Philosophy of Technology and Responsible Innovation, Wageningen University;
- Prof. Rein Raud, professor of Asian and Cultural Studies, Tallinn University;
- Prof. Corien Bary, professor in Logical Semantics, Radboud University;
- Dr. Elsbeth Brouwer, assistant professor in Philosophy of Language and Cognition, University of Amsterdam;

academion

- Prof. dr. Erik Weber, professor of Philosophy, Ghent University;
- Dr. Constanze Binder, associate professor Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam – referee;
- Dr. Bruno Verbeek, assistant professor of Ethics and Political Philosophy, Leiden University – referee;
- Sarah Boer, MA student Philosophy, Politics, and Society, Radboud University – student member;
- Tim van Alten, MSc student Philosophy of Science, Technology and Society, University of Twente – student member;
- Christa Laurens, MA student Modern European Philosophy, Leiden University – student member.

The panel assessing the Bachelor's programme Philosophy at Tilburg University consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. Martin van Hees, professor of Moral and Political Philosophy, VU Amsterdam, and Dean of Amsterdam University College (AUC) – chair;
- Prof. Dr. Mariëtte van den Hoven, professor of Medical Ethics, Amsterdam UMC;
- Prof. dr. Bart Raymaekers, professor of Moral Philosophy and Philosophy of Law, KU Leuven;
- Prof. dr. Geert Van Eekert, professor of European Philosophy, University of Antwerp;
- Sarah Boer, MA student Philosophy, Politics, and Society, Radboud University – student member.

Information on the programme

Name of the institution:	Tilburg University
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive

Programme name:	Filosofie
CROHO number:	56081
Level:	Bachelor
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	180 EC
Specializations:	Onderzoek
	Ondernemen
	Philosophy, Politics and Economics
Location:	Tilburg
Modes of study:	Fulltime, parttime
Language of instruction:	Dutch
Submission date NVAO:	1 May 2024

academion

Description of the assessment

Organization

The bachelor's programme Philosophy at Tilburg University is offered by the Department of Philosophy, which is part of the Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences. The Department also offers a pre-master's programme and a master's programme in philosophy. The bachelor's programme is overseen by a specific programme director who is responsible for its content and quality. The programme has grown in student numbers over the past two years and now has an inflow of approximately 40 students each year, of which a small percentage is part-time student.

Reflection on the previous assessment

In the previous NVAO assessment, which took place in 2018, the programme was assessed as conditionally positive. A recovery period of two years was provided to allow the programme to improve the separation of the internship assessment and the thesis assessment within the entrepreneurship track. This was successfully accomplished, as was confirmed by the NVAO in 2020. The previous panel also recommended examining the wording of intended learning outcomes, offering more free choice for students within the curriculum, increasing the number of teaching staff with didactical training, better separating the responsibilities of the programme committee and the programme management, filling out assessment forms for the thesis more extensively, and establishing clearer guidelines for the breadth and duration of the thesis phase.

The current panel concludes that the programme has successfully implemented these recommendations of the previous panel. Details about the current situation concerning these points are described under the relevant standard assessments below.

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

> The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Findings

Profile
The bachelor's programme Philosophy offered at Tilburg University is broad and wide-ranging. A characteristic of the programme that separates it from other bachelor's programmes in philosophy is the specific attention it devotes to the four systematic subdisciplines: (1) ethics, (2) political and social philosophy, (3) philosophy of science and epistemology, and (4) philosophical anthropology and psychology. The programme also follows Tilburg University's educational profile, emphasizing the importance of knowledge acquisition, skills training, and character-building as part of the university's 'understanding society' profile.

The programme offers students the choice of three specialization tracks (see Standard 2 for more information about the tracks):

- Research, for students who would like to continue with a (research) master's in philosophy,
- Entrepreneurship, which has a direct connection to the labour market through an internship, and

academion

- Philosophy, politics, and economics (PPE), for students with the ambition to work in public governance.

The programme ties in with international demands in the philosophical domain by deriving the programme profile from the British Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS) for Philosophy (Quality Assurance Agency for UK Higher Education, 2019). To mirror the connection between the programme and succeeding study and professional fields, Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences has created a Social Advisory Committee composed of representations from the professional and academic fields. The programme's alumni are tracked to ensure that the programme has current information about their positions (see Standard 4).

The panel appreciates the profile of the bachelor's programme and its distinctive link with the 'understanding society' motto of the university. Its members noticed during their site visit that this vision is expressed well and that it is recognized broadly by staff and students as a part of the programme. The profile is closely connected to the wide variety of the alumni's fields of study. The panel is positive about the programme's connection to the future studies and professional fields of students through the involvement of alumni and an advisory committee and encourages the continuation of these activities.

The panel sees a clear distinction between the content of each of the specialization tracks and finds their content to be well suited to a philosophy programme. However, the panellists believe the name of the PPE track can be misleading for new students and that the name should be changed. There is a separate CROHO label for PPE, and other universities offer under that label an independent programme with a different content and profile. Furthermore, the panel notices that the research track is sometimes seen as a general philosophy track by students who do not want to choose one of the other two tracks. The panel also deems the track to be reflective of a general philosophy programme rather than a specifically research-oriented one and advises that the name of this track be changed as well.

Intended learning outcomes
The programme's intended learning outcomes (see Appendix 1) are logically derived from the SBS, reflecting international academic standards for philosophy programmes. The outcomes are also structured according to the Dublin descriptors for academic bachelor's programmes and are attuned to the expectations of the professional fields in which alumni may be employed. In addition to the learning outcomes that apply to all students, there are specific intended learning outcomes for each specialization track.

The panel finds that the intended learning outcomes reflect the programme's broad profile and that the track-specific outcomes provide useful direction for specialization. The learning outcomes are clearly worded and comply with the academic bachelor level. However, the panel does not explicitly recognize Tilburg University's 'understanding society' vision in the intended learning outcomes. Since this vision is a strong trademark of the programme and the panel does see this focus in its content (see Standards 2 and 4), the panel recommends explicitly including this specific vision in the intended learning outcomes. Finally, the panel notices that one learning outcome specific to the PPE specialization (8a), refers to a criterion of the entry level of the master's programme Master of science in public governance. The panel remarks that the learning outcome as it now stands is therefore not sufficiently clear.

Considerations
The bachelor's programme Philosophy offered at Tilburg University is a broad programme characterized by its specific attention to four systematic subdisciplines: (1) ethics, (2) political and social philosophy, (3) philosophy of science and epistemology, and (4) philosophical anthropology and psychology. The

academion

programme follows Tilburg University's educational profile, summarized by the motto 'understanding society'. Within the profile, the programme offers three specialization tracks, which are clearly distinctive from each other, and the panel appreciates the programme's clear profile and specializations. It finds that the programme ties in with international requirements formulated in the international framework British Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS) for philosophy and that its profile is attuned to the professional fields linked to it through its alumni and the Social Advisory Committee. The panel recommends changing the names of two tracks -the PPE track and the Research track- as they do not adequately cover the contents.

The intended learning outcomes are logically derived from the profile and are structured according to the Dublin descriptors for academic bachelor's programmes. They are, with one exception, worded clearly and reflect the academic bachelor level. The panellists believe the programme can take pride in its connection to Tilburg University's valuable 'understanding society' focus and encourages the programme to reflect this connection more in its intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion
The panel concludes that the programme meets Standard 1.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

> The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Findings

Curriculum
The programme (see Appendix 2 for an overview) starts with a general part for all students in the first year, which is followed by a specialization track in the second and third years. In the first year, students attend courses for a total of 50 European Credits (EC), such as political philosophy and metaphysics. Students also enrol in skills courses on logic (6 EC) and academic Dutch (3 EC) as well as two mentorship modules (0 and 1 EC).

In the second year, all students pursue 18 EC in shared courses (10 EC in content courses, 7 EC in methodology courses, and 1 EC in mentorship) while at the same time embarking on their specialization track, which continues into the third year. Year 3 also offers elements shared by all students: 12 EC in core content and 12 EC in total for the bachelor's thesis trajectory. Aside from these shared elements, the tracks are characterized by specific content and skills courses.

The research track, which hosts the largest number of students, focuses on interpretation, communication, methodology, and interdisciplinary philosophical research. The track consists of several philosophy courses, including two courses in philosophical research skills. In the second semester of the second year, students follow a minor of 30 EC or take 30 EC of electives. Students may take advanced philosophy courses at other universities, courses in a different scientific discipline, or they may choose to pursue a minor abroad. Students need the prior approval of the examination board for the minor or the package of electives they have chosen.

In the entrepreneurship track, students first follow the same courses as students in the Research track, and then apply their knowledge and skills on the work floor in an internship and through a research

project linked to the internship. Students have 36 EC available for electives that can comprise a minor, but prior approval of the examination board is required for their electives. Up to the end of the fifth semester, a student can switch to the research track without study delay. In Year 3, students follow specific courses for entrepreneurship and engage in their internships at companies in the fields of media, healthcare, and education, for example. The internship is preceded by a short course in which students learn to translate a practical problem to a philosophical research question and are provided with the skills necessary to identify a suitable organization for their internship. In the past, the internship and its associated research were integrated, but this was changed after the concerns articulated by the previous panel. Students in the entrepreneurship track need to find an internship themselves, but they report feeling guided well by the programme in the process of finding one as well as during the internship itself.

The relatively new PPE track has the smallest number of students. This track combines philosophical courses with courses in the domains of politics, governance, law, and economics. Students follow most track courses with students of other programmes, such as public administration or economics. The elective space is 12 EC.

Part-time students follow the same curriculum but require twice as long as a full-time student to complete the programme. They follow the courses with the full-time students, not separately, and have no claim to dispensations except those that are also enjoyed by full-time students. Part-time students receive extra support from an educational coordinator in the planning of their courses.

According to the panel, the curriculum is well structured and coherent, constituting a solid and broad basis for students. The programme builds logically toward the academic bachelor's level for both full-time and part-time students. The intended learning outcomes are translated into clear learning objectives and are well addressed in the different general courses and tracks.

The panel sees strong academic content in the curriculum. The programme not only offers a firm, fixed theoretical basis but also significant space for free choice of students in the assignments, minors, tracks, internships, and theses. This flexibility enables students to play an active role in the design of their own learning process as they build a broad and solid basis in philosophy and obtain in-depth knowledge within their track. The literature used is of the expected academic bachelor's level, and lecturers actively offer advice for additional literature to students.

The panel is positive about the academic and professional skills that students learn. Over the course of the programme, the importance of higher-order cognitive skills increases. This includes skills such as writing, critical thinking, reflecting, debating, evaluating, and conducting research. Furthermore, the skills training clearly connects with Tilburg University's 'understanding society' profile. For instance, students are trained in communication (with non-specialists), cooperation, presentation, and job applications. The panel also heard from students that lecturers initiate active conversations about the role of the philosopher in society. While the panel did not find these profile-related skills very clearly represented in the documentation, the site visit made clear that they are actively integrated into the curriculum. The panel sees an opportunity for the programme to make these aspects more visible for all stakeholders, as these offerings are a point of pride. Another opportunity is to include more oral skills training directly in the first semester, as students have suggested to the panel.

The panel received mixed signals about the integration of more diverse, non-Western philosophy into the programme. The self-evaluation report states that the programme chooses not to include courses on non-

Western philosophy or comparative philosophy. However, in the conversations during the site visit, the panel heard thoughts and first steps regarding the inclusion of non-Western philosophy that would diversify the programme and make it more inclusive. Additionally, the students expressed a wish for more attention to non-Western philosophy. The panel recommends the formulation of a clear vision about the integration of diverse and non-Western philosophy and its consistent implementation. The panel also learned that the programme aims to expand students' interdisciplinary learning to better fit the university's 'understanding society' profile. The panel encourages this ambition and suggests that the staff's service teaching in other programmes (see below under 'staff') offer opportunities to take steps in this area.

The Department of Philosophy at Tilburg University also offers a pre-master's programme, and some of the bachelor-level courses are part of it. Bachelor students indicated to the panel that they believed the pre-master students have less prior knowledge of philosophy. The difference in background knowledge sometimes led to a separation of the two student groups within the classroom and a feeling among the bachelor students of being slowed down. The panel advises the programme to implement a solution for the courses that are currently offered for both types of students.

For quality assurance of the curriculum, the panel is positive about the ways in which students are involved in the evaluation of education, for example, with student focus groups. Students believe their opinion is highly valued by the programme. The previous panel recommended better separating the responsibilities of the programme committee and programme management. The current panel finds that adequate measures on this point have been taken. Another step in this improvement process is to clearly formalize the right of consent of the programme committee and communicate this to all of the programme's stakeholders.

Educational approach
The programme offers a variety of didactical forms such as lectures, debate lessons, group assignments, student presentations, online learning, self-study, and individual assignments. Group size is usually not larger than 30 students. Students praise the programme for the safe learning setting, even when the courses address sensitive subjects such as racism or sexualism. Lecturers work together closely and join up to experiment with new didactical forms.

The panel compliments the programme for the variety of didactical methods employed and its efforts to innovate. An example of a strong didactical form is the cooperation between the courses *Cultuurfilosofie* and *Academisch Nederlands*. Here, students must indicate that they understand certain authors and demonstrate scientific accountability. They write an article in steps and provide feedback to each other during the process. Another example of a recently introduced didactical form that is working out well according to the panel, is in the course *Toegepaste ethiek*. Students practice their conversation skills during the course, based on their own personal learning goals, and they must demonstrate their skills at the end of the course in a group discussion.

Student guidance and feasibility
Students told the panel that they experience a sense of community and that lecturers are very accessible to them. Lecturers are always willing to offer help and advice to students, both inside and outside classes. An example of this is the support provided by lecturers in choosing assignment topics and tracks, and students said this is highly appreciated. Communication through the digital system Canvas is clear and on time, according to students. In the first year, students participate in a mentoring programme for study skills and personal development. During the final two years, they do so under supervision of lecturers from the programme every two to three weeks. Throughout the programme, an educational coordinator is available for personal study guidance, assisting, for example, with study planning, and personal support. Students are

highly satisfied with the educational coordinator and praise her for the psychological support she provides, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The panel formed the impression of a small-scale programme that offers personal and customized guidance to students.

Aspiring students are admitted with a VWO degree or an HBO bachelor propaedeutic. A relatively large number of the students already possess a bachelor's degree or have completed a propaedeutic exam when they enter the programme. Part-time students usually combine work and studies. Full-time students need to obtain at least 42 EC in the first year, and part-time students in the second year, to receive positive binding study advice. Full-time students stated that the programme is doable in the allocated time. Part-time students also said they find the programme feasible but added that they sometimes struggle to combine their schedules with work. They need more advance notice about their study schedules, which is not always possible due to last-minute changes.

Students are allowed to write their thesis in either Dutch or English. The thesis process starts with a preliminary 2 EC course to determine the subject of the thesis (10 EC). When students have identified their project, they can opt for a supervisor given certain guidelines. Supervisors have enough time available for this task, and students feel well supported by them. The panel finds the thesis procedures adequate and has seen an improvement on this point since the previous site visit. The panel sees that the programme maintains understandable guidelines for duration and size of the thesis project as well as clearly described go/no-go moments and deadlines. If the student fails, there is a three-month period of extra time to repair the thesis. If a student does not meet the standards after that period, they must write a new thesis under a new supervisor. The students who spoke to the panel said they find the preliminary course quite helpful, and the panel assesses this preparation phase as a strong point of the programme. In terms of guidance on content, the panel has some advice. In some cases, the thesis topic touches on the borders of the philosophical domain because of its interdisciplinary and/or applied character. Students told the panel that, although the first research question is always essentially philosophical, the research sometimes deviates from it during the later process. The panel alerts the programme to guide students more strictly on this point to ensure that all theses remain close to the philosophical research question.

Although most students do well in the first year and obtain positive binding study advice, the study delay later on has been a cause for concern. Over the past four years, an estimated 40% of the students succeeded in earning their diploma within three years. After four years of study, this rate climbs to 57%. Programme management indicates that delay is due to part-time and secondary students who do not necessarily aim to complete the programme as well as the relatively high percentage of students with mental health problems in the wake of the pandemic, particularly in 2019–2020. Students recognize these factors. The programme has taken measures such as spreading assessments further apart and implementing a mentorship which is a tailored version of the university-wide Programme for Academic Study Success (PASS). The first signs of improvement are visible in the success rates: of the 2018 cohort, 71% graduated within four years. The panel encourages the programme to keep on tracking the exact reasons for delay in the path to a degree and to continue evaluating and implementing measures for improvement.

Language policy
The programme is taught mainly in Dutch. However, much of the literature is in English, reflecting the international character of the research in philosophy and the need to prepare students for a possible master's programme, which is usually conducted in English. A limited part of the programme is offered in English to provide students with the opportunity to speak, read, and write in English. Students receive support in academic English through the first-semester political philosophy course. Those who would like more support can turn to Tilburg University's Language Centre for an additional free course or use the

Scriptorium, the university's academic writing centre. Students expressed their gratitude for these options, saying they feel well equipped for reading and writing in the English language. A benefit of the choice for some English courses is that international students can join these courses, which provides an international classroom for the Dutch students and helps to further develop the international perspective on philosophy. The panel discussed the language policy with management, staff, and students and supports the choices made, since the international research context is a fundamental part of philosophy education.

Staff
The panel met with a committed, flexible, and motivated teaching staff. The staff was expanded in recent years, which has resulted in a pool of staff who enjoy sufficient facilities and opportunities to fulfil their educational tasks and who comprise a wide variety of expertise. Staff members have 35% to 40% of their time available for research tasks, which enables them to work in depth on subjects that also benefit education. Together, the bachelor's, pre-master's, and master's programme employ 43 staff members, including three professors, eight associate professors, and 24 assistant professors. All teaching staff members in the bachelor's programme hold a PhD, and PhD-candidates can fulfil their educational tasks under guidance of a lecturer. The panel concludes that the quantity and academic quality of the teaching staff are clearly sufficient.

Teaching staff members in the programme are didactically skilled. Staff members who teach in the English language must prove their command of English with a language certificate, and students reported satisfaction with the English language skills of their teachers. Applicants for lecturer vacancies must prove their teaching skills in a trial lesson. New staff members receive didactical training (UTQ) and are guided by more experienced colleagues. Within a system of peer review, lecturers are periodically reviewed by an experienced colleague on the contents of their course and teaching skills in the classroom. In the peer review system, priority is given to new lecturers. The panel learned during the site visit that lecturers work together well to align courses and improve the programme. The panel is impressed by the professional manner in which new lecturers are guided and trained and appreciates the general didactic training among the teaching staff.

Most lecturers also have hours for 'service teaching', which involves teaching philosophy in other programmes at Tilburg University. Every bachelor's student in a non-philosophy programme at Tilburg University enrols in 12 EC of philosophy as part of the university's 'understanding society' focus. The panel is enthusiastic about this model since it strengthens the position of the philosophy programmes within the university and offers the philosophy programmes possibilities for interdisciplinary learning and teaching (see above).

Considerations
The panel appreciates the teaching–learning environment offered by the programme. In a small-scale setting, lecturers and support staff are accessible and always willing to help students. Part-time students are guided specifically towards an educational schedule that matches their situation. Lecturers combine research expertise and didactical skills and work closely together. This results in a well-structured and coherent curriculum in which students can develop their academic knowledge and skills. The curriculum offers them both a solid foundation in philosophy and the opportunity to shape their own learning trajectories.

Tilburg University's 'understanding society' profile is clearly recognizable in the curriculum. Professional skills in line with this profile are well addressed, but they could be made more visible in documentation. The panel advises the programme to formulate a vision on the inclusion of non-Western philosophy in the

academion

curriculum and the consistent implementation of that vision. The programme is taught mainly in Dutch but includes English elements to prepare students for follow-up master's programmes. The language choices are valid, according to the panel, and staff members who teach in English have a good command of English. In post propaedeutic courses that are taught together with the pre-master's programme, bachelor's students feel slowed down by the pre-master's students, as the latter have less prior knowledge. The panel advises to address this situation.

Conclusion
The panel concludes that the programme meets Standard 2.

Standard 3. Student assessment

> The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Findings

Assessment policy and practice
The programme's assessment system is based on the assessment handbook and assessment policy of the Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences. In the handbook, various types of assessments, with their construction procedures and guidelines for development and planning, are described in detail. The assessment policy describes the quality assurance of assessment at university, programme, course, and thesis levels. The programme follows the guidelines stated in these documents, which include the existence of a coherent assessment policy, assessment types based on the intended learning outcomes, and application of the four-eyes principle.

The types of assessment and assessment criteria in the programme depend on the intended learning outcome(s) involved. For example, written exams are used to assess knowledge, presentations test oral skills, and essays and papers evaluate analysing and writing skills. The level shifts during the programme from building knowledge to interpretation, reasoning, and argumentation. Assessments are concentrated in exam periods after each of the four blocks: after Blocks 1 and 3 there are midterm assessments, and after Blocks 2 and 4 there are final assessments. Summative midterm assessments have been introduced to promote continuous studying and to distribute the study load. Students also undergo what are known as low-stakes assessments: relatively small, in-between evaluations that account for a small percentage of the final grade for the course. Students are very positive about these types of midterms and in-between assessments, as they offer them a preliminary sense of how they are doing with their studies, stimulate their continuous learning process, and disperse the study load. Assessment of part-time and full-time students is identical.

Rubrics and assessment criteria are given to students upfront, and students acknowledge that it is clear what is expected of them. For written exams, example questions are available. Grading is done by one or two examiners on the basis of clear assessment forms. Students are positive about the grading process. They receive extensive written feedback and can always ask the examiner involved for a further explanation of the grading.

The panel sees a well-functioning system of assessment with sufficient variety in assessment types, and it observes an appropriate shift in assessment types toward more essays and papers as the programme

academion

progresses. The number of assessments of oral skills has increased in recent years, and the panellists believe this is fitting for the discipline of philosophy and the university's 'understanding society' focus, which includes an emphasis on character building. The panel finds that grading is done reliably and sufficiently independently and that the amount of written and oral feedback that students receive is altogether impressive. The internship of 14 EC in the entrepreneurship track is adequately assessed with a separate evaluation of the internship and the research based on the internship.

Thesis assessment
The thesis is separately assessed by two examiners: the thesis supervisor and a second, independent examiner. After first conducting separate evaluations, the examiners jointly decide on a provisional grade for the written thesis and then weigh the oral defence. If the examiners disagree on whether the thesis is of sufficient quality to pass or if they agree on a 6 as provisional grade, a third examiner is appointed. A third examiner is also appointed when the two examiners cannot agree on a final grade and their individual grades differ by more than 1 point. Criteria for assessment include the problem statement, literature, methods, originality, and conclusion. The panel finds the assessment process for the thesis adequate.

The panel studied the assessment forms of 15 theses and their conclusion was that the programme uses adequate criteria for assessing a thesis. The panel applauds the fact that students must present and defend their thesis, as this is not always the case in a bachelor's programme. According to the panel, this offers students a valuable learning experience. A suggestion is to add the oral defence as a standard criterium on assessment forms. The panel agrees with the way thesis assessment is conducted in the bachelor's programme and generally agreed with the grades given and the quality and amount of the feedback. However, grading sometimes is not completely in line with this feedback, and the panel recommends strengthening the coherence between grades and feedback.

Quality assurance of assessment
The quality of assessment is safeguarded according to legal standards by an examination board that functions for all programmes within Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences. The board works with chambers and a specific member from each programme to organize the safeguarding for each specific programme. All members of the examination board have been trained by an assessment expert. As is indicated in the annual reports, the examination board makes decisions regarding student requests and in situations of possible fraud or plagiarism. Furthermore, the board is involved in university-wide consultations to align policies around assessment. The examination board guarantees the quality of assessment in the bachelor's programme by examining grade distributions and differences between supervisors and second examiners and by reading internal and external calibration and review reports (see below). The panel met with the examination board during the site visit. What positively stood out in the conversation is that members of the board are actively involved in the discussion about the implications of artificial intelligence for the assessment policies of Tilburg University. The panel concludes that the members are committed and competent for their safeguarding tasks.

In addition to the formal safeguarding, the programme has a strong system of internal and external calibration in place that is worth mentioning. An assessment committee periodically reviews courses and forms of intermediate assessment, and advice from the assessment committee is reported to the examination board. A specialist is also available to offer advice to all examiners in constructing assessments. In addition, thesis examiners calibrate periodically by grading theses of another examiner afterwards, so they can learn from each other and align their assessment criteria. Theses calibration sessions are guided by the assessment specialist, and outcomes are reported to the management as well as the examination board. In general, grading is well aligned, and the calibrations have led to small adaptations of assessment forms.

For external safeguarding, the programme organized a calibration exercise with Utrecht University. Findings about the theses by examiners from Utrecht University were comparable with the findings of Tilburg's examiners, and plans are being made to regularly conduct this external check. The panel encourages this plan and advises that theses be examined on a structural basis by an external party or the examination board.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the programme has a satisfactory system of assessment that is transparent for students. Policy and regulations are adequately safeguarded in appropriate documents. Assessment types are varied and logically constructed from knowledge-oriented exams to academically focused essays and papers. The assessment connects well to the intended learning outcomes and is valid. The system of midterm assessment offers students an impression of how they are doing, stimulates their continuous learning process, and evenly distributes the study load. Grading is being done reliably, and students are well aware of the criteria they must meet. For important assessments, the four-eyes principle is applied in the development process or grading. The amount of written and oral feedback that students receive is impressive, and it stimulates the learning process. Thesis and internship assessment are well in place. The quality of assessment is safeguarded by the examination board. The panel recommends implementing a structural procedure for the independent quality assessment of the theses.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets Standard 3.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

> The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

Achieved level

The panel examined the theses and the corresponding assessment forms of 16 graduates and concluded that the theses (including the part-time thesis) demonstrate the expected academic bachelor's level achievement. The theses reflect a similar structure, which is based on information provided by the thesis manual of the programme. This has advantages: it makes theses easily readable, and students appreciate the clear format. The panel suggests keeping in mind that students who would like to choose another form or style of the thesis should be supported in doing so. Topics of the theses are a satisfactory fit for this philosophy programme (see Standard 2 for advice about the guidance on philosophical topics). The theses that the panel studied are well connected to university's motto of 'understanding society' and are predominantly of good quality. Students exhibit good writing skills in the theses.

After graduation

The panel is of the opinion that alumni are well-equipped for a wide range of jobs and master's programmes. Approximately 25% of the alumni continue their studies at Tilburg University, mostly in the Master's programme in Philosophy. These graduates generally perform well in their studies. Other students continue their studies at a different university in the direction of philosophy or another discipline.

The alumni office monitors the graduates' careers and is taking steps to intensify contacts with alumni, who are invited to attend conferences at Tilburg University and talk to students about their careers. The panel supports these contacts, as the information from alumni is valuable to both students and the programme.

Considerations

The panel concludes that students achieve the intended learning outcomes for the academic bachelor's level and that alumni are well-equipped to continue their studies in a master's programme. The students' theses demonstrate good writing skills, address relevant topics, and exhibit a clear structure. The 'understanding society' focus is clearly recognizable in the topics of the theses. Alumni are well-equipped for a wide range of jobs and master's programmes, and the programme maintains a record of alumni and invites them regularly to provide students with information about their careers, which the panel encourages.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets Standard 4.

General conclusion

The panel's assessment of the bachelor's programme Philosophy at Tilburg University is positive.

Development points

1. Rename the PPE track and the Research track.
2. Solve the issue of differences in prior knowledge experienced by students in courses in which both bachelor and pre-master students participate.
3. Formulate a clear vision on including non-Western philosophy and consistently implement that vision.
4. Ensure that the quality checks of theses by an external party or examination board become part of the safeguarding cycle.

academion

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

General learning outcomes:

1. Knowledge and Understanding:

A Bachelor of Arts, graduating in Philosophy, has demonstrated:

1a Extensive knowledge and understanding of the various systematic disciplines of western philosophy, with special but non-exclusive focus on the subdisciplines relating to understanding society;

1b Profound knowledge and understanding of one of the systematic disciplines of western philosophy.

1c Extensive knowledge of the history of philosophy;

1d Knowledge and understanding of the latest developments in philosophy;

1e Knowledge of the different roles a philosopher can play in society and of the field of work of philosophers.

2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding:

A Bachelor of Arts, graduating in Philosophy:

2a Has the ability to identify, analyse, interpret, and clearly explain a philosophical problem;

2b Has the ability to adduce arguments supporting the different views of the problem;

2c Has the ability to offer a critical appraisal of these views from their own point of view.

3. Judgment Formation:

A Bachelor of Arts, graduating in Philosophy:

3a Has the ability to reason logically and to think analytically, critically, and synthetically;

3b Has the ability to judge the value of and to reflect critically on a philosophical line of argumentation;

3c Has the ability to critically assess and evaluate developments in society and science;

4. Communication:

A Bachelor of Arts, graduating in Philosophy:

4a Can develop philosophical arguments and present them orally and in writing to an audience of both specialists and non-specialists;

4b Can relate these arguments to the relevant literature;

4c Can translate practical problems into a philosophical problem definition and vice versa, can communicate the findings of philosophical research to people in a particular field of work.

4d Can cooperate and discuss in a constructively critical manner in an academic-philosophical context.

5. Learning Skills:

A Bachelor of Arts, graduating in Philosophy:

5a Has analytical and synthesizing skills linked to the reading of primary philosophical texts and to scientific research in the field of philosophy;

5b Has bibliographical skills linked to the reading of primary philosophical texts and to scientific research in the field of philosophy.

Track-specific learning outcomes:

A Bachelor of Arts, graduating in Philosophy with specialization track research

6a Can formulate and process criticism on a paper in the same way that academic journals do;

6b Can make connections between philosophical theories and an empirical science (psychology);

academion

6c Can convey the conclusions of their philosophical research clearly and convincingly both to a specialized audience of researchers and to a non-specialized audience;

6d Has the ability to identify and interpret state-of-the-art research and contribute to its development.

A Bachelor of Arts, graduating in Philosophy with specialization track Entrepreneurship

7a is able to apply philosophical knowledge and insight to a social problem;

7b can clearly and convincingly convey the conclusions of philosophical research into a practical problem both to stakeholders and to a non-specialist audience;

7c can develop new perspectives on practical problems in an organizational context by using state-of-the-art philosophical concepts and methodologies;

7d Is able to find and make use of an internship placement pursuant to their own professional ambitions.

A Bachelor of Arts, graduating in Philosophy with specialization track PPE

8a has knowledge and understanding in the domains of politics and governance, economy, and law at the level of entrance for the programme Master of Science in Public Governance (by means of courses from the programme BSc Bestuurskunde), excluding methodology;

8b has knowledge and understanding of the core elements of philosophy of public governance, philosophy of the economy, and philosophy of law, especially in terms of core concepts, theories, and problems;
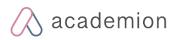
8c is able to make connections between philosophical theories and the sciences of politics and governance, economics, and law.

8d can convey the conclusions of their philosophical research clearly and convincingly both to a specialized audience of researchers and to a non-specialized audience.

Appendix 2. Curriculum

Jaar 1		Jaar 2			
Semester 1	**Semester 2**	**Semester 1**		**Semester 2**	
		Track Ondernemen / Onderzoek	Track PPE	Track Ondernemen / Onderzoek	Track PPE
Ethiek (6)		Kant's Moral Philosophy (6)		(30)	(30)
Political Philosophy (6)	Hedendaagse Sociale en Politieke Filosofie (6)			Vrije Minor vakken	PPE vakken
	Wijsgerige Antropologie (5)	Philosophy of Mind (6)			
	Epistemologie (6)	Wetenschapsfilosofie (4)			
Geschiedenis Antieke en Middeleeuwse Wijsbegeerte (6)	Geschiedenis van de Moderne wijsbegeerte (6)	Kritiek van de Instrumentele Rede (6)			
Metafysica (6)	Cultuurfilosofie (3)				
			Political Science (6)		
			Constitutioneel Recht (6)		
Logic (6)	Academisch Nederlands 1 (3)	Methodology: Styles of Philosophy (6)			
		Academisch Nederlands 2 (1)			
PASS Filosofie mentoraat 1 (0)	PASS Filosofie mentoraat 2 (1)	PASS Filosofie mentoraat 3 (1)			

Legenda:
- Ethiek
- Politieke en sociale filosofie (P&S)
- Wijsgerige antropologie en psychologie (A&P)
- Wetenschapsfilosofie en kenleer (W&K)
- Geschiedenis van de filosofie
- Verbredende vakken
- PPE vakken
- Vaardigheden en methodologie
- Mentoraat
- Scriptie
- ECTS

Jaar 3

Semester 1			Semester 2		
Track Ondernemen	Track Onderzoek	Track PPE	Track Ondernemen	Track Onderzoek	Track PPE
Toegepaste Ethiek ⑥					
Filosofie van Mensenrechten ⑥					
		Philosophy of Mind ⑥		Moral Psychology ⑥	Moral Psychology **OF** Society, Science and Information ⑥
				Society, Science and Information ⑥	
Analytische Filosofie ⑥		Analytische filosofie OF Existentialisme en Post-structuralisme ⑥			
Existentialisme en Poststructuralisme ⑥					
Taalfilosofie ④			Keuzevak ⑥		
		Besturen in de rechtsstaat ⑥			Institutional Econonomics ⑥
					Markt, Overheid en Middenveld ⑥
Stagetraject ②			Stage ⑥	Research Skills: Interpretatie ②	
			Stage-onderzoek ⑥	Research Skills: Communicatie ②	
				Fenomenologie en Hermeneutiek ④	
Bachelorscriptietraject ②			**Bachelorscriptie** ⑩		

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

DAY 1		Thursday, November 2
13.00	13.30	**Arrival and welcome, with lunch** - Dean TSHD - Program Director B Philosophy - Program Director M Philosophy - Policy Officer Education TSHD - Head of Education Support Team
13.30	15.00	Panel meeting
15.00	15.45	**Interview program management** - Vice-Dean Education TSHD - Head of Department - Program Director B Philosophy - Program Director M Philosophy
15.45	16.15	Break
16.15	17.00	**Interview Ba students (incl. PC and recent alumni; all full-time)** - BA student, ondernemen track - BA student, onderzoek track - BA alumna, PPE track - BA student, PC member - BA student, PC member - BA alumna, onderzoek track
17.00 17.15?	17.45	**Interview Ba teaching staff** - Thesis coordinator - Internship coordinator - Lecturers (3)
17.45		End of the first day, short process evaluation

DAY 2		Friday, November 3
8:45	09.00	Welcome
09.00	09.45	**Interview Ma students (incl. PC and recent alumni; 2 part-time)** - MA student, PCC track, PC member 22-23 - MA alumnus, PCC track - MA student, PHC track - MA alumnus, PMP track - MA student, EBO track - MA student, PDD track
09.45 **10.00?**	10.30	**Interview Ma teaching staff (incl. PC)** - Lecturer, PC member - Thesis coordinator - Track coordinator PMP - Track coordinator PDD - Track coordinator PHC

academion

		- Former track coordinator PCC - Former track coordinator EBO
10.30	11.00	Break
11.00	11.45	**Interview Examination Board and assessment committee member** - Chair Examination Board TSHD - Member Examination Board Philosophy - Assessment Committee Philosophy
11.45	12.30	Internal panel session
12.30	13.15	Lunch
13.15	14.00	**Concluding session program management (important session: panel gives preliminary advice if possible and mirror one last time and/or answer final questions)** - Vice-Dean Education TSHD - Head of Department - Program Director B Philosophy - Program Director M Philosophy
14.00	16.00	Concluding panel session
16.00	16.45	**Development dialogue (program chairs, decides on the agenda (1 or 2 questions) and makes minutes, that need to be approved by the panel through the secretary, and then published by the program)** - Program Director B Philosophy - Program Director M Philosophy - Head of Department - Policy officer Education (notes)
16.45	17.15	**Oral feedback panel** - Plenary, with Department of DFI
17.15	18.00	Drinks, finalization

academion

Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the programme. Information on the theses is available from Academion upon request. The panel also studied other materials, which included:

Self-evaluation report
Reports of previous NVAO site visit
Bachelor Filosofie curriculum overzicht 2023-2024
Assessment plans 2022-2023
Staff overview
Guidelines program committee 2023-2024
Annual report programme committee 2022-2023
Quality assurance education visual
Assessment handbook TSHD 2022
Assessment policy TSHD 2022
Information about assessment of the internship for the Entrepreneurship track
Education and examination regulations 2023-2024
Annual report examination board 2021-2022
Study guide bachelor Philosophy 2023-2024
Parttime schedule of a student
Inflow, drop-out and graduation rates
Thesis manual
Thesis grading guidelines
Grading rubrics graduation