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Research Master's Programme Literary Studies
University of Amsterdam

Contents

Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The panel is positive about the clear way in which the research master's (RMA) programme Literary Studies taught at the University of Amsterdam has defined its approach, focusing on the objects, theory, and methods of literary studies while explicitly also making possible the application of literary theory and its tools to non-literary objects. This clear demarcation sets the programme apart from comparative literature or cultural analysis programmes. The clear, but open profile lends the programme sufficient adaptability to tune in with such topical concerns and increases its societal relevance. The panel recommends expressing this distinctive profile more clearly in the intended learning outcomes, which are stated quite broadly. It finds that the ILOs clearly reflect the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes and are sufficiently ambitious for a research master. They also refer to a possible career outside academia.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel is pleased with the clear and coherent structure of the RMA Literary Studies' curriculum. It appreciates team teaching in the core modules and finds that their content is kept up to date and challenging to the students, catering to particular questions and topical issues raised by them. The panel also finds that the fixed and elective elements in the programme are well-balanced, allowing students sufficient freedom to shape their own learning trajectories while safeguarding coherence. The curriculum is clearly offered at research master's level and the working methods are varied and fitting. The programme is strongly research-oriented, with a focus on methods and research skills. The panel appreciates the fact that the RMA is geared towards training students as independent researchers, encouraging them to follow their own research interests throughout the programme. The tutorials function well in promoting this, allowing students to closely collaborate with staff members and leaving space for creativity. Professional and job orientation are less prominently visible, but present throughout the programme as well, and the panel is pleased with the possibility of an internship outside the University of Amsterdam or even academia in the elective space. The curriculum is feasible and students are guided well throughout the programme.

The RMA's language of instruction is English, as is the programme name. The panel considers this fitting in light of the academic and professional environments the programme prepares its students for. The panel regrets that the addition to this programme of the RMA in Dutch Literature has positioned the use of Dutch alongside that of other languages besides English, and hopes that the attractive RMA curriculum that has been created will end up convincing more Dutch Studies students. The panel is pleased with the research environment in which students of the RMA Literary Studies are educated, including the teaching staff; researchers are prominent and productive in their fields and are didactically skilled. The number of teaching staff members currently available to teach the programme is clearly sufficient, allowing for much individual attention and small-group teaching. The panel understood that a rise in student numbers will lead to a staff increase and supports this.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The panel considers assessment and assessment practises to be up to standard in the RMA Literary Studies. Assessment is aligned with programme and course objectives, and it is transparent, valid and reliable. Assessment types are varied and fitting for a research master's programme, and the students complete the entire research cycle. The impact of Covid-19 on assessment has been limited. Students in the RMA approach their own thesis supervisor, and often look for a second assessor with additional expertise in the Faculty, for instance when they combine methodology with a particular language area. The panel appreciates that the second assessor is involved after the thesis is finalized and remains independent. It suggests looking for a third reader in cases where the second assessor does become involved in supervision. It also recommends

storing the separate forms of both thesis assessors for quality assurance purposes.

The panel considers the current working method of the Examination Board to be adequate, but is of the opinion that that it should be expanded. The Board is responsible for many programmes and the delegates for the separate programmes carry a lot of responsibility in signalling programme-specific issues to the Board. The panel advises looking into ways to provide solid input, for instance by scheduling evaluation after the assessment for a higher response rate or producing statistical analyses of the exams, so that irregularities are automatically and quickly made apparent. It considers the planned addition of an assessment panel charged with regularly checking individual courses an important step towards further improving quality of assessment.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The panel finds that the final theses of the RMA Literary Studies demonstrate the research master's level and make clear that intended learning outcomes are achieved by the graduates. The panel was pleased to see that the theses reflect the programme's profile and focus, showing breadth in the choice of topics and reflecting the thematic, historical, or language strands in the programme. One exceptional thesis would have been a better fit with a cultural analysis programme, according to the panel. It agrees with the programme's motivation in granting this talented student that option within Literary Studies, provided it remains an exception. A limited number of alumni end up as PhDs due to the lack of funded positions. Alumni are well prepared for both academia and the working field.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

Research master's programme Literary Studies

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

General conclusion   positive

Prof. dr. Maarten Mous, chair   Dr. Fiona Schouten, secretary
Date: 21 February 2022

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Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 5 November 2021, the research master's programmes Linguistics and Literary Studies of the University of Amsterdam were assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment Research Master's Linguistics & Literature cluster. The assessment cluster consisted of 9 programmes, offered by the University of Groningen, Leiden University, Utrecht University, University of Amsterdam, Radboud University and Tilburg University. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (September 2018), as well as the Specification of additional criteria for research master's programmes (May 2016).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the Research Master's Linguistics & Literature cluster after taking over from Qanu per July 2021, when the first two site visits to Leiden University and University of Groningen had already taken place. On behalf of Qanu, Fiona Schouten acted as coordinator and secretary during the start-up phase and the site visits to Leiden University and the University of Groningen. On behalf of Academion, Fiona Schouten acted as coordinator for the remaining process, and as secretary for the site visits at the University of Amsterdam, Radboud University and Tilburg University. Peter Hildering was secretary for the site visit at Utrecht University. Both secretaries have been certified and registered by the NVAO.

Preparation

Qanu composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and considering the expertise and independence of the members as well as consistency within the cluster. On 25 May 2021, the NVAO approved the composition of the panel. The coordinator instructed the panel chairs on their role in the site visit.

The contact persons for the University of Amsterdam composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator (see appendix 3). They selected representative partners for the various interviews. It was determined that the development dialogue would take place at the end of the site visit. A separate development report was made based on this dialogue.

The programmes provided the coordinator with a list of graduates over the period 2019-2020. 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 various thematic specializations. 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 framework, the working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

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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 presented the preliminary findings.

Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it for peer assessment within Academion. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Amsterdam 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 the Faculty of Humanities and the Executive Staff of the University of Amsterdam.

Panel

The following panel members were involved in the cluster assessment:
- Prof. dr. M.P.G.M. (Maarten) Mous (panel chair)
- Prof. dr. H.E. (Henriette) de Swart (panel chair/panel member)
- S. (Sannah) Debreczeni BA (student member)
- Prof. dr. Y. (Yra) van Dijk (panel member)
- S. (Suze) Geuke MA (student member)
- Prof. dr. B. (Birgit) Hellwig (panel member)
- Dr. N.H. (Nivja) de Jong (panel member)
- Prof. dr. B.L.J. (Bettelou) Los (panel member)
- Em. prof. dr. M.J.H. (Maaike) Meijer (panel member)
- Prof. dr. A. (Ad) Neeleman (panel member)
- J. (Julia) Neugarten MA (student member)
- Prof. dr. D.M. (Diederik) Oostdijk (panel member)
- Prof. dr. H. (Hugo) Quené (panel member)
- Prof. dr. D. (Dominiek) Sandra (panel member)

The panel assessing the programmes at the University of Amsterdam consisted of the following members:
- Prof. dr. M.P.G.M. (Maarten) Mous, professor of African Linguistics at Leiden University (panel chair)
- Em. prof. dr. M.J.H. (Maaike) Meijer, author and emeritus professor of Gender Studies at Maastricht University (panel member)
- Prof. dr. A. (Ad) Neeleman, professor of Linguistics at University College London (panel member)
- Prof. dr. D.M. (Diederik) Oostdijk, professor of English and American Literature at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (panel member)
- S. (Suze) Geuke MA, alumna (2020) research master in Linguistics at Leiden University (student member)

Information on the programme

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

Programme name:	Literary Studies (research)
CROHO number:	60814
Level:	Master
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	Literary Studies
Location:	Amsterdam
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Language of instruction:	English
Submission date NVAO:	1-5-2022 (extended due to legislation WHW art 5.31 lid 3)

Description of the assessment

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 research master's (RMA) programme Literary Studies taught at the University of Amsterdam takes literature as its object of study while approaching literature and literary studies as a distinct entry point for interdisciplinary debates within the humanities. The foundation for the programme is the analysis of texts – be they literary or otherwise, or other cultural objects conceived as 'text'. It centralizes the analysis of texts as a crucial toolkit for humanities research in the 21st century. Accordingly, the programme trains its students to understand different ways of studying texts, while developing key skills for the academic world as well as other sectors. It has been designed to facilitate different approaches to the study of literature, whether from a language/national literature angle, a thematic one, or an interdisciplinary one.

The RMA programme is associated with the research institutes of the UvA Faculty of Humanities – notably ASCA and ASH – as well as the national research schools – notably the Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies (OSL), the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Analysis (NICA) and the Huizinga Institute. It was expanded recently through the incorporation of the RMA Dutch Literature. This has further reinforced the profile of the RMA Literary Studies, which caters to literature students from all language backgrounds, resulting in a diverse group with closely related research interests. The RMA Literary Studies is now clearly the one programme at the UvA for the study of literature at research master's level. The study of literature is treated as a field in itself, with theories, methods and many differentiations, without being determined by or restricted to a single traditional discipline, language or department.

The panel studied this profile and discussed it with the programme management and teaching staff. It is positive about the clear way in which the RMA has defined its approach, focusing on the objects, theory, and methods of literary studies while also explicitly opting for the application of literary theory and its tools to non-literary objects. This clear demarcation sets the programme apart from comparative literature or cultural analysis programmes. In the site visit interviews, the panel learnt that both staff and students engage with this profile. Staff members told the panel that the programme tends to take the research interests of students into account, such as colonialism, world literature, or gender studies. The clear, but open profile lends the programme sufficient adaptability to tune in with such topical concerns, increasing its societal relevance.

Intended learning outcomes

The programme has a set of 9 faculty-wide master's level exit qualifications, 5 research master's level exit qualifications and 5 exit qualifications that are specific for the RMA Literary Studies (see appendix 1). The panel studied these sets of intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and concluded that they clearly reflect the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes and are sufficiently ambitious for a research master. They also refer to a possible career outside academia.

The panel noticed that the ILOs are quite broadly formulated. It appreciates that the ILOs are stated in a

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relatively open manner, allowing space to make small adaptations in the curriculum. At the same time, it considers this a missed opportunity to reflect the programme's clear focus on literary studies' theory, methodology, and object, as well as its demarcation from adjoining programmes in cultural analysis and comparative literature. It encourages the programme to make this better visible for students and people external to the RMA.

Considerations
The panel is positive about the clear way in which the RMA Literary Studies has defined its approach, focusing on the objects, theory, and methods of literary studies while explicitly also enabling the application of literary theory and its tools to non-literary objects. This clear demarcation sets the programme apart from comparative literature or cultural analysis programmes. The clear, but open profile lends the programme sufficient adaptability to tune in with such topical concerns and increases its societal relevance. The panel recommends expressing this distinctive profile more clearly in the intended learning outcomes, which are stated quite broadly. It finds that the ILOs clearly reflect the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes and are sufficiently ambitious for a research master. They also refer to a possible career outside academia.

Conclusion
The panel concludes that the programme meets 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

Curriculum
The curriculum of the RMA Literary Studies consists of 36 EC (3x12) in core courses, 30 EC in electives, 12 EC in tutorials, 12 EC at a national research school, and 30 EC in thesis (18) and research project (12). In the curriculum, 90 out of 120 EC have a distinct focus on research-intensive and RMA-specific education. Only the elective space of 30 EC is shared with students from one-year MA programmes, and there, no additional demand is posed to RMA-students. The rest of the curriculum is taught at research master's level. The panel considers this proportional and fitting for a research master's programme. The distribution of courses over the two-year curriculum can be found in appendix 2.

The three mandatory core courses are Key Debates in Literary and Cultural Studies; Literature, History and Reading Historically; and Literary Studies Lab. The Key Debates course provides students with a shared basis in literary theory and engages with central debates within literary studies as an 'entry point' in the programme. It addresses key theories and concepts within the field of literary studies, and applies them in a series of case studies. The second core course, Literature, History and Reading Historically, focuses on the question of how to 'do history' within literary studies. Through a range of case studies, different modes of historical inquiry are explored. The focus is not so much on the study of historical texts per se, but on how to study texts with a historically oriented methodology, exploring questions of cultural history, New Historicism, and reception theory. The final core course focuses on how to carry out advanced-level research in literary studies. Three senior researchers teach three sets of masterclasses on their own research, in which they share their practice of doing research in literary studies and challenge the students to reflect and expand on the methodological and epistemological foundations and limitations of that research practice. In addition, this course prepares them for a larger-scale research project of their own, and also introduces them

to drawing up a PhD proposal or a job application for a career outside of academia.

The core courses start with concepts, then address history and context, and finally focus on (research) practice. This didactic setup guides the students towards becoming independent researchers. Each core course is taught by three staff members – generally one member from the department of Literary and Cultural Analysis, one from Modern Languages and Cultures, and one from Dutch Studies, which ensures a variety of disciplinary perspectives. The course coordinator, and usually at least one other staff member, teach the course for several years in a row to ensure continuity and coherence. These courses serve not only as the programmatic backbone, but also contribute to community-building, since the RMA students all take them together as a continuous peer group throughout the two years of the RMA. The core courses often feature group assignments, presentations and peer work in which group composition varies, to ensure contact and cooperation in the group as a whole. The students also build on this themselves, e.g. in self-organized peer groups, while working on their theses in the second year.

From the core courses onwards, the students develop their individual research interests through elective courses (30 EC), activities at the national research schools (12 EC) and tutorials (12 EC). For the elective courses, the students can freely choose from the offerings in the Faculty of Humanities, or take courses at other universities in the Netherlands (or occasionally abroad) after the Examinations Board grants permission. The activities at the national research schools can vary from extended training courses, summer schools and academic conferences to one-day workshops. For each event, a student can get credits – varying from 1 to 6 – usually after writing a report or reflection for the shorter events, or a paper for courses. They are free to attend any event at any research school, though most take part in activities organized by the Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies (OSL). Other popular schools are the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Analysis (NICA), the Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies (NOG) and the Netherlands Research School for Cultural History (Huizinga).

The tutorials are the most "tailor-made" format within the programme, the content of which is collaboratively determined by the student and staff member within the parameters set by the Faculty's tutorial guidelines. All students follow two tutorials (6 EC each), where they learn under the close supervision of a Faculty researcher. Tutorials can form complete packages, but most often allow room for the precise content to be determined by the students and staff member together. Tutorials can be done on a one-on-one basis, but are more frequently done in small groups of 2-6 students. The default format is that of a literature-based sequence of sessions – effectively a customized course – but the tutorial can also consist of taking part in ongoing meetings of a research project at one of the Faculty's research institutes. The tutorials are the clearest instance in the programme of teaching and ongoing research being linked. Particularly in one-on-one cases, they can also lead to co-authored journal articles for the students.

Finally, students move on to a Research Project (12 EC) linked to their final Master Thesis (18 EC). The Graduate School of the Humanities (GSH) introduced the research project in all RMA programmes to ensure that the research component of the thesis written in the RMA is more significant than that in an MA thesis. In the RMA Literary Studies, the research project is designed as a set of activities that surround and support the thesis, resulting in a portfolio that may cover a range of different academic activities involved in or necessary for the thesis, such as a conference paper or archival research as input for the thesis.

The panel studied the RMA curriculum and discussed it with students, alumni, programme management and teaching staff. It is pleased with the clear and coherent structure of the programme which provides students with a solid foundation and connection to their peer group in the core courses, and with the varied and fitting working methods. The trajectory from concepts in the Key Debates course to methodology in the

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Literature, History and Reading Historically course and to research practice in the Literary Studies Lab works very well. The panel appreciates the teaching teams in the core courses, which represent the three departments collaborating in the programme, as well as the manner in which continuity and innovation among these staff members is guaranteed. It learnt that both senior and junior staff members take part in the core courses and that the topics change, allowing the staff to incorporate their own research practice and cater to particular questions and topical issues raised by students. The content of the core courses stays up to date and challenging to the students.

The panel also finds that the fixed and elective elements in the programme are well balanced, allowing students sufficient freedom to shape their own learning trajectories while safeguarding coherence. It learnt that the programme has three different specialization paths in mind: a traditional language-based or national approach to literature, a thematic approach, or a historical approach. Students are allowed to deviate from these paths, but the panel understood from staff and students that the paths work well to guide students in following their research interests in a structured manner.

The panel finds the programme strongly research oriented and notices that a strong focus on methods and research skills is visible throughout, in line with the profile. It appreciates that the RMA is geared towards training students as independent researchers, encouraging them to follow their own research interests throughout the programme. The tutorials function well in promoting this, allowing students to closely collaborate with staff members and leaving ample space for creativity. Students and alumni were highly appreciative of the tutorials. Furthermore, the programme pays attention to research ethics in the core courses, and ethics is also touched upon in the research projects. The national research school courses bring RMA students in contact with their peers from other universities as well as PhD students and staff members from the field.

Professional and job orientation are less prominently featured, but present throughout the programme as well, as was confirmed by the students and alumni. For instance, the Literary Studies Lab course includes a special session devoted to career planning, with alumni and PhD students as guests to give the students a perspective on PhD research and on a career outside academia. Also, in recent years there has been a small but steady number of students doing internships as part of their RMA programme's elective space. These vary from internship at research institutes outside the University of Amsterdam (e.g. the Meertens Institute) or internships at cultural institutions (e.g. SLAA), to internships in a different market. The panel is pleased with this extra option, which reflects a recommendation of the previous panel and which it considers valuable for students who are interested in a career outside academia.

Feasibility and guidance
Students enter the programme coming from various backgrounds. Admission requirements include a BA grade point average of at least 7.5, proof of English proficiency, and suitability for the programme. This last criterion is assessed on the basis of the applicant's previous education and a writing sample which should demonstrate their skills in close reading and the capacity to apply concepts from literary theory. The applicants also submit an application form, including a study plan or an outlook for the path they envision for themselves in their two years in the programme. All students who meet the criteria are admitted, leading to a student intake of 12-22 per year. Every year in January, 1-3 students transfer to the RMA programme from the one-year MA Literary Studies tracks English Literature and Culture, Comparative Literature, and Literature, Culture and Society. Most often, these are foreign students who originally signed up for a one-year programme but discovered that they want to expand their studies significantly. The same criteria for admission apply for them.

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The panel considers the admission requirements adequate for this programme. It learnt that the RMA takes time and care to select students who fit the programme, and manages to select students who are successful (see also standard 4). The panel appreciates the fact that methodology is part of the intake procedure as students demonstrate their ability to apply theoretical concepts. Methodology is a strong element in the programme and prospective students' grasp of it is therefore of predictive value for study success. The panel also appreciates that students are asked about their intended study path, but are allowed to deviate from this or abandon it once they are in the programme. This requires prospective students to consider and think about the curriculum, and ensures that they know what they embark on.

The student group entering the programme is rather diverse in background, and has become more diverse since the previous assessment: student numbers have gone up by about 40%, which includes a larger number of international students. The different academic and disciplinary backgrounds involve different processes of familiarization with the UvA as an institution, with the way literary studies is carried out there, and with student life in Amsterdam. This is a particular focus point for the newly expanded student tutoring system. The coordinator for the programme acts as the dedicated tutor for the students and discusses their particular situation with them in yearly individual meetings. At least once every semester, a plenary session is scheduled to discuss how things are going in the programme, and to monitor student well-being. This also serves to uncover any problems or issues within the programme that need addressing. In addition, the students can schedule individual meetings to discuss their personal situation. They frequently turn to the programme coordinator for guidance in setting out their specialization trajectory, which electives to take, or with whom to do tutorials. If they run into difficulties of a personal or medical nature, the tutor directs them to the Faculty's dedicated study advisor.

The first core course also takes on board the variety in academic backgrounds of incoming students. It addresses aspects that can vary between countries and explains what is expected at the UvA, for instance regarding research paper writing or citation. The panel learnt from the students that this works quite well. Over the course of the programme, students can turn to the tutor, core courses staff, or tutorial, internship, or thesis supervisors for advice. They experience the programme's staff members as open and helpful, and feel well-supported.

The panel is pleased with the guidance students receive in the programme. It appreciates the work of the programme coordinator, who plays a key role in safeguarding feasibility and guiding all students towards a coherent study path. The panel points out that the growth in student numbers signalled by the programme means that this personal approach where tutorial duties lie chiefly with one person may have to be adapted. It was pleased to hear that an increase in students will mean an increase in teaching staff, so that the UvA can continue offering this level of student guidance.

The panel was told by students and alumni that they consider the programme feasible. However, students point out that they sometimes take longer studying in order to be able to combine the fulltime RMA with a part-time job to sustain themselves. The panel wonders whether the programme might consider offering a part-time option to accommodate students who incur delays because of this. It noticed to its satisfaction the cum laude regulations already accommodated these situations during the corona crisis, allowing students to earn distinctions if they graduate within 3 months after nominal study duration. The panel suggests continuing this practice.

Covid-19 period
From the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, in March 2020, all teaching was moved online. According to the students the panel met with, this led to some confusion and unclear communication at first. Students

mentioned that they didn't always know where information could be found or who they could turn to, particularly international students. As a positive effect, online teaching opened up new possibilities, such as interaction in the shape of short videos that could be prepared and/or watched outside of the designated classes, using new tools such as Kaltura, Perusall, or FeedbackFruits. The programme monitored the effect of its measures through the course evaluations. The panel concludes that quality of education was guaranteed effectively.

Most teaching could be easily transformed into an online format, particularly the courses in the RMA programme that take the form of smaller work groups. One-on-one supervision (for tutorials, guidance, or theses) was done in a higher frequency than usual. In order to support the students and track and ensure their well-being, the Faculty of Humanities took a variety of measures. A dedicated web page listed all possibilities for support for the students, including talking to (or walking with) peers, a coach, a psychologist, and the study advisers. A limited number of reservable study spaces on campus were available as well. The panel learnt that student performance did not suffer. While students struggled with the situation, they reported to the panel that the programme worked hard on ensuring their wellbeing. It appreciates the manner in which the RMA adapted to the Covid-19 pandemic, after overcoming initial hurdles, and advises to retain the good things developed as a consequence.

Language of instruction
The RMA's language of instruction is English, as is the programme name Literary Studies. The panel considers this fitting in light of the academic and professional environments the programme prepares its students for. The programme is geared towards English and American literary studies approaches. The panel regrets that the addition to this programme of the RMA in Dutch Literature has positioned the use of Dutch alongside that of other languages besides English, but finds this understandable due to the explicitly non-national focus of the programme (see Standard 1). The programme management told the panel that the RMA in its new shape does not draw as many students interested in Dutch literature as hoped for, since intake from the BA programme Neerlandistiek is relatively low. The programme hopes that this will be remedied by the hire of a new professor in Dutch studies who could rekindle the connection of Dutch Studies students with the research master. The panel hopes that the attractive RMA curriculum that has been created will end up convincing more Dutch Studies students.

Teaching staff and research environment
The panel is pleased with the research environment in which students of the RMA Literary Studies are educated, including the teaching staff. The RMA Literary Studies relies on a team of staff members consisting of a mix of staff members from Literary and Cultural Analysis, Modern Languages and Cultures, and Dutch Studies. The programme director, programme coordinator and chairs of the related departments jointly ensure that the mix of teaching staff is carefully balanced in terms of expertise. The panel discussed the cooperation between departments with staff and students and was impressed by the well-established, enthusiastic team running this RMA programme. Students and alumni testified to the instructors' enthusiasm, openness, and expertise.

The teaching staff are members of one of the Faculty's research schools, mainly ASCA and ASH. The core courses in the first year of the curriculum are designed to connect to these institutes: the core course 'Key Debates' connects particularly to the research at ASCA, and 'Literature, History, and Reading Historically' covers the work being done at ASH. ASCA's and ASH's research quality were evaluated as 'excellent' in the 2019 SEP evaluation. The panel appreciates this stimulating research environment and notes that many researchers are prominent and productive in their fields.

The panel appreciates the didactic skills and attention to ongoing professionalisation among staff members. All teaching staff in the programme hold a UTQ (university teaching qualification). There are several other programmes and courses for lecturers offered by the Teaching & Learning Centre of the Faculty of Humanities, which cover teaching methods, test assessment, curriculum assessment, and educational leadership courses. The panel considers the number of teaching staff members currently available to teach the programme clearly sufficient, allowing for much individual attention and small-group teaching. It understood (as mentioned under 'Feasibility and guidance') that a rise in student numbers will lead to a staff increase, and supports this.

Considerations

The panel is pleased with the clear and coherent structure of the RMA Literary Studies' curriculum. It appreciates team teaching in the core modules and finds that their content is kept up to date and challenging to the students, catering to particular questions and topical issues raised by them. The panel also finds that the fixed and elective elements in the programme are well-balanced, allowing students sufficient freedom to shape their own learning trajectories while safeguarding coherence. The curriculum is clearly offered at research master's level and the working methods are varied and fitting. The programme is strongly research-oriented, with a focus on methods and research skills. The panel appreciates the fact that the RMA is geared towards training students as independent researchers, encouraging them to follow their own research interests throughout the programme. The tutorials function well in promoting this, allowing students to closely collaborate with staff members and leaving space for creativity. Professional and job orientation are less prominently visible, but present throughout the programme as well, and the panel is pleased with the possibility of an internship outside the University of Amsterdam or even academia in the elective space. The curriculum is feasible and students are guided well throughout the programme.

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Conclusion

The panel concludes that that the programme meets standard 2.

Standard 3. Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment
Assessment in the RMA Literary Studies takes place according to the University Assessment Policy Framework, in line with faculty regulations. This means that assessment is aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the RMA and the learning goals of the various courses; that the evaluation criteria are

communicated transparently and in advance; that assessment types are varied and conducive to the programme's feasibility; and that examinations are valid and reliable.

The panel appreciates this policy and recognises it in the RMA. It looked at the programme's assessment matrix and found that constructive alignment of assessment with the learning goals of the programme is in place. Communication about assessment takes place through Canvas and in the online study guide, and students and alumni told the panel they are satisfied with this. Assessment types are sufficiently varied, with a focus on writing, which the panel considers fitting for a research master's programme in literary studies. They range from writing a paper or journal article to a presentation or a critical analysis paper. Care is taken to assess each course through various assessments. In the core courses and many electives, exams are designed in teams and peer reviewed. For each course, the lecturers create a file that includes assessment forms, assessment criteria, and an overview of the given grades. COVID-19 had no significant impact on assessment in the programme: the predominant assessment type, the research paper, was unaffected by the online nature of the classes. Other types of assessment, e.g. group presentations, worked remarkably well via Zoom.

The panel is pleased with assessment in the courses. It finds that assessment in the core course Literary Studies Lab and in the tutorials stands out positively. In the Lab course, students end up taking charge of a group class, and this is part of the assessment (25% of the grade). Assessment of the tutorials is often done in writing, but the teachers and students have more freedom here to choose a fitting assessment method as long as it is in line with faculty guidelines. The panel learnt that this has led to various creative, but aptly chosen exam types.

For the internship, the student has to fill out an internship plan and internship agreement before starting. Both have to be approved by the supervisor at the internship location, the student, and the RMA internship coordinator. At the end of the placement, an internship report needs to be written and approved by the internship coordinator. The internship and the report are then assessed by the supervisor at the internship location via the Faculty-wide evaluation form. The panel is satisfied with the way that internships are assessed.

Research project and thesis assessment
The RMA Literary Studies culminates in the Research Project (12 EC) and thesis (18 EC). The Research Project is assessed with a pass or fail grade through a portfolio that reflect all research-oriented activities performed for the thesis. The thesis itself is a written work of 17,000-23,000 words. It is assessed by the supervisor and an independent second reader (both examiners in the Faculty) with the help of an assessment form, which both readers fill out. They combine their findings in a form which they then share with the student. The panel recommends making sure that separate forms are filled out by each assessor, and are both stored for quality assurance purposes, even if only the final version with the judgements combined is sent to the students. Students in the RMA approach their own supervisors, and often look for a second assessor with additional expertise in the Faculty, for instance when they combine methodology with a particular language area. The panel is satisfied with this working method, especially since the second assessor is only included after the thesis is finalized and remains independent, but suggests looking for a third, truly independent reader in cases where the second reader became involved in supervision.

The panel looked at the assessment of 15 sample theses, and found it could usually follow the assessment given. Assessment forms were often filled out in much detail, and in one or two instances more sparsely motivated. In one of the latter cases, the panel disagreed with a grade given to a thesis it considered to be of

poorer quality (see standard 4), which points to the importance of detailed motivation.

Examinations Board
The Examinations Board of the Graduate School of Humanities is responsible for quality of assessment of the circa 80 MA and RMA tracks organized in the Faculty, including the RMA Literary Studies. The Board appoints examiners and evaluates assessment quality in the programmes. It consists of 6 members and is supported by various secretaries. In order to be able to guarantee assessment quality in all programmes, the Board makes use of delegated members, usually teaching staff members who represent a programme and who flag issues concerning this programme if these arise. The Examinations Board performs a yearly check on the final theses by sampling, and also advises the Faculty on issues it raises. For instance, the board investigated the assessment of tutorials in the Faculty and concluded for the RMA Literary Studies that they usually proceed well and occasionally give rise to creative forms of written assessment.

The panel finds that the Examinations Board works hard to fulfil its legal tasks, and it is generally pleased with the standard thesis check to safeguard graduate quality. At the same time, it points out that more could be done. The Examinations Board functions Faculty-wide, but there is a delegate member for the RMA programme to ensure that issues in the specific RMA programme come to the Board's attention. The delegate member can make personal observations or report issues that are brought to their attention by staff or students. Issues concerning assessment are also flagged through regular course evaluations. However, the evaluations are often filled out by a low number of students, so that they do not yield representative results. The panel applauds the initiatives to evaluate courses jointly in class, for instance after the exam, so that the response rate is higher. Written evaluations are complemented with 'panel discussions' among programme committee and students, which the panel appreciates as a valuable source of additional information. Still, the panel finds that a lot of responsibility is placed with one person, the delegate member, which it finds vulnerable. It also points out that more subtle problematic issues might escape the Examinations Board's attention, such as courses where relatively high grades are given. It advises looking into ways to produce statistical analyses of the exams, so that irregularities are automatically and quickly made apparent.

The panel learnt that the Examinations Board is planning to conduct regular checks of individual courses in all programmes. At the moment, the Board is not large enough to manage this yet. A separate assessment panel (toetscommissie) is to be appointed to execute this task. In its interview with programme and faculty management, the panel learnt that an assessment panel will be implemented at the start of the new academic year 2022-2023. It considers this an important and timely step towards further improving quality of assessment in the faculty and the RMA Literary Studies.

Considerations
The panel considers assessment and assessment practises to be up to standard in the RMA Literary Studies. Assessment is aligned with programme and course objectives, and it is transparent, valid and reliable. Assessment types are varied and fitting for a research master's programme, and the students complete the entire research cycle. The impact of Covid-19 on assessment has been limited. Students in the RMA approach their own thesis supervisor, and often look for a second assessor with additional expertise in the Faculty, for instance when they combine methodology with a particular language area. The panel appreciates that the second assessor is involved after the thesis is finalized and remains independent. It suggests looking for a third reader in cases where the second assessor does become involved in supervision. It also recommends storing the separate forms of both thesis assessors for quality assurance purposes.

The panel considers the current working method of the Examination Board to be adequate, but is of the opinion that that it should be expanded. The Board is responsible for many programmes and the delegates for the separate programmes carry a lot of responsibility in signalling programme-specific issues to the Board. The panel advises looking into ways to provide solid input, for instance by scheduling evaluation after the assessment for a higher response rate or producing statistical analyses of the exams, so that irregularities are automatically and quickly made apparent. It considers the planned addition of an assessment panel charged with regularly checking individual courses an important step towards further improving quality of assessment.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 3.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

> The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

Theses

The panel studied 15 theses from the RMA Literary Studies. It concluded that on the whole, they demonstrate the research master's level, and that the entire research cycle is completed. The panel was pleased to see that the theses reflect the programme's profile and focus, showing breadth in the choice of topics and reflecting the thematic, historical, or language strands in the programme.

In one case, the panel wondered whether a thesis, which received a very high grade of 9.5, actually matched the programme, given its focus on sound studies. The programme's definition of its object of study is the analysis of texts or other cultural objects conceived as 'text', so that sound studies fits well within the programme's reach. Nonetheless, the panel noticed that the thesis does not deal with literature or its methodologies, retaining a strongly theoretical focus. The panel found the thesis difficult to understand as it focuses on a topic beyond its literary studies expertise, although it could ascertain that the thesis was supervised and assessed by experts in the field. It concluded that the thesis would have been a better fit with a cultural analysis programme, partly because the thesis assessors are also external to the RMA Literary Studies.

It discussed the thesis with teaching staff and programme management. It learnt that this student, the thesis, and the particular circumstances were considered exceptional. The programme decided to allow a deviation from its usual profile due to the student's talent, research interests and ambitions. The programme had ascertained over the course of the curriculum, through the courses, tutorials and written papers, that the student fulfilled all exit qualifications for Literary Studies. The panel accepts this motivation to grant this student the master's degree in Literary Studies, provided this remains an exceptional case.

Alumni

The panel was informed that a limited number of RMA graduates obtain a PhD position either in the Netherlands or abroad: 6 of 34 graduates between 2016 and 2019. Due to the lack of many funded PhD places in Literary Studies, it finds this understandable albeit regrettable. The other alumni usually end up in suitable positions in the working field (e.g. education, publishing, marketing and communication). Through its interview with alumni, the panel learnt that they usually look back on the RMA with satisfaction. The panel concludes that the programme prepares its alumni well for positions inside and outside academia.

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Considerations

The panel finds that the final theses of the RMA Literary Studies demonstrate the research master's level and make clear that intended learning outcomes are achieved by the graduates. The panel was pleased to see that the theses reflect the programme's profile and focus, showing breadth in the choice of topics and reflecting the thematic, historical, or language strands in the programme. One exceptional thesis would have been a better fit with a cultural analysis programme, according to the panel. It agrees with the programme's motivation in granting this talented student that option within Literary Studies, provided it remains an exception. A limited number of alumni end up as PhDs due to the lack of funded positions. Alumni are well prepared for both academia and the working field.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 4.

General conclusion

The panel's assessment of the research master's programme Literary Studies is positive.

Recommendations by the panel

1. Express the programme's distinctive profile more clearly in the intended learning outcomes.
2. Match increase in student numbers with staff increase, to ensure the intensive student support and tutoring system can be maintained.
3. Make sure that the separate thesis assessment forms filled out by each assessor are stored for quality assurance purposes, and look for a third, truly independent reader when the first two assessors are both involved in thesis supervision.
4. Introduce the planned assessment panel, charged with regularly checking individual courses, as soon as possible to enable the Examinations Board with additional means to proactively signal programme-specific issues.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

Exit qualifications

a. Academic ability

The student who has completed the Master's degree programme:

1. should have insight into the key research methods in the field;

2. should be able to interpret, assess and take an individual position on academic practice – and the results thereof – within the field of study;

3. should be able to assess the academic practice in line with the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice (see the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity on the website of the UvA: Academic Integrity);

4. should be able to assess relevant academic literature;

5. should be able to independently formulate questions with regard to the field of study, to operationalise those questions and represent them in a research plan;

6. should be able to independently carry out research in the field of study and report on that research orally and in writing in a way that complies with the common academic conventions in the field of study;

7. should be able to present any scientific knowledge and insights gained during the degree programme and transfer them to a broader audience than the academic community;

8. should be able to answer scientific questions using knowledge of a specialism within the degree programme;

9. should be able to work in a team and give and incorporate feedback in a constructive way.

b. Programme -specific exit qualifications

The student who has completed the Research Master's degree programme:

1. should be able to apply the insights gained in their own field of study or discipline to adjoining scientific domains;

2. should be able to link topics from their field of study to current social debates and identify potential contributions;

3. should be able to reflect on their own position and the knowledge they have gained and identify areas of development;

4. should be able to formulate a concise individual research approach that is embedded in current scientific research questions;

5. should have gained practical experience with ongoing (international) research.

c Track-specific exit qualifications

The student who has completed the Research Master's degree programme:

1. has a thorough knowledge of one or several research specializations within the discipline of Literary Studies;

2. can independently identify, formulate, analyse, and critically reflect upon key theoretical questions within the field of Literary Studies.

3. possesses thorough knowledge of research methodologies within the discipline of Literary Studies;

4. the student is also able to formulate targeted research questions and present these questions in a plan for scholarly research project of a wider scope (such as a PhD research proposal);

5. has a good understanding of the pursuit of scholarship both in the Netherlands and internationally in the field of Literary Studies.

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

The programme consists of:
- 36EC (3x12) in core courses spread out over the first three semesters
- 30EC in electives
- 12EC in tutorials
- 12EC at a national research school
- 30EC thesis (18) and research project (12)

While in practice the electives, tutorials and research school activities are more flexible than the table below might imply, the basic study plan is as follows:

Year 1		Year 2	
Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 1	Semester 2
Core course (12EC): Key Debates in Literary and Cultural Studies	Core course (12EC): Literature, History, and Reading Historically	Core course (12EC): Literary Studies Lab	Thesis (18EC) + research project (12EC)
Electives / national research schools (18EC)	Electives / tutorials / national research schools (18EC)	Electives / tutorials / national research schools (18EC)	

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Donderdag 4 november 2021	
17.00 - 18.00	Voorbereidend overleg panel en inloopspreekuur

Vrijdag 5 november 2021 (digitaal bezoek)	
09.00 - 09.15	Ontvangst, intern overleg panel en inzien documenten
09.15 - 10.00	Gesprek inhoudelijke verantwoordelijken
10.00 - 10.30	Intern overleg panel/pauze
10.30 - 11.00	Gesprek studenten en alumni RM Linguistics
11.00 - 11.30	Gesprek docenten RM Linguistics
11.30 - 12.00	Intern overleg panel/pauze
12.00 - 12.30	Gesprek studenten en alumni RM Literary Studies
12.30 - 13.00	Gesprek docenten RM Literary Studies
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch
14.00 - 14.30	Gesprek examencommissie
14.30 - 15.00	Intern overleg panel
15.00 - 15.45	Eindgesprek management
15.45 - 17.00	Opstellen voorlopige bevindingen en voorbereiden mondelinge rapportage (panel intern)
17.00 - 17.30	Mondelinge rapportage voorlopig oordeel

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Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the research master's programme Literary Studies. Information on the theses is available from Academion upon request. The panel also studied other materials, which included:

General UvA documents
- Instellingsplan 2021-2026: Inspiring Generations
- Facultair Strategisch Plan 2021-2026
- Beleidsnotitie Internationalisering onderwijs FGw 2018-2023
- Notitie Taalbeleid onderwijs binnen de FGw: naar een Tweetalige Faculteit
- Toetsbeleid 2019
- Arbeidsmarktperspectief. Een onderzoek naar arbeidsmarktperspectieven onder alumni van de Faculteit
- der Geesteswetenschappen

Examination Board
- Annual report 2018-2019 & 2019-2020, Examencommissie Graduate School of Humanities
- Reactie bestuur op jaarverslagen 2018-2019 & 2019-2020

Programme Comnmittee
- Annual report/ Jaarverslag OC Literary Studies 2018-2019 & 2019-2020
- Annual report/ Jaarverslag OC Linguistics 2018-2019 & 2019-2020

Assessment
- Scriptiereglement masteropleidingen
- Beoordelingsformulier researchmasterscriptie
- Guidelines Tutorials
- Beoordelingsformulier Tutorials
- Model studiehandleiding Tutorials

Student publications
- Selected publications in 2019-2021 by current and recent students in the RMA Literary Studies
- Publications by students of the RMA Linguistics (& Communication)

Study materials of:

RM Linguistics
- Perspectives on Language and Communication (PoLaC) 1
- Life after Graduation

RM Literary Studies
- Key Debates in Literary and Cultural Studies
- Literary Studies Lab