



**M Communication and Information Studies
University of Amsterdam**

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Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The panel found that the DuMA Communication and Information Studies at the University of Amsterdam has a clearly defined and distinctive profile, with a focus on the ability to analyse and create persuasive texts. The programme is state-of-the-art and serves a societal need for highly skilled communication professionals. The intended learning outcomes are well-formulated, aligned with national and international academic standards and in line with the expectations from the professional field, and strike a good balance between academic and professional skills. The programme trains professionals that are in strong demand across civil, public and private spheres.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel assesses the structure of the curriculum in the DuMA Communication and Information as well-balanced and comprehensive, despite the limited core staff of only four lecturers. The curriculum is logically structured, beginning with foundational courses and progressing into specialized areas. Students have ample opportunities to customize their education. The programme covers a variety of communication domains, equipping students with a versatile skill set. The teaching methods are varied; they ensure that students develop both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. The internship component is a key strength of the programme, providing students with valuable professional experience while still being academically supported. The panel notes a significant improvement in the organization of the internships compared to the previous evaluation. While the programme offers intensive training in text structure, analysis, and rhetoric, the panel advises increasing attention to AI literacy within the curriculum. This will better prepare students for the changing labour market, enabling them to use generative AI effectively while being aware of its potential biases. The panel notes that an integrative course module across domains would be of value. The programme's staff is highly qualified and the atmosphere in the programme is supportive and personal. The panel acknowledges the programme's vulnerability due to its limited core staff. It encourages the programme management to establish core elements and to explore ways to strengthen its faculty resources as a way to ensure continuation of the programme at the appropriate high level.

Standard 3. Student assessment

Based on its review of procedures and sample of theses, internship reports and assessment forms, the panel concludes that the DuMA Information and Communication has a solid and credible approach to evaluating student work across the board. The panel finds the assessment policy and practices to be well-structured and effective. It praises the diverse and balanced mix of assessment methods, ranging from written assignments to group discussions, peer review and practical components. The assessment system fits well with the programme's profile. Students expressed appreciation for the frequency and clarity of assessments, noting the process as transparent and supportive of their professional development. The panel also reviewed thesis evaluations and found the process to be rigorous and well-documented. Theses are thoroughly assessed with detailed forms. In a few cases, grades seemed higher than justified by the feedback. As a result, the panel advises organizing shared calibration sessions to ensure consistency. The panel studied internship assessments and deemed them robust. The division of responsibilities between the Examinations Board, the clusters that support it, and the Assessment Committee is clear and effective. The Examinations Board fulfils its statutory duty. The panel asks the Faculty of Humanities at the UvA to consider more proactive monitoring of course assessments by the Assessment Committee and closer scrutiny of internship assessment, given its important role in the programmes.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

Based on the level of the final projects and the performance of alumni, the panel concludes that graduates of the DuMA Communication and Information Studies have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The panel found the theses generally of a high level, and the internship reports meet expectations. Alumni are successful in securing jobs that match the programme's profile and do so soon after graduation. The panel concludes that the programme results in high employability and societal contributions, as graduates possess strong communication and persuasion skills needed to address current global challenges.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

Master's programme Communication and Information Studies

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

Em. prof. Anneke Smelik (panel chair)

Mariette Huisjes MA (panel secretary)

Date: 9 July 2025

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 10, 11 and 12 March 2025, the bachelor's programmes Media and Culture, and Media and Information, and the master's programmes Communication and Information Studies (90 EC), Media Studies (60 EC) and Media Studies (90 EC) of the University of Amsterdam were assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment WO CIW and Media. The assessment cluster consisted of 23 programmes, offered by the Erasmus University Rotterdam, Radboud University, University of Amsterdam, Utrecht University, Leiden University, Tilburg University, University of Groningen, Maastricht University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (April 2024).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster. Fiona Schouten acted as coordinator and Mariette Huisjes acted as panel secretary for the assessment at the University of Amsterdam. They have been certified and registered by the NVAO.

Preparation

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members as well as consistency within the cluster. On 22 January 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).

The UvA staff members responsible for organizing the peer review composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator and secretary (see appendix 3). They selected representative partners for the various interviews. They also determined that the development dialogue would be 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 of master's programme Communication and Information Studies from the academic years 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses of the programme. They took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account. 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 reports 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 reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit. The panel was also informed on the assessment framework, the working method and the planning of the site visit and report.

Panel member Wilbert Spooren was unable to attend the site visit for health reasons. After discussion, it was agreed to proceed with the visit by all parties involved (panel, institution, and secretary). The coordinator informed the NVAO on 10 March 2024 of this agreement. After the visit, the panel member in question was informed of the outcome of the site visit and resumed participation in the preparation of the report.

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. One person requested a consultation. The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the preliminary findings.

Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to the coordinator 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 University of Amsterdam 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 finalised the report, and the coordinator sent it to the University of Amsterdam.

Panel

The panel assessing the master's programme Communication and Information Studies consisted of the following members:

- Em. prof. dr. A.M. (Anneke) Smelik, professor emeritus in Visual Culture at the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures of Radboud University (panel chair);
- Dr. D.J.A.M. (Danielle) Arets, professor Designing Journalism at Fontys University of Applied Sciences in Tilburg;
- Em. prof. dr. T. (Ton) van Haften, professor emeritus in Discourse Studies of Dutch at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics of Leiden University;
- Em. prof. dr. W.P.M.S. (Wilbert) Spooren, professor emeritus in Discourse Studies of Dutch at Radboud University;
- Dr. P. (Pieter) Verdegem, associate professor in Technology and Society at the Communication and Media Research Institute of the University of Westminster (United Kingdom);
- A. (Anne) van Dijken BA, master's student Media, Culture & Society at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (student member).

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

Information on the programme

Name of the institution:	University of Amsterdam
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive
Programme name:	M Communication and Information Studies
CROHO number:	60833
Level:	Master (NLQF 7)
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	90 EC
Specializations or tracks:	-
Location:	Amsterdam
Mode(s) of study:	Dual

Language of instruction:
Awarded degree:
Submission date NVAO:

English
MA
1 November 2025

Description of the assessment

Organization

The dual master's programme (DuMA) Communication and Information Studies at the University of Amsterdam belongs to the cluster Dutch Studies ('Neerlandistiek'), together with the bachelor and master's programmes in Dutch Studies.. The programme has a coordinator, who works in close cooperation with the programme director and delegated programme director Dutch Studies. Together they are responsible for the quality of the programme.

The programme has its own Programme Committee. It consists of an equal number of students and teaching staff and acts as a bridge between students, staff and programme management. The programme committees regularly confer with the programme coordinator and programme directors.

As of 1 September 2022, the faculty has a joint Examinations Board. This Examinations Board consists of a chair, eight members and an external member. The internal members each chair one of the eight Examinations Board clusters, one of which is the cluster Linguistics and Literary Studies (including Dutch Studies). Delegates of each programme participate in the cluster meetings. They support and advise the Examinations Board in case of complaints or requests at the programme level. The Examinations Board is also supported by an Assessment Committee that advises the Board on the assurance of assessment by randomly examining the quality of assessment.

Recommendations previous panel

The previous accreditation was in 2019. During this accreditation, the programme was assessed with a pass on standards 1, 3 and 4 and a fail for standard 2, with social safety voiced as a concern. After a year of repair, all standards were assessed with a pass. The 2021 committee did not have new recommendations. The current panel concurs that the programme addressed the previous assessment panel's concerns well and thoroughly.

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 aim of the DuMA Communication and Information Studies at the UvA is to provide students with a solid theoretical and methodological foundation to understand the way in which language is used for informative and persuasive purposes in specific communicative domains. At present the political, legal, health and academic domains are covered. The programme aims to prepare students for the practical application of theoretical insights, to resolve communication issues in the day-to-day practice of an organization during an internship. The internship serves as a stepping stone for a career in communication. The programme hosts a relatively small group of students, both from the Netherlands and abroad; a total of around 20 students enrol annually. The programme's ambition is to remain small-scale, accepting a maximum of 30 students each year.

Distinctive features of the programme are its focus on the study of argumentative discourse in specific domains and the unique combination of theory and practice throughout the programme, culminating in a broad career-oriented internship. Internationally there are no directly comparable programmes, with

discourse and communication as their core profile and a combination of academic coursework and a practical internship. In the Netherlands, there are several MA programmes with the same label of Communication and Information Studies, but the UvA programme is the only dual master, with a study load of 90 EC, a duration of one and a half academic year and a mandatory internship. Also, the other Dutch MA programmes have slightly different foci. Utrecht University offers a DuMA Communication and Organization, which is the most similar programme in the Netherlands, but it is offered only in Dutch and concerns exclusively organizational communication in a Dutch context, whereas the UvA programme has a broader and more international focus.

The DuMA has translated its profile into a set of intended learning outcomes. These are listed in appendix 1. They can be divided into academic and professional qualifications. Academic qualifications include for instance the ability to analyze and evaluate argumentative texts on the basis of insights from argumentation theory, discourse studies, genre theory and stylistics. Moreover, students should be able to connect to recent scientific practice, interpret and assess its results, take up a position within it, and apply analytical skills to their own research. Professional qualifications include transferrable skills such as proficiency in verbal and written (persuasive) communication, team work, time management, listening and adopting an initiative-taking mindset. By staying in close touch with many of the alumni, the programme coordinator ensures that the skills and scientific insights which are currently required in the field are included as much as possible in the courses.

The panel appreciates the DuMA's distinctive profile, which serves a clear societal need for professionals with high-level skills in analyzing and producing persuasive texts, both verbal and written. The profile is well-aligned with research expertise of the staff, which makes it academically state-of-the-art. The panel found that the intended learning outcomes suit both academic and professional expectations, and that they align with level 7 of the Dutch qualification frame NLQF (the master level), as well as with the Dublin descriptors. The intended learning outcomes show a good balance between academic and professional skills. They provide a solid grounding in discourse analysis, rhetoric, and theories on persuasion and argumentation, with applications across diverse domains. This ensures that students develop theoretical and applied expertise that is transferable to various sectors of society.

Considerations

The panel found that the DuMA Communication and Information Studies at the University of Amsterdam has a clearly defined and distinctive profile, with a focus on the ability to analyse and create persuasive texts. The programme is state-of-the-art and serves a societal need for highly skilled communication professionals. The intended learning outcomes are well-formulated, aligned with national and international academic standards and in line with the expectations from the professional field, and strike a good balance between academic and professional skills. The programme trains professionals that are in strong demand across civil, public and private spheres.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the master's programme Communication and Information Studies meets standard 1.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

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

Findings

Curriculum

The DuMA Communication and Information comprises three semesters of 30 EC each. In total, it spans one and a half academic year. Each semester holds three blocks. For a full overview of the curriculum, see appendix 2.

In block 1 of semester 1, all students follow two introductory courses: 'Introduction to argumentative discourse across domains' (6 EC) and 'Introduction to rhetoric and persuasion' (6 EC). The students come from a variety of cultural and disciplinary backgrounds, and the two introductory courses create a common ground for all of them. Dutch students who are already familiar with the topics in the first introductory course may follow the course 'Communicatie en argumentatie' instead. It covers the same ground, but at a more advanced level. In block 2, courses situating communication in specific domains are offered, namely 'Argumentation and communication in politics' (6 EC) and 'Argumentation and communication in health' (6 EC). Students learn about the contextual characteristics of various genres in the political and medical domains, such as parliamentary debates, political speeches, social media communication, health campaigns, medical advertisements. At the start of block 3, students choose a genre or domain that they want to specialize in. This choice takes shape in the 6 EC course 'Term Paper', where students work on a proposal for their master's thesis. In this plenary course, students learn how to find, read and critically evaluate existing research in the field, how to formulate a clear research question and to embed the research question in the literature, and how to select appropriate methodology to answer the research question. Students work in groups and individually towards the final thesis proposal.

Over the second semester in their first year, students work on their theses (18 EC), as a proof of academic competence. The final thesis is to be submitted mid-June. In parallel to the thesis-writing process, students take two electives (6 EC each). They may be the recommended electives such as 'Argumentation and communication in law' and 'Argumentation and communication in science' that are developed for the DuMA students as a primary audience. Alternatively, students may choose to broaden their profile into other areas. The choice of electives is always discussed with the programme coordinator to ensure course relevance and suitability for study progress.

In the first semester of their second year, students carry out an internship. The general aim of the internship is to gain experience in performing tasks related to communication in a professional organization, be it private or public, in the Netherlands or abroad. The internship should focus on designing, producing and revising texts. When they start searching for an internship in the second semester of their first year, students are assigned an academic internship supervisor, who provides advice. Although students search for internship vacancies themselves, the programme coordinator provides an extensive list of organizations that are looking for interns every year. The coordinator also regularly receives and shares vacancies from former alumni and other contacts. Once students have started out on their internship, the internship supervisor organizes the mid-term and final internship evaluation and discusses with the student any other matters that may occur during the internship trajectory. The final internship evaluation marks the end of the programme.

The panel studied the curriculum and the courses and compliments the programme on offering a structured, rich and well-balanced curriculum with only a limited core staff of four lecturers. The curriculum offers a logical progression, starting with foundational courses before moving into specialized areas. Students have the option to specialize by selecting courses on argumentation in law or science, or by taking electives from other disciplines. This customization enhances career prospects by allowing students to tailor their studies to specific industries. The curriculum integrates political science, law, policymaking, journalism, and media studies, equipping students with a broad and versatile skill set. Teaching formats in the courses are varied, combining lectures with case studies, team projects, and practical communication exercises. This ensures that students develop both theoretical insights and hands-on experience. The internship is a key feature of the programme, allowing students to gain professional experience while still being academically guided. The internship bridges the gap between theory and practice. Compared to the previous evaluation, the panel found the internship trajectory significantly more structured and better organized. This is a major step forward, worthy of a compliment.

The panel notes that while the programme offers intensive training in text structure, analysis, and rhetoric, it has made limited use of generative AI tools so far. The panel understands the wish to train students who stand out through their skills in creating original texts, in contrast to the growing volume of AI-generated content. However, the panel advises increasing the attention for AI literacy in the curriculum. This will prepare the students for a changing labour market, by enabling them to create efficiently as well as making them aware of how AI reflects existing biases, stereotypes, and dominant narratives. Moreover, in the panel's view the potential of AI as a tool — particularly in the context of discourse analysis — is currently underutilized. Another suggestion that came up during the site visit is to add an element to the curriculum that connects the different domains that are extensively covered (at present health, politics, law and science). Students would like to see this, and the programme has struggled to find a way to accommodate them. The panel encourages the programme to continue these efforts, as it also recognizes the value of a connecting component in the curriculum. This would provide an overview and make students aware of common communication principles that apply across all domains as well as the need to adapt their communication strategy to a specific domain.

Language of instruction

The programme is offered in English and has an English title to prepare students for an international job market and increase employability. Most of the students come to the programme with the ambition to work in an international organization. By choosing English as the language of instruction, the programme responds to a growing demand among companies and public organizations for communication specialists who combine strong local language skills with fluency in English, enabling them to operate effectively in international contexts. Speakers of Dutch may follow the course 'Communicatie en argumentatie' instead of 'Introduction to argumentation across domains' and any other elective course in Dutch, with a maximum of 30 EC in total, following faculty policy on bilingualism. Students are also allowed to do an internship in the language of their own choice. The panel is convinced by this line of reasoning and supports the decision to teach the programme in English.

Admission

The DuMA has a selective admission procedure, ensuring that students are able to comply with its standards. Students applying for the programme need to have sufficient knowledge and affinity with theoretical and methodological insights in the humanities and/or social sciences as evidenced by an average grade of at least 7 in the Dutch grading system or equivalent. Moreover, candidates should have taken at least one course during the bachelor's phase in the broad fields of communication, argumentation, or discourse studies. In addition, applicants need to provide proof of a sufficient level of English proficiency. Finally,

candidates need to submit a motivation letter of maximally one page. In this letter, they are to explain why they wish to attend the Communication and Information Studies programme and how they intend to apply the associated skills in practice during an internship. The aim of this letter is to give an impression of applicants' suitability for the programme. Once the application documents have been accepted by the Admissions Office, they are submitted to the programme coordinator, who checks the applicants' transcripts of records, grades and motivation letter. If the applicant meets all admission and selection criteria, the coordinator advises positively for acceptance. If that is not the case, the applicant is rejected and a motivation for rejection is provided. In cases of doubt, the Admissions Office is consulted. The panel agrees with the criteria for and method of admission. They guarantee that students have a realistic chance of completing the programme successfully.

Student support

Just before the start of the programme, an introductory meeting takes place in which students get to know each other, and the programme coordinator familiarizes the students with their new surroundings and facilities, including library, Canvas, schedule and format of courses, the tutor meetings, internship and thesis information sessions, the Programme Committee and available student counselling. With a maximum of 30 students per cohort, students receive individualized attention from faculty members, ensuring close supervision and strong academic support. The programme coordinator acts as tutor and meets the students regularly to discuss study progress, choice of electives, and career planning. One-on-one tutor meetings are scheduled in the first semester. Students are directed to the study advisor for academic and non-academic study problems that cannot be solved with support from the programme coordinator. Additional support is available through the UvA's Student Services, mental health counselling, and accessibility accommodations. The university provides extra support and guidance to students who need it because of a disability or chronic illness. Since 2024, every faculty within the UvA has a Testing and Education Facilities officer, who supports the study advisers to better assist students with multiple and/or complex support needs. The buildings and rooms in which the courses take place are physically accessible for all students.

The learning platform Canvas is used to give students equal access to course-related information, including the thesis, internship, and the tutoring. On Canvas, students can submit questions to the lecturers, assignments, take-home papers, and eventually their final MA thesis. Through Canvas, they also receive announcements regarding various academic and non-academic events, and vacancies for internships. Grades are also made known via this interface. During the thesis-writing process, the students benefit from the close interaction with the lecturers who supervise them, and whom they already know quite well from the courses in this small-scale programme. During the second semester, when students are searching and applying for an internship, they discuss their progress with their internship supervisor each month, as described previously.

The panel concludes that the DuMA Communication and Information has a comprehensive support system for its students. This was confirmed during its discussions with students. The panel heard that they felt well-supported and that they experienced the classroom as nurturing, with a strong sense of camaraderie. The panel noted that most students successfully complete the programme within the designated time frame, which confirms that the programme is feasible for those students who meet the selective entry requirements. The panel studied the platform Canvas and found that the programme makes good use of it, offering all course materials, assignments, and resources conveniently in one place so that both students and lecturers can manage their work easily and efficiently.

Teaching staff

The core teaching staff of the DuMA consists of four lecturers. All of them are senior research members of the Amsterdam Centre for Language and Communication, which has contributed to the UvA's international success, having now ranked first in Communication and Media Studies in the QS World University Ranking for eight years in a row. Consequently, students receive instruction from recognized experts in their fields. All lecturers have a high level of proficiency in the English language and have a University Teaching Qualification. The faculty's Teaching & Learning Centre - consisting of a team of teaching, assessment and language experts - enables lecturers to develop professionally. The panel concludes that the staff is sufficiently qualified.

During the site visit, the panel heard that due to the upcoming retirement of one of the staff members, the focus on communication in legal domains will be cancelled as one of the programme's foci. Instead, argumentation and communication in organizations will be added as a core focus, partly at the request of students. While the panel approves of this pragmatic switch, it illustrates a vulnerability in the programme. With such a limited number of staff members its continuity is constantly in danger, and particularly now that Humanities faculties in the Netherlands are threatened by financial cutbacks and hiring freezes. Therefore, the panel advises the programme to address staff turnover risks proactively. This could for instance be done by prioritizing core areas the programme wants to maintain, and by partnering with other departments.

Considerations

The panel assesses the structure of the curriculum in the DuMA Communication and Information as well-balanced and comprehensive, despite the limited core staff of only four lecturers. The curriculum is logically structured, beginning with foundational courses and progressing into specialized areas. Students have ample opportunities to customize their education. The programme covers a variety of communication domains, equipping students with a versatile skill set. The teaching methods are varied; they ensure that students develop both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. The internship component is a key strength of the programme, providing students with valuable professional experience while still being academically supported. The panel notes a significant improvement in the organization of the internships compared to the previous evaluation. While the programme offers intensive training in text structure, analysis, and rhetoric, the panel advises increasing attention to AI literacy within the curriculum. This will better prepare students for the changing labour market, enabling them to use generative AI effectively while being aware of its potential biases. The panel notes that an integrative course module across domains would be of value. The programme's staff is highly qualified and the atmosphere in the programme is supportive and personal. The panel acknowledges the programme's vulnerability due to its limited core staff. It encourages the programme management to establish core elements and to explore ways to strengthen its faculty resources as a way to ensure continuation of the programme at the appropriate high level.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the master's programme Communication and Information Studies meets standard 2.

Standard 3. Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment policy and practice

The assessment in the DuMA Communication and Information Studies follows the assessment policy framework of the University of Amsterdam. An assessment matrix is in place, in which the relationship between the exit qualifications of the programme, the learning objectives of each course and the assessment method is established. For each course, the learning objectives and the forms of assessment are described in a syllabus. The programme includes a large variety of assessment types as well as ample moments of assessment, feedback and reflection. In all courses, students benefit from continuous assessment of their work in order to be well prepared for the final assessment in the course. Assessment forms include homework assignments and class discussions, presentations, take-home assessments in which texts are analyzed and evaluated from various perspectives, and theoretical examinations testing students' ability to understand concepts and theories, team assignments where a communication product is developed and critically evaluated, and peer-review (for instance on the research proposals). Lecturers consult colleagues during the preparation of assessments when necessary. Assessment records are compiled after completion of the course, consisting of at least the syllabus, the assessments, answer keys and grading forms. The assessment records are stored in a central archive and can thus be consulted by the Examinations Board and the Assessment Committee.

The panel appreciates the assessment policy and practice within the DuMA. It observed a great and balanced variety in assessment methods, where written assignments develop students' analytical and writing skills, roundtable discussions and peer review sessions to enhance argumentation abilities, while in more practical students engage in real-world evaluations, such as designing communication strategies or creating persuasive campaigns. Calibration within the programme is informal, which the panel finds a suitable form in such a small community. Furthermore, during the site visit students were appreciative of the constant stream of assessments. They say it guides them through the programme and it is done in a transparent way, with much feedback that helps them to grow professionally. All in all, the panel is pleased with the assessment policy and practice in the DuMA.

Assessment of MA theses

The graduation handbook for the Faculty of Humanities at the UvA describes the requirements for the final project and agreements concerning the supervision, assessment, deadline and resit. It also includes a reference to the assessment forms. In addition to the faculty-wide graduation handbook, there is a programme-specific graduation handbook, which describes the intended learning outcomes and additional requirements for the thesis, the rules regarding supervision and the research plan, and the procedure of submission of the thesis. The course 'Term paper' incorporates intensive peer-review during plenary and one-on-one sessions, and ends with a graded research proposal.

The quality of theses assessment is guaranteed in three ways, to ensure the attainment of the exit qualifications. First, the four-eyes principle is applied. Each thesis is assessed by the supervisor and a second examiner. The second examiner leads the grading process. If there is disagreement between the first and second examiner, the course coordinator assigns a third reader who considers the thesis and both examiners' arguments before finalizing the assessment and assigning a grade. Second, all final projects are evaluated using an assessment form prepared by the course coordinator and Examinations Board. This form

includes compulsory criteria such as research question, scientific framework, argument construction, and conclusion, while leaving space for individual feedback. A grading matrix supports examiners in their assessment of the thesis. Calibration sessions among faculty members are another instrument that helps maintain uniform grading standards. Finally, the Examinations Board conducts annual thesis reviews using a sample of theses and assessment forms. This review ensures that assessments are justified and judgments are well-explained.

The panel concludes that the thesis evaluation process is rigorous, transparent and fair. It studied samples of the theses, together with their assessment forms. It found that the theses are thoroughly evaluated and the assessment forms are filled out in detail. Although all theses were up to standard, the panel found that in some cases the grade was higher than one would expect based on the examiners' feedback, and also higher than justified. The panel advises the lecturers to review the grading critically in a shared calibration session.

Assessment of internships

The internship is assessed with pass or fail, based on the internship plan, mid-term and final report. The internship plan gives a concise description of the organization in which the internship will be carried out, the aim of the internship, the activities to be performed, and agreements concerning the method and frequency of supervision, both with the on-site supervisor and the supervising lecturer. In their mid-term and a final report, students reflect on the activities they have performed and the experience they have gained during the internship. The reports are also intended as a moment to reflect on their own performance in a practical situation, and to describe the link between the knowledge and skills that they have acquired during their studies and their internship. Clear assessment forms with defined criteria are in place for the internship plan, and the reports. They are filled out both by the supervisor at the host organization and the internal supervisor. The final assessment is the responsibility of the staff member who supervised the internship on behalf of the programme. A passing grade is required for graduation from the DuMA. The panel reviewed both the assessment procedure and a sample of the internship reports and their assessment forms. It considers the assessment process to be robust. The panel concludes that internship assessment in the DuMA Communication and Information is sound.

Examinations Board

As of September 2022, there is one Examinations Board for the Faculty of Humanities at the UvA. It consists of a chair, eight members and one external member. Each of the internal members chairs a cluster, which holds a number of related programmes. The DuMA Communication and Information Studies is part of the cluster Linguistics and Literary Studies. Within this cluster, it has its own delegate who checks the graduation programmes and advises on programme-specific issues. Whereas the Examinations Board has a wide span of control, the delegates in the clusters operate at a local level and support the cluster chair by checking the assessment programmes and their execution in specific tracks; they also advise on programme-specific issues and deal with complaints or reports of alleged plagiarism. The Examinations Board is convened every six weeks. Its members (the cluster chairs) then compare experiences, challenges and practices. This promotes consistency and continuous improvement of assessment throughout the faculty.

The Examinations Board is responsible for appointing examiners in the programmes. It contributes to the professionalisation of lecturers and programme directors by organizing training courses and knowledge-sharing meetings. The Examinations Board checks the quality of thesis assessment by drawing a sample of five to ten percent of theses from each programme each year. The safeguarding of other types of assessment in the programmes is delegated to the Assessment Committee. This faculty-wide committee was established alongside the new setup of the faculty-wide Examinations Board in September 2022, to support the

Examinations Board. It consists of three assessment specialists and performs extra quality checks in addition to the checks done by the clusters. The Assessment Committee meets every month. It selects certain topics to investigate, based on the issues at play within the faculty as reflected in for instance complaints.

The panel considers the division of responsibilities between the Examinations Board, clusters, and Assessment Committee to be clear and justifiable. It talked to the chair of the Examinations Board, the chair of the Media Studies cluster within the Board and a member of the Assessment Committee. It found these representatives capable and clearly aware of their responsibilities. The panel heard that the Examinations Board approaches the programme director whenever it finds any irregularities and that its advice is taken seriously. The panel therefore concludes that the Examinations Board (with the help of cluster delegates and Assessment Committee) safeguards the quality of assessment within the programmes in an appropriate manner. In doing so, it fulfils its statutory duty.

The panel flags an issue that is beyond the remit of the Communication and Information Studies programme management, but could be taken up by the Faculty of Humanities. The faculty could consider tasking the Assessment Committee with systematically reviewing course assessments through periodic sample checks—similar to the way thesis assessments are routinely monitored by the Examinations Board. It is the panel's conviction that such proactive checks (at the cluster level) reduce the risk of flawed assessments, complaints, or appeals later in the process, and are therefore more effective than reactive investigations as are currently undertaken by the Assessment Committee.

Considerations

Based on its review of procedures and sample of theses, internship reports and assessment forms, the panel concludes that the DuMA Information and Communication has a solid and credible approach to evaluating student work across the board. The panel finds the assessment policy and practices to be well-structured and effective. It praises the diverse and balanced mix of assessment methods, ranging from written assignments to group discussions, peer review and practical components. The assessment system fits well with the programme's profile. Students expressed appreciation for the frequency and clarity of assessments, noting the process as transparent and supportive of their professional development. The panel also reviewed thesis evaluations and found the process to be rigorous and well-documented. Theses are thoroughly assessed with detailed forms. In a few cases, grades seemed higher than justified by the feedback. As a result, the panel advises organizing shared calibration sessions to ensure consistency. The panel studied internship assessments and deemed them robust. The division of responsibilities between the Examinations Board, the clusters that support it, and the Assessment Committee is clear and effective. The Examinations Board fulfils its statutory duty. The panel advises the Faculty of Humanities at the UvA to consider more proactive monitoring of course assessments by the Assessment Committee and closer scrutiny of internship assessment, given its important role in the programmes.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the master's programme Communication and Information Studies meets standard 3.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

Theses and internships

The programme has two final products with which students demonstrate that they have realized the intended learning outcomes. A written academic thesis that the students submit at the end of the first year serves as proof of their academic competence. At the end of their studies, students submit a final internship report, which serves as proof of their professional competence. The panel studied a sample of the theses and internship reports. The general level of MA theses is high, reflecting that students successfully meet the intended learning outcomes. The internship reports as well are of a good standard and adequately showcase the writing skills that may be expected.

Careers

The majority of graduates start their career as communication officer. They successfully secure positions in government institutions, NGOs, and multinational corporations, usually between one and three months after graduation. This success is partly due to the internships at the end of the programme, since they enable students to develop many of the functional competencies and the experience needed, and to build professional connections. The panel heard that internship hosts are quite satisfied with the students performance. Graduates are flexible thanks to the variety of domains that are covered in the programme, and they can operate in an international setting. In summary, the programme leads to strong employability and societal gain. The panel agrees with the programme that the grand challenges of our time at social, economic, health, legal, environmental and technological levels require good communication and persuasion skills grounded in theoretical insights. Graduates of the DuMA Communication and Information Studies possess such skills.

Due to the small scale of the programme, the programme coordinator stays in close touch with many of its alumni. They are actively engaged in the programme, taking part in information sessions, and helping the programme coordinator to keep the curriculum up to date. The alumni network is actively engaged, helping to align the curriculum with real-world demands. The panel commends this as a good practice.

Considerations

Based on the level of the final projects and the performance of alumni, the panel concludes that graduates of the DuMA Communication and Information Studies have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The panel found the theses generally of a high level, and the internship reports meet expectations. Alumni are successful in securing jobs that match the programme's profile and do so soon after graduation. The panel concludes that the programme results in high employability and societal contributions, as graduates possess strong communication and persuasion skills needed to address current global challenges.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the master's programme Communication and Information Studies meets standard 4.

General conclusion

The panel's assessment of the master's programme Communication and Information Studies is positive.

While the panel offers the programme and faculty some advice for improvement as stated above, it formulated no specific recommendations to be addressed by the next assessment panel.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

Master's programme Communication and Information Studies

Knowledge and understanding

K1. The student has insight into the key research methods in the field of study. Programme-specific addition: The key research methods concern: discourse theories, rhetorical theories, genre theory, argumentation theories and communication theories with a focus on the verbal and non-verbal aspects.

K2. The student builds on previously acquired knowledge and in particular acquires insight into some specialist parts of the field of study and/or parts of (other) fields. The knowledge concerns: discourse studies, argumentation studies, genre studies, rhetorical studies, communication studies.

Applying knowledge and understanding

A1. The student is able to independently carry out research in the field of study. The student is able to independently formulate questions with regard to the field of study, to operationalise those questions and represent them in a research plan.

A2. The student is able to assess the academic practice in line with the Dutch Code of Conduct for Academic Practice (see the Dutch Code of Conduct for Research Integrity on the website of the UvA: Academic Integrity).

A3. The student is able to answer scientific questions using knowledge of a specialism within the degree programme.

A4. The student can connect the scientific knowledge and insights gained in the field of study to social issues and apply them within a broader or multidisciplinary context.

A5. The student has experience in applying the scientific knowledge acquired in the programme at a relevant institution.

Judgement

J1. The student can connect to recent scientific practise within the field of study, interpret and assess its results, and take up their own position within it.

J2. The student is able to assess relevant academic literature. The academic literature concerns: the analysis and evaluation of persuasive discourse with particular focus on argumentation, the rhetorical and persuasive aspects of communication, with particular focus on classical and modern rhetoric and persuasion theory, argumentation and communication in the medical, political and scientific domains.

J3. The student is able to reflect on the implications of the insights in their own field of study for relevant institutional contexts and contemporary societal issues.

J4. The student is able to describe, analyse, and critically evaluate any (professional) experience gained in practice.

Communication

C1. The student is able to report orally and in writing on independent research in a way that complies with the common academic conventions in the field of study.

C2. The student is able to present any scientific knowledge and insights gained during the degree programme and transfer them to an audience broader than the academic community.

Learning skills

L1. The student is able to work in a team and to provide and incorporate feedback in a constructive way. These activities concern: peer review sessions, collaborative presentations and co-organisation of round tables.

L2. The student is able to reflect on their own position and on the knowledge that they have acquired and to identify areas of development.

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

Master's programme Communication and Information Studies

Year one							
Course	Semester 1			Semester 2			EC
	B 1	B 2	B 3	B 4	B 5	B 6	
Introduction to argumentative discourse across domains							6
Introduction to rhetoric and persuasion							6
Argumentation and communication in Politics							6
Argumentation and communication in Health							6
Term paper argumentative discourse across domains							6
Argumentation and communication in Law*							6
Argumentation and communication in Science*							6
Master's Thesis Communication and Information Studies							18

* Students can follow the recommended courses Argumentation and Communication in Law or Argumentation and Communication in Science, or otherwise any other elective of their own choice, but only after consultation with the programme coordinator.

Year two							
Course	Semester 1			Semester 2			EC
	B 1	B 2	B 3	B 4	B 5	B 6	
Master's Internship Communication and Information Studies							30

● Required course ● Restricted choice ● Electives

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Monday 10 March 2025

<i>Time</i>	<i>Interview</i>
10:00 10:45	Panel arrival / welcome with <i>informatiemarkt</i>
10:45 11:00	Closed panel meeting
11:00 11:30	Faculty management
11:30 12:15	Management Bachelor Programmes
12:15 13:30	Closed panel meeting and lunch
13:30 14:15	Students B Media and Culture (incl. Programme Committee & alumni)
14:15 15:00	Students B Media and Information (incl. Programme Committee & alumni)
15:00 15:30	Closed panel meeting
15:30 16:15	Teaching staff B Media and Culture (incl. Programme Committee)
16:15 17:00	Teaching staff B Media and Information (incl. Programme Committee)
17:00 17:30	Closed panel meeting

Tuesday 11 March 2025

<i>Time</i>	<i>Interview</i>
08:45 10:45	Closed panel meeting
10:45 11:30	Programme management M Media Studies (60 EC)
11:30 12:15	Students M Media Studies (60 EC, incl. Programme Committee & Alumni)
12:15 12:30	Break
12:30 13:15	Teaching staff MA Media Studies (60 EC, incl. Programme Committee)
13:15 14:15	Closed panel meeting and lunch
14:15 15:00	Programme management M Media Studies (90 EC)
15:00 15:45	Students M Media Studies (90 EC, incl. Programme Committee & Alumni)
15:45 16:00	Break
16:00 16:45	Teaching staff MA Media Studies (90 EC, incl. Programme Committee)
16:45 18:00	Closed panel meeting

Wednesday 12 March 2025

<i>Time</i>	<i>Interview</i>
09:00 09:45	Programme management M Communication and Information Studies
09:45 10:30	Students M Communication and Information Studies (incl. Programme Committee & Alumni)
10:30 10:45	Break
10:45 11:30	Teaching staff M Communication and Information Studies (Incl. Programme Committee)
11:30 12:15	Examinations Board
12:15 15:00	Closed panel meeting and lunch
15:00 15:45	Final interview management <u>all</u> Programmes
15:45 16:15	Closed panel meeting
16:15 17:15	Development dialogue
17:15 17:30	Main findings presented by panel chair
17:30	<i>Drinks</i>

Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the master's programme Communication and Information Studies.

The panel also studied other materials, which included:

- Faculty wide Teaching and Examination Regulations master's programmes
- Programme specific Teaching and Examination Regulations
- Assessment matrix
- Overview of core teaching staff
- Thesis manual CIW MA
- CIW assessment form MA Thesis
- Manual for CIW internships
- Key figures MA CIW 2024-2025
- Self Evaluation Report MA CIW 2025
- Report of the previous accreditation
- Thesis Assessment Rubric
- Annual reports Examination Board
- Documentation from several courses, including course guides
- Faculty wide assessment policy
- Faculty wide strategic plan 2021 – 2026
- Policy plans on support for students with an impairment