



NVAO • NETHERLANDS

WO-BACHELOR DIGITAL SOCIETY
Maastricht University

PANEL REPORT

MARCH 2019

NVAO • NETHERLANDS

WO-BACHELOR DIGITAL SOCIETY
Maastricht University

LIMITED INITIAL ACCREDITATION
PANEL REPORT

MARCH 2019



Contents

1	Executive summary	4
2	Introduction.....	6
2.1	The procedure	6
2.2	Panel report.....	7
3	Description of the programme	8
3.1	General	8
3.2	Profile of the institution.....	8
3.3	Profile of the programme	8
4	Assessment per standard	10
4.1	Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	10
4.2	Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	12
4.3	Standard 3: Assessment.....	15
4.4	Qualification and field of study (CROHO)	16
4.5	Conclusion	16
5	Overview of the assessments	17
	Appendix 1: Composition of the panel.....	18
	Appendix 2: Schedule of the site visit	19
	Appendix 3: Documents reviewed	20
	Appendix 4: List of abbreviations	21

1 Executive summary

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) received a request for an initial accreditation procedure regarding a proposed wo-bachelor Digital Society at Maastricht University. NVAO convened an expert panel, which studied the information available and discussed the proposed programme with representatives of the institution and the programme during a site visit on February 27 2019.

The panel discussed the three standards: (1) the intended learning outcomes, (2) the teaching-learning environment and (3) the assessment procedures. The following considerations have played an important role in the panel's assessment.

Before detailing the standards, the panel wishes to acknowledge that it considers the proposed Ba Digital Society a timely initiative, answering to a clear societal need, versed in a proposal of high quality.

The Ba Digital Society of Maastricht University is a new Ba programme in the Netherlands. The Ba Digital Society is directed to a new generation of graduates both being socio-technically knowledgeable and engaged in humanities and social science. The programme will enable them to critically assess, anticipate and shape the social, political and cultural impacts of digital transformations. The students will develop 'interactional expertise' in order to be able to mediate between various relevant social actors (such as policy makers, private companies big and small, civil society organizations, cultural institutions), thus being able to influence future digital transformations.

The panel has studied the intended learning outcomes and concludes that these are well thought through, in line with societal demand and definitely at Bachelor level. The intended learning objectives represent the Ba level well, they meet the Dublin descriptors and they appropriately build up from level 1 to level 3 in the programme.

The panel discussed with the participants the vision of the Ba Digital Society leading to the profile of interactional expert. The interactional expert has to build bridges between various relevant social actors in order to influence future digital transformations. The focus on the interactional expertise is reflected in the intended learning goals as well as practiced in the teaching method of Problem-Based Learning (PBL). The programme is addressing the relevant questions and connects the different sides of the bridge. It provides students with a perspective of how other disciplines may see the same problem.

The panel was impressed by the way in which the vision of the Ba Digital Society was elaborated in the intended learning outcomes and the profile of the programme. The panel applauds that the profile and vision 'spot on' cover problems in our current digital society. It is a proper choice to make the interactional expert the focus of the programme.

The panel was convinced by the support and underpinning of the Ba Digital Society locally and nationally. The new programme is well embedded in proper ownership in the faculty and it is developed by a passionate core team of experts. Because of their expertise and passion, the core team has the potential to become internationally leading in this field.

The programme meets standard 1: the intended learning outcomes.

The panel discussed with all participants the way in which the vision on the profile and the intended learning objectives are realized by the curriculum.

The curriculum of the Ba Digital Society offers substantial courses about the digital society. Two courses run over the entire year. During the first-year course *Surveillance Society* students analyse issues of privacy and surveillance in concordance with their appearance in the themes covered by the other first year core courses. In the second-year the course *Platform Society* runs the entire year. In this course students analyse online environments using qualitative methods such as (virtual) ethnography and other digital methods. The panel discussed the long-term development of skills and supported the idea of the chosen learning track structure. The academic skills (including academic writing) are related to the content of all courses, research and digital skills (including qualitative and

quantitative methods, interdisciplinary research design) are especially linked to critical thinking and working with digital tools, as is initiated in Problem-Based Learning tasks. Ethical aspects are discussed in many courses. The panel is particularly pleased with the way ethics is treated throughout the programme: as a recurring theme interwoven with the subject matter of all courses and not as series of separate topics. In the two courses that run the entire year there is room for developing professional and personal skills. Self-directed learning of students is supported by a mentoring programme.

The panel is impressed by the coherence of the programme that is supported by Problem-Based Learning and exchanging knowledge and experiences in an international classroom. Coherence is also supported in course manuals by clear descriptions of both the position of the course in the programme and of cross references to other courses.

The quality of the teaching staff is good. They are passionate and experienced in teaching and involved in doing research.

The programme meets standard 2: the teaching-learning environment.

The panel has studied the overview of the assessment formats and discussed with members of the Board of Examiners (BoE) their role in the development of the new Ba Digital Society. Members of the BoE have been consulted by the course development teams to discuss the assessment forms. The BoE expects that new assessment methods will be used and that a full check will be needed to guarantee the academic level.

The panel concludes that an adequate system of student assessment is in place. It is adapted to meet the requirements of the new programme. The communication within the course team guarantees aligned assessments and the regular assessment calibration sessions support the validity and reliability of the assessments.

The programme meets standard 3: an adequate system of student assessment is in place.

The panel comes to the conclusion that the programme meets all standards. Given these considerations, the panel advises NVAO to take a positive decision regarding the quality of the proposed programme wo-bachelor Digital Society at Maastricht University.

The Hague, March 2019

On behalf of the assessment panel convened for the initial limited accreditation assessment of the wo-Bachelor Digital Society at Maastricht University,

Prof. dr. ir. Wim Van Petegem
(Chair)

drs. Riekje de Jong
(Secretary)

2 Introduction

2.1 The procedure

NVAO received a request for an initial accreditation procedure including programme documents regarding a proposed wo-Bachelor Digital Society. The request was received on 31 July 2018 from Maastricht University.

An initial accreditation procedure is required when a recognised institution wants to award a recognised Bachelor's or master's degree after the successful completion of a study programme. The procedure for initial accreditation is slightly different as compared to the approach for programmes that have already been accredited. Initial accreditation is in fact an ex ante assessment of a programme. The programme becomes subject to the normal accreditation procedures once initial accreditation has been granted.

To assess the program, the NVAO convened an international panel of experts. The panel consisted of:

Chair

- Prof. dr. ir. Wim van Petegem, professor KU Leuven, Professor and Policy Coordinator Learning Technologies, Faculty of Engineering Technology, KU Leuven;

Panel members

- Prof. Dr. Bridgette Wessels, University of Glasgow Professor of Sociology; School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Glasgow;
- Dr. Gerard Alberts, Associate Professor for History of Mathematics and for History of Computing at the University of Amsterdam;

Student member

- Menno van Gameren, recently graduated from Ba Future Planet Studies, University of Amsterdam.

On behalf of the NVAO, Frank Wamelink and Riekje de Jong were responsible for the process-coordination and the drafting of the experts' report.

This composition reflects the expertise deemed necessary by NVAO. All the panel members signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel has based its assessment on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands (Stcrt. 2016, nr 69458).

The following procedure was undertaken. The panel members prepared the assessment by analysing the documents provided by the institution (Annex 3: Documents reviewed). The panel organised a preparatory meeting on 26 February 2019. During this meeting, the panel members shared their first impressions and formulated questions for the site visit.

The site visit took place on 27 February 2019 at Maastricht University. During this visit, the panel was able to discuss the formulated questions and to gather additional information during several sessions (Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit). Afterwards, the panel discussed the findings and considerations and pronounced its preliminary assessments per theme and standard. At the end of the site visit, the initial findings were presented to the institution.

Based on the findings, considerations and conclusions the secretary wrote a draft advisory report that was first presented to the panel members. After the panel members had commented on the draft report, the chair endorsed the report. On 27 March 2019 the advisory report was sent to the institution, which was given the opportunity to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report. The institution replied on 29 March 2019.

All suggested corrections were adopted. Subsequently the final report was endorsed by the panel chair. The panel composed its advice fully independently and offered it to NVAO on 1 April 2019.

2.2 Panel report

The first chapter of this report is the executive summary of the report, while the current chapter is the introduction.

The third chapter gives a description of the programme including its position within the institution, Maastricht University and within the higher education system of the Netherlands.

The panel presents its assessments in the fourth chapter. The programme is assessed according to the themes and standards in the Initial Accreditation Framework. For each standard the panel presents an outline of its findings, considerations and a conclusion.

The outline of the findings are the objective facts as found by the panel in the programme documents, in the additional documents and during the site visit. The panel's considerations consist of the panel's judgments and subjective evaluations regarding these findings and their relative importance. The considerations presented by the panel are at the Basis of a concluding overall assessment.

The panel concludes the report with a table containing an overview of its assessments per standard.

3 Description of the programme

3.1 General

Country	Netherlands
Institution	Maastricht University
Programme	Digital Society
Level	Bachelor
Orientation	(wo)
Specialisation	
Degree	BA
Location(s)	Maastricht
Study Load (EC)	180 EC
Field of Study	Cross-sectoral

3.2 Profile of the institution

Maastricht University (UM) is a research university that offers innovative and high-quality academic bachelor (and master) programmes using methods of instruction that promote active learning to build knowledge and develop academic (research) skills as well as an academic and professional attitude. By working across departments and across faculties UM creates an inspiring, interdisciplinary and multicultural environment where students become academically minded professionals and responsible citizens.

UM's Community at the CORE (Collaborative Open Research Education) strategy addresses the most pressing problems facing society today, and explicitly recognizes that this requires close collaboration between disciplines, and between research and teaching. UM distinguishes three interdisciplinary research themes: Quality of Life; Europe in a Globalizing World; and Learning and Innovation.

UM collaborates with other stakeholders in Brightlands, a joint initiative of UM, the Province of Limburg, and local and national companies. It offers students a stimulating environment in which to work with researchers and entrepreneurs in order to address immediate problems.

Distinctive features of education at UM are: Problem-Based Learning, linking research and education and the international classroom.

3.3 Profile of the programme

The Ba Digital Society of Maastricht University is a new Ba programme in the Netherlands. The Ba Digital Society aims to produce a new generation of socio-technically knowledgeable and engaged humanities and social science graduates. They will be able to critically assess, anticipate and shape the social, political and cultural impacts of digital transformations. They will develop 'interactional expertise' in order to be able to mediate between various relevant social actors (such as policy makers, private companies big and small, civil society organizations, cultural institutions), thus influencing future digital transformations.

The Ba Digital Society seizes the possibilities emerging at the intersection of technology, society, culture and politics. These have been identified as particularly promising for the Dutch context (see, for instance: VSNU (2016) The Digital Society. The Netherlands and its universities: international pioneers in human centered information technology).

Students will learn how to analyze how digital technologies affect practices in three main domains: *society*, such as (but not only) communication, education, healthcare; *culture* including media, arts and heritage; and *politics*, including governance and regulation at local, national and international levels. Studying digital transformations in different societal domains allows for cross-comparison, arriving at a nuanced understanding of digitalization processes and of future possibilities.

In the application document, the Ba programme Digital Society is compared with similar studies of the Universities of Groningen, Amsterdam, Leiden, Utrecht and Tilburg. Also, the programme is compared

with programmes that focus on computer science such as data science of the universities of Maastricht, Tilburg and Eindhoven.

The conclusion is that the Ba Digital Society has some similarity with the other programmes, but it is unique in its focus on interactional expertise and its interdisciplinary social science and humanities approach.

The Ba Digital Society is hosted by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS), made up of five departments: History; Literature and Art; Philosophy; Political Science; and Society Studies. The Ba Digital Society includes teaching staff from all five departments.

The programme team of the Ba Digital Society consists of the programme director and all course coordinators. The programme director attends the monthly meetings of the faculty-level Ba OMT (Onderwijsmanagementteam – Educational Management Team).

An Educational Programme Committee (EPC) will be established.

The FASoS Board of Examiners (BoE) is an independent body that guarantees the quality of exams, assessments and examination in all educational programmes offered by the faculty, including the Ba Digital Society.

The FASoS Assessment Committee (AC) provides advice to and supports programme management and examiners in the development and implementation of assessment programmes, assessment plans and exams.

The Ba Digital Society will be embedded in the FASoS quality assurance cycle, including the PDCA-cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act) for assessment.

The fulltime Ba Digital Society programme consists of 180 ECTS-credits

Before detailing the standards, the panel wishes to acknowledge that it considers the proposed Ba Digital Society a timely initiative, answering to a clear societal need, versed in a proposal of high quality.

4 Assessment per standard

This chapter presents the evaluation of the standards by the assessment panel. The panel has reproduced the criteria for each standard. For each standard the panel presents (1) a brief outline of its findings based on the programme documents and on documents provided by the institution before and during the site visit, (2) the considerations the panel has taken into account and (3) the panel's conclusion. The panel presents a conclusion for each of the standards, as well as a final conclusion.

The assessment is based on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands (Stcrt. 2016, nr 69458). Fundamental to the assessment is a discussion with peers regarding the content and quality of the new programme.

Regarding each of the standards, the assessment panel gives a substantiated judgement on a three-point scale: meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard. The panel subsequently gives a substantiated final conclusion regarding the quality of the programme, also on a three-point scale: positive, conditionally positive or negative

4.1 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.

Outline of findings

Graduates of the Ba Digital Society are able to critically assess, anticipate and shape the social, political and cultural impacts of digital transformations. Students acquire knowledge from the social sciences and humanities, and also from computer, data and information science. This combination enables graduates to function as 'interactional experts' between ICT professionals of different sorts (systems analysts, programmers, product developers) and policy makers, managers in different organizational settings in the public and private sectors. They are both socio-technically knowledgeable and trained in the humanities and the social sciences.

The Ba Digital Society has four general learning goals, which reflect both the University's distinguishing features and the Dublin Descriptors (D1-D5). Furthermore, the learning goals are in line with national and international standards such as the European Qualifications Framework, and possible future demands of the professional field.

KI	Knowledge and Insight (D1, D2)	Our graduates are able to understand and use academic knowledge about digital transformations in a self-directed manner.
AA	Academic Attitude (D2, D3, D5)	Our graduates have developed a critical, reflective attitude to claims made about digital transformations, and are able to use evidence to support their own claims.
GC	Global Citizenship (D3)	Our graduates are aware of their intellectual and ethical responsibilities about processes of digitalisation in a global social context.
IC	Interpersonal Competences (D4)	Our graduates are able to conduct themselves in a professional manner in a variety of international and multi- and trans-disciplinary contexts.

The design of the programme follows the principle of constructive alignment. The four overall objectives (listed above) are translated into learning objectives at the course level (available in the course handbooks). In the objectives three levels are distinguished. Level 1 objectives are related to the students themselves and their capabilities and personal development throughout the programme. Level 2 objectives concern the interactions between students and their immediate environments. Level 3 objectives are related to the relationships between students and society more broadly. In the PBL system, students further define their own learning objectives for weekly assignments.

Both Dutch and European governments stress the need for attention to digital transitions in society. At both levels, policy programmes are formulated to address the digital transition processes. The graduates

of the programme Digital Society are able to develop such strategies for digitalization in an inclusive society.

Also, the need for research on the topic of digital society is clearly formulated in the government programmes, e.g. the Digital Agenda of the European Committee and the development plans of a data economy. These topics are addressed by the programme.

By the positive decision on the 'macro efficiency application' and the meeting with the professional field, it is confirmed that the new programme meets the expectations of the professional field. The societal relevance is substantiated according to the CDHO committee.

Considerations

The panel has studied the alignment of the course objectives with the overall intended learning outcomes. This confirms that the learning objectives in the course books are in constructive alignment. The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes are well thought through. The overall intended learning objectives represent Ba level well, represent the Dublin descriptors and they appropriately build up from level 1 to level 3 in the programme.

The panel discussed the vision and the profile of the Ba Digital Society with the different stakeholders (FASoS Board, Core team and Assessment Committee). The participants made clear that the whole process that led to this programme was initiated and embedded within FASoS and supported and agreed on by the Executive Board of UM.

Within FASoS, research is already being done in many areas related to processes of digitalization, for example in arts and culture, healthcare, smart cities, hacking and governance. The development of the Ba Digital Society started with a group of staff that was already interested in and working on these topics. Thus, the programme closely relates to the four FASoS research themes (see page 16).

The programme director and the core team are responsible for the development of the programme. In developing the Digital Society courses, interdisciplinarity was assured by the strict rule that no course was developed by a single teacher and that no course team would consist of members from the same disciplinary background. Experts from computer and data sciences were consulted during the process. The focus on the interactional expertise is reflected in the intended learning goals as well as practiced in the PBL method. Literature is international and the international aspect is further supported by the international group of students and the international teaching team.

The panel discussed with the participants the profile of the intended interactional expert. The interactional expert builds bridges and mediates between various relevant social actors (such as policy makers, private companies (big and small), civil society organizations, cultural institutions), in order to influence future digital transformations. The programme is addressing the relevant questions and connects the different sides of the bridge. It provides students with a perspective of how other disciplines may see the same problem. It invites students to open up to each other's knowledge and study different perspectives.

The programme results from explicit considerations of the level of expert knowledge which is required and of a proper balance between soft and hard skills.

The vision on the programme and the relevance of the Ba Digital Society is supported by the professional field.

Based on the explanation and discussion with the board and the core team, the panel concluded that the profile of the Ba Digital Society and the underlying vision are clear and very up-to-date, fitting in questions that occur in our current society and makes the interactional expert the focus of the programme.

The panel was impressed how well the Ba Digital Society is positioned. The ownership is firmly embedded in the faculty as a result of the bottom up development which gained support from the

management. The expertise of the passionate core team inspires confidence that the education programme is and will remain in touch with the demands from society.

Conclusion

The programme meets standard 1.

4.2 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.

Outline of findings

The curriculum starts from the vision of building bridges between knowledge and skills of the domains that are integrated in Digital Society. It is positioned on a crossroads of humanities, social sciences and computational science with both a retrospective to prospective focus. The three-year interdisciplinary Ba Digital Society offers substantial courses on the digital society. Within a learning track structure, students develop their digital society skills, and their academic and professional skills. Digital society skills include the management of online presence, critical analysis of online sources, coding and algorithmic thinking. Academic skills include academic writing, qualitative and quantitative methods, and interdisciplinary research design. Professional skills include other forms of writing and presentation, collaborative working and creative problem solving.

Following the FASoS teaching calendar, the first two academic years are each divided into five periods. Each year includes a year-long thematic course in which collaborative skills (across disciplinary and national cultures) are developed.

The PBL courses are developed and executed on the following four principles:

- **Constructive Learning:** Learning should be an active process, in which students construct knowledge Based on their experience and interactions with the environment.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Students should be stimulated to interact with and learn from each other.
- **Contextual Learning:** Learning should take place in a relevant professional context. Students should encounter new information in the context of relevant situations or problems.
- **Self-directed Learning:** Students should play an active role in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning.

Based on these principles, students learn to become critical thinkers, to be flexible, are prepared for a life and career in which a life-long learning attitude is crucial, and to be able to work in (culturally) diverse teams. In practice, it means that each week students discuss two assignments, which they find in the course books, in small-scale tutorial meetings with a maximum of 15 students.

In every year of the programme, students develop their research skills in all courses by critically analyzing and applying international literature. Students have the possibility to engage with research in (at least) four ways: finding out about research (through reading and discussion); talking about research (with FASoS, UM and visiting staff); doing research (already defining research questions in the first year, and developing further research skills throughout the programme); and producing research outputs (culminating in the final Ba-thesis).

Throughout the programme, considerable attention is devoted to students' professional and personal development, also in a process of constructive alignment. This takes different forms. Across all courses, a lot of emphasis is given to writing skills, including academic writing but also writing for different types of audiences. Presentation skills are developed within PBL, but are supplemented with training in more formal individual and group presentations.

Attention is given to collaboration and to the different ways in which group work can be facilitated. This is the case in PBL-groups across all years and in the two year-long courses (year 1 and 2). Students also learn how to make effective use of digital media in all sorts of ways, including finding and managing sources, analyzing data (research skills), in presentation and communication.

Given the focus on the digital aspect, the Ba Digital Society will also experiment with digital tools and web-based educational formats, encouraging students to put PBL principles into practice, and further develop their capacities for self-learning and learning to learn. These experiments will also be the object of critical analysis and reflection by both staff and students. Such developments will be conducted in collaboration with EDLAB.

Staff and students will engage with digital tools, educational platforms, and learning analytics. When students are dispersed during their final year (internships, study abroad), they will maintain contact using collaborative digital tools, which they will certainly encounter in work environments after they graduate. The Ba Digital Society will thus act as an incubator for educational innovation, enabling FASoS and EDLAB to continue to innovate PBL.

Teaching and examinations will be conducted in English due to the specific educational nature and profile of the Ba Digital Society. This choice contributes to the employability of graduates, and to their opportunities for postgraduate study in the Netherlands and elsewhere. The choice of English guarantees the quality of education, because:

- The content of the program has an international orientation and focus because the cultural, historical, political and social aspects of digitalization cross national boundaries.
- The academic community is internationally oriented. An internationally diverse student population is expected with English as the common language. And all students have the possibility to participate in international exchange in the fifth semester.

Admission requirements

To be eligible for admission to the Ba Digital Society, applicants must provide evidence that they have obtained a Dutch VWO diploma, HBO or OU propaedeutic diploma or HBO-diploma; or the equivalent of a Dutch VWO diploma in another country.

Student support

A mentoring programme supports students in developing personal professional skills, to prepare themselves for being effective university students, and for future study. In their first year, students are supported by mentors who guide and coach them through Year 1. Mentors are staff members who teach in the Ba programme. They are trained, instructed and supervised by the coordinator of the mentorship programme. Concretely, the mentors meet with students individually and in small groups on six occasions throughout the first year. Active engagement with the mentorship activities results in 1 ECTS in Year 1. Mentoring is also provided in Years 2 and 3, but does not result in any ECTS. In the following years students can use the mentoring activities to reflect on their opportunities and choices for future study such as internships and study abroad options.

Staffing

The Ba Digital Society programme team consists of specialists from history, media and cultural studies, philosophy, political science, and science and technology studies (STS). UM's teaching staff is systematically trained and supported to create a stimulating learning environment that activates students' learning according to the PBL approach. This is accomplished through the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) training, which is compulsory for all faculty members. All staff members involved in the development of the Ba Digital Society have obtained their UTQ. Teaching staff is offered additional training in intercultural communication, working in an international classroom, assessment, coaching, and engaging with the media. The programme team consists of seven staff members. Two additional staff members with specialist competence in digitalization will be appointed in 2018-19 to strengthen the course team, one at professorial level (in the stage of writing the report the institution reported that the two staff members are appointed).

The Ba Digital Society draws on expertise from the four FASoS research themes studied by its four research groups: the social and ethical implications of digitalization (Science and Technology Studies), the digital mediation of arts and heritage and arts commenting on digitalization (Arts, Media and Culture); regulation and governance of digitalization processes (Politics and Culture in Europe); the role of digital technologies in migration and globalization (Globalization, Technology and Development). In addition, several (inter-)faculty research centers at Maastricht University conduct research relevant for the Ba Digital Society strengthening the teaching-research link even further.

Considerations

The panel discussed with all participants the way in which the vision on the profile and the learning goals of the Ba Digital Society are realized by the curriculum.

The core team emphasized that the interdisciplinary content in the courses always is a combination of humanities and social sciences. The team thoroughly discussed the core concept: “Digital Society”, however the concept is problematized and not reified. Students have to critically reflect on the concept in the first course ‘*What is (a) digital society?*’. In next courses, students’ level of understanding is raised by bringing in more and more advanced problems.

This approach is supported by the application of PBL. By starting from concrete problems, students can connect with different perspectives, so the disciplinary concepts are introduced but not as the starting point. Students will analyze and apply them, raising their level of understanding in more and more advanced problems.

The panel appreciated the clear focus in the programme on skills and asked for more explanation of the long-term development of skills over the study.

The core team explained that they have developed learning tracks in which the different skills will be built up step by step. The academic skills are related to the content of the courses. For example: for building up writing skills, students first have to practice smaller bits of writing and gradually increase their writings in length and complexity. In the first two years, research and digital skills are especially linked to critical thinking and working with digital tools, as is initiated in problem-based learning tasks.

Content and skills are integrated in the two year-long courses: *Surveillance Society* and *Platform Society*. The first-year course, *Surveillance Society*, analyzes privacy and surveillance in the different domains. This is further touched upon in other first year core courses addressing the society, politics, culture and global context. In the course *Platform Society* spanning the entire second year students analyze online environments using qualitative methods such as (virtual) ethnography and other digital methods. They experiment with online platforms that facilitate collaboration among students and between students and staff. In these tracks, there is room for developing personal and professional skills such as group work, communication and presentation skills. Ethical aspects of using digital media and difficult subjects such as discrimination and racism will also be discussed. In many courses, the students will work on a portfolio and develop their reflection skills.

With regard to technical and digital knowledge, the students -as interactional experts- should be able “to ask the right questions”, and need not to be able to answer them from a technical perspective. Students though have to be equipped with enough computational and digital knowledge to join debates, and be aware of the complexity of technical aspects. They have to be able to bridge the gap between (inter)disciplinary solutions and commissioners’ questions.

The programme director has talked to local schools of secondary education (VWO) and asked for pupils’ interest in this new Ba Digital Society with a short questionnaire (response: 50). It turned out that the new programme sparked the curiosity of pupils of all different VWO tracks (culture & society, economy & society and nature & technology). It seems to match their interest in the societal aspects of digitalization. A mixture of students with different prior knowledge will be of added value in the new programme.

The panel observed a good balance between structured learning (as defined by the intended learning outcomes) and self-directed learning of students supported by mentoring. The programme has created

a 'natural' way to support students who are in danger of falling behind by procrastination or personal problems. The mentoring programme provides opportunities for students to consult their mentor and to discuss personal and study related issues. The panel supported the role of mentoring as an incentive instead of a necessity to earn credits.

The panel concluded that the programme is coherent. It realizes the intended learning outcomes by substantive courses in which content and skills are integrated and supported by a learning process in which research and teaching are combined. This will be enhanced by the exchange of knowledge and experiences in an international classroom. The coherence in the programme is also demonstrated in course manuals by describing the position of the course in the programme.

The quality of the staff is good. The teaching team is passionate and experienced in teaching and involved in doing research.

Conclusion

The programme meets standard 2.

4.3 Standard 3: Assessment

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

Outline of findings

The FASoS Assessment Policy provides details on existing policies, guidelines, procedures and practices at FASoS that assure and enhance the quality of examinations and assessment. It offers suggestions and guidance as well as descriptions of and references to best practices of assessment. The document is based upon the UM Assessment Policy Framework and is maintained by the FASoS Assessment Committee (AC). Within FASoS, the principles of constructive alignment are at the core of the educational philosophy. In practice, this means that throughout the programme students encounter different forms of assessment to ensure they are achieving all intended learning outcomes and objectives. Assessment is used to measure achieved learning outcomes (assessment of learning), and to provide both formative and summative feedback (assessment for learning). Assessment outcomes are also used to improve teaching activities by staff.

The Board of Examiners (BoE) is responsible for the quality assurance of assessment. It conducts regular sample checks on, for example, final work grades, student survey results about the clarity and validity of examinations, and grade distributions per course throughout the years.

Considerations

The panel has studied the overview of the assessment formats and discussed with members of the BoE their role in the development of the Ba Digital Society. Members of the BoE have been consulted by the course development teams to discuss the assessment format. The board expects that this new programme may in some cases develop new assessment methods and is ready to oversee these accordingly. The BoE is familiar with innovative assessment methods and giving these a full check in order to guarantee the academic level.

The panel concludes that the system (assessment policy and quality assurance) is in place. It is apt to meet the requirements of the new programme including potentially new methods of assessment. This could be further supported by including a member of the BoE in the board of the Ba Digital Society. The communication within the course team guarantees aligned assessments and the regular assessment calibration sessions support the validity and reliability of the assessments.

Conclusion

The programme meets standard 3.

4.4 Qualification and field of study (CROHO)

The panel advises to award the degree bachelor of arts to the wo-bachelor Digital Society offered by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of Maastricht University. The panel supports the programme's preference for the CROHO field of study 'cross-sectoral'.

4.5 Conclusion

The panel concludes that the bachelor Digital Society fully meets all three standards. All in all, the panel assesses the quality of the programme as positive.

5 Overview of the assessments

Standard	Assessment
<p>Intended Learning outcomes <i>Standard 1: 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</i></p>	Meets the standard.
<p>Teaching-learning environment <i>Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.</i></p>	Meets the standard.
<p>Student assesment <i>Standard 3: The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.</i></p>	Meets the standard.
<p>Conclusion</p>	Positive

Appendix 1: Composition of the panel

Chair: Prof. dr. ir. Wim van Petegem, professor KU Leuven, Professor and Policy
Coordinator Learning Technologies, Faculty of Engineering Technology, KU Leuven

Member: Prof. Dr. Bridgette Wessels, University of Glasgow Professor of Sociology; School of Social and
Political Sciences, University of Glasgow.

Member: Dr. Gerard Alberts, Associate Professor for History of Mathematics and for History of
Computing; University of Amsterdam

Member: Menno van Gameren, recently graduated Ba Future Planet Studies, University of Amsterdam

Secretaries: drs. Riekje de Jong, Otto Schrofer and Frank Wamelink (policy advisors, NVAO)

Appendix 2: Schedule of the site visit

The panel visited Maastricht University on February 27 2019 as part of the external assessment procedure regarding the wo-bachelor Digital Society.

Location: Maastricht University, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences (FASoS), Grote Gracht 80-82, Spiegelzaal (for committee) & 0.001 (base room for FASoS colleagues)

Time	Meeting with	Agenda points
08:45-09:00	Arrival and welcome	
09:00-09:30	Panel meeting	Closed meeting to prepare questions for the day
9:30-10:30	FASoS Board	Short overview of programme; Position of programme within FASoS, resources, teaching-research links, etc.
10:30-10:45	Break	
10:45-11:45	Core Team	Introduction; learning objectives; assessment; etc.
11:45-12:30	Board of Examiners	Assessment and quality procedures in FASoS
12:30-13:30	Lunch	Closed for panel discussion
13:30-14:30	Core Team + new colleagues	Future developments, especially Years 2 & 3
14:30-14:45	Break	
14:45-15:30	Programme Management	Answer questions that have arisen during the day
15:30-16:30	Panel meeting	Closed meeting to prepare advice & plan report
16:30-17:00	Preliminary findings	Committee provides preliminary findings to FASoS staff
17:00-17:30	Departure of the panel	

Appendix 3: Documents reviewed

Programme documents presented by the institution

- Information dossier
- Appendices to the information dossier:
 - o Appendix 1 List of Abbreviations
 - o Appendix 2 Course Descriptions of Compulsory Courses
 - o Appendix 3 Schematic Overview of Programme
 - o Appendix 4 FASoS Assessment Policy
 - o Appendix 5 Education and Examination Regulations 2018-2019, FASoS Bachelor Programmes
 - o Appendix 6 Procedure for the grading and archiving of final works at FASoS, May 2018
 - o Appendix 7 Course Team Ba Digital Society, Selected Activities
 - o Appendix 8 Sample PBL Assignments

Documents made available on the digital reading table before the site visit and made available during the site visit

- o All year 1 course material + 2 readings for each course;
- o during lunch display of digital material, including student portal, FASoS blog

Appendix 4: List of abbreviations

○ Ba	Bachelor's degree
○ BoE	Board of Examiners
○ CERiM	Centre for European Research in Maastricht
○ CGD	Centre for Gender and Diversity (UM)
○ CORE	Collaborative Open Research Education
○ EC	European credit point
○ ECTS	European Credit Transfer Scheme
○ EDLAB	Maastricht University Institute for Education Innovation
○ EER	Education and Examination Regulations
○ EPC	Educational Programme Committee
○ EQF	European Qualifications Framework
○ FASoS	Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (UM)
○ hbo	professional higher education
○ ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
○ IDS	Institute of Data Science (UM)
○ IELTS	International English Language Testing System
○ Ma	master's degree
○ NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders
○ OMT	Onderwijs ManagementTeam (Educational Management Team)
○ PBL	Problem-Based Learning
○ PDCA	Plan, Do, Check, Act (quality cycle)
○ UM	Maastricht University
○ UTQ	University Teaching Qualification
○ VSNU	Association of Universities in the Netherlands
○ VWO	pre-university education
○ wo	Academic orientation

The panel report was ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the programme wo-bachelor Digital Society of Maastricht University

Application no.: 007165



Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders

Parkstraat 28 • 2514 JK Den Haag
P.O. Box 85498 • 2508 CD The Hague
The Netherlands

T +31 (0)70 312 23 00
E info@nvaio.net
www.nvaio.net