

ONDERZOEKERIJ

Research Master

Clinical and Developmental
Psychopathology

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Report of the limited programme assessment

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Executive summary

The outcome of the external assessment of the research master's programme Clinical and Developmental Psychopathology (CDP) of the Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam by an NVAO approved panel is positive.

The two-year full-time programme aims to equip students with the theoretical knowledge and research skills necessary to conduct research in the area of clinical and developmental psychopathology at a high-quality level. CDP prepares students to pursue a research career in the clinical mental health context, both inside and outside academia. The panel appreciates the unique features of the programme that are geared to the needs of bridging the gap between research and practice within the mental health field.

The programme formulated intended learning outcomes that clearly reflect the interdisciplinary perspective and translational approach of the programme. The panel is of the opinion that the intended learning outcomes could be strengthened by addressing more explicitly soft skills like self-regulation, self-monitoring, reflection, and dealing with cultural differences and diversity in a globalising world. It encourages the faculty-wide plans to make the integration of these soft skills more explicit in the learning outcomes.

The panel is very positive about the programme. The theory courses offer a solid theoretical foundation for research on psychopathology and related fields. The research methods courses provide students with state-of-the-art research methods that are particularly relevant to the field of clinical mental health research. During the research projects, students obtain hands-on experience in research by getting involved in ongoing projects in the department. In combination with the electives, this offers students ample opportunities to adapt the programme to their personal interest and find their own niche.

The didactic concept of CDP is characterised by teaching in small classes and individual mentoring by high-quality staff. The panel applauds this highly interactive learning and tutoring environment with a great deal of attention for the students' individual needs, performances, and development.

The panel is pleased with the improvements made regarding the selection process. The programme has defined stricter criteria to ensure that all students have the required level of methodological and statistical knowledge. In addition, it took measures to ensure that students enter the programme with the right expectations.

The panel regards the lecturers in the programme to be renowned researchers with strong international reputations. It is clear to the panel that students are part of a high-quality and committed research environment.

The programme has installed adequate measures to monitor assessment quality. The Examination Board plays an active role in ensuring the quality of assessments. The programme makes use of a variety of assessments, for example written exams with open ended questions, essays, and assignments like writing a research proposal, a literature review or a research paper. The master thesis is assessed by two examiners: the supervisor and the independent second reader. However, the panel noted that due to the small size of the programme and the close connections within the institute, it is challenging to guarantee the independence of the two examiners. The panel suggests involving an independent second grader whose research group is not involved in the research master's programme.



The level and quality of the theses differ, which is reflected in the grades. The panel saw several theses that were written in line with the format of a specific journal, including the formatting style but also the word limit. The latter has resulted in some theses of which the panel thinks that the word limit set by the envisioned journal restricted the student too much in critically reflecting on theory, methodology, and findings. The panel advises interpreting the concept of 'publishable' as being of sufficient quality to process it further into a paper that can be submitted to a journal.

Based on the performance of alumni the panel concludes that the programme prepares students very well for a research career in the field of clinical mental health research.

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

Date: 20 May 2021

Rob Ruiter
(chair)

Esther Poort
(secretary)



1. Introduction

1.1 Administrative data

Name of the programme:	M Clinical and Developmental Psychopathology (research)
CROHO number:	60513
Level of the programme:	Master of science
Orientation of the programme:	Academic
Study load:	120 EC
Location:	Amsterdam
Variant:	Full-time
Expiration of accreditation:	1 November 2021

1.2 Introduction

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

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

1.3 Panel composition

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

- Prof. dr. Rob Rutter (chair), Professor of Health and Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience at Maastricht University;
- Prof. dr. Caroline Braet, Professor Developmental Psychopathology, Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology at Ghent University;
- Prof. dr. Guus Smeets, Professor of Education in Psychology, Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Marie Stadel MSc (student member), Behavioural and Social Sciences Research Master, University of Groningen (graduated in 2020);
- Prof. dr. Karine Verschueren, Professor of School and Developmental Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven.



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

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

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

1.4 Working method

Preparation

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

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

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

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

Online visit

The online visit took place on 2 March 2021 (see Appendix B for the schedule). During the preparatory meeting, the panel discussed the preliminary findings and decided which questions to raise in their meetings with the programme representatives. During the visit, the panel spoke with representatives of the management, students, lecturers, alumni and the board of examiners. Everyone involved in the programme had the opportunity to inform the panel in confidence about matters they consider important to the assessment. No one made use of this opportunity. The panel used the last part of the online visit to evaluate the interviews and have second meeting with the programme's management to receive answers to any remaining questions. At the end of the visit, the chair presented the panel's preliminary findings and their first impressions of the programme.



Report

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

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

Development dialogue

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



2. Review

2.1 Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Findings, analysis, and considerations

The research master's programme CDP is embedded within VU Amsterdam's Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences (*Faculteit der Gedrags- en Bewegingswetenschappen*; FGB). Teachers of the research master's programme are appointed to the Department of Clinical, Neuro- and Developmental Psychology. In addition, several teachers are also appointed to the department of Child and Family Studies, which is embedded within the same faculty. Under guidance from the programme director and within the rules and guidelines of the faculty, teachers can coordinate their teaching relatively autonomously.

The general aim of the programme is to equip students with the theoretical knowledge and research skills necessary to conduct research in the area of clinical and developmental psychopathology at a high-quality level. Students are prepared to become researchers in a clinical context (within or outside academia), with thorough knowledge of the etiology, development, and course of psychopathology as well as methods for its prevention and treatment. Students learn how to effectively form their ideas, engage in open discussions about their beliefs, and shape their own identity as upcoming researchers.

The programme has compared itself to other research master's programmes in the field of psychology in the Netherlands and abroad. Firstly, the programme offers an interdisciplinary perspective by studying psychopathology through the combination of clinical psychology, developmental psychology, and child- and family studies. The panel acknowledges that the programme clearly benefits from the collaboration between researchers from the three subsections and the three (inter)related research programmes. A second unique feature of the programme is that students are trained in specific methods, techniques and skills for conducting mental health research, rather than offering a generic research skills programme. The panel appreciates this tailor-made skills training. The third unique feature is the transnational nature of the programme. Students are trained to become researchers who can effectively bridge the gap between research and clinical practice. As evidence-based practice is much needed, the panel applauds the intentions of the programme to help filling this gap and adding to the theoretical and empirical advancement of the mental health field in the Netherlands.

The panel highly values the clear research orientation of the programme. The panel learned during the interviews that the programme made the conscious decision not offering a clinical track during the programme that would allow students to meet the requirements for the post-master training for clinical practice. The programme communicates clearly to students that if they want to meet the requirements to continue to clinical practice, they should do this outside the curriculum. The panel endorses this clear view.

The programme translated its aims into a set of thirteen intended learning outcomes which are linked to the Dublin descriptors for the master's level. The panel studied the intended learning outcomes and established that they are of the right level and depth, and clearly display the research orientation



of the programme. The intended learning outcomes fully reflect the interdisciplinary perspective and translational approach of the programme, and comprise the ingredients by which students are able to conduct research in the area of mental health.

The panel understands that the intended learning outcomes are mostly focused on theoretical knowledge and academic skills. However, the panel is of the opinion that the intended learning outcomes could be strengthened by addressing more explicitly soft skills like self-regulation, self-monitoring, reflection, and dealing with cultural differences and diversity in a further globalising society. In the eyes of the panel, these are also important skills for independent and creative researchers who can bridge the gap between research and clinical practice. This would also be in line with the educational vision and the VU core values 'responsibility' and 'openness'. The panel was pleased to learn that this was fully acknowledged by both the programme management and the faculty management. It encourages the faculty-wide plans to make the integration of soft skills more explicit in the learning outcomes of all educational programmes.

Conclusion

The panel appreciates the unique features of the programme that are geared to the needs of bridging the gap between research and practice within the mental health field. The intended learning outcomes are in line with the goal of preparing students to pursue a research career in the clinical mental health context, both inside and outside academia. The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 1.

2.2 Teaching-learning environment

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Findings, analysis, and considerations

Curriculum

CDP is a full-time programme of 120 EC. The curriculum is organised coherently into theory courses, research methods courses, academic skills courses and combinations thereof. Throughout the programme there is a continuous emphasis on academic communication skills, and special attention is given to scientific integrity.

The first year includes two compulsory theory courses (one of 6 EC and one of 12 EC) focusing on the basic principles of psychopathology and clinical research. The three research method courses (each of 6 EC) focus on advanced research skills relevant to the field, including epidemiological research, Randomised Controlled Trials (RCT) and conducting a systematic review. Writing and presenting is trained in all courses. In addition, students follow one specific course 'Writing and Presenting' (6 EC). Towards the end of the first year, students conduct their first research project (Research Project I, 12 EC). During this research project, the students develop a research plan under supervision of one of the senior researchers from the participating research groups.

The second year builds upon the first year. The theory course (6 EC) covers research on new trends in mental health research as well as more specific research trends as realised within specific research



lines. Students train their skills during three practicals, each of 6 EC. In Practical I, students acquire specific techniques and expertise for conducting clinical research. Practical II focusses on skills needed to develop and write a research proposal for an academic-clinical study. Practical III prepares students for methods and statistical analyses to be used while working on their master thesis. The master thesis (30 EC) is the capstone of the programme and must be a written report in the style of a journal paper, which, as a rule, is fit for submission to an international, peer-reviewed journal.

Twice in the programme (once in the first year and once in the second year) students take an elective course (each of 6 EC). Students can choose the 'Advanced Research Training' course or one of the courses from the electives pool offered by the research master's programmes at FGB. In the 'Advanced Research Training' course, students participate in the research programme by a staff member. In close collaboration with the staff member, the student designs and conducts a research study and analyses the data. One of the courses from the electives pools concerns the 'Introduction to R for Behavioural Sciences'. The other courses in this electives pool are content related, for example 'Autism and Developmental Disorders' or 'Behavioural Genetics'.

The panel is positive about the programme which is clearly geared towards preparing students to become researchers in a clinical context. The theory courses offer a solid theoretical foundation for research on psychopathology and related fields. The research methods courses provide students with state-of-the-art research methods that are particularly relevant to the field of clinical mental health research. The panel appreciates that the curriculum consists of two research projects. This allows students to obtain hands-on experience in research by getting involved in ongoing projects in the department. In combination with the electives, this offers students ample opportunities to adapt the programme to their personal interest and find their own niche.

The students to whom the panel spoke, were very enthusiastic about the programme. They only had one point of attention: the first-year students were a little bit disappointed about the amount of exposure to clinical practice. In the opinion of the panel, this demonstrates the need of communicating very clearly to future students that the programme is focused on training qualified researchers, rather than on preparing students for a clinical position. The panel understood that, for the current cohort of first-year students, the limited exposure to clinical practice was also related to the limitations because of the COVID-19 situation. Furthermore, the second-year students stated that during Practical I, several therapists were invited in online-meetings, which they really appreciated.

Based on the self-evaluation report and the document linking the intended learning outcomes to the courses, the panel gathered that the intended learning outcomes are clearly substantiated in the curriculum. Every intended learning outcome of the programme is addressed in at least two different courses. The panel has one point of attention. According the panel, the soft skills (such as self-regulation, self-monitoring, reflection, and dealing with cultural differences and diversity) could be better integrated in curriculum (in line with standard 1). The panel learned that most lecturers already pay attention to these soft skills in their courses, but the panel also believes that the programme would benefit from a more explicit integration of soft skills within the curriculum.

The didactic concept of CDP is characterised by teaching in small classes and individual mentoring by high-quality staff. Almost all mandatory courses are in a small group consisting of only the yearly cohort of research master's students. This allows for in-depth examinations of concepts and focus on the individual students' needs. Throughout the research projects, students receive extensive individual supervision. For the second-year research project, students are entitled to at least twenty-five hours of individual supervision by a staff member. As such, there is strong and ongoing interaction between lecturers and students during the entire programme. Students stated feeling at liberty to approach staff members when they encountered problems. Based on the interviews, the



panel gathered that the programme director plays a pivotal role. In addition, students receive guidance by their mentor. Mentor tasks are carried out by PhD students and postdocs, mostly alumni of the programme. The panel applauds this highly interactive learning and tutoring environment with a great deal of attention for the students' individual needs, performances and development. Although the panel considers the strong involvement of (and for students the easy access to) the programme director a clear strength, the panel also sees the risk in terms of long-term sustainability.

The students and alumni all agreed that the workload of the programme is high. However, all of them agreed that it is feasible. The panel noted that the majority of students graduate in two years, although delays sometimes occur.

The language of instruction of the programme is English. The programme management substantiates its choice by arguing that the field of Clinical and Developmental Psychopathology is internationally orientated, the fact that around 70-75% of the students come from outside the Netherlands, and that it is the programme's ambition to prepare students for a career in academia in which the language is English. The panel endorses this choice.

Admission and student numbers

Candidates are selected based on academic achievements (guideline is a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 7.5 or higher), requirements regarding methods and statistics courses and clinical courses, English language proficiency, and motivation. Applicants are asked to write a motivation letter and an academic assignment. In addition, the admission board considers letters of recommendation from applicants' previous university.

Following up recommendations of the previous accreditation panel, the programme improved the selection process in several ways. First, the programme has implemented a stricter procedure to ensure that all students have the required level of methodological and statistical knowledge. The international admission office helps checking thoroughly whether international students meet these requirements. Furthermore, students need to write an assignment, and the programme offers an online course to resolve deficits prior to the start of the programme. Second, the programme took measures to ensure that students enter the programme with the right expectations. The unique position of the programme at the intersection of research and clinical practice brings the risk to attract students who are actually more interested in clinical practice. Therefore, the motivation letters are monitored more closely to ensure the student makes a deliberate choice for a research master. Students who are more interested in clinical work are suggested to apply to a more clinical programme. If there are any doubts about the required statistical level or motivation, the programme manager has an interview with the applicant. The panel is pleased with the improvements made. It is of the opinion that the selection process is appropriate for this research master's programme.

The programme aims at enrolling in between twenty and twenty-five new students per academic year. The average number of students actually starting the programme is sixteen. The panel is of the opinion that these small cohort sizes may jeopardise the viability of the programme. It was pleased to note that the programme already took initiatives to improve the visibility of the programme among bachelor students in the Netherlands, while at the same time strives to enrol at least the same number of students from abroad. This seems to have positive results, given the twenty-one students enrolling in the programme in 2020. The panel encourages the programme continuing these initiatives and monitor closely if the target of minimum twenty new enrolments will be accomplished.



Staff

The panel thinks highly of the teaching staff, who are prominent researchers and internationally recognised experts within the field of clinical and developmental psychopathology. During the online visit, the panel met very competent and enthusiastic staff members. As mentioned earlier, supervision and tutoring are taken very seriously by all staff members. The panel was pleased to learn that all staff members have received their University Teaching Qualification (UTQ), In addition, 30% of the staff members have received their Senior University Teaching Qualification (STQ).

In 2017, the Institute's research programme was assessed by an external committee according to the qualifications of the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021 (SEP). All psychology departments of the VU received an excellent score on quality. This reputation of the institute is endorsed by the panel. Research master's students become acquainted with these research areas during the substantive courses, and when they carry out their research internship and write their thesis. It is clear to the panel that students are part of a high-quality and committed research environment.

COVID-19

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

When the measures were alleviated after the summer, the programme had various live sessions, using a camera in class. The majority of the new international students came to Amsterdam, around 20% of the students stayed abroad. The programme dealt with the time differences in a flexible way. With help of the year representatives, the programme monitored the well-being of the students.

The panel concluded that although the COVID-19 situation is not an optimal teaching and learning situation, the programme still allows students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The pandemic has offered a good opportunity to gain experience with blended learning. The panel was pleased to learn that the VU will investigate what measures might be kept after COVID-19.

Conclusion

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



2.3 Student assessment

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

Findings, analysis, and considerations

Assessment policy and Examination Board

As described in the self-evaluation report, the programme distinguishes three levels of responsibility for the execution and quality control of the assessments. The first level is the examiner, who is responsible for the quality of the assessment of a specific course. The second level is the programme director, who monitors the assessments throughout the programme, and takes appropriate action if an assessment fails to meet the standards. The third level is the Examination Board (EB), that monitors and ensures the quality of examinations, in various complementary ways. The faculty has one central EB and separate subcommittees for the clusters Psychology, Education & Family Studies, and Human Movement Sciences. Every subcommittee consists of lecturers of the corresponding cluster, and every programme is represented by at least one lecturer. At least one of the members of the central EB is not directly affiliated with (employed at) FGB. From the discussion with representatives of the EB, the panel gathered that these members possess the proper capacity, expertise and attitude to perform all tasks in a proactive way.

All course components are concluded with a formal assessment. One of the appendices of the self-evaluation report contains an overview of the methods of examination for each course. The panel established that the relation between the intended learning outcomes, the course objectives and the assessment is well thought out. The programme uses a variety of assessment methods. Students have to take written exams with open ended questions, write essays, and complete assignments like writing a research proposal, a literature review or a research paper.

Master thesis

The panel studied thesis assessment forms and the thesis assessment procedure for grading the master theses. The master thesis is assessed by two examiners: the supervisor and the independent second reader. The supervisor and the second reader independently read the thesis and evaluate it according to the faculty's formal assessment forms for research reports. From the interview with the lecturers and the EB, the panel gathered that due to the small size of the programme and the close connections within the institute, it is challenging to guarantee the independence between the two examiners. The panel encourages the programme to better safeguard the independency, and to consider involving an independent second grader whose research group is not involved in the research master's programme.

Based on the completed assessment forms, the panel noted that there is a lot of attention for quantitative grading, with many different sub scores. However, this seems to come at the cost of the qualitative feedback. Several thesis assessment forms contained very limited written feedback. The self-evaluation report also indicates that providing sufficient feedback is one of the development points of the programme. As described in the self-evaluation report and also explained by the management during the interviews, the programme management urges lecturers to provide detailed textual feedback. The panel strongly supports this. In addition, the panel has one other point of attention. It noticed that the box regarding the plagiarism check was not always checked. The panel encourages the programme to make it obligatory to run such a check for each thesis and to complete this box.



The programme recently implemented the new faculty's formal evaluation form, which is a standardised excel sheet that weighs a range of subgrades for various assessment criteria of the thesis. These evaluation forms require the examiner to grade various aspects of the thesis including abstract, introduction, writing quality, and to provide feedback on these aspects. After the examiner has rated all the criteria, the form automatically provides a grade through weighing all the subgrades. The final grade for the thesis is jointly determined by both examiners after comparing their independent grades. In most cases, the two grades are simply averaged to determine a final grade, but the two examiners may also reach consensus based on discussion. Should it be impossible for the supervisor and second reader to reach agreement about the final grade, the programme director may assign a third reader to resolve the dispute. The panel learned that until now, this has never happened. In the eyes of the panel, this may also be a consequence of the earlier observation that it is difficult to guarantee true independency between two examiners within such a small teaching team. The panel suggests always involving a third assessor when the independent, provisional grades of the two assessors differ by more than 1 point.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme has an adequate assessment system and a pro-active EB. The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 3.

2.4 Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings, analysis, and considerations

As described before, students finish the programme with a master thesis. In order to assess whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved, the panel has studied a sample of fifteen recent theses. Some of these were really excellent, whereas others were satisfactory to good. For some of the theses, the panel would have given a somewhat lower grade than the programme assessors had done. None of the theses have been rated to be unsatisfactory by the panel.

As stated in the self-evaluation report, the thesis must be written in the style of a journal paper, which is fit for submission to an international, peer-reviewed journal. The panel evaluated several theses that were written in line with the format of a specific journal, including the formatting style but also the word limit. The latter has resulted in some theses of which the panel thinks that the word limit set by the envisioned journal restricted the student too much in critically reflecting on theory, methodology and findings. According to the panel, the extent to which students in these cases have mastered this part of the empirical cycle could therefore not always be judged objectively. The panel advises interpreting the concept of 'publishable' as being of sufficient quality to process the thesis into an empirical paper that can be submitted to a journal rather than having journal requirements set the length of the master thesis.

The quality of the programme is also impressed by the achievements of the students, who are doing well according to the self-evaluation report. Due to low response numbers, the general VU alumni surveys are unreliable to provide exact figures about the current positions of alumni. Based on the contacts with alumni, the programme estimates that 30% to 50% of the graduates continue with a PhD position, albeit not necessarily in the first year after graduation. About 25-50% of the students



continue with a clinical track or combine research and clinical work. The panel compliments the programme for the initiative to stay in touch with alumni through LinkedIn and encourages the programme to collect alumni data more systematically and on a larger scale.

During the online visit, the panel talked to four alumni. All of them are very enthusiastic about the programme and its practical use in their profession.

Conclusion standard 4

The panel concludes that students of the programme achieve an adequate final level and find suitable jobs. The programme therefore meets standard 4.



3. Strengths and recommendations

3.1 Strengths of the programme

The panel is impressed by the following features:

- Evidence-based practice – The programme is clearly geared to the needs of bridging the gap between research and practice within the mental health field;
- Tailor-made skills training – Students are trained in specific methods, techniques and skills for conducting mental health research;
- Interactive learning environment – The didactic concept is characterised by teaching in small classes and individual guidance with strong attention for the students' individual needs, performance, and development;
- Teaching team – Lecturers are prominent researchers and internationally recognised experts within the field and bring in a wide array of expertise from various disciplines;
- Assessment –The programme uses a variety of assessment methods and the EB plays an active role in ensuring the quality of assessments.

3.2 Recommendations

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

- Soft skills –Integrate the soft skills more explicitly in the intended learning outcomes and the curriculum;
- Independency – Ensure the independency of the second assessor of the master thesis and consider involving an independent second grader whose research group is not involved in the research master's programme;
- Qualitative feedback – Encourage lecturers to always provide comprehensive textual feedback on the assessment form of the master thesis;
- Format of the master thesis – Reconsider the format of the master thesis. The required format should allow all students to critically reflect on theory, methodology, and findings.



4. Conclusion

The intended learning outcomes are in line with the goal of preparing students to pursue a research career in the clinical mental health context, both inside and outside academia. The content and structure of the programme and the high-quality teaching staff provide a strong teaching learning environment. The programme has an adequate assessment system and a pro-active EB. The theses and careers of the graduates show that students have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

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



Appendix A – Panel composition and programmes of the cluster

Panel composition of the cluster:

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

The cluster consist of thirteen programmes:

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



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



Appendix B – Schedule of the visit

2 March 2021

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



Appendix C – Documents studied

- Self-evaluation report and appendices:
 - Appendix 1: Assessment Report Previous Accreditation, and Actions Taken
 - Appendix 2: Overview of the current curriculum
 - Appendix 3: Teaching and Examination Regulation 2020-2021
 - Appendix 4: Enrolment Appendix
 - 5: Overview of staff Research Master Clinical and Developmental Psychopathology
 - Appendix 6: Subject-specific Reference Framework and the Learning Outcomes of the Programme
- Factsheet and NSE results RM CDP
- NVAO *accreditatie besluit* research master CDP 2015
- *Aanvullende beoordeling* Developmental and Clinical Psychopathology (research) (QANU, 2017))
- 20-21 Course and Examination Regulations RM programmes Psychology
- Assessment plan RM CDP 2020-2021
- Assessment programme RM CDP
- Evaluation form M-thesis CDP
- Faculty Assessment Framework FBMS (FGB) - February 2019
- 15 theses with assessment forms



Appendix D – Abbreviations

CDP	Clinical and Developmental Psychopathology
EC	European Credit
FBG	<i>Faculteit der Gedrags- en Bewegingswetenschappen</i> (Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences)
NVAO	<i>Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie</i>
SEP	Standard Evaluation Protocol
STQ	Senior University Teaching Qualification
UTQ	University Teaching Qualification
VU	Vrije Universiteit

