

**Police Academy of the Netherlands  
Canterbury Christ Church University**

**Master of Science in Policing**

**Report on Joint Programme Assessment**

**April 2025**



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

SUMMARY .....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	7
PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT.....	9
Organisation.....	9
Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes.....	10
Standard 2 – Teaching and learning environment .....	13
Standard 3 – Assessment .....	19
Standard 4 – Achieved learning outcomes .....	23
Standard 5 – Facilities .....	25
Standard 6 – Quality Assurance .....	27
Overall conclusion.....	30
ANNEXES .....	31
Annex A – Administrative data on institution and programme.....	31
Annex B – Panel.....	32
Annex C – Site visit programme .....	33
Annex D – Materials reviewed .....	34
Annex E – Follow-up previous accreditation .....	37



## **SUMMARY**

On 31 January 2025, an independent accreditation panel visited the Police Academy of the Netherlands (PAN) in Apeldoorn to perform a quality assessment of the Master of Science in Policing, a joint award degree offered by PAN and Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) in the UK. The MSc in Policing is a post-initial part-time 90 EC programme that aims to provide police officers with an academic understanding of strategic policing tasks in a network-driven context, nationally and internationally. The programme has both an academic and a professional orientation as students carry out independent comparative research for the benefit of policing practice.

The underlying document reports on the assessment of the MSc in Policing according to the Assessment framework for the higher education system in the Netherlands. The panel established that the programme meets all six NVAO standards for the accreditation of existing programmes: intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, assessment, achieved learning outcomes, facilities, and quality assurance. As a result, the panel's overall assessment of the MSc in Policing is **positive**.

The panel considers that the MSc in Policing has a clear and distinctive profile, proper **intended learning outcomes**, and is well connected to the professional field. The programme benefits from the long-standing cooperation between the partner institutions, PAN and CCCU. The intended learning outcomes are formulated adequately in terms of the domain (policing), the level (master) and the orientation (academic) of the programme. Different stakeholders are involved in monitoring and safeguarding the relevance of the programme learning outcomes, including a recently established Work Field Advisory Committee.

The panel considers that the MSc in Policing has a strong **teaching-learning environment** featuring a coherent curriculum, a befitting didactic concept, highly resourceful students and well-qualified teaching staff. The curriculum is broad in content, feasible in structure, and maintains a connection between programme learning outcomes and course learning goals. The educational principles underlying the curriculum (delivery) are in line with the vision of the partner institutions and benefit the target group and their particular professional situation. The lecturing and tutorial staff involved in the MSc in Policing is highly qualified to deliver their share of the programme in terms of expertise and didactics. While the programme attracts high potentials, the intake, throughput and success rate figures remain below expectation.

The panel considers that the MSc Policing can rely on a robust system of **assessment**. Course and thesis assessments are embedded in established policies and frameworks at the level of the partner institutions. The curriculum is set up in such a way that course learning goals are assessed adequately, which in turn ensures that the different learning outcomes at programme level are covered. The transparent information on assessment, and the use of feedback and feed forward ensure that students are adequately and fairly assessed. In this regard, the thesis review showed that the evaluation form is relevant, the marking is correct and the feedback insightful.

The programme can rely on good quality provisions to safeguard the quality of assessment through independent oversight by several boards and the External Examiners.

The panel considers that the **learning outcomes** are assessed – and demonstrated - in a systematic way. Its thesis review has shown that students who successfully finish the master thesis, have effectively **achieved** all learning outcomes. Their quality was good and through their research, students contribute to the organisation and are recognised as experts in their domain. Although there is no formal connection (yet) between completing the master study and making internal promotion in the Dutch Police, programme graduates nonetheless move on within the organisation to positions that are commensurate with the level of their studies.

The panel considers that the MSc in Policing programme can rely on excellent **facilities**. The written materials, as well as the discussions and the guided tour on site showed that the renovated building of the Police Academy is state-of-the-art, where students and staff have at disposition good quality study facilities, and a well-equipped library.

The panel considers that **quality assurance** provisions governing the MSc in Policing are up to standard: its mechanisms are comprehensive and address external and internal provisions. The quality assurance system has a clear structure and encompasses all relevant stakeholders and programme components.

Finally, the panel established during the visit that partner institutions pay careful attention to complying with the requirements of their constituencies. This approach indicates a deeply engrained sense of, and commitment to, ongoing quality improvement. Hence, it is fair to conclude that MSc Policing stakeholders are all part of a widely shared **quality culture**.

Looking towards the future, the panel suggests five **points for development**:

- integrate the distinctive programme elements (or flavour) in the generic learning outcomes, notably its international dimension and its emphasis on research competencies;
- communicate in recruitment/intake sessions about the kinds of job profiles that may be open to MSc Policing graduates;
- look for a structural and sustainable solution for the high number of drop-outs;
- reconsider the size of the written course assignments and replace part of the assignment load with alternative forms of assessment;
- be proactive in thesis supervision, strict in upholding the indicative thesis length, and monitor that students comply with the ethical requirements on research data privacy.

On behalf of the entire accreditation panel,

Prof. dr. Francis Pakes  
Chair

Mark Delmartino MA  
Secretary

Date: 16 April 2025

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Master of Science (MSc) in Policing **programme** is a post-initial part-time 90 EC programme that aims to provide police officers with a deep academic understanding of issues relating to strategic policing tasks in a network-driven context, nationally and internationally. It sets out to enable students – nearly all of whom work in or with the police – to blend operational experience with research findings, and acquire an international and comparative view on policing. The programme results from a long-standing intensive cooperation between the Police Academy of the Netherlands (PAN) and Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) in the UK. The administrative data on the institutions and the programme are listed in Annex A.

On behalf of the programme, PAN composed a peer review **panel** and hired an independent secretary for this single programme assessment. The panel, which was submitted to - and approved by - NVAO is presented in Annex B.

The **site visit schedule** was discussed and agreed between PAN, the panel chair and the secretary. Annex C contains the schedule of the site visit. The programme team selected representative partners for the various interviews and determined that the development dialogue would take place right after the final session of the site visit. The results of this development meeting will be reported separately by the programme team.

In the run-up to the visit, the programme prepared a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and made this available to the panel, together with a set of relevant additional **materials**. As part of this external review, the panel also studied 15 master theses and their assessment forms, i.e. all final products that had been successfully submitted since the previous accreditation visit. All materials are listed in Annex D.

During the accreditation visit in 2019, the previous panel made some recommendations for further development. The actions taken by the programme in response to the **previous accreditation** are described in Annex E. The current panel has integrated this follow-up into its considerations for the present assessment.

Preparing for this external assessment, the panel chair and secretary organised an online **introduction meeting** for panel members on 14 December 2024. At this meeting, the scope of the accreditation was presented, as well as guidelines how to process the programme and thesis materials. Furthermore, the panel identified a few topics for further clarification, agreed to report in writing on their initial impressions in advance of the site visit, and decided to hold an extensive preparatory meeting on the eve of the site visit. The panel members then studied the information and sent their findings to the secretary, who processed their first impressions from both SER and thesis review in a compilation document.

At its **preparatory meeting** on 30 January 2025 in Apeldoorn, the panel discussed these initial findings, prioritised the topics for discussion and agreed on a division of tasks during the discussions. An open consultation hour for MSc Policing students and staff was scheduled as part of this preliminary meeting; however, nobody made use of the opportunity to speak individually and confidentially with the panel.

The external assessment is based on the Accreditation Framework for Higher Education in the Netherlands. Given that PAN did not apply for an institutional quality assurance audit (ITK), the panel assessed six standards of the **evaluation framework**: intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, assessment, achieved learning outcomes, facilities, and quality assurance. The panel conducted the assessment independently and received all necessary information to arrive at a judgement. At the end of the site visit, the panel informed programme and institutional representatives about its findings, considerations and conclusions.

The secretary then drafted a first version of the **assessment report** and shared it with the panel members for review. Their feedback was integrated in a second draft, validated by the panel chair and sent to PAN for a check on factual errors. Their response was incorporated in this final version of the report.

## **PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT**

### **Organisation**

The MSc in Policing is the result of a long-standing working relationship between the Police Academy of the Netherlands (PAN) and Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). It started in 2004 with the European Diploma in Policing programme, and resulted in a Memorandum of Agreement to jointly set-up an MSc in Policing in 2005.

PAN has the legal status of a university of applied sciences. With regard to business and personnel management, finance and recruitment, PAN is part of the National Police organisation. In terms of education/training, examination, knowledge and research, the Police Academy operates as an Independent Governing Body. Its bachelor and master programmes are diploma-equivalent to programmes at a similar qualification level of universities or universities of applied sciences.

At CCCU, the MSc Policing sits within the School of Law, Policing and Social Sciences (part of the Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences) and reflects its wide and long experience in police academic education. Staff within the School have been cooperating with police forces in the UK and internationally in the delivery of education programmes. Staff has also been developing research on law enforcement, which is reflected in the research-informed education in the programme modules.

The joint programme has been accredited three times by NVAO and was validated simultaneously by CCCU. According to the terminology of NVAO and art 7.3c of the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act, the programme has the status of a Joint Degree. This 'jointness' of the programme is explicitly mentioned in the NVAO Decision from March 2020 confirming the maintenance of the programme accreditation. For the UK's Quality Assurance Agency, the MSc Policing is referred to as a Joint Award.

The panel was informed that over the years, there has been some internal discussion on the status of the MSc in Policing programme. After the latest UK-led Periodic Partner Review, both institutions agreed to "refrain from this interpretation issue and stick to what we agree upon, i.e. that our joint programme (thus not a franchised one) is fully in line with PAN's and CCCU's definition of a Joint Award: where the University works with one or more degree awarding bodies for the purposes of course design, approval, delivery and assessment. Courses are jointly awarded to students by all degree awarding bodies. In this case, the degree awarding bodies are CCCU and PAN."

The Joint Degree/Award is led by two Course Directors at PAN and CCCU, who report to the programme board, which consists of representatives of both institutions. PAN delivers 80% and CCCU 20% of the teaching in the programme courses. The quality assurance provisions are

shared across both organisations equally and described in detail under standard 6. They fulfil the requirements for both Dutch and the UK quality assurance bodies.

## **Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes**

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

### **Profile**

The MSc in Policing is a post-initial part-time 90 EC programme that aims to provide police officers with an academic understanding of strategic policing tasks in a network-driven context, nationally and internationally. It aims at an academic understanding and comparison of policing issues and strategies, and enables students to blend operational experience with research findings, and acquire an international and comparative view on policing. Because it wants to contribute to a safer society through (inter)national cooperation between the police, their partners and the public, the programme is open to police officers and police support staff from the Netherlands and abroad, as well as to members of related public administration institutes and private security agencies. The MSc in Policing has both an academic and a professional orientation as students carry out independent comparative research for the benefit of policing practice. Police science/policing is viewed as a conglomerate of domains including aspects from criminology, sociology, (social) psychology, political science, and law. The panel acknowledged prior to the site visit that the MSc in Policing is quite a unique programme that combines all the above-mentioned buzz words: strategic policing, networking, (inter)national cooperation, comparative research and viewpoints, etc. The panel's discussions on site have only strengthened this view: students, alumni and staff concurred in emphasising that this master programme is about educating student-professionals on strategic policing in an international environment thereby combining an academic with a professional orientation.

Furthermore, the panel gathered from the written materials and several insightful policy documents that the MSc in Policing is in alignment with the current strategic missions of both programme partners, the Dutch National Police and UK's College of Policing. The Strategic Agenda of the Police Academy and the ministerially approved Research Agenda emphasise the important (inter)national network position of the Police amongst safety and security stakeholders. According to the Police Academy, the programme contributes to filling strategic positions in the police or with partner organisations. MSc Policing graduates are academic reflective practitioners who are likely to be recruited for the coordination of operational tactics or strategies, for supportive tasks at a strategic policing level or for leadership positions in law enforcement. Because working at a strategic level implies that students/graduates can communicate internationally about their research findings, participants are expected to have a good grasp of English and are examined in English.

During the visit, the panel gained a better view on another key aspect of the MSc in Policing programme: its joint character, which is promoted through the intensive cooperation (agreement) between two partner institutions. While the self-evaluation report seemed to emphasise mainly the Dutch side of the programme – after all, the programme was to obtain re-accreditation from the Dutch authorities – the discussions on site with representatives of both institutions were very informative on the terms of reference, the respective tasks and roles, and the day-to-day governance of the programme. The panel noticed in this respect that the international dimension is now better defined and operationalised than it was the case during the previous accreditation visit, when the then panel recommended the programme to enhance its international orientation. The panel also understood from the discussions with the institutional/programme management that both partners have a long-standing cooperation agreement on which they are both proud, which they both honour to the full, and which they are both keen to maintain, notwithstanding difficult budgetary / political conditions for maintaining a joint international programme in both the UK and the Netherlands. At the end of the site visit, the panel concluded that the international partnership / cooperation brings the MSc in Policing programme to a higher level, where the result is greater than the sum of its parts.

### **Intended learning outcomes**

The intended learning outcomes of the MSc in Policing are described in terms of a qualification profile. Students who graduate from the programme should be able to demonstrate 16 competencies clustered in four categories: professional, contextual, social and individual. These categories make it easier for police officers to understand what is useful, valuable and required for policing tasks. The generic learning outcomes integrate knowledge and skills, and are geared to the professional strategic needs of the Dutch Police as described in its recently established future-oriented occupational profile 2020-2030.

Looking at the formulation of the 16 learning outcomes, the panel noticed that these are set at (master) level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework, which coincides with the Dutch NLQF 7 framework and with the Framework for Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. According to the panel, the learning outcomes are aligned to different normative frameworks and focus in particular on the professional strategic needs of the Dutch police. Moreover, the formulation of the learning outcomes is clear and suitable for a master of science degree.

The learning outcomes / competencies permeate the content of the entire curriculum and are described in a more systematic way in the learning goals per module. The panel has studied the qualification profile, the 16 generic competencies at programme level, and the overview of more specific and more detailed course learning goals. Overall, the panel established that there is a strong connection between the course/module learning goals and the programme learning outcomes/competencies. This connection, in turn, ensures that taken altogether, the curriculum modules allow students to acquire the programme learning outcomes.

While it is positive about the direct connection between the qualification profile and the competencies to be achieved at programme level, the panel indicated to the programme team that the 16 intended learning outcomes in their current form do not necessarily do justice to the breadth of the programme profile – the above-mentioned keywords and the curriculum content. In fact, the intended learning outcomes pay more attention to what is expected of a (Dutch) police officer than to the particular flavour of the MSc in Policing, i.e. the combination of international, intercultural, interdisciplinary and research-driven approaches in a joint programme. Discussing these findings with the programme team, the panel understood that all these aspects are mentioned in the course learning goals and will therefore be assessed eventually in one of the programme modules. Nonetheless, the panel advises the programme team to consider incorporating more explicitly the distinctive flavour of the MSc in Policing into the learning outcomes, e.g. by adding references to international competencies and research competencies. Anticipating on its thesis review findings in standard 4, the panel found that MSc in Policing students demonstrate more and distinctive end-level competencies than what is prescribed in the qualification profile.

### **Safeguarding programme relevance**

The panel gathered from the written materials that the generic Intended Learning Outcomes are evaluated whenever the occupational profiles for the police are altered. Compared to the previous profile, which was applicable during the previous accreditation round, the new profile for the period 2020-2030 has led to both changes and continuation. Changes concern more attention to some of the contextual competencies and the emphasis on the police officer as a resilient professional and a reflective practitioner. Competencies that continue to be relevant relate to governance, ethical considerations, networking in a multidisciplinary context, and diversity. Both changes and continuation are operationalised at the level of the specific course learning goals and in the titles of the course weeks. The broadly formulated learning outcomes at programme level are reviewed regularly through evaluations by lecturers, students, alumni, external examiners, or the Work Field Advisory Committee (WAC).

The panel was informed that the WAC was established only in 2024 but has in the meantime emphasised among others the importance of internationalisation in the curriculum and the availability of literature on the changing society and the function of the police. Furthermore, it advised the programme team not to increase the number of students, to include more guest lectures and make better use of the alumni network for the recruitment of high potential police officers. The panel welcomes the establishment of the WAC. Its discussion with the WAC chair during the site visit revealed that the committee could take up an important advisory position in the programme eco-system. The programme may want to ask the WAC for advice on how to incorporate the programme's distinctive flavour in the intended learning outcomes.

### **Considerations**

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

The programme educates student-professionals on strategic policing in an international environment thereby combining an academic with a professional orientation: the students / police officers acquire knowledge, insights and skills in different domains and carry out comparative research for the benefit of policing practice. Compared to the previous accreditation round, the international dimension is now better defined and operationalised. Moreover, the panel thinks highly of the long-standing and effective cooperation (agreement) between the two partner institutions, PAN and CCCU.

The intended learning outcomes describe the competencies that are expected of a police officer graduating the MSc in Policing programme. They are formulated adequately in terms of the domain (policing), the level (master) and the orientation (academic) of the programme. Notwithstanding the connection between the specific learning goals at course/module level and the more generic learning outcomes at programme level, the panel sees room for a more explicit integration in these generic competencies of the programme's distinctive flavour, notably its international dimension and its emphasis on research competencies.

The panel welcomes the involvement of different stakeholders in monitoring and safeguarding the relevance of the programme learning outcomes. In this regard, the recently established Work Field Advisory Committee is an additional asset to the programme.

## **Conclusion**

The panel judges that the MSc Policing **meets** standard 1, intended learning outcomes.

## **Standard 2 – Teaching and learning environment**

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

### **Curriculum**

The MSc in Policing consists of 90 EC. The curriculum is divided in three modules of 20 EC and a master thesis of 30 EC. Each module consists of four residential course weeks with self-study intervals. Most course weeks are held in the Netherlands: currently the first and ninth residential weeks are held in Canterbury and in Münster, respectively, while there are plans to organise another course week in Canterbury. Every module features an extensive reading list and is completed with one or more assessments and/or assignments.

The panel gathered from the module descriptions that the curriculum is structured in a coherent way. Each module has its own learning goals, which are linked to the programme learning outcomes and address at least one competence from each category (professional, contextual, social, individual).

Since the previous accreditation visit, the curriculum structure has remained intact but the course contents and the organisation of the residential weeks have changed further to student and alumni evaluations and the substantive developments in policing. The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that the current course weeks are less overcrowded in activities than before, and contain every time a two-hour session on research methods in general and on the specific module assignments in particular. The panel spoke to the dedicated research coordinator of the programme and endorses his approach to bringing all students up to par in terms of research/methods skills during these weeks. Furthermore, students can take individual tutoring sessions during these weeks. The topics and contents of the residential weeks have altered to some extent, and align well with the topics that are highlighted in the qualification profile. In addition, the programme offers students the opportunity to enhance their personal effectiveness throughout their study. Overall, the curriculum contents have been broadened over the past few years, which in turn has allowed students to dedicate their master thesis research to a wider range of topics. According to the panel, the programme team has addressed in good order this recommendation of the previous accreditation report to broaden the curriculum contents.

The master thesis is largely an individual endeavour, with the student performing research and discussing progress with his/her supervisor. The panel was informed that also in the master thesis process, a novelty is occurring in the sense that every six weeks there are dedicated time slots for students to discuss their thesis progress in a colloquium with fellow students and the research coordinator.

During the site visit, students and alumni indicated to the panel that they very much appreciate the programme curriculum, as well as the attention paid by the programme team to take on board student suggestions for improvement. In this way, the current residential weeks are much more effective – and interesting – than before. Students also appreciate the additional and systematic support on research skills, as well as the opportunities for tutoring and thesis discussions.

Asked what they would like to change in the programme, one student suggested to make a better link between the master thesis research of an individual student on the one hand, and the individual operations of this student as police officer on the other hand. Other students indicated that during the residential weeks, there is room for providing (even more) different perspectives on a subject by guest lectures with other than academic profiles (for instance a mayor, an activist, etc.). In this regard, one staff member proudly mentioned to the panel that they had invited a ‘real anarchist’ to speak to the class. While students appreciate the (increased) involvement of international staff, as well as their two exchange visits to CCCU and DHP, there is room for more emphasis on the comparative and international aspect in the programme.

Based on its own readings of the materials and its internal deliberations after each discussion round on site, the panel identified one curriculum-related element that requires further attention and consideration by the programme team: to pay more explicit attention to the place of research ethics during the study. The discussions on site and the findings from the thesis review seem to

indicate that students are not always aware of the wealth of (police) data they have at disposition for their assignments and thesis research, that access to data comes with responsibilities, and that their treatment of (police) data requires dedicated attention and reference in the master thesis. According to the programme team, there is an ethics committee (being created) in PAN, but it still has to be connected to the MSc in Policing students who work on a master thesis (proposal).

### **Learning environment**

The MSc in Policing is delivered in a learning environment, which reflects the educational vision of both partner institutions as well as the strategic principles of the Dutch Police. CCCU's learning, teaching and assessment strategy and PAN's educational vision share similar characteristics as they both want to provide a challenging and inclusive learning environment that consists of student-centred learning, flexible learning pathways, research proficiency, blended learning, and reflecting on practice.

The quintessence of PAN's educational vision is to bridge the gap between theory and practice, which is achieved through competence-oriented education, context-bound courses, and a complementary training system. In terms of the MSc in Policing programme, this means that (i) competencies are dealt with as an integrated application of academic and professional knowledge and skills; (ii) the curriculum modules reflect core tasks of policing at a strategic level; and that (iii) learning assignments are derived from police practice needs and independent research findings, while the recommendations that come out of these assignments are fed back into the organisation (National Police) the students work for.

According to the panel, the specific learning environment of the programme with its flexible pathways and student-centred learning facilitates the work-life balance of the student-professionals, as well as the work-study balance of the police officers. The educational principles underlying the (delivery of the) curriculum benefit the specific target group and the particular situation of their professional environment. The timing and planning of the combined residential weeks and self-study intervals are aligned with the planning schemes of the Dutch Police, while the course weeks are organised in such a way that they remain feasible for the students.

### **Student intake, progression and completion**

In order to apply for the MSc in Policing, students should hold a Dutch Bachelor of Policing degree, a Dutch academic or professional bachelor's degree including the demonstrated ability to apply basic research methods, a UK Bachelor's degree with Honours, or an equivalent (foreign) award including research methods. All applicants are invited for an intake interview to establish whether they possess the required competences to complete the course, notably regarding research skills and English language proficiency. Students who lack the research skills can be advised to take research tutorials. During the interview, students are also asked to reflect on the impact of the study on their work-life balance.

According to the panel, the admission requirements for the programme are clear and relevant. During the discussions on site, students and alumni indicated that the application process was sometimes rather stressful as several candidates had obtained their initial degree a long time ago and were concerned about their capacity to refresh their knowledge and skills. All students (and alumni) the panel spoke to seem to do well during their study, which means that the academic admission requirements for the programme are set at the right level.

The panel did notice, though, that students had made different agreements with their superiors in so far as compensation for the study is concerned. While students were usually allowed to attend the residential weeks as part of their regular working hours, the situation was less clear in some cases for the time they spent in-between on self-study or the master thesis. Moreover, some students had management or supervision tasks - or were promoted to such positions during their study - which made it difficult to be absent from work. Hence, the panel suggested three actions to the programme team: first, to indicate in recruitment/announcement communications that a sufficient amount of freedom on the job is required during the study period; second, to pay more explicit attention during the intake interview to this compensation arrangement of the individual candidate with his/her superiors; and third, to advocate with the Dutch Police for a common HR policy arrangement to compensate for the study time.

In terms of intake, throughput and success rate, the panel gathered from the written materials that the target number of fifteen students per cohort is not reached. According to the programme team, there are different reasons for the relatively low intake numbers. One important reason is that the MSc in Policing is – still – not part of the needs assessment policy of the Dutch Police organisation. This means that students can apply for the programme but are not assured that they will (automatically) be promoted upon graduation. In this regard, the panel indicated that the programme team could communicate more explicitly on the three profiles the MSc in Policing is preparing for: while there is no automatic promotion upon graduation, graduates do tend to end up in leadership positions, in strategic advisory positions, or as operational specialists.

Another reason is that the programme is very hesitant to open up to other national or international student-professionals who are not policing professionals. The panel understood from the discussions on site that this is an ongoing issue at PAN. While many participants see the benefits of a wider student audience, there are also formal limitations – such as access to data/information for ‘external’ participants – which would make the organisation of the course much more cumbersome. In this regard, the panel suggests to discuss formally with the different programme bodies if the MSc Policing is a study for police officers only, for police officers and other policing professionals, or also for qualified professionals with an interest but no background in strategic policing affairs. In addition, there is the issue whether this joint degree is truly international if only Dutch students attend.

In terms of throughput, the panel noticed that quite a big number of students drop out during their studies, while others take a very long period to graduate. Since the previous accreditation period, 16 students have graduated, while one third of the enrolled students dropped out. On

average, it took students about 4,5 years to graduate. The programme team acknowledged that both the drop-out rate and the completion time were high. In order to tackle these issues, several measures were taken since 2022:

- interviewing applicants about their undergraduate background, especially with regard to the level of research skills and proficiency in English, next to their motivation to embark on the MSc Policing Course;
- emphasising that the nominal duration of the course is three years, with the possibility of a three-year extension due to private reasons or particular policing obligations;
- monitoring the progress of each cohort;
- differentiating the type of tutoring: personal contacts by course directors, research skills by the research coordinator, and personal effectiveness by an expert coach;
- setting, and maintaining, stricter deadlines for course work submissions;
- intensifying contacts with management development advisers and HRM staff in the police force.

Students who started in a more recent cohort emphasised that setting clear expectations regarding the nominal duration of the study and the deadlines for assignments contribute to creating a community feeling among the cohort: now more than before students have the idea that they are all in together for a three-year study. The panel welcomes the efforts of the programme team to reduce the number of drop-outs as well as the average study time to completion. The discussions with students indicated that these measures seem to be effective. The panel therefore encourages the programme team to maintain the above-mentioned measures and follow-up attentively the progress of each cohort and its individual students.

## **Staff**

The panel gathered from the written materials that taking both partner institutions together, the master programme relies on more than 30 lecturers: 10+ from CCCU and 20+ from PAN. In line with the partnership agreement, CCCU staff is responsible for delivering 20% of the teaching on the programme. All PAN lecturers involved in the MSc in Policing hold a PhD, have a didactical qualification, are expert in a particular discipline and have a formal examiner status or experience at level 7 programmes. Moreover, six staff on the PAN payroll combine a lectorate at PAN with a professorship at a Dutch university. The panel was informed that staff from CCCU fulfil similar requirements, which are set out in CCCU People Plan 2024-2025. Moreover, police practitioners who contribute valuable input in terms of professional expertise and experience to the programme invariably occupy senior positions.

Studying the CVs of the staff involved and talking to a number of module convenors and course week managers, the panel found that the lecturers are well qualified to teach on the master programme. Students and alumni from their side indicated to the panel that they highly appreciate the expertise and didactical skills of the lecturers, as well as their availability and their commitment to the programme and the students.

Furthermore, the panel was informed that the tutorial sessions have been reorganised recently and now focus on three aspects: (i) research skills and correct referencing by the research coordinator, (ii) study progress including work-life balance by the Dutch Course Director; and (iii) personal effectiveness in a job context through a combination of group and individual sessions with an expert. The panel noticed that the tutoring provisions are in conformance with CCCU's Personal Academic Tutor Policy guidelines. Moreover, due to the small scale of the cohorts, informal contacts between students and academic staff are easy to make. Students indicated to the panel that the tutorial offer is very much appreciated: while they do not serve all students equally well, each student is likely to need guidance or support at some point in their study on research methods, work-life balance and/or personal effectiveness. The panel met several tutors and thought highly of their expertise, as well as their commitment to the programme and their availability to the students.

Finally, the panel noticed that in order to follow-up study progress, the Course Directors confer every four months with module leaders, course week managers and teachers, and with the management of the Sectors Higher Education and Knowledge & Research at PAN. Moreover, individual meetings are held every three months with module leaders. The panel welcomes these oversight meetings, which are likely to signal study progress issues at an early stage at both cohort and individual level.

### **Considerations**

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the MSc in Policing has a strong teaching and learning environment featuring a coherent curriculum, a befitting didactic concept, highly resourceful students and well-qualified teaching staff.

The panel acknowledges the efforts of the programme team to address the recommendations of the previous accreditation panel. As a result, the current curriculum is broader in content and more feasible in structure, while maintaining a strong connection between programme learning outcomes and course learning goals. The current set-up of the curriculum facilitates the work-life balance of the students, as well as the work-study balance of the police officers.

The panel thinks highly of the learning environment. The educational principles underlying the (delivery of the) curriculum are in line with the educational vision of the partner institutions. Concepts such as flexible pathways, student-centred learning, challenging and inclusive learning environment, research proficiency, blended learning and reflecting on practice benefit the specific target group and the particular situation of their professional environment.

The programme invariably attracts high potentials within the Dutch Police. The admission requirements are clear and the curriculum components are feasible. Nonetheless, the programme is doing less well in terms of intake, throughput and success rate. The panel understands the current rationale for the intake but suggests the programme to discuss internally whether this is still the most relevant approach. It also appreciates the comprehensive efforts of the programme team to reduce the number of drop-outs, as well as the average study time to completion. The panel encourages the programme team 'to keep up the good work' as the first

results are promising. Nonetheless, a more structural solution is needed, possibly by advocating (even more than before) with the Dutch Police that the programme should become part of their needs assessment and that students who enrol on the programme should benefit from a common compensation arrangement for the time they spent on their studies.

Finally, the panel considers that the staff involved in the MSc in Policing are resourceful and highly qualified to deliver their share of the programme in terms of expertise and didactics. This appreciation does not only cover the lecturers but also extends to the tutorial staff. In this regard, the panel appreciates the efforts of the programme team to restructure the tutorial sessions in line with the specific needs of the students.

### **Conclusion**

The panel judges that the MSc in Policing **meets** standard 2, teaching-learning environment.

## **Standard 3 – Assessment**

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

### **System of assessment**

The panel gathered from the written materials that the principles behind the MSc Policing assessment strategy reflects the educational vision and the learning and teaching strategy of both CCCU and PAN. As already mentioned under the previous standards, the programme maintains a clear connection between the learning outcomes at programme level and the learning goals at module level. Similarly, there is alignment between the course learning goals and the forms of assessment in each module. These connections are not only clear to the programme management and the teaching staff, but are made explicit in the student handbook and during the induction session at the start of the programme.

The MSc in Policing consists of three modules and a master thesis. Each module has its own (types of) assessment:

- Module one – Policing Models - combines an oral literature exam and a written literature review report;
- Module two – Policing & Society – is assessed through a case study and an essay;
- Module three – International Policing – requires an oral presentation and defence of a research proposal, as well as a research report underlying the proposal;
- The Master Thesis consists of a written research report and an oral defence.

The panel noticed that each assessment and the master thesis are based on the student capacity to blend an independent academic approach with the ability to demonstrate professional competencies. While acknowledging the variety of assessment forms and their relevance within the overall structure of the curriculum, the panel did wonder why the programme had opted for quite sizeable written assignments in the modules. Writing a decent piece of text of at least 4000

words (and a research proposal of 8000 words) takes a long time, part of which might be spent equally well / better on an alternative form of competence acquisition. The panel understood from the discussion with the management and the teaching staff that the programme is certainly willing to consider alternative formats, in addition to maintaining some of the written assignments but then in a smaller form.

Furthermore, the panel noticed with satisfaction that the programme pays extensive attention to transparency in marking and to providing feedback on each assignment. Hence, every exam follows the four-eyes principle whereby two assessors use a mark sheet and provide feedback highlighting where work can be improved or where it exceeds the required standards. These assessors are called academic markers at CCCU and have formal examiner status or proven examiner experience. Marking is done according to a holistic assessment grid that consists of eight generic rubrics for each level of performance. The panel was informed that – further to the recommendation of an external examiner – the programme introduced a new assessment grid in 2024: this Grading Grid combines a holistic approach with tailored marking sheets geared to the type of assignment. The expectation is that the new approach will lead to even better and more specific feedback for students. The panel has looked at both the old and the new grid, and was shown a number of completed mark sheets. According to the panel, completing such grids is time consuming for assessors but also highly beneficial for students as they receive invaluable information on the development of their competencies.

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. Students are informed in different ways about the importance of proper referencing as to avoid unintentional plagiarism or an irresponsible use of Generative AI: the student handbook includes a dedicated section, while the topic is also addressed during the induction week. Furthermore, students receive three guidelines, one issued by CCCU, one by PAN, and one by Saxion University of Applied Sciences. The panel looked into all three documents and found these to be relevant, useful and comprehensive. Students indicated during the visit that they are concerned about the developments and know very well what is allowed and what not. At the time of the visit, the programme had not yet adapted its assessment formats, nor were there concrete plans to do so in the immediate future. Nonetheless, representatives from both institutions indicated that they are monitoring the situation attentively and can adjust assessments if need be. The panel found that the MSc in Policing 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.

### **Thesis assessment**

The master thesis constitutes the culmination of the MSc in Policing. As part of its external assessment, and in line with the requirements and procedures of NVAO, the panel reviewed 15 of the 16 master theses that had been submitted successfully since the previous accreditation visit. The quality of the theses will be addressed under the next standard. In so far as thesis assessment is concerned, the panel noticed that the evaluation form which is used to assess the

thesis is relevant. Furthermore, panel members reported that they found the evaluations to be transparent and insightful, with the views of both evaluators being properly reflected and sufficiently elaborated. Overall, the marking seemed fair: the panel thought that each of the fifteen theses had received a final score that was in line with their own appreciation. Given that comments were quite extensive and insightful, any possible doubt on the side of the panel members was taken away or clarified by the written feedback motivating the scores.

All in all, the panel found that the completed evaluation forms gave a good impression of the way the assessment had taken place and what the key findings were of the assessors to give a particular score. If anything, the panel noticed that different markers use different approaches. While this finding may result from reviewing thesis assessments over a longer period of time, the panel does advise the programme team to monitor whether all markers have the same understanding with regard to the expected depth and length of their (good quality) feedback.

### **Assuring quality of assessment**

The panel gathered from the written materials that in terms of safeguarding the quality of assessment, the MSc in Policing is relying mostly on the expertise and the procedures of CCCU. Hence, the main body safeguarding the quality of assessment is not a Dutch style Board of Examiners, but the UK approach of External Examiners. In this regard, the programme indicated that quality assurance for taught courses at CCCU had undergone a significant restructure since the academic year 2021-2022.

The panel read in the detailed section of the self-evaluation report that currently, quality assurance works as follows for the MSc in Policing:

- Every year, there are three *Module Achievement Boards*, one per trimester: during these boards, the course team ensures that marks are entered into the system;
- Once per year, there is a *Progression & Awards Board* which oversees the marks per student for the whole year and decides on progression to the next academic year or on receiving an award;
- Throughout the year, there are also *Boards of Studies*. Because of the collaborative type of programme aiming at a joint degree, PAN is represented in the Board of Studies meetings where course improvements are considered;
- All these bodies have independent oversight as there is always an academic *External Examiner* from another university involved who approves the marks considered during that marking period. While the External Examiner can disagree with a mark, this has reportedly not occurred in the case of the MSc in Policing since the previous accreditation period. External examiners are expected to report annually. The panel has looked at all annual reports that have been drawn up since the previous accreditation.
- These quality assurance processes are mainly focused on student achievement relating to their marks. A parallel process is in place to oversee the wider quality of the programme in the form of a *Continuous Performance Plan*, which sets out key priorities across the academic year and is updated throughout the year during Programme Boards which invite feedback from all staff contributing to the programme.

The panel found that the MSc in Policing can rely on a carefully designed assessment system with an equally appropriate system to safeguard the validity, reliability and transparency of the mark. The panel appreciates the efforts of the partner institutions to organise assessment in a proper way and is confident by reading the statements in the annual reports of the External Examiners that the system works properly in the day-to-day reality of the programme. In fact, the panel noticed that some of its own findings on course and thesis assessment are confirmed by the External Examiners: “The depth and breadth of the types of assessment are appropriate for examining the students’ understanding and knowledge within a work-based setting, allowing for development, reflection and improvement of professional skills”; “The feedback and feed forward provided to students was relevant, supportive and developmental”; “Students are given opportunities to bring together their academic learning with their experiences in policing practice.”

### **Considerations**

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the MSc Policing 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 partner institutions, notably CCCU. The curriculum is set up in such a way 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. Moreover, the transparent information on assessment, and the extensive use of feedback and feed forward ensure that students are adequately and fairly assessed throughout the programme. This appreciation applies to both course and thesis assessment. The panel’s thesis review showed that the evaluation form is relevant, the marking is fair and the feedback motivating the marks is insightful.

While quality assurance is addressed in a separate standard, the panel thinks highly of the provisions set by CCCU to safeguard the quality of assessment through independent oversight by External Examiners and three different boards. The panel is convinced that the assessment quality of the MSc in Policing programme is in competent hands with CCCU and the External Examiners.

In addition to all positive considerations, the panel advises the programme team to reconsider the size of the written course assignments and to replace part of these assignments with alternative forms of assessment.

### **Conclusion**

The panel judges that the MSc in Policing **meets** standard 3, assessment.

## **Standard 4 – Achieved learning outcomes**

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

There are two ways to determine whether the intended learning outcomes are effectively achieved: through a quality control of the final projects and by examining the career paths of graduates after completing the programme. The panel considered both aspects when assessing the achieved learning outcomes of the MSc Policing.

### **Thesis quality**

The post-initial part-time programme culminates in the master thesis (called dissertation in the UK). According to the programme handbook, the aim of the thesis is to assess the academic ability of students to perform research, analyse and design long-term (inter)national policing strategies related to societal demands, and to construct well-reasoned arguments based on the research findings. The production of an individual thesis, possibly in the form of an advice or a policy report, should contribute to the scientific development of the police profession and be relevant for (inter)national law enforcement strategies.

As part of its assessment, and in line with the requirements and procedures of NVAO, the panel reviewed 15 out of the 16 master theses that had been submitted successfully since the previous accreditation visit. The panel was very positive about the overall thesis quality as each thesis fulfilled at least the minimum criteria for a final academic product at master level. Moreover, the panel members agreed with each final score given by the programme assessors.

In their individual comments on the review, panel members emphasised that overall – and according to their respective scores – theses were well-structured, well-written, and contained a substantial primary research component, as well as a good discussion of the methodological issues. The good quality theses, moreover, constituted well-designed empirical studies that addressed relevant topics demonstrating sufficient theoretical reflection and ambition. Most theses combined an academic approach of the students with practical implications for their work as police officers. In addition, panel members found the level of English in the master thesis documents high and the writing style attractive: the theses provided interesting reading. Further to a recommendation from the previous accreditation panel, the panel noticed that the thesis subjects now cover many more and broader subjects than in the previous round. It shows, according to the current panel, that the (wider) modules contents have influenced the students' choice for a topic of their interest.

The panel also noticed three points that deserve further attention by the programme team: (i) in a few cases thesis supervision could have been more proactive/hands-on, certainly when students collected a lot of data but their analysis failed to tell a story; (ii) each thesis seemed to meet the average size (about 18000 words) set by the Handbook. However, the sample consisted of reports ranging from 47 to 95 pages. Apart from the varying student workload and assessor marking load, such a spread also affects the comparability (not to say fairness) of scoring; (iii) a few students identified their interview partners in the appendix to the thesis while the standard

procedure is for participants to enjoy anonymity. The panel addressed these points with the teaching staff and the programme management, who acknowledged these flaws and thought they constituted feasible points for improvement. The team was also satisfied to hear that the panel confirmed through its review the positive results of their own internal quality review.

Furthermore, while the panel found several theses to be of good quality, none of the final products was really excellent. In this respect, however, the panel was very satisfied to hear from alumni that they have been using/presenting/disseminating the results of their thesis research ‘on the job’ and/or are now considered by the wider Dutch Police organisation as expert in the domain of their master thesis. Examples of such domains include social safety and inclusion for police team leaders, police conduct at animal welfare protests, and victim statements on human trafficking. It shows according to the panel that students often choose a topic that is close to their professional (personal) interest and successfully manage to make the research findings/methodology/outcomes relevant for a wider audience of peers/colleagues.

In sum, given the alignment between the programme learning outcomes and the course learning goals, and the fact that the master thesis is the “proof of the pudding”, the panel concludes that MSc Policing students who successfully produce a master thesis have effectively achieved all learning outcomes.

### **Graduate performance**

Further to its findings on standard 1, the panel noticed that the programme learning outcomes are intentionally formulated in terms of competencies. In this way, programme graduates have acquired the knowledge, skills and attitudes of a police officer operating at a strategic level in policing. The interesting discussions on site with alumni have demonstrated, according to the panel that programme graduates have been well prepared during the course for taking up senior strategic positions in policing. In fact, the panel noticed that several ‘high potentials’ among current and former students were encouraged by their line managers to enrol on the master programme but got promoted already during their study, and are likely to advance even further in the hierarchy after their graduation.

Notwithstanding positive signals that the programme is an effective lever to identify high potentials in the Police force, the panel was informed that PAN has been trying for years to convince the Dutch Police organisation that the master programme should become part of its needs’ assessment policy. While this is not the case yet, PAN and the master programme are part of the career development for senior officers. Further to its findings on the programme’s throughput and success rate, the panel was informed that the formal disconnect between completing the programme and making promotion within the organisation might be one of the reasons for the high share of programme drop-outs.

Notwithstanding this disconnect, the programme team sees – and the panel confirms this viewpoint based on its interviews on site - that more applicants of the latter cohorts are encouraged by their superiors or by alumni to enrol on the master programme. Moreover, the panel acknowledges the statement of the programme team that several alumni acquired senior

positions in the Dutch Police (soon) after their graduation. In line with recent trends in the police force, some of these alumni were promoted to leadership positions, while others now occupy strategic/advisory positions, and still others made a career move as operational specialists. According to the panel, it is important that the Dutch Police / Police Academy communicates on the possibility of all three types of job promotions when they recruit new high potential student-police officers for the master programme.

### **Considerations**

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the intended learning outcomes are assessed – and demonstrated - in a systematic way. Its thesis review has shown that students who successfully finish the master thesis, have effectively achieved the programme learning outcomes. In this way, they demonstrate the competencies of a police officer who operates at a strategic level, as a leader, and/or as an operational specialist. The panel found the quality of the master theses generally of good quality and was positively surprised by the impact some of the master studies have had on the organisation and on the expert recognition of the student. In addition to all positive findings on the thesis review, the panel advises the programme team to be more proactive in thesis supervision, to be stricter in upholding the indicative thesis length, and to monitor that all students comply in their research (product) with the (ethical) requirements on (research) data privacy.

The panel considers that programme alumni are high potentials, who tend to move on within the organisation to positions that are commensurate with the level of their studies. There is, however, no formal connection (yet) between completing the master study and making internal promotion within the Dutch Police. Because this situation may cause students to drop-out, the panel advises the programme team to clearly communicate in recruitment/intake sessions about each of the job profiles future MSc Policing graduates may be assuming.

### **Conclusion**

The panel judges that the MSc Policing **meets** standard 4, achieved learning outcomes.

## **Standard 5 – Facilities**

*The accommodation and material facilities (infrastructure) are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.*

### **Findings**

The panel gathered from the written materials, including a dedicated appendix on CCCU and PAN facilities, that the programme mainly runs in the Netherlands at the venue of the Police Academy in Apeldoorn. The induction week and some of the study weekends are conducted at the main campus of Canterbury Christ Church University in Canterbury. Since the previous accreditation visit, the German Police University (Deutsche Hochschule der Polizei, DHP) hosts a joint course week as part of module 3.

During the site visit, the panel was guided around the premises of PAN and noticed that the programme can rely on up-to-date facilities in terms of classrooms, computer rooms and a library. The panel was informed that the location in Apeldoorn received a prestigious architectural award for the renovation of its building. It is accessible to students with mobility problems and functional disabilities, and features a restaurant. Each classroom contains a digital projector, digital blackboard, intranet and internet access. It also has the technical infrastructure to produce webinars. During their study, the Dutch students/police officers can make use of the digital facilities of the National Police across the Netherlands. During the visit, students and alumni indicated that the facilities at Apeldoorn are really top-notch, which in turn contributes to a positive and welcoming study environment.

On its explicit request, the panel visited the library of PAN in Apeldoorn, which functions as the national expertise centre for the police profession in support of its knowledge, research and education function. The library offers workplaces in an Open Learning Centre. It possesses many academic journals and books that are relevant for policing matters. One library staff member acts as subject librarian for Policing and works closely with the Course Director and teaching staff to select new books and organise inter-library loans. Students and alumni mentioned during the site visit that they make good use of the library during their study, in particular for the master thesis, and appreciate the expertise and support of the librarians.

During their studies, master students and programme staff utilise CCCU's virtual learning environment called Blackboard, which comprises following features: (i) online publishing for learning and teaching materials; (ii) computer mediated conferencing; (iii) computer aided informal assessments; (iv) access to online information sources; and (v) access to Turnitin, a platform dedicated to enhancing students' study skills and aiding the detection of plagiarism. Students and staff indicated during the site visit that this learning environment is used extensively and contains all necessary – and timely - information on the programme, the courses, the assignments and the deadlines.

The panel did not visit the premises in Canterbury or at DHP, but gathered from the written materials and the discussions with management, staff and students that both institutions provide similarly good-quality, up-to-date, and accessible facilities, including a modern library. CCCU recently built a big and modern library building (Augustine House) and introduced an electronic Student Portal to facilitate access to university provisions. When students or staff have to stay overnight, nearby hotel accommodation is available in Canterbury and Apeldoorn.

### **Considerations**

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the MSc in Policing programme can rely on excellent facilities. This appreciation is based on its initial impression from the written materials and was confirmed during the discussions and the guided tour on site in Apeldoorn. The panel was impressed by the renovated building of the Police Academy and thought highly of its library facilities. Moreover, MSc Policing students (and staff) have at disposition a modern and up-to-date virtual learning environment, which facilitates the study.

## **Conclusion**

The panel judges that the MSc Policing meets standard 5, facilities.

## **Standard 6 – Quality Assurance**

*The programme has an explicit and widely supported quality assurance system in place. It promotes the quality culture and has a focus on development.*

### **Findings**

The panel gathered from the written materials that the MSc in Policing wants to comply with the external academic standards of both the Dutch Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) and UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). As members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), NVAO's and QAA's evaluations of internal quality assurance procedures are based on similar principles.

With regard to internal quality assurance, the master programme (in the words of the self-evaluation report) is "subject to scrupulous prerequisites and stringent controlling devices" of CCCUs Quality & Standards Office, which is accountable to the authority of the Academic Board. This office ensures that CCCU's academic provision meets the standards that are prescribed by external frameworks and by the university's own commitments as an autonomous body with degree-awarding powers.

In 2017, PAN established a systematic quality assurance system for the whole organisation in a so-called Quality Dossier. According to this system, which in the meantime has been updated to *Kwaliteitsdossier Politieacademie 3.0*, the responsibility for quality assurance lies first and foremost with the programme team. In case of the MSc Policing programme, this is the Team Master, which in liaison with Team Research, reports to the Sector Head of Higher Education at PAN.

The panel noticed that, as an operationalisation of the institutional frameworks, there are many different quality assurance mechanisms in place for the MSc Policing programme:

- Students and staff are represented in the Degree Programme Committee ('opleidingscommissie'), which is called the Student Voice Forum in CCCUs terminology. It provides solicited and unsolicited advice or recommendations to the Course Directors on all educational or organisational matters to promote and guarantee the quality of the study programme;
- Students provide feedback on each module through module evaluations;
- Every year, students complete the Dutch National Student Survey (NSE);
- Alumni are asked to systematically contribute their reflections on the programme;
- The Dutch Agency on Implementation of Education (*Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs*, DUO) organises surveys among alumni;

- The quality of assessments is monitored and safeguarded by External Examiners (see standard 3);
- CCCU's Course Performance Plans replace the former Annual Programme Monitoring Reviews. Its results are discussed in meetings of the Board of Study and of CCCU's faculty hosting the MSc Policing;
- The Periodic Partner Review is a written reflection by PAN and by CCCU on the findings of the CCCU's meeting with programme stakeholders;
- The MSc programme has a Work Field Advisory Committee, which consists of six members from external but closely related bodies such as ministries and academia (see also under standard 1).

The panel acknowledges that the different instruments reflect the international/bi-national character of the programme and its partner institutions. By adopting and implementing this comprehensive quality assurance system, both CCCU and PAN ensure that their joint programme fulfils all requirements of both the Dutch and the UK system.

Furthermore, the panel gathered from the discussions on site that these instruments do not serve as 'must haves' that were set-up to appease external audit agencies, but are used effectively to obtain insight on the quality of the programme from all relevant stakeholders, and adjust the programme accordingly. Hence, the panel endorses the statement in the self-evaluation report that the programme acted in many respects upon the Quality Assurance worries and the improvement suggestions from students, alumni and the Work Field Advisory Committee. In order to stimulate progress of study a tailored system of tutoring has been implemented and community building has been reinforced.

The panel was informed during the visit that following the outcomes of several quality assurance instruments, for instance, submission deadlines became stricter in 2023, that leadership subjects are now dealt with in a separate course week called 'Integrity, Police Organisation and Management', that the programme's international dimension was strengthened by offering a course week on International Policing & Policing Organisations together with (students from) the German Police University, and by appointing a German academic (Bavarian Institute for Police Training) to manage the course week on 'Public Order Policing'.

During the visit, the panel spoke to several students and alumni, who indicated that they feel involved in the quality assurance of the programme, through formal participation in the degree programme committee, through informal contacts with the Course Directors, and by completing evaluation surveys. Students and alumni have always felt that their concerns were heard and that improvements have been made as a result of their remarks and the outcomes of the module evaluations. For example, the submission for assignments has become individually based and the information provision about assessments has improved. This also holds for the connection between the theme of a residential week and the following assignment. Moreover, students emphasised that they are informed about the follow-up of evaluations and quality assurance reviews. In this regard, several students who joined the programme recently indicated that the

stricter upholding of submission deadlines is helping them to advance on the programme and is contributing to completing their study within the nominal duration.

### **Considerations**

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that quality assurance provisions governing the MSc in Policing are up to standard: the quality assurance mechanisms are comprehensive and address both external and internal provisions. The quality assurance system has a clear structure and encompasses all relevant stakeholders – students, staff, alumni, and professional field representatives – as well as all relevant programme components: admission, education, assessment, employability, and so on.

The panel appreciates the efforts – and careful attention - of both partner institutions to ensure that their joint programme complies with the requirements of both constituencies. Moreover, the panel thinks highly of the effectiveness of these instruments as their outcomes are used in an ongoing effort to increase the quality of the programme. In this way, the meticulous approach of both partners and their respective stakeholders is indicative, according to the panel, of a deeply engrained sense of, and commitment to, ongoing quality improvement. Hence, it is fair to conclude that students, staff, alumni, management and professional field representatives on the MSc Policing are all part of a widely shared quality culture.

### **Conclusion**

The panel judges that the MSc Policing **meets** standard 6, quality assurance.

## **Overall conclusion**

The panel established that the MSc Policing meets all six NVAO standards under consideration: intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, assessment, achieved learning outcomes, facilities, and quality assurance. As a result, its overall assessment of the programme quality is **positive**.

## **Recommendations**

Looking towards the future, the panel suggests following points for development:

- integrate the distinctive programme elements (or flavour) in the generic learning outcomes/competencies, notably its international dimension and its emphasis on research competencies;
- communicate in recruitment/intake sessions about the kinds of job profiles that may be open to MSc Policing graduates;
- discuss the most appropriate composition (homogeneous or heterogeneous, national versus international, police officers vs also non-police officers) of the student cohorts;
- look for a structural and sustainable solution for the number of drop-outs, possibly by advocating (even more than before) with the Dutch Police that the programme should become part of their needs assessment and that students who enrol on the programme should benefit from a common compensation arrangement for the time they spent on their studies;
- reconsider the size of the written course assignments and replace part of the assignment load with alternative forms of assessment;
- be proactive in thesis supervision, strict in upholding the indicative thesis length, and monitor that all students comply in their research (product) with the (ethical) requirements on (research) data privacy.

## ANNEXES

### **Annex A – Administrative data on institution and programme**

Name	Politieacademie Nederland (Police Academy of the Netherlands)
Status	independent governing body
ITK	not applicable
Contact	Harry Peeters/ Fiona Engbers ( <a href="mailto:fiona.engbers@politieacademie.nl">fiona.engbers@politieacademie.nl</a> )

Name	Policing
CROHO	60723
Registration	Joint Degree (NVAO) / Joint Award (QAA)
Level	master
Orientation	academic (wo-master)
Credits	90 EC
Location	Apeldoorn (NL) & Canterbury (UK)
Mode of study	part-time
Language	English

## **Annex B – Panel**

### **Prof. dr. Francis Pakes, chair**

Francis is Professor in Criminology and undertakes research in comparative criminal justice at the University of Portsmouth. He was chair of the programme's accreditation panel in 2013.

### **Prof. dr. Tom Vander Beken, expert**

Tom is Professor in Criminal Law and Criminology and director of the Institute for International Research on Criminal Policy at Ghent University. He was member of the programme's accreditation panel in 2013.

### **Prof. dr. Stephanos Anastasiadis, expert**

Stephanos is Professor of Social Sciences and Leadership at the Police Academy of Lower Saxony (D), his current research interest is in professional police knowledge – role perception and generational change.

### **Drs. Bryan Rookhuijzen, expert**

Bryan is a retired senior chief commissioner of police at the Dutch Police. In 2014-2015, he chaired the Committee of Appeal for the Exams at the Police Academy.

### **Dennis van Eck van der Sluijs BSc, student-member**

Dennis is a master student Crisis and Security Management – War and Peace Studies at Leiden University in The Hague. He is Reservist of the Royal Netherlands Navy.

The panel was accompanied by **Mark Delmartino MA**, MDM Consultancy bv, Antwerpen – Belgium. As freelance secretary, Mark has worked with accreditation panels since 2006 and is certified by NVAO.

All members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

## **Annex C – Site visit programme**

Location: Politieacademie, Arnhemseweg 346, Apeldoorn

### **Friday 31 January 2025**

- 08.45 Arrival panel and internal meeting
- 09.30 Session with School and Programme Management
- 10.30 Session with students
- 11.30 Session with lecturers
- 12.30 Session with Exam Board
- 13.00 Lunch and internal meeting
- 13.30 Guided Tour
- 14.00 Session with support staff
- 14.45 Session with alumni and professional field
- 15.30 Internal panel meeting
- 15.45 Final session with programme management
- 16.00 Internal panel deliberations
- 16.45 Plenary feedback
- 17.15 Development Dialogue
- 18.00 End of site visit

## **Annex D – Materials reviewed**

*Master of Science in Policing. Self-Evaluation Report for a Joint Award, Volume I. Main Document, Apeldoorn – Canterbury, January 2025*

- NVAO Accreditation Standards for Level 7 programmes
- MSc Policing Course Specification
- Background of MSc in Policing
- Significant Developments
- Standard 1 Intended Learning Outcomes
- Standard 2 Curriculum: Learning Environment
- Standard 3 Student Assessment
- Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes
- Standard 5 Facilities
- Standard 6 Quality Assurance
- Appendices
  - ✓ APPENDIX 1 1 Development interview MSc Policing. Background of Pitch
  - ✓ APPENDIX 2 MSc Policing equation with international qualification standards
  - ✓ APPENDIX 3 MSc Policing Qualification Profile equation with EQ7 and FHEQ 7
  - ✓ APPENDIX 4 Comparing UK FHEQ 7 / EQ7 / 2nd Cycle of DUBLIN
  - ✓ APPENDIX 5 RATIO behind 4-by-4 Set of 16 Intended Learning Outcomes
  - ✓ APPENDIX 6 Module Aims and Specific Learning Outcomes
  - ✓ APPENDIX 7 Police Education Council (POR) in a Nutshell
  - ✓ APPENDIX 8 Outline of Adjusted Curriculum MSc in Policing
  - ✓ APPENDIX 9 Assessment of Modules & Master Thesis (Dissertation)
  - ✓ APPENDIX 10 Illustrative Reading List
  - ✓ APPENDIX 11 Short Overview of Academic Staff Expertise
  - ✓ APPENDIX 12 Former Assessment Grid
  - ✓ APPENDIX 13 NEW GRADING GRID (criteria per assessment type)
  - ✓ APPENDIX 14 Mark Sheet Example
  - ✓ APPENDIX 15 List of Master Thesis (Dissertation) plus Average Marks
  - ✓ APPENDIX 16 Facilities of CCCU and Police Academy
  - ✓ APPENDIX 17 Organisation & Courses' Chart of Police Academy
  - ✓ APPENDIX 18 Student's Evaluative Essays and Reflections thereupon

*Master of Science in Policing. Self-Evaluation Report for a Joint Award, Volume II. Staff Resumés and Publications, Apeldoorn – Canterbury, January 2025*

*Master of Science in Policing. Self-Evaluation Report for a Joint Award, Volume III. Handbook Master of Science in Policing 2025, Apeldoorn – Canterbury, January 2025.*

- The Police Academy of the Netherlands
- Canterbury Christ Church University

- Occupational Profile of a Master of Science in Policing
- Qualification Profile of MSc in Policing
- Outline of MSc in Policing
- Module Aims & Specific Learning Outcomes of MSc Policing
- Mandatory and Recommended Reading
- Assessment
- Tutoring
- Curriculum Committee of Master of Science in Policing
- Appendices
  - ✓ Staff Expertise
  - ✓ Student Partnership Agreement
  - ✓ CCCU Policies and Regulations
  - ✓ Illustrative Reading List – Reading Suggestions per Module

The following *programme supplements* were made available in a digital format

- ✓ wo-Master Decision NVAO 2020
- ✓ Self-Evaluation Team Research 2015-2022
- ✓ Peer Review Inquiry 2015-2022 /
- ✓ Police Occupational Profiles 2020-2030 ('Beroepsprofielen Politie')
- ✓ Strategic Agenda Police Academy 2022-2026
- ✓ HRM Strategy up to 2025
- ✓ Strategic Agenda Police 2021-2025
- ✓ Strategic Research Agenda for the Police 2023-2026
- ✓ Vision on Higher Police Education 2022
- ✓ CCCU PAN Student Audit 21 November 2024
- ✓ PAN EE MAB PAB documents
- ✓ External Examiners Annual Reports
- ✓ NSE Surveys
- ✓ Periodic Partnership Review PPR
- ✓ DUO Alumni Surveys two pieces
- ✓ SVF Minutes
- ✓ Intake Graduates Drop-outs Cohorts MSc Policing 10-17 anonymous
- ✓ Quality Dossier 3.0 Police Academy
- ✓ Evaluations by Students (copies and links)
- ✓ MSc Policing Alumni minutes
- ✓ WAC minutes
- ✓ Boards of Studies and CPPs
- ✓ CCCU PPR Panel Outcomes Report PAN
- ✓ KMTO Strategic Agenda NP Management Board
- ✓ Explanation to Joint Award vs Joint Degree

✓ Memorandum of Agreement CCCU and Police Academy Netherlands

*Thesis review* - The panel reviewed all 15 master theses and their assessment forms that were successfully submitted since the previous accreditation visit in 2020. Names and student numbers are available at the Police Academy of the Netherlands.

## **Annex E – Follow-up previous accreditation**

In January 2019, the MSc in Policing was visited by an audit panel of NQA, which judged the programme quality to be positive. NVAO confirmed in March 2020 that the programme accreditation is maintained. In its report the panel listed a set of recommendations for consideration by the programme. As part of its materials for the current assessment panel, the programme produced a PowerPoint presentation listing the follow-up it had given to these recommendations.

### **Broaden the academic scope and go more beyond the borders of policing, to give students broader perspectives and thus enhance their academic level.**

- Involvement of CCCU in the course has been increased.
- Cooperation with German Police University has been reinforced by running a joint seminar as part of Module 3.
- More lecturers than before are also employed at Dutch academic universities: Groningen, VU, OU, Leiden, Delft University of Humanistics Utrecht
- There are regular guest teachers from University of Twente, Radboud University, VU Amsterdam

### **Expand the international orientation of the Programme.**

- We are conferring with Europol about cooperation options.
- The Head of Public Order Training from the Bavarian Institute for Police Training is appointed as Course Week Manager for the Course Week on public order policing
- Marleen Easton (Ghent University) contributes to the Course Week on Criminal Investigation and Intelligence.
- The international orientation of the programme is reflected in ILOs 5/8/10/12

### **Make the profile of the Programme more explicit.**

- In our information sessions for new applicants, we already have and are going to put more emphasis on the fact that the Course is meant for police officers with aspirations for a strategic position. This emphasis is supported by the facts that:
  - ✓ The MSc in Policing has been designed to provide police officers and partners with a deep academic understanding of issues relating to strategic policing tasks in a network-driven context, nationally and internationally.
  - ✓ Three occupational profiles are relevant for the MSc Policing, i.e. for the Police Officer, Detective and Police Leader.
  - ✓ Several alumni acquired senior positions in the police, such as being chief of a sector or a district, a police advisor or developer at a strategic level, or an operational specialist in the highest job category.

### **Intensify the training and guidance in research skills.**

- Research Skills and correct referencing are tutored by the research coordinator as well as the particular academic teacher, be it from CCCU or the Police Academy. For every module, several sessions focus on research methodology and discussing ideas and draft versions of the assignments for the respective module (e.g. a literature review or essay). The aim is to support students in completing course work. They have to discuss the approach of an assignment for course work with a relevant tutor before they start working on it. It may be a topic of their own choice or one prescribed by the tutor who also supervises the

demarcation of the subject and its elaboration and advises on methodological pitfalls during the writing of the course work.

- Students have to draw up an integral proposal for the master thesis.

### **Expand the training of research skills to more general academic assignments**

- Research skills are now linked to academic criteria of CCCU's new Grading Grid (that we have adjusted to our wishes)
- Using the new Grading Grid is also due to a calibration of the former Assessment Grid, that was criticised because of its too generic nature.
- Every course week is devoted to explaining the research approach for a particular assignment.
- There are two separate lectures on research methods (theoretical and practical).

### **Broaden the content of the curriculum, in line with the recommendation to broaden the academic scope of the Programme.**

- Because the Occupational Profiles are designed to be future-proof for a period of 10-odd years, the corresponding – broadly formulated – Learning Outcomes will cover results of intermediate evaluations by our lecturers, students, alumni, External Examiners or Work Field Advisory Committee (WAC), which might refer to actual developments, up to date literature, new subjects etc. So, for instance, we now pay attention to the subject of “climate change and policing” during the induction week in Canterbury (by David Lydon) and the joint seminar in Münster at the German Police University.
- Subject matters in the field of law are addressed in the Course Week on Legitimacy & Accountability and internationally with regard to the powers of EU institutions like Europol, Frontex etc. in the course week on International Policing & Policing Organisations
- There is now a separate course week on Policing in a Digitised Society

### **Incorporate the latest relevant developments of international policing models in the modules**

- Latest developments on policing models are specifically addressed in the Course Week on International Policing & Policing Organisations, Organised Crime & International Policing and Counterterrorism, Extremism, Radicalism (CTER)

### **Rethink the schedule of the residential weeks (students generally experience them as overcrowded)**

- As a rule, a residential week takes now about 4 days of 6 hours.
- Sometimes the fifth day is reserved for individual consultations or work assignments.

### **Stress the importance of appointing more specialists within the police with an MSc degree in policing**

- The recruitment target of 10 – 15 students each year will certainly become more stable and regular, if the MSc Policing becomes part of the NP needs' assessment policy. Both the Police Academy and the National Police are well aware of possible competing needs, but also of the fact that they 'need' each other, as illustrated in reports of them. (E6)
- As long as this is not the case, we propagate the relevance of the MSc Degree in Policing for (also) specialist jobs in three ways:
  - ✓ In our advertisements for journal *Tijdschrift voor de Politie*
  - ✓ We participate actively in Management Development meetings of the Force.
  - ✓ We involve alumni in propagating the MSc Degree, also in information gatherings.

**The programme could also be interesting for a wider range of police, security and defence professionals**

- Opinions differ. Yes, we also recruit amongst members of the KMar and are open for associated fields, but stretching the scope too much could impact on the uniqueness of having a programme especially for the policing perspective. There are enough broader oriented security programmes available.
- Another factor is that only police students don't have to pay for the programme (because of the costing by J&V)

**Make the module descriptions more detailed**

- Handbook information is more extensive and more detailed than before.
- Every course week an overview of the particular subjects is provided, sometimes accompanied by an explanation from the teachers and/or an assignment for that week.

**Improve the provision of information about assessments**

- Information on assessments is now also included in the Handbook, e.g. with regard to the different nature of each assignment.

**Improve further the proper substantiation of the marks by the assessors**

- As from this year onwards the generic Assessment Grid has been replaced by a tailor-made Grading Grid.
- Teachers have been informed of how to deal with the new Grid and what is expected from them in terms of addressing the assessment criteria in the mark sheet , also in terms of giving feedback on areas of improvement.

**Broaden the subjects of the master theses (in line with R standard 1)**

- Subjects of Dissertations and Learning Outcomes
- The subjects of the dissertations relate to the intended learning outcomes of the modules: five of them to Policing Models (Nos 1, 3, 4, 15, 16); seven to Policing & Society (Nos 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12) and four to International Policing (Nos 8, 11, 13, 14). It demonstrates that the contents of the Course have influenced students' choices for a subject.

**The theses could also contain more reflection on the choice of subjects and the relevance of it for the domain of police science**

- Since we are paying more attention to mastering research skills, we expect that students can address the balance between profession relevance and academic skills better in a master thesis. We are looking forward to the panel's assessment of master theses.

**The methodological level could be further improved. This also holds for referencing and the understanding of ethical considerations**

- We agree, that's why we invested more in conveying research skills and the importance of good referencing and avoiding (unintended) plagiarism, e.g. with a special presentation during the induction week in Canterbury.
- Students are introduced to the requirements of ethical research upon their induction and pointed towards the relevant documentation, for instance via CCCU's Blackboard.