



**Public Administration  
Radboud University**

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## Summary

### Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

Both the BSc and the MSc Public Administration have an ambitious and distinctive profile, aiming to nurture students into responsible, engaged, and reflective academic professionals capable of addressing the societal challenges faced by national and local governments. The panel appreciates the mission of instilling students with a critical and reflective attitude toward theory, research methods, the role and functioning of public governance, and their own performance. The master's programme adds significant value through its emphasis on developing critical thinking skills.

The panel values the dual focus of the programmes, prioritising academic skills and knowledge, with ample attention to developing relevant professional skills in public administration. Both programmes adopt a multidisciplinary approach, fostering a structured interplay between public administration and its supporting disciplines. The panel commends the programmes for effectively balancing three essential elements: academic sophistication, the development of practical skills in students, and the multidisciplinary perspective. Recognizing the delicate equilibrium among these three elements, the panel encourages the programme management to take a proactive approach to maintaining this harmonious balance. Furthermore, the panel encourages both programmes to fully integrate the principles of this profile into all facets of their respective programmes.

The goals of both programmes have been effectively translated into two coherent sets of ILOs. The panel considers the ILOs to be appropriate in terms of content (public administration), orientation (primarily academic), and level (bachelor or master). Furthermore, the master's programme incorporates an additional intended learning outcome for each track, distinctly illustrating the unique nature of each specialization.

The panel believes that the establishment of the advisory board and the reinforcement of ties with alumni contribute to an enhanced connection with stakeholders. The panel encourages programme management to systematically utilize these contacts in strategic discussions and to foster connections with the professional field.

### Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

Based on the documents studied and the interviews conducted, the panel is very positive about the curricula of both programmes. They are coherent, well-structured, and encompass all intended learning outcomes. The mission of the programmes, aimed at addressing societal issues to improve our society, has been clearly translated into the curricula and is recognizable to students, teaching staff, and alumni.

The panel is very positive about both the previous curriculum and the revised curriculum. It commends the revision of the *bachelor's programme*, applauding the well-thought-out strategy in revising the curriculum, which was truly a result of co-creation. The programme has succeeded in identifying emerging areas of teaching that align with evolving trends in public administration. The five thematic lines organizing the bachelor's programme cover both the relevant subjects of the field and the disciplines from which public administration draws. The *master's programme* is well structured, and the four different tracks are cohesive and effectively bridge theory and practice. Both programmes offer students ample opportunity to tailor the programme to their preferences.

The panel identified several points of improvement. For the *bachelor's programme*, the panel recommends taking a clearer stance on the internship, exploring a different format for the bachelor thesis, and paying

more attention to writing and reporting skills. The panel believes that both programmes could be enhanced by placing greater emphasis on writing skills for publications intended for a broader audience.

The teaching methods used in the programmes are deemed appropriate. Both programmes utilize a diverse range of educational approaches, effectively aligning with the learning objectives of the different courses. While the bachelor's curriculum maintains a well-balanced study load, the feasibility of the master's programme could be improved. The programme management is aware of this and has implemented appropriate measures, including changes to the master's thesis process and a shift in the curriculum structure from a block system to a ribbon system (starting from the academic year 2024-2025).

The teaching staff is qualified for teaching in the programmes, both in terms of research background and didactic qualities. The panel highly appreciated the strong commitment towards the bachelor's and master's programmes expressed by the programme management and teachers.

### Standard 3. Student assessment

The panel is positive regarding the assessment system in both programmes. The assessment methods are diverse and align well with the learning goals of the courses. The balance between group work and individual assignments effectively prepares students for their future professional setting. The assessment system is consistently supported and improved by the Examining Board, which operates independently and professionally. It has checks and balances in place and plays an important role in the quality assurance of the two programmes.

The thesis assessment procedures are up to standard. The assessment forms and rubrics are insightful and transparent, although there is room for improvement in the transparency of how assessments and feedback are translated into grades. Furthermore, the panel recommends including a criterion to assess students' capabilities in developing, synthesising, and presenting strategic or public policy recommendations. This addition is seen as a means to further enhance the programmes' objective of cultivating relevant professional skills in public administration.

The panel appreciates the fact that both the bachelor's and master's theses are evaluated by two assessors who independently assign grades. For the bachelor's programme, the process by which the two assessors reach an agreement on the final grade for the bachelor thesis was less evident to the panel and could be made more transparent.

### Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The panel concludes that the theses show that the intended learning outcomes are achieved for both programmes. The theses are generally of good quality, addressing real-world issues pertinent to the objectives of the programmes. The programmes prepare students for relevant master's programmes and relevant positions in the academic and professional field.

### Standard 5. Diversity

The programmes clearly have diversity on the agenda, both in terms of the composition of the staff and the student population, as well as diversity within the curriculum. The panel concludes that while the gender balance in the programmes is deemed satisfactory, there is room for improvement in terms of diversifying cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. It suggests targeting students from more underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds and further diversifying the composition of the Advisory Board.

## Score table

The panel assesses the programmes as follows:

### *B Public Administration*

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 5: Diversity	meets the standard

General conclusion positive

### *M Public Administration*

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 5: Diversity	meets the standard

General conclusion positive

Prof. Andrew Massey  
Chair

Esther Poort MSc  
Secretary

Date: 18 January 2024

# Introduction

## Procedure

### Assessment

On 6-7 November 2023, the bachelor's and master's programmes Public Administration at the Radboud University were assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment Public Administration. The assessment cluster consisted of 20 programmes, offered by the institutions Utrecht University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Radboud University, University of Twente, Maastricht University, Tilburg University, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Leiden University. The assessment followed the procedure and standards described in the NVAO-EAPAA agreement signed on 18 May 2021, and is aimed at double accreditation by EAPAA and NVAO.

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster Public Administration. Peter Hildering acted as coordinator and Mark Delmartino and Esther Poort acted as secretaries in the cluster assessment. They have been certified and registered by the NVAO.

### Preparation

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members as well as consistency within the cluster. The composition of the panel was approved by EAPAA on 11 September 2023 and by the NVAO on 14 September 2023. The coordinator instructed the panel chairs on their role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016).

The programmes composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the secretary (see appendix 3). The programmes selected representative partners for the various interviews. It also determined that the development dialogue would be organized at the end of the site visit. A separate development report was made based on this dialogue.

The programmes provided the secretary with a list of graduates over the period 2022-2023. In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses per programme. He took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account, as well as the tracks in the master's programme. Prior to the site visit, the programmes provided the panel with the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. They also provided the panel with the self-evaluation reports and additional materials (see appendix 4).

The panel members studied the information and sent their findings to the secretary. The secretary collected the panel's questions and remarks in a document and shared this with the panel members. In a preliminary meeting, the panel discussed the initial findings on the self-evaluation reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit. The panel was also informed on the assessment frameworks, the working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

### Site visit

During the site visit, the panel interviewed various programme representatives (see appendix 3). The panel also offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. No consultation was requested. The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the preliminary findings.

## Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings. The report was submitted to the coordinator for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the programmes in order to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The panel then finalised the report, and the coordinator sent it to Radboud University.

## Panel

The following panel members were involved in the cluster assessment:

- Prof. Andrew Massey, professor of Government, King's College London – chair;
- Prof. Monique Kremer, professor of Active Citizenship, University of Amsterdam – chair;
- Prof. Ernst ten Heuvelhof, emeritus professor of Public Administration, Delft University of Technology;
- Prof. Peter Bursens, professor of Political Science, University of Antwerp;
- Prof. Ellen Wayenberg, professor of Public Governance and Management at Ghent University and member of the EAPAA Accreditation Committee;
- Prof. Calin Hinteá, professor of Public Administration and Management at Babes-Bolyai University and member of the EAPAA Accreditation Committee;
- Prof. Thurid Hustedt, professor of Public Administration and Management at Hertie School Berlin and member of the EAPAA Accreditation Committee;
- Dr. Hester Glasbeek, advisor Leadership Development at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, and Senior Partner of Reflect Academy: For Leadership in Learning;
- Anje-Margreet Woltjer MSc, director of SPO Utrecht;
- Prof. Ria Janvier, professor of Social Law, University of Antwerp;
- Prof. Leo Huberts, emeritus professor of Public Administration, Vrije Universiteit;
- Prof. Heinrich Winter, professor of Public Administration, University of Groningen;
- Wim de Boer MSc, lecturer Public Administration and Governance at Haagse Hogeschool;
- Prof. Tanja Klenk, professor of Public Administration and Public Policies, Helmut-Schmidt-University Hamburg;
- David Van Slyke PhD, professor of Public Administration, The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs;
- Prof. Geske Dijkstra, emeritus professor of Governance and Global Development, Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. Esther Versluis, professor of European Regulatory Governance, Maastricht University;
- Prof. Zoe Radnor, professor of Service Operations Management, Aston University;
- Prof. Sophie Vanhoonacker, professor of Administrative Governance, Maastricht University;
- Prof. Kees van Paridon, emeritus professor of Economics, Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. Tannelie Blom, emeritus professor of European Integration, Maastricht University – referee;
- Tom Hillenaar BSc, master student Engineering and Policy Analysis, Delft University of Technology – student member;
- Sibel Gökbekir BSc, master student of Complex Systems Engineering and Management at Delft University of Technology, and of International and European Union Law at Erasmus University Rotterdam – student member.



The panel assessing the Public Administration programmes at Radboud University consisted of the following members:

- Prof. Andrew Massey, professor of Government, King's College London – chair;
- Prof. Calin Hintea, professor of Public Administration and Management at Babes-Bolyai University and member of the EAPAA Accreditation Committee;
- Prof. Heinrich Winter, professor of Public Administration, University of Groningen;
- Wim de Boer MSc, lecturer Public Administration and Governance at Haagse Hogeschool;
- Tom Hillenaar BSc, master student Engineering and Policy Analysis, Delft University of Technology – student member.
- Prof. Tannelie Blom, emeritus professor of European Integration, Maastricht University – referee;

## Information on the programmes

Name of the institution:	Radboud University
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive

Programme name:	B Public Administration
CROHO number:	56627
Level:	Bachelor
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	180 EC
Specializations or tracks:	non
Location:	Nijmegen
Educational minor:	Not applicable
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Language of instruction:	Dutch
Submission date NVAO:	1 May 2024

Programme name:	M Public Administration
CROHO number:	66627
Level:	Master
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specializations or tracks:	- Policy Analysis and Consulting - Governance of Safety and Security - Governance and Management of Local Affairs - European Union Governance and Politics
Location:	Nijmegen
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Language of instruction:	Dutch
Submission date NVAO:	1 May 2024

## Description of the assessment

### Recommendations previous accreditation panel

The documentation included an overview of how the programmes followed up on the recommendations given by the previous accreditation's panel (2018). Also, several recommendations and their follow-up actions were discussed with the programme during the site visit. The panel concludes that the programme management demonstrates an impressive commitment to continuous improvement across all levels, effectively addressing previous external review recommendations. The panel is content with the improvement measures taken and sees that these have contributed to improved quality of the programme. Some examples will be discussed under the relevant standards.

### Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

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

### Findings

#### *Mission and profile*

The mission of the *bachelor's programme Public Administration* is to enable students to understand and contribute to the public governance process. The programme is designed to support students in evolving into responsible, engaged, and reflective academic professionals who can play their part in resolving key societal challenges. The goal of the programme is not only to equip the students with the knowledge and skills required to address the challenges ahead, but also to instil a sense of care in students and develop an awareness that their decisions will have consequences for citizens, the country, and the world.

To achieve this, the bachelor's programme is built upon three fundamental principles: responsibility, reflexivity, and empirical grounding. Responsibility is demonstrated through a strong emphasis on the societal role and responsibility of public administration, the programme's responsibility to create an optimal learning environment for students, and the student's individual responsibility for their learning journey. Reflexivity is the programmes' commitment to ingrain students with a critical and reflective mindset concerning theory, research methods, the role and functioning of public governance, and their own performance. This is apparent in the curriculum of the programme, incorporating components such as philosophy, ethics, and principles of good governance. Empirical grounding reflects the programme's dedication to equipping students with essential research skills, encompassing both fundamental and applied approaches. Furthermore, the curriculum is designed to provide students with an understanding of the professional environments they are likely to encounter in their future careers.

The bachelor's programme is characterized by balanced attention to the EU, national, and decentral levels, and their intersections. The programme revolves around the two key disciplinary themes in Public Administration: the institutions of public administration and their organization (public administration) and the policy process (public policy). Furthermore, the programme's substance is rooted in the concept of societal public administration, emphasizing that good public governance is not an end in itself but a prerequisite for serving the public interest. Finally, the programme is multidisciplinary, fostering a structured interplay between public administration and its supporting disciplines (political science, sociology, economy, and law) through an approach of disciplinary cross-fertilization.

The mission of the *master's programme Public Administration* is to educate socially engaged students who want to make a difference in the world. The programme aims to nurture critical and reflective professionals capable of addressing the societal challenges confronted by national and local governments. Upon graduation, students should possess the knowledge and skills required for a career in either the professional practice of public administration or related research.

The master's programme takes the same multidisciplinary approach as the bachelor's programme, with a greater emphasis on depth and the integration of theories, methodologies, and disciplines. A crucial aspect of the master's programme is ensuring that students grasp the diverse ways public administration and policy can be interpreted and analysed. These varying perspectives enrich their understanding of specific situations in the public sector and developments in public administration practice, cultivating their knowledge and analytical skills. This enables them to critically evaluate these perspectives comparatively and instils the idea that multiple viewpoints enhance, rather than diminish, their ability to thoroughly analyse the specific situations they'll encounter in their professional practice. Another important feature of the master's programme is its connection with the professional field. About 80% of the master's students do an internship in the public or private sector, and the programme frequently invites guest lecturers to highlight the connection between research, theories, and practice.

Master students can choose from three Dutch-language specializations Policy Analysis and Consulting (*Beleidsadviesing*), Governance of Safety and Security (*Besturen van Veiligheid*), and Governance and Management of Local Affairs (*Bestuur en Management van Lokale Vraagstukken*). The latter, established in 2022-2023, succeeds the Public Management specialization. Additionally, students have the option to choose the English-language track offered in collaboration with Political Science, namely European Union Governance and Politics.

The panel commends both programmes for their ambitious and distinctive profile, praising their emphasis on training socially engaged students to evolve into critical and reflective professionals capable of addressing the societal challenges faced by national and local governments. The panel highly appreciates the emphasis on responsible governance, which is clearly visible in both programmes. Consequently, the programmes intentionally prepare students to become engaged and reflective academic professionals who can play a vital role in resolving key societal challenges faced by national and local governments. The panel acknowledges that the master's programme adds significant value in this regard by placing a strong emphasis on improving students' critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the panel finds the four master tracks appealing to students and believes that they contribute to the distinctive profile of the master's programme.

The mission of both programmes is effectively translated into clear aims and objectives, serving as a foundational framework for the design of the respective programmes. According to the panel, this is clearly articulated in the documents. Throughout the interviews, the panel observed that the mission and aims are fully embraced by programme management, teaching staff, students, alumni, and the working field. For example, all students indicated that their primary motivation for studying public administration was their desire to contribute to addressing complex societal problems.

The panel acknowledges the balance between the academic and professional focus of the programmes. In both programmes, emphasis is placed on cultivating academic skills and knowledge as the primary objective. Additionally, there is ample attention given to the development of professional skills that are relevant within public administration. Students employ these skills to engage in applied research and analyse real-life cases. Furthermore, they gain specialized professional skills, particularly in the areas of

policy analysis, advisory roles, and effective communication. The panel views this practical aspect of the programmes as an asset, enhancing students' readiness for their future professional careers.

Based on the documents and interviews, the panel concludes that both programmes adeptly strike a balance among three essential elements: academic sophistication, the cultivation of practical skills in students, and a multidisciplinary perspective. Acknowledging the nuanced balance among the three critical elements, the panel recommends that programme management adopt a proactive stance in preserving this delicate equilibrium. Moreover, the panel encourages both programmes to incorporate these three elements throughout all aspects of their respective curricula, ensuring that they permeate every facet of the programmes to enhance their overall effectiveness and impact.

#### *Intended learning outcomes*

Both programmes have translated their aims into a set of intended learning outcomes (ILOs) outlining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students are to obtain by the end of the programme (see Appendix 1). The ILOs underscore a strong emphasis on academic skills and knowledge, which students apply in conducting applied research and analysing real-world cases. Furthermore, the ILOs demonstrate that students need to develop specialized professional skills, particularly in the domain of policy analysis, advice, and communication. As outlined in the self-evaluation report, the bachelor's programme is explicitly positioned at the bachelor level, progressively fostering independence and responsibility in both skills and substantive expertise, aligning with NLQF Level 6. The intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the master's programme are aligned with NLQF Level 7. Compared to the bachelor's programme, the master's programme provides more in-depth knowledge and reflection on multidisciplinary theories, which students are expected to understand and apply. This emphasis is also evident in a separate ILO in the master programme concerning reflection.

The panel studied the ILOs of both programmes and concluded that they present a well-structured overview of their main goals. The panel observed that both programmes cover the different knowledge areas of the domain-specific framework for Public Administration, Public Governance, and Governance and Organization (PAGO) Programmes. The ILOs are accurately formulated for their intended levels and distinctly delineate the differences in level between the bachelor's programme and master's programme. Regarding the *master's programme*, the panel appreciates that each of the four tracks has its own additional intended learning outcome, clearly demonstrating the distinctive nature of the individual tracks.

#### *Professional field*

In response to the recommendation of the previous committee to improve contact with stakeholders, an advisory board was established in 2022. During its first meeting, the advisory board discussed various topics, including the new bachelor curriculum and the upcoming revision of the master curriculum. Another initiative to improve contact with stakeholders involved strengthening the ties with alumni through the appointment of alumni coordinators at both the faculty and departmental levels. The departmental alumni coordinator organizes meetings where alumni are, for instance, invited for a short lecture and drinks. The panel acknowledges that significant progress has been made in strengthening contacts with the professional field and encourages the programmes to keep utilizing both the advisory board and the alumni network to enhance the relationship between the programme and the professional field.

#### Considerations

Both programmes have an ambitious and distinctive profile, aiming to nurture students into responsible, engaged, and reflective academic professionals capable of addressing the societal challenges faced by national and local governments. The panel appreciates the mission of instilling students with a critical and

reflective attitude toward theory, research methods, the role and functioning of public governance, and their own performance. The master's programme adds significant value through its emphasis on developing critical thinking skills.

The panel values the dual focus of the programmes, prioritising academic skills and knowledge, with ample attention to developing relevant professional skills in public administration. Both programmes adopt a multidisciplinary approach, fostering a structured interplay between public administration and its supporting disciplines. The panel commends the programmes for effectively balancing three essential elements: academic sophistication, the development of practical skills in students, and the multidisciplinary perspective. Recognizing the delicate equilibrium among these three elements, the panel encourages the programme management to take a proactive approach to maintaining this harmonious balance. Furthermore, the panel encourages both programmes to fully integrate the principles of this profile into all facets of their respective programmes.

The goals of both programmes have been effectively translated into two coherent sets of ILOs. The panel considers the ILOs to be appropriate in terms of content (public administration), orientation (primarily academic), and level (bachelor or master). Furthermore, the master's programme incorporates an additional intended learning outcome for each track, distinctly illustrating the unique nature of each specialization.

The panel believes that the establishment of the advisory board and the reinforcement of ties with alumni contribute to an enhanced connection with stakeholders. The panel encourages programme management to systematically utilize these contacts in strategic discussions and to foster connections with the professional field.

#### Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programmes meet standard 1.

## Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

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

#### Findings

##### *Bachelor curriculum*

The bachelor's curriculum is currently undergoing revision. Due to the significant changes involved, a gradual approach is being adopted, with the implementation of changes planned for the academic years 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025. Appendix 2 provides an overview of both the new and the old curriculum.

In the new curriculum, approximately 30% of courses are replaced by new ones, and an additional 30% are relocated within the curriculum, sometimes undergoing a name change. The revised curriculum is guided by the following principles:

1. Learning is cumulative: acknowledging that learning is more effective when it builds upon prior knowledge, the new curriculum clusters courses with similar themes to ensure a transparent and logical progression. For instance, it focuses on the early and later stages of the policy cycle in different semesters.

2. Move beyond isolated disciplinary perspectives: Instead of isolated disciplinary courses, the programme integrates various theoretical insights in one course. For instance, sociological and political theories are jointly discussed when teaching policy implementation (Implementation and Evaluation).
3. Incorporating new themes: the new curriculum introduces previously missing themes, including digitalisation, creativity in the civil service, citizen perspectives, and dealing with large datasets. This expansion is supported by an increase in core staff.
4. Enhancing the research-teaching connection: as a result of the programme revision, more teachers are now better aligned to teach courses that partly match their research expertise, strengthening the connection between research and teaching.

The bachelor's curriculum follows the standard Radboud University semester and block system. It is organized along five thematic lines (1) public administration (including organization management), (2) public policy, (3) philosophy and ethics, (4) research methods, and (5) interdisciplinarity. A second organizing principle is that the links between different courses should be evident. In the new curriculum, each semester has a specific focal point around which courses are clustered. The third organizing principle is that the level of academic achievement should progress over the years.

An innovation in the new curriculum involves students having the option, in the second semester of the second year, to choose from four specialization courses and allows students to explore their own interests, ahead of the free semester in the third year and the choice of MA programme, which they must make shortly after. They are required to complete two of these specialization courses. Each specialization course is connected to a master's programme specialization track.

Given the phased implementation of the new curriculum, the third year of the programme is currently still structured according to the old curriculum. This third year includes, among other things, 18 EC of elective space, of which students may use 12 EC for an internship. The internship aims to allow students to experience working in an organization linked to the field of public administration. At the start of the internship, students provide the supervising teacher with details about the location, tasks, duration, and goals. Upon approval, students begin their internship. A meeting is then scheduled between the student, supervising teacher, and the internship organization to align expectations. At the end of the internship, students submit a skills-focused report, graded by the supervising teacher as pass or fail. Another important element of the third year concerns the bachelor thesis, an individual assignment in which students conduct a meta-evaluation of existing research on a topic of their choice, under the supervision of an individual tutor.

Based on the documents studied and the interviews conducted, the panel is very positive about both the previous curriculum and the revised curriculum. They are logically structured, address relevant topics, and effectively operationalize the programme's profile and learning outcomes. The five thematic lines cover both the relevant subjects of the field and the disciplines from which public administration draws. The panel commends the programme management for their well-thought-out strategy in revising the curriculum. Throughout the interviews, the panel observed that the revision of the bachelor's programme was truly a result of co-creation. Staff members were engaged from the outset, participating in regular meetings to collectively discuss and formulate a thoughtfully designed curriculum and its content. According to the panel, the programme has succeeded in identifying emerging areas of teaching that align with evolving trends in public administration. Also, the panel appreciates the inclusion of an option in the new curriculum for students to choose from four specialization courses, allowing them to tailor their focus in the bachelor's programme and explore the specializations offered in the master's programme.

Students express their satisfaction with the programme in the student chapter, highlighting various strengths such as the high standard of teaching methodological skills and the emphasis on fostering a critical perspective on public administration issues. However, there is less satisfaction among students regarding the overlap between certain courses. They note that course material is sometimes repeated without further development. The programme management informed the panel that these concerns have been addressed in the programme revision. Additionally, the programme has enhanced and expanded regular meetings among lecturers of similarly themed courses to specifically address the issue of overlap.

During the site visit, the programme management explained that students were less satisfied with the faculty-wide courses, which were criticized for being too general and, in some cases, too basic. The programme recently replaced one of these courses (Economics) with one of its own and has received permission to take over the remainder of the faculty courses over the next two years.

The students with whom the panel spoke were positive about the content and structure of the programme. They value the programme's focus on social challenges and the opportunity to undertake an internship. However, they pointed out the challenge of securing an internship within the allocated 12 EC and expressed a desire for more guidance in the internship search process. The panel recommends taking a clearer stance on the internship. Although students currently have the option to pursue an internship, they receive minimal guidance in finding one. Furthermore, it proves challenging for students to complete an internship within the allotted EC. The panel suggests considering either a) addressing the challenges that students face in finding and completing an internship within the allocated 12 EC or b) providing clearer information from the outset about the challenges they may encounter when opting for an internship.

The panel also spoke with some master's students and alumni who had completed the bachelor's programme. They unanimously indicated that the current format of the thesis, which involves conducting a meta-analysis, does not adequately reflect what they learned during the bachelor's programme in terms of research skills. They would have liked to have had more opportunities to further develop their research skills during this final project. During the site visit, the programme management elucidated that it previously resembled a condensed MSc thesis. This was changed to a meta-analysis aiming to diminish time commitments for both staff and students and to avoid redundancy for students who continue with the MSc. The panel recommends exploring a different format for the bachelor thesis. While the panel understands the programme's intention to avoid redundancy with the work conducted in the master's thesis, the current choice of conducting a meta-analysis is deemed overly restrictive for students. Furthermore, the panel suggests broadening the purpose of the bachelor theses, not limiting them solely to the development of scientific research skills but also incorporating the cultivation of skills to identify, synthesize, and formulate potential public policy/strategy ideas in the researched areas.

Lastly, the panel has a more general point for improvement. It recommends paying more attention to writing and reporting skills. Some of the theses observed by the panel exhibited subpar textual quality. In discussions with the programme management and teaching staff, the panel noted that writing skills are addressed not only in academic skills courses but are also evaluated across different courses. However, there appears to be inconsistency among courses and instructors regarding the strict application of rules, such as limiting language errors to no more than five per assignment. The panel was pleased to learn that students requiring extra guidance can receive additional extracurricular support from the writing lab. Nevertheless, the panel recommends increasing emphasis on scientific writing and reporting in both courses and thesis supervision and grading. Additionally, the panel advises paying more attention to writing for different audiences. It suggests not only assigning tasks that focus on writing for an academic audience but also incorporating exercises where students can demonstrate their ability to convey complex concepts to a

broader readership and/or in a professional context, such as through assignments like writing a management summary or a policy advice brief. These types of assignments are considered a means to further reinforce the programmes' objective of cultivating relevant professional skills in public administration.

#### *Master curriculum*

The master's programme offers four specialization tracks, three in Dutch and one in English. All students in the Dutch-language MA programme take three mandatory courses: Research Approaches in Public Administration (*Bestuurskundige Onderzoeksbenaderingen*), Administrative Ethics (*Bestuurlijke Ethiek*), and Management Visions (*Sturingsvisies*, formerly known as New Public Governance until 2022). These three shared courses show the different perspectives on research, ethics, and governance paradigms through which theoretical and empirical phenomena can be understood, and which will underpin the specialization courses. In the specialization phase, students opt for one of three specialized tracks, each consisting of another three courses:

- The Governance of Safety and Security track focuses on how safety and security policies (including crisis management) develop among politicians, experts, civil servants, media, and ordinary citizens and how this works out in practice.
- The Policy Analysis and Consulting track focuses on the extent to which and under what conditions actors can develop, implement, and evaluate public policies in an environment in which facts and values are intertwined.
- The Management and Governance of Local Affairs track focuses on internal and external governance of local service delivery.

The English-language EU Governance and Politics specialization constitutes a distinct curriculum comprising six mandatory courses, taught alternately by faculty members from the Public Administration and Political Science departments. The focus is on how current political and societal developments influence the design and functioning of European Union governance, EU policymaking and implementation, and issues of legitimacy and problem-solving capacity. Students learn how EU policies are formulated and designed and how they lead to concrete results. Additionally, they participate in an Advanced Research Methods course and select an elective.

At the end of each of the four specialization tracks, students complete a master's thesis (18 EC), with the option to include either an internship or an elective course, commonly referred to as the master project. Although the internship is not obligatory, students are encouraged to do an internship as it helps them access the information (i.e., data collection) they need for their master's thesis and increases their chances of getting a job after graduation by expanding their network, skill set, and/or work experience. In practice, approximately 80% of students chooses to pursue an external internship, typically aligned with their thesis topic, while 10% opts for an internal internship, and another 10% selects an elective. External internships provide students with the opportunity to acquire work experience, build a professional network, and conduct research for their thesis within and around public sector organizations. Internal internships are more research-oriented, being tied to staff research projects, enabling students to enhance their understanding of the research process. This option is particularly appealing to students who are considering a PhD or those who have previously undertaken an external internship and wish to delve further into the research aspect.

The *master's programme* was recently voted the best Public Administration master's programme in the Netherlands in the National Student Evaluation (NSE). In both the student chapter and interviews, current students expressed their satisfaction with the programme. They particularly value the specialized courses,



where lectures are highly interactive, providing students with the opportunity to delve deeply into the material and develop their critical thinking skills. Additionally, students expressed great enthusiasm about a particular course where they had the opportunity to work on a real-life case for a municipality.

Based on the documents studied and the interviews, the panel is very positive about the curriculum. The panel established that the courses comprising the tracks are coherent and connect theory and practice in an impactful manner. Overall, the panel is of the opinion that the ILOs are consistently and effectively translated into the different tracks of the master's programme. Similar to the bachelor's programme, the panel believes that the master's programme could be enhanced by giving greater emphasis to writing skills for publications intended for a broader audience.

The panel noted that the programme has effectively addressed the recommendation of the previous panel to consider the role of the English language track within the programme and make it more appealing to international students. In response, the programme replaced the former English-language programme, COMPASS, with the more specialized EU Governance and Politics programme. The panel is also positive about the recent change of the Public Management track to the specialization of Governance and Management of Local Affairs. According to the panel, this change aligns well with the programme's mission and goals and contributes to the distinctive profile of the master's programme.

The programme management substantiates the choice of English as the language of instruction in the EU Governance and Politics track by highlighting that, in addition to academically exploring EU governance, this specialization also equips students for professional careers in transnational settings. Given that English serves as the lingua franca in such environments, students are required to enhance their English language skills relevant to their field of study and future professional endeavours. The panel fully endorses this decision and its rationale.

#### *Teaching methods*

In the *bachelor's programme*, students initially receive close guidance with weekly assignments, mentoring groups, and detailed goal setting. As they progress through the curriculum, the emphasis shifts towards promoting independent study and reflection, both individually and in groups. The curriculum reform has introduced innovative approaches, including the creation of documentaries, scenario development for future policy, and data-driven problem-solving. Typically, each course consists of approximately one-third contact hours and two-thirds independent self-study. Contact hours include lectures, small-scale working groups for discussions, guest lectures by practitioners, seminars for student presentations and discussions, and tutorials for collaborative paper preparation or software instruction, such as SPSS.

The teaching methods of the *master's programme* are similar to those in the later phase of the bachelor's programme, with an emphasis on independent learning and application. As the students move to the specialization courses, the groups become smaller, allowing for more interactive courses.

The panel observed the enthusiasm of both students and staff for the interactive teaching methods. During interviews, students expressed appreciation for the diversity in teaching methods, with particular enthusiasm for classes that involve a high level of interaction. They suggested that enhancing interactivity could be achieved by more closely integrating lectures and working groups.

The panel concludes that the programmes have effectively addressed the advice from the previous panel by incorporating a greater variety of teaching methods to enhance the learning experience for students. The programmes employ a wide diversity in educational approaches, encompassing lectures, workgroups, and

projects, which align well with the learning objectives of the various courses. The panel encourages the programme to continue developing innovative, interactive formats that contribute to a student-centred learning process.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant increase in the use of digital tools, such as Zoom sessions, live streaming, web lectures, and videos. Currently, the programme is in the process of finding the right balance between on-campus education (to ensure socialization, connection, and immersion) and digital tools such as web lectures (so students can rewatch lectures prior to the exam). The faculty policy entails recording bachelor lectures and making the recordings available two weeks before the exam week. However, due to the highly interactive nature of teaching in the master's programme, the policy is not to record any lectures. The panel endorses this policy.

#### *Entry requirements master's programme*

To enter the master's programme, students are required to have one of the following:

- Bachelor's programme in public administration or Political Science from Radboud University;
- Bachelor's programme in public administration from a different Dutch university;
- Premaster in Public Administration from Radboud University.

In January 2020, the department evaluated the pre-master's programme as recommended by the previous panel. While overall impressions were positive, several criticisms emerged, including overlap with previous education, sections perceived as overly general or basic, and limited personal counselling. Steps taken to address these concerns include the introduction of electives to provide students more opportunities for specialization and allowing specific groups (HBO Public Administration students and pre-masters students interested in the EU track) to replace one course with a more tailored option.

The programme aims to develop minors (shortened pre-master's programmes), tailored for students currently enrolled in other bachelor's programmes such as Communications Studies or Sociology. These minors serve as a pathway for these students to meet the qualifications required for entry into the master's programme. By offering such a shortened pre-master programme, the management aims to encourage more students to enrol in the master's programme.

According to the panel, the admission criteria make sense. The master's programme builds on the bachelor's programme, so a substantial premaster with bachelor's courses if students come from a different background seems necessary. The panel appreciates the modifications in the pre-master's programme and the proposed development of minors tailored for specific student groups. It advises the management to carefully monitor the effectiveness of these changes.

#### *Feasibility and completion rates*

After reviewing documents and engaging in discussions with students, the panel concludes that the *bachelor's curriculum* maintains a well-balanced study load. The completion rates for the bachelor's programme are comparable to those of other programmes within the faculty and other public administration programmes in the Netherlands. The self-evaluation report notes that this achievement is, in part, attributable to the support provided by mentors to first-year students (and second-year students during COVID-19), along with the proactive guidance offered by the student advisor. The interviewed students confirmed that they receive effective study guidance and are satisfied with the accessibility and support provided by the student advisor when needed.

For the *master's programme*, students indicate that feasibility could be improved. The programme management also recognizes this as a weakness in their SWOT analysis. The self-evaluation report explains that this feasibility issue is related to the block structure of the curriculum. For more than a decade, the curriculum was structured into four-week courses: three weeks of teaching and one week of examinations. For a long time, this was quite successful and popular among students. However, in recent years, the programme has been increasingly seen as too intense (by students as well as teaching staff). Therefore, from 2024-2025 onwards, the curriculum structure will be changed to the structure used in the bachelor's programme with seven weeks of teaching and one week of examinations (ribbon system).

In the past assessment period, the number of students completing the master's programme within the allocated time significantly decreased to just above 12%. The self-evaluation report explains that a substantial portion of the delay results from students choosing to extend their studies with extra courses, longer internships, and/or foreign exchanges, all aimed at enhancing their career opportunities. Additionally, part of the delay is attributed to personal reasons. However, a recent internal analysis revealed that for a significant portion of students, delays were also related to prolonged internships and thesis projects.

Therefore, the programme evaluated the master's thesis process and introduced changes to enhance study feasibility from 2020-2021 onwards. These changes include providing information about the thesis and the internship process earlier, emphasizing that the internship is supposed to be a research internship and should not involve regular day-to-day activities within the internship organization, introducing the research proposal earlier, and increasing guidance for supervisors. The panel was pleased to note that the strategy seems to be bearing fruit. The average one-year completion rate has increased from 12% in the period 2017-2020 to 38% in the period 2020-2022. The panel encourages the programme to continue monitoring the study progress closely and ensuring that students do not experience unwanted or unnecessary delays.

#### *Staff*

The Department Public Administration has grown considerably since the previous evaluation, from 14.8 FTE and 16 core staff members to 23.85 FTE and 25 (on average younger) core staff members as of January 2023. At the same time, student numbers have remained stable and there have been only a few courses added to the new curriculum. Therefore, the programmes have been able to invest additional resources into improving and renewing courses (sometimes accompanied by more intensive teaching formats), while also relieving the workload of staff members. The extra capacity proved extremely useful during the pandemic and the simultaneous reform of the bachelor's curriculum. In addition, the department has recruited a small number of junior teachers and teachers from practice in supporting roles. The student-staff ratio (number of students divided by FTE full/associate/assistant and other teachers) is 17.5.

The growth has led to an expansion in the disciplinary diversity of the group. An internal analysis revealed strong qualifications in almost all aspects of the curriculum, with particular strengths in public policy and quantitative methods. However, the analysis revealed room for improvement in public management and qualitative methodology. The recruitment of new assistant professors and a new professor of Public Administration has contributed to achieving a better balance. For curriculum elements related to law, the department collaborates with teaching staff members of the Faculty of Law.

Nearly all teachers with a PhD have a teaching qualification (either university or senior university level). The remainder and several of the PhD students are currently working on receiving such a certificate. Within the department, teachers responsible for consecutive courses within the same subject area convene periodically to align their courses, identify programme-wide points of improvement, and make necessary adjustments. At the faculty level, teachers have the opportunity to receive coaching and guidance to attain basic university

teaching qualifications, engage in lunch meetings on current educational topics, and seek advice from the Teaching Information Point (TIP) to enhance their courses. Given the large number of new staff members and the fact that many were hired during the pandemic, the programmes are establishing a more systematic process of onboarding and peer learning to ensure cohesiveness in the teaching approach.

From the student chapter and the conversations with the students, it appears that they are satisfied with the lecturers. According to the students, lecturers have a high level of expertise and knowledge and foster an open and informal atmosphere, contributing to a positive relationship between students and lecturers. Students also value the enthusiasm of the lecturers and note that they are very approachable.

The panel met with very qualified and dedicated teaching staff. Staff members are experienced researchers, and the panel values the link between research and teaching. It was evident to the panel that the staff members truly feel part of an educational team and are highly motivated to train students into critical public administration professionals. The panel was also pleased with the expansion of the teaching staff, noting that it has facilitated investments in the enhancement and renewal of courses, while concurrently alleviating the workload of staff members. The panel concludes that students are part of a high-quality and committed teaching environment.

### Considerations

Based on the documents studied and the interviews conducted, the panel is very positive about the curricula of both programmes. They are coherent, well-structured, and encompass all intended learning outcomes. The mission of the programmes, aimed at addressing societal issues to improve our society, has been clearly translated into the curricula and is recognizable to students, teaching staff, and alumni.

The panel is very positive about both the previous curriculum and the revised curriculum. It commends the revision of the *bachelor's programme*, applauding the well-thought-out strategy in revising the curriculum, which was truly a result of co-creation. The programme has succeeded in identifying emerging areas of teaching that align with evolving trends in public administration. The five thematic lines organizing the bachelor's programme cover both the relevant subjects of the field and the disciplines from which public administration draws. The *master's programme* is well structured, and the four different tracks are cohesive and effectively bridge theory and practice. Both programmes offer students ample opportunity to tailor the programme to their preferences.

The panel identified several points of improvement. For the *bachelor's programme*, the panel recommends taking a clearer stance on the internship, exploring a different format for the bachelor thesis, and paying more attention to writing and reporting skills. The panel believes that both programmes could be enhanced by placing greater emphasis on writing skills for publications intended for a broader audience.

The teaching methods used in the programmes are deemed appropriate. Both programmes utilize a diverse range of educational approaches, effectively aligning with the learning objectives of the different courses. While the bachelor's curriculum maintains a well-balanced study load, the feasibility of the master's programme could be improved. The programme management is aware of this and has implemented appropriate measures, including changes to the master's thesis process and a shift in the curriculum structure from a block system to a ribbon system (starting from the academic year 2024-2025).

The teaching staff is qualified for teaching in the programmes, both in terms of research background and didactic qualities. The panel highly appreciated the strong commitment towards the bachelor's and master's programmes expressed by the programme management and teachers.

## Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programmes meet standard 2.

## Standard 3. Student assessment

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

## Findings

### *System of assessment*

The assessment system of both programmes aims to (1) test what students have learned in the courses they have taken; (2) reflect the diverse aims of the programmes; (3) be responsive to the needs and input of teaching staff and students; and (4) react to new developments and experiences.

At the departmental level, a test matrix is used to oversee programme-level assessments, ensuring diversity and coherence among courses and alignment with programme goals. Course coordinators are responsible for determining how well students have achieved course objectives using various assessment methods. These assessments include traditional Q&A exams, presentations, research papers, short exercises, scenario-building reports, reflections, and other assignments, some conducted during the course and others at the end. Individual assignments complement group work assessments. All courses that assign group work also include individual assignments to ensure that students are properly assessed.

In the student chapter, students express concerns about the abundance of group assignments. They point out that group projects tend to lead to workload division. The management indicated that they recognize this concern, and it has led them to reduce the number of group assignments while introducing a greater number of individual assignments. These individual assignments vary in scale, ranging from small tasks to individual papers and reflection papers. The students with whom the panel met mentioned that the quantity of individual assignments has indeed risen, and they find the balance between individual assignments and group work satisfactory.

The panel is positive about the system of assessment in both programmes. The test matrices ensure that course assessment covers all knowledge and skills described in the ILOs of the programmes. The assessment methods are varied and fit the learning goals of the courses. The combination of group work and individual work is balanced and prepares students for their work in a future professional setting. The panel reviewed several exams and found that they constitute a well-balanced blend of theory and relevant, up-to-date case studies.

### *Examining board*

Within the faculty, Examining Boards are organized at the departmental level to ensure that tailor-made decisions can be made. The Examining Board has the triple role of (1) deciding on disputes between teachers concerning the assessment of the master thesis by requesting an independent teacher from our staff to assess the thesis; (2) monitoring the general quality of assessment in programmes; and (3) deciding on individual requests submitted by students (e.g., extensions).

In line with the departmental philosophy, the programmes consider the quality of education and assessment as the outcome of collaborative efforts involving teachers, the Examining Board, and departmental

management. The Examining Board ensures assessment quality through various measures, including monitoring exams based on student evaluations and grades, providing feedback to examiners, emphasizing the use of the four-eye principle (teachers asking colleagues to review exam questions for clarity), and appointing course assessors. The Examining Board's regulations cover various aspects, such as grade compensation, addressing suspicions of fraud, and handling cases of plagiarism.

The panel concludes that the assessment system is well-supported and consistently enhanced by the independent and professional Examining Board. The Board has established checks and balances to oversee the quality of assessments. The interview with the Examination Board revealed to the panel that the Examining Board is well-organized and systematically ensures the quality of assessments with precision. Moreover, the panel noted that the Examining Board has struck a healthy balance between on the one hand, its role as enforcer of rules and on the other hand a constructive role in which the Examining Board supports lecturers, discusses issues with the team and performs checks; it does not dictate specific directives to teachers.

#### *Thesis assessment*

The *bachelor's thesis* is an independent project in which students conduct a meta-evaluation of existing research on a topic of their choice, guided by an individual tutor. Starting in the 2022-2023 academic year, at the request of the Examining Board, each bachelor's thesis is evaluated by two lecturers. The second reader is a bachelor's thesis teacher who was not involved during the supervision process for this particular student. Both lecturers are examiners of the programme and independently assess the thesis. In cases where they agree that the thesis is satisfactory but disagree on the specific grade, with a difference of one grade point or more, a third teacher involved in the supervision of BA theses is brought in to assess the thesis. The final grade for the bachelor's thesis is determined by averaging the three grades. If only one lecturer deems the thesis unsatisfactory, a third lecturer involved in the supervision of bachelor's theses is also asked to evaluate the thesis.

Regarding the grading of the *master's thesis*, the first and second readers also independently grade the thesis using standard forms. They then confer and come to an agreement on the grade. If the grade suggestions from the two readers differ by more than one grade point or if they are unable to reach an agreement, the Examining Board will appoint a third reader, usually a full professor, whose grade will be decisive. All master's thesis supervisors hold a PhD or are in the final stages of earning one. In recent years, the programme has implemented additional measures to enhance the quality of master's thesis grading. These include the random assignment of second readers and sessions where master thesis supervisors can share their experiences, including grading. If students choose to integrate their internship with their thesis, the thesis serves as the student's internship report. Attaining a grade of 5.5 or higher for the master's thesis ensures a passing grade for the internship. If a student chooses to undertake an internship independently of the master's thesis, they must submit a report reflecting on the skills acquired, among other aspects. The thesis supervisor will assess this report, resulting in either a pass or fail grade.

As part of its preparation for the site visit, the panel studied the work of 15 students from each programme, along with the accompanying assessment forms. The panel found the assessment forms and the rubrics to be insightful and transparent. Overall, the evaluations are well structured and provide good feedback that is informed and positively critical, giving a thorough explanation as to where the strengths of the theses lie and ways in which to further strengthen the work. However, in some cases, critical feedback was not reflected in the grades assigned for various criteria. Occasionally, a rather critical evaluation of a specific criterion still resulted in a score of 7.5 or higher. The panel recommends enhancing the transparency of how assessments are translated into grades. This should be an important topic for discussion for future calibration sessions.

Additionally, the panel suggests incorporating a criterion that evaluates students' ability to develop, synthesize, and present strategic or public policy recommendations. According to the panel, this addition would further enhance the programmes' goal of cultivating relevant professional skills in public administration.

The panel highly values the fact that both the bachelor's and master's theses are evaluated by two assessors who independently assign grades. Regarding the master's thesis, the panel has a clear understanding of how the two assessors reach a consensus on the final grade and the procedures in place in case of a disagreement between them. However, the process by which the two assessors come to an agreement on the final grade for the bachelor's thesis was less evident to the panel. From the meeting with the Examining Board, the panel gathered that this process requires further development. The panel was pleased to hear that the programme management will soon submit a proposal to the Examining Board on how they plan to organize the entire assessment process for the bachelor's thesis more transparently.

#### Considerations

The panel is positive regarding the assessment system in both programmes. The assessment methods are diverse and align well with the learning goals of the courses. The balance between group work and individual assignments effectively prepares students for their future professional setting. The assessment system is consistently supported and improved by the Examining Board, which operates independently and professionally. It has checks and balances in place and plays an important role in the quality assurance of the two programmes.

The thesis assessment procedures are up to standard. The assessment forms and rubrics are insightful and transparent, although there is room for improvement in the transparency of how assessments and feedback are translated into grades. Furthermore, the panel recommends including a criterion to assess students' capabilities in developing, synthesising, and presenting strategic or public policy recommendations. This addition is seen as a means to further enhance the programmes' objective of cultivating relevant professional skills in public administration.

The panel appreciates the fact that both the bachelor's and master's theses are evaluated by two assessors who independently assign grades. For the bachelor's programme, the process by which the two assessors reach an agreement on the final grade for the bachelor thesis was less evident to the panel and could be made more transparent.

#### Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programmes meet standard 3.

#### Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

#### Findings

##### *Quality theses*

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied the theses of 15 bachelor graduates as well as of 15 master graduates. The panel took care that all tracks of the master's programme were sufficiently covered in the selection.

For the *bachelor's programme*, the panel found that the theses demonstrate that students possess a solid understanding of (meta)-evaluations in the field of policy reviews and a grasp of the methodological criteria these evaluations should adhere to. The chosen subjects are both interesting and relevant and effectively articulate the academic and societal value of these topics. The panel is also of the opinion that the theses are well-structured, and the theoretical frameworks are generally interesting. While the panel is generally positive about the bachelor's theses overall quality, it identified one thesis as unsatisfactory, graded with a six by the programme. This thesis exhibited an unclear research question, a redundant theoretical framework, and insufficient text quality. Based on the discussions during the site visit and the convincing quality of the other theses, the panel considers this unsatisfactory thesis as an outlier, not representative of the overall quality of the theses. Moreover, the panel notes that the theses in general could benefit from enhancements in writing and reporting skills (Standard 2).

For the *master's programme*, the panel found that the theses are of good quality. The theses feature well-crafted explanations of conceptual frameworks, particularly in relation to methodology. It is also evident from the theses that students have a good understanding of concepts and 'real-world' issues. Some theses were even considered excellent, demonstrating that certain students have outstanding research and analytical skills.

Overall, the theses convincingly showed that the intended learning outcomes for both programmes are achieved by its graduates. For both programmes, the distribution of marks is fair and well-aligned with the substantive content of the work. The panel thinks that the quality of the theses and their positive impact on students' subsequent careers can be enhanced by placing a clearer focus on possible strategies or public policy recommendations related to the topics analysed.

### *Alumni*

Roughly 50% of the *bachelor students* continue with the master's programme in Public Administration at Radboud University. A smaller percentage opts for a different master's programme within the university, and approximately 30% choose to pursue their master's studies elsewhere. The alumni survey 2023 showed a great sense of satisfaction with their education, with 84% being (highly) satisfied with their bachelor's programme. They specifically highlighted the importance of critical and analytical thinking, effective communication, cooperation, and argumentation. Additionally, 91% of the alumni assigned (very) high importance to the societal impact of their work, indicating a strong commitment among graduates to serve the public interest and address complex societal challenges.

According to the National Alumni Survey, the average time between graduating and the first paid job is two months. Most of the graduates work in the government sector (65%) or the private sector (18%), while 12% work in research and education, and 6% work in healthcare. The master graduates interviewed by the panel during the site visit expressed high satisfaction with their education, particularly highlighting that the programme has effectively equipped them with advanced critical and analytical thinking abilities. They feel well-prepared to contribute to complex issues in the field of public administration. They had only one suggestion for improvement, which was to provide more attention to writing skills for a broader audience (see standard 2).

### Considerations

The panel concludes that the theses show that the intended learning outcomes are achieved for both programmes. The theses are generally of good quality, addressing real-world issues pertinent to the



objectives of the programmes. The programmes prepare students for relevant master's programmes and relevant positions in the academic and professional field.

### Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programmes meet standard 4.

### Standard 5. Diversity

Staff and student populations should adequately reflect society, in various ways. The programme has an adequate strategy for dealing with the diverse backgrounds of students.

### Findings

Emancipation is a fundamental value at the university, faculty, and department levels, intending to make a societal impact, particularly for minority groups. For example, in discussions about new policies, such as the potential paywall for ChatGPT, the faculty emphasizes the importance of equal opportunities for all students.

At the departmental level, the commitment to driving societal change is closely tied to the ambition of presenting a range of perspectives. The ultimate goal is to instil a sense of responsibility in students, helping them recognize the impact of their future actions as academic professionals on citizens, the country, the climate, and the global community. Therefore, the aim is to ensure that students are exposed to diverse perspectives and encouraged to appreciate that their perception of the world may differ from that of other citizens. This is achieved through various methods, including course materials, insights from guest speakers, research, and lectures on current events. Instructors employ techniques such as presenting cases and videos to illustrate the complexity of reality in the classroom. Teachers also choose to dedicate one or more meetings to addressing specific issues, such as the challenges citizens may face in using public services or instances of institutional racism.

In terms of gender balance, the department is more or less balanced among both staff (46% female) and students (bachelor 43% female and master 48% female). As explained in the self-evaluation report, the university's location in a region with lower ethnic diversity compared to other areas in the Netherlands results in fewer students from ethnic minority backgrounds. The self-evaluation report further explains that the programme does have a good representation of first-generation students at the university (first-generation students are those who are the first in their families to pursue a college or university education). An informal poll during a course in the 2022-2023 academic year revealed that approximately 50% of the students present were first-generation students. Similarly, during a staff meeting, it was observed that a significant proportion of staff members were also first-generation.

The panel concludes that the programmes explicitly prioritize diversity, encompassing both the makeup of the faculty and student body, as well as diversity within the curriculum. The panel determines that the gender balance in the programmes is considered satisfactory. However, the panel noted that there is room for improvement in terms of diversifying cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The panel acknowledges that the Nijmegen region may exhibit less cultural diversity than larger metropolitan areas in the Netherlands, a characteristic reflected in the student population. Although the panel appreciates that the programme attracts many first-generation students, it emphasizes that this does not automatically translate into increased diversity among students, particularly in terms of socio-economic status. The panel suggests that targeting students from more underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds could prove to be a highly

effective strategy for enhancing programme diversity. Marketing initiatives can target this group by, for example, featuring a diverse selection of alumni in programme promotions and showcasing their variety in socio-cultural backgrounds and current careers.

Moreover, the panel acknowledges the diverse representation of advisory board members from various governmental and relevant public organizations. However, it recommends broadening the board's diversity in other aspects, such as considering the socio-cultural backgrounds of members or the nature of issues they deal with in their daily work.

### Considerations

The programmes clearly have diversity on the agenda, both in terms of the composition of the staff and the student population, as well as diversity within the curriculum. The panel concludes that while the gender balance in the programmes is deemed satisfactory, there is room for improvement in terms of diversifying cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. It suggests targeting students from more underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds and further diversifying the composition of the Advisory Board.

### Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programmes meet standard 5.

### General conclusion

The panel's assessment of the BSc and MSc Public Administration is positive.

### Development points

1. Adopt a proactive approach to maintaining a harmonious balance among a) academic sophistication, b) the development of practical skills in students, and c) the multidisciplinary perspective. Integrate these principal elements into all facets of both programmes.
2. Enhance the cultivation of professional skills in public administration by:
  - a. placing greater emphasis on writing skills for a broader audience;
  - b. incorporating a criterion in the thesis assessments to evaluate students' abilities in developing, synthesizing, and presenting strategic or public policy recommendations.
3. Implement a targeted strategy to attract students from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds as an effective measure to enhance programme diversity.
4. *Bachelor's programme*: Take a clearer stance on internships, explore alternative formats for the bachelor thesis, and place increased emphasis on refining writing and reporting skills. Additionally, enhance the transparency of the process by which the two assessors reach an agreement on the final grade for the bachelor's thesis.

# Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

## **Bachelor's programme Public Administration**

Aan het einde van de opleiding is de student in staat om:

1. Theorie: de belangrijkste begrippen, theorieën en concepten van de bestuurskunde op het vlak van beleid (beleidsanalyse, besluitvorming en ontwikkeling van beleid), bestuur en management (organisatie(processen), besturing en structuur en functioneren van openbaar bestuur voor verschillende niveaus en organisaties):
  - a) toe te lichten, kritisch te beoordelen en te relateren aan actuele ontwikkelingen en debatten;
  - b) te relateren aan basiskennis van de sociologie, filosofie, politicologie, economie (in het bijzonder de openbare financiën), Nederlands recht (in het bijzonder staats- en bestuursrecht).
2. Onderzoek (onder begeleiding) kwantitatief en kwalitatief sociaal-wetenschappelijk onderzoek op te zetten om te beschrijven, te verklaren of te toetsen en kritisch te reflecteren op de mogelijkheden en beperkingen hiervan.
3. Toepassing: bestuurlijke, beleidsmatige en/of organisatieproblemen te analyseren, interpreteren en verklaren binnen hun juridische, economische en maatschappelijke context en aan de hand hiervan adviezen over beleid en organisatie te ontwikkelen, uit te voeren en kritisch te evalueren door middel van kritische reflectie.
4. Communicatie: wetenschappelijk verantwoord te communiceren en rapporteren over bestuurskundig onderzoek en beleid, door systematisch te werken bij het verzamelen en verwerken van informatie en het schriftelijk en mondeling rapporteren daarover aan zowel specialisten als niet-specialisten.

## **Master's programme Public Administration**

At the end of the degree programme, students are specialised in one of the following disciplinary fields:

- Beleidsadviesing: ability to investigate to what extent and under what conditions actors in an environment in which facts and values are intertwined are able to develop effective and legitimate policy and to formulate policy advice on this basis.
- Bestuur en Management van Lokale Vraagstukken: Able to investigate how local governments address complex social issues effectively, efficiently and legitimately, in a context of major mutual dependencies between local governments and other organisations, such as (national) governments or private organisations, and residents.
- Besturen van Veiligheid: capable of perceiving the formal and informal forces that determine the development of security policy (including crisis management) and advising public administration from various perspectives on 'reasonable and understandable' security policy.
- European Union Governance and Politics: able to investigate how political and societal pressures, and the interaction between different European and national levels of governance, affect the shaping and functioning of European governance, policy interventions, processes of European policy formulation and implementation, and issues regarding legitimacy and problem-solving in European politics and governance.

At the end of the degree programme, students are capable of:

1. Theory: applying the most important theories and concepts (including current ones) of organisation when conducting research into all types of public and semi-public administrative organisations, assessing the research for its public administration effectiveness and legitimacy, and reflecting on the roles of various actors from a relational and sectoral perspective.
2. Application: based on theories that apply to the specific specialization:
  - a. performing and assessing policy studies, implementation processes and effective consultation; or

- b. conducting research into various types of public and semi-public administrative organisations/sectors and providing corresponding advice; or
  - c. conducting research into crisis management and public safety management, and providing corresponding advice; or
  - d. conducting research into how government institutions, government sectors and the government in its totality deal with external and internal changes.
3. Research: based on autonomously designed and implemented public administration research within the corresponding specialization, contributing to the development of scientific knowledge.
4. Reflection: applying questions of administrative ethics, normative theories and epistemological knowledge to issues of policy, administration and organisation, and reflecting critically on the development of scientific knowledge and the role of scientific research in public administration.
5. Communication: in a scientifically responsible fashion, communicating and reporting on research, policy, administration and organisation, and adequately accounting for this in writing and orally in both academia and a professional environment.

## Appendix 2. Programme curricula

### The old curriculum Bachelor Public Administration

	1	2	3	4
Year 1	Core Themes in Public Administration	Policy Project	Domestic Governance	Management of Public Administration
	RIM-A	Organisation Theory	RIM-B	Project Domestic Governance
	Academic Skills		Introduction to Law	
Year 2	Sociology for Public Administrators	Economics of Management Sciences	The Policy Cycle 1 Agenda- and Decisionmaking	Philosophy of the Management Sciences
	Research Methods in Public Administration I	Project: Comparative Analysis	Administration, Power and Justice	Project Consultancy and Organisation Behaviour
	Management of Complexed Services		Research Methods in Public Administration II	
Year 3	European Governance	Bachelor's thesis (12 EC)	Free space / internship	
	The Policy Cycle 2 Implementation and Evaluation			
	Comparative Public Administration			

## The new curriculum 2023-2024 Bachelor Public Administration

	1	2	3	4
Year 1	Core Themes in Public Administration	Domestic Governance	Agenda- and Decisionmaking in Policy	Philosophy of the Management Sciences
	RIM-A	Politics and Governance	RIM-B	Policy integration and simulation
	Academic Skills		Law and Governance	
Year 2	Implementation and Evaluation of Policy	Citizen and Governance	Comparative Public Administration	EU Governance in Practice
				Safety in the Netherlands: Policy and Organisation
	Research Methods in Public Administration II	Vitality and Management of Public Organisations	European Governance	Challenges in Policy Advice
				Local Challenges
	Economics and Governance		Research Methods in Public Administration II	
Year 3	Free space / internship		Bachelor's thesis (3 ECTS block 1, 9 ECTS block 2)	
			Hackathon	Governance in the digital age
			Good Governance	

## Master Curriculum Public Administration 2022-2023

### Master Public Administration (per specialization)

Policy Analysis and Consulting	Governance of Safety and security	Governance and Management of Local Affairs	Period	Credits
Research Approaches in Public Administration			1	6 EC
Management Visions: current challenges			1	6 EC
Administrative Ethics			1	6 EC
Policy Consultancy: Proof & Policy	Public Safety Management: Safety Management in the Netherlands	Governance and Management of the External Environment	2	6 EC
Policy Consultancy: Imaging & Policy	Public Safety Management: Organization and Execution	Internal Organisation and Management	2	6 EC
Policy Consultancy Contemporary Methods of Policy Research	Public Safety Management: Contemporary Methods of Security Research	Practice-oriented research in local government	3	6 EC
Master's Project in Public Administration			3-4	6 EC
Master's Thesis in Public Administration			3-4	18 EC

### European Union Governance and Politics - Public Administration

European Union Governance and Politics	Period	Credits
The EU Executive Order	1	6 EC
Politicization of the EU Arena	1	6 EC
Advanced Research Methods	1	6 EC
EU Policy Delivery	2	6 EC
EU Policy in Practice	2	6 EC
Free Elective	-	6 EC
Master's Project Public Administration	3	6 EC
Master's Thesis Public Administration	3-4	18 EC

## Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Monday 6 November 2023

09.00 – 09.15	Welcome and arrival
09.15 – 10.45	Panel preparation (including consultation hour)
<b>10.45 - 11.30</b>	<b>Interview management</b>
11.30 - 11.45	Break/internal panel meeting
<b>11.45 – 12.30</b>	<b>Interview bachelor students</b>
12.30 -13.15	Lunch
<b>13.15 – 14.00</b>	<b>Interview teaching staff bachelor</b>
14.00 -14.15	Break/ Internal panel meeting
<b>14.15- 15.00</b>	<b>Interview master students</b>
<b>15.00 -15.30</b>	<b>Guided tour</b>
<b>15:30 -16.15</b>	<b>Interview teaching staff master</b>
16.15– 16.30	Break/ Internal panel meeting
<b>16.30 -17.15</b>	<b>Representatives of the Advisory Board &amp; alumni</b>

Tuesday 7 November 2023

8:45-9:15	Internal panel meeting
<b>09.15 - 10.00</b>	<b>Interview Board of Examiners</b>
10.00 - 10.30	Internal panel meeting
<b>10.30 - 11.15</b>	<b>Final interview management</b>
11.15 - 13.15	Concluding panel session (incl. lunch)
<b>13.15 - 14.15</b>	<b>Development Dialogue</b>
14.15 – 14.30	Break/internal panel meeting
<b>14.30- 15.00</b>	<b>Oral feedback</b>



## Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses per programme. Information on the theses is available from Academion upon request. The panel also studied other materials, which included:

- Domain-Specific Frame of Reference for Public Administration, Public Governance, and Governance and Organisation (PAGO) Programmes
- Old and new BA curriculum
- Structure of the Master's programme
- Overview of the teaching staff
- Internship regulations bachelor
- Internship regulations master
- Examining Board: Template assessing written exams
- Overview of internships
- Systematiek kwaliteitsborging toetsing
- Bachelor's Thesis guide and assessment form 2021-2022 and 2022-2023
- Master's Thesis assessment form 2022-2023
- Student chapter 2022-2023
- Department of Public Administration: SWOT-analysis 2023
- Most recent annual report of the Examining Board
- Most recent annual report of the Programme Committee
- On COVID-19
- Composition of the Advisory Board 2023
- Exit data Master's programme
- Notitie masterthesistrject
- Exam matrix- end terms
- Exam-matrix- types of examns
- Faculty memo ChatGpT and education
- Actions in response to recommendations made by the previous assessment committee
- Education and Examination Regulations BSc Public Administration 2021-2022 and 2022-2023
- Education and Examination Regulations MSc Public Administration 2021-2022 and 2022-2023
- Rules and Regulations of the Examination Board in Public Administration 2022-2023
- Study guide BA Public Administration 2021-2022 and 2022-2023
- Study guide Ma Public Administration 2021-2022 and 2022-2023