MASTER'S PROGRAMME MEDIA STUDIES

ERASMUS SCHOOL OF HISTORY, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM

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This report was finalised on 12 August 2019.



REPORT ON THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME MEDIA STUDIES OF ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for Limited Programme Assessments as a starting point (September 2016).

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

Master's programme Media Studies

Name of the programme: Mediastudies
International name of the programme: Media Studies

CROHO number: 60830
Level of the programme: master's
Orientation of the programme: academic
Number of credits: 60 EC

Specialisations or tracks: Media & Business (M&B)

Media & Creative Industries (MCI) Media, Culture & Society (MCS) Media & Journalistiek (M&J)

Location: Rotterdam

Modes of study: full time, part time
Language of instruction: Dutch, English
Expiration of accreditation: 29/06/2020

The visit of the assessment panel Communication- and Information Sciences & Media Studies to the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication of Erasmus University Rotterdam took place on 11 and 12 April 2019. The judgements in this report refer to the full time and part time modes of study, unless otherwise indicated.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

Name of the institution: Erasmus University Rotterdam Status of the institution: publicly funded institution

Result institutional quality assurance assessment: positive

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The NVAO has approved the composition of the panel on 20 August 2018. The panel that assessed the master's programme Media Studies consisted of:

- Prof. dr. D. (Daniël) Biltereyst, professor of Film and Media Studies at Ghent University and director of the Center for Cinema and Media Studies [chair];
- Em. prof. dr. P.C. (Peter) Neijens, emeritus professor Media and Persuasion at the University of Amsterdam;
- Prof. dr. (Steve) Paulussen, associate professor Media and Journalism at the University of Antwerp;
- Dr. M. (Mir) Wermuth, founder and owner of Blinkering, an organisation for programme management in the creative industries;
- Ms. B. (Biba) Becker, bachelor's student Online Culture at Tilburg University [student member].

The panel was supported by drs. Linda te Marvelde, who acted as secretary.



WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The site visit to the master's programme Media Studies at the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication of Erasmus University Rotterdam was part of the cluster assessment Communication and Information Sciences & Media Studies. Between October 2018 and May 2019 the panel assessed 23 programmes at 9 universities. The following universities participated in this cluster assessment: Erasmus University Rotterdam, Maastricht University, Radboud University, University of Groningen, Tilburg University, University of Amsterdam, Leiden University, Utrecht University, and VU Amsterdam.

On behalf of the participating universities, quality assurance agency QANU was responsible for logistical support, panel guidance and the production of this report. Dr. Irene Conradie was project coordinator for QANU. She also acted as secretary in the cluster assessment at Leiden University and University of Amsterdam. The remaining assessments of the cluster were guided by independent NVAO-certified secretaries. Drs. Renate Prenen acted as secretary in the cluster assessment at Maastricht University, Radboud University, University of Groningen, and VU Amsterdam. Drs. Linda te Marvelde acted as secretary in the cluster assessment at Erasmus University Rotterdam, Tilburg University, and Utrecht University.

During the site visit at Erasmus University Rotterdam, the panel was supported by drs. Linda te Marvelde, a certified NVAO secretary.

Panel members

The members of the assessment panel were selected based on their expertise, availability and independence. The panel consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. D. (Daniël) Biltereyst, professor of Film and Media Studies at Ghent University and director of the Center for Cinema and Media Studies [chair];
- Em. prof. Dr. C.J.M. (Carel) Jansen, emeritus professor of Communication and Information Sciences at University of Groningen [chair];
- Em. prof. Dr. P.C. (Peter) Neijens, emeritus professor of Media and Persuasion at the University of Amsterdam;
- Em. prof. dr. J.L.H. (Jo) Bardoel, emeritus professor of Communication Science at Radboud University;
- Prof. dr. W. (Wilco) Hazeleger, director/CEO of the Netherlands eScience Center (NLeSC);
- Prof. dr. O.M. (Odile) Heynders, professor of Comparative Literature at Tilburg University;
- Prof. dr. J.C. (Jaap) de Jong, professor of Journalism and New Media and chairman of the Media Studies programme at Leiden University;
- Prof. dr. G. (Geert) Jacobs, professor of Language for Specific Purposes and head of the Linguistics Department of Ghent University;
- Dr. J. (Joyce) Karreman, assistant professor at the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social sciences (BMS) at University of Twente;
- Drs. J. (Judith) Mulder, co-founder and director of FirMM Information + Service Design;
- Drs. M. (Maike) Olij, freelance media consultant and concept developer;
- Prof. Dr. S. (Steve) Paulussen, professor of Media and Journalism at University of Antwerp;
- Prof. Dr. P.P.R.W. (Patricia) Pisters, professor of Film Studies and Media Studies at University of Amsterdam;
- Dr. B. (Bert) Pol, founder and managing partner at Tabula Rasa, an organisation specialised in behaviour change and communication;
- Dr. E.M.C. (Els) van der Pool, assistant professor of Human Communication Development at HAN University of Applied Sciences;
- Dr. M. (Mir) Wermuth, founder and owner of Blinkering, an organisation for programme management in the creative industry;
- Drs. G. (Gaby) Wijers, founder and director at LIMA, an international platform for sustainable access to media art;



- Ms. M. (Monique) Kloosterman, BA, master's student Communication Science at University of Groningen [student member];
- Ms. A.C.M.F. (Aimée) Overhof, BA, recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in Online Culture at Tilburg University [student member];
- Ms. B.D.H. (Biba) Becker, bachelor's student Online Culture at Tilburg University [student member].

Preparation

On 20 August 2018, the (vice) panel chairs (prof. dr. Daniël Biltereyst, em. prof. dr. Carel Jansen, em. prof. dr. Peter Neijens) were briefed by QANU on their role, the assessment framework, the working method, and the planning of site visits and reports. A preparatory panel meeting was organised on the same day. During this meeting, the panel members were instructed in the use of the assessment framework as well as the principle that the panel operates on the basis of trust and conducts an assessment by peers. The panel discussed its working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

The project coordinator composed a schedule for the site visit to Erasmus University Rotterdam in consultation with the Faculty. Prior to the site visit, the Faculty selected representative partners for the various interviews. See Appendix 3 for the final schedule.

Before the site visit to Erasmus University Rotterdam, QANU received the self-evaluation report of the programme and sent it to the panel. A thesis selection was made by the panel's chair and the project coordinator. The selection consisted of fifteen theses and their assessment forms for the programme, based on a provided list of graduates from 2017-2018. A variety of topics, tracks and examiners were included in the selection. The project coordinator and panel chair ensured that the distribution of grades in the selection matched the distribution of grades of all available theses.

After studying the self-evaluation report, theses and assessment forms, the panel members formulated their preliminary findings. The secretary collected all of the initial questions and remarks and distributed them among the panel members.

At the start of the site visit, the panel discussed its initial findings on the self-evaluation report and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit.

Site visit

The site visit to Erasmus University Rotterdam took place on 11 and 12 April 2019. Before and during the site visit, the panel studied the additional documents provided by the programme. An overview of these materials can be found in Appendix 4. It conducted interviews with representatives of the programme: students and staff members (including representatives of the Programme Committee), the programme's management, alumni, representatives of the Examination Board, and the admissions and recruitment officer.

The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the chair publicly presented the panel's preliminary findings and general observations.

Report

After the site visit, the secretary prepared a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to the project coordinator for peer assessment. Subsequently, she sent the report to the panel. After processing the panel members' feedback, the project coordinator forwarded the draft report to the Faculty for checking for factual irregularities. The project coordinator discussed the ensuing comments with the panel's chair, and changes were implemented accordingly. The report was then finalised and sent to the Faculty and University Board.

Consistency and calibration

In order to ensure the consistency of the assessment within the cluster, various measures were taken:

- 1. The panel composition ensured regular attendance of key panel members, including the chair;
- 2. The coordinator was present at the panel discussion leading to the preliminary findings at all site visits:
- 3. Calibration meetings took place on 13 February 2019 and 28 May 2019. During these meetings, the panel chairs (with the exception of em. prof. dr. Carel Jansen on 13 February 2019 due to unforeseen family circumstances), vice chairs, and QANU coordinator discussed the working method and the assessments.

Definition of judgement standards

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments, the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of both the standards and the programme as a whole.

Generic quality

The quality that, in an international perspective, may reasonably be expected from a higher education Associate Degree, Bachelor's or Master's programme.

Unsatisfactory

The programme does not meet the generic quality standard and shows shortcomings with respect to multiple aspects of the standard.

Satisfactory

The programme meets the generic quality standard across its entire spectrum.

Good

The programme systematically surpasses the generic quality standard.

Excellent

The programme systematically well surpasses the generic quality standard and is regarded as an international example.



SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

Intended learning outcomes

The master's programme Media Studies focuses on organisational, political, strategic, and business aspects of media and its position at the crossroads of social sciences and humanities. The programme offers four specialisations that have their own profiles: Media & Business; Media & Creative Industries; Media, Culture & Society; and *Media & Journalistiek*. The last specialisation is offered in Dutch, all of the others are English-taught. The panel values the distinct profile of the programme, with its international and intercultural outlook and its explicit connection to the professional field being important and recognisable elements. It appreciates the programme's explicit choices and constant efforts to connect with the field and organisations it is part of and serves. The four specialisations represent interesting and relevant focus areas. They have a logical connection to each other but are distinctive as well. The panel suggests that the profiles could benefit from 'sharper' descriptions to better reflect their main foci and distinction.

The intended learning outcomes (ILOs) are appropriate for an academic master's programme in Media Studies. They properly reflect the national and international requirements of the professional field, discipline and the Dublin descriptors at the master's level. They properly clarify what is expected from the programme's graduates in terms of knowledge and skills.

Teaching-learning environment

The panel concludes that the programme and staff constitute a coherent teaching-learning environment for the students that enables them to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The programme has a clear vision of what it wants to be: a broad, international programme that offers small-scale teaching and a close connection to the current research of its academic staff. This outlook provides the programme with a clear compass on which it bases its choices. The focal points of the four specialisations match the expertise and research interests of the teaching staff. The specialisations provide a broad palette of themes and perspectives, which is fitting for the diverse and fast-changing field of media studies.

The programme manages to attract bright and highly motivated students who are satisfied with their programme and find interesting jobs after graduation. Policies are in place to deal with the heterogeneity of the students. The programme strikes an excellent balance between academia and the professional field/workplace. Small-scale teaching, interculturalism, and internationalism are leading principles that are easily identified in the organisation and execution of the programme. The academic staff are knowledgeable, highly motivated and approachable. The students are very appreciative of them. The programme will need to show flexibility to deal with a changing environment and faces the challenge of maintaining a healthy workload for all staff members. Education is taken very seriously as an important part of an academic's career, and lecturers receive adequate support and professionalisation opportunities.

Assessment

The programme has a system of assessment in place that is properly supported by the overall quality culture that the panel encountered during the site visit. It applies multiple and diverse assessment methods per course. The course assessments are of a satisfactory level and support the students' learning process. The panel finds that students are generally supplied with good quality, helpful and comprehensive oral and written feedback.

Students write many papers in the courses, which seems to prepare them well for the thesis. The grading is fair and based on detailed argumentation. The programme has processes in place to safeguard the quality of assessments.

The panel has some points of special attention with regard to assessments. The programme has an informal structure that places trust in its lecturers, who are high-quality professionals. In order to strengthen the formal structure, the panel recommends applying a peer-review principle as much as

possible in the process of test construction. Also, it finds that the programme must archive the thesis assessment forms of the supervisor, second reader, and final form. It is positive about the Second Reader Panel (SRP), which is appointed by the Examination Board (EB) and plays a central role in monitoring the quality and reliability of the thesis assessment. The SRP provides a good opportunity for calibration. However, the panel encourages the SRP to review its working practices. By reflecting on its own methods, the SRP might be able to evaluate the outcome from its meetings and reconsider its method, for instance to allow for calibration combined with discussions that benefit all examiners.

The EB has a faculty-wide responsibility and operates at a distance. The panel finds it encouraging that the EB samples courses each year, but recommends that the EB also pro-actively sample theses each year as it reports on planning to do as of the next academic year.

Achieved learning outcomes

The panel concludes that graduates achieve the intended learning outcomes. The theses show that the students are able to properly conduct independent research projects that are methodologically sound, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The level shown in the theses is generally high, in some cases leading to publications in peer-reviewed journals. Most theses are eloquently written and show the students' ability to switch between theoretical frameworks and practical implications. The alumni are very satisfied with the programme as a preparation for their further career. The panel finds that their attitude, way of thinking, and the positions they hold are a testament to the high quality of the programme. They function as ambassadors of the programme and find employment in work fields related to media studies.

The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment framework for limited programme* assessments in the following way:

Master's programme Media Studies

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes satisfactory
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment good
Standard 3: Assessment satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes good

General conclusion good

The chair, prof. dr. Daniël Biltereyst, and the secretary, drs. Linda te Marvelde, of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in it. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 12 August 2019

DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR LIMITED PROGRAMME ASSESSMENTS

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 notion that media, telecommunications, computer networks, and the cultural and entertainment industry increasingly shape social, political, cultural and economic exchanges lies at the core of the master's programme Media Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam. The rise of mediated forms of communication and culture has significantly changed international relations, the public sphere, business, and daily life, including the way we communicate with each other, both privately and publicly. As a result, our mediated societies have developed a need for academically trained media professionals who understand, address, and solve the complex problems and changes within the world of media and society at large.

The master's programme Media Studies focuses on organisational, political, strategic, and business aspects of media and its position at the crossroads of social sciences and humanities. It pays specific attention to international and cultural aspects of communication, and to the so-called creative or cultural industries. The programme offers four specialisations that have their own profiles: Media & Business; Media & Creative Industries; Media, Culture & Society; and Media & Journalistiek. The last specialisation is offered in Dutch, all of the others are English-taught. The programme reckons that its specific profile enriches and strengthens the domain of media and communication, whilst seeking alignment with the university's profile. The panel appreciates that the programme has a distinct overarching profile by choosing a unique focus in the Dutch landscape of Communication and Information Sciences and Media Studies, the visitation cluster to which this master's programme belongs. The study of language and linguistic aspects of communication (traditional foci of Communication and Information Sciences) understandably receives limited attention in the programme. The panel also appreciates the different specialisations, which have their own distinct profiles, but notes that they could benefit from even clearer profile descriptions to really set them apart from each other. For example, it finds that the difference between the relatively new Englishlanguage specialisation Media & Creative Industries on the one hand, and the Media & Business and Media, Culture & Society specialisations on the other hand could be clearer. In addition, it feels that the Media & Creative Industries profile description is open to multiple interpretations. The specialisation could concern the relation between media and other creative industries (e.g. fashion, architecture, design), or it could concern the role of creative industries and the added value of creativity in general.

The programme aims to train students to become critical and versatile professionals. They learn to apply their academic knowledge and skills to issues with which media and other managers, policy makers, marketeers, educators, programme makers, politicians, NGOs, journalists, editors, and other professionals related to the media sector are confronted. After completion of the programme, graduates should be able to make independent contributions to the academic study of the media and communication sector and the uses and impact of media in society. They are able to analyse complex organisational, political, and social issues and know how to apply the insights gained in management, policy, and communication positions within and outside the media and communication sector.

The aims of the programme are translated into seven generic intended learning outcomes (ILOs) that are applicable to all four specialisations. The ILOs are inspired by the Dublin descriptors and connected to the domain-specific framework of reference for Communication and Information Sciences and Media Studies (2012). In addition, the programme seeks alignment with national and international standards through the active participation of staff in the Netherlands Flanders Communication Association (NeFCA) and the national Research School for Media Studies (RMeS),



and by adhering to the general standards, guidelines and ethical principles developed by leading international scholarly associations in the field, notably the International Communication Association. A Professional Advisory Committee (PAC), established in 2017, provides valuable advice about the content and positioning of the programme from the perspective of the local and international labour market and society.

Considerations

The panel values the distinct profile of the programme, with its international and intercultural outlook and its explicit connection to the professional field being important and recognisable elements. It appreciates the programme's explicit choices and constant efforts to connect with the field and organisations it is a part of and serves. The four specialisations represent interesting and relevant focus areas. They have a logical connection to each other but are distinctive as well. The panel suggests that the profiles could benefit from 'sharper' descriptions to better reflect their main foci and distinction.

The ILOs are appropriate for an academic master's programme in Media Studies. They properly reflect the national and international requirements of the professional field, discipline and the Dublin descriptors at the master's level. They properly clarify what is expected from the programme's graduates in terms of knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

Master's programme Media Studies: the panel assesses Standard 1 as 'satisfactory'.

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 programme is offered in full-time and part-time mode. No special provisions are in place for the part-time programme. The findings of the panel therefore apply to both modes of study. A schematic overview of the programme, including a brief description of the curricula, is available in Appendix 2.

General impression of the programme

The ILOs are translated into concrete learning outcomes per course which are included in the course descriptions. For each of the specialisations, a matrix has been constructed that shows how the learning outcomes per course are related to the ILOs, showing that all ILOs are addressed in the curricula and thus ensuring that the curricula enable students to achieve them. The panel has reviewed course materials and concludes that they are of high-quality (content) and well-maintained. The choices made with regard to methodological training are well-argued. The programme is properly embedded in academia, whilst finding meaningful connections with the professional field. It offers ample extracurricular opportunities in cooperation with interesting external professional and academic partners. The panel confirmed that the programme has a good and solid reputation internationally in the field of Media Studies. The lecturers involved with the programme are both good researchers and teachers. The panel highly appreciates that teaching is explicitly valued and respected as an important element of the academic staff's career.

The curricula of the different specialisations show consistency and coherence. The panel is impressed with the programme's diligent and active stance towards continuous improvement. The programme actively maintains and supports the coherence and feasibility of the curricula by means of discussions between lecturers and students, systematically checking and reviewing course guides, and annually reviewing all prescribed literature. This should also prevent overlap between courses. In addition, each specialisation has an academic coordinator who is tasked with monitoring (and adjusting) course content and alignment, away days are organised with all staff members, coordination meetings are scheduled, and the programme committee gives advice on matters relating to the quality of the



programme. The panel highly appreciates that the programme has created a quality culture that supports continuous improvement and ensures team spirit. It has heard ample examples of issues (e.g. relating to programming) that have been detected and solved quickly.

Didactic approach

The didactic approach of the programme centres around the active and independent learning of its students. Interactive work in seminars and research workshops are scheduled in the first three terms of the academic year, while the fourth and final term is fully focused on writing the master's thesis. Teaching methods and course formats in all specialisations encourage students to think critically and to generate rather than just acquire knowledge. The learning process and teaching methods facilitate and stimulate both active and cooperative learning. The programme demands attendance and expects active student participation. Teaching is small-scale, intensive and interactive, which is highly appreciated by both students and staff. The panel finds that the programme executes its didactic approach well and manages to create a highly inspirational and productive environment for all its stakeholders.

Students are frequently required to work in teams for presentations, assignments, and projects, under conditions that assure positive interdependence and individual accountability. Group work is encouraged because it contributes to the development of collaborative skills (task-oriented and social) and prepares students for future professional situations. It is the lecturers' role to structure the learning process, guide and evaluate performances, while students are self-directing in processing information within reflective frameworks that they develop during their studies. The students are critical of group work as they are confronted with students from a variety of backgrounds, who have different work ethics and other cultural norms which can lead to frustration. However, they also value group work as an adequate preparation for future professional life.

Curricula

The four specialisations share the same basic structure. The contents of their curricula differ with the exception of two methodology courses and the so-called Master Class that serves as preparation for the thesis. Courses in each specialisation are dedicated to central themes related to its specific focus, thereby preventing overlap in content and ensuring a specific angle or perspective on themes that might be part of multiple specialisations (e.g. 'entrepreneurship').

The programme champions the integral focus on theory, empirical research and the application of knowledge and skills in relevant professional settings. Students are presented with subjects, topics and issues which they have to research and elaborate on. They are required to analyse arguments, judge the credibility of sources, identify the focus of an issue, solve or define problems, apply theories and concepts to real-life cases, answer questions or formulate research questions of their own. They develop and present their commentaries, analyses, reports and statements concerning the studied literature and research assignments on the relevant theme. During class they are expected to actively discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm with fellow students.

The methodology courses (Methods of Media Research I & II) and the Research Workshop provide hands-on training in designing, executing and reporting independently performed academic research. Students increasingly learn to work autonomously and are gradually prepared to design and write their own master's thesis in which they must demonstrate that they are able to contribute to the academic debate on a certain subject, based on their own, original, empirical research. Students reported that the programme is quite 'methods-heavy' and that the methods training can be quite repetitive. The panel learned that the purpose of both methodology courses is to acquaint students with qualitative and quantitative methods in a broad sense as this will equip them with methodological knowledge and skills that they need on the labour market. More in-depth methodology skills can be obtained via the Research Workshop in which students choose a topic in conjunction with a method to familiarise themselves with a particular method. Upon review of the methodology study materials and discussions with students and staff, the panel finds that the form and content of the methodology training are actually well-designed and fitting for a master's

programme that attracts such a heterogeneous influx of students. The techniques offered are deemed fitting for a programme in a humanities faculty.

Students finish their studies with a master's thesis for which they perform individual, original, empirical research with the aim of contributing to the academic debate on a certain subject. The panel is enthusiastic about the Master Thesis Market, at which all potential thesis supervisors and professional organisations are present. The market allows students to gather information about possible thesis projects for which they can apply and/or to pitch their own research ideas to prospective supervisors. It provides an inspirational environment for students to start their thesis process. The thesis coordinator assigns a supervisor to each student based on the thesis subjects which are strongly related to current research that the supervisors are involved in. If students propose an independent research subject, a supervisor is sought who has the expertise to supervise the proposed project. The Master Class supports students at the start of the thesis process, ultimately leading to the thesis proposal. In each specialisation, students can combine their thesis with an internship.

Connection to professional field

The programme prepares students for a broad range of jobs in a variety of contemporary media and communication environments which are partly international in scope and involve working relations with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders with different cultural backgrounds. While it primarily trains students in key academic abilities (analytic, conceptual, inquisitive, evaluating, and critical), it also addresses important career skills: writing and presentation skills, analytical skills to map and solve problems, sensitivity for the positions and ideas of others, collaborative skills, research skills (including applied), creative and strategic thinking, and developing an independent, professional, and critical attitude. In addition, the programme also actively seeks to support students with an orientation to the local and international labour market. Many courses feature applied cases, organise field trips and/or invite guest lecturers from a variety of relevant work fields to discuss current issues and trends in their field and professional practice. Students may also develop their thesis project in collaboration with an external professional organisation, through which they can connect their course work to real-life issues and cases and grow their professional networks.

The panel is impressed by the success of the programme in creating and maintaining a fruitful connection to the dynamic and diverse professional field via curricular and extracurricular activities. The Labour Market Committee of Students' Study Association ACE, the Professional Advisory Committee (PAC), and the programme management organise a variety of extracurricular activities (career days, fieldtrips, workshops, symposia, world cafés, honours projects) in which students can connect with external organisations and learn more about the labour market from alumni and practitioners.

International classroom

Students apply for enrolment in one of the four specialisations. Admission to the programme is granted on the basis of an academic bachelor's degree, provided that the previous programme paid substantial attention to the field of expertise of media and communication and to relevant methods of research. Applicants may be referred to a pre-master's programme. Some students are required to take a crash course in methodology before enrolment. The programme attracts applicants from all over the world. In 2018-2019, around half (53%) of the new students who enrolled in one of the three English-taught programmes represented 35 different nationalities. Almost one-fifth (18%) are non-EEA students. There are no regular cross-overs between the specialisations, students identify mainly with their "own" track.

In the three English-taught specialisations, learning takes place in a multicultural classroom (both students and lecturers), where international and intercultural dimensions receive attention. The programme wishes to continue its Dutch specialisation *Media & Journalistiek* as it finds that it is important to retain a Dutch-language track. This specialisation provides a valuable connection to

influx from Dutch universities of applied sciences (hbo) and prepares students for a career in a Dutchlanguage labour market.

The international classroom and interculturalism are leading principles of the programme. The academic literature, however, is dominated by a western perspective. The programme consciously tries to integrate sources from other parts of the world to counter this, via the experiences and knowledge of its international (non-western) students and staff. It provides different perspectives in showing how media are used in various international settings, thus providing a more rounded perspective on how media operate in these settings. Global cases are also used to learn to generalise local cases.

Staff

Teaching and supervision are mainly provided by experienced lecturers with a PhD degree in the field of communication and media or related fields. The majority of lecturers are active, internationally experienced researchers who contribute to the development of their research field and who include their research in their teaching. With the exception of some specialised lecturers with a part-time appointment, all staff members participate in accredited research schools and/or international associations in the field.

Teaching staff with a fixed or long-term temporary contract have to obtain the University Teaching Qualification (*Basiskwalificatie Onderwijs*, BKO). Experienced lecturers regularly follow refresher courses, for example on the use of the digital learning environment (Canvas) or blended learning. A significant number of lecturers have acquired (or are in the process of acquiring) a Senior University Teaching Qualification (*Seniorkwalificatie Onderwijs*, SKO), which has recently become available in English.

The teaching staff represents a mix of international and Dutch lecturers; 49% of the lecturers hail from outside the Netherlands. An affinity for working with an international group of students is a requirement for any staff member teaching in the master's programme, either by bringing relevant experience or by participating in additional training. The large majority of the teaching staff has relevant international teaching experience, through past appointments at foreign universities or other international programmes, visiting professorships, and other forms of staff exchange.

Students praise the expertise and compassion of the lecturers, whom they describe as knowledgeable, interested, approachable, and available. The quality of feedback and guidance is high. The panel estimates that the small-scale setting and close ties with students mean that lecturers gear a lot of time and energy towards students (creating short lines), which could add to a high workload. However, the lecturers seem content with the culture they have created together with the students and informed the panel that the sense of collegiality and the support provided by management makes the workload feasible. As a basic principle, all academic staff perform research and teach. Lecturers receive a teaching-free term per year. Personal career budgets are available in addition to basic professionalisation opportunities.

Considerations

The programme has a clear vision of what it wants to be: a broad, international programme that offers small-scale teaching and a close connection to the current research of its academic staff. This outlook provides the programme with a clear compass on which it bases its choices. The focal points of the four specialisations match the expertise and research interests of the teaching staff. The specialisations are linked but distinctive and provide a broad palette of themes and perspectives, which is fitting for the diverse and fast-changing field of Media Studies.

The programme manages to attract bright and highly motivated students who are satisfied with their programme and find interesting jobs after graduation. Policies are in place to deal with the heterogeneity of the students. The programme strikes an excellent balance between academia and the professional field/workplace. Small scale-teaching, interculturalism, and internationalism are

leading principles that are easily identified in the organisation and conduct of the programme. The academic staff are knowledgeable, highly motivated and approachable. The students are very appreciative of them. The programme will need to show flexibility to deal with a changing environment and faces the challenge of maintaining a healthy workload for all staff members. Education is taken very seriously as an important part of an academic's career, and lecturers receive adequate support and professionalisation opportunities.

The panel concludes that the programme and staff constitute a coherent teaching-learning environment for the students that enables them to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Master's programme Media Studies: the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'good'.

Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings

The programme adheres to an assessment plan which is based on the faculty's (and university's) Assessment Policy that describes various provisions and measures to promote and monitor the quality of assessment. The assessment plan describes the programme's testing policy, presents an overview of how the intended learning outcomes are linked to the Dublin descriptors and the learning objectives of courses. It also describes how learning objectives are translated into assessment forms. Securing the translation of objectives into more detailed parts of the curriculum is done via three types of matrices: qualifications matrix, test matrix, and assessment matrices. In addition, it gives a concise overview of the types of tests that are used and also contains the testing regulations from the Teaching and Examination Regulations and the quality assurance procedures. Finally, the practical aspects of testing are set out.

Course assessments

The programme aims for the integrative assessment of knowledge, skills and a critical, scientific attitude. Courses combine formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments are performed regularly via several small assignments during the course period involving oral presentations, assignments, papers and active participation in discussions in seminars and workshops. Research or literature papers are often used as a means of summative assessment. Lecturers are responsible for the construction of the assessments. A peer-review principle is not automatically applied. When a course is executed by means of 'team-teaching', there is a chance that a colleague will check an assessment. Lecturers who are solely responsible for a course do not benefit from an extra check. The panel recommends that the peer-review principle be applied as much as possible in the process of test construction.

Continuous and substantial feedback is an important element of the programme's assessment policy. Feedback on intermediate assignments is given within two or three weeks, generally using a categorised grading form. Continuous feedback (informal) is also given during class discussions and via other channels such as email. Feedback and grades for final papers or exams are also given within the three-week period after the end of a course. Students may consult their lecturers at any time for clarification. Feedback by peers and self-assessment are sometimes employed in addition to expert feedback from lecturers.

Thesis assessment

The programme aims to guarantee the quality of the thesis through a uniform system of supervision and an explicit assessment method, which is communicated to the students at the start of the programme. The system is based on three guidelines:



- 1) All lecturers use the same assessment form, which provides an overview for both students and lecturers of the quality criteria on which the thesis is assessed. These quality criteria are explained in the Master Class at the start of the thesis process.
- 2) The programme has a Second Reader Panel (SRP) appointed by the Examination Board. The SRP plays a central role in monitoring the quality and reliability of the thesis assessment. The panel consists of assistant, associate, and full professors and is chaired by the thesis coordinator. The SRP has two roles in the process: 1) all thesis proposals need to be approved by the supervisor and one member of the SRP before students can start the writing process; 2) the SRP is responsible for the final assessment of theses.

All final theses that have been evaluated and approved by the supervisor go to the SRP at the end of June. A second reader assesses the thesis independently, using the assessment form. The SRP subsequently compares the assessments of the supervisor and the second reader to establish the final grade. The SRP appoints an arbitrator and takes a binding decision when: 1) there is doubt about whether a thesis is 'passable' (proposed grade 5-6); 2) the proposed grade is higher than an 8; and/or 3) the proposed grade of the supervisor differs from the second reader by 1 or more points.

3) The programme has specified a number of general criteria from the assessment form to guarantee the quality of the master thesis. The *Writing Guide* and the *Methodological Guidelines* for Thesis Research provide guidelines and criteria for referencing, data collection (e.g. sample size), data analysis, and reporting of data. The criteria are established in close consultation with all supervisors, and consider both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Students are satisfied with the high-quality feedback they receive from lecturers, both for course work and for the thesis. The panel finds that they receive a well-completed assessment form for their thesis that contains qualitative feedback from the supervisor and the second reader. However, the only assessment form available is a final form that can be characterised as a synthesis of the findings of the supervisor and the second reader. Only the final form is archived. There is no paper trail for the individual findings of the supervisor and the second reader, resulting in a process that is not transparent (enough) despite the SRP's role in overseeing the supervisors' and second readers' assessments. The panel therefore recommends that the programme ensure that the assessment forms filled out by the supervisor and the second reader are both archived, in addition to the final form. It also suggests documenting, analysing and annually reporting on the scores of both reviewers and the differences between them.

Quality Assurance and Examination Board

Before the start of an academic term, the programme and academic coordinators inspect draft versions of the course guides and provide feedback to the lecturers. Assessment forms and criteria are reviewed and, if necessary, streamlined to ensure a balanced assessment schedule for students. After the screening process, the course guides are finalised and uploaded to Canvas.

Based on the Assessment Policy, the Examination Board (EB) formulated rules and guidelines concerning testing and assessment in the Assessment Protocol, an overarching document that provides concrete guidelines and tools for the construction, administration, assessment, and archiving of assessments. It also documents the agenda of the EB.

The EB has a faculty-wide responsibility; two of its members are connected to Media Studies. The committee meets every 2-2.5 months. Members have 40 hours per year for their task in the EB, which the panel considers rather low. There is a plagiarism sub-committee whose members have additional hours available. All written assignments and the thesis are handed in via Turnitin; lecturers are meant to inform the EB when plagiarism is detected. The EB mainly concerns itself with regular tasks, such as appointing examiners, dealing with plagiarism, binding study advice, etc.

The EB reported that they sample several courses each year to evaluate the quality of their assessments. Since the EB has a responsibility for all programmes in the faculty, not every programme has its courses reviewed. Last year the EB monitored five master's courses from the entire faculty, none from the programme in Media Studies. New courses are always reviewed by the EB. The EB does not randomly sample theses yet, but reports that it plans to introduce thesis sampling in the next academic year. The panel finds that the EB should sample theses to assess their quality and the quality of their assessment, as this directly touches on one of the prime responsibilities of the EB.

Via the SRP, however, the quality of theses and their assessments are monitored. The panel finds that the SRP provides a good calibration opportunity. However, it was informed that discussions during the SRP meetings that concentrate on individual cases are kept short so as not to influence the third reader. The panel, therefore, questions whether a working practice can be found that contributes (even) more to a collective learning process for everyone involved in the meetings.

The EB and the programme management indicated that the agenda and working methods of the EB are satisfactory and that the EB is in control. The panel finds that the EB seems to operate from a distance and does not have the time to give every programme in the faculty enough attention by proactively monitoring the quality of courses and theses. However, there are procedures in place to ensure that the programme's quality is assured via other means.

Considerations

The programme has a system of assessment in place that is properly supported by the overall quality culture that the panel encountered during the site visit. It applies multiple and diverse assessment methods per course. The course assessments are of a satisfactory level and support the students' learning process. The panel finds that students are generally supplied with good quality, helpful and comprehensive oral and written feedback.

Students write many papers in the courses, which seems to prepare them well for the thesis. The grading is fair and based on detailed argumentation. The programme has processes in place to safeguard the quality of assessments.

The panel has some points of special attention with regard to assessments. The programme has an informal structure that places trust in its lecturers, who are high-quality professionals. In order to strengthen the formal structure, the panel recommends that a peer-review principle be applied as much as possible in the process of test construction. Also, it finds that the programme must archive the thesis assessment forms of the supervisor and second reader, along with the final form. It is positive about the SRP, which provides a good opportunity for calibration. However, it encourages the SRP to review its working practices. By reflecting on its own methods, the SRP might be able to evaluate the outcome from its meetings and reconsider its method, for instance to allow for calibration combined with discussions that benefit all examiners.

The EB has a faculty-wide responsibility and operates at a distance. The panel finds it encouraging that the EB samples courses each year, but recommends that the EB also pro-actively sample theses each year.

Conclusion

Master's programme Media Studies: the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'satisfactory'.



Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

The panel studied a sample of fifteen theses and their assessment forms and had an interview with a number of alumni during the site visit, to determine if the intended learning outcomes are achieved. It found a number of very strong theses. It reported that the theses tend to include interesting and relevant research questions and proper use of the literature, from both current journals and classic standard works. The methodological strength varies from very good to satisfactory. On a side note, the panel reported that the reflection generally shown by the students in the theses is somewhat limited. Some students rewrite their thesis to publish it as a paper or an article in a peer-reviewed journal, which is something that the panel highly appreciates. In conclusion, the panel found that all theses convincingly show that the students achieve the ILOs.

Alumni

The programme keeps track of its alumni and their careers. The programme's management, support staff and Professional Advisory Committee monitor how graduates fare on the labour market and maintain contact with alumni and the labour market in general. The programme has an alumni database which is updated annually. It contains information for 1002 (89%) of its graduates from 2003-2016 (reference date: December 2018). The most common work fields of graduates are Communication and PR (25.7%), Marketing, Advertising and Sales (21.1%), and Management (9.9%).

From the interview with alumni the panel concluded that they look back on the programme with great appreciation. They feel very well prepared for their future career, either as a PhD candidate or in a position on the labour market. The panel finds that the alumni have a great reflective and academic attitude, hold interesting positions, and have a keen understanding of the manner in which they were prepared by the programme for their careers. According to the panel, the enthusiasm and insight that the alumni display for their programme testify to its quality.

Considerations

The panel concludes that graduates achieve the intended learning outcomes. The theses show that the students are able to properly conduct independent research projects that are methodologically sound, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The level shown in the theses is generally high, in some cases leading to publications in peer-reviewed journals. Most theses are eloquently written and show the students' ability to switch between theoretical frameworks and practical implications. The alumni are very satisfied with the programme as a preparation for their further career. The panel finds that their attitude, way of thinking, and the positions they hold are a testament to the high quality of the programme. They function as ambassadors of the programme and find employment in work fields related to media studies.

Conclusion

Master's programme Media Studies: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'good'.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The panel assesses Standards 1 and 3 as 'satisfactory' and 2 and 4 as 'good'.

According to the decision rules of NVAO's Framework for limited programme assessments, the panel assesses the master's programme Media Studies as 'good'.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the master's programme Media Studies as 'good'.



APPENDICES





APPENDIX 1: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Master's programme Media Studies

Graduates will have gained knowledge and understanding of the following:

- 1. Key theoretical developments, issues and discussions in the academic study of media and communication;
- 2. Theory development and research regarding current policies, communication practices, strategic organizational issues and developments in sectors spanning business, media, and creative industries;
- 3. Key academic research methods and techniques as they apply to the field of media and communication.

Graduates have an academic mind, a critical disposition and excellent written, and oral expression skills. They are able to:

- 4. Systematically analyse complex processes and issues within the media sector as well as media and communication issues within organizations and society;
- Critically evaluate the functioning of researchers, policy makers and professionals in the field of media and communication and the aforementioned sectors (business, media, and creative industries) and to make a constructive contribution to innovations in policy, communication, organization and strategy;
- 6. Independently conduct research in the field of media and communication by applying various (qualitative and quantitative) research methods, document this in a clearly structured argumentation, and reflect on the research, the research process and possible implications.
- 7. Apply the gained knowledge and skills independently and creatively within the media and communication sector, media and communication research, and the (media and communication) policy and strategy of governments, NGOs, companies and other organizations, and the public debate about media.



APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

Master's programme Media Studies

All courses have a study load of 5 EC except for the Master Class (2 EC) and the Master Thesis (18 EC).

Media & Business			
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Seminar 1	Seminar 3	Seminar 4	Master Thesis
Media & Business Transformations	Strategic Mass Communication	Entrepreneurship in Media & Business	
	Corporate Social Responsibility	Leadership Communication: Strategies and	
	Communication	Trends	
	New Media Marketing & Advertising	Culture, New Media & International Business	
	Participating Customers		
Seminar 2	Research Workshop	Workshop	
Corporate Management with Social Media Social Media Campaigns		Digital Research Methods	
Media Economics and Media Management	Brands, Media and Identity		
	Global Advertising		
	Corporate Reputation Management		
Methods of Media Research I	Methods of Media Research II	Master thesis	
Master Class (all year)			

Media & Creative Industries			
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Seminar 1	Seminar 3	Seminar 4	Master Thesis
Management of Media and Creative	Globalization and Media Industries	Media Entrepreneurship	
Industries			
Seminar 2	Research Workshop	Seminar 5	
Audience Engagement	Culture Online	Marketing Media and Entertainment	
	Innovation in the Creative Industries	Creative Labour	
	Television Audiences	Media Policies and Markets	
	Social Media Use		
Methods of Media Research I	Methods of Media Research II	Master Thesis	
Master Class (all year)			

All courses have a study load of 5 EC except for the Master Class (2 EC) and the Master Thesis (18 EC).

Media, Culture & Society			
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Seminar 1	Seminar 3	Seminar 4	Master Thesis
Media and Socio-Cultural Change	Participating Audiences	New Media, Politics and Campaigns	
	Media and Power		
Seminar 2	Research Workshop	Seminar 5	
Media, Culture and Globalization	Media and Migration	Marketing Media and Entertainment	
	Surveillance, Visibility and Reputation	Creative Labour	
	Television Audiences	Media Policies and Markets	
Methods of Media Research I	Methods of Media Research II	Master Thesis	
Master Class (all year)			

Media & Journalistiek			
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Seminar 1	Seminar 3	Seminar 4	Master Thesis
Journalistiek en Media	Beeldvorming en Media	Journalistiek en Ondernemerschap	
Seminar 2	Research Workshop	Workshop	
Digitalisering en Netwerksamenleving	Politieke Communicatie	Journalistiek	
	Framing and Impact van Nieuws		
Methoden van Media-onderzoek I	Methods of Media Research II	Master Thesis	
Master Class (all year)			

Media & Business (M&B, International)

The M&B programme focuses on the role of established and emerging media in international business and the media business in particular. Digitization and globalization have transformed the media sector as well as the life of other industries. The programme examines these developments and the ways in which media firms and other companies adapt to altering business conditions and new modes of communication and business.

Media & Creative Industries (MCI, International)

The MCI programme focuses on current issues and developments in organisations, policies, production, management, marketing and distribution in the media and creative industries. It pays due attention to the impact of digitalisation and internationalisation as well as the key role of audiences in this vibrant sector. The significance of the media and creative industries for society is also an important object of study.

Media, Culture & Society (MCS, International)

The MCS programme focuses on the societal impacts and uses of established and emerging media against a background of increasing cultural diversity, media saturation and digitization. Special attention is paid to the shifting relations between the private and the public, the global and local, citizens and governments, media users and producers, considering specific cultural and political contexts.

Media & Journalistiek (M&J, Dutch)

The M&J programme focuses on how the Dutch and international digital news and image industry function, how (journalistic) media content is produced, distributed, and consumed, and what effects this has on users and citizens. The programme analyses the digitization in journalism, its relation to social media and to the media world in general, and how companies, governments and other organisations deal with this transformation. It also examines the wider societal impacts and consequences of current developments in journalism and the (news) media sector.

APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

DAY 1		Thursday - 11 April 2019
15:30	16:00	Arrival of panel / Welcome with a short presentation
16:00	17:30	Preparation, internal meeting and documentation review
17:30	18:00	Meeting with alumni
18:30	21:00	Dinner (panel meeting)

DAY 2		Friday - 12 April 2019
08:30	09:00	Arrival of panel, internal meeting and documentation review
09:00	09:45	Meeting with management
09:45	10:00	Panel meeting
10:00	10:45	Meeting with students
10:45	11:30	Meeting with lecturers
11:30	11:45	Panel meeting
11:45	12:30	Meeting with Examination Board
12:30	13:30	Internal meeting with lunch break
13:30	14:15	Final interview with management
14:15	15:30	Deliberations panel, formulating preliminary findings and conclusions
15:30	15:45	Feedback of preliminary findings to management and core staff
15:45	15:50	Break
15:50	16:30	Development dialogue
16:30	17:30	Plenary presentation of preliminary findings (15 min.) / Reception

APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the master's programme Media Studies. Information on the selected theses is available from QANU upon request.

During the site visit, the panel studied, among other things, the following documents (partly as hard copies, partly via the institute's electronic learning environment):

Course and Assessment Materials 2018-2019

- Course guides (including assignments and grading rubrics
- Assessment matrices
- Mandatory literature (only books)
- Methodological and Writing Guidelines

Methodological courses

•	Methods of Media Research I	All 4 programs
•	Methods of Media Research II	All 4 programs
•	CM4104 Digital Research Methods	M&B

Seminars

3	Semilars						
•	CM4102 Corporate Management with Social Media	M&B-Media & Business					
•	CM4202 Media and Socio-Cultural Change	MCS-Media, Culture & Society					
•	CM4302 Management of Media and Creative Industries	MCI-Media & Creative Industries					
•	CM4400 Journalistiek en Media	M&J-Media & Journalistiek					
•	CM4109 Entrepreneurship in Media and Business	M&B					
•	CM4502 Media en Ondernemerschap	M&J					
•	CM4503 Media Entrepreneurship	MCI					
•	CM4993 New Media, Politics and Campaigns	MCS					
•	CM4501 Creative Labour	MCI / MCS					

Research Workshops

•	CM4154 Global Advertising	M&B-Media & Business
•	CM4252 Surveillance, Visibility and Reputation	MCS-Media, Culture & Society
•	CM4353 Culture Online	MCI- Media & Creative Industries
•	CM4454 Framing and Impact of News	M&J-Media & Journalistiek

Master Thesis

- CM4500 Master Class Media Studies
- CM5000 Master Thesis
- Flowchart Master Thesis
- Procedure Master Thesis
- Master Thesis Project book
- Academic Writing Guide Media Communication and Culture
- Methodological Guidelines Thesis Research

Annual Reports PC and EB

- Programme committee annual reports of the last two years (2015-2016 and 2016-2017)
- Annual reports of examination board of last two years (2016-2017 and 2017-2018)

Additional documents

- Policy Documents
- ESHCC Assessment Protocol



- ESHCC Educational Policy Plan 2014-2018 and draft 2018-2022
- EUR Educational Vision 2017
- ESHCC Education Vision 2017