

Assessment report
Limited Framework Programme Assessment
Master Medical Anthropology and Sociology
University of Amsterdam

Contents of the report

1. Executive summary	2
2. Assessment process	4
3. Programme administrative information.....	7
4. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard	8
4.1 Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	8
4.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	10
4.3 Standard 3: Student assessment.....	12
4.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	14
5. Overview of assessments.....	15
6. Recommendations	16

1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the Master Medical Anthropology and Sociology programme of University of Amsterdam, which has been assessed according to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, as published on 20 December 2016 (Staatscourant nr. 69458).

The programme is unique and the programme objectives are very relevant. The objectives of the programme to educate students in medical anthropology, medical sociology and science and technology studies and to introduce them to the social sciences perspectives of health, illness and health care are very much appreciated by the panel. The programme objectives are research-based and up-to-date.

The programme objectives meet the requirements of the Reference Framework for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology in the Netherlands. The panel welcomes the efforts by the joint programmes to draft this framework and regards this to be a sound description of this domain.

The panel appreciates the comparison made to programmes abroad and considers this programme to compare favourably to programmes in this field in other countries.

The panel supports the objectives of the programme to prepare students for positions in research and in the professional field. The panel suggests to promote further integration of the programme within the wider professional field.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme correspond to the programme objectives, are well-articulated and are conform to the master level.

The programme student inflow numbers are appropriate. Students from various backgrounds are admitted to the programme and the panel regards this as positive and as conducive to student diversity in the programme. The admission requirements and procedures are adequate. The panel is positive about the preparatory programme being offered.

The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes. The contents of the curriculum are up to standard. In addition, the panel considers the curriculum to be well-balanced and coherent. The panel appreciates the fieldwork component in the curriculum, as this allows students to experience research in the programme domain first-hand.

The panel regards the lecturers in the programme to be good researchers and skilled teachers. The panel welcomes the team spirit among them. The panel regards the lecturers to be easily approachable for students. The panel is positive about courses, being lectured by teams of lecturers. The workload of lecturers may be demanding, but is manageable.

The panel considers the curriculum to be well-organised in educational terms, allowing students to actively engage in the learning processes. The study methods adopted in the courses correspond to the educational concept. The study guidance is organised well, both on the programme level and during the fieldwork and Master thesis phases. The panel is positive about the buddy system. The panel advises to monitor class sizes. The student success rates are very much up to standard.

The panel approves of the examination and assessment rules and regulations of the programme, these being in line with University of Amsterdam's assessment policies. The monitoring by the Examinations Board of examination and assessment processes is adequate.

The examination methods adopted in the programme are appropriate and consistent with the goals and contents of the courses. The panel approves the measures, which have been taken to counter plagiarism and fraud.

Students are guided adequately in the fieldwork and Master thesis processes. The assessment procedures for the Master thesis, involving two examiners are adequate. Although the assessment scoring forms include relevant criteria and are transparent, the panel proposes to have examiners add written comments and to have proportional weights attached to clusters of criteria.

The panel considers the measures ensuring the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations and assessments to be satisfactory.

The Master theses match the intended learning outcomes. The panel supports the grades given by the examiners of the programme. Some theses are very good, whereas others are sufficient. In the panel's view, some of the theses may have been marked slightly too low and would have merited somewhat higher marks.

The panel considers the programme graduates to have reached the intended learning outcomes and to be qualified to enter the labour market. The positions graduates manage to secure, are in line with the objectives of the programme. The panel suggests to collect more comprehensive information about the professional field and graduates' careers.

The panel that conducted the assessment of the Master Medical Anthropology and Sociology programme of University of Amsterdam assesses this programme to meet the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, judging the programme to be satisfactory. Therefore, the panel advises NVAO to accredit the programme.

Rotterdam, 6 February 2019

Prof. dr. T. Otto
(panel chair)

drs. W. Vercouteren
(panel secretary)

2. Assessment process

The evaluation agency Certiked VBI received the request by University of Amsterdam to manage the limited framework programme assessment process for the Master Medical Anthropology and Sociology programme of this University. The objective of the programme assessment process was to assess whether the programme would conform to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, published on 20 December 2016 (Staatscourant nr. 69458).

Having conferred with management of the University of Amsterdam programme, Certiked invited candidate panel members to sit on the assessment panel. The panel members agreed to do so. The panel composition was as follows:

- Prof dr. T. Otto, full professor of Anthropology and Ethnography, University of Aarhus, Denmark, full professor and tropical leader, The Cairns Institute, James Cook University, Australia (panel chair);
- Prof dr. G. Alex, full professor Ethnology, Asian-Oriental Institute, Eberhardt-Karls University Tübingen, Germany (panel member);
- Dr E.D. Rasch, associate professor, Sociology of Development and Change Group, Wageningen University (panel member);
- Dr M.E. Pelkmans, associate professor in Anthropology, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom (panel member);
- Drs D. Stolk, programme coordinator Cultural Emergency Response, senior member management team, Prins Claus Fonds Amsterdam (panel member);
- I. Corbeek, student Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies, Radboud University (student member).

On behalf of Certiked, drs. W. Vercooteren served as the process coordinator and secretary in the assessment process.

All panel members and the secretary confirmed in writing being impartial with regard to the programme to be assessed and observing the rules of confidentiality. Having obtained the authorisation by the University, Certiked requested the approval of NVAO of the proposed panel to conduct the assessment. NVAO have given their approval.

To prepare the assessment process, the process coordinator convened with management of the programme to discuss the outline of the self-assessment report, the subjects to be addressed in this report and the site visit schedule. In addition, the planning of the activities in preparation of the site visit were discussed. In the course of the process preparing for the site visit, programme management and the Certiked process coordinator regularly had contact to fine-tune the process. The activities prior to the site visit have been performed as planned. Programme management approved of the site visit schedule.

Well in advance of the site visit date, programme management sent the list of final projects of graduates of the programme of the most recent years. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator selected the final projects of 15 graduates from the last few years. The grade distribution in the selection was ensured to conform to the grade distribution in the list, sent by programme management.

The panel chair and the panel members were sent the self-assessment report of the programme, including appendices. In the self-assessment report, the student chapter was included. In addition, the expert panel members were forwarded a number of theses of the programme graduates, these theses being part of the selection made by the process coordinator.

Several weeks before the site visit date, the assessment panel chair and the process coordinator discussed the self-assessment report provided by programme management, the procedures regarding the assessment process and the site visit schedule. In this meeting, the profile of panel chairs of NVAO was discussed as well. The panel chair was informed about the competencies, listed in the profile. Documents pertaining to a number of these competencies were presented to the panel chair. The meeting between the panel chair and the process coordinator served as the briefing for panel chairs, as meant in the NVAO profile of panel chairs.

Prior to the date of the site visit, all panel members sent in their preliminary findings, based on the self-assessment report and the final projects studied, and a number of questions to be put to the programme representatives on the day of the site visit. The panel secretary summarised this information, compiling a list of questions, which served as a starting point for the discussions with the programme representatives during the site visit.

Shortly before the site visit date, the complete panel met to go over the preliminary findings concerning the quality of the programme. During this meeting, the preliminary findings of the panel members, including those about the theses were discussed. The procedures to be adopted during the site visit, including the questions to be put to the programme representatives on the basis of the list compiled, were discussed as well.

On 1 and 2 November 2018, the panel conducted the site visit on the University of Amsterdam campus. The site visit schedule was as planned. In a number of separate sessions, the panel was given the opportunity to meet with Faculty Board representatives, programme management, Examinations Board members, lecturers and final projects examiners, and students and alumni.

In a closed session at the end of the site visit, the panel considered every one of the findings, weighed the considerations and arrived at conclusions with regard to the quality of the programme. At the end of the site visit, the panel chair presented a broad outline of the considerations and conclusions to programme representatives.

Clearly separated from the process of the programme assessment, assessment panel members and programme representatives met to conduct the development dialogue, with the objective to discuss future developments of the programme.

The assessment draft report was finalised by the secretary, having taken into account the findings and considerations of the panel. The draft report was sent to the panel members, who studied it and made a number of changes. Thereupon, the secretary edited the final report. This report was presented to programme management to be corrected for factual inaccuracies. Programme management were given two weeks to respond. Having been corrected for these factual inaccuracies, the Certiked bureau sent the report to the Board of University of Amsterdam, to accompany their request for re-accreditation of this programme.

3. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO: M Medical Anthropology and Sociology (M Medische Antropologie en Sociologie)
Orientation, level programme: Academic Master
Grade: MSc
Number of credits: 60 EC
Specialisations: None
Location: Amsterdam
Mode of study: Full-time (language of instruction English)
Registration in CROHO: 60198

Name of institution: University of Amsterdam
Status of institution: Government-funded University
Institution's quality assurance: Approved

4. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard

4.1 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

The Master Medical Anthropology and Sociology programme is part of the Graduate School of Social Sciences of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of University of Amsterdam. This School offers five Master programmes and three Research Master programmes in the social sciences as well as PhD education in this field. The dean of the Faculty has the responsibility for all programmes of the Faculty. The two directors of the programme, assisted by the programme coordinator/study advisor, are responsible for the delivery and quality of this programme. The Programme Committee for the Bachelor Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Master Cultural and Social Anthropology and Master Medical Anthropology and Sociology programmes, being composed of both lecturers and students, advises programme management on quality issues regarding this programme. The Examinations Board for these three programmes has the authority to ensure the quality of examinations and assessments of these programmes.

The Master Medical Anthropology and Sociology of University of Amsterdam is a one-year, research-based, academic master programme in this field. The programme is directed towards the study of medical anthropology, medical sociology and science and technology studies. The objectives of the programme are to educate students to understand and to engage in subjects of health, illness and health care from a social sciences perspective. The programme aims to prepare students both for theory and practice in this domain.

The objectives of the programme are conform to the Reference Framework for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology in the Netherlands, which has been drafted by the joint programmes of this assessment cluster in the Netherlands.

The programme is unique in the Netherlands. Programme management compared this programme to programmes in a number of European countries and in the United States. From this comparison, the programme appears as a comprehensive programme, covering medical anthropology, medical sociology and science and technology studies.

The programme aims not only to prepare students for academic research positions, but also for positions in the professional field. Students are prepared for positions in different types of organisations for which knowledge and skills in this domain are relevant.

The programme objectives have been translated into intended learning outcomes, specifying knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of illness, health and health care, knowledge and skills to do research in this domain, knowledge and understanding of theoretical, methodological and ethical dimensions of research in this domain, theoretical insights and critical assessment of literature, relevant for this domain, communication skills in this field, and knowledge and skills to analyse problems in the programme domain and to contribute to policy-making and practical applications in the domain.

Programme management presented the comparison of the intended learning outcomes to the Dublin descriptors for the master level.

Consideration

The panel considers the programme to be unique and the programme objectives to be very relevant. The programme objectives to educate students in medical anthropology, medical sociology and science and technology studies and to introduce students to the social sciences perspectives of health, illness and health care are very much appreciated by the panel. The panel considers the programme objectives to be research-based and up-to-date.

The programme objectives meet the requirements of the Reference Framework for Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology in the Netherlands. The panel welcomes the efforts by the joint programmes to draft this framework and regards this to be a sound description of this domain.

The panel appreciates the comparison made to programmes abroad and considers this programme to compare favourably to programmes in this field in other countries.

The panel supports the objectives of the programme to prepare students for positions in research and in the professional field. The panel suggests to promote further integration of the programme within the wider professional field.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme correspond to the programme objectives, are well-articulated and are conform to the master level.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 1, Intended learning outcomes, to be good.

4.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

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

Findings

Yearly, about 60 to 80 students apply to enrol. About 40 to 50 students per year are admitted. As not all students admitted come, the student influx is about 20 to 30 students. The intake numbers are constrained by expert staff available. Applications are screened by the programme Admissions Committee. The student body composition is quite diverse. About 60 % of the students coming from the Netherlands, about 30 % being from other European countries and the other students originating from countries outside of Europe. The entry requirements for the programme are a bachelor degree in the social sciences and a grade point average of 7.0 (out of 10.0) in their prior education. Applicants with some deficiencies in knowledge and/or social sciences research methodology may be admitted, provided they complete the preparatory programme, consisting of 30 EC of courses at maximum. The actual programmes are tailored to the specific deficiencies of students. Some courses in the preparatory programme are offered as electronic courses.

The programme curriculum takes one year, the total study load being 60 EC. Programme management presented a table, showing the mapping of the intended learning outcomes to the courses. The curriculum is composed of five courses (33 EC), fieldwork (12 EC) and the Master thesis (15 EC). The courses are scheduled in the first semester of the curriculum. In these courses, students are introduced to theory and methodology in medical anthropology, medical sociology and science and technology studies. These courses may be tailored to the fieldwork and Master thesis of individual students. In the *MAS in Action* course, students are taught to apply concepts to a range of professional fields. In addition, they are offered a choice out of three electives (3 EC). In the last course *Research Design*, students are guided in planning and organising the fieldwork in terms of research techniques and ethical considerations. The fieldwork may take place in the Netherlands or abroad. Students may do fieldwork in their countries of origin. The main purpose of the fieldwork is to do research and gather data to address the research questions formulated. Ethnographic research methods and techniques are adopted, being interviews, (participant-) observations, or online media. About 25 % of the students do research within the context of ongoing research projects. The curriculum ends with the Master thesis, based upon research done in the fieldwork. Transferable skills are part of the course *MAS in Action* and fieldwork. The Graduate School of Social Sciences of the Faculty organises regularly career events for students.

A total number of 22 staff members are involved in the programme. The core staff consists of seven lecturers. With some exceptions, all lecturers are involved in both education and research in fields, relevant for the programme. The staff members are employed at the Department of Anthropology of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. They are researchers in research groups of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research. The Anthropology research groups received high to very high scores in the most recent research evaluations. All of the lecturers have PhDs. Of the total number of staff about 82 % are BKO-certified and another 5 % are in the process of acquiring the certificate. Guest lecturers also teach in the programme. At the moment, no junior lecturers or PhD students participate.

Lecturers meet three times per year in staff meetings to discuss the programme. In addition, ad hoc meetings take place. In a number of courses, teams of lecturers are involved. Lecturers experience their work load to be quite demanding, but manageable.

The programme educational concept is to offer research-based, intensive and small-scale education. Student-activating teaching, student participation, individual supervision and guidance are strongly promoted. At the beginning of the programme, students are assigned their individual supervisor for the fieldwork and Master thesis project. The supervisor, being a staff member with expertise in the research project subject, continues to guide students during the fieldwork and in the Master thesis phase. The student output of the courses, such as the annotated bibliography, theoretical reflection and research proposal may be used by students as starting points for the fieldwork research and Master thesis. In the courses, the number of hours of face-to-face education are about 9 hours per week. The study methods adopted in the courses include seminars, close reading sessions, presentations and discussions. For the fieldwork and Master thesis, students are entitled to 34 hours of supervision. In addition, three non-mandatory thesis writing workshops are scheduled. Students are brought together in small buddy groups to read and discuss literature. Buddy groups are arranged to promote students completing the challenging programme. The programme coordinator/study advisor of the programme meets at least two times with every one of the students and is the first point of reference and guidance for students. In addition, students are guided by two programme academic advisors. Students' appreciation of guidance in the programme differs over the years. The student-to-staff ratio is 25/1. The study load of the curriculum is experienced by students to be demanding, but nevertheless manageable. On average only few students drop out. The student success rates are about 79 % after one year and about 96 % after two years.

Considerations

The programme student inflow numbers are appropriate. Students from various backgrounds are admitted to the programme and the panel regards this as positive and as conducive to student diversity in the programme. The admission requirements and procedures are adequate. The panel is positive about the preparatory programme being offered. The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes. The contents of the curriculum are up to standard. In addition, the panel considers the curriculum to be well-balanced. The panel appreciates the fieldwork component in the curriculum, as this allows students to experience research in the programme domain first-hand. The panel regards the curriculum as coherent. The panel regards the lecturers in the programme to be good researchers and skilled teachers. The panel welcomes the team spirit among them. The panel regards the lecturers to be easily approachable for students. The panel is positive about courses, being lectured by teams of lecturers. The workload of lecturers may be demanding, but is manageable. The panel considers the curriculum to be well-organised in educational terms, allowing students to actively engage in the learning processes. The study methods adopted in the courses correspond to the educational concept. The study guidance is organised well, both on the programme level and during the fieldwork and Master thesis phases. The panel is positive about the buddy system. The panel advises to monitor class sizes. The student success rates are very much up to standard.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 2, Teaching-learning environment, to be satisfactory.

4.3 Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings

The programme examination and assessment rules and regulations are in line with the University of Amsterdam policies. As has been indicated, the Examinations Board has the authority to monitor the quality of examination and assessment processes and products of the programme. The Examinations Board meets monthly.

The examination methods for the courses are selected in line with the courses' contents. In all courses, multiple examinations and various examination methods are scheduled. The examination methods include written assignments, ethnographic vignettes, annotated bibliographies, essays, presentations and written accounts of interviews. All written reports, including theses, are checked for fraud and plagiarism.

For the fieldwork and Master thesis, students are allowed to meet with prospective supervisors and are guided in their selection of topics. As has been indicated above, students are supervised on an individual basis in the fieldwork and thesis writing processes by their supervisors. Supervisors are staff members, to ensure the academic quality of the work. In the course *Research Design*, students draft their research proposal. Before starting the fieldwork, the supervisor approves the research proposal. Ethical clearance assessment of the proposal is part of the procedure. Before leaving for the field, students and supervisors sign the Fieldwork and Thesis Agreement, specifying mutual rights and obligations. In the course of the fieldwork, students submit two interim fieldwork reports and one final fieldwork report. The fieldwork is assessed by the supervisor on the basis of pass or fail. Having completed the fieldwork, students draft the Master thesis, guided by their supervisor. The Master thesis is assessed by two examiners on the basis of the written report and the thesis evaluation meeting. They assess the thesis and the oral defence by students, using assessment scoring forms with assessment criteria. In case of disagreement between examiners, the Examinations Board will hear the examiners and try to reach a solution.

Programme management and the Examinations Board have taken a number of measures to promote the quality of examinations and assessments. The Examinations Board appoints examiners, being permanent BKO-certified staff members or staff members in the process of acquiring the BKO-certificate. For all courses, course dossiers have been compiled. These include, among others, course goals, examination methods adopted, assessment criteria and grading rules. Examinations and assessment criteria are drafted by teams of lecturers. Examinations are also marked by teams of lecturers. Lecturers and the Examinations Board meet at least one time each year to discuss and calibrate assessments of papers and theses. The Examinations Board reviews samples of Master theses.

Considerations

The panel approves of the examination and assessment rules and regulations of the programme, these being in line with University of Amsterdam's assessment policies. The monitoring by the Examinations Board of examination and assessment processes is adequate.

The panel is positive about the examination methods adopted in the programme. These are consistent with the goals and contents of the courses. The panel greets the measures, which have been taken to counter plagiarism and fraud.

The supervision and assessment procedures for the fieldwork and the Master thesis are up to standard. Students are guided appropriately in the processes. The assessment procedures for the Master thesis, involving two examiners are adequate. Although the assessment scoring forms include relevant criteria and are transparent, the panel proposes to have examiners add written comments and to have proportional weights attached to clusters of criteria.

The panel considers the measures ensuring the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations and assessments to be satisfactory.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 3, Student assessment, to be satisfactory.

4.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

The panel reviewed 15 Master theses of programme graduates of the last two years. The average grade for the Master theses is about 7.6 for the last four years. About 19 % of the students graduate cum laude. Programme management attributes this rather high proportion to the strict entry requirements.

Programme management has conducted a survey among programme alumni (response rate 36 %). About 83 % of the alumni found positions within one year after graduating. About 28 % of the graduates managed to secure PhD positions in the Netherlands or abroad. Approximately 15 % of the graduates are employed by private companies, about 12 % of them at NGOs, about 11 % by health care institutions and another 11 % in education. About 64 % of the programme graduates expressed being satisfied about the programme preparing them for their future careers.

Considerations

The Master theses the panel studied, match the intended learning outcomes. The panel supports the grades given by examiners of the programme. Some theses are very good, whereas others are sufficient. This is duly reflected in the grades. In the panel's view, some of the theses may have been marked slightly too low and would have merited somewhat higher marks.

The panel considers the programme graduates to have reached the intended learning outcomes and to be qualified to enter the labour market. The positions graduates manage to secure, are in line with the objectives of the programme. The panel suggests to collect more comprehensive information about the professional field and graduates' careers.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 4, Achieved learning outcomes, to be satisfactory.

5. Overview of assessments

Standard	Assessment
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Good
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Satisfactory
Standard 3: Student assessment	Satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Satisfactory
Programme	Satisfactory

6. Recommendations

In this report, a number of recommendations by the panel have been listed. For the sake of clarity, these have been brought together below. These panel recommendations are the following.

- To promote further integration of the programme with the wider professional field.
- To monitor class sizes.
- To have examiners add written comments to the assessment scoring forms for the Master theses and to have proportional weights attached to clusters of criteria on these scoring forms.
- To collect more comprehensive information about the professional field and graduates' careers.