

Vlindersingel 220
NL-3544 VM Utrecht
+31 30 87 820 87
www.AeQui.nl
info@AeQui.nl

Master programme Master of Film Amsterdam University of the Arts

Report of the limited programme assessment 11 and 12 November 2020

Utrecht, The Netherlands January 2021 www.AeQui.nl Assessment Agency for Higher Education

Colophon

Programme

Amsterdam University of the Arts Master programme Master of Film Location: Amsterdam Mode of study: fulltime Croho: 44733 Result of institutional assessment: positive

Panel

Raoul van Aalst, chair Simone van den Broek, domain expert Mick Wilson, domain expert Kuba Mikurda, domain expert Salvador Miranda, student Barbara van Balen, secretary

The panel was presented to the NVAO for approval.

The assessment was conducted under responsibility of AeQui Nederland Vlindersingel 220 3544 VM Utrecht The Netherlands www.AeQui.nl

This document is best printed in duplex



Table of contents

Colophon	2
Table of contents	
Summary	
Introduction	
1. Intended learning outcomes	
2. Teaching-learning environment	
3. Student assessment	
4. Achieved learning outcomes	14
Attachments	
Attachment 1 Assessment committee	
Attachment 2 Program of the assessment	17
Attachment 3 Documents	

Summary

On 11 and 12 November 2020 an assessment committee of AeQui assessed the Master programme Master of Film of the Amsterdam University of the Arts. Due to the national Covid19 measurements the assessment was online. The committee judges that the programme meets each standard; the overall quality of the programme meets the standard.

Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes are developed in line with the ambitions of the master programme to operate at the crossroads where the production of art meets the production of knowledge. The committee appreciates the mission to provide a space for experienced professionals to develop their abilities to reflect on the art practice and give them the opportunity to design their own methods. The concept of the master programme is interesting, relevant and important for the film industry in general. The focus in the programme on research and process, rather than product can be seen as unique. The assessment committee finds the intended learning outcomes appropriate and valid for the master's level. It is obvious that the programme is relevant to the field.

The assessment committee assesses that the intended learning outcomes meet the standard.

Teaching-learning environment

The committee considers the master programme to be strongly profiled based on a specific outspoken mission, resulting in a characteristic identity. It is impressed by the ambition of the programme, in particular by the way staff and management showed to be able to act responsively to comments of the students. The programme has a clear structure aimed at reflection and development of a research methodology in line with the objectives and the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

The pedagogical strategy is in line with the programme's concept. A limited group of ten stu-

dents is selected, originating from all over the world. The teaching team is diverse and qualified. The main didactic principles in the programme are peer learning, workshops organised in a succeeding manner into the four semesters and individual tutoring or mentoring, supported by guest lectures.

The first semester is in the view of the committee crucial for the foundation of the student-researcher community and it thinks that a stronger framework in that semester is needed to create an atmosphere necessary for valuable peer review within the group.

The assessment committee assesses that the teaching learning environment meets the standard.

Student assessment

The committee has established that the programme has an adequate assessment system and a very strong assessment procedure for the four exams scheduled in the programme. The committee appreciates the effort and time put in the exams and the assessment of the students, which makes this process very helpful for the students.

The committee encourages the programme to experiment with collective self-assessment in the peer group, including the teachers.

The committee has established that the examination board of the Film Academy performs its legal tasks in an adequate way.



The assessment committee assesses that the student assessment meets the standard.

Achieved learning outcomes

The committee established that the programme Master of Film demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are realized. The committee studied 15 research projects and concluded that the graduates have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The committee found the wide variety of end products delivered by the students positive. The committee recommends to include presentation to a general audience in the graduation requirements and procedure.

The assessment committee assesses that the intended learning outcomes meet the standard.

Recommendations

The programme has been positively assessed, there is nonetheless room for improvement. In order to bring the programme to an even higher level of quality in the future, the committee issues the following recommendations:

- To look for relevant partnerships and to use the international networks of the Film Academy more explicitly in the design of, and the communication about, the master programme;
- to introduce the title coach for the teachers guiding the students during the programme;
- to introduce a framework in the first semester in order to create an atmosphere necessary for valuable peer review within the group;
- to further develop the staff into a teaching team;
- to communicate the conditions and requirements for exams early;
- to experiment with collective selfassessment in the peer group, including the teachers;
- to include presentations to a general audience in the graduation requirements and procedures.

All standards of the NVAO assessment framework are assessed positively; the assessment committee therefore awards a positive recommendation for the accreditation of the programme.

On behalf of the entire assessment committee, Utrecht, January 2021

Raoul van Aalst Chair Barbara van Balen Secretary

Introduction

This report describes the assessment of the master programme Master of Film. This two-year full-time programme of 120 EC is offered by the Netherlands Film Academy, part of the Amsterdam University of the Arts.

The institute

Amsterdam University of the Arts educates students for the international field of art, culture and heritage. The university is founded in 1987 as a merger of four Art Academies. Currently the university contains the following academies: Breitner Academy of Visual Arts, the Academy of Architecture, the Netherlands Film Academy, Reinwardt Academy of Cultural Heritage, the Conservatorium van Amsterdam and the Academy of Theater and Dance.

The Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK) offers nine bachelor degree programmes, twelve master degree programmes and an associate degree programme. The focus of the AHK intensive education lies on the artistic and personal development of the students. The AHK aims to educate students for the highest level in their discipline based on thorough craftmanship, with room for innovation and experiment.

The programme

The programme is a two-year full-time master programme of professional orientation, amounting to 120 ECTS. The focus of the programme is artistic research in and through cinema.

The programme operates in English.

The assessment

The Amsterdam University of the Arts assigned AeQui VBI to perform a quality assessment of its master programme Master of Film. In close cooperation with the programme management, AeQui convened an independent and competent assessment committee. A preparatory meeting

with representatives of the programme was held to exchange information and plan the date and programme of the site-visit.

In the run-up to the site visit, the assessment committee has studied the self-evaluation report on the programme and reviewed a sample of graduation research projects accepted during the last two years. The findings of the report and the results of the graduation projects were input for discussions during the visit.

The site visit was carried out online on 11 and 12 November 2020 according to the programme presented in attachment 2. The panel has carried out its assessment in relation to, and in consideration of, the cluster of programmes in which this programme is placed. The contextualisation of the programme within its cluster was conducted by the complete panel during the preliminary meeting and the final deliberations. The knowledge required for this was present in (part of) the panel.

The committee has assessed the programme in an independent manner; at the end of the visit, the chair of the assessment committee presented the initial findings of the committee to representatives of the programme and the institution.

In this document, the committee is reporting on its findings, considerations and conclusions according to the NVAO framework for extended programme assessment 2018. A draft version of the report was sent to the programme management; its reactions have led to this final version of the report.



1. Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes are developed in line with the ambitions of the master programme to operate at the crossroads where the production of art meets the production of knowledge. The committee appreciates the mission of the programme to provide a space for experienced professionals to develop their abilities to reflect on the art practice and give them the opportunity to design their own methods. The concept of the master programme is interesting, relevant and important for the film industry in general. The focus in the programme on research and process, rather than product can be seen as unique. The assessment committee appreciates the mission of the programme and finds the intended learning outcomes appropriate and valid for the master's level. It is obvious that the programme is relevant to the field.

The assessment committee assesses that the intended learning outcomes meet the standard.

Findings

The two-year master programme operates at the crossroads where the production of art meets the production of knowledge. In the view of the Film Academy the programme aims to develop critical reflection on exploration in a professional field of filmmaking. The programme provides the student-researchers with the necessary support and conditions to develop their own research trajectory and contribute to the growing practice-based expertise in artistic research. The Film Academy explains in its critical review that artistic research in and through cinema means thinking through images and sounds, concepts and language of filmmaking. It means starting from the practice, knowledge and perspectives of the cinema-making, and using the filming practice's accompanying concepts and language. It uses the terminology of the cinematic practice as a metaphor, an analogy and first and foremost as conceptual and practical paradigms. It establishes a perspective and a frame where making and thinking are one. The programme recruits student-researchers who are experienced and skilled in the field. The curriculum is designed to assist them in the process of their emancipation as researchers who are able to conduct their studies natively in the audiovisual form, reflect on their respective positions and methodologies, design their line of experimentation and share knowledge with relevant audiences.

These objectives are translated in intended learning outcomes. Graduates of the programme should have demonstrated that they have mapped and critically examined their subjectivity and are able to contextualize and position their artistic research and practice. The graduates should have mastered their own method(s) of research and should be able to provide an explanation, argumentation or rationale for adopting a particular way of working (methodology). Graduates should be able to plan, design, modify and execute experiments and to draw conclusions from these experiments. Furthermore, they should be able to reflect on and present their processes and outcome(s) and have the ability to communicate their research to a relevant group of recipients.

Considerations

Throughout the discussions, the assessment committee gathered that the Film academy has founded its master programme on a strong and unique vision. The programme has a very specific mission and identity. The committee appreciates the mission of the programme to provide a space for experienced professionals to develop their abilities to reflect on the art practice and give them the opportunity to design their own methods. The concept of the master is interesting, relevant and important for the film industry in general. The focus in the programme on re-

search and process, rather than product can be seen as unique. The committee finds the intended learning outcomes appropriate and valid for the master's level. It is obvious that the programme is relevant to the field and with its unique focus adds to professionalisation and the development of artistic research in and through cinema.

The committee noticed that there was in the dossier and during the interview no mention of collaboration with other institutes in the field,

despite the international contacts and network of the Film Academy. The committee advises to consider using these international networks more explicitly in the future.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee establishes that the intended learning outcomes meet the standard.



2. Teaching-learning environment

The committee considers the master programme to be strongly profiled based on a specific outspoken mission, resulting in a characteristic identity. It is impressed by the ambition of the programme, in particular by the way staff and management showed to be able to act responsively to comments of the students. The programme has a clear structure aimed at reflection and development of a research methodology in line with the objectives and the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The programme selects a limited group of ten students, originating from all over the world. The teaching team is diverse, qualified and actually involved in practice-based research. The pedagogical strategy is in line with the concept of the programme. The main didactic principles in the programme are peer learning, workshops organised in a succeeding manner into the four semesters and individual tutoring or mentoring, supported by guest lectures. In the view of the committee, the first semester is crucial for the foundation of the student-researcher community and it thinks that a stronger framework in that semester is beneficial to create an atmosphere necessary for valuable peer review within the group.

Findings

The 2-year full-time, English-spoken programme (120 EC) for no more than 10 international student-researchers is divided into four semesters each with its own focus. The four semesters together form the model for planning, designing, executing and communicating research projects conducted in and through cinema practice.

Semester 1: Subjectivity and positioning.
Semester 2: Method and methodology
Semester 3: Experience and experimentation
Semester 4: Conceptualization and communication.

Main principles in the programme are peer learning, workshops organised in a succeeding manner into the four semesters and individual tutoring or mentoring. The core of the programme is research.

Various educational instruments have been used over the last five years: workshops, lectures, artists in residence, individual tutoring and mentoring, external advice, peer learning and peer feedback, and individual work. All the teaching forms are designed to aid student-researchers in the process of revising and developing their respective practices in the frame of the research. Workshops serve as road signs in the curriculum structure. There are two types of workshops: those which correspond directly with a theme of

the semester and therefore initiate and sustain reflection on subjectivity, methodology, experimentation and conceptualization, and those that are meant to inspire, provoke or introduce researchers to interesting practices, methods, and approaches to artistic research. Workshops combine reflection and theory, exchange and practical assignments.

A tri-weekly lecture series supports the focus of the programme by presenting a wide variety of guest lecturers from various artistic and academic fields who are willing to share their knowledge and experience with the students.

Incoming students

The programme selects a limited number of 10 candidates per year. Applicants need to convince the selection committee that they have the desire, abilities and mentality to successfully follow the programme and unfold their research trajectories.

In order to be considered for an interview, potential candidates need to:

- Motivate their wish to enrol in the programme.
- Describe what it is they would like to research and how.

- Indicate what kind of project they could develop to experimentally test their research question.
- Write an artist statement.
- Discuss recent examples of different art and media forms that they found interesting.
- Submit a portfolio.

The student-researcher groups are very diverse. Student-researchers come from all over Europe, Asia, America and the Middle East.

Staff

The policy of the programme is to only recruit teachers who are actively involved in the practice-based research. The programme expects the workshop facilitators, team members and teachers to have hands-on experience in designing and executing practice-based research projects, so they understand the dynamics of the process that the student-researchers are following.

The staff is also divers, with different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds. Over the years a community has formed around the programme with the staff, mentors (including former ones), teachers, the external advisors of the studentresearchers, the external examiners, the artists in residence, the research fellows and collaborators and the alumni of the programme. All the regular teachers have ample teaching and coaching experience. Many of them have also research expertise. Most staff involved is hired on temporary basis. Some have a permanent contract with the Film Academy. The head of the programme is employed full time and so is one member of the support staff. Furthermore, three mentors are employed for two days a week and a support staff member three days a week. The programme will replace the mentors with (new) core teachers, who will combine teaching and programming of the semesters with individual guidance of the researchers. The programme is planning to provide these core teachers with research time in order to keep up their own research. The Amsterdam University of the Arts offers teachers professional development workshops and refresher courses, which some of the

programme's staff and teachers have attended. The programme itself plans to develop its own research-oriented training for the staff.

Infrastructure

The programme makes use of the general facilities of the Netherlands Film Academy. The academy's building, houses two large film studios (each covering 250 m2), a large rehearsal studio (150 m2) and four smaller studios (each covering 60 m2). One of the major studios is equipped for use as a professional green screen studio. On the second floor is a 100-seat film theatre equipped to project also the latest formats. The Film Academy building is particularly designed for the academy and contains all the equipment and support needed for film production. Facilities like computers, a green screen studio, VR-facilities, wifi, SER rooms and editing sets are available. The academy has a huge collection of books and films, also online available. The master programme has its own area on the third floor, with two offices, two classrooms, two small rooms in which mentor sessions can take place, and a working room with two editing stations.

Considerations

The committee considers the programme to be strongly profiled based on a specific outspoken mission, resulting in a characteristic identity. The committee is impressed by the ambition of the programme, in particular by the way staff and management showed to be able to act responsively to comments of the students. The committee much appreciates the openness in which the management and the staff, as well as the students, spoke about the situation that developed in the last academic year with the departure of one of the core teachers. It was obvious that the management was aware of the problems this departure caused for the student group. The mentioned students commented in the interviews that they missed structure and content and felt rather lost and left to themselves. The programme management developed in reaction to these comments a structured programme with a clear schedule and fixed contact mo-



ments. Furthermore, the programme management informed the committee that it considers to provide the (new) core teachers with research time in line with the pedagogic vision and to strengthen the peer group learning. That way the feedback and guidance of the mentors will more directly support the work and the development of the student-researchers. The committee very much appreciates this strategy. It feels that the evolution of the curriculum, structure and teacher-student relations as outlined in the critical review provides a firm basis for the future development of the programme and should solve the problems reported by the students in the interviews. During the interviews the management also discussed the title of the function of these mentors with the committee. The committee advises to introduce the title coach.

The committee finds the structure of the curriculum in line with the ambition and the objectives of the programme. The pedagogical strategy is highly reflexive. The committee appreciates the serious attempt to arch the pedagogical strategy to the concept of the programme. The first semester is in the view of the committee crucial for the foundation of the student-researcher community and it thinks that a stronger framework in that semester is needed to create an atmosphere necessary for valuable peer review within the group.

The committee finds the hiring strategy and the quality of the staff appropriate for the programme. It could however be a challenge to have a consolidated teaching team, in particular when the staff is hired on a freelance basis. The committee advises the management to see to it that the team is stimulated to create time for and act as a team. The introduction of research groups could add to continuity and sustainability. Furthermore, the committee advises to remain aware that the programme should not be dependent on a single teacher.

The programme Master of Film is offered in English. The committee finds this language appropriate for the applicants the programme is aiming at and in line with the international character of the field. English proficiency is one of the criteria used in the selection procedure for students and one of the criteria used for staff recruitment. During the site visit, the committee experienced that the language proficiency of both students and staff is sufficient to good. Furthermore, the staff is offered ample opportunities to improve their English when necessary. The AHK offers English language training.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee establishes that the programme meets this standard.

3. Student assessment

The committee has established that the programme has an adequate assessment system and a very strong assessment procedure for the four exams scheduled in the programme. The committee appreciates the effort and time put into the exams and the assessment of the students, which makes this process very helpful for the students. The committee encourages the programme to experiment with collective self-assessment in the peer group, including the teachers. The committee has established that the examination board performs its legal tasks in an adequate way.

Findings

The Film academy has developed an assessment policy for the master programme in 2014. This policy has been improved in the years following 2014 but the outline and main issues are still the foundation for assessment in 2020.

The selection process is the first step of the assessment, this process is described under 2. In fact, it is also a first pedagogical moment in the programme, because it requires applicants to imagine how their respective artistic practices could be framed in the context of research.

There's a continuous thread of checkpoints or moments of assessment throughout the programme. It starts with the selection procedure, continues through the intermittent exams and soft check-ups with the group, teachers, or external advisors, and ends with the final exam and the Artistic Research Week (graduation show). The programme distinguishes between formative and summative modes of assessments. The former are geared towards generating feedback on student-researchers' progress, the latter are the moments of a formal evaluation and can be associated with exams.

Each semester in the programme is finalised with an exam. The exams are constructively aligned, meaning that each one of the 4 exams builds upon the previous and are in line with the intended learning outcomes of the semester.

All four exams have a similar setup. First, student-researchers submit the materials that correspond with the requirements and themes of the semesters, including the critical review (executed in any medium or format chosen by the examinee), in which they provide the exam committee with their subjective point-of-view and a critical reflection on their process. At the exam itself, the student gives a semi-public (open to other students and staff members) oral and/or audio-visual presentation that is meant to supplement the submitted materials. The presentation is later followed by the Q&A, which is no longer open to other participants. The Q&A is used to ask any remaining questions and clarify the doubts. The exam concludes with the head of the programme presenting the result to the individual researchers after the committee has seen all the examinees and discussed their performance. Within approximately two weeks after the exam, each student-researcher receives a detailed write-up on his/her own performance including observations of all the committee members and an overall report. All exams have their own assessment forms. All exams are assessed by a committee of two or (for the final exam) three external examiners. These examiners are people from the field and have to be appointed by the Examination Board. For each exam (and, if needed, for every student) a balanced team of examiners is composed out of the (growing) pool of examiners. The examiners report that they have ample time to study the material and to really understand the student and the project. Students tell during the site visit that they are satisfied with the exams and the assessment process. They find the examiners capable and feel that they get very serious and



thorough feedback on their work. Some students, however, reported that it was, until shortly before the exam, not clear to them what the requirements are.

Until July 2019 the programme had its own examination board, which would oversee the exam process, judge its transparency and relevance, or, if necessary, make suggestions for improvements. Over the years, the board also organized interviews with student-researchers and took samples of actual exam procedures to determine the quality of the assessments. From the academic year 2019/20, the role of the master's examination board was taken over by the general examination board of the Film Academy. The committee had an interview with members of the examination board during the site visit.

Considerations

The committee considers the exams and the way the students are assessed very strong aspects of the programme. It has a very clear assessment structure that is tuned to what the programme is aiming to do. The committee appreciates the effort and time put into the exams and the assessment of the students, which makes this process very helpful for the students. The committee advises to communicate the conditions and requirements for exams early in the process.

The committee encourages the programme to experiment with collective self-assessment in the peer group, including the teachers. The implementation of research time for the (new) core teachers could be a momentum for the introduction of this experiment.

The committee has established that the examination board performs its legal tasks in an adequate way.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee establishes that the programme meets this standard.

4. Achieved learning outcomes

The committee established that the programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are realised. The committee studied 15 research projects and concluded that the graduates have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The committee found the wide variety of end products delivered by the students positive. The committee recommends to include presentations to a general audience in the graduation requirements and procedure.

Findings

The committee had access to 53 research projects through a website provided by the Film academy. The information available gives insight in the process as well as the production of the graduated students-researchers. The committee also had access to the assessment forms used by the assessment of the final exam. The programme is explicitly not focused on production. Students can choose to make a film production, but that is not required. The format in which the students present their research process and results is free. The assessment procedure is thorough and intensive as indicated under standard 3

Current researchers and alumni are frequently invited and selected for the festivals, as evidenced by information provided to the committee. Furthermore, they receive awards, grants, scholarships and invitations to residencies all across the globe. In recent years a significant number of former student-researchers continued their trajectories as PhD candidates, filmmakers, artists, curators, advisors and teachers.

Considerations

The committee studied 15 research projects thoroughly and all of the presented projects roughly and established that the works show that the graduates have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The level of the projects is variable, some of them are very good to excel-

lent and some are satisfactory, but all works meet the level required for a master programme.

The committee found the wide variety of end products delivered by the students positive. This variety is a proof of the high standard the programme achieves. Furthermore, the track record of the programme is high, graduates win a lot of prizes.

The committee appreciates the assessment procedure for the final exam, which is obviously tuned to the particular task the student is supposed to address.

The committee noticed that the master programme and the results of the research projects are not really, actively disclosed to the general public, apart from an open to public artistic research week. These results could have greater visibility within the relevant professional industries, expanded through further networking with industry and institutional partners. The committee recommends to include presentations to a general audience in the graduation requirements and procedure.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee establishes that the programme meets this standard.



Attachments

Attachment 1 Assessment committee

drs R.R. (Raoul) Aalst, van, Voorzitter

Raoul van Aalst is onderzoeker en adviseur op het grensvlak van organisatiekunde en filosofie. Tot 2020 was hij programma-manager op het gebied van HRM

PhD MA K. (Kuba) Mikurda

Kuba Mirkuda is a film scholar and filmmaker; he is Head of the Institute of Arts Studies, Film School in Łódź

S. (Simone) Broek van den

Simone van den Broek is a producer of films and documentaries

Prof. PhD M. (Mick) Wilson

Professor in Contemporary Art, University of Gothenburg, Sweden Visiting professor at the Faculty Center for Curatorial Studies Bard, New York, USA, as well as at the Faculty New York School of Visual Arts, MFA Curatorial Practice

S. (Salvador) Miranda. Studentlid

Salvador Miranda (b. 1987) is a Mexican-Canadian artist and filmmaker based in Rotterdam. His research explores grand narratives and the images of our visual culture that (re)produce them. In September 2019 he graduated (cum laude) at M Fine Arts at the Piet Zwart Institute.

The panel was supported by Barbara van Balen PhD, registered secretary



Attachment 2 Program of the assessment

Programme online site visit accreditation Master of Film - 11 and 12 November 2020

Day 1	Wednesday 11 November
11:45 – 13:15	Preparation, panel only
13:15 – 13:30	Break
13:30 – 14:00	Presentation Management Team
14:00 – 15:00	Management Team
15:00 – 15:15	Break
15:15 – 16:15	Mixed group talk on Relevance 1(focus on study programme)
	Combination of representatives from the field, alumni, teachers/mentors
16:15 – 16:30	Break
16:30 – 17:30	Students representatives Graduation Groups 2021, 2020 and 2019
17:30 – 18:00	Preparations for day 2, panel only
Day 2	Thursday 12 November
9:30 – 10:15	Exam Board, Academy Council. Exam Board members, external examiner, member Academy Council
10:15 – 10:30	Break
10:30 – 10:45	Introduction to the topic of pedagogy
10:45 – 11:45	Mixed group talk on Pedagogy 1(more conceptual). Professionals in the field of education (MA staff and colleague institutes)
11:45 – 12:00	Break
12:00 – 13:00	Mixed group talk on Pedagogy 2 (more about lived experience). Teachers and alumni
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 15:00	Mixed group talk on Relevance 2 (focus on broader relevance). Combination of representatives from the field, alumni, teachers/mentors
15:00 – 16:45	Deliberation, panel only
16:45 – 17:15	Concluding the site visit – first feedback by the panel

Attachment 3 Documents

- Critical Review with annexes and a student chapter, all presented as a website
- Assessment Policy Master of Film. September 2020
- Teaching and Examination Regulations Master of Film
- Overview of teaching staff
- Graduation Projects of 53 students