

Assessment report  
Limited Programme Assessment

**Bachelor Economics and Governance**

Wageningen University

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## 1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the Bachelor programme Economics and Governance of the Wageningen University, which has been assessed according to the NVAO Assessment Framework.

The panel noted that the programme management acted upon the recommendations, made during the previous assessment in 2009. The programme management, among others, tailored the intended learning outcomes more clearly to the Economics and Governance programme profile, achieved more coherence in the curriculum, stipulated the Bachelor thesis requirements and improved the study success rates.

The programme's name, Bachelor Economics and Governance, matches its contents and corresponds to the names of similar programmes.

The panel approves of the objectives of the programme, which testify to an Economics programme with special emphasis on activities and sectors for which Governance issues are important, such as agriculture, natural resources exploitation, environment-oriented activities and economic development. In this sense, the programme has its own profile, being distinct from other Economics programmes in the Netherlands. The panel agrees with the programme management to train students primarily to enter Economics Master programmes and not so much to enter Governance Master programmes. Having compared the objectives of the programme to the Subject-Specific Reference Framework for Economics programmes, the panel has ascertained the programme to meet the requirements of this Framework. The panel recommends to bring the programme closer to the Wageningen University's international profile, thereby strengthening the programme character and attracting more students. The intended learning outcomes of the programme match the programme objectives, adequately specifying the domain-specific knowledge and skills, research skills and general academic knowledge and skills to be acquired, and meet the Bachelor level requirements. In the position and involvement of the External Advisory Board, the panel sees an effective means to ensure the programme to meet the professional field requirements and to remain up-to-date.

The admission requirements and admission procedures of the programme are regarded by the panel to be appropriate. The panel recommends, however, to emphasize in the information to prospective students this programme to be an Economics programme with elements of Governance and not a programme with Economics and Governance on an equal footing.

The intended learning outcomes are met in the curriculum. The panel approves of the curriculum structure with a substantial common part of compulsory courses, addressing fundamental subjects in Economics and Governance, the Methodology courses and the choice for the students to opt either for the Economics profile or the Governance profile. In addition, the panel finds the course contents to be very appropriate. The panel advises to consider raising the number of specializations to include, for instance, Agriculture, Environment and Food Safety in order to broaden the range of choices for the students and to attract more students and to benefit from the internationally acclaimed qualities of Wageningen University. The panel noted that the ordering of especially the methods courses was not always very logical. Although the panel sympathizes with the fact that it is difficult to meet all constraints (internal as well as externally imposed), it would be advisable to periodically assess whether the order of the curriculum can be re-optimized.

The panel advises to consider to change the programme to a fully English-taught programme, adding to the international character and attractiveness of the programme and making it accessible for foreign students.

The programme management has succeeded in implementing the educational principle of small-scale, intensive teaching, as may be deduced from the 9 : 1 student-teacher ratio. The teaching methods, such as tutorials, practical training, group learning and excursions match this principle. The study load for the students is adequate, as the students with whom the panel met expressed. The information provision and study guidance for the students are up to standard, the study advisor playing a pivotal role in the study guidance. The panel is positive about the Bachelor Assessment, allowing students to consider and plan the remainder of the programme and to prepare for the Master programme of their choice.

The panel regards the lecturers in the programme to be experts in their fields and to possess adequate educational capacities, as may be deduced from the sizeable proportion of lecturers with BKO-certificates or equivalent qualifications. The lecturers present their research in the classes.

The panel regards the rules and regulations for examinations and assessments to be appropriate, as these meet the Wageningen University assessment policy and are adequate for ensuring the quality, validity and reliability of examinations. This may be derived from the use of specification grids to ensure the validity, the assessment strategy in the courses for the selection and combination of examination methods and the appointment of skilled examiners. The responsibilities and tasks of the Examination Board are adequate, the Board monitoring examination and assessment procedures, overseeing the quality of examinations, appointing examiners and reviewing the Bachelor theses. The supervision and assessment of the Bachelor thesis are well-organized. The panel, however, advises to place the Bachelor thesis at the end of the curriculum, so the students may benefit from all prior courses in their thesis project. In addition, the panel feels the rubrics scoring forms to assess the thesis may be used more rigorously.

The panel is positive about the study success rates of this programme, as these are in line with the target figures as agreed upon by Wageningen University and the Dutch Ministry of Education.

Students completing the programme are prepared for Economics Master programmes. The panel did, however, notice the need for additional mathematics and theoretical economics courses to allow the students to qualify for Economics Master programmes, outside of Wageningen University. Therefore, the panel advises to strengthen the mathematics and statistics courses in the curriculum and to tailor these courses to the programme requirements.

The panel studied the examinations of the courses and found these to be very appropriate, testifying to the level achieved by the students in these courses.

At first, the panel studied 15 theses of students, who graduated in the last two years. Two of these theses were assessed by the panel to be unsatisfactory. Thereupon, the panel studied six additional theses of graduates of the last two years, primarily in the lower grade bracket. The panel concluded all of these theses to be at least satisfactory. As a consequence, the panel regards the two theses, assessed as unsatisfactory as outliers, being not representative for the quality and level of the Bachelor theses in general. A number of theses, the panel studied, were assessed by the panel to be good literature studies, with numerous references to scientific literature, solid analyses and sound policy recommendations. As a further elaboration of the theses' subjects and scope, the panel recommends to promote students applying mathematical and statistical methods in the theses.

The panel assesses the Bachelor programme Economics and Governance of Wageningen University to be satisfactory and recommends NVAO to grant re-accreditation to this programme.

Rotterdam, 5 December 2016

Prof. dr T.J. Wansbeek  
(panel chair)

drs W. Vercouteren RC  
(panel secretary)

## 2. Assessment process

Certiked VBI received a request to conduct a limited programme assessment for the re-accreditation of the Bachelor programme Economics and Governance. This request was submitted by the Wageningen University.

Certiked requested the approval by NVAO of the proposed panel of experts to conduct this assessment. NVAO have given its approval. The panel composition was as follows (for more detailed information please refer to Annex 4: Composition of the assessment panel):

- Prof. dr T.J. Wansbeek, Honorary Professor of Statistics and Econometrics, University of Groningen (panel chair);
- Prof. dr J. Hartog, Emeritus Professor of Microeconomics with Visiting Scholar position, University of Amsterdam (panel member);
- Prof. dr R. Kabir, Professor and Chair Corporate Finance and Risk Management, University of Twente (panel member);
- Prof. dr D.P. van Soest, Professor of Environmental Economics, Academic Director Tilburg Sustainability Center, Tilburg University (panel member);
- S.M. van den Hoek, student Bachelor programme Tax Economics, University of Amsterdam, (student member).

On behalf of Certiked, drs. W. Vercouteren RC was responsible for the process coordination and for drafting the panel's report. All panel members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel conducted this assessment on the basis of the standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework of 19 December 2014 (Staatscourant nr. 36791).

The following procedure was adopted. The panel members studied the documents presented beforehand by the programme management, including a number of theses (please refer to Annex 2 and 3: Documents reviewed and Theses reviewed). With respect to the selection and study of the theses, the panel proceeded in line with the NVAO Guidelines for the assessment of final projects during external assessments of 18 February 2015.

Before the date of the site visit, the panel chair and the panel secretary met to discuss the assessment procedures. Before the site visit date, all panel members sent in their preliminary findings, based on the information file submitted by the programme management, forwarded a number of questions to be put to the programme representatives on the day of the site visit and sent in their findings about the theses, they had studied. The panel secretary summarized this information.

On 6 October 2016, the panel had a meeting to discuss the preliminary findings concerning the quality of the programme. During this preliminary meeting, the findings of the panel members, including those about the theses were discussed, and a number of questions were added to the list drafted beforehand. On the basis of this input, the panel secretary drew up a final list of questions, which served as a starting point for the discussions with the programme representatives during the site visit.

On 7 October 2016, the panel conducted a site visit on the Wageningen University Campus. The site visit schedule was in accordance with the schedule drafted beforehand (please refer to Annex 1: Site visit schedule). The programme management communicated the open office hours to the students and staff of the programme. No persons presented themselves.

In a closed session at the end of the site visit, the panel reviewed the findings, weighed the considerations and drew conclusions regarding the quality of the programme. At the end of the site visit, the panel chair presented a broad outline of the findings to the programme management.

A draft version of this report was finalised by the secretary, having taken into account the information presented as well as the findings and considerations of the panel. The draft report was sent to the panel members, who studied the draft report and made a number of changes. Thereupon, the secretary edited the final report. This report was presented to the programme management to be corrected for factual inaccuracies. After having been corrected for these inaccuracies, the report was sent to the institution's Board to accompany their request for re-accreditation of this programme.

### 3. Overview of the programme

#### 3.1 Basic information about the programme

*Administrative information about the programme:*

Name programme in CROHO: Bachelor Economie en Beleid  
 Orientation, level programme: Academic Bachelor  
 Grade: BSc  
 Number of credits: 180 EC  
 Specializations: N.A.  
 Location: Wageningen  
 Mode of study: Full-time  
 Registration in CROHO: 50101

*Administrative information about the institution:*

Name of institution: Wageningen University  
 Status of institution: Government-funded University  
 Institution's quality assurance: Approved, with the Distinctive feature Internationalization

*Quantitative data about the programme*

Cumulative proportion of students who dropped out after one, two or three years (vwo matriculation)

Cohort	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Drop-out rate after one year	13 %	20 %	33 %	12 %	26 %	17 %
Drop-out rate after two years	20 %	28 %	33 %	26 %	35 %	
Drop-out rate after three years	20 %	28 %	33 %	26 %		

Cumulative proportion of students who continued their study in the second year and who completed the programme after three, four, five and six or more years (vwo matriculation)

Cohort	2009	2010	2011	2012
Success rate after three years	50 %	50 %	21 %	41 %
Success rate after four years	79 %	75 %	79 %	
Success rate after five years	93 %	83 %		
Success rate after six or more years	93 %			

Percentage of students who continued their studies in the second year and who completed the programme after three, four, five and six or more years (all students)

Cohort	2009	2010	2011	2012
Success rate after three years	50 %	50 %	21 %	41 %
Success rate after four years	79 %	75 %	79 %	
Success rate after five years	93 %	83 %		
Success rate after six or more years	93 %			

#### Lecturers' qualifications

Qualification	MSc	PhD	BKO*
Percentage of lecturers	100 %	100 %	29 %

\*BKO means having obtained Dutch University Teaching Qualification. Another 47 % of the lecturers either has another, similar qualification or has prolonged teaching experience.

The student-to-staff ratio is 9 : 1.

#### Number of contact hours per week for each of the years of the programme

Year of the programme	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Number of contact hours per week	14.7	12.7	12.1

### 3.2 Main facts about the institution

The Bachelor programme Economics and Governance is a programme of the Department of Social Sciences of Wageningen University.

Wageningen University is part of Wageningen University & Research. This institution is made up of university departments on the one side and research groups on the other side. University departments and research groups between them constitute sciences groups. Wageningen University & Research is organized along the lines of five research groups, being the Agrotechnology & Food Sciences Group, Animal Sciences Group, Environmental Sciences Group, Plant Sciences Group and Social Sciences Group. These groups are meant to combine and to mobilize expertise with regard to subjects in these domains.

According to the publications on the Wageningen University & Research website, the mission statement of the institution is to be a leading international research and knowledge center, with the goal *to explore the potential of nature, to improve the quality of life*.

The objectives of the institution not only are to generate high-level knowledge but also to put this knowledge into practice across the planet. The institution wants to conduct globally leading fundamental research and to have a strong position as a supplier of applied scientific research. In addition, Wageningen University intends to train professionals who will be able to generate breakthroughs in knowledge and technology in the near and the more distant future. In recent years, Wageningen University & Research obtained high-ranking positions in world-wide rankings of universities and research institutes in the domains the institution focuses on.

More than 10,000 students study at Wageningen University, being subdivided in nearly 5,000 Bachelor students and over 5,000 Master students. The university departments offer 20 Bachelor programmes and 28 Master programmes. More than 2,500 employees (counted as full time equivalents) are employed by Wageningen University. For Wageningen University & Research as a whole the number of employees is more than 5,000 (also in Fte's).

### 3.3 Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are as follows. Upon completion of the programme, students are expected to be able to:

- Explain economic and governance concepts, principles and theories in general, and in particular those related to agriculture, the environment, natural resources and development in regional, national and international contexts.
- Apply economic and governance concepts, principles, theories, and modelling approaches to issues in agriculture, the environment, natural resources and development, and take into consideration relevant life and natural sciences aspects.
- Analyze the economic effects of changes in the natural and institutional environment regarding agriculture, the environment, natural resources and development.
- Apply knowledge by writing a research plan on a topic in economics or governance regarding agriculture, the environment, natural resources and development, including the main phases of a scientific research or design process under supervision.
- Analyze concepts, approaches and methods and reflect upon scientific literature, with special reference to economics and governance of agriculture, the environment, natural resources and development under supervision.
- Collect and interpret relevant information in the field of economics and governance, using available literature and data to address issues in agriculture, the environment, natural resources and development with some supervision.
- Apply statistical, econometric and modelling techniques under supervision to economics and governance problems in agriculture, the environment, natural resources and development.
- Make judgements based on social and ethical issues that arise in work or study in the field of economics and governance.
- Cooperate in a team to perform project-based work.
- Communicate clearly (verbally and in writing) about the results of research projects or other assignments, using oral presentations and reports containing qualitative and quantitative information.
- Reflect upon personal knowledge, skills, attitudes, and functioning, both individually and in discussions with others, and design and execute their own study path (under supervision).

### 3.4 Outline of the curriculum

In the table below, the curriculum of the programme is presented.

Curriculum components	Credits
Mathematics for Social Sciences	6 EC
Economics and Governance in Historical Perspective	6 EC
Sociology of Business, Consumers and Economics	6 EC
Microeconomics and Behaviour	6 EC
Research Methods in the Social Sciences	6 EC
Macroeconomics and International Trade	6 EC
Environmental Economics and Environmental Policy	6 EC
Public Administration and Policy Making	6 EC
Macroeconomics & Policy	6 EC
Analysis of a Problem Situation	6 EC
First year	60 EC
Basic Statistics	3 EC
Theories of Economic Growth	3 EC
Institutional Economics and Economic Organisation Theory	6 EC
Advanced Statistics	6 EC
Microeconomics	6 EC
Governance, Trust and Policy Change	6 EC
Public Sector Economics	6 EC
Economic Analysis of Coordination	6 EC
Econometrics	6 EC
Students choose Governance for Forest, Nature and Biodiversity <i>or</i> International Policy and Institutions	6 EC
Students choosing the Economic profile select two courses out of four courses: Spatial and Regional Economics; Agriculture, Food and Policy; International Trade and Development Policy; Environmental Economics in Practice (courses partly in second year, partly in third year)	12 EC
Students choosing the Governance profile select one course out of four courses: Spatial and Regional Economics; Agriculture, Food and Policy; International Trade and Development Policy; Environmental Economics in Practice and select one course out of two: International Environmental Policy <i>or</i> Designing Innovative Governance Arrangements (courses partly in second year, partly in third year)	12 EC
Students choose two Natural Sciences or Life Sciences courses	12 EC
Bachelor Thesis (Economic profile <i>or</i> Governance profile)	12 EC
Free choice	30 EC
Second and third year	120 EC
Total credits of the programme	180 EC

#### 4. Overview of assessments

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Satisfactory
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Satisfactory
Standard 3: Assessment	Satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Satisfactory
<b>Programme</b>	Satisfactory

## 5. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard

### 5.1 Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

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

#### *Findings*

In the words of the management of this Bachelor programme, the main objectives of the Bachelor Economics and Governance programme are to train student in Economics, thereby especially focusing on economic activities and sectors with a high degree of policy-intensity, i.e. economic activities for which government intervention and government policy are important. These activities or sectors are, among others, agriculture, natural resources exploitation, environment-oriented activities and economic development in low-income and middle-income countries. This focus on policy-intensive economic activities and economic sectors is in line with the Wageningen University profile.

The programme objectives lead not only to train students to study Economics in terms of economic behavior and the workings of markets but also to train them in Governance, being the extent to which and the way in which government intervenes in the economic processes and the decision-making processes which determine these interventions. The programme objectives are to study government interventions in response to market failures but also to study other perspectives, such as trust.

The programme is meant to prepare students for a career as an economist, working in public or private sector institutes, organizations or firms, for which governance issues are important. This Bachelor programme does not prepare students to proceed to the labor market directly but in stead to continue their studies at Master level and, having completed the Master programme, to enter the labor market. As an Economics Bachelor programme, students are primarily prepared for Economics Master programmes and not so much for Governance Master programmes.

In preparation of this external assessment process, the programme management together with representatives of Economics programmes of other Dutch universities, drafted the Subject-Specific Reference Framework for Economics programmes. This Framework, which has been published in 2016 prior to the accreditation process for this and other Economics programmes, specifies the Economics domain as well as the objectives of the Economics Bachelor and Master programmes. The programme management informed the panel this Wageningen University Economics and Governance programme has been designed to comply with the requirements of this Framework.

The programme management listed a number of intended learning outcomes (please refer to the complete list to section 3.3 of this report). These intended learning outcomes address domain-specific knowledge (intended learning outcomes 1 – 3), research qualifications (learning outcomes 4 – 6), domain-specific skills (learning outcome 7) and general academic knowledge and skills (learning outcomes 8 – 11).

The programme management showed the intended learning outcomes to conform to the Dublin-descriptors for the Bachelor level, in order to demonstrate the learning outcomes meeting the required Bachelor level.

For the programme, an External Advisory Board has been installed, composed of representatives of the professional field. This Board meets once a year and discusses with the programme management the intended learning outcomes and the curriculum of the programme, mainly to monitor the correspondence of the programme to the professional practice requirements.

In 2014, the programme management invited three academic experts from the Economics, Agricultural Economics and Environmental Economics disciplines for an external review of the intended learning outcomes and the curriculum of the programme. These experts found the programme to meet the Economics and Governance domains and to comply with international academic and scientific standards for Bachelor programmes in these domains. Some suggestions on their part for further improvements of the programme have been acted upon by the programme management.

### *Considerations*

The panel approves of the objectives of this Bachelor Economics and Governance programme and has established the programme to be predominantly an Economics programme with special emphasis on activities and sectors for which Governance issues are important, such as agriculture and environment-oriented activities. In the panel's view, both the Economics and Governance goals are appropriate and are adequately mixed, distinguishing this programme from other Economics programmes in the Netherlands.

The panel is positive about the goal of the programme to train the students primarily to enter Economics Master programmes and not so much to enter Governance Master programmes. For the panel, this goal corresponds to the Economics characteristics of the programme.

The panel compared the objectives of the Economics and Governance programme to the Subject-Specific Reference Framework for Economics programmes and has been able to ascertain this programme to meet the requirements of this Framework. As a consequence, the panel regards this programme to be a sound Economics programme.

The panel recommends the programme management to exploit the Wageningen University international profile more strongly. This profile being very strong, this step may strengthen the programme character and, as a consequence, may attract more students. As will be elaborated under standard 2, the panel advises to change the programme to an all English-taught programme.

In the panel's view, the intended learning outcomes of the programme correspond to the programme objectives and appropriately specify the domain-specific knowledge and skills, research skills and general academic knowledge and skills the students are to acquire. In addition, the intended learning outcomes match the Bachelor level requirements, as they are in line with the Dublin-descriptors for the Bachelor.

In the panel's opinion, the involvement of the External Advisory Board ensures the programme to meet the professional field requirements and to remain up-to-date with regard to these requirements.

The panel is positive about the step the programme management has taken to have the intended learning outcomes and the curriculum of the programme reviewed by three distinguished scholars, representing relevant disciplines.

### *Assessment of this standard*

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

## 5.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

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

### *Findings*

The panel found the organization of the programme to differ to a certain extent from the customary organization in Dutch universities. The Programme Committee, consisting of equal numbers of lecturers and students, is responsible for the contents of the programme, including the intended learning outcomes, the curriculum, the teaching methods and the assessment policy, as well as the quality of the programme, whereas the Programme Director has the duty to take care of the realization of the programme. The Board of the Educational Institute of Wageningen University oversees these processes and approves any decisions made by the Programme Committee. As the Programme Committee is responsible for three programmes, the Programme Sub-Committee Economics and Governance specifically focuses on this programme. The Sub-Committee reports to the Programme Committee.

The number of students enrolling in the programme gradually increased over the years from an influx of 16 students in 2009 to an influx of 44 students in 2015 and 48 students in 2016. The students have as their previous education the Dutch *vwo-diploma*.

The entry requirements for the students are to have a Dutch *vwo-diploma*, including as required courses Mathematics A or B. Non-Dutch diplomas are screened for their equivalence with this *vwo-diploma*. Other applicants, fulfilling certain requirements, may be required to the *colloquium doctum* test. All prospective students must participate in the programme matching procedures, which entail filling out an online questionnaire to test the applicants' views on the programme. Part of the matching procedures is a non-binding advice by the programme management about admittance to the programme. In case this advice would be negative, the student advisor approaches these students to refrain them from entering the programme.

The programme management presented an elaborate table showing the relations between the intended learning outcomes and the courses or curriculum components. From this table, it may be deduced that all of the intended learning outcomes are addressed in one or more courses.

In a formal sense, the programme is a Dutch-taught programme. In the first year, nearly all of the courses are in Dutch. In the second year, most of the courses and in third year, all of the courses are in English. Wageningen University is considering to transform the Bachelor programmes to English-taught programmes, including this programme.

The curriculum consists of a very substantial common part of compulsory courses (114 EC), addressing fundamental subjects in Economics and Governance, subjects where Economics and Governance meet, such as Economic Sociology and Institutional Economics, and Methodology (please refer to section 3.4 of this report for the curriculum overview). All students are expected to take all of these courses, and are offered only one choice between two courses. In addition, students select two Natural Sciences or Life Sciences courses out of a wide variety of courses, offered in the programme. Later in the programme, students may choose either for the Economics profile or the Governance profile. These profiles include two courses to be selected from a number of courses and the Bachelor thesis. Students may select courses in such a way that they meet the requirements of both profiles.

For the Bachelor thesis, students turn to one of the research groups participating in the programme. These research groups design and offer courses in the programme and provide thesis guidance for their domain. For the Economics profile, students may opt for the research groups Agricultural Economics and Rural Policy, Development Economics, Economics of Consumers and Households or Environmental Economics and Natural Resources. For the Governance profile, students may select the research groups Environmental Policy or Public Administration and Policy. At the end of the curriculum, students have 30 EC free choice courses. Students may select courses or do a minor. Most of the students take courses or do minors at Wageningen University. About 20 % go to another university, about half of them abroad. The programme management promotes students taking courses or minors abroad. Students are to present their free choice courses as well as the Natural Sciences or Life Sciences courses to the Examination Board for approval. Approval by the Examination Board depends on whether the courses selected contribute to achieving the intended learning outcomes of the programme and on whether these courses exhibit a satisfactory level and constitute a coherent set.

Students opting for the Economics profile, tend to take 42 % of the curriculum in Economics courses and 19 % in Governance courses. Students who choose the Governance profile, tend to take 32 % Economics courses and 29 % Governance courses. The remainder of the courses being Methodology, Natural or Life Sciences and free choice courses.

The educational principle of the programme is in line with the education policy of Wageningen University and is geared towards offering small-scale, intensive teaching. The teaching methods, consistent with this principle, are tutorials, practical training, group learning and excursions. In addition, students are offered lectures in larger groups, and study independently to prepare classes, read literature and prepare assignments. A number of courses have been specially designed for this programme. Other courses, notably courses in the Methodology section, such as mathematics and statistics, are more generic and meant for other Wageningen University programmes as well. Especially in the latter courses, students of this programme take classes with students from other programmes.

The programme management has taken measures to balance the study load in the programme. The courses have been spread over six periods in one year, for each of the three years. Each semester, two eight-week periods and one four-week period are scheduled. The exams of the courses in these periods are scheduled at the end of the period. From written evaluations among students of the last few years as well as from explanations by students with whom the panel met during the site visit, it may be deduced the programme is quite feasible. The second and third year are more challenging than the first year, they informed the panel. The number of contact hours is 14.7 hours per week in the first year, 12.7 hours per week in the second year and 12.1 hours per week in the third year. In the first year, students are to achieve at least 36 EC, in line with the Binding Studies Advice (BSA) regulations of Wageningen University.

The study guidance is to a large extent in the hands of the programme study advisor. During the first year, the study advisor monitors the student study pace and invites students to discuss their study progress, in case they would fall behind. In the second year, the student do the so-called Bachelor Assessment, which is a self-assessment, meant to give a sense of direction to students for the remainder of the curriculum and for their studies after having completed the Bachelor programme. The advisor counsels students in their choices with regard to free choice courses and Natural and Life Sciences courses and advises them on the continuation of their studies at Master level.

There are 28 core lecturers participating in the programme, making the student-to-staff ratio 9 : 1. Nearly all of these lecturers are Wageningen Graduate School fellows, a position implying lecturers to conform to a number of requirements as a researcher. The lecturers are expected to touch upon their research projects and results in the classes. About 29 % of the lecturers obtained a Basic Teaching Qualification (BKO), while 21 % is in the process of acquiring this certificate. About 18 % obtained a different but equivalent teaching qualification and another 29 % of the lecturers is not in the possession of a BKO, but has prolonged experience in teaching. Tenure track lecturers are to obtain their BKO within three years after the start of their tenure track.

### *Considerations*

The panel considers the admission requirements to be in line with legal regulations and the admission procedures of the programme to be appropriate. The panel would, however, recommend to emphasize in the information to the prospective students this programme to be an Economics programme with elements of Governance and not so much a programme with Economics and Governance on an equal footing, as some students, mistakenly, might think.

The panel considers the intended learning outcomes to be met in the curriculum of the programme and approves of the curriculum structure with a substantial common part of compulsory courses, addressing fundamental subjects in Economics and Governance, the Methodology courses, the choice for the students to opt either for the Economics profile or the Governance profile and the free choice courses. The panel has established the course contents to be very appropriate. The panel advises to consider raising the number of specializations to include, for instance, Agriculture, Environment and Food Safety in order to broaden the range of choices for the students and to attract more students.

The panel noted that the ordering of especially the methods courses was not always very logical. Though the panel sympathizes with the fact that it is difficult to meet all the constraints (internal, as well as externally imposed), it would be advisable to periodically assess whether the order of the curriculum can be re-optimized.

The panel advises the programme management to consider changing the programme to a completely English-taught programme. This will make the programme accessible for foreign students and will, in the panel's view, make the programme more international and more attractive for students and bring the lecturers and students in the programme more closely to comparable programmes abroad through, among others, student exchange.

In the panel's view, the programme management has succeeded in implementing the educational principle of small-scale, intensive teaching, as may be deduced from the 9 : 1 student-teacher ratio. The teaching methods, such as tutorials, practical training, group learning and excursions comply with this principle. As will be elaborated in standard 4, the panel feels some of the generic courses, such as mathematics and statistics, may benefit students more, if these would be tailored to the specific requirements of this programme.

The study load for the students is adequate, as has been expressed by the students the panel met, and the number of contact hours is appropriate. The information provided to the students and the study guidance are up to standard. The study advisor has a pivotal role in the guidance of the students. The students with whom the panel met, expressed being very content about the guidance. The panel is positive about the Bachelor Assessment, allowing students to consider and plan the remainder of the programme and to prepare for the Master programme of their choice.

The panel regards the lecturers in the programme to be experts in their fields and to possess adequate educational capacities, as may be deduced from the sizeable proportion of lecturers with BKO-certificates or equivalent qualifications. The lecturers present their research in the classes.

*Assessment of this standard*

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

### 5.3 Standard 3: Assessment

*The programme has an adequate assessment system in place.*

#### *Findings*

The examination and assessment rules and regulations of this Bachelor programme conform to the assessment policy of Wageningen University. The Programme Committee has the responsibility for carrying out these rules and regulations, whereas the Programme Director is to take care of the implementation of this policy. The Examination Board of the Social Sciences of Wageningen University monitors the examinations and assessment procedures and is to ensure the quality of interim examinations and the final examination, the interim examinations being examinations of courses and the final examination applying to students who have passed all courses and, as a consequence, may be regarded to have met the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The Examination Board verifies whether this is the case.

In consultation with the Examination Board, the programme management has taken a number of measures to ensure the validity and reliability of the examinations and assessments. In most of the courses, specification grids are used, in which the relations between the course learning goals and the examinations items are listed, to ensure the validity of the examinations. The Examination Board appoints examiners. Lecturers may only be appointed as examiners, if they are involved as coordinator or lecturer in the course to be assessed and if they are in possession of the BKO-certificate. In addition, the Examination Board checks the grade distribution of examinations and regularly reviews a number of Bachelor theses. If the grade distribution deviates from normal, the Board inspects the examination more closely.

The course coordinators draft the assessment strategy of the course, being the means by which the learning goals of the course are assessed. Course coordinators consult the professor in charge of the research group, which is responsible for the course. In the programme, a wide variety of examination methods are used, such as written examinations, practicals, assignments, papers, essays and presentations. Written examinations may include multiple-choice questions, but these are always accompanied by a number of open questions in the examination. Students are required to have a pass for all of the examinations of a course. In some courses, students do group work. To prevent free-riding, students have to write individual parts in the report and students are asked to identify free-riders.

Students may start their thesis project, if they have completed the first year of the programme and have obtained at least 40 EC of the second year. The thesis project is an individual project. Depending on the subject the student is interested in and wants to address, the thesis coordinator of the programme directs the students to the research group, covering this subject. In these research groups, a supervisor is appointed to guide the students through the process. Students select the thesis subject themselves, with the assistance of their supervisor. The thesis project is carefully planned and includes quite regular meetings between the supervisor and the student. In total, 17 hours have been allocated for supervision. The thesis is assessed by the supervisor and the second reader, who has not been involved in the process. The assessment is composed of three elements, being the written report, the oral defense and the process. The last element includes the assessment of skills, such as initiative, commitment, time management and critical attitude. The written report constitutes 60 % of the grade, the thesis process accounts for 30 % of the grade and the oral defense is 10 % of the grade. Each of these examiners assesses the written report and the oral defense, using the rubrics assessment form for the thesis. Together, the two examiners arrive at the final grade for the thesis.

### *Considerations*

The panel regards the rules and regulations for examinations and assessments in the programme to be appropriate, as these comply with the Wageningen University assessment policy. The panel considers these rules and regulations to be adequate for ensuring the quality, validity and reliability of the examinations and assessments. Examples to substantiate this are the use of specification grids to ensure the validity of the examinations, the assessment strategy in the courses for the selection and combination of examination methods and the appointment of skilled examiners.

The panel approves of the responsibilities and tasks of the Examination Board, as this Board monitors the examination and assessment procedures, oversees the quality of the examinations, appoints the examiners and regularly reviews the Bachelor theses.

The procedures for the supervision of the Bachelor thesis and the assessment of the thesis are regarded by the panel to be adequate, as two examiners assess the theses, on the basis of three distinct components. The panel, however, recommends to place the Bachelor thesis at the end of the curriculum, so the students may benefit from all prior courses in their thesis project, including the minor or free choice courses. In addition, the panel feels the rubrics forms to assess the thesis may be used more rigorously.

### *Assessment of this standard*

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

## 5.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

*The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

### *Findings*

For the recent cohorts 2009, 2010 and 2011, the study success rates of the programme after four years were 79 %, 75 % and 79 % (please refer to section 3.1 of this report). These success rates are slightly better than the success rates of other Wageningen University Bachelor programmes and comply with the target figures, in the agreement of the University and the Dutch Ministry of Education in this respect.

Students are expected to do as a minimum requirement a literature study in their Bachelor thesis. They are encouraged to perform analyses of quantitative data or simulations, but generally literature studies are accepted. The average grade of the Bachelor theses in the last two years was a little over 7.5.

As has been indicated, students having completed the Bachelor programme typically do not enter the labor market but continue their studies at Master level. In recent years, one student enrolled in a Governance Master programme. Most students opt for Economic Master programmes and in particular the Master Management Economics and Consumer Studies of Wageningen University. Students who choose Economics Master programmes elsewhere often take economics and mathematical courses in their free choice to prepare them for those programmes. The majority of the students tend to opt for the Economics profile. Only 10 % of the graduates of the last two years chose the Governance profile.

Of the students of the 2009, 2010 and 2011 cohorts, about 70 % continued their studies in the Master in Management, Economics and Consumer Studies of Wageningen University. They performed relatively well in this Master programme, obtaining an average grade for the Master courses of 7.6. The majority of the other students went on to study in Master programmes Economics, Business Economics or Management at other universities in the Netherlands or abroad. These students expressed being satisfied about the Bachelor programme as a preparation for these Master programmes.

### *Considerations*

The panel is positive about the study success rates of this programme, as these are in line with the target figures as agreed upon by Wageningen University and the Dutch Ministry of Education.

In the panel's view, students completing the programme are prepared for the Economics Master programmes. The large proportion of students opting for the Economics profile, is in line with the predominantly Economics character of the programme. The panel did, however, notice the need for additional mathematics and theoretical Economics courses to allow the students to qualify for Economics Master programmes, outside of Wageningen University and, therefore, recommends to strengthen the mathematics and statistics courses in the curriculum and to adjust these courses to the requirements of this programme.

The panel studied the examinations of the courses and found these to be very appropriate, testifying to the level achieved by the students in these courses.

At first, the panel studied 15 theses of students, who graduated in the last two years. Two of these theses were assessed by the panel to be unsatisfactory. These theses lacked a scientifically underpinned research question, were rather poor in references to the scientific literature and did not exhibit a proper analysis on the part of the student. Thereupon, the panel studied six additional theses of graduates of the last two years, primarily in the lower grade bracket. The panel concluded all of these theses to be at least satisfactory. As a consequence, the panel regards the two theses, assessed as unsatisfactory as outliers, being not representative of the quality and level of the Bachelor theses in general. A number of theses, the panel studied, were assessed by the panel to be good literature studies, with numerous references to scientific literature, solid analyses and sound policy recommendations.

As a further elaboration of the theses' subjects and scope, the panel recommends to promote students applying mathematical and statistical methods in the theses.

*Assessment of this standard*

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

## 6. Recommendations

In this report, a number of recommendations are listed. For the sake of clarity, these are brought together below. The recommendations are the following.

- To better exploit the strong Wageningen University international profile in the programme, thereby strengthening the programme character and, as a consequence, attracting more students.
- To consider increasing the number of specializations offered to include, for instance, Agriculture, Environment and Food Safety in order to broaden the range of choices for students and to attract more students.
- To emphasize in the information to the prospective students this programme to be an Economics programme with Governance elements and not so much a programme with Economics and Governance on an equal footing, as some students, mistakenly, might think.
- To periodically assess whether the order of the curriculum, especially with regard to the methods courses, can be re-optimized
- To consider to change the programme to a completely English-taught programme.
- To place the Bachelor thesis at the end of the curriculum, so the students may benefit from all prior courses in the thesis project, and to use the thesis rubrics form more rigorously.
- To strengthen the mathematics and statistics courses in the curriculum and to adjust these courses to the requirements of this programme, in order to allow students to gain access to Economics Master programmes, outside of Wageningen University, more easily.
- To promote students applying mathematical and statistical methods, as a further elaboration of the theses' subjects and scope.

## Annex 1: Site visit schedule

The site visit took place at the Wageningen University Campus on 7 October 2016. The site visit schedule was as follows.

09.00 h. – 09.30 h.	Arrival and deliberations panel (closed session)
09.30 h. – 10.00 h.	Dean, Education Institute Board, Programme Committee, Programme Director Prof. dr ir M.A.J.S. van Boekel (Director Education Institute, Dean of Education), Prof. dr ir J.P.M. van Tatenhove (Representative Board of Education Institute), Prof. dr S.W.F. Omta (Chair Programme Committee), Ir E.P. Kroese (Programme Director)
10.00 h. – 11.20 h.	Programme management Dr ir C. Gardebroek (Chair Programme Sub-Committee Economics and Governance, lecturer), Dr ir R.A. Groeneveld (former member Programme Committee and Programme Sub-Committee Economics and Governance, lecturer), A. van Eck BSc (student member Management Board of Programme Committee, and member of Programme Sub-Committee Economics and Governance), Dr ir G.R. Biesbroek (member Programme Sub-Committee Economics and Governance, lecturer), Ir E.P. Kroese (Programme Director)
11.30 h. – 12.15 h.	Examination Board Social Sciences Prof. dr M.A. Koelen (chair Examination Board), H.W.A. Houweling (secretary Examination Board), Prof. dr E.C. van Ierland (member Examination Board), Ir S. Sterrenburg (study advisor, advisor Examination Board)
12.15 h. – 13.30 h.	Lunch panel (closed session), open office hours 12.15 h. – 12.45 h.
13.30 h. – 14.30 h.	Lecturers of a various courses and theses' examiners Prof. dr ir C.J.A.M. Termeer (lecturer), Dr ir L.K.E. Dries (lecturer), Ir S. Sterrenburg (study advisor), dr ir J.H.M. Peerlings (lecturer, thesis examiner), dr E. van der Werf (lecturer, thesis examiner)
14.30 h. – 15.30 h.	Students and alumni, including Programme Committee member N. van Hilten (student cohort 2014), M. van der Veen (student cohort 2014), I. Groeneveld (student cohort 2015), W. Verhagen (student cohort 2015), C. Rietman (student cohort 2016), W. van den Hengel BSc (alumnus), D. Martens (alumnus), J. Kerr (student cohort 2014, member of Programme Committee and Programme Sub-Committee Economics and Governance)
15.30 h. – 17.15 h.	Deliberations panel (closed session)
17.15 h. – 17.45 h.	Main findings presented by panel chair to the programme management

## Annex 2: Documents reviewed

The panel studied the following documents, presented prior to the site visit:

- Critical Reflection Bachelor Economics and Governance
- Subject-specific reference framework
- Expert opinion about domain requirements and international standards of scientific quality
- External Advisory Committee
- Expert opinion regarding requirements of the professional field
- Course descriptions
- Natural and Life Sciences courses chosen (2009 – 2013)
- Courses and relation with learning outcomes
- Contact hours and teaching methods
- Staff overview, including their qualifications and participation in courses
- Education and Examination Regulations Wageningen University 2015 – 2016
- Rules and regulations Examination Boards Wageningen University
- Transparency and level of course assessments as evaluated by students
- Thesis assessment form and rubric
- Theses graduates 2014 – 2015 and 2015 – 2016
- Student success rates
- Graduates and Masters outside Wageningen University

On the day of the site visit, the programme management presented the following documents:

- Description in Study Handbook, Course Guide and recent student evaluations on all 29 compulsory and restricted optional courses
- Exercises and assignments, examinations plus answers, specification tables, prescribed literature and additional Blackboard information of 10 selected courses
- Programme Committee minutes of three most recent years
- External Advisory Committee minutes
- Experts' reports
- Examination Board minutes of three most recent years
- Report peer review Bachelor theses
- Brochure and website information for prospective students
- Matching procedure for prospective students
- Overview of Bachelor Assessment to assist students to select optional courses and thesis subject

### **Annex 3: Theses reviewed**

The Bachelor theses of the following 21 students have been selected for review by the panel

- 930927487100
- 940531114120
- 931105416020
- 940726113080
- 930330157120
- 931230291030
- 950604762120
- 910903582030
- 921105307070
- 931216529100
- 950212927040
- 920113427090
- 940311718060
- 931014706050
- 901008610060
- 880611422080
- 910423336030
- 940522584040
- 940426544070
- 910802628060
- 931020608050

## Annex 4: Composition of the assessment panel

The assessment panel had the following composition:

- Prof. dr. T.J. Wansbeek, Honorary Professor of Statistics and Econometrics, University of Groningen (panel chair);
- Prof. dr. J. Hartog, Emeritus Professor of Microeconomics with Visiting Scholar position, University of Amsterdam (panel member);
- Prof. dr. R. Kabir, Professor and Chair of Corporate Finance and Risk Management, University of Twente (panel member);
- Prof. dr. D.P. van Soest, Professor of Environmental Economics, Academic Director Tilburg Sustainability Center, Tilburg University (panel member);
- S.M. van den Hoek, student Bachelor programme Tax Economics, University of Amsterdam (student member).

Prof. dr. T.J. Wansbeek, panel chair

Mr. Wansbeek is Honorary Professor of Statistics and Econometrics at University of Groningen. He took his doctorate from University of Leiden. Among others, he held positions as Professor of Microeconometrics at University of Amsterdam, as the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business of University of Amsterdam and as the Dean of the Faculty of Economics of University of Groningen. He was and is an editorial board member of a series of academic journals, such as *Journal of Econometrics*. Mr. Wansbeek held and holds a number of Visiting Scholar positions at, among others, University of Southern California, United States and Zhejiang University, China.

Prof. dr. J. Hartog, panel member

Mr. Hartog is Emeritus Professor of Microeconomics at University of Amsterdam, holding a Visiting Scholar position at this University. He took his doctorate from Erasmus University Rotterdam. At this university, he held the position of Researcher and Associate Professor, subsequently becoming a Professor of Microeconomics at University of Amsterdam. He held a number of Visiting Positions at universities in countries Europe, the United States and Asia. He also was an editor and referee for a number of international academic journals. Mr. Hartog is a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences.

Prof. dr. R. Kabir, panel member

Mr. Kabir is Professor and Chair of Corporate Finance and Risk Management at University of Twente and Head of the Department of Finance and Accounting. He took his doctorate from Maastricht University. He held Visiting Scholar positions at, among others, Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing, China, New York University, United States and University of Melbourne, Australia. Before becoming Professor at University of Twente, Mr. Kabir was Associate Professor of Finance at Tilburg University and Professor of Finance at University of Stirling, United Kingdom.

Prof. dr. D.P. van Soest, panel member

Mr. Van Soest is Professor of Environmental Economics at Tilburg University as well as Academic Director of Tilburg Sustainability Center of Tilburg University. He took his doctorate from University of Groningen. He held and holds academic management positions and sat and sits on several committees in academia. Prior to his appointment as Professor at Tilburg University, Mr. Van Soest held positions, among others, as Senior Researcher at Brabant Center for Sustainability Studies, as Associate Professor at Tilburg University and as Professor of Environmental Economics at VU University Amsterdam.

S.M. van den Hoek, student member

Ms. Van den Hoek is a student in the Bachelor programme Tax Economics of University of Amsterdam. She has taken on a number of extra-curricular activities, such as being the chair of the Student Association of her programme and being a member and the chair of the Student Council of the Faculty of Economics and Business of University of Amsterdam. In addition, Ms. Van den Hoek is employed by Canal Company as a guide and a host.