



INTERNATIONAL MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ADVANCED
RESEARCH IN CRIMINOLOGY: BORDER CROSSING, SECURITY
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE (IMARC)

GHENT UNIVERSITY, IN COOPERATION WITH ERASMUS UNIVERSITY
ROTTERDAM (COORDINATOR) AND THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

INITIAL ACCREDITATION • PANEL REPORT
FRAMEWORK FOR THE EUROPEAN APPROACH FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
OF JOINT PROGRAMMES

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1 Executive summary

The self-assessment report, the additional documentation provided during the online site-visit, and the conversations with an engaged management, motivated staff, and representatives of the professional field, alumni and students have provided the panel with a comprehensive view of the programme. According to the panel, and following the standards of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, the International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice (IMARC) fulfils all standards.

The panel confirms that the Consortium agreement covers all essential aspects to set up, govern and implement the IMARC programme as a common endeavour between the participating universities in the Consortium. The panel took note of the withdrawal of University of Kent from the partnership as of 2024, but received formal confirmation as to its continued engagement towards enrolled IMARC students and those registering in 2022.

The IMARC programme is the result of joint development of the curriculum by highly regarded staff in criminology from different disciplinary backgrounds. The panel sees it as a strength that IMARC is built on a long-term, international collaboration within the framework of the Common Study Programme in Critical Criminology (CSP), an international, collaborative, research focused programme for postgraduates in criminology. IMARC offers students a general training in international criminology and criminological research as well as specialised tracks at one of the three partner institutions with focused courses, allowing students to further explore and develop their own interests and expertise.

The panel has extensively discussed the intended learning outcomes (LO) during the online site-visit. Since IMARC is a unique programme in Flanders, the programme specific learning outcomes are identical to the domain specific learning outcomes that are valid for the domain of Criminology. The panel observed that the LO of the IMARC programme are adequate for a Research Master in the field of criminology. Yet, the key concepts of the research master could have been more detailed to define how border crossing, security and social justice are conceptualised in the programme, and how these relate to the knowledge, skills, and competences defined in the LO. The panel therefore advises to integrate the key concepts explicitly in the LO, and to better document the relations between LO, the modules and tracks, and the different assessments.

Varied methods of teaching and learning allow taking into account the divergent backgrounds and knowledge base of enrolled students. A key element of the IMARC programme is student participation in the Common study programme (CSP). This offers IMARC students an excellent opportunity to learn from peers and benefit from the large research expertise that is present in the network of the Consortium. The panel is positive about the possibilities for students to do an internship and link with the professional field. It encourages the programme to use the full potential of its connections with a relevant and engaged professional network.

Given the admission policy that targets an international, and as culturally diverse as possible group of students and the level of methodological skills required, the panel understands certain choices made in the compulsory part of the programme. It nevertheless advises to offer more support to ensure that students obtain the desired level of exposure to and are able to undertake quantitative research. As IMARC is a research masters programme, the panel finds a solid basis in both qualitative and quantitative research methods for all students most appropriate. Regardless these remarks, the panel confirms that the structure and content of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended LO at the right master's level.

Last, the panel sees the envisaged changes in the composition of the Consortium as an opportunity to strengthen the joint aspects of the programme further. It suggests organising

more frequently and structurally consultation between the Consortium partners to make up a state-of play, exchange on particular review points and redefine the programme when necessary. In this regard, the plans of the IMARC management to install a masters thesis committee, with joint grading, based on the review of both the supervisor and co-supervisor are commended as an excellent way to strengthen co-working in IMARC.

The Hague, 25 April 2022

On behalf of the expert panel convened to assess the International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice,

Prof. dr. Joanna Shapland
(panel chair)

Anja Detant
(secretary)

2 Assessment – Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

2.1 Eligibility

2.1.1 Status

The institutions that offer a joint programme should be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree(s) should ensure that the degree(s) belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based.

The 3 higher education institutions cooperating in the consortium for the delivery of the International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice (IMARC) are all established and officially recognised universities, both in their respective countries and more broadly within the European (and international) field of higher education institutions.

The panel sees it as a strength that IMARC is built on a long-term, international collaboration within the framework of the Common Study Programme in Critical Criminology (CSP). The CSP is an international, collaborative, educational, research focused programme for postgraduates in criminology. Three partners of this collaboration (Ghent University, Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) and University of Kent) worked together in order to develop the IMARC programme.

All partners in the Consortium have undergone thorough accreditation processes for their accredited national degree programmes. IMARC is integrated within the already accredited national degree programmes. The panel has seen that IMARC students are awarded a double or multiple degree (depending on the student's mobility path), based on accredited local programmes. The Coordinating University, that is Erasmus University Rotterdam, issues a joint diploma supplement on behalf of all the partners, offering information regarding the programme, the courses that have been completed and the different grading systems.

The panel has been informed of future changes in the composition of the Consortium that offers the IMARC programme, namely the withdrawal of the University of Kent from the partnership as of 2024 and other institutions potentially joining the Consortium. The panel looked in detail at the existing cooperation agreement. It bases its assessment solely on the programme that was set-up and is ensured by the current consortium (see also 2.1.3).

2.1.2 Joint design & delivery

The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme.

The panel met with representatives of IMARC of Ghent University and EUR and examined in detail their cooperation to deliver the programme. The panel did not have the opportunity to question the University of Kent in the same way, but received clarifications in writing as to its continued engagement towards enrolled IMARC students and those registering in 2022. The Head of the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, has formally confirmed that the University of Kent will deliver on its commitment to the IMARC programme until the last students of the 2022-24 cohort have graduated. The 2022-2024 cohort will be the last cohort involving Kent. Kent is willing to accept three IMARC students into the Kent

programme. The panel is satisfied with the confirmation provided by the management at Kent University that it will deliver full tuition until the end of the programme.

Based on the self-evaluation report, the online site-visit and additional information received, the panel confirms that the IMARC programme is the result of a joint development of the curriculum by highly regarded staff in criminology from different disciplinary backgrounds (integrating the disciplines of criminology, sociology, political science and criminal law).

IMARC offers students a general training in international criminology and criminological research as well as specialised tracks at one of the three partner institutions with focused courses, allowing students to further explore and develop their own interests and expertise. To the panel the initial semester of students at EUR appears crucial for the student experience and allows developing a common learning perspective in IMARC. The panel also expresses its appreciation that the delivery of (parts of) the programme by each institution complements the delivery by the other institutions in the Consortium.

The panel confirms that sufficient joint governance mechanisms exist. Several elements of jointness can be highlighted:

- A jointly designed and integrated academic curriculum with mutually agreed mobility periods.
- Joint eligibility criteria and admission procedures for candidates.
- Joint governance structure for the programme.

IMARC is managed by the Consortium Board that comprises the local coordinators of the three partner universities. The Board monitors the implementation of the programme – educationally, organizationally, and financially – and takes decisions on important issues arising throughout the academic year, for instance the feedback from student evaluations. Moreover, the Board discusses strategic issues, such as modifications and updates of the curriculum as well as changes in the consortium.

The panel has learned from the exchanges during the online site-visit that the programme has been adapted in response to signals identified at the start-up phase, and due to changing circumstances and the constraints of the COVID-context. To the panel it is, however, not fully clear that the three institutions are constantly in communication on all aspects of the design and delivery of the programme. The panel believes that it may be helpful if the consortium partners would at clearly defined and regular intervals, make up a state-of play, exchange on particular review points and further define the future of the programme.

2.1.3 Cooperation Agreement

The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement should in particular cover the following issues:

- *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme;*
- *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.);*
- *Admission and selection procedures for students;*
- *Mobility of students and teachers;*
- *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium.*

The panel confirms that the Cooperation agreement signed by the Consortium partners contains all required official and legal arrangements to manage and run the programme.

The Consortium agreement clarifies the governance structure and settles matters as the joint recognition of local degrees and the delivery of a joint IMARC certificate, the admission

procedure and student administration, the study programme and mobility scheme, staff matters, items of the joint teaching and examination regulations, and the financial arrangements to run the programme.

Giving the envisaged changes in the composition of the Consortium, the panel had some questions about its impact on the financial viability of the joint programme. The panel has been reassured on this point, given the strong engagement of the University management of both Ghent University and EUR, and the realistic ambitions to make the relatively small research master programme grow in the next few years, possibly including some new partner universities in the Consortium. The current partner universities confirmed that an average of 25 students makes it financially sustainable to keep the programme running.

The panel has taken note that admissions to the IMARC programme are done centrally at the coordinating university EUR that selects and enrolls the students. Assessment matters and examination regulations are put to local levels. Quality assurance arrangements are equally dealt with within the respective universities in relation to the modules that they run for IMARC. Further, quality arrangements are handled by the Consortium Board that is responsible for quality enhancement of the joint programme.

The exchanges clarified that the Consortium partners use joint requirements and a common template for assessing the Master thesis. The panel is positive about this tool to ensure coherence in the requirements and assessment of the thesis, but finds it a missed opportunity that no moderating procedures for calibrating assessments are integrated in the Consortium agreement. The panel understands that the Consortium has opted for mutual trust and reliance on the local quality assessment and examination systems of the partner universities. Nevertheless, it encourages the institutions to clarify in the Consortium agreement how they ensure the common approach towards IMARC students in assessment and examinations and to be explicit in their Agreement about the elements of jointness with regard to the master thesis.

The panel sees the envisaged changes in the composition of the Consortium as a good opportunity to integrate those missing elements to safeguard the common approach and refine and clarify certain parts of the Consortium agreement; it encourages the partner universities to further strengthen the jointness of the programme when new partners join the Consortium.

Regardless of the suggestions made above, the panel confirms that the Consortium agreement covers all essential aspects to set-up, govern and implement the IMARC programme as a common endeavour between the participating universities in the Consortium. The panel concludes that the evidence demonstrates that the programme is fully compliant with the different criteria in the Eligibility standard.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

2.2.1 Level

The intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s).

The panel confirms that the intended learning outcomes of the IMARC programme are set at the right (masters) level, in line with the European Framework for qualifications.

2.2.2 Disciplinary field

The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in

the respective disciplinary field(s).

The Selfevaluation report clarified that since IMARC is a unique programme in Flanders the programme specific learning outcomes are identical to the domain specific learning outcomes that are valid for the domain of Criminology.

The panel observed that the learning outcomes of the IMARC programme are adequate for a Research Master in the field of criminology. However, the explanation of the learning outcomes in the Selfevaluation report regarding the key concepts of the research master is not precise and detailed enough to grasp how border crossing, security and social justice have been conceptualised in the programme. It surprised the panel that the Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice (BCSSJ) terminology does not appear in the relevant learning outcomes for the programme.

To the panel, the knowledge, skills, and competences defined in the learning outcomes could and should be more strongly tied to these key concepts that are governing the programme. The panel has been reassured by the additional information that it received during the site-visit, defining the key concepts, and the explanations provided by the programme management and staff. It has become clear to the panel that the partner universities intend BCSSJ to be relevant to all aspects, in all tracks and all modules, as well as throughout all assessments of the programme.

The panel is satisfied by the explanations received, but strongly recommends the consortium partners revise the learning outcomes, so as to more clearly integrate the key concepts of the IMARC programme. In addition, it advises redefining the list of relevant and related disciplines that are enumerated in the learning outcomes, in order to make these fully consistent with the multidisciplinary ambitions and focus of the programme.

2.2.3 Achievement

The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

The IMARC programme has been developed to ensure that there is a good balance between the provision of modules across the three universities in reflecting local and global issues of Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice (BCSSJ). The two-year programme gives students the opportunity to thoroughly undertake their research questions, provide data collection and argue their final results in a thesis, whereby they are trained in different research approaches and methodologies.

The IMARC programme is organised around the principle of mobility and offers opportunities to enrich the educational experience of students by taking semesters at the partner universities and participating in the Common Study Program in Critical Criminology (CSP), an international environment in which informal learning takes place.

The panel has extensively discussed the intended learning outcomes (LO) during the online site-visit. From the information provided in the self-evaluation report, and given the complex structure of the programme, the panel did not find a clear description of how the learning outcomes could be achieved throughout all possible modules and tracks. From the documentation, the panel had difficulties to comprehend where and how all the intended learning outcomes could be obtained, and how their achievement would be assessed.

The explanations provided by the management and the staff and the additional information in the Matrix that was presented during the online site-visit clarified this matter and comforted the panel. It has seen that the entire programme is mapped at course level and that learning outcomes have been defined for each course. The programme management

explained further how it ensures that the entirety of courses, that is all modules together, allow students to reach all goals and all the learning outcomes of the programme.

The panel has taken note of these explanations and confirms that the management and teaching staff have a good view on what achievements are intended in which modules and how these connect to the overall learning outcome of the IMARC programme. The panel nevertheless believes that the programme would benefit from more straightforward explanations and evidence. It advises the management to clarify the relation between learning outcomes, the modules and tracks, and the different assignments and assessments in all relevant documentation about the programme (see also 2.8). By doing so, (candidate) students will not only receive more clarity, but obtain a better and more complete understanding on this matter.

2.2.4 Regulated Professions

If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account.NA

Not applicable.

2.3 Study Programme

2.3.1 Curriculum

The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

IMARC has the ambition to train students to become specialists on border crossing, security and social justice in a research or policy environment, being highly skilled professionals joining bodies like police forces, NGOs, the Refugee Council, institutions such as Transparency International or integrating into the EU and international institutions.

The programme is composed of different modules that have been organised in such a way as to encourage incremental learning, beginning with a joint first semester before moving on to specific thematic tracks. The thematic tracks support students in the development of their specialist area and prepare for their research fieldwork and thesis.

The panel deems a two-year 120 ECTS programme necessary to achieve the LO of the IMARC research master as these cover a general training in international criminology and criminological research as well as the exploration and development of an individual specialised research interest and expertise in view of a proper thesis preparation.

The panel confirms that the structure and content of the curriculum enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel is also positive about the possibilities for students to do an internship and link with the professional field (though the opportunity to undertake an internship was necessarily limited during the Covid period). In semester 3 students can indeed choose to perform the data collection for their research at a partner university, an associate partner or during an internship.

A key element of the IMARC programme is student participation in the Common study programme in critical criminology (CSP), which takes place twice a year at a range of European and international locations. The CSP involves 15 universities from 10 countries in an international, collaborative, short-term mobility programme focused on postgraduates in criminology. The panel understood that IMARC students participate in one mandatory credit-bearing CSP in the second semester to present their thesis research proposal. Students are

however encouraged to attend all four common sessions of the CSP during their 2 years' study programme. Due to COVID restrictions, the CSP sessions had in some cases to be replaced by local sessions. In the given situation, the panel appreciates the efforts of the consortium to find valuable alternatives and offer opportunities for peer-to-peer non-formal learning.

Yet, the panel is more critical as to the level of quantitative research methods that students get trained in. In the compulsory part of the programme, there is overall less emphasis on quantitative research methods than on qualitative research methods. The panel understands certain choices made in this matter, but advises to do more for students to obtain the desired level of exposure, and have sufficient in-depth knowledge about and be able to undertake quantitative research.

Given the fact that IMARC is a research master, the panel finds a solid basis in both qualitative and quantitative research methods for all students most appropriate. It thus recommends the management and teaching staff to reconsider the choices made and rebalance as far as possible the methodological focus in the compulsory training of research skills (see also 5.1).

Following the enthusiastic exchanges with students and alumni and with representatives from the professional field, the panel also underlines the importance of engaging more with the professional field in the design of the programme, the set-up of assignments and the offer of internships. The option to do an internship appeared to be a factor of attraction for students. Internships make the professional perspectives and practices in the broad field of critical criminology tangible. The professional field on the other hand, showed a clear interest and willingness in integrating IMARC students who wish to do so for an intership.

The panel is of the opinion that the programme has not yet used the full potential of this connection. A stronger involvement with the professional network in the development of the curriculum (as guest speakers, for study visits, internships and assignments) would be an added value for the programme, and ensure strong links between the programme and the professional, and international and EU environment that is relevant for IMARC.

2.3.2 Credits

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.

The panel has studied the programme and the distribution of the ECTS over the different modules. It had some questions about the Common study programme in critical criminology and how these sessions were counted in the distribution of the credits. Credits are assigned to three activities: attendance on a course in which the CSP is integrated; participation in a cross-programme blended learning workshop; and an evaluated presentation at the CSP.

The panel confirms that the ECTS distribution has been done with care and is duly justified.

2.3.3 Workload

A joint bachelor programme will typically amount to a total student workload of 180-240 ECTS-credits; a joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60 ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA); for joint doctorates there is no credit range specified. The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored.

IMARC is a research master programme distributed over 2 years, counting for 120 ECTS. The workload for such a programme is reasonable and seems not to pose particular problems. The

exception to this was the first cohort. Students raised the problem of distribution of workload over the courses, and flagged many deadlines coming together.

The panel has seen evidence that shows that the matters raised in student evaluations were addressed by the Consortium: the participating universities took adequate action and responded to student concerns by better matching workload and ECTS and adapting deadlines. The panel has also understood from the site visit that students have a direct line with staff and administrative coordinators, and informal communication possibilities to signal problems, if need be.

The panel is convinced that the programme is well manageable for the students and that adequate measures for monitoring of the workload are installed. Yet, the panel advises the consortium to remain vigilant and keep an eye on the uniformity of workload between the different tracks and partner universities. It underlines that the workload of students should be similar for all tracks, so as to guarantee the equivalence between the different specialisations chosen.

The panel is convinced that a continued communication and a regular review mechanism will be helpful to monitor equivalence of workload in the different tracks as the courses develop.

2.4 Admission and Recognition

2.4.1 Admission

The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.

The Consortium Board decides on the minimum requirements for admission. Admissions are administratively managed centrally by the EUR for all three universities. Applicants should submit as part of the application process: 1. Demonstration of requirements through bachelor's degree in Criminology or a related discipline with specific descriptions of the (methodological) courses; 2. Applicants must submit proof of fulfilling the language requirements. 3. All applicants are also required to write a letter of motivation.

The panel has requested some clarifications on the admission procedure. It received confirmation that the admission procedure involves all partner universities, as the Consortium Board decides on the admission of applicants and ranks the eligible candidates, following the next two steps: • a shortlist of applicants based on the grades from the Bachelor degree; • a ranking of the shortlisted applicants based upon the motivation letter and background (CV). The panel finds it positive that, once the students are enrolled with the Coordinating University, they also enrol at the other partner universities where they take part of the programme. This guarantees students easy access to all necessary student facilities throughout the whole period of their study.

The panel understands that the diverse disciplinary background of candidate students is a challenge in the admission procedure. With regard to the level of knowledge of and skills in quantitative research methods, the discrepancy can be considerable. The Consortium pays attention to this in the admission process by proposing lists of recommended literature for those with limited prior knowledge. Yet, the panel advises the Consortium to find more adequate solutions to bring all students in IMARC at the same required basic level of comprehension and skills in quantitative research (see also 2.3.1).

2.4.2 Recognition

Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior

learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

Applicants may be considered to join the IMARC programme if they have at least finished a Bachelor's degree of 3 years of study (180 ECTS) or an equivalent international degree from a regular (state or private) University. Other cases are considered on a case-by-case basis, following the central provisions of the partner universities for recognition of qualifications and prior learning.

2.5 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

2.5.1 Learning and teaching

The programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the learning and teaching approaches applied should be adequate to achieve those. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.

The aim of IMARC is to conduct international, interdisciplinary innovative research with a strong social and peer-to-peer learning driven orientation, i.e. the Common Study Programme in Critical Criminology (CSP). The programme exposes students to a variety of teaching and learning approaches including more traditional, but also interactive lectures; small group seminars; hands-on research workshops; and group and individual presentations.

The teaching staff clarified how the different knowledge levels and intercultural backgrounds of students are used in the assignments to be delivered. As IMARC is a small programme, there is ample room for exchanges and discussions among students, making their backgrounds a strength in group assignments, allowing them to use different angles and building on the different methodological levels in engagement with peers.

Due to the limitations in the COVID-period, the programme has experimented with online teaching, allowing students to prepare assignments in small online discussion platforms or get together in 'breakout rooms' to discuss a certain questions. This approach worked well and will be implemented further. The teaching staff also confirmed that it plans to better use students' own input for themes and literature to discuss in class, mostly deriving from their own prior academic background.

The panel is positive about the approach to varied methods of teaching and learning and believes it allows taking into account the divergent backgrounds and knowledge base of enrolled students.

Yet, as students in IMARC have different preceding skills and abilities regarding research methods, in particular in the field of quantitative research, the panel believes it may be valuable to develop some form of targeted teaching or experiment with basic and advanced methodology courses. The panel learned that the programme management and teaching staff are very well aware of the tension between the ideal to have an as international, and culturally diverse as possible group of students and the level of methodological skills required.

Within IMARC different scenarios are envisaged on how to put IMARC's aim to put that students work in an international and intercultural environment more in the limelight whilst maintaining the programme's high methodological standard. The panel advises the Consortium to consider remedial classes during summer or parallel tracks that could help to build a solid understanding of quantitative research methods for those students with limited prerequisite knowledge and experience in this area.

2.5.2 Assessment of students

The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes

should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They should be applied consistently among partner institutions.

As the Selfevaluation report did not include sufficient information to obtain a clear view on what assessment methods are used in the different tracks and courses, and how assessments are tied to the learning outcomes set for the different modules, the panel requested additional information.

The panel has been informed that the teaching staff possesses an assessment matrix with an overview of the learning outcomes for their course and the assessment questions related. A diversity of assessment methods is used in different parts of the programme. The programme Board has responsibility to guard the use of an appropriate mix of assessment methods to test that learning goals are achieved, and monitors the balance between summative and formative assessments.

Local exam regulations are in place for each partner university. As stipulated in the Consortium agreement, exam results obtained at any partner university are fully recognized by all other partner universities. The partner universities hereto agreed on a grade conversion table.

The master thesis evaluation is based on an assessment of the written thesis and the oral defence. The procedures are conducted according to the local practices of the university of the main supervisor. The explanations received during the site-visit also clarified the roles of main and second supervisor to the panel.

The panel finds it positive that the thesis requirements are set out in a jointly agreed template that is appropriate to a research masters. This allows adopting a coherent approach between the partner institutions. The panel had the opportunity to see some Master theses and their grading. Though COVID circumstances had a considerable impact on the research work done and was taken into consideration, the panel thinks that the thesis work could have benefited from some more supervision and fine-tuning of the output in order to be fully in line with the marking.

The panel is convinced that a joint panel for assessing the thesis and thesis oral defence would be a plus in the programme. It recommends this as a way forward for future cooperation in IMARC, but understood from the exchanges with the management and teaching staff that it is already one of the ambitions of the programme to adopt this common assessment. The IMARC management has indeed confirmed during the online site visit that it has the intention to install a master thesis committee, with joint grading, based on the review of both the supervisor and co-supervisor. The panel sees this as an important step forward that can strengthen co-working, also in the approach of the masters thesis.

Thus far, the panel advises to include the thesis assessment template and all common provisions regarding assessments in the Consortium agreement. Overall, the panel suggests it should be more transparent in the programme documentation for candidate students as to what can be expected in each module, how the respective modules relate to the learning outcomes and how these link to the assignments and assessments.

2.6 Student Support

The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.

The participating universities have a number of student support services, including services targeting international students, that are accessible to IMARC students attending the programme on their premises. The Student Handbook gives an overview of all student

services at each partner University. The IMARC students and alumni with whom the panel has spoken, were overall very positive about the support received. The contact point for the IMARC programme in the different partner universities is well-known.

Students and alumni confirmed not only that good administrative support and guidance is offered when they encounter practical difficulties or need advice regarding the mobility part of the programme. They also mentioned the accessibility of the teaching staff and the thesis supervisors, their clear engagement and the direct lines which are motivating for students.

To keep contacts close and maintain support at the same level, the panel advises the partner universities to be cautious that key administrative people and coordinators of the programme are themselves adequately supported, when the programme expands and cohort numbers grow.

The panel is reassured that the voice of students is taken into consideration, as student representatives provide their input to the Consortium Board, which is responsible for quality enhancement of the programme. This arrangement ensures that students' concerns about, among others, student support services will be heard and can be addressed.

2.7 Resources

2.7.1 Staff

The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.

The IMARC curriculum has been designed on the basis of the consortium partners' joint and complementary expertise. The partners' expertise is translated into the three specialisation tracks, in which students take dedicated courses which emphasize different but complementary perspectives on international criminology and the core themes of the programme.

The rubric of BCSSJ is the common ground in research agendas and existing curricula of all partners. The panel understood that guest lectures by visiting scholars contribute to the IMARC programme with different perspectives on BCSSJ. The involvement of these scholars allows students networking opportunities for their research and future career.

The joint supervision by two partner universities of the Master thesis further exemplifies the complementary and added value of the fields of expertise of the involved staff. The panel is positive about this element of jointness. The links of IMARC with the broad network in the CSP could be used to his purpose.

The panel confirms that the programme is taught by very motivated and experienced academics, with an excellent reputation in the field. In view of the expected changes in the Consortium and with the arrival of new academic staff, it points to the need for the Consortium Board to closely monitor and review the programme and its components as academic staff and their research expertise will change.

2.7.2 Facilities

The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

IMARC students enrol and fully register at EUR, which is the coordinating university for the programme. This also offers remote access to the library and database service of EUR

throughout the entire academic year, regardless of the university in which they are located. Students thus get full access during the whole period of the masters' programme to use the resources in Rotterdam. In addition, at each IMARC location, students are enrolled and fully integrated with their host university. This also provides access to general university services such as library, international/visa offices, career services, language centres and classes, etc.

Several opportunities during the year are created, where IMARC students can meet and interact with both local and other international students. The panel sees the attendance of students at the CSP as a very valuable component in the programme to exchange with peers and be involved with the broad network and staff involved in IMARC.

Following the exchanges with the representatives from the professional field, the panel advises the programme board and staff to activate the professional network and examine the possibilities that the professional field is willing to offer for guest lectures, study visits and internships. The panel hopes that more liaison with the professional networks will allow to offer relevant internships, so as to meet the expectations of students. Closer involvement of the professional field can also otherwise benefit to students, who actually seem to lack clear information on potential future career destinations.

2.8 Transparency and Documentation

Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

The Consortium Board has designed a joint promotion and dissemination strategy, to ensure the visibility of the joint study programme, as well as to promote the results achieved. These promotion and dissemination activities include the development and maintenance of an integrated and comprehensive website providing all the necessary information about the IMARC programme for students, future employers and other stakeholders. Details on the required documents for enrolment are also provided on the programme website and in the application form.

The panel has also seen that the student handbook is comprehensive and includes very detailed and relevant information.

As this is a complex programme that involves different universities, modules and specialisation tracks, electives and options for an internship, the panel nevertheless believes that more detailed and complete documentation on some aspects of the programme would be useful to inform (candidate) students, such as clarifying upfront the relationship between learning outcomes, courses and specialisation tracks and how these link to assignments and assessments. The panel also sees it as an advantage for the Consortium to have complete information available to feed into regular, periodic meetings of relevant boards and reflect on changes that need to be made for the future of the programme.

2.9 Quality Assurance

The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.

The Programme Board takes the responsibility for the content and the quality of the programme. The consortium has developed an evaluation process in the Joint Master's Quality Assurance Guide. In terms of analysis and action, the evaluation process feeds into a

collective oversight of the programme at all partners. The Board receives input from academics, administrative staff and external advisors. Last, student representatives participate in quality assurance at the Joint Master's Programme.

Although the Board is responsible for the quality assurance of the programme, the individual partner universities, being the degree-awarding institutions, are responsible for the programme's quality as well. In this, they are bound by national regulations and local university policies on quality assurance. Additionally, all partner universities have in place local, internal evaluation procedures for their own teaching staff (e.g. annual appraisals, reports, student questionnaires, scientific output evaluation).

Feedback is collected in the IMARC programme on different levels: course based and semester based collected from all students during a cohort, or on programme level collected from student panels. From the information it received, the panel has seen that the results of student evaluations are taken into account by the respective partner universities and Consortium Board. The timely and adequate response to complaints about the workload by the first cohort, shows that correction mechanisms lead to effective remedial action.

The cooperating institutions apply both separately and together sufficient and adequate quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that the programme is monitored on a regular basis, and that problems or issues flagged by students are taken into account to introduce remedial actions where necessary.

3 Final judgement

The panel is positive about the International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice (IMARC). There is no doubt that the programme fulfils all standards of the framework for the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

The panel confirms that the Consortium agreement covers all essential aspects to set up, govern and implement the IMARC programme as a common endeavour between the participating universities in the Consortium. The panel has been informed of future changes in the composition of the Consortium that offers the IMARC programme, namely the withdrawal of the University of Kent from the partnership as of 2024 and other institutions potentially joining the Consortium. The panel bases its assessment solely on the programme that was set-up and is ensured by the current consortium. The panel received formal confirmation as to the University of Kent's continued engagement towards enrolled IMARC students and those registering in 2022.

The panel emphasises the strengths of the programme. Firstly, IMARC is built on a long-term, international collaboration within the framework of the Common Study Programme in Critical Criminology (CSP), an international, collaborative, research focused programme for postgraduates in criminology. Subsequently, varied methods of teaching and learning allow taking into account the divergent backgrounds and knowledge base of enrolled students. Furthermore, a strong team of highly regarded staff in criminology from different disciplinary backgrounds is engaged in teaching this programme. In addition, a dedicated team of coordinators and administrative staff offers all required organisational and practical support to students in the programme.

The panel has nevertheless formulated a number of recommendations:

- The panel observed that the intended learning outcomes (LO) of the IMARC programme are adequate for a research master in the field of criminology. Yet, the key concepts of the research master could have been more detailed to define how border crossing, security and social justice are conceptualised in the programme, and how these relate to the knowledge, skills, and competences defined in the LO. The panel therefore advises to integrate the key concepts explicitly in the LO, and to better document the relations between LO, the modules and tracks, and the different assessments.
- Given the admission policy that targets an international, and as culturally diverse as possible group of students and the level of methodological skills required, the panel understands certain choices made in the compulsory part of the programme. It nevertheless advises to offer more support to ensure that students obtain the desired level of exposure to and are able to undertake quantitative research. As IMARC is a research masters programme, the panel finds a solid basis in both qualitative and quantitative research methods for all students most appropriate.
- Furthermore, an engaged professional network, as an essential part of a well-functioning QA system, should be actively involved in the programme as a source of information and goodwill. Using the full potential of the relationship with the professional network in the development of the curriculum (as guest speakers, for study visits, internships and assignments) would be an added value for the programme.

- Last, the panel sees the envisaged changes in the composition of the Consortium as an opportunity to strengthen the joint aspects of the programme further. It suggests organising more frequently and structurally consultation between the Consortium partners to make up a state-of play, exchange on particular review points and redefine the programme when necessary. In this regard, the plans of the IMARC management to install a masters thesis committee, with joint grading, based on the review of both the supervisor and co-supervisor are commended as an excellent way to strengthen co-working in IMARC.

Regardless of these recommendations, the panel assesses the quality of the International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice (IMARC) as positive.

4 Assessment procedure

The assessment was carried out in line with the 'Framework for the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes – November 2020'.

The panel prepared itself for the assessment on the basis of the Self-Assessment Report and annexes submitted by the institutions when applying for initial accreditation. Prior to the preparatory meeting of the panel, each panel member formulated initial impressions and questions to be discussed. During the preparatory online meeting on Monday 17 March 2022, the panel discussed all information received with the application and also prepared the virtual dialogue with the programme (institutions). Impressions and questions were collected and merged into a summary document before the dialogue with the institution.

The virtual dialogue took place on 24 and 25 March 2022. The digital platform used was Teams. The dialogue included discussions with representatives of the cooperating institutions, mainly EUR and Ghent University. After the online site-visit, the panel requested by email confirmation from the management of the University of Kent as to their full commitment and tutoring of IMARC students enrolling in the programme until 2024, the date on which Kent will exit the IMARC Consortium.

During the dialogue the panel investigated the context of the joint programme and the institutions and collected all required information to make a judgement on the quality of the joint programme.

During a closed meeting of the panel on 25 March 2022 the panel discussed all information obtained and translated it into a judgement per standard and for the programme as a whole. The panel took this conclusion in full independence.

All information obtained led to a draft assessment report that has been sent to all panel members. The feedback from the panel members has been processed. The assessment report adopted by the chairperson was submitted to NVAO on 25 April 2022.

5 Overview of the assessments

The panel presents their assessments per standard, as outlined in chapter 2.

Standard	Assessment
1 Eligibility	Compliant
2 Learning Outcomes	Compliant
3 Study Programme	Compliant
4 Admission & Recognition	Compliant
5 Learning, Teaching & Assessment	Compliant
6 Student Support	Compliant
7 Resources	Compliant
8 Transparency & Documentation	Compliant
9 Quality Assurance	Compliant
Programme as a whole	Positive

Annex 1: General information on the programmes

Institution	Ghent University Erasmus University Rotterdam University of Kent
Address, institution website	Study programme – International Master Criminology
Qualification	Master of Science
(Additional) title	International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice (UGhent)
(Parts of) field of study(s)	Law, notary, criminological sciences
Specialisations	Global flows, local dilemmas and glocal answers (EUR) European Union criminal policy and justice in context (UGhent) Border crossing – theory, culture, power, and ‘the global (UKent)
Programme routes	Multiple degree
Location where the programme is offered	Rotterdam, Ghent, Kent
Teaching language	English
Study load (in credits)	120 ECTS

Annex 2: Programme-specific Learning Outcomes

A. Knowledge and understanding

1. Independently understanding and critically reflecting on legal, social and historical aspects of criminological problems in their national and international contexts.
2. Comparing and connecting, both nationally and internationally, basic disciplines of criminology: sociology, law, cultural studies, political science and international relations.
3. Having knowledge of political and policy debates on issues regarding crime, harm, transgression and control phenomena.

B. Applying knowledge and understanding

4. Independently analysing and evaluating legal, social and historical aspects of criminological problems in their national and international contexts.
5. Independently synthesizing, analysing, critically evaluating and writing academic texts in the field of criminology, and applying paradigms while adverting to and creatively using their boundaries.
6. Independently applying knowledge and understanding about policy and decision-making processes and actors to criminologically-relevant phenomena.
7. Independently approaching criminologically relevant topics, specifically in relation to border crossing, security and social justice from an interdisciplinary angle, while accounting for their historical, national and international contexts.
8. Independently designing and carrying out empirical academic research, specifically in an international and/or interdisciplinary setting.
9. Independently and within a certain timeframe formulating solutions and policies for new and complex criminological problems, both nationally and internationally.
10. Ability to collaborate with relevant academic and non-academic parties in formulating solutions for interdisciplinary criminological questions.
11. Independently working within relevant sectors and with relevant actors, which include academic institutions, governmental bodies, research institutes, criminal justice system and security institutions and actors, NGOs and commercial organisations.
12. Ability to act as a broker to connect sectors with each other and combine academic expertise and research to contribute to new and more effective cooperation mechanisms to address crucial political and humanitarian themes, by means of research fieldwork, internships and other professional collaborations.

C. Making judgements

13. Independently constructing a critical vision of the societal role and responsibility of a criminologist, both nationally and internationally.
14. Ability to integrate in research and policy advice aspects of developments in history and insights from related disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, international relations, political science, public administration, cultural studies, and law.
15. Ability to reflect on ethical, theoretical and methodological choices in designing and carrying out research.
16. Independently making judgements including those related to applying ethical and normative perspectives in the evaluation and interpretation of research-outcomes, policy and practice.
17. Independently making judgements respecting the integrity and ethical norms of the profession and integrating them in one's scientific/professional work.
18. Independently making judgements, respecting cultural differences and integrating diversity, pluralism in one's scientific/professional work.

D. Communication

19. Independently presenting criminological research, solutions and policy recommendations in English to specialist and non-specialist audiences, both in writing and orally.

E. Lifelong learning skills

20. Independently engaging in research and being open minded to reflect and respond to new developments and current discussions in criminology and the work field of borders, security and social justice

Annex 3: Composition of the panel

The composition of the panel that assessed the quality of the International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice of Ghent University, in cooperation with Erasmus University Rotterdam (coordinator) and the University of Kent, was as follows:

Prof. dr. Joanna Shapland (chair), Edward Bramley Professor of Criminal Justice, University of Sheffield;

Prof. dr. Letizia Paoli (panel member), full professor of criminology, KU Leuven, Leuven Institute of Criminology (LINC);

Prof. dr. Joery Matthys (panel member), assistant professor, Leiden University, Institute of Security and Global Affairs;

Drs. Alexandra Bahary (student panel member), Master of Laws, Droit et société, PhD student University of Ottawa, Canadian Law & Society Association graduate student co-representative

The panel was assisted by:

- Ms. Veerle Conings, policy advisor Flanders NVAO, process coordinator;
- Ms. Anja Detant, secretary.

All panel members and the process coordinator/secretary have signed NVAO's code of deontology.

Annex 4: Schedule of the site visit

The site visit by the panel to the programme was conducted on 24 and 25 March as part of the external assessment procedure regarding the International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice of Ghent University, in cooperation with Erasmus University Rotterdam (coordinator) and the University of Kent. The schedule was as follows:

24 March 2022 – virtual meeting

Time	Meeting
11.00u – 12.00u	Session 1 – Programme management
12.00u – 12.30u	Closed meeting of the panel
12.30u – 13.30u	Session 2 – Teaching staff
13.30u – 14.30u	Closed meeting of the panel, lunch
14.30u – 15.30u	Session 3 – Supporting staff
15.30u – 16.00u	Closed meeting of the panel
16.00u – 17.00u	Session 4 – Alumni and professional field
17.00u – 18.00u	Closed meeting and preparation second day

25 March 2022 – virtual meeting

Time	Meeting
8.30u – 9.00u	Panel log in Closed meeting of the panel
9.00u – 10.00u	Session 5 – Students
10.00u - 10.20u	Closed meeting of the panel
10.20u – 11.00u	Session 6 – Second meeting with programme management
11.00u – 12.30u	Final closed meeting of the panel
12.30u - 13.00u	Closing dialogue panel and programme representatives

Annex 5: Documents reviewed

During the site visit the programme management presented the following documents:

Information file

- Self-Assessment Report

Mandatory annexes to the information file

- Consortium Agreement
- List of intended learning outcomes, including: a) Matrix of alignment with Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA); b) Matrix of alignment with applicable national qualifications framework
- Student Handbook
- Factsheet
- Academic staff CVs (all partners)
- Relevant documents constituting internal quality assurance system
- Diploma supplement (sample)

Additional annexes

- Internship IMARC –Objectives and procedures
- Student evaluations by cohort 1 and 2
- Evaluation of the Master Programme Curriculum by cohort 1

Documents made available during or leading up to the dialogue

- 2 examples of a Master thesis IMARC
- Matrix on the learning outcomes and the different modules, tracks, research modules and thesis (mail of 24 March 2022, Matrix ILO's vs IMARC courses)
- PPT of the programme (mail of 24 March 2022)
- Joint conceptualization of the core concepts of the IMARC (mail of 24 March 2022)
- IMARC 'lessons learned' for the purpose of the NVAO Audit (mail of 25 March 2022)
- Confirmation from the University of Kent Head of School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research that UKent will make a full commitment to the students enrolled with them up to and including the student cohort 2022-24 (mail of 13 April 2022)

Annex 6: List of abbreviations

BCSSJ	Border crossing, security and social justice
CSP	Common Study Programme in Critical Criminology
ECTS	European Credit according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
FQ-EHEA	Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area
IMARC	International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice
LO	Learning outcome
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie)

The panel report has been ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the International Master of Science in Advanced Research in Criminology: Border Crossing, Security and Social Justice of Ghent University, in cooperation with Erasmus University Rotterdam (coordinator) and the University of Kent according to the Framework for the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint programmes.

Colofon

INTERNATIONAL MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ADVANCED RESEARCH IN CRIMINOLOGY: BORDER
CROSSING, SECURITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

GHENT UNIVERSITY, IN COOPERATION WITH ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM
(COORDINATOR) AND THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT (VL130926-21)

Initial accreditation • Panel report



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