



M Master Military Strategic Studies
Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defence Academy

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Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The panel concludes that the master's programme MSS has a clear profile and aims to reflect on the use of the military instrument of power for international security. The classroom with military and non-military students adds to the reflection from multiple perspectives on this issue. The programme has recently been recognized as part of the formal career development of military personnel, which the panel thinks is a very good development that strengthens the connection to the professional field and adds to the reputation of the master as well as to the extrinsic motivation of students. The intended learning outcomes align with the requirements for academic master's programmes. To further improve the profile of MSS, the panel thinks that the programme would benefit from a clearer defined holistic view on the field of military strategic studies, and an alignment of the programme's narrative and that of the individual tracks with this view. While it is clear that the field of military strategic studies is by nature multidisciplinary, it is important to specify the reality that is being studied by these different disciplines. Furthermore, the programme could formulate track-specific intended learning outcomes to reflect the methodologies relevant for that track. Finally, the programme could further strengthen its ties to the professional field by setting up an Advisory Board specific for MSS next to the faculty-wide Board that is currently established.

Standard 2. Curriculum; orientation

The MSS programme places significant emphasis on academic research, influenced by ongoing research conducted by faculty staff. The programme integrates academic skills through its structure and thematic focus. Students receive guidance on thesis topics from faculty researchers and are provided with a course on research methods. The panel finds academic skills integrated into the curriculum, but notes that research methods are often not clearly elaborated in student theses and that there is a high prevalence of qualitative methods. It suggests enhancing track-specific research methodologies and considering greater emphasis on quantitative methods/data science.

The programme has a strong connection to professional practice, with many students employed in a military context. Assignments are tied to current events, and alumni note the programme's effectiveness in developing skills for practical situations. The programme is closely linked to the military field, benefiting from both military and civilian student perspectives. The panel suggests highlighting this connection as a strength of the programme.

Standard 3. Curriculum; content

The MSS curriculum provides an appropriate mix of core courses, track-related courses, electives and a thesis, fitting the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The core courses establish a common foundation, the specialized tracks allow for deeper exploration, and the final phase encourages independent research. The panel suggests making the role of ethics and non-Western perspectives in the curriculum more explicit as they are of increasing importance and relevance for all tracks.

Standard 4. Curriculum; learning environment

The MSS programme maintains a small-scale environment, typically accommodating around 45 students annually with limited class sizes during the track phase and elective sessions. The panel concludes that this small scale fosters a highly engaging learning environment, promoting discussions among students and faculty, interaction between military and non-military students, and individualized feedback. The modular curriculum design allows for flexibility, accommodating students' needs. While the programme emphasizes coherence in its curriculum, students are encouraged to explore topics of personal interest within the

broader framework. The programme structure progresses in complexity over three phases, aiming to develop investigative and reflective academic attitudes. The curriculum, the literature and assessments are in English to prepare students for international cooperation, but lectures and discussions are usually in Dutch. Discussions may also be held in English, accommodating international students. Despite some uncertainty, the compromise of English-based materials with Dutch lectures and discussions is regarded as the best solution by stakeholders. The panel advises the programme to make a clear decision and maintain consistency.

Standard 5. Intake

The panel finds the admission requirements appropriate, sufficiently addressing relevant previous education, English language proficiency, and academic skills. The panel furthermore appreciates the programme's transparent communication regarding the programme's workload.

Standard 6. Staff

The panel acknowledges the quality of the teaching team, noting that all teachers hold a doctoral degree and have a strong connection to current research. The panel finds there is sufficient staff available for education. It recommends ensuring all teaching staff attain BKO certification to further promote teacher professionalization.

Standard 7. Facilities

The panel is positive about the facilities and determines they are clearly sufficient for the realisation of the programme.

Standard 8. Tutoring

The programme has established a solid system of guidance, allowing ample room for informal guidance and information exchange in a small-scale setting. The panel notes that students are satisfied with the guidance they receive and the tailored approach to finding solutions for any issues they encounter. It concludes that student guidance within MSS is well-organized.

Standard 9. Quality Assurance

The panel concludes that the quality assurance system for the MSS programme is well-established, concentrating on both quality control and improvement. Each course is evaluated once every three years, and through use of course evaluations, student feedback is also gathered continuously. Feedback reaches management quickly, allowing them to act promptly to implement improvements. The programme regularly consults alumni and field experts to ensure its goals align with the requirements from the field, also leading to ongoing modifications and improvements in course offerings.

Standard 10. Student assessment

The panel concludes that the assessment system in place for the MSS programme ensures validity, reliability, and transparency. Assessments align with learning outcomes, testing knowledge and skills through various appropriate methods. In light of the importance of debate in the teaching philosophy, the panel recommends complementing assessment in the programme with structured assessment of classroom participation. The use of answer models and assessment matrices has improved since the previous accreditation panel's recommendations, monitored by a Board of Examiners that has shown itself to be very task-conscious and actively involved in safeguarding the quality of assessment. Theses were assessed in an appropriate way, although in some cases the grades were higher than the panel would have given itself. The panel recommends improvements in thesis assessment consistency to address this. It also suggests public

defences for student theses before a larger committee for independent assessment. This could also contribute to the visibility of the programme within the military field.

Standard 11. Achieved learning outcomes

The panel evaluated 15 theses from MSS students and found their level generally appropriate for a master's degree. Several theses have been published as research publications, either authored independently by students or co-written in collaboration with their supervisors: an attest to the academic skills of the graduates of the MSS programme. The panel suggests improving the reproducibility of thesis research by providing better methodological guidelines. MSS alumni express satisfaction with the programme, highlighting its blend of military experience and academic research, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills. MSS alumni are able to approach practical issues and problems concerning military strategy from an academic perspective, which is of value both to the individual alumnus and the Defence organization at large. Alumni are seen as valuable assets and the panel suggests using them as ambassadors for the programme.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

Master Programme Military Strategic Studies

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Curriculum; orientation	meets the standard
Standard 3: Curriculum; content	meets the standard
Standard 4: Curriculum; learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 5: Intake	meets the standard
Standard 6: Staff	meets the standard
Standard 7: Facilities	meets the standard
Standard 8: Tutoring	meets the standard
Standard 9: Quality Assurance	meets the standard
Standard 10: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 11: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard

General conclusion positive

Prof. dr. Jan van den Broek
Chair

Peter Hilderling MSc
Secretary

Date: 19 March 2024

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 25 and 26 January 2024, the master's programme Military Strategic Studies of the Faculty of Military Sciences (FMS) of the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA) was assessed by an independent peer review panel. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (September 2018).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the Faculty of Military Sciences (FMW) of the NLDA. Peter Hildering acted as coordinator and secretary in the cluster assessment. He has been certified and registered by the NVAO.

Preparation

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members. On 4 September 2023, the NVAO approved the composition of the panel. The coordinator instructed the panel chair on his role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016).

The contact person of the institution composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator (see appendix 3). The programme selected representative partners for the various interviews. It also determined that the development dialogue would take place directly after the site visit. A separate development report was made based on this dialogue.

The programme provided the coordinator with a list of graduates over the period 2021-2023. In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses. He took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account. Prior to the site visit, the programme provided the panel with the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. It also provided the panel with the self-evaluation report and additional materials (see appendix 4).

The panel members studied the information and sent their findings to the secretary. The secretary collected the panel's questions and remarks in a document and shared this with the panel members. In a preliminary meeting, the panel discussed the initial findings on the self-evaluation report and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit. The panel was also informed on the assessment frameworks, the working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

Site visit

During the site visit, the panel interviewed various programme representatives (see appendix 3). The panel also offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. One person made use of this opportunity by providing written feedback. The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the preliminary findings.

Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to an Academion colleague for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing

this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the FMS in order to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The panel then finalised the report, and the coordinator sent it to the FMS of the, NLDA.

Panel

The panel assessing the master programme Military Strategic Studies at Netherlands Defence Academy consisted of the following members:

- Em. prof. dr. ir. J. (Jan) van den Berg, emeritus professor Cyber Security at TU Delft and Leiden University (chair);
- Prof. dr. M. (Marie) Postma, professor Computational Cognitive Science at Tilburg University;
- Prof. C.D.B. (Cindy) Du Bois, professor in Economics at the Royal Military Academy (KMS) and the Free University of Brussels (Belgium);
- Lt-gen b.d. G.J. (Jan) Broeks, member of the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) and vice-chairman of the Permanent Committee on Peace and Security (CVV), member of the Supervisory Board Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael,' strategic advisor of the Ministry of Defence and Senior Mentor at NATO;
- S. (Sarah) Noyon, undergraduate student European Studies at the University of Amsterdam (student member).

Information on the programme

Name of the institution:	Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defence Academy
Status of the institution:	Legal body providing higher education
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Not applicable
Programme name:	Master Military Strategic Studies
CROHO number:	60469
Level:	Master
Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	Managing & Organising in the Military (MOM) War Studies (WS) Intelligence & Security (I&S)
Location:	Breda
Mode(s) of study:	Parttime
Language of instruction:	Dutch, English
Submission date NVAO:	1 May 2024

Description of the assessment

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings

Profile and aims

The master's programme Military Strategic Studies (MSS) is offered by the Faculty of Military Sciences (FMS), the part of the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA) that is responsible for organizing the NLDA's academic programmes. The FMS master's programme aims to train 'reflective practitioners,' as the scientific exit qualifications are interwoven with the required competencies in the military field and defence-related institutions. The programme is open to both military and non-military students. Military students are typically officers following the programme as part of a training programme for higher military positions. The programme aims for a balanced mix of military and non-military students in its cohorts.

The content of the MSS programme focuses on the use of the military instrument of power in crises or in crisis prevention. It focuses on understanding, analysing, explaining and reflecting on the military dimension of international security, with an emphasis on the post-Cold War period. The programme addresses contemporary strategic issues, experiences with military force in conflicts, challenges in defence planning, and the internal dynamics of military organizations. It also examines the internal dynamics of military organizations and their relationship with politics and the societal context. Graduates should be able to contribute to problem-solving strategies relevant to military interventions and the management of defence organizations. Within this context, students can choose between three specialization tracks: Managing & Organising in the Military (MOM), War Studies (WS) and Intelligence & Security (I&S). MOM focuses on the internal management and organization of military processes, while WS and I&S focus on military operations and intelligence respectively.

The panel appreciates the profile and aims of MSS, which it believes has a clear focus on reflecting on the use of the military instrument for international security. This is relevant both to non-military students interested in this domain and to military students, for whom this offers clear added value for their careers as military officers. According to the panel, the admission of non-military students to the programme contributes to the multidisciplinary nature of the programme and has the potential to provide students with more diverse perspective when reflecting on the use of the military instrument; students and alumni also explicitly noted this.

The panel noted from discussions during the site visit that the programme views the field of military strategic studies through a multidisciplinary lens, recognizing the complex environment in which military officers operate. The common thread of military strategic studies is described as the denominator of the different interpretations of these conflicts. The panel understands this position, but also believes that the MSS programme would benefit from a more comprehensive definition of its discipline. A more clearly defined holistic view of military strategic studies could make it clearer from the outset what the programme encompasses: what it is about, what issues it addresses, by what methodological means, and to what end. Particularly at the track level, the connection to this central theme of the programme needs more precise clarification.

The panel therefore recommends developing such a description of the discipline, and linking this to the narrative of the common curriculum as well as to the individual tracks. This could make it clearer to prospective students, as well as to stakeholders within the military, what the programme entails and what its added value is for graduates.

Intended learning outcomes

The objectives and aims of the master's programme MSS have been translated into a set of seven intended learning outcomes that describe the knowledge and skills that students should acquire throughout the programme. The panel examined these intended learning outcomes, and found them to be at a sufficient academic level for a master's degree. For example, graduates are expected to be able to conduct scientific research, and to reflect critically on and adapt to their changing work environment or military engagement. Following the earlier discussion regarding the discipline and its associated methodology, the panel advises to formulate track-specific intended learning outcomes to reflect the methodologies relevant to that track.

Professional field

In order to align the programme with the expectations of the professional field, MSS engages in ongoing contact with stakeholders such as the armed forces, the Ministry of Defence, experts, academics, and think tanks. The panel appreciates this, and believes that this is important to keep the programme up to date and relevant. It also believes that these contacts could be made more structural. It therefore advises MSS to further strengthen its links with the professional field by setting up an MSS-specific advisory board in addition to the current faculty-wide board.

The previous accreditation panel recommended better promotion of the programme within the military. In response to these recommendations, the programme and faculty boards have been working on the internal recognition of the programme. From discussions with alumni and representatives within the military, the panel was pleased to learn that this has had the desired result. MSS is now recognized on an equal footing with the Higher Defence Education (HDV) programme, which has historically been the educational programme for military personnel to participate in in order to move up the career ladder. Military badges will be awarded for the completion of the MSS programme. The panel is very positive about this development, as it strengthens the relevance of the programme within the military, making it a more attractive choice for prospective students as a means of achieving personal and professional development to further their careers. Now that the programme has been recognized as part of the formal career development of military personnel, the panel advises that this fact should be better exploited in the promotion of the programme: communicate more and more frequently about the possibilities of the programme.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the master's programme MSS has a clear profile and aims to reflect on the use of the military instrument of power for international security. The classroom with military and non-military students adds to the reflection from multiple perspectives on this issue. The programme has recently been recognized as part of the formal career development of military personnel, which the panel thinks is a very good development that strengthens the connection to the professional field and adds to the reputation of the master as well as to the extrinsic motivation of students. The intended learning outcomes align with the requirements for academic master's programmes. To further improve the profile of MSS, the panel thinks that the programme would benefit from a clearer defined holistic view on the field of military strategic studies, and an alignment of the programme's narrative and that of the individual tracks with this view. While it is clear that the field of military strategic studies is by nature multidisciplinary, it is important to specify the reality that is being studied by these different disciplines. Furthermore, the programme could

formulate track-specific intended learning outcomes to reflect the methodologies relevant for that track. Finally, the programme could further strengthen its ties to the professional field by setting up an Advisory Board specific for MSS next to the faculty-wide Board that is currently established.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 1.

Standard 2. Curriculum; orientation

The curriculum enables the students to master appropriate (professional or academic) research and professional skills.

Findings

Academic skills

Academic research plays an important role in the programme. The programme's architecture, track structure, and thematic focus are shaped by ongoing research conducted by the faculty staff of the Faculty of Military Sciences. The FMS Research Centre, established in 2020, comprises three research centres: *Military Technology*, *War Studies* and *Military Management Studies*. These centres play a crucial role in developing scientific knowledge and conducting research. Specifically, the *War Studies* research centre focuses on contemporary conflict challenges with a multidisciplinary scope, while the *Military Management Studies* research centre explores issues related to military organization, innovation, and business from a range of disciplines and an interdisciplinary perspective. Both centres contribute directly to the core and elective courses offered within the programme, as well as the thesis trajectories. Each year, in a dedicated session about the thesis period, researchers from the FMS present potential research topics from their field to students. Researchers actively encourage students to engage with and contribute to the different FMS research programmes.

The MSS programme assumes that students have a basic understanding of academic research, inherent in their background (at least a bachelor's degree or comparable). The focus on the military-specific context and how to conduct research within that context is central to MSS. As students come from different backgrounds and levels of education, the compulsory part of the curriculum includes a course on research methods. This course aims to expose students to the different perspectives and methods, both qualitative and quantitative, of research. When working on their own thesis, students write and discuss their research in 'circle meetings' with other students working on a similar topic, under supervision of a teacher with relevant expertise in the topic and the research methods used (see also standard 8).

The panel has studied the role of academic skills in the programme and discussed this with students, alumni, and teaching staff members of the programme. It concludes that academic skills are sufficiently integrated into the MSS curriculum, and that students are guided by active researchers who are able to integrate the latest scientific insights into their courses and supervision. In line with the consideration in standard 1 on this topic, the panel recommends providing more differentiation within the tracks in terms of research methodology. Currently the programme offers the full range of possible methodologies in the Research Methods course, and leaves it to the supervisors to provide students with additional training in the research methods relevant to their thesis. The panel thinks that the programme could strengthen this by emphasizing research methods relevant to research within the subject of the track more strongly within the tracks, so that students can already specialize in certain methods within the courses. In addition, the programme could

provide extra-curricular support materials for students who wish to strengthen their skills in a particular research method.

Furthermore, the panel noted from the theses it studied that, even though the programme pays attention to both qualitative and quantitative research methods, in practice qualitative research predominates. The panel thinks that consideration should be given to whether, in the light of current developments in academic research, there should be a greater emphasis in the curriculum on quantitative research methods/data science. This may be more appropriate within certain tracks, such as MOM and I&S.

Professional skills

MSS has a strong connection to the professional practice. Students typically pursue the programme alongside employment in a military or Ministry of Defence context. Assignments are linked to current events, and professional skills within the courses focus on discussion and reflection on practical work situations. The panel concludes that the programme is strongly embedded in the military context, and is therefore closely related to the professional field. Many of the teaching staff are also employed in the military, and can draw on their experience for the programme. The balanced mix of military and civilian students allows all students to benefit from this, and to apply insights directly to the military context. The panel considers this to be a strong aspect of the education and thinks that the programme could highlight this as one of its strengths.

Considerations

The MSS programme places significant emphasis on academic research, influenced by ongoing research conducted by faculty staff. The programme integrates academic skills through its structure and thematic focus. Students receive guidance on thesis topics from faculty researchers and are provided with a course on research methods. The panel finds academic skills integrated into the curriculum, but notes that research methods are often not clearly elaborated in student theses and that there is a high prevalence of qualitative methods. It suggests enhancing track-specific research methodologies and considering greater emphasis on quantitative methods/data science.

The programme has a strong connection to professional practice, with many students employed in a military context. Assignments are tied to current events, and alumni note the programme's effectiveness in developing skills for practical situations. The programme is closely linked to the military field, benefiting from both military and civilian student perspectives. The panel suggests highlighting this connection as a strength of the programme.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 2.

Standard 3. Curriculum; content

The contents of the curriculum enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Findings

The 60 EC curriculum is designed to be completed part-time over a two year period. The MSS curriculum is divided into three successive phases: 1) the core courses; 2) the track-related courses and 3) the final phase including the elective courses and the graduation (thesis) period. The first phase consists of a compulsory part of four common core courses (20EC), which serve as a common foundation for the three distinct but

interrelated tracks from which students choose one. In the second phase, each subsequent track (of 20 EC) consists of four courses. In the final phase, students take an elective course (5 EC), while the thesis research period (15 EC) completes the programme. Each phase has specific objectives that contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The first phase focuses on core courses, providing insights into the evolution of contemporary warfare, the nature of security and strategy, and societal perspectives on the use of force. These courses aim to provide a common framework of reference for students from diverse backgrounds within the multidisciplinary MSS field. The second phase introduces three specialized tracks – ‘War Studies,’ ‘Intelligence & Security,’ and ‘Managing & Organizing in the Military.’ Each track consists of thematically clustered courses, allowing students to delve deeper into specific areas of interest. Notable adjustments made by the programme in the past years include the inclusion of a course on the future of war within the ‘War Studies’ track and a redesign of the ‘Intelligence & Security’ track to reflect contemporary challenges in the intelligence domain. The final phase encourages independent inquiry and responsibility, allowing students to select an elective course, develop thesis research proposals, and work on individual theses.

The panel has studied the structure and content of the curriculum, and concludes that it fits the intended learning outcomes of the programme. During the site visit, the panel discussed the role of ethics in the curriculum with several representatives of the programme. The panel considers ethics to be a very important issue in military affairs: it judges and justifies military action from a moral point of view. Contemporary military operations demonstrate that political assignments, social and cultural environments, cutting-edge technologies, and organizational frameworks pose questions and dilemmas for the military and its personnel. These issues can have significant consequences, not least for the soldiers directly involved. From the interview with the teaching staff, the panel concludes that ethics is sufficiently covered in the curriculum, as it is addressed in courses such as War, Defence & Society. However, given the importance and growing relevance of ethics in the current landscape of hybrid warfare, the panel recommends that this should be made more explicit.

At the same time, the role of non-Western perspectives could be made more explicit, and perhaps given more consideration in the curriculum. While the interviews underlined that the course content departs from the Western perspective, the growing role and influence of non-Western players cannot be ignored. During the interview with the teaching staff, it was made clear to the panel that non-Western perspectives are discussed by some of the teachers, but this is not explicitly stated in the programme. The panel recommends that this should be better coordinated and monitored within the programme.

Considerations

The MSS curriculum provides an appropriate mix of core courses, track-related courses, electives and a thesis, fitting the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The core courses establish a common foundation, the specialized tracks allow for deeper exploration, and the final phase encourages independent research. The panel suggests making the role of ethics and non-Western perspectives in the curriculum more explicit as they are of increasing importance and relevance for all tracks.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 3.

Standard 4. Curriculum; learning environment

The structure of the curriculum encourages study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Findings

Teaching methods

The MSS programme is offered in a small-scale environment. It typically accommodates around 45 students per year, which also represents the maximum number of students attending the common core courses. During the track phase and elective sessions, class sizes typically vary between ten and eighteen students. The limited class size encourages discussions between lecturers and students, promotes peer interaction, facilitates engagement between military and non-military students, and between Ministry of Defence (MoD) and non-MoD students. In addition, the smaller class size allows for active student participation, direct interaction with lecturers, and individual feedback on essay and thesis development. The programme offers a variety of working methods including plenary lectures, working groups and electronic learning. In order to achieve the intended learning outcomes and to enhance professional skills, active participation is one of the principles of the programme's teaching philosophy and at the core of the reflective practitioner. Students are, therefore, encouraged to participate actively in debates.

The panel found that the small scale of the programme, with a favourable student-teacher ratio, creates a very student-centred and highly engaging learning environment. Discussions are the dominant teaching method within courses and are valued by both students and teachers. Based on the interviews with both parties, the panel is very positive about this form of peer learning, as it is beneficial in a number of ways: it helps to develop higher level thinking and oral communication; it encourages interaction between students and teaching staff, exposing Interviews with students and alumni of the programme clearly demonstrated the importance of active participation in the professional development of MSS students. The level of student participation and the overall quality of the education is further enhanced by the limited number of students on each course.

Student-centredness

The programme aims to strike a balance between ensuring coherence in the curriculum and giving students the flexibility to choose topics of personal interest. Students are encouraged to write papers, articles, essays, and theses on topics of their choice, as long as these topics can be approached from different perspectives. While such choices may extend beyond the programme's initial focus on Western security policy and post-Cold War military power, they should still relate to the core elements of the programme. Both the level of complexity of the programme and the amount of independent work undertaken by students increase over the three successive phases of the programme. The student-centred approach of the programme is also reflected in the modular design of the curriculum, which gives students the flexibility to pause their studies when necessary, such as during planned or unforeseen military deployments. This design also allows other eligible students, who do not necessarily wish to complete the full programme or obtain an MA degree, to engage selectively in specific components of the curriculum. Students have the opportunity to switch between courses from different tracks, provided that the balanced mix of students is maintained. In addition, students may choose courses from other tracks as electives or take additional courses on a voluntary basis where possible.

The panel appreciates the student-centredness of the programme, and the flexibility that allows students to tailor the programme to their own preferences or personal circumstances. The structure of the programme is

designed to enable students to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge as well as an investigative and reflective academic attitude, allowing them to take responsibility for their own learning process.

Language of instruction

To prepare students for international cooperation and coordination common in the military professional field, the MSS curriculum, literature and all assessments, including all graded elements of the programme, are offered in English. At the same time, the programme allows student to make use of spoken Dutch in classroom. Over the years, the implementation of the use of English in the programme has been debated and was subject to change. Finding a right balance between effective discussions in the classroom and a proper preparation for an international professional field has been a challenge for the Programme Board. At the time of the site visit the compromise actively implemented was: on paper, everything is in English, but classes and discussions are in principle in Dutch, and adaptations are made in case foreign students are present. While the panel observed from interviews that there was still some uncertainty and confusion on the matter, this compromise is also regarded as the best solution by all. The panel agrees that this arrangement seems to work in practice, and advises to settle on the implementation of choice and keep this in place for a longer time in order to provide clarity to both staff and students.

Considerations

The MSS programme maintains a small-scale environment, typically accommodating around 45 students annually with limited class sizes during the track phase and elective sessions. The panel concludes that this small scale fosters a highly engaging learning environment, promoting discussions among students and faculty, interaction between military and non-military students, and individualized feedback. The modular curriculum design allows for flexibility, accommodating students' needs. While the programme emphasizes coherence in its curriculum, students are encouraged to explore topics of personal interest within the broader framework. The programme structure progresses in complexity over three phases, aiming to develop investigative and reflective academic attitudes. The curriculum, literature and all assessments are in English to prepare students for international cooperation, but lectures and discussions are usually in Dutch. Discussions may also be held in English, accommodating international students. Despite some uncertainty, the compromise of English-based materials with Dutch lectures and discussions is regarded as the best solution by stakeholders. The panel advises the programme to make a clear decision and maintain consistency.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 4.

Standard 5. Intake

The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.

Findings

The programme is open to students from a variety of backgrounds, but is primarily tailored to experienced Dutch officers and civil servants of the Ministry of Defence with permanent contracts. This group benefits from the programme as it provides a valuable academic foundation that contextualizes their professional experience. Military students can apply with a bachelor's or master's degree from FMS or another university, completion of extended programmes at the Royal Military Academy or the Royal Naval Institute, or successful completion of advanced staff and command courses. The programme also considers civilian students and military students from allied or partner nations as a secondary target group, which can be

admitted with relevant academic qualifications in the field of military strategic studies. Non-MoD applicants are assessed based on their CV, grades, motivation, work experience, and personal competences. In addition to a relevant degree, the programme requires applicants to provide a certificate of proficiency in the English language in order to participate successfully in the programme. There are a variety of acceptable certificates and in exceptional cases, the Board of Examiners may waive the language requirement. Completion of a relevant bachelor's or master's degree taught entirely in English may also lead to an exemption. Foreign students should be able to master Dutch passively to guarantee that they can follow conversations in and outside classes.

A deficiency programme is offered to applicants from the programme's primary target group who, in the opinion of the Board of Examiners, are not yet eligible, but have remediable deficiencies. Students follow a personalized track comprising a maximum of six FMS bachelor's courses, including a compulsory research methods course where students learn to write a research proposal. Upon completion of the deficiency programme, applicants are eligible for admission to the MSS master's programme and may be selected.

The panel has examined the admission requirements of the programme and concludes that they are appropriate for the content of the programme. The requirements take sufficient account of relevant previous education, English language proficiency, and academic skills. The panel learnt from students and alumni that in addition to the formal entry requirements, the programme also integrates the expected workload in the communication to prospective students. Combining a part time master's programme with other responsibilities that come with a job in the military can be challenging (see standard 8), and the programme wants students to be prepared for this. The panel appreciates that the programme takes this into account, and learnt from students and alumni that this has helped them to manage their expectations.

Considerations

The panel finds the admission requirements appropriate, sufficiently addressing relevant previous education, English language proficiency, and academic skills. The panel furthermore appreciates the programme's transparent communication regarding the programme's workload.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 5.

Standard 6. Staff

The staff team is qualified for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content and educational expertise. The team size is sufficient.

Findings

The MSS programme is taught by teaching staff members affiliated to the Faculty of Military Sciences, many of whom are also affiliated to other academic institutions. There are nineteen teachers in total, twelve of whom hold the position of professor, either at the NLDA or at another academic institution, The other seven all hold a doctoral degree.

The FMS Education and Quality Manual stipulates that teaching staff in all degree programmes are involved in research. According to the FMS personnel policy, academic staff should devote thirty per cent of their time to research, sixty per cent to teaching and the remaining ten per cent to management and administration. Most of the MSS teaching staff are embedded within the War Studies Research Centre (WSRC), and some are

based in FMS's Military Management Studies Research Centre (MMSRC), whose research largely informs the various tracks of the MSS programme. Several staff members also have links to civilian universities or think tanks. In addition to many years of organizational knowledge, military staff members also bring recent operational skills, knowledge and experience from the professional field to classes.

Course evaluations include assessments of individual teaching staff members, covering didactic and academic skills, as well as their understanding of the military context. The overall student rating of teaching staff is close to 8 out of 10. The high appreciation of the teaching staff was confirmed during the student interview, where the teachers were praised for their in-depth knowledge of their respective disciplines as well as their didactic and research skills.

The panel is very positive about the quality of the teaching team. The teachers are highly regarded by the students for their knowledge of their specific disciplines and for their didactical and research skills. The staff combines education with state-of-the-art research. All teaching staff members have at least a PhD and are actively engaged in research in the field of war studies. Given the small scale and part-time nature of the programme, the panel finds there is sufficient staff available to provide education besides active participation in research.

To safeguard teaching quality within an overarching policy of quality-improvement, FMS aims to certify all lecturers at BKO level. From studying the documentation provided by the programme management, it became clear to the panel that although many teachers are working towards their BKO certification, less than half of them actually are BKO certified. In order to ensure the quality of education, the panel recommends that this should be brought up to 100% of the teaching staff.

Considerations

The panel acknowledges the quality of the teaching team, noting that all teachers hold a doctoral degree and have a strong connection to current research. The panel finds there is sufficient staff available for education. It recommends ensuring all teaching staff attain BKO certification to further promote teacher professionalization.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 6.

Standard 7. Facilities

The accommodation and material facilities are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum.

Findings

The MSS programme is taught on the premises of the FMS. Students stay all day on Fridays when classes are held, using several smaller classrooms and a lecture hall for plenary classes. Teachers and students can use audio-visual resources, such as screens and (mobile) recording equipment. Students have access to several online educational facilities. In order to facilitate students' search for information and to reduce the number of information sources, these complementary platforms are accessible directly or indirectly through the electronic learning environment Moodle. Moodle serves as a platform and overview for all courses. FMS teaching staff members create and maintain their courses and students can easily access course-related information. An integrated messaging system provides an easy way to send important messages to all staff members and students.

The NLDA library specializes in military scientific literature and is of national importance in the field of war studies. It provides FMS staff and students with access to an extensive range of publications, with a physical collection of approximately 200,000 titles and access to over 25,000 e-journals in more than 75 databases. Access to the entire collection is facilitated through a discovery metasearch tool that is available online. Through its digital connection via Worldcat, the NLDA library is linked to thousands of other libraries worldwide.

During the visit to Breda, the panel visited some of the facilities and found them well suited for teaching the MSS programme. Interviews with the students and alumni revealed a number of minor issues, which the panel advises to address. Some students mentioned that access to the online library can be limited, which sometimes results in required and recommended literature being inaccessible to students. The panel advises to investigate and remedy this. Furthermore, the panel learnt during the site visit that it sometimes takes a long time before non-military students get access to facilities; for example access cards to the terrain are sometimes not provided until several months after the start of the programme. The panel recommends to strive for a swifter procedure for onboarding of non-military students.

Considerations

The panel is positive about the facilities and determines they are clearly sufficient for the realisation of the programme.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 7.

Standard 8. Tutoring

The tutoring of and provision of information to students are conducive to study progress and tie in with the needs of students.

Findings

Student guidance

The programme aims for intensive tutoring of students in a small-scale environment, and low-threshold contact between teaching staff and students. Prior to the start of the MSS master's programme, the FMS provides applicants with comprehensive information about the programme content, admission requirements and the deficiency programme. Once admitted, an orientation day helps prepare students for successful completion of the programme. Course guides detail grading systems and resit procedures, while the Teaching and Examination Regulations outline course details, examination formats and rules and regulations concerning fraud and integrity. The panel learnt from the interviews during the site visit that there is additional support available for students with disabilities, such as extra time during exams for dyslexic students, and wheel-chair accessible lecture rooms, ensuring equal access to education while maintaining academic standards.

The programme coordinator acts as a mentor to MSS students, helping them with any problems they may encounter. Much of the programme's informal study guidance also takes place in the classroom. Because students engage in interactive education in small groups, there is a lot of informal interaction between teachers and students. Students can therefore easily approach teachers with questions or issues.

Supervision during the master's thesis is provided by the student's supervisor. This is a teaching staff member with expertise on the thesis topic of the student. Students write and discuss an initial research proposal under supervision of a senior staff member in 'circle meetings' with a maximum of four to five peers. The composition of these circles is fixed, as are the thesis supervisor and the co-examiner. The result of the proposal is presented to and assessed by the supervisor and a co-examiner in a 'go / no-go' session. Over the following months, students discuss the progress of their work in the same circles. Their draft thesis is again presented and assessed in another 'go / no-go' session (final feedback) prior to the summer holidays, with time to finalise their work until the end of August.

The panel is positive on the student guidance in the programme. It concludes that the academic guidance offered to students is appropriate and students are satisfied with the guidance and information provided. Teachers are available for questions and there is attention to disability.

Feasibility

Almost 70% of students enrolled in the MSS programme complete the programme eventually, with the majority of students (varying between years, between 41-62%) graduates within the given two-year time frame. Due to professional or personal situations, especially for military students, it is possible to study in phases and sometimes to suspend studies. Students and graduates told the panel that it is particularly difficult to combine the programme with a managerial role, as operational needs take precedence. The programme makes efforts to help, for example by offering flexible deadlines for assignments. From the interviews with students and alumni, the panel could confirm that delays in study are not caused by programme-specific reasons. The programme is flexible in the case of work-related delays. Students and alumni all confirmed that the workload was considerable, but that they had expected it and were well prepared for it.

Considerations

The programme has established a solid system of guidance, allowing ample room for informal guidance and information exchange in a small-scale setting. The panel notes that students are satisfied with the guidance they receive and the tailored approach to finding solutions for any issues they encounter. It concludes that student guidance within MSS is well-organized.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 8.

Standard 9. 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

Quality assurance for all FMS degree programmes is outlined in the Education and Quality Manual (EQM). Responsibility for quality assurance within the FMS lies with the Faculty Board, but based on agreements made within the faculty, day-to-day responsibility for the programme is delegated to the Programme Board. The Programme Board has been established to monitor and ensure the coherence and overall programme structure of the MSS programme and is therefore responsible for the evaluation of the MSS programme. Next

to the chair, the programme coordinator and two student members, the Board consists of the three track coordinators and a core module coordinator. The MSS Quality Manual (MQM) elaborates on the specific issues of the MSS programme. The MQM aims to maintain and improve the educational quality over time, covering both individual components and the programme as a whole. It emphasizes both quality control and quality improvement and assigns responsibilities to various bodies involved, such as the Programme Board, Programme Committee, Board of Examiners, and FMS teaching staff.

Each FMS programme has a Programme Committee. The Programme Committee is a joint committee consisting of equal numbers of students and teaching staff. The main task of the Programme Committee is to monitor the quality and feasibility of the curriculum and to identify problems, in order to ensure the quality and feasibility of the programme. To this end, they evaluate all the assessment components within the programme. Educational support for the programme is provided by the Education Section of the NLDA, a faculty-wide department that is not linked to specific programmes and is therefore in a more independent position to provide feedback. The Education Section oversees the evaluation of courses in a three-year cycle according to an evaluation schedule, as well as following specific events such as changes in course coordinators or curriculum revisions. Each newly developed course is evaluated after its first iteration. Evaluation is carried out using a standardized questionnaire, and focus on the objectives and level, coherence, structure and feasibility of the course, applied teaching methods, didactic skills, course materials, assessments, learning effects, assignments and the examination. Informal evaluations and broader evaluations beyond individual courses are also carried out. In 2021-2022, a comprehensive evaluation was conducted among students of the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 to assess the MSS curriculum and tracks. Evaluation results, including student feedback and lecturer reflections, are shared internally and are available to students via Moodle.

In addition, the programme regularly consults alumni and representatives of the professional field to ensure its goals align with the requirements from the field, leading to ongoing changes and improvements in courses. Following up on recommendations from the previous accreditation, the Board of Examiners has introduced a checklist for teachers to ensure that all courses meet their criteria, based on the Quality Manual. On the basis of course evaluations, student satisfaction surveys, and alumni surveys each element of the programme being evaluated goes through the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle.

The panel has reviewed the quality assurance system and concludes that it is well established. The Quality Manual provides sufficient tools for quality control and improvement. The panel learnt from staff and students that due to the small scale of the MSS programme, student feedback reaches management quickly, either enabling them to act promptly to implement improvements or seek solutions to problems. From the panel's interviews with the programme management and the Programme Committee, it concludes that the programme committee plays an active role in the quality assurance of the programme, identifying bottlenecks and proactively approaching the programme management with possible improvements to the programme. It is listened to by management and is therefore well placed to fulfil its role. The programme management regularly gathers input from various stakeholders and uses it to improve the programme. Course evaluations and the accompanying advice from the Programme Committee are used to adjust courses for the next cohort. In addition, as already noted at several points in this report, the panel found that the recommendations from the previous accreditation round have been followed up.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the quality assurance system for the MSS programme is well-established, concentrating on both quality control and improvement. Each course is evaluated once every three years, and through use of course evaluations, student feedback is also gathered continuously. Feedback reaches

management quickly, allowing them to act promptly to implement improvements. The programme regularly consults alumni and field experts to ensure its goals align with the requirements from the field, also leading to ongoing modifications and improvements in course offerings.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 9.

Standard 10. Student assessment

The programme has an adequate student assessment system in place.

Findings

System of assessment

The assessment system within MSS follows the FMS-wide quality manual EQM, which covers assessment validity, reliability, transparency, suitability and comparability of different exam sessions (e.g. initial exams and resits). Assessment is designed in such a way that the tests are appropriate to the level and learning objectives of the content being assessed. The programme assesses knowledge through written (take-home) exams and skills through products such as papers and presentations.

Following the previous accreditation panel's recommendations, the programme has made a number of improvements in the assessment system. It has introduced assessment matrices in the design and development of assessments, as well as an examination and assessment plan as part of the MQM. This plan provides an overview of the assessment formats throughout the curriculum and the distribution of workload across lecture periods. The plan also shows the relation between the MSS learning outcomes, curriculum design, test formats, and the testing assessment procedures. The Programme Board and Board of Examiners annually monitor alignment with the intended learning outcomes. Policies on plagiarism and fraud are clearly set out in the TER, with particular reference to emerging technologies like large language models. All written assessments are checked for plagiarism, and fraud allegations are thoroughly investigated, with potential consequences.

The panel has studied the assessment system and discussed it during the site visit. It concludes that the system adequately ensures the validity, reliability, and transparency of assessment and that the programme uses varied and appropriate assessment methods to test students' knowledge and skills. The panel was also pleased to see that the programme followed the recommendations of the previous accreditation by introducing assessment matrices and an assessment plan.

During the site visit, the panel discussed with the programme about the assessment of the ability to engage in constructive dialogue. This skill is an important part in the courses, and is also included in the learning outcome on communication, but it is not assessed separately in the courses. The teaching staff mentioned in the interview that explicit assessment of student participation in debates was dropped because the programme could not find a reliable and valid way to assess this. Instead, lecturers now informally ensure that all students participate in the debates during the courses, which they feel to be feasible due to the small-scale set-up of the courses. The panel agrees that this could work in practice, but that it should be possible to introduce a more structured method for assessing the student's debating skills, both in terms of participation and quality. It suggests, for example, to use peer feedback for this, having students assess each other's contribution to the discussions in the courses.

Board of Examiners

The MSS Board of Examiners oversees the quality of assessment within MSS. This is a programme-specific Board consisting of a chair and two members. It assesses all applications for admission and safeguards assessment within the programmes, for example by setting rules for the proper conduct of tests and exams, monitoring the alignment of assessments with the intended learning outcomes and undertaking comparative research to verify the written feedback and the grades awarded. It also takes regular samples of course assessment and theses to check the validity and transparency of the grading.

During the site visit, the panel spoke with the Board of Examiners. During the interview, the panel found that the Board of Examiners was very committed to its role and actively involved in safeguarding the quality of assessment in both the courses and theses. The panel appreciates that the Board not only checks adherence to the rules, but also aims to raise awareness among the teachers, for example by working with a checklist for each teacher to check that their course complies with the requirements in the EQM and MQM.

Thesis assessment

Students write their thesis as part of a thesis circle under supervision of an FMS staff member (see standard 8). Through this thesis circle, students receive formative feedback through peer review. Formal assessment is carried out by the thesis supervisor with input from a co-examiner at key stages: the assessment of the individual research proposal, the first full draft of the thesis and the final thesis. Following submission of the final thesis the supervisor and co-examiner provide separate assessments of the work, and then jointly decide upon a grade. The examiners utilize a detailed rubric to substantiate their scoring on the sub criteria for the thesis, with explanations provided if the final score differs from the average of individual scores. The procedure with two separate forms for the two assessors, and a third form for the combined assessment was recently introduced after the Board of Examiners observed that not all second examiners provided separate motivations and grades on the assessment forms.

Prior to the visit the panel has evaluated the assessment of 15 theses of MSS students. It concludes that thesis assessment was generally carried out in an insightful and transparent manner, with a helpful rubric for substantiating the grades. It welcomed the recent introduction of a separate assessment form for the second examiner, which safeguards adequate documentation of the second examiner's contribution. From the theses it studied, the panel noted that although all but one theses (see standard 11), were of a sufficient quality, the grading for the theses was rather high compared with its own assessments. In discussing these issues with the Board of Examiners, the Board noted that in their most recent thesis quality check, they had also found that the grades were sometimes higher than would be expected on the basis of the qualitative feedback provided by supervisors. Based on this finding, the Board concluded that a benchmark of the rubrics with the teaching staff would be helpful. This was also done in 2020, but as it has been some years since, they agreed that it would be helpful to do a new benchmark. The panel supports this.

In addition, the panel recommends that this should be complemented with a further alignment of the thesis review process in terms of feedback and the role of the second examiner. For example, in the theses reviewed by the panel, the panel noted that motivation for the final grade was sometimes very short compared to others. The panel discussed this with the Examination Board and noted their willingness to address this as a point for improvement. The panel also noted that there are no strict requirements to the extent to which second examiners can be involved in thesis supervision. Some second examiners also provide formative feedback to students throughout the process, while others are only involved at the formal assessment moments. The panel advises to harmonize this, and limit the involvement to three contact moments.

Finally, the panel suggests the programme to include public defences of MSS students' theses before a larger committee in the thesis assessment procedure. Not only is this quite common for master's theses in the field according to the panel, it is also a way of testing the student's knowledge, discouraging the use of large language models like ChatGPT for writing the thesis, as well as having a grade determined by a larger committee of independent assessors.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the assessment system in place for the MSS programme ensures validity, reliability, and transparency. Assessments align with learning outcomes, testing knowledge and skills through various appropriate methods. In light of the importance of debate in the teaching philosophy, the panel recommends complementing assessment in the programme with structured assessment of classroom participation. The use of answer models and assessment matrices has improved since the previous accreditation panel's recommendations, monitored by a Board of Examiners that has shown itself to be very task-conscious and actively involved in safeguarding the quality of assessment. Theses were assessed in an appropriate way, although in some cases the grades were higher than the panel would have given itself. The panel recommends improvements in thesis assessment consistency to address this. It also suggest public defences for student theses before a larger committee for independent assessment. This could also contribute to the visibility of the programme within the military field.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 10.

Standard 11. Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

The panel has evaluated 15 theses of MSS students across the three tracks, and found them, with one exception, of an appropriate level for a war studies master's programme. The one thesis in its sample that the panel found to be of insufficient quality was mainly lacking in its research methodology (see below). The other theses that the panel studied convinced the panel that this thesis was an outlier and that thesis quality in general is up to standard. The panel also noted that significant amount of theses led to peer reviewed publications, either authored independently by students or co-written by students in collaboration with their supervisors: a testament to the academic skills of the graduates of the MSS programme. The panel noted a wide variety in the use of methodology in the theses. In some cases, it found that the methodological underpinning of the executed research could have been strengthened. In particular, the parameters used in the research project could sometimes be made more explicit in order to improve the reproducibility of the results. The panel recommends to consider the use of guidelines regarding methodology with which theses must comply, in order to support both students and examiners.

The panel interviewed several MSS alumni and professional field representatives who expressed great enthusiasm and pride in the programme and were very satisfied with the programme and its added value. They found the programme to be a good mix of military context and academic research and noted the added value in their trained capacity for critical examination, independent thinking and analysis. Professional field representatives found that MSS alumni are able to approach practical issues and problems of military strategy from an academic perspective, which is of value both to the individual graduate and the defence

organization as a whole. They also indicated that MSS is considered one of the most valuable master's programme at NLDA. The panel was impressed by the academic level and the degree of reflection on the professional field that it found among the alumni it met. The panel advises to explicitly make use of alumni as ambassadors for the programme.

Considerations

The panel evaluated 15 theses from MSS students and found their level generally appropriate for a master's degree. Several theses have been published as peer reviewed publications, either authored independently by students or co-written in collaboration with their supervisors: an attest to the academic skills of the graduates of the MSS programme. The panel suggests improving the reproducibility of thesis research by providing better methodological guidelines. MSS alumni express satisfaction with the programme, highlighting its blend of military experience and academic research, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills. MSS alumni are able to approach practical issues and problems concerning military strategy from an academic perspective, which is of value both to the individual alumnus and the Defence organization at large. Alumni are seen as valuable assets and the panel suggests using them as ambassadors for the programme.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 11.

General conclusion

The panel's assessment of the master programme Military Strategic Studies of the NLDA is positive.

Development points

1. In order to further improve the profile of MSS, present a more clearly defined holistic view of the field of military strategic studies and align the programme's narrative and that of the individual tracks with this view.
2. Formulate track-specific intended learning outcomes to reflect the methodologies relevant for that track. Consider greater emphasis on quantitative methods / data science and explore the integration of quantitative research methods in MOM and I&S.
3. Further strengthen the ties to the professional field by setting up an Advisory Board specific for MSS next to the faculty-wide Board that is currently established.
4. Ensure all teaching staff attain BKO certification to further promote teacher professionalization.
5. Introduce structured assessment of classroom participation.
6. Improve thesis assessment consistency by providing methodological guidelines, better defining the role of the second examiner and conducting a new benchmark on thesis grades.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

MSS graduates are able to:

1. understand and explain the evolution of contemporary Western security policy and the perspectives of Western (European) societies concerning the use of force;
2. understand and explain dominant trends and characteristics of contemporary conflicts and modes of warfare;
3. understand and explain the role of strategy at the interface between political and military activity in general and in various types of conflict in particular;
4. understand, analyse and reflect on contemporary strategic challenges Western (European) states and military organizations are confronted with, using relevant insights derived from a multidisciplinary body of knowledge;
5. relate the outcomes of analysis and reflection (in)to problem solving strategies that are relevant to the military interventions and the management of defence organizations;
6. communicate ideas, perspectives and results in an international context in constructive dialogue, in oral presentation and in cooperative workgroups;
7. (independently) conduct research to develop the capacity to contribute to the body of knowledge in the MSS domain.

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

THESIS (15 EC)		
Elective (5 EC)		
European Stratego / Cyber Security and Cyber Operations / Terrorism and Counterterrorism / Selling War / Decision-making in crisis and war / From Peacekeeping to State-building		
TRACK MANAGING & ORGANISING IN THE MILITARY (20 EC)	TRACK WAR STUDIES (20 EC)	TRACK INTELLIGENCE & SECURITY (20 EC)
Leadership and Ethics	Irregular Warfare	Data and Technology in Intelligence
Technology Management and the Military	The Future of War	International Intelligence Cooperation
Defence Economics & Performance Management	International Law of Military Operations	Intelligence and its Environment
Strategizing and Organizing	Deterrence & Coercive diplomacy	Intelligence Organizations and their Cultures
Compulsory Core Courses (20 EC)		
Research Methods in Military Strategic Studies	War, Defence & Society	
War & Warfare in the (post)Modern World	Contemporary Security & Strategy	

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Thursday 25 January 2024

Time	Activity	Who
11.45 – 12.30	Reception of the visitation panel, followed by a shared (informal) lunch around 12:00 PM.	Faculty Board Programme Board
12.30 – 14.00	Internal meeting visitation committee.	
14.00 – 14.45	Meeting with formally substantive responsible.	Faculty Board Programme Board Foundation Board representative
14.45 – 15.15	Internal meeting visitation committee.	
15.15 – 16.00	Meeting with the teaching staff	Teaching staff panel
16.00 – 16.15	Internal meeting visitation committee.	
16.15 – 17.00	Meeting with the Board of Examiners	Board of Examiners
17.00 – 17.30	Guided tour of facilities at FMW/TvZ	Guide

Friday 26 January 2024

Time	Activity	Who
08.45	Departure from hotel	
09.00 – 09.45	Internal meeting visitation committee; Opportunity for drop-in session.	Interested individuals
09.45 – 10.15	Meeting with Programme Committee	Programme Committee
10.15 – 10.30	Internal meeting visitation committee	
10.30 – 11.15	Meeting with professional field and alumni representatives	Professional field representatives Alumni representatives
11.15 – 11.30	Internal meeting visitation committee	
11.30 – 12.15	Meeting with MSS students and recent alumni representatives	MSS Students (current) Alumni (graduated in 2023)
12.15 – 13.30	Lunch; Internal meeting visitation committee	
13.30 – 14.15	Final meeting with formally and substantive responsible.	Faculty Board Programme Board Foundation Board representative
14.15 – 16.00	Drafting of preliminary findings by the visitation committee.	
16.00 – 16.45	Oral feedback on initial observations.	FMS staff All
16.45 – 17.30	Development dialogue	Programme Board Programme Committee representatives

Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses. Information on the theses is available from Academion upon request. The panel also studied other materials, which included:

- Panelreport reaccreditation 2018 and NVAO decision reaccreditation 2018
- Self-evaluation report Master MSS
- Learning outcomes
- Study structure
- Evaluation Calendar
- Standard Questionnaire
- Course-Transcending Evaluation
- Faculty Qualifications
- Testing and Assessment Plan
- MSS Quality Manual (MQM)
- Course Guide 'Research Circles & Thesis' 2023-2024
- MSS Thesis Assessment Form Final Grade
- External Inquiry MSS theses 2018-2022
- Internal Evaluation MSS theses 2018-2022
- ZER student evaluation 2022-2024
- Discipline protocol MSS with validation letters
- Education Quality Manual
- Annual Reports SWOON 2018-2022
- Teaching and Examinations Regulations 2023-2024
- Study Guide 2023-2024
- Annual reports Board of Examiners 2018-2023
- Covid Evaluation
- Course files all courses