

ONDERZOEKERIJ

Research Master Behavioural and Social
Sciences

University of Groningen

Report of the limited programme assessment

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Executive summary

The outcome of the external assessment of the research master Behavioural and Social Sciences (BSS) of the University of Groningen (RUG) by an NVAO approved panel is positive. The two-year full-time programme aims to prepare students to become independent, critically reflective researchers, who have effective collaboration skills. BSS distinguishes itself by offering a programme that trains specialists in a multidisciplinary context. The intended learning outcomes adequately reflect the level and orientation of the programme. However, the panel is of the opinion that the multidisciplinary context could be better reflected in the intended learning outcomes.

The panel found the curriculum to be well-structured and research-oriented. At the beginning of the programme, students choose one of three themes: a) Deficits, Distress, and Disorders, b) Lifespan Development and Socialisation, or c) Understanding Societal Change. In combination with specialised electives and method courses, the theme courses offer students the opportunity to reach a high level of expertise. According to the panel, the multidisciplinary profile of the programme is reflected very adequately in the curriculum. A point of attention is the small group size per theme. The panel recommends the programme to proactively stimulate the inflow of students.

The panel is positive about the research quality, English proficiency and teaching skills of the teaching staff of the programme. Students are satisfied with the quality and availability of their supervisors and lecturers. The panel noted that although there are strong communities within the themes, this is less apparent on programme level. The panel encourages the programme to also build an overarching programme community.

The study guidance in general appears to be sufficiently well-organised. However, the panel advises the programme paying more attention to the perceived study load of students, especially in the first year of the programme, partly due to weekly graded assignments.

The programme has a clear framework for assessment and makes use of an appropriate range of assessment methods. The Board of Examiners has a clear view of its tasks and responsibilities.

To increase the focus on intrinsically instead of extrinsically motivated learning, the panel encourages the programme to further implement formative assessment and critically reflect on the number of summative assignments.

The master thesis is assessed by two examiners, the supervisor and a second assessor from a different specialisation of the same theme. However, the panel noted that due to the close connections within the themes, it is challenging to guarantee the independence of the two examiners. The panel suggests involving an independent second grader who is from one of the other themes. In addition, it suggests appointing a third examiner in case of discrepancy of one point or more between the independent grades of the first and second assessor.

The panel considers that the intended learning outcomes of the research master's programme are achieved by the end of the curriculum. The theses are of good quality and reflect the research orientation of the programme. The panel concludes that students are very well prepared for a career in research in the behavioural and social sciences.



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: 20 May, 2021

Rob Ruiter
(chair)

Annemarie Venemans
(secretary)



1. Introduction

1.1 Administrative data

Name of the programme:	Behavioural and Social Sciences (research)
CROHO number:	60654
Level of the programme:	Master of science
Orientation of the programme:	Academic
Study load:	120 EC
Location:	Groningen
Variant:	Full-time
Specialisation:	Clinical Neuropsychology; Clinical Psychology and Experimental Psychopathology; Pedagogical and Educational Sciences; Developmental Psychology; Sociology; Environmental Psychology; Organizational Psychology; Social Psychology; Psychometrics and Statistics
Expiration of accreditation:	1 November 2021

1.2 Introduction

This report focuses on the assessment of the research master's programme Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen (RUG). This assessment forms part of a cluster assessment of thirteen research master 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 research master's programme Behavioural and Social Sciences consisted of the following members:

- 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 Methods, 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. Detlev Leutner, Professor of Instructional Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Duisburg-Essen;
- Hanne Oberman, MSc (student member). Methodology and Statistics for the Behavioural, Biomedical, and Social Sciences, Utrecht University (graduated in 2020).

The panel was supported by dr. Annemarie Venemans-Jellema, who acted as secretary.

All panel members and the secretary have signed a declaration of independence and confidentiality. In this declaration they affirm 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 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) and topics.

The panel members individually formulated their preliminary findings and a number of questions they want 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 24 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 preliminary 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, the 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 Research Master in Behavioural and Social Sciences (BSS) of the University of Groningen (RUG) is embedded in the Graduate School of Behavioural and Social Sciences (GSBSS). GSBSS is part of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences (FBSS).

The programme aims to prepare students to become independent, critically reflective researchers, who have effective collaboration skills. The programme offers a combination of training in multidisciplinary theorising and research, and the opportunity to specialise within a specific discipline. The programme is centred around three themes: ‘Deficits, Distress, and Disorders’ (DDD), ‘Lifespan Development and Socialization’ (LDS), and ‘Understanding Societal Change’ (USC). Each theme is associated with a few disciplines such as pedagogical and educational sciences, psychology or sociology. The associated disciplines determine the multidisciplinary perspectives taken on the theme and the options the students have to specialise. Students select a theme upon entering the programme.

The programme has compared itself to other research master’s programmes in the field of social and behavioural sciences. According to the self-evaluation report, BSS distinguishes itself by offering a programme that trains specialists in a multidisciplinary context. In addition, the programme includes a broad range of disciplines. According to the panel, this broad, multidisciplinary research master is unique in the Netherlands.

BSS formulated intended learning outcomes in line with the Dublin descriptors. The panel verified the relationship between the intended learning outcomes and the Dublin descriptors. It observed that all Dublin descriptors are evident in the intended learning outcomes. The panel is of the opinion that the intended learning outcomes are clearly of an academic nature and level, corresponding with general, internationally accepted descriptions of a master’s programme with an academic research orientation. As multidisciplinary is fundamental in the aim of the programme, the panel would have expected to see this aspect better reflected in the learning outcomes. It encourages the programme evaluating and eventually rephrasing its intended learning outcomes to better reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the programme.

The panel welcomes the programme not only educates students for academic careers, but also for society at large as scientist practitioners. Students in the DDD theme can do a clinical traineeship that fulfils one of the requirements for entering a postdoctoral clinical training programme. As evidence-based clinical practice is much needed, the panel applauds the intentions of the programme management to help to fill this gap and to add to the advancement of the clinical practice in the Netherlands while training students with strong research skills.



Conclusion

The panel concludes that BSS is a unique programme with a combination of multidisciplinary and specialisation. The intended learning outcomes correspond to the academic master's requirements with a research orientation. 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 BSS is a full-time programme of 120 EC, divided into four semesters. The curriculum consists of five elements, a) courses in theory and training in multidisciplinary perspectives, b) specialisation courses, c) science courses, d) statistics and methodology courses, e) courses in research experience and professional development. A complete outline of the curriculum can be found in Appendix E.

Courses in theory and training in multidisciplinary perspectives consist of theme courses and the course 'Multidisciplinary Research in Action' (5 EC). At the beginning of the programme, students choose one of the three themes. The compulsory theme courses (15 EC) include both specialisation-based and multidisciplinary perspectives. In these courses, the similarities and essential differences in theories, concepts and perspectives between the disciplines associated with the theme are extensively highlighted and discussed. All students attend the second-year course 'Multidisciplinary Research in Action', in which students learn when and how to incorporate a multi-disciplinary approach in their research projects.

Specialisation courses (20 EC) allow for further specialisation in the theme-related specialisations. These elective courses are from the electives pool offered by the programme or incidentally from another research master programme. Some courses make use of some lectures of a course of a one-year master's programme, but still have a substantial part dedicated to research master's students only.

The curriculum consists of several courses on science, statistics, and methodology. In the science courses 'How to theorize' (2.5 EC) and 'Reflecting on Science and Integrity' (7.5 EC) students learn to think critically and to reflect upon methodological, philosophical, social and historical aspects of science. Statistical and methodology courses (22.5 EC) give students a profound basis in various statistical methods, including computer skills and the ability to sensibly use statistics to solve empirical research problems.

The major part of the fifth element of the curriculum includes the traineeship (10 EC) and the master thesis (30 EC). In addition, students are required to participate in research seminars (2.5 EC). During the traineeship, students join an ongoing research project, in which they focus on one or two parts of the research cycle. The master thesis (30 EC) involves carrying out a standalone research project, following the entire research cycle. The research proposal for this research project is written during the course 'How to write an effective research proposal' (5 EC).



For students from the DDD theme it is possible to arrange a clinical traineeship (20 EC). The clinical traineeship is one of the requirements to qualify for a postdoctoral clinical training programme. For students specialising in Clinical Psychology, it is mandatory to also have completed the theme course 'Clinical Interventions and E-health for Adults and Youth'. For students specialising in Clinical Neuropsychology, it is mandatory to have completed the theme course 'Neuropsychological Assessment'. 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 quality of mental health care can benefit from this clinical track.

The panel considers the curriculum to be an appropriate reflection of the intended learning outcomes of the programme, comprising theoretical and methodological knowledge and skills as well as academic and research skills. The panel welcomes the theme structure of the curriculum, because this allows students to work in small groups in their field of interest, offering them a solid basis in the behavioural and social sciences domain.

The panel appreciates the mix of multidisciplinary and specialisation. The previous accreditation panel recommended to further strengthen the multidisciplinary character of the programme, because there was too much focus on five disciplinary specialisations. The current panel is of the opinion that the multidisciplinary profile of the programme is reflected very adequately in the curriculum, as may be seen from the themes and the course 'Multidisciplinary Research in Action'. The panel believes that the electives allow students to adapt the programme to their personal interest or ambitions. It was pleased that the electives were tailored at research master's level.

The panel welcomes the different methodologies being addressed in the curriculum and feels students are acquainted with a wide variety of research techniques. The research-component of the programme is considered to be well-designed and strongly represented in the curriculum. The panel appreciates the attention to ethics given in the programme. During the online visit, the programme management explained that in all theoretical courses ethical issues are discussed, but it is explicitly covered in the course 'Reflecting on Science and Integrity'. In addition, all thesis projects have to acquire ethical approval and students were encouraged to fulfil integrity issues like pre-registration.

As a special feature of the curriculum the panel regards the research assistantship in a project of choice, offered to all first-year students. The aims of the assistantships are to facilitate the students' embedding in a research group and to let the students gain practical experience in research methodologies, measures, and collaboration. The panel welcomes the offer to students to work as a research assistant. This opens the opportunity for a paid participation in an ongoing research project while being trained at the same time.

The language of instruction of the programme is English. The programme management substantiates its choice by arguing that research takes place in an international context, most scientific literature is available in English only, many students will pursue a career in an internationally oriented environment, and a substantial part of students and staff is international. The panel endorses this.

The didactical principle of the programme is based on the fact that students function as self-directed learners who achieve the learning outcomes in a manner that fits their individual learning needs. The panel established that the BSS programme offers plenty of opportunities for students to meet their personal interests and needs.



Admission and intake

The criteria for applicants to be admitted to the programme are a bachelor degree in psychology, sociology, pedagogical or educational sciences, or a related field, above-average grades, good command of English, and an attitude, motivation, and talent fitting the programme.

The number of students enrolling in the programme ranges from 19 to 29 students per year in the years from 2015 to 2020. A substantial number of students come from abroad. At the moment, the percentage of students coming from countries outside of the Netherlands is 65%. There is a large difference between the student intake per theme, in 2020 three students enrolled in the DDD theme, eight students in the LDS theme and fifteen students in the USC theme.

The panel is positive about the sophisticated admission procedure, which carefully looks for a good match between prospective students and programme. It has become evident to the panel that a small size per theme provides challenges for the quality of the programme. Students reported that they sometimes have seminars with a group of three students. In the opinion of the panel this seriously threatens the depth of discussion and the variety in arguments and discussion points that will be uttered. Also, presentations of group assignments will receive a limited variety of feedback in this way. According to the panel, public relations and marketing is key in ensuring the viability of the programme. It urges the programme to undertake strong efforts to increase the inflow of students, both nationally and internationally.

Staff

The programme is taught by scientific staff members, who are tenured at the level of assistant, associate or full professor and affiliated at one of three research institutes of the faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences: The Heymans Institute for Psychological Research, The Nieuwenhuis Institute for Educational Research, and The Groningen Centre for Social Science Research. Their research was evaluated by an international review board of senior scholars according to the guidelines of the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021 (SEP). All institutes scored very good to excellent on all the assessment points. All teachers have the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) (89%) or are in training for it (11%).

The panel recognises the staff's scientific quality, international academic reputation and teaching experience. It highly appreciates the commitment and the availability of staff members. The panel was impressed by the quantity and quality of the research performed by the institutes. Their main areas of research indicate that the scientific staff has sufficient expertise to execute the full programme.

According to the student chapter of the self-evaluation report, students appreciate the possibility to closely interact with high quality teachers (experts in their field) during small group classes. It is valued that teachers employ an "open door policy", by encouraging students to contact them any time. The panel applauds this highly interactive learning and tutoring environment with a great deal of attention for the student's individual needs, performances, and development.

The panel noted that in the past years there has been a strong focus in building the three themes, leading to strong communities within the themes amongst staff and also amongst students, but not so much between the themes. The panel encourages the programme management to proactively build an overarching programme community.



Study load and study guidance/mentoring

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 demanding, partly because of the unbalance between having mainly course work in the first year and mainly individual research projects in the second year of the programme. One student mentioned during the visit that there is no time for reading anymore, because of all writing assignments during courses. Students who wrote the student chapter of the self-evaluation report confirmed this. These students expressed the concern that a focus on grades fostered by weekly graded assignments diminishes intrinsic motivation and increases pressure on students. The panel agrees with students that a reduction of graded assignments would benefit the learning experience, motivation, and mental health of students. It appreciates the measures the programme management already took to increase the balance between both years by moving the default period for the traineeship to year 1 and some courses to year 2, but suggests to pay more attention to a switch from summative towards more formative evaluations.

The students value the guidance that is offered to them by both the academic advisor and mentor. The academic advisor invites each student twice during their first year and once during their second year to discuss personal study plans. Further, students can contact the academic advisor when needed. The mentor is a staff member with whom students discuss study experiences, specialisation-oriented issues, and career perspectives.

The programme is designed to be completed in two years. On average, 68% of students graduate within this time period. The academic advisor monitors the progress of every individual student and discusses how to prevent or reduce delays. The panel noted that the proportion of students graduating in two-years seems to decrease from 2015 to 2018. It advises to keep monitoring the students' progress closely.

COVID-19

Due to COVID-19 almost all education of the programme 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 students and teachers, students mentioned that due to the small-scale teaching there was still a lot of social interaction and discussion possible. In addition, the programme started several activities to stimulate the community building, for example a buddy system where first-year students are matched with a second-year student and online coffee meetings.

The panel concluded that although the COVID-19 situation is not an optimal teaching and learning situation, the programme still allows students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. It suggests the programme to explore what measures might be kept after COVID-19.

Conclusion

Summing up, the panel considers the teaching and learning environment of the programme to be strong. 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 procedure and criteria of course assessments, the assessment methods and alignment of intended learning outcomes and assessment modes are part of the assessment plan. This assessment plan complies with the assessment policy of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences (FBSS) and the general assessment policy of the RUG. The panel studied the assessment plan and established that the relation between the intended learning outcomes, the course objectives, and the assessment is well thought out. To measure the intended learning outcomes, the programme uses a variety of assessment methods such as exams, individual and group assignments, in-class discussion sessions, oral presentations, poster presentations, and written reports.

According to the self-evaluation report, the assessment procedures of individual courses are transparent, meaning that students know in advance which assessment instrument(s) are used, and how they are weighted. The panel verified that students are well-informed about the type of assessment and grading criteria before the start of each course.

As already mentioned in standard 2, the panel noted that the programme makes use of weekly summative assignments, leading to extrinsically instead of intrinsically motivated learning. Although the programme also makes use of formative assessment, this is not formalised. The panel is of the opinion that formative assessment really fits with the programme's principle that students function as self-directed learners. It encourages the programme to further implement formative assessment and critically reflect on the number of summative assignments.

Grading of the theses

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 first assessor is the supervisor. The second assessor, who is appointed by the GSBS, is from the same theme as the first assessor, but has a different specialisation. Each assessor fills in an individual assessment form. Based on recommendations made by the previous accreditation panel, the programme created a new assessment form with rubrics. Together, the assessors integrate their separate assessments into one assessment form, including a clear motivation of the grade. If there is disagreement about the grade between first and second assessor a third examiner is involved.

The panel is of the opinion that the thesis assessment procedure is highly improved. It is pleased with the newly implemented assessment form that gives clear information about the assessment criteria and the determination of the grade. Based on the completed assessment forms the panel studied, it established that the quality and quantity of written feedback given by the supervisor and second assessor varied. It encourages the programme to stimulate assessors generating adequate written feedback in addition to mere tick-box scoring. Moreover, the panel thinks the independency of the procedure can be further improved. Due to the close connections within a theme, it is challenging to guarantee the independence of the two assessors. The panel recommends appointing a second assessor from a different theme instead of someone from the same theme, assuring the



independency between the graders. In addition, the panel recommends appointing a third examiner in case of discrepancy in grades between the first and second assessor of one point or more instead of only in case of disagreement.

Board of Examiners

The research master's programme has its own Board of Examiners (BoE). With respect to assessment, the BoE evaluates the assessment plan in relation to the realisation of the learning outcomes, appoints the responsible examiners for implementing the different parts of the assessment of courses, supervises the utilised assessment methods in relation to the assessment plan, and carries out periodically and general evaluations of the assessments.

The previous panel noted that there was a tendency to award relatively high grades and many cum laudes. Currently, the percentage of cum laudes is 45% and summa cum laude 10%. The BoE takes a proactive role in safeguarding grade inflation, for example by a yearly reassessment of ten master theses.

The panel reviewed the activities of the BoE and established that the BoE not only carries out its formal tasks, but also has a visionary and pro-active approach with regard to identifying and solving potential problems. For example, the panel is positive about the proactive role the BoE takes in preventing grade inflation and having attention for the number of cum laudes. It encourages the BoE to keep monitoring this. One issue here that could be explored is whether a score of '8' is just covering 'good', as explained in the thesis assessment form. Semantics could partly explain the inflation issue.

The BoE accidentally meets with BoE's of other programmes, but there are no structural meetings. As this BoE is relatively small, the panel suggests meeting with other BoE's on regular basis to share experiences.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme has an effective assessment system in place and a proactive BoE. It therefore meets standard 3.

2.4 Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings, analysis and considerations

The panel reviewed fifteen master theses of the programme. It considers the theses generally to be very good. The theses are the result of an empirical study, have a clear academic style, a proper methodical section, and a critical discussion of results. The panel agrees with all grades and would have given the same marks, deviating maximally by 0.5 only, sometimes giving a slightly higher or slightly lower grade than the two original assessors. In the opinion of the panel, a number of theses are suitable for publication. The panel noted a substantial number of theses actually having been submitted to academic scientific journals.



The majority of alumni have found positions as PhD student (66%) or another research jobs (8%). Another 21% continues in a professional career. For 5%, the position after graduation is unknown. The faculty provides funding for (about) five four-year PhD positions each year, specifically for this research master's programme. Each year, about fifteen students take the opportunity to apply. The panel senses no urgent issues among students with regard to competition for these positions.

The panel is positive about the career chances of the graduates of the programme. Although there is much competition for jobs and a restricted number of PhD positions available, most graduates find good labour market positions. As one third end up in non-academic functions, the panel advises to pay more attention to career paths outside academia for example by career talks with alumni and career markets. The panel also encourages the programme to strengthen the ties with alumni by inviting them as guest lecturers.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the students reach a high level of achievement and are very well prepared for a career in research in the behavioural and social sciences.



3. Strengths and recommendations

3.1 Strengths of the programme

The panel is impressed by the following features:

- Curriculum structure – The programme has a theme structure as well as elective courses, which gives students ample opportunity to tailor the programme to their own interests;
- Research basis – The programme has a well-designed research-component including an opportunity to work as a research assistant;
- Teaching team – The teaching staff is dedicated and well-qualified. Staff members are experts in their respective areas, bringing in the latest developments in their field.
- High quality end products – The overall academic quality of the studied theses is very high.

3.2 Recommendations

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

- Multidisciplinary approach – Rephrase the intended learning outcomes to better reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the programme;
- Student inflow – Increase the student inflow to assure a sufficient student number in all themes;
- Community – Strengthen the research community on programme level encompassing the three themes;
- Assignments – Have a critical look at the number of summative assignments and further implement formative assessment;
- Independency – Ensure the independency of the second assessor of the master thesis and consider involving an independent second grader from a different theme.



4. Conclusion

The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes put a strong emphasis on the development of research skills, which clearly distinguishes this programme from a regular master's programme. The curriculum is carefully designed and gives students ample opportunity to tailor the programme to their own interests. The programme has a well-developed and innovative vision on assessment, which is carefully translated into policy and successfully implemented in daily practice. According to the panel, students achieve the intended learning outcomes for the research master.

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 Ruiters (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 School and Developmental Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven.

The cluster is composed 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 and 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

24 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	Examination board
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 report of the previous accreditation
 - Appendix 2A. Revision matrix after revision period (2017-2020)
 - Appendix 2B. Revision matrix from revision period 2015-2017
 - Appendix 3. Overview of the current curriculum
 - Appendix 4. Learning outcomes of the programme
 - Appendix 5. Adjustments in view of the corona pandemic
 - Appendix 6. Teaching and examination regulations
 - Appendix 7. Inflow and flow figures for the last period considered (2015-2020)
 - Appendix 8. Overview of staff involved in the programme
- Selection of fifteen theses
- Report research review Psychology 2017
- Report research review Pedagogical Sciences and Educational Sciences 2017
- Report research review Sociology 2018



Appendix D – Abbreviations

BoE	Board of Examiners
BSS	programme of Behavioural and Social Sciences
DDD	Deficits, Distress, and Disorders
EC	European Credit
FBSS	Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences
GSBSS	Graduate School of Behavioural and Social Sciences
LDS	Lifespan Development and Socialisation
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
RUG	University of Groningen
SEP	Standard Evaluation Protocol
STQ	Senior University Teaching Qualification
USC	Understanding Societal Change
UTQ	University Teaching Qualification



Appendix E – Overview of the curriculum

Component	Year 1		Year 2	
	First semester	Second semester	First semester	Second semester
Theory and training in multidisciplinary perspectives	Theme courses (15 EC)		Multidisciplinary research in action (5 EC)	
Specialisation	Specialisation courses (10-20 EC total)			
Science courses	How to theorize (2.5 EC)		Reflecting on Science and Integrity (7.5 EC)	
Statistics & methodology courses	Advanced statistics (7.5 EC)	Applied statistics (10 EC)		
	Elective Statistics & methodology course (5 EC total)			
Research experience and professional development		(Clinical) Traineeship ((20) – 10 EC)	How to write an effective research proposal (5 EC)	Master's thesis, possibly including course 'Writing in English' (30 EC)
	Seminars (including Systematic review and meta-analysis workshop) (2.5 EC)			

