

Assessment report
Limited Framework Programme Assessment

Master Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship

Utrecht University

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1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the Master Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship programme of Utrecht University, which has been assessed according to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, as published on 20 December 2016 (Staatscourant nr. 69458).

The programme objectives are sound. The programme covers subjects in this domain broadly. The panel is positive about the focus of the programme on themes of citizenship, diversity and sustainability. The research-orientation of the programme and the academic and professional skills to be acquired by students are appreciated by the panel. The programme objectives are up-to-date.

The programme objectives meet the requirements of the Reference Framework for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology in the Netherlands. The panel welcomes the efforts by the joint programmes to draft this framework and regards this to be a sound description of this domain.

The panel appreciates the comparison to programmes abroad and regards this programme to meet international standards.

The panel appreciates students being educated to qualify for both academic careers and positions in the broader professional field.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme correspond to the programme objectives and conform to the master level.

The panel appreciates the stable student influx numbers. The admission requirements and procedures are appropriate. The panel is positive about the pre-master programme being offered to students with deficiencies.

The panel is positive about the contents of the curriculum. The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The courses are perceived by the panel to be very solid. The attention devoted to professional identity and integrity and labour market orientation is welcomed by the panel. The curriculum is structured well and is coherent. The panel suggests to schedule a few masterclasses on analysing and synthesising data and writing the Master thesis after the fieldwork.

The panel regards the lecturers to be both good researchers and skilled teachers. The panel welcomes the collaboration and coherence among the teaching staff. The panel is positive about the policy per 2019 to recruit junior lecturers for periods of four years. The workload of the lecturers may be demanding, but is manageable. The panel suggests to allow lecturers more time to innovate courses. The panel also proposes to monitor the time lecturers have available for research.

The panel considers the educational concept and study methods in the curriculum to be well-designed, allowing students to complete the curriculum. The number of hours of face-to-face education as well as the hours of individual guidance are up to standard. The student-to-staff ratio is satisfactory. Study guidance is organised well. Student success rates are appropriate.

The panel approves of the examinations and assessment rules and regulations of the programme, these being in line with Faculty assessment policies. The positions of the Board of Examiners and the Assessment Committee in view of supervising examination and assessment processes are adequate.

The examination methods adopted in the programme are appropriate and are consistent with the goals and contents of the courses.

The supervision and assessment procedures for the Master projects are adequate. As examiners fill out the thesis evaluation forms differently, the panel recommends to have these forms filled out more consistently and more elaborately.

The panel considers the measures ensuring the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations and assessments to be satisfactory. The panel advises, however, to carry out the examination and assessment processes more strictly.

The panel regards the Master projects to be appropriate academic research projects. The panel supports the grades given by examiners of the programme, although some of the projects may have been marked slightly too high. The panel suggests to consider adopting more differentiated assessments, using a wider range of grades.

The panel welcomes the measures taken in the programme to prepare students for the professional field and encourages programme management to continue along this path.

The panel considers the programme graduates to have reached the intended learning outcomes and to be qualified to enter the labour market and to find appropriate positions.

The panel that conducted the assessment of the Master Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship programme of Utrecht University assesses this programme to meet the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, judging the programme to be satisfactory. Therefore, the panel advises NVAO to accredit the programme.

Rotterdam, 18 February 2019

Prof. dr. T. Otto
(panel chair)

drs. W. Vercooteren
(panel secretary)

2. Assessment process

The evaluation agency Certiked VBI received the request by Utrecht University to manage the limited framework programme assessment process for the Master Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship programme of this University. The objective of the programme assessment process was to assess whether the programme would conform to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, published on 20 December 2016 (Staatscourant nr. 69458).

Having conferred with management of the Utrecht University programme, Certiked invited candidate panel members to sit on the assessment panel. The panel members agreed to do so. The panel composition was as follows:

- Prof dr. T. Otto, full professor of Anthropology and Ethnography, University of Aarhus, Denmark, full professor and tropical leader, The Cairns Institute, James Cook University, Australia (panel chair);
- Dr E.D. Rasch, associate professor, Sociology of Development and Change Group, Wageningen University (panel member);
- Dr M.E. Pelkmans, associate professor in Anthropology, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom (panel member);
- Drs D. Stolk, programme coordinator Cultural Emergency Response, senior member management team, Prins Claus Fonds Amsterdam (panel member);
- K. Donatz, student Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, VU Amsterdam (student member).

On behalf of Certiked, drs. W. Vercooteren served as the process coordinator and secretary in the assessment process.

All panel members and the secretary confirmed in writing being impartial with regard to the programme to be assessed and observing the rules of confidentiality. Having obtained the authorisation by the University, Certiked requested the approval of NVAO of the proposed panel to conduct the assessment. NVAO have given their approval.

To prepare the assessment process, the process coordinator convened with management of the programme to discuss the outline of the self-assessment report, the subjects to be addressed in this report and the site visit schedule. In addition, the planning of the activities in preparation of the site visit was discussed. In the course of the process preparing for the site visit, programme management and the Certiked process coordinator regularly had contact to fine-tune the process. The activities prior to the site visit have been performed as planned. Programme management approved of the site visit schedule.

Well in advance of the site visit date, programme management sent the list of final projects of graduates of the programme of the most recent years. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator selected the final projects of 15 graduates from the last few years. The grade distribution in the selection was ensured to conform to the grade distribution in the list, sent by programme management.

The panel chair and the panel members were sent the self-assessment report of the programme, including appendices. In the self-assessment report, the student chapter was included. In addition, the expert panel members were forwarded a number of theses of the programme graduates, these theses being part of the selection made by the process coordinator.

Several weeks before the site visit date, the assessment panel chair and the process coordinator discussed the self-assessment report provided by programme management, the procedures regarding the assessment process and the site visit schedule. In this meeting, the profile of panel chairs of NVAO was discussed as well. The panel chair was informed about the competencies, listed in the profile. Documents pertaining to a number of these competencies were presented to the panel chair. The meeting between the panel chair and the process coordinator served as the briefing for panel chairs, as indicated in the NVAO profile of panel chairs.

Prior to the date of the site visit, all panel members sent in their preliminary findings, based on the self-assessment report and the final projects studied, and a number of questions to be put to the programme representatives on the day of the site visit. The panel secretary summarised this information, compiling a list of questions, which served as a starting point for the discussions with the programme representatives during the site visit. Shortly before the site visit date, the complete panel met to go over the preliminary findings concerning the quality of the programme. During this meeting, the preliminary findings of the panel members, including those about the theses were discussed. The procedures to be adopted during the site visit, including the questions to be put to the programme representatives on the basis of the list compiled, were discussed as well.

On 7 November 2018, the panel conducted the site visit on the Utrecht University campus. The site visit schedule was as planned. In a number of separate sessions, the panel was given the opportunity to meet with Faculty Board representatives, programme management, Board of Examiners members, lecturers and final projects examiners, and students and alumni.

In a closed session at the end of the site visit, the panel considered every one of the findings, weighed the considerations and arrived at conclusions with regard to the quality of the programme. At the end of the site visit, the panel chair presented a broad outline of the considerations and conclusions to programme representatives.

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.

The assessment draft report was finalised by the secretary, having taken into account the findings and considerations of the panel. The draft report was sent to the panel members, who studied it and made a number of changes. Thereupon, the secretary edited the final report. This report was presented to programme management to be corrected for factual inaccuracies. Programme management were given two weeks to respond. Having been corrected for these factual inaccuracies, the Certiked bureau sent the report to the Board of Utrecht University, to accompany their request for re-accreditation of this programme.

3. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO: M Cultural Anthropology (M Culturele Antropologie)
Orientation, level programme: Academic Master
Grade: MSc
Number of credits: 60 EC
Specialisations: None
Location: Utrecht
Mode of study: Full-time (language of instruction English)
Registration in CROHO: 60745

Name of institution: Utrecht University
Status of institution: Legal Entity for Higher Education
Institution's quality assurance: Approved

4. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard

4.1 Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings

The Master Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship programme is one of the programmes of the Graduate School of Social and Behavioural Sciences. The School is part of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University and encompasses thirteen Master programmes. The dean of the Faculty has the responsibility for all programmes of the Faculty. The Board of Studies of the School, being composed of the directors of all Master programmes, decides on subjects as programming, information provision and quality assurance of the programmes. The director of this programme is responsible for the coordination and organisation of the programme. The director is advised on the quality assurance of the programme by the Programme Advisory Committee, being composed of lecturers and students. Members of this Committee sit on the School-wide Education Committee to advise the Board of Studies. The Board of Examiners for the one-year Master programmes of the School has the authority to monitor the quality of examination and assessment processes and products of these programmes. This and the other programmes are represented by at least one member on the Board. This member specifically monitors the examination and assessment processes for this programme.

The Master Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship of Utrecht University is a one-year, broad, research-based, academic master programme in this field. The programme objectives are to educate students in combining anthropological knowledge, academic-professional skills and ethical awareness to analyse, interpret and address problems at the intersection of citizenship, diversity and sustainability. These themes are interpreted broadly, including notions as nation state and citizenship and referring not only to climate change aspects, but also to social and economic dimensions.

The objectives of the programme are conform to the Reference Framework for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology in the Netherlands, which has been drafted by the joint programmes of this assessment cluster in the Netherlands.

Programme management compared this programme to programmes abroad, especially in the United Kingdom and on the European mainland. The Utrecht programme distinguishes itself by the thematic approach of the subjects of citizenship, diversity and sustainability, allowing students to gain theoretical and methodological knowledge and understanding and offering students rather extensive engagement in ethnographic research.

The programme aims to prepare students both for careers in academia and in the broader professional field, training them to become academic professionals. To be up-to-date on trends in the professional field, programme management confers two times per year with the Professional Field Committee about adjusting programme objectives and curriculum to professional field requirements.

The programme objectives have been translated into intended learning outcomes, specifying, as the main points: knowledge and understanding of the main concepts and theories and the current developments in the programme domain; knowledge and skills to carry out independent research in this field; analysis of complex issues; critical analysis of debates and research in this field; written and oral communication skills; and reflection on professional identity and scientific and professional integrity.

Programme management presented the comparison of the intended learning outcomes to the Dublin descriptors for the master level.

Consideration

The panel regards the programme objectives to be sound. The programme covers subjects in this domain broadly. The panel is positive about the focus of the programme on themes of citizenship, diversity and sustainability. The research-orientation of the programme and the academic and professional skills to be acquired by students are appreciated by the panel. The programme objectives are up-to-date.

The programme objectives meet the requirements of the Reference Framework for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology in the Netherlands. The panel welcomes the efforts by the joint programmes to draft this framework and regards this to be a sound description of this domain.

The panel appreciates the comparison to programmes abroad and regards this programme to meet international standards.

The panel appreciates students being educated to qualify for both academic careers and positions in the broader professional field.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme correspond to the programme objectives and conform to the master level.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 1, Intended learning outcomes, to be satisfactory.

4.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

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

Findings

The student influx numbers are rather stable for the last years, being on average 50 students per year. Among the total number of incoming students about 30 % are from the Utrecht University Bachelor Cultural Anthropology programme, about 20 % to 25 % are international students and about 30 % have bachelor degrees from higher professional education institutions (hbo). The entry requirements are theoretical and methodological knowledge at bachelor in anthropology level and proficiency in English. Students are to submit a letter of motivation. All applications are reviewed by the programme Admission Committee. In case of deficiencies, students have to take courses in the pre-master programme. Students having hbo-degrees, have to take the 60 EC pre-master programme.

The programme curriculum takes one year, the total study load being 60 EC. Programme management presented a table, showing the mapping of the intended learning outcomes to the courses. The curriculum is composed of three compulsory theoretical and conceptual courses (15 EC) and one elective (5 EC), the Academic Professional course (5 EC), the Ethnographic Methods and Research Design course (5 EC and the Ethnographic Fieldwork and Thesis or Master project (30 EC). In the first courses, students study concepts and theories of globalisation, sustainability and social, cultural and political transformations. In the elective course, students may acquire in-depth knowledge about specific topics. The elective course offered by the programme introduces students to concepts and theoretical approaches of security, power, violence, sovereignty and citizenship. In the Academic Professional course, students work on their professional identity, elaborate on their professional and academic integrity and ethics and concentrate on their labour market orientation. This course runs in parallel to other courses and spans the whole of the curriculum. In the course, students do several assignments, being geared towards the topics mentioned. To prepare for the Master project, students draft the research design in the Ethnographic Methods and Research Design course. The Master project is the individual research project, requiring students to gather, analyse and interpret ethnographic data, relate these to theoretical concepts and articulate findings and conclusions.

The lecturing team of the Department of Cultural Anthropology is composed of 17 permanent staff members and another 17 temporary staff members and junior teachers. All permanent staff members are engaged in both education and research. Most staff members are employed at the Department of Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and do research in the Sovereignty and Social Contestation line of research of the Department. Nearly all permanent staff members have PhDs, about 82 % of them are BKO-certified and about 47 % of them have SKO-certificates as well. Nearly all temporary staff members and junior teachers are trained in education. Junior lecturers are to be recruited for four years, allowing them to build their careers in education. Lecturers meet regularly to discuss the programme. Lecturers experience their workload to be demanding, but manageable. The Faculty is taking measures to alleviate lecturers' workload. Students expressed to appreciate their lecturers.

Being in line with the Utrecht Education Model, the educational concept of the programme is research-based, small-scale and interactive teaching and learning. The number of hours of face-to-face education is about 12 hours per week in the courses, two courses being scheduled in parallel. During the Master project, students are entitled to 30 hours of individual supervision. The study methods adopted in the programme include lectures, tutorials, section meetings and practical classes. The student-to-staff ratio is about 27/1. Students are guided in the programme not only by the lecturers and the supervisors, but also by the programme director in the position as tutor. Students may contact the tutor in case of questions or problems. In case of serious problems or falling behind in the study schedule, students may turn to the Faculty study advisors or student counsellors. Students are very appreciative of the study guidance in the programme. The study load of the curriculum is experienced by students to be manageable. The number of drop-outs in the programme is very limited. The student success rates are about 70 % after one year and about 86 % after two years (last five cohorts).

Considerations

The panel appreciates the stable student influx numbers. The admission requirements and procedures are appropriate. The panel is positive about the pre-master programme being offered to students with deficiencies.

The panel is positive about the contents of the curriculum. The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The courses are perceived by the panel to be very solid. The attention devoted to professional identity and integrity and labour market orientation is welcomed by the panel. The curriculum is structured well and is coherent. The panel suggests to schedule masterclasses on analysing and synthesising data and writing the Master thesis after the fieldwork.

The panel regards the lecturers to be both good researchers and skilled teachers. The panel welcomes the collaboration and coherence among the teaching staff. The panel is positive about the policy per 2019 to recruit junior lecturers for periods of four years. The workload of the lecturers may be demanding, but is manageable. The panel suggests that lecturers should be provided with time to innovate courses. The panel also proposes to monitor the time lecturers have available for research.

The panel considers the educational concept and study methods in the curriculum to be well-designed, allowing students to complete the curriculum. The number of hours of face-to-face education as well as the hours of individual guidance are up to standard. The student-to-staff ratio is satisfactory. Study guidance is organised well. Student success rates are appropriate.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 2, Teaching-learning environment, to be satisfactory.

4.3 Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings

The programme examination and assessment rules and regulations are in line with the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences Assessment Policy Plan. As has been indicated, the Board of Examiners has the authority to monitor the quality of programme examination and assessment processes and products, one of the members of the Board being specifically responsible for this programme.

The examination methods for the courses are selected in line with the courses' goals and contents. In all of the courses, multiple examinations are scheduled. The examination methods in the programme include written examinations, essays, papers, written assignments and presentations. In addition, formative examinations are scheduled to promote students' study pace. To complete the Academic Professional course, students submit their portfolio, encompassing the assignments done within the course and the final reflection. Portfolios are graded.

The final project of the programme is the Master project. This is an individual research project, requiring students to complete the full empirical cycle. Students are encouraged to select topics for their projects on their own. In the Ethnographic Methods and Research Design course, students draft the research design and research plan for their projects. This course includes the review of literature for the project. The plan having been approved, students go on to do ethnographic fieldwork independently for 14 to 16 weeks. Students are entitled to individual supervision. Fieldwork may be done as research internships. Academic research standards of projects are ensured by supervisors. In the course of the fieldwork, students submit three reports. Having completed the fieldwork, students analyse and interpret the material gathered and complete the thesis. Theses are assessed by two examiners, using thesis evaluation forms. In case of substantive differences in judgments, a third examiner will study the thesis and determine the final grade.

Programme management and the Board of Examiners have taken measures to promote the quality of examinations and assessments. The assessment plan for the programme outlines the relations of the intended learning outcomes, courses' goals and examination methods adopted. The Board of Examiners appoints examiners, who should be BKO-certified. For courses, course dossiers have been compiled to show the examinations meeting the course goals. Course examinations are peer-reviewed. For some courses, test matrices and (rubrics) assessment forms have been adopted. On behalf of the Board of Examiners, the Assessment Committee regularly inspects, among others, the programme assessment plan and the assessment procedures applied for the Master projects. Examiners meet in calibration sessions to discuss Master project research proposals and Master theses. Written reports, including theses, are checked for fraud and plagiarism.

Considerations

The panel approves of the examinations and assessment rules and regulations of the programme, these being in line with Faculty assessment policies. The positions of the Board of Examiners and Assessment Committee in view of supervising examination and assessment processes are adequate.

The panel is positive about the examination methods adopted by the programme. These are consistent with the goals and contents of the courses.

The supervision and assessment procedures for the Master projects are adequate. As examiners fill out the thesis evaluation forms differently, the panel recommends to have these forms filled out more consistently and more elaborately.

The panel considers the measures ensuring the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations and assessments to be satisfactory. The panel advises, however, to carry out the examination and assessment processes more strictly.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 3, Student assessment, to be satisfactory.

4.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

The panel reviewed 15 Master projects of programme graduates of the last two years. The average grade for these projects is about 7.3 for the last two years.

Programme management has taken steps to strengthen the labour market orientation and preparation of students. Students work on their labour market orientation in the Academic Professional course. In addition, they are offered alumni experiences and careers on the dedicated website of the programme and they are assisted by the specially appointed career development manager.

Programme management conducted a survey among more than 400 programme graduates of the years 2005 to 2016. The results of the survey show the graduates of the programme being employed in non-profit organisations (14 %), education (14 %), government (12 %), research and science (11 %), business (10 %), consultancy and advice (7 %) or media and communication (7 %). Programme graduates expressed being generally content about the programme.

Considerations

The panel regards the Master projects to be appropriate academic research projects. The panel supports the grades given by examiners of the programme, although some of the projects may have been marked slightly too high. The panel suggests to consider adopting more differentiated assessments, using a wider range of grades.

The panel welcomes the measures taken in the programme to prepare students for the professional field and encourages programme management to continue along this path.

The panel considers the programme graduates to have reached the intended learning outcomes and to be qualified to enter the labour market and to find appropriate positions.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 4, Achieved learning outcomes, to be satisfactory.

5. Overview of assessments

Standard	Assessment
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Satisfactory
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Satisfactory
Standard 3: Student assessment	Satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Satisfactory
Programme	Satisfactory

6. Recommendations

In this report, a number of recommendations by the panel have been listed. For the sake of clarity, these have been brought together below. These panel recommendations are the following.

- To schedule a few masterclasses on analysing and synthesising data and writing the Master thesis after the fieldwork.
- To allow lecturers time to innovate courses.
- To monitor lecturers having sufficient time to do research.
- To have thesis evaluation forms for Master projects filled out more consistently and more elaborately by examiners.
- To carry out the examination and assessment processes more strictly.
- To consider adopting more differentiated assessments for the Master projects, using a wider range of grades.