

MSc Management, Economics, and
Consumer Studies

Wageningen University

Advisory report of the assessment of the existing programme
11 December 2024

Colophon

Institution and programme

Wageningen University
Wageningen
Institutional Audit: yes

Programme:

MSc Management, Economics, and Consumer Studies
Site: Wageningen
Mode: fulltime
ISAT-number: 66836

Assessment panel

Eric Dooms, chair
Ale Smidts, expert
Ed Peelen, expert
Karen Taselaar, student-member
Mark Delmartino, secretary

AeQui Nederland
PO Box 5050
3502 JB Utrecht
The Netherlands
www.AeQui.nl

Summary

On 11 December 2024 an assessment panel of AeQui visited the University of Wageningen (WU) to perform a quality assessment of two degree programmes. This external assessment is part of a broader cluster evaluation of wo-bedrijfskunde programmes in the Netherlands. The underlying document reports on the panel assessment of the Master of Science in Management, Economics, and Consumer Studies (MME) according to the NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. The panel's overall judgement of the programme quality is **positive**.

Intended learning outcomes

The MME programme is a two-year full-time programme taught in English. It is a social science programme embedded in a life science context, and combines socio-economic theories, methodological knowledge and academic and professional skills with specific knowledge on sustainability and value chains in a life science context. The MME programme is internationally oriented and students tackle issues at a national, European and global level in both developed and developing countries. Since the previous accreditation, the programme was substantially restructured, and consists now of five largely independent but related specialisations. The MME programme has a clear and distinctive profile, features proper learning outcomes, and is well connected to the professional field. Its profile aligns well with the mission and vision of the university. The intended learning outcomes strike a good balance between general domain-related statements and specific translations per specialisation, and their formulation does justice to the domain, level and orientation of the programme. The dynamic interaction with the professional field, and in particular the systematic involvement of the External Advisory Committee, allows to review and update the learning outcomes and the curriculum contents, strengthens the relevance and impact of the programme, and enhances the employability of its graduates. According to the panel, the conscientious efforts of the programme team to address the recommendations from the

previous accreditation report are indicative of a broader and widely shared quality culture that is based on continuous development. The panel thus concludes that the programme **meets** this standard.

Teaching-learning environment

The MME programme has a strong teaching and learning environment featuring a coherent curriculum, a befitting didactic concept, a diverse student audience and well-qualified teaching staff. The panel endorses the decision to offer the programme in English, and approves of its English-language title. The curriculum is coherent with course learning goals being clearly aligned to the programme learning outcomes. The combination of different curriculum components – cursory specialisation courses, electives, consultancy project, academic internship, and master thesis – does justice to the unique profile of the programme, and is highly appreciated by students. In line with the educational vision of the university, the didactic approach includes a variety of teaching methods. MME students benefit of the small-scale education, the student support services of the university, and the study advisers of the programme. The teaching staff is well qualified to apply the programme's educational principles to the substance of their courses and the different teaching formats. The panel noticed a positive vibe in the MME programme: the management functions as a real team, students form a community, and the teaching and support staff are

competent and enthusiastic. The panel thus concludes that the programme **meets** this standard.

Student assessment

The MME programme can rely on a robust system of assessment. Both course and thesis assessments are embedded in well-established university-wide assessment policies and frameworks, while the curriculum matrix safeguards that course learning goals are assessed adequately and cover the programme learning outcomes. Course assessment is carefully designed, varied, and well aligned with the learning objectives. The transparent information on assessment ensured that students are adequately and fairly assessed throughout their study. The thesis review demonstrated that the evaluation form is relevant and that the scoring is consistent. The panel thinks highly of the quality assurance system for assessment, which is comprehensive and effective, and commends the Examination Board Social Sciences for its expertise, pro-active approach, commitment, and meticulous reporting. The panel thus concludes that the programme **meets** this standard.

Achieved learning outcomes

Students who graduate from the MME programme have effectively acquired all intended learning outcomes. The selected and reviewed theses meet the quality expectations for a final

All standards of the NVAO framework have been positively assessed. On this basis, the panel provides a **positive recommendation** regarding the accreditation of the MSc Management, Economics, and Consumer Studies.

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

Eric Dooms
Chair

project of academic orientation at master level. MME graduates are well prepared for the labour market and find suitable employment that is in line with the level and domain of their studies. The panel thus concludes that the programme **meets** this standard.

Recommendations

With an eye on the future, the panel offers the following points for development:

- intensify the external communication/marketing on the MME programme with a view to attract / recruit more students in the long run;
- increase the theoretical depth in certain course contents, and add more real-life cases / the business reality in the curriculum components;
- include critical, diverse and non-European voices in materials and classroom debates;
- reflect on the MME thesis size, and establish whether the curriculum components in their current size constitute the most effective set-up for this two-year degree programme;
- ensure that each thesis evaluation form is completed in an insightful way by both supervisor and second assessor;
- consider whether the current weights allocated in the master thesis assessment to process and research are balanced.

Mark Delmartino
Secretary

Introduction

Institution

Wageningen University (WU) consists of one Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences offering 20 bachelor and 31 master degree programmes. The Rector Magnificus is also the Dean of the Faculty. The Board of Education is the governing body of all degree programmes. Academic teaching staff are hosted by one of the university's ninety Chair Groups, which in turn belong to one of five Science Groups at WUR: Agrotechnology & Food, Animal Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Plant Sciences, and Social Sciences.

Each degree programme has a Programme Committee consisting of an equal number of students and staff members appointed by the Board of Education. The Board of Education oversees that the programme director and the PC develop and update bachelor's and master's curricula and align with the Chair Group(s) on whether new courses and specialisations are needed and/or existing courses or thesis specialisations have to be enhanced.

There is one Programme Committee (consisting of six staff and six students) and one Programme Director covering the two degree programmes under review. To safeguard the quality of student assessment, WU has four Examining Boards. The MME programme falls under the Examining Board of the Social Sciences (EBSS).

Programme

The Master programme in Management, Economics, and Consumer Studies (MME) is a two-year full-time programme taught in English. MME is a social science programme embedded in a life science context, and combines socio-economic theories, methodological knowledge and academic and professional skills with

specific knowledge on sustainability and value chains in a life science context. The supply chain is defined in the programme as the system and the resources required to move a product or service from primary production to consumers. As the challenges facing this domain are often multifaceted, the programme considers simultaneously its environmental, economic and social dimensions. The MME programme is internationally oriented and students tackle issues at a national, European and global level in both developed and developing countries.

Following the recommendation of the previous accreditation panel, the programme was substantially restructured to do away with the lack of specialisation opportunities. Since 2022-2023 the MME programme 'new style' consists of five largely independent but related specialisations: (i) Sustainable Business and Innovation; (ii) Sustainable Supply Chain Analytics; (iii) Consumer Studies; (iv) Economics of Sustainability; and (v) Governance of Sustainability Transformations. The MME programme is unique in three ways: the application to value chains in a life science context, their sustainability and institutional environment; the two years' duration that allows to combine cursory education, internship, consultancy training, and a master thesis in every specialisation; it is the only MSc degree in the Netherlands that specialises in consumer studies and combines economic, psychological, communicative, sociological and design approaches.

Assessment

The external assessment of this programme is part of a wider wo-Bedrijfskunde cluster visit involving 20 degree programmes at eight higher education institutions in the Netherlands. Wageningen University has commissioned AeQui

to carry out the assessment of its bachelor and master programme in this cluster.

In the run-up to the visit, a preparatory meeting was held with representatives of WU to exchange information and plan the dates and programme of the site visit. In collaboration with the programmes, AeQui assembled an independent and knowledgeable panel (see Attachment 1). The panel explicitly oriented itself to the cluster in which the programme is placed. The visit was carried out on 11 December 2024 according to the programme presented in Attachment 2.

The assessment was conducted based on the Accreditation Framework for Higher Education in the Netherlands. WU has a positive institutional audit decision, and therefore the panel assessed four standards of the framework. During the previous accreditation round, the then panel made recommendations for further development. The actions taken in response by the programme are listed in Attachment 3. The panel has integrated this follow-up into its considerations for the current assessment.

The MME programme put at disposition many materials, which served as background information before and during the visit. An overview of

these materials is listed in Attachment 4. In the run-up to the site visit, the panel studied the programme's self-evaluation report and reviewed a sample of 16 master theses, three of which were selected as part of a Dual Degree Programme. Their first impressions on the report and the thesis (evaluations) formed the basis for discussion during an online preparatory meeting on 9 December, and guided the panel's questions during the visit.

An Open Consultation Hour for students, teaching and support staff was organised in connection with the preparatory meeting; eventually, three people signed up and spoke individually and confidentially with the panel. At the initiative of WU, a Development Dialogue took place at the end of the site visit. The results of this meeting did not affect the assessment presented in this report.

The panel conducted the assessment independently. At the end of the visit, the chair informed the programme and institutional representatives about the panel findings, considerations and conclusions. A draft version of the underlying report was sent to the programme, whose response was incorporated into this final version of the report.

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

The Master programme in Management, Economics, and Consumer Studies (MME) is a two-year full-time programme taught in English. MME is a social science programme embedded in a life science context. It is situated in the context of Wageningen's mission "to explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life." It combines socio-economic theories, methodological knowledge and academic and professional skills with specific knowledge on sustainability and value chains in a life science context. In the framework of the MME programme, the supply chain is defined as the system and the resources required to move a product or service from primary production to consumers. The programme's institutional environment is the set of regulations, customs and taken-for-granted norms prevalent in states, societies, professions and organisations, which impinge on and shape organisational behaviour and outcomes.

The challenges facing this domain are multifaceted and can be studied from a business, a consumer, an economics and a governance perspective. The MME programme addresses the main challenge of simultaneously considering the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability. The master is internationally oriented and students tackle issues at a

national, European and global level in both developed and developing countries by applying state-of-the-art knowledge to issues on the intersection of socio-economics and life sciences.

The academic and research orientation of the programme is evident in its commitment to theoretical rigour, research-based teaching, and the development of critical analytical skills. It provides students with the tools to acquire - and apply - relevant theoretical and methodological approaches. Hence, the MME programme prepares students for both an (international) PhD programme and an (international) professional career in business, applied research, policy-making or consultancy.

The multidisciplinary character of the programme is reflected in the involvement of different Chair Groups¹ in the respective specialisations, which contribute their disciplinary expertise to the curriculum specialisations. In this way, students are exposed to different perspectives and methodologies, learn to integrate knowledge and apply it to real-world problems.

The panel acknowledges that the profile of the MME programme is unique in the Dutch academic landscape for different reasons: it focuses on the application of value chains in a life science context, it is the only two-year master programme in social sciences in the Netherlands,

¹ Business economics, Food quality and design, Information technology, Operations research and logistics, Marketing and consumer behaviour, Business management and organisations, Consumption and healthy lifestyles, Law,

Environmental policy, Public administration and policy, Agricultural economics and rural policy, Environmental economics and natural resource, Urban economics, Development economics, Economic and environmental history, Strategic communication

and the only MSc degree that allows students to specialise in consumer studies combining economic, psychological, communicative, sociological and design approaches.

The panel gathered from the discussions on site with management, staff and students that this unique profile is certainly known to the inner circle of WU stakeholders. Moreover, it starts to reach the outside world. The programme indicated that there is nonetheless some more work to do in terms of external communication/marketing, as one of their traditional intake “sources” - Dutch students from the Business and Consumer Studies (BBC) programme - is in decline.

According to the panel, the programme clearly delivered on the recommendation of the previous panel to enhance the specialisation component in the programme. The resulting MME ‘new style’ combines the breadth of a degree programme with depth in the respective specialisations, offering students the knowledge and skills needed to make a substantial contribution to the domain of food, the agri-value chain, and its institutional environment.

Intended learning outcomes

The MME programme features twelve intended learning outcomes (ILOs), which are clustered in four categories: one overarching domain-specific outcome, three outcomes related to theory and interpretation, four outcomes on academic research methods, and four outcomes addressing professional skills and academic attitude. Together, these ILOs articulate what MME graduates are expected to know, understand, and able to do upon completion of the programme. According to the panel, this set of ILOs is logical as they align with the profile and the main focus of the programme. Moreover, the panel appreciates the efforts of the programme team – and

endorses the results – to ‘translate’ the common set of end-level qualifications into more specific learning outcomes for each of the five specialisations.

The ILOs are explicitly linked to the five Dublin descriptors for master programmes, ensuring that the degree meets the recognised academic standards at European level. The panel noted that the ILOs are not only well aligned with the Dublin descriptors but also with international subject-specific disciplinary expectations. In this regard, the MME programme uses the EQUAL Guidelines for Undergraduate Degrees in General Business & Management as a benchmark. According to this domain-specific reference framework, Business & Management graduates “will be able to demonstrate relevant knowledge of, and critical engagement with, the key issues in strategy and leadership, alongside more broadly the types and networks of organisations, the external environment in which they operate, and how they are managed.” The panel noted that this is exactly what the MME programme is about, and what its intended learning outcomes for each of the five specialisations set out to achieve.

Furthermore, the panel established that the ILOs are formulated clearly and strike a good balance between general domain-related statements and specific translations per specialisation. It also appreciates the explicit attention in the learning outcomes to the combination of social and life science contexts, the collaboration in multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural teams, and ethical issues. This, in turn, reflects the programme’s responsiveness to (emerging) societal challenges and developments, and enhances the relevance and currency of the programme.

Professional Field

The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that the MME programme adopts different mechanisms to ensure that its ILOs remain aligned with the needs and expectations of the professional field. In addition to informal and one-off encounters with guest lecturers, internship providers and external thesis research partners, the most important formal body is the External Advisory Committee (EAC).

The EAC consists of 17 representatives from various sectors, including industry, government, consultancy, and research organisations. The panel noticed from the materials that both the individuals on the committee and the organisations they represent are highly resourceful and cover the breadth of the MME programme. In this way, the programme definitely lived up to the recommendations of the previous accreditation panel to diversify the composition of the advisory committee.

The committee meets at regular intervals with the Programme Committee and provides advice and feedback on the relevance and applicability of the programme's objectives and content, on trends in the labour market, on the required competencies for graduates, and on opportunities for curriculum innovation. In this way, the EAC plays an important role in bridging the gap between academic education and professional practice.

The panel established that the EAC takes its role seriously – and that its advice is also taken seriously by the programme. The self-evaluation and the discussions on site highlighted several examples of how the EAC has influenced the development of the ILOs and the revision of the curriculum. In its most recent meetings, for instance, the committee confirmed the value of

multidisciplinary knowledge and research skills because employers appreciate that graduates can work across disciplinary boundaries, think creatively out-of-the-box, and apply analytical thinking to complex problems. The EAC also identified areas for improvement, such as the need to strengthen student confidence in presenting themselves in the labour market and in 'leading change', i.e. initiating and leading transitions in their professional domain. Moreover, the EAC emphasised the growing importance of data literacy and the ability of graduates to make data-driven decisions by applying data-science tools. The panel appreciates the follow-up the programme is giving to these pieces of advice.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the MME programme has a clear and distinctive profile, features proper learning outcomes, and is well connected to the professional field.

The panel establishes that the profile of the MME programme aligns well with the mission and vision of the university. The master programme offers students the knowledge, skills and tools needed to acquire and apply relevant theoretical and methodological approaches, and to make as graduates a substantial contribution to the domain of food, the agri-value chain, and its institutional environment. The panel is convinced that the programme adequately prepares MME students for an (international) career in academia, business, policy-making and consultancy.

The panel considers that the intended learning outcomes do justice to the domain, level and orientation of the MME programme (specialisations), as well as to its distinctive profile. Moreover, the ILOs strike a good balance between

general domain-related statements and specific translations per specialisation. In this way they constitute a strong basis for the design of the curriculum and the assessment of student learning.

The panel thinks highly of the programme's connections to the professional field. The systematic and structural involvement of the External Advisory Committee is a useful and effective way to review and update both the intended learning outcomes and the curriculum contents. Moreover, this dynamic interaction with the professional field strengthens the relevance and impact of the programme and enhances the employability of its graduates.

The panel also commends the programme team for addressing – and delivering on – the main recommendation from the previous accreditation report: to enhance the specialisation component in the programme. The resulting MME 'new style' combines the breadth of a degree

programme with depth in the respective specialisations. These conscientious efforts do not only contribute to a distinctive profile, good quality ILOs and a representative advisory committee, but are also part of a broader and widely shared quality culture that is based on continuous development.

In addition to all these positive considerations, the panel sees room for enhancing the external communication/marketing efforts of the programme. While the curriculum revision proved effective in attracting more students in the short run, the middle- to long-term perspectives seem to indicate that MME's traditional recruitment source, Dutch BBC graduates, is in decline.

Taking these considerations into account, the panel assesses that the programme **meets** this standard.

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

Programme

The MME programme lasts two years, with each year consisting of 60 EC spread over six periods of 12 EC or 6 EC. The combination of two longer periods and one short period aligns with the semester system that is often used at other universities in the Netherlands and abroad. The first year consists of the specialisation part (five/six courses, 30/36 EC), an Academic Master Cluster (featuring a 9 EC consultancy course and a 3 EC modular skills course), and an elective space with supporting/profiling courses (12/18 EC). Across all specialisations, the second year has an identical set up and features an academic internship (24 EC) and the master thesis (36 EC).

The MME master is essentially a broad programme, which can be offered to a diverse group of students due to the five newly developed specialisations:

- The *Sustainable Business and Innovation* specialisation offers insights from business sciences, providing a multi-disciplinary perspective on how firms, farms, markets and sectors transform to be part of sustainable solutions.
- The *Sustainable Supply Chain Analytics* specialisation provides theory, tools, and techniques to analyse sustainable supply chains in life sciences. Students look at three dominant perspectives in supply chains: the material, finance, and information/data flows.
- The *Consumer Studies* specialisation provides the knowledge and skills to analyse consumers making choices, acquiring and using products and services, and disposing

of them. It combines insights from psychology, economics, communication, design, and sociology in an interdisciplinary approach.

- The *Economics of Sustainability* specialisation focuses on the interactions between economic actors and the natural environment. Students are trained as quantitative economists, who analyse real-world problems in food systems, natural resources and the living environment, and provide economic solutions for a sustainable future.
- The *Governance of Sustainability Transformations* specialisation provides in-depth understanding on the social, political and legal dimensions of transformative governance and on the ways to put this to work in governance arrangements.

Each specialisation is set-up according to the same curriculum building blocks:

- The *Academic Master Cluster* combines academic consultancy training with modular skills training. The consultancy training is a university-wide master course in which groups of 5-7 students with different disciplinary backgrounds work as a consultancy team on a 'real-world' project for a client.
- The *Elective Space* consists of supporting and/or profiling courses. The former give admissible students the opportunity to fill specific knowledge gaps to reach the required knowledge level in their specialisation; the latter allow students to deepen knowledge or improve methodological skills.
- In the *Academic Internship*, students experience the institutional, entrepreneurial, and

labour reality of a possible first working environment as a graduate. Students work on their own personal assignment outside the university for a company, public institution, consultancy firm, research organisation, or non-governmental organisation.

- The *Master Thesis* is organised according to a protocol that outlines the procedural steps to be taken from first idea to assessment. MME students demonstrate their ability to design and conduct research at academic master level. Students are encouraged to identify their own thesis subject that matches the research domain of the selected Chair Group. They produce a research proposal, execute the research, write it down in a thesis report and present it to fellow students and staff in a research colloquium.

Moreover, the panel was informed that students can pursue a dual degree. After having completed their first year at WU, MME students can join the MSc Agricultural and Food Economics at Bonn University or the Laurea Magistrale in Agricultural and Food Economics at the Piacenza and Cremona campuses of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. The panel welcomes such arrangements, as they enhance the international dimension of the programme and the international opportunities of MME students. Moreover, the panel gathered from the materials and the discussions that there are clear arrangements between the universities and the programmes on the curriculum requirements for MME students who wish to study abroad and obtain a dual degree. The programme management emphasised that upon graduation, dual degree students have acquired the same learning outcomes as their fellow MME graduates who spent the entire two years at WU. Every year, a few students make use of this opportunity. In its thesis review (standard 4), the panel

also looked at master theses produced in the framework of these dual degree arrangements and found these to be of good quality.

The panel acknowledges with satisfaction that the different programme stakeholders have worked hard to address the key recommendation of the previous accreditation report. The resulting MME curriculum new style is very coherent: it is comprehensive in its span of disciplinary specialisations, and innovative and attractive in its combination of curriculum components. Moreover, the panel established that the MME programme has considered all teaching-learning related recommendations from the previous accreditation report. The programme integrated several suggestions, notably with regard to the research character of the programme, the design perspective, and the creation of profiling courses to do away with possible deficiencies in disciplinary knowledge. According to the panel, these efforts confirm the quality culture in the programme and the openness of all stakeholders to continuous development.

Furthermore, the panel noticed that the programme is academic and research oriented, emphasising analytical thinking, methodological training, and scientific reflection. Hence the attention in the curriculum for theory development, for research skills, and for critical engagement with contemporary societal issues. Course work allows students to acquire knowledge and to apply relevant theoretical and methodological approaches. Gradually, students learn to translate and apply these approaches in the context of academic consultancy, an academically oriented internship, and a research thesis. By the end of the programme, students/graduates have acquired the necessary qualifications to conduct academic research, as well as a solid knowledge and skills basis for a career in

business, applied research, policy-making, or consultancy.

The panel was informed that the intended learning outcomes are operationalised throughout the curriculum, which is designed in such a way that students develop their knowledge and skills gradually over two years. Each course contributes to one or more of the ILOs. The mapping between courses (and their learning goals) and overall learning outcomes at programme level is made explicit in the curriculum matrix. The panel studied this matrix and established that – irrespective of the specialisation – all ILOs are systematically addressed and that students have multiple opportunities to develop and demonstrate the required competencies.

The panel gathered from the interesting student chapter and the discussions with MME students that they are overall satisfied with the content, quality and organisation of the (new) programme curriculum. Students like in particular the different options of the programme: the flexibility to choose a relevant specialisation and to tailor the curriculum components to their own interests and career perspectives. For instance, students who wish to focus on academic research, can further carve their individual study programme by substituting the academic master cluster with a research master cluster. Other students emphasised the opportunities to connect with real life through the consultancy training, the academic internship, and the in-company thesis and to (learn how to) write a policy brief, work with company data sets and relate to company staff who might one day become their colleagues. Students also appreciate the breadth of the programme, as evidenced in the five substantive domains offered by the specialisations and the different chair groups involved in the respective specialisations. Moreover, students like the variety in the curriculum

components, which do not only focus on domain-specific knowledge, but also on academic and professional skills training. All these options enable students to explore their interests and to create their own unique study programme. Students also referred to the relevance and actuality of the specialisations, and the interesting combination of social sciences and life sciences that permeate every specialisation. In this respect, MME students do not only study topics/specialisations that are currently very ‘hot’; they also become experts in these domains, which are in high demand by the labour market. Finally, master students found the international dimension of the MME contents, as well as its attention to the diversity of the student body a distinctive value of the programme.

When they were asked what can be improved, MME students indicated that the strength of having a diverse student group brings specific challenges as to the entry level, expectations and ambitions of these students. Students from several specialisations indicated that in some courses there is not always much depth or new theory, that they sometimes miss the application of business theory in real life, and that ‘the interesting stuff comes at the end of the lecture: critical reflections, nuances and discussions start in the last 5-10 minutes’. Furthermore, some students thought the courses were not always sufficiently critical to the economic system (e.g. Donut Economy). Finally, a few students indicated – and others confirmed – that there could be more diversity in the rather Eurocentric study materials, theories and literature. The panel discussed these elements with the management and the teaching staff, who recognised these elements as fair points of criticism. The panel welcomed this reaction and encouraged the programme to look for ways to add more theoretical depth, real life case applications, and diverse materials in the relevant courses.

Finally, the panel discussed in several sessions the relevance/value added of a two-year programme. According to the programme representatives, this allows for a more diverse group of students to enrol, and to compose a unique individual learning path through elective profiling / supporting courses, consultancy training, academic internship, and an (in-company) research thesis. A two-year programme, therefore, facilitates the connection between science and society, which is required for sustainable solutions. Students very much confirmed the above motivations: the combination of the programme components allows to find a relevant position on the labour market because students have not only acquired the knowledge during their study but also tried-and-tested their professional skills and built a professional network. Students with (applied) research ambitions indicated that the longer trajectory allows them to gradually grow their research skills. Still other students mentioned that the longer study period allows them to try-out different things before deciding which career path to pursue. While acknowledging all these elements in support of a two-year programme, the panel does wonder why the second year of the programme only includes two components and whether some of the other programme components should be getting a more prominent position in the 120 EC curriculum. In this regard, and further to its findings on the master thesis (see standard 4), the panel is not sure if the current size of the master thesis (which is even larger than a research master thesis) does justice to the programme and reflects the research achievements of the MME students. The panel invites the programme team to take these observations into consideration for future curriculum adjustments and developments.

Language of instruction

The title of the MME programme is in English, and so is the programme's language of instruction. The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that this has been - and still is - an explicit and obvious choice. English has been the language of instruction for all master programmes at WU, ever since the establishment of the bachelor / master system. Offering courses in English enables students to participate in the 'international classroom', trains them in dealing with diversity in nationalities, cultures and perspectives, helps them to benefit from the contributions of international staff, and allows for international collaboration and exchange. Proficiency in English gives university and programme graduates a basic skill that will help them launch their careers in a working environment that is becoming more and more global. Finally, most scientific communication is in English.

The panel also learned that the programme attracts a considerable number of international students (30%) because it is offered in English. This diversity is critical to effectively teach in the above-mentioned International Classroom and for students to learn to operate in an international and intercultural context. This, in turn, requires staff with good quality language skills. The panel was informed that it is university-wide policy that lecturers (can follow training to) display English language skills at level C1.

Based on the written materials and the discussions on site, the panel endorses the English title of the programme, as well as the extensive motivation that underpins the decision to offer the MME programme in English. Moreover, the student comments on the value added of a diverse audience indicate according to the panel that the MME programme is truly international in several respects, not just in terms of language.

Learning environment

The panel gathered from the written materials that the structure of the curriculum supports progressive learning and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The structure of the academic year in six periods allows students to focus on one or two courses at a time, which helps avoiding peak loads and supports more in-depth engagement with course content.

Across the curriculum there are various teaching methods, each with their own standards and requirements. The panel was informed that this variety is part of the university-wide education policy to provide intensive teaching by organising tutorials for smaller groups in addition to plenary lectures for all students.

The panel appreciates the programme's educational approach featuring small groups, the equal distribution of work and study load, and the variety in courses and teaching methods. Students from their side indicated that they value the personal contact with teachers and the relatively small scale of the programme specialisations.

Furthermore, the panel read in the materials – and obtained plenty of evidence during the site visit – that the student support system is a very strong point of the MME programme. In line with university policy, the programme strives to cater to a diverse population of students. Students with functional impairments can reach out to student deans, psychologists, and study advisors for assistance in minimising any potential barriers. The information provision for students is well developed from the initial stage prior to enrolment, over the different curriculum phases when students make choices on their individual study programme, right up to the point when they make future career plans.

In alignment with university policy, the MME programme has several dedicated study advisers who guide students throughout their study and are their first point of contact for personal or academic issues. Their work already starts prior to the enrolment phase as many candidate students inquire on an individual basis with the study advisers whether they would qualify for admission. The study advisers also play a key role in helping students at the start of the programme identify and select courses that do justice to their background and their interests. Students meet with their study adviser several times during the programme. In addition, study advisers know the broader offer of central university services and can refer students to student psychologists, academic counsellors, and career services.

Students highly appreciate the personal attention and work passion of the study advisers, as well as their advice on individual study plans and their helicopter view on university-wide student support services. Students rate the support provided by the programme – and in particular by the study advisers - very positively. Moreover, the master students the panel spoke to on-site mentioned the quality, availability and individual attention of the study advisers as a major strength of the programme. The panel was happy to speak to the study advisers and noticed that their expertise, enthusiasm and commitment are very high.

Student admission, intake and success rate

The MME programme attracts three types of students: bachelor graduates from WU programmes such as Business and Consumer Studies, Economics and Governance, or Health and Society who are directly admissible; bachelor graduates, often international, from other academically oriented degree programmes; and Dutch students with a bachelor degree from a

University of Applied Science. Students from the latter two groups are individually evaluated by the Admission Committee, taking into account the previous programme content, their grade point average, and their CV. Students have to indicate the MME specialisation in their application, which is taken into account during the admission process and in deciding on the individually tailored pre-master programme candidates may have to take and successfully pass before enrolling on the MME programme. The panel observed that the admission requirements are described clearly on the programme website and are appropriate for the level and content of the programme.

Since the previous accreditation visit, and in particular since the launch of the MME programme new style in 2022-2023, the yearly intake has increased from 150 to 200 students. While the total intake is not divided equally over the different specialisations, the detailed student data on the first two cohorts show that the differences are not wide and the intake numbers per specialisation seem to be converging.

While there are no specific data on student drop-out, the programme management indicated that students who do not finish the programme very often decide to do so already after a few months. Just as it was the case for the bachelor students, there are not so many MME students (around 25%) who finish the programme within the nominal duration of two years, while around 70% of the students do so in three years. Over the years, the average time of completion was between 27 and 29 months, i.e. with a delay of less than one semester. Currently about 15% of the MME students have incurred a considerable delay in completing the programme ('langstudeerders' in Dutch). The panel was informed that the programme - and

the university - are currently taking initiatives to try and get these students back on track.

The panel understood from the discussions that study delay is a long-standing issue as the previous accreditation panel already advised to improve the success rate. As a reaction to this advice, the programme adjusted/tightened the organisation and planning of the master thesis. It is, however, too early to see the impact of this adjustment as the COVID-19 pandemic has frustrated the outcomes of this plan. The current panel gathered from the discussions with management, staff and students that the average completion time and success rate is in line with WUR norms. Moreover, students indicated to the panel that all courses are feasible in their own right although some courses are more difficult than others, and that the MME programme as a whole is feasible. However, the master thesis was/is a potential stumbling block, while also the internship requirements of organisations often cause students to incur some (further) delay. However, the panel was informed that many students combine their study with extra-curricular activities, volunteer work in or outside university, and side jobs. This combination often leads to study delay. Moreover, students and staff indicated that even in 2025, the side effects of the pandemic are still felt by many students: a lack of motivation and focus, and the need to take some extra time to cope with the numerous challenges.

Staff

The MME programme is delivered by a large team of approximately 60 staff members, who are affiliated with the 17 Chair Groups that contribute to the programme. This means that during the programme, students are exposed to staff with a wide range of backgrounds, who bring in diverse substantive expertise and research experience, which in turn enhances the

academic orientation of the programme. During the visit the panel established that staff dedicated to the MME programme has good research credentials.

WU requires teaching staff to hold a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ): 72% of the MME staff has such UTQ, while another 10% is in the process of obtaining the qualification. The remaining group (18%) consists mainly of experienced senior staff members who started teaching before UTQ became mandatory. The panel noticed in the staff overview and the discussions on site that the MME staff is well qualified to teach this student audience.

Overall, students are quite satisfied with the teaching staff: the appreciation in the most recent National Student Survey was repeated in the student chapter and during the discussion on site. Students like the accessibility, involvement and support of the teaching staff, and think their substantive expertise, didactic skills and thesis supervision capacity are fine, too. The panel acknowledges with satisfaction that students feel well supported by the teaching staff and appreciate the quality of education in the programme.

Furthermore, the discussions on site have shown that the programme director, the programme committee, the study advisers and the staff co-operate as a genuine team. Staff indicated to the panel that the programme director is very supportive and goes at lengths to create a team spirit among staff who belong to many different Chair Groups. According to the panel, the MME programme is doing well because the management is good at facilitating the teaching staff to operate as a team.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the MME programme has a strong teaching-learning environment featuring a coherent curriculum, a befitting didactic concept, a diverse student audience and well-qualified teaching staff. The panel moreover endorses the decision to offer the programme in English, and approves of its English-language title. According to the panel, the MME programme is international in several respects, not just in terms of language.

The panel thinks highly of the efforts of the programme team to revise the curriculum, as well as of the resulting set-up with five specialisations which reflect even better than before the profile of the programme. Moreover, the panel acknowledges with satisfaction that the MME programme 'new style' attracts more students. The curriculum is coherent with the course learning goals, which in turn are clearly aligned to the programme learning outcomes. Moreover, the set-up of the courses is such that students have plenty of opportunities to acquire the individual learning outcomes in an incremental way throughout the two-year study. The combination of different curriculum components – cursory specialisation courses, electives, consultancy project, internship and master thesis – does justice to the unique profile of the programme. Students from their side are satisfied with the curriculum, its options and its feasibility.

The panel appreciates the variety of teaching methods across the curriculum components, which it deems relevant and in alignment with the educational vision of the university. MME students, moreover, benefit very much of the small-scale education, the student support services of the university, and the study advisers of the programme. The latter group is highly

valued by students and should be commended for its professionalism and availability. In addition, the teaching staff is well qualified to apply the programme's educational principles to the substance of their courses, the different teaching formats and the group of students. If anything, staff may want to allow for more interaction and critical discussion in class.

Furthermore, the panel established that in terms of student data, the admission criteria are appropriate and the current intake figures are positive. The success rate is in line with other WUR programmes, the average time to completion is acceptable, and the panel is confident that a stricter follow-up of the master thesis process will limit further study delay.

During the site visit, the panel felt a positive vibe among all stakeholders it spoke to. The panel commends the programme management for creating in this programme a community of students with different backgrounds and interests who are taught and supported by an equally competent and enthusiastic staff team.

In addition to all positive considerations, the panel noticed that students had several relevant suggestions, which would enhance the quality of their programme (specialisations). It therefore encourages the programme team to look for ways to increase the theoretical depth in certain course contents, to include critical, diverse and non-European voices in study materials and classroom debates, and to bring practice to class through real-life cases and by positioning theories in business reality. Furthermore, the panel wonders whether the current study credit allocation of the different programme components (and in particular the 36 EC master thesis) over the two-year 120 EC curriculum is most effective for achieving the profile, ambitions and learning outcomes of the MME programme. Hence, it invites the programme team to reflect on this observation in view of future curriculum adjustments and developments.

Taking these considerations into account, the panel assesses that the programme **meets** this standard.

Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment system

The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that the MME programme operates an assessment system that complies with the university-wide assessment policy. This policy is outlined in the document Education Assessment Policy 2023. The panel has looked into this policy document and found it relevant and comprehensive. The key principles of this assessment policy are validity, reliability, transparency, and efficiency. These principles are reflected in the course assessments, the thesis evaluation, and the functioning of the Examining Board.

Each MME course contains an assessment of the knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the course learning goals. Course assessments typically combine multiple forms of evaluation, such as a written exam and a group assignment, or a paper and a presentation. All course assessments together determine whether a student has achieved the intended learning outcomes at programme level. The panel studied the above-mentioned curriculum matrix, which provides at overall programme level an overview of the programme learning outcomes, the courses and their respective assessment methods per learning outcome. According to the panel, this detailed matrix constitutes a very useful tool for the programme director and the Examining Board to monitor and control the variety of assessment methods and their individual relevance for the course and the learning outcome(s).

The MME programme applies various assessment methods: three types of written exams – featuring open questions, closed questions and combined open/closed questions; written assignments and reports, presentations, and performances. Most of these methods are adopted for both individual and group assignments. The panel understands that such variety helps to ensure that the different learning outcomes are adequately assessed and that students with different learning styles have fair opportunities to demonstrate their competencies. Moreover, the panel notes that the respective assessment formats are appropriate for the content and level of each course. For example, theoretical courses often include individual written exams to test conceptual understanding, while applied courses may require group projects or case study analyses. The panel established during the visit that this mixture of assessment methods contributes to the validity and robustness of the overall system.

The university's electronic learning environment facilitates the transparent communication of assessment criteria, formats, deadlines, and grading schemes. Students are informed in advance about the types of assessments they will face, the weighting of different components, and the criteria used for grading. Lecturers are required to provide feedback within ten working days of an exam or assignment, ensuring that students can learn from the assessment process. The panel gathered from the discussions on site with students and staff that the assessment system is transparent, that students are informed well in advance of the assessment format and possibly the evaluation criteria. Very often students can

prepare for an exam by completing mock tests, an option they very much appreciate.

During the visit, the panel discussed on several occasions and with different stakeholders the developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its impact on course delivery and assessment. The panel was informed that across WUR, the use of generative AI (ChatGPT, BARD, DALL-E, Elicit) to create ready-made content, for example in theses, is considered fraud unless this use of AI is explicitly permitted by the supervisor or examiner. Moreover, examiners are advised to use a variety of assessment methods. Teachers are provided with information, training and education about AI, as well as with examples of correct and incorrect use, and dilemmas. Students indicated that at the initial stages, there was some uncertainty about the use and about the trackability of AI generated texts. This has led to several students being heard by the Examining Board on individual cases of alleged fraud/plagiarism, and the Examining Board often ruling that the student committed an irregularity, which is a lighter form than fraud. Nowadays, the situation as to what is accepted and what not, is much clearer to both students and staff as it is repeated in each and every course and before each and every exam. This, in turn, has reduced somewhat the number of cases brought before the Examining Board. In addition, teachers and Examining Board members mentioned that the university is working on a comprehensive policy, which is likely to affect the contents of the courses, the delivery of education, and the organisation of assessment.

In sum, the panel found that the MME programme is addressing issues of (Generative) AI in a mature and appropriate way. Nonetheless, it is clear to the panel – and the programme – that the developments regarding (Generative) AI require ongoing attention not only in terms

of thesis writing and assessment, but also in didactics. The panel therefore encourages the university to come up at its earliest convenience with proper guidelines, and implement these widely.

Thesis assessment

The master thesis forms the final component of the MME programme. It is an individual research project, conducted within the student's chosen specialisation, and represents the culmination of the student's academic learning. The assessment of the thesis is guided by a standardised university-wide format and procedure. Each thesis is supervised by a staff member from the relevant Chair Group and assessed by the supervisor and an independent second reader. Both assessors are required to use the standard thesis evaluation form, which includes four clusters of criteria: research competence (40%), thesis report (50%), oral presentation (5%), and oral defence (5%). The final grade is determined jointly, and in case of disagreement, a third examiner may be involved.

As part of its external assessment, the panel reviewed a representative sample of 16 master theses, three of which were submitted as part of a Dual Degree Programme, as well as the corresponding completed evaluation forms. The selected theses were submitted in the academic year 2023-2024. The quality of the MME theses will be addressed under the next standard. In so far as thesis assessment is concerned, the panel noticed that the evaluation form is relevant featuring a proper rubric, clear criteria and a transparent grading system. The panel welcomes the good quality rubrics because the previous accreditation report advised to develop rubrics for thesis assessment. The panel was informed that shortly after that visit, WU decided to develop university-wide rubrics for master theses, which in the meantime have become an integral part

of the thesis assessment in the MME programme. Furthermore, the panel found that the weight allocated to the thesis process/research competence (40%) is quite extensive. While above-average attention to the thesis process seems logical in view of the learning goals of the master thesis, the panel nonetheless considers that the current weight allocation somewhat downplays the importance of the research work. Furthermore, it was not clear from the completed evaluation forms whether it is only the supervisor who scores on the research competence/thesis process.

In so far as the completed assessment forms are concerned, the panel noticed that the grades are nicely calibrated and that in all cases the panel agreed to the final score provided by the assessors. Nonetheless, the panel got the impression that grades on the performance part of the thesis are more variable among assessors and often quite high, thus compensating the grade on the thesis report.

Moreover, while most assessment forms were completed in an insightful way, the panel noticed that a number of forms nonetheless contained varying degrees of written feedback. In these cases, the panel noted that comments could have been more detailed or critical, particularly when explaining high marks. In several cases the feedback of the second reader was missing (on the consolidated evaluation forms), while in another case the only written comment consisted of references to comments made beforehand.

While the overall picture is positive and the panel wants to commend the many assessors who did provide insightful feedback, the written thesis feedback is nonetheless an important point for attention (and monitoring in the future), as the previous accreditation panel came

to a similar conclusion. In the previous accreditation report, the then panel recommended among others to improve the extent to which staff members provide comments on their appreciation of the student's work in the thesis assessment form. The current panel was informed that staff members were urged on several occasions to provide their comments and appreciations, but this encouragement has seemingly not yet reached all assessors. The panel therefore advises the programme to set up a system that controls whether each thesis evaluation form has been completed in an insightful way, and only validates / accepts this form after such review. Furthermore, the panel noticed that in terms of archiving, some of the completed assessment forms put at its disposition consisted only of the consolidated assessment form and contained only supervisor feedback. According to the panel, this is (hopefully) a technical issue that requires attention but can be easily repaired.

Overall, the panel found the master thesis assessment to be informative, transparent, and aligned with academic standards. The use of independent assessments, standardised rubrics, and quality checks contributes to the reliability of the process and ensures that the thesis truly reflects the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. In general, the assessment forms were completed properly – the recommendation of the previous panel was effective up to a certain degree – with clear justifications for the scores given. The use of rubrics contributed to consistency and transparency. Hence, the overall thesis assessment process is sound and professionally executed.

Quality assurance

As part of the programme's and university's quality assurance system, all courses and its assessment formats are evaluated by students

through the university's standard course evaluation system. As part of this process, students provide feedback on the clarity of the assessment criteria, the fairness of grading, and the usefulness of feedback. These course evaluations are reviewed and its results discussed by the Programme Committee, which includes both staff and student representatives. The feedback the committee provides to lecturers has led to concrete improvements, such as a clearer communication of grading criteria or an increased consistency in group assessments. Lecturers, moreover, are expected to address any concerns or suggestions for improvement. Students indicated that they appreciate this system and that possible weaknesses in individual course assessments are effectively addressed in the committee and followed up by the programme director and the individual examiner/course coordinator.

Furthermore, the panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that across the one-faculty WU, four Examining Boards are safeguarding the quality of assessment for all degree programmes. They execute their tasks independently from the Board of Education. Every year, all four Boards produce together one Annual Report on their activities. The Examining Boards reject or approve the individual study programmes of students and award student degrees. They appoint the course examiners and monitor changes to the assessment strategy of interim examinations in the annual education modification cycle. As part of their quality assurance activities, the Boards periodically visit Chair Groups to discuss the validity and reliability of the assessments. Moreover, the Examining Board organises thesis review sessions at programme level to assure and enhance the quality of thesis assessment. These checks include a review of the evaluation forms, the use of plagiarism detection software, and the

justification for the final grade. Any irregularities are followed up and may lead to further action or policy adjustments.

In so far as the MME programme is concerned, the Examining Board Social Sciences (EBSS) is in charge of the assessment quality assurance tasks. The EBSS consists of eight members: a chair, two secretaries, four staff members from the domain, and one external member, in this case an academic from another Dutch university (VU). The Board performs both proactive and reactive duties. Proactively, it reviews the new and revised courses, organises calibration meetings for assessors, and conducts thematic reviews on specific assessment-related issues (e.g. the use of rubrics or group grading). Reactively, it investigates complaints, handles cases of fraud or plagiarism, and decides on exemptions or requests for special arrangements.

During the site visit, the panel spoke to several EBSS representatives, who confirmed that they feel sufficiently autonomous to execute their tasks independently. The individual members the panel spoke to also made a very competent impression and were committed to the university, the programme and their safeguarding tasks. The panel gathered from the discussion that EBSS is in regular contact with the MME programme committee, the programme director and the educational coordinators of the respective Chair Groups. Once every four years the EBSS meets each of the 20 Chair Groups that contribute to the Social Sciences domain. Every meeting is prepared by reviewing the courses a Chair Group offers, and is complemented by a follow-up meeting after two years. In this way the assessments pertaining to every course on offer in every programme are quality controlled regularly. This is a huge task, according to the panel, and responds to the recommendation of

the previous accreditation committee that the visit frequency to Chair Groups should be raised. The EBSS regularly performs random checks on completed theses to verify the consistency of grading and compliance with assessment procedures. These checks include among others a review of the evaluation forms, and the justification for the final grade. It also ensures that procedures are consistently followed and that the assessment criteria are applied uniformly across Chair Groups. The panel was informed that the latest MME thesis quality control review took place in July 2022. EBSS was satisfied with the quality and transparency of thesis assessment, and found that the scoring was adequate in the sense that EBSS reviewers agreed to the scores of the thesis assessors. The panel informed EBSS that it came to similar conclusions on thesis assessment in its own review that took place in November 2024.

In sum, the panel was highly satisfied with the way EBSS is implementing its different pro-active and re-active tasks, notably but not exclusively the detail with which it reviews the course and thesis assessments. These processes are well organised and described in a very transparent way. The expertise of EBSS – and the commitment of its members - is reassuring for both the programme and this panel.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the MME programme can rely on a robust system of assessment. This appreciation is based first and foremost on the fact that both course and thesis assessments are embedded in well-established policies and frameworks at the level of the university. The curriculum matrix, moreover, demonstrates that course learning goals are assessed adequately,

which in turn ensures that the different learning outcomes at programme level are covered. Furthermore, the panel establishes that course assessment is carefully designed, varied, and well aligned with the learning objectives. In addition, the transparent information on assessment ensures that students are adequately and fairly assessed throughout the curriculum.

The panel thinks highly of the quality assurance system for assessment, which is comprehensive and effective. The different players have their own roles, which are well defined and complementary. Together, they ensure that assessment practices are regularly reviewed, aligned with institutional policy, and continuously improved based on feedback and reflection. In this regard, the panel commends the Examination Board Social Sciences for its expertise, pro-active approach, commitment, and meticulous reporting. The panel is convinced that the assessment quality of the MME programme is in competent hands with EBSS.

The panel's review of the MME theses demonstrated that in terms of assessment, the evaluation form is relevant. Moreover, the panel agreed in all cases to the thesis scores. However, not all assessors make optimum use of the form yet: their qualitative feedback varies in size and insightfulness and not every individual assessor seems to contribute feedback to the consolidated assessment form. Moreover, the panel considers that the current weight allocated to the thesis process downplays the importance of the research work. Notwithstanding these points for attention, the panel is satisfied that the overall thesis assessment process is executed in a sound and professional way.

Taking these considerations into account, the panel assesses that the programme **meets** this standard.

Achieved learning outcomes

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

Findings

There are two ways to establish whether the intended learning outcomes have been achieved: by reviewing the quality of the graduation projects and by looking at the professional whereabouts of the alumni after their graduation. The panel has looked at both elements when assessing the quality of the programme.

Quality of graduation projects

The MME programme culminates in an individual master thesis of 36 EC. Students can choose a Chair Group and supervisor, provided the thesis topic is relevant for the programme specialisation they are enrolled in. Students are guided through the thesis process by a supervisor from one of the contributing Chair Groups. The thesis research project itself is spread over the final four periods of the second year and consists of three parts: the preparation and drafting of the research proposal, the execution of the research process culminating in a thesis report, and the public presentation with defence.

As part of its external review, the panel studied a representative sample of 16 master theses covering all five specialisations, which were submitted and successfully completed in the academic year 2023-2024. Three of which were submitted as part of a Dual Degree Programme: two with Bonn University and one with Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Overall, the panel found that each and every thesis fulfilled at least the minimum quality requirements of a final master product of academic orientation. In several cases the thesis quality was good to even very good, the topics were interesting and socially relevant, and the research was conducted in a very transparent way. Altogether students

adopted a large diversity of methods and approaches, ranging from qualitative research to highly quantitative analysis of secondary data, from interpretative methods to causal methods (experiments). Given the number of credits allocated to the master thesis, several reports were quite lengthy and featured extensive data and analysis. During the visit, the panel was informed that several students had turned their thesis report in an academic publication afterwards, and that some students were able to present their research at an international conference.

As a point for attention, the panel noticed that some of the theses with lower pass scores were less informative in their abstract, the introductory chapter, and the section on managerial implications. Its major observation, though, pertains to the quality of the thesis in relation to the study load (36 EC) allocated. The panel found the quality of the MME master thesis projects to be good, but overall not very different from the quality and outlook of master theses at other universities where the theses is credited with much less EC (usually between 15 EC and 20 EC). However, the quality of the MME theses can hardly be compared to the quality of research master theses (which usually 'only' account for 30 EC). Hence, while students successfully demonstrate their competencies at master level, the panel invites the programme team to reflect on both the size/study credits and the terms of reference of the master thesis.

Notwithstanding these observations, the panel concludes that the quality of the master thesis is always sufficient, and often really good. The thesis review demonstrated, according to the

panel, that the MME programme successfully prepares students to conduct academic research and synthesise knowledge in a meaningful way.

Performance of graduates

The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that students who graduate the MME programme are successful in their further career. Based on data from WU's Career Monitor, the panel noticed that almost all MME graduates find a job within six months after graduation. While most graduates chose a professional career, 9% of the MME alumni entered a PhD trajectory. According to the panel, this shows that the MME programme effectively prepares its students for both a professional and an academic career.

The data also showed that MME graduates end up in different sectors and with different types of employers: food industry is quite popular (18%), followed by engineering and consultancy agencies (15%), universities and research institutes (10%) and agricultural enterprises and services (10%). Although the panel only spoke to a small group of MME students and recent alumni, their future career plans are similarly diverse. Students and alumni are/were very happy in Wageningen, were/are satisfied with the MME study and now look forward to pursuing a career in a position that is commensurate with the domain of their specialisation and the level of their diploma.

Furthermore, the panel gathered from alumni and employer feedback – collected through surveys, focus groups and advisory committee meetings – that the academic orientation and specialist focus of the MME programme are well suited to current professional demands. MME graduates who enter the labour market have strong research skills, a reflective attitude, and

are able to work in diverse teams. The panel was informed that employers value MME graduates for their analytical skills, multidisciplinary background, and ability to communicate across domains.

In sum, the panel welcomes the attentive follow-up of MME graduates. The data gathered through follow-up surveys indicate that MME graduates are able to function in a professional, academic, interdisciplinary and international environment. They obtain jobs in a broad range of positions and sectors within and beyond the Netherlands and have good career perspectives. The panel is therefore convinced that students who graduate the MME programme possess all end level qualifications.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that students who graduate from the MME programme have effectively acquired all intended learning outcomes. According to the panel, the selected and reviewed MME theses meet the quality expectations for a final project of academic orientation at master level.

Moreover, MME graduates are well prepared for the labour market and find suitable employment that is in line with the level and domain of their studies. Employers consider that the academic orientation and the specialist focus of the programme are well suited to the current demands of the professional field, and appreciate the strong research skills of MME graduates, their reflective attitude and ability to work in diverse teams.

Notwithstanding its positive conclusion on the quality of the selected and reviewed MME theses, the panel observes that the study credits allocated to this master thesis is exceptionally

high. Hence, the panel encourages the programme team to reflect on the MME thesis size and – in line with a previous consideration – establish whether the combination of the curriculum components in their current size constitutes the most effective set-up for this two-year programme.

Taking these considerations into account, the panel assesses that the programme **meets** this standard.

Attachment 1: assessment panel

dr. Eric Dooms, chair

Associate Professor of Strategy-TIAS

prof.dr. Ale Smidts, expert

Professor Marketing Research at Erasmus University Rotterdam

prof.dr. Ed Peelen, expert

Academic director UvA Academy, University of Amsterdam

Karen Taselaar, student-member

Student BSc International Business Administration, University of Twente

The panel was supported by Mark Delmartino MA, certified secretary.

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

Attachment 2: site visit programme

Location: Leeuwenborch, building 201, Hollandseweg 1, Wageningen

Wednesday 11 December 2024

- 08.45 Arrival panel
- 09.30 Management of programmes
- 10.30 Students Bachelor programme
- 11.15 Teaching staff Bachelor programme
- 12.15 Examining Board and Study advisors
- 13.00 Lunch and internal meeting
- 14.00 Students Master programme and Alumni
- 14.45 Teaching staff Master programme
- 15.45 Final meeting with Management of programmes
- 16.00 Internal panel deliberations
- 17.00 Development dialogue
- 17.45 Preliminary feedback
- 18.00 End of site visit

Attachment 3: Recommendations from previous assessment

Since the previous visitation of MME in 2018, the programme has been substantially restructured. The main reason for the restructuring was the lack of room for specialisation in the programme. This was noted by the visitation panel in 2018 and signalled also by students and staff on several occasions. The main reason for the lack of room for specialisation was the programming of two MME-broad common courses at the start of the programme. These two courses, meant to fit with students of all specialisations, in fact did not really fit with the majority of the students. Because of the broadness of the programme, it appeared very difficult to develop courses that are interesting and relevant for all students. These challenges lead to the decision to skip the two common courses and to reconsider and completely re-define the specialisations. After the Programme Committee undertook these steps and received permission from the Board of Education, committees consisting of lecturers from the chair groups involved in the different specialisations started redeveloping the curriculum of each of the specialisations under close supervision of the programme committee. The resulting new MME programme with the five largely independent specialisations was offered for the first time in the study year 2022-2023.

The new set up of the programme has increased the room for specialisation considerably and has also contributed to the research character of the programme. The suggestion of the previous visitation panel to add a design perspective was taken up especially in the specialisations Sustainable Business and Innovation (in the course conceptual Innovation Lab) and Governance of Sustainability Transformations (in the course Designing Governance for the Future). The suggestion of the previous visitation panel to increase the exposure to life sciences for students with a non-life sciences background has not led to the inclusion of specific life science courses in any of the specialisations. The reason is that also within the current courses there is quite some exposure to life sciences by means of guest lectures and excursions. Moreover, it would be quite arbitrary to choose one particular life science course, since the palette of life science courses is quite broad at Wageningen University, as is the interest of students. Profiling courses offer a much better opportunity to increase life science knowledge in any direction for each individual student.

Next to the recommendations regarding the content of the programme and the depth of the specialisations, the previous visitation panel made a number of additional recommendations. These comments and the follow up actions and developments are as follows.

The panel recommended to address personal development and reflection on personal development in the learning outcomes more explicitly. A reflection report is part of all internships. The programme team is working on the inclusion of a type of self-assessment similar to that of the BSc programme Business and Consumer studies. A pilot is taking place in the Consumer Studies specialisation. Once this self-assessment is included in all specialisations personal development can be extended in the learning outcomes.

The panel recommended to diversify the composition of the advisory council in terms of the study background of the members. This has taken place as can be seen from the composition of the current advisory council.

The panel recommended to improve the rate of staff members who have obtained their UTQ. The figures in subsection 2.3 show that this rate has increased. Additionally, WU offers now also a recently developed Senior Teaching Qualification training.

The panel recommended to look for ways to improve the study success rate. One way to do this is to decrease the study delay that students often face during their thesis. This has been addressed by implementing more strict rules for the time planning of the thesis. However, especially due to the Covid19 epidemic, results of this are not visible yet.

Finally, the panel made three recommendations regarding the assessment of the thesis:

- to consider having a third staff member involved in the assessment of the thesis, preferably representing another Chair Group;
- to develop rubrics for the assessment of the thesis;
- to improve the extent to which staff members provide comments and explain their appreciation of the student's work on the assessment form.

Improvement of the assessment of the thesis has been given quite some attention within Wageningen University as a whole. By formalising the independent assessments of the two assessors in Osiris, objectivity of the assessment has increased. A third assessor has been discussed but was not accepted by the majority of people involved, mainly due to the increase of workload. University wide Rubrics for the assessment of the thesis have been developed and are an integral part of all thesis assessments. Finally, staff members were urged on several occasions (visits to Chair Groups and thesis reviews of the Examining Board, and email reminders to thesis supervisors) to explain their appreciation of the student's work on the assessment form in addition to the verbal feedback given.

Attachment 4: reviewed documents

Self-evaluation Management, Economics, and Consumer Studies MSc

Annexes to the self-evaluation

- Faculty structure and organisation
- Learning outcomes specified per specialisation
- EQUAL Guidelines for Doctoral Programmes in Business and Management
- External advisory committee
- Contribution of MME courses to specialisation learning outcomes and type of assessment
- Key staff, including qualifications
- Education and Examination Regulations 2024-2025
- Course guide, assessment form and rubric MSc thesis

Additional materials

- Governance structure and the organisation of Wageningen University Degree Programmes
- Framework for Education WUR 2024-2025
- Materials on selected MME courses
- Data on MME students
- Annual reports Examining Boards WUR 2022-2023, 2021-2022 and 2020-2021
- Annual reports and year plans Programme Committee 2022-2023, 2021-2022 and 2020-2021
- Assessment policy WUR
- Study advice service level commitment 2023
- Student guidance – find your way 2025
- Information on Dual Degree programmes in Bonn and Cremona

Thesis review

A representative sample of 16 graduation works and their assessment forms, selected among students graduating the master programme Management, Economics, and Consumer Studies in 2023-2024. Three out of the 16 theses were submitted as part of a Dual Degree Programme: two from Bonn University, 1 from the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Names and student numbers are available with evaluation agency AeQui.

