

Assessment report
Limited Framework Programme Assessment

Bachelor Life Science and Technology

Delft University of Technology and Leiden University

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1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the joint-degree Bachelor Life Science and Technology programme of Delft University of Technology and Leiden University. The programme was assessed according to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, published on 20 December 2016 (Staatscourant nr. 69458).

The panel considers the collaboration between both Faculties of Delft University of Technology and Leiden University to be well-organised and effective. The panel welcomes the Universities' initiatives to offer broad bachelor programmes, allowing students to acquire comprehensive and in-depth education in the chemical sciences domain and to select among a range of master programmes of Dutch universities to specialise in. The panel understands and supports the programme position to educate students to continue their studies at master level rather than to enter the labour market.

The panel regards the programme objectives to be sound and appreciates these. They introduce students to the chemical engineering for life sciences domain and educate them well in the molecular life sciences, chemical biology and biotechnology disciplines. The programme is modern and up-to-date and is aligned with relevant societal trends. The panel regards the programme profile to be well-delineated, but suggests to articulate this more clearly, by comparison to other Dutch and foreign programmes.

The objectives of the programme are within the boundaries of the domain-specific reference framework for academic chemical sciences programmes. The panel appreciates the efforts by the joint programmes in chemical sciences in the Netherlands to draft this framework and regards this to be a sound and up-to-date description of this domain. The profile of this Delft University of Technology and Leiden University programme may be clearly distinguished within the framework.

The intended learning outcomes meet the programme objectives and are very clear as well as up-to-date. They conform to the bachelor level.

The panel is pleased to see the substantial number of incoming students in the programme and notes this number being within programme capacity limits.

The curriculum matches the intended learning outcomes. The panel is very positive about the contents of the curriculum, the courses offering a solid foundation in subjects in molecular life sciences, chemical biology and biotechnology. The panel especially very much appreciates the balance of breadth and depth in the curriculum. In addition, the curriculum is up-to-date and includes new trends in this field. The curriculum is coherent and structured well along the learning trajectories. The panel regards the learning trajectories as being well-designed, and appreciates the transferable skills learning trajectory.

The lecturers in the programme are well-reputed researchers and skilled teachers. The panel regards the lecturers to be motivated and considers their educational capabilities to be up to standard. The panel notes sufficient numbers of teaching assistants being available to balance the lecturers' workload.

The programme entry requirements and admission procedures are appropriate. The panel advises to make study-choice check activities compulsory, in order to admit more students having the motivation and capacities to complete the programme.

The educational concept and study methods are appropriate, promoting students-activating learning. New study methods are introduced at a satisfactory pace. The number of practical courses in the curriculum is adequate, these courses being well-organised. The students-to-staff ratio and the number of hours of face-to-face education in the programme meet the standards. The academic counsellor and the student mentors ensure adequate study guidance. Although the programme is challenging, the panel regards it to be feasible and the study load to be evenly distributed. The panel supports the completion rate target figures, set by programme management.

The panel regards the examination and assessment regulations for the programme to be appropriate. The examination methods in the programme are adequate, being consistent with the course goals and contents. The measures being taken to counter free-riding in group assignments are positive. The panel advises to have all Bachelor final projects and written assignments checked for fraud and plagiarism, like programme management intends to do. The supervision and assessment processes for the Bachelor final projects are well-organised. The panel welcomes the rubrics scoring form and the academic skills being assessed in the project. Measures have been taken to ensure the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations and assessments. The panel observes, however, these measures not being systematically followed through by examiners. Although the position and authority of the Board of Examiners are adequate, the panel proposes the Board to be more pro-active in enforcing the examination and assessment procedures.

The panel regards the course examinations to be up to standard. The Bachelor final projects definitely meet the requirements of this programme. The panel found some of the grades awarded to these projects by the programme examiners to be somewhat high.

The panel is convinced that students having completed the programme reached the intended learning outcomes and regards the graduates of this programme to be well prepared to continue their studies at master level in this domain.

The panel which conducted the assessment of the joint-degree Bachelor Life Science and Technology programme of Delft University of Technology and Leiden University assesses this programme to meet the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, judging the programme to be satisfactory. Therefore, the panel recommends NVAO to accredit this programme.

Rotterdam, 7 March 2019

Prof. dr. M.A. Cohen Stuart
(panel chair)

drs. W. Vercouteren
(panel secretary)

2. Assessment process

The evaluation agency Certiked VBI received the request by Delft University of Technology and Leiden University to support the limited framework programme assessment process for the joint-degree Bachelor Life Science and Technology programme of these Universities. The objective of the programme assessment process was to assess whether the programme would conform to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, published on 20 December 2016 (Staatscourant nr. 69458).

Management of the programmes in the assessment cluster WO Scheikunde convened to discuss the composition of the assessment panel and to draft the list of candidates.

Having conferred with management of the Bachelor Life Science and Technology programme of Delft University of Technology and Leiden University, Certiked invited candidate panel members to sit on the assessment panel. The panel members agreed to do so. The panel composition was as follows:

- Prof. dr. M.A. Cohen Stuart, professor emeritus, chair of Physical Chemistry & Colloid Chemistry, Wageningen University, professor emeritus of Physical Surface Chemistry, University of Twente, professor East China University of Science and Technology, Shanghai, China (panel chair);
- Prof. dr. A.H.T. Boyen, associate professor emeritus, Faculty of Sciences and Bio-engineering Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (panel member);
- Prof. dr. ir. G.B. Marin, professor of Chemical Reaction Engineering, head Laboratory for Chemical Technology, Ghent University (panel member);
- Prof. dr. R.M.J. Liskamp, professor, chair Chemical Biology and Medicinal Chemistry, School of Chemistry, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, professor of Molecular Medicinal Chemistry, Utrecht University (panel member);
- Drs. O. de Vreede, head Innovation and Human Capital, VNCI, Association of the Dutch Chemical Industry (panel member);
- A.E.M. Melcherts BSc, student Master in Nanomaterials Science, Utrecht University (student member).

On behalf of Certiked, drs. W. Vercouteren served as the process coordinator and secretary in the assessment process.

All panel members and the secretary confirmed in writing being impartial with regard to the programme to be assessed and observing the rules of confidentiality. Having obtained the authorisation by the University, Certiked requested the approval of NVAO of the proposed panel to conduct the assessment. NVAO have given their approval.

To prepare the assessment process, the process coordinator convened with management of the programme to discuss the outline of the self-assessment report, the subjects to be addressed in this report and the site visit schedule. In addition, the planning of the activities in preparation of the site visit were discussed. In the course of the process preparing for the site visit, programme management and the Certiked process coordinator regularly had contact to fine-tune the process. The activities prior to the site visit have been performed as planned. Programme management approved of the site visit schedule.

Well in advance of the site visit date, programme management sent the list of final projects of graduates of the programme of the most recent years. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator selected the theses of 15 graduates from the last few years. The grade distribution in the selection was ensured to conform to the grade distribution in the list, sent by programme management.

The panel chair and the panel members were sent the self-assessment report of the programme, including appendices. In the self-assessment report, the student chapter was included. In addition, the expert panel members were forwarded a number of theses of the programme graduates, these theses being part of the selection made by the process coordinator.

Several weeks before the site visit date, the assessment panel chair and the process coordinator met to discuss the self-assessment report provided by programme management, the procedures regarding the assessment process and the site visit schedule. In this meeting, the profile of panel chairs of NVAO was discussed as well. The panel chair was informed about the competencies, listed in the profile. Documents pertaining to a number of these competencies were presented to the panel chair. The meeting between the panel chair and the process coordinator served as the briefing for panel chairs, as meant in the NVAO profile of panel chairs.

Prior to the date of the site visit, all panel members sent in their preliminary findings, based on the self-assessment report and the final projects studied, and a number of questions to be put to the programme representatives on the day of the site visit. The panel secretary summarised this information, compiling a list of questions, which served as a starting point for the discussions with the programme representatives during the site visit.

Shortly before the site visit date, the complete panel met to go over the preliminary findings concerning the quality of the programme. During this preliminary meeting, the preliminary findings of the panel members, including those about the theses were discussed. The procedures to be adopted during the site visit, including the questions to be put to the programme representatives on the basis of the list compiled, were discussed as well.

On 27 September 2018, the panel conducted the site visit on the Delft University of Technology campus. The site visit schedule was as planned. In a number of separate sessions, the panel was given the opportunity to meet with the representatives of the Faculties of both universities, programme management, Board of Examiners members, lecturers and final projects examiners, and students and alumni.

In a closed session at the end of the site visit, the panel considered every one of the findings, weighed the considerations and arrived at conclusions with regard to the quality of the programme. At the end of the site visit, the panel chair presented a broad outline of the considerations and conclusions to programme representatives.

The assessment draft report was finalised by the secretary, having taken into account the findings and considerations of the panel. The draft report was sent to the panel members, who studied it and made a number of changes. Thereupon, the secretary edited the final report. This report was presented to programme management to be corrected for factual inaccuracies. Programme management were given two weeks to respond. Having been corrected for these factual inaccuracies, the Certiked bureau sent the report to the Board of Delft University of Technology, being the administrative host institution for this programme, to accompany their request for re-accreditation of this programme.

3. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO: B Life Science and Technology
Orientation, level programme: Academic Bachelor
Grade: BSc
Number of credits: 180 EC
Specialisations: N.A.
Location: Delft, Leiden
Mode of study: Full-time (language of instruction Dutch)
Registration in CROHO: 21PF-55010/21PB-55010

Name of institutions: Delft University of Technology (“penvoerder”) and Leiden University
Status of institutions: Government-funded Universities
Institutions’ quality assurance: Approved

4. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard

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.

Findings

The joint-degree Bachelor Life Science and Technology programme is offered by the Faculty of Applied Sciences of Delft University of Technology and the Faculty of Science of Leiden University, Delft University of Technology being the administrative host institution. The cooperation of the Universities is governed by the cooperation agreement, drafted by them. The Boards of the Faculties mentioned are jointly responsible for the programme quality. The director of studies of the programme is appointed by the deans of both Faculties. Being assisted by the programme coordinator and the academic counsellor, he takes care of programme management. For the programme, one set of Teaching and Examination Regulations applies. The Board of Studies, consisting of an equal number of lecturers and students, advises programme management on quality issues. The Board of Examiners has the authority to ensure the quality of examinations and assessments of the programme. Members of the Board of Studies and the Board of Examiners are appointed by the Faculty Boards of both Universities.

The joint-degree programmes Bachelor Life Science and Technology and Bachelor Molecular Science and Technology allow the two Universities to offer the full spectre of subjects in the chemical sciences disciplines at bachelor level. Having completed the bachelor programme, students may specialise in one of the master programmes offered by Universities in these disciplines.

The Bachelor Life Science and Technology programme is a three-year, research-based, broad bachelor programme, covering the molecular life sciences, chemical biology and biotechnology disciplines. The programme objectives are to educate students in scientific knowledge, understanding and skills in these disciplines, to train them to contribute, under supervision, to identify, formulate and solve problems in these domains, and to prepare them for master programmes in these disciplines. Students are taught to understand subjects in societal relevant fields of health and disease and environment and sustainability from multidisciplinary angles.

The objectives of the programme conform to the domain-specific reference framework for the chemical sciences in the Netherlands, which has been drafted by the joint programmes of this assessment cluster in the Netherlands. In this domain-specific framework, reference has been made to international frameworks and benchmark statements. This Delft University of Technology and Leiden University programme may be regarded as being positioned at the intersection of the chemistry, chemical engineering and molecular life sciences sub-domains of chemical sciences. Programme management compared the programme to other, similar programmes in the Netherlands.

The programme aims primarily to prepare students for studies at master level in molecular life sciences, chemical biology or bio-engineering, such as the Master Life Science and Technology programmes of Delft University of Technology or Leiden University.

The objectives have been translated into the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The intended learning outcomes specify, among others, knowledge and understanding of life sciences, chemical biology and biotechnology basic concepts and principles, research knowledge and skills in these domains, analysing and interpreting scientific problems, academic skills, such as communication and collaboration skills, reflection on social, scientific and ethical issues and competences for continuing education.

Programme management demonstrated the intended learning outcomes to meet the Dublin descriptors, showing these to match the bachelor level.

Considerations

The panel considers the collaboration between both Faculties of Delft University of Technology and Leiden University to be well-organised and effective. The panel welcomes the Universities' initiatives to offer broad bachelor programmes, allowing students to acquire comprehensive and in-depth education in the chemical sciences domain and allowing them to select among a range of master programmes of Dutch universities to specialise in.

The panel considers the objectives of the programme to be sound. The panel appreciates these objectives, introducing students to the chemical engineering for life sciences domain and educating them well in the molecular life sciences, chemical biology and biotechnology disciplines. The panel regards the programme to be modern and up-to-date and to be aligned with relevant societal trends. The panel considers the programme profile to be well-delineated, but suggests to articulate this profile more clearly, in comparison to other Dutch and foreign programmes.

The objectives of the programme are within the boundaries of the domain-specific reference framework for academic chemical sciences programmes. The panel appreciates the efforts by the joint programmes in chemical sciences in the Netherlands to draft this framework and regards this to be a sound and up-to-date description of this domain. The profile of this Delft University of Technology and Leiden University programme may be clearly distinguished within the framework.

The panel understands and supports the programme position to educate students to continue their studies at master level rather than to enter the labour market.

The objectives have been well-translated into the programme intended learning outcomes. The panel finds the intended learning outcomes to be very clear and up-to-date. The intended learning outcomes conform to the bachelor level.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 1, Intended learning outcomes, to be good.

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.

Findings

The number of incoming students in the programme grew steadily from 2010 to 2017 from 113 students to 168 students. A small number of Dutch-speaking international students enrol. The gender balance of the group of incoming students is equal (50 %/50 %).

The curriculum has a study load of 180 EC and takes three years to complete. Programme management presented a table, mapping the intended learning outcomes to the curriculum components. The curriculum was renewed in the years 2013 to 2015, among others, to meet current trends in the field, to increase involvement of students and lecturers by raising the number of hours of face-to-face education and to improve the feasibility and the assessment structure of the programme. The current curriculum is organised in learning trajectories to enhance coherence and to present students integrated views on subjects. The learning trajectories are supporting disciplines mathematics, physics and chemistry, both theory and practice, core disciplines in life sciences and biotechnology, theory and practice, research skills, understanding research and academic literature, transferable skills and integration of knowledge. Courses are part of these learning trajectories. Transferable skills or academic skills training, being presentation skills, writing skills and collaboration skills and critical thinking are included in the courses. In the third year, students take a minor (30 EC), allowing them to broaden or deepen their studies. About 18 % of the students take the minor Advanced LST, offering them deepening or broadening knowledge within the programme domain. About 5 % to 10 % of the students spend the minor abroad. At the end of the curriculum, students conduct the Bachelor final project (18 EC). Programme management discusses gaps and overlap of courses as well as courses' subjects depth regularly with lecturers. New trends, such as bio-informatics are addressed in the curriculum. For talented students, the honours programme is offered, but only few students complete this programme.

About 43 lecturers are involved in the programme, coming from both Universities. Nearly all lecturers are PhDs and are actively engaged in research within one of the Leiden or Delft research groups. A few lecturers are especially appointed to teach in the programme, these lecturers being, however, affiliated with research groups, not to lose the valuable connection with research. The majority of the lecturers are BKO-certified, which is a requirement. The students expressed appreciating the lecturers and judged them to be easily approachable. In addition to the permanent staff, PhD students, post-doctoral co-workers and student assistants act as teaching assistants in tutorials, lab courses and research projects. Funds are available to recruit teaching assistants, alleviating lecturers' workload.

Applicants with the Dutch pre-university secondary school diploma in the natural sciences & technology subject cluster or in the natural sciences & health subject cluster with mathematics B and physics are unconditionally admitted to the programme. Other students are admitted, if they have taken mathematics and physics at the required level. Before entering, applicants may fill out study-choice check on-line questionnaires. Prospective students with lower grades than 7.0 for mathematics are discouraged by mail by the academic counsellor to enrol.

The educational concept of the programme is research-based learning and geared towards activating learning on the part of the students. The study methods in most theoretical courses are lectures, seminars as exercise sessions and homework assignments. In the practical courses, teaching methods are practical work and group assignments. Lecturers adopt new, ICT-based teaching methods. About 30 % of the lectures are recorded. Programme management intends to raise this number. The average number of hours of face-to-face education in the curriculum is about 30 hours per week in the first year decreasing to about 24 hours per week in the third year. The overall students-to-staff ratio is 20 : 1. Both in Delft and Leiden, new buildings and laboratory facilities are available for the programme. The programme academic counsellor interviews all students, monitors their study pace and advises them in case of study problems. In the first year, students are assigned to mentor groups and are guided by student mentors, being second-year students. The study association is active in scheduling activities for students in the programme. Students experience the programme to be demanding, but feasible. In the first year, students have to report 45 EC (Binding Study Advice). If they do not succeed, they have to leave the programme. Students having obtained 45 EC, may take the Summer School at the end of the first year, allowing them to gather additional credits. Students are required to draft their study plan for the second year, to avoid bottlenecks. The academic counsellors assist them with this. About 30 % to 40 % of the students leave the programme in the first year. The student success rates after three years are on average about 37 % and on average about 74 % after four years (figures for last three to four cohorts, proportions of students re-enrolling in second year). The target completion rate figures of programme management are 50 % after three years and 80 % after four years.

Considerations

The panel is pleased to see the substantial number of incoming students in the programme and notes the number being within programme capacity limits.

The curriculum matches the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The panel is very positive about the contents of the curriculum. The courses offer a solid foundation in subjects in molecular life sciences, chemical biology and biotechnology. The panel especially very much appreciates the balance of breadth and depth in the curriculum, the breadth of the programme not being at the expense of in-depth study of subjects. In addition, the curriculum is up-to-date and includes new trends in this field. The curriculum is coherent and well-structured along the learning trajectories. The panel regards the learning trajectories to have been well-designed, appreciating the transferable skills learning trajectory.

The lecturers in the programme are well-reputed researchers and skilled teachers. The panel regards the lecturers to be motivated and considers their educational capabilities to be up to standard. The panel notes sufficient numbers of teaching assistants being available to balance the lecturers' workload.

The programme entry requirements and admission procedures are appropriate. The panel advises to make study-choice check activities compulsory, in order to admit more students having the proper motivation and capacities to complete the programme.

The panel regards the educational concept and the study methods of the programme to be appropriate, promoting students-activating learning processes. New study methods are introduced at a satisfactory pace. The number of practical courses in the curriculum is adequate, these courses being well-organised. The students-to-staff ratio and the number of hours of face-to-face education in the programme meet the standards. The academic counsellor and the student mentors ensure adequate study guidance. Although the programme is challenging, the panel regards the programme to be feasible and the study load to be evenly distributed. The panel supports the completion rate target figures, set by programme management.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 2, Teaching-learning environment, to be good.

4.3 Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings

The examinations and assessments in the programme are governed by the Teaching and Examination Regulations for the programme and the assessment policy document, drafted by the Board of Examiners. As has been indicated, the Board of Examiners has the authority to ensure the quality of examinations and assessments of the programme.

The examination methods in the courses are written examinations, written assignments, homework assignments, oral presentations and student participation. Courses always include more than one type of examination. Homework assignments are maximum 15 % of the final course grade, since it is impossible to establish these being the student's own work. In the practical courses, practical work as examination method is included. Academic and professional skills' assessments are part of the course examinations. In some courses, examinations are group reports and presentations. Free-riding is countered by individual components in the assessments. Students are allowed resits in the period immediately following the course period. At least half of the written assignments and Bachelor final projects are checked for fraud and plagiarism. On account of technical problems and because of confidentiality, not yet all are inspected. Programme management intends to have all checked.

The Bachelor final project is an individual research project, to be completed in thirteen weeks time. The project is supervised by supervisors of one of the research groups. Day-to-day supervisors may be PhD students or post-doctoral co-workers, acting under the responsibility of supervisors. At completion of the project, students are to submit the written report and are to present and defend the results. The project is assessed by at least two staff members. They use an extensive rubrics scoring form for their assessment, which includes as assessment criteria, among others, theoretical knowledge and understanding, scientific approach, research work, report, presentation and defence and academic skills.

In the programme, measures have been taken to ensure the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations and assessments. Examinations drafts are to be peer-reviewed by fellow examiners. Examinations are to include test matrices. In case of deviant grade distributions, examinations may be analysed. The Board of Examiners inspects on a regular basis samples of examinations and Bachelor thesis projects.

Considerations

The panel regards the examination and assessment regulations for the programme to be appropriate.

The panel approves of the examination methods adopted in the programme, noting these to be consistent with the goals and the contents of the courses. The panel is pleased to see academic and professional skills being assessed. The panel is positive about measures being taken to counter free-riding. The panel recommends to have all Bachelor final projects and written assignments checked for fraud and plagiarism, like programme management intends to do.

The supervision and assessment processes for the Bachelor final projects are well-organised. Students are offered appropriate supervision and the assessment procedures are up to standard. The panel welcomes the rubrics scoring form and the academic skills being assessed in the project.

Measures have been taken in the programme to ensure the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations and assessments. The panel observes, however, these measures not being systematically followed through by examiners. Although the position and authority of the Board of Examiners are adequate, the panel proposes the Board to be more pro-active in enforcing the examination and assessment procedures.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 3, Student assessment, to be satisfactory.

4.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

The panel studied the examinations of a number of courses of the programme.

In addition, the panel reviewed the Bachelor final projects of fifteen graduates of the programme with different grades. In these projects, students have to demonstrate to be able to conduct an individual research project within the domain of the programme. The average grade of the Bachelor final projects for the last years is 7.9.

As has been indicated, programme graduates may enter master programmes in the programme domain. The majority of the graduated proceed to the Master Life Science and Technology programmes of either Leiden University (about 30 %) or of Delft University of Technology (about 45 %). The other graduates mainly go on to enrol in master programmes of other Dutch universities.

Figures have been collected on the results of graduates in the Delft and Leiden Master Life Science and Technology programmes. Graduates perform well, nearly all of them completing these programmes.

Considerations

The panel regards the course examinations, which were reviewed by panel members, to be up to standard.

The panel regards the Bachelor final projects to definitely meet the requirements of the programme. Some of the grades awarded to these projects by the programme examiners are assessed by the panel as being somewhat too high.

The panel is convinced that students having completed the programme reached the intended learning outcomes and regards the graduates of this programme to be well prepared to continue their studies at master level in this domain.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 4, Achieved learning outcomes, to be satisfactory.

5. Overview of assessments

Standard	Assessment
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Good
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Good
Standard 3: Student assessment	Satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Satisfactory
Programme	Satisfactory

6. Recommendations

In this report, a number of recommendations by the panel have been listed. For the sake of clarity, these have been brought together below.

- To articulate the programme profile more clearly in comparison to other Dutch and foreign programmes.
- To make study-choice check activities compulsory, in order to admit more students having the proper motivation and capacities to complete the programme.
- To achieve the completion rate target figures, set by programme management.
- To have all Bachelor final projects and written assignments checked for fraud and plagiarism, like programme management intends to do.
- For the Board of Examiners to be more pro-active in enforcing the examination and assessment procedures.