

Assessment report  
Limited Framework Programme Assessment  
**Master Cultural and Social Anthropology**  
University of Amsterdam

*Contents of the report*

1. Executive summary .....	2
2. Assessment process .....	4
3. Programme administrative information.....	7
4. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard .....	8
4.1 Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes .....	8
4.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment .....	10
4.3 Standard 3: Student assessment.....	12
4.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes .....	14
5. Overview of assessments.....	15
6. Recommendations .....	16

## 1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the Master Cultural and Social Anthropology 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 welcomes the objectives to educate students in-depth in theory, methodology and practice of anthropological research. The panel regards the programme objectives to be research-based and up-to-date. Welcoming the broadly defined transferable skills, the panel advises to consider adding specific anthropological and ethnographic skills and to communicate these skills in more pronounced terms.

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 made to programmes abroad and considers this programme to meet international standards.

The panel supports the objectives of the programme to prepare students for a wide range of positions in the professional field. The panel finds the specialisations Applied Anthropology and Visual Anthropology relevant and regards these to increase the options open to students.

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

The programme student inflow numbers are appropriate. The panel welcomes students from various backgrounds being admitted to the programme, being conducive to student diversity in the programme. The admission requirements and procedures are adequate. The panel is positive about the preparatory courses being offered.

The panel is positive about the contents of the curriculum. The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes. The courses are up to standard. Especially the fieldwork component is valuable, as this allows students to experience anthropological research first-hand. The panel regards the curriculum as coherent. The panel advises to encourage and facilitate internships through establishing and sustaining contacts with relevant organisations and institutions that may need and use anthropological skills and methods.

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

The panel regards the curriculum to be well-organised, allowing students to take part actively in the learning processes. The study methods adopted in the courses mirror the educational concept. The study guidance is organised well, both on the programme level and during the fieldwork and thesis. The panel is positive about the newly introduced fieldwork progress tool. 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 in the programme are consistent with the goals and contents of the courses. The panel appreciates the measures, which have been taken to counter plagiarism and fraud.

The supervision and assessment procedures for the fieldwork and the Master thesis are up to standard. Students are guided appropriately in the processes. The assessment procedures for the Master thesis, involving three examiners are adequate. Although the assessment scoring forms include relevant criteria and are transparent, the panel proposes to have examiners add written comments and to use proportional weighting of clusters of criteria.

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

The Master theses match the intended learning outcomes. The panel generally supports the grades given by examiners of the programme. Some of the theses may have been marked slightly too high. Some theses are very good, whereas others are only sufficient. This is duly reflected in the grades. One thesis was found by the panel to be unsatisfactory, but the panel considers this thesis to be an outlier, not being representative of the general quality of the theses.

The panel considers the programme graduates to have reached the intended learning outcomes and to be qualified to enter the labour market. The range of positions graduates manage to secure, is in line with the objectives of the programme. The panel suggests to collect more information about the professional field and graduates' careers.

The panel that conducted the assessment of the Master Cultural and Social Anthropology 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 Master Cultural and Social Anthropology 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. Vercouteren 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 were 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 theses of the programme graduates, these theses 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 theses 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: M Cultural and Social Anthropology (M Culturele Antropologie en Sociologie der Niet-Westerse Samenlevingen)  
Orientation, level programme: Academic Master  
Grade: MSc  
Number of credits: 60 EC  
Specialisations: Applied Anthropology  
Location: Amsterdam  
Mode of study: Full-time (language of instruction English)  
Registration in CROHO: 66614

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 Master Cultural and Social Anthropology programme is part of the Graduate School of Social Sciences of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of University of Amsterdam. This School offers five Master programmes and three Research Master programmes in the social sciences as well as PhD education in this field. The dean of the Faculty has the responsibility for all programmes of the Faculty. 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 both 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 Master Cultural and Social Anthropology of University of Amsterdam is a one-year, broad, research-based, academic master programme in this field. The programme is directed towards understanding and explaining the differences and commonalities between social groups or societies. Students are educated to become anthropologists with the capabilities to contribute to the production of anthropological knowledge. Students are in-depth educated in theory, methodology and practice of anthropological research, but they are also trained in general, transferable skills. These skills are broadly defined and include working independently, problem-solving skills, open-mindedness, adapting to new situations, and interaction with diverse people.

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 and in the United Kingdom.

The programme aims to prepare students for positions in academia and in the professional field in the broad sense. Students are not trained for specific positions in this field, but are prepared for a wide range of positions in different types of organisations for which anthropological knowledge and skills are relevant.



Since 2017, the programme offers one specialisation, being Applied Anthropology. In this specialisation, students are educated to apply anthropological research and knowledge in addressing situations and solving problems in organisations. Programme management is considering adding another specialisation, being Visual Anthropology. This specialisation is to be geared toward the study of visual materials and the use of visual methods.

The programme objectives have been translated into intended learning outcomes, specifying theoretical, methodological and ethical knowledge and understanding of anthropological research, knowledge and understanding of one or more thematic specialisms and of the socio-historic background of one or more regions, knowledge of methods and skills to conduct anthropological research, knowing how to abstract theoretical insights from empirical knowledge, applying knowledge and understanding to theoretical and practical problems, and academic skills, such as critical analysis and communication skills.

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

#### *Consideration*

The panel regards the programme objectives to be sound. The panel welcomes the objectives to educate students in-depth in theory, methodology and practice of anthropological research. The panel regards the programme objectives to be research-based and up-to-date. Welcoming the broadly defined transferable skills, the panel advises to consider adding specific anthropological and ethnographic skills and to communicate these skills in more pronounced terms.

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 made to programmes abroad and considers this programme to meet international standards.

The panel supports the programme objectives to prepare students for a wide range of positions in the professional field. The panel regards the specialisations Applied Anthropology and Visual Anthropology to be relevant and to increase the options open to students.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme correspond to the programme objectives, are well-articulated and are conform to the master 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 in the last seven years remained rather stable at about 45 to 50 incoming students. The composition of the student influx changed over the years from the majority of students having obtained their bachelor degree in anthropology from University of Amsterdam or other Dutch Universities to about 40 % of incoming students originating from abroad and about 50 % of them having bachelor degrees in other disciplines. The entry requirement for the programme is the bachelor degree in anthropology. In case of bachelor degrees in other disciplines, students ought to have obtained significant numbers of credits in anthropological theory and social science research methodology. Students coming from abroad have to submit their diploma, academic transcripts, curriculum vitae and motivation letter. Applications are reviewed by the application committee. Students falling short of the entry requirements, have to take the preparatory programme. This programme is tailor-made and may range from one or two digital courses to 60 EC pre-master programmes.

The programme curriculum takes one year, the total study load being 60 EC. Programme management presented a table, showing the mapping of the intended learning outcomes to the courses. The curriculum is composed of four courses (27 EC), fieldwork (18 EC) and the Master thesis (15 EC). Three courses are scheduled in the first part of the curriculum. These courses address current anthropological theories and anthropological concepts. These courses may be tailored to the fieldwork and Master thesis of individual students. In the third course, students are guided in planning and organising the fieldwork in terms of research techniques and ethical considerations. The fieldwork may take place in the Netherlands or abroad. The main purpose of the fieldwork is to do research and gather data to address the research questions formulated. Research methods and techniques adopted may be interviews, participant-observation, visual methods or social media. After fieldwork, the Writing Ethnography course teaches students to organise the data gathered and to plan the thesis process. In this course, students are also guided in writing the thesis. The students of the Applied Anthropology specialisation share the same curriculum. In the fieldwork preparation course and the thesis seminar course, these students are in separate classes to address the specific features of applied research. The Graduate School of Social Sciences organises regularly career events for students.

A total number of about 30 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. 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. The Anthropology research groups received high to very high scores in the most recent research evaluations. All of the lecturers have PhDs. Of the total number of staff about 80 % are BKO-certified and another 13 % are in the process of acquiring the certificate. Lecturers meet regularly in staff meetings to discuss the programme. Lecturers experience their work load to be quite demanding, but manageable.

The programme educational concept is to offer research-based, intensive and small-scale education. Student-activating teaching, student participation, individual supervision and guidance are strongly promoted. In the first part of the programme, through the mediation of the programme manager, students are assigned their individual supervisor for their research project. The supervisor, being a staff member with expertise in the research project subject, continues to guide students during the fieldwork and in the Master thesis phase. Students send updates on their fieldwork progress via the recently introduced tool. The number of meetings between students and supervisors are at least five. In the courses, the number of hours of face-to-face education are 8 to 9 hours per week. The study methods adopted in the courses include seminars, close reading sessions, presentations and discussions. The programme manager, acting as study advisor and thesis supervision coordinator, is the first point of reference and guidance for students. Students appreciate the guidance in the programme. The student-to-staff ratio is 24/1. The study load of the curriculum is experienced by students to be manageable. On average about 15 % of the students drop out or do not attend classes. The student success rates are about 47 % after one year and 76 % after two years.

#### *Considerations*

The programme student inflow numbers are appropriate. The panel welcomes students from various backgrounds being admitted to the programme, this being conducive to student diversity in the programme. The admission requirements and procedures are adequate. The panel is positive about the preparatory courses being offered.

The panel is positive about the contents of the curriculum. The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes. The courses are up to standard. Especially the fieldwork component is valuable, as this allows students to experience anthropological research first-hand. The panel regards the curriculum as coherent. The panel advises to encourage and facilitate internships through establishing and sustaining contacts with relevant organisations and institutions that may need and use anthropological skills and methods.

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

The panel regards the curriculum to be well-organised in educational terms, allowing students to take part actively in the learning processes. The study methods adopted in the courses mirror the educational concept. The study guidance is organised well, both on the programme level and during the fieldwork and thesis. 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 courses include written assignments, literature review papers, research exercises and in-class participation. All written reports, including theses, are checked for fraud and plagiarism.

For the fieldwork and Master thesis, students may select their own topic. As has been indicated, students are guided on an individual basis in the fieldwork and thesis writing processes by their supervisor. Before the start of the fieldwork, they sign the statement of mutual rights and obligations. In the prior courses, students draft their research proposal. Before starting the fieldwork, the supervisor approves the research proposal. Ethical clearance of the proposal will be included shortly. In the course of the fieldwork, students submit two interim fieldwork reports and one final fieldwork report. The fieldwork is assessed by the supervisor on the basis of pass or fail. Having completed the fieldwork, students draft the Master thesis, guided by their supervisor and participating in the Writing Ethnography or Writing Applied Anthropology course. The Master thesis is assessed by the thesis committee, consisting of three examiners. They assess the thesis and the oral defence by students, using assessment scoring forms with assessment criteria. In case of disagreement between examiners, the Examinations Board will hear all and try to reach a solution.

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 are also marked by teams of lecturers. Lecturers and the Examinations Board meet at least one time each year to discuss and calibrate assessments of papers and 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 in the programme. These are consistent with the goals and contents of the courses. The panel greets the measures, which have been taken to counter plagiarism and fraud.

The supervision and assessment procedures for the fieldwork and the Master thesis are up to standard. Students are guided appropriately in the processes. The assessment procedures for the Master thesis, involving three examiners are adequate. Although the assessment scoring forms include relevant criteria and are transparent, the panel proposes to have examiners add written comments and to use proportional weighting of clusters of criteria.

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.

##### *Findings*

The panel reviewed 15 Master theses of programme graduates of the last two years. The average grade for the Master theses is about 7.3 for the last two years. About 7 % of the students graduates cum laude.

Programme management conducted a survey among programme graduates of the years 2012 to 2014. Approximately 20 % of the graduates managed to secure PhD positions in the Netherlands or abroad. The results of the survey show about 10 % of the graduates finding positions in research outside of academia. Other graduates were employed in a wide range of positions and industries, including policy and advice, consultancy, education, healthcare, social work or journalism. The programme graduates find the programme to be relevant for their current positions. They expressed being less satisfied about the programme preparing them for their future careers, although these figures improved over the years.

##### *Considerations*

The Master theses the panel studied, match the intended learning outcomes. The panel generally supports the grades given by examiners of the programme. Some of the theses may have been marked slightly too high. Some theses are very good, whereas others are only sufficient. This is duly reflected in the grades. One thesis was found by the panel to be unsatisfactory, but the panel considers this thesis to be an outlier, not being representative of the general quality of the theses. One of the theses was given the grade ten (10.0) by the programme examiners, which was well-deserved.

The panel considers the programme graduates to have reached the intended learning outcomes and to be qualified to enter the labour market. The range of positions graduates manage to secure, is in line with the objectives of the programme. The panel suggests to collect more information about the professional field and graduates' careers.

##### *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 consider adding specific anthropological and ethnographic skills to the intended learning outcomes and to communicate these skills in more pronounced terms.
- To encourage and facilitate internships through establishing and sustaining contacts with relevant organisations and institutions that may need and use anthropological skills and methods.
- To have examiners add written comments to the assessment scoring forms for the Master theses and to apply proportional weighting of clusters of criteria on these scoring forms.
- To collect more information about the professional field and graduates' careers.