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## Master Maritime Economics and Logistics Erasmus University Rotterdam

Advisory report of the existing program  
31 January 2025

## Colophon

### Institution and programme

Erasmus University Rotterdam  
Rotterdam  
Institutional Audit: yes

Programme: Master Maritime Economics & Logistics  
Location: Rotterdam  
Mode: fulltime and parttime  
Orientation: post-experience, WO-Master  
ISAT-number: 75043

### Assessment panel

Christa Sys, chair  
Pierre Cariou, expert  
Annet Koster, expert  
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## Summary

On 31 January 2025, an assessment panel of AeQui visited the master's programme Maritime Economics and Logistics (MEL) of Erasmus University Rotterdam. MEL is a 60 EC post-experience master's programme offered on campus in Rotterdam. It can be followed in full-time and part-time mode. The panel's overall judgement is **positive**.

### Intended learning outcomes

MEL is an academic programme that prepares students to enter or continue their professional career within the global maritime industry. MEL has formulated three intended learning outcomes that follow the learning journey of the student. According to the panel, the profile of MEL is relevant and well-developed. MEL's dedicated focus to the maritime economics and logistics sector is unique in the Netherlands, as is its location in Europe's largest port. MEL's intended learning outcomes (ILO's) are well-designed and reflect the level that is to be expected of a master's programme. The programme strikes a good balance between its core academic orientation and its focus on professional skills and networking.

MEL adapts appropriately to new developments in the field. The social, political, economic, industrial, and educational environment will, however, continue to change rapidly. Therefore, the panel recommends that MEL future-proofs the programme by placing greater emphasis on benchmarking, strategy development and networking in the upcoming years. In doing so, it may be helpful to give the Advisory Board a more prominent position.

### Teaching-learning environment

MEL has a clear educational vision with three pillars: research orientation, global orientation, and a challenging, consistent and rich learning environment. The panel concludes that the curriculum clearly reflects these pillars, is well-designed and coherent. In contrast to the previous assessment the students indicate that the overall workload of MEL is manageable. In the future, MEL could consider including more company projects in the cur-

riculum, where students work more closely together with the industry. The panel also recommends that the programme continues to evaluate the curriculum for its alignment with recent developments and monitors the quality of the extracurriculars more actively.

Critical remarks by the 2018 assessment panel on academic skills training in the programme have been adequately addressed. Academic skills are now an explicit and integral part of the programme, as is reflected in the quality of the theses. The thesis trajectory is also clearly designed, although students sometimes struggle to finalise their thesis in the last few months of the programme, during the summer. Therefore, the panel advises to further develop the thesis trajectory.

MEL uses an English name and English is the language of instruction in the programme. In the panel's opinion, this choice is logical given the global and multicultural sector in which graduates will come to work. The core teaching staff of MEL is highly qualified and the quantity of the staff is sufficient. Given the ambitions of the programme to explore teaching innovations, the panel recommends further professionalisation of the teaching team on didactics and teaching innovations. The assessment took place on-site. MEL is embedded in the campus of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. The panel is generally under the impression that the facilities are sufficient. The panel also noticed that MEL has a clear student evaluation system in place. Guidance for students, including guidance for students with an impairment, is well-organised.

### Student assessment

The assessment system of MEL aims to support active learning and to challenge students. The panel found that the assessment philosophy of MEL is clearly reflected in its assessment system. MEL uses a variety of assessment methods, with a well-considered balance between individual assessment and group work. Assessments are carefully designed and aligned with the ILO's. Assessment includes clear grading rubrics and assessment criteria. The thesis assessment procedure is clearly described and well-designed. Assessment of the thesis is done carefully and fair with sufficient oral feedback on the final grade. The panel recommends making small adjustments to the thesis assessment form and process, to improve transparency of assessment on an administrative level. The Examination Board (EB) functions properly and is aware of its role and responsibilities. However, the high number of appeals from students is a challenge that significantly impacts the workload of the EB. The panel recommends streamlining the appeal process by reducing appeal options, analysing root causes of the current high number of appeals, and implementing a targeted action plan to minimise appeals, allowing the EB to focus more structurally on quality checks.

### Achieved learning outcomes

The theses display academic master's level and the intended learning outcomes of the programme. All theses make a relevant contribution to existing

challenges and issues in the field. Employment figures show that graduates are successful in MEL industries.

### Recommendations

Without detracting from the panel's positive impression on the four standards, the panel offers the following recommendations:

- further adjust the timing of the thesis trajectory and/or improve the availability of thesis guidance during the summer period;
- monitor the quality of the extracurriculars more actively;
- adjust the thesis assessment form and process, to improve transparency of assessment on an administrative level;
- streamline the process of appeal, to make sure that the Examination Board can work on quality checks more structurally.

With an eye on the future, the panel offers the following suggestions for consideration:

- invest more in benchmarking, strategy development and networking. In doing so, it may be helpful to give the Advisory Board a more prominent position;
- evaluate the curriculum for its alignment with recent developments in the industry and education (e.g. the energy transition and GenAI);
- invest in professionalisation sessions for new and core lecturers on didactics and learning innovations.

All standards of the NVAO framework have been positively assessed. On this basis, the panel provides a [positive recommendation](#) regarding the accreditation of the master's programme Maritime Economics and Logistics.

On behalf of the entire site visit panel,  
Utrecht, March 2025

Christa Sys  
Chair

Adrienne Wieldraaijer-Huijzer  
Secretary

## Introduction

### Main characteristics of the programme

The Maritime Economics and Logistics programme (MEL) is an academic post experience master programme of Erasmus University Rotterdam. It prepares students to enter or continue their professional career within the global maritime industry. The programme started in 2001 and now already has a total of 781 graduates working in different fields, such as marine transportation, logistics and freight, marine ports and services, energy, trading, finance and construction and engineering. Many students in the programme have already been working in MEL-related fields and want to develop further. Therefore, the average age of MEL students is relatively high (28 years old). In accordance with the global nature of maritime economics and logistics, the language of instruction in the programme is English and the student body is highly international with an average of 15 nationalities per year.

MEL is offered in full-time and part-time mode. Both modes are subject of this assessment. Most students take the programme in full-time mode. Between 2021 and 2023, the average cohort size of full-time MEL students was 43. Each year, around two students start the programme in part-time mode.

MEL is offered by the MEL Centre, which falls under the auspices of the Erasmus School of Economics (ESE) in close cooperation with the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM). Apart from the master's programme, this centre offers short courses, workshops and games, and excursions and visiting programmes in Rotterdam.

In 2023-2024, the programme also became part of Erasmus UPT BV, which is a centre of expertise in education and research in urban economy, ports and transport economy.

MEL is managed by a Programme Executive Committee that comprises the General Manager, Academic Programme Manager and the Programme Manager. The daily running of the programme is coordinated by the MEL office. This office includes the Programme Manager, an Office Assistant, a Programme Coordinator and the Director of Admissions. The organisational structure of MEL also contains an Examination Board and an Education Committee.

The leadership of the programme has regular contacts with members of the maritime business community, and participates in the Rotterdam Maritime Board. External stakeholders are also invited to be part of the MEL Stakeholders Advisory Board, consisting largely of MEL Alumni. Feedback on the academic quality and curriculum of the programme is provided by the Academic Council of MEL. This council includes a chair, the Academic Director of MEL, two other staff members of the programme and a secretary.

### The assessment

Erasmus University Rotterdam has commissioned AeQui to carry out the current assessment. For this purpose, AeQui, in collaboration with the programme, has assembled an independent and knowledgeable panel. A preparatory meeting with representatives of the programme has taken place.

The assessment was conducted based on the Accreditation Framework for Higher Education

in the Netherlands, according to the programme outlined in Appendix 2. The institution has a positive institutional audit decision, and therefore four standards were assessed.

Recommendations for further development were made during the previous assessment. The programme has taken actions in response (see Appendix 3). The panel has integrated this follow-up into its considerations for the current assessment.

The panel conducted the assessment independently; the panel received the necessary information to arrive at a judgement. At the end of the assessment, the programme was informed of the findings and conclusions.

This report was sent in draft to the programme; the programme's responses have been incorporated into this final report.

The site visit included a development meeting on assessments in the programme and on the consequences of GenAI for curriculum design and assessment. Discussions during this meeting were fruitful and show that the programme is actively thinking about the impact of changes in the social, political, and economic context, and of new developments in the sector and education. The development meeting is not part of the formal assessment and has not affected the assessment presented in this report. The programme has taken minutes of this meeting and will post them on the designated Erasmus University website.

## Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

### Findings

#### *Profile*

MEL profiles itself as an academic and internationally oriented programme. Students develop economic and managerial subject-knowledge and skills in shipping, ports, terminal management, maritime logistics, supply chain management and shipping finance, as well as the ability to analyse challenges in the industry and develop research-based solutions. MEL also pays attention to transferable and professional skills, such as communicating and working in a multicultural professional environment, decision-making in uncertain and complex situations and making connections with the professional field.

The panel studied the profile of MEL. It found that it is well-developed. MEL's profile distinguishes itself in higher education due to its specific focus on maritime economics and logistics, as well as its strategic location in Rotterdam at the core of Europe's shipping, transport, and logistics sectors. It is highly appreciated by students and industry representatives. The profile is also well-connected to the university's profile of 'creating a positive societal impact.' While acknowledging that shipping, ports, and logistics are important facilitators of solutions to societal issues, MEL actively strives to educate students who can think creatively and contribute to societal challenges in the maritime sector.

The panel also found that the MEL profile is continuously updated in relation to new developments in the field. Since the previous accreditation, MEL has included new relevant topics in the programme such as sustainability and data

science. In the future, further innovation of MEL will be indispensable because of the rapidly evolving social, political, and economic context, and innovations in the industry and education. The panel therefore recommends MEL to place greater emphasis on benchmarking, strategy development and networking in the upcoming years. More in detail, this could include investing more in international benchmarking of the profile, strengthening of contacts and network with local industries in greater Rotterdam, and overthinking strategy in terms of marketing and target regions of student intake. On a more practical level, MEL could make better use of the Advisory Board as a platform for feedback on all these topics. This would require involvement in this Board of more contacts outside MEL's alumni network and giving this Board a more prominent and structural role in the continuous evaluation of the curriculum.

#### *Intended learning outcomes (ILO)*

MEL has formulated three ILO's that follow the learning journey of the student. The first learning outcome underscores the development of the theoretical and conceptual knowledge that is needed for understanding the economics and management of MEL sectors. The second learning outcome focuses on the ability of students to analyse and critically assess trends and economic and managerial issues by applying relevant theories and concepts. The final learning outcome formulates the end goal of the programme, namely the ability of graduates to propose research-based solutions in (parts of) complex maritime supply chains.

The panel studied the ILO's and considers them to be well thought out and clearly defined. They reflect master's level and have been matched with the Dublin Descriptors for master's programmes. By following the student journey, the ILO's are recognisable for students and function as a clear guideline for the curriculum. In addition, the ILOs are recognisably based on the profile and objectives of the programme, e.g. by including core knowledge areas in economics and logistics and management science and analytical skills in ILO 1, analytical skills and specialisation in ILO2, and problem-oriented application in the maritime industry in ILO3. In the view of the panel, the ILO's also strike the right balance between academic skills on the one hand, on which there is great emphasis, and application, practical skills, and professional orientation on the other hand.

#### *Orientation*

As an academic programme, the development of academic skills is a key element in the profile of the programme. Academic skills are developed gradually and in an integrated manner with content knowledge and skills, as part of all three ILO's. In recent years, MEL has strengthened the academic orientation of the programme, therewith taking up the recommendations of the 2018 assessment panel. The panel concludes that the programme has done so successfully (see Standard 2 and 4). Analytic skills are addressed throughout the programme. The academic orientation of the programme is now solid and in order.

During the site visit, MEL management and panel discussed the balance between academic and professional orientation. The panel and MEL agree that the field requires graduates with a diverse range of academic and professional competencies, enabling them to act in volatile and uncertain global economic and social contexts. Because MEL is a post experience programme,

incoming students also expect this dual focus. While some transferable skills (e.g. intercultural communication, managerial skills) and industry visits are covered in the formal curriculum, MEL has chosen to offer other professional skills (e.g. interview techniques) and activities extracurricularly. The panel agrees with the balance struck in the programme, and the larger emphasis on academic skills in the formal curriculum. More importantly, MEL is aware that the right balance between academic and professional orientation must be monitored closely during the continuous development of the programme.

#### **Considerations**

The profile of MEL is relevant and well-developed. MEL's dedicated focus to the maritime economics and logistics sector is unique in the higher education landscape, as is its location in the vicinity of one of Europe's largest ports. With its ambition to educate creative thinkers and problem-solvers for the maritime industry, MEL is also clearly linked to the broader ambition of Erasmus University Rotterdam to 'create positive societal impact'.

MEL's ILO's are well-designed and recognisable for students because they follow the student journey. The ILO's reflect the level that is to be expected of a master's programme. The programme strikes a good balance between its core academic orientation and its focus on the development of professional skills and networking. This balance requires ongoing evaluation and reflection. The panel found that the programme is aware of this.

MEL adapts appropriately to new developments in the field. However, the social, political, economic, industrial, and educational environment will continue to change rapidly. Without detracting from the panel's positive overall impression on Standard 1, the panel therefore rec-

ommends that MEL future-proofs the programme by placing greater emphasis on benchmarking, strategy development and networking in the upcoming years. In doing so, it may be helpful to give the Advisory Board a more prominent position.

Taking these considerations into account, the panel assesses that the programme meets this standard. This applies to both the full-time and part-time variants.

## Teaching-learning environment

Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

### Findings

#### *Vision on education, language of instruction and teaching formats*

The educational vision of MEL consists of three pillars. First, the programme has a research orientation, where students learn how to take a research-based approach to analyse trends and issues in the maritime domain. According to the panel, this pillar is clearly visible in the programme, both in the subject-courses, as well as in the course on research methodology, and the thesis. After an introduction to relevant concepts and theories in economics and management, the programme builds on these in an increasingly more complex, integrated, and applied way.

The second pillar of MEL's educational vision, is the programme's global orientation. In practice, this means that courses incorporate the international perspective, and that business cases and examples have a global orientation. Correspondingly, the official language of instruction and education in the programme is English, as well as the programme's name. In the view of the panel, this choice of an English name and of English as language of instruction is logical given the global and multicultural sector in which graduates will come to work. The global orientation is also mirrored in the classroom, which includes a highly international group of students from (on average) 15 nationalities per year. The panel sees this multicultural classroom as an important asset of the programme because it mirrors students' (current and/or future) professional work environment and is, as such, instrumental in the learning process of students. The highly international student group in the

programme offers an interesting opportunity for Dutch students to obtain an international experience at home. The panel suggests the programme to investigate whether it is possible to attract also more Dutch students.

Offering a challenging, consistent, and rich learning environment, is the final pillar of MEL's educational vision. This is done by providing an integrated approach to teaching the knowledge and skills needed in the maritime industry, offering many real-life cases and examples, and facilitating interaction with industry leaders in the curriculum and extracurricular activities. The programme expects 100% attendance in the courses and active student participation during lessons. When asked, students indicated during the visit that exceptions to this are possible in case of personal circumstances, which seems reasonable to the panel.

During the site visit, the panel talked to (fulltime and parttime) students about the teaching methods in the programme. It found that students are happy with the variety in teaching and assessment methods. The number of contact hours in the courses (12 per week) is deemed sufficient and class sizes are generally not higher than 35-40 students. To facilitate interaction and discussion, almost all courses include a combination of plenary lectures as well as coached assignments and group work. Students did indicate that not all their fellow-students are equally involved and motivated in the courses, posing a hindrance in group work. The panel learned that MEL listens to these types of signals

and has taken various measures to increase participation, but the solution is not straightforward. MEL has for example experimented with students compiling their own groups, but this is not equally appreciated all by the students. Peer and self-assessment, to better assess the implication of each student to group work, could be encouraged. To ensure that all international students, who come from different education systems, understand what is expected of them in the classroom, MEL also actively addresses expectations for student participation in the introduction week.

In the view of the panel, MEL makes sufficient efforts to create the challenging and active learning environment it aims at with the third pillar. During the site visit, the panel was surprised by positive reviews from students about a new cultural awareness workshop, offered at the beginning of the programme. The panel recommends that this workshop should be retained, and that it should perhaps also include an extra reminder to students of MEL's pedagogical vision of active participation.

In the future, MEL plans to expand the use of innovative small-scale and intensive teaching methods. The panel encourages this. This could perhaps also be combined with a short training session for new teachers on didactics and learning innovations (see: Standard 2, Teaching staff).

### *Curriculum*

The curriculum of MEL consists of 15 courses (60 EC in total). In 6 Generic Courses (16,5 EC in total), students gain understanding of theories, concepts and tools relevant to the maritime sector. Examples of Generic Courses are Data Science, Management Science, International Economics and Maritime Logistics. The Generic Courses serve as building blocks for 3 more advanced Core Courses (18 EC) and 3 Specialty

Courses (9 EC). The Core Courses (Shipping Economics and Policy, Port Management and Economics, Logistics and Supply Chain Management) provide understanding of the drivers, trends, and issues of key MEL sectors. Here, students also learn how to analyse and critically evaluate the issues and potential managerial solutions that apply. The Specialty Courses deal with special themes related to the MEL sectors such as maritime law, sustainability and shipping and transport finance.

The panel studied the build-up of the curriculum, and concludes that it has a logical and clear progressive nature from general (semester 1) to industry-specific (semester 2) to applied. To ensure internal coherence between the courses, the courses have been matched with the ILO's in a matrix. This is evaluated on a regular basis by the programme management. During the site visit, it became clear that students are generally happy with the design and quality of the courses. This also applies to the Generic courses. These courses are important not only to get the diverse student population at the same level, but are also already very much focused through the use of cases and course materials from the MEL domain.

According to the panel, the content of the courses is also relevant and matches expectations from the professional field. For further future improvement, MEL could consider including more company projects in the programme, where students work as a group to solve a real case brought by a company. The panel also recommends that the programme evaluates the curriculum for its alignment with recent developments (e.g. the energy transition, AI, business/supply chain games) and - if necessary - incorporates these developments into the curriculum more explicitly.

The panel found that a relatively large portion of the curriculum (54 EC) is similar and obligatory for all students. Students have an elective space of 6 EC, where they can either do a minor (6 EC) in qualitative analysis ('Disruptive Scenarios in Shipping') or quantitative analysis ('Business Analytics'). From the documentation and the interviews during the site visit, the panel learned that some students would like to have more elective space and/or room to design their own study path, while others indicate that there already is a lot of freedom within the courses to choose one's own research topics. In the future, the programme aims to offer more choice in maritime specialist courses and to enlarge the choice options of the students. The panel applauds this initiative. By providing more choice, the programme may also be able to better accommodate students who would like to be challenged more.

#### *Research methods and thesis trajectory*

Since the previous accreditation, MEL worked to improve the academic quality of the thesis and to integrate academic skills more firmly into the curriculum. Students now take a Research methods course (1.5 EC) and already start working on their thesis (9 EC) early in the programme. From the course descriptions and the quality of the thesis produced (see Standard 4), the panel concludes that MEL has managed to significantly improve the academic skills education in the programme. In addition, the Student Thesis Manual includes clear guidelines for students on planning, guidance, expectations, and academic good conduct. In November and December, students receive training in research methodologies, academic writing, and presentation skills. Subsequently, they start working on their thesis proposal between January-March.

Although the academic skills line and thesis pathway are well put together, students indicate that the time allocated to the thesis is relatively

short. The panel discussed this issue during the site visit and learned that most of the research and writing work still falls in the summer holidays, when teachers are absent. This can lead to study delays. The panel therefore recommends further development of the thesis trajectory.

#### *Part-time mode*

Part-time students follow the same courses as full-time students. The only difference is that part-time students follow the programme over two years, and must take the course Economics and Data Science in the first year to ensure consistency of the programme. The panel agrees with this choice, as students need the Generic Courses before they move on to more advanced courses. During the site visit, part-time students confirmed that the programme is doable for them.

#### *Extracurricular activities*

On top of the formal curriculum, MEL also offers a lot of extracurricular activities for students to develop their professional skills and their professional network. These activities are not compulsory, but in practice quite popular with students. Students can take part in a study trip to a maritime city in Europe, company visits, distinguished lecture series, alumni lecture series and a Professional Development Course with seminars offered in partnership with external organisations. They can also choose to end their thesis trajectory with a summer internship in the industry. Since 2017, MEL also offers a Career Development Track.

The panel studied an overview of extracurricular activities and concludes that they are very relevant. However, the panel did question why some extracurricular activities are not part of the regular curriculum. The panel discussed this issue with the programme director. It found that the programme is continuously looking for a good balance in the curriculum and also wants

to safeguard the academic orientation of the programme, separating it from activities focusing on practical skills. The panel understands this.

From the discussion with students, the panel learned that they highly value the extracurricular activities. However, they also noted that not all extracurriculars are of the same quality. The panel recommends more active monitoring of this, even if extracurriculars are not part of the formal programme.

#### *Admissions*

Students seeking admission to the programme must have obtained a relevant bachelor's degree or (exceptionally) equivalent professional experience. Students who have not completed prior education in English, also have to provide proof of proficiency in the English language with an IELTS score of 6.5 or equivalent. English language skills and motivation are also tested during the admission process. In order to be considered, applicants must submit their work experience and educational achievements, a written motivation and two reference letters which indicate the applicant's aptitudes and capabilities. Applications are assessed by an Admissions Committee that consists of the MEL Executive Director, the Academic Director, and the Director of Admissions.

The panel concludes that the admissions process is well-designed. On a yearly basis, between 35-40 students are admitted to the programme. The panel notes that the portion of Dutch students in the programme is relatively low (7%). The panel advises the programme to investigate whether it is possible to increase the proportion of Dutch students, for example by talking to local MEL industry partners about this. The highly international group of students in the programme provides an interesting opportunity

for Dutch students to gain an international experience at home. Increasing the number of Dutch students will also further strengthen links with Dutch companies in the maritime sector. Finally, an increase of Dutch students is important because of the Dutch 'Internationalisation in Balance' Bill.

#### *Feasibility*

Since the previous assessment, MEL implemented several curriculum changes to (further) improve the feasibility of the programme. One of these changes was the reduction of fragmentation in the curriculum by reintegrating many of the smaller learning units of 1.5 EC into larger courses. The panel observed that, despite these measures, the success rate after 1 year is improving but still relatively low (61% in 2023, 48% in 2022 and 56% in 2022), whereas the success rate after 2 years is significantly higher (81% in 2022 and 86% in 2023). The panel addressed this issue with the students and found that the thesis trajectory probably plays a significant role in this. According to the students, the overall workload of the programme is manageable, including the workload of the first block, which still has a relatively large number of smaller courses. Some students indicated that they would like to be challenged more in the second semester. The panel applauds the initiative by the programme to offer more choice in maritime specialist courses and to enlarge the choice options of the students in the near future. By providing more choice the programme may also be able to better accommodate students who would like to be challenged more.

#### *Guidance and studying with an impairment*

The MEL office team is the first point of contact for students who need professional advice or guidance. This team consists of the Programme Manager, an Office Assistant, a Programme Coordinator and the Director of Admission, and is

located on the EUR campus. The panel established that the office has wide opening hours (during office hours) and is well known with the students. Students can also call on the student advisors for help. The student advisors handle general questions on study planning, exams and making choices, but also offer advice in case of personal circumstances, studying with an impairment or issues involving the Examination Board.

The panel talked to the students about guidance. They describe MEL as a small-scale programme with a very committed and approachable teacher team and supporting staff. Staff are generally quick to respond and take time to provide support if needed. Guidance is very well-organised, with one exception. Not all students know where to find university guidance on student housing in the Netherlands, and if they do find it, the guidance is very limited. As a suggestion to the programme, the panel advises to inform students more explicitly about the guidance offered in this area within the university and to inform students in advance about the housing situation in the Netherlands, which is currently difficult.

#### *Programme-specific facilities*

The MEL programme is situated on the campus of Erasmus University and uses the general lecturing facilities of the university. In addition to general facilities, MEL also has a couple of programme-specific facilities. First, the programme has its own MEL office, which is staffed by the MEL team during office hours. The office includes a small library, access to various data sources, and a complete set of student theses from previous cohorts that are available to the public. The panel visited the campus and found that the facilities are sufficient.

Prospective MEL-students can find information on the programme website and several digital

platforms. Enrolled students use Canvas for information on the MEL programme and are updated about events and activities through social media. The panel found that the website provides clear information for prospective students. According to students, Canvas is an adequate tool and communication with MEL staff is usually smooth.

#### *Teaching staff*

The panel found that there are enough teachers to provide the courses in the programme. The average teacher-student ratio is 1 FTE of teachers for every 18 active students in the programme.

The panel studied an overview of teaching staff. It concludes that the core teaching staff is highly qualified with strong academic backgrounds and extensive professional experience in their respective fields. They actively engage in research and maintain connections with the maritime, logistics, and transport sectors, enhancing the practical relevance of the curriculum. Some teachers in the programme are practitioner-lecturers from the industry. In addition, MEL invites professionals from the field for guest lectures.

A vulnerability of the programme is that it has a relatively small core teacher team with an uneven age distribution. A number of very experienced lecturers will be leaving the faculty in the near future. The field is rapidly developing, and it is sometimes hard to attract new teachers in these areas. In addition, there is a gender imbalance, although the panel was pleased to discover that this imbalance is not present in the student population and that female students feel safe in group discussions. The panel encourages the programme to continue working towards a larger and more diverse teaching team.

From talking to students during the site visit and from the student chapter, the panel concludes that students are satisfied with their teachers' subject expertise and English language skills. They are especially positive about the expertise and didactic skills of the core staff. The didactic qualities of the guest lecturers is more variable. Although it is the working standard that teachers obtain a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ), the panel found that not all teachers have this. Currently, 53% (9 teachers) of the teaching staff hold a UTQ, 35% (6 teachers) do not and 12% (2 teachers) have been exempted because of previously acquired skills. The programme manager holds a Senior University Teaching Qualification (SUTQ). The panel recommends further increasing the didactic skills of the staff, either through the UTQ or through other tailor-made trainings on teaching innovation. One of the future ambitions of the programme is to enhance student centred learning by exploring blended learning methods, differentiation in teaching methods and other types of teaching innovation. This requires panel further professionalisation of the teaching team on these topics.

#### *Quality assurance*

The panel found that MEL has a clear student evaluation system in place. Upon completion of each course, students are asked to fill in an anonymous evaluation questionnaire. As part of the quality assurance cycle of the programme, the results of these evaluations are shared with the lecturers so that they can take the comments into account when planning their next course. Students are also asked to fill in an anonymous questionnaire at the conclusion of the programme before the graduation ceremony. The programme management evaluates the results of this questionnaire and decides upon changes in the programme when neces-

sary. Because of the small scale of the programme, the programme also collects a lot of feedback in daily contacts with students.

#### *Considerations*

MEL has a clear educational vision with three pillars: research orientation, global orientation, and a challenging, consistent and rich learning environment. In the panel's view, the curriculum clearly reflects these pillars.

MEL uses an English name and English is the language of instruction and communication in the programme. In the panel's opinion, this choice is logical given the global and multicultural sector in which graduates will come to work. The international classroom and use of English language mirror the (current and/or future) professional environment of the MEL students and are thus very instrumental and relevant in their learning process.

The curriculum of MEL is well-designed and internally coherent with a logical progressive nature from general (semester 1) to industry-specific (semester 2) to applied. Critical remarks by the 2018 assessment panel on academic skills training in the programme have been adequately addressed. Academic skills are now an explicit and integral part of the programme. The thesis trajectory is clearly designed, although the panel recommends further development of the thesis trajectory and/or improving thesis guidance during the summer period.

The content of the courses is relevant and matches expectations from the professional field. Students are happy with the variety in teaching methods. For future improvement, MEL could consider including more company projects in the programme, where students work more closely together with the industry. The panel also recommends that the pro-

programme evaluates the curriculum for its alignment with recent developments and monitors the quality of the extracurriculars more actively.

The admissions process is well-designed and, according to the students, the overall workload of the programme is manageable. Students are very positive about the commitment and approachability of the core teacher team. According to the panel, the core teaching staff is highly qualified and the quantity of the staff is sufficient. Given the ambitions of the programme to explore teaching innovations, the panel recommends further professionalisation of the teaching team on this.

The assessment took place on-site. MEL is embedded in the campus of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. The panel is generally under the impression that the facilities are sufficient. The

panel also noticed that MEL has a clear student evaluation system in place. Guidance for students, including guidance for students with an impairment, is well-organised. One point for further improvement is that not all students know where to find university guidance on student housing and experience difficulties with finding accommodation. The programme could make this more explicit and be clearer about the difficult housing situation in the Netherlands.

Taking these considerations into account, the panel assesses that the programme meets this standard. This applies to both the full-time and part-time variants.

## Student assessment

Standard 3: The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

### Findings

#### *Assessment philosophy and system*

The assessment system of MEL aims to support active learning and to challenge students. Therefore, MEL tests students regularly, using a combination of methods. The panel studied assessment materials and found that assessment formats are indeed sufficiently diverse and appropriate for the programme, incorporating written exams, oral presentations, research papers/thesis, and practical evaluations where relevant. The panel noticed a mix of individual and group assignments. Upon asking, the programme management explained that group assignments are specifically aimed to develop team working skills. The panel was pleased to find that students need to be assessed on an individual basis for at least 60% of each course. The panel concludes that there is a fair balance between individual assessments and group work.

Since the previous accreditation, the programme has worked to improve the workload of students by reducing the number of small courses and competing assignments and exams. From the student chapter and the discussion with students, the panel concludes that these measures have been effective. Exams are planned at the end of courses and students experience a good spread of workload. Students are also satisfied with the communication on assignments and tests.

The panel studied a sample of assessments. It concludes that the assessment methods are aligned with the intended learning outcomes and effectively measure students' knowledge, skills, and competencies.

#### *Quality management of assessment*

The panel established that quality of assessment is guaranteed in different ways, among other things, by only allowing academic staff members to develop and administer assessments. Regarding transparency, the assessment requirements, grading criteria, and expectations are clearly communicated to students. Examination and assessment policies are documented and made accessible to all students. During the site visit, students confirmed that they receive timely and constructive feedback to support their learning and improvement. The panel also found that measures are in place to ensure consistency in grading and minimise subjectivity, such as standardised grading rubrics and multiple assessors where appropriate.

#### *Thesis assessment*

The thesis assessment procedure is described in a thesis assessment manual for students. The panel studied this manual and concludes that it is clear about all important steps in the process and assessment, and includes a chapter on referencing and plagiarism. The thesis is individually produced and guided by two supervisors. If the thesis is combined with an internship, the process also involves company mentors. The thesis assessment is done by two examiners. The first assessor is usually the thesis supervisor, the second assessor is an independent assessor which can also be the company mentor. The two assessors decide on a mark in advance of the thesis defence. The quality of the thesis can alter the mark by a grade maximum of 0.5. The two examiners first read the thesis, then fill in the rubric and discuss their assessment. The panel

concludes that the thesis assessment process is well-designed.

The panel studied a sample of theses and assessment forms. It found that the assessment generally seems fair, but also noticed that there is opportunity to further improve transparency of thesis assessment. First, it is not visible in the assessment forms whether the examiners assess the thesis independently of each other, before reaching a joint conclusion. Second, the forms do not show how the assessors judged the written document and if/how the judgment was adjusted based on the oral defence. Third, the panel observed that some thesis assessment forms included only a very short written substantiation of the given mark. As a result, it was not always clear to the panel how the assessors arrived at their final conclusion. During the site visit, the panel learned that students receive very extensive oral feedback on their final grade. Therefore, the panel concludes that transparency of assessment is in order, but could be further strengthened on an administrative level by making a couple of small adjustments in the assessment form and process.

#### *Examination Board*

MEL has its own Examination Board (EB). This Board meets at least twice a year and discusses the results of examinations as well as individual cases and requests on students related to examination. The EB also reviews assessments and the quality of the thesis as part of their regular meetings. During the site visit, the panel talked to members of the EB about their role and tasks. It found that the members are very professional and well informed about the tasks and responsibilities of the EB. A challenge for the EB is the relatively high number of appeals from students, leaving less time for other important activities. The panel recommends streamlining the appeal process by reducing appeal options, analysing root causes of the current high number

of appeals, and implementing a targeted action plan to minimise appeals, allowing the EB to focus more structurally on quality checks.

The panel talked with the EB about the impact of GenAI on assessment. The panel found that MEL follows university-wide policy on this topic. On the risk-side, MEL explicitly states that the use of AI tools is not allowed in summative assessments. In some courses, MEL has resorted more to assessment based on performance in class. On the opportunities-side, MEL is experimenting with GenAI in its teaching, e.g. by allowing students to use it and reflect on the quality of prompting and output.

#### *Considerations*

The panel found that the assessment philosophy of MEL is clearly reflected in its assessment system. MEL uses a variety of assessment methods, with a well-considered balance between individual assessment and group work. According to the panel, the assessments are carefully designed and aligned with the ILO's. Assessment includes clear grading rubrics and assessment criteria. Students experience a well-distributed workload and are satisfied with communication about assessments and the amount of feedback they receive.

The thesis assessment procedure is clearly described and well-designed. Assessment of the theses is done carefully and fair with sufficient oral feedback on the final grade. The panel recommends making some small adjustments to the thesis assessment form and process, to improve transparency of assessment on an administrative level.

The Examination Board functions properly and is aware of its role and responsibilities. The relatively high number of appeals from students is a challenge that significantly impacts the work-

load of the EB. The panel recommends streamlining the appeal process by reducing appeal options, analysing root causes of the current high number of appeals, and implementing a targeted action plan to minimise appeals, allowing the EB to focus more structurally on quality checks.

Taking these considerations into account, the panel assesses that the programme meets this standard. This applies to both the full-time and part-time variants.

## Achieved learning outcomes

Standard 4: The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

### Findings

#### *Quality of the theses*

The panel assessed a sample of 16 theses, 15 theses from alumni that studied in full-time mode and 1 thesis from a part-time student.

The panel concludes that MEL graduates meet the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The quality of the theses is high and all theses make a relevant contribution to existing challenges and issues in the field of Maritime Economics and Logistics. The thesis topics are diverse, in line with MEL's profile and well-linked to the expertise of the thesis supervisors. Depending on the research question, students show sufficient mastery of quantitative and/or qualitative research skills. The thesis also demonstrates that students are adequately trained in the academic research cycle.

#### *Performance of graduates.*

The programme actively keeps track of where graduates end up after graduation. MEL has its own Alumni network with 781 alumni active in 74 countries. The industry is generally very positive about graduates from the programme. 34%

of alumni end up in marine transportation, 22% in logistics and freight, 20% in marine ports and services and 10% in energy. Alumni also end up in trading companies, finance, and construction and engineering. Here, many students work in positions such as logistics manager, policy maker, consultant and port or terminal engineer. Only seldom do students choose for a career in academics. Until now, seven graduated MEL students finished a PhD trajectory. About 1/3 of all alumni work in the Netherlands.

#### *Considerations*

The theses display academic master's level and the intended learning outcomes of the programme. All theses make a relevant contribution to existing challenges and issues in the field of Maritime Economics and Logistics. Employment figures show that graduates are generally successful in MEL industries.

Taking these considerations into account, the panel assesses that the programme meets this standard. This applies to both the full-time and part-time variants.

## Attachment 1: assessment panel

Prof.dr. Christa Sys, chair  
Professor Transport, Logistics and Ports Havens, Antwerp University, Belgium

Prof.dr. Pierre Cariou, pane member  
Professor in Shipping and Port Economics at KEDGE Business School, France

mr. drs. Annet Koster, panel member  
Director Royal Association of Netherlands Shipowners (KVNR), the Netherlands

Anne van der Rijdt MSc, student-member  
Graduated in MSc Social Challenges Policies and Interventions, Utrecht University, 2024

The panel was supported by Adrienne Wieldraaijer-Huijzer, certified secretary.

All panel members have completed and signed a statement of independence and impartiality, and these have been submitted to NVAO.

## Attachment 2: site visit program

### MSc MEL Accreditation

#### Programme Commission visit 31 January 2025

*Location: Mandeville Building T19-11 (parking: Erasmus Plaza)*

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome
9:15 – 9:30	Panel preparation
9:30 – 9:45	Presentation of the programme (incl. kick-off development dialogue)
9:45 - 10:30	Meeting with programme management
10:30 – 10:45	Panel preparation
10:45 – 11:45	Meeting with students
11:45 - 12:30	Lunch and internal discussion
12:30 – 13:30	Teaching staff
13:30– 14:00	Meeting with Examination board
14:00 – 14:15	Internal panel session
14:15 – 14:45	Development dialogue
14:45 – 15:45	Internal panel session
15:45-16:30	Concluding session with School management

## Attachment 3: Recommendations from previous assessment

Recommendations by the 2018 assessment panel:

**Standard 1:**

no specific recommendations.

**Standard 2:**

"Pay particular attention at safeguarding the academic character of the thesis trajectory"

*Directive plan of action previous accreditation:*

2: Teaching - learning environment				<i>Satisfactory</i>
<i>The curriculum, the teaching - learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.</i>				
Page report 145	Quote for improvement: "The panel suggests that the programme should pay particular attention to safeguarding the academic character of the thesis trajectory."	Proposed action: Combine the measures being taken for point four "Achieved learning outcomes" with improved expectation management and additional check of proposed thesis subject.	Actor(s): The MEL Programme Management & the MEL Thesis Coordinator	Delivery date: Implementation as of 2019
<p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <p>The panel senses a kind of tension between the academic ambitions of the programme and the expectations of the students that the programme should prepare for a relevant professional career in the MEL sector. Further to what the thesis committee has reported on the quality of the MEL theses and acknowledging that the curriculum contents are currently under scrutiny, the panel suggests the programme to pay particular attention at safeguarding the academic character of the thesis trajectory.</p> <p>The proposed action described below under point 4: "Achieved learning outcomes" will expose the students to the required knowledge to write a good academic thesis early on in the programme allowing them to practice and further develop their acquired knowledge in the assignments of the programme. Also, starting from the Introduction Day to the programme, the difference between descriptive work and academic research will be explained and additional time will be spent on explaining the importance of the academic thesis for the business community. This will be achieved by explaining why a purely descriptive thesis is less valuable to a company than a thesis that uses academic research to develop testable hypotheses. By creating the link between the usefulness of an academic thesis for the business community compared with the lesser value of a purely descriptive thesis, writing an</p>				

	academic thesis will become more attractive and relevant to developing a professional career in the MEL sector. The MEL thesis coordinator will also keep an eye on the thesis titles that the students propose and flag any subjects that need to be discussed by the programme management to decide if they are fully in line with the academic requirements.
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**Standard 3:**

“The panel considers that the quality of MEL thesis evaluation can be improved in two ways:

- a better use of the full range of (positive) scores to differentiate and acknowledge good quality work of some students, and
- more qualitative feedback that is systematically registered in the evaluation form”

*Directive plan of action previous accreditation:*

3: Student assessment				Satisfactory
<i>The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.</i>				
Page report 146	Quote for improvement: “The panel considers that the quality of <u>MEL thesis evaluation</u> can be improved in two ways: a better use of the full range of (positive) scores to differentiate and acknowledge the good quality work of some students, and more qualitative feedback that is systematically registered in the evaluation form.”	Proposed action: Look into the possibility of scoring with point one decimal in tenths rather than purely in half points.  Regarding the evaluation form feedback section: the feedback section on the evaluation form was immediately removed as it was duplicate to the face-to-face feedback: feedback has always been given to the student verbally in person directly after the defense to insure that the student understands the reasoning behind the scores and where the student could have improved their work.	Actor(s): The Examination Board	Delivery date: Implementation as of 2019
<p><b>Explanation:</b> The thesis committee reviewed 10 theses produced by MEL students in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. In terms of scoring, the expert agreed to all final grades, which correctly reflect the quality of each individual thesis. As a result, the ranking of the theses is adequate:</p>				

	<p>theses with a higher score are indeed of better quality than those receiving a lower grade, while theses with an identical grade are of comparable quality. Nonetheless, the expert noticed that the spread of final grades (by the assessors) is somewhat smaller than the spread of quality (as perceived by the expert). According to the expert, making full use of the span of scores at disposition and thus more clearly differentiating weaker from stronger theses would in particular acknowledge and do justice to the good quality work of some students.</p> <p>We will look into the possibility of scoring with point one decimal in tenths rather than purely in half points. This will be discussed with the MEL Examination Board and at the end of the academic year the spread of grades will be evaluated.</p>
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**Standard 4:**

“The panel advises the programme to pay more explicit attention to academic skills development in the curriculum and to literature review and research methods in the thesis trajectory of all MEL students”

*Directive plan of action previous accreditation:*

<b>4: Achieved learning outcomes</b>				<i>Satisfactory</i>
<i>The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.</i>				
Page report	Quote for improvement: “The panel advises the programme to pay more explicit attention to academic skills development in the curriculum and to literature review and research methods in the thesis trajectory of all MEL students.”	Proposed action: The Research Methodology course will be taught earlier in the programme & an additional lecture will review the material and pay more detailed attention to the literature review and research methods.	Actor(s): Additional Research Methodology lecturer	Delivery date: November 2019
148	<p><b>Explanation:</b> The expert reported that while the quality of each thesis individually is sufficient, the overall quality of the thesis sample is somewhat lower compared to the other MSc programmes the expert had reviewed. While several theses are fully up to standard, others are descriptive and focus on summarising information from publicly available secondary sources instead of reviewing academic research. According to the expert, the literature reviews are generally the weakest area of student work in this sample of MEL theses with some students reviewing little academic research and focusing on the description of the topic. Moreover, the expert noticed that some students do not always use academic research to develop testable hypotheses. Across the thesis sample, the quality of the empirical work varies con-</p>			

siderably, from a simple compilation of data to more complex statistical analysis and mathematical modelling. Similarly, some students discuss the contribution of their thesis results to the existing body of knowledge but this discussion does not happen systematically in each thesis. Students moreover mentioned that in hindsight they could have done with some more research guidance in the programme in order to take their theses further on the academic path. The findings from the thesis review seem to confirm this point.

The Research Methodology part of the curriculum will be taught earlier on in the programme so that the students can use, practice and further develop their acquired knowledge in the assignments of the programme early on. Furthermore we have added an additional lecturer who will review the current lesson material and approach the subject with new examples and pay even more detailed attention to the process of how to write a good literature review, how to choose and develop a research question, which methods are available and how to choose the correct method.

This will also have an effect on the other subjects of the programme where assignments are required. In the assignments the choice and development of the correct research question and method are imbedded in the theory and receive the same attention.

## Attachment 4: reviewed documents

- Self-Evaluation Report MSc Maritime Economics and Logistics (Final version, November 25, 2024)
- MEL Brochure 2024
- Overview of the teaching staff
- Cohort details 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024
- Course outlines of all courses in the programme
- Overview of extracurricular activities
- Agendas and minutes of two recent Examination Board meetings
- Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) Master's programme MSc Maritime Economics and Logistics Academic Year 2024-2025
- Rules and Regulations of the Examination Board MSc Maritime Economics and Logistics, Erasmus School of Economics for the study programme MSc Maritime Economics and Logistics
- Selection of Exams and assignments:
  - o Logistics and Supply Chain Management Exam
  - o Management Sciences Exam, part 1 and 2
  - o Port Economics and Management Assignment, Exam and Cases
  - o Shipping and Transport Finance Group Assignments and Exam
  - o Shipping Economics and Policy assignment literature review
- Student thesis manual and thesis assessment rubric
- Graduation work of 16 students, distributed among all study modes, including assessment forms.

