

Master Fiscale Economie Erasmus University Rotterdam

*Report of the limited programme assessment
3 and 4 November 2022*

Colophon

Programme

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master Fiscale Economie

Location: Rotterdam

Mode of study: fulltime

Croho: 66402

Specialisations: Directe Belastingen
Indirecte Belastingen

Result of institutional assessment: positive

Committee

prof.dr. Peter Schotman, chair

prof.dr. Niels Hermes, domain expert

em.prof.dr. Eelke de Jong, domain expert

prof.dr.ir. Paula van Veen-Dirks, domain expert

prof.dr. Henk Vording, domain expert

Judith Kikkert, BSc, student

drs. Titia Busing, secretary

The committee was presented to the NVAO for approval.

The assessment was conducted under responsibility of

AeQui Nederland

Postbus 5050

3502 JB Utrecht

www.AeQui.nl

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Summary

On 3 and 4 November 2022 an AeQui committee assessed the master programme in Fiscale Economie of Erasmus University Rotterdam. The overall judgement of the committee is that the quality of the programme is positive, and therefore **meets the standard**.

Intended learning outcomes

Based on the interviews and the examination of underlying documentation, the committee concludes that the intended learning outcomes tie in with (inter)national requirements for this field. All intended learning outcomes are covered in the programme and the intended learning outcomes are aligned with the Dublin descriptors. The programme's research driven orientation is very well reflected in the intended learning outcomes. The programme's focus on taxation and the integration of the economics of taxation and tax law, is also visible in the intended learning outcomes and set-up of the programme. The committee assesses that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**.

Teaching-learning environment

The committee concludes that the programme enables students to realise the intended learning outcomes. The intended learning outcomes are translated in learning goals which are stipulated in the course guide and syllabus.

The research orientation of the programme is reflected in its structure and content. The programme is tied in with the research of the lecturers involved and research skills are addressed throughout the programme. The small-scale seminars allow for in-depth discussions of research and the integration of theory and practice. The programme succeeds in integrating economics and tax law. The relation between theory and professional practices is also an explicit part of the programme.

The legal enrolment criteria are applicable to the programme. The programme has a sufficient guidance system for students in place that matches the independence expected of students in a master programme. Lecturers are competent, qualified and enthusiastic. The committee appreciates that lecturers are active in research as well as in taxation practice.

Students are informed about the programme through the online learning environment which is clearly structured and informative. The committee concludes that the programme **meets this standard**.

Student assessment

An adequate system of assessment is in place. The quality assurance of the assessment system is solid and effective measures are taken to guarantee the validity, reliability and transparency of the assessments. These include using assessment specification tables, the four-eye principle, assessment criteria and written feedback. The level of the different assessments studied by the committee was sufficient. An appropriate variety in forms of assessment is used, and in most courses two forms of assessments are used.

The examination board is active in safeguarding the quality of the assessments and in preventing plagiarism. The examination board annually checks the quality of the theses and other assessments. The committee concludes that the programme **meets this standard**.

Achieved learning outcomes

The programme has an adequate thesis process in place. In assessing students' master theses, two examiners are involved and a rubric is used.

Based on the studied theses, the committee concludes that the level of the graduates is good and that students achieve the required master's level. The studied theses reflected good knowledge of the relevant law in its economic context. The analytic perspective is predominantly legal. Lecturers commented during the site visit that this reflects student choices rather than deliberate guidance from the programme. The committee noted that the final written feedback in the thesis evaluation form is quite limited.

Recommendations

In order to bring the programme to an even higher level of quality in the future, the committee recommends the following:

- to align the content of the syllabuses and course guides;
- to effectuate the arrangements made with Erasmus School of Law regarding the positioning of the lecturers and their research;
- to establish an effective collaboration with Erasmus School of Law, which will allow the programme to sustain its ambition of research-driven education;
- to discuss with lecturers how to become part of ESE;
- to encourage students to enhance their use of their economic skills in the thesis.

All standards of the NVAO assessment framework (2018) are assessed positively; hence the committee awards a positive recommendation for the accreditation of the master programme in Fiscale Economie of Erasmus University Rotterdam. The committee concludes that the overall assessment of the programme meets the standard.

On behalf of the entire assessment committee,
Utrecht, March 2023

Peter Schotman
Chair

Titia Buising
Secretary

Introduction

This report reflects the site visit of the master programme in Fiscale Economie of Erasmus University Rotterdam. The programme prepares students for a career as an economically educated tax expert in government, business or tax consultancy.

The institute

The programme is part of Erasmus School of Economics (ESE), part of Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). The mission of EUR is to make a positive impact on societal challenges. EUR strives to understand and make progress towards solving complex societal challenges, with alignment in its core activities of education and research and in close cooperation with local and global partners.

ESE offers three bachelor programmes, with two English tracks, and four master programmes. For each master's programme a pre-master programme is offered. Currently 6700 students are enrolled in ESE and approximately 155 FTE of lecturers are employed.

ESE comprises four academic departments: Applied Economics, Business Economics, Econometrics, and Economics. The departments provide the education of the different bachelor and master programmes. Each department is headed by a Department Director and supported by a secretariat. The Programme Management Education consists of the Programme Director, the three Bachelor Programme Managers, the Programme Manager Educational Innovation, Head Student Affairs, and the three Policy Officers Education. The Programme Management Education meets every two weeks to discuss and decide on current education matters.

ESE is currently developing a new strategic plan 2023-2027, including an adjusted educational vision and a renewed vision on assessment.

The programme

The master programme in Fiscale Economie is a full-time programme, amounting to 60 EC. Most of the programme is taught in Dutch. Since the self-evaluation report was made available in English, this report is also written in English.

The programme offers two specialisations: Directe Belastingen and Indirecte Belastingen.

The specialisations have a slightly different set-up and include deepening knowledge through core courses, applying and integrating knowledge in a seminar, and proof of knowledge and skills with the individual thesis.

In the previous accreditation process recommendations were made (for all programmes) to improve the information provided to students and to inform students more clearly and comprehensively about the thesis process and the thesis assessment and align thesis processes. The committee noted that ESE acted on these recommendations by implementing a new digital learning and working environment. In this environment the information about exchange, thesis and internships is centralised and accessible for all students. In addition, the thesis process has been streamlined for all programmes (see also standard 4).

The assessment

Erasmus University Rotterdam assigned AeQui to perform a quality assessment of its master programme in Fiscale Economie. In close co-operation with the programme management, AeQui convened an independent and competent assessment committee. A preparatory meeting with

representatives of the programme was held to exchange information and plan the date and programme of the site visit.

In preparing for the site visit, the assessment committee studied the self-evaluation report on the programme and reviewed a sample of student work. The findings were input for discussions during the site visit.

The site visit was carried out on 3 and 4 November 2022 according to the programme presented in attachment 2. No use was made of the (online) open consultation hour. The committee carried out its assessment in relation to, and in consideration of, the cluster of programmes in which this programme is placed. The contextualisation of the programme within its cluster was conducted by the complete committee during the preliminary meeting and the final deliberations. The knowledge required for this was present in the committee.

The committee assessed the programme in an independent manner; at the end of the visit, the chair of the committee presented the initial findings of the committee to representatives of the programme and the institution.

In this document, the committee is reporting on its findings, considerations and conclusions according to the 2018 NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. A draft version of the report was sent to the programme management; its reactions have led to this final version of the report.

The programme will initiate and plan a development dialogue in the course of 2023. The results of this development dialogue will have no influence on the assessment presented in this report.

1. Intended learning outcomes

The committee concludes that the intended learning outcomes have been adequately concretised with regard to content, level and orientation and meet international requirements. The intended learning outcomes are generic and applicable to all specialisations. In addition, the intended learning outcomes reflect the Dublin descriptors. The programme is research driven, which is also reflected in the intended learning outcomes. In addition, the programme's focus on tax economics and the integration of tax and economics is visible in the intended learning outcomes and set-up of the programme. The committee concludes that the programme meets the criteria for this standard.

Findings

All ESE master programmes share the same educational vision in which research and education are strongly connected.

The master programme aims at deepening students' knowledge of the relationship between taxation and economic behaviour. Students are prepared for a career as an economically educated tax expert. Graduates can work in government (for example, as a tax inspector or tax policy economist), business (for example, as a corporate tax specialist), or in tax consultancy.

The programme offers two specialisations, the specialisation *Directe Belastingen* and the specialisation *Indirecte Belastingen*. The latter is offered in cooperation with Erasmus School of Law (ESL). The self-evaluation report notes that this enables students to acquire deeper knowledge and understanding in a specific sub-field of economics and taxation. By collaborating with ESL, the programme can also connect to their research resources.

The specialisation *Directe Belastingen* focuses on three themes: small and medium-sized enterprises, multinational companies and tax policy. In addition, the developments in the field of European and international tax law are discussed. The specialisation *Indirecte Belastingen* addresses international trade, the international foundations of indirect taxation and European customs law. Moreover, developments in the field of indirect

tax policy, as well as indirect tax assurance, are discussed.

The programme is furthermore characterised by a strong integration of practice and teaching. The self-evaluation report notes that the integration of practice and teaching enables the programme to quickly incorporate new developments in economics and taxation in the curriculum.

The research driven orientation is also reflected in the intended learning outcomes. The intended learning outcomes address, for example, the ability to outline and define a problem with the chosen field of specialisation and to legitimise it based on current scientific or social issues, to specify, formulate and operationalise research questions in a systematic and valid manner, to select, use and critically evaluate relevant and modern qualitative and quantitative research methods, to find and efficiently and effectively use databases for data collection and to formulate conclusions. The latter by considering premises, basic assumptions and the limitations and possibilities of the chosen methodology. In addition, recommendations have to be based on creativity, originality and good insight into social and scientific standards and values.

The intended learning outcomes are based on the description of an economics degree programme as described in the Subject-specific Reference Framework for Economics (January 2016). The intended learning outcomes are the same for both specialisations. The programme presented an

overview that explains the translation of the Dublin descriptors into the intended learning outcomes. The programme also outlined the relation between the intended learning outcomes and the different components of both specialisations.

In 2021 ESE conducted a benchmark analysis for all programmes. This analysis was aimed at reviewing the validity of programmes, as well as the positioning and profiling relative to national and international peers, including the evaluation of the intended learning outcomes. The self-evaluation report notes that this did not lead to changes in the orientation and organisation of the programme.

Input from the professional field is gathered through Advisory Boards, which mainly include alumni. The Advisory Boards are directly connected to ESE's master specialisations.

Considerations

Based on the interviews and the examination of underlying documentation, the committee concludes that both the intended learning outcomes

tie in with (inter)national requirements for this field.

Based on an overview of the relation between courses and intended learning outcomes, the committee notes that all intended learning outcomes are covered. The programme also provided insight in the alignment between the intended learning outcomes and the Dublin descriptors.

The committee notes that the programmes research driven orientation is very well reflected in the intended learning outcomes. In addition, the programme's focus on taxation and the integration of the economics of taxation and tax-law, is visible in the intended learning outcomes and set-up of the programme.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee establishes that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**.

2. Teaching-learning environment

The committee concludes that the programme enables students to realise the intended learning outcomes. The programme's focus on specialisation is reflected in the set-up of the programme. In addition, the research orientation is reflected in the content and set-up of the programme. The set-up also shows the relation with professional practice. The committee notes that the content of different course documents such as course guide and syllabi can be more aligned. Students and lecturers value the seminars. These allow for in-depth discussions that prepare students for their thesis. The staff is competent, enthusiastic and involved. Lecturers are active in research and practice. The committee notes that the legal enrolment criteria are applicable to the programme. The guidance system for students matches the independence expected of students in a master programme. The committee concludes that the programme meets the criteria for this standard.

Findings

As mentioned in the introduction, the specialisations (Directe Belastingen and Indirecte Belastingen) have a comparable set-up and are organised in five teaching blocks. Both specialisations include:

- deepening knowledge through core courses;
- deepening, applying and integrating knowledge in a seminar; and
- proof of knowledge and skills with the individual thesis.

All ESE master programmes offer a combination of core courses and small-scale seminars. The first focus on deepening knowledge and understanding of theory and methodology. The latter on applying and integrating knowledge and understanding.

As mentioned, the specialisation Directe Belastingen comprises three themes: small and medium-sized enterprises, multinational companies and tax policy. The first themes are addressed in small-scale seminars (10 EC each). In these seminars different topics are discussed every week and students are expected to give a presentation on the topic discussed.

The tax policy theme is addressed in two courses. The Advanced Economics of Taxation course (4 EC) addresses the principals of optimal taxation and how taxes affect market outcomes, efficiency, the distribution of resources, and social welfare. In addition, students learn to understand how

taxes can optimally strike a balance between equity and efficiency and to apply the insights from optimal taxation to actual policy debates. In the second course on tax policy (the Tax Policy course of 4 EC), students learn to conduct economic research on a policy relevant topic, to write a well-structured research proposal, and to answer a policy relevant question with methods used by applied economists. In this course, students present their work to their peers and policy makers from the Ministry of Finance. In addition to these three themes, this specialisation also comprises courses such as Direct Tax Assurance and Technology, Europees Belastingrecht, Internationaal Belastingrecht, and a Capita Selecta course. In the specialisation Directe Belastingen students can choose two electives.

The specialisation Indirecte Belastingen is, as mentioned before, focussed on international trade, the international foundations of indirect taxation and European customs law. This is reflected in courses such as Internationale Grondslagen van de Indirecte Belastingen and Internationale Handel. The first course addresses the treatment of the international law context of WTO law and its impact on the levying of indirect taxes and customs duties in the EU context. In addition, the operation of EU law is discussed (including the relationship between primary and secondary law) as well as the place of VAT within

the internal market of the EU. The course on Internationale Handel covers (in an integrated manner) the customs law, VAT and civil law aspects with respect to goods subject to globalisation.

In addition to the above themes, this specialisation also addresses major developments in digital technologies and indirect taxes such as consumption taxes, environmental taxes and property taxes. The Tax Policy course is shared with the other specialisation. The specialisation Indirecte Belastingen does not offer electives.

In the seminars, students deepen their knowledge and apply and integrate this knowledge to solve problems within their subfield. Students work actively on assignments, where theory and practices are integrated, and which are based on actual cases in the field of economics and taxation. Students discuss academic papers, work on (business) cases, and present or even teach challenging topics to their peers.

The programme provides exposure to practice by means of guest lectures. In the specialisation Directe Belastingen, for example, this is part of the Direct tax assurance and technology course and both seminars Midden- en Kleinbedrijf en Multinationale onderneming. In the specialisation Indirecte Belastingen, this is part of the Indirect tax assurance and technology course, the Indirect tax policy course and in the seminar Werkcollege Indirecte belastingen. In addition, most of the academic staff involved in the programme also work part-time in tax practice.

The programme notes that the study association also has an important role in bridging this gap by organising activities that involve the professional field. This includes, for example, company visits, job market skills workshops and the annual Fiscale Bedrijvendag.

Other than academic skills, seminars and core courses also address communication skills and judgmental skills. Students are encouraged to discuss their reasoning and opinions in class as

well as in writing. In addition, students are required to write (small) research reports or to give presentations.

Students and alumni the committee met with value the alignment of the programme with the professional field. Students are able to apply the learned knowledge directly in their practice and consider this a significant advantage over students from comparable programmes. Students mentioned that the Tax Policy course, which is part of both specialisations and focuses on research and economic aspects of taxation, is a valuable addition to the more legal courses in the programme.

Students of the Indirecte Belastingen specialisation feel well prepared for the more mathematical assessment of the Indirect Tax Assurance course.

Regarding the integration of economics and taxation, it was noted during the site visit that the Taxation of Multinationals course and the seminar Midden en Klein Bedrijf address economic aspects as well as taxation. In these courses, the different subdisciplines are integrated. In addition, the committee learned that for lecturers and students the combination and integration of economics and taxation is very natural. Compared with graduates from programmes in fiscal law, students of the foregoing programme are trained in mathematical skills, have insight in economic aspects and are much more aware of the issues companies face regarding, for example, investments.

Learning environment

The programme ties in with ESE's ambition to offer research oriented education. The ESE educational vision also emphasises an academic community of students and lecturers to create, disseminate and apply scientific knowledge; face-to-face contact and interaction between students and lecturers and the use of technology as a means, not an end in itself.

The seminars comprise intensive, interactive and small-scale teaching and guidance. The seminars consist of groups of maximum 24 students. One of the seminars of the Indirecte Belastingen specialisation is taught by two lecturers. The students the committee met with value the small-scale of the programme. Students are in general positive about the different teaching formats used in the programme.

The site visit also revealed that impact learning is a university wide strategic theme. For the ESE programmes this implies that students will be enabled during their studies to get more in touch with practice and to have an impact there. And that students are even more confronted with contemporary issues.

Discussion with management on social safety revealed that this is currently part of the strategy sessions with the departments in which the core values including a safe working environment is discussed. Moreover, an ESE confidant is available.

Incoming students

The legal enrolment criteria apply to the programme. For students who do not qualify for direct admission a one-year pre-master programme is available. The site-visit made clear that most students enrolling in the master programme have a degree from the ESE bachelor programme in Fiscale Economie. In both specialisations only a few students followed the pre-master programme.

Staff

The staff involved in the programme in Fiscale Economie (apart from the professors) is employed at FEI BV. In addition, several courses are taught by lecturers of the Department of Economics. All lecturers of FEI BV also work part-time in tax practice. The self-evaluation report notes that this enables them to work with real examples from practice and to incorporate new developments in the field of taxation in education. In past years, temporarily available research funding was

available to enable five lecturers of FEI BV to pursue and obtain a PhD. This also created a stronger link between research and education. The self-evaluation report notes that expanding collaboration with Erasmus School of Law will provide more possibilities on research, resources for publications and joint provision of taxation education.

ESE's Service Level Agreement Education, which is updated yearly, describes the basic requirements for each course, including guidelines for contact hours, group size, active learning elements and interactive education, as well as lecturers' qualifications and examinations.

Educational achievements and course evaluations are discussed in the annual performance and development interviews with faculty members. Teaching performance is assessed by class visits and reviews from peers and the course evaluation. For the master programme in Fiscale Economie, class visits are held for new lecturers the committee learned during the site visit.

90% of ESE staff obtained a university teaching qualification. Individual training is available as well as so called micro-labs. The latter are two-to-four-hour workshops on various topics, ranging from assessment to delivery of teaching to innovating education. In addition, the ESE Innovation Hub provides lecturers with support in using digital tools, including interactive elements in large-scale plenary lectures, in enhancing personal online learning or in building the Canvas pages. ESE also organises so called Education After-noons, in which lecturers share their best practices with educational innovation. Examples are dealing with free-riding behaviour, how to integrate sustainability in courses and how to stimulate peer feedback. New lecturers are mentored by a senior lecturer. ESE employs about 155 FTE of lecturers.

During the site visit, the committee discussed the positioning of the staff within ESE and FEI BV. It became clear that the main reason for the positioning in FEI BV is that the research conducted

by the lecturers does not fall within ESE's norms for research within the field of economics, for example, the research of the lecturers involved has a more legal orientation and is published in other types of research journals. Arrangements have been made with the Erasmus School of Law. However, these have yet to be effectuated.

The self-evaluation report notes that the increased student numbers could cause a peak workload for thesis supervisors in academic years 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. One of the measures to reduce the workload has been the initiation of a thesis working group in 2021, to further optimise thesis and supervision processes with special attention to workload reduction or academic supervisors and support staff.

During the site-visit the committee discussed the increasing workload of lecturers. The renewed thesis and supervision process is expected to reduce the workload. The introduction of a tenure track for lecturers can also reduce the general workload. Tenured lecturers have a PhD and sometimes a small research appointment.

Students the committee met with value the approachability of their lecturers.

Guidance and student information

Students are primarily guided by their lecturers, during the courses and the small-scale seminars. In addition, students receive individual supervision in writing their thesis.

For guidance regarding personal problems, ESE study advisers, study counsellors or university psychologists are available. ESE also organises different workshops and webinars on topics such as dealing with stress, uncertainties, time management, journal writing, connecting communication and collaboration etc. For students who experience difficulties in motivating themselves to work on the thesis, a thesis group is available.

The site visit revealed that the programme committee does not discuss the evaluation results of individual courses unless there are big issues. It

was also noted that each course is evaluated. The response rate is, however, very low. Improvements for the latter are currently being developed and piloted in 2023. Students the committee met with during the site visit, mentioned that feedback from students is considered and that students from the programme committee organise meetings with lecturers to evaluate the courses with students. Students are also informed about the changes in response to their feedback.

Considerations

The committee concludes that the programme enables students to realise the intended learning outcomes. The intended learning outcomes are translated in learning goals, which are stipulated in the course guide and syllabus. In reviewing courses on the digital learning environment and the accompanying syllabus and course guide, the committee noticed, however, that the information provided in these can be different. Moreover, the syllabi studied show different structures and design and are not always in line with the course guide. The committee recommends the programme to align the content of these documents.

The research orientation of the programme is reflected in its structure and content. The programme is tied in with the research of the lecturers involved and research skills are addressed throughout the programme. In both specialisations, this is, for example, part of the Tax Policy course. The small-scale seminars allow for in-depth discussions of research and the integration of theory and practice. The relation between theory and professional practices is also an explicit part of the programme. The committee observes that adequate and up-to-date literature is used in the programme.

The committee concludes that the programme succeeds in integrating economics and taxation; this was confirmed during the site visit by lecturers and students. The combination of both is very logical and natural to them and in line with the demands of the professional field.

The legal enrolment criteria are applicable to the programme. The programme has a sufficient guidance system for students in place that matches the independence expected of students in a master programme. The small-scale seminars and individual thesis supervision contribute to this and if needed extra support from study advisors is available.

Lecturers are competent, qualified and enthusiastic. The committee appreciates that lecturers are active in the taxation practice. Regarding the positioning of the lecturers and (the recognition of) their research, the committee recommends ESE to effectuate the arrangements made with the Erasmus School of Law. The committee is of the opin-

ion that for the programme to maintain a research driven character that matches the ESE vision on education, it is important that lecturers' research is valued. In addition, the committee strongly recommends the programme to discuss with lecturers how to become part of ESE.

Students are informed about the programme through the online learning environment. The short demonstration during the site visit showed that the online learning environment is clearly structured and informative.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the committee establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.

3. Student assessment

The committee concludes that the programme has an adequate assessment system in place. The intended learning outcomes are at the basis of this system. Effective measures are taken to guarantee the validity, reliability and transparency of the assessments, by using assessment specification tables, the four-eyes principle, assessment criteria and written feedback. Students are satisfied with the variety in forms of assessment used. The examination board is effectively organised and safeguards the quality of the assessments and theses in an active manner. The committee values the random checks of the quality of assessments and theses. The committee concludes that the programme meets the criteria for this standard.

Findings

ESE's vision on assessment is leading for the programme's assessment policy and system. Alignment between the content and level of the learning objectives and the assessment at course level is an important premise in the vision. The vision is translated in ESE's examination policy, that describes the framework in which exams are developed and taken. This framework is worked out in detail in an Examination Protocol that provides guidelines and direction for lecturers with regard to examinations.

To guarantee the reliability and validity of exams, lecturers are expected to carry out peer review in the construction of exams. In addition, all exams are required to have assessment criteria to enhance the reliability and to ensure independence in the grading process. And assessment specification tables are used to provide insight into how a course is assessed.

Depending on the content and objectives of a course, one or more types of assessment are used, such as: assignments, mid-term tests, written examinations with open questions and oral examinations. Assignments include presentations, solving cases, the writing of a policy advice or (group or individual) papers, and group discussions. The different types of assessment are indicated in the assessment specification tables of courses and in the assessment overviews on programme level. The latter also includes the weighting of the different assessments used in the courses.

The set-up of assessment of courses is part of the course guide. During a block, students are provided with a sample examination, including indications of the answers. An inspection opportunity is obligatory for each exam.

The use of digital test software has increased in the past years, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the programme increased the variation in assessments forms by using oral examinations. The programme notes that digital test software makes grading of written exams more efficient. The self-evaluation report also states that due to increasing student numbers possible capacity limits for on-campus examination might lead to alternative forms of assessment.

The requirements for examinations and grading are formalised in the Rules and Regulations of the Examination Board and in the aforementioned Service Level Agreement Education.

The students the committee met with are content with their exams and the transparency of the grading. Students value the variety of assessment methods used in the courses and that their grade does not depend on one assessment.

Examination board

The ESE examination board is responsible for safeguarding the quality of examinations and the final qualifications attained of all the ESE bachelor and master programmes. All academic departments and programmes are represented in the

board. The examination board uses systematic monitoring and random checks to safeguard the quality of examination. This includes sample surveys of assessments and theses. The examination board documents its activities in an annual report. The Examination Monitor is used to monitor the quality of the assessments. The Examination Monitor provides a quick scan based on pass rates and distortions in grade distributions (also compared to previous years).

During the site visit, the committee met with representatives of the examination board. It became clear that a two-year project has been set up on strengthening the safeguarding function of the examination board. And a new colleague focused on coordinating all safeguarding activities will be hired. In addition, external examiners are screened on their educational and research skills before being appointed as an examiner.

Regarding the statistical analysis of assessments, it was remarked that also student evaluations and evaluations by lecturers prove useful insights in the quality of assessments.

In the discussion about preventing and detecting plagiarism it was noted that students as well as lecturers are informed about the interpretation of plagiarism and group work. Moreover, lecturers are expected to discuss this with their students. The Thesis Workflow Process supports lecturers and students in this.

During the Covid-19 pandemic ESE used proctoring in the online exams. Representatives of the examination board the committee met with are very positive about this. Representatives of the

examination board remarked that online exams and proctoring will be possible for students who, for example, due to chronic illness, cannot come to campus for an exam.

Considerations

The committee concludes that an adequate system of assessment is in place. The quality assurance of the assessment system is solid and effective measures are taken to guarantee the validity, reliability and transparency of the assessments. These include using assessment specification tables, the four-eye principle, assessment criteria and written feedback.

In general, the level of the different assessments studied by the committee was sufficient. The committee also notes that an appropriate variety in forms of assessment is used. And that in most courses two forms of assessments are used (during the course and at the end of the course).

The examination board is active in safeguarding the quality of the assessments and in preventing plagiarism. The examination board annually checks the quality of the theses and other assessments. The committee also values the continuation of online exams for students that otherwise would not be able to take the exam on campus.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the committee establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.

4. Achieved learning outcomes

Based on the studied documents and the interviews, the committee concludes that graduates of the master programme achieve the required level and the intended learning outcomes. It was confirmed in the meeting with students and alumni that they are very capable of integrating economics and taxation and they characterise themselves as taxation economists. The committee concludes that the overall academic quality of the studied theses is good and agreed with the grades given. The committee observed that the studied theses displayed a more legal than economic approach and that the final written feedback in the thesis evaluation form is quite limited. The committee concludes that the programme meets the criteria for this standard.

Findings

The programme is finalised with the master thesis. In this individual thesis, students show that they are able to independently perform scientific research. The thesis has to address a topic related to the chosen master specialisation. The requirements for the thesis are described in the thesis manual.

With the thesis, students show that they have achieved all intended learning outcomes. Moreover, students demonstrate that they can:

- formulate an economic-taxation research question based on relevant scientific concepts and theories;
- apply economic-taxation concepts, theories, research techniques and methods to the research topic;
- process the collected data adequately and draw conclusions regarding the research question; and
- report research findings in a logical and consistent way and give a clear oral explanation of the research project.

The type of thesis students write can vary between:

- a theoretical thesis: formulating a new theory or making a new model, or the analysis of legislation and case law;
- an empirical thesis: analysis of an existing data set.

During the thesis process, students formulate their research topic, choose a preferred supervisor, draft a thesis proposal, write their thesis and defend their thesis.

Regarding the topics of the theses, lecturers stated during the site visit that since students choose their own topic, an economic perspective on taxation is not always fitting for the chosen topic. If it matches their topic, students are, however, challenged to discuss business economics, such as profit determination, and to use research articles on economics and business economics. Students the committee met with are content about the thesis supervision.

Students are informed about the thesis process and the thesis requirements by means of an introductory lecture, a thesis manual, and all thesis information is shared on the Canvas Thesis Hub of each programme. The thesis process is organised by a thesis coordinator. During the thesis process, feedback is given regularly by the thesis supervisors, both verbally in the supervision sessions and in writing via the Thesis Workflow. In accordance with the Service Level Agreement Education, either the thesis supervisor or the second assessor should hold a PhD, to ensure the academic quality of the thesis.

As mentioned in the introduction, the thesis process has changed in recent years for all bachelor and master programmes. This includes improving the online system used (Thesis Workflow) for

guidance and handing in thesis and assessment, the introduction of fixed deadlines for handing in the thesis, the introduction of a Canvas Thesis Hub for each programme (to provide information centrally and timely), the introduction of thesis manuals for students and for supervisors and the option for students to join a thesis group. In addition, thesis rubrics have been implemented and requirements of thesis supervisor's and second assessor are formalised in the aforementioned Service Level Agreement Education.

The thesis is assessed by a thesis committee consisting of the thesis supervisor and a second assessor. Both assess the thesis independently based on the rubrics. Through the Thesis Workflow System supervisors are able to keep track of students' progress, to communicate with students and to assess the thesis. The grade is determined after the student has presented and defended the thesis in a session in which both the supervisor and second assessor are present. At the end of this session, the assessors provide feedback to the student on the quality of the thesis, the process, and the grading.

During the site visit, the committee discussed the deadlines of the thesis with several representatives. The discussions showed that the introduction of fixed deadlines in the thesis process is a shift in trend from the past. New, more strict deadlines for the thesis and (new) deadlines for the thesis proposal are currently debated on within ESE. The committee also learned that the interpretation of the fixed deadlines varies per programme. In addition, students often add an internship to their programme. This usually leads to study delay, which the students the committee met with take for granted. For the foregoing programme it was noted that a lot of students already work in tax practice for two or three days per week. Lecturers the committee met with support the implementation of stricter deadlines for the thesis.

The programme notes that graduates from the master programme in Fiscale Economie easily find a job. Graduates work for companies, the Ministry of Finance and the Dutch tax authority.

The programme involves alumni through a newsletter, social media platforms and a special website. In addition, alumni are invited for events and part of the Advisory Boards for the master programmes (see also standard 1). Alumni are also involved in the MentorMe platform for bachelor students.

Considerations

The committee concludes that the programme has an adequate thesis process in place. In assessing students' master theses, two examiners are involved and a rubric is used.

To assess whether students achieve the required master level and the intended learning outcomes, the committee studied 15 theses, representing the two specialisations. Based on this, the committee is of the opinion that the level of the graduates is good and that students achieve the required master's level. The committee agreed with the grades given.

In general, the committee noted that the studied theses reflected good knowledge of the relevant law in its economic context. The analytic perspective is predominantly legal. Lecturers commented during the site visit that this reflects student choices rather than deliberate guidance from the programme. The committee encourages the programme to enhance students' use of their economic skills in their theses. In addition, the committee is of the opinion that the final written feedback in the thesis evaluation form is quite limited.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the committee establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.

Attachments

Attachment 1 Assessment committee

prof.dr. P.C. (Peter) Schotman	Peter Schotman is Professor of Empirical Finance at Maastricht University School of Business and Economics and research fellow of the Network for Studies on Pensions, Aging and Retirement (Netspar) in The Netherlands.
prof.dr. N. (Niels) Hermes	Niels Hermes is Professor International Finance and chair of the department Economics, Econometrics and Finance at the Faculty of Economics and Business of Groningen University.
em.prof.dr. E. (Eelke) de Jong	Eelke de Jong was Professor International Economics at Radboud University Nijmegen until October 2021.
prof.dr.ir. P.M.G. (Paula) van Veen-Dirks	Paula van Veen-Dirks is Professor Management Accounting, co-chair of the department Accounting and director of the research group Accounting at Groningen University.
prof.dr. H. (Henk) Vording	Henk Vording is Professor Tax Law at Leiden University and permanent visiting professor at Peking University School of Law.
J. (Judith) Kikkert BSc	Student of the MSc Management, Economics & Consumer studies at Wageningen University & Research

The assessment committee was supported by drs. T. (Titia) Busing, external NVAO-certified secretary.

All committee members and the secretary have signed a declaration of independence. The assessment committee has been submitted to, and validated by, NVAO prior to the site visit.

Attachment 2 Programme of the assessment

Thursday 3 November

09.00 – 09.15	Welcome to the panel by the Dean
09.15 – 10.15	Dean, Vice-Dean Education, Programme Director, Programme Manager Econometrics, Programme Manager education innovation
10.15 – 10.30	Break
10.30 – 11.30	Lecturers bachelor and master Economics
11.30 – 11.45	Break
11.45 – 12.45	Students/Alumni bachelor and master Economics
12.45 – 13.30	Lunch break
13.30 – 14.30	Lecturers bachelor and master Econometrics
14.30 – 14.45	Break
14.45 – 15.45	Students/alumni bachelor and master Econometrics
15.45 – 16.00	Break
16.00 – 17.00	Examination Board (all programmes)
17.00 – 17.30	Private discussion of the panel
17.30 – 18.00	Closure of the day with Vice-dean, Programme Director, Policy Officer

Friday 4 November

09.00 – 10.00	Lecturers bachelor and master Fiscale Economie
10.00 – 10.15	Break
10.15 – 11.15	Students/Alumni bachelor and master Fiscale Economie
11.15 – 11.30	Break
11.30 – 12.30	Lecturers MSc Accounting, Auditing and Control
12.30 – 13.15	Lunch break
13.15 – 14.15	Students/alumni MSc Accounting, Auditing and Control
14.15 – 16.00	Break and drafting preliminary findings and preparing oral panel report
16.00 – 16.30	Feedback of the panel and closure by the Dean
16.30 – 18.00	Drinks in Paviljoen

Attachment 3 Documents

- Self-evaluation report
- Teaching and Examination Regulations Master programmes ESE 2022-2023
- Rules and Regulations of the Examination Board 2022-2023
- Subject-specific reference framework Economics 2016
- Studentenhoofdstuk Master Fiscale Economie
- ILOs and Dublin Descriptors - Master Fiscale Economie
- Relation ILOs and courses Master Fiscale Economie
- Overview Teaching Staff BSc and MSc Fiscale Economie
- 2022-05 ESE Organisation Charts 2022
- Annual Report Examination Board ESE 2021
- Examination Policy ESE, 08-2022
- Examination Protocol ESE
- Assessment Specification Table, format 08.2022
- Assessment overviews Master 2022-2023
- ESE Policy Proctoring - October 2021
- Flowchart proctoring - October 2021
- Service Level Agreement Education 2022-2023
- ESE Language Policy
- Annual Report 2021-2022 PC
- Thesis Supervision Manual 2021-2022
- Student Thesis Manual
- Theses of 15 students