

Assessment report
NVAO Limited Framework Programme Assessment

Research Master Social Sciences

University of Amsterdam

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1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the Research Master Social Sciences of the University of Amsterdam. The programme was assessed according to the four standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands.

The programme is well-organised and is embedded firmly in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of the University of Amsterdam.

The panel regards the profile of the programme to meet the requirements for research master programmes in the social sciences domain. The panel appreciates students being offered the opportunities to approach subjects from different disciplinary angles and at the same time being given room for disciplinary orientation. The panel also welcomes the programme offering three methodology specialisations, thereby allowing students to gain in-depth training in either one of these methodologies.

The programme's intended learning outcomes conform to the master level and surpass this level in some respects, adequately preparing students for PhD trajectories.

The argumentation for the English programme name and for English as the language of instruction are sound, as English allows to cater to international students and gives students the opportunities to conduct fieldwork or do internships abroad.

Programme management appropriately followed up on the recommendations of the previous assessment panel.

The number of incoming students in the programme allows for appropriate class sizes and assures the educational viability of the programme. The entry requirements and admission procedures of the programme assure admitting students, who have the capacities to complete the programme.

The curriculum meets the programme's intended learning outcomes. The panel approves of the contents and coherence of this curriculum and welcomes the design of the curriculum, allowing for three distinct specialisations. The curriculum reflects the multidisciplinary character of the programme, but leaves room for students to pursue disciplinary orientations. The methods courses in the curriculum allow students to gain depth in their methods training. Research ethics are covered in the programme. The panel is positive about the necessity for approval of the Examinations Board in case of students taking regular master courses. The panel regards the fieldwork and the internal and external internships to be managed well, with transparent entry requirements and clear products, which are evaluated.

The lecturers have very good credentials in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records. The research programme groups which the lecturers are involved in, all show very good to excellent results in recent research assessments. The panel, therefore, finds the programme to be embedded in high-quality research activities.

The panel regards the educational concept and study methods as appropriate for this programme. The system with tutors and the study adviser assures adequate study guidance for students. The panel, nevertheless, recommends to manage study load and study stress among students, by clarifying assessment standards to students and thus managing their expectations. The drop-out and study success figures for the programme are up to standard.

Programme management took adequate measures in the Covid crisis to provide for and to assure the quality of education as well as of examinations and assessments, and to monitor the well-being of students.

The rules and regulations for the examinations and assessments in the programme are appropriate, the quality assurance of these being up to standard. The Examinations Board activities are adequate as well. The panel advises, nevertheless, programme management to follow up more transparently on the rules, regulations and propositions brought forward by the Examinations Board.

The examination methods in the courses are in line with the knowledge and skills to be tested in these courses. The examination methods are satisfactorily varied. The panel is positive about the fraud and plagiarism rules.

The supervision and assessment processes for the thesis are up to standard. The panel advises, nevertheless, to document the separate assessments of the thesis examiners, to have the thesis examiners give more extensive feedback to substantiate the marks, especially the higher marks, and to have the examiners comment on the plagiarism score.

The panel reviewed fifteen master theses of programme graduates from the three specialisations. No theses were found by the panel to be unsatisfactory. Out of all the theses reviewed, five theses were graded satisfactory by the panel, six theses were found to be good, and four theses were found to be excellent. The marks for six theses were regarded by the panel to be appropriate. The marks for eight theses (over 50 % of the theses) were found to be too high, but less than one point. One thesis was found to be graded too low.

The panel sees the proportion of students graduating cum laude as being rather high and, therefore, recommends to make the cum laude requirements more demanding.

The career preparation activities in the programme are appropriate, including the activities preparing students for non-academic research or policy careers.

Programme management keeps track of the number of graduates finding research positions both as PhD students or in non-academic research. The panel applauds the programme results, 75 % of the graduates securing PhD positions or non-academic research positions.

The panel which conducted the assessment of the Research Master Social Sciences of the University of Amsterdam assesses this programme to meet the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, judging the programme to be positive. Therefore, the panel recommends NVAO to continue the accreditation of this programme.

Rotterdam, 16 June 2021,

Prof. L.J. de Haan PhD
(panel chair)

W. Vercouteren MSc
(panel secretary)

2. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO: Master Social Sciences (Research)
Orientation, level programme: Academic Master
Grade: MSc
Number of credits: 120 EC
Specialisations: Empirical-analytical (quantitative)
Interpretative (qualitative)
Mixed methods
Location: Amsterdam
Mode of study: Full-time
Language of instruction: English
Registration in CROHO: 21PK-60214

Name of institution: University of Amsterdam
Status of institution: Government-funded University
Institution's quality assurance: Approved

3. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard

3.1 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

The Research Master Social Sciences programme is one of the master programmes in social sciences of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of the University of Amsterdam. The programme carries 120 EC of study load and takes two years to complete. The programme is part of the Graduate School of Social Sciences. The Graduate School bundles the master programmes, research master programmes and PhD trajectories in the domain of social sciences of the Faculty. The Graduate School director chairs the Board of Studies, on which sit all programme directors as well as two student members. The Board of Studies is responsible for the educational and financial policies of the programmes. Management of this programme is in the hands of the programme director, who is assisted by the programme coordinator/study adviser. The Programme Committee, consisting of lecturers and students, advises programme management on the quality of the programme. The Examinations Board sets rules for examinations and assessments in the programme and monitors the quality of these. The lecturers in the programme are employed at the Departments of Sociology, Anthropology or Political Science. Lecturers are researchers, participating in nine of the research programme groups of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR).

The profile of the programme is to educate students to independently carry out problem-oriented research in the social sciences in general, and in sociology, political science or anthropology in particular, specialising along methodological lines. Students are trained multidisciplinary, which implies being able to approach themes and subjects from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Students specialise methodologically. The programme offers three methodological specialisations, being the specialisations empirical-analytical (quantitative), interpretative (qualitative), and mixed methods.

The programme's intended learning outcomes include knowledge and understanding of appropriate research methods and techniques in the social sciences, knowledge and understanding of thematic areas of interest, knowledge and skills to formulate research problems, to develop research designs, and to apply research methods and techniques, capabilities to write research proposals and present research findings, knowing how to position oneself academically, and capabilities to pursue PhD programmes or for high-level non-academic research positions.

Programme management showed the intended learning outcomes to correspond to the Dublin descriptors for the second cycle, as indicators of the master level. The intended learning outcomes partly reach the Dublin descriptors for the third cycle, as this research master programme aims to prepare students for PhD positions.

Programme management made the comparison to other programmes in this field in the Netherlands and abroad. Notwithstanding clear similarities to these programmes, the Amsterdam programme distinguishes itself, among other things, by being expanded over three methodologies, and by offering fieldwork and internships to students.

The programme name is English, and the programme is taught in English. The English name and English as language of instruction are chosen to allow international students to enrol. English also enables students to conduct fieldwork or to do internships abroad. Furthermore, English allows to recruit international teachers, making expertise available to the programme. Finally, the programme is closely related to English-spoken research programme groups.

Programme management took up the recommendations of the previous assessment panel, leading to a number of improvements. Programme management, among others, intensified preparing students for non-academic careers, rearranged thematic electives and introduced the Team Work for group cohesion among students in the programme, improved the communication between tutors and programme management by lowering the number of tutors, made the oral defence part of the thesis assessment, and took action to have thesis assessment forms filled out more completely.

Considerations

The panel sees the programme organisation as adequate and considers the programme to be well-embedded in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of the University of Amsterdam.

The panel regards the profile of the programme to meet the requirements for research master programmes in the social sciences domain. The panel appreciates students being offered the opportunities to approach subjects from different disciplinary angles and at the same time being given room for disciplinary orientation. The panel also welcomes the programme offering three methodology specialisations, thereby allowing students to gain in-depth training in either one of these methodologies.

The programme's intended learning outcomes meet research master requirements. These intended learning outcomes, so the panel established, conform to the master level and surpass this level in some respects, adequately preparing students for PhD trajectories.

The panel appreciates the comparison of this programme to similar programmes in the Netherlands and abroad, observing the commonalities and differences of these programmes and the distinctive character of this programme.

The panel endorses the English name of the programme and English as the language of instruction. Among other things, English allows the programme to cater to international students and gives students the opportunities to conduct fieldwork or do internships abroad.

Programme management appropriately followed up on the recommendations of the previous assessment panel.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 1, Intended learning outcomes.

3.2 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

The number of applications is high, reaching 150 applications last year. About 80 to 100 students are admitted. The number of students actually enrolling in the programme is on average 35 students per year over the last seven years, ranging from 29 to 39 students per year. The maximum intake is 40 students. The proportion of international students rose from 22 % in 2014 to 48 % in 2020. The gender balance is in favour of female students, being about 2/3 of all students.

The programme entry requirements are academic bachelor degrees in social sciences, with at least 30 EC of training in social sciences and at least 30 EC of training in social sciences research methods. The grade point average in the previous education must be at least 7.5 (Dutch grading system). Applicants have to be proficient in English and should be strongly motivated to study in this programme. The admissions committee admits applicants on the basis of these criteria.

The curriculum consists of two years. Programme management demonstrated the curriculum to meet the programme intended learning outcomes. In the first block of the first year, all students take two compulsory courses (12 EC). At the end of this block, students select one of the three methodological specialisations. In the remainder of the first semester, students take two methods courses (12 EC) which are aligned with their specialisation and also take one elective thematic course (6 EC). The second semester allows students to deepen their thematic and methodological knowledge and skills in two methods courses (12 EC) and two thematic electives (12 EC). In exceptional cases, students may take courses of regular, one-year master programmes. This happens, however, very rarely and is permitted only after Examinations Board's approval. At the end of the second semester, all students come together in the *Team Work Research Seminar* (6 EC). In this course, students participate in multi-methods teams to complete a mixed methods research design. In the third semester, students may do internships, do fieldwork or take methods electives. In the empirical-analytical specialisation, fieldwork is not offered. In the mixed methods specialisation, fieldwork is one of the options. In the interpretative or mixed methods specialisations, students may choose either for fieldwork (24 EC) or for fieldwork (15 EC) and internship (9 EC). Fieldwork may only be started, if the fieldwork proposal, to be completed in the *Fieldwork Preparation and Proposal* course (6 EC), is approved by the supervisor. Fieldwork itself has to result in the fieldwork report, which is formally evaluated. Internships are research internships done at the University of Amsterdam, at other universities or at organisations in the Netherlands or abroad. About 2/3 of the internships are at the University of Amsterdam. To be allowed to do internships, students have to have their internship proposals be approved by the internship supervisor and the tutor. In case of external internships, the proposal needs to be approved by the external internship supervisor as well. The internship report as outcome of the internship is formally evaluated. About 50 % of the students do internships. In the fourth semester, students write their thesis (24 EC). Theses may be in the form of monographs or articles. In the

fourth semester, the *Thesis Seminar* (3 EC) course trains students in academic writing and the *Workshops Academic & Professional Skills* (3 EC) course prepares them for academic and non-academic positions. Research ethics are addressed in one of the first courses of the curriculum and also in drafting the thesis proposal and writing the thesis. The last few years, improvements in the curriculum contents and scheduling were implemented.

The staff lecturing in the programme comprises 75 lecturers, amounting to 3.6 FTE, with 30 of them being core staff in the programme. Of all of the lecturers, 95 % have PhDs and 87 % are University Teaching Qualification certified. The lecturers have different disciplinary backgrounds. They are internationally qualified researchers in their field of study and publish in peer-reviewed journals. The research programme groups of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR), in which lecturers participate as researchers, obtained for each of the assessment criteria the scores *very good* or *excellent* in the most recent research assessments in 2014 and 2020. Lecturers bring forward their research interests in the courses. Staff members experience high but manageable workload.

The educational concept of the programme is research-based education. The study methods in the programme include lectures, seminars, hands-on training, and in-class discussions and reflection. Lectures, which are meant to transfer knowledge, are few and are limited to the first part of the programme. Seminars are meant for gaining insight and critical reflection. Methods courses include hands-on training. The number of contact hours are about 8 hours per week in the first year and about 5 hours per week in courses in the third semester. In the second year, students are individual supervised by lecturers in fieldwork, internship or thesis periods. In the first semester, all students are assigned their individual tutor. Three tutors are active in the programme, for each of the three Departments to which lecturers in the programme belong. Tutors serve as academic advisers to students. They introduce students to research programme groups and individual researchers, assist them in finding supervisors for internships and thesis research, and help them finding their way in the programme and within the University. In the first year, tutors and students meet at least four times. Students may, in addition, turn to the study adviser for general advice and in case of study-related or personal problems. Students choose their specialisation at the end of the first block in the first year. Tutors advise them on the specialisation to select. In selecting the specialisation, students also have an interview with the programme coordinator. Changing specialisation is difficult. Decisions on fieldwork or internships within specialisations may be taken later. Students experience high study load. The proportion of students dropping out of the programme decreased over the last years to on average 10 %. The Graduate School of Social Sciences has set the study success rate for completion of the programme within three years at 80 %. The study success rate of the programme was on average 88 % for the last five cohorts.

Programme management has taken measures to organise education in the Covid crisis and to monitor the quality of the education. Education on campus often proves not to be feasible, mainly due to government regulations. Therefore, learning activities have been changed to online lectures and seminars. Programme management also offers alternatives for data collection, by allowing students to use secondary data sets. These alternative learning activities are assured to meet course goals and programme intended learning outcomes. In student surveys, questions on the quality of

online education have been added. Response rates tend to be lower to some extent and results are mixed. Students indicate to appreciate the efforts to offer online education or they suggest improvements. The study adviser regularly contacts students, and organises meetings with them. This way, students' well-being is actively being monitored. The study adviser also assists students in overcoming obstacles in their studies. Thesis supervisors signal students' problems. Lecturers are requested to intensify their contacts with students, and to prioritise education over research.

Considerations

The number of incoming students in the programme allows for appropriate class sizes and assures the educational viability of the programme.

The panel approves of the entry requirements and admission procedures of the programme. These assure admitting students, who have the capacities to complete the programme.

The curriculum meets, so the panel established, the programme's intended learning outcomes. The panel approves of the contents and coherence of this curriculum and welcomes the design of the curriculum, allowing for three distinct specialisations. The curriculum reflects the multidisciplinary character of the programme, but leaves room for students to pursue disciplinary orientations. The panel appreciates the methods courses in the curriculum, allowing students to gain depth in their methods training. Research ethics are covered in the programme. The panel is positive about the approval of the Examinations Board needed in case of students taking regular master courses. The panel regards the fieldwork and the internal and external internships to be managed well, with transparent entry requirements and clear products, which are evaluated.

The panel appreciates the staff teaching in the programme. The lecturers have very good credentials in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records. The research programme groups which the lecturers are involved in, all show very good to excellent results in recent research assessments. The panel, therefore, finds the programme to be embedded in high-quality research activities.

The panel regards the educational concept and study methods as appropriate for this programme. The system with tutors and the study adviser assures adequate study guidance for students. The panel, nevertheless, recommends to manage study load and study stress among students, by clarifying assessment standards to students and thus managing their expectations. The drop-out and study success figures for the programme are up to standard.

In the panel's view, programme management took measures to provide adequate education during the Covid crisis, to assure the quality of this education, and to monitor the well-being of students.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 2, Teaching-learning environment.

3.3 Standard 3: Student assessment

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

The examination and assessment rules and regulations for the programme are specified in the Teaching and Examination Regulations and in the Rules and Guidelines of the Examinations Board.

The Examinations Board is responsible for, among other things, monitoring the quality of examinations and assessments, appointing examiners, and monitoring whether students have met the programme intended learning outcomes. The Examinations Board has these responsibilities for this programme, the Research Master International Development Studies and Urban Studies programmes, and the regular, one-year Master International Development Studies programme. External members sit on the Board. Each year, the Board reviews two to three courses on the alignment of intended learning outcomes, course goals and assignments or examinations. The Board also reviews a number of theses with lower, average and higher grades.

The assessment methods in the programme are papers, group and individual written assignments, and in-class participation activities. No written examinations are scheduled, as programme management sees these as leading to knowledge reproduction only. The fraud and plagiarism rules of the University of Amsterdam apply to all summative examinations and graded assignments. All of the graded written assignments are checked for plagiarism by dedicated software.

The students completing their master thesis are guided in this process by their individual thesis supervisor. Before being allowed to start this process, students have to obtain approval of their research proposal. Students are required to submit the thesis at the official deadline or they may make use of the second deadline which is considered a rewrite. Submitting at the second deadline excludes the student graduating cum laude. The master theses are assessed and graded by the supervisor and the second reader. They give their mark after the oral defence by the student. When the supervisor and the second reader disagree on the thesis mark or when they decide to grade the thesis a marginal pass or fail (between 5.0 and 6.0), a third reader is appointed to independently grade the thesis.

Programme management has taken measures to organise examinations and assessments in the Covid crisis and to monitor their quality. Written assignments, reports, and presentations have been organised as in pre-Covid times, be it that presentations are given online. As no on-site written examinations are scheduled in the programme, changes in the organisation and scheduling of examinations and assessment remain very limited as well. Proctoring has not been adopted. To lower stress levels of students, the Examinations Board is more lenient, extends deadlines for theses and changes some examinations to pass/fail. The Examinations Board monitors the quality of examinations and assessments and assures these to meet the programme intended learning outcomes.

Considerations

The panel regards the rules and regulations for the programme examinations and assessments to be appropriate. The quality assurance of the examinations and assessments is adequate.

The panel sees the activities of the Examinations Board as being appropriate. The panel advises, nevertheless, programme management to follow up more transparently on the rules, regulations and propositions brought forward by the Examinations Board.

The examination methods in the courses are adequate for the knowledge, insights and skills to be tested in these courses. The examination methods are satisfactorily varied. The panel is positive about the fraud and plagiarism rules.

The panel regards the supervision and assessment processes for the thesis to be up to standard and approves of the thesis assessment form in use. From these forms, it is, however, unclear what the independent judgements of each of the examiners is, as only the joint assessment is presented. The panel advises to document the separate assessments. The panel also regards the comments by the thesis examiners to be rather concise and often not elaborate enough. The panel recommends to have the thesis examiners give more extensive feedback to substantiate the marks, especially the higher marks. In addition, the panel advises for the examiners to comment on the plagiarism score, listed on the thesis assessment form.

The panel considers the measures programme management has taken to organise examinations and assessments in the Covid-crisis and to monitor the quality of these examinations and assessments to be appropriate.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 3, Student assessment.

3.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

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

Students are to demonstrate the knowledge and skills, they have acquired in the programme, in the thesis. Theses may take the form of either monograph or article.

The average grade for the theses was 8.1 for the last three cohorts. The Examinations Board for the programme, who reviewed a number of theses, found the marks of the thesis examiners in a number of cases somewhat too high but not substantially too high. About 40 % of the graduates, who started the programme in the years 2013 to 2016, published an article or a book, including publications based upon their thesis or in collaboration with their supervisors.

The proportion of students graduating cum laude, was 58 % for the 2017/2018 cohort, 46 % for the 2018/2019 cohort and 48 % for the 2019/2020 cohort.

The programme aims to prepare students for both PhD positions or for positions in non-academic research. In the programme, students are offered opportunities to prepare for non-academic policy or research positions. In the course *Team Work Research Seminar*, students are taught collegiality, negotiation and leadership skills. In the course *Workshops Academic & Professionals Skills*, students are prepared for both academic and non-academic careers. External internships in non-academic organisations allow students to proceed to non-academic positions. The Graduate School of Social Sciences schedules a career event for students yearly. The event allows students to get into contact with prospective employers.

The proportion of graduates from the programme proceeding to PhD trajectories is over 50 %. The number of PhD positions offered by the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) has decreased, due to funding issues. However, 75 % of those proceeding to PhD positions pursue PhD trajectories at other institutions. Programme graduates also find research or policy positions outside of academia. About 25 % of the programme graduates obtain positions in non-academic research.

Considerations

The panel reviewed fifteen master theses of programme graduates. The theses were selected from all of the theses of graduates of the last two years. In the selection, theses with lower, average and higher marks were represented. The three specialisations of the programme were represented in the selection as well. No theses were found to be unsatisfactory. Out of all the theses reviewed, five theses were graded satisfactory by the panel, six theses were found to be good, and four theses were found to be excellent. The marks for six theses were found to be appropriate. The marks for eight theses (over 50 % of the theses) were found to be too high, but less than one point. One thesis was found to be graded too low.

The panel sees the proportion of students graduating cum laude as being rather high. The panel recommends to make the cum laude requirements more demanding.

The panel appreciates the career preparation activities in the programme, including the activities preparing students for non-academic research or policy careers.

The panel welcomes programme management keeping track of the number of graduates finding research positions both as PhD students or in non-academic research. The panel applauds the programme results, 75 % of the graduates securing PhD positions or non-academic research positions.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 4, Achieved learning outcomes.

4. Overview of assessments

Standard	Assessment
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Programme meets Standard 1
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Programme meets Standard 2
Standard 3: Student assessment	Programme meets Standard 3
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Programme meets Standard 4
Programme	Positive

5. Recommendations

In this report, a number of recommendations by the panel have been listed. For the sake of clarity, these have been brought together below.

- To manage study load and study stress among students, by clarifying assessment standards to students and thus managing their expectations.
- To follow up more transparently on the rules, regulations and propositions brought forward by the Examinations Board.
- To document the separate assessments of the thesis examiners, to have the thesis examiners give more extensive feedback to substantiate the marks, and to have the examiners comment on the plagiarism score.
- To make the cum laude requirements more demanding.

Appendix: Assessment process

Certiked VBI evaluation agency was requested by the University of Amsterdam to support the limited framework programme assessment process for the Research Master Social Sciences of this University. The objective of the programme assessment of this research master programme was to establish whether the programme would conform to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, September, 2018 (officially published in Stcrt. 2019 no. 3198, 29 January 2019) as well as to the criteria listed in the NVAO Specification of additional criteria for research master's programmes, 30 May, 2016.

This programme is one of the programmes in the assessment cluster of Social Sciences Research Master programmes (in Dutch: WO OZM Maatschappij). Management of the programmes in this assessment cluster discussed the composition of the assessment panel and drafted the list of panel candidates.

Having conferred with programme management of the Research Master Social Sciences programme of the University of Amsterdam, Certiked invited candidate panel members to sit on the assessment panel. The panel members agreed to do so.

The panel composition was as follows:

- Prof. L.J. de Haan PhD, Professor Emeritus of Development Studies, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands (panel chair);
- Prof. A. Need PhD, Professor of Sociology and Public Policy; Dean Twente Graduate School, University of Twente, the Netherlands (panel member)
- Prof. J.Y. Nazroo PhD, Professor of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester, United Kingdom (panel member);
- N. Aerts BSc, student Research Master Social and Behavioural Sciences, Tilburg University, the Netherlands (student member).

On behalf of Certiked, W. Vercouteren MSc served as the process coordinator and secretary in the assessment process.

All panel members and the secretary confirmed in writing being impartial with regard to the programme to be assessed as well as observing the rules of confidentiality. Having obtained the authorisation by the University, Certiked requested the approval of NVAO of the proposed panel to conduct the assessment. NVAO has given its approval.

To prepare for the assessment process, the process coordinator convened with programme management to discuss the documents to be presented to the assessment panel, the site visit schedule, and the planning of the preparatory activities. In the course of this process, programme management and the process coordinator regularly had contact to fine-tune the process. The

activities prior to the site visit were performed as planned. Programme management approved of the site visit schedule.

Well in advance of the site visit date, programme management sent the list of theses of programme graduates of the most recent years. These theses take the form of either articles or monographs. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator selected fifteen theses from this list. In the selection, theses with lower, average and higher grades were represented. Both articles and monographs were included in the selection. All the programme specialisations were covered in the selection as well.

The panel members were forwarded in time the documents, prepared by programme management. These documents consisted of the self-evaluation report, the annexes to the self-evaluation report and additional information. The student chapter was part of the self-evaluation report. The annexes to the self-evaluation report included, among other things, a list of improvements after the previous accreditation, relations of intended learning outcomes to curriculum, course descriptions, teaching and examination regulations, core staff overview, recent publications and research grants of staff, data on student intake and success rates, list of students publications, and Covid-19 measures taken by programme management. The additional information consisted of, among other things, course dossiers and minutes and annual report of Programme Committee and Examinations Board.

To assist panel members in assessing the programme, they were sent the Trained Eye Research Masters Limited Framework document of Certiked evaluation agency, this document being the elaboration of the NVAO Assessment framework and the NVAO Specification for research master programmes.

Prior to the site visit date, the assessment panel chair and the process coordinator met to discuss the assessment process procedures. In this meeting, the panel chair was informed about the profile of panel chairs of NVAO. The panel chair agreed to work in line with the profile of panel chairs.

Seeing the continuing spread of Covid-infections in the Netherlands and the measures taken by Dutch government to counter the spread of infections, programme management proposed the site visit to be organised online. All panel members agreed to the online visit.

Prior to the date of the online visit, panel members sent in their preliminary findings, based upon their studying the programme documents, and sent in questions to be put to the programme representatives on the day of the visit. The panel secretary summarised this information, and compiled a list of questions to serve as the starting point for the discussions with the programme representatives during the visit.

Shortly before the visit date, panel members met to prepare for the site visit. Panel members discussed the procedures to be adopted during the visit, the preliminary findings about the programme, the panel reviews of the final projects studied, and the questions to be put to the programme representatives.

On 31 March, 2021 and 1 April, 2021, the panel conducted the online visit. The visit schedule was in accordance with the schedule as planned. The visit schedule included the following meetings.

31 March, 2021

09.00 – 10.15 Faculty representatives, department head, research group director, programme director

10.30 – 11.30 Examinations Board

11.30 – 12.30 Panel lunch (closed session), with 11.30 – 12.00 Open office hours

1 April, 2021

09.00 – 09.45 Programme director, core lecturers, study adviser

10.00 – 10.45 Lecturers/final project examiners

11.00 – 11.45 Students, Programme Committee student member, and programme alumni

11.45 – 12.45 Deliberations panel (closed session)

16.45 – 17.00 Main findings presentation by panel chair to programme representatives

17.00 – 17.45 Development dialogue

Open office hours were communicated timely by programme management to staff and students. No persons presented themselves during these open office hours.

In a closed session at the end of the visit, the assessment panel considered the findings, weighed the considerations and arrived at conclusions with regard to the quality of the programme. After these internal deliberations, the panel chair presented in broad outline the findings, considerations, conclusions and recommendations to programme representatives.

At the end of the site visit, panel members and programme management met to discuss further improvements in the programme during the development dialogue.

The assessment draft report was finalised by the secretary, having taken into account the findings and considerations of the panel. The draft report was sent to the panel members, who studied this draft and made a number of changes. Thereupon, the secretary edited the final report. This report was presented to programme management to be corrected for factual inaccuracies. Programme management were given two weeks to respond. Having been corrected for the factual inaccuracies, the Certiked bureau sent the report to the University Board to accompany their request to continue the accreditation of this programme.