



NVAO • THE NETHERLANDS

INITIAL ACCREDITATION

WO-BACHELOR

MARINE SCIENCES

Wageningen University

SUMMARY REPORT

13 MARCH 2023

1 Peer review

The quality of a new programme is assessed by means of peer review. A panel of independent peers including a student reviews the plans during a site visit to the institution. A discussion amongst peer experts forms the basis for the panel's final judgement and the advisory report. The focus is on the curriculum, the teaching and learning environment, and student assessment.

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) takes a formal decision on the quality of the new programme based on the outcome of the peer review. This decision can be positive, conditionally positive or negative. Following a positive NVAO decision with or without conditions the institution can proceed to offer the new programme. Upon completion of the programme graduates are entitled to receive a legally accredited degree.

This summary report contains the main outcomes of the peer review. A full report with more details including the panel's findings and analysis is also available. NVAO bases an accreditation decision on the full report.

Both the full and summary reports of peer reviews are published on NVAO's website www.nvao.net. There you can also find more information on NVAO and peer reviews of new programmes.

2 Panel

Peer experts

- **Prof. dr. Michel Kaiser** (chair), Professor of Fisheries Conservation at The Lyell Centre, Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh (Schotland).
- **dr. Marion Jegen**, Research Group leader – Marine EM, IfM Geomar/ Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel (Duitsland);
- **dr. Ton Peeters**, was previously a lecturer/researcher, education manager and Programme Director bachelor in Biology at Utrecht University (the Netherlands);
- **Arwen Barendregt** (student-member), Student bachelor Applied Biology at HAS Green Academy (the Netherlands).

Assisting staff

drs. Riekje de Jong (secretary)
Tinka Thede, MSc (NVAO policy advisor and process coordinator)

Site visit

Wageningen, 31 January 2023

3 Outcome

The NVAO approved panel reaches a positive conclusion regarding the quality of the initial accreditation bachelor in Marine Sciences (180 EC) offered by Wageningen University.

Graduates of the English taught three-year fulltime BSc Marine Sciences will be able to positively contribute to sustainable socio-ecological marine systems. They will investigate and analyse social, economic and biological processes in marine systems. They will also evaluate and design innovative and integrated solutions for challenges faced in marine systems nowadays and in the future.

The programme provides a balanced mix of disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses. The courses are focused on the conceptual domain, on research and on personal development and working in an international/intercultural environment. Every academic year ends up in an integrated project in which students use the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the courses of that year. In these projects students also learn to translate their research findings into responsible and practical recommendations. Students will realize the interdisciplinary profile of the BSc Marine Sciences with the variety of assessment methods offered and with their final individual research project and thesis report. Graduates can choose for a subsequent MSc study, or they can start a professional career as a policy advisor or consultant in the field of Marine Sciences.

The overall quality of the examinations and the evaluation of the quality of the assessments are safeguarded in Wageningen University's assessment policy. The panel concludes that students will realize the interdisciplinary profile of the BSc Marine Sciences with the variety of assessment methods offered and with their final individual research project and thesis report. The panel concludes that evaluation procedures are in place to monitor the quality of the programme and students' performance.

The panel is of the opinion that the institution has developed a relevant programme. The programme is appropriate for the bachelor level and enables students to contribute to sustainable socio-ecological marine systems from an interdisciplinary perspective.

4 Commendations

The programme is commended for the following features of good practice.

1. Unique mix of disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses – Using blended disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses, the BSc Marine Sciences enables students to develop social, economic and biological knowledge and skills to work on sustainable socio-ecological marine systems.

2. Project-based learning – Every year of the programme ends up in integrated projects in which students apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired in the courses of that year. Students will come up with innovative and integrated solutions and learn to translate their research findings into responsible and practical recommendations.

3. Boundary Crossing – Throughout the programme students learn to reflect on different perspectives outside one's own scientific domain, culture or context. Students develop skills to collaborate with specialists and stakeholders in multidisciplinary and intercultural teams. They also develop their attitude and skills to choose their personal learning paths to work on their professional identity.

4. Professional field requirements – The BSc programme meets the strong need for graduates with an interdisciplinary focus in the professional field. Therefore the programme has a unique position in the international field.

5. Staff – The core staff have an excellent track record of multidisciplinary teaching and research.

5 Recommendations

For further improvement to the programme, the panel recommends a number of follow-up actions.

1. Communication – Provide an unambiguous description of the content of the BSc programme. Unambiguously communicate prior knowledge required for admission to subsequent masters' programmes with students at the start and in the second year of the programme. Specify agreements with subsequent MSc programmes also outside Wageningen University and update the agreements if the MSc programmes change.
2. Admission levels – Do not constrain the admission levels of graduates of secondary education because of the aim for a balanced intake of students with a science and humanities background. Use flexible entry requirements through an either/or option.
3. Study advisor – Evaluate if the study advisory is rightly aligned to prepare students for the choices they make in the second year. Also monitor the study advisory with regard to study delay of specific groups of students or to specific courses.
4. Proactivity – Decide in advance of the start of the programme which courses are the most challenging due to their cross disciplinary nature (e.g. biologists taking social science courses may struggle initially). Evaluate during the course to adapt the course if needed.
5. Subject specificity – integrate subject-specific statistics and economic concepts in already existing (disciplinary) courses in the first year. At least make students aware by showing the basics so that they understand what they are doing.

6 What comes next?

NVAO grants initial accreditation to a new programme on the basis of a panel's full report. The decision is valid for a maximum of six years. For conditional accreditation other regulations apply. Upon accreditation the new programme will follow the NVAO review procedures for existing programmes. NVAO publishes the accreditation decision together with the full report and this summary report. ¹

Each institution has a system of quality assurance in place ensuring continuous follow-up actions and periodic peer-review activities. Peer reviews help the institution to improve the quality of its programmes. The progress made since the last review is therefore taken into consideration when preparing for the next review. The follow-up activities are also part of the following peer-review report. For more information, visit the institution's website. ²

¹ <https://www.nvao.net/nl/besluiten>

² <https://www.wur.nl/en.htm>

7 Summary in Dutch

Het panel oordeelt positief over de kwaliteit van Marine Sciences van Wageningen University. Dit is de uitkomst van de kwaliteitstoets uitgevoerd door een panel van peers op verzoek van de Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO). Voor deze beoordeling heeft het panel gesprekken gevoerd met de opleiding op 31 januari 2023.

Afgestudeerde van de driejarige BSc opleiding (180 EC's) Marine Sciences van Wageningen University onderzoeken socio-ecologische mariene systemen en ontwikkelen innovatieve en geïntegreerde oplossingen voor problemen die zich daarin voordoen.

Het studieprogramma bestaat uit een afgewogen mix van disciplinaire en interdisciplinaire cursussen waarmee studenten hun kennis en onderzoek vaardigheden ontwikkelen en leren om in een internationale en interculturele context te werken. Elk studiejaar wordt afgerond met een integratieproject waarin studenten hun verworven kennis toepassen. In deze projecten staan het onderzoeken en oplossen van problemen centraal die zich in zee of oceanen en in kustgebieden voordoen. Studenten vertalen hun onderzoeksresultaten in praktisch bruikbare aanbevelingen om socio-ecologische marine systemen te verbeteren. Ter afronding van hun studie voeren studenten een individueel onderzoeksproject uit en schrijven ze een onderzoeksverslag (thesis). Afgestudeerde kunnen vervolgens verder studeren in een masteropleiding of gaan werken als beleidsmedewerker of adviseur op het gebied van bijvoorbeeld ecologie, kustbescherming of visserij.

De examencommissie borgt de kwaliteit van toetsing en beoordeling op een passende wijze. Het panel is van oordeel dat de instelling een relevante opleiding heeft ontwikkeld. Het programma is passend voor het bachelor niveau en stelt studenten in staat vanuit een interdisciplinair perspectief bij te dragen aan duurzame mariene (eco)systemen.

Meer informatie over de NVAO-werkwijze en de toetsing van nieuwe opleidingen is te vinden op www.nvaio.net. Voor informatie over de Wageningen University verwijzen we naar de website van de instelling.³

³ <https://www.wur.nl/en.htm>

