



M Forensic Psychology
Maastricht University

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Project code P2411

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Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The panel recognizes the clear and coherent vision of the Forensic Psychology master's programme. The programme is purposefully designed to educate students as scientist-practitioners capable of working at the interface of psychology and the legal system. The intended learning outcomes are appropriately aligned with academic master's level expectations and reflect both academic standards and the needs of professional forensic practice. They also support the development of interpersonal, reflective, and ethical capacities essential for forensic practice. The programme demonstrates a strong ambition to educate students to an above-average level of competence. The panel observes that the current programme-level ILOs are predominantly oriented toward academic and research competencies, while the clinical aspects are more strongly embedded at the course level. The panel supports the programme's intention to revise the ILOs to better represent its dual scientific and clinical focus and to reflect recent developments. While the current mechanisms for incorporating professional field input are valuable, the panel suggests that a more structured and regularized process could help to align the programme and its outcomes with evolving professional expectations.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel concludes that the Forensic Psychology programme offers a well-structured, coherent and academically rigorous curriculum that prepares students effectively for both professional and research roles in the forensic psychological field. The curriculum integrates theoretical content, applied methods, clinical skills training, and real-world experience in a logical and progressive manner. The panel advises the programme to improve the systematic alignment between course-level learning outcomes and the overarching programme ILOs. Currently, this connection is made in general terms, but not consistently mapped to specific assessment criteria. The addition of the PRO-F course in the second year has strengthened the curriculum, addressing earlier concerns about professional development and supervision. The panel appreciates the reflective and peer-based format of PRO-F and acknowledges its value as a safe space. It also appreciates the broad range of topics addressed in the programme through many small credit modules, allowing the programme to cover a wide and relevant range of topics. While the panel sees this as a strength, it also suggests introducing more flexibility or specialisation options, such as elective tracks or modules, to accommodate the diverse interests of students and respond to their expressed desire for more choice. The panel supports the suggestion from students to include a wider range of therapeutic approaches in the Therapy Skills Lab.

The learning environment is a clear strength, marked by strong student-staff interaction, a high degree of student engagement, and a supportive learning community. The panel is impressed by the didactic concept of the programme. It finds that the combination of PBL, seminar-style sessions, and practical trainings creates a challenging and interactive educational environment that aligns well with the programme's objectives. The student-centred, small-scale setup fosters active participation and a high level of engagement. The panel considers the didactic model effective in promoting deep learning, personal development, and academic excellence. While the curriculum is intense and challenging, completion rates demonstrate its feasibility. Nevertheless, workload peaks – such as tight exam scheduling – may be revisited to reduce unnecessary stress. The panel acknowledges that the extracurricular opportunities contribute meaningfully to students' academic and professional development. However, it finds that engagement remains limited and largely student-driven. The panel recommends the programme take a more active role in making extracurricular engagement a shared responsibility, structurally embedding these activities and

involving students in their design to enhance participation and broaden learning beyond the formal curriculum.

The panel fully supports the choice of English as the language of instruction and in the programme name. Given the international classroom, the global nature of the field, and the relevance of intercultural communication skills in forensic psychology, English is both appropriate and essential. The panel finds the admission procedure to be robust and well-aligned with the goals of small-scale and intensive education, effectively selecting motivated and qualified students with both academic and professional potential. It advises the programme to monitor student population and consider positive selection strategies to promote diversity, particularly given the high share of German applicants. The panel finds the quality and composition of the teaching staff to be a key strength. Students benefit from the involvement of highly qualified clinicians and researchers, and frequent, high-quality interaction and individual guidance. The panel also appreciates the programme-specific facilities, including a dedicated classroom and common room for Forensic Psychology students, which contribute to the sense of community and support the implementation of small-scale and intensive education. Well-equipped research labs further enhance learning and support thesis work.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The panel finds that the master's programme in Forensic Psychology has a well-developed and transparent assessment system that is closely aligned with the intended learning outcomes. It acknowledges the quality assurance procedures in place to monitor and periodically review assessment practices. The variety of assessment methods across courses is appropriate for the broad set of academic and professional competencies the programme aims to develop. The combination of formative and summative assessments supports student learning and skill acquisition. The panel encourages the programme to expand the use of formative assessment, particularly as a means to reduce pressure, provide earlier feedback, and support student wellbeing. The panel recommends that, for PRO-F to remain a formal course within the curriculum, a form of formative assessment should replace attendance as the sole basis for evaluation, in order to ensure educational validity and alignment with assessment standards. The panel observed a tendency toward overestimation in thesis grading and recommends that the programme address this to ensure consistency and fairness. It encourages the further development and implementation of a thesis rubric, which could support more structured and transparent assessment practices. The panel is positive about the Board of Examiners, fulfilling its responsibilities effectively by ensuring compliance with the Education and Examination Regulations. The panel is also positive about the BoE's transition to a more proactive and systematic quality assurance cycle. It recommends continuing this development to improve consistency, and strengthen oversight of assessment practices across the faculty's programmes, including Forensic Psychology. Finally, the panel applauds the faculty's forward-thinking policy on generative AI, which it regards as a leading example of how to align innovation, assessment integrity, and learning goals.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The panel concludes that the MSc Forensic Psychology convincingly achieves its intended learning outcomes. The theses reviewed by the panel were generally of high quality, with several standing out as excellent. Completion rates are consistently strong, particularly in light of the programme's small-scale and intensive character, and drop-out is minimal. These results demonstrate the feasibility of the programme and the effectiveness of its guidance structures. Alumni outcomes are equally impressive: graduates enter the labour market quickly and take on demanding roles in forensic, clinical, and academic settings. The panel was particularly struck by alumni's sense of preparedness and the confidence they expressed in applying both scientific knowledge and practical skills in their work. The programme succeeds in preparing

graduates for complex professional environments, and its outcomes reflect a successful integration of academic and applied learning.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

Master's programme Forensic Psychology

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard

General conclusion positive

The panel assesses the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education of the master's programme Forensic Psychology as follows:

Criterion A: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Criterion B: Curriculum – content	meets the standard
Criterion C: Curriculum – learning environment	meets the standard
Criterion D: Intake	meets the standard
Criterion E: Staff	meets the standard
Criterion F: Facilities	meets the standard
Criterion G: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
General conclusion	positive

Prof. dr. Michiel van der Wolf, panel chair

Yannick Slagter MA, secretary

Date: 18-07-2025 (update 02-12-2025)

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 22 and 23 May 2025, the Forensic Psychology master's programme of Maastricht University was assessed by an independent peer review panel. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (valid from 1 April 2024), including the Criteria Pertaining to Distinctive Feature of Small-scale and Intensive Education.

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of Maastricht University. Yannick Slagter acted as coordinator and secretary. He has been certified and registered by the NVAO.

Panel composition

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members. On 17 February 2025, 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). Panel chair Michiel van der Wolf also attended a NVAO training session on the Criteria Pertaining to Distinctive Feature of Small-scale and Intensive Education on 5 December 2024.

Preparation

The programme composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator (see appendix 3). The programme selected representative partners for the various interviews. It 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 over the period 2023-2024. In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses of the programme. He took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account. There were no tracks or specializations to take into account. 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 information 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 frameworks, the working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

Site visit

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, general observations of the panel and suggestions for development themes.

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 programme in order 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 the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience and Maastricht University.

Panel

The panel assessing the Forensic Psychology programme at Maastricht University consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. M.J.F. (Michiel) van der Wolf, Professor of Forensic Psychiatry at the Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology at the University of Leiden [panel chair];
- Prof. dr. E. (Ellen) Giebels, Professor of Social Psychology of Conflict and Safety at the University of Twente;
- Dr. H. (Hannah) Jones, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology and Mental Health at Queen Mary University of London;
- M. (Manó) Lakos BSc, master's student Forensic and Legal Psychology, Erasmus University [student member].

Each panel member, the panel secretary and the programme have filled out the Statement of Impartiality and non-disclosure agreement, as required by the NVAO. They can confirm that the assessment was carried out in complete independence.

Information on the programme

Name of the institution:	Maastricht University
BRIN-number:	21PJ
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive
Programme name:	Forensic Psychology
ISAT number:	69305
Level of the programme:	Master (NLQF 7)
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Language of instruction:	English
Location:	Maastricht
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Awarded degree:	MSc
Submission date NVAO:	1 November 2025

Description of the assessment

Organization

The master's programme Forensic Psychology is part of the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience (FPN) at Maastricht University. The programme falls under the responsibility of the Faculty Board, which holds final accountability for the quality and organization of all education offered within the faculty. Within this structure, the programme is managed by a programme director, who is responsible for the day-to-day coordination, implementation, and development of the curriculum. The programme director works in close collaboration with the programme coordinator, who oversees logistical and administrative processes, and with individual course coordinators, who are responsible for the design and delivery of specific courses. Educational policies and strategic decisions at the faculty level are developed and monitored by the Faculty Board, in consultation with programme directors and various advisory bodies. The faculty itself is one of six faculties at Maastricht University, and operates within the university's broader framework for education, research, and quality assurance. The programme also works closely with central support services provided by the university, including student guidance, digital learning platforms, and examination services. This embeddedness ensures that the MSc Forensic Psychology benefits from both local autonomy and central institutional support in maintaining academic quality and organisational efficiency.

Recommendations previous panel

During the previous accreditation, the panel issued several formal recommendations aimed at enhancing the programme's clarity, supervision, assessment quality, and distinctiveness. First, the panel recommended clarifying the programme's focus and goals, and explicitly formulating its ambitions regarding students' personal development. Second, it urged the programme to organize more structured and proactive supervision in the second year, especially during internships, to strengthen student support. Third, the panel advised improving the transparency and reliability of thesis assessment, for example by documenting the reasoning behind grades and implementing thesis sampling. Fourth, the panel recommended that the Board of Examiners adopt a more proactive approach in monitoring assessment quality, particularly in the second year. Lastly, the panel called for ongoing monitoring of success rates to detect potential trends and safeguard the programme's small-scale and intensive profile. The current panel found that these aspects were followed up by the programme in a satisfactory manner. See the relevant standards for more detail.

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings

The master's programme in Forensic Psychology is designed to educate students to become scientist-practitioners who can contribute to the assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation of individuals within forensic mental health contexts. The programme combines academic rigour with professional relevance and aims to equip students with both theoretical knowledge and applied skills. It places particular emphasis on ethical responsibility, critical thinking, and evidence-based practice. Graduates are expected to function effectively at the intersection of psychology and the legal system, contributing to both clinical and research environments in forensic settings. Upon completion of the programme, students are qualified to work in correctional facilities (both adult and juvenile), forensic psychiatric (inpatient and outpatient) institutions, police services, probation services, and organisations focusing on child protection and domestic violence. In addition, graduates are well positioned to pursue further training in postgraduate programmes leading to

registration as licensed healthcare psychologists (GZ-Psycholoog), clinical psychologist-specialists, and psychotherapists (BIG-register).

The programme's intended learning outcomes (ILOs, see appendix 1) are described at the programme level and formulated in alignment with domain specific and European Federation of Psychologists' Associations' requirements, as well as with the Dublin descriptors for the master's level and therefore also the Dutch NLQF framework describing this level. The ILOs focus on the development of theoretical and empirical knowledge in forensic psychology, critical reflection, research skills, ethical reasoning, and the ability to integrate knowledge and skills in professional forensic contexts. In addition, the ILOs demonstrate a clear focus on the development of personal attitudes and professional competencies. This includes outcomes related to ethical awareness, self-reflection, and the ability to function responsibly in multidisciplinary and high-stakes environments. These elements ensure that students are not only academically and professionally trained, but also supported in developing the interpersonal, reflective, and ethical capacities essential for forensic practice.

The programme documentation shows that the programme-level ILOs are formulated in generally academic and research-oriented terms. Course learning goals often place a stronger emphasis on practical and professional competences relevant to clinical and forensic practice. During the site visit, the programme's management indicated that they intend to update the programme ILOs. As part of this process, the programme plans to map the course-level learning goals to the existing programme ILOs in order to identify how each course contributes to the overall aims. This alignment is intended to serve as a basis for revising the programme ILOs to ensure that they reflect both the current structure of the programme and its development over recent years. This process is scheduled to be coordinated at the faculty level and will include all master's programmes within the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience. A faculty-wide meeting about this revision has been scheduled for September 2025.

Input from the professional field is gathered through multiple channels. Clinical professionals who are involved as teaching staff in the MSc Forensic Psychology contribute ongoing input based on their work in practice. In addition, the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience maintains a shared advisory board for all of its master's programmes. This board meets once a year and includes representatives from academia and clinical institutions such as the Mondriaan clinic, a mental healthcare institution in the southern Netherlands, offering services across a broad spectrum of psychiatric care, including addiction treatment and forensic psychiatry. According to the management, this combined input helps ensure that the programme content and intended outcomes remain attuned to developments in the field.

The panel appreciates the clear vision and distinctive profile of the Forensic Psychology programme, which is firmly focused on the clinical and forensic assessment and treatment domain. It finds the current ILOs appropriate for an academic master's programme in this field and aligned with expectations from both academia and professional practice. The programme clearly distinguishes itself from other comparable forensic psychology programmes in the Netherlands through its strong practical orientation, supported by a coherent and explicit scientist-practitioner profile. The programme thus aspires to high standards, aiming to educate students to an above-average level. It appreciates that the programme is internationally focused, but also remains well aligned with national professional pathways, including routes to postgraduate clinical training such as GZ-psychologist. The panel notes, however, that the ILOs are predominantly oriented toward the scientist role, while the clinical dimension is mainly addressed at the course level. The panel therefore supports the programme's intention to revise and update the ILOs to better reflect recent developments and the dual scientific-clinical nature of the programme. The panel values the input provided by teaching staff with professional experience and the presence of an advisory board, although it feels that

the programme may benefit from a more structural and systematic way of gathering input from the working field. The advisory board is shared across all master's programmes and only meets annually, and while clinical professionals on staff do bring in valuable insights from the field, this input seems more informal and incidental. A more systematic approach – such as centrally collecting, sharing, and embedding these insights across the programme – could ensure that all staff and students benefit from the programme's professional connections.

Considerations

The panel recognizes the clear and coherent vision of the Forensic Psychology master's programme. The programme is purposefully designed to educate students as scientist-practitioners capable of working at the interface of psychology and the legal system. The intended learning outcomes are appropriately aligned with academic master's level expectations and reflect both academic standards and the needs of professional forensic practice. They also support the development of interpersonal, reflective, and ethical capacities essential for forensic practice. The programme demonstrates a strong ambition to educate students to an above-average level of competence. The panel observes that the current programme-level ILOs are predominantly oriented toward academic and research competencies, while the clinical aspects are more strongly embedded at the course level. The panel supports the programme's intention to revise the ILOs to better represent its dual scientific and clinical focus and to reflect recent developments. While the current mechanisms for incorporating professional field input are valuable, the panel suggests that a more structured and regularized process could help to align the programme and its outcomes with evolving professional expectations.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 1.

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard A of the framework for the Distinctive Feature “Small-scale and Intensive Education”.

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 Forensic Psychology master is a full-time, two-year programme comprising 120 EC. It is structured to provide students with a comprehensive academic and practical foundation for a career in forensic mental health services. The curriculum combines coursework, skills training, supervised clinical and research internships, and a final thesis. It is designed to ensure a gradual progression from theoretical knowledge and foundational skills in year one to applied clinical and research experience in year two. The programme ILOs form the basis for curriculum design and student assessment. For each course, the assessment programme indicates which of the overarching ILOs are addressed, thereby ensuring general alignment across the curriculum.

The first year of the programme focuses on building students' academic knowledge, therapeutic techniques, cultural and legal awareness, and practical competencies. This is achieved through a mix of core theoretical courses, skills labs, and practice-oriented modules. This structure is designed to prepare students for the

intensive second year, in which they take part in real-world clinical and research environments. A distinctive feature of the first semester is the fact that students follow several theoretical courses together with students from the master's programme in Legal Psychology. These shared courses create opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange and broaden students' perspectives on psychological roles in legal contexts.

In the first year, students take theoretical courses such as Psychology of Eyewitness Testimony (4 EC), which explores the reliability of memory, eyewitness accounts, and interviewing techniques; Personality Disorders (4 EC), focusing on the classification, diagnosis, and treatment of personality disorders within forensic populations; Young Offenders (4 EC), which examines the development of juvenile delinquency, relevant interventions, and aspects of juvenile justice; and Sex Offenders (4 EC), covering typologies, risk assessment, and treatment approaches for individuals who have committed sexual offences. These courses are complemented by additional theoretical modules such as Criminal Law (4 EC), which introduces students to the fundamentals of Dutch criminal law and legal procedures relevant to forensic psychologists; and Applied Statistics for Forensic Psychologists (4 EC), which equips students with the statistical skills necessary to critically analyse forensic psychological data and interpret research findings in applied contexts. The curriculum also includes Interrogation & Interviewing (4 EC), a course that bridges theory and practice by training students in various interviewing and interrogation techniques used in investigative and forensic settings, including the psychology behind false confessions and suggestibility. In addition to theoretical modules, the first year includes several practice-focused courses. The Therapy Skills Lab (4 EC) provides training in core therapeutic skills. The primary model used is schema therapy, a prominent approach in Dutch forensic practice. While students value this training, during the site visits they also expressed interest in learning a broader repertoire of therapeutic techniques. Practical training is further supported by courses like the Expert Witness Skills Lab (4 EC), in which students develop professional communication skills relevant to legal settings. This includes writing psychological reports and practising the oral presentation and defence of expert findings in simulated courtroom situations. Academic development is embedded in two dedicated Academic Skills Labs, I and II (4 EC each): the first focuses on reading and analysing academic literature, writing summaries, and referencing, while the second aims to develop argumentation, academic writing, and critical reflection. In preparation for the second-year thesis and research internship, students also complete a Research Proposal Workshop (1 EC), where they develop and refine their research question, methodological approach, and ethical considerations under supervision.

The second year of the programme shifts focus to direct application of knowledge and skills through supervised internships and research. It includes two major components: the clinical internship and the research internship, both accompanied by written assignments. The clinical internship (16 EC) is completed at a recognized forensic or mental health institution. Students work under the supervision of a registered clinical psychologist, gaining experience with client contact, treatment participation, report writing, and teamwork. They are expected to demonstrate increasing autonomy and professionalism. Students document their experience in a clinical internship report (4 EC), which includes learning goals, reflections, and evidence of competence development. Besides the clinical placement, students complete a research internship (10 EC) within the university or at an external research institute. This component enables students to gain hands-on experience in empirical research in a forensic psychological context. It begins with the Research Proposal (2 EC), in which students formulate their research question, justify their methodology, and prepare for data collection and analysis. This leads to the master's thesis (10 EC), based on original research, typically aligned with the internship setting or broader programme themes.

An important addition to the curriculum since the previous accreditation is the course Professional Reflections & Observations – Forensic Psychology (PRO-F) (2 EC). This course was introduced in direct response to recommendations made by the previous accreditation panel, specifically regarding the need for

better supervision in the second year and stronger guidance in personal and professional development. PRO-F runs longitudinally through the second year and supports students in setting and evaluating personal learning goals, reflecting on their clinical and academic performance, and integrating professional competencies. The course includes individual coaching sessions, peer group discussions, and observation-based feedback mechanisms. Teaching staff described PRO-F as a 'safe space' in which students are encouraged to bring in real-life experiences from their clinical internships for peer reflection through structured intervention formats. This approach aims to promote learning from and with peers, and requires an environment of trust. To safeguard this, the course is assessed on the basis of attendance only, without grading. Students indicated that they appreciate the inclusion of PRO-F in the second-year curriculum and consider it a valuable support during their clinical development.

The panel finds that the curriculum of the MSc in Forensic Psychology is well-structured and thoughtfully designed to serve both practitioner- and research-oriented learning goals. The use of numerous small-credit modules allows the programme to address a broad and relevant range of topics within the field, which the panel considers a particular strength. The curriculum offers a coherent mix of content-based courses, applied components, and skills training, and is clearly focused on fostering a wide array of professional attitudes and competences. Although the curriculum is fully prescribed, students do have some flexibility to personalise their learning path by choosing their internship locations and thesis topics, which allows them to align parts of the programme with individual interests or career goals. The panel did observe that the programme's curriculum attempts to cover a wide scope within forensic psychology. While students value the structure and coherence of the current design, many indicated during the site visit that they would prefer more opportunities to specialize, as not all topics are of equal interest or relevance to every student. Students also mentioned that the lack of elective options is experienced as a limitation, though they simultaneously expressed appreciation for the clarity and cohesion of the programme path. The panel suggests that the programme review its broad curriculum with a view to introducing more choice, such as through thematic tracks or flexible modules that allow students to focus on particular subfields of forensic psychology.

At the same time, students expressed a desire to broaden their therapeutic skillset beyond schema therapy. The panel suggests that the Therapy Skills Lab could be expanded to include exposure to additional therapeutic approaches. The panel considers the PRO-F course a valuable and well-conceived addition to the second year, effectively responding to earlier recommendations on supervision and professional development. The panel appreciates both the format and the safe space it provides, and acknowledges students' positive reception of the course. However, the panel recommends that, for PRO-F to remain a formal course within the curriculum, a form of formative assessment should replace attendance as the sole basis for evaluation. This is further discussed under standard 3.

With regard to the alignment between ILOs and the curriculum, the panel notes that while each course is linked to the programme ILOs at a general level, the translation to specific course outcomes remains largely indicative rather than systematically mapped. The panel advises strengthening this alignment by more explicitly connecting course-level outcomes and assessment criteria to the overarching programme ILOs, thus supporting the programme management's existing plans to this end discussed under standard 1.

Learning environment

The Forensic Psychology programme is characterized by a small-scale and intensive educational setting. The programme is deliberately designed to foster close contact between students and staff, with a low student-staff ratio (15.3, compared to the national average of 20) that facilitates personal attention and interaction. This small-scale model enables lecturers to closely monitor student progress, while also promoting active

participation and peer collaboration. Throughout the programme, students are challenged to take ownership of their learning process.

The didactic concept adopted in the programme is described as a unique combination of Problem-Based Learning (PBL), seminar-style teaching, hands-on skills labs, and practical training sessions in an international classroom setting. This mix of methods aims to create a dynamic and student-centred learning environment. Students come from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds, contributing to a rich classroom dialogue and intercultural exchange. The PBL approach is a core element of the Maastricht education model, and is applied throughout the curriculum. PBL is implemented in small tutorial groups of 12 where students collaboratively analyse real-world cases, formulate learning goals, and actively seek out knowledge needed to study these cases. This format encourages deep learning, critical thinking, and self-directed study. Each tutorial is facilitated by a staff member in the role of tutor who guides the discussion and monitors group dynamics. Students are expected to come to sessions well-prepared and to take an active role in leading discussions, presenting findings, and reflecting on their learning. The structure of PBL fosters independence and mutual responsibility, while also allowing space for the integration of theory and practice.

In addition to PBL, students attend seminar-type classes, skills labs, and practical training sessions. Skills labs such as the Therapy Skills Lab and the Expert Witness Skills Lab are interactive and practice-oriented, and often simulate real-life clinical or forensic settings. The programme also includes opportunities for intervision, structured peer discussions on professional challenges and experiences, particularly within the second-year PRO-F course. The combination of formats aims to ensure that students are consistently engaged in both analytical and applied learning.

During the programme, students are encouraged to engage in a range of extracurricular activities that can enhance their academic and professional development. Opportunities offered include contributing to meta-analysis projects, writing reviews or blogs for public and academic platforms such as InMind, attending additional lectures, participating in staff-led journal clubs, supporting expert witness work, and assisting in research conducted by teaching staff. Staff members indicated during the site visit that they actively raise awareness about such opportunities – by pointing students to relevant conferences or suggesting possible activities. Students and alumni confirmed this, reporting that they had enjoyed participating in optional lectures and remarking that, particularly in the area of research, the extracurricular opportunities have been very valuable. The initiative to take part in such activities lies largely with the student. In practice, only a small group of students engages in extracurricular work, as many find it difficult to make time for additional commitments due to the intensive workload of the core programme.

Another defining feature of the programme is the strong learning community that has developed among students and between students and staff. The sense of community is deliberately fostered through both formal and informal structures. Students and staff interact frequently, both during teaching and outside of class, and the atmosphere is described as accessible and collegial. The faculty provides a dedicated common room exclusively for Forensic Psychology students, which serves as a multifunctional space for studying, group work, informal teaching sessions, and social interaction. This shared space plays a key role in building social cohesion. In addition, the programme organises community-building events, including a welcome drink with staff during the introductory week and an end-of-year gathering before students begin their internships – traditions that contribute to a shared group identity. Alumni recalled social dinners with their cohort and the programme director, highlighting the informal and lasting relationships formed during the programme. Students reported feeling closely connected to their peers and supported by lecturers, who are approachable and invested in their development. Several also shared how students actively look out for one

another, ensuring no one is left behind, even during difficult periods. A strong sense of community develops easily in the first year and continues into the second year, where the PRO-F course provides a structured way to stay connected. Alumni confirmed that the bonds formed are enduring: some continue to meet regularly with former classmates even six years after graduation, underscoring the depth and lasting impact of these relationships.

The panel considers the learning environment of the Forensic Psychology programme to be one of its key strengths. It appreciates the small-scale set-up and the intensive, student-centred teaching approach. The combination of PBL, seminar-style sessions, and practical trainings creates a challenging and interactive educational climate that aligns well with the programme's objectives. During the site visit, this was clearly confirmed: students described and demonstrated a high level of preparation, commitment, and engagement in their coursework and classroom participation. Staff and alumni likewise highlighted how the active teaching methods stimulate students to perform at a high level and to fully participate in the learning process. The panel finds that this educational model fosters not only academic excellence but also deep student involvement. Furthermore, both staff and students showed themselves very positive about PBL, explaining how they think it's particularly suited for the field of forensic psychology. In the line of work you always deal with cases: they are the starting point for discussion, forming hypotheses and then testing them, which is exactly what PBL aims for.

The panel observed a strong sense of learning community among students, characterised by close peer support and a collaborative atmosphere. It was particularly impressed by the cohesiveness of student cohorts and the long-lasting connections reported by alumni. The availability of dedicated facilities – such as a programme-specific classroom and common room – further enhances this sense of belonging. The learning community also plays a vital role in student wellbeing. During the site visit, students highlighted how peer support is essential in navigating the demands of the programme. They described how they rely on one another for encouragement, practical help, and emotional support, especially during periods of stress or when dealing with personal difficulties. This sense of solidarity is particularly valuable for international students, who may not have family or established social networks in the Netherlands. The peer group often functions as a surrogate support system, which helps reduce feelings of isolation and enhances the overall student experience. Overall, the panel finds that the programme has succeeded in creating an intellectually demanding yet socially supportive environment that fosters both academic and personal development.

The panel also appreciates the range of extracurricular opportunities made available to students, including involvement in research activities and writing for public platforms. The panel notes that the extracurricular opportunities provided by the programme offer meaningful avenues for academic and professional broadening. As such, they contribute to the programme's ambition to educate students to an above-average level. However, it notes that some of these activities – such as contributing to meta-analyses or literature reviews – appear closely aligned with the academic curriculum and may function more as extensions of the programme than as true extracurricular engagement. The panel sees potential for broadening the scope of these activities, for instance through closer contact with professional practice, such as visiting clinics or inviting practitioners into the learning environment. It acknowledges that some shared activities are already in place, such as public lectures and journal clubs organised by staff, which are open to all students and serve as informal spaces for academic enrichment. While the panel values the efforts of teaching staff to raise awareness and support interested students, it also observes that participation currently depends heavily on individual student initiative. As a result, only a small number of students engage in such activities. The panel believes the programme should play a more active role in making extracurricular engagement a shared responsibility. It recommends exploring ways to integrate these activities more structurally – without

necessarily increasing workload – by giving students a greater voice in shaping them and encouraging wider participation as a means of fostering personal and professional growth.

Language of instruction

The master's programme Forensic Psychology is taught in English. This choice reflects the international orientation of the programme, both in terms of student population and academic field. The programme attracts students from diverse national and cultural backgrounds, and prepares graduates for careers in international and multicultural professional environments. English is the dominant language in the scientific literature and professional discourse in forensic psychology, making it a natural choice for instruction. All teaching materials, assessments, and communication within the programme are conducted in English to ensure consistency and accessibility for the full student body. By offering education in English, the programme is also able to recruit high quality staff on an international level enhancing the programme's quality and reputation.

The choice of the English programme name, Forensic Psychology, is consistent with the international orientation of the curriculum and the professional field. Using an English title ensures recognizability and alignment with global academic and professional standards, as forensic psychology is an internationally established discipline in which English is the dominant language. An English programme name facilitates the recruitment of students from diverse national and cultural backgrounds, enhances the programme's visibility, and reflects the language of the scientific literature and professional discourse. Furthermore, the English programme name enhances the recognizability of the programme within the international professional field.

The panel fully supports the choice of English as the language of instruction and communication within the Forensic Psychology programme, as well as the English name of the programme. Given the international orientation of the field, the diverse backgrounds of students, and the programme's aim to prepare graduates for global and intercultural professional contexts, English is both a logical and necessary choice. During the site visit, students and alumni confirmed that the international classroom fosters cross-cultural awareness and effective communication skills – competencies that are essential in forensic psychological practice. In this context, the panel considers English to be the appropriate and indeed only suitable language for the programme.

Admission

Each year, the MSc Forensic Psychology admits a maximum of 24 students. The programme aims to attract motivated and talented individuals with a strong academic background and a clear interest in forensic psychology as both a scientific and applied discipline. In line with its small-scale and intensive nature, the programme is selective and seeks students who are capable of handling a demanding curriculum and contributing to an engaged learning community. Applicants must hold a relevant bachelor's degree, typically in psychology or a closely related field, and demonstrate sufficient knowledge of research methods and statistics. In addition to meeting these academic prerequisites, applicants are expected to have clinical experience and they are asked to submit a motivation letter, curriculum vitae, academic transcripts, and two letters of recommendation. All applications are assessed by a selection committee, the Board of Admissions, composed of academic staff from the programme.

The selection procedure is multi-layered. It includes a review of the submitted documents, with particular attention to academic performance and the quality of motivation. Shortlisted candidates are invited for an interview, either in person or online. The interview serves to assess the applicant's motivation, interpersonal skills, and suitability for the programme's demanding structure and group-based learning model. Final

decisions are based on the overall assessment of qualifications, potential for success in the programme, and fit with the profile of a scientist-practitioner.

Recognizing that the programme charges a higher tuition fee due to its designation as a small-scale and intensive programme, the university is committed to ensuring accessibility for students regardless of financial background. For non-EU students who demonstrate both academic excellence and financial need, there is the possibility of support through the prof. dr. W.A. Wagenaar Fund. According to the management, this scholarship is awarded approximately once every two years to enable the participation of an international student who would otherwise be unable to afford the programme. This reflects the programme's broader commitment to inclusivity and diversity.

The panel finds the admission procedure to be well-structured and effective in selecting motivated and academically and professionally talented students who are well-suited to the programme's small-scale and intensive educational concept. The panel does encourage the programme to remain attentive to diversity within the student population. Given the relatively high number of German students – partly due to greater access to clinical experience in Germany – the panel encourages considering positive selection for students from other backgrounds when applicants are otherwise equally qualified. The panel values the programme's commitment to inclusiveness and commends the initiative to financially support students through the prof. dr. W.A. Wagenaar Fund.

Feasibility and guidance

The Forensic Psychology programme offers students a structured and accessible system of academic and personal guidance throughout the two-year programme. From the start, students are provided with information about the programme structure, learning goals, assessment procedures, and practical matters via a range of channels, including an online student portal and the programme handbook. Course coordinators and teaching staff are approachable and play an active role in supporting students with academic matters.

A central component of the guidance system is the mentor programme. Each student is assigned a personal mentor – typically a member of the academic staff – who serves as a first point of contact for academic or personal concerns. The programme always tries to match the mentor with student interest. Mentors monitor student progress, offer advice, and help students reflect on their development. They also serve as a bridge to other support systems within the faculty and university, referring students when needed to student advisors or university counselling services. During the site visit, staff members explained there are always at least three meetings between student and mentor: the first meeting at the start of the year to see who they are, what their goals are, and to make agreements on how they can contact their mentor. Halfway through the year the mentor reaches out for a mid-term evaluation, and then again at the end of the year. Sometimes students need more support, with one staff member noting there's a student she sees every month. Student input during the site visit showed that the mentor system is proactive, with mentors actively reaching out to students. It is appreciated by students and said to function effectively.

Students are further supported during their internships, both clinical and research-based. The programme assists students in finding suitable internship placements by maintaining a network of recognized institutions and by offering practical guidance during the search and application process. Once placed, students are supervised by professionals within the host institution and are also assigned an academic supervisor from the university. The clinical internship includes structured supervision, regular feedback sessions, and the requirement to submit a reflective internship report. Similarly, the research internship and

thesis process are closely monitored by research-active staff members, who provide individual supervision throughout the trajectory.

The programme emphasizes student-centredness, both in its didactic approach and in its responsiveness to student input. Feedback mechanisms include formal course evaluations, informal classroom dialogue, and participation in the programme committee. During the site visit, students indicated that they feel heard and supported. They gave examples of feedback that led to actual changes in course content or planning. This responsiveness contributes to a sense of shared responsibility for programme quality and student experience.

The Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, as part of Maastricht University, has institutional arrangements in place to support students with physical, psychological, or learning impairments. Students with special needs are encouraged to disclose these early in the programme so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged. Support is coordinated at the faculty and university level through student advisors, disability coordinators, and university psychologists. Available accommodations may include extended exam time, flexible deadlines, assistive technology, or physical accessibility adjustments. The programme ensures that students with an impairment are not disadvantaged and are able to participate fully in academic activities. This aligns with Maastricht University's wider commitment to inclusive education.

The panel is positive about the programme's information provision and finds that the Forensic Psychology programme offers a solid and supportive system of student guidance. It finds that students receive clear and timely information through multiple accessible channels, enabling them to navigate the curriculum and its requirements effectively. The mentor programme, in particular, is appreciated for its tailored and individualized approach, offering students a clear point of contact throughout the programme. Mentors monitor progress, provide advice, and offer support where needed. The panel also notes that internship guidance – both in identifying suitable placements and in the supervision of students during their internship periods – is well-organized. The panel is positive about the facilities and support for students with impairments, with criteria for providing services based on an individual student's needs in relation to their educational requirements at the time. The physical accessibility of teaching spaces is well arranged. Based on completion data presented in the self-evaluation, the panel considers the study success data to be strong, particularly in light of the programme's BKKI designation, and a clear indicator of the effectiveness of the programme's guidance and support structure. Completion rates are above average, and drop-out is minimal, indicating that the programme is both demanding and feasible. Across five recent cohorts, nominal completion rates ranged between 73% and 92%, with three of the five cohorts graduating over 80% of students on time. The lower outcomes in two cohorts are attributed to delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, drop-out rates are very low, and most students who start the programme complete it successfully. Nevertheless, the panel is aware of the high workload and stress levels that students report. During the site visit, students and alumni described the workload as particularly intense at certain times, with examples such as multiple deadlines converging within the same week, or finishing an assignment on Sunday and starting a new block on Monday. While this scheduling is intended to maximise study time, it may be counterproductive, with many students that experience it as stressful. In the student chapter it was mentioned that some reported symptoms of burnout by the end of the first year. International students indicated that the tight scheduling made it difficult to find an appropriate window to return home, adding to their overall stress. The programme acknowledges these concerns in the self-evaluation and continues to monitor workload distribution across periods. The panel encourages the programme to continue evaluating its course planning and workload balance in order to maintain feasibility without compromising student well-being.

The panel finds that students feel heard and see that their feedback leads to meaningful improvements. This is a positive reflection of the programme's student-centred approach. At the same time, like many programmes, Forensic Psychology struggles with low response rates in standard course evaluations. The panel advises the programme to explore more structural and engaging ways to collect student input. One promising example was the 'development session' held during the site visit, where students, staff, and management jointly reflected on the future of the programme. The panel found this an inspiring and effective format and suggests making such a session a recurring, annual event.

Teaching staff

The Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience aims to maintain a balanced ratio of 50%-25%-25% between assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors, which is also reflected in the Forensic Psychology programme. The teaching staff of the programme consists of a diverse and experienced group of academic and clinical professionals. All teaching staff members possess disciplinary expertise in forensic psychology or closely related areas, and many combine academic appointments with practical roles in the field. This dual orientation ensures that students are exposed to both cutting-edge research and real-world clinical practice. Staff members are actively engaged in research within the Faculty, particularly in areas such as forensic assessment, psychopathy, risk evaluation, offender treatment, and psychological jurisprudence. Their expertise is directly integrated into the teaching content of the programme's modules.

To ensure high standards of teaching quality, all staff involved in teaching are required to hold or obtain a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ). This certification is part of Maastricht University's policy on professional development in higher education and confirms that staff meet university-wide didactic standards. New teaching staff without a UTQ are expected to obtain this qualification within two years of their appointment. The programme supports staff in this process through faculty-level training and peer feedback mechanisms. In addition to formal certification, all course coordinators are expected to engage in ongoing professional development through activities such as the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme, faculty-wide education lunches, and Education Days. These initiatives aim to strengthen the teaching community and provide a shared framework for high-quality teaching and assessment, aligned with the principles of small-scale and intensive education.

Furthermore, staff regularly participate in educational meetings and curriculum development sessions to ensure alignment of teaching methods with the programme's didactic concept. The combination of PBL, skills training, and seminar-style instruction requires staff to be flexible, student-focused, and capable of facilitating interactive learning environments. The student-staff ratio in the programme is intentionally kept low, in line with its designation as a small-scale and intensive programme. The annual cohort is limited to a maximum of 24 students, which allows for close interaction between students and teachers. Staff members are easily approachable, and students report frequent informal contact and personalised feedback. This favourable ratio not only supports the implementation of interactive teaching methods but also fosters the strong learning community that is a hallmark of the programme. The combined academic, didactic, and professional qualifications of the teaching staff form a crucial pillar of the programme's quality and educational philosophy.

The panel is very positive about the quality and composition of the teaching staff. The programme offers an excellent opportunity for students to learn from highly skilled clinicians and researchers who have significantly contributed to the field. The panel finds that the staffing level is very adequate to support the programme's small-scale and intensive educational format, enabling frequent and meaningful interaction between staff and students and plenty of individual counselling. Staff members bring strong academic and clinical expertise to the programme, as also reflected in the 2023/2024 National Student Survey, where they

received a 4.3 rating for subject-matter expertise and 4.2 for their involvement. All teaching staff hold a UTQ, ensuring didactic proficiency. The student–staff ratio of 15.3 is well below the national average of 20, making it highly appropriate for a small-scale, intensive programme. The panel considers the expertise and engagement of the teaching team a key strength of the programme.

Programme specific facilities

The master’s programme in Forensic Psychology is supported by a range of programme-specific and faculty-wide facilities that enhance the learning and research environment. A key feature is the availability of a dedicated classroom used exclusively by the cohort. Additionally, students have access to a private common room reserved for their use. These spaces serve not only as study environments but also as social and informal meeting areas, contributing to cohesion within the group by fostering consistency, familiarity, and group cohesion. Students spoke positively about the importance of having shared physical spaces where they can study, meet, or decompress during the intensive programme. For many, these shared environments strengthen both academic collaboration and personal support networks. Beyond programme-specific facilities, the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience houses a wide array of specialized laboratories that are accessible to Forensic Psychology students for research purposes. These include labs for behavioural experiments, autonomic nervous system measurements, virtual reality, stress research, sexuality and sexual deviance studies, and serious gaming. A new facility for psychodiagnostic testing is currently under construction. Mobile equipment is also available for field measurements in forensic institutions. Students receive technical support from the faculty’s Department of Instrumentation and Engineering, staffed by experienced technicians who assist in developing software and custom instruments for research projects. The panel concludes that programme’s and faculty’s facilities are of a high standard and enhance the programme’s small-scale and intensive setup, noting it’s a privilege to have experimental labs and facilities.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the Forensic Psychology programme offers a well-structured, coherent and academically rigorous curriculum that prepares students effectively for both professional and research roles in the forensic psychological field. The curriculum integrates theoretical content, applied methods, clinical skills training, and real-world experience in a logical and progressive manner. The panel advises the programme to improve the systematic alignment between course-level learning outcomes and the overarching programme ILOs. Currently, this connection is made in general terms, but not consistently mapped to specific assessment criteria. The addition of the PRO-F course in the second year has strengthened the curriculum, addressing earlier concerns about professional development and supervision. The panel appreciates the reflective and peer-based format of PRO-F and acknowledges its value as a safe space. It also appreciates the broad range of topics addressed in the programme through many small credit modules, allowing the programme to cover a wide and relevant range of topics. While the panel sees this as a strength, it also suggests introducing more flexibility or specialisation options, such as elective tracks or modules, to accommodate the diverse interests of students and respond to their expressed desire for more choice. The panel supports the suggestion from students to include a wider range of therapeutic approaches in the Therapy Skills Lab.

The learning environment is a clear strength, marked by strong student-staff interaction, a high degree of student engagement, and a supportive learning community. The panel is impressed by the didactic concept of the programme. It finds that the combination of PBL, seminar-style sessions, and practical trainings creates a challenging and interactive educational environment that aligns well with the programme’s objectives. The student-centred, small-scale setup fosters active participation and a high level of engagement. The panel considers the didactic model effective in promoting deep learning, personal development, and academic excellence. While the curriculum is intense and challenging, completion rates

demonstrate its feasibility. Nevertheless, workload peaks – such as tight exam scheduling – may be revisited to reduce unnecessary stress. The panel acknowledges that the extracurricular opportunities contribute meaningfully to students’ academic and professional development. However, it finds that engagement remains limited and largely student-driven. The panel recommends the programme take a more active role in making extracurricular engagement a shared responsibility, structurally embedding these activities and involving students in their design to enhance participation and broaden learning beyond the formal curriculum.

The panel fully supports the choice of English as the language of instruction and in the programme name. Given the international classroom, the global nature of the field, and the relevance of intercultural communication skills in forensic psychology, English is both appropriate and essential. The panel finds the admission procedure to be robust and well-aligned with the goals of small-scale and intensive education, effectively selecting motivated and qualified students with both academic and professional potential. It advises the programme to monitor student population and consider positive selection strategies to promote diversity, particularly given the high share of German applicants. The panel finds the quality and composition of the teaching staff to be a key strength. Students benefit from the involvement of highly qualified clinicians and researchers, and frequent, high-quality interaction and individual guidance. The panel also appreciates the programme-specific facilities, including a dedicated classroom and common room for Forensic Psychology students, which contribute to the sense of community and support the implementation of small-scale and intensive education. Well-equipped research labs further enhance learning and support thesis work.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 2.

The panel concludes that the programme meets standards B, C, D, E and F of the framework for the Distinctive Feature “Small-scale and Intensive Education”.

Standard 3. Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment

The Forensic Psychology programme has a comprehensive and varied assessment system that is closely aligned with its ILOs. The assessment strategy is described in the programme’s assessment plan, which outlines the types of assessments used, their timing, and their relationship to both course-level and programme-level learning objectives. The goal is to ensure that assessments are valid, transparent, and aligned with the competencies students are expected to develop. To support this, the assessment plan is reviewed and updated annually in line with the nominal plan cycle, which finalises the curriculum for the upcoming academic year. This review ensures continuous alignment of assessments with learning outcomes and maintains consistency in the quality of assessment practices. Furthermore, the FPN-wide RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consult, Inform) framework provides clarity about the responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in assessment and contributes to the structured quality assurance of the assessment system.

Each course includes a tailored assessment approach that reflects the nature of the content and the learning goals. According to both the documentation and input from teaching staff during the site visit, most courses include multiple assessment components, such as written reports, oral presentations, mind maps, and self-reflection assignments. This mix allows for the evaluation of both knowledge and practical skills. Staff noted that the programme offers a combination of formative and summative assessments, in which students receive ongoing feedback throughout the course in addition to final evaluations. Competency development is a guiding principle, with assignments designed to test applied abilities such as differential diagnostics, reading and interpreting scientific literature, and critical thinking. The only exception to this, as discussed under standard 2, is the PRO-F course which is assessed on the basis of attendance, without grading.

Assessments are designed and reviewed by course coordinators, often in consultation with other staff, and must align with the faculty's broader assessment framework. The FPN assessment policy is based on UM's assessment vision and national quality standards, and aims to ensure that assessments validly and reliably demonstrate whether students meet the intended learning outcomes. The types of assessment used in the programme range from closed-book exams to open-book assignments, oral defences, and group work. This variety ensures that students are assessed in diverse ways across different contexts. Feedback is typically provided in writing and is intended to support continuous learning. Students are informed of assessment formats, criteria, and deadlines in advance via the course manuals and the digital learning environment.

The master's thesis is a central component of the second year. It is evaluated by two assessors: the first assessor is typically the student's supervisor, while the second assessor is a member of academic staff who has not been involved in the supervision of the project. Both assessors review the thesis independently and assign a grade. If the two grades differ by more than two points or if there is disagreement regarding whether the thesis meets the required standards, a third assessor is appointed. Assessment criteria are outlined in the thesis manual, and all assessors are expected to provide written justification for their evaluations. The master thesis is based on original empirical research and must include data collection as part of its design. During the site visit, the panel noted that some theses they read in preparation for the visit did not clearly demonstrate original data collection, but resembled a systematic review instead. In response to questions, the management explained that in such cases, students may fulfil the data collection requirement through their participation in a larger research project not directly tied to their thesis topic. The practical component of the research internship is assessed separately from the thesis itself. To ensure that the requirement of data collection is still met, as part of this assessment, the research internship supervisor must confirm that the student has actively engaged in data collection, even if the data are not used in the written thesis. This practical evaluation forms an integral part of the total assessment for the research internship.

The clinical internship and research internship are assessed through separate procedures. The clinical internship includes both a performance evaluation by the external supervisor and the submission of a Clinical Activities Report (CAR), which is assessed by academic staff of the programme. The performance evaluation is based on predefined criteria regarding professional conduct, participation in treatment, and reflective capacity. The CAR documents the student's clinical internship experience through a structured report combining a literature-based overview of the healthcare and legal context with detailed reflections on the internship setting, personal clinical activities, learning goals, and a case study. It meets Dutch postgraduate training requirements and follows APA style. The research internship is evaluated by the research internship supervisor on the student's engagement in the research process, including planning, execution, and collaboration with researchers. Both internship components aim to assess the integration of knowledge, skills, and professional behaviour in real-world settings.

The panel finds that the assessment system of the Forensic Psychology programme is generally well-structured, transparent, and aligned with the programme's learning outcomes. It appreciates the variety of assessment methods used across courses, including written assignments, presentations, and oral components, which collectively reflect the broad competencies the programme aims to develop. The panel also acknowledges the quality assurance procedures in place to monitor and periodically review assessment practices. However, in regard to the newly introduced PRO-F course, the panel recommends that, for it to remain a formal course within the curriculum, a form of formative assessment should replace attendance as the sole basis for evaluation, in order to ensure educational validity and alignment with assessment standards. Achievement of course learning goals cannot be assessed by attendance.

The panel encourages the programme to further explore the use of formative assessment. The Forensic Psychology curriculum, with its emphasis on professional development and skill acquisition, is well-suited for low-stakes feedback moments that promote learning. Increasing formative assessment could respond to several observations raised earlier in the report – such as the current assessment setup of the PRO-F course, students' desire for more guidance, and high perceived workload. By integrating more formative components, the programme could alleviate performance pressure and promote deeper engagement with learning objectives, while maintaining the rigour expected of an academic master's programme.

During its review of thesis work, the panel observed a structural tendency toward overestimation in grading, both at the lower and higher ends of the scale. In several cases, the panel also noted that the awarded grades did not fully correspond with the quality of the feedback. This observation led the panel to raise the issue during the site visit, in separate discussions with both the programme's management and the Board of Examiners. While all parties acknowledged the concern, no clear or singular cause for the discrepancy in grading could be identified. The panel therefore recommends that the programme address this issue to ensure fair and consistent grading practices. One possible step discussed during the visit was the introduction of a thesis rubric, which the management indicated is currently under consideration faculty-wide. This rubric is intended to improve consistency and transparency in grading and to ensure that assessment criteria are applied uniformly. The panel considers this a promising development and strongly encourages its implementation should the programme choose to pursue this direction. A well-designed rubric could help improve transparency, ensure alignment between feedback and grades, and support assessors in applying consistent, criteria-based evaluations.

Board of Examiners

The assessment quality and the safeguarding of learning outcomes in the Forensic Psychology programme are overseen by the Board of Examiners (BoE), which operates at the faculty level. The Board is not linked to a single programme, but supervises assessment quality across most educational programmes within the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, ensuring compliance with the Education and Examination Regulations (EER). Its responsibilities include monitoring the validity, reliability, and transparency of assessment procedures, and ensuring that students who graduate have demonstrably achieved the intended learning outcomes of their programme. The BoE addresses disputes, draws lessons from them to improve assessment practices, and ensures thesis quality through required dual assessment, automated checks for irregularities, and follow-up protocols for diverging grades. These are regularly sampled to monitor assessment consistency. The BoE provides oversight and support when specific concerns or incidents occur – such as questions about the validity of an exam or the handling of a complaint. During the site visit, the Board explained that they are currently in a transitional phase, shifting from an ad hoc, demand-driven model to a more proactive approach. This includes implementing a regular quality cycle of assessment review, with routine checks across all types of assessments used in the faculty's programmes. This quality cycle aims to provide greater consistency and deeper insight into the strengths and areas for improvement in

assessment design and implementation. While relatively few assessment issues have emerged in this programme in the past, the Board indicated that this new system will allow for more systematic monitoring and feedback. It will enable them to engage more directly with course coordinators and examiners in evaluating exam quality, grading consistency, and alignment with intended learning outcomes.

Regarding broader developments, the BoE has also taken a role in addressing challenges and opportunities presented by generative AI. A new faculty-wide policy on the responsible use of generative AI in education has recently been approved by the faculty board, and will replace the previous, outdated version. This policy is aligned with Maastricht University's institutional framework and promotes the integration of AI use into the programme's intended learning outcomes where appropriate. Its underlying philosophy is that students must learn how to use generative AI tools critically and ethically, and that assessments should be redesigned where necessary to reflect this reality. Accordingly, teachers are being encouraged not only to inform students of what constitutes acceptable use of AI in academic work, but also to reconsider assessment design more broadly. A university-wide professionalisation initiative is currently underway, including a faculty-level course for lecturers on the application of AI tools in teaching. This will ensure that staff can make informed decisions about both the opportunities and limitations of AI in the context of assessment and educational integrity.

The panel gained a positive impression of the Board of Examiners. It finds that the BoE currently fulfils its responsibilities effectively by ensuring compliance with the Education and Examination Regulations (EER), overseeing thesis quality through dual assessment and systematic follow-up on grade discrepancies, and resolving disputes in a constructive manner. The panel particularly values the Board's established practices such as thesis sampling and active involvement in programme-level policy development, which contribute to maintaining assessment quality and integrity. It welcomes the Board's transition toward a more proactive and structured quality assurance cycle for assessment, moving beyond reactive interventions. The panel recommends that the Board continue and fully implement this more systematic approach, as it will enhance oversight and consistency across the faculty's programmes, including Forensic Psychology. The panel was also particularly impressed by the faculty's newly adopted policy on generative AI. It considers the policy to be forward-thinking and well-aligned with current developments in academic practice. Compared to other institutions and programmes, the panel found the faculty's approach to AI integration – both in teaching and assessment – to be relatively advanced and a model of good practice.

Considerations

The panel finds that the master's programme in Forensic Psychology has a well-developed and transparent assessment system that is closely aligned with the intended learning outcomes. It acknowledges the quality assurance procedures in place to monitor and periodically review assessment practices. The variety of assessment methods across courses is appropriate for the broad set of academic and professional competencies the programme aims to develop. The combination of formative and summative assessments supports student learning and skill acquisition. The panel encourages the programme to expand the use of formative assessment, particularly as a means to reduce pressure, provide earlier feedback, and support student wellbeing. The panel recommends that, for PRO-F to remain a formal course within the curriculum, a form of formative assessment should replace attendance as the sole basis for evaluation, in order to ensure educational validity and alignment with assessment standards. The panel observed a tendency toward overestimation in thesis grading and recommends that the programme address this to ensure consistency and fairness. It encourages the further development and implementation of a thesis rubric, which could support more structured and transparent assessment practices. The panel is positive about the Board of Examiners, fulfilling its responsibilities effectively by ensuring compliance with the Education and Examination Regulations (EER). The panel is also positive about the BoE's transition to a more proactive and

systematic quality assurance cycle. It recommends continuing this development to improve consistency, and strengthen oversight of assessment practices across the faculty's programmes, including Forensic Psychology. Finally, the panel applauds the faculty's forward-thinking policy on generative AI, which it regards as a leading example of how to align innovation, assessment integrity, and learning goals.

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 reviewed a sample of 15 master's theses submitted by recent graduates of the Forensic Psychology master's programme. Overall, the panel found the theses to be of high quality and above average for a master's programme, with some really excellent products. Based on the thesis sample, the panel concludes that graduates of the programme demonstrate the capacity to conduct independent, empirically grounded research at master's level. The quality of the theses supports the conclusion that students achieve the intended learning outcomes at the required master's level. Combined with the positive assessment of the programme's success rates, which is discussed under 'Feasibility and guidance' in standard 2, the panel concludes that Forensic Psychology demonstrates the achieved learning outcomes that befits a programme with small-scale and intensive education.

The programme tracks alumni outcomes through informal networks, alumni surveys, and feedback from internship supervisors who often serve as future employers. Graduates of the Forensic Psychology programme go on to work in a broad range of professional contexts. Almost 80% of alumni found a suitable job within 6 months of graduation. Many alumni find positions within forensic mental health institutions, correctional facilities, and youth care organizations, as well as in research environments. Some pursue further training to become registered psychologists or therapists in the Dutch healthcare system, including GZ-opleiding and other postgraduate clinical pathways. Others take up PhD positions or enter applied research roles in governmental and academic settings.

Students consistently acquire high-level professional skills, as evidenced by feedback from clinical internship supervisors who report that students are often entrusted with tasks beyond what is typically expected at that stage of training. Students often exceed expectations and are capable of performing professional-level tasks already during the internship. The panel acknowledges this as a strong indicator of the programme's practical effectiveness. During the site visit, alumni also expressed a high level of satisfaction with the preparation the programme had given them. They reported feeling well-equipped to handle the demands of the workplace, both in clinical and research setting, and employers and supervisors frequently indicate that graduates of the programme are competent, professional, and confident in their roles.

The panel is highly impressed by the professional outcomes of graduates from the Forensic Psychology master. Alumni not only enter the labour market quickly, but often secure demanding and high-quality positions in clinical, correctional, and research environments. The programme clearly prepares students for the complexity of forensic psychological practice, including both its scientific and applied dimensions. Discussions with alumni confirmed that they feel well-prepared for their professional roles, both in terms of

theoretical knowledge and practical competence. The panel concludes that the learning outcomes of the programme are convincingly achieved.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the MSc Forensic Psychology convincingly achieves its intended learning outcomes. The theses reviewed by the panel were generally of high quality, with several standing out as excellent. Completion rates are consistently strong, particularly in light of the programme's small-scale and intensive character, and drop-out is minimal. These results demonstrate the feasibility of the programme and the effectiveness of its guidance structures. Alumni outcomes are equally impressive: graduates enter the labour market quickly and take on demanding roles in forensic, clinical, and academic settings. The panel was particularly struck by alumni's sense of preparedness and the confidence they expressed in applying both scientific knowledge and practical skills in their work. The programme succeeds in preparing graduates for complex professional environments, and its outcomes reflect a successful integration of academic and applied learning.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 4.

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard G of the framework for the Distinctive Feature "Small-scale and Intensive Education".

General conclusion

The panel judges that the master's programme meets all four standards. The panel's assessment of the programme is therefore positive.

Recommendations

1. Actively involve students and staff in shaping extracurricular activities and integrate these structurally to support broader participation and personal development;
2. If the PRO-F course is to remain a formal, credit-bearing course, replace attendance-based evaluation with a form of formative assessment to ensure alignment of the course with its intended learning outcomes;
3. Address the issue of grade inflation in thesis assessment to ensure fair and consistent grading practices. The panel supports the implementation of a rubric to promote consistent, transparent, and criteria-based grading;
4. Follow through on the implementation of the new assessment quality cycle to ensure pro-active and systematic monitoring, improved consistency, and strengthened oversight of assessment practices across the across the faculty's programmes, including Forensic Psychology.

Distinctive Feature Small-Scale Intensive Education

The MSc Forensic Psychology has held the Distinctive Feature of Small-Scale and Intensive Education (BKKI) since 2013. The programme was first launched in 2010, and successfully underwent reaccreditation in 2014 and 2019. With the current site visit in 2025, the programme enters its third BKKI renewal cycle. The panel reviewed the programme against all seven criteria for the Distinctive Feature and formulated the following considerations.

A. Intended Learning Outcomes

The programme aims to educate students to an above-average level in both the academic and professional domains of forensic psychology. The intended learning outcomes reflect this dual focus and emphasize research skills, clinical practice, and professional development. They also support the development of interpersonal, reflective, and ethical capacities essential for forensic practice. The panel finds the learning outcomes appropriate and ambitious, fitting the goals of a BKKI-designated programme.

B. Curriculum Content

The curriculum is broad, coherent, and integrates academic courses with applied clinical training. A wide range of topics is covered through small-credit modules. The panel finds that the integration of curricular and extracurricular learning is evident, although it encourages the programme to take a more proactive role in facilitating extracurricular engagement and involving students in shaping such activities.

C. Learning Environment

The panel considers the learning environment to be a key strength of the programme. Education is small-scale, intensive, and built around a strong learning community. The teaching model combines PBL, seminar-style sessions, skills labs, and close supervision, creating a challenging and engaging setting. Students demonstrate a high level of preparation and commitment to coursework and class participation. The structure of the curriculum, combined with accessible support and guidance, enables an above average number of students to complete the programme within the nominal time. The panel concludes that the programme offers a demanding but feasible learning environment with clear expectations, strong student engagement, and study progress supported by design.

D. Student Intake

The programme applies a selective admission procedure, aimed at attracting highly motivated and academically capable students. Selection is based on academic background, motivation, and suitability for the small-scale and intensive learning format. The panel finds the procedure appropriate and encourages the programme to remain mindful of diversity within its international classroom.

E. Staff

The staff-to-student ratio is low and suitable for the demands of small-scale education. Teaching staff are well-qualified, holding relevant academic and professional expertise. All lecturers hold a University Teaching Qualification. Staff members regularly engage in professionalisation activities focused on teaching and assessment within the context of small-scale, intensive programmes, including participation in educational training, and the Continuing Professional Development programme. The panel finds the teaching team highly competent and involved. In addition to high-quality group teaching, the panel also notes the ample opportunities for individual student guidance and supervision, enabled by the favourable staff–student ratio.

F. Facilities

Students benefit from programme-specific facilities such as a designated classroom and common room, in addition to access to well-equipped research laboratories. These support both formal teaching and informal peer interaction. The panel considers the material infrastructure to be well-suited to the BKKI designation.

G. Achieved Learning Outcomes

Students graduate with strong academic and professional skills. The theses are of high quality, and study success rates are consistently above average. Alumni secure positions quickly after graduation, often in demanding clinical or academic environments. The panel concludes that the programme demonstrably meets the intended learning outcomes at the advanced level required for BKKI.

General conclusion Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education

Based on the information provided and the outcomes of the site visit, the panel concludes that the master's programme Forensic Psychology continues to meet all criteria for the Distinctive Feature of Small-Scale and Intensive Education. The panel therefore assesses the programme positively for the continuation of the Distinctive Feature.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

ILO 1: Knowledge of theories, processes, interventions, instruments and assessment methods in the field of forensic psychology.

ILO 2: Ability to apply theories, interventions, instruments and assessment methods to practices in the field of forensic psychology.

ILO 3: Ability to write an original and feasible research question and proposal on a forensic psychological topic.

ILO 4: Ability to design and conduct sound scientific research in the field of forensic psychology (incl. the selection and application of appropriate research methods and statistics).

ILO 5: Ability to critically judge research questions and experimental designs, considering the ethical responsibilities in research.

ILO 6: Ability to critically analyse, assess, evaluate, interpret, and synthesize, research data, theories and publications in the field of forensic psychology.

ILO 7: Ability to relate findings to the existing literature and formulate realistic judgements on the implications and importance of research output.

ILO 8: Ability to effectively communicate in English – in writing and orally (group discussions and presentations) – on topics in forensic psychology.

ILO 9: Ability to write scientific reports in the form of a practical report, Master's thesis and/or scientific publication according to the scientific standards of forensic psychology.

ILO 10: Ability to communicate scientific theories and empirical findings in an understandable way to both professionals (experts and non-experts) and to lay people (incl. clients).

ILO 11: Ability to communicate forensic psychological knowledge effectively to professionals from other disciplines, notably legal professionals and clinically trained mental health professionals.

ILO 12: Ability to reflect on one's own professional behaviour (incl. ethical standards) and development as they apply to forensic psychology (including specific best practice ethics standards for forensic psychologists).

ILO 13: Ability to work in a research setting and/or in an applied/forensic-clinical setting.

ILO 14: Ability to work in a multidisciplinary team.

ILO 15: Ability to read, understand, integrate and critically reflect on research papers, professional reports and new developments in forensic psychology.

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

Period	MSc Forensic Psychology Year 1 2024-2025		
Period 1	PSY4618 Interrogation & Interviewing (4 credits)	PSY4619 Psychology of Eyewitness Testimony (4 credits)	PSY4621 Assessment Skills Lab I (4 credits)
Period 2	PSY4636 Forensic Neuropsychology (3 credits)	PSY4635 Thinking Like an Expert (4 credits)	PSY4622 Assessment Skills Lab II (4 credits)
Period 2b	PSY4617 Applied Statistics for Forensic Psychologists (4 credits)		
Period 3		PSY4605 Personality Disorders (4 credits)	
Period 4a	PSY4607 Criminal Law (4 credits)	PSY4637 Therapy Skills Lab (4 credits)	PSY4632 Malingering and All That (2 credits) <i>Practical Training:</i> PSY4653 Malingering and All That
Period 4b		PSY4616 Forensic Assessment in Child Custody and Child Abuse Cases (2 credits)	
Period 5a	PSY4604 Psychotic Disorders (4 credits)		
Period 5b	PSY4627 Expert Witness Skills Lab (4 credits)		PSY4628 Young Offenders (4 credits)
Period 6		PSY4634 Research Proposal Workshop (1 credits)	PSY4629 Sex Offenders (4 credits)
Period	MSc Forensic Psychology Year 2 2024-2025		
Period 1 – 6	PSY5607 Research Proposal (2 credits), PSY5609 Research Internship Graded (10 credits)/ PSY5612 Research Internship Ungraded (16 credits) and PSY5603 Master's Thesis (10 credits) PSY5611 Professional Reflections & Observations – Forensic Psychology (PRO-F) (2 credits)		
	AND		
	PSY5604 Clinical Internship (16 credits) and PSY5606 Clinical Activities Report (4 credits)		

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Day 1: Thursday 22 May

Time	What	Who
12.00-12.15	Welcome	Programme director Dean Policy advisor
12.15-13.15	Panel preparation (incl. lunch)	
13.15-14.00	Interview management	Programme director Vice-dean education Education director
14.00-14.15	Break	
14.15-15.00	Interview teaching staff and Academic Advising	5 staff members (incl. staff representative Educational Programme Committee) Academic advisor
15.00-15.30	Break	
15.30-16.15	Interview Board of Examiners and Test Committee	Chair Board of Examiners Member Board of Examiners Chair Test Committee
16.15-16.30	Break	
16.30-17.15	Interview students & alumni	3 students (incl. student representative Educational Programme Committee) 3 alumni
17.15-18.00	Internal panel session	

Day 2: Friday 23 May

Time	What	Who
09.00-10.00	Tour of the facilities	Staff members Students
10.00-10.15	Panel preparation	
10.15-12.00	Development oriented session in the form of smaller focused group discussions: Future-Proofing Forensic Psychology: Our 2030 Programme Vision (including break)	Vice-dean Education FPN Programme Director Member Board of Examiners Chair Test Committee 5 students 3 practitioners 2 teachers Secretary
12.00-13.45	Internal panel session, drawing up findings (incl. lunch)	
13.45-14.15	Concluding session management	Programme director Vice-dean education Education director
14.15-14.45	Concluding panel session	
14.45-15.15	Oral report panel	

Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the master's programme Forensic Psychology. Information on the theses is available from Academion upon request.

The panel also studied other materials, which included:

- Self-evaluation report
- Strategic Plan for Education 2024-2028
- Results National Student Survey M Forensic Psychology 21-24
- Mentor Guide M Forensic Psychology 24-25
- Nominal Plan M Forensic Psychology 24-25
- Clinical Activities Report Guidelines
- List of master theses M Forensic Psychology 2023 and 2024
- List of Job Titles of Survey Respondents M Forensic Psychology
- FPN Admissions - Academic Background Form
- Information Sheet – Admissions - Criteria
- Interview rating sheet Forensic Psychology
- Overview of expertise academic staff M Forensic Psychology
- UM Vision on Assessment
- FPN Assessment Policy
- Assessment programme M Forensic Psychology 24-25
- RACI Quality Assessment FPN
- EER M Forensic Psychology 24-25
- Assessment Criteria Master Thesis M Forensic Psychology 24-25
- Clinical Internship Evaluation Form
- Annual Report of the Board of Examiners of FPN 22-23
- UM Policy Framework Generative Artificial Intelligence
- Alumni Survey Results M Forensic Psychology