

Assessment report
Limited Framework Programme Assessment

Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology

University of Amsterdam

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1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology programme of University of Amsterdam, which has been assessed according to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, as published on 20 December 2016 (Staatscourant nr. 69458).

The programme objectives are sound. The panel appreciates the programme being very broad within the programme domain, intending to cover subjects in this domain widely and offering a range of options for students. The programme balances well the breadth and depth of the domain, allowing students to go in-depth in their studies. The panel appreciates the research-orientation of the programme and regards the programme objectives to be up-to-date.

The programme objectives meet the requirements of the Reference Framework for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology in the Netherlands. The panel welcomes the efforts by the joint programmes to draft this framework and regards this to be a sound description of this domain.

The panel appreciates the comparison to programmes abroad and regards this programme to meet international standards.

The panel finds students to be well prepared to enrol in master programmes in this domain, to apply for master programmes in other fields or to enter the labour market.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme correspond to the programme objectives, are well-articulated and are conform to the bachelor level.

Although the student inflow numbers are appropriate, the panel supports programme management plans to raise the inflow of students. The admission requirements and procedures are adequate. The panel advises to communicate in more pronounced terms the balance of breadth and depth, achieved in the programme.

The panel is positive about the contents of the curriculum. The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The courses are up to standard. The panel in particular appreciates the literature study with the Presentation/Oral Examination. The panel is positive about the breadth and the depth of the curriculum and considers the curriculum to be coherent. Although students are adequately prepared for the professional field in some courses, the panel proposes to reinforce and expand contacts with external organisations to offer and to facilitate internships for students.

The panel regards the lecturers in the programme to be both good researchers and skilled teachers. The panel welcomes the team spirit among the lecturers. The workload of the lecturers may be demanding, but is manageable.

The panel considers the curriculum to be well-organised in educational terms, leading students to more self-reliance. The number of hours of face-to-face education and the class sizes are adequate. The study guidance is organised well. The panel suggests to inform students about lecturers' fields of expertise and to arrange for more easy accessibility of lecturers. The student success rates are appropriate.

The panel approves of the examinations and assessment rules and regulations of the programme, these being in line with University of Amsterdam assessment policies. The monitoring by the Examinations Board of examination and assessment processes is adequate.

The examination methods adopted by the programme are consistent with the goals and contents of the courses. The panel welcomes the measures, which have been taken to counter plagiarism and fraud.

The supervision and assessment processes for the thematic module papers, Bachelor theses and literature studies for the Presentation/Oral Examinations are appropriate. Although the assessment scoring forms include relevant criteria and are transparent, the panel proposes to have examiners add written comments and to have proportional weighting to clusters of criteria. In addition, the panel advises to introduce written protocols for the Presentations/Oral Examinations.

The panel considers the measures ensuring the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations and assessments to be satisfactory.

The panel regards the combination of the thematic module papers and the Presentation/Oral Examination literature study to be adequate as final projects. The final projects match the intended learning outcomes. The panel supports the grades given by examiners of the programme, although some of the papers may have been marked slightly too high. Some papers are very good, whereas others are only sufficient. One paper was found by the panel to be unsatisfactory, but the panel considers this paper to be an outlier, not being representative of the general quality of the papers.

The panel considers the programme graduates to have reached the intended learning outcomes and to be qualified to enter the labour market, enrol in master programmes in this domain and in other domains.

The panel that conducted the assessment of the Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology programme of University of Amsterdam assesses this programme to meet the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, judging the programme to be satisfactory. Therefore, the panel advises NVAO to accredit the programme.

Rotterdam, 6 February 2019

Prof. dr. T. Otto
(panel chair)

drs. W. Vercouteren
(panel secretary)

2. Assessment process

The evaluation agency Certiked VBI received the request by University of Amsterdam to manage the limited framework programme assessment process for the Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology programme of this University. The objective of the programme assessment process was to assess whether the programme would conform to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, published on 20 December 2016 (Staatscourant nr. 69458).

Having conferred with management of the University of Amsterdam programme, Certiked invited candidate panel members to sit on the assessment panel. The panel members agreed to do so. The panel composition was as follows:

- Prof dr. T. Otto, full professor of Anthropology and Ethnography, University of Aarhus, Denmark, full professor and tropical leader, The Cairns Institute, James Cook University, Australia (panel chair);
- Prof dr. G. Alex, full professor Ethnology, Asian-Oriental Institute, Eberhardt-Karls University Tübingen, Germany (panel member);
- Dr E.D. Rasch, associate professor, Sociology of Development and Change Group, Wageningen University (panel member);
- Dr M.E. Pelkmans, associate professor in Anthropology, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom (panel member);
- Drs D. Stolk, programme coordinator Cultural Emergency Response, senior member management team, Prins Claus Fonds Amsterdam (panel member);
- I. Corbeek, student Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies, Radboud University (student member).

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

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

To prepare the assessment process, the process coordinator convened with management of the programme to discuss the outline of the self-assessment report, the subjects to be addressed in this report and the site visit schedule. In addition, the planning of the activities in preparation of the site visit was discussed. In the course of the process preparing for the site visit, programme management and the Certiked process coordinator regularly had contact to fine-tune the process. The activities prior to the site visit have been performed as planned. Programme management approved of the site visit schedule.

Well in advance of the site visit date, programme management sent the list of final projects of graduates of the programme of the most recent years. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator selected the final projects of 15 graduates from the last few years. The grade distribution in the selection was ensured to conform to the grade distribution in the list, sent by programme management.

The panel chair and the panel members were sent the self-assessment report of the programme, including appendices. In the self-assessment report, the student chapter was included. In addition, the expert panel members were forwarded a number of final products of the programme graduates, these final products being part of the selection made by the process coordinator.

Several weeks before the site visit date, the assessment panel chair and the process coordinator discussed the self-assessment report provided by programme management, the procedures regarding the assessment process and the site visit schedule. In this meeting, the profile of panel chairs of NVAO was discussed as well. The panel chair was informed about the competencies, listed in the profile. Documents pertaining to a number of these competencies were presented to the panel chair. The meeting between the panel chair and the process coordinator served as the briefing for panel chairs, as meant in the NVAO profile of panel chairs.

Prior to the date of the site visit, all panel members sent in their preliminary findings, based on the self-assessment report and the final projects studied, and a number of questions to be put to the programme representatives on the day of the site visit. The panel secretary summarised this information, compiling a list of questions, which served as a starting point for the discussions with the programme representatives during the site visit.

Shortly before the site visit date, the complete panel met to go over the preliminary findings concerning the quality of the programme. During this meeting, the preliminary findings of the panel members, including those about the final products were discussed. The procedures to be adopted during the site visit, including the questions to be put to the programme representatives on the basis of the list compiled, were discussed as well.

On 1 and 2 November 2018, the panel conducted the site visit on the University of Amsterdam campus. The site visit schedule was as planned. In a number of separate sessions, the panel was given the opportunity to meet with Faculty Board representatives, programme management, Examinations Board members, lecturers and final projects examiners, and students and alumni.

In a closed session at the end of the site visit, the panel considered every one of the findings, weighed the considerations and arrived at conclusions with regard to the quality of the programme. At the end of the site visit, the panel chair presented a broad outline of the considerations and conclusions to programme representatives.

Clearly separated from the process of the programme assessment, assessment panel members and programme representatives met to conduct the development dialogue, with the objective to discuss future developments of the programme.

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

3. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO: B Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology (B Culturele Antropologie en Ontwikkelingssociologie)
Orientation, level programme: Academic Bachelor
Grade: BSc
Number of credits: 180 EC
Specialisations: None
Location: Amsterdam
Mode of study: Full-time (language of instruction Dutch)
Registration in CROHO: 50035

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

4. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard

4.1 Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Findings

The Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology programme is part of the College of Social Sciences of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of University of Amsterdam. This College is the home of the Bachelor programmes Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Human Geography and Planning and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences. The dean of the Faculty has the responsibility for all programmes of the Faculty. Assisted by the programme coordinator, the director of the programme is responsible for the delivery and quality of this programme. The Programme Committee for the Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Master Cultural and Social Anthropology and Master Medical Anthropology and Sociology programmes, being composed of lecturers and students, advises programme management on quality issues regarding this programme. The Examinations Board for these three programmes has the authority to ensure the quality of examinations and assessments of these programmes.

The Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology of University of Amsterdam is a three-year, broad, research-based, academic bachelor programme in this field. The programme is directed towards the study of diversity, complexity, inequality, interconnectedness and dynamics in societies. These phenomena are studied from holistic and comparative perspectives. The programme aims to introduce students to specific themes and regions within this domain, and to educate them in ethnographic-empirical research methods. In addition, students are trained in academic skills, relevant for this field.

The objectives of the programme are conform to the Reference Framework for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology in the Netherlands, which has been drafted by the joint programmes of this assessment cluster in the Netherlands.

Programme management compared this programme to programmes abroad, especially in Scandinavian countries but also with reference to programmes in the United Kingdom.

Having completed the programme, students may continue to specialise in anthropology by taking master programmes in this field, may broaden their education by choosing master programmes in other fields or may enter the labour market. Therefore, the programme aims to prepare students for master programmes in this domain, for master programmes in other fields or for the labour market.

The programme objectives have been translated into intended learning outcomes, specifying, as the main points, knowledge and understanding of ideas and theories in the programme domain, of social-cultural variation and complexity, and of ethnographic and social-historical origins of regions, qualitative and quantitative research knowledge and skills, including ethical dimensions in this respect, understanding and analysis of societal and cultural problems, academic skills, and awareness of trends in this domain.

Programme management presented the comparison of the intended learning outcomes to the Dublin descriptors for the bachelor level.

Consideration

The panel considers the programme objectives to be sound. The panel appreciates the programme being very broad within the programme domain, intending to cover subjects in this domain widely and offering a range of options for students. The programme balances well the breadth and depth of the domain, allowing students to go in-depth in their studies. This is facilitated by the range of expertise of staff members. The panel appreciates the research-orientation of the programme and regards the programme objectives to be up-to-date.

The programme objectives meet the requirements of the Reference Framework for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology in the Netherlands. The panel welcomes the efforts by the joint programmes to draft this framework and regards this to be a sound description of this domain.

The panel appreciates the comparison to programmes abroad and regards this programme to meet international standards.

The panel finds students to be well prepared to enrol in master programmes in this domain, to apply for master programmes in other fields or to enter the labour market.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme correspond to the programme objectives, are well-articulated and are conform to the bachelor level.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 1, Intended learning outcomes, to be satisfactory.

4.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Findings

The student influx decreased gradually from 143 students in 2011 to 96 students in 2017. The decreasing numbers are in part caused by specific changes in regulations for students from institutions for higher professional education (hbo). Programme management is considering measures to counter this trend. The entry requirements are the pre-university (vwo) diploma, the higher professional education propaedeutic diploma (hbo) or equivalent prior education. About 60 % of the incoming students have the vwo-diploma, whereas about 30 % have the propaedeutic hbo-diploma. Prospective students have to attend matching days. On these days, they attend lectures, tutorials, take examinations and study academic literature. This way, students may make informed choices for the programme.

The programme curriculum takes three years, the total study load being 180 EC. Programme management presented a table, showing the mapping of the intended learning outcomes to the courses. The curriculum is organised in four distinct clusters or learning trajectories of courses. These clusters correspond to the intended learning outcomes. The clusters are theory (knowledge and understanding of ideas and theories in the programme domain), methodology (qualitative and quantitative research methods knowledge and skills), themes and regions (ethnographic topics and social-historical knowledge of regions), and academic skills. All of the courses or modules are part of any one of these clusters. The first year is composed of introductory courses in each of the clusters and allows students to establish their aptitude for the programme. The second year builds on the first year and addresses subjects and problems at more advanced level. In the third year, students may tailor the curriculum to their preferences, allowing them to select theoretical, thematic and regional specialisation modules. Students are introduced to the professional field by doing a brief applied research project in the first year, an assignment for external organisations in the second year and optional internships in the third year. Only few students do internships, however. As final projects of the programme, students draft two thematic module papers, do literature studies and present findings in the Presentation/Oral Examination. A Bachelor thesis is optional for students, but is not the formal final product. Students are offered an extensive range of thematic modules to choose from. New trends in the domain are monitored by programme staff and are subsequently incorporated in the curriculum. Talented students may take the honours programme, implying 30 EC of extra courses.

A total number of about 40 permanent staff members, temporary staff members and junior teachers are involved in the programme. With some exceptions, all lecturers are involved in both education and research. Guest lecturers from the professional field lecture in thematic modules. Programme management wants to intensify this. The staff members are employed at the Department of Anthropology of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. They are researchers in research groups of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research. These research groups received high to very high scores in the most recent research evaluations. About 72 % of them have PhDs. Of the total number of staff about 60 % are BKO-certified and another 7 % are in the process of acquiring the certificate. Lecturers meet regularly in staff meetings to discuss the programme. They experience their workload to be quite demanding, but manageable.

The educational concept of the programme is research-based and leads students to become self-reliant and critical academics at bachelor level. In the course of the programme, study approaches change from intensive supervision to self-directed learning. The number of hours of face-to-face education are about 13 per week in the first year, about 10 hours in the second year and about 8 hours in the third year. The study methods adopted in the programme include lectures, tutorials, seminars. Some study methods are small-scale. Lectures are recorded. In lectures or tutorials, various teaching methods are adopted. These include group discussions, quizzes, presentations, written assignments or site visits. Students are guided by junior teachers as mentors in the first year of the curriculum. The mentors participate in tutorials and aid students in acquiring study skills. In case of problems, students are directed to the study advisor for guidance. Students appreciate the mentor system. As the curriculum and specially the second year entails quite some choices to be made by students, the study advisor meets with every individual student to draft their study plans for the second and third years. Students are content about study guidance. The student-to-staff ratio is 33/1. In the first year and in line with the Binding Study Advice, students must obtain 42 EC. Students experience the study load of the curriculum to be manageable. About 20 % to 30 % of the students drop out, mainly in the first year. The student success rates are about 29 % after three years and 76 % after four years (last five to six years; proportion students re-entering in second year).

Considerations

Although the student inflow numbers are appropriate, the panel supports programme management plans to raise students' inflow. The admission requirements and procedures are adequate. The panel advises to communicate in more pronounced terms the balance of breadth and depth, achieved in the programme.

The panel is positive about the contents of the curriculum. The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The courses are up to standard. The panel in particular greets the literature study with the Presentation/Oral Examination. The panel is positive about the breadth and the depth of the curriculum and considers the curriculum to be coherent. Although students are adequately prepared for the professional field in some courses, the panel proposes to reinforce contacts with external organisations to offer and to facilitate internships for students.

The panel regards the lecturers to be both good researchers and skilled teachers. The panel welcomes the team spirit among the lecturers. The workload of the lecturers may be demanding, but is manageable.

The panel regards the curriculum to be well-organised in educational terms, leading students to more self-reliance. The number of hours of face-to-face education and the class sizes are adequate. Study guidance is organised well. The panel suggests to inform students about lecturers' fields of expertise and to arrange for more easy accessibility of lecturers (e.g. open office hours). The student success rates are appropriate.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 2, Teaching-learning environment, to be satisfactory.

4.3 Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings

The programme examination and assessment rules and regulations are in line with the University of Amsterdam policies. As has been indicated, the Examinations Board has the authority to monitor the quality of examination and assessment processes and products of the programme. The Examinations Board meets monthly.

The examination methods for the courses are selected in line with the courses' contents. In all courses, multiple examinations are scheduled. The examination methods in the programme include written examinations, assignments, essays, papers, research assignments, oral presentations and in-class participation. All written reports, including theses, are checked for fraud and plagiarism.

To complete the programme, students need to draft two papers in two thematic modules, do a literature study and present findings in the Presentation/Oral Examination. A Bachelor thesis is only possible as an elective (only about 10 % of the students choose to do an optional thesis). The thematic module papers are based upon literature, applied to specific subjects or problems. Presentations/Oral Examinations are literature studies, addressing specific subjects or problems. To assess thematic module papers, Bachelor theses or Presentations/Oral Examinations, assessment scoring forms are adopted. These scoring forms include relevant assessment criteria. Bachelor theses are assessed by two examiners. Presentations/Oral Examinations are done in front of fellow-students and two examiners.

Programme management and the Examinations Board have taken a number of measures to promote the quality of examinations and assessments. The Examinations Board appoints examiners, being permanent BKO-certified staff members or staff members in the process of acquiring the BKO-certificate. For all courses, course dossiers have been compiled. These include, among others, course goals, examination methods adopted, assessment criteria and grading rules. Examinations and answer models are drafted by teams of lecturers. Examinations constituting over 30 % of the final course grades are peer-reviewed by fellow-lecturers. Lecturers and the Examinations Board meet at least one time each year to discuss and calibrate assessments of papers and theses. The Examinations Board on a regular basis and randomly inspects papers of thematic module papers and Bachelor theses.

Considerations

The panel approves of the examinations and assessment rules and regulations of the programme, these being in line with University of Amsterdam assessment policies. The monitoring by the Examinations Board of examination and assessment processes is adequate.

The panel is positive about the examination methods adopted by the programme. These are consistent with the goals and contents of the courses. The panel welcomes the measures, which have been taken to counter plagiarism and fraud.

The supervision and assessment processes for the thematic module papers, Bachelor theses and literature studies for the Presentation/Oral Examinations are considered by the panel to be appropriate. Although the assessment scoring forms include relevant criteria and are transparent, the panel proposes to have examiners add written comments and to have proportional weighting of clusters of criteria. In addition, the panel advises to introduce written protocols for the Presentations/Oral Examinations.

The panel considers the measures ensuring the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations and assessments to be satisfactory.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 3, Student assessment, to be satisfactory.

4.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

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

The panel reviewed 15 final projects in the form of both the thematic module papers and the literature studies for the Presentations/Oral Examinations of programme graduates of the last two years. The average grade for the thematic module papers is about 7.2 for the last year, whereas the average grade is 7.5 for the last two years for the Presentations/Oral Examinations.

Programme management conducted a survey among programme graduates of the years 2015 to 2017. The results of the survey show about 12 % of the graduates to enter the labour market, whereas another 12 % of them take gap years and have not decided upon their future careers. The majority of the graduates continue their studies at master level. About 30 % of them proceed to master programmes within this domain. Another 30 % of the graduates opt for master programmes in other fields, such as International Development Studies or International Relations. Although the programme graduates are generally content about the programme, they are less satisfied about the programme preparing them for their future careers.

Considerations

The panel regards the combination of the thematic module papers and the Presentation/Oral Examination literature study to be adequate as final projects. The final projects the panel studied, match the intended learning outcomes. The panel supports the grades given by examiners of the programme, although some of the papers may have been marked slightly too high. Some papers are very good, whereas others are only sufficient. One paper was found by the panel to be unsatisfactory, but the panel considers this paper to be an outlier, not being representative of the general quality of the papers.

The panel considers the programme graduates to have reached the intended learning outcomes and to be qualified to enter the labour market, enrol in master programmes both in this domain or in other domains.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 4, Achieved learning outcomes, to be satisfactory.

5. Overview of assessments

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

6. Recommendations

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

- To communicate in more pronounced terms the balance of breadth and depth, achieved in the programme.
- To reinforce and expand contacts with organisations to offer internships and to facilitate internships for students.
- To inform students about lecturers' fields of expertise and to arrange for more easy accessibility of lecturers.
- To have examiners add written comments to the assessment scoring forms for the thematic module papers, Bachelor theses and literature studies and to have proportional weighting of clusters of criteria on these scoring forms.
- To introduce written protocols for the Presentations/Oral Examinations.