



M Philosophy (research)
University of Amsterdam

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Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The panel concludes that the research master's programme Philosophy offered at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) has a clear objective and attractive profile. It aims at providing students with the necessary advanced research skills and thorough knowledge and understanding for an academic career in the field of philosophy. The programme is well-conceived, with ample attention for advanced research skills. It is characterized by an emphasis on systematic philosophy and the continental tradition, while not losing sight of the different currents in the broad scope of philosophical traditions and subdisciplines. According to the panel, the specific profile of the programme may be more clearly communicated to prospective students, as it seemed that some students were not aware of this beforehand. The panel considers the exit qualifications to be clearly defined, well-elaborated, and appropriate for the research master level. They are aligned with the demands and expectations of the international philosophical discipline. Alignment with the professional and academic field is adequately realized through discussion with the advisory board.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel concludes that the curriculum is well-designed, coherently structured, and aligned with the exit qualifications. The programme allows students to achieve advanced academic knowledge, understanding, and research skills, and contains sufficient course offerings specifically at research master's level. Students have a lot of room to explore their individual research interests, while achieving sufficient depth in for instance the tutorials. Research methodologies, ethics and integrity are addressed well throughout the programme. The panel is impressed by the flexibility in the programme, but also sees some vulnerabilities with regard to guaranteeing that each student acquires sufficient general philosophical background. It advises the programme to (continue to) to make sure that the achievement of all exit qualifications is not compromised. In the past few years the attention for diversity in the philosophical content offered and critical reflection on the canon was strengthened. The panel encourages the programme to continue this development.

During the programme, students can get acquainted with the role of philosophy in the various professional and academic fields through multiple courses and activities. The learning environment is well designed, making use of a good variety of teaching methods in small-scale and activating settings. The panel is especially positive about the tutorials and the co-teaching applied in the core courses. The programme is strongly student-centred. Additionally, it is well embedded in the department's research environment, giving students ample opportunity to participate in research and get familiar with the research in their field of interest. The programme is taught in English, which is appropriate for a research master, according to the panel. A fair number of students is international, resulting in an international classroom.

The selection criteria and procedure are appropriate. Although the programme in itself is feasible, according to the panel, the study success rates require improvement. The panel advises to systematically analyse the causes of study delay, and in particular identify and tackle factors that are within the sphere of influence. The panel recommends also looking into the role of students' large degree of freedom in relation to study delay. According to the panel, student guidance is well structured. The programme has a good tutoring system in place, but not all students participate in it. The panel advises the programme to take measures to increase participation, as this will benefit the students and their study progress. For example, the programme may consider making the tutoring meetings mandatory and scheduling the first individual meeting with the tutor by default.

The teaching staff is motivated, accessible, helpful, and cooperative. Lecturers are competent, qualified, and highly dedicated to the students. They have strong research profiles, ensuring a strong connection with advanced research.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The panel concludes that assessment in the programme is well designed, and that varied and appropriate assessment methods are applied. In the past few years, the programme evidently improved the quality assurance regarding assessment. There is regular consultation and calibration about assessment among the teaching staff. Also, the four eyes principle is consistently applied in thesis assessment. Moreover, the thesis assessment form was improved. The panel does advise to diversify the thesis regulations and assessment criteria more specifically per master's programme, to better align them with the specifics of each programme. Additionally, the programme should see to it that the scores in the thesis assessment form are always elaborately substantiated by both examiners. Furthermore, the panel advises the programme to see to compliance with the criteria for word count more strictly, and to lay down the procedure with respect to the involvement of a third reader more clearly and communicate it in an unequivocal way.

According to the panel, the Examinations Board is in control, competent and proactive in safeguarding the quality of assessment. It safeguards the programmes' exit level by reviewing samples of theses. Some tasks are delegated to the assessment committee, which systematically evaluates assessment quality by reviewing samples of assessment files

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

Based on the examination of a selection of 15 theses, the panel concludes that the theses are of a high level, appropriate for a research master. The theses clearly demonstrate the achievement of the exit qualifications. The documentation and interviews show that graduates are well prepared for the professional and academic field and perform successfully.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

M Philosophy (research)

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. Gerd Van Riel
Chair

drs. Anne-Lise Kamphuis
Secretary

Date: March 26th 2024

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 11 and 12 December 2023, the research master's programme Philosophy of the University of Amsterdam was assessed by an independent peer review as part of the Philosophy cluster assessment. The assessment cluster consisted of 29 programmes, offered by Leiden University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Radboud University, University of Groningen, Tilburg University, University of Twente, Utrecht University, University of Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. 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 (NVAO, 2016).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster Philosophy. Fiona Schouten acted as both coordinator and secretary, and Irene Conradie, Mariette Huisjes, Marieke Schoots, and Anne-Lise Kamphuis acted as secretaries in the cluster assessment. They have been certified and registered by the NVAO.

Preparation

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members as well as consistency within the cluster through overlapping panel participation. Gerd Van Riel acted as chair of the UvA panel, and was also chair during the assessments at the University of Groningen and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He participated as a panel member in the site visits to Leiden University, Utrecht University, Erasmus University Rotterdam and Radboud University. Thomas Reydon acted as a panel member at the UvA as well as at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Martine Prange and Tim van Alten participated as panel members in the assessments of UvA and Erasmus University Rotterdam. On 24 July 2023, the NVAO approved the composition of the panel. The coordinator instructed the panel chairs on their role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016).

The contact persons of the institution composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator (see appendix 3). The programme selected representative partners for the various interviews. It was also determined that the development dialogue would be part of the site visit. A separate development report was made based on this dialogue.

The programme provided the coordinator with a list of graduates over the period April 2021 to July 2023. In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses. They took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account. Prior to the site visit, the programme provided the panel with the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. It also provided the panel with the self-evaluation report 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 report and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit. The panel was also informed on the assessment frameworks, the working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

Site visit

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

Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to the coordinator for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the programme and the contact person 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 of the University of Amsterdam.

Panel

The following panel members were involved in the cluster assessment:

- Prof. dr. Martin van Hees, professor of Moral and Political Philosophy, VU University, and Dean of Amsterdam University College (AUC) – chair;
- Prof. dr. Gerd Van Riel, professor of Ancient Philosophy and Dean of the Institute of Philosophy, KU Leuven – chair and panel member;
- Prof. dr. Mariëtte van den Hoven, professor of Medical Ethics, Amsterdam UMC;
- Prof. dr. Thomas Reydon, professor of Philosophy of Science and Technology, Leibniz University Hannover;
- Em. prof. dr. Jos de Mul, professor of Philosophical Anthropology, Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. dr. Sonja Smets, professor in Logic and Epistemology, University of Amsterdam;
- Prof. dr. Bart Raymaekers, professor of Moral Philosophy and Philosophy of Law, KU Leuven;
- Prof. dr. Geert Van Eekert, professor of European Philosophy, University of Antwerp;
- Prof. dr. Martine Prange, professor of Philosophy of Humanity, Culture, and Society, Tilburg University;
- Prof. dr. Wybo Houkes, professor of Philosophy of Science and Technology, Eindhoven University of Technology;
- Prof. Federica Russo, professor in Philosophy of Science and Technology, University of Amsterdam;
- Dr. Victor Gijssbers, assistant professor Philosophy, Leiden University;
- Prof. dr. Vincent Blok, professor of Philosophy of Technology and Responsible Innovation, Wageningen University;
- Prof. dr. Rein Raud, professor of Asian and Cultural Studies, Tallinn University;
- Prof. dr. Corien Bary, professor in Logical Semantics, Radboud University;
- Dr. Elsbeth Brouwer, assistant professor in Philosophy of Language and Cognition, University of Amsterdam;
- Prof. dr. Erik Weber, professor of Philosophy, Ghent University;
- Dr. Constanze Binder, associate professor Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam – referee;
- Dr. Bruno Verbeek, assistant professor of Ethics and Political Philosophy, Leiden University – referee;
- Sarah Boer, MA student Philosophy, Politics, and Society, Radboud University – student member;

- Tim van Alten BSc, MSc student Philosophy of Science, Technology and Society, University of Twente – student member;
- Christa Laurens, MA student Modern European Philosophy, Leiden University – student member.

The panel assessing the Philosophy research master at the University of Amsterdam consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. Gerd Van Riel, professor of Ancient Philosophy, KU Leuven – chair;
- Prof. dr. Thomas Reydon, professor of Philosophy of Science and Technology, Leibniz University Hannover;
- Prof. dr. Martine Prange, professor of Philosophy of Humanity, Culture, and Society, Tilburg University;
- Prof. dr. Corien Bary, professor in Logical Semantics, Radboud University;
- Tim van Alten BSc, MSc student Philosophy of Science, Technology and Society, University of Twente – 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:	Philosophy (research)
CROHO number:	60128
Level:	Master
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	-
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Language of instruction:	English
Submission date NVAO:	1 May 2024

Description of the assessment

Previous accreditation panel's recommendations

The previous accreditation of the research master's programme Philosophy offered at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) took place in 2015. The panel assessed all standards as satisfactory. The following recommendations were given:

- Balance the study load and credits for core courses.
- Improve communication about possible research activities.
- Increase the proportion of international students and make sure all theses are written in English.
- Improve study success.
- Improve the transparency and consistency of thesis assessment.
- Maintain a rigorous policy for the appointment of examiners.

In response to these recommendations, the programme implemented several improvements, including a redesign of the programme, a better infrastructure for communication with students, and a tutoring system to reduce study delay. The quality of the assessment system was also improved, mostly as part of the recovery trajectory following the assessment of the other educational programmes in the Philosophy department. The recovery trajectory included the introduction of a new archiving system for theses, the development of rubrics for thesis assessment, and organizing 'educational meetings' ('onderwijsmiddagen') about assessment.

In the self-evaluation report the programme elaborately described the actions undertaken in response to the recommendations. Also, several improvements were discussed in the interviews during the site visit. The panel concludes that the recommendations have been adequately followed up on. Where applicable, this will be further described under the relevant standards in this report.

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 programme primarily prepares students for a career in academia. It aims at providing students with the necessary advanced research skills and thorough knowledge and understanding for an academic career in the field of philosophy. Students are equipped for continuation in a doctoral programme. They acquire the competences for performing high-quality academic research and for ensuring publications based on their research in professional journals. Also, students are prepared for positions in the public or private sector requiring advanced research skills.

The programme is characterized by an emphasis on systematic philosophy, paying a lot of attention to the fundamentals of important systematic disciplines in philosophy. The history of philosophy is also addressed, but mostly in a systematic context. Based on the documentation and the interviews, the panel concludes that the programme focuses mostly on the continental tradition, rather than on the analytical tradition, while not losing sight of the different currents in the broad scope of philosophical traditions and

subdisciplines. The panel is positive about the programme's profile and considers the programme to be well-conceived and attractive. The panel does think that the specific profile of the programme may be more clearly communicated to students in recruitment activities, as it seemed that some students were not aware of this beforehand.

Exit qualifications

The programme's intended learning outcomes are described in nine general and six programme specific exit qualifications. See appendix 1 for a detailed description of the exit qualifications. The general exit qualifications include one qualification (A3) exclusively focused on academic (research) integrity. The self-evaluation report describes in which exit qualifications the Dublin descriptors for the master's level are addressed. To achieve alignment with the (international) discipline, the exit qualifications are regularly discussed among the programme management and lecturers. Each year, they are presented to various bodies in the faculty (such as the Programme Committee, the Examinations Board, the Student Council and the Faculty Board) for formal consent or advice. To guarantee alignment with the expectations and needs of the professional field, the exit qualifications are discussed with the advisory board ('Alumni klankbordgroep') each year. The advisory board consists of alumni working in various sectors within the professional field.

The panel considers the exit qualifications to be clearly defined and well elaborated. They are appropriate for the academic orientation of the programme and the master's level as described in the Dublin descriptors. Also, they are appropriate for a research master, stressing the mastery of advanced research skills within the philosophical field. The exit qualifications reflect future prospects in academia as well as (research) positions in the public or private sector. The exit qualifications are aligned with the demands and expectations of the international philosophical discipline. Alignment with the professional and academic field is adequately realized through discussion with the advisory board.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the research master's programme Philosophy offered at the UvA has a clear objective and attractive profile. The programme is well-conceived, with ample attention for advanced research skills. It is characterized by an emphasis on systematic philosophy and the continental tradition, while not losing sight of the different currents in the broad scope of philosophical traditions and subdisciplines. According to the panel, the specific profile of the programme may be more clearly communicated to prospective students, as it seemed that some students were not aware of this beforehand. The panel considers the exit qualifications to be clearly defined, well-elaborated, and appropriate for the research master level. They are aligned with the demands and expectations of the international philosophical discipline. Alignment with the professional and academic field is adequately realized through discussion with the advisory board.

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 research master is offered as a fulltime two-year programme (120 EC). The curriculum includes four mandatory core courses (24 EC in total) in the first year and three compulsory 'Tutorials' (18 EC in total) in the first and second year. The tutorials are small, intensive classes, organized by students themselves, following their research interests and in agreement with the availability of and expertise of the teaching staff. In the interview, students gave multiple examples of tutorials they had organized and indicated that they are very positive about this format. In the second year of the programme, students participate in the 12 EC 'Research Project', in which students write a research plan for their thesis, and the 12 EC 'Research Lab'. In the second semester of the second year, students work on their 'Research Master Thesis' (18 EC) for which they perform all the steps in the entire research cycle. The programme includes 36 EC of (restricted choice) electives, of which in principle 10-12 EC should be dedicated to National Research School electives. This means that a maximum of 24 EC can be spent on courses that are not specifically designed for the research master. These electives are typically available for all master's students in the Philosophy department. Appendix 2 includes overviews of the curriculum.

The self-evaluation report describes in which courses each exit qualification is addressed. The relation between the exit qualifications and the courses is also demonstrated in a matrix. According to the panel, the curriculum is well designed and well aligned with the exit qualifications. The curriculum has a good, coherent structure, allowing students to achieve the relevant advanced academic knowledge, understanding, and skills. There is ample attention for research skills, most predominantly in the 'Research Lab', 'Research Project', tutorials and thesis. Research skills are also addressed in the core courses, in which a variety of philosophical methodologies is covered. The programme evidently allows students to explore their individual research interests, not only in their thesis but also in the tutorials. The topic of ethics and research integrity is well integrated in the majority of courses in the programmes.

The programme is characterized by a large degree of freedom for students to compose their own programme, not only in the elective space but also in the tutorials and the thesis. The panel is impressed by the flexibility in the programme that allows students to define their own philosophical specialization and follow their own research interests. It is clear from the documentation and the interviews that the programme strongly values the freedom of choice for students. For many students, the flexible nature of the programme was one of the main reasons for choosing this programme at the UvA. The panel recognizes the value of this distinctive characteristic but also sees some vulnerabilities with regard to guaranteeing that each student acquires sufficient general philosophical background. In the interviews, the programme explained that students are guided in choosing electives and tutorials by the tutor. The panel sees that the programme is aware of the vulnerability that comes with the large degree of freedom and advises the programme to (continue to) make sure that the achievement of all exit qualifications is not compromised.

In the past years the programme has strengthened the attention for diversity, including non-Western philosophy and a critical reflection on the canon, in the courses. The interviews indicate that the lecturers are generally aware of the need to increase diversity in the programme, but many lecturers' expertise focuses on other areas. The panel appreciates the efforts taken by the programme to increase diversity in the philosophical traditions addressed and the critical reflection on the canon. It sees that the awareness and will to invest in it are evidently present among the management and staff. The panel encourages the programme to continue this development and to further strengthen the attention for diversity. In order to do so in a sustainable way, the panel believes that it is important to hire more lecturers who are specialized in these areas of philosophy.

The panel is positive about how students can get acquainted with the role of philosophy in the various professional fields during the programme. For example, during the yearly career week organized by the faculty, alumni tell about their professions, allowing students to get familiar with the professional field. Also, the programme organizes 'alumni talks' several times a year, in which alumni from a specific professional field (like education, journalism, public policy and politics, and publishing) share about their current position. Students of the research master are also regularly invited to attend various colloquia and other events from the department's research groups. Besides that, the programme organizes talks with young academic professionals to inform students about pursuing an academic career. In the interview, students described that the course 'Research Lab' also helped them to get familiar with the academic field, by informing them on how to write a proposal to get funding. Students did mention they would appreciate a little more support in the PhD application process.

As mentioned earlier, students are required to take 10-12 EC of courses offered by the National Research School. This requirement is the result of an agreement of all deans of Dutch universities' faculties offering Philosophy. The 'Nederlandse Onderzoeksschool Wijsbegeerte (OZSW)' focuses specifically on the field of philosophy. It is clear from the documentation and the interviews that both students and lecturers are critical of the National Research School's offer, as the courses are not always perceived as relevant for the philosophical field. The panel understands this criticism. It suggests that it might be helpful if the research school would develop courses on broad topics that are relevant for all students, such as research integrity.

Learning environment

The didactic approach in the programme is aligned with the educational vision of the UvA. This vision emphasizes research-intensive education, a focus on academic development (a critical and inquisitive attitude), and room for differentiation and specialization. The programme's learning environment is designed to educate students to become independent researchers. A lot of the teaching takes place in relatively small-scale settings, like seminars (10-25 students) and tutorials (1-5 students). According to the programme, the large degree of freedom to compose their own specialization contributes to students' active and independent attitude. Many courses, including the tutorials and electives, require students to take an active role in shaping their own study path. Throughout the programme, didactic methods such as debates and discussions in class are used, stimulating students to develop their own views. Students indicated they appreciate this interactive aspect of the learning environment. The classrooms are quite diverse, representing various nationalities, ages, and backgrounds. This allows students to interact with students from other backgrounds, which contributes to developing a constructive, critical, and reflective attitude.

The panel is positive about the learning environment in the programme as it employs a good variety of teaching methods that are appropriate for the courses' learning objectives. The panel is especially pleased with the tutorials as they allow students to dive into a topic of their own interest in a small-scale setting with a dedicated lecturer. Also, from the interviews, the panel learned that co-teaching is applied in the core courses of the first year. Lecturers from different traditions and subdisciplines teach together and try to bridge the gaps between their perspectives. The panel is impressed with this setup, as it allows students to learn how to navigate the different philosophical traditions. The programme provides a lot of opportunity to develop advanced research skills and an academic attitude. The panel also appreciates the strong student-centred approach of the programme, which is reflected in the students' freedom of choice. According to the panel, this is a great strength of the programme.

As a research master, the programme is closely connected to the research environment in the Philosophy department. There are two research institutes related to the programme: the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ACSA) and the Institute for Logic, Language and Computation (ILLC). Both ACSA and ILLC were

assessed as very good to excellent in the most recent research review. Students participate in reading groups, seminars, and research groups of the research institutes. In this way, they can familiarize themselves with the academic research practice. Students are also invited to colloquia, symposia, and other research-related meetings in the department. According to the panel, the programme is very well embedded in the department's research environment, giving students ample opportunity to participate in research and get familiar with the research in their field of interest.

Admission

The programme admits around 25 students each year. Students are selected based on motivation, academic background, and previous results. The selection committee inspects the applications and selects the students to be admitted. To be admissible for the research master, students need to have an academic bachelor's degree in philosophy or in another bachelor's programme including 60 EC of philosophical courses. The collection of philosophical courses should include multiple courses at an advanced level, at least one of which was assessed by means of an academic philosophical essay, and cover various philosophical subdisciplines. On top of this, students need to demonstrate their motivation for the programme and have an average score of at minimum 7.5 in the post-propaedeutic phase of the bachelor's programme.

The panel agrees with the selection criteria and considers them appropriate for the research master and in line with the requirements commonly applied by similar programmes in the Netherlands. The selection procedure is in order.

Study success

In the student chapter, students indicated that the feasibility of the programme is in order. Nevertheless, the documentation reveals that in the past few years around a third of the students graduated within two years. Less than two-thirds graduated within three years. The panel considers study delay to be a point of concern for the programme, although there is no indication that the feasibility of the programmes is an issue. In the interviews and in the self-evaluation report, the programme management indicated it agrees that study success should be improved, but also mentioned that some of the main causes of study delay are outside the programme's sphere of influence, for instance students who follow two programmes at the same time, have a job, or deliberately choose to take more time for the programme (e.g. to be able to take more electives). In the current academic year, the programme is looking into study delay by means of surveys to identify the most important causes. The panel underlines the importance of a systematic analysis of the causes of study delay. It advises to also look into the role of students' large degree of freedom in relation to study delay. The programme should identify factors that are within the sphere of influence and make sure to implement all possible measures that could decrease study delay. For example, the programmes may consider implementing deadlines for the thesis and make tutoring mandatory.

Guidance

In the thesis trajectory, students are individually guided by a supervisor. Supervisors always have multiple meetings with the students during the thesis trajectory. The number of meetings is tailored to the needs of the student. For overall student guidance, the programme has a tutoring system. Since the academic year 2021-2022, the tutoring system has been intensified, in part to improve study progress. The programme's coordinator and the lecturer of the Research Project and Research Lab both act as tutors for the students. The tutors are the first point of contact for students with regard to issues such as study progress and their choice of electives. The programme believes the tutoring system will allow it to keep track of students' study progress and choices and to properly guide them in that process. The tutoring system is mainly focused on content-related issues. For issues related to planning and personal problems, a study advisor is available.

Tutors can refer students to the study advisor when needed. Students can also contact the study advisor themselves.

Each of the two years starts with a plenary tutoring meeting. In both the first and second semester of each year, students have the opportunity to schedule individual meetings with their tutor. The plenary as well as individual tutoring meetings are not mandatory. It is clear from the documentation and the interviews that part of the students do not attend the tutoring meetings. These students often do not respond when the tutor actively approaches them either. Because of this, several students, some of whom may need it the most, may be missing out on the guidance they need. In the interviews, the programme explained that making the tutoring mandatory is a source of discussion in the faculty. It does not seem to fit with the culture in the faculty. To encourage attendance, the tutoring was recently included in the study guide, to communicate that it should be seen as a standard part of the curriculum. Attendance has increased as a result of this. The interviews show that students regularly receive messages from their tutor. They are aware of the possibility of individual meetings. Nevertheless, for some, there is still a barrier to contact the tutor individually as they feel they should have a specific reason/problem to do this. The student chapters and the interview with students show that students are generally content with the guidance they receive from the tutors. They noted that tutors are approachable and cooperative. However, quite a few students had not made use of the opportunity to consult with their tutor.

The panel is very pleased with how the tutoring system is set up. Despite the resistance in the faculty, the panel advises the programme to consider making the meetings mandatory, as this will benefit the students and their study success. The barrier for making individual appointments with the tutor may be lowered by scheduling these meetings by default, at least the first time.

Internationalization

The programme is taught in English, in order to prepare students for a career in the academic field, which is strongly internationally oriented and in which English is the common language used. Additionally, a fair number of lecturers are international. Moreover, the programme values the international classroom. According to the panel, the choice for English is appropriate for the research master, as it fits with the international nature of the academic field of philosophy and allows students to prepare for an academic career.

Over the past three years, on average around a quarter of the students was international. At the moment, about a third of the student population is international. The interview with students makes clear that students appreciate the mix of nationalities in the classroom.

Teaching staff

At the moment, a team of 11 staff members is involved in teaching the core courses of the programme. All staff members have a permanent position in the Philosophy department and have a PhD. The team also includes three full professors. Practically all staff hold a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ). Several staff members also hold a Senior Teaching Qualification (STQ). The panel is positive about the teaching staff, and considers it appropriate for a research master. The size of the team, consisting of mostly permanent positions, contributes to the stability of the programme. According to the panel, the staff members are competent and qualified with regard to both the contents and the didactics of the programme. The overview included in the documentation demonstrates their strong research profiles. The staff members are very active in research, which creates a strong link between education and research. The courses they teach are closely linked to their personal research. During the site visit, the panel met with very motivated and

engaged staff members. Students indicated that the staff are very accessible, helpful, and cooperative. The panel is impressed by the passion of the teaching staff and their dedication to the students.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the curriculum is well-designed, coherently structured, and aligned with the exit qualifications. The programme allows students to achieve advanced academic knowledge, understanding, and research skills, and contains sufficient course offerings specifically at research master's level. Students have a lot of room to explore their individual research interests, while achieving sufficient depth in for instance the tutorials. Research methodologies, ethics and integrity are addressed well throughout the programme. The panel is impressed by the flexibility in the programme, but also sees some vulnerabilities with regard to guaranteeing that each student acquires sufficient general philosophical background. It advises the programme to (continue to) to make sure that the achievement of all exit qualifications is not compromised. In the past few years the attention for diversity in the philosophical content offered and critical reflection on the canon was strengthened. The panel encourages the programme to continue this development.

During the programme, students can get acquainted with the role of philosophy in the various professional and academic fields through multiple courses and activities. The learning environment is well designed, making use of a good variety of teaching methods in small-scale and activating settings. The panel is especially positive about the tutorials and the co-teaching applied in the core courses. The programme is strongly student-centred. Additionally, it is well embedded in the department's research environment, giving students ample opportunity to participate in research and get familiar with the research in their field of interest. The programme is taught in English, which is appropriate for a research master, according to the panel. A fair number of students is international, resulting in an international classroom.

The selection criteria and procedure are appropriate. Although the programme in itself is feasible, according to the panel, the study success rates require improvement. The panel advises to systematically analyse the causes of study delay, and in particular identify and tackle factors that are within the sphere of influence. The panel recommends also looking into the role of students' large degree of freedom in relation to study delay. According to the panel, student guidance is well structured. The programme has a good tutoring system in place, but not all students participate in it. The panel advises the programme to take measures to increase participation, as this will benefit the students and their study progress. For example, the programme may consider making the tutoring meetings mandatory and scheduling the first individual meeting with the tutor by default.

The teaching staff is motivated, accessible, helpful, and cooperative. Lecturers are competent, qualified, and highly dedicated to the students. They have strong research profiles, ensuring a strong connection with advanced research.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 2.

Standard 3. Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment in the programme

The assessment in the programme is based on the principles and guidelines of the university's assessment policy. The link between the exit qualifications and the courses is demonstrated in a matrix. The self-evaluation report describes the assessment methods for each mandatory course. In line with the assessment policy, each course in the programme is assessed through at least two tests, formative as well as summative. Assessment methods applied include reviews, reports, essays, presentations, oral exams, preparation of questions for discussion, proposals, peer reviews, and the thesis. The panel considers the assessment in the programme to be well designed. The programme makes use of varied assessment methods that are appropriate for the contents and learning objectives of the courses.

The courses' learning objectives and assessment methods are stated in the study guide. In the course manuals these matters are further specified, including a description of the assessment criteria and weighting. After a test has been graded, students always have the opportunity to inspect the test and the feedback. Examiners are appointed by the Examinations Board. Examiners are required to have a permanent position, a PhD, and a UTQ certificate. For grading the assessment, examiners make use of marking models and assessment forms. The course coordinators make sure that relevant documents regarding assessment in the course, such as the course manual, tests, marking models/assessment forms, and an overview of the grades, are archived in an assessment file.

The self-evaluation report and the interviews show that the programme has strongly invested in improving the quality assurance regarding assessment. For example, the programme regularly organizes 'educational meetings' ('onderwijsmiddagen') for the lecturers, in which topics related to assessment are discussed. By discussing these topics, there is consultation and calibration about the development and grading of tests among the teaching staff. The panel concludes that assessment in the programme is sufficiently valid, reliable, and transparent.

Thesis assessment

Theses are always assessed by two examiners: the thesis supervisor and the second reader. The two examiners fill out the assessment form independently, after which they discuss their findings and come to an agreement about the final grade. The interviews indicate that the second reader is leading in the assessment process in order to offset any biases that may be present with the first reader, who supervised the thesis. The panel is pleased that the four eyes principle is applied to thesis assessment and concludes that it is consistently implemented. This is a very clear improvement since the previous assessment. Based on the documentation and interviews, however, it has not become entirely clear to the panel in which cases a third reader is required. The panel recommends laying down a clear procedure for this and to communicate it in an unequivocal way.

Following the previous assessment in 2015, rubrics were added to the thesis assessment form. The panel is positive about this improvement. However, the panel thinks that the assessment criteria should be better aligned with the programme's exit qualifications. At the moment, one assessment form is used for the different master's programmes in philosophy. Related to this, there is one, shared thesis manual for these master's programmes. The panel advises the programmes to diversify the thesis regulations and assessment criteria more specifically per programme, to better align them with the specifics of each programme. The panel notes that the specific requirement that the thesis should, in principle, be publishable in some form, is already integrated in the assessment form.

In preparation for the site visit, the panel examined 15 theses from the programme, including their filled-in assessment forms. Based on this, the panel concludes that the grades awarded are not always elaborately

substantiated. For each criterion, the form offers room for written feedback ('comments') to substantiate the score. In some cases, this column was not or only briefly filled out. The panel notes that the form describes the 'comments' column as optional. In the opinion of the panel, this should be adjusted to make it more mandatory. The panel advises the programme to see to it that the scores are always elaborately substantiated in the form by both examiners.

The panel also noted that a relatively large proportion of the examined theses exceeds the maximum word count as stated in the thesis manual. The interviews with the lecturers and programme management indicated that some lecturers have a relatively flexible approach towards the regulation about word count, perceiving it as a rough guideline. The panel considers it important to be strict in upholding this regulation, in order to guarantee a fair playground for the students. Word count could also be included as an assessment criterion in the assessment form. The same goes for some other formal aspects of the thesis, such as requirements concerning the table of contents.

Examinations Board

There is one joint Examinations Board at faculty level, consisting of a chair, eight members, and one external member. Each of the eight members is chair of a cluster of one or more programmes. These programmes are represented in the cluster through delegates. The research master is part of the cluster Philosophy. Programme specific matters are usually dealt with by the clusters. The Examinations Board focuses primarily on overall issues that concern all programmes. One of the ways in which the Examinations Board safeguards the exit level and the quality of assessment, is by reviewing a sample of theses and assessment files yearly. The Examinations Board delegated the review of assessment files to the faculty wide assessment committee, consisting of assessment experts in the faculty. The conclusions and recommendations that follow from these reviews are reported to the programme director, who should communicate it to the relevant examiner. In the interview, the assessment committee indicated that it still sees room for improvement with regard to the monitoring of the improvement measures taken in response to the recommendations. The Examinations Board and the assessment committee organize training opportunities for lecturers, and thereby contribute to lecturer professionalization.

The panel's impression of the Examinations Board is positive: it is competent, in control, and proactive in safeguarding the quality of assessment. The structure of clusters in which the individual programmes are represented through delegates, provides a strong connection with the specifics of the programmes. The panel is also very pleased with the skilled assessment committee, that reviews the assessment system in a systematic way and as such contributes to assessment quality.

Considerations

The panel concludes that assessment in the programme is well designed, and that varied and appropriate assessment methods are applied. In the past few years, the programme evidently improved the quality assurance regarding assessment. There is regular consultation and calibration about assessment among the teaching staff. Also, the four eyes principle is consistently applied in thesis assessment. Moreover, the thesis assessment form was improved. The panel does advise to diversify the thesis regulations and assessment criteria more specifically per master's programme, to better align them with the specifics of each programme. Additionally, the programme should see to it that the scores in the thesis assessment form are always elaborately substantiated by both examiners. Furthermore, the panel advises the programme to see to compliance with the criteria for word count more strictly, and to lay down the procedure with respect to the involvement of a third reader more clearly and communicate it in an unequivocal way.

According to the panel, the Examinations Board is in control, competent and proactive in safeguarding the quality of assessment. It safeguards the programmes' exit level by reviewing samples of theses. Some tasks are delegated to the assessment committee, which systematically evaluates assessment quality by reviewing samples of assessment files.

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 research master thesis is regarded as the final project in which students demonstrate that they achieved the programme's exit qualifications. Before the site visit, the panel examined a selection of 15 theses from the programme. In the selection, a proper distribution across grades and topics was ensured. In the opinion of the panel, the level of the examined theses of both programmes is appropriate for a research master's programme. The theses are of a high academic level and demonstrate the achievement of the exit qualifications. According to the panel, the quality of the theses allows for further elaboration into publishable articles. The panel appreciates the variety of topics addressed in the theses.

Alumni

There is no representative data available about the alumni of the programme. Results of the National Alumni Survey ('Nationale Alumni Enquête') are not helpful because of the low response. The programme does keep in touch with alumni. These alumni have either pursued an academic career and continued to doctoral programmes, or found positions in professional fields like journalism, publishing, editing, and public administration. The interview indicates that alumni are positive about the programme and clearly see the value of the programme for their current job. Based on the documentation and the interviews, the panel concludes that graduates of the research master are well prepared for the professional and academic field and perform successfully.

Considerations

Based on the examination of a selection of 15 theses, the panel concludes that the theses are of a high level, appropriate for a research master. The theses clearly demonstrate the achievement of the exit qualifications. The documentation and interviews show that graduates are well prepared for the professional and academic field and perform successfully.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 4.

General conclusion

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

Development points

1. Communicate the specific profile of the programme more clearly to prospective students.

2. (Continue to) make sure that the achievement of all exit qualifications is not compromised by the flexible nature of the programme.
3. Continue strengthening the attention for diversity in the philosophical content offered and critical reflection on the canon.
4. Systematically analyse the causes of study delay, and in particular identify and tackle factors that are within the sphere of influence. Also look into the role of students' large degree of freedom in relation to study delay.
5. Take measures to increase participation in the tutoring meetings. Consider making the tutoring meetings mandatory and scheduling the first individual meeting with the tutor by default.
6. Diversify the thesis regulations and assessment criteria more specifically per master's programme, to better align them with the specifics of each programme.
7. See to it that the scores in the thesis assessment form are always elaborately substantiated by both examiners. Also, see to compliance with the criteria for word count more strictly.
8. Elaborate and lay down the procedure with respect to the involvement of a third reader in thesis assessment.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

a. Academic Ability

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

- A1. has insight into the key research methods in the field;
- A2. is able to interpret, assess and take an individual position on academic practice –and the results thereof – within the field of study;
- A3. is 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);
- A4. is able to assess relevant academic literature;
- A5. is able to independently formulate questions with regard to the field of study, to operationalise those questions and represent them in a research plan;
- A6. is 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;
- A7. is able to present any scientific knowledge and insights gained during the degree programme and transfer them to a broader audience than the academic community;
- A8. is able to answer scientific questions using knowledge of a specialism within the degree programme;
- A9. is 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:

- O1. is able to apply the insights gained in their own field of study or (sub)discipline to adjoining philosophical and scientific domains
- O2. is able to link topics from their field of study to current social or scientific debates and identify potential contributions;
- O3. is able to critically reflect on their own position and the knowledge they have gained and is able to identify areas of development;
- O4. is able to formulate and motivate a concise individual research approach in the context of contemporary philosophical debates and embedded in academic practice.
- O5. has gained practical experience within a current practice of research.
- O6. has acquired demonstrable knowledge of a number of specialist philosophical debates and is able to connect, compare and evaluate different philosophical perspectives within at least one of the following thematic areas: Ethics, Politics and Society; Art, Culture and Critique; Language, Logic, Mind and Metaphysics; Science, Humanities, Technology and Society.

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

The programme's aims are realised through the following core courses and compulsory units in the programme:

- Classical Texts, Contemporary Debates 1: Histories of Philosophy (6EC)
- Classical Texts, Contemporary Debates 2: Kant, Hegel and Us (6EC)
- Classical Texts, Contemporary Debates 3: Analysis and Critique (6EC)
- Classical Texts, Contemporary Debates 4: Class, Race, Gender, Earth (6EC)
- 18 EC in Tutorials
- 36 EC in Elective courses, with
- 24 EC (at least) Philosophy Electives (Restricted Choice) and
- 10-12 EC Research School Electives.
- Research Project and Research Lab
- Research Master Thesis

The table below gives a schematic overview of the two years of the programme.

ReMA	1st semester (Sep-Jan)			2nd Semester (Feb-Jul)		
Year	block 1	block 2	block 3	block 4	block 5	block 6
y1	CTCD 1 (6EC)	CTCD 2 (6EC)	Tutorial 1 (6EC)	CTCD 3 (6EC)	CTCD 4 (6EC)	Tutorial 2 (6EC)
	Elective (6EC)	Elective (6EC)		Elective (6EC)	Elective (6EC)	
y2	Tutorial 3 (6EC)	Research Project (12EC)		Research Lab (12EC)		
	Elective (6 EC)	Elective (6 EC)		Research Master Thesis (18EC)		

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Day 1: Monday 11 December

10.30	10.45	Arrival and welcome
10.45	12.15	Private panel meeting and open consultation hour
12.15	13.00	Lunch
13.00	13.45	Interview programme management
14.15	15.00	Interview students bachelor
15.00	15.45	Interview lecturers bachelor
16.15	17.00	Interview students 1MA and 2MA
17.00	17.45	Interview lecturers 1MA and 2MA

Day 2: Tuesday 12 December

09.00	09.30	Private panel meeting
09.30	10.15	Interview students rMA
10.15	11.00	Interview lecturers rMA
11.30	12.00	Interview Examination Board
12.00	13.00	Lunch
13.30	14.15	Final interview programme management
14.15	16.00	Private panel meeting: conclusions
16.00	16.30	Oral presentation of conclusions
16.30	17.15	Development dialogue

Appendix 4. Materials

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

- Self-evaluation report
- Teaching and Examination Regulations 2023-2024
- Matrix compulsory units – Exit qualifications
- Research profiles of core course lecturers
- Research-related events, accessible for students of the Research Master
- Tutorials course manual and assessment form
- Research review ILLC 2017
- Research review ASCA 2019
- Examencommissie Scriptiesteekproef 2023 (rMA en 2MA)
- Kengetallen
- Toetsbeleid UvA 2019
- Jaarverslag Examencommissie GSH
- Brief reactie DB op jaarverslag Examencommissie CoH GSH 21-22
- Examinatoren afdeling Filosofie
- Onderwijsmiddagen afdeling Filosofie
- Jaarverslagen Opleidingscommissie 21-22 en 22-23
- Restricted choice electives Philosophy 2023
- Alumni-relaties afdeling Filosofie
- MA Thesis Manual Philosophy (sep 23)
- English MA Thesis Philosophy assessment form
- Nederlands MA Fil Scriptie beoordelingsformulier
- MA Thesis AOS per supervisor 2223
- Syllabi of several courses:
 - Kant, Hegel and us
 - Philosophy and Decolonization
 - Research project
 - Aesthetics and metaphysics (restricted choice elective)
 - Philosophy of Mathematics (restricted choice elective)
 - Theories of Justice (restricted choice elective)
- Access to the Canvas environment of selected courses