

Assessment of conditional initial
accreditation

Executive Master in Customs and Supply

Chain Compliance

Erasmus University Rotterdam

20th February 2018

Inhoud

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1 Description of the programme

1.1 General

Country	Netherlands
Institution	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Programme	Executive Master in Customs and Supply Chain Compliance
Level	Master (postgraduate)
Orientation	Academic (in Dutch: wo)
Degree	MSc
Location	Rotterdam
Study load:	64 EC
Mode of study	Part-time
CROHO section	Economy

2 Executive summary

NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders) received a request for an initial accreditation procedure with regard to the postgraduate academic (wo) master's programme Executive Master in Customs and Supply Chain Compliance of Erasmus University Rotterdam. NVAO convened an expert panel, which first visited the programme in 2016 and issued an advisory report on December 23rd of that year. In this report, the panel made clear that it supported the programme's objectives, as these are relevant to the study of the new trends in the field of customs. Furthermore, the panel was of the opinion that the intended learning outcomes meet the objectives of the programme. The panel also approved of the organisation of the programme, in terms of management of the programme and involvement of stakeholders. The curriculum meets the learning outcomes and covers the subjects to be addressed satisfactorily.

However, on a number of issues the panel was not completely convinced. In the panel's view, the entry requirements and admission procedures of the programme were not entirely suitable. Students with bachelor degrees ought to remedy their deficiencies in academic skills before being admitted to the programme. This was not the case in the programme. Though these students are expected to enrol in the pre-master programme, the panel observed that in this programme only very limited time was given to the study of academic skills. Therefore, the panel recommended redesigning the admission procedures and restating the entry requirements, to allow for differences in prior education between students and to ensure the academic level to be reached in the programme.

Another issue concerned the staff. Although the panel had no doubt about the teaching skills of the core lecturers, it felt that the teachers with a practical background (i.e. not being "BKO" skilled teachers) should be supervised more rigorously. Additionally, the information exchange among the lecturers about adjustments of the courses and about preventing gaps and overlap was too limited in the panel's view. The panel advised to intensify the interaction between lecturers to discuss these subjects.

A third issue concerned the examination and assessment framework. As the assessment criteria of the examinations in the courses did not adequately reflect the intended learning outcomes of the programme and as the quality of the examinations ought to be checked more rigorously, the panel advised to relate the examinations more clearly to the learning outcomes and to improve the quality control of the examinations.

Although the panel was positive about the composition and responsibilities of the examination board, the panel felt this board could proceed more pro-actively. The panel recommended the examination board to strengthen the quality assurance of examinations and assessments.

Conditions

The panel advised NVAO to take a conditionally positive decision regarding the quality of the postgraduate academic (wo) master programme Executive Master in Customs and Supply Chain Compliance of Erasmus University Rotterdam. The panel listed the following recommendations, to be fulfilled within one year:

1. The coherence of the curriculum should be reinforced and the interaction among lecturers should be intensified concerning adjustments, gaps and overlaps within the programme.
2. The admission procedures should be redesigned and the entry requirements should be restated, to allow for differences in prior education between students and to ensure the academic level to be reached in the programme.
3. The quality control of the examinations should be improved, in particular by reinforcing the role of the Examination Board and by relating the examinations clearly to the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

NVAO followed these recommendations and made a positive conditional decision on the master's programme at March 17 2017. NVAO set three conditions, that the new master programme should fulfil within a one year period. To show that the conditions have been met, the institution has submitted an additional file at NVAO.

Assessment

The panel appreciates the steps the management team of the master's programme has taken to make improvements. Concerning the first condition, the management team has improved the coherence of the curriculum and the interaction of lecturers. The meetings between staff members, the coaching of staff members without a BKO and the evaluation of the module descriptions are useful and important steps in this direction. The panel feels that these improvements in the programme will contribute to the success of the programme.

Concerning the second condition, the modules on Research Methods (and Methodology) have been strengthened. The management team furthermore has given a clear description of the exemption policy. The panel is convinced that the exemption policy is basically sound and that the management team doesn't issue exemptions lightly. However the panel feels that RSM should be careful not to weaken the scientific and research oriented character of the master. Therefore, the panel has added two recommendations to this report in section 4.

Finally concerning the last condition, the panel sees improvement in the quality control of the examinations and the role of the Examination Board. The new assessment policy shows the relation between learning objectives and assessments. The Examination Board is involved in the assessment of both theses and examinations. The clarification given by the management team of the new master satisfies the panel.

These considerations lead the panel to conclude that the conditions, that are part of the conditionally positive decision on the initial accreditation of the (wo) master's programme Customs and Supply Chain Compliance of Erasmus University Rotterdam (RSM), have been met. Therefore the panel advises NVAO to take a positive decision regarding the quality of the postgraduate academic (wo) master programme Executive Master in Customs and Supply Chain Compliance of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

On behalf of the initial accreditation panel convened to assess the postgraduate academic (wo) master programme Executive Master in Customs and Supply Chain Compliance of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

The Hague, February 20th 2018

Prof.dr. W.F. de Koning (chair)

drs. E.J. van der Spek (secretary)

3 Assessment of conditional initial accreditation

In her decision of 31st March 2017 on the aforementioned request for an initial accreditation, NVAO made a positive conditional decision. NVAO set three conditions, that the new master programme should fulfil within a one year period. To show that the conditions have been met, the institution has submitted an additional file at NVAO on 28th September 2017. On request of NVAO, the panel has assessed on 20th February 2018 whether the institution has thereby met the conditions that were stipulated in the accreditation decision. The advisory report of the panel has been put together during a written consultation.

The panel has posed a number of questions for clarification of the additional file. These questions have been sent to the master programme on 11th December 2017. The programme has answered these questions in writing; the answers have been received by NVAO on 23rd January 2018.

3.1 Condition 1

Condition (see decision).

The coherence of the curriculum should be reinforced and the interaction among lecturers should be intensified concerning adjustments, gaps and overlaps within the programme.

Outline of findings

In its advisory report, the panel made a number of critical remarks about the coherence of the programme. In the first place, the panel advised to strengthen the coherence of the curriculum and to clarify the relations between the courses. In the second place, the panel thought the lecturers should meet more often to discuss adjustments of the courses to prevent gaps and overlap.

The management team of the programme has taken a number of steps to improve the coherence. According to the new accreditation report, the core faculty will coach and provide feedback to other faculty (without BKO-certification). This is a step to improve collaboration between faculty staff. Core faculty evaluate modules within their faculty team and provide feedback. So far seven modules have been evaluated and improved in this way.

A second step is improving coherence between core knowledge areas. Steps have been taken to document the interdisciplinary topics and provide suggestions to improve coherence. As a result, the programme has started with the development of a number of new crossover teaching cases.

The panel has send a request for clarification on a number of items, such as (1) the frequency and form of the BKO-coaching; (2) the organizing of an activity that would allow the staff to meet and exchange information; and (3) the description of the module on Systems Based Auditing, and in particular the involvement of other knowledge areas in this module.

In its reply, the management team of the master's programme has made clear that staff members that are involved in the same module meet regularly. The core teachers coach

and supervise the staff members that do not have a BKO. Teaching activities of non BKO-teachers are always supervised by a core teacher. Some of the core teachers have organized a virtual conference with their fellow teachers.

In 2017 a workshop has been held about the didactic aspects and the evaluation system within the programme. In May 2018 another workshop will be organized for all teaching staff, with the focus on integrating teaching cases.

Considerations

It is clear to the panel that efforts have been taken to improve the coherence of the curriculum and the interaction of lecturers. The meetings between staff members, the coaching of staff members without a BKO and the evaluation of the module descriptions are useful and important steps in this direction. The course description of the module on Systems Based Auditing is being improved due to questions of the panel. The panel is happy to see these improvements, as the mutual understanding of the topics of other teachers within the programme will contribute greatly to the success of the programme. However, the panel would like to advise the management team to make sure that the three (or four) focus areas will be sufficiently integrated (see section 4 for recommendations).

Conclusion: condition 1 is met

3.2 Condition 2

Condition (see decision).

The admission procedures should be redesigned and the entry requirements should be restated, to allow for differences in prior education between students and to ensure the academic level to be reached in the programme.

Outline of findings

In its advisory report, the panel stated that the entry procedure was not fitted for students with bachelor degrees or coming from professional universities (hbo). According to the panel, these students ought to remedy their deficiencies in academic skills before being admitted to the programme. However, the pre-master programme that was set up for these students was quite limited in regard to academic skills.

The management team of the programme has taken a number of measures to remedy this problem. Two modules have been added: in the pre-Master a module Research Methods and Methodology has been added, in the Master's programme a new module on Quantitative Methods and SPSS. Students with an MSc can waive the module on Research Methods and Methodology from the pre-Master.

However, the organization of the pre-Master and the exemption policy regarding this pre-Master weren't exactly clear to the new panel. Therefore, the panel has posed a number of questions about the scope and the scientific value of the pre-Master. In answering these questions, the management team has made clear that the pre-Master now contains two modules on Research Methods (1 and 5 ECTS) and four modules 'Essentials of...' (Customs, Logistics, Auditing and IT; 2,5 ECTS each).

The panel also had a number of questions on the exemption policy. Depending on the previous education (wo or hbo) and work experience, candidates can be exempted from one or more modules from the pre-Master. In general, work experience can result in an exemption from one or more of the essentials modules, whereas academic experience (a wo-degree in a relevant field) can result in an exemption from one or both of the modules on Research methods. However, the actual exemptions are based on a questionnaire that is used during the intake interview. Exemption therefore is no automatic process, but a process that is given due care by the management team.

Considerations

The panel approves of the strengthening of the modules on Research Methods (and Methodology). The management team furthermore has given a clear description of the exemption policy. The panel, moreover, is convinced that the exemption policy is basically sound and that the management team doesn't issue exemptions lightly. So the panel feels that the management team has taken sufficient steps to meet this condition.

This being said, the panel feels that RSM should be careful not to weaken the scientific and research oriented character of the master. Therefore, the panel has added two recommendations to this report: see section 4.

Conclusion: condition 2 is met

3.3 Condition 3

Condition (see decision).

The quality control of the examinations should be improved, in particular by reinforcing the role of the Examination Board and by relating the examinations clearly to the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

Outline of findings

In its advisory report, the panel has stated that the quality of the examinations should be checked more rigorously. This can be done by relating the examinations more clearly to the intended learning outcomes and to improve the quality control of the examinations. Also the panel felt the Examination Board could proceed more actively.

The management team has developed an assessment policy that makes explicit the coherence between learning objectives and assessments. This plan is discussed with the Faculty Board and Examination Board and it is implemented in the course outlines. Also, the management team has developed an action plan with the Examination Board. As a result, the Examination Board provided feedback on course outlines, improved the assessment policy, evaluated thesis reports and required the implementation of a new assessment plan for all modules.

Again, some questions were raised by the panel to clarify the steps taken by the management team of the Master's programme. In answering these questions, the management team has given a clarification of the tasks and responsibilities of the Examination Board. The Examination Board has assessed a number of theses; according to the new policy, the Examination Board assesses three theses for each core theme

(customs, supply chain and IT&Compliance). The other examinations are assessed as well. The programme director sees to it that the examinations are developed in accordance to the assessment plan and assessment matrix. Educational experts from the RSM's Learning and Innovation Team are involved in the development of these examinations.

Considerations

In the view of the panel, the quality control of the examinations is improved and the role of the Examination Board is both strengthened and clarified. The new assessment policy shows the relation between learning objectives and assessments. The Examination Board is involved in the assessment of both theses and examinations. The clarification given by the management team of the new master satisfies the panel.

Conclusion: condition 3 is met

4 Recommendations

1. Firstly, the panel insists that the majority of the students should have a (wo) Master's degree. A majority of students with a Bachelor's degree (both wo and hbo) could, in the view of the panel, have a negative influence on the character of the programme.
2. Secondly, the panel recommends *not* to give exemptions for the module Research Methods and Methodology I (5 ECTS) if the scientific training of the candidate is different from the scientific approach that is used in the Executive Master in Customs and Supply Chain (for example when a candidate doesn't have sufficient knowledge on statistics). In this way, the RSM will strengthen the scientific character of the Executive Master.
3. Thirdly, the panel would like to advise the management team to make sure that the three (or four) focus areas will be sufficiently integrated. In particular the integration of the module Systems Based Auditing needs additional attention.

Annex 1: Composition panel

The panel which assessed the quality of the postgraduate academic (wo) master's programme Executive Master in Customs and Supply Chain Compliance of Erasmus University Rotterdam consisted of the following persons:

- prof.dr. W.F. de Koning, Professor Emeritus in Accounting Information Systems, Nyenrode Business University (panel chair);
- prof.dr. I.J.J. Burgers, Professor of Economics of Taxation, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Groningen and Professor of International and European Tax Law, Faculty of Law, University of Groningen (panel member)
- R. Hendrix, Director Operations Benelux (Service Delivery) at Iron Mountain (panel member)
- D. van Wanrooij LLB, student Master in International and European Law and Master Law and Technology, Tilburg University, (student member).

prof.dr. W.F. de Koning (panel chair)

Mr De Koning is Professor Emeritus in Accounting Information Systems at Nyenrode Business University. He took his doctorate from Erasmus University Rotterdam. He was employed as an IT auditor by a bank and an accounting firm and, subsequently, was a partner of an accounting and consulting firm. Mr De Koning served as Professor at the School of Accounting and Controlling of Nyenrode Business University.

prof.dr. I.J.J. Burgers (panel member)

Mrs Burgers is Professor of Economics of Taxation at the Faculty of Economics and Business of University of Groningen as well as Professor of International and European Tax Law at the Faculty of Law of University of Groningen. She studied Economics of Taxation as well as Business Economics and took her doctorate in Tax Law at University of Groningen. Mrs Burgers has published widely.

R. Hendrix, (panel member)

Mr Hendrix is Director Operations Benelux of Iron Mountain. He served as an officer in the Royal Netherlands Army and took part in several overseas operations. Subsequently, he was employed by a number of international companies. Mr Hendrix frequently serves as a chair of NVAO panels for the initial accreditation of higher education degree programmes in the Netherlands.

D. van Wanrooij LLB (student member)

Ms Van Wanrooij is a student in both the Master programme in International and European Law of Tilburg University and the Master programme Law and Technology of Tilburg University. Ms van Wanrooij frequently serves as a student member on NVAO panels for the initial accreditation of higher education degree programmes in the Netherlands.

All panel members filled in and signed a declaration of independence and impartiality.

The panel was assisted by Ed Lansink, process coordinator NVAO, and Erik van der Spek, Hendrikx Van der Spek, secretary.

The panel report has been ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the postgraduate academic (wo) Master programme Executive Master in Customs and Supply Chain Compliance of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

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