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**Master of Business Administration
The Hague University of Applied Sciences**

***Report of the limited programme assessment
13 and 14 April 2022***

Utrecht, The Netherlands
June 2022
www.AeQui.nl
Assessment Agency for Higher Education

Colophon

Programme

The Hague University of Applied Sciences
Master of Business Administration
Location: The Hague
Mode of study: fulltime and parttime
Croho: 70024
Result of institutional assessment: positive with conditions

Panel

Raoul van Aalst, chair
Hans Mulder, domain expert
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Marianne van der Weiden, secretary

The panel was presented to the NVAO for approval.

The assessment was conducted under responsibility of:

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This document is best printed in duplex

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Summary

On 13 and 14 April 2022 an assessment panel of AeQui visited the Master of Business Administration (MBA) at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. The committee judges that the programme meets each standard; the overall quality of the programme **meets the standard**.

The 60 EC programme is offered to both fulltime and parttime students, in Dutch and in English. Fulltime students complete the curriculum in one year, parttime students do so in two years. The programme prepares students to become holistic, innovative and socially responsible business leaders for high performance organisations in the global market.

Intended learning outcomes

The MBA aims for its graduates to be strategic business professionals and confident leaders who are able to analyse and solve managerial problems effectively. The intended learning outcomes match the professional standards and the requirements of the international field, as defined by the Association of MBAs, and are clearly defined at master's level. The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes are a strong basis for a solid traditional MBA programme. As the programme's vision, however, aims for a more pronounced and modern MBA, with a strong focus on sustainability, global citizenship, digitalisation and life-long learning, the panel advises making this vision more explicit in the intended learning outcomes and ensuring a stronger alignment between the vision on the one hand and the intended learning outcomes, courses and assessment on the other hand. The programme uses input from the Advisory Board and the professional links of the curriculum committee to keep up to date with current trends in the field. The panel encourages the programme to broaden the membership of the Advisory Board and to make full use of this board's input when further developing the MBA curriculum. The assessment panel assesses that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**.

Teaching-learning environment

The curriculum is coherent and offers students appropriate possibilities to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Students learn to apply relevant theoretical knowledge and develop their professional, personal and research skills in two parallel learning lines. The final period is devoted to a thesis project. Part-time students can choose between a Dutch and an English curriculum, while the fulltime programme

is organised in English and the part-time BDA specialisation is offered in Dutch. The BDA specialisation gives the impression of being strongly geared to engineering, while in practice this is not the case. To better match internal and external expectations, the (titles of) modules should be more strongly aligned with the programme's intended learning outcomes. Sustainability is an important aspect in all modules and should be explicitly included in the intended learning outcomes at programme and module level. Adopting the HILL didactical method is a good choice. The panel advises further work to fully implement this concept. Students value the learning environment and the learning communities, where they are able to share experiences with their peers. Students and alumni would welcome a stronger emphasis on real-life cases, using their own organisations as case studies, thus further increasing the applicability of what they learn. Transforming the current interpretation of learning communities to involve not only students, but also lecturers and the professional field, would be a good way to achieve such a stronger link to the professional practice. The workload is feasible but heavy. This should be an ongoing point of attention for management and lecturers. The programme was able to respond to the COVID-19 situation and to adapt the course format to meet the new circumstances. The intake and selection procedure is well-considered and results in a good match between students and programme. In order to avoid and remedy any deficiencies in the required knowledge and skills the panel advises the programme to include a GMAT as a formative element in the intake procedure and to offer additional study material and web lectures so students can upgrade their knowledge when needed, preferably before starting the programme. The teaching staff is

qualified and committed and communication between staff and students is open. Student facilities, services and information are good. The assessment panel assesses that the teaching-learning environment **meets the standard**.

Assessment

The programme has an adequate assessment system, based on the vision that assessment is an integral part of a student's learning process. The panel finds that assessments are geared at the appropriate master level and that validity, reliability and transparency are sufficiently ensured. A few further improvements are possible, such as a stronger alignment of competencies, learning objectives and assessment at module level, and finetuning what the HILL didactical model means for assessment. The Examination Board and its assessment committee play a proactive role and have provided the programme manager and lecturers with good advice, based on the issues they encountered in their regular check of assessment portfolios. Almost all lecturers have now received proper training in assessment and are BKE-qualified. The panel assesses that the student assessment system **meets the standard**.

Achieved learning outcomes

Students do applied research and write a master thesis to show that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The panel studied a sample of sixteen theses of recent years and is satisfied that they are at master's level. Overall, the panel agrees with the grades and feedback from the examiners. The panel found the theses to be solid and sometimes even impressive pieces of work for a study load of 15 EC. The panel advises to strengthen the applied character of the research and add sustainability as an assessment criterion, as this is considered an essential element of the MBA programme at

THUAS. Alumni look back on their master's programme with appreciation and acknowledge the added value of the MBA programme for their careers. The panel assesses that the achieved learning outcomes **meet the standard**.

Recommendations

The programme meets the criteria for accreditation. To support the programme in its further improvement, the panel formulates the following recommendations:

- make the programme's vision (with a focus on sustainability, global citizenship, digitalisation and life-long learning) more explicit in the intended learning outcomes and ensure a stronger alignment between the vision and the intended learning outcomes, courses and assessment at programme and module level;
- the BDA specialisation gives the impression of being strongly geared to engineering, while in practice this is not the case. To better match internal and external expectations, the (titles of) modules should be more strongly aligned with the programme's (intended) learning outcomes;
- strengthen the link with the professional practice, e.g. by using students' own organisations for case studies, including lecturers and the professional field in the learning communities, and broadening the membership of the Advisory Board;
- include a GMAT as a formative assessment of applicants' numerical and data skills, and offer additional study material and web lectures to students to remedy any knowledge deficiencies, preferably before starting the programme;
- monitor the workload of students;
- strengthen the applied character of the theses.

All standards of the NVAO assessment framework are assessed positively; the assessment panel therefore awards a positive recommendation for the accreditation of the programme.

On behalf of the entire assessment panel,
Utrecht, June 2022

R. van Aalst,
Chair

M.J.H. van der Weiden,
Secretary

Introduction

This report describes the outcome of the evaluation of the Master of Business Administration of The Hague University of Applied Sciences, on 13 and 14 April 2022. The Hague University of Applied Sciences (further: THUAS) offers a wide range of associate degree, bachelor's, post-bachelor's and master's programmes. The Master of Business Administration (further: MBA) can be completed in one year (fulltime) or in two years (parttime). Students are professionally educated in international business and management in order to become a competent, effective and strategic professional.

The institute

THUAS is a university of applied sciences, located in The Hague, Delft and Zoetermeer, and rooted in its environment, collaborating with partners to solve social issues and to work towards a smart and economically strong region. THUAS aims to educate students to become qualified, independent professionals on the job market and responsible citizens in a globalising society. The current student population comprises almost 26,000 students from more than 140 different countries. Programmes are organised in seven disciplinary Faculties, while the post-bachelor's and master's programmes are also connected to The Hague Graduate School. The MBA is embedded in the Faculty of Business, Marketing & Finance. Applied research and innovation projects will be organised in seven Centres of Expertise.

The programme

The MBA is a 60 EC programme. Students can choose for the two-year parttime or the one-year fulltime curriculum. They develop their knowledge and skills in a range of modules (Finance 1 and 2, Strategy, Operations, Economics, Marketing, Human Experience and Business Innovation & Sustainability). Parallel to the eight modules (36 EC in total), the programme offers two learning lines: Business Research Methods & Business Analytics (4 EC) and Personal Leadership Development & Integration (5 EC). The last period is fully dedicated to the master thesis (15 EC).

The programme attracts applicants with at least two to three years of working experience. Fulltime students are recruited from all over the world, leading to a very diverse cohort each year. The

fulltime programme is therefore taught in English. The parttime programme is offered in both English and Dutch for international and Dutch students respectively, while the working language in the Big Data Analytics specialisation is Dutch.

The teaching staff consists of nineteen lecturers, six of whom have a PhD and thirteen have a master's degree. All have theoretical and professional expertise in the specific areas in which they teach. The curriculum committee consists of five core lecturers, representing core subjects of the programme including the Big Data Analytics profile, and reports to the programme management. The programme manager is responsible for the content and quality of the education and the complete organisation of the programme and reports to the faculty's programme director.

The assessment

THUAS assigned AeQui to perform a quality assessment of its MBA. In close co-operation with the programme management, AeQui convened an independent and competent assessment panel. A preparatory meeting with representatives of the programme was held to exchange information and plan the date and programme of the site visit.

In the run-up to the site visit, the assessment panel has studied the self-evaluation report on the programme and reviewed a sample of sixteen recent graduation projects. The findings of the report and the results of the review of graduation projects were input for discussions during the visit.

The site visit was carried out on 13 and 14 April 2022 according to the programme presented in attachment 2. The panel has carried out its assessment in relation to, and in consideration of, the cluster of programmes in which this programme is placed. The contextualisation of the programme within its cluster was conducted by the complete panel during the preliminary meeting and the final deliberations. The knowledge required for this was present in (part of) the panel.

The panel has assessed the programme in an independent manner; at the end of the visit, the chair of the assessment panel presented the initial

findings of the panel to representatives of the programme and the institution.

In this document, the panel is reporting on its findings, considerations and conclusions according to the 2018 NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. A draft version of the report was sent to the programme management; its reactions have led to this final version of the report.

Initiated by the programme, a development dialogue will be planned in the second half of 2022. The results of this development dialogue have no influence on the assessment presented in this report.

1. Intended learning outcomes

The MBA aims for its graduates to be strategic business professionals and confident leaders who are able to analyse and solve managerial problems effectively. The intended learning outcomes match the professional standards and the requirements of the international field, as defined by the Association of MBAs, and are clearly defined at master's level. The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes are a strong basis for a solid traditional MBA programme. As the programme's vision, however, aims for a more pronounced and modern MBA, with a strong focus on sustainability, global citizenship, digitalisation and life-long learning, the panel advises making this vision more explicit in the intended learning outcomes and ensuring a stronger alignment between the vision on the one hand and the intended learning outcomes, courses and assessment on the other hand. The programme uses input from the Advisory Board and the professional links of the curriculum committee to keep up to date with current trends in the field. The panel encourages the programme to broaden the membership of the Advisory Board and to make full use of this board's input when further developing the MBA curriculum. The assessment panel assesses that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**.

Findings

The MBA aims to educate students to be strategic business professionals, able to work in any sector, in the Netherlands and internationally. Graduates are confident leaders who are able to analyse and solve managerial problems effectively and to find workable strategic solutions in challenging situations. They have developed an entrepreneurial, adaptive and innovative mindset and are able to grow professionally and personally in their career. This is defined into a set of programme competencies and learning outcomes and further specified in the module outlines.

The MBA profile and intended learning outcomes are derived from the standards set by the Association of MBAs (AMBA). The MBA at THUAS provides a rigorous academic framework including applied research, allied to the professional practice and reflecting international business and management standards. A matrix shows how the MBA competencies and learning outcomes correspond to the Dublin descriptors at master's level and to level 7 of the Netherlands Qualification Framework. The programme also used the standard 'Master programmes in the HBO', drawn up by the association of universities of applied sciences in 2019, to clarify the MBA's master level.

The panel agrees that the intended learning outcomes have been defined at the appropriate master's level and correspond with professional standards.

THUAS profiles itself as a network university with an international and sustainability focus. The focus on internationalisation is evident from the diversity of the student population and the attention to global trends throughout the programme. During the site visit, all discussion partners emphasised the importance of sustainability as part of the programme's vision. The panel notes, however, that these elements receive only limited attention in the intended learning outcomes. The panel also feels that being part of a network university should imply a stronger involvement with the local context of The Hague, e.g. in the learning communities (see also standard 2).

The specialisation Big Data Analytics (BDA) is aimed at students with the ambition to bridge business with data analytics and data architecture. Students combine a general core of courses related to business and management with more advanced courses to develop their BDA profile. The panel agrees that digitalisation is a relevant trend for organisations and applauds the inten-

tion to offer a modern and up-to-date programme. The panel wonders, however, if the names of the specialisation and the courses (see also standard 2) are clear enough for students and other stakeholders: they suggest a technical rather than a managerial approach. Besides, digitalisation is broader than big data analytics: other relevant aspects of digitalisation, such as robotics, blockchain and platform economy, are not really addressed.

The management explained to the panel that the recent inclusion of the MBA into the Faculty of Business, Finance and Marketing, will stimulate cooperation and exchange with related programmes, not only horizontally between the master programmes, but also vertically between programmes of different levels (associate degree, bachelor, master). They expect that this will greatly contribute to the Faculty's role in stimulating life-long learning of professionals. The panel encourages the programme to further investigate and develop these options in close cooperation with the Examination Board and assessment committee.

The programme regularly updates its contents, following developments in the professional field through the Advisory Board and the curriculum committee. The Advisory Board consists of six members, mainly of the programme's own alumni, and has been renewed recently (1.5 years ago). The panel would suggest a broader composition of this board, to solicit feedback from as wide a range as possible. The curriculum committee consists of five experienced lecturers who are

also business professionals in their field and specialisation. The policy is to have these two bodies meet together annually to discuss developments in the field and produce suggestions for adjustments and innovations in the curriculum. The panel expects such meetings to be useful for the further development of the MBA programme.

Considerations

The assessment panel considers that the intended learning outcomes match the professional standards and the requirements of the international field, as defined by AMBA. The programme is defined at master's level. The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes are a strong basis for a solid traditional MBA programme. As the programme's vision, however, aims for a more pronounced and up to date MBA, with a strong focus on sustainability, global citizenship, digitalisation and life-long learning, the panel advises making this vision more explicit in the intended learning outcomes and ensuring a stronger alignment between the vision on the one hand and the intended learning outcomes, courses and assessment on the other hand. The panel encourages the programme to broaden the membership of the Advisory Board and to make full use of this board's input when further developing the MBA curriculum.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment panel establishes that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**. This applies to both fulltime and parttime study mode.

2. Teaching-learning environment

The curriculum is coherent and offers students appropriate possibilities to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Students learn to apply relevant theoretical knowledge and develop their professional, personal and research skills in two parallel learning lines. The final period is devoted to a thesis project. Parttime students can choose between a Dutch and an English curriculum, while the fulltime programme is organised in English and the part-time MBA with BDA specialisation is offered in Dutch. The BDA specialisation gives the impression of being strongly geared to engineering, while in practice this is not the case. To better match internal and external expectations, the (titles of) modules should be more strongly aligned with the programme's intended learning outcomes. Sustainability is an important aspect in all modules and should be explicitly included in the intended learning outcomes at programme and module level. Adopting the HILL didactical method is a good choice. The panel advises further work to fully implement this concept. Students value the learning environment and the learning communities, where they are able to share experiences with their peers. Students and alumni would welcome a stronger emphasis on real-life cases, using their own organisations as case studies. Transforming the current interpretation of learning communities to involve not only students, but also lecturers and the professional field, would be a good way to achieve such a stronger link to the professional practice. The workload is feasible but heavy. This should be an ongoing point of attention for management and teachers. The programme was able to respond to the COVID-19 situation and to adapt the course format to meet the new circumstances. The intake and selection procedure is well-considered and results in a good match between students and programme. In order to avoid and remedy any deficiencies in background knowledge and skills the panel advises the programme to include a GMAT as a formative element in the intake procedure and to offer additional study material and web lectures to students. The teaching staff is qualified and committed. Communication between staff and students is open. Student facilities, services and information are good. The assessment panel assesses that the teaching-learning environment **meets the standard**.

Findings

The MBA is offered as a fulltime (1 year) and part-time (2 years) programme of 60 EC. The fulltime programme is taught in English, while the part-time programme is offered in both English and Dutch for international and Dutch students respectively, while the working language in the Big Data Analytics specialisation is Dutch. Students complete eight modules on a range of topics, such as finance, strategy, marketing and business innovation (36 EC in total). Two vertical learning lines run parallel to the modules: business research methods & business analytics (4 EC), and personal leadership development & integration (5 EC). The last period is devoted to field research, thesis and oral defence (15 EC).

Orientation

The MBA is a professional master, aimed at Dutch and international students with a minimum of two

to three years' work experience. Both students and alumni confirm that the programme has a professional orientation and introduces relevant case studies in the classes. Lecturers use the Harvard Case Study method across the curriculum, simulating the contexts and dynamics in the business work field. Students and lecturers bring in their professional experiences, which leads to interesting discussions in class. Despite this, some students would like to learn more than what is in the books, preferring a stronger connection with the industry, and have suggested to the programme management that students should be stimulated to become more outward oriented. They also feel that it would be helpful and more stimulating if lecturers use the students' organisations as real-life cases instead of standardised more general cases.

The research line in the curriculum consists of workshops, coaching sessions and online web lectures and includes a module on statistics and business analytics. Participating alumni share their experiences and approach, content and process to the thesis, within the research line, starting in the introduction week and organised throughout the programme.

The panel appreciates that the two vertical learning lines enable the students to develop both their professional and personal skills and their research capabilities. As one of the students told the panel, the programme helps students to develop into a more complete person, able to cooperate in a group and take on different roles. In the master thesis students must show that they are able to combine relevant theory with empirical field research and to reach relevant conclusions and recommendations for a client organisation. The panel will discuss the thesis in more detail in the chapter on standard 4.

Contents

The knowledge and skills in each module are derived from the programme's Body of Knowledge and Skills (BoKS). Lecturers told the panel that they regularly meet, both formally and informally, to check how their modules fit together. The panel confirms that the curriculum is solid and coherent, but heard from students that it could be more stimulating, especially in the first part of the programme. It appears that some lecturers feel obliged to cover topics in their module that students should have learnt in their bachelor's education, because students enter the programme with a variety of degrees. As time is precious in a one-year (or two-year parttime) programme the panel advises looking for other ways to address any deficiencies in background knowledge, such as by offering additional reading materials or web lectures, preferably before starting the programme but also during the course of a subject.

The content of modules in the Dutch and the English curriculum are identical, but examples and cases in the English curriculum are more international, in line with students' backgrounds. At first

sight, the BDA curriculum appears quite different from the regular MBA programme and is framed as a much more technical programme, but lecturers and management emphasised that the names of modules may be different, but that their learning outcomes correspond closely with those in the regular MBA curriculum (e.g. Big Data Basics is comparable to Strategy). This is explicitly monitored, also by the Examination Board, because 60% of the BDA curriculum must overlap with the MBA curriculum in order to be valid as a specialisation of the MBA programme. The Examination Board thinks that, although this is partly a semantic discussion, more clarity on the titles and content of BDA modules is desirable, both internally and for the external market. BDA students and alumni assured the panel that they consider themselves MBA graduates with additional knowledge and skills to use data in their work.

The programme management mentioned that being part of the Faculty of Business, Marketing & Finance creates the possibility of increasing the range of courses, e.g., by offering modules as electives to each other's students. The panel agrees that this is an interesting option, offering a more personalised learning path to the students. The panel suggests offering a wider range of elective modules related to digitalization, open to all students.

Sustainability is considered an essential element of the curriculum by all involved. The current curriculum does no longer include a separate module on this aspect, but all modules and teachers are expected to address sustainability in teaching and assignments. Although this does not appear explicitly in the learning outcomes, the panel was reassured by the feedback from students that, indeed, sustainability is well-integrated in all modules and assignments. The cooperation with the Centre of Expertise Mission Zero and the membership of the professor in Circular Economy in the Advisory Board support the continuous attention to the topic. The panel advises including sustainability in the intended learning outcomes at programme and module level.

Structure

In each variant of the programme, the maximum number of students is 20, leading to short communication lines between lecturers, staff and students. Teaching methods are seminars, guest lectures, workshops, student presentations and online activities (web lectures, webinars and consultancy hours). The MBA strives for an activating, challenging and study-able programme. For this purpose, the programme has introduced the HILL model (High Impact Learning that Lasts) as its teaching method, and learning communities where small groups of 3-4 students can develop new perspectives through interaction with each other. Peer review and collective learning are part of the learning communities. The learning communities are also used to help each other in remedying gaps in knowledge or skills, although students feel that this should rather be the task of their lecturers. Currently, the composition of the learning communities remains unchanged, but students would prefer to change the composition a few times during the programme. More generally, they would welcome more engagement with other groups and more networking in and outside of class, e.g. through guest lecturers and meet & greets with people from the professional field.

The panel agrees that HILL is a viable choice and encourages the programme to continue its implementation. The panel also agrees that learning communities are a valuable method of collaborative learning and thinks that their role could be expanded. Currently, the learning communities are working groups of students only. Elsewhere, they also include lecturers and the professional field, allowing these communities to work on real-life cases. The professional field introduces a problem they would like to have addressed, while the lecturers bring in the knowledge students need to solve it ('just in time'). The panel suggests looking into this wider interpretation of learning communities, as it fits well with the further implementation of the HILL method.

The workload for students is high, especially for the parttime students who combine their studies

with work and private life. Students describe the programme as 'hard-paced'. They acknowledge that this as an advantage because they learn much, but they also note that some terms and semesters are heavier than others. They would welcome a redistribution of modules over the terms and semesters to achieve a better balance, e.g. by switching Marketing and Finance 2. The panel thinks such a redistribution is a reasonable request.

In a more general way, the panel feels that the workload is related to the issue of safety. Especially in an environment where students from very different cultural and educational backgrounds have to work together, it is essential that they feel safe and do not feel pressed to go beyond their limits. It is part of a (future) leader's role to prevent a rat race and burn-outs in their group. Not all students showed awareness and reflection on this aspect when they met with the panel.

Recent developments

In 2020 and 2021 the programme was for a large part offered online. Teachers had to adjust their pedagogic and didactical strategies. They embraced the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model to develop a vision on using digital technology within the modules. Students encountered problems in gathering data for assignments and the thesis project. When physical attendance was again possible, teachers used their experience with online teaching to expand the blended learning environment, combining online, onsite and practical learning activities. The quality of the learning environment as well as the wellbeing of students was monitored. The programme manager was the first point of contact for students. The fact that in the past two years study visits and guest lectures were offered online may have diminished for students the external perception of getting insights from a real practitioner and have increased their need of stronger links with real-life companies and organisations.

Incoming students

Students have to meet a number of requirements to be admitted to the programme: a recognised bachelor degree, a minimum of two to three years of work experience, English proficiency, and a match with the MBA profile. On average, parttime students have a more senior profile than fulltime students. All admissible candidates are invited for an intake interview (online or in The Hague) with the programme manager to investigate if there is a good match between the candidate and the programme's profile and objectives. An admission board, consisting of the programme manager and at least one lecturer, decides whether the candidate is permissible, after which the final application follows.

Applicants are not required to submit a GMAT score. For some, this was an extra reason to apply at THUAS because it saved time and money, while others noted that some students are struggling with numbers and data and need to ask for external support sometimes. The panel agrees that it should be clear in the admission information that e.g. basic Excel knowledge is necessary, in order to manage expectations. Offering the opportunity to do a GMAT could be helpful as a formative assessment of a student's skills, even if a GMAT score is not a formal admission requirement. In the paragraph on Contents (see above) the panel commented on the current practice in some modules to include knowledge that should have been part of the students' bachelor programme, and suggested to offer additional reading materials or web lectures before starting the programme.

The MBA is not publicly funded. For the majority of students, their employers pay the tuition fees, while others are self-paying and consider this an investment in their future.

Staff

The information dossier shows the qualifications of teaching team members in terms of academic degree, professional experience and didactic expertise. The number of lecturers with a PhD has increased substantially over the past few years

(from 14 to 30%). The management aims for all lecturers to be strongly involved in research. Almost all teaching team members have completed the basic qualification on assessment (BKE, Basiskwalificatie Examinering). They interact formally in teaching team meetings and professionalisation sessions, and informally between classes. Students are positive about their teachers, especially for their openness and approachability. A stronger involvement of the teaching team in curriculum development and in external research projects is one of the programme's ambitions mentioned in the self-evaluation report. The panel confirms on the basis of its meeting with lecturers, that the MBA has a strongly committed teaching team, and that its further ambitions are to be supported.

Language

The fulltime programme runs in English, while the parttime programme is offered both in Dutch and in English. The working language in BDA is Dutch. Students in the English curricula come from countries in almost all continents and must prove their adequate language proficiency as part of the admission process. Lecturers are required to possess a (nearly) fluent level of English and this presents no problems in practice. The panel commends the programme for its bilingual offering, catering to the needs of different groups of students.

Infrastructure

MBA is housed in the Poseidon building of THUAS. Sufficient facilities for online and offline teaching are available. The building is a meeting-place for lecturers and students. Students have access to the online and onsite library of THUAS.

Tutoring and student information

The programme manager is available for students during classes and advises students, solicited and unsolicited, on any issues they may have, such as about study results, social problems or study barriers. Students are supervised in their thesis research by one of the lecturers. Group coaching takes place during the Personal Leadership Development & Integration learning line. The small

group size of both the lecturing team and the student cohorts encourage an informal culture and short lines of communication.

Students are well-informed about the programme and what is expected from them, starting with the introduction week at the beginning of the programme, and sustained by module descriptions, study guide, timetables, assignments with assessment criteria and deadlines at the beginning of each term and semester. Students can find all programme related information on Blackboard, and assessment results in Osiris.

Three students from different cohorts together with two lecturers comprise the Programme Council. This council meets at least twice per year, advises the management about the teaching and education regulations and may submit proposals regarding the quality and organisation of the teaching programme. Students hardly use the course evaluation questionnaires to provide feedback, not because of lack of interest, but because they are asked to evaluate before the course is finished and they read mails in their personal email accounts more regularly than those in their student-email accounts. They think it would be more effective if they were asked to fill in such questionnaires in class during the last lecture,

Considerations

Considering what the panel read before and heard during the site visit, it is convinced that the MBA offers its students a coherent curriculum, with adequately balanced attention for theoretical background, research capabilities and professional and personal development. Looking at module titles, the framing of the BDA specialisation gives the impression of being rather strongly geared to engineering, while in practice this is not the case. To better match internal and external expectations, the (titles of) modules should be more strongly aligned with the programme's intended learning outcomes. Sustainability is an important aspect in all modules and should, therefore, be explicitly included in the intended learning outcomes at programme and module level. Adopting

the HILL method is a good choice. The panel advises further work to fully implement this concept. Students value the learning environment and the learning communities, where they are able to share experiences with their peers. Students and alumni would welcome a stronger emphasis on real-life cases, using their own organisations as case studies, thus further increasing the applicability of what they learn. The panel believes that transforming the current interpretation of learning communities to involve not only students, but also lecturers and the professional field, would be a good way to achieve such a stronger link to the professional practice. The intake procedure succeeds in admitting students who are able and committed to complete the programme. They come from a wide range of bachelor programmes. The panel advises the programme to include a GMAT as a formative assessment of students' numerical and data skills, in order to manage the applicants' expectations, and to offer additional study material and web lectures to students so they can remedy any deficiencies they may have prior to the start of the programme and lecturers do not need to spend teaching time to do so. The lecturers are qualified and committed to teach in the programme and their communication with students is open and constructive, which was confirmed by the students. The workload is heavy. Management and teachers should be aware that too much pressure affects the safety of a learning environment, especially in an intercultural context where students have different ideas about what is normal or acceptable. The panel hopes that the MBA, building on an already solid base, will use the panel's suggestions to achieve further improvements, in line with the programme's vision as described in the previous chapter.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment panel establishes that the programme **meets this standard**. This applies to both fulltime and part-time study mode.

3. Assessment

The programme has an adequate assessment system, based on the vision that assessment is an integral part of a student's learning process. The panel finds that assessments are geared at the appropriate master level and that validity, reliability and transparency are sufficiently ensured. A few further improvements are possible, such as a stronger alignment of competencies, learning objectives and assessment at module level, and finetuning what the HILL didactical model means for assessment. The Examination Board and its assessment committee play a proactive role and have provided the programme manager and lecturers with good advice, based on the issues they encountered in their regular check of assessment portfolios. Almost all lecturers have now received proper training in assessment and are BKE-qualified. The panel assesses that the student assessment system **meets the standard**.

Findings

The MBA considers assessment as an integral part of a student's learning process and uses a combination of formative and summative tests. Assessments are designed to reflect the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (analysing, evaluating and creating knowledge) and in line with the programme's didactical principles of the HILL model (activating, challenging). The MBA uses a matrix to demonstrate that all intended learning outcomes are assessed in the modules and the thesis.

Assessment methods include case studies, written examinations, research papers, mini theses and the research proposal in preparation of the master thesis. Partial and formative assessment methods include presentations and group assignments. The panel agrees that these are suitable ways of assessment. In some module outlines the description of the assessment method differs from that in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER). The panel agrees with the Examination Board that in such cases the text of the TER is leading, and that some additional assessments may certainly be interesting, but not relevant in view of the learning objectives. The panel advises aligning the assessment methods and the descriptions thereof in the module outlines with the TER. The Examination Board has played an active role in the alignment of competencies, indicators and learning objectives at programme level. The next step is to do this at module level as well. In the panel's view a recent improvement has been that the relative weight of individual and group

assessments and written and oral assessment forms in modules has been changed from 50-50 to 70-30 per cent of the grade.

To safeguard validity and reliability of assessment the MBA ensures that all intended learning outcomes at programme and module level are covered by assignments and exams (checked against the assessment matrix) and are assessed multiple times. Module outlines and assessments are checked by a qualified examiner and the programme manager (four-eyes principle). This examiner's approval is needed before module outline and assessment are included in the module's assessment portfolio and are posted on Blackboard and made available for students. Students are informed about the assessment methods and criteria at least two weeks in advance of a module. They are satisfied with the assessment and grading procedures and feel free to ask their lecturers for an explanation when they don't understand the grade they have been given.

The Examination Board and its assessment committee play a proactive role in safeguarding the final level of the degree and the quality of assessments. Both the Examination Board and the assessment committee act as a critical friend and coach in the programme and advise on regulations, the implementation of the HILL model and its effect on feedback, feedforward and assessment. The division of roles between management (organising assessment) and Examination Board (safeguarding quality) is clear for all concerned

and works well, the panel heard. The management has realised that almost all lecturers now hold a BKE, following the Examinations Board's advice. The assessment committee screens the assessment portfolios three times each year, checking if they meet all criteria, reports its (positive as well as negative) findings to the Examination Board, and gives feedback and advice to the programme manager and lecturers. The following year they check if improvements have been made. The panel is satisfied that the MBA has a clear protocol on how to act in cases of suspected plagiarism and fraud. In line with the management's ambition to strengthen the role of the MBA in the life-long learning of professionals, the panel thinks it is worthwhile for the Examination Board to design a protocol for exemptions.

Considerations

The panel considers that the programme has an adequate and well-organised assessment system,

with a few possibilities for further improvement, such as a stronger alignment of competencies, indicators and learning objectives at module level, and finetuning what the HILL didactical model means for assessment. The proactive way in which the Examination Board and the assessment committee fulfil their role is commendable. The panel is convinced that the Examination Board's advice strengthens the quality of the MBA assessment system. Circumstances, such as a clear division of roles and responsibilities between management and Examination Board and assessment qualifications (BKE) for all lecturers, are favourable.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment panel establishes that the programme **meets this standard**. This applies to both fulltime and part-time study mode.

Achieved learning outcomes

Students do applied research and write a master thesis to show that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The panel studied a sample of sixteen theses of recent years and is satisfied that they are at master's level. Overall, the panel agrees with the grades and feedback from the examiners. The panel found the theses to be solid and sometimes even impressive pieces of work for a study load of 15 EC. The panel advises to strengthen the applied character of the research and add sustainability as an assessment criterion, as this is considered an essential element of the MBA programme at THUAS. Alumni look back on their master's programme with appreciation and acknowledge the added value of the MBA programme for their careers. The panel assesses that the achieved learning outcomes **meet the standard**.

Findings

Students use the last part of their study programme to demonstrate their ability to individually conduct an applied research project, write a master thesis and defend it. They are allowed to start their research when they have successfully completed the previous modules. The thesis manual specifies the criteria that students will be evaluated on in their thesis, and the rules and regulations concerning the requirements and grading. The thesis coordinator assigns a suitable thesis supervisor, in close liaison with the programme manager. Theses are assessed independently by two examiners: a first examiner (initially the second reader during the research process) and a second examiner (the supervisor). At least one of the examiners must have a PhD degree. Both examiners must agree on the grade (90% of the final mark) before a student is allowed to proceed to the presentation and oral defence (10% of the final mark). In the process of coming to an agreement on the grade, the two examiners need to calibrate their judgements. The panel thinks it would be helpful to share these calibrations among all supervisors, in order to finetune the interpretation of the assessment criteria and rubrics.

The Examination Board takes an active role in safeguarding the master level and the assessment quality of the theses. Each year, a sample of theses is reviewed by the assessment committee. In addition, external reviews are organised annually by the programme manager and the Examination

Board. Results are discussed with the programme manager and the written report is communicated with the lecturers who act as supervisor and the thesis coordinator. A point of attention raised in the most recent external review was the usability of the recommendations in the theses.

In preparation of the site visit, the panel studied a sample of sixteen theses submitted by fulltime and parttime students who started their studies in 2019, 2020 or 2021. The panel considers that the work of these sixteen students clearly reflects the intended master level. Overall, the panel agrees with the grades and feedback from the examiners. The panel found the theses to be solid and sometimes even impressive pieces of work for a study load of 15 EC. Most of them are traditional products, and could be more applied and relevant. This observation is in line with the external reviewer's comment mentioned above. The panel also noted that not all theses reflect the aspect of sustainability, although the MBA considers this an essential element of the programme. Adding sustainability to the intended learning outcomes at programme level, as recommended in the chapters on standards 1 and 2, will ensure that this is an assessment criterion of the master thesis.

Alumni look back on their master's programme with appreciation, as was apparent from the documentation and from the panel's conversation with alumni. They acknowledge the added value of the MBA programme for their careers. They all work in management positions and quite a few of them have clear ideas how their MBA degree will

help them in their further career. Many alumni are involved in the MBA programme, e.g. as members of the Advisory Board or as guest lecturers. They would welcome a more formal alumni network to remain in touch with each other and the MBA programme. This is one of the programme's ambitions and the panel encourages the programme to fulfil this ambition.

Considerations

The panel is satisfied with the overall level of the graduates' final theses. It is evident that they are at the intended master's level. More focus on the applied character of the research and on sustainability would be useful. Alumni appreciate the

programme as helpful to gain a good position in the field of management. The panel concludes that the overall level of the theses, combined with the positive evaluation of alumni, shows the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment panel establishes that the programme **meets this standard**. This applies to both fulltime and part-time study mode.

Attachments

Attachment 1 Assessment committee

Drs Raoul van Aalst

Werkt als zelfstandige bij een bedrijfskundige adviesbureau

Drs Rob Jacobs RA RC

Hoofddocent Zuyd Hogeschool, en verder actief als controller, accountant en riskmanager

Prof.dr. Hans Mulder MBA

Hoogleraar Antwerp Management School (Enterprise & IT Architecture and Management), en verder bestuurder, onderzoeker en adviseur bij de Venture Automatisering Adviesgroep (VIAGroep)

Vera L. Broek, studentlid

Vera Broek studeert B Muziek aan Codarts, hogeschool voor de kunsten. Tevens studeert ze BSc Biomedische Wetenschappen aan de Universiteit Leiden.

Het panel werd ondersteund door dr. Marianne van der Weiden, secretaris.

Attachment 2 Programme of the assessment

Wednesday 13 April 2022

<u>Time</u>	<u>Meeting</u>
14:00-14:45	Panel preparation
14:45-15:00	Break
15:00-15:15	Welcome
15:15-16:15	Meeting with Management
16:15-16:30	Break
16:30-17:30	MBA Experience
17:30-17:45	Break
17:45-18:30	Advisory Board and Alumni

Thursday 14 April 2022

<u>Time</u>	<u>Meeting</u>
09:00-09:30	Panel preparation
09:30-10:15	Examination Board and Assessment Committee
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-11:30	Lecturers
11:30-12:00	Lunch break
12:00-12:30	Speaking with walk-in students
12:30-13:30	Students
13:30-15:15	Panel meeting
15:15-16:00	Feedback panel
16:00	Refreshments

Attachment 3 Documents

- Self-evaluation report
- Theses selection of 16 students
- Appendices to the self-evaluation report:
 - 0. Characteristics of the programme
 - 0.1. Vision on learning in a master programme
 - 1. End qualifications
 - 1.1. MBA competency framework
 - 1.2. MBA Competency matrix – Dublin Descriptors and NLQF 7
 - 1.3. MBA Programme Framework
 - 1.4. Programme evaluations
 - 1.5. Module outlines including assessments
 - 2. Programme
 - 2.1. Assessment within the master programmes THGS
 - 2.2. PER/OER MBA
 - 2.3. Facilities for students with a disability
 - 2.4. MBA Body of Knowledge and Skills (BoKS)
 - 2.5. List of literature used in the programme
 - 2.6. Minutes of lecturers' meetings
 - 2.7. Minutes of Advisory Board
 - 2.8. Intake procedure
 - 2.9. Schedule 2021-2022
 - 2.10. Schedule introduction week 2021-2022
 - 2.11. Minutes of Programme Committee (OC)
 - 2.12. NSE evaluations
 - 2.13. Minutes of Curriculum Committee
 - 2.14. MBA areas of improvement and related actions
 - 3. Faculty
 - 3.1. Overview of lecturers
 - 3.2. Profile of lecturers
 - 4. Facilities
 - 4.1. Student statutes/guidelines THUAS
 - 4.2. Thesis manual 2021 – 2022
 - 4.3. Bright Future Scholarship (BFS)
 - 5. Assessment and final level
 - 5.1. Annual report Examination Board 2020-2021
 - 5.2. Minutes Assessment Committee
 - 5.3. Minutes of review master theses (Examination Board and External)
 - 5.4. Overview of graduates of last two cohorts