

ONDERZOEKERIJ

Research Master

Psychology

Leiden University

Report of the limited programme assessment

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Contents

Contents.....	3
Executive summary	4
1. Introduction.....	6
1.1 Administrative data.....	6
1.2 Introduction.....	6
1.3 Panel composition.....	6
1.4 Working method	7
2. Review.....	9
2.1 Intended learning outcomes	9
2.2 Teaching-learning environment.....	10
2.3 Student assessment.....	14
2.4 Achieved learning outcomes.....	15
3. Strengths and recommendations.....	17
3.1 Strengths of the programme.....	17
3.2 Recommendations.....	17
For further improvement of the programme, the panel makes the following recommendations:....	17
4. Conclusion	18
Appendix A – Panel composition and programmes of the cluster	19
Appendix B – Schedule of the visit	21
Appendix C – Documents studied	22
Appendix D – Abbreviations	23



Executive summary

The outcome of the external assessment of the research master's programme Psychology of Leiden University by an NVAO approved panel is positive. The two-year full-time programme aims to prepare the next generation of young academics in Psychology for a career as a top-researcher in academia and/or public or private organisations. The intended learning outcomes demonstrate the multidisciplinary ambitions of the programme and adequately reflect the level and orientation of the programme. However, the panel suggests to make more explicit references to the ambition of the programme to train the next generation of internationally oriented top researchers.

The panel is positive about the curriculum that offers a general part, combined with four specialisations (tracks). It consists of general research skills courses and track-specific courses in which students acquire a solid theoretical foundation in their own domain of specialisation. In addition, students get hands-on experience in research by being involved in projects of the research programmes of the Institute of Psychology. Points of attention are the perceived high study load and the guidance of students in their choice of electives.

The panel thinks highly of the staff members, who are acknowledged scientists in their field and take supervision and tutoring of the research master's students very seriously. The panel welcomes the highly interactive learning environment which stimulates collaboration and provides ample opportunities for feedback between students and staff.

The research master's programme has an adequate assessment system. The panel appreciates the expertise and proactive attitude of the Board of Examiners. The programme uses a wide variety of assessment methods which are consistent with the goals and contents of the courses. However, the panel encourages the programme to make better use of the learning benefits of formative assessment methods.

The master thesis is assessed by two assessors. The panel was not fully convinced that the independency of the two assessors is always guaranteed. Another point of attention concerns the limited written feedback provided by the examiners on the thesis assessment forms. The panel was pleased to note that the Institute of Psychology will implement a new procedure that better ensures the independency of the different assessors, and ensures a third assessor in case of grade discrepancy between assessors. This new institute-wide procedure also entails an improved assessment form. The panel advises the programme to ensure that this new assessment form explicitly focusses on the intended learning outcomes of the research master's programme.

The level and quality of the theses differ from sufficient to good, which is reflected in the grades. Generally speaking, the panel is convinced that students have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The panel is positive about the career chances of the graduates of the programme, most of them working in positions in which they need the scientific knowledge and analytical skills acquired in the research master's programme.



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

Date: 1 June 2021

Janke Cohen-Schotanus
(chair)

Esther Poort
(secretary)



1. Introduction

1.1 Administrative data

Name of the programme:	Psychology (research)
CROHO number:	60383
Level of the programme:	Master of science
Orientation of the programme:	Academic
Study load:	120 EC
Location:	Leiden
Variant:	Full-time
Tracks	Clinical and Health Psychology Developmental Psychology Social and Economic Psychology Cognitive Neuroscience
Expiration of accreditation:	1 November 2021

1.2 Introduction

This report focuses on the assessment of the research master's programme Psychology of Leiden University. This assessment forms part of a cluster assessment of thirteen research master's programmes at seven universities. In total, fifteen panel members participated in this cluster assessment. Appendix A provides an overview of the thirteen participating research masters and the composition of the total panel.

The assessment is based on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands 2018 (limited framework). Research master's programmes must meet a number of additional criteria as described by the NVAO (specification of additional criteria for research master's programmes, 2016).

1.3 Panel composition

For every online visit, a (sub)panel was composed, based on the expertise and availability of panel members. Each (sub)panel consisted of five members, including the chair and the student member. The panel that assessed the master's programme Psychology consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. Janke Cohen-Schotanus (chair) Professor emeritus of Research of Education in the Medical Sciences;
- Prof. dr. Caroline Braet, Professor Developmental Psychopathology, Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology at Ghent University;
- Prof. dr. Harm Hospers, Professor emeritus of Applied Health Psychology;
- Prof. dr. Guus Smeets, Professor of Education in Psychology, Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Erasmus University Rotterdam;



- Marie Stadel MSc (student member), Behavioural and Social Sciences Research Master, University of Groningen (graduated in 2020).

The panel was supported by drs. Esther Poort, who acted as secretary.

All panel members and the secretary have signed a declaration of independence and confidentiality. In this declaration they affirm not to have had any business or personal ties with the programme in question for at least five years prior to the review.

The NVAO approved the composition of the panel on 26 November 2020.

1.4 Working method

Preparation

On 14 January 2021, the panel of the entire cluster held a general online kick off meeting. In this meeting, the panel received an introduction to the assessment framework and discussed the working methods in preparation to and during the online visits.

The programme drew up a self-evaluation describing the programme's strengths and weaknesses. This self-evaluation included a chapter in which the students reflected on the programme. The panel members prepared the assessment by analysing the self-evaluation report and the appendices provided by the institution. The panel also studied a selection of fifteen master theses and the accompanying assessment forms from the programme. The theses selection was made by the panel's secretary based on a provided list of at least fifty theses of the most recent years. In the selection, consideration was given to a variation in assessments (grades), topics, and tracks.

The panel members individually formulated their preliminary findings and a number of questions they wanted to raise during the online visit. The secretary made an overview of these preliminary findings and questions and sent it to the panel members as a starting point for the preparation of the panel during the online visit.

To further ensure that the different panels used the same working method and approach for all thirteen programmes in the cluster, the two chairs and the two secretaries had two additional meetings: one prior to the first visit and one halfway through all the visits.

Online visit

The online visit took place on 23 March 2021 (see Appendix B). During the preparatory meeting, the panel discussed the preliminary findings and decided which questions to raise in their meetings with the programme representatives. During the visit, the panel spoke with representatives of the management, students, lecturers, alumni and the Board of Examiners. Everybody involved in the programme had the opportunity to inform the panel in confidence about matters they consider important to the assessment. No one made use of this opportunity. The panel used the last part of the online visit to evaluate the interviews and had a second meeting with the programme's management to receive answers to any remaining questions. At the end of the visit, the chair presented the panel's general findings and first impressions of the programme.



Report

The secretary drew up a draft report based on the panel's findings. This draft report was presented to the members of the panel and adjusted on the basis of their feedback. After adoption, the draft report was sent to the institution for verification of factual inaccuracies. The secretary discussed the programme's comments with the chair, after which the secretary drew up the final report and circulated it to the panel for a final round of comments.

The report follows the four standards such as set of in the NVAO's Assessment Framework 2018 (limited framework): 1) the intended learning outcomes, 2) the teaching-learning environment, 3) assessment, and 4) achieved learning outcomes. Regarding each of the standards, the assessment panel gave a substantiated judgement on a three-point scale: meets, does not meet, or partially meets the standard. The panel subsequently gave a substantiated final conclusion regarding the quality of the programme, also on a three-point scale: positive, conditionally positive, or negative.

Development dialogue

Although clearly separated from the process of the programme assessment, assessment panel members and programme representatives met to conduct the development dialogue, with the objective to discuss future developments of the programme in light of the outcomes of the assessment report.



2. Review

2.1 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, analysis, and considerations

The programme is embedded within the Institute of Psychology of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences (FSBS). The Institute of Psychology also offers a bachelor's programme and a one-year master's programme in Psychology. The institute consists of six units that collaborate in one of the three overarching research themes ('Health and well-being', 'Development and learning', and 'Social and economic decision-making').

The general aim of the programme is to inspire, educate, and prepare the next generation of young academics in psychology for a career as a top-researcher in academia and/or public or private organisations. The ambition of the programme is preparing researchers that can cross the boundaries of psychological disciplines in order to address complex societal problems.

The programme offers a general part, combined with four specialisations, so-called tracks: 1) Track Clinical and Health Psychology; 2) Track Developmental Psychology; 3) Track Social and Economic Psychology; 4) Track Cognitive Neuroscience. The panel highly appreciates the mix of a broad research orientated programme with the four different tracks. This combination allows students to obtain a solid theoretical foundation of research methodology and statistics as well as to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of theoretical models within and across psychological disciplines.

As described in the self-evaluation report, the research master's programme distinguishes itself from the one-year master's programme by its strong research focus. Research master's graduates have advanced knowledge of the theoretical field of psychological research, as well as scientific knowledge and methodological skills from (sub)disciplines other than their own domain of specialisation. The panel also established that the programme clearly benefits from the strong connections with the three overarching research themes of the Institute of Psychology.

The programme formulated intended learning outcomes are in line with the Dublin descriptors. In the eyes of the panel, these intended learning outcomes clearly reflect that the programme goes beyond regular master's programmes in psychology in terms of theoretical and methodological depth. In addition, the intended learning outcomes clearly demonstrate the multidisciplinary ambitions and cover all relevant research skills. The panel is also pleased with the way social and ethical responsibilities are addressed in the intended learning outcomes. However, the panel suggests to make more explicit references to the ambition of the programme to train the next generation of internationally oriented top researchers. In the eyes of the panel, soft skills like self-regulation, self-monitoring, reflection, and interpersonal and intercultural skills, are highly relevant for graduates with this ambitious profile. Addressing these soft skills more explicitly, would also be in line with the aim of training independent and pro-active researchers, who can reflect on new findings and detect gaps in their research fields.



Conclusion

The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes of the programme are at the right level and depth. They reflect the multidisciplinary ambitions and the research orientation of the programme. The programme therefore meets standard 1.

2.2 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, analysis, and considerations**Curriculum*

The research master's programme in Psychology is a full-time programme of 120 EC, divided into four semesters. The curriculum consists of eight obligatory general courses (8 x 5 EC), four track specific courses (4 x 5 EC), four electives (4 x 5 EC), a research internship (20 EC), and a master thesis (20 EC).

The eight obligatory general courses cover the research skills needed in the empirical cycle. Students learn how to design and evaluate an empirical study, how to collect data, how to analyse data with advanced statistical techniques, and how to report and present their findings. The panel welcomes the way the programme addresses research ethics and open science. Besides the general attention in the curriculum for these aspects, the programme offers a second-year course 'Responsible Research in Practice' that is entirely focused towards research ethics and open-science practises.

In the obligatory track-specific courses, students gain a state-of-the-art overview of theoretical developments and debates in their own domain of specialisation. The panel values the opportunity to choose from four different tracks, allowing students to optimally align and customise the programme to their personal preferences and research ambitions. The panel was pleased to learn that all general courses and track specific courses are exclusively geared to research master's students.

The panel appreciates that the curriculum consists of two research projects and that all students gain experience with all phases of the empirical research cycle. Whereas in their research internship students may focus on specific elements of the empirical cycle (e.g., data collection and data analysis), the master thesis project comprises the entire empirical cycle. In some cases, students base their master thesis on existing data. In such cases, the student's mentor ensures that data-collection skills are addressed in the research internship. Students are encouraged to conduct the research for their research internship and/or master thesis at a research institute abroad. Students typically apply for a travel grant from the LUF International Study Fund (LISF). Until this year, approximately 30% of the students went abroad, which is highly appreciated by the panel.

Students can further specialise in their area of interest by choosing electives from a wide range of relevant courses offered in the other three tracks of the research master's programme and/or from courses offered in other research master's programme within Leiden University. Students can also choose courses offered in the one-year master's programme Psychology. Students mentioned during the visit that research master's students may have additional or different assignments than students from the one-year master's programme, such as writing a research-based article. Students who wish to take electives outside the Institute of Psychology (or outside Leiden University) are required to ask



approval from the Board of Examiners (BoE) of the institute. The research master's programme also offers one general elective, the 'Research Apprenticeship Psychology' (RAP). During the RAP, students gain experience with several aspects of research planning, data collection, data analysis and other practical aspects of conducting psychological research under the supervision of staff from the institute. The panel highly values this general elective and believes this is relevant for all research master's students. The panel suggests making this a general obligatory course.

As described in the self-evaluation report, the students choose among electives and research topics to create a coherent package of multidisciplinary and specialized training. The panel appreciates this free space students have to design their own learning path. However, the panel noted that the freedom of choice is very broad. As a result, students report that there is not enough information on how to apply for electives from different faculties and institutes and how to integrate these into their study programme. Therefore, the panel encourages the programme to offer students more guidance in what electives to choose and provide students timely with the information they need. In addition, the panel advises the programme to be more critical and restrictive on what choices are offered to students. An option could be a thematic clustering of courses on certain topics and the requirement that students select part of their electives from such clusters.

The programme offers students in the Clinical and Health Psychology and Developmental Psychology tracks the possibility to acquire certificates to prove that they meet the requirements to enrol in the post-master training to become a legally registered health care psychologist (*Gezondheidszorgpsycholoog-BIG*). These students can use the 20 EC elective space to follow the required courses from the one-year clinical master specialisation. Students who want to enrol the post-master training, also need to conduct a clinical internship. The programme offers this clinical internship as an extracurricular option for research master's students. In the past years (cohorts 2015-2017), 8 to 11 students per year followed the so called 'clinical route', demonstrating that this option is used by a substantial proportion of students.

The panel is convinced about the added value of this clinical route, because of the shortage of researchers in a clinical psychology setting. Also, the panel agrees with the programme that the field of mental health care can benefit from this science orientated clinical track. The panel is of the opinion that the programme found a good way to implement the clinical route in the programme. It was pleased to note that students following this clinical route, cannot replace their research internship by a clinical internship. This ensures the research orientated profile of all graduates. The panel encourages the programme to continue to follow (national) discussions on the optimal structuring of the scientist-practitioner learning line in research master's programmes.

Overall, the panel is of the opinion that the curriculum is well structured. It considers the curriculum to be an appropriate reflection of the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The programme management puts a lot of effort into continuously improving the programme. The panel compliments the management for this proactive attitude. The panel encourages the programme management to further strengthen the curriculum. The panel thinks that the programme would benefit from a more explicit integration of soft skills, such as self-regulation, self-monitoring, reflection, and interpersonal and intercultural skills within the curriculum.

The educational focus of the research master's programme is research-led teaching, offered to small groups that allow for active and engaging teaching. The panel observed the enthusiasm of both students and staff for the highly interactive approach. All interviewees confirmed that the small-scale teaching environment is a strong feature of the programme, which stimulates collaboration and provides ample opportunities for feedback between students and staff.



The language of instruction of the programme is English. The programme management substantiates its choice by arguing that this is essential to prepare young academics in Psychology for a career as a top-researcher. The panel endorses this.

Following up the recommendations of the previous accreditation panel, the programme has intensified the recruitment of international students. The panel was pleased to note that in recent years (2017-2019) 34% of the students had an international background, compared to 20% in the years before the previous accreditation. The panel welcomes the international classroom setting. However, the panel encourages the programme using this international classroom setting in a more structured and explicit way, for example by challenging students to reflect on cultural differences that may be relevant for the study of psychological phenomena.

Admission

The research master's programme is selective and students that apply for admission are evaluated on academic achievements, including the bachelor thesis (guideline is a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 7.5 or higher), requirements regarding methods and statistics, and English language proficiency. The Admissions Board, advised by the staff, evaluates the applications for admission.

The panel observed that the admission criteria are formulated clearly and adequately reflect the research-oriented nature and high demands of the programme. The programme has a stable, healthy and sustainable inflow ranging between 38 and 53 students per year. The panel noted that the number of applicants is much higher than the number of admitted students, which illustrates the selective nature of the programme.

Staff

One of the appendices to the self-evaluation report contains a list of all academic staff members participating in the programme. The panel acknowledges the staff's scientific quality, international academic reputation and teaching experience. In accordance with university policy, all lecturers working more than 0.5 fte for at least a year, obtained their University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) or Senior Teaching Qualification (STQ), or are in the process of acquiring one. During the online visit, the panel met very competent and enthusiastic staff members. Supervision and tutoring are taken very seriously by all staff members.

All teachers in the research master's programme are associated with one of the six research units of the Institute of Psychology. In 2017, the institute's research programme was assessed in the external national research review. The quality of the research was evaluated as 'very good', the societal relevance and viability were both assessed as 'excellent'. This reputation of the institute's research programme is endorsed by the panel. Students are actively involved in many research activities within the institute, not only during the courses but also when they carry out their research internship and write their master thesis. It is clear to the panel that students are part of a high-quality and committed research environment.

According to the student chapter of the self-evaluation report, students highly value teachers and feel inspired by the staff's commitment, dedication, and supportiveness. Students confirmed this in the interview during the online visit.



Study load and guidance

In the student chapter of the self-evaluation report, students report that several courses have a workload that they believe is too high. During the online visit the panel asked about the feasibility of the programme. Students reported to the panel that they feel that especially the first year of the programme is very demanding. This is also related to the fact that students follow four courses in parallel and have to make assignments for several courses. Because of the overlapping course work, there is not always enough time to master everything.

The panel was pleased to note that programme management is well aware of the perceived high study load. It noticed the measures the programme management already took, like reducing the number of interim assignments and replacing these with an end-of-course exam. However, the panel also noticed that the management attributed the high study load to a large extent to the high ambitions of the students. The panel encourages the programme management to discuss with students and teachers how the perceived study load could be diminished. It advises to pay special attention to international students who may experience a lot of stress, especially if they just arrived in the Netherlands.

Several measures have been taken to help students with study planning and with promoting their well-being. All students are appointed a (staff) mentor who they meet at least twice a year to discuss study progress, their choice of electives and any plans to go abroad for their internship or thesis project. The panel appreciates this individual guidance, but also noticed that the mentors interpreted their role differently. The students with whom the panel spoke, indicated that it depends on the mentor what kind of topics they discuss with their mentor, and whether the student is actively guided to develop for example their soft skills. The panel advises to make more explicit to both mentors and students what is to be expected of the mentor.

Although the programme is scheduled within a two-year time frame, the average study duration is approximately 2.5 year. As described in the self-evaluation report, this delay occurs in all different tracks, and the reasons for the delay are diverse. The panel supports the plans of the programme management exploring the reasons for study delay and potential solutions to reduce study duration. The panel suggests to pay particular attention to the contribution of the master thesis to the relatively long average study duration. It believes that 20 EC results in a tight timeframe, in particular if students need to collect their own data within these 20 EC.

COVID-19

Due to COVID-19 almost all education switched to online teaching and assessment in the past year. The panel asked students and teachers about their experience with online teaching. Whilst COVID-19 evidently had an impact on the interaction between student and teachers, both students and teachers were positive about the quick and efficient transition. Because of the relatively small group size, it was quite easy for teachers to interact with all students online.

To ensure the quality of the teaching, as well as the well-being and support for students, the institute launched a number of initiatives, such as a toolkit 'Online teaching and assessment' (for teachers) and a toolkit 'Online Examination Psychology' (for students), and a peer-mentoring system (students who have already studied at least one semester supervise groups of maximum fifteen first-year students).

The panel concluded that although the COVID-19 situation is not an optimal teaching and learning situation, the programme adequately adapted to the COVID-19 situation and still allows students to achieve the academic objectives.



Conclusion

In sum, the panel considers that the teaching and learning environment of the programme is strong and students are able to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 2.

2.3 Student assessment

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

*Findings, analysis and considerations**Assessment policy and methods*

The programme uses a wide variety of assessment methods, including written exams, assignments, oral and poster presentations, reviewing and writing a research proposal, and essays. The panel recognises that along the programme, the emphasis in testing shifts from assessing whether students have acquired knowledge, skills, and an academic attitude to assessing whether they are able to apply them.

Based on the course manuals, the panel noticed that there is alignment between the intended learning objectives of the courses and assessment forms. The panel was pleased to learn that the programme is currently in the process of checking the alignment of the overall intended learning outcomes with assessments on programme level.

Students reported in the student chapter that examination methods are adequate. Teachers provide useful and clear feedback on assignments and examinations, making the courses instructive and educational. However, in some cases, students feel like there is not enough room to make mistakes without immediately being penalised. In the eyes of the panel, this may also be related with the large number of interim summative assignments. As already mentioned in standard 2, the programme decided to replace the interim summative assignments by end-of-course exams. The panel believes, however, that assignments would benefit the learning experience, motivation and mental health of students by using more formative assessments. Formative assessments and use of portfolio's also fit with the programme's principle of active and engaging teaching. Therefore, the panel encourages the programme to implement a well considered balance between formative testing and summative testing .

Assessment master thesis

The panel studied thesis assessment forms and the thesis assessment procedure used for grading the master thesis. Each thesis is evaluated by two assessors. The thesis is assessed against a number of criteria on the research work and learning processes (e.g., degree of independence), and content-dependent criteria (e.g., the quality of the various sections of the thesis).

Based on the completed assessment forms, the panel noted that these forms contained limited written feedback. It was not clear to the panel how the two different assessors make the decision on the final grade. Moreover, the panel was not fully convinced that the independency of the two assessors is always guaranteed. Therefore, the panel welcomes the attention for the new assessment procedure and new assessment forms which will be implement the upcoming year. This procedure and assessment form are developed by an institute wide taskforce. The panel was pleased to learn



that this new procedure better ensures the independency of the different assessors, and ensures a third assessor in case the difference in grades is too large. The panel was also positive about the new thesis assessment form. It allows assessors to address all necessary competences and go into all aspects of the thesis. However, the panel noted that this new form will be used for both the regular master's programme and the research masters' programme. Since the research master' programme has different learning objectives, the panel recommends making an assessment form specifically for research master's students. The panel learned that the assessment form has a digital format. The panel advises including sufficient possibilities for qualitative textual feedback, in combination with explicit instructions for assessors to provide detailed textual feedback.

Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners (BoE) consists of six members of the Institute of Psychology, and one external member and is responsible for the three educational programmes of the institute. The panel reviewed the activities of the BoE in monitoring the quality of examinations. The panel appreciates the involvement of the BoE in the updating of the feedback forms of the Research Internship, the upcoming Research Master Thesis assessment, and the development of regulations pertaining to fraud. The BoE also participates in the yearly conferences in which they discuss teaching and learning ambitions of the institute with the teaching staff and the Institute Board (*Masterslagen*). The panel is of the opinion that the BoE is very well organised and safeguards the quality of the assessments in a structured and accurate manner.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme has a sound system of assessment in place and the BoE takes its responsibilities seriously. The programme therefore meets standard 3.

2.4 Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings, analysis, and considerations

In order to assess whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved, the panel has studied a sample of fifteen recent theses ranging in quality from sufficient to very good. Generally speaking, the panel is convinced that the students show that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes and thus the research master's level.

The panel assessed all theses as satisfactory, however, a few times the panel did award a thesis with a lower grade than the programme assessors did. In these cases the panel expected, for example, a clearer theoretical framework, more advanced statistical analysis or more critical reflections.

The panel was pleased to learn that approximately 23% of the graduates (2014-2018) are a first or co-author on academic peer-reviewed publications from research work during their master programme.

The panel is positive about the career chances of the graduates of the programme. The panel established that almost all alumni work in positions in which they need the scientific knowledge and analytical skills acquired in the research master's programme. About 43% of the graduates start a PhD position after graduation and 10% started their career as a teaching research assistant within the



university, which may lead them to prepare or continue in an academic research position. In addition, 20% of the graduates started working in clinical practice, while 19% found work in private firms or research agencies (e.g., consultancy, researcher at TNO, finance, data analyst, etc). The remaining students (8%) have not reported their current work or are job seeking.

During the online visit, the panel talked to a diverse group of alumni, who are currently working as a researcher inside or outside academia. They indicated that they were well prepared by the programme for their current positions.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the students reach a satisfactory level of achievement and alumni continue on easily to a career in line with the objectives of the programme. The programme therefore meets standard 4.



3. Strengths and recommendations

3.1 Strengths of the programme

The panel is impressed by the following features:

- Structure of the curriculum – The mix of a broad research orientated programme with the four different tracks allows students to optimally align and customise the programme to their personal preferences and research ambitions. The panel appreciates that all general courses and track specific courses are taught exclusively to research master's students;
- International orientation – A substantial part of the students have an international background and/or conduct the research for their research internship and/or master thesis at a research institute abroad;
- Interactive learning environment – The didactic concept is characterised by teaching in small classes, which stimulates collaboration and provides ample opportunities for feedback between students and staff;
- Strong academic environment – The high-quality and strongly engaged teaching staff ensure that the programme is embedded in a strong academic environment;
- Assessment system – The programme uses a variety of assessment methods and the BoE is very well organised and safeguards the quality of the assessments in a structured and accurate manner.

3.2 Recommendations

For further improvement of the programme, the panel makes the following recommendations:

- Ambitions – Make the ambition of the programme to train the next generation of internationally oriented top researchers more explicit. Integrate the soft skills in both the intended learning outcomes, the curriculum and the assessment strategies;
- Study load – Pay more attention to the perceived study load of students and explore potential solutions to reduce the perceived study load;
- Electives – Offer students more guidance in what electives to choose and be more critical and restrictive on what students can choose. The students' choice could, for example, be more directed by means of recommended trajectories;
- Formative assessment – implement a well considered balance between formative testing and summative testing and make better use of the learning benefits of formative assessment methods;
- Thesis assessment – Continue to improve the assessment of the thesis. Develop a thesis assessment form explicitly for the research master's programme and encourage examiners to always provide comprehensive textual feedback on this assessment form.



4. Conclusion

The intended learning outcomes are in line with the goal of preparing students for conducting research in the field of psychology. The intended learning outcomes reflect the multidisciplinary ambitions and the research orientation of the programme. The content and structure of the programme and the high-quality teaching staff provide a strong teaching and learning environment. The programme has an adequate assessment system and a pro-active Board of Examiners. The theses and careers of the graduates show that students have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Standard	Judgement
Standard 1	Meets the standard
Standard 2	Meets the standard
Standard 3	Meets the standard
Standard 4	Meets the standard
Final conclusion	Positive



Appendix A – Panel composition and programmes of the cluster

Panel composition of the cluster:

- Prof. dr. Janke Cohen-Schotanus (chair) Professor emeritus of Research of Education in the Medical Sciences;
- Prof. dr. Rob Ruiter (chair), Professor of Health and Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience at Maastricht University;
- Prof. dr. Lidia Arends, Professor of Statistics and Research Methodology, Department of Psychology, Education & Child Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. dr. Caroline Braet, Professor of Developmental Psychopathology, Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology at Ghent University;
- Prof. dr. Rachel Gibson, Professor of Politics, Department of Politics, University of Manchester;
- Prof. dr. Harm Hospers, Professor emeritus of Applied Health Psychology;
- Prof. dr. Detlev Leutner, Professor of Instructional Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Duisburg-Essen;
- Prof. dr. Maike Luhmann, Professor of Psychological Methods, Department of psychology, Ruhr University Bochum;
- Hanne Oberman MSc (student member). Methodology and Statistics for the Behavioural, Biomedical, and Social Sciences, Utrecht University (graduated in 2020);
- Prof dr. Arne Roets, Professor of Social Psychology, Faculty of psychology and educational sciences, Department of Developmental, Personality, and Social Psychology, Ghent University;
- Prof. dr. Guus Smeets, Professor of Education in Psychology, Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Yvonne Schittenhelm BSc, (student member), Master Individual Differences and Assessment, Tilburg University;
- Marie Stadel MSc (student member), Behavioural and Social Sciences Research Master, University of Groningen (graduated in 2020);
- Prof. dr. Lieven Verschaffel, Professor of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven;
- Prof. dr. Karine Verschueren, Professor of School and Developmental Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven.

The cluster consist of thirteen programmes:

- M Individual Differences and Assessment (research), Tilburg University;
- M Behavioural Science (research), Radboud University;
- M Clinical and Developmental Psychopathology (research), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam;
- M Social Psychology: Regulation of Social Behaviour (research), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam;
- M Psychology (research), University of Amsterdam;
- M Communication Science (research), University of Amsterdam;
- M Educational Sciences: Learning in Interaction (research), Utrecht University;



- M Methodology and Statistics for the Behavioural, Biomedical and Social Sciences (research), Utrecht University;
- M Development and Socialisation in Childhood and Adolescence (research), Utrecht University;
- M Social & Health Psychology (research), Utrecht University;
- M Behavioural and Social Sciences (research), University of Groningen;
- M Psychology (research), Leiden University;
- M Developmental Psychopathology in Education and Child Studies (research), Leiden University.



Appendix B – Schedule of the visit

23 March 2021

Time	Session
08.30 – 10.00	Preparation panel
10.00 – 10.45	Management
10.45 – 11.00	Evaluation
11.00 – 11.45	Students
11.45 – 12.00	Evaluation
12.45 – 13.30	Lecturers
13.30 – 13.45	Evaluation
13.45 – 14.15	Alumni
14.15 – 14.30	Evaluation
14.30 – 15.00	Board of Examiners
15.00 – 15.30	evaluation and preparing questions for management
15.30 -16.00	Second meeting management
16.00 – 17.30	Evaluation
17.30 – 17.45	Presentation of first findings



Appendix C – Documents studied

- Self-evaluation report with appendices
 - Appendix 1: Assessment of previous assessment (2015)
 - Appendix 2: Recommendations and responses to previous assessment
 - Appendix 3: Course and Examination Regulation (including learning goals)
 - Appendix 4: Course descriptions E-prospectus
 - Appendix 5: Overview of the curriculum (2019-2020)
 - Appendix 6: Overview of staff (2019-2020)
 - Appendix 7: Student inflow and outflow
 - Appendix 8: Adjustments due to COVID-19
 - Supplemental Appendices online
 - Supplemental Appendix 9: Student wellbeing
 - Supplemental Appendix 10: Test plan
 - Supplemental Appendix 11: Thesis Assessment Form
 - Supplemental Appendix 12: Internship Assessment Form
- Fifteen theses with assessment forms



Appendix D – Abbreviations

BoE	Board of Examiners
EC	European Credit
GPA	Grade Point Average
NVAO	<i>Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie</i>
STQ	Senior university Teaching Qualification
UTQ	University Teaching Qualification
LISF	LUF International Study Fund

