



# **Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences**

## **Master Agricultural Production Chain Management**

### **Full Study Programme Assessment**



## Summary

In January 2019 the hbo-master programme Agricultural Production Chain Management (APCM) of Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences was visited by an audit panel from NQA. APCM is a fulltime one year master study programme (60 EC), that is delivered at the VHL campus in Velp. APCM applied for the regular NVAO<sup>1</sup>-accreditation and for IAC/EADI<sup>2</sup> - accreditation. Both accreditations can be combined, according to the agreement between NVAO and EADI. The audit panel assesses the quality of the APCM study programme as **satisfactory**.

### Intended learning outcomes

The programme receives the assessment **satisfactory** on standard 1 for NVAO and for IAC/EADI.

APCM upholds an interesting profile for its study programme with the combination of agribusiness, sustainable value change management, focus on developing countries and attention for personal leadership. The learning outcomes comply with the master's level, professional orientation and the demands of the work field. The professional field has contributed to the setup of the learning outcomes and profile of APCM. The learning outcomes can be strengthened with an extra competency that comprises a framework for the knowledge and understanding that is present in the degree programme. That way the multi- and interdisciplinarity can be shaped more clearly.

### Curriculum

The programme receives the assessment **satisfactory** on standards 2 and 5, **good** on standards 3 and 4 for NVAO and for IAC/EADI.

The APCM programme offers students many opportunities to enhance their professional skills as facilitators of change and therewith has a distinct applied nature. The panel is convinced that the programme has a good and solid content with a basis for multi- and interdisciplinary approaches, but students can be made more conscious of the way they can substantiate how they set up and steer processes of change. APCM realises more knowledge, capabilities and confidence with its students by working with actual issues from the work field. Students learn a lot and develop essential skills and attitudes to become change facilitators in their home countries. The positive changes to the research education line and the cooperation with the applied professors will give positive effects in the way students mention and use research literature. A wide variety of teaching methods is used and tailored to student's needs and backgrounds where appropriate. Students feel challenged from day one. The panel is very positive about the learning environment and the clear structure of the educational programme. Students are challenged and set to work with a wide variety of learning methods. APCM uses modern techniques like VPA and mini-lectures and could in future possibly consider expansion towards more blended learning. The panel finds that APCM has a very diverse intake and a strong dependency on the Nuffic scholarships for a great part of the intake. The panel sees opportunities to use the existing connections with alumni, embassies and important organisations more systematically to enlarge the student intake and increase the viability of the programme. The panel is positive about the

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<sup>1</sup> NVAO: Nederlands Vlaams Accreditatie Orgaan/Dutch Flemisch Accreditation Organisation

<sup>2</sup> IAC/EADI: The International Accreditation Council for Global Development Studies and Research of the European Accreditation of Development Research and Training Institutes

apparent international composition within the classroom and about the valuable guidance APCM offers to new incoming students.

### **Staff**

The programme receives the assessment **good** on standard 6 for NVAO and **satisfactory** for IAC/EADI.

The staff team, that with a mix from different backgrounds and organisational units, are successful in the delivery of the APCM-programme. The staff members are very enthusiastic about their field and really drive the students to perform well. This is much appreciated by the students. The team size is sufficient and the team scores good on skills, expertise, didactical skills and BKE.

### **Services and facilities**

The programme receives the assessment **good** on standard 7 and 8 for NVAO and for IAC/EADI. APCM has good services and facilities that contribute to an attractive learning environment for students. Students and teachers like the campus where VHL is situated and make good use of the well equipped lecture rooms. Because of the small group size there is a good inter-personal relationship between students and staff, and the staff are very accessible to the students. The panel is very positive about the buddy system with Dutch students and the peer support system during the thesis phase. The module outlines are informative to students and the information facilities are improving because of the switch to Moodle rooms.

### **Quality assurance**

The programme receives the assessment **satisfactory** on standard 9 for NVAO and for IAC/EADI.

APCM has a system of evaluations and improvements in place in accordance with VHL-policy, mostly course and block evaluations and the NSE. The education performance is measured against key performance indicators and the PDCA-cycle is in place. The quality assurance cycle could be made more visible and formal with better registrations.

### **Assessment**

The programme receives the assessment **satisfactory** on standard 10 for NVAO and for IAC/EADI.

APCM has an adequate assessment system in place with which it can show that students achieve learning outcomes. This is covered in the exam plans. APCM is making a move towards more alignment and calibration among teachers regarding the practice of assessments. The panel thinks the exam committee and the recently started assessment committee need more time to develop clear procedures and be in control of the examination quality. The validity of certain exams can be strengthened. With the theses assessments the panel sees improvements in the grading system and substantiation of the marks.

### **Achieved learning outcomes**

The programme receives the assessment **satisfactory** on standard 11 for NVAO and for IAC/EADI.

APCM has very clear procedures for the thesis phase. There are no doubts on the level of the theses. Students show their personal and professional growth and it is clear from alumni's positions in the work field that APCM offers students added value in the field of development studies. That said, students could be more explicit in the thesis with regard to knowledge skills,

governance skills and analytical skills. Some theses can be better contextualised within the scientific literature. More emphasis can be given to the reflection by students on the development of their personal attitude. Seeing the positions alumni hold and the career changes they have taken, it is clear to the panel that the APCM programme has great development impact.



## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Basic data of the study programme</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Intended learning outcomes</b>	<b>13</b>
Standard 1 Intended learning outcomes	13
<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>17</b>
Standard 2 Orientation of the curriculum	17
Standard 3 Contents of the curriculum	20
Standard 4 Structure of the curriculum	21
Standard 5 Incoming students	22
<b>Staff</b>	<b>24</b>
Standard 6 Quality of staff	24
<b>Services and facilities</b>	<b>27</b>
Standard 7 Services and facilities	27
Standard 8 Tutoring	28
<b>Quality assurance</b>	<b>30</b>
Standard 9 Evaluation of results	30
<b>Assessment</b>	<b>32</b>
Standard 10 Assessment system	32
<b>Achieved learning outcomes</b>	<b>34</b>
Standard 11 Learning outcomes achieved	34
<b>General conclusion of the study programme</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>41</b>
Appendix 1: Programme for the site visit	42
Appendix 2: Documents examined	44



## Introduction

This is the assessment report of the Master Agricultural Production Chain Management degree programme (APCM) offered by Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (VHL). VHL applied for a combined accreditation for NVAO and EADI. This is a possibility due to the agreement between NVAO and EADI. The assessment was conducted by an audit panel compiled by NQA commissioned by VHL. Prior to the assessment process the audit panel has been approved by NVAO and EADI.

In this report Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA) gives account of its findings, considerations and conclusions. The assessment was undertaken according to the *Assessment frameworks for the higher education system* of NVAO (2016)<sup>3</sup> and the *NQA Protocol 2018 for extensive programme assessment*.

The site visit took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2019.

The audit panel consisted of:

Mr. dr. ir. H. Kieviet (chairperson, representative profession/discipline)

Mr. J. Mönks PhD (representative profession, for IAC/EADI audit)

Mrs. dr. J.R. Budds MA DPhil (representative discipline)

Mr. drs. J.J. Steen, (representative for ECA audit)

Ms. E.M. Smits BSc (student member)

mrs. Ir. M. Dekker-Joziase, NQA-senior auditor, acted as secretary of the panel.

The APCM degree programme is part of the visitation group 'HBO leefomgeving/development', together with the bachelor programme IDM and the master programme MOD. All three degree programmes were visited and assessed during a cluster-visit of three days. The panel composition was the same for all three audit days, except from the chair persons. With the IDM and MOD audits mr. Ekkel held the chair position. With the APCM audit the chairperson was mr. H. Kievit.

The study programme has provided the panel with a self-evaluation report. Its form and content comply with the requirements of the appropriate NVAO assessment framework, and the *NQA Protocol 2018*. The audit panel studied the self-evaluationreport and other documents. The panel visited the study programmes presentation. The self-evaluation report and all other (oral and written) information have enabled the panel to reach a deliberative judgement.

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<sup>3</sup> Since the panel has been approved by the NVAO before 15 December 2018, the Assessment framework 2016 is applied

The panel declares the assessment of the study programme was carried out independently.

Utrecht, April 2019

Panel chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several vertical strokes on the left and a large, sweeping horizontal stroke that loops back to the left.

dr. ir. H. Kieviet

Panel secretary

A handwritten signature in blue ink, featuring a cursive style with a prominent 'M' and 'D' at the beginning, followed by several horizontal strokes.

ir. M. Dekker-Joziase

## Short outline of the study programme

The professional master programme Agricultural Production Chain Management (APCM) is a unique study programme at master's level that is aimed at prospective students who are mid-career professionals in a development and business context, mostly from developing countries. From the beginning APCM has focused on development studies. APCM is a one year programme (60 EC), with an average intake of twenty students per cohort. Since the start of APCM in 2001 259 students from 42 different countries have joined in the programme, which results in a very international classroom.

Students can choose a specialisation: Livestock Chain, Horticultural Chain or Forest Chain (started recently in 2018). Most students choose the specialisation in line with previous education and experience.

APCM started in 2001 and since then has an annual intake of approximately twenty students. Almost all students gained a scholarship of the Nuffic. Most students are supported by their employer in the home country.

APCM is positioning itself more alongside the applied professorship in Sustainable Agribusiness in Metropolitan Areas. APCM collaborates closely with the Bachelor programme Agribusiness and Business Administration and it shares competences and experience with other Master programmes: Management of Development (MOD) and Innovative Dairy Chain Management. The cooperation with MOD is very close in the second semester (80% of the programmes content) and integrated during the thesis assessment.

In 2016 a major programme modification took place, in which students and the students' representatives had an important role. The programme was restructured to lessen the time pressure for students.

APCM has a joint Exam Committee and Academic Programme Committee with the master MOD. General parts of the study programme are shared with MOD and specialities are chosen to highlight both master programmes.

The previous accreditation was held in 2011. APCM received recommendations to increase the intake with more students from the private sector and to put more emphasis on reflection and the applied nature in the thesis phase. APCM was successful with the latter and is still working on the first recommendation.

### Administrative data

<i>Administrative data of the study programme</i>	
name study programme as in CROHO	M Agricultural Production Chain Management
orientation and level study programme	hbo; master
Grade	MSc.
number of study credits	60 EC

graduation courses / 'tracks'	Specialisations: - Livestock Chain - Horticultural Chain - Forest Chain
Location	Velp
Variant	Fulltime
language used	English
registration number in CROHO	70058

# Intended learning outcomes

## Standard 1 Intended learning outcomes

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

### Conclusion

The study programme receives the judgment **satisfactory** for standard 1.

APCM upholds an interesting profile for its study programme with the combination of agribusiness, sustainable value change management, focus on developing countries and attention for personal leadership. The learning outcomes comply with the master's level, professional orientation and the demands of the work field. The professional field has contributed to the setup of the learning outcomes and profile of APCM.

APCM receives the advice to strengthen the learning outcomes, especially the knowledge and understanding components by an extra competency that offers a clearer framework for the knowledge and understanding that is present in the degree programme. That way the multi- and interdisciplinarity can be shaped more clearly.

### Substantiation

#### *Professional orientation*

The unique professional master programme Agricultural Production Chain Management (APCM) trains mid-career professionals to act as value chain facilitators towards sustainable value chains, in particular in developing countries. This is captured in APCM's mission: 'Educating effective chain facilitators, through transformative learning'. With an interdisciplinary focus and entrepreneurial attitude APCM students learn to empower entrepreneurs, producer groups and communities in creating shared value, quality improvement/certification, organisational change and social impact. With this students also learn to enhance business linkages between value chain actors. This includes quality management, logistics, marketing, information exchange, food safety and finance, sustainability and social inclusion. Students learn to address real life issues, often from their professional experience, from a multi-stakeholder approach and develop stronger personal leadership qualities.

With this mission and vision APCM contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): zero hunger, quality education, gender equity, sustainable cities and communities, climate action and partnership for the goals. The staff members are looking at opportunities to also integrate new values into the programme, such as climate change mitigation and circular economy.

The panel finds the above mission and vision interesting. It is a practical approach to development, which focuses on developing entrepreneurship and market integration among local producers as the key route to poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods, which is the direction taken by most major development agencies. Yet, by doing so, it arguably under-emphasises the structural drivers of poverty and production, and perhaps communities' own

visions for their futures, and thus from a “development studies” perspective we could consider it to be rather partial. Combined with the APCM’s roots in agriculture this gives an interesting niche for development programmes. The international focus of APCM is in line with for example the World Bank’s emphasis on the need for global value chains. The panel finds that the programme needs to challenge mainstream and offer various perspectives. The above-mentioned profile is confirmed in the interviews the panel had with students, staff members and representatives from the work field; namely the alumni and the members of the professional advisory board (PAC). Students and alumni told the panel that they learn to make horizontal and vertical linkages within organisations and between stakeholders. Their focus is on creating shared values as instruments for better chain management and from there increase production, product quality and cooperation between the stakeholders.

Through the university’s vision on education, VHL promotes five values as the basis for the learning environment:

- Real-world centred, to get direct contact with the professional field and to collaborate in a multidisciplinary and living lab setting;
- Freedom of choice to take responsibility for the study in the light of the end qualifications;
- Diversity in the range of knowledge, teaching methods and tests, such as lectures, excursions, individual assignments and group work, examinations, presentations and reports;
- Up-to-date use of digital resources that are in line with the latest developments, including management games;
- Research, internationalization and sustainability in the final competences to develop at MSc level.

As a result of this policy, VHL made a policy advisory document on how to increase the participation of students in professorships research projects in order to train student on inter- or multidisciplinary learning outcomes. In this document, APCM practice of working in professorships was taken as an example.

The mission of the APCM Master Programme’s refers, in line with the Dublin descriptors, explicitly to interdisciplinarity. The aim is to educate (mid-career) professionals who are competent to facilitate multi-stakeholder processes with an interdisciplinary focus. APCM promotes a pro-active entrepreneurial attitude which is key in sustainable and inclusive value chain development, especially related to empowering entrepreneurs in the agricultural and forestry sector and in producer groups and communities. Creating shared value, improving quality and certification, changing an organisation and making social impact can only be done effectively with an interdisciplinary approach. The multidisciplinary approach is reflected in scientific background and current research projects of the staff members.

On curriculum level, certain modules are indicated to work on an interdisciplinary assignment or to conduct applied research (see table 1):

Block	Title module	EC	Level of interdisciplinarity
<b>1: Value chain Analysis &amp; Development</b>	Personal Development and leadership	3	(Personal) Leadership training
	Value Chain Analysis	6	Technical (value chain related) and social (e.g. governance, sustainability, gender, cooperatives) issues and business economics taught
	Sector Analysis	3	All technical, socio-economic and political-institutional aspects of a given sector (cocoa in Ghana) analysed
	Organisational Analysis	3	Organisational and institutional analytical tools
<b>2: Value Chain Governance</b>	Integrated Chain Management	6	Food quality, food safety and logistics issues and certification taught and integrated in a manual and audit
	Value Chain Development project	5	Project management, marketing and chain governance taught and integrated in a chain development project; professorship assignment
	Livestock Production	4	Production related topics integrated with sustainability (climate smart agriculture)
	Horticulture Production	4	Idem
	Forest Production	4	Idem
<b>3: Applied Research Design</b>	Research Methods	6	
	Action research in practise	4	Professorship assignment; see box 1.
	Research Design	5	
<b>4: Applied Research Project</b>	Applied research project	15	Thesis field work, mostly qualitative and partly quantitative research combining biological (livestock, horticulture or forest product chains) and social sciences

### *Final qualifications*

APCM has compiled a set of seven competences:

- A. to analyse the sustainability and resilience of value chains, stakeholders and production systems;
- B. to initiate and manage innovative chain processes and projects;
- C. to design a business plan or new business models for business service entrepreneurs of chain actors
- D. to conduct applied research contributing towards an efficient and resilient value chain development;
- E. to build sustainable relationships with chain stakeholders;
- F. to communicate global value chain developments in a multicultural setting to specialists and non-specialists;
- G. to apply and reflect on a professional attitude in a changing international business environment.

These competences were compiled from relevant job profiles and are related to the Dublin descriptors at master's level and the seventh level of Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. Members of the PAC and broader connections have participated in this process.

The panel acknowledges the relevance of the competences for the specific profile and the master's level of the APCM programme. The panel advises to add an extra competency that offers a framework for the knowledge and understanding components and depicts the knowledge and understanding that students need to be well equipped for chain management next to becoming a change facilitator. This can also create a framework for the approach to multidisciplinary and multicultural impact that APCM represents.

#### *Assurance of APCM's specific profile*

The APCM programme and profile are regularly discussed with the PAC<sup>4</sup>, the five applied professors that are linked to APCM, the two other master programmes MOD and IDCM and are compared to the job positions of alumni (alumni survey 2017). APCM has also benchmarked its study programme to other master programmes in the field of business, economics, food and value chain management; which confirms APCM's specific profile on chain value, agribusiness and developing countries.

APCM staff follow national and international discussions on relevant developments, e.g. the growing interest in bio-economy, technological novelties, laws and regulations, the views on sustainable food future and the shift from 'aid to trade' that promotes business development in the developing countries. This is taken into account in APCM's modifications of the study programme towards climate smart agriculture and circular economy.

The panel finds APCM eager in discussing relevant developments with the work field. Staff members on a regular basis participate in the PAC meetings to keep upfront with the trends in the work field.

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<sup>4</sup> The PAC is shared with the master programme Management of Development

# Curriculum

## Standard 2            Orientation of the curriculum

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

### Conclusion

The study programme receives the judgment **satisfactory** for standard 2.

The panel finds that the APCM programme offers students many opportunities to enhance their professional skills. The programme has a distinct applied nature. Students have to work together and actively contribute to the project groups. This gives a setting where inter- and multidisciplinary is abundant, but this is not always addressed or referred to in an explicit and theoretically embedded manner. Students can be made more conscious of the way they can substantiate how they operate, set up and steer processes of change, and how these processes of change affect producers. This will enhance the facilitator competencies even further. APCM already offers a lot to students and is worthwhile. It really makes a difference to students' knowledge and capabilities and in their home countries. Students become more confident. The panel is positive about the changes in the research education line and the cooperation with the applied professors on this point. The panel hopes this will result in more conscious mentioning of research processes and use of literature in the students' outputs.

### Substantiation

#### *Set up of the programme*

Most students come from an agricultural background with focus on the production stage and have to broaden their perspective by learning about value chain facilitation in agribusiness. Therefore APCM's programme offers a balance between the value chain approach and research as a tool for change. The programme is structured along learning pathways in value chain management, chain facilitation, integrated chain management and applied research. The programme is built in four blocks of 15 EC. Block 1 aims at value chain analysis and development and addresses personal development. Block 2 addresses Value Chain Governance and project management within the chosen specialisation. In block 3 students are taught in applied research methods and design, which they have to demonstrate in block 4 in the applied research project/thesis in their home country.

#### *Professional orientation*

The work field experience is an important part of the programme. Students learn to enhance certain skills and use them in practice and to strengthen their professional attitude through practical and research experience. The desired skills and attitudes are described in the Body of Knowledge and Skills (BOKS).

In many discussions and reports students have to reflect on their skills and attitudes. This is an important factor for the master level. This way the student also learns to tackle issues like cultural differences and multidisciplinary and –stakeholder approaches.

The practical and applied nature of the APCM programme is also demonstrated in the teaching methods that are being used with the theory of transformative learning (see also standard 4), for example Visual Problem Appraisal, mini lectures and games. Students often work in groups or teams which enhances the communication and reflection skills. Students confirm that they are challenged to think critically before addressing certain challenges and research questions.

#### *Professional skills*

In the BOKS the competencies are translated into the tools, skills and attitudes that are expected of students. There it becomes clear that students have to obtain a wide set of tools and skills, for example value chain mapping, PESTEC analysis, Swot analysis, Business Canvas Model, Participatory research tools, Focus group discussion tools, climate smart agriculture and circular practices, MIDCA tool, theory of change tools, 3R framework et cetera.

The panel finds that the teachers challenge students to look critically at their own professional working field through value chain analysis and ability to organise a development trajectory. Students are offered disorienting dilemmas that they have to question, and solve with critical thinking and teamwork. Often students bring their own background and experience to the mixed project groups. In mini-lectures students have to present their approach to a technical problem from the multi- and interdisciplinary viewpoints. A strong example is the Visual Problem Appraisal where the starting information on a certain problem is offered in a suitcase with multiple video messages from different stakeholders in a production chain, for example the improvement of the cocoa chain in Ghana. All students have to study literature to learn about theories and knowledge and in the group they have to discuss, choose and justify what solutions would be best. This also enhances entrepreneurial skills, since students have to dig into business models and advise local entrepreneurs.

The panel found that the cases and module assignments showed that students have to develop an inter- and multidisciplinary way of thinking and performing. Often students have to integrate knowledge from different disciplines and work with different stakeholders, for example governance, landscape architecture, human communities and agroforestry business. However the panel found it hard to see evidence of this in the student's products and the theses. Therefore the panel advises APCM to be more profound in its communication of inter- and multidisciplinary approaches and to make students more conscious of this method of working. Students learn the methods, but could be made more aware of the theories behind their approach and the broader context that comes with challenges. That will make students more conscious on the possibilities to positively steer and influence the processes and decisions. In the reports and products students can show this more strongly and convincingly.

#### *Research skills*

In recent years APCM is working on the education line of applied research together with the applied professors within VHL. In the first block students start by searching, using and making reference to literature. The professors are involved in the research methods and design courses in block 3, where students learn the principles of applied research. The module applied research

in practice puts students in the middle of the work field, which offers them an opportunity to develop their competencies in a 'living lab' environment. Students practice qualitative research in the form of a rapid appraisal project for one of the applied professors. Practical field work is always part of the research project and forms the basis for the thesis. Students stated that they become more confident in researching issues and problems in their professional field.

The panel recognises the energy APCM is putting into the strengthening of the research line and encourages APCM to continue on this path and pull it all the way through, in a way that the research knowledge and skills become more visible in the students' use of literature and outputs up to the thesis.

Research outcomes are taught or discussed in specific lectures, through (guest)lectures of professors and lecturer-researchers. In module applied research in practice, box 1 shows the approach how research results have been used in further research:

*“Box 1: Applied research in practice*

*To practise qualitative research the whole group conducts applied research in the form of a rapid appraisal in the Netherlands that is related to a project of one of the applied professorships. The APCM group practises applied research, management, facilitation and presentation skills and are responsible for the final report.*

*APCM contributes to the teamwork of different programmes working on a certain project. Example is the Doesburger Eng in Ede for which Business Models were developed to produce cereals in the neighbourhood and process it into a “local product”, maintaining the cultural-historical landscape and strengthening the social cohesion.*

*Other examples are ‘food landscapes’ in Brummen, prevention of peat inclination in the Veenweide area (North-Holland) and opportunities for agroforestry businesses (food-forestry) in Arnhem-Nijmegen.”*

In main modules, students are given articles, research papers or books, which have to be summarised, presented and discussed in a mini-lecture to fellow-students. In the chain development project module, research outcome is given as background information in chain development project assignment.

*Intercultural skills*

In the international classroom students have to deal with intercultural differences between students on a daily basis. By working together in assignment groups students have to communicate and learn to address differences and similarities. There are no specific learning goals for the intercultural and communication skills.

## Standard 3 Contents of the curriculum

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

### Conclusion

The study programme receives the judgment **good** for standard 3.

The APCM study programme offers a lot of content to the students. Despite the differences in background all students learn a lot and develop essential skills and attitudes to become change facilitators in their home countries. APCM works with actual issues from the work field and with current literature. The positive effect on the students is clear. Students feel empowered and find their study path very clear. A wide variety of teaching methods is used and tailored to student's needs and backgrounds where appropriate. Students feel challenged from day one through good assignments that address the independent thinking skills of students and enrich their knowledge base. The panel is convinced that the programme has a good and solid content with a basis for multi- and interdisciplinary approaches. APCM can show this more for example by more mentioning of the connections with current literature.

### Substantiation

#### *From competencies to programme content*

The competencies are linked to the four education blocks and they are translated to a set of learning outcomes in the *EER*<sup>5</sup> and in the *Assessment Plan APCM 2018-2019*. This shows a progression and in each block a combination of competencies.

In the Body of Knowledge and Skills (BOKS) the competencies are worked out in the theory & concepts and the tools, skills and attitudes that the students have to obtain. These can be

found in the module descriptions in the module handbooks. This set up is very constituent and makes clear to students what is expected and what they have to do.

Block	Competences
1, 2, 4	A. To analyse the sustainability and resilience of value chains, stakeholders and production systems
1, 2, 4	B. To initiate and manage innovative chain processes and projects
2, 4	C. To design a business plan or new business models for business service entrepreneurs or chain actors
3, 4	D. To conduct applied research contributing towards an efficient and resilient value chain development
2, 3, 4	E. To build sustainable relations with chain stakeholders
1, 2, 3, 4	F. To communicate global value chain developments in a multicultural setting to specialists and non-specialists
1, 2, 3, 4	G. To apply and reflect on a professional attitude in a changing international business environment

#### *Study materials and methods*

The panel had insight into the study materials and student outputs and is of the opinion that the content of the study programme is good and that the appropriate study materials are used.

Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods that are adjusted to the student's needs and backgrounds. Students feel challenged from day one. They feel they regularly have to step out of their comfort zones and that APCM offers a safe environment to do so.

<sup>5</sup> EER Education and Examination Regulations

The panel finds the assignments and projects well described and very good in the way they address the independent thinking skills with students. Teachers do many different things with students and are capable of combining the different angles needed to solve problems. There is a basis for multi- and interdisciplinarity, but this could be shown more in the accreditation materials and in the module descriptions.

The panel supports the observation from APCM's own PAC that more attention could be given to chain management next to the focus on change facilitation. This will be discussed in the Programme Committee that also serves the master programme Management of Development. Teacher's experiences and general topics are shared with MOD, for example in the mini-research module.

The panel finds that APCM teachers use current and appropriate literature and textbooks available on Google Scholar and Greeni. To emphasise the master's level and current developments students could be made more aware of recent scientific literature and how this affects their performance. This gives students more opportunities to contextualise their understanding. Students gave the advice that the examples in topics, assignments and literature could be more diverse, in the sense that there now seems to be too much focus on the African continent.

#### **Standard 4                    Structure of the curriculum**

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

#### **Conclusion**

The study programme receives the judgment **good** for standard 4.

The panel is very positive about the learning environment and the clear structure of the educational programme. Students are challenged and set to work with a wide variety of learning methods. The curriculum is progressive in the content and level and stimulates students to act and become more responsible for their own education. APCM uses modern techniques like VPA and mini-lectures and could in future possibly consider expansion towards more blended learning.

#### **Substantiation**

The APCM study programme is developed from the vision of adult learning of Kolb and transformative learning principles where education builds on prior knowledge and experience. Teachers use a variety of learning methods: lectures, individual and group assignments, VPA, mini-lectures and field work. In block one students practice new concepts in an unfamiliar but controlled setting before they apply what they have learned to their own working background. In blocks two and three students learn and practice complex concepts in simulative or real-life assignments in un-familiar chains. In block four they apply research and all they have learned in their own field of work. This offers a student-centred learning environment that complies with the

VHL-values: real world centred, freedom of choice, diversity, up-to-date education and attention to research, internationalisation and sustainability.

Students become more and more responsible for their own learning. Students learn to look critically to their own field of work and their own actions and assumptions and expectations. Students learn to complete the learning cycle, from theorisation to planning, execution, reflection and action and re-planning. Social responsibility and life long learning are key factors in the development of the students. The formative aspect is as important as the summative aspects.

The panel finds the learning environment is challenging to students and it offers ample opportunity for students to attain the learning goals. The combination of teaching methods and content offer a strong curriculum. Students feel enriched and specifically appreciate the acquired competencies on data-gathering, chain facilitation, applied research, presenting and self-reflection.

The panel encourages APCM for future development to expand on e-learning and blended learning possibilities, conforming to APCM's ambitions. Knowledge transfer with the help of e-learning could create even more room for interaction during meetings. It could shift the attention even more to the training aspects and the application of what students have learned beforehand in the studying materials, literature and filmed lectures. It also offers the students options to look back on lectures in their own time and space. The panel recognises that this offers other challenges to live up to the current positive effects of face-to-face meetings. The panel sees opportunities for parts of the programme, for instance entrepreneurship, where Erasmus programmes have good experience with e-modules. Maybe there are also opportunities to attract more international students for (parts of) the curriculum.

## **Standard 5            Incoming students**

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

### **Conclusion**

The study programme receives the judgment **satisfactory** for standard 5.

The panel finds that APCM has a very diverse intake and a strong dependency on the Nuffic scholarships for a great part of the intake. The number of intake is small (approx. 20 per year) and APCM is seeking a broader and more diverse intake with more potential students from The Netherlands and EU countries. The panel sees opportunities to use the existing connections with alumni, embassies and important organisations more systematically to enlarge the student intake and increase the viability of the programme.

The panel is positive about the apparent international composition within the classroom and about the valuable guidance APCM offers to new incoming students.

## Substantiation

APCM has a very diverse intake of students. APCM is aimed at mid-level and senior staff of organisations and companies in the agricultural production chains from different developing countries. The organisations that the students work for can be chain actors (producers, processors or traders), chain supporters (NGO, consultants) or chain influencers (governmental bodies). There is a strong international representation in the classroom composition.

In practice most students come from countries in East Africa (Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Rwanda and Uganda). Between 2006 and 2018 259 students from 42 different countries entered the programme. According to VHL enrolment policy students must have two years working experience, a Bachelor's degree in agriculture or a related field, good English language skills (TOEFL 550 or IELTS 6.0) and computer literacy. Most students come in by means of a Nuffic/OKP fellowship, with the accompanying Nuffic admission conditions. Nuffic allows a certain number of applicants per study year for the study programmes IDCM, MOD and APCM. APCM creates a priority list with a healthy mix of men and women, countries and continents, private and public sector and diversity in organisations. Dutch Embassies also create a priority list. Based on both, Nuffic makes the final selection and division of the fellowships over the study programmes and specialisations.

VHL has recently hired a special officer to promote the MOD and APCM programmes on social media in The Netherlands and other European countries. Results are not known yet. It is not easy to attract students because the programme is not funded by the government and students have to pay the full fees.

The entry procedure is thorough and effective. In general 87 percent of students graduate within 13 months. Only 3 percent totally drop out and 10 percent of the students receive a post-graduate certificate<sup>6</sup> in place of a master's degree.

The panel concludes that APCM is quite dependent on Nuffic fellowships. There is an announcement that more funding will become available for Nuffic fellowships for Mediterranean countries. To enhance the independence from Nuffic, VHL is trying to identify where potential students might be recruited from; the target is an increase of 10-15 percent of the intake. Together with MOD ideas are suggested to offer blocks of education or certain modules to allow students to study for shorter periods. The panel suggests that APCM and VHL try to use the connections of alumni and embassies more, since they are the best advocates for APCM's quality and value. Nuffic's alumni platform with networks in many countries offers opportunities to do this. APCM can also start with its own alumni network Ambrosia. Some of the teachers have many contacts with alumni. These can be used in a more systematic and structural way.

From the meetings during the audit visit the panel heard that APCM invests in the welcoming and settling of students in the first few weeks. This is really helpful for the incoming students, when they are confronted with the official registrations and procedures, and immersion in a new cultural context.

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<sup>6</sup> A post-certificate is granted to students that have passed all courses and fulfilled the entry requirements for the research project and thesis, but who were not able to complete the thesis. Students that do not live up to the thesis entry requirements receive a certificate of attendance. This way all students can prove that they have progressed in learning outcomes.

# Staff

## Standard 6            Quality of staff

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

### Conclusion

The study programme receives the judgment **good** for NVAO and **satisfactory** for IAC/EADI standard 6.

The panel is positive about the staff team that with a mix from different backgrounds and organisational units are successful in the delivery of the APCM-programme. The staff members are very enthusiastic about their field and really drive the students to perform well. This is much appreciated by the students. The team size is sufficient and the team scores good on skills, expertise, didactical skills and BKE.

### Substantiation

The APCM programme is provided by a core team of seven people, responsible for the organisation, performance and development. An additional team of sixteen lecturers and trainers gives practical support to the running of the education blocks. Experts from the VHL Applied Research Centres are involved in lecturing and supervision and the assurance of the Master's level. From a list of staff members the panel concludes that the teaching staff show a good level (all master level and one PhD level). Most of the staff have international working experience and fifty percent is involved in applied research activities. Most core team members and all PhD experts work in international research and projects. All staff members are didactically skilled, have an educational certificate or are currently following a didactic course. Most core team members have the basic qualifications on examination (BKE). A few teachers are native English speakers and two-thirds of the total team has international experience.

The panel is of the opinion that the team has sufficient size and expertise to manage the programme and courses. The staff/student ratio is 1:14. The organisation of the team is complex, since staff members come from five different VHL-educational teams and three VHL applied research teams. This is a plus to the multidisciplinary nature of the programme and students are very positive about their teachers and the way they are taught and guided by the teachers. In student's evaluations the scores for the staff are steady around 4.0 (on a 5-points scale). Since team members come from other educational teams there is no specific personnel policy, but APCM does support a PhD trajectory for one of the staff members and is intensifying the cooperation with the MOD programme. Another point of attention is giving staff with an international background a more prominent position.

From the audit interviews the panel is impressed on how the staff members work with the students. The panel also finds that the staff maintain relevant contacts with the international professional field through projects and guest lectures on international topics and by attending

training courses, seminars and symposia. The team seems to be rather informal by nature in its operations, yet performs to a good standard. The team could usefully adopt a slightly more formal structure, e.g. follow up on evaluations (see standard 9). But overall the panel is of the opinion that the APCM staff does a very good job and really goes the extra mile to let the students excel in their development.

To assure the quality of education and the connection with the different cultures of the students, APCM has an international staff regarding origin and work experience. APCM promotes – in line with the master policy - the polyvalence of the core and support team. Important is the international experiences and the involvement of core staff in a variety of professorships (and international) projects. The work experience of APCM staff is displayed in table 2. The multidisciplinary approach is reflected in scientific background and current research projects of the staff members.

*Table 2: current International fields of APCM staff*

<b>Expert</b>	<b>International Working field</b>	<b>Link with APCM</b>
<b>PhD</b>	Dairy value chains in Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya and Romania	In LC modules
<b>PhD</b>	Sustainable Agribusiness in Metropolitan areas i.e. Baramati India, Ethiopia, Kenya, Romania and Brazil	Cases used in HC and LC modules
<b>PhD</b>	Management of Forested Landscapes in Brazil, Ethiopia, Vietnam and Romania, Indonesia	Cases used in HC modules
<b>PhD</b>	Palm oil in Indonesia and Malaysia; tropical forestry in Ghana and Surinam	Cases used in HC and FC modules
<b>PhD</b>	Biomass cascades research Interreg project Netherlands, Germany, Denmark	Cases in HC and LC modules
<b>Master</b>	Refresher Training, Kenya Dairy Chain Governance in Ethiopia and Kenya	Module Org. Analysis PhD-study, MSc theses
<b>Master</b>	Strengthening Education for Agricultural Development, Rwanda	Cases used in HC and LC modules
<b>Master</b>	Teaching and learning in ruminant production with private sector participation, Indonesia	Alumni (Yuni) is the project leader
<b>master</b>	Refresher Training, Kenya SIA Kiem Vang project Market opportunities by Dutch circular innovations for the agrofood sector in semi-arid Indonesia	Module Org. Analysis Cases in HC and LC modules

Four core and support staff members have been specially appointed to strengthen the international dimension. One of the PhD's is also employed as professor, which enhances the quality of the MSc programme level.

In each block 3-5 (national or international) guest lecturers from the professional field (companies, GOs, NGOs or knowledge institutes) are invited and/or excursions are organised, in the line of the module topic. In the same line, Master graduates, when returned to the Netherlands, are given podium to share their study or work experiences. Whenever fitting, master students are encouraged to participate in guest lecturers from other programmes or other

organisations (Agromisa lectures or Max Havelaar lectures) as well as in seminars or conferences.

# Services and facilities

## Standard 7 Services and facilities

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

### Conclusion

The study programme receives the judgment **good** for standard 7.

APCM has good services and facilities that contribute to an attractive learning environment for students. Students and teachers like the campus where VHL is situated and make good use of the well equipped lecture rooms. Students and teachers have good access to computers, software, internet and the well stocked library. Teachers share office space by hot-desking. The fact that they are still reachable and student oriented is welcomed by the students. VHL is working on improvement regarding affordable housing. For future development the panel suggests APCM to look at the possibilities of e-learning and experiment with videos and knowledge clips.

### Substantiation

The APCM programme is realised at the VHL campus in Velp. The educational building, referred to as 'a landed flying saucer', is situated on the Larenstein estate with very green surroundings. This allows for hands-on education for certain topics that offers a rich learning environment. The building is fully equipped for English speaking students and for students with a disability. All necessary facilities are present and of good quality. There are classrooms in various sizes, computer rooms, private work and study spaces, a GIS (Geographical Information System) room, a well provisioned library, and a film studio. Students and staff have adequate access to computers with the necessary software and connections to the internet.

Teachers work in open spaces (flexplek), according to the hot-desking principle, where they share desks in an open office space. Provision of laptops and smart-phones made this possible and this ensured that teachers are still reachable for students, which is highly appreciated by students. Teachers use modern computer and social media facilities in their classes, e.g. by flipping the classroom and the use of instructional videos or you-tube videos on new topics. In the self-evaluation report a shortage of areas for confidential discussions was raised. During interviews this did not seem to be a major problem to students.

Students receive their schedules and changes via Webunits and their progress is tracked by the Student Information System. VHL is switching its educational information system to Moodle rooms for modules and personal portfolios. The panel advises to explore the possibilities of e-learning more and experiment with videos and knowledge clips. This might open possibilities to make better use of time for interaction (see also standard 4).

On arrival students receive help with housing and the formal requirements. Overall students are very satisfied with the facilities and information systems although they find the housing facilities expensive. Attention is needed to inform students before arrival on this topic. It is difficult for students to find suitable and affordable housing in the Velp/Arnhem area. VHL has contracted house renting companies, but still the student satisfaction can be improved (score 2.8 on 5-point scale). VHL is working on better links with the student housing association in Arnhem-Nijmegen and with local councils. The panel heard that most problems occur when students have to prolong their stay in case of resits or extra time needed for the thesis.

## **Standard 8            Tutoring**

*Tutoring and student information provision bolster students' progress and tie in with the needs of students.*

### **Conclusion**

The study programme receives the judgment **good** for standard 8.

Students are very positive about the formal and more informal tutoring and guidance by mentors, teachers and fellow students. There are many contact opportunities regarding study progress and personal development. Because of the small group size there is a good inter-personal relationship between students and staff, and the staff are very accessible to the students. The panel is very positive about the buddy system with Dutch students and the peer support system with MOD-students during the thesis phase. The module outlines are informative to students and the information facilities are improving because of the switch to Moodle rooms.

### **Substantiation**

The tutoring system aims at getting students accustomed to the new situation in The Netherlands and at supporting their personal development. The tutoring system is in line with the transformative learning approach and VHL policy. Tutoring includes several social events and extracurricular activities. Every student meets three times a year with an appointed mentor to discuss progress and wellbeing. Students learn to reflect on their own capabilities. General student remarks are also addressed by the student representatives. For general logistic support students can turn to the admissions office and housing facility office. For more personal issues students can contact a student counsellor.

Students are satisfied in evaluations about the tutoring (scores of 3.9 out of 5 in NSE). This is confirmed in the interviews the panel held, where students mentioned that they experience a lot of interaction with teachers and students. There is contact on a daily basis. Because of the small group size all students are well known and they feel recognised. The panel is positive regarding the 'buddy system' from the Ambrosia student's association, which is put in place together with the master programme Management of Development and the bachelor programme International Development Management. It includes a cultural programme. Social Dutch lessons are given by Dutch bachelor students under supervision of a teacher.

During the thesis phase Peer Study Support (PSS) groups are formed, for the first time in 2018/2019, where mixed APCM and MOD students support each other. This offers students a good platform to exchange ideas and experiences in this difficult and challenging phase of the programme.

The information provision has improved and received a score 3.77 in the NSE. VHL is changing to the Moodle rooms system. This system has to be filled gradually. The module outlines that the panel saw were of good quality and very informative to students on content and study activities.

## Quality assurance

### Standard 9            Quality assurance

*The programme is evaluated on a regular basis, partly on the basis of assessable targets.*

#### **Conclusion**

The study programme receives the judgment **satisfactory** for standard 9.

APCM has a system of evaluations and improvements in place in accordance with VHL-policy, mostly course and block evaluations and the NSE. The education performance is measured against key performance indicators and the PDCA-cycle is in place. The panel understands from the interviews and the follow up on evaluation results that improvements have been put in place, for example the calibration among examiners and the revision of assessment criteria. Also the time pressure has been improved for students during the curriculum revision in 2016. The panel thinks that the quality assurance cycle could be made more visible and formal with better registrations of how, how often evaluations take place, what the conclusions and the follow up actions are.

#### **Substantiation**

APCM has a system of evaluations and surveys in place in accordance with the VHL quality assurance policy. The assurance scheme is based on the PDCA-cycle and performance is measured against key performance indicators, for example minimal 3.8 score in the NSE, minimal 70% student and alumni satisfaction and 80% of teaching staff has a MSc or PhD degree. Most KPIs are met.

APCM collects data after every education block, during the tutoring sessions, at the end of the entire programme and at national level through the NSE. The data and scores are collected by the quality coordinator, shared with the module coordinator and analysed in the core and expert teams and in the Educational committee. The Academic Programme Committee supervises the total quality assurance cycle.

The panel finds that APCM holds good evaluations and does follow up on the outcomes. This can be seen in improvements to the programme, for example the restructuring of the programme in 2016 to even out the work/time pressure for students. Students confirm that every block is evaluated and that scores and outcomes are discussed. They give a 4.1 score for the quality system (on a 5-point scale); which is high. The panel is positive regarding the calibration sessions that are held for examiners of the theses.

The panel does recognise that improvements are being made, but found it hard to find the paper trail to substantiate this. APCM could improve on this and thereby better prove that the PDCA-loop is closed. APCM does mention follow up on previous accreditation, for example the link with applied professorships, the revision of assessment criteria for the thesis, and the emphasis on

time for students' reflection. This is in line with APCM's own conclusion that the continuation of the PCDA could become more visible in forms and in module guides.

# Assessment

## Standard 10      Assessment system

*The programme has an adequate assessment system in place and demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

### Conclusion

The study programme receives the judgment **satisfactory** for standard 10.

The panel finds that APCM has an adequate assessment system in place with which it can show that students achieve learning outcomes. This is covered in the exam plans. APCM is making a move towards more alignment and calibration among teachers regarding the practice of assessments. The panel advises to strengthen the formal procedures and processes. The panel thinks the exam committee and the recently started assessment committee need more time to develop clear procedures and be in control of the examination quality. The validity of certain exams can be strengthened. With the theses assessments the panel sees improvements in the grading system and substantiation of the marks. This can be further improved by continuation of the calibration sessions among examiners.

### Substantiation

VHL has several assessment policy documents (in Dutch) that are aimed at the assessment of competencies through professional skills and products. APCM uses a wide variety of examinations (formative and summative) such as written exams, papers, oral, presentations, group work, audits, reflective journals and portfolio. The alignment of assessment forms and competencies is set out in an assessment plan. For every module there is an assessment matrix which depicts the coverage of the learning goals by the assessments, including level indicators.

The panel has inspected a variety of exams and student outputs and finds the validity of certain exams can be improved, especially with the thesis where grades differentiated between assessors. In general there is a suitable variety in exams and the exams are aimed at the right level and students do know what to expect regarding exams. Reflection reports were an important part of the formative assessments. The panel suggest APCM to guard the balance between formative and subjective assessments.

The assurance that exams are up to par lies foremost with the teachers who compose the exams. This is substantiated partly by years of experience and partly by the BKE and SKE<sup>7</sup> trainings that staff members follow. The panel sees a strong focus on the practical steps of composing and completing and polishing of exam matrices and criteria in the rubrics. There is attention to the four-eyes principle with assessments in the form of orals, papers, presentations and theses. An external examiner is involved in the process as an advisor with the final grading.

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<sup>7</sup> Three team members are following the Senior Qualifications in Examination course (SKE)

The panel sees a growing interest in the assurance of exam quality and would like to encourage this development. The exam committee is starting a development from 'bookkeeper' to a more active and also coaching role regarding exam quality. An assessment committee has just started under the supervision of the exam committee and will check exams of several master programmes per year. The panel thinks both committees need more time to intensify the scrutiny of exams and given grades. The panel advises to put more effort into checking the way assessment criteria and forms are used and filled in, instead of further refining the criteria within the rubrics. Seeing the occasional differences between examiners implies that more understanding of the criteria and the alignment in using them is essential to keep examiners on the same track.

The panel advises to strengthen the formal assurance procedures and processes, starting with the formal appointment of each and every examiner in person by the exam committee<sup>8</sup>. APCM can include in its exam plan more attention to the assurance of exam quality. Further more the exam committee can be more in control. It has surveyed two APCM theses in November 2018 and addressed certain points of attention, but could have put more emphasis on critical points to keep examiners sharp and aligned in their understanding and usage of examination criteria and forms. The panel advises to do this more often and couple this more with calibration sessions with examiners. The panel finds that examiners can note down more feedback to make it clearer how the grading is substantiated with actual findings and what feedback is given to the students.

The panel is positive regarding the grading process and forms of the assessment of theses. It is clear what the individual grading is of both assessors and what the supervisor gives as advisory grading. The composition of the final mark is clear. The capturing of the feedback can be further increased. The panel notices an improvement in the forms in the way that examiners can note down which criteria are valid and underpin the judgements. The panel encourages APCM to continue with the calibration sessions among examiners/assessors. PAC members who operate as external examiners for the theses, mention that the calibrations have already led to more equal judgements.

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<sup>8</sup> Shared exam committee with the master Management Of Development.

# Achieved learning outcomes

## Standard 11      Achieved learning outcomes

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

### Conclusion

The study programme receives the judgment **satisfactory** for standard 11.

APCM has very clear procedures for the thesis phase. The thesis is the ultimate proof that students have mastered all competencies and show with an individual applied research project that they can apply knowledge and come to valuable recommendations. The panel has checked fifteen dossiers of thesis projects, including the thesis assessments. The panel has no doubts on the level of the theses. Students show their personal and professional growth and it is clear from alumni's positions in the work field that APCM offers students added value in the field of development studies. That said, students could be more explicit in the thesis with regard to knowledge skills, governance skills and analytical skills.

In 2011 advice was given to put more focus on application instead of a strong scientific focus, considering the professional background of students. The panel sees a good follow up on this point, but found that some examples of theses were not as well contextualised within the scientific literature as they could have been, implying that a balance needs to be better achieved in this regard. The same is true for the recommendation to put more emphasis on the reflection by students on the development of their personal attitude.

Seeing the positions alumni hold and the career changes they have taken, it is clear to the panel that the APCM programme has great development impact. The panel recommends maintaining the certificates of attendance and post-graduate certificate for students who have performed well on study units but were not able to complete the whole study programme. With these certificates they can still show participation, learning achievement and personal growth.

### Substantiation

#### *Thesis phase*

The final applied research project is the ultimate proof of the future chain facilitators. Students have to show that they master the competences at master level (Dublin descriptors) and can present appropriate recommendations. Their personal development forms an important factor along with the impact in the value chain governance in the student's field of work - most often in their home country.

The thesis phase consists of block 3 and 4. In block 3 students work on applied research design and a proposal (5 EC) for which they have to receive approval (go-decision) before they can start in block 4 with the research project (15 EC). Students have to apply newly acquired concepts and

insights to critically explore and reflect on current practices of value chain development. Field work and data collection are an important part of the thesis research project. The thesis project is finalised with a professional product like a policy, an advice, plan or design.

The panel finds the thesis manual very informative on all the processes, steps, objectives and requirements of the thesis, the timelines, the supervision and the assessment procedures and criteria. The report has to contain a reflective paragraph that is written on the basis of a reflective journal, which students maintain during the entire thesis phase. Along with triangulation, reflection will add to the credibility of the research.

Students can only start on the thesis if they have completed all study units from the first three terms. If this requirement is not met students can receive a certificate of attendance. The thesis projects are performed individually. The subject is chosen and prepared in consultation with the specialisation coordinator and if applicable the commissioner of the organisation where the research is held, often the organisation in the home country that sponsors the student. Various applied professors from VHL are involved in final projects as supervisor or internal assessor. Before the start of the applied research students are prepared with a writing clinic for academic writing.

The thesis is checked for plagiarism and assessed by three persons: a VHL-supervisor, a second independent VHL-assessor and an external assessor. The students present and defend their research work during a twenty minute colloquium and a forty minute oral examination. The student will be informed if it is sufficient and will receive a mark after confirmation in a meeting of the examination board. Students can get a chance to improve and resubmit the report or in case of a total rejection they receive a Post-Graduate Certificate. The student receives grades for the thesis report, the presentation and oral defence and the reflection journal.

#### *Thesis outputs*

The panel has chosen the thesis dossiers of fifteen alumni from an overview list of the last two cohorts. The chosen reports cover a wide range of grades and represents all specialisations. The panel finds all theses of sufficient to sometimes excellent quality. The thesis reports and assessments show that students master the intended learning outcomes at the master's level. Students use theoretical concepts and literature and apply them to existing problems. Students show the ability to present, defend and discuss the outcome and give direct recommendations. Some reports could be better in the use of and reference to literature, analytical skills, knowledge skills or governance skills. But the panel also sees that the theses with better grades show more focused studies, better reflections and well structured reports that link well with theoretical concepts and literature. The judgements of the theses are transparent and to the point. Feedback for students is noted. The attention to the reflective paragraph is clearly an improvement that follows from the recommendations from the previous accreditation in 2011.

The subjects of the theses fit with the specialisation that the students follow, for example:

- Strategies to improve dairy farmers' contribution to the amount of locally sourced milk in Nigeria;
- Pre and post harvest factors influencing the quality of coffee value chain in Ethiopia;
- Effect of quality of rice produced on customer satisfaction in a cooperative in Rwanda;
- Identifying constraints for market access in Kenya peanut butter.

#### *Post graduate certificate and certificate of attendance*

For students who are not able to start or could not finish the thesis, APCM offers special certificates to emphasise that all students have shown progress and can make their experiences worthwhile in their further career. Students that did not succeed for all the previous courses receive a certificate of attendance emphasising that they have attended the APCM programme for nine months. Students that started the thesis but did not finish it, receive a post-graduate certificate.

The panel finds it positive that with these certificates all students can demonstrate that they have learned valuable subjects, even if they did not obtain the official master degree.

#### *Alumni performance*

The study and especially the thesis projects enhance the working careers of alumni. Alumni work in the private sector, for NGO's and in governmental positions. They have functions in all the aspects of the value chain: consuming, retailing, wholesaling, processing, collecting and producing. A quarter of the students published an article from their master thesis (Survey alumni 2016). Around 40 percent of alumni have changed jobs and or employer. A quarter of the alumni receive a promotion. This shows the personal effects and also the development impact of the master study diploma and the extra value it offers to students and organisations. An alumni survey in 2017 of the APCM programme shows that APCM receives high scores (8 out of 10) especially on the effect on personal development and on the relevance for developments in the home country. Interviews with alumni in Kenya show that they hold positions as chain facilitators and have become more confident as agents or trainers in value chain development and chain facilitation. Almost all of the interviewed alumni received a promotion or made a career shift. Five percent continued to study and did a PhD. In Zimbabwe five alumni were recruited to lead the national and regional governmental offices in Dairy Services.

The panel is convinced of the added value that the APCM programme realises with its students and alumni.

# General conclusion of the study programme

## Assessments of the standards

The audit team comes to the following judgements with regard to the standards:

Standard	Assessment	EADI
1 <i>Intended learning outcomes</i>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
2 <i>Orientation of the curriculum</i>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
3 <i>Contents of the curriculum</i>	Good	Good
4 <i>Structure of the curriculum</i>	Good	Good
5 <i>Incoming students</i>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
6 <i>Quality of staff</i>	Good	Satisfactory
7 <i>Services and facilities</i>	Good	Good
8 <i>Tutoring</i>	Good	Good
9 <i>Quality assurance</i>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
10 <i>Assessment system</i>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
11 <i>Achieved learning outcomes</i>	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

## Considerations and conclusion

Weighing of the judgements with regard to the four standards is based on the assessment rules of NVAO:

- The final conclusion regarding a programme will always be 'unsatisfactory' if standard 1, 10 or 11 is judged 'unsatisfactory'. In case of an 'unsatisfactory' score on standard 1, NVAO cannot grant a recovery period.
- The final conclusion regarding a programme can only be 'good' if at least five standards are judged 'good'; one of these must be standard 11.
- The final conclusion regarding a programme can only be 'excellent' if at least five standards are judged 'excellent'; one of these must be standard 11.

The audit panel assesses the quality of the hbo-master study programme APCM Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences as **satisfactory**.

# Recommendations

The audit panel has the following recommendations for the study programme:

## Standard 1

- The panel advises to add an extra competency that offers a framework for the knowledge and understanding components and depicts the knowledge and understanding that students need to be well equipped for chain management next to becoming a change facilitator.
- Continue with the entrepreneurship direction in the degree, but also make students aware that this is one direction and not necessarily the direction for development, and be more aware of what it may mean for producers and their communities and landscapes

## Standard 2

- The panel advises APCM to be more profound in the communication on inter- and multidisciplinary approaches and to make students more conscious on this method of working.

## Standard 3

- To emphasise the master's level and current developments students could be made more aware of actual scientific literature and how this affects their performance.

## Standard 4

- The panel encourages APCM for future development to expand on e-learning and blended learning possibilities, conform APCM's ambitions. This could enable APCM to reach more students, have benefits for the timing of the curriculum and it could make APCM more independent from Nuffic grants.

## Standard 5

- The panel suggests that APCM and VHL try to use the connections of alumni and embassies more, since they are the best advocates for APCM's quality and value. These can be used in a more systematic and structural way.

## Standard 6

- The team could gain in a bit more formal structure, e.g. follow up on evaluations.

## Standard 7

- The panel heard that most housing problems occur when students have to prolong their stay in case of resits or extra time needed for the thesis. Advice to help students in this phase.
- VHL policy documents should be available in English to students and employees.

## Standard 9

- APCM can improve on the closing of the PDCA-loop.

**Standard 10**

- The panel thinks the exam committee and the recently started assessment committee need more time to step up to the plate and be in control of the examination quality. This can be further improved by continuation of the calibration sessions among examiners.
- The panel advises to put more effort in checking the way assessment criteria and forms are used and filled in, instead of further refining the criteria within the rubrics.

**Standard 11**

- Students could be more explicit in the thesis with regard to knowledge skills, governance skills and analytical skills.
- Strengthen the contextualisation of the literature in the theses, so that these are not just obligatory sections but shape the approach to and analysis of the data.
- Consider opportunities for students to do thesis topics with the applied professors as well as with their home institutions (or merge the two more)



# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Programme for the site visit

Time	activity	Interviewees
8:30	Reception	
8:45-9:00	Panel discussion	
9:00-9:15	<b>Pitch of the programme</b>	<b>Core team members:</b>
9:15-9:45	<b>Exhibition and explanation of study methods:</b> VPA (module sector analysis) Mini Lectures (module personal development and leadership) Rapid Appraisal (module Applied Research in Practice) Digital learning environment : Moodlerooms	<b>Core team members:</b>
9:45-11:15	Study of materials	
11:15-12:15	<b>Interview 1: the learning environment</b> <i>Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10</i>  <i>IAC/EADI ; ECA</i>  <i>Interaction with applied research</i>	<b>Lecturers:</b>  <b>Professors:</b> PhD, professor Sustainable Business in Metropolitan Areas, director ARC FaD PhD, professor Management of Forested Landscapes PhD, lecturer research methods, associate professor Dairy Value Chains
12:15-13:00	<b>Green Lunch</b>	<b>Video – APCM in action</b>
13:00-14:00	<b>Interview 2: students and alumni</b>  <i>Standard 5   Self-evaluation chapter 5 (Students chapter)</i>  <i>IAC/EADI, ECA</i>  <i>Standard 1,11</i>	<b>Students:</b> Group (deputy) representatives BSc, Ghana – Livestock Chain / member of APC BSc, Kenya – Livestock Chain BSc, Kenya – Horticulture Chain / member of APC BSc, Indonesia - Horticulture Chain BSc, Rwanda – Forest Chain / member of APC  <b>Alumni:</b> graduate 2017 Livestock Chains (ovb) graduate 2018 Horticultural Chains, former representative graduate 2018 Livestock Chains (via skype/phone)
14:00-14:15	<b>Panel discussion</b>	

14:15-15:00	<b>Interview 3: student assessments, graduation, learning outcomes and quality assurance</b> <i>Standards 5, 10, 11</i>  <i>ICA/EADI, ECA</i>	APCM / MOD
15:00-15:15	<b>Panel discussion</b>	
15:15-15.45	<b>Tour around the premises</b> <i>Standards 7</i>	With IDM and MOD
15:45-16:30	<b>Panel discussion</b>	
16.30-16.45	<b>Feedback</b>	All
16:45-17:15	<b>Programme Developments</b>	Development of an initial master APCM and MOD teams
17:15-18:00	Closing and Drinks	All

<b>January 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	Joint visit of the estate	IDM, MOD, APCM
	<b>Interview: with the management</b>	
<b>January 24<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Interview: with the management</b>	
	<b>Programme Developments</b>	Internationalisation APCM and MOD teams

## Appendix 2: Documents examined

### *APCM:*

Self-evaluation Report APCM, November 2018  
Education and examination regulations study programme APCM 2018-2019  
Education and Examination Regulations 2018-2019, General part Master programmes  
Body of Knowledge and skills APCM  
Current international projects  
APCM Brochure 2018-2020  
Selection of APCM module books  
Selection of professional products form different modules  
List of activities, excursions and applied research product and mini-theses  
APCM Staff 2018-2019  
Yearplan 2017 APCM  
List of examiners  
Report alumni survey, Year programme evaluations  
Peer study support  
Assessment plan APCM 2018-209  
Selection of Assessment forms and matrices APCM 2018-2019  
NSE and 'Keuzegidsen'  
Report previous accreditation  
Several impression videos with students' experiences  
Selection of fifteen theses from list of graduates of the last two graduation cohorts  
Thesis Manual APCM 2017-2018 and Protocol Thesis Trajectory 2018-2019  
Research overview , abstract booklets 2015-2018  
Preliminary results of PhD research of a staff member

### *VHL:*

Institutional plan 2018-2021 and 2014-2017  
English Strategic Plan VHL 2018-2021  
Inrichting van het onderwijs bij hogeschool Van Hall Larenstein, 2014  
Studeren met een functiebeperking  
Passende extra voorzieningen voor studenten met persoonlijke omstandigheden 2017  
Hogeschool VHL Kwaliteitszorgplan 2018-2021 and 2015-2017  
Toetsbeleid Van Hall Larenstein 2015  
Format toetsplan master, Handreiking toetscommissie,  
Kadernotitie Internationalisering 2018-2021  
Kadernotitie Master VHL 2016  
Degree programme committee regulations Van Hall Larenstein 2016  
Overview of VHL professorships