

wo-master Philosophy, Politics and Economics University of Groningen

24 October 2016

NVAO limited initial accreditation

Panel report

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1 Executive summary

The academic master programme Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) at the University of Groningen is coordinated by the Faculty of Philosophy, but designed and offered in close collaboration with other faculties (Faculty of Economics and Business, Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts). The programme intends to equip students with the necessary attitude, insight and skills to allow them to combine the knowledge and understanding from Philosophy, Politics and Economics with a creative and solution-focused approach to today's complex social problems. The programme strikes a good balance between research-based and application-based aims and is in line with international developments. The intended learning outcomes of the programme are presented in the framework of the Dublin descriptors. The academic character is described in terms of the level of learning outcomes, which aim at the highest levels of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Additional evidence of the academic character is the selective admission procedure and the fact that students also learn by directly engaging with scientific research. All courses are given by staff members who are active and accomplished researchers. Job prospects for PPE graduates are not only in public organisations but also in business, journalism, banking and NGOs. The representatives from three work fields (journalism, banking, and law) whom the panel met during the site visit, were interested and committed. They think the PPE programme is a useful preparation for positions in their sectors and would like to be involved in the programme in an advisory role or e.g. by presenting cases in a seminar. The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes of the PPE programme meet the standard.

The programme is taught in English and consists of nine modules of 5 EC each and a 15 EC master thesis. Three modules constitute the shared academic core of the programme, on methods, theories and the history of PPE. As proposed, two seminar courses run parallel to the first two core courses and give students the opportunity to apply what they have learned to concrete cases. Students select four PPE electives, one or two of which may be replaced by an internship. The three PPE disciplines are well integrated in the core curriculum, but the attention for impact assessment methods, an important tool in economic and policy research, is not strong enough in the methods course. The panel thinks this is a critical omission. The panel also thinks that it is more effective to organise the core courses and seminars sequentially instead of concurrently, because students should have a full grasp of theories and of methods before they are asked to apply them. A key feature of PPE is the recognition that certain problems can be well-addressed only by using together the robust suite of tools the three disciplines offer. In addition, in view of the importance of learning how to apply knowledge and skills to actual cases, the panel recommends offering a third PPE seminar instead of one of the electives. An internship may be useful for students, depending on their background and aims. The panel recommends developing a more elaborate vision on the role of internships. Writing a thesis while involved with an organisation and using authentic data may also be an interesting way to strengthen the link with the work field. The panel expects, based on the interview with representatives from the work field, that PPE will also be attractive for part time students. The panel advises making the programme equally attractive and feasible for full time and part time students and to aim to keep both groups together in class to facilitate interaction and create diversity. The core staff is excellent, on an outstanding, internationally recognised level, and is clearly committed to teaching in the programme.

Students find their teachers very accessible and helpful. Academic guidance is provided for by the student advisor and an academic mentor for each student.

The small class size, of a maximum annual intake of 25 students, and a staff-student ratio of 1:18 will provide favourable conditions for the development of the intended analytical and critical skills and attitude. Admission to the programme is selective, based on previous performance and motivation. In view of the ambitions of the interdisciplinary programme it is important that all students have a sufficient knowledge of the three constituting disciplines, from the beginning of the programme. The programme staff plans to provide prospective students from monodisciplinary backgrounds with an approximately 1,000 page reading list to prepare them for the required level of the other disciplines. The panel thinks that a reading list by itself will not be enough: reading without discussion will not lead to sufficient understanding. The panel fears that this will affect the quality of discussion in class and believes that a formal assessment is necessary at an appropriate point (not necessarily before the start of the programme, but also not too late so as to avoid unnecessary delays). The panel thinks there are better, more interactive, ways to bring all students to the necessary minimum level, but in all cases a formal assessment is essential. The need for assessment partly motivates the conditional nature of the panel's positive advice.

The panel is positive about the structure and contents of the programme, except for the insufficient attention in the methods course for impact assessment. The staff is excellent and conditions for intensive teaching and guidance are good. The admission procedure is well-considered and based on appropriate criteria. The panel thinks, however, that providing a reading list without assessment is not enough to remedy possible deficiencies of incoming students. Pending the addition of impact assessment to the methods course and a better system to remedy deficiencies, the panel concludes that the teaching-learning environment of the PPE programme partially meets the standard.

The assessment of the students' progress is formulated in the assessment plan. Students are assessed through a balanced mix of assessment methods: exams using essay-type questions, weekly assignments and individual essays, reports and group or individual presentations. Students are informed timely about the form of assessment and the criteria that will be applied. The quality of examinations or assessment is judged in advance by way of peer review among teaching staff. In order to guarantee uniform assessment across the programme the department uses assessment forms with clear criteria to mark similar assignments such as presentations, essays and the master thesis. The Examination Board evaluates and monitors the implementation of the assessment plan and takes its legal role seriously. The panel concludes that the assessment meets the standard.

The embedding of the PPE programme in the long-term plans of the respective faculties is good and supported by adequate financial investments. The expected intake numbers seem realistic. If unforeseen circumstances or disappointing student numbers would make it necessary to discontinue the programme, the faculty guarantees that students can complete the entire curriculum. The panel concludes that the financial provisions and graduation guarantee meet the standard.

Given these considerations, the panel advises NVAO to take a conditionally positive decision regarding the quality of the proposed programme wo-master Philosophy, Politics and Economics at the University of Groningen.

The panel has formulated two conditions:

1. Develop and have a system in place to assess at an appropriate time whether deficiencies have been addressed and thus to ensure that all students have a sufficient level of knowledge in the three PPE disciplines;
2. Redesign the methods course and include proper attention for impact assessment methods.

The Hague, 24 October 2016

On behalf of the Initial Accreditation panel convened to assess the wo-master Philosophy, Politics and Economics at the University of Groningen,

Prof. dr. Martin Stokhof
(chair)

Dr. Marianne van der Weiden
(secretary)

2 Introduction

2.1 The procedure

NVAO received a request for an initial accreditation procedure including programme documents regarding a proposed wo-master Philosophy, Politics and Economics. The request was received on 10 Augustus 2016 from the University of Groningen.

An initial accreditation procedure is required when a recognised institution wants to offer a programme and award a recognised bachelor or master's degree. To a certain extent, initial accreditation demands a different approach to the accreditation procedure for programmes already being offered. Initial accreditation is in fact an ex ante assessment of a programme, and a programme becomes subject to the normal accreditation procedures once initial accreditation has been granted.

NVAO convened an international panel of experts. The panel consisted of:

- Prof. dr. Martin Stokhof (chair), professor (emeritus) of Philosophy of Language at the University of Amsterdam;
- Prof. dr. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, Morehead-Cain Alumni Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina, Director of the UNC Philosophy, Politics and Economics Program;
- Prof. dr. Peter Niesen, professor of Political Science/ Political Theory at the Universität Hamburg;
- Prof. dr. Bas ter Weel, managing director of SEO Amsterdam Economics and professor of Economics at the University of Amsterdam;
- Ferdi Verhulst BA, master student in Governance at VU University Amsterdam.

On behalf of the NVAO, drs. Lisette Winsemius, policy advisor was responsible for the process coordination and dr. Marianne van der Weiden acted as the panel's secretary.

Details of the panel members' expertise are given in Annex 1 (Composition of the panel). All panel members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel based its assessment on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Initial Accreditation Framework (Stcrt. 2014, nr 36791).

The panel members studied the programme documents regarding the proposed programme (see Annex 3: Documents reviewed). Their first impressions were sent to the panel's secretary and the NVAO process coordinator, in order to detect the items to be clarified during the site visit. The panel discussed the first impressions in a preparatory meeting before the site visit. The site visit took place on 13 October 2016 at the University of Groningen (Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit). The panel formulated its preliminary assessments per standard immediately after the site visit. These are based on the findings of the site visit, and building on the assessment of the programme documents.

2.2 Panel report

Based on the preliminary assessments at the end of the site visit the secretary wrote the panel report. For each standard the panel presents an outline of its findings, considerations and a conclusion. The findings are the facts as found by the panel in the programme documents and during the site visit. The panel's considerations are based on the panel's evaluations regarding these findings and their relative importance. The panel's concluding assessment is based on the considerations presented in this report. The panel concludes the report with a table containing an overview of its assessments per standard.

The secretary sent a draft version of the report to the panel members for their comments. The chair approved the final version of the report. The programme management received the report for a check on factual inaccuracies on 24 October 2016 and reacted on 9 November 2016. The programme management found no factual inaccuracies in the report. The panel declares that this advice was drawn up independently. It was submitted to NVAO on 9 November 2016.

3 Description of the programme

3.1 General

Country	: The Netherlands
Institution	: University of Groningen
Programme	: Philosophy, Politics and Economics
Level	: master
Orientation	: academic (wo)
Specialization	: n.a.
Modes of study	: full time/part time
Degree	: Master of Science (MSc)
Location(s)	: Groningen
Study Load (EC)	: 60 EC
Field of Study	: cross-sectoral

3.2 Profile of the institution

The University of Groningen was founded in 1614. It is organised in ten faculties that offer degree programmes and courses in the fields of Humanities, Social Sciences, Economics and Business, Spatial Sciences, Life Sciences and Natural Sciences and Technology. There are 45 Bachelor's degree programmes, 146 Master's degree programmes and 14 Research Master's programmes. The University of Groningen has almost 30,000 students and employs 5,238 fte staff, including 479 full professors and 1,500 PhD students. Almost thirty per cent of the first year's students come from abroad and the total population of international students is fifteen per cent (2015/16).

3.3 Profile of the programme

The academic master's programme Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) is targeted at students with an interest in obtaining advanced analytical and quantitative training as a foundation for pursuing research-based careers in public service, in banking and finance, commerce, journalism, politics and public policy making. The target group consists of students with a bachelor's degree in philosophy, political science or economics, who are intent on sharpening their abilities in normative reflection, on deepening the knowledge of subjects they have acquired in their bachelor's degree studies and on broadening and enhancing their methodological skills. The one-year programme PPE will be taught in English. It is the first PPE master programme offered by a Dutch university. The programme consists of three core courses, two seminars, four electives and a thesis:

	1 st quarter	2 nd quarter	3 rd quarter	4 th quarter
Academic core	Methods of PPE (5 EC)	Theories of PPE (5 EC)	History of PPE (5 EC)	
PPE seminars	PPE Seminar 1 (5 EC)	PPE Seminar 2 (5 EC)		
Electives	Elective 1 (5 EC)	Elective 2 (5 EC)	Elective 3 (5 EC) Elective 4 (5 EC)	
Thesis				Master Thesis (15 EC)

4 Assessment per standard

This chapter presents the evaluation by the assessment panel of the standards. The panel has reproduced the criteria for each standard. For each standard the panel presents (1) a brief outline of its findings based on the programme documents and on documents provided by the institution and the site visit, (2) the considerations the panel has taken into account and (3) the conclusion of the panel.

4.1 Intended learning outcomes: Standard 1

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

Outline of findings

In the information dossier the goal of the programme is described as imparting to students the knowledge, insight and skills in the field of Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) that will thoroughly prepare them for careers in diverse organisations, such as national or international public administrations, governmental and non-governmental organisations, private businesses and banks, think tanks and research institutions. The programme intends to equip students with the necessary attitude, insight and skills to allow them to combine the knowledge and understanding from Philosophy, Politics and Economics with a creative and solution-focused approach to today's complex social problems. In the PPE programme, an interdisciplinary approach, critical reflection and applicability are critical elements.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are presented in the framework of the Dublin descriptors. Students are expected to acquire advanced knowledge and understanding of key concepts, theories, conceptual and formal methods of the field of PPE, as well as their history. The level of knowledge builds upon and extends that of a bachelor's degree programme and provides a basis for originality in developing and applying ideas, often within a research context. Students learn to apply the knowledge and understanding in analysing conceptual and normative assumptions of arguments, probing political legitimacy and power in decision-making and implementing policies efficiently and equitably. Graduates are able to clearly communicate results, as well as the background knowledge and insights that produced these results, to both specialist and non-specialist audiences. They possess strong oral and written skills in English. Graduates will have acquired learning skills that allow them to further develop themselves. They will be able to plan and implement activities independently and effectively. They will have developed a critical, independent, creative, pro-active and resourceful attitude and will approach research with scientific and methodological rigour.

The PPE master degree programme has an academic character. In the information dossier this is described in terms of the level of learning outcomes, which aim at the highest levels of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In its meetings with the management and teaching staff the panel has looked more closely at what is meant by preparing students for 'research-based work'. Based on these discussions, the panel concludes that students are not being prepared to do cutting-edge research in the proposed professional contexts. Instead, they are trained to address complex problems in ways that are properly informed by research, which may involve research into what research has been done, or needs to be done. The panel considers this an important aim and appropriate target. The

representatives from the work field and the students shared and supported this interpretation.

In the information dossier, the assessment panel was provided with a comparison of benchmark programmes internationally. PPE bachelor degree programmes are common in English-speaking countries. On the European continent the number of PPE bachelor and master programmes is growing. In the Netherlands, a number of universities offer either a PPE specialisation track at bachelor (University College Groningen) or master level (Leiden University), a bachelor programme PPE (VU Amsterdam) or a Philosophy and Economics research master programme (Erasmus University Rotterdam). In Europe, the Groningen PPE master programme is most similar to the PPE programme at the University of Hamburg, especially in its interdisciplinary approach, but the Hamburg programme is a two year programme.

During the site visit the panel met with representatives from three sectors of the work field (banking, journalism and law). From this meeting the panel concluded that the stakeholders were interested and committed. They would be willing to contribute to the programme, e.g. by presenting real-life cases or by allowing students to do thesis research at their organisation. They expect that the PPE master programme will be enriching and beneficial for their employees and colleagues, or even for themselves, and they would, therefore, recommend the programme to others. They would invest in the programme by allowing employees to enter the PPE part time programme.

The panel also met with three students who are currently enrolled in the Philosophy department. Two of them combine their philosophy studies with another programme (economy, history) or had done so last year (international relations and international organisations). For them, the interdisciplinary character of the PPE programme is the most attractive feature of the programme.

Considerations

The panel agrees with the fundamental ideas that guide the vision of the PPE master degree programme. PPE has a long tradition in the Anglo-American academic world, having been introduced with the aim to produce high-level candidates for recruitment to civil service and public office. The Groningen PPE programme broadens the potential job positions in a plausible way to include professionals in NGOs, private companies, think tanks and research institutes. This dovetails with the international trend toward stronger academic and intellectual footprints of PPE programmes, and, consequently, a broader orientation spanning research-based and application-based aims. The proposed programme strikes a good balance between both orientations. The intended learning outcomes follow up on the problems sketched in the introduction of the information dossier on the ethical implications of policy questions. They aim at establishing a strong methodological competence, which is important when dealing with normative questions. Application and communication skills are plausibly outlined and translate the multi-disciplinary education to the many contexts in which they will find application.

The panel is convinced of the academic, rather than professional, character of the PPE programme, given the contents and level of the coursework and the skills being developed. The PPE programme proposal rightly emphasises open-mindedness and the ability to make decisions. This is a good reason to see the programme as less about creating researchers and more about preparing people who have more specialised training in one or another of

the disciplines, to exploit the research done in the others to secure a perspective that is fresh and fruitful in addressing the sorts of problems and challenges they will face in various professions and positions.

The panel advises making use of the commitment and interest of relevant stakeholders, that was evident during the site visit, in a more structural way, e.g. by setting up an advisory committee with representatives from public and private organisations. This way they could contribute their thoughts about the best ways to further develop the programme, and also be invited to actively participate in various ways. This would be useful to strengthen the connection of the PPE programme with the work field(s) and with actual and relevant applications for the seminar courses.

Summarising, the panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes of the programme have been nicely specified with regard to content, level and orientation. They are well-defined and appropriate for an academic master programme; they meet international requirements. It is sufficiently clear for what kind of positions the graduates are prepared.

Conclusion

Meets the standard.

4.2 Teaching-learning environment: Standard 2

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

Outline of findings

Structure and contents of the programme

The one-year (60 EC) master programme is taught in English and consists of nine modules of 5 EC each and a 15 EC master thesis. Three modules constitute the academic core of the programme: Methods of PPE (offered in the first quarter), Theories of PPE (second quarter) and History of PPE (third quarter). Two seminar courses run parallel to the Methods and Theories core courses and give students the opportunity to apply the methods and theories they simultaneously learn in the core courses. Students select four PPE electives: one in the first and one in the second quarter, two in the third quarter. Electives can be selected from a set of courses especially designed for the PPE programme, in which philosophical, political and economic perspectives are combined, or students can choose disciplinary electives from a predetermined list of master courses offered by the participating faculties. Instead of one or two elective courses, students may also choose to do an internship, up to a maximum of 10 EC, depending on the type and length of the internship. The master thesis (fourth quarter) completes the programme.

In its meeting with the teaching staff during the site visit, the panel discussed the contents of the core courses, especially those of the methods course, and their relationship with the seminars. The panel was informed that in the Methods of PPE module students learn to understand and apply the conceptual and formal methods of statistics, decision theory, game theory, social and public choice theory. They also learn how to frame problems and research questions in PPE areas and select an appropriate method, based on a thorough understanding of the main quantitative and qualitative methods used in contemporary PPE research and applications. The panel thinks that the modules ambitiously integrate the three

composite disciplines in the core curriculum. The disciplines are approached, in the theory and history modules, from a recognisably philosophical angle, analysing the content of political and economic concepts and their genealogy. The methods module offers social scientific empirical and logical/mathematical methods but, given the aims of the programme, the panel considers appropriate attention to economic methods, especially impact assessment, essential. Impact assessment is becoming more important, for politicians and policy advisors are expected to evaluate the effects of their policy measures, which in some cases is even a legal obligation, and are held accountable for them. The panel feels it is necessary to broaden the methods course to include impact assessment methods and to involve assessment specialists in the course, e.g. as co-teachers. The teaching staff suggested as a possibility including impact assessment in one of the electives, but the panel believes this topic should be part of the core curriculum.

As mentioned above, the two seminars are intended to give students the opportunity to apply the methods and theories they simultaneously learn in the Methods of PPE and Theories of PPE modules to a concrete policy issue at hand. The panel wondered why the seminars are offered concurrently with the core courses. Offering them sequentially, the panel thought, would provide students with a stronger and fuller basis to select appropriate concepts and methods for the problem at hand. During the site visit, the staff members explained that the main reason for the parallel structure was to provide more didactic variety. This seems not a sufficiently strong reason, given that full time students will have a third course and that taking full advantage of the seminars seems most likely done once students have the benefit of the full content of the methods and theories courses, respectively.

In view of the dual ambition of the programme, spanning research-based and application-based aims, the seminars are an important feature of the programme. The seminars are a crucial link between theory and the 'real world', preferably focusing on hands-on cases. They are especially significant for full time students without much experience in the work field. Considering that the programme aims to prepare students for a career in a wide variety of professional and institutional settings, it is not entirely clear to the panel how the whole spectrum can be addressed in the two 5 EC seminars that deal with applications. The panel recommends exchanging one of the four electives for a third seminar.

Students may choose to take up an internship instead of one or two electives, depending on the length of the internship (maximum 10 EC). The panel considers this a useful part of the curriculum. It fits the emphasis on the applicability of the knowledge and skills that students gain in the programme. The panel agrees that an internship should be voluntary. Whether a student chooses to do an internship will depend on previous experience and the student's ambitions and intended profile, which the panel finds appropriate. The panel wondered how the PPE staff could guarantee worthwhile internships, avoiding placements where students are only allowed to do simple tasks. The panel's doubts were increased by the representatives of the work field who told the panel that they were more in favour of welcoming students to do their thesis research than to do an internship. The staff was able to convince the panel, however, that they have procedures and facilities in place to ensure that students find suitable internships. The *Kenniscentrum Filosofie* (Knowledge centre philosophy) is the faculty's internship support centre and can build on its experiences in other master programmes. The panel believes it would be good for the profile of the programme to have a further developed vision on the role of internships.

Didactical approach

In the information dossier it is described how the structure of the programme helps the students to not only acquire the interdisciplinary PPE knowledge, but also apply their knowledge to case studies of a more practical kind. In addition, students deepen their disciplinary knowledge in the electives, the PPE specialisation courses. Face-to-face instruction will on average be six to twelve hours per week during the first three quarters of the year and one to two hours per week during the final quarter when students work on their thesis. Classes will be in small groups, since the estimated intake is 25 students per year. The staff-student ratio will be around 1:18. The panel considers this a favourable learning environment for the development of the intended analytical and critical skills and attitude.

Admission to the programme is selective, based on previous performance and motivation. Admission requirements are a bachelor's degree in PPE, Philosophy, Philosophy of a specific discipline, Economics or Political Science. The applicant must have a good academic record in his/her bachelor programme: a mean score of at least 7.5 for the coursework and at least a 7.5 for the bachelor's thesis. Non-native speakers of the English language must prove their English proficiency by gaining a minimum TOEFL score of 100. Students must submit a CV, a letter of motivation and a writing example. In individual interviews, the Board of Admissions will address issues such as motivation, ambitions, working attitude, capacities and skills. The Board may admit students with another bachelor degree than those mentioned above, based on the CV, letter of motivation and writing example of the applicant. In such cases the Board can impose supplementary requirements. Prospective students from monodisciplinary backgrounds will be provided with an approximately 1,000 page reading list to prepare them for the required level of the other disciplines. Students must possess the required level before the start of the programme. If this level turns out to be insufficient during the programme, the academic mentor is responsible for guiding the student and helping him or her out. During the site visit the panel was provided with a first draft of the reading list and discussed extensively with staff and students how this would work out. It is clear that all involved agree on the importance of a sufficient background level in all three PPE disciplines. The students who were interviewed by the panel, saw it as a distinct risk that the quality of discussion in class would be too low if the knowledge levels were not remedied in advance. The panel thinks that a reading list by itself will not be enough: reading without discussion will not lead to sufficient understanding. The panel believes that a formal assessment is necessary at an appropriate point (not necessarily before the start of the programme, but also not too late so as to avoid unnecessary delays). The panel thinks there are better, more interactive, ways to bring all students to the necessary minimum level, but in all cases a formal assessment is essential.

The programme will be geared towards full time students, but it will also be possible to study as a part time student. In that case, students can use two years for the one-year curriculum and make individual arrangements with the teaching staff. The management admitted in its meeting with the panel that in some quarters only full time attendance is possible, i.e. when a core course and seminar run parallel. These courses are so strongly linked together that it is not feasible to do them separately. The panel thinks that a different sequencing of the courses, as suggested above, may solve this problem. The panel advises making the programme equally attractive and feasible for full time and part time students and to aim to keep both groups together in class in the core curriculum to facilitate interaction and create diversity.

There could be a beneficial symbiosis between the full time and part time students: part time students can e.g. bring in cases from the work field which could broaden the perspective of the full time students.

Staff

The PPE master degree programme will be taught by academic staff members drawn from the Faculty of Philosophy, the Faculty of Economics and Business, the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Arts. All core staff members have a sixty per cent teaching and a forty per cent research task. Staff members who have received a research grant from the NWO, the EU or another funding agency, may have a reduced teaching task to a minimum of twenty per cent. The panel received an overview of all professors (assistant, associate, full) involved in the PPE programme, including information on their academic accomplishments. All PPE staff members have a PhD and are involved in research. In order to ensure a common perspective on PPE, its theories and its methods, all staff members participate in the newly established Centre for Philosophy, Politics and Economics. This Centre will stimulate and facilitate interdisciplinary research and bring together students, PhD students, postdocs and senior researchers from the participating faculties. The panel recognises that this will contribute to the integration of research and teaching in the PPE programme, which will certainly benefit the PPE students.

Most PPE staff members have a University Teaching Qualification and are enthusiastic and experienced teachers. This was confirmed by the students with whom the panel met during the site visit. They told the panel that staff members are very approachable and committed. The Faculty of Philosophy is relatively small. All staff members and students know each other, which contributes to a community feeling. Students feel themselves taken seriously. They expect the same positive atmosphere with its advantages in the PPE programme, since it will also be for a small group of students (maximum 25) and many staff members will be from the Faculty of Philosophy. The panel was impressed by the spirit of cooperation and commitment among the core staff members from the contributing faculties, as could be seen during the site visit. This will contribute to the quality of the PPE programme.

Within the Faculty of Philosophy there is one programme committee (*Opleidingscommissie*) for all bachelor and master programmes combined. Representatives from PPE will be part of this programme committee. The programme was discussed with the Programme Committee. In addition, a think tank consisting of the professors from the participating faculties, was involved in developing the PPE programme.

Services and facilities

The general study facilities, such as lecture rooms and library, have been assessed and found to be of good quality in the Institutional Quality Assurance Assessment of the university. The study specific facilities such as student support and guidance are a topic for the current assessment. PPE students will have access to a study advisor of the Faculty of Philosophy. This study advisor can answer questions concerning the organisation of their education (programme, electives, study skills) and advise and support students on more personal matters. The students with whom the panel spoke during the site visit, were very positive about the study advisor, his accessibility and support.

For academic guidance, each student will be paired with a mentor, chosen from the core staff of the PPE programme. The mentor counsels students on the choices for their individual study programme, such as elective courses and the choice of a master thesis

topic and supervisor. Mentors are also responsible for a successful completion of the student's coursework, acting as guides when the student encounters difficulties. The student and the mentor meet once a week in the first quarter and on a regular basis throughout the rest of the year. In the fourth quarter the role of the mentor may be taken over by the master thesis supervisor. The programme coordinator organises an introductory meeting for all new students at the beginning of the academic year. Students must submit their selection of electives and/or internship for approval to the programme coordinator. The Board of Examiners ultimately decides on the students' programme. Given the close community in the Faculty and the evident commitment of the staff members whom the panel met during the site visit, the panel is confident that students will be properly guided during their programme, in both academic and personal matters.

Considerations

The panel has found that the PPE programme allows students to be exposed to cutting edge scientific research, and that they are thereby socialised into the three fields of Politics, Philosophy and Economics. The core staff is excellent, on an outstanding, internationally recognised level, and is clearly committed to teaching in the programme. Ties between the participating departments and institutes are strong. Unlike other PPE programmes, which are offered jointly by a mix of departments, this one proceeds from a strong core in an international-level philosophy department. This is a great advantage for a coherent programme. The modules ambitiously integrate the three composite disciplines in the core curriculum consisting of methods, theories (concepts) and history. Application-oriented seminars and electives complement the core modules in a plausible way. Internships are non-obligatory, and there is a clear connection with credit points earned (up to 10 ECTS, instead of one or two elective modules). Academic guidance is provided for. The workload is a standard one under the Bologna system.

Regarding the sequencing of core courses and seminars, the panel considers the substantive argument more important than didactical considerations put forward by staff, and is convinced that the staff will be able to organise sufficient didactic variety within the theoretical core courses. Since the seminars are the opportunity to connect to actual problems, the panel believes it is better when students have been introduced to the full range of concepts and, especially, of the available methods before they enter the seminars. Substituting one elective by a third seminar would give the students an extra chance to learn how to apply their theoretical insights to actual policy issues. It would also give the PPE staff an additional opportunity to cover the multiple settings for which they intend to prepare the students. To realise this, it may further be helpful to complement the philosophy staff and organise co-teaching with staff from other disciplines. The panel further recommends making sure that it is possible to do the PPE programme as a part time student. From its meeting with representatives from the work field the panel concludes that there is a potential market, and that organisations would facilitate PPE studies for their employees. The panel advises keeping the full time and part time students together to enable interaction and create diversity in class.

Despite the positive features, the panel has found two points of improvement that need to be taken up before an unconditionally positive judgment about the programme can be passed. The first issue concerns the heterogeneity of the student population and the deficiencies they may have, the second relates to the core course Methods of PPE in which more attention should be given to impact assessment, especially the methods used by economists to both quantitatively and qualitatively assess effectiveness and efficiency.

Regarding the possible deficiencies of incoming students, the staff is clearly aware of the problem and has decided to provide a reading list to solve it before students start the programme. The panel, however, believes that this is not an adequate solution and thinks there are better ways to bring all students to the necessary minimum level. The teaching staff should assess whether the deficiencies have been solved at an appropriate time, which is not necessarily before the start of classes. More interactive ways to remedy the deficiencies would probably be more effective. The panel has thought of different possible solutions, such as an intensive one- or two-week boot camp just before the start of the academic year or small mentoring groups of four to five students in the first weeks or months of the programme, including assessment. If the PPE staff prefers to adhere to the reading list, the panel feels it is at least necessary to add a formal assessment. The panel thinks it is of crucial importance to have a good system in place before the programme gets under way. The second point requires a redesign of the methods course. Given the demands of the work field, the panel considers proper attention for impact assessment methods essential. This should not be left to a student's choice by offering it in an elective course, but this topic must be part of the core courses, preferably (co-)taught by a staff member with the necessary economic skills. The panel expects that both points can be resolved within a reasonably short time. Pending these two improvements, the panel concludes that the programme partially meets this standard.

Conclusion

Partially meets the standard.

4.3 Assessment: Standard 3

The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.

Outline of findings

The assessment of the students' progress is formulated in the assessment plan of the Faculty of Philosophy, which is based on the assessment policy of the University of Groningen. This policy implies that all parts of the programme will be subject to examination or assessment and that the form of examination is adapted to the nature and learning objectives of that particular part or course. Students are informed timely about the form of assessment and the criteria to be applied. The quality of examinations or assessment is judged in advance by way of peer review among teaching staff.

In the information dossier the panel could read that students are assessed through a variety of forms: exams using essay-type questions, weekly assignments and individual essays, work-in-progress reports, process and evaluation reports and group or individual presentations. Staff aims at a balanced mix of different assessment methods, allowing for forms of assessment that evaluate written accuracy under pressure (written exams) or demand longer term sustained engagement with a topic (essays) as well as continuous assignments of variable length throughout a course that require students to stick to deadlines, often as part of a group. The department uses assessment forms with clear criteria to mark similar assignments such as presentations, essays and the master thesis. This guarantees uniform assessment across the programme. Students are informed about the content, structure and criteria of the assessments in the syllabi, in class or in guidance documents.

They can find all syllabi and guidance documents on the Nestor digital learning environment. During the site visit, the panel was provided with assessment samples and assessment forms. The panel found these to be appropriate and clear.

All assessments are graded on a numerical scale of 1 to 10, with the exception of the internships. They are graded as pass or fail. The panel thinks this is appropriate.

The Faculty of Philosophy has described the procedures concerning the master thesis in the Master Thesis Protocol. Each student has a supervisory team of two supervisors. The supervisors and the student sign a supervision plan in which a jointly agreed time plan is worked out. In the course of the thesis project, students and their advisors have regular meetings. A third examiner, from another department, must have read and accepted the thesis before it can be defended. During the 45-minute defence, students answer the critical comments of their supervisors, the third examiner, and other members of the participating faculties. The panel considers this a very rigorous procedure.

The Examination Board warrants the quality of assessment within the programme and is responsible for the appointment of examiners, the evaluation of assessments and the assessment plan (including grading procedures and grading criteria) and the supervision of the used assessment methods in relation to the assessment plan. The Examination Board also decides on requests from students regarding their programme in case certain parts of their study have been completed elsewhere or requests to make certain changes to their programme. During the meeting with lecturers at the site visit, the panel discussed the role of the Examination Board with one of its members. The panel was informed that there is one general Examination Board for all degree programmes in the Faculty of Philosophy. For the PPE programme, in which several other faculties are involved, the Examination Board is aware that it is important to ensure a good alignment. They will, therefore, contact the staff members from other faculties and introduce them to the assessment plan and assessment forms to be used. The Examination Board has been part of the discussions on the PPE programme in an earlier stage and found these fruitful. The panel was told that they have provided advice and suggestions on a number of (minor) issues.

Considerations

The assessment plan shows that there is a well-thought out vision on the role and quality of assessment in an educational programme. The ways in which courses will be assessed are in line with the learning objectives. The Examination Board evaluates and monitors the implementation of the assessment plan and takes its legal role seriously. The panel concludes that the programme has an adequate assessment system in place.

Conclusion

Meets the standard.

4.4 Graduation guarantee and financial provisions: Standard 4

The institution guarantees students that they can complete the entire curriculum and makes sufficient financial provisions available.

Outline of findings

The management of the Faculty of Philosophy confirmed in its meeting with the panel that the establishment of a PPE programme is a strategic choice of the University of Groningen, and the Faculty of Philosophy in particular. It is the University Board's aim to develop a master's programme, coordinated by the Faculty of Philosophy, but designed and offered in close collaboration with other faculties (Faculty of Economics and Business, Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts). The University Board has allocated funds as investments for the initial stages of the programme. This guarantees that the Faculty will be able to meet all the requirements, also in terms of attracting new faculty staff, to make the programme feasible and successful. A detailed budget is provided with the information dossier. The Faculty expects to reach a financial steady state in 2020-2021 with an annual intake of 25 students and an annual issue of 20-25 degree certificates. If a discontinuation or rearrangement of the programmes becomes necessary due to unforeseen circumstances, there is a guarantee that the students who have started the programme will be able to complete their curriculum within a period of two years, i.e. the projected one year plus one year extra. The management is optimistic about the projected intake of 25 students and expects the PPE programme will be attractive for bachelor graduates from the University College Groningen and from PPE bachelor programmes in Utrecht and VU Amsterdam. They also anticipate interest of international students. The panel agrees that this expectation is realistic.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the embedding of the programme in the long-term plans of the respective faculties is good and is supported by adequate financial investments. The expected intake numbers seem realistic. The panel adds that the market for a part time track may be substantial. In case these expectations are not met and the intake remains too low after a start up phase of five years, the PPE programme could be made a specialisation in another master programme of the faculty. If unforeseen circumstances or disappointing student numbers would make it necessary to discontinue the programme, the faculty guarantees that students can complete the entire curriculum.

Conclusion

Meets the standard.

4.5 Conclusion

The panel has found that the intended learning outcomes (standard 1), the assessment system (standard 3) and the graduation guarantee and financial provisions (standard 4) meet the criteria. Regarding the teaching-learning environment (standard 2), the panel is positive about most aspects of the structure and contents of the curriculum, about the staff and the services provided to students. The panel has found two points of improvement, however, that need to be addressed before the programme can be formally allowed to start. The first point concerns the heterogeneity of the student population and the deficiencies they may have, the second relates to the core course Methods of PPE in which more attention should be given to quantitative and qualitative tools of impact assessment used by

economists. The panel expects that both issues can be resolved within a reasonably short time. Pending these two improvements, the panel concludes that the programme partially meets standard 2. The panel has also formulated a number of recommendations. These are not meant to disqualify the programme, but to help in further improving it.

On the basis of the outcomes per standard, the quality of the programme is assessed as conditionally positive.

4.6 Conditions and recommendations

Conditions:

1. Develop and have a system in place to assess at an appropriate time whether deficiencies have been solved and thus to ensure that all students have a sufficient level of knowledge in the three PPE disciplines;
2. Redesign the methods course and include proper attention for impact assessment methods.

Recommendations:

1. Reorganise the course requirements by:
 - having students take the core theory and method courses before taking the coordinated seminars, which, the panel thinks, will facilitate taking full advantage of the contents of the core courses in addressing the cases explored in the seminars;
 - substituting an additional PPE specific course for one of the electives, so as to deepen the students' understanding of the distinctive perspective PPE offers.
2. Strengthen the relationship of the programme with the work field(s) and the connection with actual applications by:
 - developing a more elaborate vision on the role of internships;
 - involving people from the work field in seminars;
 - setting up an advisory board with representatives from the work field.
3. Make the programme equally attractive and feasible for part time students as for full time students and aim to keep both groups together in class in the core curriculum to facilitate interaction and create diversity.

5 Overview of the assessments

Standard	Assessment
1. Intended Learning outcomes <i>The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been concretised with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements</i>	Meets the standard
2. Teaching-learning environment <i>The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.</i>	Partially meets the standard
3. Assessment <i>The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.</i>	Meets the standard
4. Graduation guarantee and financial provisions <i>The institution guarantees students that they can complete the entire curriculum and makes sufficient financial provisions available.</i>	Meets the standard
Conclusion	Conditionally positive

Annex 1: Composition of the panel

Prof. dr. Martin Stokhof (chair) is emeritus professor of philosophy of language at the University of Amsterdam. He has published extensively on various topics in formal semantics and pragmatics, in philosophy of language, and on the philosophy of Wittgenstein, including a monograph on Wittgenstein's early views on logic and ethics. He also co-authored the two-volume textbook on logic and formal semantics, and an introduction to philosophy of language. His administrative experience includes chair of the KNAW-NVAO accreditation committee for research masters in the humanities (2010-2015); chair of the Humanities Council of NWO (2004-2010); scientific director of the Institute for Logic, Language and Computation at the University of Amsterdam (1998 to 2004). Since 2014 he is member of the Scientific Council of the ERC.

Prof. dr. Geoffrey Sayre-McCord is the Morehead-Cain Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and the Founding Director of the University of North Carolina's Philosophy, Politics and Economics Program. His main research is in moral theory, theory of knowledge, and the intersection of philosophy, politics, and economics. He was the chair of the philosophy department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was a Professorial Fellow at the University of Edinburgh for three years, and was the Laurance Rockefeller Visiting Professor at Princeton University, and a Visiting Professor at the University of California at Irvine, as well as a several time Visiting Fellow in the Research School of Social Science at the Australian National University.

Prof. dr. Peter Niesen holds the Chair in Political Theory at the University of Hamburg. From 2007 to 2013, he was Professor of Political Theory at TU Darmstadt and a Principal Investigator in the Frankfurt-based Cluster of Excellence "Formation of Normative Orders". Niesen has a doctorate in philosophy and a habilitation in political science from Frankfurt University. He is co-founder of the first German MA in Political Theory and currently teaches in the Hamburg PEP M.Sc. program. He has held visiting appointments at University College London, Harvard University, Southampton University, the University of Iceland, the London School of Economics and Université de Montréal. His research interests are in international political theory and democratic theory in contemporary and in Enlightenment thought (Kant, Bentham). Among his recent publications is "Restitutive Justice in International and Cosmopolitan Law" in K. Flikschuh & L. Ypi (eds.), *Kant and Colonialism*, Oxford 2014.

Prof. dr. Bas ter Weel is managing director at SEO Amsterdam Economics and professor of economics at the University of Amsterdam. Previously he was deputy director at the CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis and professor of economics at Maastricht University. Before that, he headed the departments of International Economics and Labour and Education at the CPB. Before joining the CPB he worked at Maastricht University as an assistant professor and researcher and at the Netherlands Authority for the Financial Markets (AFM) as an economist. His research focuses on empirical and theoretical issues in the areas of education, labour economics and the economics of innovation and new technology.

Ferdi Verhulst BA (student member) is a part time Master student Governance of Security at VU Amsterdam. Before that, he studied History at the University of Utrecht and specialised in International Relations and Governance. Between September 2013 and

September 2014 he was part of the educational affairs committee of the Humanities Faculty Council at the University of Utrecht. Currently he works as a policy officer for the Netherlands Fire Service in Arnhem. He has several years of experience in testing programs and institutions as a student member for the NVAO.

Assisting staff:

- Dr. Marianne van der Weiden, secretary to the panel
- Drs. Lisette Winsemius, policy advisor NVAO and process coordinator

All panel members and the secretary signed a declaration of independence and confidentiality prior to the assessment process.

Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit

Date: Thursday 13 October 2016

Location: University of Groningen, Philosophy Department, Oude Boteringstraat 52, 9712 GL Groningen, Room: Beta

Agenda:

08.30u – 10.00u reception/ preparatory meeting panel

10.00u - 10.45u Session 1 – meeting with institutional management

- Prof. Dr. L.W. (Lodi) Nauta (Dean, Faculty of Philosophy)
- Drs. M. (Marga) Hids (Managing director, Faculty of Philosophy)
- Drs. A.A.(Arnold) Veenkamp (Educational manager, Faculty of Philosophy)

10.45u – 11.00u panel meeting (confidential)

11.00u – 12.00u Session 2 –meeting with lecturers/ examination board

- Prof. Dr. B.P. (Boudewijn) de Bruin (via skype) (Professor Financial Ethics, FEB)
- Prof. Dr. J.W. (Jan Willem) Romeijn (Professor Philosophy of Science, FWB)
- Prof. Dr. C. (Christine) Straehle (Professor Political Philosophy and Public Affairs, FWB)
- Dr. A.T. (Andreas) Schmidt (Assistant Professor Political Philosophy, FWB)
- Dr. J.A. (Jan Albert) van Laar (Assistant Professor Argumentation Philosophy, member of the examination board)
- Prof. Dr. (Herman) de Jong (Professor Economic History, Dean FEB)
- Prof. Dr. R.P.M (Rafael) Wittek (Professor Sociologie, FBSS)

12.00u – 13.00u panel meeting, lunch (confidential)

13.00u - 13.45u Session 3 – meeting with representatives work field

- Roland Mees (director Wholesale Banking ING)
- Daan Keur (formerly: president van de rechtbank Noord Nederland, currently: judge at the Court of Appeal)
- Willem van Reijendam (redacteur RTVNOORD, correspondent Het Financieele Dagblad)

13.45u - 14.00u panel meeting (confidential)

14.00u - 14.45u Session 4 – meeting with students

- Tim van Heuven (Ma Philosophy, Ba Economy)
- Bart Coster (Ma Philosophy)
- Jort Hiemstra (Ba Philosophy, Ba History)

14.45u – 16.15u Panel meeting (confidential) (if necessary second meeting with programme management/ lecturers)

16.15 u – 16.30u: Session 6 – Presentation of initial findings

Annex 3: Documents reviewed

Programme documents presented by the institution

Information Dossier

Appendices:

- Learning outcomes and domain-specific frame of reference
- Institutional Quality Assurance Assessment, University of Groningen
- Teaching and Examination Regulation PPE
- Overview of the curriculum in diagram form
- Detailed description of the curriculum components
- Overview of staff to be allocated
- Intended staff-student ratio
- Assessment plan 2015-2016 Faculty of Philosophy (in Dutch)
- Assessment policy University of Groningen (in Dutch)
- PPE-plan Faculty of Philosophy (Investeringsagenda, in Dutch)
- CDHO macro-efficiency decision (in Dutch)

Documents made available during the site visit

- CDHO macro-efficiency request and decision (in Dutch)
- Faculty of Philosophy PPE-plan, final version 20 february 2015
- Education and Examination rules PPE (2017-2018)
- Overview of the curriculum in diagram form
- Assessment plan 2016-2017 Faculty of Philosophy
- Thesis assessment form Faculty of Philosophy
- Reading list PPE prospective students
- Course description PPE
- Course manuals PPE seminars
- Example course guides
- Examples of assessments
- PPE master course 2015-2016
- Philosophy of argumentation: dialogue and Fallacy
- Study Guide Philosophy 2016-2017

Annex 4: List of abbreviations

ba	bachelor
EC	European Credit
hbo	hoger beroepsonderwijs
ma	master
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
PPE	Philosophy, Politics and Economics
wo	wetenschappelijk onderwijs

The panel report has been ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the programme wo-master Philosophy, Politics and Economics of the University of Groningen.

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