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Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

According to the panel, the profile and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the master's programme Media Studies offered at Erasmus University are well-described. With regard to the profile, the panel considers the five specializations clearly defined and fitting, matching the teaching staff's research expertise. The panel advises making the programme's positioning at the interface of social sciences and humanities more concrete and explicit, since this is a defining feature and a strength of the programme. The panel considers the ILOs to match the academic orientation and master's level of the programme, reflecting the Dublin descriptors and the profile. The panel also finds that the programme's profile and its ILOs are well-attuned to the professional field. It is pleased with the installation of the new Professional Advisory Board, which will structurally ensure that the programme profile and ILOs are in line with the requirements of that field.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel finds that the curricula of the master's programme's five specializations are well-designed and clearly structured. The programme is coherent yet offers students a lot of flexibility to attune the programme to their individual interests. The high-quality teaching staff, the attention paid to academic skills and the intensive, small-scale teaching methods are among the programme's strengths and are praised by students. The panel compliments the programme on its good teaching-learning environment. The admission procedure is sound, and guidance and information provision are done well in all specializations. The panel also supports the choice of English as the language of instruction in four of the five specializations and the programme name. The panel applauds the programme's initiatives to further strengthen connections with the relevant professional fields in its courses and suggests streamlining these in a learning line. The panel encourages the programme to maintain the interactivity and small-scale setup and to continue to mitigate staff workload to uphold the high-quality teaching-learning environment it currently offers.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The panel considers assessment policy and practice in the programme to be well-designed and in line with the programme's aims and objectives. The test types are fitting and varied, and a good balance is struck between formative and summative testing. The panel finds that thesis assessment is done well and that the Examination Board is clearly in control of assessment quality. It recommends further enhancing the role of the EB by taking regular samples of theses for a check on level and quality on top of the current formal check. It also recommends formalizing and making explicit the carefully chosen checks and balances the EB relies on when appointing PhD candidates or external staff as examiners.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

Based on the good quality of final theses and the success of programme graduates, who move on to work in relevant sectors and who look back on the programme with satisfaction and enthusiasm, the panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes of the programme are clearly achieved.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

Master's programme Media Studies

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard

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Standard 3: Student assessment   meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes   meets the standard

General conclusion   positive

Prof. dr. G. (Geert) Jacobs (panel chair)   Dr. F. (Fiona) Schouten (panel secretary)
Date: 26 May 2025

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 22 and 23 January 2025, the master's programme Media Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam was assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment WO CIW & Media. The assessment cluster consisted of 23 programmes, offered by Erasmus University Rotterdam, Radboud University, University of Amsterdam, Utrecht University, Leiden University, Tilburg University, University of Groningen, Maastricht University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (April 2024).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster WO CIW & Media. Fiona Schouten and Yannick Slagter acted as coordinators and panel secretaries. Sarah Boer, Mariette Huisjes, Anne-Lise Kamphuis and Marieke Schoots also acted as secretaries in the cluster assessment. They have all been certified and registered by the NVAO. For the assessment of the master's programme Media Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam, Fiona Schouten acted as panel secretary.

Preparation

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members as well as consistency within the cluster. On 19 December 2024, the NVAO approved the composition of the panel. The coordinator instructed the panel chair on his role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016).

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

The programme provided the coordinator with a list of graduates from the academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses of the programme. They took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account and selected 1 thesis of the specialization Digitalisation, Surveillance & Societies; 6 theses of the specialization Media & Business; 4 theses of the specialization Media & Creative Industries; 2 theses of the specialization Media & Journalistiek; and 2 theses of the specialization Media, Culture & Society. This selection reflected the number of graduates in each major proportionally. Prior to the site visit, the programme provided the panel with the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. It also provided the panel with the self-evaluation report and additional materials (see appendix 4).

The panel members studied the documentation and sent their findings to the secretary. The secretary collected the panel's questions and remarks in a document and shared this with the panel members. In a preliminary meeting, the panel discussed the initial findings on the self-evaluation report and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit. The panel was also informed on the assessment framework, the working method and the planning of the site visit and report.

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

Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to an Academion colleague for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the Erasmus University Rotterdam to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The panel then finalized the report, and the coordinator sent it to Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Panel

The panel assessing the master's programme Media Studies at the Erasmus University Rotterdam consisted of the following members:
- Prof. dr. G. (Geert) Jacobs, professor in English Business Communication at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of Ghent University (Belgium) (panel chair);
- Prof. dr. H. (Hilde) Van den Bulck, professor of Communication at the College of Arts and Sciences of Drexel University (United States);
- Dr. A.F. (Aleit) Veenstra, acting director of Stichting JIC Buitenreclame and research manager at Nationaal Media Onderzoek;
- Dr. R. (Rico) Lie, assistant professor in Communication for Development and Intercultural Learning, at the chairgroup Knowledge, Technology and Innovation of Wageningen University & Research;
- V.C.T. (Vincent) Heijboer BA, master's student Media Studies, track Film and Photographic Studies, at Leiden University (student member).

Each panel member and the panel secretary have filled out the Statement of Impartiality and non-disclosure agreement, as required by the NVAO.

Information on the programme

Name of the institution:	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive
Programme name:	M Mediastudies / M Media Studies
CROHO number:	60830
Level:	Master (NLQF7)
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specializations or tracks:	Media & Business (English)
	Media, Culture & Society (English)
	Media & Journalistiek (Dutch)
	Media & Creative Industries (English)

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	Digitalisation, Surveillance & Societies (English; renamed per September 2025 as Media, Digitalisation & Social Impact)
Location:	Rotterdam
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Language of instruction:	English, Dutch
Awarded degree:	Master of Arts
Submission date NVAO:	1 November 2025

Description of the assessment

Organization

The master's programme Media Studies (60 EC) is offered by the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication (ESHCC) of Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). ESHCC has a management team consisting of five members: the dean, the vice dean research, the vice dean education, the director of operations and a student member. The School hosts a faculty-wide examination board, which is responsible for ensuring the quality of the organisation and procedures around tests and examinations.

ESHCC is home to three departments: History, Arts and Culture Studies, and Media & Communication. The MA Media Studies is offered by Media & Communication, along with two other degree programmes. The M&C department is led by a management team consisting of the education programme director (EPD), the head of department, and the research programme director (RPD). The EPD is responsible for the content, organization, quality and design of the M&C programmes and consults regularly with programme committee Media & Communication (PCMC), which is in place for the three degree programmes offered in the department.

Recommendations previous panel

The previous accreditation panel advised the programme to sharpen the profiles of the various specializations to better reflect their main foci and distinction. It also recommended introducing peer review among examiners in assessment, improving the archiving of thesis assessment forms, and having the examination board read sample theses each year. The panel found to its satisfaction that these recommendations were all addressed by the programme.

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings

Profile

The Media Studies master's programme focuses on (mass) media and communication, which play a pivotal role in shaping contemporary global societies. Media and communication research helps develop a deeper understanding of the complexities and dynamics of today's mediated and digitalized societies. The programme aims to educate academically trained media professionals who know how to navigate the complex issues and changes within the media world and wider society. The EUR programme distinguishes itself from other media studies programmes (inter)nationally by its focus on the organizational, political and economic aspects of the media and its position at the interface between the social sciences and the humanities. The programme builds on the mission of Erasmus University Rotterdam: 'Creating Positive Societal Impact', aiming to equip students with the skills to become thorough, critical, and versatile professionals in the field of media and communication at an academic level. The programme emphasizes the application of this academic knowledge to the challenges faced by media managers, policy makers, marketeers, educators, programmers, politicians, NGOs, journalists, editors and other professionals within and outside the media sector.

Media Studies has five specializations, four of which are taught in English:

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- Media & Business (M&B) explores the rapid transformations in the media and business landscape instigated by new digital technologies and globalization. The specialization focuses on how organisations adapt to these transformations to stay relevant, competitive and leading in a dynamic environment.
- Media & Creative Industries (MCI) focuses on the production, organization, management, marketing and distribution of media and creative products, as well as providing insights into how audiences receive and engage with these products.
- Media, Culture & Society (MCS) examines the role of contemporary media in cultural and political transformations, with particular attention to how an ever-changing media environment is shaped by and affects our personal and social lives.
- Digitalisation, Surveillance & Society (DSS) explores the social, cultural, and ethical consequences of new and established technologies; the ways in which values such as 'privacy' and 'security' affect our lives; and the interplay between technology shaping the social world, and social actors shaping technology. The DSS specialization will be offered to students from 2025-2026 under the new name 'Media, Digitalisation and Social Impact'.
- Media & Journalistiek (M&J) – the only specialization taught in Dutch – focuses on technological, social, economic and political developments and how these intersect with the role of journalism in contemporary society.

The specialization Media & Journalistiek mainly focuses on the Dutch journalistic landscape, while the other four specializations each focus on transnational media ecologies and the global and local political implications of the dynamics of media communication contexts. In addition, each of these four specializations is characterized by a distinctive cross-national comparative perspective. Considerable attention is given to international and intercultural dimensions.

The Digitalisation, Surveillance & Societies specialization was added in 2021 to address contemporary issues of privacy, surveillance and security, demonstrating the programme's ability to respond to societal trends. While student evaluations, graduation rates, and employment outcomes for graduates have been positive, low student enrolment has raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of this specialization. As a result, content adjustments will be gradually phased in from this academic year and a name change will be introduced in 2025-2026 to better reflect prospective students' understanding of the specialization. Feedback from a survey of national and international prospective students indicated that the new name, Media, Digitalisation & Social Impact, is seen as a more accurate and appealing representation of the specialization's scope.

The programme's connection to the professional field is strengthened by the departmental professional advisory committee (PAC). The PAC consists of four academic staff members and one member from the department's professional services. The PAC aims to increase the visibility of the links between the curriculum and the professional field, and to support staff in strengthening these links. In September 2023, the vice-dean of education organized a roundtable session with professionals in the field of media and communication. During the site visit, the panel learnt that this session led to the creation of a permanent Professional Advisory Board (PAB) which will structurally provide the programme with input from the working field.

The panel studied the programme's profile and discussed it during the site visit with various stakeholders, including management, staff and students. The panel appreciates the profile. As mentioned above, the programme distinguishes itself from other media studies programmes by its position at the interface of the

social sciences and the humanities. This is visible first and foremost in the fact that students in the programme are familiarized with research methodologies from both domains, quantitative as well as qualitative. In addition, courses often take perspectives from social sciences and humanities into account as the teachers themselves operate on the interface of the two, and/or through co-teaching. The panel agrees with the programme that this is a defining feature and a strength. It advises making this more concrete and explicit in the programme's profile and external communication, so that prospective students are drawn in knowing what to expect, and current or past students can pinpoint what sets them apart from students in similar programmes.

The panel also appreciates the clearly defined specializations as they match staff expertise. Since the previous accreditation, the profiles of the specializations were sharpened to create clearer distinctions between them and this has led to an attractive portfolio. The panel understands the reasons behind the repositioning of the DSS specialization and supports the new name. The panel learnt that the content and focus of each specialization are part of an ongoing discussion within the programme, and that students and staff are consulted about possible adaptations such as the refocusing of the DSS specialization. The panel appreciates this shared process of finetuning, adjusting and adapting. According to the panel, given the programme's aims and ambitions, it is important to also have the professional field closely involved in this process of finetuning the profile and aims of the master's programme and its various specializations. Therefore, the panel considers the installation of the PAB an important new step in ensuring that the programme's profile and its intended learning outcomes match the expectations of the professional field.

Intended learning outcomes
The programme translated its profile and aims into a set of 7 intended learning outcomes (ILOs, see appendix 1). These outcomes are shared by the five specializations of the programme. On completion of the programme, graduates will have the skills and knowledge to make an independent contribution to the academic study of media and communication and to analyse complex social, organizational and policy issues. They will be able to apply these insights in management, policy and communication roles across a range of sectors. The academic and research skills developed, particularly through ILOs 3-7, prepare students for careers that require critical analysis and effective communication of complex issues within and beyond the media and communication sector.

The panel concludes that the programme's ILOs reflect the level and orientation that may be expected of a master's programme in media studies. Based on an overview matching the ILOs to the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes, the panel concludes that the academic master's level is well described in the ILOs (also matching Dutch quality reference framework NLQF 7). It finds that the ILOs also clearly take into account the expectations of the relevant professional field. This is guaranteed thanks to the efforts of the PAC and the input from the newly installed PAB.

Considerations
According to the panel, the profile and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the master's programme Media Studies offered at Erasmus University are well-described. With regard to the profile, the panel considers the five specializations clearly defined and fitting, matching the teaching staff's research expertise. The panel advises making the programme's positioning at the interface of social sciences and humanities more concrete and explicit, since this is a defining feature and a strength of the programme. The panel considers the ILOs to match the academic orientation and master's level of the programme, reflecting the Dublin descriptors and the profile. The panel also finds that the programme's profile and its ILOs are well-attuned to the professional field. It is pleased with the installation of the new Professional Advisory Board, which will structurally ensure that the programme profile and ILOs are in line with the requirements of that field.

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Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 1.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

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

Findings

Curriculum

The five specializations of the Media Studies master's programme (60 EC) are offered fulltime. They share a curriculum structure with four components: (applied) theoretical courses (15-25 EC), methodological courses (15 EC), elective courses (0-10 EC) and a master's thesis (20 EC). Theoretical courses focus on central issues relevant to each specialization, while methodological courses equip students with research techniques commonly used in media and communication studies. Elective courses offer students the opportunity to deepen their understanding of specific topics within their field, providing a more specialized perspective that complements, but does not overlap with, their chosen specialization. ESHCC's academic calendar consists of four terms; each term consists of eight weeks of teaching, followed by one or two weeks of assessment. See appendix 2 for an overview of the curricula.

To ensure the quality and coherence of the Media Studies programme, the programme coordinator works together with academic coordinators for each of the specializations. While the programme coordinator acts as a link between students, staff and programme procedures (such as course enrolment, resits, graduation), the academic coordinators are responsible for avoiding overlap in course content and assessment deadlines. The curriculum is designed to ensure that the ILOs are addressed systematically in all specializations, and course learning objectives are aligned with the ILOs.

The panel finds the curricula of the five specializations to be clear and well-designed. The specializations and courses align with the intended learning outcomes as demonstrated in the programme's assessment plans per specialization, and follow a clear build-up. According to the panel, the attention paid to academic skills and research methods (both qualitative and quantitative) is among the programme's main strengths. While the curricula offer limited flexibility in terms of electives, students have ample opportunities to adapt the programme to their individual preferences within the courses, the thesis, and the choice of specialization. Recently, the programme has been working on including other than Western-oriented perspectives and elements, and these efforts are appreciated by the students that the panel talked to.

The programme has been working on strengthening the link with the professional field in the various specializations and courses, in line with its profile and with the EUR's goal of developing global citizens with expertise, critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills. Collaborations with organisations such as NPO, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, RNW Media, Rotterdam Film Festival, Vereniging Nederlandse Poppodia & Festivals, Media Monks, Rotown and Vers Beton are examples of this professional involvement. An increasingly important feature of the programme is the integration of real-life case studies from organizational partners into the courses. For example, in one course in the Media & Creative Industries specialization, students work with partner organisations to help solve marketing communication challenges, while in Media & Journalistiek, students work with a journalist in the Workshop Journalistiek & Storytelling. In Media & Business, all students participate in the Consulting Challenge, where student teams work on a management

communication challenge with a specific business organization, assuming the role of consultants and delivering a set of strategic recommendations to the business. The departmental Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) investigated these and other initiatives within the programme, and showcased them to inspire teaching staff and encourage them to learn from one another. The programme hopes to further stimulate such professional connections, while at the same time safeguarding the academic level of the programme. In addition to such efforts within the courses, many students follow additional extracurricular activities such as skills workshops (organized at ESHCC level) on top of the regular courses.

The panel is pleased to see the efforts made regarding professionalization. It encourages the programme to work on maintaining and building on the connections made and sees this as a positive addition rather than a threat posed to the solid academic basis that the programme provides to students. At the same time, the panel finds that the programme could streamline the many initiatives that are already in place or under development. Collaborations with professionals and external organizations are valuable, but also require investment from staff members. Moreover, the extent to which students are confronted with professionalization elements now depends partly on their choice of electives, and can sometimes appear fragmentary. The panel therefore advises creating a professionalization learning line within the curriculum that highlights and organizes the professionalization elements in each specialization. This learning line would allow the programme to make conscious and structural choices on what professional skills and elements should be placed where in the curriculum, and which elements that are currently extracurricular could be included in a specialization. The PAC inventory and showcasing of professionalization efforts mentioned above, and the overview of professional activities made by the programme's department, could serve as a good starting point for designing such a learning line.

Teaching methods and didactic approach
ESHCC's educational mission is to prepare students to embrace change by linking personal ambitions with societal challenges, disciplinary knowledge with interdisciplinary approaches, and local issues with global perspectives. In line with this mission, the Media Studies programme promotes active and independent learning, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own education within a structured framework. Teachers guide the learning process through interactive methods that encourage critical thinking and the application of knowledge. Teaching methods and course formats are designed to encourage students to think critically and to generate and apply knowledge.

Teaching is predominantly small-scale and takes place in seminars, which have a group size of approximately 20-25 students. The approach is intensive and interactive. Students are required to analyse arguments, assess the credibility of sources, identify the focus of issues, solve or define problems, apply theories and concepts to real-life cases, answer questions or formulate their own research questions, and discuss, explain, debate, and brainstorm during class. In order to ensure participation and interaction, attendance is mandatory for all seminars. Students are often required to work in teams for presentations, assignments, and projects, in order to develop collaborative skills. In the larger specialization programmes (M&B, MCI), the seminars in the theoretical courses are accompanied by larger-scale lectures where lecturers discuss theoretical perspectives and organize guest lectures for the entire student group. The accompanying seminars provide space for students to actively engage with the course material in depth.

The panel discussed the teaching methods with students and alumni of the programme. It found that they were enthusiastic about the interactive methods and the small scale of seminar groups, also in the larger specializations. According to the students, the small-scale setting allows them to form a connection with their teachers and with fellow students, and the interactive nature of education is motivating and enriching. Students consider compulsory attendance to be conducive to this in-class participation and collaboration,

and they generally agree with this policy. They mentioned that the rules on compulsory attendance are not too rigid: exceptions are made if necessary, and two seminars can be missed without consequences. The panel concludes that the programme manages to create an engaging and motivating study environment.

The students from the four English-language tracks told the panel that they found the intercultural exchanges within the international classroom to be particularly valuable and enriching. In addition, these students also encounter each other in shared electives, which further enhances the diversity of perspectives. In the Dutch-language M&J track, the international classroom is not present, but students have diverse backgrounds from which their courses benefit. They are happy to be working closely with a small group of fellow students and staff in a specialization that is closely connected to the relevant professional field.

The panel concludes that the programme does an admirable job in motivating and activating students through interactive and intensive teaching methods. Students feel thoroughly trained in critically analysing and exchanging ideas as part of a stimulating academic setting with ample attention for professional application. As student numbers are currently increasing, the panel encourages the programme to maintain the interactivity and small-scale setup and to uphold the high quality teaching it currently offers.

Admission
Each year, the master's programme Media Studies attracts around 280 students, spread across the various specializations: the largest, M&B, had an inflow of 126 students in 2024; MCI of 82; M&J of 40; MCS of 16; and DSS of 10. Students are admitted on the basis of academic merit, English language proficiency for the four English language specializations, and qualitative requirements. These include a bachelor's degree in the social sciences or humanities. Applicants must also submit an essay, a letter of motivation, a curriculum vitae and a statement of academic achievement. These elements ensure that students have the motivation, academic foundation and analytical skills necessary to achieve the programme's learning outcomes. Each application is assessed by members of the admissions committee, consisting of academic coordinators who assess the applicant's basic knowledge of the field of media and communication, and the Admissions Office, which verifies the bachelor's degree and language proficiency.

Students enter the programme from a variety of backgrounds. Those who don't directly qualify for the programme and who have a non-academic (hbo) bachelor's diploma or a diploma from a non-related academic discipline can follow the one-year pre-master Media Studies (45 EC). The pre-master focuses on theory in media studies, academic skills, and research skills, and culminates in a research project. Upon successful completion, students are eligible to enrol in the master specialization chosen in the pre-master. Students and alumni mentioned to the panel that the pre-master is a good preparation for the master's programme.

The panel agrees with the careful and elaborate admission procedure. It learnt that for the academic year 2024-2025, around 75% of applicants were admitted. According to the panel, the focus on motivation as well as academic merit is fitting for a programme that looks for student participation and activation.

Language of instruction
Four of the programme's specializations are offered in English, and the programme has both an English (Media Studies) and a Dutch name (Mediastudies). The choice of English is in line with ESHCC's educational focus on local issues with global perspectives. It is linked to the international orientation of the academic and professional fields related to the specializations, which equip students for careers in the global media and communication industries (including those based in the Netherlands) where English is the dominant language. The choice of English also makes the specializations accessible to a diverse, (inter)national

student body, enriching the learning environment with a variety of cultural perspectives that help students build valuable international networks for their future careers.

These considerations do not apply to the Dutch-taught specialization Media & Journalistiek, which addresses the specific needs of the Dutch media and journalism sector. This specialization ensures that the programme maintains its connection to the national context and contributes to the local knowledge infrastructure. M&J places greater emphasis on local applicability, equipping students to contribute to the Dutch media landscape while remaining grounded in global research and theory.

The panel discussed these choices with programme management, teaching staff, and students. It agrees with the choice of English (and an English programme name) for the four non-Dutch specializations. The working language in academia and in most of the professional field is English, and as mentioned before, the international classroom is considered an asset by students in training intercultural skills and addressing multiple perspectives. The panel ascertained that the language command of staff members is sufficient to offer the programme in English.

Student guidance and information provision
In order to help students navigate their programme, a student support and guidance structure is in place. During the first week of the academic year, students are introduced to the campus, the staff and the content of their chosen specialization during Introduction Week. Once in the programme, the Media Studies programme coordinator is responsible for the overall organization and communication for both students and staff, ensuring a smooth experience from the introduction week to the graduation ceremony. The programme coordinator provides up-to-date information on a variety of topics to ensure that students are aware of all their curriculum options and can register for their courses in an organized and timely manner. In addition, the academic coordinators of the master's specializations serve as points of contact for students on all matters relating to the programme and particularly their specialization. Another factor in student guidance during the programme is its focus on student and student-teacher interaction. Due to the small-scale teaching methods, the programme builds a strong learning community with intensive personal contact between lecturers and students, and between students themselves. Students are further supported through information provision via Canvas.

Media Studies students also have a dedicated student advisor, who informs and advises them on their study programme and study planning. The student advisor can also provide advice or assistance if students have personal circumstances that may affect their studies, or refer to EUR-wide facilities such as the central contact point Safe@EUR or a personal support Hub. ESHCC also has a confidential counsellor dedicated to students. For students with a functional impairment, the student advisor is the first point of contact. At EUR level, further expertise is available through the Team Studying with a Functional Impairment (Team SMF). Team SMF supports students with a functional impairment and makes policy plans for this group of students. Students with a physical impairment or chronic illness are offered the opportunity to adapt their studies, as far as is reasonably possible. These adjustments are carefully planned to meet the student's needs without compromising the quality or degree of difficulty of the course or overall programme, thus promoting a learning environment that enhances the accessibility and feasibility of the education for all students.

When students write their master's thesis, they are guided by a supervisor who is a member of the teaching staff. There is a structured process in place: supervisors within each specialization formulate possible research projects, which are collected in the MA Thesis Project Book. Based on the project book, students may attend 'Supervisor Meet & Greets' to explore ideas and possibilities in areas of interest. Students are

then invited to submit their supervisor preferences and, based on these, are assigned a supervisor prior to the thesis proposal stage. This system ensures a good match between the student's research interests and the supervisor's expertise, as well as a fair workload distribution among staff. All students follow a Master Class where they are instructed how to write their thesis, and meet regularly with their supervisors during the writing process. The process is monitored by the thesis coordinators from the various specializations, who rely on the digital Thesis Management System (TMS) to identify potential delays.

In guiding students, the programme also offers career orientation options. On a faculty level, ESHCC's (digital) Career Orientation Programme offers modules focusing on self-discovery, labour market orientation, networking and job applications, as well as company visits, workshops, etc. Through the Experience Office, master's students also have the opportunity to participate in monthly extracurricular skill workshops. The student experience officer is also the faculty liaison for the Student Wellbeing Programme and meets regularly with this central office and faculty representatives to work on improving the wellbeing and personal development of students. This includes organizing wellbeing-related events, advising on communication, and working together to create and evaluate university policy. Finally, ESHCC's alumni officer helps students prepare for the job market by organizing events and activities. Since the academic year 2023-2024 there has also been a mentoring programme that connects students with alumni (MentorMe).

Students and alumni that the panel talked to were pleased with the information provision and guidance system offered in the master's programme. They feel supported and appreciate the many guidance and development options. Particularly the dedicated student advisor was mentioned frequently as approachable, helpful, and proactive. The Student Experience Officer was also appreciated for actively drawing attention to extracurricular possibilities. For academic advice, students felt they could contact both the programme coordinator and individual staff members easily. The panel is pleased with guidance and information structures in the programme, also regarding feasibility for students with functional impairments. It learnt that over the past five years, 70% of students graduated nominally and 89% within two years. The panel applauds these positive figures and sees them as an indication that students are guided well throughout the programme.

Staff
The programme is taught by staff from the Media & Communication department, 89% of whom hold a PhD degree in media and communication or related fields. Some part-time lecturers are invited to teach who are experts in specific fields (e.g., media production, communication consultancy).The majority of the teaching staff has a research assignment in addition to their teaching assignment (i.e., most are assistant, associate, or full professors) and are active, internationally recognized researchers who contribute to the development of their field of research. This alignment between teaching and research is a key criterion in the recruitment and selection of new staff.

Of the teaching staff with a permanent contract, 87% have obtained or are obtaining the University Teaching Qualification (Dutch: BKO) and 24% the Senior University Teaching Qualification (Dutch: SKO). Experienced lecturers regularly participate in training courses offered by the University's Centre for Teaching & Learning or the ESHCC Learning & Innovation team, for example on the use of blended learning, intercultural communication in the classroom, inclusive education, AI in education, or impact-driven course design. For new staff, the DEVELOP onboarding programme was introduced to get acquainted with the organizational structure as well as teaching practices.

The panel is impressed with the high quality, didactic skills and enthusiasm of the programme staff. Their research background informs the various courses and is praised by the students. The panel understood from

its conversations with staff and management that, as is the case in academia and the humanities at large, the workload of staff members is a point of attention. It encourages the programme management to continue looking for ways to alleviate this and is pleased that this is permanently on the agenda, both at programme and at faculty level.

Considerations

The panel finds that the curricula of the master's programme's five specializations are well-designed and clearly structured. The programme is coherent yet offers students a lot of flexibility to attune the programme to their individual interests. The high-quality teaching staff, the attention paid to academic skills and the intensive, small-scale teaching methods are among the programme's strengths and are praised by students. The panel compliments the programme on its good teaching-learning environment. The admission procedure is sound, and guidance and information provision are done well in all specializations. The panel also supports the choice of English as the language of instruction in four of the five specializations and the programme name. The panel applauds the programme's initiatives to further strengthen connections with the relevant professional fields in its courses and suggests streamlining these in a learning line. The panel encourages the programme to maintain the interactivity and small-scale setup and to continue to mitigate staff workload to uphold the high-quality teaching-learning environment it currently offers.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 2.

Standard 3. Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment system and methods
Assessment in the Media Studies programme matches the faculty's assessment policy. The programme's intended learning outcomes align with the various courses, and this is made visible in an assessment plan per specialization. In addition, lecturers are responsible for providing an account of their course's assessments in an assessment matrix. This matrix shows how every learning outcome is assessed and at what level. The matrix enables lecturers to reflect on their assessments and develop tests that are consistent with the content and objectives of the course.

Media Studies strives for a good balance between formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment is conducted regularly through several small assignments throughout the eight-week course period. Examples of formative assessments used in the programme include quizzes, peer feedback, homework assignments, active participation in discussions, and diagnostic in-class tests. Summative tests in the programme are typically in the format of a written research report or a theoretical essay. In addition to providing an opportunity to evaluate the students' competencies, these assignments also encourage critical thinking and enhance students' ability to reflect on their own performance. While the majority of mandatory courses also requires some form of group work, the final grade is primarily dependent on the student's individual performance.

Courses can be delivered by an individual lecturer or taught by a team of lecturers. In the first case, lecturers are expected to consult a colleague regarding content and assessment. In the latter case, the lecturers consult with each other regarding content and assessment. In this case, calibration sessions for each

assessment are organized amongst the lecturers during the course. In the course guides, embedded in Canvas, lecturers provide all necessary information about the course using a standard format. This includes the grading rubrics, which stipulate the assessment criteria and their weight, grading factor, and deadlines.

The panel discussed assessment policies and practices with the programme management, students, teaching staff and Examination Board. It concludes that assessment in the programme is done well and carefully. Assessment is varied and matches the activating teaching methods. It allows students to achieve the learning outcomes and helps them gain insight into their learning trajectory. Measures are in place to allow for transparent and valid assessment.

The programme and the ESHCC are working on addressing the quality assurance challenges posed by generative AI. A Task Force was established in 2023 that advised ESHCC education management on how to deal with generative AI in teaching (including assessment). As a result, examiners are no longer allowed to offer take-home exams and are offered the support of the Learning & Innovation team to check if exams are AI-proof. Also, in-text referencing must now include the page number(s) in all cases. The recently revised Assessment Policy provides guidelines for lecturers. At the same time, the programme wants to train students to use generative AI wisely. It therefore also includes generative AI in teaching and test methods so that students gain experience with it and reflect upon it in an academic setting. The panel agrees with the programme that the ability to work critically and ethically with generative AI is particularly important for students in a Media Studies programme, who will be confronted with it both in academia and in a professional environment. The panel is pleased with the conscientious way in which the programme approaches and adapts to generative AI and the challenges and opportunities it entails.

Thesis assessment
The master thesis is supervised by a staff member with expertise in the subject. The thesis assessment process begins with the submission of a research proposal that is assessed by both the supervisor and the second reader. The research proposal is assessed on the basis of four main substantive criteria: 1) problem definition and research question, 2) literature review, 3) accountability and research design, and 4) structure and timeline, with a grading scale of fail/satisfactory/good. Proposals are assessed on a pass/fail basis and in the event of disagreement between the assessors about a pass or fail, a third senior assessor is appointed to make the final decision. Students have one opportunity to revise a failed proposal based on the feedback.

Once the proposal has been approved, the writing of the thesis begins and students submit a draft version via the Thesis Management System (TMS) in early June. The Thesis Management System (TMS) was introduced following a recommendation by the previous panel and facilitates systematic and transparent assessment based on established criteria. The final thesis is independently assessed by the supervisor and a second reader, both from the same department. As often as possible, the second reader is the same staff member who assessed the thesis proposal. The programme uses a Second Reader Panel (SRP), a pool of second readers that provides second readers to assess research proposals and theses, as well as arbiters in cases where the assessments of the thesis differ significantly. This is necessary in exceptional cases, if there is disagreement between the supervisor and second reader, or when the suggested grades diverge by 1.1 grade point or more. In case of a difference between 0.5 and 1 grade point, supervisor and second reader are expected to find a consensus. If the difference is under 0,5, the supervisor's assessment determines the grade.

The panel studied the assessment of 15 theses and found that generally, thesis assessment is done well. The grades given are in line with what the panel would expect, and the grade substantiation on the thesis forms

is usually clear and sufficiently extensive. The panel is also positive on the clear and structured procedure and the new Thesis Management System.

Examination board
The ESHCC examination board (EB) is tasked with ensuring the quality of assessment within the programme. The board consists of two members from each of the faculty's three departments, plus one external member. The board's primary responsibilities include evaluating the overall assessment structure to ensure it meets final qualifications, conducting regular reviews of the quality of exams and final assignments, appointing examiners and providing examiners with guidelines for creating, administering, and grading assessments. Furthermore, it oversees adherence to these guidelines. Each year, the EB conducts targeted reviews of a sample of courses across all specializations, examining aspects such as the use of assessment matrices, the presence of clear grading rubrics and the clarity of test instructions. The EB shares its findings with the vice dean education, the EPD and the head of department. The EB uses a similar process to evaluate thesis assessments, as recommended by the previous accreditation panel. A sample of ten master theses is reviewed each year to ensure representation across different programmes and specializations.

The panel is pleased with the way the EB safeguards assessment quality in the programme and applauds the changes it made to accommodate the recommendations of the previous panel. The panel is convinced that the EB fulfils its legal duties in guaranteeing assessment quality. As a point of further improvement, the panel was told by EB members that their thesis review focuses on formal matters such as the completeness of assessment forms and adherence to formal requirements. The panel recommends complementing this working method by also having a sample of the theses checked for their content and the achieved level, as an extra guarantee that the intended final level is met. The EB could mandate an assessment committee to do this regularly to avoid too high a workload.

Another aspect to be further developed is the appointment of examiners by the Examination Board. At present, thesis supervision is sometimes carried out by PhD candidates as examiners. The EB decides whether to allow this. The panel learnt that in practice, the EB has clear and well-chosen checks and balances to determine whether a PhD candidate can be appointed as thesis supervisor. The EB grants permission only when the PhD candidate in question has already published a journal article and gained experience in teaching. The panel recommends making these checks and balances explicit. By extension, the EB could also make the criteria explicit by which it appoints temporary external examiners in some courses. This too is done according to careful checks and balances that should be made explicit and formalized to maximize procedural transparency.

Considerations
The panel considers assessment policy and practice in the programme to be well-designed and in line with the programme's aims and objectives. The test types are fitting and varied, and a good balance is struck between formative and summative testing. The panel finds that thesis assessment is done well and that the Examination Board is clearly in control of assessment quality. It recommends further enhancing the role of the EB by taking regular samples of theses for a check on level and quality on top of the current formal check. It also recommends formalizing and making explicit the carefully chosen checks and balances the EB relies on when appointing PhD candidates or external staff as examiners.

Conclusion
The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 3.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

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

Findings

The panel read 15 theses representing all master's specializations. It concludes that the theses clearly demonstrate the expected level and that they are generally strong, well-written and methodologically sound. It applauds the final level achieved in the programme.

Graduates find jobs in a variety of sectors and types of organizations, not just in media and entertainment but also in government, the non-profit sector and finance. Other categories include communication and public relations; training, consultancy and research; and IT and related services. After graduation, the career paths of Media Studies alumni are actively tracked. The alumni officer conducts annual career surveys to collect data on where graduates find employment or continue their studies. According to these surveys, alumni highlight the programme's strong link between theory and practice, its international focus, and the diverse career paths it opens. They also highlight the value of multidisciplinary learning, small class sizes, and the opportunity to engage with real-world issues throughout their studies. The panel met with alumni from all specializations during the site visit and learnt to its satisfaction that they look back quite positively on the way the programme prepared them for the labour market. Particularly the focus on critical thinking was mentioned repeatedly as valuable in future careers.

Considerations

Based on the good quality of final theses and the success of programme graduates, who move on to work in relevant sectors and who look back on the programme with satisfaction and enthusiasm, the panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes of the programme are clearly achieved.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 4.

General conclusion

The panel's assessment of programme is positive.

Recommendations

1. Expand the thesis samples to include a regular check on their level and quality;
2. Make explicit and formalize the checks and balances that the Examination Board relies on when appointing PhD candidates or external staff as examiners.

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Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

Graduates will have gained knowledge and understanding of the following:
1. Key theoretical developments, issues and discussions in the academic study of media and communication.
2. Theory development and research regarding current policies, communication practices, strategic organizational issues and developments in sectors spanning business, media, and creative industries.
3. Key academic research methods and techniques as they apply to the field of media and communication.

Graduates have an academic mind, a critical disposition and excellent written and oral expression skills. They are able to:
4. Systematically analyse complex processes and issues within the media sector as well as media and communication issues within organizations and society.
5. Critically evaluate the functioning of researchers, policy makers and professionals in the field of media and communication and the aforementioned sectors (business, media, and creative industries) and to make a constructive contribution to innovations in policy, communication, organization and strategy.
6. Independently conduct research in the field of media and communication by applying various (qualitative and quantitative) research methods, document this in a clearly structured argumentation, and reflect on the research, the research process and possible implications.
7. Apply the gained knowledge and skills independently and creatively within the media and communication sector, media and communication research, and the (media and communication) policy and strategy of governments, NGOs, companies and other organizations, and the public debate about media.

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Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

Media & Business			
Term 1	**Term 2**	**Term 3**	**Term 4**
Media & Business Transformations (5 EC; 24 contact hours)	Engaging Consumers: Strategic Practices and Frameworks (5 EC; 16 hrs)	Consulting Challenge (5 EC; 24 hrs)	Master Thesis Project (20 EC), includes the Master Class and the Master Thesis
Elective Seminar (5 EC): • Corporate Management with Social Media (28 hrs) • Media Economics and Media Management (24 hrs) Methods of Media Research (10 EC; 64 hrs)	Elective Research Workshop (5 EC): • Culture, New Media and International Business (24 hrs) • Corporate Social Responsibility Communication (24 hrs) • Diversity and Inclusion in Strategic Communication (24 hrs) • Future Studies as a Strategic Tool for Media Firms (24 hrs) • Social Marketing Campaigns (24 hrs)	Elective Seminar (5 EC): • Roaming the Digital World: Data Analytics for Business and Society (24 hrs) • Strategic Mass Communication (24 hrs) • Entrepreneurship in Media and Business (24 hrs) • Leadership Communication: Strategies and Trends (24 hrs) (CM4110) • Digital News Media: Consumption and Engagement (24 hrs) • Fashion Brand Activism and Social Media (24 hrs)	
Master Thesis Project (20 EC)			

Media, Culture & Society			
Term 1	**Term 2**	**Term 3**	**Term 4**
Media, Culture and Globalisation (5 EC; 21 contact hours)	Elective Seminar (5 EC) • Audience Engagement (24 hrs) • Digital Media and Cultural Identities (24 hrs)	New Media, Politics and Campaigns (5 EC; 24 hrs)	Master Thesis Project (20 EC), includes the Master Class and the Master Thesis
Media and Socio-Cultural Change (5 EC; 24 hrs) Methods of Media Research (10 EC; 64 hrs)	Elective Research Workshop (5 EC) • Vigilant Audiences, Visibility and Reputation (24 hrs) • Media & Migration (24 hrs) • Television Audiences (24 hrs)	Elective Seminar (5 EC) • Roaming the Digital World: Data Analytics for Business and Society (24 hrs) • Media Policies and Markets (24 hrs) • The Future of the Creative Labour Market (24 hrs) • Media Entrepreneurship (16 hrs)	
Master Thesis Project (20 EC)			

Media & Creative Industries			
Term 1	**Term 2**	**Term 3**	**Term 4**
Management of Media and Creative Industries (5 EC; 32 contact hours)	Audience Engagement (5 EC; 24 hrs)	Marketing Media and Entertainment (5 EC; 24 hrs)	Master Thesis Project (20 EC), includes the Master Class and the Master Thesis
Globalisation and Media Industries (5 EC; 32 hrs)	Elective Research Workshop (5 EC) • Television Audiences (24 hrs) • Production Cultures in the Streaming Industries (24 hrs) • It's in the Game (24 hrs) • Innovating the Music Business (24 hrs) • Disruptions in the Film Industry (24 hrs)	Elective Seminar (5 EC) • Roaming the Digital World: Data Analytics for Business and Society (24 hrs) • Media Policies and Markets (24 hrs) • The Future of the Creative Labour Market (24 hrs) • Media Entrepreneurship (16 hrs)	
Methods of Media Research (10 EC; 64 hrs)			
Master Thesis Project (20 EC)			

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Digitalisation, Surveillance & Societies

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Digitalisation and Social Change (5 EC; 24 contact hours)	Privacy, Ethics and Social Impacts (5 EC; 24 hrs)	Digital Citizenship and Community Engagement (5 EC; 24 hrs)	Master Thesis Project (20 EC), includes the Master Class and the Master Thesis
Surveillance and Societies (5 EC; 24 hrs)	Elective Research Workshop (5 EC) • Vigilant Audiences, Visibility and Reputation (24 hrs) • Surveillance and the Media (24 hrs)	Elective Seminar (5 EC) • Roaming the Digital World: Data Analytics for Business and Society (24 hrs) • Unboxing the Algorithms (24 hrs)	
Methods of Media Research (10 EC; 64 hrs)			
Master Thesis Project (20 EC)			

Media & Journalistiek

Blok 1	Blok 2	Blok 3	Blok 4
Journalistiek en Media (5 EC; 24 contacturen)	Beeldvorming & Media (5 EC; 21 uur)	Journalistiek & Publiek (5 EC; 24 uur)	Master Thesis Project (20 EC), inclusief de Master Class en de Master Thesis
Workshop Journalistiek & Storytelling (5 EC; 32 uur)	Elective Research Workshop (5 EC) • Impact van Journalistiek (24 uur) • Datajournalistiek: van Ruwe Data naar Impact op de Samenleving (24 uur)	Media en Politiek (5 EC; 24 uur)	
Methods of Media Research (10 EC; 64 uur)			
Master Thesis Project (20 EC)			
	Journalistiek Café #1 (0,5 EC)		*Journalistiek Café #2 (0,5 EC)*

Colour Key	Core Courses	Methodology Courses	Electives	Master Thesis	Extracurricular Component

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Wednesday 22 January 2025

Time		Activity
17.15	17.30	Welcome panel
17.30	18.00	Meeting with alumni

Thursday 23 January 2025

Time		Activity
08.30	08.45	Arrival panel
08.45	09.00	Panel discussion
09.00	09.45	Interview with programme management
09.45	10.00	Panel discussion
10.00	10.45	Interview with students
10.45	11.00	Panel discussion
11.00	11.45	Interview with teaching staff
11.45	12.30	Lunch/ panel discussion
12.30	13.15	Development dialogue
13.15	13.30	Panel discussion
13.30	14.00	Interview with the examination board
14.00	15.00	Panel discussion
15.00	15.45	Final interview with programme management
15.45	16.30	Concluding panel discussion
16.30	16.45	Plenary recap
16.45	17.30	Drinks

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Appendix 4. Materials

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

Appendix	Documentation	Standard 1	Standard 2	Standard 3	Standard 4
I	Intended learning outcomes master Media Studies	X			
II	Roundtable professional practice M&C (Sep-Oct 2023)	X			
III	Quality assurance report - Curriculum evaluation and alumni survey 2023-2024		X		X
IV (a-e)	Assessment plans per specialisation	X	X	X	X
V	Course descriptions (weblink)		X		
VI (a-i)	Course files		X	X	
VII	Overview activities professional field master Media Studies		X		X
VIII	ESHCC Assessment Policy (final draft)			X	
IX	Master Thesis Media Studies - Project Book 2023-2024		X		
X	Master Thesis Media Studies - Student manual		X		
XI	Quality assurance report - Course evaluations and National Student Survey (NSE) 2023-2024		X	X	
XII	Teaching and Examination Regulations ESHCC master programmes 2024-2025	X	X	X	X
XIII	Overview teaching staff master Media Studies		X		
XIV	Annual report Programme Committee Media & Communication 2023-2024		X	X	
XV	Criteria of appointment of examiners ESHCC 2024-2025			X	
XVI	Master Thesis Media Studies - Assessment form research proposal			X	
XVII	Master Thesis Media Studies - Assessment form thesis			X	
XVIII	Rules and Regulations ESHCC Examination Board 2024-2025			X	
XIX	Annual report ESHCC Examination Board 2022-2023			X	
XX	Follow-up recommendations previous accreditation master Media Studies	X		X	
XXI	Panel report previous accreditation master Media Studies (NVAO, 2019)	X	X	X	X
XXII	Overview recent graduates master Media Studies 2022-2023 and 2023-2024				X
XXIII	Master Media Studies Alumni Experiences (weblink)				X

The panel also received additional information on application and admission numbers upon request prior to the site visit.