

**RESEARCH MASTER'S PROGRAMME  
RESEARCH IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
AND ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCE**

**UTRECHT UNIVERSITY**

**TILBURG UNIVERSITY**

**ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM**

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# CONTENTS

<b>REPORT ON THE RESEARCH MASTER'S PROGRAMME RESEARCH IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCE OF UTRECHT UNIVERSITY, TILBURG UNIVERSITY AND ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM .....</b>	<b>5</b>
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMMES.....	5
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTIONS .....	6
COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL .....	6
WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL .....	6
SUMMARY JUDGEMENT.....	11
DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE JOINT NVAO-EAPAA ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK.....	13
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>27</b>
APPENDIX 1: CURRICULA VITAE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL .....	29
APPENDIX 2: DOMAIN-SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE .....	31
APPENDIX 3: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES .....	36
APPENDIX 4: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM .....	38
APPENDIX 5: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT .....	39
APPENDIX 6: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL .....	40

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# REPORT ON THE RESEARCH MASTER'S PROGRAMME RESEARCH IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCE OF UTRECHT UNIVERSITY, TILBURG UNIVERSITY AND ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM

This report takes the joint NVAO-EAPAA Accreditation Framework 2016 as a starting point. Within the standards of this framework, the panel has also looked at the requirements set by the NVAO Guidelines for the assessment of research master's programmes (April 2015).

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMMES

### **Research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science**

Name of the programme:	Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science
CROHO number:	60391
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specializations or tracks:	-
Location(s):	Utrecht
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Expiration of accreditation:	01/01/2019

### **Research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science**

Name of the programme:	Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science
CROHO number:	60391
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specializations or tracks:	-
Location(s):	Tilburg
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Expiration of accreditation:	01/01/2019

### **Research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science**

Name of the programme:	Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science
CROHO number:	60391
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specializations or tracks:	-
Location(s):	Rotterdam
Mode(s) of study:	full time

Language of instruction: English  
Expiration of accreditation: 01/01/2019

The three programmes were visited by the assessment panel Public Administration at the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance of Utrecht University, which took place on 11-13 December 2017.

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTIONS

Name of the institution: Utrecht University  
Status of the institution: publicly funded institution  
Result institutional quality assurance assessment: positive

Name of the institution: Tilburg University  
Status of the institution: publicly funded institution  
Result institutional quality assurance assessment: positive

Name of the institution: Erasmus University Rotterdam  
Status of the institution: publicly funded institution  
Result institutional quality assurance assessment: positive

## COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The NVAO has approved the composition of the panel on 16 October 2017. The panel that assessed the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science consisted of:

- Prof. dr. T. (Tony) Bovaird, professor emeritus of Public Management and Policy at the University of Birmingham (United Kingdom) [chair];
- Prof. P.B. (Peter) Sloep, professor emeritus in technology enhanced learning with the Open University of the Netherlands;
- Prof. E. (Esther) Versluis, professor of European Regulatory Governance at Maastricht University;
- Drs. H. (Henk) de Jong, Strategy Director at the Dutch National Police;
- Prof. J. J. A. (Jacques) Thomassen, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Twente and a member of the Netherlands Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW);
- J.C. (Jasper) Meijering, master's student Engineering and Policy Analysis at Delft University of Technology [student member].

The panel was supported by Mark Delmartino MA, who acted as secretary.  
Appendix 1 contains the curricula vitae of the panel members.

## WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The assessment of the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science is part of a cluster assessment. From October to December 2017, a panel assessed seven bachelor's programmes and seventeen master's programmes in Public Administration at eight universities.

The panel consists of seventeen members:

- Prof. T. (Tony) Bovaird, professor emeritus of Public Management and Policy at the University of Birmingham (United Kingdom) [chair];
- Prof. A. (Adrian) Ritz, professor for Public Management at the University of Bern (Switzerland) [vice-chair];

- Prof. M. (Marleen) Brans, professor at the Public Governance Institute of the KU Leuven (Belgium) [vice-chair];
- Prof. H.M.C. (Harrie) Eijkelhof, professor emeritus of Physics Education at Utrecht University;
- Prof. P.B. Peter Sloep, professor emeritus in Technology-Enhanced Learning, in particular Learning in Social at the Open Universiteit Nederland;
- Prof. T. (Tiina) Randma-Liiv, professor of Public Management and Policy and vice-dean for Research at Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia);
- Prof. L. (Lan) Xue, professor and dean of the School of Public Policy and Management, Tsinghua University (China);
- Prof. E. (Esther) Versluis, professor of European Regulatory Governance at Maastricht University.
- Prof. W. (William) Webster, professor of Public Policy and Management at the Stirling Management School, University of Stirling (UK);
- Prof. J.J.A. (Jacques) Thomassen, emeritus professor of Political Science at the University of Twente;
- Prof J. E. (Jenneke) Bosch-Boesjes, emeritus professor of Development and Differentiation in Academic Education at the University of Groningen;
- Drs. B. (Bertine) Steenbergen, interim director at the Ministry of Security and Justice.
- Prof. J.P. (Jan) Pronk, professor emeritus in Theory and Practice of International Development at the International Institute of Social Studies and former Minister for Development Co-operation and Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Housing;
- Drs. C. (Cees) Vermeer, town clerk of the city of Breda;
- Drs. H. (Henk) de Jong, director of Strategy and Policy of the Dutch National Police;
- J.C. (Jasper) Meijering BSc, master's student Engineering and Policy Analysis at Delft University of Technology [student member];
- S. (Sophie) van Wijngaarden BSc, master's student Systems Engineering, Policy Analysis & Management at the Delft University of Technology [student member].

A panel of six to eight members was appointed for each visited, based on the expertise and availability of each panel member, and taking into account possible conflicts of interest.

Peter Hildering MSc of QANU was project coordinator of the cluster assessment Public Administration. He was secretary during the visits to the University of Twente, Radboud University, Erasmus University Rotterdam and Leiden University. He also attended the final panel consultations of every visit and read and commented on draft versions of each report in order to monitor the consistency of the assessments and the resulting reports. Mark Delmartino MA, freelance worker of QANU, was secretary of the panel during the visits to Tilburg University, Maastricht University, Utrecht University, and VU University Amsterdam. Dr. Joke Corporaal, freelance worker of QANU, was second secretary during the visits to the Erasmus University Rotterdam and Leiden University.

#### *Joint NVAO-EAPAA assessment*

The panel assessment was aimed at (re-)accreditation by both NVAO and EAPAA. In order to increase efficiency and reduce administrative burden, both accreditation processes were combined. NVAO and EAPAA agreed on a joint process and framework on 12 September 2016. This report is based on the joint NVAO-EAPAA framework and is aimed at double accreditation for all programmes involved.

#### *Joint assessment of the three programmes*

In the process leading up to the site visit, representatives of the three programmes at Utrecht University, Tilburg University and Erasmus University Rotterdam requested NVAO to be assessed as if they were a single programme based in Utrecht, considering that this best reflects the context in which the programmes are offered. On 25 September 2017, the NVAO agreed with this procedure with the following requirements:

- The three universities each request accreditation for their programme based on the same report (this report);
- The report should clearly indicate that the education is offered by each of the three universities and other partners;



- The assessment (and the report) show clearly which research programmes are associated with the research master's at all associated universities;
- The report clearly shows that all three universities have realized learning outcomes, even though they are formally registered in Utrecht only;
- The selection of these represents all associated universities.

The programmes and panel took care to guarantee that these requirements were met during the site visit and in the report.

#### *Preparation*

Before the assessment panel's site visit to Utrecht University, the project coordinator received the self-evaluation reports that the programmes wrote based on the joint NVAO-EAPAA framework. He sent it to the panel after checking it for completeness of information. Upon reading the self-evaluation reports, the panel members formulated their preliminary findings. The panel also studied a selection of fifteen theses and the accompanying assessment forms for each programme. This selection was made by the panel's chair, in cooperation with the secretary, from a list of graduates from the past three years. The chair and secretary took care that all tracks and specializations within the programmes were covered, and made sure that the distribution of grades in the theses selection matched the distribution of grades over all theses.

The panel chair, secretary and programme jointly composed a schedule for the site visit. Prior to the site visit, the programme selected representative partners for the various interviews. Interviews were planned with students, teaching staff, management, alumni and professional field, the programme committee and the board of examiners. See appendix 5 for the definitive schedule.

#### *Site visit*

The site visit to Utrecht University on 11-13 December 2017 was followed by a visit to VU University that took place on 14 and 15 December 2017. At the start of the week, the panel held a preparatory meeting during which it was instructed regarding the assessment framework and procedures. After this, the panel discussed its working method and its preliminary findings for the Utrecht site visit, and reflected on the content and use of the programme's domain-specific framework of reference (appendix 2).

During the site visit, the panel conducted interviews with representatives of the programmes, and examined materials provided by the programmes. An overview of these materials is given in appendix 6. The panel provided students and staff with the opportunity to speak informally with the panel outside the set interviews. No use was made of this opportunity.

The panel used the final part of the visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards the panel chair gave an oral presentation, in which he expressed the panel's preliminary impressions and general observations. The visit was concluded with a development conversation, in which the panel and the programmes discussed various development routes for the programmes. The result of this conversation is summarized in a separate report.

#### *Report*

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report based on the assessment panel's findings. Subsequently, he sent it to the assessment panel for feedback. After processing the panel members' feedback, the coordinator sent the draft report to the university in order to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel's chair and adapted the report accordingly before its finalisation.

#### *Decision rules*

The panel used the definitions from the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments to assess the six standards in the joint NVAO-EAPAA framework. To determine the score for the programme as a whole, the decision rules of the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments were applied to the scores for Standard 1 to 4.



**Generic quality**

The quality that can reasonably be expected in an international perspective from a higher education bachelor's or master's programme.

**Unsatisfactory**

The programme does not meet the current generic quality standards and shows serious shortcomings in several areas.

**Satisfactory**

The programme meets the current generic quality standards and shows an acceptable level across its entire spectrum.

**Good**

The programme systematically surpasses the current generic quality standards.

**Excellent**

The programme systematically well surpasses the current generic quality standards and is regarded as an international example.



## SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

This evaluation concerns the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science, a two-year full time programme of 120 EC that is offered jointly by Utrecht University, Erasmus University Rotterdam and Tilburg University, with Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Radboud University Nijmegen and Twente University as associate partners. Utrecht University bears full responsibility for the quality assurance of the programme, while accreditation is granted to the universities of Utrecht, Rotterdam and Tilburg.

The intended learning outcomes of the research master's programme are adequate in terms of content (public administration / organization science), orientation (academic) and level (master's). According to the panel, these outcomes are in line with the requirements of the domain-specific reference framework and constitute a strong and precise translation of what the programme stands for.

The panel considers that the teaching and learning environment of the programme is good, in the sense that its components systematically exceed the basic quality requirements: the programme is consistent and attractive in its combination of compulsory and specialisation courses; the small-scale, interactive, intensive and motivating approach to teaching fits very well with the educational philosophy of this programme; the selection and intake are organised meticulously; the staff are highly qualified and provide students access to their excellent research programmes. According to the panel, the central and local programme coordinators demonstrate that an innovative and complex structure is not an obstacle to offer students an interesting and valuable academic research experience. If anything, the panel wonders why there are so few (international) applicants for this good quality programme.

The research master's programme has an adequate assessment system. Individual tests are valid, reliable and transparent, and students get feedback on assessments. Moreover, the panel thinks highly of the expertise and operational capacity of the Board of Examiners and the Testing Committee. The panel appreciates the quality of the feedback in the thesis evaluation form. However, the independent character of the assessment procedure by the two assessors could be reflected more explicitly in the evaluation form.

The panel considers that the intended learning outcomes of the research master's programme are achieved by the end of the curriculum. The theses are of good quality and reflect the research context of the programme. The panel welcomes the efforts to safeguard the reliability of the thesis assessment and encourages the programme to have students work towards a final research product in a publishable format. Upon graduation, students find a job that is in line with the objective of the programme: because of its attention to both academic and applied research, the programme provides a good basis for each graduate to seek a research-oriented career to his/her liking.

The internal quality assurance of the programme is catered for adequately, both formally and informally. The panel appreciates the role of the local coordinators in collecting quality signals and the ways in which students can – and do – voice their opinion on the quality of the courses and the curriculum. Nonetheless, the programme could establish a work-field advisory committee that also includes (potential) employers from consultancy companies, authorities and think tanks.

The panel considers that diversity is on the radar of the programme, the department and the partner institutions. It welcomes the initiatives taken so far and encourages all responsible bodies to step up their efforts in recruiting a more diverse student body that is taught by a more diverse faculty. The panel acknowledges, moreover, that course contents should be more inclusive with regard to non-European issues.

In sum, the panel issues a positive conclusion on the quality of the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science. The programme is up to standard on



all accounts, with its teaching and learning environment systematically exceeding basic quality. Moreover, the panel considers that the programme fulfils the specific accreditation requirements set for research master's programmes.

The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment framework for limited programme assessments* in the following way:

*Research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science (Utrecht University)*

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	satisfactory
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	good
Standard 3: Student assessment	satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	satisfactory
Standard 5: External input	satisfactory
Standard 6: Diversity	satisfactory
General conclusion	satisfactory

*Research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science (Tilburg University)*

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	satisfactory
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	good
Standard 3: Student assessment	satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	satisfactory
Standard 5: External input	satisfactory
Standard 6: Diversity	satisfactory
General conclusion	satisfactory

*Research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science (Erasmus University Rotterdam)*

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	satisfactory
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	good
Standard 3: Student assessment	satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	satisfactory
Standard 5: External input	satisfactory
Standard 6: Diversity	satisfactory
General conclusion	satisfactory

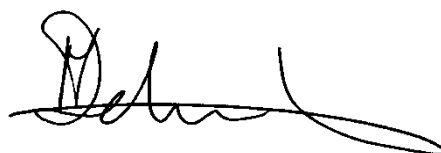
The chair and the secretary of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 09-04-2018



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Prof. dr. Tony Bovaird



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Mark Delmartino, MA

# DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE JOINT NVAO-EAPAA ACCREDITATION FRAMEWORK

## Organisational context

The research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science (further: Research Master's PAOS) is offered jointly by Utrecht University, Erasmus University Rotterdam and Tilburg University; Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Radboud University Nijmegen and the University of Twente are associate partners. Utrecht University bears full responsibility for the quality assurance of the research master's programme, as well as the administrative tasks including student registration.

Accreditation is granted to the universities of Utrecht, Rotterdam and Tilburg, the three original partners in this research master's since the early 2000's. In the period 2014-2016, the three other partners joined the programme as partners. Formally, students enrol at Utrecht University and receive their diploma from this university as well. The cooperation means that education is provided by lecturers from the six institutions involved in the programme and that the content and structure of the curriculum are coordinated in consultation with all partners.

In addition to the main self-evaluation report prepared by Utrecht University, the partners from Rotterdam and Tilburg produced their own appendices describing their contributions regarding student admission, faculty qualification, research context and curriculum development. The panel has studied all documents and met during the site visit with representatives from all partner institutions. This report covers the assessment of the overall research master's programme as offered by all six institutions together. In the remainder of the report, the three programmes will be treated as if they form a single programme with its main base in Utrecht.

### Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes of the programme have been detailed with regard to content, level and orientation; they meet international requirements. As for level and orientation (bachelor's or master's; professional or academic), the intended learning outcomes fit into the Dutch qualifications framework. In addition, they tie in with the international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations. The programme should clearly state its educational philosophy in reaching these outcomes and identify a clear mission.

NVAO Guidelines RM: the programme substantiates its research-oriented nature in the intended learning outcomes, taking account of how graduates make their way in the professions and in society at large.

## Findings

To assess the programme objectives, the panel studied the domain-specific reference framework (Appendix 2) and the intended learning outcomes (Appendix 3) of the research master's programme.

The key objective of the research master's programme is to educate motivated people who are able to use their academic knowledge in the field of public administration and organisation to make a useful contribution to the solution of public issues. This objective is elaborated in three learning pathways: substance of public administration and organisation of public issues; academic research into public administration and organisation of public issues; and applied research into public administration and organisation of public issues. The panel observed that these learning pathways are on the one hand similar to the organisation of intended learning outcomes in other degree programmes offered by the Utrecht University School of Governance (USG), while on the other hand this research master's programme stands apart from other programmes through its strong research



focus. The learning pathways form a common thread throughout both the compulsory and elective parts of the curriculum. The panel agrees with the programme's statement that these three learning pathways provide a strong foundation for doctoral programmes, as well as for positions in which applied research constitutes an important share of the duties.

Research master's students are trained towards achieving 14 learning outcomes, which are connected to the respective learning pathways and have been formulated in an insightful way. The panel welcomes in particular the specific attention in learning outcome S4 to ethical aspects of fundamental and applied research; moreover, the panel acknowledges the attention of the programme in several learning outcomes to acquisition, communication and dissemination of research. The competencies are aligned with the PAGO domain-specific reference framework. The panel learned during the visit that the learning outcomes have been updated recently to reflect the development of the programme structure and to ensure a direct link with the PAGO framework and the EAPAA guidelines.

This new set-up of the programme objective with learning pathways and (intended) learning outcomes emphasises five characteristics of the research master's programme: the breadth of the field of study, the connection between research and education, the value of both academic and applied research, the methodological multiformity of the field of study, and the cooperation between lecturers and students within a master-apprenticeship relationship. The panel observed that these features are again a mixture of what USG stands for (breadth, research-education, methodology) and what sets this inter-institutional research master's programme apart: the value of both academic and applied research and the master-apprenticeship relation.

### **Considerations**

The panel considers that the intended learning outcomes of the research master's programme are adequate in terms of content (public administration / organization science), orientation (academic) and level (master's). In the view of the panel, these outcomes are in line with the requirements of the domain-specific reference framework and constitute a strong and precise translation of what the programme stands for, both in terms of key objective and specific characteristics.

The panel considers that the research oriented nature of the programme is very much present in the objective and set-up of the programme. Although Utrecht University is clearly in the lead in this programme, the panel has met with a strong team of coordinators from all partners who confirmed their commitment to what they call a 'national' research master's programme featuring the respective research strengths of the individual partners.

### **Conclusion**

The panel assesses Standard 1, intended learning outcomes, of the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science as 'satisfactory'.

#### **Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment**

The curriculum, staff and programme-specific services and facilities enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The contents and structure of the curriculum enable the students admitted to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The quality of the staff and of the programme-specific services and facilities is essential to that end. Curriculum, staff, services and facilities constitute a coherent teaching-learning environment for the students.

### **Findings**

To assess the content and structure of the programme, the panel studied the curriculum (Appendix 4) and the content of several core courses (Appendix 6) of the research master's programme.

## **2.1 Core components**

*The core curriculum provides a thorough teaching of the basic concepts, theories, methods and history (classics) of Public Administration on the level of the programme (bachelor's or master's).*

*NVAO Guidelines RM: the programme has a substantial proportion of curriculum components specific to the research master's. If research master's students follow subjects in regular master's programmes, additional requirements have to be met. The curriculum devotes attention to academic and scientific methodologies generally accepted in the discipline, and the ethics of conducting research.*

The research master's programme is a two-year full-time programme that amounts to 120 EC. The curriculum consists first and foremost of three types of compulsory courses, all of which are specific to the research master's:

- three substantive courses cover the most current literature and the classics within the field of PAOS: governance and policy, organisations and professionals, and public organisations in a rapidly changing society;
- methodology courses pay attention to 'pure' and 'applied' research contexts and to both 'low-control' and 'high-control' research; throughout the curriculum, students are trained in qualitative and quantitative analytic techniques;
- the conducting research stream consists of a small applied research project and the final research master's thesis.

The panel observed that the structure of the curriculum is coherent and that the intended learning outcomes are translated adequately in the different courses of the programme. Studying the document linking the programme outcomes to the course objectives, the panel gathered that each programme outcome is addressed several times throughout the curriculum. Furthermore, the panel established that research master's students are taught all disciplinary and methodological components one may expect from a Public Administration programme, and that these core components of the curriculum are taught exclusively to research master's students. The courses 'philosophy of sciences' and 'designing research in social sciences' pay explicit attention to ethical dimensions of conducting research.

Furthermore, the panel understood from the discussions that the programme coordinators play an important role in safeguarding the consistency of the course contents, in ensuring that all students acquire at least the minimum standards in all research methods, and in setting the scene for students to select a thesis topic in time.

## **2.2 Other components and specialisations**

*The programme clearly defines its objectives for additional work and the rationale for the objectives, and explains how the curriculum is designed to achieve these objectives. The statement of objectives includes any programme specialisation or concentration and the main categories of students to be served (e.g. full-time, part-time).*

*NVAO Guidelines RM: students have the opportunity to incorporate specific individual components into their curriculum without compromising their nominal study progress, in order to deepen or broaden their research or research capacities.*

Students can specialise in the research master's programme through four components:

- the tutorial (6 EC) offers students the opportunity to explore a single topic in depth within an intensive setting in order to deepen their knowledge and research capacities;
- the electives (12 EC) allow students to take methodology or substantive courses to prepare for the thesis process as they see fit;
- in the internship (3 or 6 EC) students reinforce their profile as applied researchers;
- for their thesis, students are free to select a topic within the field of PAOS to broaden their knowledge.



The panel observed that students have quite some freedom in selecting their specialisations. In many cases this free space is used to broaden or deepen their knowledge and research capacities in order to prepare for the research master's thesis. Several students are using the electives to gain international experience. Students indicated that they are particularly satisfied with this 'freedom of choice': it is possible to study a wide range of subjects and perspectives and to develop their competencies in various different directions. This choice is facilitated and enhanced by having several universities on the programme who put at disposition lecturers with different backgrounds. According to the students, the programme most certainly lives up to its promise of emphasising "the variety of science-philosophical approaches and methodological pluralism".

The panel observed that the specialisation part of the curriculum is a relevant complement to the core part. The two components are mutually reinforcing each other and allow students to eventually produce a research master's thesis on a wide variety of topics. Given that the international dimension of the programme is not very much developed in the core part, the panel thinks that the specialisation part provides students with some opportunity for a summer school or a study period abroad.

### **2.3 Multi-disciplinarity**

*The courses taken to fulfil the core curriculum components provide research methods, concepts and theories from the disciplines of economics, law, political science, sociology, public finances, informatisation, and public management as well as the relationship between these fields.*

The panel observed that the research master's programme pays particular attention to knowing and learning how to use a variety of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. This is expressed first and foremost in the three substantive courses, which address a broad spectrum of theories from the disciplines of public administration, political science, sociology and organisation science. Moreover, the methodology components address insights from research within a series of social-scientific disciplines.

Furthermore, the panel learned that the tutorial, the elective courses and the thesis allow students to work in an interdisciplinary way applying insights from other disciplines and linking these to public administration and organisation science.

### **2.4 Length**

*The programmed curriculum length is in line with the objectives of the programme and in accordance with the accreditation category that is applied for.*

The panel confirms, based on the information materials and the discussion on site, that the research master's programme is a two-year full-time programme of 120 EC, which is the required length for research master's programmes in the Netherlands.

### **2.5 Relationship to practice and internships**

*The programme provides adequate training of practical skills in correspondence with the mission and the programme objectives. Therefore it has adequate links to the public administration profession.*

Throughout the programme, research master's students are exposed to two types of research skills: academic research gets specific attention in the tutorial and in the thesis process, and often results in students and lecturers writing joint grant applications or scientific articles; applied research is emphasised in the applied research track at the end of year one, when students conduct research for a client from the public sector. Moreover, students wishing to pursue more applied research can perform an internship with a research-oriented organisation or company.

The panel also learned from the discussions that several courses welcome guest speakers or organise visits to think tanks, knowledge institutions or consultancy firms. In the view of the panel, students



have plenty of opportunities throughout the curriculum to find out whether their interest is with academic or applied research, and can try-out both options. In both cases, the programme provides a useful basis for professional life beyond the research master's programme.

### **2.6 Structure and didactics of the programme**

*The programme is coherent in its contents. The didactic concepts are in line with the aims and objectives of the programme. The teaching methods correspond to the didactic philosophy of the programme. The programme is 'doable' in the formal time foreseen for the programme in the respective years.*

*NVAO Guidelines RM: the curriculum is coherent across both years. It balances educational content and research skills and their inter-relationship in the entire curriculum. The size of the final project in relation to the structure of the curriculum is substantial.*

The panel observed that the educational philosophy of the research master's programme is based on small-scale, motivating and intensive teaching. There is a lot of direct interaction between students and lecturers, as many courses are offered to small groups of less than ten students. Community building plays an important role: lecturers and coordinators are approachable and many informal activities are held in order to reinforce this process. Most core courses are taught at USG in Utrecht, although students also follow some compulsory courses at partner universities and about half of the core courses are coordinated by lecturers from partner universities outside Utrecht. Moreover, first and second year students integrate during a study trip at the start of the academic year. All students and local coordinators meet twice per year.

Throughout the courses, students are challenged to achieve their fullest potential: those aspiring to academic careers are challenged to write and submit research proposals together with experienced researchers, while students with consultancy ambitions can participate in real-life consultancy projects. The panel gathered furthermore that a particularity of this programme is the master-apprentice relationship: students learn from lecturers by seeing and experiencing the lecturers working on their own applied and academic research; right from the start, they are placed in the role of researcher, gaining greater independence throughout the programme.

In their contribution to the self-evaluation report, students indicated that there is a good relationship between the first-year and second-year students. Moreover, the small-scale character of the programme entails that it is very easy to contact lecturers in an informal way, be it for personal feedback, career advice or the discussion of papers. All interviewees confirmed during the visit that the educational philosophy not only exists on paper, but is a reality within the research master's programme. The panel observed the enthusiasm of both students and staff for the highly interactive approach, which fuels their commitment to the programme. The facilities at USG moreover enhance this community feeling.

The panel also gathered from the materials and the discussions that coordinating such a multi-partner programme is not easy, but that the partners manage it particularly well. Both the two programme coordinators and the five local coordinators are aware of the complexity and very committed to providing students with a meaningful experience. The only potential problem mentioned by students was that scheduling tutorials and electives take place at the institution of the responsible lecturer and is sometimes challenging, although they also emphasised in this regard that the central and local programme coordinators go to some lengths to ensure that courses are scheduled in a feasible way. The panel concludes that the current structure, in which all partners contribute to a single teaching-learning environment based in Utrecht, is a fitting way to formalize the cooperation.

Students indicated that the programme is challenging, but feasible. The panel learned that the research master's programme set itself two targets: on average students should acquire 90% of the first year credits after twelve months and 80% of the students should finish the programme in the nominal time of two years. The first target is more or less met, while the programme is making good



progress towards achieving also the second target. The panel is impressed by the efforts of the programme to increase the educational feasibility, but also understands that students encounter delays due to the development of other study-related activities such as student-assistantships or even teaching jobs at universities of applied science.

### **2.7 Admission of students**

*Admission goals, admission policy and admission standards, including academic prerequisites, are in line with the mission and programme objectives. They are clearly and publicly stated, specifying any differences for categories of students.*

*NVAO Guidelines RM: the admission requirements enforced and the manner in which the programme selects prospective students reflects the research-oriented nature and high demands of the programme.*

The research master's programme is a selective and small-scale programme. The admission to the programme is set up in such a way that it ensures an optimal match between students and the programme. While the programme can accept up to 25 students per year, the number of students effectively enrolling is lower. According to the programme, clear communication about the degree programme and its requirements are a driver of student self-selection with only highly qualified students applying for admission. The panel observed in the material provided by the programme that on average 25 students per year express an interest in the programme, with 17 students eventually enrolling. Although the programme would be able to accommodate more students, the panel appreciates that the programme nevertheless does not wish to lower the selection criteria. If the programme wants to attract more high quality students, the panel recommends stepping up efforts to recruit international students, of which there are surprisingly few in the programme.

Candidates are selected based on criteria such as academic potential, demonstrable experience with and affinity for research in the field of PAOS, communication skills, motivation and interest in the field of study, and a command of the English language. The selection process consists of instruments such as the average examination marks in the bachelor's programme, a language test, a research proposal, a recommendation letter and an interview. The panel observed that the admission criteria are formulated clearly and adequately reflect the research-oriented nature and high demands of the programme. The different selection instruments are used to design the procedure in such a way that it reflects the core elements of the programme - research, PAOS, small-scale activating education - and facilitates the best match between student and programme.

### **2.8 Intake**

*The structure, contents and the didactics of the programme are in line with the qualifications of the students that enter into the programme.*

The admission procedure for the research master's programme is stringent. Those students who are admitted, have been selected on the likelihood that they can complete the programme successfully. Incoming students are somewhat heterogeneous in terms of their educational background, as about half of the students have no connection to the partner institutions, but studied elsewhere in the Netherlands or abroad.

The panel observed that the programme structure as well as the educational philosophy with its small-scale education, intensive teaching, community building and direct contacts with staff contribute to students levelling up quite quickly, if at all needed. Hence, the drop-out rate is low. Furthermore, the panel learned that the programme offers individual targeted support for students who need to make up for deficiencies, for instance on quantitative research skills.

## **2.9 Faculty qualifications**

*A substantial percentage of the professional faculty nucleus actively involved in the programme holds an earned doctorate or other equivalent terminal academic degree in their field. Any faculty lacking the terminal degree must have a record of sufficient professional or academic experience directly relevant to their assigned responsibilities. The field of expertise and experience of the faculty reflects the needed expertise to deliver the programme as intended. All faculty with teaching assignments have at least proven basic educational skills. The educational skills are adapted to the didactics of the programme and its components. Where practitioners teach courses, there is satisfactory evidence of the quality of their academic qualifications, professional experience and teaching ability.*

*NVAO Guidelines RM: the programme is provided in a context of research that has been rated, from both a national and an international perspective, as clearly above average (good or excellent), that has a distinct bearing on the contents of the programme, and that also trains PhD students and other junior researchers. In principle, this is referenced by the outcomes of external assessments, and if supplemented with information regarding the track records of the staff. Senior researchers and professors are closely involved in teaching and the supervision of graduation trajectories.*

The research master's programme is embedded in the research programmes of the six participating institutions:

- Utrecht University – Public Matters
- Tilburg University – The quest for credibility in politics and public administration
- Erasmus University Rotterdam: Lost Connections, Linking Capacities
- Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam: New Public Governance
- University of Twente: Innovation of Governance
- Radboud University Nijmegen: Institute for Management Research

These research programmes were assessed in the recent past by international review committees. The panel observed in the materials that all programmes received very good to excellent scores (between 4 and 5, with Tilburg scoring 2 on an inverse scale from 4 to 1) and that key researchers of these programmes are directly involved in the courses, tutorials and thesis supervision of the research master's.

Lecturers on the research master's programme have been selected for their specific substantive and / or methodological expertise. All staff are members of the Netherlands Institute of Government, a research school accredited by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. The panel observed in the CV's of the coordinators and the extensive staff overview that the programme offers a wealth of individual specialist disciplines and methodological expertise. All lecturers have a PhD while most also hold a university teaching qualification (UTQ). According to the overview, among the 18 staff allocated to the research master's, there are 8 full professors, 4 associate professors and 6 assistant professors. Moreover, the appendices provided by Tilburg University and Erasmus University Rotterdam indicated that also these institutions feature high quality research programmes and contribute good quality staff to the programme.

The panel thinks highly of the teaching staff, who have a good reputation both nationally and internationally. Students, moreover, indicated that they appreciate the quality of the lecturers, as well as their commitment and availability. They also experience the master-apprenticeship relationship as both effective and pleasant: students are encouraged to be a researcher and study 'on-the-job' with lecturers working on their own applied and academic research.

According to the overview in the report, the programme dedicates 1.2 FTE to education, which results in a staff-student ratio of 1:15 when counting a total student number of 18 per cohort. Based on the discussions on site, the panel gathers that there is sufficient staff to teach the programme.



## Considerations

The panel considers that the teaching and learning environment of the research master's programme is good, in the sense that its components systematically exceed the basic quality requirements: the programme is consistent and attractive in its combination of compulsory and specialisation courses; the small-scale, interactive, intensive and motivating approach to teaching fits very well with the educational philosophy of this programme; the selection and intake are organised meticulously; the staff are highly qualified and provide students access to their excellent research programmes. The panel furthermore observed that the programme fulfils all specific requirements for the teaching and learning environment of a research master's programme.

According to the panel, the central and local programme coordinators demonstrate that an innovative and complex structure is not an obstacle to offering students an interesting and valuable academic research experience. If anything, the panel wonders why there are so few (international) applicants for this good quality programme.

## Conclusion

The panel assesses Standard 2, teaching-learning environment, of the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science as 'good'.

### Standard 3: Assessment

The programme has an adequate assessment system in place. The tests and assessments are valid, reliable and transparent to the students. The programme's examining board safeguards the quality of the interim and final tests administered.

## Findings

To assess the quality, validity and transparency of assessment in the research master's programme, the panel considered the assessment policy, the assessment of the research master's theses and the functioning of the Board of Examiners.

Based on the description in the Self-Evaluation Report and the sample of tests consulted on site, the panel gathers that the assessment system adopted for this research master's programme is fine: the form of testing depends on the learning outcomes and the competencies to be tested; testing is an essential element of learning, and the measurement of student competencies is valid and reliable. The panel has come across a wide variety of assessment methods, also within one and the same course, and observed that these tests are as much as possible spread over the teaching period in order to ensure that students receive also feedback at an early stage. Moreover, in response to student evaluations, the programme has looked into the distribution of tests and their scheduling in courses that run parallel to each other. Students indicated to the panel that they are properly informed about the assessment requirements and confirmed that the programme goes to some lengths to ensure that tests are scheduled in a feasible way.

In recent years, the programme has invested in the development of tests that correspond to the learning objectives and that are varied in nature. In this regard, the panel studied a document in which courses and their assessment forms are linked to learning outcomes. According to this overview, three courses are assessed entirely on the criterion of the active participation of students. During the discussion, the panel learned that this type of assessment only concerns the introductory part of the respective workshops, which account for 2 EC. The panel agrees to this arrangement but suggests that the programme makes the division between introduction and core part more explicit in its materials.

As mentioned in the introduction, Utrecht University and in particular the USG department is responsible for the quality assurance of the research master's programme. The two coordinators of the programme monitor the quality of testing. Moreover, all courses and the quality of their tests are evaluated by students and discussed in the Board Academic School (BAS). Moreover, USG has one

Board of Examiners for all its degree programmes, as well as a Testing Committee that functions as a subcommittee of the Board of Examiners. Over the years the legal position and tasks of the Board of Examiners has changed significantly. Members have been trained by the university to perform their tasks adequately and there is regular cooperation between examination boards within the Faculty and across the university. From the discussion on site with representatives of both Board and Committee, the panel gathered that these members possess the proper capacity and expertise to perform all tasks according to the requirements set by Dutch law. The panel also learned that the Testing Committee has assessed the testing quality of the research master's courses in 2014 and again in 2017. Interviewees from Board and Committee confirmed to the panel that the tests are good and creative, with an adequate variation in marks.

With regard to the assessment of the research master's thesis, the programme has developed an extensive course programme to inform students and lecturers how the thesis process is arranged and how the thesis will be assessed. It explains the roles of the first and second assessor in thesis evaluation and contains the assessment form which has been in use since the end of 2013. In order to support supervisors and second readers, the Testing Committee created an overview of the minimum requirements the thesis should fulfil. The panel has reviewed a sample of 15 research master's theses, which were submitted and accepted in the academic years 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. The panel observed that each thesis is assessed using an evaluation form with relevant assessment criteria; in almost all cases, assessors had completed the evaluation form in an insightful way, justifying the final score in a transparent and sometimes comprehensive way. It was, however, not possible to determine on the basis of the evaluation form whether the two assessors had evaluated the thesis independently and how the final score (and the arguments underpinning this score) was established. The panel indicated during the sessions - and repeats its finding in this report - that the evaluation form should better reflect the independent character of the assessment by the two graders.

### **Considerations**

The panel considers that the research master's programme has an adequate assessment system, which is regularly reviewed and enhanced. Individual tests are valid, reliable and transparent, and students get feedback on assessments. Moreover, the panel thinks highly of the expertise and operational capacity of the Board of Examiners and the Testing Committee.

In principle the assessment of the research master's thesis is organised properly. The panel appreciates the quality of the feedback in the evaluation form underpinning in an insightful way the final score. In order to enhance the transparency of grading in the evaluation form, the programme may want to develop the evaluation form in order to reflect the independent character of the assessment procedure by the two assessors.

### **Conclusion**

The panel assesses Standard 3, assessment, of the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science as 'satisfactory'.

**Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes**

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved. The level achieved is demonstrated by interim and final tests, final projects and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes.

NVAO Guidelines RM: NVAO Guidelines RM: the choice of final project topics is related to the research context of the programme. Within the graduation trajectory, the entire research cycle is completed. The final projects are deemed publishable.

**Findings**

To assess the achieved learning outcomes of the programme, the panel studied a sample of theses (Appendix 6), and interviewed alumni and representatives of the work field who employ graduates of the research master's programme.

The research master's thesis amounts to 30 EC and is mainly executed in the fourth and final semester of the programme. The panel observed in the course description and in the sample of theses it reviewed that research master's students complete the entire research cycle during the thesis trajectory. Students are free to select a topic within the field of PAOS and are encouraged – but not obliged – to connect the thesis to a research programme of one of the partner institutions. Having studied a broad variety of theses, the panel understood that this variety is in fact promoted by the programme because students are exposed during the programme to a wide spectrum of perspectives and methods.

In order to establish whether research master's students have effectively achieved the learning outcomes, the panel reviewed a sample of 15 theses covering the whole range of scores given and ensuring a balanced mixture of supervisors representing the six different institutions, with a minimum of 2 theses per partner. The panel found that each thesis fulfilled at least the minimum requirements one would expect of a final product of an academic programme at research master's level, i.e. a thesis that is clearly of master's level quality and reflects the considerable workload research master's students are expected to invest in the thesis. There were several good quality theses that were well-researched and strong on methodological approach and theoretical embeddedness that showed that the student completed the entire research cycle.

While there was hardly any thesis the panel thought was of poor quality, the panel did observe in several instances that a thesis had been over-graded. During the discussions, the panel was informed that the programme is aware of the grading issue and has in the meantime taken adequate measures to safeguard the reliability of the thesis assessments: in any case where a thesis is likely to get a score of 8.5 or higher, the two programme coordinators will review the thesis, as well, before the score is finalised. The panel also observed that while the quality of the theses was adequate, the format was very diverse and often seemed not publishable in the current form. The panel was told that the thesis format is mainly an issue of time and feasibility; students first work on their thesis and then re-work it as a publication. In most cases, the thesis is finished within the deadline, but students lack the time to turn it also into an article before the end of the academic year. The panel learned that several students continue the work on their thesis after graduation, turning the study into an article in cooperation with their supervisor. In the self-evaluation report, ten examples from four cohorts are listed.

The research master's programme prepares students for a career in research either in the form of a PhD trajectory or in a research oriented job. Based on the materials and the discussion with alumni, the panel learned that almost half of the graduates (46%) indeed remain in academia, while the others start a professional career at consultancy companies (26%), ministries/local authorities (15%) or think tanks (13%). The panel gathered from the student contribution to the self-evaluation report that students appreciate the attention of the programme to both academic and applied research. However, given the considerable number of graduates entering the job market, students would like the programme to strengthen the applied research component. Finally, the panel observed that those

graduates moving on to PhD positions were often successful in acquiring prestigious scholarships or continued their academic career beyond one of the partner institutions.

### **Considerations**

Theses indicate to what extent students have achieved the intended learning outcomes. Having established that each thesis studied by the panel fulfils at least the minimum criteria required, the panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes of the research master's programme are achieved by the end of the curriculum. The panel welcomes the recent adjustment of the programme to safeguard the reliability of thesis assessments and encourages the programme to inform students about the requirements of the thesis format at a very early stage of the thesis development phase.

The panel considers, moreover, that the theses fulfil the specific requirements for final research master's products: the thesis is the result of a sufficiently extensive exercise covering the entire research cycle and addresses a topic that is related to the research context of the programme.

The panel concludes that upon graduation students find a job that is in line with the objective of the programme. This consideration is based on the enthusiasm of the alumni who indicated that this programme formed an important lever for their career: because of its attention to both academic and applied research, the programme is providing a good basis for each graduate to seek a research-oriented career to his/her liking.

### **Conclusion**

The panel assesses Standard 4, achieved learning outcomes, of the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science as 'satisfactory'.

#### **Standard 5: External input**

The content of a curriculum and the means of communication and teaching change over time. Flexibility, and the ability to innovate on the basis of adequate information on governance and teaching skills are important features of any educational programme, in order to meet the need of the students and the teaching staff. The programme provides evidence of an adequate process of curriculum development in which all relevant stakeholders are involved.

### **Findings**

#### **5.1 Curriculum development**

*The programme innovates itself, and uses measures of quality in this process, such as summaries of course evaluations, exit interviews, graduate surveys and related information.*

According to the Self-Evaluation Report, the quality of the research master's programme has been monitored constantly over the past few years, leading to various adjustments and continuous improvement. While USG is ultimately responsible for quality assurance, all partner institutions are involved in collecting and sharing quality signals and in adjusting the programme. To ensure the improvement of the curriculum, the programme has adopted a system of course evaluations, evaluations of the first year programme and curriculum evaluations after the second year. In addition, regular conversations are held with alumni, employers and potential employers within and outside the academic world. The results of the evaluations are discussed each year in consultation with the local coordinators, as well as in the department's Board Academic School (BAS). In this respect, the panel observed during the discussions that the local coordinators play an important role in collecting quality signals for the development of the programme.

The panel also gathered from the discussions that the programme adopts a pragmatic approach to curriculum development, combining the best of two worlds: the formal quality assurance cycle and informal signals from students, lecturers, the job market and the international research community. For instance, the Applied Research Internship elective has been created as a response to students wishing to develop their applied research skills beyond the compulsory course. Moreover, in its



written contribution to the self-evaluation report, Tilburg University indicated that it has been involved in developing and offering new courses recently.

The panel learned from the materials and the discussions that the programme has good connections to external stakeholders in academia; however, the ties to stakeholders in applied research are less developed. The panel encourages the programme to strengthen these ties, possibly in a more systematic and formalised way, in order to keep its research education up to speed with the demands of consultancy companies, authorities and think tanks.

### **5.2 External reviews**

*The programme provides evidence that the recommendations received during previous reviews (by NVAO, EAPAA or any other (inter)national review body) have led to changes in the content or the organisation of the programme.*

The panel learned that since the previous re-accreditation in 2010, two larger revisions have been made to the programme: one immediately following that visit and one at the time when three more universities were joining the programme in 2014 and beyond. These changes concerned the methodology training, the substantive courses and the relationship between fundamental and applied research. The panel gathered from the information provided in the self-evaluation report that these revisions have been for the better. In its written contribution, the Erasmus University Rotterdam indicated that further to the recommendation of the previous accreditation committee, it has contributed to strengthening the methods component.

### **Considerations**

The panel considers that the internal quality assurance of the programme is catered for adequately, both formally and informally. There are, moreover, regular informal contacts with external stakeholders such as alumni and employers. The panel also appreciates the role of the local coordinators in collecting quality signals and the ways in which students can – and do – voice their opinion on the quality of the courses and the curriculum. In the view of the panel, the programme may consider establishing a work-field advisory committee that should include also (potential) employers from consultancy companies, authorities and think tanks. Furthermore, the panel considers that the programme has done a good job in taking on board the findings from the previous external review, which has resulted in several adjustments that all seem for the better.

### **Conclusion**

The panel assesses Standard 5, external input, of the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science as 'satisfactory'.

### **Standard 6: Diversity**

Diversity among staff and students is one of the aims of the programme. This reflects the broader appreciation of diversity as a relevant variable in the study and practice of public administration and governance. The programme at least takes steps to increase gender balance among the professional staff of the programme, if necessary.

### **Findings**

The programme pays attention to student diversity in the recruitment process, but makes sure that the selection is based solely on the quality of the candidates. While the number of international students (about 25%) is lagging behind, the intake is balanced in terms of gender with female students slightly outnumbering their male colleagues. Moreover, the panel learned from the materials that each year the research master's programme attracts students from USG's bachelor's programme, from the partner institutions' programmes, and from other bachelor's programmes.

With regard to the diversity of lecturers, most are Dutch. Although men are over-represented, women are visible in all positions as well as in various courses. Most lecturers belong to partner institutions.



The disciplinary background of the lecturers differs, which corresponds to the programme's ambition to offer a multidisciplinary perspective on the field of study.

In their contribution to the self-evaluation report, students indicated that the international dimension of the programme is not very well developed: the number of international students per cohort is low, the majority of lecturers are Dutch and the contents of the programme focus too much on the Western public sector. The panel gathered from the discussions that the programme is very much aware of this situation. The programme has enlarged its marketing efforts and asked alumni chapters and the international networks of the partner institutions to promote the research master's programme among promising international students. Moreover, course coordinators are invited to incorporate non-Western cases and literature in their teaching and materials.

### **Considerations**

The panel considers that diversity is on the radar of the programme, the department and the partner institutions. It welcomes the initiatives taken so far on this issue and encourages all responsible bodies to step up their efforts in recruiting a more diverse student body that is taught by a more diverse faculty. The panel, moreover, agrees that course contents should be more inclusive with regard to non-European issues.

### **Conclusion**

The panel assesses Standard 6, diversity, of the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science as 'satisfactory'.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The panel assesses five standards as 'satisfactory' and standard 2 on the teaching and learning environment as 'good'. The panel also confirms that this programme meets the specific requirements set by the NVAO Guidelines for the assessment of research master's programmes. According to the decision rules of NVAO's Framework for limited programme assessments applied to standards 1 to 4, the panel assesses the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science as 'satisfactory'.





## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX 1: CURRICULA VITAE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

**Prof. dr. T. (Tony) Bovaird** is emeritus professor of the University of Birmingham (United Kingdom). He has previously worked at Aston Business School and Bristol Business School. From 2012 he has held a visiting chair in Meiji University (Japan) and has been visiting professor at various universities and business schools in the UK and abroad, such as the University of Bern, University of Barcelona, the University of Minho (Portugal) and the University of Brasilia. His research covers strategic management of public services, performance measurement in public agencies, evaluation of public management and governance reforms, and user and community co-production of public services. He has carried out research and has been involved in projects for, amongst others, the European Commission, several UK government departments and the Welsh Government. He is on the Governing Council of Local Areas Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA) and has been a member of the Strategy Board of the UK Research Councils' Local Government Initiative (LARCI) and the Local Government Reference Panel of the National Audit Office. He has given keynote speeches for several (inter)national annual conferences. Professor Bovaird is a member of the Editorial Board of the International Public Management Journal and co-author of Public Management and Governance. Professor Bovaird is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the German Institute for Public Administration Research and a non-executive director of Governance International.

**Prof. P.B. (Peter) Sloep** is professor emeritus in technology enhanced learning with the Open University of the Netherlands. There, he has been involved in the 'Lerarenuniversiteit', an expertise centre in the area of (continuous) teacher professional development in primary, secondary and vocational education. He also headed a unit that researched the use of online social networks for teaching and learning. His main area of expertise is professional development in and with social networks, existing or custom built; but his interests also cover learning design, open learning, massive open online courses (MOOCs), learning technologies in general and learning technology standards more in particular, knowledge sharing and knowledge creation in communities and online networks. Being trained as a theoretical biologist (including a PhD) and having worked as course developer for the OU in this and neighboring areas, Sloep turned his attention ever more towards the learning sciences, in particular towards educational technology.

**Prof. E. (Esther) Versluis** is professor of European Regulatory Governance at Maastricht University. She obtained her PhD in 2003 from Utrecht University and was awarded the Van Poelje prize for best PhD dissertation in the field of public administration for her dissertation on 'Enforcement Matters. Enforcement and Compliance of European Directives in Four Member States'. Since 2001 she is involved with education at Maastricht University, first as lecturer, as assistant professor and since 2015 as professor. She was member and chair of the Faculty Council and chair of the Graduate Program Committee Arts & Culture. Until 2014 she was director of Studies master's programme European Public Affairs and is currently director of Studies of the bachelor's programme European Studies. In 2015 she was awarded the Best PhD supervisor of the year-award by the Netherlands Institute of Government. Professor Versluis' research concentrates on problems and complexities related to European regulatory governance. She is an active member of the Netherlands Institute of Government (NIG), the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), the European Union Studies Association (EUSA) and the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES).

**Prof. J. J. A. (Jacques) Thomassen** is professor emeritus of Political Science at the University of Twente and a member of the Netherlands Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). He is author and editor of numerous publications including The European Voter, The Legitimacy of the European Union after Enlargement, Elections and Representative Democracy, Representation and Accountability and Myth and Reality of the Legitimacy Crisis. Explaining trends and cross-national differences in established democracies. He served in many professional positions, amongst others as President of the Dutch Political Science Association from 1997 to 1999, Scientific Director Netherlands



Institute of Government (NIG) (1999-2004) and General Secretary of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) from 2008 to 2011.

**Drs. H. (Henk) de Jong** is Strategy Director and Deputy Commissioner at Police Netherlands. From 2007 to 2012 Henk de Jong served as general director at the city of Amsterdam. He has extensive experience as a senior public sector official, public sector consultant and entrepreneur with leading expertise in Dutch, EU and US government practices, with city, regional and national agencies, educational institutions, international businesses and philanthropies on policy-making, organizational change management, business development and crisis accountability. As a practitioner of public sector management, he serves on the Advisory Boards, works with academic institutions and is engaged in cultural initiatives. He frequently speaks at conferences, seminars, graduate-level and executive training programs that focus on the unique aspects and challenges of the public sector.

**J.C. (Jasper) Meijering** is master's student in Engineering and Policy Analysis at the Delft University of Technology. He obtained his bachelor's degree in Systems Engineering, Policy Analysis and Management also from the Delft University of Technology. His research focuses on using quantitative modelling and simulation techniques to address grand global challenges and acting as strategic policy advisor. He is selected for a scholarship program from, and works as Student Ambassador for, the Dutch Energy sector. From January 2016 to January 2017 he was selected to join outreach program Young Future Energy Leaders Program of the Masdar Institute in Abu Dhabi. In this capacity, he was a member of United Arab Emirates' delegation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22) in Marrakech, Morocco and attended the World Future Energy Summit 2016.

## APPENDIX 2: DOMAIN-SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE

### **Domain-specific requirements Public Administration, Public Governance, and Governance and Organization (PAGO) Programmes, 2010**

#### **Introduction**

The study of public administration has developed and expanded into a broad interdisciplinary body of knowledge, which tackles a variety of themes and practices on public administration, governance and organization (PAGO). The academic community in the Netherlands acknowledges that throughout the years this field has widened and now includes not only public administration but also governance and organization. This entails a diversity of approaches on the one hand, but on the other, the conviction that these approaches are connected and interrelated and worthwhile to keep together. Programmes may share basic components, but also may differ to express their specialisation in this broadened field. This parallels developments in the profession. Alumni are increasingly challenged in a wide variety of fields that put varying demands regarding professional knowledge, skills and attitudes. In this frame of reference we will address this field as the PAGO-field: including public administration, public governance, and governance and organization.

In this domain-specific frame of reference we start with a brief summary regarding the development of the PAGO-field and argue that the broadening of the field is due to various exogenous and endogenous changes. Accordingly we will outline the programme principles of PAGO-studies as well as related learning outcomes.

#### **Developments**

The societal impact of processes like globalization, individualization and ICT has altered the nature of public problems. Issues like risk and security, environment and ecology, economics and welfare, and nationality and culture are high on the societal and political agenda. The impact of such problems has consequences for the abilities of (national) governments. It challenges them to reach beyond traditional approaches. This has led to manifold changes in political and administrative landscapes. New expectations and demands are expressed towards politics and administration, including moral standards. New criteria for performance have emerged that aim at 'value for money', new business-like concepts of management, and reformed public service delivery. There have been new interpretations of democracy and accountability, and of relations between state, civil society and the market.

Government and public administration not only changed its own practices, it also changed its relationship with society. Public administration thus moved towards governance, i.e. dealing with public problems through dispersed networks of organizations and actors, including social institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), and private companies. Government and public policy are still relevant, but new outlooks and mechanisms are designed and used to make things work.

These developments have also changed the field of study of PA. Scholars started to use new concepts to understand developments, broadening categories such as 'government-governance', and crossing boundaries between the public and private world. These concepts include focused attention to issues like interdependence, ambiguity, networks, contextuality, governance, and the role of institutions, trust and integrity. These developments invited researchers to cross disciplinary borders and take aboard theories, concepts, methods and ideas, from organization studies (structure, culture, management, strategy, networks, et cetera) as well as other bodies of knowledge (new fields within economics, political science and sociology, communication theory, ethics and philosophy, geography, international relations and law, et cetera).

Another issue that needs to be highlighted is that the study of Public Administration in the Netherlands includes several fields that elsewhere are situated in political science. The PAGO-studies not only focus on classical PA issues, but also on public organization and management issues, as well as on subfields like 'public policy', 'policy making', 'public governance', 'public culture and ethics'.



Scholars of these issues are part of the broad 'PA' community, in research as well as in educational programmes.

### **Resulting Fields of Study**

This PAGO-community consists of three fields of study. The first embodies the classical features of the discipline, concentrating on politics, administration and the public sector. Public administration often started within the context of (departments of) politics and/or law, with an emphasis on the study of government and bureaucracy as well as public policy-making and implementation.

The second emerged through the fact that public interests and public problems are increasingly tackled by a multitude of public and private actors. It broadened the scope of study to include nongovernmental actors, as part of the often complex public-private, multi-actor networks that deal with collective and public interests.

The third field focuses on questions of governance and organization that surpass the traditional public-private boundaries. It includes the study of private actors in social contexts. This orientation links the worlds of business administration and public administration and pays attention to what we know about management, strategy and behaviour in corporations. This approach can be labelled as 'governance and organization'.

PAGO today is a broad multi- and interdisciplinary field of science. The classical core disciplines of political science, law, sociology and economics are important, and there is an increasing involvement of disciplines that focus on organization, culture, and communication. Also, challenging new interchanges with bodies of knowledge in (for example) social and organizational psychology, planning studies and geography, philosophy and ethics and history have demonstrated added value.

The PAGO-community acknowledges that there are different views regarding object and focus of the field of study. For instance: is PAGO about knowledge by description, explanation and prediction, or is evaluation and improvement the prime goal? Or, how do we relate to and communicate with practitioners in public (and private) administration, governance and organization? Rather than excluding certain views, the PAGO-community welcomes a variety in approaches, ideas and outlook. This variety is also visible in the PAGO-programmes.

### **Defining programme principles**

PAGO-programmes are academic programmes aiming at the development of academic knowledge, skills and attitude in students that are relevant for understanding public administration, governance and organization. They pay particular attention to social and political contexts and developments, relevant (interdisciplinary) bodies of knowledge, aim at developing research capacities, and contribute to working professionally in public and private domains. In this frame of reference we have listed elements that are to be seen as building blocks for academic programmes. As far as knowledge is concerned, contemporary programmes encompass various disciplinary views supporting the PAGO-domain, and various sorts of domain-specific knowledge. As far as skills are concerned, they encompass skills for applying and reflecting on scientific methods and approaches, integrating knowledge and skills for working in public domains/organizations. As far as attitude is concerned, it encompasses critical stances and moral stature. Each of these subfields is briefly elaborated in order to circumscribe specific learning outcomes at Bachelor's and Master's levels (see next paragraph).

### **Knowledge**

#### *Knowledge of society and changing contexts*

Activities in public domains influence, are influenced by, and interact with social systems and developments. On the one hand, they constrain public sectors, as they reproduce values, traditions and culture(s). On the other hand, they call for public action; (new) facts, events and problems, fuelled by new technologies, pose new challenges. PAGO-programmes enhance understandings of



social structures and behaviours, societal trends and changes. This calls for an awareness of political, sociological, cultural, historical, philosophical, ethical, economic and judicial contexts.

#### *Knowledge of political and administrative systems*

The organization, processes and activities in public domains are shaped by and within political systems. PAGO-programmes should devote attention to the institutions, structure, organization and activities of such political systems, at different levels (local, regional, national, transnational). PAGO-programmes encompass political and social theories, including those regarding legitimacy and the democratic design and functioning of organizations in public domains. They also pay attention to the application of these theories in everyday practice.

#### *Knowledge of (public) policy, decision making and implementation*

Governance for societal problems includes many insights derived from various bodies of knowledge, ranging from high-level decision-making to everyday service delivery. PAGO-programmes address both classic and contemporary theories, methods and techniques of policy-making, management, decision-making, and their implementation in everyday practice.

#### *Knowledge of organizations and organizing principles*

Public domains entail a variety of organizations, some organized as classical government bodies, some as between the public and private sectors, while others have been influenced by and/or have taken on the characteristics of private organizations. There is a growing awareness that policies and service delivery must be organized and require well-trained and motivated professionals. This leads to a more explicit emphasis on organizational studies. PAGO programmes entail knowledge of organizational concepts/perspectives on organizing, domains of managerial activities, insights in organizational change and management tools.

#### *Knowledge of governance and networks*

The powers and authorities to intervene have become less governmental and more distributed. Due to organizational fragmentation, the rise of network relations, and the spread of (normative) governance models – e.g., 'joined up government', 'public-private partnerships', and 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR) – multiple parties have become active in dealing with public problems and representing public interests. PAGO-programmes pay attention to new relations and new governance regimes, having both theoretical and empirical consequences.

### **Skills**

#### *Research skills*

The role of knowledge in (public) policies and organizations is crucial for its effectiveness, especially for understanding the complexity of contexts, structures, outcomes and behaviours. PAGO-programmes include methods of quantitative and qualitative social-scientific research to analyse and also emphasise a clear understanding of contextual aspects.

#### *Integrative skills*

Public domains can be analysed from different angles; theories are grounded in various disciplines. The quality of research and capacities of civil servants and other functionaries in public domains depend on integrative skills, i.e. abilities to combine, integrate and apply different bodies of knowledge. PAGO-programmes devote attention to and provide opportunities to practice integrative skills.

#### *Cooperation and communication skills*

The functioning of the public domain largely depends on the skills of actors to exchange ideas, to negotiate when necessary, and to cooperate in constructive ways. Civil servants and other functionaries use a repertoire of skills and attitudes to communicate ideas to audiences of experts as well as laymen. Cooperation is at the heart of PAGO and includes a sense of responsibility and leadership. PAGO-programmes devote attention to and provide opportunities to practice cooperative and communicative skills.



## **Attitude**

### *Critical stances*

PAGO programmes are academic programmes that not only facilitate cognitive learning and skill development, they also develop critical powers. Students are taught how to critically analyze arguments used by others, how to relate 'fashionable' statements, e.g. by politicians, to more traditional as well as to scientific insights, and how to reflect upon political and normative implications of policy choices and organizational design. PAGO-programmes devote attention to the development of a constructive, critical attitude.

### *Moral stature and professionalism*

The eloquence and credibility of PAGO has two features. First is its ability to approach societal problems in effective ways, but second is the degree to which government and governance principles serves as a moral compass. PAGO-programmes train students in this respect for occupying positions in governance regimes (public and private), they also train students in developing appropriate or 'professional' conduct. This is a matter of guarding values, such as accountability and integrity, and of practicing values, such as entrepreneurship and innovation.

## **Academic learning outcomes for PAGO studies**

The broad fields identified and circumscribed in the above are to be seen as programme criteria and, thus, as the building blocks of a programme. Each programme will emphasize a specific selection of these building blocks to impose specific learning outcomes on students. In the table below we list such learning outcomes. This is a generic list, both applicable for bachelor's and master's programmes.

The difference between both studies is in the degree of complexity; in the level of analysis; and in the independence of the student. Here we follow the distinctions made in the so-called Dublin descriptors. In this system a distinction is made between first cycle learning for bachelors and second cycle learning for masters. First cycle learning involves an introduction to the field of study. It aims at the acquisition and understanding of knowledge, ideas, methods and theories, elementary research activities, and basic skills regarding communication and learning competences. At second cycle learning we find a deeper understanding of knowledge; problem solving skills are developed for new and unexpected environments and broader contexts. Here students can apply knowledge in various environments. At the master's level we also expect a well-developed level of autonomy regarding the direction and choices in a study.

In generic bachelor's PAGO-programmes most of the learning outcomes will apply that are listed below. Master's programmes, however, usually have a much stronger thematic focus and may especially focus on a particular set of these learning outcomes that are best suited for that specialisation, but not covering all the learning outcomes listed below. We propose that the learning outcomes for the bachelor's level, apply for the master's level in the sense that students demonstrate that they are capable of:

- dealing with increased situational, theoretical and methodological complexity;
- demonstrating increased levels of autonomy and self-management;
- applying ideas, methods, theories in research and problem solving;
- mastering the complexity that is inherent to the field of specialisation.

In the table below we have organized the learning outcomes according to the Dublin descriptors. We present the main components of the Dublin descriptors in italics, and accordingly the proposed learning outcomes.

## **Knowledge and understanding**

*1 (Bachelor's) [Is] supported by advanced text books [with] some aspects informed by knowledge at the forefront of their field of study*

*2 (Master's) provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing or applying ideas often in a research context*

- (Basic) knowledge of (changing) societal contexts
- (Basic) knowledge and understanding of the distinctive nature of organization, policy making, management, service delivery and governance in PAGO domains
- (Basic) awareness of political traditions and politics
- (Basic) knowledge and understanding of the discipline, PAGO-paradigms, intellectual tradition, theories and approaches
- (Basic) knowledge and understanding of multi-actor and multi-level concepts
- A general (basic) understanding regarding the dynamics and processes of actors in public domains, how these processes influence society and vice versa

### **Applying knowledge and understanding**

*1 (Bachelor's) [through] devising and sustaining arguments*

*2 (Master's) [through] problem solving abilities [applied] in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts*

- (Basic) capacity to work at different levels of abstraction
- (Basic) skills in problem definition and problem solving in the PAGO domain
- (Basic) ability to distinguish normative preferences and empirical evidence
- (Basic) skills in combining, integrating and applying knowledge
- (Basic) insight into the scientific practice
- (Basic) capacity to select a suitable theoretical framework for a given empirical problem
- (Basic) skills in combining normative and empirical aspects
- (Basic) capacity to build arguments and reflect upon the arguments of others
- (Basic) awareness of relevant social, ethical, academic and practical issues

### **Making judgments**

*1 (Bachelor's) [involves] gathering and interpreting relevant data*

*2 (Master's) [demonstrates] the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete data*

- (Basic) ability to formulate research questions on problems in the PAGO-domain
- (Basic) knowledge regarding research on social-scientific positions and thinking
- (Basic) training in and application of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods social science research
- (Basic) abilities to collect data and to derive judgments thereof

### **Communication**

*1 (Bachelor's) [of] information, ideas, problems and solutions*

*2 (Master's) [of] their conclusions and the underpinning knowledge and rationale (restricted scope) to specialist and non-specialist audiences (monologue)*

- (Basic) capacity to use argumentative skills effectively
- (Basic) capacity to function in multi- and interdisciplinary teams in several roles
- (Basic) capacity to function effectively in governance, organization, management, policy and advocacy settings
- (Basic) capacity to use communicative skills effectively in oral and written presentation

### **Learning skills**

*1 (Bachelor's) have developed those skills needed to study further with a high level of autonomy*

*2 (Master's) study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous*

- Learning attitude
- (Basic) capacity to reflect upon one's own conceptual and professional capacities and conduct

## APPENDIX 3: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

*Exit qualifications for 'The substance of the public administration and organisation of public issues' (S)*

The graduate has:

S1	A broad knowledge and understanding of the disciplinary and theoretical approaches to the question of change in both the public domain and public organisations, including their relation to macro-sociological and political change.
S2	An in-depth understanding of selected key themes in the field of public administration and organisational science research.
S3	An in-depth understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of empirical research in public administration and organisational science research, as well as the ability to position oneself in corresponding debates.
S4	Insights into the ethical aspects of fundamental and applied research in public administration and organisational science research.

*Exit qualifications for 'Academic research into the public administration and organisation of public issues' (AC)*

The graduate has:

AC1	The ability to derive research problems from theoretical insights in the field of public administration and organizational science.
AC2	The ability to translate these into a sound research design.
AC3	An in-depth understanding of the main low-control and high-control methods and techniques of data collection and analysis for fundamental research in public administration and organizational science research, as well as the ability to use these.
AC4	The ability to conceptualize and operationalize theoretical concepts.
AC5	Insights into the possible strategies for dissemination of fundamental research findings, and the capacity to implement these in a real-life research context.
AC6	The ability to effectively communicate about knowledge and research of public administration and organizational science, both verbally and in writing.

*Exit qualifications for 'Applied research into the public administration and organisation of public issues' (AP)*

The graduate has:

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| AP1 | Insight into key quality criteria for applied research, and the ability to use these.   |
| AP2 | The ability to derive research problems from experiences of stakeholders in the field of public administration and organizational science.  |
| AP3 | The ability to develop and negotiate effective terms for applied research, including financial aspects.   |
| AP4 | Insights into the strategies for disseminating research findings to direct stakeholders in applied research, and the capacity to implement these in a real-life research context. |

## APPENDIX 4: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

	First Year				Second Year			
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4
<b>Theory (30 EC)</b>	Core themes and modern classics 1: Public policy and governance (9 EC)	Core themes and modern classics 2: Public organizations and professionals (9 EC)	Tutorial (6 EC)		Core themes and modern classics 3: Transforming public governance (6 EC)			
<b>Methodology (41 EC)</b>	Philosophy of science (6 EC)	Designing research in the social sciences (6 EC)	Methods Workshop I: high control designs (8 EC)	Craft of Research Workshop 1: Contexts, roles and strategies (5 EC)	Methods Workshop II: low control designs (8 EC)	Craft of Research Workshop 2: From analysis to persuasion (8 EC)		
<b>Research (37 EC)</b>				Applied Research Track (7 EC)			Research and master thesis track (30 EC)	
<b>Optional (12 EC)</b>	Electives (12 EC)							

## APPENDIX 5: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

### **Monday 11 December 2017**

09.00 Arrival at Utrecht School of Governance (USG)  
09.10 Internal meeting panel  
12.30 Management USG  
13.30 Lunch  
14.15 Bachelor's students  
15.05 Bachelor's lecturers  
16.05 Board of Examiners  
17.00 Transfer to hotel  
17.30 Internal meeting panel (Court Hotel)  
18.30 end of day 1

### **Tuesday 12 December 2017**

08.30 Open consultation hour (Court Hotel)  
09.30 Alumni and professional field Ba + Ma  
10.20 Master's students  
11.25 Master's lecturers  
12.20 Lunch  
13.30 Internal meeting panel  
14.15 Management Research Master's programme  
15.00 Research Master's students  
15.45 Research Master's lecturers  
16.30 Alumni and professional field RM  
17.00 Internal meeting panel  
17.45 Final meeting management Research Master's  
18.15 Internal meeting panel  
19.00 end of day 2

### **Wednesday 13 December 2017**

09.00 Alumni and professional field Executive Master's  
09.45 Executive Master's students  
10.30 Executive Master's lecturers  
11.00 Internal meeting panel  
12.15 Final meeting management Ba + Ma + EM  
13.00 Lunch and internal meeting panel  
15.30 Feedback to USG on key panel findings  
16.15 Development dialogue  
17.15 End of site visit

## APPENDIX 6: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the research master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organization Science. The associated student numbers are available through QANU upon request.

In the framework of the site visit, the panel studied, among other things, the following documents (partly as hard copies, partly via the institute's electronic learning environment):

- Self-Evaluation Report, master's programme Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science, Utrecht, August 2017.
- Appendices to the self-evaluation report of the research master's programme, August 2017.
- Erasmus University appendix to the self-evaluation report RM in PAOS, July 2017.
- Tilburg University self-evaluation report RM in PAOS, August 2017.

Course materials, evaluations and assessments Research Master's PAOS:

- Core themes and modern classics 2: Public Organizations and Professionals (USG7510 year 1, lecturers UU and EUR)
- Applied research track (USG7711 year 1, lecturer UU)
- Craft of research workshop 2: Analysis and persuasion: From notes, texts, recordings and pictures to stories (USG7652T year 2, lecturer TiU)

Other materials

- Course Manuals
- Literature
- Reports by Programme Committee
- Examination Board materials
- Overview of applications Research Master's PAOS
- Materials on Diversity
- Plan van Aanpak Internationalisering, mei 2015
- Versterken internationale en interculturele competenties, april 2015