

MASTER'S PROGRAMME
INTERNATIONAL CRIMES, CONFLICT
AND CRIMINOLOGY

FACULTY OF LAW

VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

QANU
Catharijnesingel 56
PO Box 8035
3503 RA Utrecht
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0) 30 230 3100
E-mail: support@qanu.nl
Internet: www.qanu.nl

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This report was finalized on 15 April 2019.

REPORT ON THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME INTERNATIONAL CRIMES, CONFLICT AND CRIMINOLOGY OF VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for Limited Programme Assessments as a starting point (September 2016).

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

Master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology

Name of the programme:	M International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology
CROHO number:	66724
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specializations or tracks:	n.a.
Location(s):	Amsterdam
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Expiration of accreditation:	30/06/2021

The visit of the assessment panel Criminology to the Faculty of Law of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam took place on 17 and 18 January 2019.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

Name of the institution:	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
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 the 10th of December 2018. The panel that assessed the master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology consisted of:

- Prof. L. (Letizia) Paoli, professor in Criminology at the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University of Leuven (chair);
- Prof. dr. A.C.M. (Toine) Spapens, professor in Criminology at Tilburg Law School of Tilburg University;
- Prof. I. (Ineke) Haen Marshall, professor at the Department of Sociology and the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice of Northeastern University (USA);
- Dr. A.G. (Andrea) Donker, lector Knowledge Analysis Societal Security at the Research Centre for Societal Innovation of the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences;
- I. (Iris) Willems, master's student Criminology at Erasmus University Rotterdam (student member).

The panel was supported by A.P. (Anke) Van Wier, MA, who acted as secretary.



WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The site visit to the master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology at the Faculty of Law of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam was part of the cluster assessment Criminology. In January 2019 the panel assessed nine programmes at four universities. The following universities participated in this cluster assessment: Leiden University, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Utrecht University and Erasmus University Rotterdam.

On behalf of the participating universities, quality assurance agency QANU was responsible for logistical support, panel guidance and the production of the reports. Fiona Schouten was project coordinator for QANU. Fiona Schouten and Anke van Wier acted as secretaries in the cluster assessment. They are certified NVAO secretaries.

Panel members

The panel consisted of the following members:

- Prof. L. (Letizia) Paoli, professor in Criminology at the Faculty of Law of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium (chair);
- Prof. dr. A.C.M. (Toine) Spapens, professor in Criminology at Tilburg Law School of Tilburg University;
- Prof. mr. dr. S. (Suzan) van der Aa, professor in Criminal Law & Criminology at Maastricht University;
- Prof. dr. T. (Tom) Vander Beken, professor at the Department of Criminology, Penal Law and Social Law at Ghent University (Belgium);
- Prof. I. (Ineke) Haen Marshall, professor at the Department of Sociology and the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice of Northeastern University (USA);
- Dr. A.G. (Andrea) Donker, lector Knowledge Analysis Societal Security at the Research Centre for Societal Innovation of the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences;
- Prof. dr. M. (Marc) Cools, professor in Criminology at Ghent University (Belgium);
- Dr. M. (Martina) Althoff, associate professor in Criminology at the department of Criminal Law and Criminology of the Faculty of Law, University of Groningen;
- A. (Annika) Both, master's student Criminology at Erasmus University Rotterdam (student member);
- A. (Aster) Kroon, master's student Criminology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (student member);
- I. (Iris) Willems, master's student Criminology at Erasmus University Rotterdam (student member);

Preparation

On 10 September 2018, the panel chair was briefed by QANU on her role, the assessment framework, the working method, and the planning of site visits and reports. A preparatory panel meeting was organised on 7 December 2018. During this meeting, the panel members received instruction on the use of the assessment framework. The panel also discussed their working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

The project coordinator composed a schedule for the site visit in consultation with the Faculty. Prior to the site visit, the faculty selected representative partners for the various interviews. See Appendix 4 for the final schedule.

Before the site visit to Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, QANU received the self-evaluation reports of the programmes and sent these to the panel. A thesis selection was made by the panel's chair and the project coordinator. The selection consisted of fifteen theses and their assessment forms for the programmes, based on a provided list of graduates between 2016-2018. A variety of topics and tracks and a diversity of examiners were included in the selection. The project coordinator and panel chair assured that the distribution of grades in the selection matched the distribution of grades of all available theses.

After studying the self-evaluation report, theses and assessment forms, the panel members formulated their preliminary findings. The secretary collected all initial questions and remarks and distributed these amongst all panel members.

At the start of the site visit, the panel discussed its initial findings on the self-evaluation reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit.

Site visit

The site visit to Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam took place on 17 and 18 January 2019. Before and during the site visit, the panel studied the additional documents provided by the programmes. An overview of these materials can be found in Appendix 5. The panel conducted interviews with representatives of the programmes: students and staff members, the programme's management, alumni and representatives of the Board of Examiners.

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 panel's preliminary findings and general observations.

Consistency and calibration

In order to assure the consistency of assessment within the cluster, various measures were taken:

1. The panel composition ensured regular attendance of (key) panel members, including the chair;
2. The coordinator was present at the start of all site visits as well as the panel discussion leading to the preliminary findings at all site visits.

Report

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to the project coordinator for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel. After processing the panel members' feedback, the project coordinator sent the draft reports to the faculty in order to have these checked for factual irregularities. The project coordinator discussed the ensuing comments with the panel's chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The report was then finalised and sent to the Faculty and University Board.

Definition of judgements standards

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments, the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of both the standards and the programme as a whole.

Generic quality

The quality that, in an international perspective, may reasonably be expected from a higher education Associate Degree, Bachelor's or Master's programme.

Unsatisfactory

The programme does not meet the generic quality standard and shows shortcomings with respect to multiple aspects of the standard.

Satisfactory

The programme meets the generic quality standard across its entire spectrum.

Good

The programme systematically surpasses the generic quality standard.

Excellent

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



SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

Intended learning outcomes

According to the panel, the master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has a unique and remarkable profile. It is finely attuned to the needs of the highly competitive professional field. The panel considers the addition of the element of 'conflict' to the programme's name and aims a good extension of its profile. The master's programme's aims and profile are closely in line with the faculty's aims and philosophy as a whole. The formulated intended learning outcomes reflect the aims of the programme and describe the level and orientation in a detailed manner, paying attention to a broad range of knowledge acquisition and skills development. The panel highly appreciates the emphasis placed upon originality and creative thought in the intended learning outcomes.

Teaching and learning environment

The panel is impressed with the curriculum of the ICC master's programme. Its content is truly interdisciplinary and is clearly connected to the philosophy of both the VU as a whole and the Faculty of Law in particular. The panel concluded that the programme's components have been demonstrably matched to its main aims and the intended learning outcomes. It praises the programme for the revisions they have recently carried out regarding the inclusion of the dimension of conflict in the curriculum, plus extended and improved skills and methods training. It considers them a clear improvement for the programme and makes it truly interdisciplinary.

The panel is pleased to see that the ICC programme enables students to achieve the final qualifications in a timely manner, notwithstanding its challenging and ambitious nature. In part this is due to the good design of the thesis trajectory and the supervision offered. The relatively small class size and interactive and innovative teaching methods encourage students to develop their knowledge and skills as self-directed learners. The panel compliments the programme on the way it engages and encourages students to direct their own learning. It also praises the programme for the large number of options it offers to tailor the programme towards their personal interests. It is enthusiastic about the expert seminars and the ways in which the programme involves students in the ongoing research of faculty members. It has seen that the 'mixed classroom' approach truly is an asset of the programme. It is impressed with the professional approach that the programme adopts towards teaching and is glad to see that teaching in the programme is done by renowned researchers in the field.

The panel identified a couple of options for further improvement. While it is very positive about the changes already made to the methods and skills teaching trajectory, it advises the programme to consider tailoring this even more to the students' needs. This would include devoting more attention to qualitative and non-empirical research. It would furthermore be good, in the panel's view, to include more practical assignments in the methods and skills teaching. Finally, it recommends exploring whether more options to conduct fieldwork or internships during the programme could be included.

Assessment

The panel confirmed that the assessment and evaluation system of the ICC programme functions at a high level. Exams and tests are well designed and of good quality, and a variety of assessment methods assure the training of various skills and the attainment of the intended learning outcomes. The programme has a clear and well-developed assessment policy and an assessment plan. Criteria and modes of assessment are sufficiently communicated through the short lines of communication present in the programme. The quality assurance of this system functions well.

The panel concluded that the thesis trajectory is properly set up. Students are aware of the assessment criteria and are adequately assessed. Feedback forms are clear and are adequately filled out. They have recently been improved to clearly separate the comments from the two readers. The panel would like to see more narrative feedback provided on these forms and recommends adding

more extensive sections on methodology, justification of methodological choices and critical evaluation of the literature.

The panel is very impressed by the work and professionalism of the Examination Board. The Board has a clear view of its tasks and responsibilities, carries out its tasks in a proactive manner, and is in control of safeguarding assessment quality.

Achieved learning outcomes

The panel concluded that students in the ICC programme realise the intended learning outcomes. The level of the theses was adequate but varied. A number of the theses did not include a thorough discussion of methods or a critical evaluation of the literature. The panel also observed differences in quality between theses based on empirical work and those based on the literature, with the former being of higher quality than the latter. It established that the programme's alumni succeed in obtaining a professional position that matches their degree level.

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

Master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	good
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	good
Standard 3: Student assessment	good
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	satisfactory
General conclusion	satisfactory

The chair, prof. L. Paoli, and the secretary, A.P. van Wier MA, 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: 15 April 2019



DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR LIMITED FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENTS

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

Profile

The master's programme of International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam aims to train a select and diverse group of students to study international and conflict-related crimes through an interdisciplinary perspective. This one-year programme aims to train students to work in various types of organisations, ranging from human rights organisations, governmental departments and international organisations, to universities and research institutes.

As of the 2018-2019 academic year, the programme has changed its name from 'International Crimes and Criminology' to 'International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology'. For reasons of branding, the programme will keep using the abbreviation 'ICC', and this report will follow that convention. The panel is very positive about the addition of the conflict dimension to the programme, judging it to be both a perfectly fitting and a very timely inclusion. Through adding the element of conflict to the programme, students are enabled to study criminal activity that does not meet the strict definition of international crimes, but is worth looking into. Examples include (international) terrorism and human trafficking. The panel believes that including the conflict element in the programme has made it unique among the Dutch criminology programmes.

The panel considers the programme's profile clearly defined and very suitable for a master's degree in Criminology. It confirmed that the programme's profile is clearly aligned with the overarching philosophy of the Faculty of Law of the Vrije Universiteit: *Law in Action*, in which the societal implications of law take centre stage.

The programme management is aided by an advisory board composed of representatives from the work field, some of whom are themselves alumni of the programme. The panel is convinced that this ensures that the programme stays in touch with the demands of the highly competitive professional field.

Intended learning outcomes

The master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology has formulated three general aims:

1. prepare the student to practice professionally as, inter alia, analyst, policy maker, researcher or expert in the field of international crimes, other conflict related crimes and international criminal justice;
2. teach the student specialised knowledge, skills and understanding in the field of international crimes, other conflict related crimes and international criminal justice;
3. prepare the student for academic work in the field of international crimes, other conflict related crimes and international criminal justice.

The programme has translated these aims into ten intended learning outcomes (see appendix 3), which describe the knowledge and skills that students need to acquire. The panel confirmed that the intended learning outcomes adhere to the domain-specific framework of reference (see appendix 2) for Dutch criminology programmes. Through the link with the framework, the programme also ensures that it meets the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes in criminology. The panel is very pleased with the level and orientation of the intended learning outcomes, and confirmed that they are appropriate for an academic master's programme. The intended learning outcomes are

concrete and clearly formulated. The panel is very positive about the emphasis placed on originality and creative thinking in these intended learning outcomes.

Considerations

According to the panel, the master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has a unique and remarkable profile. It is finely attuned to the needs of the highly competitive professional field. The panel considers the addition of the element of 'conflict' to the programme's name and aims a good extension of its profile. The master's programme's aims and profile are closely in line with the faculty's aims and philosophy as a whole. The formulated intended learning outcomes reflect the aims of the programme and describe the level and orientation in a detailed manner, paying attention to a broad range of knowledge acquisition and skills development. The panel highly appreciates the emphasis placed upon originality and creative thought in the intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology: the panel assesses Standard 1 as 'good'.

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

International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology (ICC) is a one-year master's programme. It used to have an annual average intake of 25 students per year, but following the implementation of a new faculty-wide policy, the programme is now aiming to attract 30-40 students per year. Through a strict selection process, the programme ensures that the quality of the cohort stays at the level that was maintained previously. It aims to bring in a diverse population of students, in terms of both nationality and disciplinary background. It generally attracts two-thirds of its student population from outside of the Netherlands. The panel confirmed that the programme's students are also diverse in terms of their previous education, having spoken to students from disciplines ranging from anthropology to law, criminology and sociology.

Curriculum contents and design

The curriculum of ICC is divided into two semesters composed of three blocks each. The blocks follow the university-wide academic calendar, in accordance with university policy. The first two blocks are 8 weeks in length, the last one 4 weeks. A schematic overview of the curriculum can be found in appendix 4 of this report. The programme consists of three compulsory courses worth 42 EC in total: the courses 'Conflict and Crimes' and 'International Criminal Courts and Tribunals' and the thesis trajectory. In addition to these mandatory courses, the programme offers nine elective modules in the second semester, consisting of regular courses and expert seminars. Students must follow two electives and two expert seminars.

The panel studied the curriculum presented in the critical reflection and the online learning environment. It looked at the study guide for the entire programme and into material provided for certain courses in more detail (see appendix 6). It also discussed the curriculum with the programme management, teaching staff, students and alumni. It is highly impressed by the set-up of the curriculum, which it considers very ambitious. The critical reflection contains an insightful matrix taken from the programme's assessment plan that relates all courses to the intended learning outcomes.

The programme management has recently undertaken a large revision of the programme with the aim of making it more attractive to prospective students, by better balancing the workload between periods, making it more interdisciplinary, adding a stronger emphasis on methods and skills training,



and firmly integrating the element of 'conflict' into the curriculum. The panel is very positive about these revisions. The programme's current students indicated that they chose to study ICC at the VU over other, similar programmes precisely because of its interdisciplinary nature. They indicated that although the interdisciplinary nature of the programme makes it challenging, this also makes it more interesting. The panel considers the way in which the ICC master combines and integrates the criminological 'mother disciplines' sociology, law, psychology and statistics a strong point of the programme.

The programme starts with the 'Conflicts and Crimes' course in the first semester, which functions as a 'crash course' in the field of international crimes, conflict and criminology. The students the panel spoke to indicated that this course succeeds in bringing the entire cohort, with their diverse backgrounds, up to speed with regard to the main theories and concepts that they will deal with later on in the programme. The course also requires students to familiarise themselves with some of the conventions regarding the use and evaluation of sources, both academic and non-academic, and with practical skills such as writing research papers and presenting research findings.

Students also follow a course on research methods and skills in the second period. The panel is appreciative of the efforts the programme management has already taken when it comes to strengthening their methods and skills teaching trajectory. It greatly appreciates the attention paid to writing research papers, and the number of opportunities students get to receive feedback on their writing. At the same time, the panel is of the opinion that the programme could do even more to familiarise students with social science research methods and conventions in this field. In its talks with students, the panel learned that they would be interested in an extended crash course in methods, parallel to the crash course in 'content' that they take in the first period. It also feels that more could be done to attune the method teaching trajectory to the type of research students tend to do in their thesis (or their professional careers). Having studied a sample of theses from recent graduates, the panel found that the majority of the students opts for a literature study instead of empirical research. It recommends paying more attention in the methods and skills trajectory to justification of the methodology used in literature-based research and to qualitative methodology in general.

As of the 2018-2019 academic year, the programme has included the element of 'conflict' in both its name and its intended learning outcomes. The panel is pleased to see that this element has also been implemented throughout the curriculum. The programme has both created new courses to accommodate this change and adapted old courses to pay more attention to this dimension and the interrelationships that exist between crime and conflict. Since international conflict is a fast-moving field, the panel urges the programme to avoid complacency and stay attuned to developments in this area. The programme should ensure that the students deal with current topics as much as possible, while older conflicts can serve as a point of reference.

Students of the ICC master's programme have a lot of options to tailor the programme to fit their own interests, with 18 out of 60 EC available for electives. The panel also appreciates the number of optional, extracurricular courses the programme offers. Examples include a fieldtrip to Bosnia to learn about Transitional Justice, a research lab placement at the Center for International Criminal Justice, and participation in the Amsterdam Law Forum. The panel would welcome opportunities in the curriculum to conduct fieldwork or do an internship, but it understands that the choices that the programme has made as well as external constraints placed upon it preclude the freeing up a lot of space for these activities.

The programme's final project is quite comprehensive, encompassing 18 EC and a large part of the second semester. The panel was impressed with the organisation of the thesis trajectory. It appreciates the fact that the second reader is involved early on in the process. Before a student can proceed with the thesis, not only the first reader has to give approval once the student has handed in a workable research design, the second reader also needs to give a green light. Students of the programme have 10 months to complete their thesis (counting from the green-light moment). If

they do not finish within these 10 months, they will need to start a new thesis trajectory, with another topic. The panel has confirmed that this is a feasible approach to the thesis trajectory.

Didactic approach

Teaching at the Faculty of Law of the VU is based on the motto 'education that challenges'. The faculty wants to stimulate students to be part of the academic community, articulated as 'academic citizenship'. This educational philosophy is derived from the university-wide teaching philosophy that revolves around the three core values of personal engagement, openness and responsibility. The panel confirms that teaching in the ICC programme adheres to these values. The relatively small scale of the programme allows teaching to take place in interactive lectures and workshops. This format is regarded as very positive by both staff and students. Students are expected to play an active role in these classes, and discussion and critical reflection are very much encouraged.

The programme uses a wide variety of teaching formats such as lectures, seminars, workshops, study trips to institutions in the field, and presentations. The panel was glad to hear about some innovative educational formats. One example of this is part of a methods course, in which students interview grandchildren of victims of the Second World War. These interviews are then discussed and analysed in class. The students were very positive about this practical exercise, and stated that the methods trajectory could perhaps include even more practical assignments like that one, such as a moot court exercise. The panel supports this wish, and encourages the programme to continue to develop practical exercises for the methods trajectory.

As a result of its restrictive application process, the programme is able to tailor the composition of the student cohorts. A primary aim of this process is to create a 'mixed classroom', containing students with both different disciplinary backgrounds and different nationalities. The programme actively stimulates the exchanges between these students, stating that this helps them to critically reflect on their own culture and experiences, training their skills in critical thinking and evaluation. The students the panel interviewed during the site visit and the student chapter in the self-evaluation report confirm this. The panel states that the mixed classroom principle is a very strong element of the programme.

A final characteristic of the programme's didactic approach is a strong interaction and integration between education and research. Lecturers often refer to their own research in their teaching. The panel is very appreciative of the 'expert seminars' the programme has developed. These are short courses, of 3 EC, that students take in the second semester. In these courses the students are actively engaged in ongoing or recent research. The nature of these seminars is dynamic. Topics that students can study in the 2018-2019 academic year are: Truth Finding in Mass Atrocity Crimes Trials; Dictatorships; Refugees, Terrorism and War Crimes; and Conflict and Illegal Extraction of Natural Resources. The panel was pleased to learn that the programme offers some selected students the option to collaborate in ongoing research of staff members during the extracurricular course 'Centre for International Criminal Justice (CICJ) Research Lab'.

Teaching staff

The staff of the ICC master's programme are renowned researchers in their field. They actively use their research in their teaching. The panel was pleased to hear that the staff members make use of their networks to strengthen their courses. Students indicated that they appreciated the guest lecturers from within and outside of academia who are invited to lecture in the programme.

The panel inquired into the perceived work pressure and workload of teaching staff, and found that teachers in the programme are satisfied with the steps the faculty has taken in recent years to combat excess work pressure. The teaching staff indicated that the faculty has actively been hiring new staff members to match the rising intake of students. The panel was positively surprised to see that the programme has recently hired a number of their own alumni who, after a PhD or positions in the professional field, have returned to their alma mater.



The panel appreciates the emphasis the programme places on professionalisation of its staff. The VU policy states that all lecturers with a permanent appointment need to obtain a Basic Teaching Qualification (BTQ). All senior teaching staff of the ICC programme possess a BTQ, and in total 75% of teaching staff in the programme has a BTQ, often with a specialisation in intercultural teaching. The programme director also has a Senior Teaching Qualification. Lecturers teaching in English who are non-native speakers have to demonstrate their proficiency by means of an English language test.

Feasibility and study guidance

The ICC master's programme provides students with intense guidance in their programme. At the beginning of the academic year, all students have an individual introductory meeting with the programme coordinator. During this meeting they are informed about the programme, the expectations placed upon them, the options they have regarding electives, and practical matters, such as housing. In February students meet again with the programme coordinator for a progress meeting to discuss study results and future plans.

The teaching staff gets a large amount of time to spend on thesis supervision (approximately 35 hours). The recent graduates the panel interviewed appreciated the extensive feedback and support they received during their thesis trajectory. Students indicated that they enjoyed the willingness of their thesis supervisors to provide guidance. Those students who want to do fieldwork for their final thesis are accommodated, but doing fieldwork often leads to delays. The students that the panel spoke to did not see this as a problem, however, but indicated that they understood that a one-year master's programme cannot facilitate extensive periods of students being abroad. They were very satisfied with the way in which their thesis supervisors encouraged and supported them to engage in fieldwork. The panel understands this reasoning and appreciates that the programme facilitates it when students want to extend their studies and engage in fieldwork. If students do not carry out fieldwork for their thesis, the panel confirmed that it is feasible to complete the programme within one year.

The panel noted that the programme responds quickly and adequately to the feedback it receives from students. During the site visit, it noticed that issues the recent graduates indicated as points for improvement had already been taken up and changed for the current students. One example the panel heard about concerned the International Criminal Courts and Tribunals course (ICCT), which many students without a background in law struggled with. It was pleased to learn that the programme responded by adding a brief optional preparatory module with a 'crash course' on international criminal law. The programme's current students indicated that they now felt a lot better prepared for the ICCT course.

Considerations

The panel is impressed with the curriculum of the ICC master's programme. Its content is truly interdisciplinary and is clearly connected to the philosophy of both the VU as a whole and the Faculty of Law in particular. The panel concluded that the programme's components have been demonstrably matched to its main aims and the intended learning outcomes. It praises the programme for the revisions they have recently carried out regarding the inclusion of the dimension of conflict in the curriculum, plus extended and improved skills and methods training. It considers them a clear improvement for the programme and makes it truly interdisciplinary.

The panel is pleased to see that the ICC programme enables students to achieve the final qualifications in a timely manner, notwithstanding its challenging and ambitious nature. In part this is due to the good design of the thesis trajectory and the supervision offered. The relatively small class size and interactive and innovative teaching methods encourage students to develop their knowledge and skills as self-directed learners. The panel compliments the programme on the way it engages and encourages students to direct their own learning. It also praises the programme for the large number of options it offers to tailor the programme towards their personal interests. It is enthusiastic about the expert seminars and the ways in which the programme involves students in the ongoing research of faculty members. It has seen that the 'mixed classroom' approach truly is

an asset of the programme. It is impressed with the professional approach that the programme adopts towards teaching and is glad to see that teaching in the programme is done by renowned researchers in the field.

The panel identified a couple of options for further improvement. While it is very positive about the changes already made to the methods and skills teaching trajectory, it advises the programme to consider tailoring this even more to the students' needs. This would include devoting more attention to qualitative and non-empirical research. It would furthermore be good, in the panel's view, to include more practical assignments in the methods and skills teaching. Finally, it recommends exploring whether more options to conduct fieldwork or internships during the programme could be included.

Conclusion

Master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology: the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'good'.

Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment system

Assessment within the Master's Programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology follows the university-wide 'VU Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning' (2018), which has been specified in further detail in a Faculty of Law memo on assessment policy (2017) and adopted into the Assessment Plan Master's programme in International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology (2018-2019). This assessment plan was prepared by the programme board at the recommendation of the programme committee. The panel is very impressed by the professional assessment system the programme has in place.

According to the programme's assessment plan, all course coordinators within the programme need to compile an assessment dossier before the start of a course. This dossier specifies test forms, test objectives and the links between the teaching, examination and intended learning outcomes of a course, summarised in an assessment matrix. The programme board requires course coordinators to provide some of the information from the assessment dossier to students in the course guides. In this way students are made aware of how they are assessed, and on which criteria.

The panel appreciates the way the programme allocates tasks and competences in the assessment system. The assessment plan specifies three types of examination competence. These three competences are allotted by the Board of Examiners on an individual basis, based on the type of training staff members have received (BTQ and other). Examiner type A is qualified to function as course and exam coordinator, examiner type B can supervise bachelor's theses, and examiner type C can supervise master's theses as well. In order to qualify for type C, a staff member must actively engage in criminological research.

An assignment or exam is always designed by a course coordinator, who then makes use of the peer-review principle by consulting one or more colleagues who are also involved in the course to check the exam or assignment. After the exam is administered, a sample of exam papers or answers must be marked by at least two lecturers to detect any significant discrepancies in the marks awarded. The panel is pleased to note that the lines of communication between the lecturers are short and feels that this positively impacts the quality of assessment in the programme.

The programme board regularly consults both the Board of Examiners and the Programme Committee for feedback on examinations. The panel confirmed that the suggestions from these two bodies, as



well as feedback from students in the regular evaluations, are quickly taken up by the programme management.

Assessment methods

The panel observed that the ICC programme employs a variety of assessment methods, with research papers and written exams being used most frequently. The method of assessment is chosen based on the intended learning outcomes of the course. Course coordinators are stimulated to make use of multiple forms of assessment in each course to ensure the maximum validity and reliability of assessment. They are also asked to use intermediate assessments as much as possible. The programme board supervises the choice of methods made by the course coordinators.

The thesis trajectory is well designed according to the panel. Students are intensively supervised, and the programme has formulated a clear and helpful instruction manual for the thesis trajectory. The panel also examined the assessment forms for the thesis, judging them to be clear and helpful for students. While some examiners could have provided more narrative feedback, the quality of the feedback was sufficient overall. The panel was glad to learn that the programme will be using new assessment forms for the thesis as of this academic year, on which the comments from the two readers are clearly separated. Following the recommendation in standard 2 to include more teaching on methodology, justification of choices regarding methodology and critical evaluation of the literature, the panel advises the programme to include these elements in the thesis assessment forms.

Examination Board

The quality of assessment within the ICC programme is safeguarded by an Examination Board appointed for all programmes within the Faculty of Law. The Examination Board has five members. Four of them are members of the faculty's teaching staff, while the fifth is an external member and an expert in assessment. The Board is assisted by two secretaries. Members of the Examination Board have received training in their tasks and responsibilities.

The panel interviewed members of the Examination Board. It concluded that they have a clear view of their tasks and responsibilities and that they work hard to guarantee a faculty-wide quality of assessment. The Board has developed its own analysis tool, which enables it to establish the reliability of test items immediately after the exam takes place. This tool is available for both multiple-choice exams and ones that consist of essay questions. When the analysis of an exam gives rise to doubts concerning the reliability of the questions, the grading can be altered before the test results are published. The Examination Board uses this instrument when it looks at a random sample of tests (25% of exams in a programme), upon request, or whenever evaluations or results indicate that the quality of the exam is not up to standard. It discusses its findings with the course lecturers. In the experience of the Board, this instrument has enhanced the quality of assessment within the faculty, raising awareness and providing insight into the factors that influence the quality of exam items. The Examination Board also evaluates the assessment dossiers of courses biannually, as well as a sample of master's theses.

The panel concludes that the Examination Board has a clear and professional understanding of its role and responsibilities. Its members work hard to safeguard assessment quality within the faculty. The panel appreciates the ambition of the Examination Board to supervise assessment quality in a proactive and thorough manner, while at the same time exercising the necessary restraint in placing demands upon staff members in order to avoid taking time away from education. In the interview with the panel, the board summarised its perception of its responsibilities as 'control servicing quality, not as an end in itself'. The panel was happy to hear that the Examination Board will soon obtain additional staff so the workload of its members will be somewhat reduced.

Considerations

The panel confirmed that the assessment and evaluation system of the ICC programme functions at a high level. Exams and tests are well designed and of good quality, and a variety of assessment

methods assure the training of various skills and the attainment of the intended learning outcomes. The programme has a clear and well-developed assessment policy and an assessment plan. Criteria and modes of assessment are sufficiently communicated through the short lines of communication present in the programme. The quality assurance of this system functions well.

The panel concluded that the thesis trajectory is properly set up. Students are aware of the assessment criteria and are adequately assessed. Feedback forms are clear and are adequately filled out. They have recently been improved to clearly separate the comments from the two readers. The panel would like to see more narrative feedback provided on these forms and recommends adding more extensive sections on methodology, justification of methodological choices and critical evaluation of the literature.

The panel is very impressed by the work and professionalism of the Examination Board. The Board has a clear view of its tasks and responsibilities, carries out its tasks in a proactive manner, and is in control of safeguarding assessment quality.

Conclusion

Master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology: the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'good'.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

Theses

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied a selection of 15 ICC theses and the accompanying assessment forms. In general, the theses demonstrated that ICC graduates acquire the ability to formulate a research question, select relevant academic literature and other sources, reflect on these sources and draw conclusions. The panel did notice that some papers were a marginal pass, but no theses were seriously disputed. It also remarked that many theses consisted of literature studies. While this is understandable, given the fact that fieldwork to collect empirical data on international crimes is quite difficult to realise, the panel would have liked to see more attention being paid to methodological rigour in these literature-based theses. In almost all literature-based theses students did not or only briefly address how they searched and selected relevant documents. The panel would also like to see more attention paid in the theses to critical assessment of collected literature. While the panel is convinced that students meet the final criteria, and the 'Methodology of International Crimes' course assures that students meet the intended learning outcomes related to methodology, methodology sections should also by default be included in final theses based on literature study.

Performance of graduates

The panel confirmed that graduates of the programme do relatively well in the competitive labour market for graduates in this field. Most graduates of the programme first complete an internship or traineeship before they find a position. Many graduates work in international organisations or for national public agencies. The programme management indicated that now that the programme has run for 10 years, there are increasing opportunities for students to find these internships. Awareness of the programme has spread, and alumni hire graduates of the programme. The programme itself also hires quite a number of its alumni for PhD or teaching positions. The alumni the panel spoke to were convinced the programme had properly prepared them for the labour market. They appreciated the extra activities, such as a job fair, that the programme organises. Students and alumni also appreciated how teachers of the programme use their own networks to the students' benefit.



Considerations

The panel concluded that students in the ICC programme realise the intended learning outcomes. The level of the theses was adequate but varied. A number of the theses did not include a thorough discussion of methods or a critical evaluation of the literature. The panel also observed differences in quality between theses based on empirical work and those based on the literature, with the former being of higher quality than the latter. It established that the programme's alumni succeed in obtaining a professional position that matches their degree level.

Conclusion

Master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'satisfactory'.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The panel assessed standards 1, 2 and 3 as 'good' and standard 4 as 'satisfactory'. Based on the NVAO decision rules regarding limited programme assessments, the panel therefore assesses the programme as 'satisfactory'.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology* as 'satisfactory'.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: DOMAIN-SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE

Inleiding

Op het gebied van criminaliteit en deviant gedrag, maatschappelijke reacties daarop, de aanpak van criminaliteit en het denken over veiligheid hebben zich de afgelopen decennia ingrijpende ontwikkelingen voorgedaan. Nieuwe, complexere vormen van criminaliteit; de effecten van de toegenomen invloed van (sociale) media op (reacties op) criminaliteit; ontwikkelingen in digitale technologie; toename van internationale dimensies van criminaliteit, rechtshandhaving en veiligheidsdenken; de veranderingen in formele en informele vormen van sociale controle en de effecten van de Europese eenwording alsmede processen van mondialisering, zijn voorbeelden van gebieden waarop de vraag naar kennisontwikkeling groot is en naar verwachting blijft. Gefragmenteerde, monodisciplinaire kennis volstaat niet meer om huidige en toekomstige onderzoeksvraagstukken te kunnen aanpakken. Bovengenoemde ontwikkelingen vragen, naast multidisciplinariteit, om een goed begrip van internationale dimensies en de vaardigheid kritisch en onafhankelijk te kunnen reflecteren op heersende academische, politieke, media- en maatschappelijke percepties op criminaliteit, deviant gedrag, aanpak van criminaliteit, en veiligheid.

In criminologische masteropleidingen wordt voortgebouwd op de kennis, het inzicht en de vaardigheden die in een academische bacheloropleiding zijn opgedaan. De masteropleidingen kunnen zich profileren op specifieke criminologische vraagstukken of thema's, op een nationale dan wel internationale focus, op kwalitatieve dan wel kwantitatieve methoden en op positivistische dan wel kritische tradities binnen de criminologie. In hun toelatingseisen geven zij aan welke vooropleidingen zij geschikt achten om de leerresultaten van de masteropleidingen het behalen. Aan deze eisen zal in de regel een bacheloropleiding Criminologie aan een Nederlandse universiteit beantwoorden.

De masteropleidingen leiden studenten op tot zelfstandig denkende en zelfstandig werkende criminologen. Er vindt een verdieping en verbreding van kennis plaats en de onderzoeksvaardigheden worden uitgebreid. Hiermee zijn afgestudeerden in staat om aan de bestudering en/of aanpak van de complexere vormen van criminaliteit in de hierboven geschetste actuele context mee te werken. Zij leren zelfstandig data te verzamelen, te analyseren en te interpreteren. Dit proces moet leiden tot kritische reflectie op (de aanpak van) criminaliteit waarbij de beperkingen en onbedoelde effecten van oplossingen beargumenteerd kunnen worden. Daarnaast wordt kennis en inzicht in de opsporing, vervolging en berechting van criminaliteit en (de totstandkoming van) criminaliteitsbeleid, het fundamenteel reflecteren op daaraan onderliggende principes, en de evaluatie daarvan vergroot en waar relevant in internationaal (vergelijkend) perspectief geplaatst. De nadruk ligt op het analyseren van concrete criminaliteitsvraagstukken en de aanpak daarvan, en het kritisch analyseren van beleid aan de verkregen criminologische kennis en inzichten. Daarbij worden verschillende kwalitatieve en/of kwantitatieve methoden van onderzoek toegepast.

Studenten worden getraind om de complexiteit van criminologische bevindingen op een heldere wijze met vakgenoten en niet-specialisten te communiceren, ook in een internationale setting. Een afgestudeerde master moet in staat zijn een soeverein, beargumenteerd standpunt in te nemen en kritisch te kunnen reflecteren op (mondiale) maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen binnen het studieveld van de criminologie. De masteropleiding stelt de afgestudeerde in staat op zelfstandige wijze in het werkveld te functioneren of op zelfstandige wijze een vervolgstudie (postacademisch dan wel promotietraject) te doen.

In het afstudeerproject tonen studenten aan in het complexe maatschappelijke veld zelfstandig literatuuronderzoek en/of empirisch onderzoek te kunnen uitvoeren door het presenteren van actuele theoretische kennis, het formuleren van een probleemstelling, het verzamelen van data, het analyseren en beoordelen van gegevens, het formuleren en beargumenteren van oplossingen, en het bekritisieren van bestaande handelwijzen. Studenten passen hierbij de verworven theoretische en methodische kennis en inzichten op een ethisch verantwoorde wijze toe. De afgestudeerde master moet in staat zijn zelfstandig onderzoek op te zetten en uit te voeren en is geschikt voor functies in de wetenschap, de beleidssector en de uitvoerende sfeer. De leerresultaten van masteropleidingen



Criminologie sluiten aan bij de wensen van (een deel van) het beroepenveld. Daartoe vindt afstemming met het beroepenveld plaats.

Masteropleidingen Criminologie beogen een breed gevormde, kritisch reflecterende academicus op te leiden die een discipline overstijgende kennis heeft van criminaliteit en criminaliteitsbeheersing, die vaardigheden bezit om onderzoek te doen in dit veld en in verschillende functies de vertaalslag kan maken tussen het normatieve kader waarin de jurist werkt en de empirische kennis vergaard door de sociale wetenschapper. Deze doelstelling is vertaald in de volgende uitgangspunten:

- Het bieden van een verdieping van zowel de theoretische als de methodische vakken van de bacheloropleiding Criminologie, respectievelijk de vooropleiding zoals in de toegangsvoorwaarden van de Onderwijs- en Examenregeling is opgenomen. De eerder opgedane kennis en vaardigheden worden op geïntegreerde wijze toegepast op specifieke problemen op het terrein van veiligheid, criminaliteit en deviant gedrag, de maatschappelijke reactie daarop, het toezicht erop en de aanpak ervan (opsporing, vervolging en berechting van criminaliteit en criminaliteitsbeleid in nationaal en/of mondiaal perspectief);
- Het bieden van een wetenschappelijke oriëntatie op het vakgebied van de criminologie;
- Het vormen van een kritisch maatschappelijk reflecterende professional op het vakgebied van de criminologie;
- Het vormen van een zelfstandige, interdisciplinaire onderzoeker, die in beginsel toegang heeft tot een promotietraject.

In de leerresultaten van masteropleidingen Criminologie zijn deze uitgangspunten, die voldoen aan de Dublin-descriptoren (of vergelijkbare normen), te herkennen, ongeacht de specifieke focus van de opleiding.

APPENDIX 2: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

In meeting these goals, the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) expresses the following intended learning outcomes. After finishing the Master the graduate:

A. Has knowledge of and insight into:

1. Recent approaches, theories, and (research) findings from various disciplines in relation to international crimes, other conflict related crimes and international criminal justice;
2. Quantitative and qualitative research methodology in relation to international crimes, other conflict related crimes and international criminal justice;
3. Legal issues concerning international crimes and other conflict related crimes.

B. Is capable of:

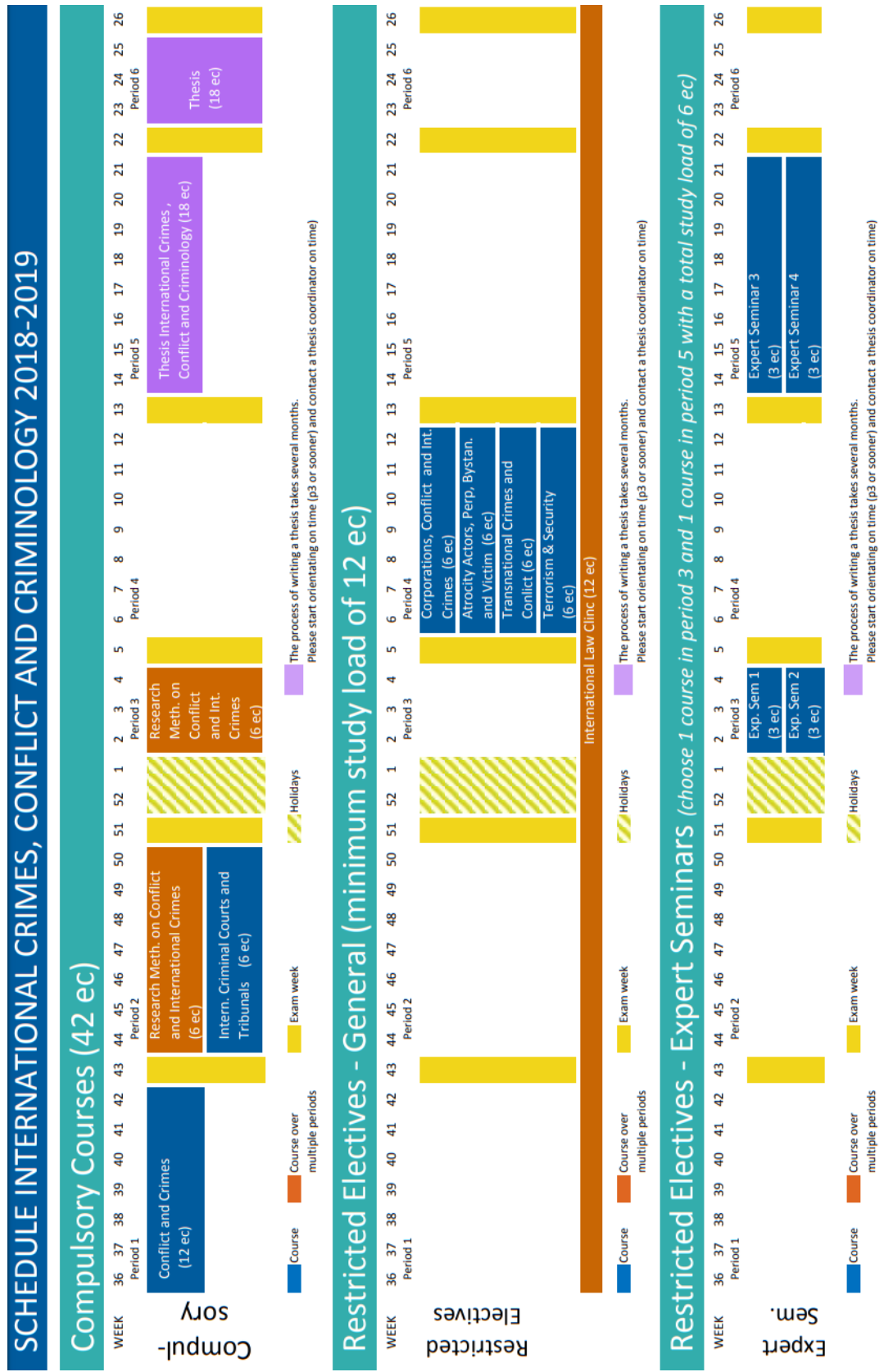
4. Identifying and applying theoretical approaches from various disciplines;
5. Applying research methods and interpreting results;
6. Independently setting up, carrying out and reporting the results of an interdisciplinary research project;
7. Critical reflection on research results and reflection on the theoretical debates within the selected domain.

C. Shows evidence of:

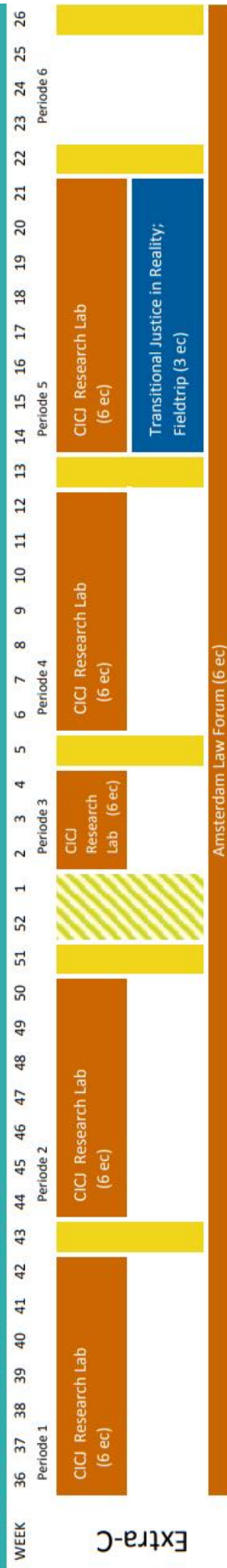
8. An independent, critical attitude with regard to existing theories and knowledge;
9. An investigative, original and creative attitude with regard to existing issues and solutions in relation to international criminal justice and transitional justice;
10. Critical, analytical and normative reflection on academic research and on research results.



APPENDIX 3: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM



Extra-curricular Courses



Extra-C

- Course
- Course over multiple periods
- Exam week
- Holidays
- The process of writing a thesis takes several months. Please start orientating on time (p3 or sooner) and contact a thesis coordinator on time

APPENDIX 4: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

Donderdag 17 januari 2019

10.00 – 10.15	Aankomst en welkom
10.15 – 12.30	Intern overleg, inzage documentatie
12.30 – 13.00	Lunch
13.00 – 14.00	Inhoudelijk verantwoordelijken
14.00 – 14.30	Intern overleg panel
14.30 – 15.15	Studenten B Criminologie
15.15 – 16.00	Docenten B + M Criminologie
16.00 – 16.30	Intern overleg panel
16.30 – 17.15	Studenten M Criminologie (incl. alumni)
17.15 – 18.00	Posterpresentatie

Vrijdag 18 januari 2019

09.00 – 10.00	Aankomst en voorbereiding
10.00 – 10.45	Examencommissie
10.45 – 11.30	Studenten M International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology (incl. alumni)
11.30 – 12.15	Docenten M International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology
12.15 – 12.45	Lunch
12.45 – 13.45	Eindgesprek management
13.45 – 16.30	Opstellen oordelen
16.30 – 17.00	Vorbereiden mondelinge rapportage
17.00 – 17.30	Mondelinge rapportage

APPENDIX 5: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology. Information on the selected theses is available from QANU upon request.

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

Facultaire documenten - Instellingsdocumenten

Examencommissie

- Jaarverslagen 2013-2018
- Beleidsplan kwaliteitsbewaking tentamens
- Examenreglement
- Notitie examinerbevoegdheid 2016

Kwaliteitszorg

- Handboek Onderwijskwaliteit Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- Kader kwaliteitszorg Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid (herzien 2017)

Onderwijsbeleid

- Meerjarenperspectief 2016-2020 Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid
- Meerjarenplan Onderwijs 2019-2024 Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid
- Notitie Talentonderwijs 2016
- Koersconferentie 2015
- Notitie ICT in het Onderwijs 2016-2017
- Onderwijsvisie Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid 2016
- Onderwijsvisie Vrije Universiteit 2016
- Position paper Law in Action
- Programma's jaarlijkse Onderwijsmiddagen 2015-2018

Studentbegeleiding

- Beleidsplan functiebeperking VU
- Jaarverslagen studieadviseurs 2014-2018
- Memo vervolgmonitoring Beleid functiebeperking
- Rapport monitoring Beleid functiebeperking

Toetsen en beoordelen

- Facultaire nota Toetsbeleid (herzien 2017)
- Handboek Onderwijskwaliteit Vrije Universiteit, hoofdstuk Toetsbeleid

Opleidingsgebonden documenten

Master's programme International Crimes, Conflict and Criminology (ICC)

- Annual Reports master's programme ICC2015-2018
- Assessment Plan 2018-2019 master's programme ICC
- National Student Survey 2018 results
- Overview publications ICC-students in cooperation with ICC teachers
- Posters for presentations by thesis students
- Selection learning material (Handbooks, syllabi)
- Study Guide master's programme ICC 2018-2019
- Teaching and Examination Rules master's programme ICC 2017-2018, 2018-2019
- Thesis Manual ICC VU 2018-2019 (including assessment forms)

