

Appendix 1: Recovery plan 'Herstelplan' research master

A) ACTIONS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE POINTS OF CRITIQUE

1. In order to address the first point (quality of teachers and researchers involved in the research master), we strongly modified the master programme, making full use of the teachers from the two research groups that were assessed excellent in the QANU Research Assessment, namely Urban Geography and Economic Geography (both scored 5 out of 5). The researchers of these two excellent groups are heavily involved in the teaching and coordination of the new research master courses offered. In particular the leading professors of these two research groups will become the coordinators of the core courses of the new research master programme.
As a result of this change, from September 2015 onwards the new research master programme will no longer cover topics concerning spatial planning and international development studies (the research groups scored 3 out of 5) nor will courses be taught by teachers from these two groups. This means that all research master courses will be taught solely by teachers from the Urban Geography and Economic Geography research groups. As a consequence, the research master will solely address three of the five themes of the new Research Programme of the Research Institute URU, namely Healthy Urban Living, Urban Inequalities, and Evolutionary Economic Development in Urban Regions.
2. In order to address the second point of critique (limited differentiation between research master students and one-year students in shared courses), we rigorously decided to offer dedicated research master courses, for research master students only. In other words, shared courses with other (one-year) master programmes do no longer exist in the new research master programme. The new dedicated courses will reflect the new research themes adopted by URU, providing students with strong links to the URU researchers involved in teaching in the research master. These new dedicated courses will start in September 2015.

As mentioned above at points 1 and 2, on special request of the Committee the new master programme will start per September 2015 already (academic year 2015/16). As a result, the NVAO Committee will be able to assess this renewed master in two-years' time.

With respect to the point of concern raised by the Committee regarding low inflow, we have taken concrete actions to increase the enrolment rate. For instance, starting in April 2015 we are in direct contact with all students that either already applied for the research master or showed interest in the Research Master by visiting at least one of the two-yearly Master Information Evenings. Furthermore, we contacted the current UU geography bachelor students individually and informed them about the opportunities and challenges of the new Research Master programme. In September 2015, we start an active national and international marketing effort, jointly with the Communication and Marketing Department, involving amongst others: better use of our renewed website and of relevant social networks; better use of our research partners abroad to attract international students.

Regarding Standard 3, the Committee suggested to improve the thesis assessment procedure and written feedback to master students. In order to address this point an entirely new rubric for the master thesis has been designed which is already effective since this February 2015. Filling out this rubric several times during the master thesis project and discussing the results with their supervisor, provides master students with insight in their progress and competences. As such, next to a summative tool, the rubric is used as a formative tool for detailed feedback during the master thesis phase. Lecturers have been widely involved in the formulation of the new rubric and are closely monitored in the implementation process.

B) OVERVIEW OF THE NEW RESEARCH MASTER PROGRAMME

The new programme unites the complementary theoretical and methodological frameworks of urban and economic geography, the two best research groups in this field in The Netherlands.

The new research master programme described below has been conditionally approved by the Utrecht University board (20 April 2015). As a result, the implementation of the programme has started already, with the design of the new courses, the study course manuals, the appointment of lecturers as coordinators of the new courses.

Content of this overview of the new research master programme:

- 1. Global contents & end qualifications of the master programme**
- 2. Structure of the programme and course (types)**
- 3. A benchmark with comparable programmes in The Netherlands and abroad**
- 4. Embeddedness in the field of research**
- 5. Embeddedness in society and labour market prospects**
- 6. Expected inflow**
- 7. Labour market orientation**
- 8. International and interdisciplinary orientation**
- 9. Student target group, selection and admission**
- 10. Student guidance**

1. Global contents & end qualifications of the master programme

The core perspective of the master programme is that we are living in an increasingly urbanizing world which is in a constant state of flux. As a consequence, cities are no static settings for the inflow, outflow, and development of people and firms. Due to human-made technologies which mobilized people, goods and information at increasing pace the world evolved into a complex and highly dynamic web of flows within and between cities, which differ in nature and speed both shaping and being shaped by individuals, firms and institutions. As a consequence, nowadays the spatial organization of urban societies is turbulent to an extreme degree. These societies are facing "new" realities which call for renewed efforts in teaching and researching economic and urban geography in order to safeguard sustainable economic and social urban development. These new realities refer to new developments as a consequence of globalization and urbanization, such as growing social diversities in terms of lifestyles and inequalities, partly as a consequence of international migration; to demographic ageing; to unhealthy living patterns; and to innovative urban dynamics that generate increasing productivity and higher urban competitiveness and, consequently, as better chances for some and fewer chances for others on the urban and regional labour markets. Innovative conceptual perspectives on urban development are needed that combine economic and social patterns, processes, and causalities. An innovative approach addressing the urban and network character of present day societies also needs a mixture of state-of-the-art quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate the increasing complexity and diversity of (people and firms) in cities. This "new science of cities" affords a better understanding of cities and to identify options for successful interventions¹. The two-year research master offers students a challenging programme to master this innovative dynamic perspective on cities.

This unique master programme combines urban and economic dynamics adopting a research oriented approach at precisely the complex but intriguing crossroads of Urban and Economic Geography focussed on cities and networks as facilitators of economic growth, health and social cohesion. The master programme provides students with theoretical and empirical knowledge, research and academic skills with respect to three main pillars of the URU research programme:

- Inequality and Diversity in Urban Areas
- Economic Evolution Towards Sustainable Cities and Regions
- Healthy Urban Living, which is also a Faculty research theme

The master programme prepares students to become skilful researchers in urban and economic issues, who are able to independently carry out scientific research in academic, policy or consulting environments. As such, two-year master graduates are:

¹ Michael Batty (2013), *The new science of cities*. Cambridge: The MIT-Press.

- Familiar with leading theories and methodologies to study urban and economic dynamics;
- Able to apply these theories and methodologies in empirical research;
- Able to report and communicate research findings according to scientific standards, resulting in scientific articles, professional publications/policy recommendations;
- Able to assess the societal relevance of scientific research findings and translate them into policy recommendations;
- Aware of academic ethics, specifically with respect to scientific research.

2. Structure of the programme and course (types)

In accordance to the specific demands of the NVAO Committee, the master provides only dedicated courses which are not shared with other master programmes.

The structure of the two-year research master programme is pictured in the scheme below (number of EC). The names of the courses are preliminary and could change.

	<i>Period 1</i>	<i>Period 2</i>	<i>Period 3</i>	<i>Period 4</i>
First year	<i>Course 1 (7.5 EC)</i> The New Science of Cities	<i>Course 3 (7.5 EC)</i> Urban Social Dynamics	<i>Course 5 (7.5 EC)</i> Urban Resilience	<i>Course 7 (7.5 EC)</i> Key Thinkers in Urban and Economic Geography
	<i>Course 2 (7.5 EC)</i> Quantitative Urban & Economic Analytics	<i>Course 4 (7.5EC)</i> Doing Qualitative Research in Dynamic Urban settings	<i>Course 6 (7.5 EC)</i> Writing Competences	<i>Course 8 (7.5 EC)</i> Developing a master thesis proposal

	<i>Period 1</i>	<i>Period 2</i>	<i>Period 3</i>	<i>Period 4</i>
Second year	<i>Course 9 (45.0 EC)</i> Master thesis: guided research abroad and scientific publication			<i>Course 10 (7.5 EC)</i> Communication Competences
				<i>Course 11 (7.5 EC)</i> Scientific Research Proposal

- Across courses there is a balance between theoretical and conceptual knowledge, research skills and academic competences. Students get acquainted with leading theoretical knowledge in broad domains (e.g. course 7) and sub domains of human geography (courses 1, 3 and 5).
- Research skills, including research design for empirical study, data collection, qualitative and quantitative methods, are extensively trained and used in addressing both scientific and societal relevant problems (courses 2 and 4). In these two courses on research methods, practical assignments from the work field are being developed. In particular in the thesis project these research skills are tested (course 8 and 9). The topic of scientific integrity will be addressed in the courses dealing with academic and research skills (specifically courses 2, 4 and 8). Specific attention will be given to the ethical dimension of conducting academic research and selecting research and design methods and techniques. In these courses as well during the research thesis (courses 8 and 9) students critically assess the correct use and validity of scientific methods and their ethical implications, and they become aware of: the role of the researcher's value; the replicability as an important scientific criterion; the non-exploitative relationship with research subjects; the importance of asking for informed consent and designing transparent criteria for data storing and management.
- Academic skills like literature search, report and research proposal writing, presentation, scientific ethics and peer review, besides being part of all teaching courses, are taught in dedicated courses (courses 6, 8, 10 and 11).
- In period 4 of the second year as a follow-up to course 8, students are trained to develop a Research Project Proposal and as such, to translate their (thesis) ideas to external research calls on actual societal themes. Also the course on Communication Competences aims at communicating research findings to stakeholders, and as such, bridges quite naturally the academic master setting to the labour market, career context and society. Students can spend a period abroad in all universities with which the UU has an agreement, also under the EU Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus programmes. Besides that we have preferred partners with whom we collaborate intensively in research projects. What is specific about all research

partnerships is that at these institutes students can spend their compulsory period abroad and sometimes even get additional supervision; however, the main responsibility is always with the research master supervisor in Utrecht. This type of international research exchange is defined on an ad hoc basis and depends very much on the research topic which the student is most interested in. At the international institutions that are also Utrecht University Partners, (e.g. UCLA, Hong Kong, Lund), students are allowed to enrol in additional courses (outside the formal research master curriculum).

Students have multiple opportunities to provide individual input to the master programme.

- The Master's thesis allows students to conduct a research on a topic of their choice, after consultation with the programme leader and thesis supervisor.
- The Master's thesis allows students to conduct research in a research organization of their choice, again after approval by the programme leader.
- Within each course students are usually offered the possibility to choose a topic on their own for the final paper, essay or assignment (depending on the course design).

All full professors in Urban Geography and Economic Geography are contributing to the master programme.

3. A benchmark with comparable programmes in The Netherlands and abroad

In the Netherlands the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and the University of Groningen (RUG) offer two-year (research master) programmes that are to some degree comparable to the programme of Utrecht University (UU). However, by focusing explicitly on the interdependency between urban and economic patterns and processes and applying an explicit *dynamic* perspective on cities on three core themes (urban inequalities, economic evolution and healthy urban living) the UU master is clearly distinctive from the more general oriented urban or regional master programmes of both UvA and RUG respectively. In addition, UU (30 EC) reserves more time for training academic skills as compared to UvA (28 EC) and RUG (20 EC). The three programmes pay similar attention to teaching research skills. However, at UU students devote far more time to the master's thesis (45 EC) as compared to both UvA (28 EC) and RUG (30 EC). The UU master's programme therefore stands out as offering an explicitly research-oriented curriculum on urban and economic dynamics, in an excellent international research group.

Internationally, several universities offer two-years programmes in urban geography or economic geography, such as: King's College London (KC), University of Newcastle (UN), Lund University (LU), Royal Institute of Technology (Stockholm) (RIT), University of Luxembourg (UL), Aalborg University (AU), TU Berlin (TUB), University of Stuttgart (US). If compared, the Utrecht master programme has similar scope in terms of underpinning disciplinary/thematic fields as most other research master programmes, though other programmes focus on either urban studies or planning or both (with the only exception of Luxembourg). Instead, the UU research master is unique in regarding urban and economic dynamics as intrinsically interwoven. An additional distinctive feature of UU, as compared with all other master programmes is the role played by the Master Thesis, which is the largest in size at the UU (45 EC).

The master programme is unique in the Netherlands and worldwide for its:

- *Integrated research opportunities in excellent research groups:* The master programme offers the student cutting-edge and inspiring international research at the crossroads of urban and economic geography, with a clear emphasis on urban and economic *dynamics*. In particular, students are embedded in the URU integrated research environment, where they interact closely with the best researchers in urban and economic geography in the Netherlands.
- *International focus:* Students are brought in close contact with international top scholars who work at the research frontiers in urban and economic geography. For instance via the course 'Key thinkers in Urban and Economic Geography' where international scholars are invited, and through active participation in international workshops and presentations by invited scholars in the Utrecht Research Institute (URU). Furthermore, students spend a compulsory period abroad hosted by a partner institution, as part of their master's thesis research project. For this we have close contacts with scholars with excellent track records in urban and economic geography at four preferred research partner institutions abroad (Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Glasgow and Lund) and we have plans to extend this research network to other universities (e.g. Bocconi University in Italy, Toulouse in France). The master's thesis research is conducted abroad in close collaboration with the research partners and intensively supervised

by UU staff, so that a tight research focus is combined with broadening the research context and research design internationally. Finally, in the last three years thus far at least half of the enrolled students came from different countries, which provides in itself an international environment and stimulates intercultural communication.

- *Flexibility (tailor made solutions, research coaching)*: Students are personally coached during their studies. We closely follow their personal and scientific development, in particular during the master thesis. Within the framework of urban and economic dynamics we offer the students considerable freedom in choosing the topic of research they are most interested in and in which inspiring research institute abroad to carry out this research.

4. Embeddedness in the field of research

- The master programme is at the heart of the strategic research areas "Sustainability" and "Institutions" of Utrecht University, in addressing institutional contexts for international socio-economic patterns, processes and networks shaping the sustainability of urban regions of tomorrow.
- The master programme incorporates and addresses three main research themes of the Economic Geography and Urban Geography sections within URU research programme: urban inequality, evolutionary economic geography and healthy urban living.
- Only researchers from the Urban Geography and Economic Geography section are involved as lecturers in research master courses and supervise master students in their thesis research phase.
- Students attend, present and discuss their own work at the yearly URU Research Programme days with other master students, PhD's and staff.
- Students actively participate to URU events such as guest lectures, workshops, book readings and discussions, and PhD thesis defences.

5. Embeddedness in society and labour market prospects

"Society" (especially public organizations, such as governments on different levels, and private companies, such as consultancies) asks for researchers with thorough knowledge of difficult urban questions such as the growing inequality between regions and groups, declining urban neighbourhoods, polarization between different ethnic groups, unequal health situations and the effects of the economic crisis on job opportunities, housing and the development of regions. However, addressing these issues is becoming more complex in urban societies which are in a constant state of flux. Knowledge on responding effectively on urban processes that occur at different speeds is crucial to stimulate social and economic sustainable developments. Public and private bodies involved in governance ask for a solid knowledge of research methodology and research competences. The programme delivers students who do have this knowledge and competences. Thus far, after graduation students get jobs at consultancy companies, research units of large multinational corporations, but also at local and national government bodies. The distribution of our alumni across functions in universities and research functions outside academia indicates that 40% of the graduates remains in academia (as PhD or junior staff), while around 30% gets employed in the private sector. More than 90% of the total graduates gets a job directly after graduation (section 5.5 and Table 5.3 in the UU Self-Assessment Report of the Research Master Programmes 2009-2013 – this report was sent to the Committee in June 2014).

6. Actions to increase inflow

The actual inflow over the last three years has stabilized at approximately 9-10 students to enrol yearly); about 45% of the actual inflow between 2008 and 2012 comes from abroad (see UU Self-Assessment Report of the Research Master Programmes 2009-2013).

The inflow figures show that students are indeed interested in the research master, and that the number of students submitting to this master has increased over the years and is on track to reach the 2014 level of about 45 submissions in June. However, as in many other master programmes, we witness that only half of the students admitted actually starts the research master. The Communication and Marketing department presumes that many of these are (international) students that subscribe to many masters and depending on the scholarship or grant received, choose one. This outflow will be investigated in detail in the (near) future, in collaboration with the Communication and Marketing department.

We aim at increasing the enrolment up to 20 or more students each year. We expect additional new students because of the new and unique combination of urban and economic geography and

our clearer focus at urban and economic dynamics. However, we have already planned concrete actions to increase the enrolment rate, of which the main ones are:

- Directly contact the students that (at the Master Information Evenings twice a year) showed interest in or even already submitted to the research master already in an early stage (directly after showing interest or after submission) and keep this personal contact alive: by informing them personally and respond quickly to their questions. Investigate their decisions before they actually choose a master programme.
- Invite the UU bachelor students to an additional meeting in April each year about the new research master's focus and content.
- From Spring 2015 onwards, we intensify the link between the honours programme in the bachelor studies and the master programme at Utrecht University and specifically target the potential research master students already in an early stage of their bachelor studies. The same goes for intensifying marketing activities at the University College Utrecht and Roosevelt Academy.
- Via more active national and international marketing efforts, jointly with the Communication and Marketing department, and supported by the new thematic focus of the research master programme. Specific actions to be taken in summer/fall 2015: a video to be uploaded on the website and in the relevant social networks, explaining the uniqueness of the programme; a more attractive and more easily accessible website; use our research partner institutes abroad to attract foreign students.

7. Labour market orientation

- Two courses are dedicated to research skills, needed in future positions as (senior) researcher within or outside academia.
- In the second year of the programme, students attend the *Communication Competences* course, where they reflect on their programme in terms of societal implications, management and leadership.
- In this *Communication Competences* course, master students are trained in consulting skills in, in particular in relating scientific research outcomes to policy and management information needed by policy makers or commercial parties.
- Students are expected to organize their study abroad period in an organization abroad. Although intensively supported in this process, this is a challenging task, which contributes to enhance their organizational skills (master students from abroad who opt to stay in the country will do the same in the Netherlands).
- The combination of academic research with studying abroad (or in the Netherlands for foreign students who decide to carry out their research in the Netherlands) prepares students to apply their geographical knowledge in (international) practice. The academic, research and communication skills acquired and applied during this study period abroad equip students with flexible research capabilities. They learn to focus on practical skills in diverging contexts which prepares them for working positions in professional environments anywhere.
- The connection between the research master and PhD programmes is realized in two ways. Formally, during the last period of the programme, students work on developing a research proposal (see course 11: *Scientific Research Proposal*) under the supervision of their thesis supervisor; if the proposal is of sufficient quality, it may be submitted to a funding agency. In a more informal way students have the opportunity to meet with current PhDs at seminars and attend their thesis defences.

Specific activities are organized to prepare the students for a later profession. For instance, an alumni network has been created and a newsletter is also in place to circulate relevant job opportunities for current master students. Moreover, during the study period abroad, which is linked to the master thesis, students are strongly oriented at the (future) labour market and may inquire about possibilities to start a PhD in the hosting university or another institution or country.

In addition to these activities in the regular research master programme, the Department of Human Geography and Spatial Planning provides the unique masters-wide "Time to Explore" programme. Various activities in this programme are organized to better prepare for the graduates' future position in the labour market. The following activities are organized yearly in this "Time to Explore" programme:

- 'Meeloopdag': Some alumni open the doors to their organization, inviting students to a day in the workplace.

- Career training: During this training students examine their interests, abilities, motives and values which play an important role for them in finding a job.
- Network training: In this training students and alumni come together to explore what job positions can be fulfilled after completing their Master.
- Job application training.

Currently, the department of Human Geography and Planning at Utrecht University is developing a mentor network focused on connecting alumni and students (together with the U-fonds). The objective is to provide the opportunity for students to be advised by professionals on job applications, career advice and job opportunities. The alumni network of Human Geography and Spatial Planning contributes to the "Time to Explore" programme and related activities.

8. International and interdisciplinary orientation

- The literature used in all courses is international and all courses are performed in English.
- In all theoretical courses (courses 1, 3 and 5) social and cultural differences across different spatial scales (Western, non-Western) are addressed and critically discussed.
- The master programme will invite several international guest lecturers to contribute to the programme (e.g. course 7). Moreover, the opportunity to carry out research or internships at international institutions ensures that students get in contact with a variety of cultural perspectives.
- Students from the Netherlands spend a compulsory period abroad, which is often based at a foreign university – sometimes a research institution. The study period abroad is optional for students from outside the Netherlands, who can also choose to be hosted by an organization in the Netherlands.
- The staff in Economic and Urban Geography carries out research activities in an international setting, in particular as part of international research collaborations. Therefore foreign researchers often visit URU, sometimes as a short research stay in which they present and reflect on their recent work. We work towards bringing the master students directly into contact with these international scholars as - together with the PhDs - the students will prepare discussion topics for these meetings or presentation sessions.
- Students come from different disciplinary backgrounds, which creates an exchange of multi-, and interdisciplinary views (approximately 45% comes from abroad).
- The three thematic courses of the master are organized around interdisciplinary topics which combine urban and economic geography.
- Also the methodological courses taught in the master can be applied across a wide set of disciplines and topics (e.g. interview techniques, multilevel analysis).
- Students are in close touch with URU researchers in Urban and Economic Geography (via lectures, thesis supervision, seminars), who have different scientific backgrounds and expertise in a variety of disciplines. Students are invited to join research seminars at ours as well as other departments (Faculty of Geosciences, Innovation Science/ Faculty of Law, Economics, and Governance, Utrecht School of Economics, Sociology).
- Students are stimulated to participate to the GeoHuis, where researchers of the Faculty of Geosciences discuss interdisciplinary topics in Geosciences.

9. Student target group, selection and admission

Admission to the programme is selective, based on an assessment of study results and personal competence and motivation. Selective admission is necessary to ensure that the students are capable of completing the master's programme within two years.

Enrolment in the research master's programme at Utrecht University requires the following competences:

- You are able to interpret, analyse and solve key issues in urban geography or economic geography;
- You are able to design, perform, analyse and report on scientific research in social sciences;
- You are able to express yourself in proficient English, both orally and in written text;
- An academic master's degree in a human geography or planning specialization or in another social or economic science field with a substantial amount of 'spatial' and 'research' content.

This means that students can be accepted to the programme with at least an academic Bachelor's degree in Human Geography, Spatial Planning, Urban or Regional Planning, as well as disciplines

such as Social Sciences, Economics, Management or Organizational Sciences, Liberal Arts & Sciences and Law if they have demonstrable knowledge of issues related to human geography, urban and economic geography in human geography and/or urban and economic geography). This latter requirement includes students from the University College of Utrecht University. In addition, all Bachelor's degree holders must have knowledge of and experience with both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

All university graduates should in principle have achieved a high GPA to qualify for admission. When making a decision on admission, the admission committee also takes into account the grades for courses related to the field of economic or urban geography, progression during the Bachelor programme and motivation for studying. The student's qualifications should meet the following requirements:

- Be able to show good academic results in previous studies. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they belong to the top of their cohort;
- Have completed previous studies with a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 (on a scale of 1-4) or at least 7.0 under the Dutch system;
- Have knowledge of and experience with basic methods and techniques in geographic or social-science research;
- Have a positive motivation and dedication to undertake the master's programme;
- Have good command of and practical experience in using the English language. The holder of a Bachelor's degree gained at a university in The Netherlands meets the English language requirements for admission. Other students who are non-native English speakers and who have not taken at least two years of English language courses are required to provide proof of their English proficiency (IELTS; TOEFL).

All university undergraduate students seeking admission to the master programme submit an official application to the Master Admission Committee. The master coordinator assesses the candidates in consultation with the Secretary of the Admissions Committee on a range of criteria. In addition, the decision for the admission is based on: applicant's CV; a well-argued motivation letter; a letter of recommendation from at least two students' professors; applicant's research output. If needed, the applicant is interviewed to assess his or her attitude, motivation, orientation and research ideas.

There is no premaster course for students. However, the Admissions Committee of the Graduate School of Geosciences may require those applicants who do not meet the admission requirements to complete a package of courses to a maximum of 60 ECTS, to be taught by Utrecht University and tailored to the Master's programme concerned, in order to remove background deficiencies. These courses are mostly related to research methods and techniques.

10. Student guidance

An important role in tutoring is played by the programme leader, who takes care of:

- Providing information to students prior to and at the start of the programme concerning the curriculum;
- Organizing meetings to help new students become familiar with the university and the city;
- Organizing sessions guiding students in their preparation for their master's thesis and study period abroad. In particular these meetings help students from outside the Netherlands to get familiar with the Utrecht education style and the specific requirements of the master programme. They include around 10 meetings during the year about specific topics (study abroad, thesis topic, labour market orientation, discussions on exemplar master theses etc.);
- Being available to help students in case of ad hoc questions or problems;
- Advising in personal issues; for this, all students can also receive additional support from the departmental study advisor.

In case of problems, all students can always contact the coordinator and academic counsellors who have experience in coaching (international) students.

In addition to the curriculum, community-building activities for the research master students, such as social meetings and excursions are organized separately, generally by the programme leader.

- The so-called 'Familiarisation' sessions are meant to create and deepen social bonds between students via social oriented meetings (e.g. dinner and excursions with URU staff).

- An excursion is organized to the city of Utrecht and to the university campus.
- Other social events include: reading sessions, watching movies, cooking workshops (to get to know students' international cuisines).
- In addition, the Graduate School of Geosciences will organize a number of events which aim to bring together students from different programmes within the Faculty.

Moreover students have created a Facebook page, where they exchange both personal and professional relevant information. This type of social networking also allows different cohorts of students to establish connection with newcomers and share useful information.



Universiteit Utrecht

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF GEOSCIENCES

HUMAN GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

MASTER'S THESIS RUBRIC *Instructions*

The master's thesis Rubric consists of a grading sheet (A) and a description of the criteria on which the assessment of the rubric is based (B). The rubric will also be handed over to the students. The Rubric has to be signed by the first reviewer (usually the first supervisor), and a second reviewer.

Mind you! The file is secured and can only be filled out on the designated spots.

Rubric

- Both first and second reviewer use the rubric for the assessment.
- Please fill out the form digitally.
- For each item, please indicate the most appropriate description with an x in one of the boxes on the grading sheet.
- You will find the descriptions matching the criteria on pages 3 to 5 of the rubric.
- It is possible to fill out more than one x in a row.
- Please add additional remarks at the end of each main category of the grading sheet.
- When you have completed the form, please print it out and sign it (first and second reviewer) and deliver the signed original to the Student Information Desk (Studiepunt).



Universiteit Utrecht

FACULTY OF GEOSCIENCES
HUMAN GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING
MASTER'S THESIS RUBRIC

Course Code GEO4-Click here to enter text.
Credits Click here to enter text. EC

Student Name	Click here to enter text.
Student Number	Click here to enter text.
Title of Thesis / Report	Click here to enter text.
Master's Programme	Click here to enter text.
Name(s) of Internal Supervisor(s)	Click here to enter text.
Host Organisation (if applicable)	
Name of organisation	Click here to enter text.
Country	Click here to enter text.
Period	From Click here to enter text. Until Click here to enter text.
Name(s) of External Supervisor(s)	Click here to enter text.

Final Mark

Click here

Date Click here to enter a date.

Name of First Reviewer Click here to enter text.

Signature

Name of Second Reviewer Click here to enter text.

Signature

Thesis	Unacceptable	Insufficient	Acceptable	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Background: theory/ context/ regional setting/ previous work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional comments: <i>Click here to enter text.</i>						
Method	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Results: data collected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Results: analysis techniques and data analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Results: data presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional comments: <i>Click here to enter text.</i>						
Conclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reflection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional comments: <i>Click here to enter text.</i>						
References	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall quality of writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Process	Unacceptable	Insufficient	Acceptable	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Autonomy & ownership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall comments: <i>Click here to enter text.</i>						

Thesis						
	Unacceptable	Insufficient	Acceptable	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Introduction	Reason, relevance and/or aim of research are lacking.	Reason, relevance and/or aim of research are unclear.	The Introduction discusses reason, relevance and aim, however it is done superficially and without coherence.	The introduction discusses reason, relevance and aim clearly and coherently.	Satisfactory + The introduction positions the thesis within the existing literature, geographical thinking or societal debates. The Introduction serves as an appealing invitation to read the thesis.	
Background: theory/ context/ regional setting/ previous work	Minimal use of literature/ nonselective use of literature/ literal quotations that have not been tied together into a cohesive whole.	The literature used is only partly relevant and/or incomplete, leading to poor substantiation of the proposed research.	The literature is sufficient and relevant, but is summed up. A clear link to the research is not always made.	The research is linked to relevant theoretical literature, which is functional for executing the proposed research. Theories and concepts are used correctly.	The research is well-embedded in the existing body of literature, from which relevant scientific theories are selected and used, resulting in an accurate and coherent conceptual framework.	Good+ Originality in connecting subjects and/or makes the connection to other disciplines.
Method	The thesis lacks transparency.	The research method is inaccurately and/or incompletely described; validity, reliability and suitability are not explicitly described.	The research method is described at an elementary level; validity, reliability and suitability are briefly described.	The research method is comprehensively described; validity, reliability and suitability are described in some detail.	The research method is comprehensively described; validity, reliability and suitability are described in detail.	
			Reliability is suboptimal.	Reliability is suboptimal.	Reliability is good.	
	No Justification of the method is offered.	Justification for the selected method is missing, insufficient and/or lacks a link with the research question (s)/aim(s).	Justification for the selected method is given and shows a link with the research question (s)/aim(s).	Justification for the selected method is convincing and shows a clear link with the research question (s)/aim(s). The method fits the research population.	Justification for the selected method is convincing and shows a clear link with the research question (s)/aim(s), with the research population and with the context of the research. Potential weak points and/or pitfalls of the method are substantiated.	
Results: data collected	Data haven't been collected correctly.	Data have been collected correctly, but data are insufficient to answer the research question fully.	Data have been collected correctly and are sufficient to answer the research question fully.		Sufficient data have been collected correctly in an original manner.	

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Results: analysis techniques and data analysis	Incorrect processing of the results (e.g. used the wrong test).	Sloppiness and vagueness in processing of the results, which makes it difficult for the reader to value the outcomes.	Correct but limited processing of the results.	Correct and precise processing of the results. Implications of the outcomes are discussed in relation to the applied techniques.	Correct and thorough processing of the results. Implications of the outcomes are discussed in relation to the applied techniques, expectations and previous research.	
	The distinction between description and interpretation of results is unclear to the reader.	The distinction between description and interpretation of results is clear to the reader, but the interpretation of the results is incorrect.	Interpretations are therefore superficial or limited. Implications of the outcomes are hardly discussed.	Good interpretations on the basis of these results. In the discussion of the results, essentials and details are clearly separated.	In-depth interpretations and reflections on these in a wider context.	
Results: data presentation	The data are not represented properly, data in texts, figures, maps or otherwise do not meet academic standards (mistakes, little connection with methods and theory).	Representation (tables, figures and charts) of selected data is not clear or missing.	The selected data are represented accurately. Correct choice of maps, figures and text.	Representation of selected data is clear and supports the understanding.	Use of best suitable combination of maps, texts and figures, if necessary by using self-made forms of representation.	
		Lack of coherence between representation techniques (maps, texts, etc.).	Coherence between representation techniques not always clear.	Data in texts, maps, figures are interrelated and reinforce the general analysis.		
Conclusion	Conclusions do not do justice to the content of the thesis.	Conclusions are a mere summary. The answers to the research questions are not fully supported by the results / data. Limited reflection on the selected method.	After a short summary, the research question is answered with reference to data and theory. Limitations of the study are discussed superficially. Social and theoretical implications are not addressed.	After a short summary, the research question is answered with reference to data and theory. Limitations of the study are discussed. Social and theoretical implications are addressed superficially.	After a short summary of the project, the research question is answered carefully with reference to data and theory. Social and theoretical implications are addressed. Limitations of the selected method are discussed.	
		No suggestions for future research.	Future research is mentioned, but seems trivial.	Future research is mentioned, but seems trivial.	Potential topics for future research are suggested in general terms.	Based on this, the thesis gives specific recommendations for future research.

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Reflection	No reflection on and discussion of the research questions and/or choices made.	Reflection hardly covers the methodological approach and the execution of the research	Only partly substantiated reflection on the methodological approach and the execution of the research	Reflection clearly substantiates what went well and what didn't in the methodological approach and the execution of the research	Satisfactory + Clearly substantiates which alternative approach or method could have led to a better or more reliable research. Proper consideration is given to related, published studies.	
References	Very sloppy and/or fraudulent.	References in text and/or list are incomplete, inconsistent, and contain multiple mistakes. Some references are irrelevant or untraceable. References do not comply with standards of research journal(s) or APA.	References in text and list comply with standards of research journal(s) or APA. References are complete, relevant and traceable, but occasionally contain some mistakes	As previous, but no mistakes have been made.		
Overall quality of writing	Frequent mistakes, many typos.	Text is not well structured and difficult to read or understand. Layout of the final document does not meet the standards.	Clear construction of and variety in length of sentences. Some mistakes in grammar or spelling that don't distract from reading. Text is structured. Layout of the final document is consistent.	Clear construction and length of sentences. Minor mistakes in grammar or spelling. Text is well-structured, facilitating the understanding of the reader. Layout of the final document is consistent.	Formulations are varied, specific and appropriate, inviting towards further reading. Layout of the final document is professional and attractive.	

Process

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Autonomy & ownership	Ideas are given by the supervisor, but poorly incorporated. No 'ownership' of the topic and process by the student.	Ideas are given by the supervisor. Student tasks are primarily initiated by the supervisor (demonstrating, reflecting, making choices, planning). The tasks needed to be monitored closely by the supervisor.	Ideas are primarily given by the supervisor. Tasks are initiated by a combination of student and supervisor. Student follows-up on given direction.	Ideas are generated in conjunction with supervisor. Ideas and tasks are sometimes generated by the teacher, sometimes by the student (student recognizes where help is needed and asks for it).	Ideas are generated autonomously. Supervision meetings are primarily based on student-initiated planning, discussions and reflections.	Good + Not only develops a logical, consistent plan to solve problems, but recognizes consequences of solutions and can articulate reason for choosing solutions.