

**LIFE SCIENCES AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL INNOVATION

**WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY**

QANU  
Catharijnesingel 56  
PO Box 8035  
3503 RA Utrecht  
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0) 30 230 3100  
E-mail: [support@qanu.nl](mailto:support@qanu.nl)  
Internet: [www.qanu.nl](http://www.qanu.nl)

Project number: Q0667

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This report was finalized on 29 March 2019





# REPORT ON THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL INNOVATION OF WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for Limited Programme Assessments as a starting point (September 2016).

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMMES

### Master's programme Development and Rural Innovation

Name of the programme:	MSc Development and Rural Innovation
CROHO number:	60103
Level of the programme:	Master
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specializations or tracks:	Communication and Innovation Studies Sociology of Development and Change Technology and Development Studies
Location:	Wageningen
Mode(s) of study:	fulltime
Language of instruction:	English
Expiration of accreditation:	31-12-2019

The visit of the assessment panel Development and Rural Innovation to Wageningen University took place on 16 and 17 January 2019.

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

Name of the institution:	Wageningen University
Status of the institution:	publicly funded
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	positive

## COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The NVAO approved the composition of the panel on March 7<sup>th</sup> 2018. The panel that assessed the master's programme Development and Rural Innovation consisted of:

- Prof. S. (Stanley) Brul, Professor Molecular Biology and Microbial Food Safety at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and chair of the Dutch institute for Biology (NIBI) (Chair);
- Dr. A. A. J. (Annik) Van Keer, educational policy advisor at the Faculty of Science at Utrecht University (UU);
- Prof. N. (Nadarajah) Sriskandarajah, Professor Emeritus with the Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden;
- Prof. W.M. (Wim) Cornelis, Professor in Soil Physics; programme Director International Master in Physical Land Resources, UNESCO Chair of Eremology Ghent University, Belgium;
- Prof. C. (Christian) Lund, Professor with the Department of Food and Research Economics, University of Copenhagen, Denmark;
- Prof. M. (Murat) Arsel, Professor at International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam (external reviewer);
- B. (Boas) van der Putten MSc, graduated in 2017 in Biomedical Sciences at the University of Amsterdam. He is currently working on two PhD tracks at the AIGHD/AMC (student member).



The panel was supported by dr. F. (Floor) Meijer, who acted as secretary.

Due to personal reasons, prof. Christian Lund had to withdraw from the panel early on. In consultation with the programme and the NVAO, he was replaced by prof. Murat Arsel, who read and commented upon the self-evaluation report and a number of theses, but did not attend the site visit itself.

## WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

### *Preparation*

In preparation of the site visit, the panel studied several documents, amongst others: the NVAO assessment framework (2016), the institutional audit of WU and the previous programme assessment (of 2012). The accreditation system has entered its third phase (concurrent with a second round of institutional audits). Wageningen University has recently successfully passed its second institutional audit. The new NVAO assessment framework is 'geared to a quality assurance system that is based on trust in the existing, high quality of Dutch higher education'.

The most recent assessment of the programme took place in 2012. In this assessment, standard 1 and 2 were assessed as satisfactory and standard 3 as good, resulting in an overall score of satisfactory. The panel concluded that the programme could strengthen the distinctiveness of its profile and objectives as expressed in the intended learning outcomes. The curriculum was assessed as well-structured and coherent but the panel advised to clarify the structure and position of the *Thesis Path* course. The panel appreciated the quality of the staff, the support system for students, the study-load and programme-specific services. The panel was generally pleased with the system of assessment and the initiatives to strengthen the role of the Examining Board. The theses were considered to be of good quality.

With the new philosophy of the framework and the last assessment of this specific programme in mind, the panel does not want to elaborate too long on the different criteria of the four standards of the limited framework. The overall evaluation of the programme by this panel is, as it was in 2012, positive. In this report, therefore, the panel will concentrate specifically on developments since 2012 and on providing suggestions that might help to make the programme even better than it already is.

QANU received the self-evaluation report of the Development and Rural Innovation programme on 22 November 2018 and made it available to the panel. The panel members read the self-evaluation and prepared questions, comments and remarks prior to the site visit. The secretary collected these questions in a document and arranged them according to panel conversation and subject.

In addition, panel members read recent theses. In consultation with the chair, fifteen theses were selected from the academic years 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, covering the full range of marks given and all tracks. The panel members also received the grades and the assessment forms filled out by the examiners and supervisors. An overview of all documents and theses reviewed by the panel is included in Appendix 4.

The programme management drafted a programme for the site visit. This was discussed with the secretary and chair of the panel. As requested by QANU, the programme management carefully selected discussion partners. A schedule of the programme for the site visit is included in Appendix 3.

### *Site visit*

The site visit took place on 16 and 17 January 2019 at Wageningen University (WU). In a preparatory meeting on the first day of the site visit, the panel members discussed their findings based on the self-evaluation and on the theses and formulated the questions and issues to be raised in the interviews with representatives of the programme and other stakeholders.

During the site visit, the panel studied a selection of documents provided by the programme management. They included course descriptions, course materials, written exams, assignments and other assessments.

The panel interviewed the programme management, students, alumni, staff members, members of the Programme Committee and members of the Examining Board.

#### *Report*

After the visit, the secretary produced a draft version of the report. She submitted the report to the panel members for comments. The secretary processed corrections, remarks and suggestions for improvement provided by the panel members to produce the revised draft report. This was then sent to WU to check for factual errors. The comments and suggestions provided by the programme management were discussed with the chair of the assessment panel and, where necessary, with the other panel members. After incorporating the panel's comments, the secretary compiled the final version of the report.

#### *Definition of judgements standards*

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments, the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of both the standards and the programme as a whole.

#### **Generic quality**

The quality that, in an international perspective, may reasonably be expected from a higher education Associate Degree, Bachelor's or Master's programme.

#### **Unsatisfactory**

The programme does not meet the generic quality standard and shows shortcomings with respect to multiple aspects of the standard.

#### **Satisfactory**

The programme meets the generic quality standard across its entire spectrum.

#### **Good**

The programme systematically surpasses the generic quality standard.

#### **Excellent**

The programme systematically well surpasses the generic quality standard and is regarded as an international example.





## SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

### *Intended learning outcomes*

The master's programme Development and Rural Innovation (MDR) is a two-year social science programme designed for students with a technical or life sciences background. They are trained to become 'hybrid professionals' who are able to connect with different scientific and societal stakeholders in dynamic, multicultural and transdisciplinary contexts across the globe, from a local rural level to an international policy arena. The panel highly appreciates MDR's objective to deliver graduates who are able to build bridges between different types of knowledge in a dynamic world. The profile of the programme is unique and highly relevant, even if there are a few aspects that could do with further elaboration. The programme's ILOs demonstrate a suitable level and orientation and sufficiently reflect the programme's profile. An opportunity for further improvement is to make the ILOs more specific and include research integrity as a topic. The panel was pleased to find that the needs of the professional field feed into the ILOs and curriculum.

### *Teaching-learning environment*

The panel established that the design of the two-year master's curriculum is clear. It consists of a year of course work followed by a year in which students work on an academic internship and thesis. The three introductory courses in the three disciplines that are central to the programme serve the purpose of submerging students in the social sciences and facilitating cohort building. The remainder of the curriculum, notably the elective space (18 EC) and thesis (30 EC), offers students quite a bit of freedom to pursue their own interests, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent than some other WU master's programmes. The panel would like to warn against too much flexibility. Offering a 'buffet-style' curriculum may detract from the larger intellectual agenda of the programme. In this sense the panel believes that it is a good idea to limit the courses that students can take outside of the social sciences.

The panel was pleased to find that the curriculum spans a good number of courses that were specifically designed for MDR students. The content of these courses is an adequate reflection of the current state of affairs in the relevant disciplines and helps to transform students into 'hybrid professionals'. Topics that could perhaps do with a bit more attention are the role of SME's and entrepreneurship in general, and qualitative data analysis. Also, some students question the particular focus on agricultural examples, and on development in the global South rather than the global North. Maintaining a close and continuous dialogue with students should help to make sure that the course content matches students' expectations. The design of the *Thesis Path* may need a bit of work, since the current course does not seem to completely fulfil its high potential. While the curriculum pays quite a bit of attention to professional skills, the level of the courses is clearly academic, with the research of the Chair Groups feeding into the curricula. The panel further established that course specific learning goals are suitable and match the teaching methods used.

The teaching-learning environment of the programmes is characterised by an open and pleasant atmosphere. There is an adequate number of contact hours and teaching methods are suitable for small-scale and interactive class rooms, with a lot of attention paid to peer learning. Students receive a high level of support when it comes to mapping out their individual study path. In this sense, the role of the programme's study advisers is crucial. The teaching staff of the programme are motivated and qualified. Lecturers are experts in their fields and many have valuable international experience in both the professional and academic field. Diversity, however, is an issue. The panel feels that the programme should aim for internationalization of its staff, as this would help bring in fresh new perspectives and role models that students can relate to.

### *Assessment*

The programme has developed an adequate system of assessment, which is based on the WU-wide assessment policy. The assessment strategies at course level pay sufficient attention to the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations, for example by aligning learning goals and assessment



methods, by using answer models and rubrics, and by clearly communicating assessment procedures and criteria to students. Some particular aspects, such as the consistent use of rubrics and peer review of assessments, deserve further improvement. Students confirmed that there is a good balance between group work and individual work. Sample tests studied by the panel indicate that the overall level of assessment is adequate.

The procedures for assessing the final product of the programmes, the thesis, are clear and the assessment itself is sound. The panel does recommend reconsideration of the current practice of assigning quite some weight to the process in the assessment of master's theses. Also, the panel would like to see a further streamlining of the procedures across Chair Groups. Finally, the panel advocates the university-wide implementation of a digital assessment system in which the subsequent steps in the thesis process are fully automated.

The panel established that the Examining Board safeguards the overall level of assessment in the programmes to the best of its abilities. Increasing the capacity of the EB, as is the intention of the Executive Board, could help to strengthen its agency in relation to the rather autonomous Chair Groups. Nonetheless, the panel feels that the central university should also critically reconsider whether the design of the current quality assurance system optimally suits its purposes.

#### *Achieved learning outcomes*

From the sample theses and the position of graduates the panel is confident that students achieve the ILOs of the programme. The general level of the final projects is satisfactory. Notwithstanding some (very common) shortcomings with respect to theory and methodology, the work is of sufficient academic quality; not least because students show that they are able to navigate the difficulties involved in gathering data in an international setting. Graduates of the master's programme find employment in relevant positions at non-profit organisations, research institutes/universities and companies. Alumni generally feel that the programme has provided them with valuable skills and a useful combination of perspectives.

The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment framework for limited programme assessments* in the following way:

#### *Master's programme Development and Rural Innovation*

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	Good
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Satisfactory
Standard 3: Student assessment	Satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Satisfactory
General conclusion	Satisfactory

The chair prof. dr. Stanley Brul and the secretary dr. Floor Meijer of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 29 March 2019



# DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR LIMITED FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENTS

## **Governance structure of Wageningen University (WU)**

In contrast to many other Dutch Universities, WU has just one faculty: the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Therefore the governance structure of WU differs from most other universities. The Rector Magnificus of the University is also the Dean of the Faculty. The Dean of the Faculty appoints the Programme Board, which consists of four professors and four students. The Programme Board is the legal governing body of the university's 18 bachelor's and 28 master's programmes. It is responsible for the design, content, quality and financing of the programmes. Each programme has its own Programme Committee, which consists of an equal number of students and staff members who are appointed by the Programme Board. Programme Committees advise the Programme Board on the design and content of their degree programmes. The Programme Board does not employ the lecturers; these are employed by the 94 Chair Groups, which generally include a Chair Holder (full professor), academic and support staff, postdocs and PhD students. The Programme Board, the Programme Committees and the Chair Groups together form the WU education matrix organization.

The Executive Board of WU has appointed four Examining Boards (EBs), each responsible for a group of related degree programmes (domain) and Chair Groups. Examining Boards are independent from the Programme Board and include staff members from the domain. The Examining Boards assess the individual study programmes of students and award student degrees. The Examining Boards also appoint the course examiners and monitor changes to the assessment strategy of interim examinations in the annual education modification cycle. The Examining Boards assure the quality of the interim examinations, and for that reason periodically visit Chair Groups to discuss the validity and reliability of the assessments.

### **Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes**

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

## **Findings**

### *Profile*

The master's programme Development and Rural Innovation (MDR) is a two-year social science programme designed for students with a technical or life sciences background who have an interest in global development issues and innovation in the field of agriculture, food and natural resource management. Considering the fact that innovations in this field require a combination of technological and social change, as well as awareness of the different knowledge and agendas of all societal actors involved, the programme aims to train so-called 'hybrid professionals': academically trained graduates who are able to connect with different scientific and societal stakeholders in dynamic, multicultural and transdisciplinary contexts across the globe, from a local rural level to an international policy arena. To prepare students for their future role, MDR presents them with a specific 'slice' of the social sciences, which combines elements of (1) Development Studies, (2) Science & Technology Studies (STS) and (3) Communication Sciences. A number of WU Chair Groups are involved in the programme, notably the Knowledge, Technology and Innovation Group (KTI) and the Sociology of Development and Change Group (SDC).

The panel is highly appreciative of the MDR profile and its objective to satisfy the very real need for knowledge brokers who are able to participate in or facilitate interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge creation and sharing. Given the dearth of social sciences in the teaching curriculum of natural sciences, the ambition to equip students coming from these backgrounds with critical



perspectives originating in development studies, STS and communication sciences is deserving of much praise. Combining approaches from these three fields of study and applying them to the domain of agriculture, food and natural resource management in a dynamic global context results in a unique profile. Furthermore, it holds the promise of taking interdisciplinarity to what some may call its logical conclusion, transdisciplinarity. Given its reputation and position in the Dutch academic world, WU is especially well-suited to host the MDR programme. The panel established that students recognize and acknowledge these positive aspects. They indicated to the panel that the natural science-social science crossover, as well as WU's reputation in the field, were major reasons for choosing the programme.

Notwithstanding its appreciation for what MDR sets out to accomplish, the panel signals some issues that the programme may wish to address. The first has to do with the conception of innovation, which seems central to the way the programme is conceived and marketed. While the programme seems to be aware of the potential problems and conflicts engendered by innovation, this can be taken further. In the panel's opinion, the programme needs to question what innovation really means, whom it serves, how it is governed, and whether it is always the solution to problems with respect to development. A second issue that could be addressed – or at least clarified further – is the North-South (or developing vs. developed country) tension that runs through the programme. The panel established that the traditional focus on the developing South is increasingly challenged; by students, who feel that development in the global North also deserves attention, but also by the demands of the changing labour market. Whereas past graduates predominantly found employment in development cooperation in the South, it is currently much more common, at least for European graduates, to move into policy jobs in the North. A third and final issue that deserves some further attention, is the focus on rural aspects as implied by the programme title. From its conversations with staff and students, the panel gathered that urban challenges are increasingly acknowledged as an important topic, which means that the programme may wish to adjust its title accordingly. Notwithstanding these minor comments, the panel believes that MDR occupies an important niche at WU and in the general academic landscape.

#### *Intended learning outcomes*

The profile and objectives of the programme have been translated into eleven intended learning outcomes (ILOs, see overview in appendix 1). By linking the ILOs to the Dublin descriptors, the programme ensures that their level and orientation are suitable. The strong emphasis on scientific research in the ILOs underscores the academic character of the programme. At the same time, the ILOs also reflect the competences demanded by the professional field. On the whole, the ILOs are rather generic in character and could be made more specific to the programme's unique profile. A recommendation to this effect that was made by the 2012 panel has partially been taken up, by including an additional ILO (ILO 6) that refers to the ability of interpreting debates around social and natural science interdisciplinarity and thereby alludes to the 'hybrid' character of graduates. Apart from this addition, the current ILOs are largely identical to the 2012 ILOs. The panel feels that the programme could have been more thorough in its review and would like to encourage it to, once again, critically rethink the ILOs in the context of the points made above regarding the programme's profile. An additional aspect that the programme may wish to include in its ILOs is the necessity of developing professional ethics and awareness of responsible research practices ('research integrity').

#### *Link with the professional field*

To ensure compatibility with the demands of the professional field, the programme is in regular contact with potential employers. This takes place via the professional networks of staff members as well as by regular consultation of the programme's External Advisory Committee (EAC), which consists of sixteen members with wide-ranging backgrounds and ample international experience. The panel was pleased to find that the EAC annually reviews the ILOs, the content and quality of the programme and the performance of graduates. It established that recent feedback from the EAC was mostly positive. Employers endorse the programme's profile, objectives and ILOs, but did wonder whether the programme should pay more attention to relevant developments related to (small)

businesses and entrepreneurship in rural areas. An additional – and also appreciated – step taken by the programme was to submit the ILOs to four international experts, who found the ILOs appropriate for a master’s programme in this field and in accordance with international scientific quality standards. An opportunity for further improving the connection to future employers of graduates is to internationalise the EAC by adding a foreign member, which would ensure a better fit with the international character of the programme. All in all, the panel concludes that the professional field is sufficiently invested in the programme.

### **Considerations**

The panel highly appreciates MDR’s objective to train ‘hybrid professionals’ who are able to build bridges between different types of knowledge in a dynamic world. The profile of the programme is unique and highly relevant, even if there are a few aspects (innovation, North/South, rural/urban) that could do with further elaboration. The programme’s ILOs demonstrate a suitable level and orientation and sufficiently reflect the programme’s profile. An opportunity for further improvement is to make the ILOs more specific and include research integrity as a topic. The panel was pleased to find that the needs of the professional field feed into the ILOs and curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

*Master’s programme Development and Rural Innovation:* the panel assesses Standard 1 as ‘good’.

### **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**

#### *Intake*

MDR is a small-sized social sciences programme with an average annual intake of 21 students. Increasingly students come from a variety of different national and cultural backgrounds. Approximately half of the students are from the Netherlands, but there is also a significant representation of students from other European countries, Asia and Africa. Non-European students typically have a number of years of working experience in a relevant field. The programme management informed the panel that there is some room for growth, up to approximately 40 students. The panel agrees that this would be a suitable size for the programme.

Students with an interest in international development and beta/gamma integration and a bachelor’s degree in the technical sciences, life sciences or management sciences are eligible for admission. Preferably, this degree should be related to agricultural and rural development, natural resource management, the food industry or similar fields. Furthermore, students need to comply with the university-wide admission requirements for master’s programmes. Students with a background in the social sciences are referred to the International Development Studies programme (MID), which is closely related to Development and Rural Innovation.

#### *Curriculum*

The panel established that the design of the two-year master’s curriculum (120 EC) is clear and sensible. The first year primarily consists of course work (60 EC), in which students are submerged in the social sciences and enabled to build a theoretical framework and skill base for their thesis (30 EC), which they write in the second year. Students are offered a choice of three thesis tracks that largely coincide with the fields covered by the programme: (1) Communication and Innovation Studies, (2) Technology and Development Studies and (3) Sociology of Development and Change. The remainder of the second year is filled with an academic internship (24 EC), which is often linked to the thesis. Throughout the curriculum, students take part in regular sessions of the so-called *Thesis Path MDR* (6 EC), which interlinks the various course components.



The courses in the first year come in a variety of categories. To start with, there are three introductory courses (12 EC total), which introduce students to the specific slice of the social sciences that the programme focuses on. This social sciences 'crash course' discusses the main concepts, theories and research approaches that characterize each of the programme's three orientations. Second, there are two research methodology courses (12 EC total), which teach students about social sciences research design and give them the opportunity to practice with phrasing a research question, selecting the appropriate methodology and collecting and interpreting data. A third category of courses comes under the heading of the WU-wide Academic Master Cluster (12 EC total). This consists of two courses (*Facilitating Interactive Processes*; *Cutting Edge Issues in Development and Rural Innovation*) in which students, amongst other things, develop relevant professional skills. As part of a fourth course category, so-called thesis preparatory courses (6 EC), students choose one of three courses, which deepen the knowledge that they need for their chosen thesis track. Finally, students select three optional courses (18 EC total) from the WU course catalogue, with which they further broaden or deepen their knowledge. These are not necessarily courses in the social sciences; students can also opt to further specialize in their life science or technical science background.

From the student chapter and interviews with students, the panel established that students are positive about the contents of the curriculum, which scored a 4.1/5 in the 2018 national student survey (*Nationale Studenten Enquête*) and was labeled a 'Top-rated programme in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Students particularly appreciate the curriculum components that take place outside of the lecture rooms, such as the one-week excursion in the *Cutting Edge*-course. They also like that the programme can be tailored to their personal interests. The elective courses can be used to prepare for the thesis, which, in its turn, offers considerable freedom to pursue individual interests. The panel also supports flexibility and making students responsible for their own learning process, especially when there is a good support system in place to help students in their choices, which is certainly the case at MDR. The panel does wish to note that flexibility should not come at the cost of overall cohesion. This point is perhaps especially relevant for a non-standard programme such as MDR, which clearly has a larger intellectual agenda to convey to students. Given the limited duration of the programme and the small number of credits available for familiarizing life sciences/natural sciences graduates with social sciences research, the panel wonders whether it is helpful for students to pursue non-social science topics as part of their elective space. The programme should take care to avoid a situation in which different students may end up with different outcomes from the programme.

Students identified some aspects with respect to the curriculum content that could be improved. Some, for example, noted that courses pay a lot of attention to agricultural issues and could adopt a wider perspective that also includes attention for issues such as climate change, self-government and citizen movements. Other students mentioned that there is too much emphasis on helping and developing the South. Some students who are themselves from the South note that they feel that their countries are not always well represented in the courses. Alumni in their turn indicated that the programme could make more use of the expertise of 'citizen scientists', which would help to introduce valuable new perspectives and move away from a traditional attitude towards development cooperation. Staff members that the panel spoke with do not necessarily recognize these comments made by students. They indicated that the focus on rural development, in their opinion, remains a useful point of departure for the course content, considering the fact that many ground-breaking developments play out at that level. Staff also mentioned that students are presented with different perspectives with respect to the North/South divide and taught to critically assess the existing body of literature. All in all, the panel notes that there may be a certain disconnect between the expectations of students and the intentions of staff. Maintaining a continuous dialogue on course content should help to address this issue.

A curriculum component that was revised as a result of the 2012 assessment is the *Thesis Path* that runs throughout the curriculum. The intention was to clarify the relation between the different parts

of the course and its link to other courses in the programme. The current panel very much appreciates the central position that the *Thesis Path* takes up in the MDR curriculum and its intention of helping students to develop the characteristics of 'hybrid professionals'. It notes that students recognize these intentions, but not necessarily when they first start the course. For some students the value of the course only becomes apparent when they start their thesis research. Students also commented that the course is too long and could be offered in blocks instead of the present continuous form. Furthermore, students indicated that the *Thesis Path* includes parts that are not that well-organised or too abstract, notably the philosophy of science part that could perhaps be better embedded. The panel hopes that these issues can be dealt with, as the idea behind the *Thesis Path* is highly commendable. A second course that received mixed feedback from students is *Cutting Edge Issues in Development and Rural Innovation*. The panel was pleased to learn that this course was given a new design in 2018-2019 and will be further improved based on the feedback by the current cohort of students.

During the site visit the panel studied material from three sample courses: the compulsory introductory course *Introduction to the Sociology of Development, Knowledge and Change*, the compulsory research methodology course *Methodology for Field Research in the Social Sciences* and the (restricted optional) thesis-preparatory course *Researching Socio-Technical Practices, Innovation and Responsible Futures*. From the course materials it concludes that the content of these courses is relevant and sufficiently challenging. The learning goals for the courses are clear and match the teaching methods that are used. The course literature is appropriate. The panel is confident that the curriculum as a whole sufficiently covers the ILOs. A topic that deserves more attention in the panel's opinion is the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship in general.

The master's programme is research-led and thesis-driven, with the research of the relevant WU Chair Groups clearly feeding into the curriculum. As students are new to the social sciences upon entering the programme, quite a bit of attention goes out to training students in the specific research methodology of the discipline. Students themselves are generally positive about the level of academic skills training that they receive. Alumni, however, indicated that they felt somewhat less prepared for qualitative than for quantitative research and that qualitative data analysis could be given more emphasis in the methodology courses from an earlier stage onwards. This may be something for the programme to look into. In a general sense, the panel feels that the programme's efforts in preparing students for academic research are impressive. Even so, there are obvious limitations to what can be achieved in a relatively short time and with a very heterogeneous student population. It was rightfully pointed out that students come from different academic traditions and have widely varying experience in academic thesis writing. In this sense it is understandable that the level of interaction with theory as achieved in the master's theses varies quite a bit. As staff members indicated that it is difficult to bring all of the students to the expected academic level, the panel feels that it is important for the programme to monitor that the admission criteria sufficiently safeguard that all students are able to achieve the ILOs.

The final dedicated piece of work in the programme is the thesis, for which students conduct a scientific research project in their preferred field(s) of social science. Students are encouraged to develop their own thesis subject in line with the research interests of the Chair Group that supervises the project. This enables students to integrate their recently acquired social science knowledge with interests and experiences from their earlier bachelor's studies or their professional experiences. Data collection for the thesis in most cases takes place outside the Netherlands, often in a developing country. The panel notes that the programme provides students with sufficient opportunities to prepare for an academic career. Students who wish to pursue a PhD can enrol in a special programme offered by the Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS).

The programme also contains a number of elements that help students to prepare for a non-academic career, notably the internship, which generally takes place in companies, public institutions, consultancy firms, research organizations or NGOs, and the Academic Master Cluster courses, which



include attention for professional skills and follow a 'learning by doing' model. According to students, however, labour market preparation could be given even more attention. They feel that exposure to practice is limited and that case studies are very theoretically oriented. Also, they see themselves as generalists rather than specialists and worry that this makes it harder to find their way on the labour market. The panel established that the programme is aware of these issues and is looking for ways to make students more aware of their own capabilities as hybrid professionals, and of the relevant labour market opportunities.

#### *Teaching-learning environment*

The programme offers its students a pleasant and effective teaching-learning environment, in which there is a strong sense of community and contacts between staff and students are close. Cohort building is facilitated by the fact that students come to MDR from a wide range of backgrounds but have in common that they are all new to the domain of social sciences. Especially the intense introductory courses function as a 'pressure cooker' in which students really become dependent on each other. During the interviews, students and staff spoke positively of the use of peer learning. MDR's classrooms are highly international, with students bringing in different perspectives, life experiences and various levels of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills. Lecturers were said to be generally sensitive to cultural differences, but there are instances where some students feel that their approach is too direct, especially when it comes to criticizing students in class. Other students, however, feel that the directness and egalitarianism of the Dutch educational system is refreshing and helpful. Students also reported that there is an open atmosphere, with sufficient opportunities for discussion and asking questions. In their experience lecturers value the input of students and incorporate it into their teaching.

The panel appreciates that the programme employs relatively small-scale and activating teaching methods in order to accommodate different styles of learning and develop students who are critical, autonomous, self-conscious learners. Lectures are interactive and often use audio/video materials, buzz groups, collective mind mapping and group presentations. Group assignments are used to apply theory to practical cases. Several courses involve group assignments on which students work outside the class, usually in a self-arranged mode, with moments of guidance and feedback by lecturers. A notable example of a course that uses experiential learning is *Facilitating Interactive Processes*, which is part of the Academic Master Cluster. In this course, students themselves become the subjects in group dynamics, which they jointly analyse and reflect upon. The course has received several WU-teaching awards in the past four years.

The number of contact hours, on average 15 hours per week during the first year of the curriculum, is appropriate for a master's programme. Students confirmed that the workload, on average 40 hours per week, is manageable. Even so, a large part of the student population does not complete the programme within the appropriate time frame, for example because they combine the master's programme with work or another programme, wish to extend the internship or take longer to complete the thesis. Over the past six years the three-year success rate has fluctuated between 61% and 81%, which is (well) below the WU target of 90%. Lowering the completion time, the panel feels, should remain on the list of the programme's priorities.

Students are generally satisfied with the quality of guidance and supervision by staff members. The panel notes that study advisers play an important role in supporting students in developing their own study paths. Thesis supervision practices vary somewhat across different Chair Groups. Some of the WU Chair Groups have adopted the principle of 'thesis rings', which function as 'intervision' groups for students who are working on their thesis. The panel would like the MDR Chair Groups to follow this example.

#### *Teaching staff*

The panel is pleased with the quality of the teaching staff. Lecturers are experts in their fields with substantial international networks, who teach courses and supervise theses that are close to the core

of their own research activities. A large majority of the staff is affiliated to the Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS), which underscores the close link between research and teaching. All of the staff involved have obtained a PhD. In addition to their academic work, many staff members are also involved in innovation and policy processes and other development-oriented activities. Students described their lecturers as highly knowledgeable and approachable. In many respects, the composition of the staff matches the character and content of the programme. The panel got the impression that lecturers themselves usually have a background in the technical or life sciences and later became involved in social sciences research. Diversity, however, is somewhat of an issue. The panel established that the current composition of the staff does not (yet) reflect the increasing internationalization. A large part of the staff has been trained at WU and is of Dutch origin. This is something to remedy via the Chair Group recruitment strategies.

The panel notes that didactic skills are considered important and lecturers are given sufficient opportunities to obtain a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) and/or other qualifications that benefit their teaching. Approximately 80% of lecturers have obtained a UTQ, which is high compared to other WU programmes. A promising development is that university-wide there seems to be a growing awareness that the current model of building careers on research rather than teaching is in need of reconsideration.

Currently, the course phase of the master's programme has a student-staff ratio of 22:1, which is acceptable.

### **Considerations**

The panel established that the design of the two-year master's curriculum is clear. It consists of a year of course work followed by a year in which students work on an academic internship and thesis. The three introductory courses in the three disciplines that are central to the programme serve the purpose of submerging students in the social sciences and facilitating cohort building. The remainder of the curriculum, notably the elective space (18 EC) and thesis (30 EC), offers students quite a bit of freedom to pursue their own interests, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent than some other WU master's programmes. The panel would like to warn against too much flexibility. Offering a 'buffet-style' curriculum may detract from the larger intellectual agenda of the programme. In this sense the panel believes that it is a good idea to limit the courses that students can take outside of the social sciences.

The panel was pleased to find that the curriculum spans a good number of courses that were specifically designed for MDR students. The content of these courses is an adequate reflection of the current state of affairs in the relevant disciplines and helps to transform students into 'hybrid professionals'. Topics that could perhaps do with a bit more attention are the role of SME's and entrepreneurship in general, and qualitative data analysis. Also, some students question the particular focus on agricultural examples, and on development in the global South rather than the global North. Maintaining a close and continuous dialogue with students should help to make sure that the course content matches students' expectations. The design of the *Thesis Path* may need a bit of work, since the current course does not seem to completely fulfil its high potential. While the curriculum pays quite a bit of attention to professional skills, the level of the courses is clearly academic, with the research of the Chair Groups feeding into the curricula. The panel further established that course specific learning goals are suitable and match the teaching methods used.

The teaching-learning environment of the programmes is characterised by an open and pleasant atmosphere. There is an adequate number of contact hours and teaching methods are suitable for small-scale and interactive class rooms, with a lot of attention paid to peer learning. Students receive a high level of support when it comes to mapping out their individual study path. In this sense, the role of the programme's study advisers is crucial.



The teaching staff of the programme are motivated and qualified. Lecturers are experts in their fields and many have valuable international experience in both the professional and academic field. Diversity, however, is an issue. The panel feels that the programme should aim for internationalization of its staff, as this would help bring in fresh new perspectives and role models that students can relate to.

All in all, the panel concludes that the MDR curriculum, teaching-learning environment and staff enable students to realize the ILOs.

### **Conclusion**

*Master's programme Development and Rural Innovation:* the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'satisfactory'.

### **Standard 3: Student assessment**

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

### **Findings**

#### *System of assessment*

The panel established that WU has a sound assessment policy. In 2017, WU renewed its vision on education alongside its education assessment policy. This assessment policy defines why and how WU assesses and how the roles and responsibilities are distributed. Its goal is to generalise assessment rules and policies and to make them transparent to both lecturers and students.

The system of assessment that is in use within the programme takes the WU-wide policy as a starting point and uses assessment as a tool to direct learning. To ensure that tests are valid, an assessment strategy is drawn up for each course, linking the course specific learning outcomes to assessment methods. The assessment strategies make clear how and when a learning outcome is assessed, who is involved in assessing students and how the final grade is determined. By publishing the assessment strategies in the Study Handbook, as well as in the study guide of individual courses, the programme ensures that students are well aware of what is expected of them. In all courses which include written exams, students are provided with mock exams and/or discuss previous exams in class. In the case of papers, students are informed about the criteria by which a paper is assessed. Course examiners are responsible for test design and checking test results. It is not clear to the panel whether it is customary that tests (and answer models) are peer reviewed by a colleague. In the panel's opinion this should be standard practice. The panel was informed that written exams are usually graded with the help of answer keys. Assessment criteria are always made available for written assignments and in some cases (e.g. thesis, internship) a rubric is also used to appropriately score the outcome. Following grading, students are enabled to inspect their exam results and receive individual feedback, which helps them learn from mistakes. Overall, the panel finds that there is sufficient attention for the validity, reliability and transparency of assessment.

The panel has established that the combined assessment of all courses covers the full range of intended learning outcomes, although it has not seen a detailed assessment plan. Designing such a plan, which includes course specific learning goals and assessment methods, would be a welcome next step. All but one of the courses use a combination of different assessment methods, with assessments taking place at various moments during the course, not just at the end of it. These include written exams (mostly with open-ended questions), individual or group assignments, papers/essays and presentations. During the site visit, the panel studied a limited number of assessments and answer models of sample courses. It found that these tests are generally well aligned with the learning goals and teaching methods. An appropriate combination of multiple choice and essay questions is used. The overall level of the exams is adequate. The assessment reflects the content that was discussed during the course and sufficiently addresses all of the relevant cognitive levels.

From its interviews with stakeholders, the panel concludes that all parties involved are generally pleased with the assessment procedures and quality of examination. Students indicated to the panel that there is a good balance between individual and group assessment and that the assessment is generally sufficiently in-depth and reflective of the knowledge and skills that they are supposed to acquire. The self-evaluation report indicated that the examination in one course is in need of attention. After evaluations showed that *Cutting Edge Issues in Development and Rural Innovation* performed below par in terms of transparency of assessment and content of the examination, the Examining Board started a review of this course. The panel expects that these issues will be dealt with shortly.

#### *Thesis and internship assessment*

The programme is concluded with both an internship (24 EC) and a thesis (30 EC). The internship is supervised by a staff member from one of the core Chair Groups that contribute to the programme. In addition to completing an academic internship report on the results of their work, students also write a self-reflection report about their experiences and competence development during the internship. The panel was informed that the assessment method for the internship is currently under discussion. University-wide it was concluded that the current assessment form and rubric will need to be revised as these do not sufficiently acknowledge that internship projects come in various shapes and sizes. This is a step that the panel applauds. Something for the university to consider is whether it is sensible to grade the self-reflection report that students produce as part of the internship. It may be more appropriate to just establish that the student has met the conditions than to award a grade, specifically when only one rubric on self-reflection has been defined which counts up to 25% of the final grade. Also, the panel feels that the university may wish to address the practice that students who complete the internship abroad often receive inflated scores from their local supervisors.

Even though the internship covers more ILOs than the thesis (seven out of eleven for the internship compared to five out of eleven for the thesis) the thesis is seen as central to the successful completion of the programme. The rules and procedures for thesis writing, supervision and assessment are laid out in the MSc Thesis Protocol. The thesis is assessed by the supervisor(s) involved, who is a staff member of one of the core Chair Groups, in deliberation with an independent examiner (second reader), and in accordance with the thesis rubric. The different components that are scored on the standardised assessment form are the research competence (30% of the final grade), the thesis report (60% of the final grade), the colloquium (5% of the final grade) and the oral defence (5% of the final grade). Each component includes a number of sub-criteria which have to be assessed as sufficient in order for the student to receive an overall pass grade. A rubric is used to support and standardize the grading of theses.

The panel is, on the whole, satisfied with the thesis assessment (procedure). However, it does want to share a few observations with respect to current assessment practices. A topic that the panel raised during the interviews concerned the WU-wide practice of scoring the thesis process ('research competence') alongside the outcome ('thesis report'). Without wanting to pass an overall judgment on this practice, which is known to have upsides as well as downsides, the panel does wish to note that the process is given quite some weight. This is something that the programme (and even the university) may wish to reconsider. A further comment concerns the variations in thesis assessment procedures that can be found across the WU Chair Groups. While the general outlines of the assessment are standardized, the panel learned that details can be filled in at Chair Group level. The panel feels that it would be preferable for all Chair Groups to adopt similar supervision and assessment mechanisms within a single programme in order to avoid inequalities for students. A general issue that needs to be addressed is the fact that the assessments of both assessors are recorded on a single assessment form. To enable external reviewers to establish that both readers have independently phrased their assessment, it is preferable to have each assessor fill out a



separate form and administrate both forms. A recommendation that the panel would like to offer is to further streamline the thesis process by digitalisation of the subsequent steps, from start to finish.

After studying a sample of theses and associated assessment forms, the panel concludes that it largely agrees with the assessments and grades given by the supervisors, although grades are consistently 0.5 point higher than the grades that the panel would have given. This is perhaps partly due to the way the scoring system is designed, with 30% of the grade being allocated to the 'research competence', which measures the quality of the student rather than the finished product. The written feedback on the assessment forms is clear and generally well founded, but often quite brief. A bit more detail and concrete demonstration of why something is 'interesting', for instance, would go a long way.

#### *Examining Board*

At WU there are four Examining Boards (EBs), each responsible for the assurance of the quality of examination of a group of related degree programmes. The Executive Board appoints EB members and at least one member is independent (not affiliated to the programmes). For each course a member of the lecturing staff is appointed as examiner by the responsible EB. The examiner is responsible for the assessment strategy of the course.

Part of the responsibilities of the EB is to check whether the individual study programmes of students cover all of the ILOs, thereby assuring that students have achieved the intended end level upon graduation. The panel is convinced that the EB does this to its best ability. Another important part of the EB's assignment is to annually review samples of final products in order to safeguard the end level of the programmes under its responsibility. Because the EB itself does not have the required expertise to assess the content of MDR theses, this responsibility is delegated to designated reviewers, who are staff members from a different Chair Group to the one that employs the original supervisor/examiner. The panel was informed that recent thesis reviews showed only small differences between the original assessment and the assessment by the reviewer. The panel supports the method used for reassessing the theses but was surprised to find that no written records of the outcomes of these reviews are kept. The panel strongly encourages the EB to start recording results and to publish the general outlines thereof in its annual report.

To ensure the quality of assessment, the EB periodically visits the Chair Groups that are involved in the teaching. Prior to these visits, which generally take place every four years, a delegation of EB members accompanied by an external assessment expert checks a sample of course assessments, theses and internship assessments, whose validity, reliability and transparency they later discuss with representatives of the Chair Groups. Where necessary, the EB proposes improvements. The core Chair Groups involved in the programme were last visited in 2015. The panel is not aware of any specific recommendations that were made to the Chair Groups on this occasion. The next visits are scheduled to take place in the first half of 2019. Currently, the EB does not periodically verify that the programme as a whole sufficiently covers all of the ILOs. During the site visit, EB members indicated that they hope to add such an annual check to the EB's responsibilities in the near future. This is a development that the panel would applaud.

Although the panel has no particular reasons for concern with respect to the quality of assessment in the programme, it does note that the current university-wide system of quality assurance poses some challenges. To start with, there is considerable distance between the EB and the Chair Groups, which operate with a large measure of autonomy. The limited means available to the EBs over the reporting period meant that these may have lacked agency in properly streamlining procedures across Chair Groups and following up on prior recommendations. An additional issue for WU to consider is that the current system does not seem to allow for taking a snapshot of the assessment quality in a certain programme at a certain moment. Programmes such as those in Development and Rural Innovation rely on a substantial number of Chair Groups, which are all visited at different times and (even) by different Examining Boards. The panel was very pleased to learn that the Executive

Board of WU is doubling the resources for Examining Boards as of 2019. Even so, it does advise the university to carefully consider how these resources can be used to their optimal effect.

### **Considerations**

The programme has developed an adequate system of assessment, which is based on the WU-wide assessment policy. The assessment strategies at course level pay sufficient attention to the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations, for example by aligning learning goals and assessment methods, by using answer models and rubrics, and by clearly communicating assessment procedures and criteria to students. Some particular aspects, such as the consistent use of rubrics and peer review of assessments, deserve further improvement. Students confirmed that there is a good balance between group work and individual work. Sample tests studied by the panel indicate that the overall level of assessment is adequate.

The procedures for assessing the final product of the programmes, the thesis, are clear and the assessment itself is sound. The panel does recommend reconsideration of the current practice of assigning quite some weight to the process in the assessment of master's theses. Also, the panel would like to see a further streamlining of the procedures across Chair Groups. Finally, the panel advocates the university-wide implementation of a digital assessment system in which the subsequent steps in the thesis process are fully automated.

The panel established that the Examining Board safeguards the overall level of assessment in the programmes to the best of its abilities. Increasing the capacity of the EB, as is the intention of the Executive Board, could help to strengthen its agency in relation to the rather autonomous Chair Groups. Nonetheless, the panel feels that the central university should also critically reconsider whether the design of the current quality assurance system optimally suits its purposes.

### **Conclusion**

*Master's programme Development and Rural Innovation:* the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'satisfactory'.

#### **Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes**

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

### **Findings**

#### *Theses*

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied a sample of fifteen recently completed master's theses. These theses cover a wide array of topics, which are reflective of the students' interests. In many cases students come back to the subjects that they studied at bachelor's level, which they now approach from a social sciences perspective, using either qualitative or quantitative methods. Not all theses are strictly related to the rural development domain but in general they do match the broader intellectual agenda of the programme. Interdisciplinarity is not necessarily a goal for the thesis. Likewise, the thesis does not cover the specific capacities of the 'hybrid professional' (ILO 6-8). These ILOs are addressed in the courses rather than the thesis or internship. From the course material that it studied, the panel is sufficiently confident that students also achieve the ILOs that are not covered by the thesis. Even so, the programme could consider making interdisciplinarity a goal for the thesis and aim for a broader coverage of the ILOs in the thesis.

The panel was generally satisfied with the level and content of the sample theses. The programme clearly sets the right expectations in terms of research design, data collection and theoretical analysis. The panel also notes that much of the work was done in an international context. The fact that students often succeed in collecting valuable data under challenging conditions is impressive and underlines that the work is at master's level. Moreover, the panel is generally pleased with the structure of the theses and the level of writing. Notwithstanding the panel's positive evaluation of



the theses, it also found some minor shortcomings that the programme may wish to look into. Regarding the use of methodology, the panel established that, in most of the sample theses, the methodological approach is presented as a given rather than the best option out of a set of alternatives. Similarly, there is little critical reflection on the research process, especially during field research. Questions of positionality, ethics and responsibility could have been more explicitly discussed. Also, the level of engagement with theory is often rather shallow. Finally, framing is an issue. Almost all theses would have benefitted from sharper problem formulation. To the extent that such problem formulation is evident, many theses presented it in a rather woolly manner and quite late in the text. All in all, however, these issues should not be seen as major limiting weaknesses. The panel is well aware that shortcomings related to theory and methodology are very commonplace amongst the best students attending top universities.

The panel was informed that thesis results are occasionally published. One thesis that resulted in an article co-authored by the thesis supervisors was part of the sample that the panel studied ('How Do Agricultural Extension Workers of DAE Use Social Media for Strengthening Agricultural Innovation in Bangladesh?').

#### *Position of graduates*

The position of graduates underlines that students achieve the ILOs. After graduation, master's graduates quickly (89% within six months) obtain a variety of jobs at a wide range of organisations, both in the Netherlands and abroad. These include positions at international (non- or inter-) governmental organizations, research institutes/universities, consultancy organizations in the agricultural or engineering sectors and other businesses. Common occupations for graduates are consultant/adviser, programme/project coordinator, researcher, policy maker and trainer. Quite a number of graduates move on to PhD positions and academic careers. It was stressed during the site visit that graduates are well qualified for beta-gamma integration projects, a type of PhD project that is common at WU. Most of the alumni that the panel spoke with indicated that the programme taught them valuable skills that are useful in their day-to-day working life. The panel also established that alumni indeed see themselves as hybrid professionals, who are able to combine perspectives from the social and natural/technical sciences, rather than as pure social scientists.

#### **Considerations**

From the sample theses and the position of graduates the panel is confident that students achieve the ILOs of the programme. The general level of the final projects is satisfactory. Notwithstanding some (very common) shortcomings with respect to theory and methodology, the work is of sufficient academic quality; not least because students show that they are able to navigate the difficulties involved in gathering data in an international setting. Graduates of the master's programme find employment in relevant positions at non-profit organisations, research institutes/universities and companies. Alumni generally feel that the programme has provided them with valuable skills and a useful combination of perspectives.

#### **Conclusion**

*Master's programme Development and Rural Innovation:* the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'satisfactory'.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The panel is largely pleased with the intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, assessment and achieved learning outcomes of the master's programme Development and Rural Innovation. The programme has a strong intrinsic profile and commendable cross-disciplinary objectives, both of which are well at home at WU, where beta-gamma integration is valued and stimulated. Nonetheless, the programme may find a renewal of its identity to be beneficial. Without abandoning the original focus on rural development in the South, which still holds value today, the programme could consider broadening its scope, by starting from the Global South and expanding to other areas of development and environmental innovation. Equally important is to ensure that the selection of prospective students sends a message that is coherent with whatever novel avenue is chosen by the programme.

### **Conclusion**

The panel assesses the *master's programme Development and Rural Innovation* as 'satisfactory'.





## APPENDICES



# APPENDIX 1: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

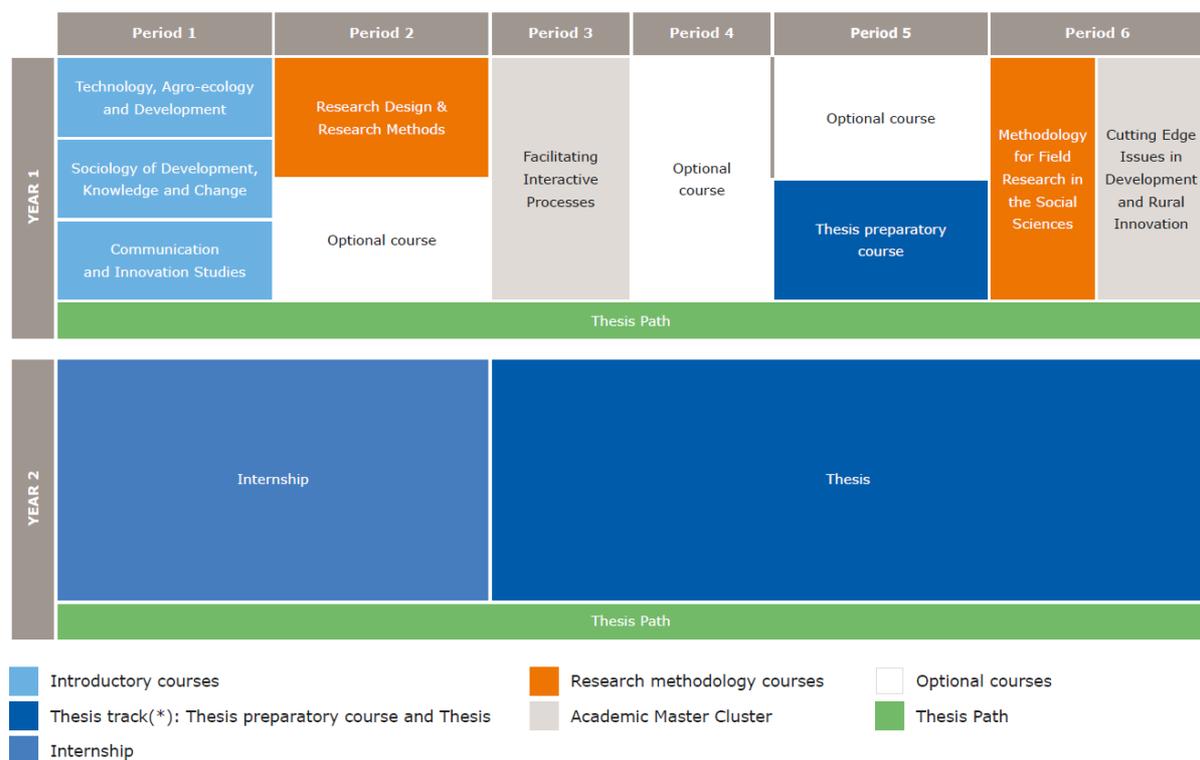
## ***Master's programme Development and Rural Innovation***

After successful completion of this MSc programme graduates are expected to be able to:

1. Explain ideas, concepts and theories of development sociology, communication & innovation studies, and technology studies in relation to current issues, problems and challenges in the domain of development and rural innovation;
2. Assess and apply theoretical and methodological perspectives from a) development sociology, b) communication & innovation studies, or c) technology studies, to analyse current issues, problems and challenges in the domain of development and rural innovation;
3. Design and assess research in the domain of development and rural innovation, including formulating a problem statement and operationalising objectives and research questions within an adequate research plan;
4. Select and apply appropriate research methods and techniques to collect and analyse data from literature and empirical research in the domain of development and rural innovation;
5. Critically reflect upon the design, implementation, facilitation and evaluation of interventions and programmes in the domain of development and rural innovation;
6. Interpret debates around social and natural science interdisciplinarity and communicate with diverse scientific audiences about different perspectives on problems and challenges in the domain of development and rural innovation;
7. Facilitate communication and decision-making in networks of actors with different knowledges and cultural backgrounds with the aim of enhancing development and rural innovation;
8. Translate research results into recommendations for intervention and policy in the domain of development and rural innovation;
9. Critically reflect upon the different roles of the specialist in development and rural innovation, including the ethical and value-driven aspects, in diverse international working environments;
10. Communicate convincingly (verbally and in writing) about (own) research findings and project results and their underpinning rationale;
11. Design and plan own learning processes based on continuous reflection (both individually and in discussion with others) upon personal knowledge, skills, attitudes and functioning.



## APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM



(\*) Choice from:

**Thesis track Communication and Innovation Studies**

Change, Inter-Human Processes and Communication

Thesis Strategic Communication *or*

Thesis Knowledge, Technology and Innovation

**Thesis track Sociology of Development and Change**

Political Ecologies of Natural Resource Distribution

Thesis Sociology of Development and Change

**Thesis track Technology and Development Studies**

Researching Socio-Technical Practices, Innovation and Responsible Futures

Thesis Knowledge, Technology and Innovation

Note: Students have some flexibility in the planning of their programme. For example, students can take optional courses in the first and second year, spend more or less time in the first year to organise their internship or thesis research, and choose in which order to do their thesis and internship.

Figure 2: Schematic overview of the programme

## APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

<b>16 January MSc Development and Rural Innovation</b>		
14.00	15.30	Arrival of panel, internal meeting and documentation review
15.30	16.15	Interview with management (including delegation of Programme Committee)
16.15	16.30	Break
16.30	17.00	Examination board and study advisor(s)
17.00	17.30	Alumni
17.30	18.00	Internal deliberation panel, short recap day 1

<b>17 January MSc Development and Rural Innovation</b>		
8.45	10.00	Deliberations panel and documentation review
10.00	10.45	Students
10.45	10.50	Mini break
10.50	11.35	Teaching staff
11.35	12.15	Break and deliberations panel
12.15	13.00	Final interview with management (and PC)
13.00	14.15	Deliberations panel and formulating preliminary findings and conclusions + lunch
14.15	14.45	Feedback of preliminary findings and conclusions



## APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied fifteen theses. Information on the selected theses is available from QANU upon request.

During the site visit, the panel studied, among other things, materials from the following courses (partly as hard copies, partly via the institute's electronic learning environment):

- SDC-21804 Introduction to the Sociology of Development, Knowledge and Change
- CPT-37806 Researching Socio-Technical Practices, Innovation and Responsible Futures
- SDC-33306 Methodology for Field Research in the Social Sciences