

NDERZ EKERIJ

Research Master

Individual Differences and Assessment

Tilburg University

Report of the limited programme assessment

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Executive summary

The outcome of the external assessment of the research master's programme Individual Differences and Assessment (IDA) of Tilburg University by an NVAO approved panel is positive.

The two-year full-time programme aims to provide multidisciplinary perspectives on the central theme individual differences and assessment to equip talented students with the theory and tools they need to conduct fundamental scientific research in this field of psychology. The programme focusses on two main areas of application, namely work and health. The programme's intended learning outcomes clearly and unambiguously reflect the level that may be expected of graduates of a research master's programme. These learning outcomes demonstrate a good balance between skills-based (both academic and social skills) and knowledge-based learning outcomes. The panel appreciates the way the learning outcomes address critical judgments skills and social and ethical responsibilities.

The panel is positive about the curriculum that offers a good balance between content and methodological courses, and provides ample opportunities getting individual research experience. The programme pays extensive attention to ethics and integrity in scientific research.

The admission criteria are formulated clearly and adequately reflect the research-oriented nature and high demands of the programme. The intake in the first three years of the programme was problematically low (varying between five and seven students per year) but has increased during the last two academic years to respectively twelve and fifteen students. The panel advises to strengthen the recruitment strategy to increase the inflow of students. It also advises to reconsider the requirement of two letters of reference because this may cause a hurdle for good students to apply for the programme.

The panel thinks highly of the staff members, who are acknowledged scientists in their field and take supervision and tutoring of the research master's students very seriously. The panel welcomes the international classroom and the highly interactive learning environment that stimulates interaction and cohesion amongst students and staff.

The programme has a clear framework for assessment and the panel applauds the strong alignment of the intended learning outcomes, the teaching methods and assessment methods. The Examination Board Psychology is well organised and safeguards the quality of the assessments in a structured and accurate manner.

The master thesis is assessed by two independent assessors. The panel is very positive about the carefully and thoughtfully designed evaluation form which is recently implemented. The panel has two points of attention. It advises to improve the calibration of assessors and to involve a third assessor when provisional grades of the two assessors differ by more than one point.

The panel is impressed by the high quality and academic level of the fifteen theses it examined. It found some interesting and original topics and innovative ideas. The panel is positive about the career chances of the graduates of the programme, most of them working in positions in which they need the scientific knowledge and analytical skills acquired in the research master's programme.



The chair and the secretary of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 31 May 2021

Janke Cohen-Schotanus
(chair)

Esther Poort
(secretary)



1. Introduction

1.1 Administrative data

Name of the programme:	M Individual Differences and Assessment (research)
CROHO number:	60954
Level of the programme:	Master of Science
Orientation of the programme:	Academic
Study load:	120 EC
Location:	Tilburg
Variant:	full-time
Expiration of accreditation:	30 June 2022

1.2 Introduction

This report focuses on the assessment of the research master's programme in Individual Differences and Assessment (IDA). This assessment forms part of a cluster assessment of thirteen research master's programmes at seven universities. In total, fifteen panel members participated in this cluster assessment. Appendix A provides an overview of the thirteen participating research masters and the composition of the total panel.

The assessment is based on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands 2018 (limited framework). Research master's programmes must meet a number of additional criteria as described by the NVAO (specification of additional criteria for research master's programmes, 2016).

1.3 Panel composition

For every online visit, a (sub)panel was composed, based on the expertise and availability of panel members. Each (sub)panel consisted of five members, including the chair and the student member. The panel that assessed the research master's programme IDA consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. Janke Cohen-Schotanus (chair) Professor emeritus of Research of Education in the Medical Sciences;
- Prof. dr. Harm Hospers, Professor emeritus of Applied Health Psychology;
- Prof. dr. Maike Luhmann, Professor of Psychological Methods, Department of psychology, Ruhr University Bochum;
- Hanne Oberman MSc (student member). Methodology and Statistics for the Behavioural, Biomedical, and Social Sciences, Utrecht University (graduated in 2020);
- Prof. dr. Lieven Verschaffel, Professor of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven.

The panel was supported by drs. Esther Poort, who acted as secretary.



All panel members and the secretary have signed a declaration of independence and confidentiality. In this declaration they affirm not to have had any business or personal ties with the programme in question for at least five years prior to the review.

The NVAO approved the composition of the panel on 26 November 2020.

1.4 Working method

Preparation

On 14 January 2021, the panel of the entire cluster held a general online kick off meeting. In this meeting, the panel received an introduction to the assessment framework and discussed the working methods in preparation to and during the online visits.

In accordance with the NVAO's limited assessment framework, the programme drew up a self-evaluation report that describes the four standards. This self-evaluation included a chapter in which the students reflected on the programme. The panel members prepared the assessment by analysing the self-evaluation report and the appendices provided by the institution. The panel also evaluated a selection of fifteen master theses and the accompanying assessment forms from the programme. The theses selection was made by the panel's secretary based on a provided list of at least fifty theses from the most recent years. In the selection, consideration was given to a variation in assessments (grades), and topics.

The panel members individually formulated their preliminary findings and a number of questions they wanted to raise during the online visit. The secretary made an overview of these preliminary findings and questions and sent it to the panel members as a starting point for the preparation of the panel during the online visit.

To further ensure that the different panels used the same working method and approach for all thirteen programmes in the cluster, the two chairs and the two secretaries had two additional meetings: one prior to the first visit and one halfway through all the visits.

Online visit

The online visit took place on 18 March 2021 (see Appendix B for the schedule). During the preparatory meeting, the panel discussed the preliminary findings and decided which questions to raise in their meetings with the programme representatives. During the visit, the panel spoke with representatives of the management, students, lecturers, alumni and the Examination Board. Everyone involved in the programme had the opportunity to inform the panel in confidence about matters they consider important to the assessment. No one made use of this opportunity. The panel used the last part of the online visit to evaluate the interviews and have a second meeting with the programme's management to receive answers to any remaining questions. At the end of the visit, the chair presented the panel's preliminary findings and their first impressions of the programme.



Report

The secretary drew up a draft report based on the panel's findings. This draft report was submitted to the members of the panel and adjusted on the basis of their review and feedback. After adoption, the draft report was sent to the institution for verification of factual inaccuracies. The secretary discussed the programme's comments with the chair, after which the secretary drew up the final report and circulated it to the panel for a final round of comments.

The report follows the four standards such as set of in the NVAO's Assessment Framework 2018 (limited framework): 1) the intended learning outcomes, 2) the teaching-learning environment, 3) assessment, and 4) achieved learning outcomes. Regarding each of the standards, the assessment panel gave a substantiated judgement on a three-point scale: meets, does not meet, or partially meets the standard. The panel subsequently gave a substantiated final conclusion regarding the quality of the programme, also on a three-point scale: positive, conditionally positive, or negative.

Development dialogue

Although clearly separated from the process of the programme assessment, assessment panel members and programme representatives met to conduct the development dialogue (18 May 2021), with the objective to discuss future developments of the programme in light of the outcomes of the assessment report.



2. Review

2.1 Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings, analysis, and considerations

The research master's programme Individual Differences and Assessment (IDA) was launched in 2016 and is imbedded in the Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences (TSB) of Tilburg University (TiU). Within TSB, four departments contribute to this programme: Developmental Psychology, Human Resource Studies, Medical & Clinical Psychology, and Methodology & Statistics.

The IDA programme builds on TiU's mission of Understanding Society, starting from the consideration that "No human being is like the others". The four departments provide multidisciplinary perspectives on the central theme individual differences and assessment to equip talented students with the theory and tools they need to conduct fundamental scientific research in this field of psychology.

Given the existing fields of expertise of TSB, two main application fields were chosen: work and health. Within these fields, the programme focusses on three core topics of individual differences, namely personality, motivation, and intelligence. These topics are related to people's suitability for certain positions in education and work, and can also predict the onset, course, and treatment of certain (mental) health conditions. Since the effective assessment of individual differences depends on the quality of their measurement, the programme places emphasis on providing students with a sound psychometric background.

The panel recognises the value of this relatively new programme that prepares students for a research career in psychology, particularly personality psychology and psychological methods and assessment. The panel values the strong emphasis on research skills and statistical methods, which provide the students with qualifications that make them also competitive for various research fields as well as possible careers inside and outside academia. The panel also appreciates the choice of two application fields. These application fields are aligned with the expertise of the teaching staff and give the programme a unique profile.

The programme translated its aims into a set of twenty-three intended learning outcomes which are linked to the Dublin descriptors for the master's level. In the eyes of the panel, these intended learning outcomes clearly and unambiguously reflect the level that may be expected of graduates of a research master's programme. These are in line with the goal of preparing students for conducting fundamental research in the fields of psychology and demonstrate a good balance between skills-based (both academic and social skills) and knowledge-based learning outcomes.

As stated in the self-evaluation report, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with the three pillars of the Tilburg Education Profile (TEP): Knowledge, Skills and Character. The pillars 'Knowledge' and 'Skills' clearly overlap with the Dublin descriptors. Regarding the third pillar, the programme fosters students' character building by stimulating intellectual independence, fostering students to develop critical mindsets and be aware of their social and scientific responsibility. Students are encouraged to come up with constructive solutions to urgent social problems and to put their acquired insights into practice. The panel welcomes this explicit focus on 'character building' and



is pleased with the way the intended learning outcomes address critical judgments skills and social and ethical responsibilities.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that IDA is a unique programme that prepares students for a research career in psychology, both inside and outside academia. The intended learning outcomes clearly reflect the programme's profile, including, the university-wide aim regarding 'character building'. The programme therefore meets standard 1.

2.2 Teaching-learning environment

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

Findings, analysis, and considerations

Curriculum

The research master's programme IDA is a full-time programme of 120 EC. The programme is structured along four learning lines: a) the content learning line (36 EC), b) the methodological and statistical learning line (27 EC); c) the independent research project learning line (42 EC), and d) the traineeship learning line (15 EC). All courses are specifically designed for the IDA programme.

The content learning line consists of six courses (6 EC each). This learning line is based on a classical division of the domain of individual differences into personality (including motivation) and intelligence. The three first-year content courses ('Theoretical Models of Individual differences', 'Biological and Physiological Correlates of Individual differences', and 'Dynamics of Individual Differences') provide a broad theoretical foundation. The second year includes two applied content courses: 'Advanced Applications of Health' and 'Advanced Applications of Work'. In the second year, the content learning line also includes elective courses. Up to 2019-2020, students could choose one external elective course and the two applied courses both were mandatory. In the current academic year (2020-2021), students can decide to choose only one of the two applied courses and choose a (second) external elective course instead. The panel welcomes this adjustment that offers students more opportunities to adapt the programme to their own interests and ambitions. In general, students choose their electives from another research master's programme. The panel was pleased to note that the electives selection process is considered to be a learning opportunity to reflect about interest and career opportunities. Students are asked to provide a written argumentation for the choice of their electives including their personal and course specific learning goals and career planning.

The methodological and statistical learning line consists of four courses of 6 EC and one course of 3 EC. These courses provide students with a sound background for carrying out research into individual differences and their assessment using advanced methods, including the statistical programming language R.

The independent research project learning line consists of two research projects (the first-year paper of 12 EC and the master thesis of 24 EC), the 'Ethics and Data Management' course (3 EC), and a



Research Seminar (3 EC). The first-year paper trains students in identifying a research question, reviewing literature, analysing data, and writing a concise and coherent research paper. This first-year paper is written based on an existing dataset of one of the research projects of IDA staff members. The master thesis (24 EC) consists of conducting and reporting an empirical study. Under supervision of IDA staff members, students follow the complete empirical cycle by a) writing a research proposal, b) collecting and analysing data, c) presenting the results to IDA staff and fellow students, and d) writing up the master thesis. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of IDA, which includes different research traditions and methods, students can choose among three main forms of research projects. One is to conduct a full empirical cycle as part of which students are responsible for preparing, organising and executing their own data collection. The second option concerns creating and/or testing innovative methods and/or statistical approaches for example by using existing large-scale data or simulations. The third option involves working on secondary data analyses based on existing, large-scale datasets, which would be impossible to collect within the timeframe of the programme. Students who don't collect their own data for their master thesis, are required to collect data in an existing research project of a staff member of IDA. The panel supports this possibility of choices, which enhances the flexibility of the programme and allows students to further specialise in their specific area of interest. The panel was pleased to note that all students gain experience with all aspects of the entire empirical cycle.

The traineeship learning line allows students to work with IDA-internal supervisors in four specific traineeships and to gain international experience in the international traineeship. Each traineeship has a different primary goal, covering knowledge and skills required throughout all phases of a research project in the following sequence: knowledge/skill acquisition (traineeship 1); research design (traineeship 2); data analysis and reporting (traineeship 3); and peer-reviewing (traineeship 4). Students can complete the international traineeship in three ways: attending an international conference, attending a summer school, or conducting research abroad. In the student chapter, students indicated to appreciate the traineeships and the possibility to learn from experts in the field while providing insight into the working environment of university departments. The panel shares this appreciation and agrees with the programme's choice of offering several relatively small traineeships. The previous accreditation panel (the initial accreditation) wondered whether it was realistic that students would undertake the activities planned for the international traineeship within the time allocated to it (3 EC). The panel was pleased to learn that this international internship appears to be feasible in practice. During the previous years, students attended conferences, summer schools and conducted research abroad to an equal extent. Students and alumni the panel met, highly value this international part of the curriculum. The programme reimburses students for expenses related to the international traineeship for a maximum of €1.000.

The panel noted that the program director is committed to involve the four different departments equally in the programme. The multidisciplinary learning environment is realised by co-teaching between staff members from different departments. Furthermore, students are encouraged to pick different supervisors of different departments and with different research backgrounds in the four internal traineeships and the two research projects (first-year paper and the master thesis project).

The panel appreciates the way the programme conceptualised the 'Assessment' part of the programme's name. This is addressed both in terms of statistical methods (e.g. psychometrics, structural equation modelling) and in terms of applying assessments. The panel supports the programme's choice to provide students with a sound general background about the philosophy of assessment methods rather than focussing on a comprehensive set of specific assessment methods. This gives students a good foundation from which they can critically evaluate assessment methods in different fields. The programme also offers opportunities to apply specific tests in their own field of



interest, for example during assignments and the internship. The panel compliments the programme on this well-balanced and thought-out approach.

The panel is positive about the well-considered incorporation of the concept of 'character building' in the programme. The programme trains students to critically reflect on the literature as well as on each other's positions, but also on their individual way of reasoning for them to develop into thoughtful and competent young scholars. The panel welcomes the extensive attention paid to ethics and integrity in scientific research which are important aspects of 'character building'. These topics are core parts of the 'Research Seminar' and the 'Ethics and Data Management' course and supervisors discuss these topics in the internal traineeships and in the supervision of the first-year paper and master thesis. All students need to write a proposal for the Ethical Review Board (ERB) and complete a study pre-registration for their master thesis according to the Open Science Framework (OSF) guidelines. During the interviews, the panel was given good examples of curriculum elements that contribute to other aspects of 'character building', including a strength management workshop (In which students learn about their own strengths).

Since 2021, student can choose two courses from the regular master's programme Cognitive Neuropsychology as elective. During the online visit, the panel learned that these two courses allow students to meet the requirements to enrol in the post-master training to become a legally registered health care psychologist (*Gezondheidszorgpsycholoog-BIG*). Students who want to enrol in the post-master training, also need to conduct a clinical internship. The panel is convinced about the added value of this clinical route, because the field of mental health care can benefit from a science orientated clinical track. The panel is of the opinion that the programme found a good way to implement the clinical route in the programme. It encourages the programme to continue to follow (national) discussions on the optimal structuring of the science oriented clinical track in research master's programmes.

The self-evaluation provides a clear explanation how the intended learning outcomes are accomplished in the programme. The intended learning outcomes of the programme are translated into specific learning objectives for each course outlined in the course syllabi. The panel established that the entire programme covers all learning outcomes. Overall, the panel is of the opinion that the intended learning outcomes found a consistent and balanced translation into a rich, varied, and transparent curriculum. The curriculum offers a good balance between disciplinary content and methodological courses, and provides ample opportunities for getting individual research experience. Through several traineeships, research projects, as well as electives, students have the freedom to tailor the curriculum to their unique needs and interests.

Admission and student numbers

The research master's programme is selective and students that apply for admission are evaluated on academic achievements, including a weighted average of 7.5 or higher, requirements regarding methods and statistics, and English language proficiency. Applicants must have a strong motivation, the skills, and talent for doing scientific research, and a clear understanding of the field of individual differences as evident from their bachelor's thesis or a comparable essay. In addition, applicants must provide a motivation letter and two letters of reference. The program director reviews the application documents and conducts a short online interview with the applicant (together with one other IDA staff member). The program director advises the Examination Board (EB), who reviews the applicants' files and takes the final decision.



The panel observed that the admission criteria are formulated clearly and adequately reflect the research-oriented nature and high demands of the programme. The admission conditions and procedure are rather strict and transparent. The panel advises to reconsider the requirement of two letters of reference. Not all students may have access to senior staff members who could provide these letters, which may cause a hurdle for good students to apply for the programme.

The programme aims at enrolling twenty-five new students per academic year. The panel noticed that the intake in the first three years of the programme was problematically low (varying between five and seven students per year), but has increased during the last two academic years to respectively twelve and fifteen students. The panel is of the opinion that these cohort sizes provide challenges for the viability of the programme. According to the panel, attracting more students is desired. The panel was pleased to learn that the programme already changed the recruitment strategy in order to attract more students, including advertising more explicitly that it is a master's programme in the field of Psychology. It encourages the programme to strengthen this strategy to increase the inflow of students. Alumni who are currently working in different position inside and outside academia could be helpful in making the different options after graduation more tangible to possible future students.

Didactic approach

As indicated in the self-evaluation report, the programme aims to facilitate and promote students' learning processes by enhancing their basic knowledge, strengthening their motivation and increasing their responsibility and self-efficacy, thereby inspiring their curiosity and reflective thinking. Students also participate in teaching, for example, by preparing and leading the discussion of the academic reading material. The panel agrees that this offers students a good training experience to acquire the skills necessary to present research material and to explain complex material in a clear and concise way.

The panel observed the enthusiasm of both students and staff for the highly interactive didactical approach. The small-scale character of the programme makes it very easy to contact lecturers in an informal way. Staff members, students, and alumni informed the panel that there is a real sense of community among students as well as very good contacts between teachers and students. Students feel respected and taken seriously by their teachers.

In line with the guidelines and the educational profile of TiU, the programme considers international education relevant both for scientific development and for preparation for the job market. The programme is aimed specifically at international students and those Dutch students who have an interest to study in international teams of diverse cultural backgrounds, and working on global and complex challenges while taking into account different perspectives and while dealing with cultural differences. The vast majority of students has an international background: the fifteen students in the current cohort represent ten different nationalities. The panel noticed that the programme uses this international classroom in a deliberate and thoughtful way, for instance by challenging students to reflect on cultural differences.

The language of instruction of the programme is English. The programme management substantiates its choice by arguing that this maximises inclusivity of international students and staff members. In addition, it enables all students a) to join the exchange and coordination of knowledge, b) to invest in cross-cultural collaborations as an option for growth, and c) to increase their employment opportunities worldwide. The panel endorses this.



Study load and study guidance

The students and alumni the panel met, indicated that the workload of the programme is high. However, all of them agreed that the programme is feasible which is also attested by the high percentage (90%) of students who finish the programme in two years. Of the four students who did not graduate within two years, three opted for spreading the programme over three years to pursue a second (clinical) master at the same time.

The panel noted that the feasibility of the programme is also related to the openness of all staff members. Throughout the programme, students receive extensive supervision from lecturers during courses, research projects and internships. Students and alumni indicated they felt free to approach staff members when they encountered problems or needed advice. The panel noted that the program director plays a pivotal role in stimulating interaction and cohesion amongst students and staff. Students meet up with the program director at least twice during the programme to discuss their goals and development. The panel considers the strong involvement of (and for students the easy access to) the program director a clear strength. However, the panel believes that this crucial role of one person also brings risks for the long-term sustainability. The panel also noticed that students are less aware of the possibility to receive formal guidance outside the programme, such as student counsellors. It advises to communicate this more explicitly to students.

Staff and academic context

The panel acknowledges the staff's scientific quality, international academic reputation and teaching experience. All lecturing staff has a consistent track-record of publications in the top journals in their respective fields and many of them have attracted prestigious external funding. Lecturers are very engaged with the students and supervision and tutoring are taken seriously by all staff members. The ambitious and small-scale character of the programme adds to the commitment of the teaching staff to the programme and to the motivation to work with IDA students.

The programme offers a multidisciplinary research environment, in which students experience different research traditions of the four departments involved. In recent research reviews, these four departments were assessed as 'very good' or 'excellent'. This reputation of the departments is endorsed by the panel. It is clear to the panel that students are part of a high-quality and committed research environment.

In the current academic year (2020-2021), a partial re-composition of teaching staff took place due to high turn-over among IDA staff members. The panel was pleased to note that new staff members filled these gaps immediately. As indicated in the self-evaluation report, this concerns more junior but competent and passionate staff members, who are eager to foster multidisciplinary collaborations and can set the basis for long-term continuity within the programme. The panel appreciates that the program director puts lots of time and effort in creating a good team spirit, among other things by bi-monthly meetings with IDA staff members.

The thorough SWOT analysis in the self-evaluation report indicates that the high workload among staff members is a potential threat. As explained in the SWOT analysis, this high workload was caused by the many improvements made in the previous years (e.g., improvement of alignment and transparency of assessment, alignment across courses, fostering of multi-disciplinarity), which required extra engagement of the IDA staff members.



COVID-19

Due to COVID-19 almost all education switched to online teaching and assessment in the past year. The panel asked students and teachers about their experience with online teaching. Whilst COVID-19 evidently had an impact on the interaction between student and teachers, both students and teachers were positive about the quick and efficient transition. Because of the relatively small group size, it was quite easy for teachers to interact with all students online.

The programme tried to compensate for the lack of personal interaction by including more group work, small-group and plenum discussions, regular individual meetings with the program director and regular group meetings. All these components, conducted online, enhanced personal and individualised contact despite the lack of physical proximity.

The panel concluded that although the COVID-19 situation is not an optimal teaching and learning situation, the programme still allows students to achieve the academic objectives. In addition, the pandemic has offered a good opportunity to gain experience with blended learning.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that programme's intended learning outcomes are translated into a rich, varied and transparent curriculum. The panel is also positive about the interactive learning environment, and the dedicated staff who are experts in their domain. The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 2.

2.3 Student assessment

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

*Findings, analysis, and considerations**Assessment policy*

The panel noted that the programme follows the Tilburg University Assessment Policy and the TSB assessment system, which are thorough and well-considered. The program director uses the curriculum map and the assessment plan to monitor the programme assessment's validity and fairness. The panel noticed that these documents provide a good overview of the assessments of the programme's intended learning outcomes, the course's learning goals and the assessments types. The programme uses a variety of different forms of testing, including oral and written exams, assignments, essays/papers, presentations, and in-class participation. Overall, the panel applauds the strong alignment of the intended learning outcomes, the teaching methods and assessment methods.

The self-evaluation report gives a detailed description of the quality assurance mechanism on the course level of the assessments. The quality assurance policy is based on three pillars: validity, reliability, and transparency. The programme has several measures in place to safeguard these pillars, including the use of answer models or rubrics, the four eyes principle, and course syllabi. The panel was very positive about these mandatory course syllabi which provide information about the way the course learning goals are assessed, including detailed information about forms of assessment and sample questions/answers, grading, expected work-load, criteria used for the assessment, and timing and re-sit options.



The panel was pleased to note that the programme has a clear view how to assess 'character building'. The EB explained that the programme distinguishes five elements which are related to 'character building': intellectual independency, critical mindset, social responsibility, scientific responsibility, and entrepreneurship. Except social responsibility, all elements are integrated in the objectives of individual courses and as such also assessed in these courses. The panel understands that the aspect 'social responsibility' is very hard to formally assess.

Examination board

The EB Psychology serves the psychology bachelor's and master's programmes as well as the research master's programme IDA. The self-evaluation describes in detail the instruments used by the EB, including a) instructing examiners, b) screening assessment procedures, c) reviewing fairness and transparency of exams, d) responding to students' complaints and appeals; and e) adopting policies to prevent fraud and to impose sanction. The panel is of the opinion that the EB is very well organised and safeguards the quality of the assessments in a structured and accurate manner.

Master thesis

In preparation for the site visit, the panel studied a selection of fifteen theses and the accompanying assessment forms. The thesis is always assessed separately and independently by the supervisor and another member of the teaching staff, using standardised assessment forms provided by the EB. The panel was pleased to note that the programme prevents the formation of fixed assessment couples and promote maximal variety in the formation of couples of supervisors and assessors.

The programme recently implemented a new thesis assessment form. These new forms require the assessor to grade eight aspects of the thesis including the abstract, the research question, the discussion, and writing quality. The aspect 'work attitude' is only assessed by the supervisor. Each of the eight aspects include explicit descriptors that supervisors and second assessors use to attribute a score. In line with the EER of TSB, the course coordinator calculates the final grade of the students and appoints a third independent assessor in case of conflicting assessments (discrepancy between grades of 1.5 points or more, fail/pass discrepancy), or a final grade of 9 or higher. The panel is very positive about this carefully and thoughtfully designed evaluation form. Overall, the panel was satisfied with the quantity and quality of the provided narrative feedback.

The panel has two points of attention. First, the panel noted that assessors sometimes seem to use their own personal standards, and some assessors seem to set the bar too high. The panel was pleased to hear that the EB recognised this and indicated that the calibration of assessors still needs to be improved. The panel supports this. Second, in five of the fifteen theses studied by the panel, the discrepancy between the two assessors was between 1 and 1.4 points. The panel suggests to involve a third assessor in case of a discrepancy of more than one point (instead of a discrepancy of more than 1.5 points).

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme has a sound and thorough system of assessment in place and the EB takes its responsibilities seriously. The programme therefore meets standard 3.



2.4 Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings, analysis, and considerations

The panel is impressed by the high quality and academic level of the fifteen theses it examined. The panel found some interesting and original topics and innovative ideas. The theses were well-written, used advanced measurement and analyses methods and included high-quality discussions. Open science practices such as preregistrations were widely adopted. In general, the panel agrees with the grades given. Sometimes the panel would have given a slightly higher or slightly lower grade, but never deviating by more than one point.

The high quality of the theses is also evidenced by the number of students and alumni who succeeded in publishing their research. In total, nine IDA-related papers have been published, and several are under review and in preparation for submission. These numbers have to be viewed in light of the fact that the first IDA students graduated only two years ago.

The programme is still quite young and, due to the overall low enrolment, so far only seventeen students have graduated. The panel noticed that these alumni appear to find appropriate positions. Eleven alumni enrolled in a PhD programme and one alumnus is currently applying for a PhD position. The other five alumni are working as clinical psychologist, junior researchers, or data analyst.

During the online visit, the panel met with a number of alumni. All of them were very enthusiastic about the programme and its practical use in their profession. They indicated that the programme did not only give them the right skills but also self-confidence.

Conclusion standard 4

The panel concludes that the master theses reflect the high scientific standards of the research master's programme, and graduates are well prepared for research positions inside and outside academia. The programme therefore meets standard 4.



3. Strengths and recommendations

3.1 Strengths of the programme

The panel is impressed by the following features:

- Unique focus – The programme offers a fundamental basis of individual differences and assessment combined with the application in the work and health field. These fields are aligned with the expertise of the staff and give the programme a unique profile;
- Character building - The programme has incorporated the university-wide concept of 'character building' in a well-structured and well considered way;
- Well-balanced curriculum – The curriculum offers a good balance between content and methodological courses, and provides ample opportunities getting individual research experience in the different departments involved;
- Internationalisation – The programme has a clear view on internationalisation and the students have an internationally diverse background;
- Teaching team – The teaching staff is enthusiastic, well-qualified and knowledgeable in their respective areas. The staff members bring in a wide array of expertise from various disciplines;
- Assessment system – The programme has a sound and thorough system of assessment in place, characterised by a wide variety of assessment methods aligned to the aims of the programme. The EB is well-organised and safeguards the quality of the assessments in a structured and accurate manner;
- High quality end products – The overall academic quality of the studied theses is very high.

3.2 Recommendations

- Attracting more students – Strengthen the recruitment strategy to increase the inflow of students. Advertise more explicitly that this is a master's programme in the field of Psychology and involve alumni to make the different options after graduation more tangible to future students;
- Admission procedure –Reconsider the requirement of two letters of reference, because this may cause a hurdle for good (international) students to apply for the programme;
- Assessment of the thesis – Continue to improve the assessment procedure of the thesis by improving the calibration of assessors and by involving a third assessor in case of a discrepancy of more than one point.



4. Conclusion

The intended learning outcomes are in line with the goal of preparing students for conducting research in the field of psychology. The intended learning outcomes reflect the research orientation and the programme's profile. The content and structure of the programme and the high-quality teaching staff provide a strong teaching and learning environment. The programme has a well-developed and innovative vision on assessment, which is carefully translated into policy and successfully implemented in daily practice. The theses and careers of the graduates show that students have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Standard	Judgement
Standard 1	Meets the standard
Standard 2	Meets the standard
Standard 3	Meets the standard
Standard 4	Meets the standard
Final conclusion	Positive



Appendix A – Panel composition and programmes of the cluster

Panel composition of the cluster:

- Prof. dr. Janke Cohen-Schotanus (chair) Professor emeritus of Research of Education in the Medical Sciences;
- Prof. dr. Rob Ruiter (chair), Professor of Health and Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience at Maastricht University;
- Prof. dr. Lidia Arends, Professor of Statistics and Research Methodology, Department of Psychology, Education & Child Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. dr. Caroline Braet, Professor of Developmental Psychopathology, Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology at Ghent University;
- Prof. dr. Rachel Gibson, Professor of Politics, Department of Politics, University of Manchester;
- Prof. dr. Harm Hospers, Professor emeritus of Applied Health Psychology;
- Prof. dr. Detlev Leutner, Professor of Instructional Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Duisburg-Essen;
- Prof. dr. Maike Luhmann, Professor of Psychological Methods, Department of psychology, Ruhr University Bochum;
- Hanne Oberman MSc (student member). Methodology and Statistics for the Behavioural, Biomedical, and Social Sciences, Utrecht University (graduated in 2020);
- Prof dr. Arne Roets, Professor of Social Psychology, Faculty of psychology and educational sciences, Department of Developmental, Personality, and Social Psychology, Ghent University;
- Prof. dr. Guus Smeets, Professor of Education in Psychology, Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Yvonne Schittenhelm BSc, (student member), Master Individual Differences and Assessment, Tilburg University;
- Marie Stadel MSc (student member), Behavioural and Social Sciences Research Master, University of Groningen (graduated in 2020);
- Prof. dr. Lieven Verschaffel, Professor of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven;
- Prof. dr. Karine Verschueren, Professor of School and Developmental Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven.

The cluster consist of thirteen programmes:

- M Individual Differences and Assessment (research), Tilburg University;
- M Behavioural Science (research), Radboud University;
- M Clinical and Developmental Psychopathology (research), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam;
- M Social Psychology: Regulation of Social Behaviour (research), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam;
- M Psychology (research), University of Amsterdam;
- M Communication Science (research), University of Amsterdam;



- M Educational Sciences: Learning in Interaction (research), Utrecht University;
- M Methodology and Statistics for the Behavioural, Biomedical and Social Sciences (research), Utrecht University;
- M Development and Socialisation in Childhood and Adolescence (research), Utrecht University;
- M Social & Health Psychology (research), Utrecht University;
- M Behavioural and Social Sciences (research), University of Groningen;
- M Psychology (research), Leiden University;
- M Developmental Psychopathology in Education and Child Studies (research), Leiden University.



Appendix B – Schedule of the visit

18 March 2021

Time	Session
08.30 – 10.00	Preparation panel
10.00 – 10.45	Management
10.45 – 11.00	Evaluation
11.00 – 11.45	Students
11.00 – 12.00	Evaluation
12.45 – 13.30	Lecturers
13.30 – 13.45	Evaluation
13.45 – 14.15	Alumni
14.15 – 14.30	Evaluation
14.30 – 15.00	Examination board
15.00 – 15.30	Evaluation and preparing questions for management
15.30 – 16.00	Second meeting management
16.00 – 17.30	Evaluation
17.30 – 17.45	Presentation of first findings



Appendix C – Documents studied

- Self-evaluation report;
- Appendix 1a. assessment report of the initial accreditation in 2015
- Appendix 1b. summary follow-up recommendations assessment panel (2015)
- Appendix 2. list of intended learning outcomes
- Appendix 3: course descriptions of research master IDA
- Appendix 4a: lecturing staff research master IDA 2019-2020
- Appendix 4b: lecturing staff research master IDA 2020-2021
- Appendix 5a: education and examination regulations 2019-2020
- Appendix 5b: provisions concerning the assessment of theses 2019-2020
- Appendix 5c: education and examination regulations 2020-2021
- Appendix 5d: provisions concerning the assessment of theses 2020-2021
- Appendix 6: graduated students research master IDA 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020
- Appendix 7. covid-19 adjustments
- Additional appendices:
 - IDA_OriginalDecisionLetter_Accreditation_19-8-15
 - Course syllabi 2020-2021
 - ReMa IDA: national and international benchmarks
 - IDA assessment plan curriculum maps
 - IDA specification tables
 - IDA_TSB- Handbook for constructing and grading exams – psychology
 - Procedure of assessment committees and thesis committee examination board psychology
 - Publications of IDA students with IDA staff members, status jan. 2021
- Fifteen theses with assessment forms.



Appendix D – Abbreviations

EB	Examination Board
EC	European Credit
EER	Education and Examination Regulations
ERB	Ethical Review Board
IDA	Individual Differences and Assessment
NVAO	<i>Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie</i>
OSF	Opens Science Framework
UTQ	University Teaching Qualification (UTQ)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats
TSB	Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences
TEP	Tilburg Education Profile
TiU	Tilburg University (Tiu)

