

Assessment report
Extended Framework Programme Assessment

Master of Science in Management

Nyenrode Business Universiteit

Contents of the report

1. Executive summary	2
2. Assessment process	5
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: Curriculum; orientation.....	9
4.3 Standard 3: Curriculum; content	12
4.4 Standard 4: Curriculum; learning environment	13
4.5 Standard 5: Intake.....	15
4.6 Standard 6: Staff.....	16
4.7 Standard 7: Facilities	18
4.8 Standard 8: Tutoring.....	18
4.9 Standard 9: Quality assurance	19
4.10 Standard 10: Student assessment.....	21
4.11 Standard 11: Achieved learning outcomes	23
5. Overview of assessments.....	25
6. Recommendations	26

1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the Master of Science in Management of Nyenrode Business Universiteit (NBU). The programme was assessed according to the standards of the extended 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).

Nyenrode Business Universiteit is a private university offering programmes in the fields of business, management, accountancy, controlling, and fiscal law. There are two locations: Breukelen and Amsterdam. Nyenrode's mission is to serve society by shaping responsible leaders. Related to this mission, Nyenrode adopted as its three main values leadership, entrepreneurship and stewardship (LES). The educational philosophy of NBU is to address head (academic rigor), heart (personal development) and hands (practical relevance). The Master of Science in Management (MScM) is offered full time in English and part time in Dutch. The full time programme mainly attracts students with a recently obtained bachelor degree and often an international background. The part time programme attracts Dutch students with a number of years of work experience who wish to extend their knowledge. This report covers both, the full time (FTMScM) and part time programme (PTMScM).

According to the panel, the learning outcomes reflect scientific as well as professional needs. They represent the general profile MScM aspires for graduates to become academically trained professionals in management positions. This general profile is reflected in the learning outcomes. Consequently, graduates are less prepared for a career in research. The learning outcomes comply with the Dublin descriptors, with a special focus on making judgements and applying knowledge and understanding. The alumni survey from the FTMScM shows that graduates find appropriate jobs within six months after graduation and feel well prepared for these jobs. Students and alumni convincingly reported that the programme fits their needs and helps them to function better as professionals.

It became obvious to the panel that the general character of the broad MScM programme is adequate. According to the panel, the improved research lines in the MScM programmes ensure the development of appropriate academic research skills. Students provided convincing illustrations of the balance between theoretical and professional elements in the programmes. The panel's initial concerns regarding the integration of the LES trinity in the programmes were largely solved during the site visit. The panel found that both MScM programmes are in line with the ambitions and intended learning outcomes. The structure of the programmes clearly reflects a professional character, fuelled by a scientific and theoretical background. The course outlines indicate that the content of the courses contributes to the intended learning outcomes. The panel appreciates that NBU intends to appoint an academic director of MScM in order to better monitor the content of the curriculum in relation to the intended learning outcomes of both programmes.

The panel met an inspiring learning environment characterized by a small-scale campus and a favourable student-staff ratio. Moreover the panel noticed that there is a substantial amount of group work in both programmes. Faculty and students experience this as a well-suited method for obtaining the intended learning outcomes. Misconduct and other problems related to group work appear to occur less than the panel initially expected.

The panel noticed that faculty members are keen on getting input for educational innovations. They are supported in educational innovation by programme directors and management. Some additional

educational support will be attracted in the next few months. The panel observed a high level of commitment among faculty and programme management for the assurance of learning as supported by AACSB. It remained unclear to the panel how this project relates to the follow-up on the advice the project group on blended learning delivered in 2017, which suggests a twofold approach through the implementation of Canvas and the introduction of more competence-based and action-oriented learning. According to programme management internationalisation is an important factor influencing the learning environment. The panel supports the idea to gradually head for a more even volume of Dutch and international students and to attract more international faculty in order to guarantee a more authentic international context for learning. The panel recommends to prioritise innovative actions to be taken and avoid coping with too many major challenges at the same time.

According to the panel, NBU's procedure for selecting applicants is rather strict. Students are selected not only on formal grounds, like demonstrable previous education and levels of mathematics and English, but also on the basis of personal features like intellectual capacities and personality. After being selected, most applicants first follow a premaster programme before entering the MScM programme. The distinction between the premaster and master programmes appears to be rather fluent 'de facto'. Students reported that they experienced the premaster as a good 'warming up' for the MScM programmes, both educationally and socially. Programme managers explained that the premaster also functions as an instrument for further selection of students. The panel concludes that the premaster has a function in aligning the starting positions and fostering the study success of students entering the MScM programmes.

The panel is convinced of the quality of faculty as most of them have a PhD and a UTQ (BKO) and are involved in research. According to the panel, the introduction of their research in courses and the use of state-of-the-art international peer reviewed literature deserves improvement. The panel has been reassured about how experienced PhDs contribute, with supervision from senior staff, to various courses and thesis supervision. The panel is concerned about the educational expertise among staff and the support of staff by educational experts. The panel appreciates the already planned appointment of additional education support staff in order to better support the teaching staff. It also noticed NBU is considering the introduction of senior UTQ arrangements.

During the site visit the panel hardly heard any negative comments on facilities that were not already mentioned in the documentation. Students repeated some of these issues and mentioned that they are already being addressed by NBU. According to the panel, tutoring arrangements are very intensive, scientifically as well as personally. The panel's concern that tutoring arrangements might even be a bit stifling was not endorsed by any additional observations during the site visit. It was obvious that students are very satisfied with tutoring as they indicated convincingly that staff is always prepared to assist where possible.

Formal arrangements for quality assurance are in place. The handbook is clear and includes a year calendar showing appropriate activities and actors involved. The panel also found a number of evaluations and several illustrations that MScM adequately copes with signals that improvements are required. Nevertheless, the panel still wonders to which extent quality assurance really functions as described. Programme management and faculty seemed convinced of an appropriate quality culture, although it turns out to be rather informal due to the small scale of NBU and its programmes. The panel thinks that the functioning of the formal arrangements and especially its documentation might be further improved without losing the main benefits of the informal quality culture that prevails within NBU.

The panel encountered various improved assessment practices, but is not fully convinced that assessment is coped with as seriously as it should and can be. Rules and regulations are adequate, as is the composition of the assessment programme. The programme management and the exam committee are clearly aware that a solid assessment practice is important and that they should not be questionable in this respect. This is confirmed by the fact that they organise external reviews. They realise that assessment matrices are useful, even though it is difficult to implement them. Nevertheless, the panel finds that there is a number of serious weaknesses, mainly in the construction of testing and the consistency with which the assessment of students' achievements is documented. Although NBU's management acknowledges these weaknesses, coping with them and implementing improvements is still a weak link in the chain of assuring the quality of testing and assessment. In this respect, the exam committee appears to rely too heavily on professionalism of the staff. Especially the assessment of theses is still too indefinite: arguments for scores are lacking, the break down and weighing of grades are not always clear and the assessments of first and second readers are not systematically documented. The documentation and site visit showed that MScM is aware of these problems and is willing to make improvements. The panel is therefore confident that everyone involved with testing and assessment will manage to organise a proper practice, on the condition that some extra expertise and assistance is provided and that this theme gets the priority it needs.

The panel is convinced that the intended learning outcomes are achieved in both programmes. The theses address reasonable research questions using appropriate methods. The grading is in line with the panel's expectations, despite the aforementioned weaknesses in its documentation. The value of graduates for the professional field, mainly industry, is evident from the good perspectives for employment. This was endorsed by PTMScM students and alumni from the FTMScM programme.

The panel assessed the MScM programme, full time and part time, following the standards of the extended framework for programme assessment, as laid down in NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands. It assessed one of the eleven standards as insufficient, but is confident that the programme will give priority to implementing more adequate practices regarding testing and assessment. The panel advises as conditions for doing so that the programme improves the quality of constructing tests (i.e. use assessment test matrices, complete answer models and ensure a clear relationship between themes tested and the learning objectives). It also advises to standardise scorecards, use them more consistently and document the argumentation for scores more systematically (especially for theses). Finally the panel advises to pay more attention to the implementation and follow up of improvements in testing and assessment. As some extra expertise and assistance for doing so is already being arranged, the panel deems this to be feasible within a period of two years. Therefore, the panel recommends NVAO to accredit NBU's full time and the part time programme on Management under the above-mentioned conditions.

Rotterdam, 24-12-2018

Name chair

Prof. dr. A.G.L. Romme

Name secretary

drs. J. Braaksma

2. Assessment process

The evaluation agency Certiked VBI received the request by Nyenrode Business Universiteit (NBU) to support the extended framework programme assessment process for the Master of Science in Management 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).

Management of the programmes in the assessment cluster Masters of Science in Management convened to discuss the composition of the assessment panel and to draft the list of candidates.

The panel composition was as follows:

- prof. dr. A.G.L. Romme, professor Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Eindhoven University of Technology (panel chair)
- prof. dr. B.I.J.M. van der Heijden, professor Strategic Human Resource Management, Radboud University Nijmegen (panel member)
- prof. dr. P.C. van der Sijde, professor Organisation, Entrepreneurship and Technology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (panel member)
- C.J. Stam MSc, student Master Sustainable Development, recently graduated (student member)

On behalf of Certiked, drs. W.J.J.C. Vercouteren and drs. J. Braaksma 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.

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 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 two most recent years. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator selected 15 final projects. The grade distribution in the selection was ensured to conform to the grade distribution in the list, sent by programme management. The specialisations of the students have been taken into account.

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 final projects of the programme graduates, these final projects being part of the selection made by the process coordinator.

A number of weeks before the site visit date, the assessment panel chair and the process coordinator met to discuss the self-assessment report provided by programme management, the procedures regarding the

assessment process and the site visit schedule. 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 asked 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 panel met to discuss the preliminary findings on the quality of the programme, including those about the final projects. The procedures to be adopted during the site visit, including the questions to be asked to the programme representatives on the basis of the list compiled, were discussed as well.

On November 16th 2018, the panel conducted the site visit at the NBU campus. The site visit schedule was in accordance with the schedule as planned. In a number of separate sessions, panel members were given the opportunity to meet with representatives of management, lecturers, students, examination board and quality assurance officers.

In a closed session at the end of the site visit, the panel considered in detail and deliberated on each and every finding, 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, the 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, taking into account the findings and considerations of the panel. The draft report was sent to the panel members, who studied it, added some reflections, and validated it. 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 University Board to accompany their request for re-accreditation of this programme.

3. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO: MSc in Management
Orientation, level programme: General management, master's degree
Grade: MSc
Number of credits: full time MScM 63 EC, part time MScM 62 EC
Language: FTMScM English, PTMScM Dutch
Location: Breukelen and Amsterdam
Mode of study: full-time and part-time
Registration in CROHO: Brin-Isat: 01MC-66420

Name of institution: Nyenrode Business Universiteit
Status of institution: Legal entity providing education
Institution's quality assurance: Not requested

4. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard

Nyenrode Business Universiteit (NBU) is a private university founded in 1946 by business and for business. It offers a range of short term and longer term programmes in the fields of business, management, accountancy, controlling, and fiscal law. There are two locations: Breukelen and Amsterdam. Nyenrode's mission is to serve society by shaping responsible leaders. Related to this mission Nyenrode adopted as its three main values leadership, entrepreneurship and stewardship (LES). These values guide all Nyenrode's activities including research.

The educational philosophy of Nyenrode is to address head (academic rigor), heart (personal development) and hands (practical relevance). Nyenrode has about 3600 students, 50 PhD students and 102 faculty (60.58 fte). NBU is organised in expertise centres. The Master of Science in Management is offered full time in English and part time in Dutch. The full time programme mainly attracts students with a recently obtained bachelor degree and often an international background. The part time programme attracts Dutch students with a number of years of work experience who wish to extend their knowledge. This report covers both, the full time and the part time programme, referred to as FTMScM and PTMScM respectively.

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 documentation describes how the MScM programme intends to 'provide talented students with a broad academic basis in management towards becoming entrepreneurial managers who can excel in any environment'. They will be able to 'bring together people to accomplish desired goals and objectives using available resources efficiently and effectively' and to do so open-mindedly and with courage. The MScM programme heads for 11 learning outcomes addressing abilities regarding: knowledge of business and theories, conducting academic research, following new developments, insight into the relationship between business and the surrounding world, developing strategic perspectives, tackling new and atypical problems, understanding the responsibility of managers, insight into one's own strengths and weaknesses, understanding one's own role in organisational contexts, applying business as well as general skills and communicating with people in different roles. Focussing on these learning outcomes, the programme combines an academic, business and international orientation with an emphasis on personal and professional development.

The comparison of these learning outcomes to the Dublin descriptors shows that especially making judgements and applying knowledge and understanding receive attention. The documentation includes a comparison of the FTMScM programme to similar programmes¹ offered at other Dutch institutes. It labels the programmes offered at the universities as safe players with a moderate price, RSM as a top European player with a fair price and TIAS and Nyenrode as expensive upcoming players. The success of Nyenrode's FTMScM programme despite its price is attributed to the pre-master programme, brand awareness, reputation, and offering more than just the academics. The benchmark for the PTMScM programme includes a comparison with RSM, TIAS and the University of Amsterdam on formal and factual features like ECs, price, group size, age and gender. It shows for example that the PTMScM

¹ RSM, TIAS, RUG, Tilburg University, Utrecht University and University of Amsterdam

population mainly consists of students with a HBO bachelor degree (92%) and a majority of men (83%).

The panel did not discuss the learning outcomes extensively during the site visit, as the documentation showed adequate learning outcomes reflecting the broad profile of the MScM programme. The alumni surveys that were provided indicate that employers are very satisfied with the capabilities of graduates and that most graduates find a job within six months after graduation.

When meeting students and alumni the panel noticed that the main reasons for students to choose the MScM programmes comply with the intended learning outcomes: increasing scientific knowledge and understanding combined with personal development in order to (better) function in management positions.

Considerations

According to the panel the learning outcomes reflect scientific as well as professional needs.

They represent the general profile of the MScM programme. With this profile MScM distinguishes itself from other more specialised degree programmes. Consequently, it prepares graduates less than other programmes for a career in research. The panel notices that this is in line with MScM's intention to prepare graduates to become academically trained professionals in management positions. This is consistent with the focus on making judgements and applying knowledge and understanding that becomes apparent from the comparison with the Dublin descriptors. The alumni survey from the FTMScM shows that graduates find appropriate jobs within six months after graduation and feel well prepared for these jobs. However, it struck the panel that, although graduates are trained to be managers, a majority does not yet manage a team in their first job. During the site visit, students and alumni convincingly reported that the programme fits their needs and help them to function better as professionals.

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: Curriculum; orientation

The curriculum enables students to master appropriate academic research skills and professional skills.

Findings

The FTMScM consists of seven common courses (26 EC) including a company project, the thesis (15 EC), four courses embedded in a track (16 EC) and two elective courses (6 EC). Students can choose one of the following tracks: Global Strategy & Sustainability, Digital Business & Innovation, and Financial Management. Students have 18-20 contact hours per week.

The common courses in the FTMScM programme are Global Strategy & International Trade (5 EC), Management Science (3EC), Operations & Supply Chain Management (5 EC) and Digitalization in Business & Society (5 EC). The Company Project (2 EC) was revised a few years ago in order to still provide some practical professional experience despite reducing the EC's available for it. A one week global immersion programme is also offered to motivate students professionally. The research line in the FTMScM programme has also been changed a few years ago. The new course Research in Business Administration (6 EC) consists of three parts. Part one focusses on developing a research question, collecting appropriate literature and creating a conceptual model. Part two concentrates on the actual execution of a research design including data collection and data analysis as well as comparing outcomes

to existing knowledge. The third part focusses on the student's own master thesis resulting in an individual research design.

The PTMScM programme has no specific tracks. It consists of 11 courses (47 EC) and a thesis (15 EC). The courses offered are: Organisational Behaviour (5 EC), Operations & Supply Chain Management (5 EC), Finance (5 EC), Marketing & Technology (5 EC), International Business & Economics including a voluntary study trip (4 EC), Research Design & Methods (4 EC), Law & Ethics (4 EC), Business Strategy (4 EC), Entrepreneurship & Sustainability (3 EC), Advanced Research (5 EC) and Leadership & Personal Development (3 EC). Students have 6 contact hours weekly.

There is no company project in the PTMScM, because students already have substantial work experience and are combining their study with a (mostly full time) job. Faculty explained that the FTMScM company project is further counterbalanced in the PTMScM by group assignments in other organisations than those where students work. The voluntary study trip mentioned above is the PTMScM equivalent of the global immersion week. The research line in the PTMScM programme consists of two main courses. The course Research Design & Methods first focusses on research questions, conceptual models, quantitative and qualitative methods, etc. In the second part of this course, students work individually on a topic they choose from a number of topics offered and write their own research design. In the course Advanced Research, students choose the methodological focus most suitable for their thesis and select a subject area (Strategy & Organisational Behaviour, Marketing, Operations & Supply Chain Management or Finance).

In order to better prepare students for the research courses in the master programmes, the two premaster programmes increased the attention for academic skills and research (FTMScM, 9 EC) and foundations of research (PTMScM, 3 EC). Although the premaster programmes are not included in this assessment of the degree courses, it is worth mentioning that these adjustments were made because most students follow a premaster programme of either 22 EC (FTMScM) or 21 EC (PTMScM) before entering either master programme. The panel only met one student who entered the master programme without following the premaster, with a bachelor in business administration. All the other students indicated that the premaster was hard work, but helped them to adopt the right attitude for successfully following the degree programme. The FTMScM students added another advantage of the premaster programme: it helped them to become acquainted with NBU campus life.

The so-called trinity of leadership, entrepreneurship and stewardship (LES) is presented as the professional core value of NBU and is leading in the MScM programmes. These values are operationalised as follows: a conscious capacity to exercise influence and power in non-coercive and energizing ways (leadership); the courage to challenge norms in ways that create renewal and innovation as the primary force of resilience and growth (entrepreneurship); and fulfilling the responsibility to ensure the long term wellbeing of stakeholders (stewardship). Documentation available during the site visit included a matrix showing how LES is embedded in respectively the academic, the business/professional and the personal components of the MScM learning outcomes. This matrix turned out to be helpful in solving the panel's concerns about the way the stewardship component is realised. This component is only covered in one course on ethics, but the matrix shows that stewardship is actually included in the learning outcomes about the relationship between business and the surrounding world and the learning outcome about understanding the responsibility of managers. The matrix also refers to the courage to do the right thing with integrity at the right moment, even in difficult situations. This is not explicitly found in the learning outcomes, but refers implicitly to the last four learning outcomes focussing on personal and professional behaviour. The panel further asked different representatives of the programme about LES during the site visit. Lecturers gave some examples of courses in which LES is integrated. For stewardship, this is for example the case in supply chain management where sustainability is a core

topic. When the panel suggested to introduce LES lines in the programme, the lecturers responded that although they had considered it, not all courses appear to be well-suited to incorporate LES. The panel asked the programme directors whether there is a code of professional conduct concerning LES. They replied that this is realised for campus staff and faculty, but not yet for students. Notably, the alumni surveys include some critical remarks on the way leadership and entrepreneurship skills and topics are being taught. Nevertheless, students reported that they do recognise the various elements of LES in lectures and excursions.

The course guides that were studied by the panel members, sometimes show that relatively old literature is being used. This raised two questions: how does the programme monitor whether course guides are kept up-to-date and to which extent is recent evidence-based research included in the courses offered? The examination board explained that monitoring the literature and course content is a responsibility of the programme management and that these issues are discussed in the programme committee. Lecturers mentioned that there is some 'classic literature' which still serves actual complex themes and problems and that they use actual cases in lectures. Students mentioned that lecturers use their own books and articles, thus embedding recent research in lecturing.

All students appreciated the breadth of the programme. They explicitly mentioned some components that they expected to be useful for their professional life, i.e. the tracks in the FTMScM and the financial courses in both programmes. Other valuable elements that have been mentioned are the knowledge component; the attention for personal development and reflection; the challenging character of group work in especially the company project and excursions; and the way leadership, entrepreneurship and stewardship appear in lectures and excursions.

Considerations

It became obvious to the panel that the general character of the broad MScM programme is adequate. According to the panel, the improved research lines in the MScM programmes ensure the development of appropriate academic research skills. The combination of more professional elements, like the company project or the group assignments in various organisations, and the attention for personal and professional development enable students to develop professional skills. Students provided convincing illustrations of the balance between theoretical and more professional elements in the programmes. For example, they appreciate the breadth and practical character of the programme, while they also value the accent on financial aspects of management, the specialising tracks in the FTMScM and the subject areas in the PTMScM programme.

The panel's concern regarding embedding the LES trinity in the programmes was reduced by the explanations provided during the site visit. It became clear that faculty and programme managers perceive the implementation of the professional LES values as a matter that deserves their full attention. The explanations regarding the limited inclusion of recent international peer-reviewed scientific literature and references to recent research in courses were less convincing. Nevertheless, the panel is assured that these issues get the attention they need. The panel appreciates the research lines in both programmes. They include a variety of research methods and prepare students adequately for writing their theses and thus showing their academic research skills. The panel is still intrigued by the differences in EC allocated to both programmes and the apparently close connection, if not prerequisite, of the premaster programmes (see further standard 5). As this does not seem to constitute a problem for the degree programmes and their students, the panel accepts these differences.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 2, Curriculum; orientation, to be satisfactory.

4.3 Standard 3: Curriculum; content

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

Findings

The documentation presents how the FTMScM and the PTMScM both address the same learning outcomes. Matrices indicate how courses contribute to the learning outcomes. The PTMScM addresses the learning outcome regarding developing strategic perspectives in nine courses. The learning outcome focussing on the relationship between business and the surrounding world is addressed in eight courses. The FTMScM addresses the learning outcome on developing strategic perspectives in eight or nine courses, depending on the track chosen. In the FTMScM programme, the same applies for the learning outcome coping with the relationship between business and the surrounding world.

All course guides are presented according to the NBU format which includes several sections. The section on objectives requires to present the learning objectives of the course, how they contribute to the learning outcomes of the programme, the integration of LES and the connection with academic competences. Other sections cope with the delivery of teaching, study materials, assessment and the course structure. The course outlines follow this format and illustrate that the programme is a general one with some specialisation in the tracks of the FTMScM. These outlines also exhibit useful relations between course objectives and the learning outcomes of the programmes.

The coherence of the programme appears in the research lines and embedding LES as described in the previous standard (2). The panel has the impression that the coherence of including LES more explicitly in the programme, and to a certain extent also the head-heart-hand approach, could be further enhanced. It appears that LES deserves some more explicit definitions, as the definitions found in the documentation and given during the meetings slightly differ. To the panel, this explains the ambiguity observed in incorporating LES in the programme as a whole as well as in the individual courses. The logical order of courses claimed in the documentation is found in the schemes of the curricula added. For instance, it is sound to deal with academic skills before the domain-specific content of the curriculum is taught. During the site visit, it became clear that the programme director consults the programme committee and examination board before deciding on the content and coherence of the curriculum. Expert centres are requested to deliver and monitor the courses. The programme management reported that they consider appointing an academic director in order to better discuss and monitor the coherence and alignment of courses in the MScM programmes.

Considerations

The panel found the two presented MScM programmes in line with the ambitions and intended learning outcomes. The structure of the programmes clearly reflects a professional character, fuelled by a scientific and theoretical background. The course outlines indicate that the content of courses contribute to the intended learning outcomes. The panel noticed and discussed with faculty that updating of the literature on a regular basis might be helpful. The panel appreciates the intentions regarding the appointment of an academic director who would monitor the content of the curricula and its relation to the intended learning outcomes. This counterbalances the slight hesitations the panel still had regarding the assurance of the overall coherence and content of the programmes, due to the current division of this responsibility among the expert centres.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 3, Curriculum; content, to be satisfactory.

4.4 Standard 4: Curriculum; learning environment

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

The documentation describes that a study year runs for 46 weeks and that the curriculum is organised in blocks of six to ten weeks. In a block, several courses parallel are taught, covering 3-5 EC each. Courses include class activities, independent study and assessments.

In the MScM programmes, students often work in small groups. The panel was reported that these groups are composed by the programme management and differ in composition, depending on the work and assignments to be realised. Thus group composition contributes to the coherence within cohorts and to developing the personal and professional skills of cooperating with different people in different settings.

The panel wondered how students and faculty experience the substantial amount of group work. It enquired for example after misconduct and free riding in group work and how often sanctions need to be taken by either faculty or the examination board. The examination board reported groups are small (three to five students) in order to avoid such unintended effects. Furthermore, students are not allowed to expel colleagues. This can only be done in cooperation with faculty. The examination board only uses the formal expelling rule about once every two years. Lecturers emphasised that whatever assignments they develop, the individual component should always be dominant. Under these conditions, they enjoy developing assignments requiring active learning and cooperation in groups and emphasise that these address head, heart and hands. Furthermore, they explained that free riding behaviour is rather difficult due to the NBU culture, wherein social control mechanisms are prevalent, and that students realise they will miss vital moments of learning; especially for delivering their thesis successfully and timely. Students generally have no problems with the amount of group work, although PTMScM students reported that it is sometimes difficult to organise it due to other commitments.

The panel noticed increased delays and dropout rates in 2017. The programme management explained that these are caused by a number of simultaneous improvements in the curriculum and the learning environment. These improvements include individual thesis writing instead of in pairs, the introduction of internships before starting with the thesis, calibration sessions of faculty resulting in discussion among them, deliberations between expertise centres and programme management regarding the programmes, and the introduction of external reviews of samples of the assessment of courses and theses. All these changes provoked extra workload for faculty and students and consequently delayed processes, especially thesis writing. The main lesson learned from all this is that preparing thesis writing should start much earlier in the programme than used to be the case. This is one of the reasons that the research lines are renewed.

A stubborn aspect seems to be the international character of the learning environment. The FTMScM is offered in English because of the 26% international students participating. The dominance of the Dutch culture and the loneliness of international students are rather worrisome. Programme directors and management conveyed that they strive for a more healthy distribution of international and Dutch students, preferably 40% international students, without increasing the total number of students in the programmes. At the same time, they intend to increase the number of international faculty in the FTMScM programme. Thus, they expect to create a better balanced international character of the learning environment. Programme management explained the cooperation with and contribution of the student association in coping with cultural differences and creating an international atmosphere on the campus and in the actual

learning environment. In the PTMScM programme, the international character mainly manifests itself in the use of international literature. In both programmes, lecturers would like to encourage students going for excursions or internships abroad.

Within the head-heart-hand educational philosophy of NBU, the MScM programmes implement different teaching formats like lecturing, business games, simulations, case studies, flipped classroom, peer group coaching and reviewing, tutorials and study trips. Canvas has been introduced recently as the new electronic learning platform.

During the site visit, it became clear for the panel that improving the learning environment in an innovative way is perceived as necessary, but also as a challenge. The balance between on- and off-site education as well as principles of blended learning are seriously considered. Blended learning has been addressed by a project group providing recommendations for implementing it. One of the main recommendations was to implement blended learning along two lines: through canvas and through a fundamental renewal in the direction of competence-based and action-oriented learning. The project group also recommended to pay special attention to educational aspects and make clear and motivated choices about what to include and what not in blended learning at NBU, based on an explicit philosophy on learning.

The programme management reported that there are substantial differences in how lectures use canvas, despite courses and educational support offered to them. This does not detract from the fact that the programme management and lecturers report that the principle of flipping the classroom works increasingly well, for example in the course on strategy. It also became clear that especially the part time students prefer onsite education, although recorded lectures are available. Students mentioned that they experience less problems with using the (electronic) learning environment Canvas than teaching staff. They seem satisfied with the learning environment, but also have suggestions for improvement, like increasing innovative cooperation between science and business and more possibilities for differentiation. Furthermore, several interlocutors mentioned the recently started and inspiring project on assurance of learning as advertised by the AACSB. This approach pays special attention to learning goals throughout the programme.

Considerations

The panel met an inspiring learning environment due to the small scale and favourable staff-student ratio. Also, the panel noticed a substantial amount of group work in both programmes. Group work appeared to be appreciated by faculty and students. It is experienced as a well-suited method for obtaining the intended learning outcomes. Misconduct and other problems in the context of group work were reported to occur less than the panel expected.

Faculty turned out to be aware of possibilities to further innovate the delivery of the programmes and of the extent to which they are capable of doing so. The panel appreciates that they experiment with innovations like recording lectures and flipping the classroom. The panel also noticed that faculty are keen on getting input for innovations. Fortunately, they are supported in this by programme directors and management as some additional educational support will be attracted in the near future. The panel observed enthusiastic commitment among faculty and programme management for the assurance of learning as supported by AACSB. The panel values the commitment but wonders whether this approach is the most important and helpful one for the type of innovations that the programmes aspire to. It remained unclear to the panel how this project relates to the follow-up on the advice the project group on blended learning delivered in 2017, which suggests a twofold approach through the implementation of Canvas and the introduction of more competence-based and action-oriented learning.

The panel recommends to prioritise innovative actions to be taken and avoid coping with too many major challenges at the same time. However, it is obvious to the panel that educational innovation already is high on the agenda of both MScM programmes.

The same applies to internationalisation as an important factor influencing the learning environment. The panel supports the idea of heading for a more even division of Dutch and international students in order to guarantee a more international context for learning. Only making the student population more international would not suffice to reach the ambitions of a more internationalised learning environment. The panel therefore applauds that the programme management and directors intend to attract more international faculty.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 4, Curriculum; learning environment, to be satisfactory.

4.5 Standard 5: Intake

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

The MScM programmes are expected to be attractive for different populations. The FTMScM is aimed at relatively young students who just obtained a bachelor who want to switch to a master in management in an international context. As this programme is taught in English, it is also attractive for international students. The PTMScM attracts Dutch students who have already been working for some years and want to extend their knowledge base. Besides formalities like delivering diplomas and paying the fee, all applicants have to perform an admission test assessing intellectual capacities and personality. Also, the candidate's levels of mathematics and English are reviewed. Proficiency in English should be at the level of TOEFL90+, IELTS 6,5+ or Cambridge 180+. The intake procedure is completed with an interview with trained interviewers. Candidates are then either accepted and offered a place in the MScM programme, or offered a customised premaster programme, or refused and possibly advised to follow another Nyenrode programme.

During the site visit the panel has seen various flowcharts facilitating the intake as well as the follow-up processes like the composition of premaster programmes and delays in study progress. The selection process, and especially the predictive value of it for future study success, is analysed in order to further optimise it. This analysis shows that motivation, an average score on personal balance and a combination of intelligence tests provide good predictors for study success.

It looks as if the premaster is also an important factor influencing the alignment of the qualifications of incoming students and the curriculum. As reported under standard two, most students enter the MScM programme via a premaster programme. For the panel, this raised the question what the relationship is between the premasters and the master programmes, and where the caesura lies. The programme directors explained that the premasters have a selective function especially with regard to academic potential. They also reported to send a formal letter to students to inform them when they are allowed to start in de MScM. Students reported that they were grateful for the opportunity to follow a challenging premaster programme before entering their degree programme. They reported that they experience the premaster as part of the whole education programme leading to the MSc degree in Management and that it has helped them to adopt the right attitude for successfully following the master programmes.

NBU does not want to exceed the current maximum intake of 100 students in Breukelen and 80 students in Amsterdam. For the FTMScM, they intend to increase the number of international students from 26% to 40% at the cost of Dutch students (see also standard 4).

Considerations

According to the panel, NBU's procedure for selecting applicants is rather strict. Students are selected, not only on formal grounds like demonstrable previous education and level of mathematics and English, but also on the basis of personal features like intellectual capacities and personality. The panel observed that most applicants first follow a premaster programme before entering the MScM programme. The distinction between the premaster and master programmes appears to the panel to be de facto fluent. Students reported to experience the premaster educationally and socially as good 'warming up' for the MScM programmes. Programme managers explained that the premaster also functions as an instrument for the further selection of students. The panel concludes that the premaster has a function in aligning the starting positions and fostering the study success of students entering the MScM programmes.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 5, Intake, to be satisfactory.

4.6 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 courses in the FTMScM are taught by 30 faculty members, of whom 77% have a PhD and 10% are preparing one. The appendix on staff shows that three of them do not have the Dutch nationality and seven are female. The courses in PTMScM are taught by 22 faculty members, 59% with a PhD and 19% preparing one. One staff member has another nationality than the Dutch one and six of them are female. Furthermore, the documentation reports that most of all MScM faculty members are involved in research and 90% hold a UTQ certificate. When looking at the curricula vitae and publication lists of faculty involved in the MScM programmes, the panel noticed that many faculty members have mainly realised publications in Dutch and/or published textbooks in Dutch and English, and to a lesser extent published in double-blind reviewed international journals. For a teaching-based university, this is an acceptable practice which is comparable to many (e.g. second-tier and third-tier) American and European business schools. As such, NBU's teaching staff is adequately represented in both national and international professional and academic bodies. The teaching staff has strong links with the national business world via NBU's extensive alumni network as well as their personal networks, and to a lesser extent with the international business world.

Programme directors discuss with the directors of the expertise centres which faculty members are best qualified for lecturing in the MScM programmes. Once faculty are allocated to the programmes, the programme management discusses the course outlines with them. The directors of the expertise centres remain responsible for the realisation of the courses. This procedure raises the question whether the programme management has enough opportunities for influencing the quality of lecturing and the alignment of courses. The programme management mentioned that, at the moment, it is considered to appoint an academic director in order to be in a better position for discussing the delivery of the

programme with faculty. They added that there is about 10 fte of vacancies for staff in order to spread the extra workload caused by the two locations, especially the upcoming location in Amsterdam.

The panel initially had some concerns regarding the qualifications of the faculty staff, which led to four questions: a. how are PhDs involved in delivering the programme, b. how are faculty actively involved in research and how do they embed their research experience in their courses, c. what are the policies following up UTQ, and d. what are the provisions for educational support? All of these questions have been discussed with several interlocutors, with the following outcomes.

- a. PhDs contribute to delivering the MScM programmes, not only by lecturing but also by supervising and assessing theses. The programme management explained to the panel that they act so under the supervision of the centre thesis coordinators after being allotted to a student by the thesis coordinator of the entire programme. Thus, the responsibility for the quality of the supervision and assessments carried out by PhD's rests with the centre thesis coordinator and/or the PhD supervisor. The examination board added that they rely on the tight social control and proven reputation of the PhD's supervising and assessing theses and that it only intervenes when it picks up signals indicating problems with the quality of the thesis. Lecturers pointed out that they all received a letter formalising their appointment as assessor. Among them, one PhD-student/lecturer reported having achieved this formal letter of appointment as well for certain programmes and courses within them.
- b. In principle, all faculty have the same division of time allocated to their tasks: 60% teaching, 35% research and 5% other tasks. There are some exceptions to this division at an individual basis. NBU's faculty also actively draws on their own research interests and output in teaching courses and in supervising master theses.
- c. NBU's UTQ has been accredited by the VSNU in 2015. Since 2017 a UTQ procedure has also been set up for external faculty of NBU. At the moment, about 60 persons are enrolled, about 10% of them being external faculty for MScM. Lecturers reported that internal and external faculty are obliged to obtain a UTQ. Lecturers and programme directors told the panel that a follow-up on UTQ is being considered. The lecturers mentioned that it might be useful to explicitly include blended learning when developing a senior UTQ.
- d. Programme directors, the programme management and faculty acknowledged the necessity of more educational expertise in order to realise intended innovations in the MScM programmes. The panel understood that they consider two kinds of expertise necessary: increasing their own educational expertise on the one hand and being able to call upon extra educational expertise when necessary. It has been told to the panel that an educational expert has recently been appointed and that a selection procedure has been started for another one.

Alumni surveys, as well as the conversations with students, show that students are satisfied with the quality of lecturers, with how easily they can be approached and with how helpful they are. This also applies to the programme management on both locations.

Considerations

The panel is convinced of the quality of faculty as most of them have a PhD and a UTQ and are involved in research. According to the panel, the introduction of their own research in some courses and the use of actual literature deserves some improvement as described in standard 2. The panel has been reassured about how experienced PhD students contribute, under supervision, to teaching courses, thesis supervision and various assessments.

The panel is concerned about the educational expertise among staff and the support of staff by educational experts. This concern appeared to be shared by the programme directors and programme

management, as increasing educational support is already being organised. The panel also believes that increasing the educational expertise of staff by developing and offering senior UTQ arrangements deserves more priority than it seems to have. Nevertheless, the panel is positive about the plans to mobilise educational expertise in order to innovate the MScM programmes. As indicated previously, the student-staff ratio is sound.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 6, Staff, to be satisfactory.

4.7 Standard 7: Facilities

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

Findings

NBU has two locations: the well-known campus in Breukelen and the newer location at the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam. The campus in Breukelen provides a learning and living environment referred to as ‘the Nyenrode experience’. There are several multifunctional educational buildings; a library with 100 study places, databases with remote access and a small print collection which is open 45 hours a week; an ICT helpdesk, two hotels, cafeteria, restaurant and bar and sports facilities. The Amsterdam location has comparable facilities to those on the Breukelen campus and provides student housing in Diemen-Zuid. Both locations house a student association.

The MScM programmes are offered at both locations. Most FTMScM students prefer the campus. FTMScM students who prefer the Amsterdam location are sometimes advised to at least start their education at the campus in Breukelen, mainly for reasons of integration and personal development. The PTMScM is offered at the campus in Breukelen.

The documentation reports difficulties in accommodating all groups during peak times. Also, there is a shortage of study cubicles and climate control needs to be improved in some buildings. Other desires that students have mentioned are the possibility to cook in their accommodation and better sports facilities. A new building is currently being designed, which is expected to tackle several of these issues.

These issues are not only mentioned in the student chapter of the self-evaluation, but also in the conversations with students during the site visit. The panel noticed that especially study facilities and student housing are important issues for students. They reportedly discussed the problem of not being able to approach all the literature in the databases available. On the other hand they also told the panel that, if necessary, they do obtain the literature they need via a staff member.

Considerations

During the site visit, the panel hardly heard any comments on facilities that were not already mentioned in the documentation. Students especially repeated the issues of study facilities and student housing, but added that NBU is already addressing these issues. The panel noticed that NBU’s management is aware of the necessity to keep facilities up to date on both locations. Therefore the panel considers the facilities as adequate.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 7, Facilities, to be satisfactory.

4.8 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

The documentation describes that students are informed via the programme portal on Canvas and can always contact the programme management with any question for information or assistance.

The programme management and the study coaches monitor the study results. The campus dean in Breukelen is available as an extra coach for students; in Amsterdam this role will be fulfilled by the programme manager. Students with a functional disability are provided with extra facilities.

Tutoring outside lectures is available on request or initiated by the programme management if study results are unsatisfactory. Sometimes such extra tutoring implies extra costs for students.

The alumni surveys characterise staff as easy to approach and very helpful. This is confirmed in the conversations with students during the site visit.

The panel got the impression that tutoring arrangements are very intensive, probably even a bit stifling. Nevertheless, the panel only came across positive experiences with tutoring in the MScM programmes.

The panel wondered to which extent tutoring also has the form of intervision, which would be very appropriate given the ambitions of the MScM programmes. This question remained unanswered.

The documentation as well as the meetings demonstrated that NBU feels responsible for the intellectual and personal development of students, as well as for their well-being. The dean discusses the functioning of the student association with the board of the association. Some of the topics getting attention are the integration of international students and the association's hazing activities. The university board formalises agreements between the student associations and the university; the campus dean monitors practices. Cultural anthropologists assist in these processes.

Considerations

According to the panel, tutoring arrangements are very intensive, educationally as well as personally.

The panel's concern that tutoring arrangements might even be a bit stifling is not endorsed by any observations during the site visit. The panel still wonders whether tutoring could also be transformed into intervision sessions, at least in some specific settings. In any case, it was obvious that students are satisfied with tutoring. Students convinced the panel that staff is always prepared to assist where possible.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 8, Tutoring, to be satisfactory.

4.9 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

The self-evaluation report describes that the MScM programmes perceive quality assurance as an ongoing process, in line with the NBU Quality Assurance framework. The quality approach includes the recommendations of peer reviews by for example NVAO and EQUIS. Furthermore it states that, due to the small organisation, issues regarding quality assurance are (also) addressed informally. There is a handbook on quality assurance systems for the MScM programme (December 2017) which is more detailed than the university's Quality Handbook for the degree programmes. The MScM handbook pays

attention to the quality systems (tools and procedures) of the programme as a whole, of courses, of assessment and of the thesis. It includes a quality assurance year calendar showing the measures placed in time and the responsibilities of all actors involved, being programme management, students, faculty, alumni, the academic service centre, programme and exam committee and centre directors. A range of tools is mentioned in the documentation including regular evaluations on several aspects organised by the programme management, programme management attending lectures and discussing their findings, feedback from class representatives and the board of the student association, the Dutch annual student survey (NSE), regular feedback from the academic and professional fields via alumni and the already mentioned input from accreditations like NVAO and EQUIS.

The MScM programme committee has two divisions: one for FTMScM and one for PTMScM. These two subcommittees are chaired by the same person. Furthermore, both subcommittees have one faculty member in common and one faculty and some student members of the programme involved. Programme managers pointed out that general topics arising from consultations with the class representatives are put on the agenda of the programme committee. Minutes of the programme committee's meetings provide many illustrations of issues raised by class representatives and show convincingly that a feedback loop following up on their comments is carefully implemented. Programme management also explained that they meet with the programme and the exam committee once a year in order to discuss general issues.

The Exam Committee 'General Management' also serves all Nyenrode's business administration programmes, besides the management programmes. It consists of 6 members including the chair and an external member from the University of Leiden. They are supported by an assessment committee responsible for providing training courses on testing and assessment. The annual report 2016-2017 of the exam committee mentions that they had to handle 13 cases of academic misconduct and that the number of requests has dropped from 332 to 109 ever since they started mandating simple requests to the programme management and asking for a doctor's letter in any request dealing with illness. From the 28 complaints, they denied 12, deemed 4 not admissible, granted 11 and one was withdrawn by the student. Targets set for 2017-2018 were: more mandates of simple requests, implementing the illness protocol and continuing monitoring the quality of master thesis and final projects.

The discussions about quality assurance that the panel had with the interlocutors, concentrated on actions and their follow up in order to close the feedback loop. The panel noticed that evaluations and formal procedures contribute to quality assurance, but it wondered how and to which extent they are realised in practice. It was especially concerned with how the feedback loop is closed, thus guaranteeing the follow-up of findings from evaluations and other observations. When the panel enquired about this, the answers mainly referred to the small scale and therefore informal approach towards quality issues and their follow-up. The exam committee explained for example how they rely on informal monitoring and control in certain cases. The answers also showed that all people involved believe that they do have a well-functioning quality culture, although mainly informally.

The panel noticed several changes in the curriculum (see standard 2) and the assessment of theses (see standard 10 and 11) since the last visit. The FTMScM and the PTMScM cover similar numbers of ECs, research and academic writing receive more systematic attention, these are now written individually and the thesis assessment form is revised. So far the follow-up of the recommendations regarding the curriculum seem to have progressed faster and more in-depth than the follow-up of the advice on assessments. This applies for example to how first and second readers use the new score cards for theses (see standard 10).

Considerations

According to the panel, the formal arrangements for quality assurance are in place. The handbook is clear and includes a year calendar showing appropriate activities and actors involved. Also, the panel observed a number of evaluations. The meetings provided several illustrations that the programmes cope with signals indicating that improvements are required. Nevertheless, the panel still wonders to which extent quality assurance functions as described in reality. The programme management and faculty expressed a strong trust in NBU's quality culture, although rather informal due to the small scale of the programmes. The panel thinks the formal arrangements and especially their documentation might be improved further without losing the advantages of the informal trust-based culture. The panel observed that there not only was a willingness to improve, but also that substantial action had been undertaken, like the revision of the research line in the programmes and the scorecard for the thesis.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 9, Quality assurance, to be satisfactory.

4.10 Standard 10: Student assessment

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

The self-evaluation presents an overview of the assessment methods and their weighting of all courses in both programmes. It shows that most courses are assessed by a mix of individual and group assessments. The individual component comprises at least 60% in the FTMScM and 50% in the PTMScM.

In the FTMScM, three out of the ten general courses are assessed fully individually. In the tracks, the number of fully individually assessed courses varies from none to two of the four courses included. In the PTMScM, three out of the thirteen courses are assessed fully individually. The thesis is an individual assessment in both programmes.

Assessments measure academic as well as practical and personal achievements. The course guides (see also standard 3) present the relationship between the learning outcomes of the programmes, course objectives and assessments. Furthermore the weighting and division of group and individual assessment methods are presented, as well as an explanation of the assessment criteria and the procedures for handing in and obtaining feedback on assignments and assessments. The MScM Rules & Regulations include grading rules.

Guaranteeing the quality of assessments receives proactive as well as reactive attention.

The documentation describes that draft exams and the assessment criteria (answer keys) are always checked by another faculty member with examiner status, focussing on the validity and the assessment method. Faculty reported that they identify spelling mistakes, ambiguous questions and look at the construction of the exam according to the levels of command as defined by Bloom. The procedure is that any recommendations for improvement need to be processed by the original examiner before the assessment takes place. The exam committee told the panel that the assessment committee checks whether this procedure is realised. It remained unclear to the panel whether the assessment committee only checks the procedure or also monitors how this 'four eyes check' of faculty has been performed and followed up.

Assessments of 2016-2017 in the PTMScM have been reviewed externally by two colleagues from other institutions (NHTV and RUG). The extensive report shows some structural weaknesses which have already been acknowledged in the programme's documentation; for example lacking assessment matrices. Furthermore, the review mentions shortcomings like incomplete answer models, ill-fitting questions and answers and unclear relations between objectives and themes tested. It was reported to the panel that the examiners get the comments on 'their' assessments and are requested to improve them. The panel still wonders how the follow-up is actually realised and monitored.

The programmes not only realised an external review of course assessments, but also of how master theses are assessed. This review systematically reports strengths and weaknesses of the content of theses as well as their assessment. The comments of these external reviewers are similar to the panel's observations regarding the fifteen theses it has seen (see standard 11).

The assessment of master theses attracted the panel's special attention, as this deserved substantial improvements according to the previous visiting panel. The programme management explained that master theses are no longer produced in pairs, but individually. The panel was also told that when a student completes his/her thesis it is sent to the supervisor and s/he sends it along to the appointed second reader. When the second reader judges the thesis sufficient, the student is admitted to the presentation, which is an integral part of the thesis trajectory. Also, new scorecards have been introduced since study year 2017-2018. This has been accompanied by a number of calibration sessions for faculty in order to properly and consistently assess theses and use the scorecards. Nevertheless, the panel came across a variety of used scorecards, not all of which were filled in by assessors as completely as the panel would have expected. For example, first and second independent assessments often lack, as well as arguments for scores given. Some scorecards are informative, others are not, as they only provide one final score without any argumentation for it. From the site visit it appears that the actual grading between the supervisor and second reader is not done independently, but in a meeting/conversation. In their defence, faculty argued that students should be confronted with one score and one argument, regardless of whether there has been discussion among first and second reader or not. They also assured the panel that first and second readers do discuss theses when assessing them. When asked for substantiation for this statement, the panel received some examples of recent email correspondences between first and second readers, written just before deciding whether a thesis is defensible or not. Although these correspondences vary as to how concerns are being discussed, they all reflect a serious level of quality assessment. In one case, the first reader even suggested to withdraw from further supervising and assessing a certain candidate, with good reason. These illustrations reduced the panel's apprehension, although its main concern remains: there is too much variation in scoring and the argumentation for scores of first and second readers is insufficiently transparently documented. The exam committee admitted that they should monitor this more strictly and announced that they will cooperate with the programme management in addressing these issues.

Faculty members reported an increasing number of rules and regulations. They also mentioned that the exam committee signals shortcomings to them when students complain or when the division of grades is remarkable. The exam committee's attention is attracted when the overall grade average for an exam is outside the range of 6-8, and/or the percentage of students who pass an exam is outside the range of 50-90 percent. In these cases the examiner is invited to provide an explanation for it.

Due to the character of the programme, assessing soft skills is an important topic in both programmes. This is known to be hard but not impossible. The panel therefore expected that this would have the attention of the exam committee. The exam committee reported not to monitor this explicitly as they rely on the expertise of staff in this respect. The panel wonders whether staff does indeed have enough

expertise regarding testing and assessment, including testing soft skills. Faculty reported that they obtain expertise from the academic services centre and from ICLON, where they follow courses, to complement what they have already learned in their UTQ.

Considerations

The panel encountered improved assessment practices. At the same time the panel is not fully convinced that assessment is coped with as seriously as should and can be done. Rules and regulations, as well as the composition of the assessment programme, are adequate according to the panel. The programme management and the exam committee are clearly aware that a solid assessment practice is important and that they should not be disputable in this respect. This is confirmed by the fact that external reviews are conducted. Programme management and exam committee members also expressed that assessment matrices are very useful, even though it is difficult to implement them.

Nevertheless, there is still a number of serious weaknesses, mainly in the construction of testing and the consistency with which assessment of students' achievements is documented. The reviews mention several weaknesses which seem to be accepted and endorsed by programme management, exam committee and faculty. However, the way these weaknesses are coped with and how improvements are implemented and followed up is still a weak link in the chain of assuring the quality of testing and assessment according to the panel. The exam committee relies too heavily on the professionalism of staff. It was mentioned several times that these weaknesses are counterbalanced by a close cooperation of the exam committee with the programme management and the assessment committee. However, this remained too implicit for the panel. Especially the assessment of theses is still too indefinite as arguments for scores lack, the break down and weighing are not always clear and insight in the assessments of first and second readers is not systematically documented.

All in all, the panel notices serious weaknesses regarding testing and assessment, but at the same time also notices awareness and willingness to improve. The panel is therefore confident that everyone involved with testing and assessment will manage to organise a proper practice, on the condition that some extra expertise and assistance is provided and that this theme gets the priority it needs. It advises especially to: improve the quality of constructing tests (i.e. use assessment test matrices, complete answer models and ensure a clear relationship between themes tested and the learning objectives). The panel also advises to standardise scorecards, use them more consistently and document the argumentation for scores more systematically (especially for theses). Furthermore the panel advises to pay more attention to the implementation and follow up of improvements in testing and assessment.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 10, Student assessment, to be unsatisfactory.

4.11 Standard 11: Achieved learning outcomes

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

Near the end of their studies, all students individually carry out research and report on it in their thesis. The fifteen theses studied by the panel generally show adequate approaches to interesting research questions. This sample of master theses also shows that graduates are capable to balance academic rigour

and professional relevance in answering a particular research question, although professional skills are not explicitly addressed and assessed with the theses. The grades provided were in line with the expectations of the panel, only a few minor discrepancies were noticed. The external reviewers of the theses that were mentioned above arrived at similar conclusions. Therefore, the demonstration of achieved intended learning outcomes is overall convincing, despite some serious shortcomings in assessing the theses. These shortcomings were discussed extensively during the site visit and reported under standard 10. They have to do with the extent to which documented arguments are provided for grades and the ambiguous, if not lacking documentation of the findings of first and second readers. Dropout rates are generally low, which the programme attributes to its selection procedure and the personal attention for students during their studies at NBU.

After graduation, FTMScM students find a proper job within six months, although only a few of them acquire a (junior) management position. The self-evaluation reports that salaries in these first jobs are above average. For the PTMScM, it is indicated that completing the programme influences students' careers positively; students from this programme reported what they learn is useful for their current jobs and that they expect even more profit in their further career. The alumni surveys indicate that industry is satisfied with the capacities of graduates. This is endorsed by the alumni the panel spoke to.

Considerations

The panel is convinced that the intended learning outcomes are achieved in both programmes. The theses illustrate this, as they generally address reasonable research questions using appropriate methods.

The grading is in line with the panel's expectations, despite some weaknesses in its documentation.

The value of graduates for the professional field, mainly industry, is evident from the good perspectives for employment. This was endorsed by PTMScM students and alumni from the FTMScM programme.

Assessment of this standard

The considerations have led the assessment panel to assess standard 11, Achieved learning outcomes, to be satisfactory.

5. Overview of assessments

Standard	Assessment
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	good
Standard 2: Curriculum; orientation	satisfactory
Standard 3: Curriculum; content	satisfactory
Standard 4: Curriculum; learning environment	satisfactory
Standard 5: Intake	satisfactory
Standard 6: Staff	satisfactory
Standard 7 Facilities	satisfactory
Standard 8: Tutoring	satisfactory
Standard 9: Quality assurance	satisfactory
Standard 10: Assessment	unsatisfactory
Standard 11: 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.

1. Prioritise and plan educational innovations coherently and carefully.
2. Increase educational support for expertise among faculty and introduce senior UTQ arrangements.
3. Give priority to the further improvement of testing and assessment practices and mobilise some extra expertise and assistance in doing so.
4. Include literature from and references to recent international peer-reviewed scientific literature in courses.
5. Improve the documentation and realisation of the formal arrangements for quality assurance while maintaining the advantages of the informal quality culture (e.g. in the thesis evaluation and grading).