

# **Organisation Studies**

**Policy, Communication  
and Organisation  
VU University Amsterdam**

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This report was finalised on 4 December 2012.



# Report on the master's programme **Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie (Policy, Communication and Organisation)** of VU University Amsterdam

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments as a starting point.

## **Administrative data regarding the programmes**

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### **Master's programme **Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie (Policy, Communication and Organisation)****

Name of the programme:	Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie (Policy, Communication and Organisation)
CROHO number:	60052
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	Organisations in their Environment; Communication in and between Organisations; Organisation of Health Care; Consultancy and Change
Location(s):	Amsterdam
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Expiration of accreditation:	31-12-2013

The visit of the assessment committee Organisation Studies to the Faculty of Social Sciences of VU University Amsterdam took place on 7 September, 2012.

## **Administrative data regarding the institution**

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Name of the institution:	VU University Amsterdam
Status of the institution:	publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	applied (pending)

## **Quantitative data regarding the programmes**

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The required quantitative data regarding the programme are included in Appendix 5.

## **Composition of the assessment committee**

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The committee that assessed the master's programme Policy, Communication and Organisation consisted of:

- Prof. Arndt Sorge, Honorary Professor, Faculty of Economics and Social Science, University of Potsdam, Germany (chair);

- Prof. Nelson Phillips, Professor of Strategy and Organisational Behaviour, Imperial College Business School, London, UK;
- Prof. Ray Reagans, Associate Professor, Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge MA, USA;
- Prof. Hans Doorewaard, Professor of Organisational Development, Nijmegen School of Management, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands;
- Sanne Keurentjes, BSc, master student of Organisation Studies, University of Tilburg, the Netherlands.

The committee was supported by Dr. Marianne van der Weiden, who acted as secretary.

Appendix 1 contains the Curricula Vitae of the members of the committee.

## **Working method of the assessment committee**

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### *Preparation*

The assessment of the master's programme in Policy, Communication and Organisation of the VU University Amsterdam is part of a cluster assessment. In the context of this cluster assessment, the committee also assessed the master's programme Culture, Organisation and Management of the VU University Amsterdam, the bachelor's programme Organisatiewetenschappen and the master's programme Organisation Studies of Tilburg University, the bachelor's programme Personeelwetenschappen and the master's programme Human Resource Studies of Tilburg University. Because of the small scale of this cluster assessment, it was possible to have the programmes of both participating universities assessed by an almost identical committee.

On behalf of QANU, Dr. Floor Meijer acted as cluster coordinator and secretary for the site visit at Tilburg University. During the site visit at the VU University Amsterdam, the committee was supported by Dr. Marianne van der Weiden.

In advance of the assessment of the programmes, the programme management prepared a self-evaluation report. After a check by the committee's secretary to ensure that the information provided was complete, the self-evaluation report was forwarded to the committee members. In addition to the self-evaluation report, each committee member received 15 recent theses produced by students of the programmes. The coordinator of the committee selected 15 theses per programme randomly from a list of all graduates of the last two years. This pre-selection was then divided among the committee members by the chairman. The theses studied by the committee covered the full range of marks: every committee member received at least one thesis with a low mark (6-6.5), one with an intermediate mark (7-8) and one with a high mark (8.5+). The committee members used QANU's checklist for the assessment of theses to ensure that their assessments were comparable and covered the relevant aspects.

### *The site visit*

The site visit took place on 7 September 2012 and was preceded by a kick-off meeting on 4 September 2012 and a preparatory meeting on 6 September 2012. Prof. Reagans was not able to be present at the site visit due to problems with his traveling schedule.

During the general kick-off meeting, the committee members received an introduction into the assessment framework and evaluation procedures and agreed upon their general working

method. In the preparatory meeting, the committee discussed their findings on the self-evaluation report and theses of the VU University Amsterdam programmes and decided which issues to raise in their meetings with the representatives of the programmes.

The programme for the site visit, which is included in Appendix 2, was drawn up by the coordinator in consultation with the programme management and the chair of the committee. During the site visit the committee conducted interviews with the programme management, students, lecturers, graduates, members of the Educational Committee and the Board of Examiners. In addition, the committee studied the documentation that was made available by the programme, including learning materials, written exams, assignments and other assessments. It also explored the programme's Blackboard environment. An open office hour was scheduled and announced, but no one made use of it.

After the concluding interview with the management, the committee held an internal meeting in which it discussed its findings, phrased its conclusions and gave its assessment of the themes and standards making up the assessment framework. Finally, the chairman of the committee presented the committee's preliminary findings to staff and students of the programmes.

#### *Report*

Following the site visit, the secretary of the committee produced a draft report in which the findings of the committee are presented. This draft report was amended and corrected by the committee members. After the committee had approved the draft report, it was sent to the Department, inviting it to check for factual errors, inaccuracies and inconsistencies. The secretary forwarded the comments and suggestions provided by the Board and Institute to the chairman of the committee and, where necessary, to the other committee members. The committee decided whether the comments and suggestions were to be incorporated in the report or ignored. On the basis of the committee's decisions, the secretary compiled the final version of the programme report.

#### *Decision rules*

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments (as of 22 November 2011), the committee used the following definitions for the assessment of both the standards and the programme as a whole.

#### **Generic quality**

The quality that can reasonably be expected in an international perspective from a higher education bachelor's or master's programme.

#### **Unsatisfactory**

The programme does not meet the current generic quality standards and shows serious shortcomings in several areas.

#### **Satisfactory**

The programme meets the current generic quality standards and shows an acceptable level across its entire spectrum.

#### **Good**

The programme systematically surpasses the current generic quality standards across its entire spectrum.

**Excellent**

The programme systematically well surpasses the current generic quality standards across its entire spectrum and is regarded as an (inter)national example.



## Summary judgement

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This report presents the findings and considerations of the committee Organisation Studies on the master's programme Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie (BCO; Policy, Communication and Organisation) at VU University Amsterdam. The committee bases its assessment on information from the self-evaluation report, additional information obtained from the discussions during the visit, the selected theses, and the documentation that was available for inspection during the site visit. For this programme, the committee has identified positive aspects as well as ones that could be improved. After having considered them, the committee has reached the conclusion that the course meets the requirements for basic quality that form the condition for re-accreditation.

### **Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes**

The one-year BCO programme offers an academic master's programme in the field of Organisation Sciences. The target group consists of students who have an interest in social processes and their influence on the functioning of organisations and who want to go beyond the simple facts and solutions.

The multidisciplinary programme focuses on complexity and problem formulation. Acquisition of knowledge plays an important role, but is seen as a means rather than as an end. Students learn how the field of organisation sciences has developed over time and what the most recent developments are. They learn to analyse the social aspects of organisations and to apply their insights to a broad variety of institutions, recognising the diversity in and of organisations.

At the end of the programme, students have acquired knowledge and insights in the field of organisation sciences and organisational research. They are able to apply their knowledge in practical settings and to perform an independent research project. They are also able to communicate about their work to different types of audience. They have acquired a critical and reflective attitude.

The committee concludes that the BCO programme is clearly designed as an academic master's programme. It has a strong focus on research and on a scientific and critical attitude. The links with the professional field are strong. The programme is well aware of the relevant developments in the labour market. The committee advises that a more elaborate domain-specific framework should be drawn up by the relevant departments at VU University and Tilburg University to guide the further development of the BCO programme in the wider context of Organisation Studies.

### **Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment**

The BCO programme is well-structured. It consists of four months of thematic coursework, introducing the students to the field. Students can select one of four tracks: Organisations in their Environment; Communication in and between Organisations; Organisation of Health Care; Consultancy and Change.

During this period students select a topic for their master's research project for which they write a research proposal in January. After it is approved they collect their data during a period of fieldwork, analyse them and write a master's thesis. A Research Lab at the beginning of the period of fieldwork teaches students the necessary methodological skills.

Lecturers use a variety of teaching methods: sometimes traditional lectures, but more often interactive working groups, small group and individual assignments, peer reviews and methodological workshops. In addition, students are expected to devote time to self-study.

The committee advises the programme staff to develop a policy on internationalisation. At the moment the focus is entirely on Dutch organisations and issues, but the EU context cannot be overlooked, and the programme will benefit from a more international perspective.

An increasing number of students is interested in the BCO programme, many with a background in higher vocational education. These students are admitted after they have successfully completed a premaster's programme. For financial reasons the premaster's programme will be shortened to 30 EC. At the same time the entrance requirements have been raised so that the quality of the incoming students is expected to remain at the same level.

The committee finds the feasibility of the programme to be reasonable. The structure of the programme allows students who want to obtain their degree within one year to do so.

The teaching staff of the BCO programme is well qualified and covers the broad range of experience, theoretical background and methodological preferences that are needed for this multidisciplinary programme. The teaching load is high, especially because of the large number of master's theses to be supervised. Contacts between lecturers and students are frequent and informal. Students express their appreciation of this.

### **Standard 3: Assessment and achieved learning outcomes**

Courses are assessed by a variety of tests and assignments. The research proposal and the master's thesis are evaluated by two assessors. The quality of the assessments is monitored by the Board of Examiners who have issued a number of useful guidelines. The next step is to check on their implementation.

The committee has checked a representative sample of theses and generally found the marking to be fair and consistent. In some cases the presentation of the literature and the data were quite good, but the discussion paragraph failed to link them sufficiently. The committee recommends that the assessment criteria for the various methodological approaches be worked out in more detail to provide more guidance.

On the basis of the theses, the committee concludes that graduates achieve an academic master's level. This conclusion is confirmed by the experiences recounted by the alumni. BCO graduates find relevant jobs at an appropriate level within a fairly short time, and they are satisfied with the knowledge, skills and attitude they acquired in the programme.

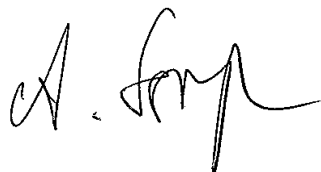
The committee assesses the standards from the Assessment framework for limited programme assessments in the following way:

#### *Master's programme Policy, Communication and Organisation:*

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	satisfactory
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	satisfactory
Standard 3: Assessment and achieved learning outcomes	satisfactory
General conclusion	satisfactory

The chair and the secretary of the committee hereby declare that all members of the committee 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: 4 December 2012



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Prof. Arndt Sorge



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Dr. Marianne van der Weiden

## Description of the standards from the Assessment framework for limited programme assessments

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The master's programme Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie (Policy, Communication and Organisation, BCO) is organised by the Department of Organisation Sciences, which also hosts the master's programme Culture, Organisation and Management (COM), a premaster's programme in Organisation Sciences, and the bachelor's programme Public Administration and Organisation (in collaboration with the Department of Governance Studies). Organisation Sciences is one of the seven scientific departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The BCO master's programme is a broad, one-year programme that has existed at the VU since 2003 and has grown steadily to a sizeable programme with 138 students in 2011 and almost 200 in the 2012-2013 academic year.

The programme has been restructured twice. In 2006 a semester structure was introduced, and in 2011 the structure was aligned with the VU-wide annual academic calendar. Key changes included the introduction of a more focused Research Lab and the opportunity for specialisation by the incorporation of four tracks. At the same time the two master's programmes of the department were linked more closely. Both now share one central basic course (Organisation Sciences) and provide a similar route towards the master's thesis (courses for Research Proposal, Research Lab and a 24 EC master's thesis). A joint one-year premaster's programme Organisation Sciences was created to accommodate students lacking the qualifications for direct access to the master's programme.

The assessment committee describes and evaluates the COM and the BCO programmes in two separate reports.

### **Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes**

The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements.

#### **Explanation:**

As for level and orientation (bachelor's or master's; professional or academic), the intended learning outcomes fit into the Dutch qualifications framework. In addition, they tie in with the international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme.

### **1.1. Findings**

This section contains the assessment of the committee on the profile and orientation of the programme (1.1.1), the domain-specific framework of reference (1.1.2), the intended learning outcomes (1.1.3) and the relationship between learning outcomes and professional practice (1.1.4).

#### **1.1.1. Profile and orientation**

The self-evaluation report describes the BCO master's programme as follows. The programme offers a thorough education in the field of organisational science and methods of organisational research. An organisation is viewed as a purposeful union of ideas, skills and power between multiple individuals that utilises resources and carries out activities to fulfil specific needs in its environment. Organisations are created with a view to their direction (intended/future) and objectives: policy-making. In order to reach the organisational

objectives the individuals involved have to communicate: exchange and interpret messages within a context of relational and situational factors with the intention to mutually influence each other.

The BCO programme is multidisciplinary: insights from several social sciences disciplines are utilised, including (organisation) psychology, sociology, public administration and communication science. BCO focuses on complexity and problem formulation: processes of organisation are typically complex and cannot be captured by simple models. Students have to learn to focus on the formulation of relevant and precise questions rather than merely searching for the answer or solution to specific problems. They develop research skills, are confronted with a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods for organisational research in their coursework, and choose a specific methodology to develop more advanced methodological skills in their master thesis project.

The self-evaluation report describes three characteristics of the programme. The first is the attention to contemporary developments. While early insights and classic works are addressed, specific attention is devoted to the latest developments in the field via the discussion of contemporary issues in organisations, including increasing flexibility, virtualisation, new and online media in inter- and intra-organisational communication. A second characteristic is the focus on social aspects of organisation rather than on technical or financial aspects. The topics are seldom related to specific organisational parts or departments (i.e. human resources, marketing, accounting), but rather address issues that cross organisations or organisational departments (e.g. dealing with contracts and conflicts, innovation, change, culture). Finally, students learn to recognise and do justice to the diversity of organisations. They learn to translate insights from the field of strategy that have been developed in the context of for-profit firms to semi-public organisations and/or NGOs.

The focus on specific themes in the four tracks ensures a stronger relationship between the master's programme and the on-going research projects of the participating staff members. It also fosters connections with the work field. Students develop insight into the specific issues of the field and come into contact with potential future employers.

After completing the one-year BCO master programme, students will be able to analyse and develop contemporary issues at the intersection of the three areas of Policy, Communication and Organisation. The academic orientation of the programme is reflected in the emphasis on the positioning of the domain vis-à-vis related domains such as governance studies, business administration, the development of the field of organisation sciences over time, and critical reflection on the differences and similarities of the various theoretical perspectives. BCO graduates will have acquired a critical mind-set towards the various theoretical perspectives, an inquisitive approach to contemporary issues in organisation and the ability to evaluate research outcomes and place them within an overarching framework.

The committee did not find a national or international benchmark in the self-evaluation report. It is convinced that an academic programme in Organisation Sciences such as BCO has an added value next to the more traditional programmes in business administration and governance studies, but would have preferred to see more explicit awareness of the differences and similarities to other programmes. Nevertheless, the committee finds the programme goals as formulated in the self-evaluation report, to be sensible and clear. The BCO profile fits well within the focus on applied social sciences and on social embeddedness that VU University wants to develop further.

### ***1.1.2. Domain-specific framework of reference***

In preparation for the cluster assessment, VU University Amsterdam and University of Tilburg have drawn up a domain-specific framework for Organisation Studies. It emphasises the multidisciplinary approach. The programmes to be assessed use a variety of disciplinary lenses but share insights from organisational sociology and organisational psychology. A common aspect in all programmes is that these insights are applied to seek understanding of organisations and organising at and across a variety of levels. The Organisation Studies domain is further characterised by multiple methodological approaches, predominantly taken from the social sciences. For a full description, see Appendix 3.

The domain-specific framework is very limited in its scope. The committee would have liked to see a more intelligent formulation of what is common to the programmes in Organisational Studies at VU University Amsterdam and Tilburg University. The table provided seems to point out the differences between the programmes rather than their common ground and fails to provide coherence, detail and explanation. A national and international benchmarking of the programme is not presented either.

### ***1.1.3. Intended learning outcomes***

To ensure that the BCO programme meets international standards and the level of a master programme, the following learning aims were formulated in the self-evaluation report:

**Knowledge and insight:** Students have to master a wide range of reading texts, including scholarly articles that are published in scientific journals and textbooks. The list of required reading texts is updated every year to reflect contemporary developments in the domain. To establish a connection between the scholarly debate and the on-going public debate, some lecturers also prescribe recent governmental or economic reports. From period 2 onwards, students have to identify and select additional reading materials, under the supervision of their lecturer or supervisor, to work on their own research projects.

**Application of knowledge and insight:** Throughout the programme students are challenged to apply their knowledge and insights in a variety of new and previously unfamiliar organisational and institutional contexts. This ranges from the analysis of a given dataset in light of the literature that has been addressed to the formulation of a research proposal which they consequently have to carry out in their master thesis project.

**Communication:** Students are able to communicate complex information, ideas and solutions clearly and with an eye for nuance to an audience of scholars, experts and professionals, both in writing and orally. They will be able to present research data and findings in a structured and meaningful manner in their research reports.

**Learning skills:** Students develop the learning skills that are necessary either to continue their education in a doctorate programme or to enter the work field as a professional. They exercise a high level of autonomy in their work and are able to identify and evaluate the quality of sources to serve as a basis for further study and research.

**Making judgements:** Students have to evaluate and be critical about research findings in relevant social or scientific debates and ethical issues. They will learn to put the reliability and generalisability of often incomplete data into perspective and evaluate their relevance.

For an overview of the knowledge goals, skill goals and judgement goals, and how these learning objectives are distributed over the individual courses, see Appendix 4.

The coursework stimulates students to develop a scientific and critical attitude. More than half of the BCO programme is devoted to the research project, its preparation and the writing of the thesis.

The committee has compared the learning objectives with the Dublin descriptors and concludes that they reflect the required level of knowledge, skills and attitude for a master's programme. The focus on research and on a scientific and critical attitude fits an academic orientation. The committee therefore concludes that the BCO programme is clearly designed as an academic master's programme.

#### ***1.1.4. Relationship between learning outcomes and professional practice***

The learning objectives and final qualifications are aimed to produce alumni who are well prepared and able to work as professionals in a wide variety of organisational settings and contexts.

Despite the academic character and research focus of the programme alumni will not necessarily become researchers. Having developed strong research skills and academic thinking, the self-evaluation report states that they are able to contribute to a wide variety of complex organisational issues and dilemmas. When confronted with such issues and dilemmas, they take a critical (self-) reflective approach to new information and situations, and acknowledge the complexities involved rather than opting for an oversimplified solution. As a result of this, they will be employable in a large number of sectors including consultancy, professional services, government, health care, and higher education.

The committee has taken note of the programme's sensitivity to developments in the labour market and the professional field. The programme pays attention to the specificity of policy analysis in practical settings, as is shown in the course content and the topics for the thesis work. This is seen as a strong point.

### **1.2. Considerations**

The committee considered the aim and the profile of the programme as described in the self-evaluation report and as expressed in the panel discussions with staff and students during the site visit.

The committee recognises that the programme aims to deliver graduates who are knowledgeable in the specific area of policy, communication and organisation and who can apply this knowledge in a critical and reflective way in different sorts of organisations. It finds that the intended learning outcomes as described in terms of knowledge goals, skills goals and judgement goals and compared with the Dublin descriptors are consistent with the level of an academic master's programme. The full range of intended learning outcomes is addressed in the courses and the thesis research project. The strong research focus of the programme is clearly recognisable and supports the academic profile.

There are direct links with the professional field, and the programme is able to specify its policy analysis to practical settings. Alumni are able to contribute to issues and dilemmas in the field. The committee therefore draws the conclusion that the programme is able to fulfil the needs of future employers.

The BCO programme is a part of the wider field of Organisation Studies and part of a larger Department of Organisation Sciences within the university. Therefore, the committee advises developing a domain-specific framework more seriously, as a background to future

developments of the programme's contents. In addition, a regular benchmarking exercise with national and international programmes in the same area is recommended.

### **1.3. Conclusion**

*Master's programme Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie (Policy, Communication and Organisation):* the committee assesses Standard 1 as **satisfactory**.



## **Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment**

The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

### **Explanation:**

The contents and structure of the curriculum enable the students admitted to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The quality of the staff and of the programme-specific services and facilities is essential to that end. Curriculum, staff, services and facilities constitute a coherent teaching-learning environment for the students.

## **2.1. Findings**

This section on the teaching-learning environment examines whether the curriculum, staff and facilities enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Aspects that will be discussed successively are: the structure and coherence of the curriculum (2.1.1), didactic principles (2.1.2), internationalisation (2.1.3), feasibility (2.1.4), intake and outflow of students (2.1.5), staff (2.1.6), programme-specific quality assurance (2.1.7). Finally, attention is paid to the improvement measures that were made in response to the previous evaluation (2.1.8).

### ***2.1.1. Structure and coherence of the curriculum***

A schematic overview of the curriculum can be found in Appendix 5.

The BCO programme is designed with the view of delivering students who can produce a thorough piece of social sciences research, on the basis of independently conducted fieldwork. The programme starts with four thematic courses that provide the scientific foundation and theoretical intensification of the curriculum and that lay the basis for the second part of the curriculum, which is devoted to the actual research project and culminates in the master thesis.

All students begin the master programme with the Organisation Sciences course. This also forms the introductory course for the COM programme. It provides an overview of the major theoretical perspectives in the field and links them to concrete problems within various types of organisations. Students are stimulated to develop a critical attitude towards the literature and dominant perspectives in this field. This course is meant to establish a common frame of reference, which is especially necessary because of the broad variety in the disciplinary background of the bachelor students enrolling in the programme (from university and higher vocational institutes).

In parallel students follow a second mandatory course in period 1, depending on the track they have chosen. They learn to analyse data and to be attentive to method and data sections in the literature they study.

To deepen their theoretical insights, students follow one mandatory and one of two elective courses for their track in period 2 (November-December). In order to establish a connection between theory and its application and relevance for practice, all courses in period 2a include a visit to an organisation and the analysis of an organisational issue of a problem observed in this organisation. Assessment is based on the formulation of a specific research question connecting the observed empirical problem in light of the literature studied, and the creation of an appropriate research design. The course in period 2b focuses on the systematic review of the literature.

From period 3 onwards, the curriculum is dedicated to preparing and performing the empirical research that supports the qualifying examination, i.e. the master thesis. Period 3

(January) is reserved for the writing of a research proposal for the master thesis project. The proposal is evaluated on its own merits and, due to the short time period available for the programme, on its chances of becoming a feasible master thesis project that can be finished before the deadline.

The Research Lab in period 4 (February-March) is dedicated to the advancement of the students' methodological skills. Workshops include multivariate analysis, experiments and laboratory research, qualitative interpretive research, case study, and social network research. Attention is paid to the operationalisation, measurement, collection and analysis of relevant data.

The entire second semester (February-June) is further dedicated to the fieldwork, the analysis of empirical data and the subsequent writing of an original academic report. The topics of the thesis build directly or indirectly on topics addressed during the thematic courses of periods 1 and 2. On the basis of their results, students have to show they can make a contribution to the existing theory and thereby advance the field of organisation sciences.

Generally speaking, the students seem to be satisfied with the structure of the programme. They describe the first course, Organisation Science, as an eye-opener. The selection of thesis topic, appropriate research method and supervisor early in the programme is appreciated. Some students would prefer classes to be linked more closely to the lecturer's research interests. This would provide a better preparation for the thesis work since thesis topics are based on the staff's research.

In summary, the committee finds that the BCO programme has achieved a good balance between providing insight into the common aspects of organisation science as seen from a specific policy and communication perspective and the personal interests of students as expressed in their choice of tracks and master's thesis projects.

### ***2.1.2. Didactic principles***

Throughout the programme students work increasingly independently. Likewise, the supervision provided by the lecturers becomes more and more individualised and directed at the specific needs of each student.

The BCO programme uses a variety of teaching methods and approaches. Traditional lectures are part of many of the thematic courses. Guest lectures by experts and professionals from the field as well as the use of film and documentaries stimulate students to consider the consequences for the practice.

All courses except for the first course on Organisational Sciences involve interactive workgroups where students and lecturers work towards the development of new insights, either on the basis of the reading materials or of the assignments students are working on. Small group and individual assignments as well as formal or informal peer review form part of the teaching approach. Methodological workshops form an important part of multiple courses.

Some students expressed the view that the introductory course on Organisation Sciences is too large in terms of student numbers. Because it is a common course for COM and BCO, it has more than 200 students, large lectures and a multiple choice exam. With regard to all the other courses, they applauded the personalised approach. The many written assignments were described as 'a struggle' but useful to attain a better understanding and to relate to the

literature. During the site visit the students mentioned as a strong point of the programme its focus on open mindedness, teaching students that there are no fixed solutions.

During the visit the committee recognised the personalised contacts between staff and students. The course on Organisation Sciences has a different set-up which may be less attractive to students, but the committee supports the intention to establish a common framework for both COM and BCO students with their respective heterogeneous disciplinary backgrounds.

### ***2.1.3. Internationalisation***

The BCO programme is taught mainly in Dutch. Some courses are in English, because they are shared with the international COM master programme (Organisation Sciences) or with other programmes for international students. Furthermore, being able to participate in English language education is included in the intended learning outcomes: a fair command of the English language (in writing and speech) is considered a valuable preparation for the students' future careers (also see Appendix 4).

The programme is oriented towards institutions in the Netherlands and the Dutch labour market. Lecturers have strong contacts with Dutch companies. The committee recognises these links as a positive aspect of the BCO programme as it strengthens the societal relevance of the programme and helps alumni to find appropriate positions. Apparently it is a deliberate choice of the programme management not to invest in internationalisation. Nevertheless, the committee is convinced that by doing so, the programme misses opportunities. The mission of the programme is formulated more broadly, and the context of organisation sciences is broadening as well. The international perspective and the context of the EU cannot be overlooked. In addition, other universities are developing international programmes in this area, which means that there will be stronger competition for students in the future.

The committee therefore advises the programme to reconsider its policy in this respect, in line with the ambitions of the VU at the university level.

### ***2.1.4. Feasibility***

The restructuring of the programme in 2011 was intended to increase the number of master students graduating on time, and to achieve a concomitant quality improvement. Students are guided early in the programme (October-November) to select a topic for their master's research project, to elaborate this into a research proposal (January) and to prepare for their research methodology in the Research Lab course (February-March). Students are supervised both individually and in thesis circles.

On average, students have between 10 and 12 contact hours a week in periods 1, 2 and 3. Self-study of the scientific literature (recent scientific publications in international peer-reviewed journals and books) forms an important part of the curriculum. Contact hours and self-study add up to a full time programme.

The Board of Examiners informed staff and students last year (2011-2012) that the June deadline for submitting the thesis would be strictly enforced. This had a positive effect on timely submissions.

Students indicated during the site visit that it is possible to finish the programme in one year if they put their mind to it. In itself BCO is therefore feasible as a one-year programme. The fact remains, however, that 40% of the students do not finish on time. The main reasons

given by staff are that students have many competing activities such as jobs. Sometimes these are part-time jobs to earn some money but students who have enrolled in the BCO programme after having completed a bachelor's degree in higher vocational education have often found work in that field and want to combine the programme with their job. In addition, there is little outside pressure to finish within one year. Finally, it sometimes happens that the data collected during the fieldwork are so interesting that both student and supervisor want to take more time to fully explore them.

The committee recognises this dilemma. A one-year programme is not much time to attain the intended learning outcomes, especially when fieldwork is involved and students are encouraged to look beyond the simple solutions. In these circumstances, the department has been able to develop a programme that can be done in one year and has done well in establishing a structure that guides students along their study paths.

### ***2.1.5. Intake and outflow of students***

For a quantitative overview of intake, through flow and output figures, see Appendix 6.

The BCO programme receives applicants from various disciplinary backgrounds and seems to be particularly attractive to students from a broad range of institutions of higher vocational training (hbo). Over the years the programme has steadily grown in size, reaching an intake of almost 200 students in 2012-2013. The majority of these students have a background in higher vocational education, and the intake from other Dutch universities is approximately half of that from the VU itself.

During the site visit the committee learned that the department cherishes the heterogeneity in its students' backgrounds and consciously aims at a large variety of intake: 50% from higher vocational institutes, 20% from its 'own' bachelor's degrees.

Should student numbers continue to rise, the department fears their quality standards will be challenged, especially regarding the supervision of master thesis projects. They would like to investigate the possibilities of a fixed quota of 175-200 students. In the short term current political uncertainty ('langstudeerdersboete') seems to be leading to a lower intake of bachelor students from higher vocational education, first into the premaster's programme and the following year into the master's programme.

All admissions are handled by the Examination Board. Students with a bachelor's degree in Governance and Organisation Sciences are admitted directly. Those with a bachelor's degree from another programme of the Faculty of Social Sciences can be admitted if they have passed three courses which are mentioned specifically in the Rules and Regulations. Admission is also possible on the basis of a bachelor's degree from an institute of higher vocational education if the candidate obtains satisfactory marks on completion of the premaster's programme.

The premaster's programme (60 EC) is a mix of methodological and substantial courses, concluding with a premaster thesis. It adapts students to the new institutional environment in terms of academic orientation (theory and research focus, reflectivity) which clearly differs from the more practical orientation of their original bachelor's programmes.

Both staff and students praise the result of the premaster's programme. The department has decided to shorten it to 30 EC as of 2012-13. This is done to decrease the costs for students because the premaster's programme is not funded by the government nor by the VU

University. Staff members mentioned to the committee that they are aware that this will put more pressure on the first semester programme next year to get all students to a common level. They describe it as a balancing act since the heterogeneity and variety of students are seen as an asset. They are not too apprehensive about the effects on students' success since the admission criteria for the premaster's programme have been tightened. Also, they find that students with a weaker background are usually aware that they will have to work harder, which, combined with a strong motivation, generally leads to good results.

Of the 2011-2012 cohort, approximately 60% of the students were able to finish their studies within the same academic year. This is a considerable increase compared to the results of the previous programme. About half of the remaining students are expected to finish their studies in the period September-December, and the final group will take longer.

#### ***2.1.6. Staff***

Practically all teaching is provided by staff members of the Department of Organisation Sciences. The student-staff ratio is 1:25.5.

The core courses are taught by members of the department, all of them educated at the PhD level. The lecturers who are responsible for the thematic courses are all involved in scientific research in the domain of their particular course. In courses with larger student numbers, these course coordinators are supported by doctoral students or junior lecturers who act as guest lecturers on their topic of research and/or support lecturers in grading assignments. The diversity of the scientific and teaching staff is large both in terms of experience, theoretical background, and methodological preferences.

Almost all lecturers either have obtained the basic academic teaching qualification as required by the VU University or an equivalent. Those who have not yet obtained this qualification are currently participating in the programme to obtain it within the next 12 months.

The increase in the number of students means that the required number of staff for the supervision of the master thesis projects exceeds the capacity of the teaching staff of the courses. To deal with this, each of the scientific and teaching staff members of the department supervises at least one, but typically more, master thesis projects. This includes PhD students and lecturers from the bachelor's and premaster's programmes. The use of experienced teachers as co-supervisors guarantees that the required quality is maintained. Increasingly, staff from the parallel COM programme is asked to supervise master thesis projects in BCO, and vice versa. This practice mixes perspectives and broadens research horizons, both among the students and the supervising staff.

The distribution of staff time between education and research is set at 70-30%. Staff members combine their research and teaching, both by teaching about their own research and by using the input of students in their research projects.

#### ***2.1.7. Programme-specific quality assurance***

All courses are critically evaluated by student questionnaires. The educational committee described the 2011-2012 academic year, the first year after the restructuring of the programme, as rather chaotic and indicated that some changes had to be improvised during the year. Not all of the information given to students was good enough at the start, but this was addressed quickly. Students expressed their appreciation that staff is always willing to listen to complaints and suggestions and that this leads to improvements in the programme. Links between staff and students are informal and short.

The educational committee has drawn up an agenda for the 2012-2013 academic year, including the translation of faculty measures such as the required increase of contact hours. It intends to follow up on comments from last year. The educational committee is aware that quality control is a crucial issue. The early detection of poor students before they start their thesis work is also an issue to be addressed. In the BCO programme the role of the study advisor is limited because of the strong personal relations between staff and students in coursework and in the thesis research projects.

The appreciation of the BCO programme as expressed in course evaluations by the students is much more positive than the outcomes of the NSE national student survey. Staff members ascribed the relatively low scores to quite serious IT problems at the time of the survey, which caused irritation among students: due to problems with the implementation of a new IT system, grades could not be reported on time, and registration for exams within the time set in the Rules and Regulations (Onderwijs- en Examenreglement) was not possible either.

### ***2.1.8. Improvements after the last evaluation***

The previous assessment of the BCO programme took place in 2006. The assessment committee found the quality to be satisfactory to good on all points.

At that time the master's programme had only been in place since 2004, which made it difficult for the committee to draw strong conclusions on some issues such as its feasibility within one year. The current assessment committee expects that especially the clear division between course work in the first two periods and the preparation and the thesis research project in the second part of the programme will help the students to focus and finish on time.

The 2006 committee recommended paying more structural attention to the internal quality system. The proactive role of the educational committee and especially the student members of that committee show that this issue is being taken seriously.

On the issue of internationalisation, the 2006 committee wrote that the programme intends to profit more from frequent international staff contacts in the future. Therefore, the lack of focus on internationalisation of the current BCO staff is a little surprising. The current committee recommends putting this issue on the agenda in the near future.

## **2.2. Considerations**

To bring bachelor students to the level of an academic master's degree in a one-year programme requires a well-structured combination of courses and independent work. The committee considers the coursework in the BCO programme a good foundation for the subsequent research project.

The BCO staff puts much effort into stimulating and guiding the students to select a thesis topic, elaborate this in a solid research proposal and enter the phase of doing their own empirical research. In the first year of this new curriculum (2011-2012), not everything has worked out as envisaged. Both staff and students indicated that lecturers are open to criticism and suggestions for improvement. The committee therefore expects that most of the teething problems will be eliminated this year.

The individualised teaching method, especially in the master research project, is a strong asset of the BCO programme. Although the heterogeneity of the students' background is large, the

programme succeeds in creating a community during the year of study. At the end the differences in background are no longer visible.

The BCO programme is taught mainly in Dutch and focuses on institutions in the Netherlands and the Dutch labour market. Although this profile strengthens the societal relevance of the programme and helps alumni to find appropriate positions, the committee is convinced that the programme misses opportunities by doing so. It therefore advises the programme to reconsider its policy in this respect, in line with the ambitions of the VU at the university level.

The committee considers the programme to be feasible, even though the pass rate after one year is 60%. Students make their own choices to take more time, mostly for valid reasons.

Bachelor graduates from higher vocational education first have to pass a one-year premaster's programme. The committee finds this a good preparation for the BCO programme. For the new academic year (2012-2013) the premaster's programme will be shortened to 30 EC for financial reasons. The staff expects that the qualitative results will be more or less comparable because the entry requirements have been tightened. The quantitative effect will probably be a drop in the intake of this group of students.

The staff is well qualified to teach the programme. The teaching load is high, especially because of the large number of students to be supervised during their research projects. The committee can therefore understand that the BCO staff would not be too unhappy with a lower intake of students in the next few years. This would enable them to address some quality issues for which sufficient time has been lacking.

The educational committee has taken a proactive approach and has, in close consultation with students and staff members, tried to remedy last year's problems in the new programme structure.

The 2006 assessment committee particularly mentioned the need to strengthen the internal quality control mechanisms. The proactive role of the educational committee shows that this issue has been addressed. The committee is a little surprised that the intentions on internationalisation have not been implemented.

Summarising, the committee is convinced that the teaching-learning environment has been designed and is executed in such a way that students are generally able to achieve the intended learning outcomes within the one-year period of the programme.

### **2.3. Conclusion**

*Master's programme Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie (Policy, Communication and Organisation):* the committee assesses Standard 2 as **satisfactory**.

### **Standard 3: Assessment and achieved learning outcomes**

The programme has an adequate assessment system in place and demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

**Explanation:**

The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests, final projects and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes. The tests and assessments are valid, reliable and transparent to the students.

### **3.1. Findings**

This section consists of two parts. First, it deals with the committee's findings with regard to the system of assessment (3.1.1). Secondly, it answers the question of whether students achieve the intended learning outcomes (3.1.2).

#### ***3.1.1. Assessment system***

In the BCO programme a variety of assessment methods is used, depending on the learning objectives to be achieved. The focus is on written assignments, to stimulate students to gain a thorough understanding of the literature instead of just memorising it. Resits are available for each course and typically take place about eight weeks after the original exam.

The Organisation Sciences introductory course is examined on the basis of an individual test which is largely based on multiple choice questions in combination with two open questions. The other thematic courses are evaluated and tested on the basis of a combination of several small group and individual assignments and tests which include both written assignments and in some cases, multiple choice. Individual assignments and tests make up at least half of the final grade of a course to limit the effects of potential 'free rider behaviour' in group assignments.

In the week prior to the final assignment or test, lecturers either prepare a response lecture or are available for feedback and questions. Students receive sample questions via Blackboard to prepare for their tests or a list of the evaluation criteria of the assignments. After the grading of assignments and tests, students have the opportunity to review their results in a session organised by the course's lecturers.

To enhance the quality of the multiple choice exams lecturers can refer to the handbook and checklist for question construction. Multiple choice exams are processed by the Education Centre, which also analyses the reliability of the exam. Lecturers are expected to cross-check their open-ended questions and assignments with co-teachers or a colleague who is an expert in the field in order to ensure their clarity, consistency and quality. It is not certain if this really happens, and the committee advises the Board of Examiners to put this on the agenda. Course evaluation forms by the students provide feedback on the clarity of the assignments.

To guarantee the quality of the achieved learning outcomes two lecturers are always involved in evaluating the Research Proposal and the master thesis. The evaluation of the Research Proposal is done via mutual consultation. The master thesis is evaluated independently. While the supervisor will take into account the process that leads to the final product in his or her evaluation (e.g. level of independence, integration of feedback), the second evaluator focuses solely on the quality of the final product, thereby ensuring a minimal quality level is maintained at all times. The evaluation of the master thesis is based on the overall quality of the written product but even more so on the quality of the theoretical arguments, the consistency and application of the method chosen, the quality of the data collection and



analysis, the level of insight, and the reflective quality shown in the discussion section. The students are made aware of the evaluation criteria for each aspect by the inclusion of the evaluation form in an information booklet used during the yearly thesis market, as well as on the Blackboard page for the master thesis.

The Board of Examiners is responsible for the standards of the programme. To ensure the quality of the exams and assessments, the Board of Examiners has issued a number of guidelines for staff: on the need to have exam questions and assignments checked by a knowledgeable colleague (four-eyes principle), on how to formulate clear questions (multiple choice and open questions) and on the importance of a test matrix to cover all learning objectives per course.

The department has reviewed the results of the BCO and COM master theses over the period 2004-2010. This review shows that some lecturers systematically mark scores that are below or above the standard deviation, that first supervisors generally mark higher than the second assessor, that there is a substantial number of stable couples of first and second assessors and that some of these 'couples' systematically give lower or higher marks. Finally, it was found that there are huge differences in the number of students supervised by one and the same lecturer and that the number of 'cum laude' students is below the Faculty's average. This review has led to a number of recommendations which should produce a more even distribution of supervisees among staff and more awareness of the grading process.

The Board of Examiners has provided a good basis by formulating clear guidelines, e.g. by using the outcomes of the survey on thesis marking, but this should be followed in the near future by a check on adherence by staff. The proactive role of the Board of Examiners has become a legal requirement but is not yet fully implemented in this Faculty.

The committee checked a number of the assignments provided as part of the documentation during the site visit and found them to be of adequate quality. The students expressed their satisfaction with the assessment system because of its focus on assignments that challenge them to relate to the literature and the theoretical framework. There are no immediate concerns about the quality of the assessment system, but nevertheless the committee finds it vulnerable because the Board of Examiners so far has not checked whether staff members have truly implemented the assessment guidelines.

As regards the thesis evaluations, the committee strongly encourages a greater dialogue among staff about marking procedures across different methodological approaches, in order to reach formalised standards on the weight of various factors for each methodology. This exercise should be monitored by the Board of Examiners, and the outcomes should be announced to the students.

### ***3.1.2. Achievement of intended learning outcomes***

To assess whether students achieve the intended learning outcomes, the committee studied a representative sample of theses. Generally speaking, the assessments by members of the committee were well in line with the grades given by staff.

While some theses were very strong in presenting their findings in a well-written narrative, the committee would have expected to see them fed back into the literature and theoretical framework. The committee expects more theorisation and reflection in a social sciences master thesis. It is important that supervisors and the Board of Examiners discuss their grading standards more fully. Staff members admitted that students have more difficulties

with theory and discussion than with the methodological part of the thesis. The importance of the discussion part of the thesis was therefore emphasised quite strongly in the 2011-2012 cohort, and supervisors find this has already led to an improvement on that score.

Supervisors sometimes think that a student has the potential to develop the thesis further, but that time constraints keep them from doing so. A thorough analysis often takes more time than that provided in the programme structure. The committee concludes that students and staff are therefore confronted with the choice either to reduce their expectations or to extend the length of the study period.

Staff members often keep in touch with students they have supervised during the master thesis project. The information these alumni provide shows that BCO students are able to obtain relevant and valued jobs. The acquired skills enable them not only to obtain their first job but also to advance in their career. This informally obtained information is validated by the outcomes of a recent survey amongst a sample of 55 alumni who graduated since 2008. Almost 90% of BCO graduates have obtained jobs that strongly build on the programme, and three-quarters of them found a job within three months of graduation.

The committee met with a number of COM and BCO alumni who confirmed these positive outcomes. Most of them mention that it has been especially useful that the programme taught them to analyse an organisation, its policy and its change issues on different levels, looking beyond the immediate facts. They are convinced that this is a specific characteristic of the BCO programme, making it unique.

### 3.2. Considerations

The committee has looked into the assessment system. This is found to be transparent, valid and consistent. The theses are supervised and evaluated fairly. The committee recommends that the observations on grading bias, as noted in a recent survey, be taken seriously. The exchange of second assessors between the COM and BCO programmes is a good way to broaden horizons.

The Board of Examiners has taken the initiative to issue some proper guidelines to lecturers on issues related to assessment, but the committee is disappointed to note that they have not checked on the implementation of these guidelines. The Board of Examiners should take a more proactive role in this respect.

The committee evaluated a representative sample of theses. Generally speaking, the committee's marks were in line with the original grades. In some cases the committee would have liked to see a stronger discussion section, linking the data back to the theoretical framework and the scientific literature. The committee recommends developing specific and clear criteria to evaluate the different methodologies used in the theses.

The theses clearly show that the graduates achieve the required master's level. This is confirmed by the experiences of the alumni on the labour market.

### 3.3. Conclusion

*Master's programme Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie (Policy, Communication and Organisation):* the committee assesses Standard 3 as **satisfactory**.

## General conclusion

The committee judges the BCO programme to be a stimulating academic master's programme. The design of its structure, the way it is taught by qualified and committed staff members, and the conditions created for quality control all contribute to a fitting teaching-learning environment. The assessment of the learning outcomes in tests, assignments and, above all, the master thesis meets the required quality standards. Both the quality of the theses and the experiences of alumni show that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

The committee assesses the *Master's programme Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie (Policy, Communication and Organisation)* as **satisfactory**.



## Appendices

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## **Appendix 1: Curricula vitae of the members of the assessment committee**

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**Prof. Arndt Sorge (chair)** was appointed Honorary Professor at the Faculty of Economics and Social Science, University of Potsdam, Germany in 2009. He has been the Director of the Research Unit Internationalisation and Organisation, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (2006-2011), held the François Sellier chair as Professor of International Business and Management, Faculty of Management and Organisation, University of Groningen (2005-2010), where he also was Full Professor of Management, esp. Organisation Structuring (1999-2010). From 1997-1999 he was a Full Professor of Work and Organisation Sciences and the Scientific Director of the Work and Organisation Research Centre WORC at Tilburg University. From 1992 until 1997 Arndt Sorge was Full Professor of Industrial and Organisational Sociology at Humboldt University Berlin and at the same time part-time Professor in International Personnel Management and Industrial Relations at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of Maastricht University (1991-1997). Arndt Sorge obtained his Doctorate (Dr. sc. pol.) magna cum laude at the University of Münster in 1975 and his Habilitation in sociology at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurt/Main in 1985.

**Prof. Nelson Phillips** has been a Professor of Strategy and Organisational Behaviour and Head of the Organisation and Management Group at Imperial College Business School, London, UK since 2005. From 2002 until 2005 he held the Beckwith Chair in Management Studies at the Judge School of Business, University of Cambridge, UK, where he also was the MBA Director from 2002 until 2003. Nelson Phillips obtained his PhD from the University of Alberta, Canada in 1995. He has been a visiting professor at the Bocconi University, Milan, Italy and an Edward Clarence Dyason Universitas 21 Fellow at the Faculty of Economics and Commerce of Melbourne University, Australia. His research interests and contributions focus on Institutional Theory; Entrepreneurship, Family Business and Social Entrepreneurship; Technology Strategy and Innovation; and Qualitative Methods.

**Prof. Ray Reagans** has been an Associate Professor at Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge MA, USA since 2009. Previous appointments were at Carnegie Mellon University (Associate Professor, 2005-2009) and at Columbia University (Associate Professor, 2001-2005). He obtained his PhD in Sociology from the University of Chicago in 1998. His research interests focus on networks and their role in organisations. His articles on these issues have been published in books and in refereed journals such as *Organisation Science*, *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Management Science*.

**Prof. Hans Doorewaard** has been a Professor of Organisation Development at the Nijmegen School of Management (NSM), Radboud University Nijmegen since 1999. He obtained his PhD in Policy Sciences from the Radboud University Nijmegen in 1989, which was based on a study of hegemonic power processes in organisations. His educational and research interests include human resource management, power in organisations, gender in organisations, organisational change, team-based work, research methodology, and emotions in organisations. As a lecturer, Hans Doorewaard is involved in both the Nijmegen School of Management at the Radboud University Nijmegen and the Executive Degree Program in Business Administration (ABK) of the Radboud University Nijmegen. From 1999 to 2008, he was the educational director of the specialisation in 'Business Administration' of the Executive Degree Program in Business Administration of the Radboud University Nijmegen. From 2003 to 2008, Hans Doorewaard was the Associate Dean of Education at the Nijmegen

School of Management. Hans Doorewaard is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Management Research of the Nijmegen School of Management.

**Sanne Keurentjes BSc** is a master student of Organisation Studies at the Tilburg University where she also works as a student assistant. She obtained her bachelor degree in Organisation Studies from Tilburg University in 2012. Previously she studied at Fontys Sport Academy, Tilburg (2005-2009) and earned her degree as a teacher physical education.



## Appendix 2: Programme of the site visit

<b>Friday 7 September 2012</b>	
8.30-9.30	<b>Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Dr. Anton Hemerijck, Dean FSW</li> <li>• Prof. dr. Marcel Veenswijk, Head of Department Organisation Sciences</li> <li>• Dr. Frank de Bakker, Faculty Board, education</li> <li>• Dr. Frans Kamsteeg, Teaching Manager Department Organisation Sciences</li> <li>• Dr. Ingrid Wakkee, Coordinator Master's BCO and COM</li> </ul>
9.30-10.30	<b>Students M COM +M BCO</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merel Keiser (BCO)</li> <li>• Sjoerd Geraerts (BCO)</li> <li>• Deborah Duttonhofer (COM)</li> <li>• Thijs Willems (COM)</li> <li>• Marjolein Krol (COM)</li> </ul>
10.30-10.45	<b>Break</b>
10.45-11.45	<b>Lecturers M COM + M BCO</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Sierk Ybema (BCO, COM, Organisation Sciences)</li> <li>• Prof. Heidi Dahles (COM, Transnational Organisations in a Global World)</li> <li>• Dr. Dick de Gilder (BCO, Communicatie en Identiteit)</li> <li>• Prof. Alfons van Marrewijk (BCO, COM, Changing Organisational Culture)</li> <li>• Dr. Dirk Deichmann (BCO, Onderzoeks Lab, Strategisch Organiseren)</li> <li>• Dr. Cathy van Dyck (BCO, Zorgprocessen, Research Proposal)</li> </ul>
11.45-12.30	<b>Educational Committees COM and BCO</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Ida Sabelis (staff member)</li> <li>• Dr. Maria Dijkstra (staff member)</li> <li>• Prof. Alfons van Marrewijk (staff member)</li> <li>• Maartje Verspoor (student)</li> </ul>
12.30-13.15	<b>Lunch</b>
13.15-14.00	<b>Board of Examiners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Geert de Vries</li> <li>• Dr. Peter v.d. Sijde</li> <li>• Dr. Sytze Kingma</li> <li>• Dr. Sonja Utz</li> </ul>
14.00-14.30	<b>Alumni</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandra van Ooijen (BCO)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jurre Ongerling (BCO)</li> <li>• Nassira Hassani (BCO)</li> <li>• Suzan de Wit (BCO)</li> <li>• Roline Prummel (COM)</li> <li>• Machteld de Jong (COM)</li> <li>• Saar Scholten (COM)</li> </ul>
14.30-15.00	<b>Preparation final meeting with management</b>
15.00-16.00	<b>Final meeting with management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. dr. Anton Hemerijck, Dean FSW</li> <li>• Prof. dr. Marcel Veenswijk, Head of Department Organisation Sciences</li> <li>• Dr. Frank de Bakker, Faculty Board, education</li> <li>• Dr. Frans Kamsteeg, Teaching Manager Department Organisation Sciences</li> <li>• Dr. Ingrid Wakkee, Coordinator Master's BCO and COM</li> </ul>
16.00-18.00	<b>Formulating conclusions and open office hour</b>
18.00-18.30	<b>Presentation preliminary findings + drinks</b>

### Appendix 3: Domain-specific framework of reference

The domain-specific framework of reference is shared between VU and University of Tilburg.

The *multidisciplinary* educational programs in OS examine and critically apply knowledge about organizational processes and the structure, culture and adaptive dynamics of organizations. All programs use a variety of disciplinary lenses (see matrix), but share insights from organizational sociology and organizational psychology. These insights are applied to seek understanding of organizations and organizing on and across a *variety of levels* (individual, team or group, organization, networks of organizations, sector/field, society).

Empirical observation, conceptual development and theorizing are seen as equally important and mutually reinforcing. Given the broad range of organization-related questions addressed, the OS domain is characterized by *multiple methodological approaches*, mostly taken from the social sciences, and manifesting themselves in the utilization of a variety of both qualitative and quantitative methods, or combinations of the two.

Programs and disciplines	Organizational sociology	Organizational psychology	Anthropology	Economics	Communication science	Public administration	Other
Organisation Studies	x	x		x			
Human Resource Studies	x	x (and work psychology)		x			labor law educational sciences
Culture, Organization and Management	x	x	x (ethnography)			x	
Beleid, Communicatie en Organisatie	x	x			x (organizational communication)	x	



## Appendix 4: Intended learning outcomes

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Students who complete Master BCO (Knowledge Goals KG)

- are familiar with relevant terms, concepts and approaches from Organisation Science (KG1).
- have knowledge of various contemporary theories and approaches from organisation science, policy studies and communication sciences (KG2).
- can apply these theories and approaches to policy, organisation and communication issues and relate these to interactions within and between different types of organisations (KG3).
- understand the organisation and operation of various types of organisations in their environment (KG4).
- have a thorough knowledge and understanding of methods of organisational research (KG5).
- are able to formulate research questions, to create an (organisational) research design (KG6).

This implies that students can (Skills Goals)

- analyse questions and phenomena related to policy communications, and organisational issues using scientific concepts and theories (SG1).
- translate practical problems into researchable questions (SG2).
- apply social scientific knowledge and insights from the domain to (more complex) problems within various types of organisations (SG3).
- independently perform literature reviews within the field of organisational sciences (SG4).
- build a scientific argument both orally and in writing (SG5).
- evaluate the internal and external validity and practical applicability of research results (SG6).
- analyse and interpret empirical data with or without the use of software for scientific research (SG7).
- under limited supervision, design and perform an empirical research project (SG8).
- actively participate in education in the English language (SG9).

Students who have finished the master BCO have developed (Making Judgement)

- an interest in the processes and the development of organisations in relation to the environment in which organisations operate (JG1).
- a critical attitude towards the scientific literature in the domain of the organisation sciences and the theoretical perspectives therein (JG2).
- a significant degree of intellectual integrity and self-reflection (JG3).



## Appendix 5: Overview of the curriculum

### BCO Organisation and Environment (O)

Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6
Organisation Sciences (eng)	Entrepreneurship and Innovation, a relational perspective	Research Proposal	Thesis		
Communication and Identity	Strategy of Public Organisations Or Networked Organisations and Communication (eng)		Research lab		

### BCO Communication in and between Organisations (C)

Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6
Organisation Sciences (eng)	Communication Strategy and Media Use or Changing Organisational Culture (eng)	Research Proposal	Thesis		
Communication and Identity	Networked Organisations and Communication (eng)		Research lab		

### BCO Consultancy and Change (CC)

Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6
Organisation Sciences (eng)	Changing Organisation Culture (eng) or Organisational Behavior	Research Proposal	Thesis		
Dynamics of Change	Organising Strategically		Research lab		

### BCO Organisation of Health Care (HC)

Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6
Organisation Sciences	Entrepreneurship and Innovation, a relational perspective or Organisational Behavior	Research Proposal	Thesis		
Organisation of Care Processes	Strategy of Public Organisations		Research lab		

**Learning goals per course**

P	course	Track(s)	Elective / mandatory	KG1	KG2	KG3	KG4	KG5	KG6	SG1	SG2	SG3	SG4	Sg5	Sg6	SG7	SG8	SG9	JG1	JG2	JG3
1a	Organization Science (E)	All	m	x	x					x								x	x		
1b	Communication and identify	O/C	m/m	x	x			x							x	x			x		
1b	organization of health care processes	HC	m	x	x			x		x					x	x			x		
1b	Dynamics of Change	CC	m	x	x			x		x					x	x			x		
2a	entrepreneurship and innovation a relationalperspective	O/HC	m/e	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x		x		x	x	
2a	organizational behavior	CC/HC	e/e	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x			x		x	x	
2a	communication strategy and media use	C	e	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x		x	x	
2a	changing organizational culture	CC	e	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x			x		x	x	
2b	organizing strategically	CC	m	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x				x	x	x	
2b	strategy of public organizations	O/HC	e/m	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x				x	x	x	
2b	networked organizations and communication	O/C	e/m	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x				x	x	x	
3	research proposal	All	e	x	x	x		x	x		x		x	x			x		x	x	x
4	research lab	All	e		x			x	x		x			x		x	x		x	x	x
4,5,6	masterthesis	All	e	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x



## Appendix 6: Quantitative data regarding the programme

### Data on intake, transfers and graduates

1. Student intake by previous education (VU, other NL-university, professional education, other) and by gender (male, female)

Cohortjaar	Cohokode	Cohortomvang - onderwijsherkomst				Cohortomvang - geslacht		
		Eigen Universiteit	Andere NI Universiteiten	HBO	Buiten HO	Man	Vrouw	Totaal
2003	60052	13	13	84	4	49	65	114
2004	60052	6	11	70	1	33	55	88
2005	60052	28	18	81	2	53	76	129
2006	60052	35	30	82	3	59	91	150
2007	60052	53	30	106	4	70	123	193
2008	60052	48	25	71	2	62	84	146
2009	60052	39	15	83	3	38	102	140
2010	60052	54	23	95	5	60	117	177
2011	60052	50	11			17	44	61

2. Completion rates (absolute numbers) and enrolment In COM (average number of months) by previous education (VU, other NL-university, professional education, other)

Examenjaar	Eigen Universiteit		Andere NI Universiteiten		HBO		Buiten HO		Totaal	
	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Studieduur (gem. aantal mnd.)	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Studieduur (gem. aantal mnd.)	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Studieduur (gem. aantal mnd.)	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Studieduur (gem. aantal mnd.)	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Studieduur (gem. aantal mnd.)
2004			4	24	9	24	1	24	14	24
2005	6	23	8	28	39	29	1	27	54	28
2006	21	17	17	22	51	31	1	24	90	26
2007	28	16	14	21	42	33			84	25
2008	37	17	20	25	73	31	1	27	131	26
2009	39	18	24	28	66	34	2	33	131	28
2010	44	20	26	30	90	31	4	33	164	28

3. Completion rates (absolute numbers) and enrolment In VU (average number of months) by previous education (VU, other NL-university, professional education, other)

Examenjaar	Eigen Universiteit		Andere NI Universiteiten		HBO		Buiten HO		Totaal	
	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Verblijfsd uur instelling (gem. aantal mnd.)	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Verblijfsd uur instelling (gem. aantal mnd.)	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Verblijfsd uur instelling (gem. aantal mnd.)	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Verblijfsd uur instelling (gem. aantal mnd.)	Aantal geslaagden (absoluut)	Verblijfsd uur instelling (gem. aantal mnd.)
2004			4	24	9	24	1	24	14	24
2005	6	37	8	28	39	29	1	27	54	30
2006	21	52	17	22	51	31	1	24	90	34
2007	28	62	14	21	42	33			84	41
2008	37	61	20	25	73	31	1	27	131	38
2009	39	62	24	28	66	34	2	33	131	41
2010	44	66	26	30	90	31	4	33	164	41

## Teacher-student ratio achieved

course	Parallel courses	Contact hours	Preparation	Examination	No. students	total	remarks
P1a:	0.67						Contact hours and preparation are shared with COM (BCO:COM=138:69)
P1b	3.00						
P 2a	3.67						Contact hours and preparation are shared with COM in one of the parallel courses
P2b	3.00						
P3	1.00						
P4	5.00						
<b>Courses</b>	16.33	42	120	2	138	4026	
<b>Thesis</b>				36	138	4968	
<b>Total FTE</b>						8994	
						5.42	1 fte = 1660 hours
<b>No. Hours per student</b>						65.17	
<b>Student-staff ratio</b>						25.47	

## Average amount of face-to-face instruction per stage of the study programme

Number of contact hours: 12 per week (first semester), 2 hours per week (second semester)

## Appendix 7: Theses and documents studied by the committee

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Prior to the site visit, the committee studied the theses of the students with the following student numbers:

1739182	1920936	1724517
1667351	1948857	2086050
1607715	1747665	2087855
1794175	1359177	1808753
1230530	16170196	2064308

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

Course materials for all courses:

- Course outlines
- Handbooks
- Readers and articles
- Assignments
- Answers and assignment papers by students
- Evaluation forms

Information on master's thesis projects:

- Rules and regulations
- Style guide
- Recently completed theses

Educational committee:

- Minutes of recent meetings
- Annual educational reports
- Curriculum evaluations

Board of examiners:

- Minutes of recent meetings
- Letters and communications to staff
- Handbook on educational quality, chapter on testing and assessments
- Transitional rules

Alumni surveys

PR material

Monitor results on personnel satisfaction



## Appendix 8: Declarations of independence

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### DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONFIDENTIALITY TO BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

THE UNDERSIGNED

NAME:

*Amdt Gorge*

HOME ADDRESS:

*Lehrstr. 32, 15788 Zenthen  
Germany*

HAS BEEN ASKED TO ASSESS THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMME AS AN EXPERT /  
SECRETARY:

**SEE ANNEX**

APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTION:

**SEE ANNEX**

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT MAINTAINING ANY (FAMILY) CONNECTIONS OR TIES  
OF A PERSONAL NATURE OR AS A RESEARCHER / TEACHER, PROFESSIONAL OR  
CONSULTANT WITH THE ABOVE INSTITUTION, WHICH COULD AFFECT A FULLY  
INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT REGARDING THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME IN  
EITHER A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE SENSE;



HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT HAVING MAINTAINED SUCH CONNECTIONS OR TIES WITH THE INSTITUTION DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS;

CERTIFIES TO OBSERVING STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY WITH REGARD TO ALL THAT HAS COME AND WILL COME TO HIS/HER NOTICE IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSESSMENT, INsofar AS SUCH CONFIDENTIALITY CAN REASONABLY BE CLAIMED BY THE PROGRAMME, THE INSTITUTION OR NVAO;

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO BEING ACQUAINTED WITH THE NVAO CODE OF CONDUCT.

PLACE:

Tilburg

DATE:

4 September 2012

SIGNATURE:

*A. J. J. J.*



**DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

TO BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

THE UNDERSIGNED

NAME: Hans Doorewaard

HOME ADDRESS: Kleppermanstraat 5  
0585 BB Mook

HAS BEEN ASKED TO ASSESS THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMME AS AN EXPERT / SECRETARY:

ORG STUDIES — Vilbusg  
VU Amsterdam

APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTION:

Vilbusg University  
VU Amsterdam

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT MAINTAINING ANY (FAMILY) CONNECTIONS OR TIES OF A PERSONAL NATURE OR AS A RESEARCHER / TEACHER, PROFESSIONAL OR CONSULTANT WITH THE ABOVE INSTITUTION, WHICH COULD AFFECT A FULLY INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT REGARDING THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME IN EITHER A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE SENSE;



HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT HAVING MAINTAINED SUCH CONNECTIONS OR TIES WITH THE INSTITUTION DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS;

CERTIFIES TO OBSERVING STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY WITH REGARD TO ALL THAT HAS COME AND WILL COME TO HIS/HER NOTICE IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSESSMENT, INsofar AS SUCH CONFIDENTIALITY CAN REASONABLY BE CLAIMED BY THE PROGRAMME, THE INSTITUTION OR NVAO;

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO BEING ACQUAINTED WITH THE NVAO CODE OF CONDUCT.

PLACE: *Stilburg*

DATE: *6 Sep 2012*

SIGNATURE: *[Handwritten signature]*





**DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

TO BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

THE UNDERSIGNED

NAME: Nelson Phillips

HOME ADDRESS: 39A Chesbow Road  
London UK W2 5BP

HAS BEEN ASKED TO ASSESS THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMME AS AN EXPERT / SECRETARY:

Org Studies - Tilburg  
- VU Amsterdam

APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTION:

Tilburg University  
VU Amsterdam

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT MAINTAINING ANY (FAMILY) CONNECTIONS OR TIES OF A PERSONAL NATURE OR AS A RESEARCHER / TEACHER, PROFESSIONAL OR CONSULTANT WITH THE ABOVE INSTITUTION, WHICH COULD AFFECT A FULLY INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT REGARDING THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME IN EITHER A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE SENSE;




HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT HAVING MAINTAINED SUCH CONNECTIONS OR TIES WITH THE INSTITUTION DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS;

CERTIFIES TO OBSERVING STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY WITH REGARD TO ALL THAT HAS COME AND WILL COME TO HIS/HER NOTICE IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSESSMENT, INsofar AS SUCH CONFIDENTIALITY CAN REASONABLY BE CLAIMED BY THE PROGRAMME, THE INSTITUTION OR NVAO;

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO BEING ACQUAINTED WITH THE NVAO CODE OF CONDUCT.

PLACE: *Tilburg*

DATE: *Sept 7, 2012*

SIGNATURE: 



**DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

TO BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

THE UNDERSIGNED

NAME: Ray Reagan

HOME ADDRESS: 204 Hastings  
Pittsburgh, Pa 15206

HAS BEEN ASKED TO ASSESS THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMME AS AN EXPERT / SECRETARY:

OW/OS/PEW/HRS at Tilburg University  
Com/Bco VU University Amsterdam

APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTION:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT MAINTAINING ANY (FAMILY) CONNECTIONS OR TIES OF A PERSONAL NATURE OR AS A RESEARCHER / TEACHER, PROFESSIONAL OR CONSULTANT WITH THE ABOVE INSTITUTION, WHICH COULD AFFECT A FULLY INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT REGARDING THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME IN EITHER A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE SENSE;



HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT HAVING MAINTAINED SUCH CONNECTIONS OR TIES WITH THE INSTITUTION DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS;

CERTIFIES TO OBSERVING STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY WITH REGARD TO ALL THAT HAS COME AND WILL COME TO HIS/HER NOTICE IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSESSMENT, INSOFAR AS SUCH CONFIDENTIALITY CAN REASONABLY BE CLAIMED BY THE PROGRAMME, THE INSTITUTION OR NVAO;

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO BEING ACQUAINTED WITH THE NVAO CODE OF CONDUCT.

PLACE:

DATE:

9/30/12

SIGNATURE:

Ray Keegan



**DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONFIDENTIALITY**  
TO BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

THE UNDERSIGNED

NAME: *SANNE KEURENTJES*

HOME ADDRESS: *VOGELSCHOOT 73*  
*4813 NH BREDA*

HAS BEEN ASKED TO ASSESS THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMME AS AN EXPERT /  
SECRETARY:

**SEE ANNEX**

APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTION:

**SEE ANNEX**

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT MAINTAINING ANY (FAMILY) CONNECTIONS OR TIES  
OF A PERSONAL NATURE OR AS A RESEARCHER / TEACHER, PROFESSIONAL OR  
CONSULTANT WITH THE ABOVE INSTITUTION, WHICH COULD AFFECT A FULLY  
INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT REGARDING THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME IN  
EITHER A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE SENSE;



HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT HAVING MAINTAINED SUCH CONNECTIONS OR TIES WITH THE INSTITUTION DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS;

CERTIFIES TO OBSERVING STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY WITH REGARD TO ALL THAT HAS COME AND WILL COME TO HIS/HER NOTICE IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSESSMENT, INSOFAR AS SUCH CONFIDENTIALITY CAN REASONABLY BE CLAIMED BY THE PROGRAMME, THE INSTITUTION OR NVAO;

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO BEING ACQUAINTED WITH THE NVAO CODE OF CONDUCT.

PLACE: *BAEDA*

DATE: *7/09/2012*

SIGNATURE:



**DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

TO BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO THE ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

THE UNDERSIGNED

NAME: Marianne van der Weiden

HOME ADDRESS: Homeruslaan 62  
3581 Mj Utrecht

HAS BEEN ASKED TO ASSESS THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMME AS AN ~~EXPERT~~ / SECRETARY:

Organization Studies

APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTION:

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam / QANU

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT MAINTAINING ANY (FAMILY) CONNECTIONS OR TIES OF A PERSONAL NATURE OR AS A RESEARCHER / TEACHER, PROFESSIONAL OR CONSULTANT WITH THE ABOVE INSTITUTION, WHICH COULD AFFECT A FULLY INDEPENDENT JUDGEMENT REGARDING THE QUALITY OF THE PROGRAMME IN EITHER A POSITIVE OR A NEGATIVE SENSE;



HEREBY CERTIFIES TO NOT HAVING MAINTAINED SUCH CONNECTIONS OR TIES WITH THE INSTITUTION DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS;

CERTIFIES TO OBSERVING STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY WITH REGARD TO ALL THAT HAS COME AND WILL COME TO HIS/HER NOTICE IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSESSMENT, INSOFAR AS SUCH CONFIDENTIALITY CAN REASONABLY BE CLAIMED BY THE PROGRAMME, THE INSTITUTION OR NVAO;

HEREBY CERTIFIES TO BEING ACQUAINTED WITH THE NVAO CODE OF CONDUCT.

PLACE: Utrecht

DATE: 4 Sept. 2012

SIGNATURE: