

MASTER'S PROGRAMME

URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

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This report was finalised on 30 September 2019.



REPORT ON THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands for limited programme assessments as a starting point (September 2018).

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

Master's programme Urban and Regional Planning

Name of the programme:	Planologie
International name of the programme:	Urban and Regional Planning
CROHO number:	66622
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specializations or tracks:	-
Location(s):	Amsterdam
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Submission deadline NVAO:	01/11/2019

The visit of the assessment panel Human Geography and Urban Planning to the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of the University of Amsterdam took place on 9 and 10 April 2019.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

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

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The NVAO has approved the composition of the panel on 11 February 2019. The panel that assessed the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning consisted of:

- Em. prof. dr. L.J. (Leo) de Haan, emeritus professor of Development Studies at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam [chair];
- Em. prof. dr. C. (Christian) Kesteloot, emeritus professor at the Division of Geography and Tourism of KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. E.M. (Ellen) van Bueren, professor of Urban Development Management at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of Delft University of Technology;
- Dr. C.J. (Kees-Jan) van Klaveren, senior auditor and data protection officer at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences;
- J. (Jim) Klooster BSc, master's student in Economic Geography at University of Groningen [student member].

The panel was supported by dr. I.M. (Irene) Conradie, who acted as secretary.



WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The site visit to the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of the University of Amsterdam was part of the cluster assessment Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning. In April and May 2019 the panel assessed nineteen programmes at four universities. The following universities participated in this cluster assessment: University of Amsterdam, University of Groningen, Utrecht University, and Radboud University.

Panel members

The panel consisted of the following members:

- Em. prof. dr. L.J. (Leo) de Haan, emeritus professor of Development Studies, at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam [chair];
- Em. prof. dr. C. (Christian) Kesteloot, emeritus professor at the Division of Geography and Tourism of KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. E.M. (Ellen) van Bueren, professor of Urban Development Management at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of Delft University of Technology;
- Drs. J. (Judith) Borsboom-van Beurden, senior researcher Smart Sustainable Cities at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU, Norway);
- Dr. L.B.J. (Lianne) van Duinen, project manager at the Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli);
- Dr. C.J. (Kees-Jan) van Klaveren, senior auditor and data protection officer at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences;
- Prof. dr. M.A. (Maria) Koelen, professor of Health and Society at Wageningen University & Research;
- Prof. dr. F.J.A. (Frank) Witlox, professor of Economic Geography at the Department of Geography at Ghent University (Belgium);
- J. (Jim) Klooster BSc, master's student Economic Geography at the University of Groningen [student member];
- L. (Lars) Stevenson BSc, bachelor's student Political Science and master's student Comparative Politics, Administration & Society at Radboud University [student member];
- N.J.F. (Niek) Zijlstra, bachelor's student Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Amsterdam [student member];
- Prof. dr. ing. C.M. (Carola) Hein, professor of History of Architecture and Urban Planning at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of Delft University of Technology [referee assessment University of Groningen].

For each site visit, assessment panel members were selected based on their expertise, availability and independence.

The QANU project manager for the cluster assessment was Dr. Irene Conradie. She acted as secretary in the site visit of the University of Amsterdam. In order to assure the consistency of assessment within the cluster, the project manager was present at the panel discussion leading to the preliminary findings at all site visits. All draft reports were checked by QANU. Dr. Meg van Bogaert and Drs. Mariette Huisjes, freelance secretaries for QANU, acted as secretaries in the site visit of the University of Groningen. Dr. Meg van Bogaert also acted as secretary in the site visits of Utrecht University and Radboud University. Dr. Marijn Hollestelle, employee of QANU, was present at the site visit of Utrecht University, specifically as secretary for the ECA assessment report of quality in internationalisation of the master's programme International Development Studies. The project manager and the secretaries regularly discussed the assessment process and outcomes.

Preparation

On 18 February 2019, the panel chair was briefed by the project manager on the tasks and working method of the assessment panel and more specifically his role as chair, as well as the use of the assessment framework.

A preparatory panel meeting was also organised on 18 February 2019. During this meeting, the panel members received instruction on the tasks and working method and the use of the assessment framework. The panel also discussed the domain specific framework.

A schedule for the site visit was composed in close consultation with the programmes. Prior to the site visit, representative partners for the various interviews were selected. See Appendix 4 for the final schedule.

Before the site visit, the programmes wrote self-evaluation reports of the programmes and sent these to the project manager. She checked these on quality and completeness, and sent them to the panel members. The panel members studied the self-evaluation reports and formulated initial questions and remarks, as well as positive aspects of the programmes.

The panel also studied a selection of theses and their assessment forms for the programmes. The selection consisted of fifteen theses per programme, based on a provided list of graduates between 2017-18. A variety of topics and tracks and a diversity of examiners were included in the selection. The project manager and panel chair ascertained that the distribution of grades in the selection matched the distribution of grades of all available theses.

Site visit

The site visit to the University of Amsterdam took place on 9 and 10 April 2019.

At the start of the site visit, the panel discussed its initial findings on the self-evaluation reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit.

During the site visit, the panel studied additional materials about the programmes and exams, as well as minutes of the Programme Committee and the Examinations Board. An overview of these materials can be found in Appendix 5. The panel conducted interviews with representatives of the programmes: students and staff members, the programme's management, alumni and representatives of the Examinations Board and the Programme Committee. It also offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. No requests for private consultation were received.

The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the panel's preliminary findings and general observations.

Report

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to QANU for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel. After processing the panel members' feedback, the project manager sent the draft reports to the faculty in order to have these checked for factual irregularities. The project manager discussed the ensuing comments with the panel's chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The report was then finalised and sent to the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and University Board.

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 the standards:

Generic quality

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

Meets the standard

The programme meets the generic quality standard.



Partially meets the standard

The programme meets the generic quality standard to a significant extent, but improvements are required in order to fully meet the standard.

Does not meet the standard

The programme does not meet the generic quality standard.

The panel used the following definitions for the assessment of the programme as a whole:

Positive

The programme meets all the standards.

Conditionally positive

The programme meets standard 1 and partially meets a maximum of two standards, with the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel.

Negative

In the following situations:

- The programme fails to meet one or more standards;
- The programme partially meets standard 1;
- The programme partially meets one or two standards, without the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel;
- The programme partially meets three or more standards.

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

The panel appreciates the clear way the programme positioned itself within the domain-specific reference framework (DSRF) and established that the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning has a clear and well-defined academic profile in which the analysis of spatially relevant socio-environmental problems is connected to the design of solutions and reflection on them. It considers the programme's focus on metropolitan areas in the western world, with particular attention for the city of Amsterdam, to be well-argued and embedded within its own research on urban studies. As a consequence, regional planning plays a minor role in the programme, and the panel concludes that the programme's focus/profile is more specialised than its name suggests. It also recognises URP's high social value, since its graduates are trained to address planning challenges in contemporary cities and to make practical contributions to planning interventions and planning practices in the capacity of researcher, policy maker or advisor.

The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) properly reflect the requirements of the DSRF and the Dublin descriptors at the master's level. It established that they are adequate in terms of level and orientation. In addition, it ascertained that the needs of the professional field sufficiently feed into the ILOs and the curriculum.

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

The panel concludes that the Urban and Regional Planning curriculum is coherently designed with a fixed structure for all students. The thesis project offers sufficient opportunity for pursuing individual interests and raising a student's profile. From the course materials the panel concluded that the content of the courses is relevant and challenging, while employing various forms of active learning. Course manuals give students a clear idea of the learning objectives. The courses build logically on each other, and the programme as a whole ties in well with the ILOs. The two learning trajectories on theoretical knowledge and skills give an additional focus to the programme. The panel is convinced that the renewed course *Planning Research: Empirical Research Methods and Techniques* provides an adequate answer to the question of how to accommodate the learning of advanced methods in the programme and link them to the thesis.

The curriculum design also comes at a cost; it consists entirely of compulsory modules. Students can do an internship extracurricularly or opt to combine a thesis with an internship. Some thesis projects explicitly offer this opportunity but students can also develop this themselves. In this regard, the panel shares the concern expressed by the students that the labour market preparation needs to be sufficiently addressed. However, it accepts that this can be achieved by incorporating relevant activities and skills training into the existing courses. It appreciates and concurs with the recent efforts to boost the programme's orientation to the professional field and encourages the programme to keep paying attention to intensifying and/or pointing out the connections with the work field. It fully supports the plan for an alternative thesis trajectory that directly involves the planning practice. In its view, the students' ability to reflect critically on the planning practice would benefit from substantial first-hand experience with the planning practice itself.

In the panel's opinion, the teaching-learning environment of the programme is generally stimulating: it has an adequate number of contact hours, relatively small-scale teaching methods, a competent system of student guidance and good facilities. The international classroom adds to the international comparative approach of the programme; the panel agrees that the diversity of the student population is an asset and encourages the programme to capitalize further on its international classroom. It agrees with the motivation to adopt English as the language of instruction and to use a foreign language name for the programme. It is impressed with the programme's diligent and active stance towards continuous improvement in a way that involves both students and staff. Some notable examples are the attention paid to a more balanced student workload and the care for sustainable and motivating feedback practices. The panel established that the teaching staff of the URP programme is dedicated and qualified and offers the students helpful supervision.



The panel therefore concludes that the curriculum, the teaching-learning environment, and the quality of staff and supervision enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Standard 3: Student assessment

The panel concludes that the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning has developed an adequate system of assessment, which is based on the Social Sciences and UvA-wide assessment policy. There is a suitable assessment plan, and assessment strategies at the course level pay sufficient attention to the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations, for example by jointly developing and peer reviewing tests, by using standardised assessment forms and rubrics, and by clearly communicating assessment procedures and criteria to the students. The panel concluded that the grading of the theses in its sample was generally correct and that the overall level of assessment was adequate. It suggests that the programme look into ways to document the findings of the supervisor and the second reader more transparently. Additionally, it proposes that wider calibration could contribute to further alignment of the thesis assessment process and criteria, for instance, by organising staff calibration sessions on thesis assessment. It appreciates the active and engaged manner in which the Examinations Board (EB) safeguards the quality of assessment in the programme. It is generally impressed by the way constructive alignment is put into practice, by the EB as well as by the staff.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The panel studied a selection of theses and found that their overall quality is of a sufficient academic level. Most of the theses used qualitative case studies and demonstrated that the students are able to study complex phenomena within their relevant contexts. The interviewed alumni were positive about their programme, and the panel established that the alumni are quite successful in their careers. Overall, it concluded that they achieved the programme's intended learning outcomes.

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

Master's programme Urban and Regional Planning

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
General conclusion	positive

The chair, em. prof. dr. Leo de Haan, and the secretary, dr. Irene Conradie, 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: 30 September 2019

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

Organisational structure

The master's programme Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) is part of the Graduate School of Social Sciences (GSSS) of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. The Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) unites all social science research at the UvA. The scientific staff of the programme is mainly employed by one department, namely the Department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies (Dutch abbreviation: GPIO). Research is organised into four thematically focused groups, which are part of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research: Urban Geographies; Urban Planning; Governance and Inclusive Development; Geographies of Globalization. The bachelor's programme *Sociale Geografie en Planologie* (SGPL) and the master's programmes Human Geography (HG) and Urban and Regional Planning (URP) have one joint Examinations Board and Programme Committee. The staff members of the Programme Committee assemble separately with SGPL bachelor student members and with students representing the master's programmes HG and URP. The academic year is divided in two semesters of three blocks each. The first two periods consist of eight weeks and the third block consists of four weeks.

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings

The panel studied the profile and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). It is a one-year social science programme that aims to educate students in planning theory and practice by integrating two key approaches: an analytical and an interventionist approach. The analytical approach seeks to empirically understand how socio-economic processes interact with existing spatial dynamics and critically examine historical and existing forms of spatial intervention, including constructive exploration of alternative approaches. The interventionist approach focuses on improving problem-solving skills so students can formulate independent and critical, constructive spatial interventions for the improvement of socio-environmental conditions. Upon graduation, they will be prepared for an academic career or for a professional advisory or planning position in government and private organisations where they will be able to address complex spatial planning questions.

The panel established its explicit international focus on metropolitan areas in the western world as a distinctive feature of the Urban and Regional Planning programme (URP) profile. Special attention is paid to the city of Amsterdam and its embeddedness in the broader field of the social sciences (particularly urban sociology, urban geography, and urban studies). The city of Amsterdam is frequently used as a starting point for international comparisons and as a real-life 'laboratory' to examine aspects of urban planning, with particular emphasis on urban political ecology, property-led urban governance, and urban mobility studies. As the complete research programme of URP is aligned to the international research profile of the Centre for Urban Studies (CUS), the explicit international urban focus is highly visible in the programme's profile and curriculum. The students benefit from the international lectures, debates and international speakers invited by the CUS.

Faced with the programme's apparent focus on urban planning and the city, the panel questioned the aptness of the programme's name, Urban and Regional Planning. It discussed with the programme's management, students and staff how regional planning fitted into the programme's profile. It gathered from its on-site discussions that the name has a history and that although cities are the main focus, 'city' is understood and discussed in a wider sense. In the case of Amsterdam, the object of study covers not only Amsterdam as a key city, but the metropolitan region as a whole.



In addition, the regional perspective is taken into account in discussions on urban geography and shrinkage areas. Finally, studied topics such as the labour market, housing market and environmental issues have dynamics which exceed city borders. In its communication to students regarding its focus, the programme clearly states its emphasis on urban and metropolitan areas. The interviewed students were neither surprised by, nor disappointed with, the lack of regional planning in the more traditional sense. As such, the panel does not consider this a point of criticism about the programme itself, yet it concludes that the programme's focus area is more specialised than its name suggests.

The aims of the programme are translated into five generic ILOs which are connected to the Dublin descriptors and to the domain-specific framework of reference for Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning (2018), see Appendices 2 and 3. The panel appreciates the clear way the programme interprets the DSFR and defines its identity with respect to that. With the linkage of the ILOs to the Dublin descriptors, the panel ascertained that the programme ensures that their target 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. For instance, the ability to participate in and contribute to discussions within the policy and theoretical domain of urban and regional planning in a constructive and reflective professional manner (4.d), giving a professional presentation of planning problems and research (4.b), and the ability to do group work (4.e). Exit qualification 5.b states rather broadly that the graduate acquires the required competencies to work as a qualified professional in the field of Urban & Regional Planning. The panel concurs with this claim, with the added observation that the approach here is academic rather than vocational; the programme's focus is on critical analysis and understanding of planning processes and interventions, and less on teaching the technical skills of a planner.

To ensure compatibility with the demands of the professional field, the programme stays in contact with potential employers, such as the municipality of Amsterdam, and professional organisations. The URP programme is recognised by the *Bond van Nederlandse Stedebouwkundigen en Planologen* (BNSP, Association of Dutch Urban Designers and Spatial Planners), so its graduates may apply for membership of this professional organisation. Further contacts with the labour market run via the professional networks of staff members and by consultation with the external member of the Examinations Board (see Standard 3). On the Social Sciences level, there is an Advisory Board. This board consists of external experts (many of whom are alumni) who are asked to advise the College of Social Sciences (CSS) and Graduate School of Social Sciences (GSSS) – upon request or upon their own initiative – regarding the quality of the programmes in relation to society and the labour market. The board convenes twice a year, meets students, programme directors and staff, and discusses CSS and GSSS priorities. All in all, the panel concludes that the professional field is thoroughly invested in the programme.

Considerations

The panel appreciates the clear way the programme has positioned itself within the DSRF and established that the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning has a clear and well-defined academic profile in which the analysis of spatially relevant socio-environmental problems is connected to the design of solutions and reflection on them. It considers the programme's focus on metropolitan areas in the western world, with particular attention for the city of Amsterdam, to be well-argued and embedded within its own research on urban studies. As a consequence, regional planning plays a minor role in the programme, and the panel concludes that the programme's focus/profile is more specialised than its name suggests. It also recognises URP's high social value, since its graduates are trained to address planning challenges in contemporary cities and to make practical contributions to planning interventions and planning practices in the capacity of researcher, policy maker or advisor.

The panel concludes that the ILOs properly reflect the requirements of the domain-specific reference framework and the Dublin descriptors at the master's level. It established that they are adequate in

terms of level and orientation. In addition, it ascertained that the needs of the professional field sufficiently feed into the ILOs and the curriculum.

Conclusion

Master's programme Urban and Regional Planning: the panel assesses Standard 1 as 'meets the standard'.

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

The panel studied the curriculum described in the self-evaluation. It looked at course outlines, a selection of the literature, study materials and course evaluations of several courses (see Appendix 5). It also discussed the curriculum and the teaching-learning environment with the programme management, teaching staff, students and alumni.

Curriculum

The panel established that the master's curriculum (60 EC) is coherent, contemporary and internationally oriented. The programme consists of six compulsory courses of 6 EC each and a thesis project of 24 EC. Students customise their profile to their individual interests in their thesis project. To create a solid shared basis, the first two blocks of the curriculum comprise four courses on historical and contemporary planning approaches, methodologies, skills and topical planning challenges. The third block offers an intensive course, *Innovative International Planning Practices*, that links the academic knowledge of the previous courses to planning practice in an engaging studio setting. In block 4 the students take a course on research methods and techniques and at the same time start working on their thesis proposal. They can fully dedicate the final two blocks to their master's thesis. Appendix 3 shows an overview of the programme.

The self-evaluation report explained how the programme intends to balance the analytical and intervention-oriented approaches key to its orientation in order to create a dialectical understanding of theory and practice in all of its courses. On the one hand, examples and key issues from planning practice are used to explain theoretical concepts. On the other hand, a deeper conceptual/theoretical understanding enhances the students' ability to develop their skills and mobilise their knowledge for practical purposes. Similarly, the two learning trajectories, on theoretical learning and on skills, bring focus to the curriculum (see Appendix 3).

The panel studied material from four sample courses, as listed in Appendix 5. It clearly recognised the interaction of the analytical and intervention-oriented approaches and the way in which this stimulates students to ask questions, be constructively critical and consider different answers. From the course materials, it concluded that the content of these courses is challenging and relevant, while employing various forms of active learning. For example, in *Rethinking Urban Transportation*, lectures are alternated with 'Application and Reflection' seminars in which innovative theories and methods are applied to a practical case. The students also go on an excursion, conduct a panel interview with 'celebrities from the field', and a small part of the course programme is left open for their own initiatives.

The panel noted that the studied courses use a variety of teaching methods which are often student-centered, small-scale and interactive. It considers this a strong feature of the programme. The learning goals for the courses are clear and match the teaching methods that are used. The course literature is appropriate and up-to-date. Important aspects of each course are described in the programme's Course Catalogue with transparent course outlines, allowing the students a clear overview of the topics covered per course. All courses have appropriate learning objectives that are explicitly connected to the programme's ILOs. A curriculum matrix indicates that the programme as



a whole covers all of the ILOs. Just like the panel, the students are largely very positive about the content of the curriculum.

The curriculum is markedly academic, and the students indicated that they felt they could have been more prepared for entering the labour market and applying the technical skills acquired in the programme. During the site visit, the panel checked this with alumni, and they expressed a much more positive view about the way and extent to which the programme had prepared them for the professional field (see Standard 4). Students can opt to combine a thesis with an internship. Some thesis projects explicitly offer this opportunity but students can also develop this themselves. Some of the interviewed students and alumni pursued an extracurricular internship, whereas others did not see this as a viable option or did not consider it. Although the interviewed students and alumni who pursued an extracurricular internship considered it a valuable experience, the panel realises that within the constraints of a one-year programme, hard choices must be made. It also learned that the URP programme has already taken numerous steps to improve its connection to the professional practice: it communicates its academic orientation more explicitly to current and prospective students, now includes several excursions, invites guest lecturers from the planning practice, incorporates practical cases in the course material and assignments, and invests in the further development of practical and transferable skills throughout the programme.

For example, the *Innovative International Planning* course offers seminars with international speakers, local planning practitioners, policy makers and activists. The students design a policy, project or intervention to be presented to an audience of planning practitioners. The programme is also considering offering an alternative thesis trajectory of a more practice-oriented or problem-solving nature. While the first semester that lays the academic foundation would remain the same for all students, the second semester would offer an alternative thesis trajectory. This most likely would be a combination of an internship and a thesis or a research assignment for a planning agency. The panel fully supports this option of an alternative thesis trajectory. It feels this could be an interesting option for students as their ability to reflect critically on the planning practice would benefit from a more intensive experience with the planning practice.

A particular challenge that has been signaled by staff and students is to accommodate the learning of advanced methods in the programme and link them to the thesis. The previous accreditation panel had suggested strengthening the methods training and its connection with the thesis. Hence, the methods course was redesigned and deliberately repositioned in parallel with writing the thesis proposal. As of 2015-16, it provided a series of lectures on research design and operationalisation, followed by seven workshops on a range of methods. The programme concluded, in consultation with its students, that this was not enough to equip students with in-depth learning of research methods. From 2018-19 onward, the *Planning Research: Empirical Research Methods and Techniques* course was further adapted to impart more in-depth knowledge of the qualitative and geo-spatial methods that are most used by planners. It is no longer directly linked to thesis writing, though emphasis is now placed on data collection and analysis within a case study design as this is the most common design in the URP programme theses.

The panel was provided with the latest course evaluation of *Planning Research: Empirical Research Methods and Techniques* and noted that the overall response was positive, with room for improvement on specific points. The students appreciated the practical content (GIS in particular), the clear course design, the student-activating teaching and sufficient feedback, but also indicated that the effort required was somewhat modest, and some regretted not having had this methods training at an earlier stage in the programme. The panel took note of the suggestions for improvement regarding this matter in the student chapter and expects they will be considered in future discussions. It would be going too far to make any recommendations concerning finer details at this point as the course is generally up to par. The panel values the increased attention paid to methods training and the decision to broaden the students' methodological horizon beyond what they need directly for their thesis. It acknowledges that the staff and students are working hard to continually improve the programme, and it appreciates the efforts made so far.

The thesis (24 EC) is considered the final dedicated piece of work in the programme. The panel noted that the thesis comprises a relatively large part of the curriculum. It consists of a scientific research project, concluded with an individually written report. The overall aim is for students to further develop their research skills and systematically and clearly analyse and present research results. It is possible to spend a short time abroad for fieldwork, though strict deadlines apply for all students. The students can choose from various broadly defined thesis projects. The panel studied the ten thesis topic descriptions on offer in 2018-19 and concluded that they comprise a wide variety of academically interesting planning topics. The project list also contained a method-oriented project, *Quantitative Approaches*, and two international projects. The panel is pleased to see that students are given adequate freedom in choosing their thesis topic whilst also being informed of suitable topics that tie in well with the staff's specific research expertise.

Intake, diversity of students and internationalisation

The self-evaluation report stated that the programme receives on average 140 applications per year, of which about 120 are accepted. This yields an average intake of about 45 students per year. As a service, all accepted students receive a reading list to get acquainted with the particular theoretical perspectives that are taught at the BSc level and/or with Dutch planning and society. If students have minor deficiencies in research methods, the programme recommends that they follow a crash course during the summer.

The panel was pleased to find that the international classroom concept works well because of the diverse backgrounds of the students and staff, an open atmosphere and the attention paid to including other geographical contexts in the teaching. The self-evaluation report indicated that in 2017-18, 41% of the students came from the Netherlands, 23% from other parts of the EU and 37% from outside the EU. The programme values the international classroom because it considers an international comparative approach one of its key characteristics. In addition to international students, the URP programme also includes international comparisons and international literature. The interviewed students were positive about the international classroom: the different international perspectives open up discussions and provide interesting opportunities to exchange different contexts and learn from each other.

As of 2012, all courses are taught in English, the programme uses its international name in its communication, and all applicants need to meet the English language requirements as described in the Teaching and Examination Regulations. The use of English as the language of instruction not only facilitates an international classroom, it also allows the international staff to thoroughly convey their knowledge. This provides students with the opportunity to get in touch with a broad range of researchers in an international field. The programme considers its Dutch context important as well. Hence, a Dutch case is often compared to an international equivalent in comparisons. Also, Dutch-speaking students can request to write their thesis in Dutch, either because they would rather write in Dutch or because the research subject makes that choice relevant. In addition, the GSSS offers an academic writing skills course for students who struggle with their English academic writing skills. The panel agrees with this motivation to adopt English as the language of instruction and use a foreign language name for the programme. It also approves of the various measures taken to accommodate Dutch students and structurally include the Dutch context.

Teaching-learning environment

The teaching-learning environment of the programme is generally stimulating. There is an adequate number of contact hours, and the teaching methods are relatively small scale, which the panel considers a strength of the programme. It has an adequate system of student guidance, in which the study adviser - who also fulfills the role of programme coordinator - plays a significant role. In addition to access to all UvA facilities, the department of GPIO maintains a GIS centre which includes a computer lab, the basic infrastructure required for GIS analysis, experienced GIS researchers and on-site assistance. Both the student association and the alumni network organise various activities (e.g. workshops, debates, field visits, public lectures and network events) which contribute to



network building, strengthening social ties, and exploring and contributing to the professional field. At the institute level, GSSS also organises career events for its students.

The panel is impressed with the programme's diligent and active stance towards continuous improvement. It actively maintains and supports the coherence and feasibility of the curriculum by means of discussions between lecturers and students, systematically checking and reviewing course guides, and annually reviewing the prescribed literature. The panel appreciates that the programme has created a quality culture that supports continuous improvement. The Programme Committee also plays an active role in this regard, giving advice on, for instance, workload and examination schedules, identifying best practices for effective feedback and expectation management of students selected into the programme. The panel appreciates that the students are taken seriously as stakeholders and that they make an important contribution to the Programme Committee.

Students confirmed that it is feasible to complete the programme within the designated time frame. The 2018 national student survey (NSE) reported an average workload of 32 hours a week. The student chapter mentioned that students experience an imbalance in the workload over the year, with a heavy workload in the autumn and a lighter workload in January. The panel learnt from the self-evaluation report that the programme has already rescheduled some of the deadlines in anticipation of this feedback. In addition, the redesigned *Research Methods* course in block 4 increased the workload in this period. Students generally complete the programme within 13-14 months. The panel gathered from the self-evaluation report that 73% of the students from the 2017-18 cohort had graduated by January 2019. General reasons for delay include combining the programme with other activities, adding an extracurricular internship, extending the thesis or experiencing personal and/or financial problems. Nonetheless, the students themselves also indicated that those who really want to finish in time are able to do so.

Teaching staff

The panel considers the international teaching staff of the URP programme dedicated and qualified. Almost all staff in the programme are members of the Urban Planning research group of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) and the research priority area Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) of the UvA and Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences (FMG). Lecturers are experts in their fields, and most have international experience. The expertise of the teaching staff covers a wide range of topics and a strong shared view on planning. Its diverse and international composition mirrors the diversity of the student population.

The information provided showed the panel that the 24 staff members involved in the URP programme are well qualified for teaching in the master's programme. The vast majority have a PhD (83%). Of the teaching staff, 67% has a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) or equivalent, and another 4% is in the process of acquiring one. Didactic skills are part of the annual appraisal process. The panel appreciates the efforts of the faculty to invest in the professionalisation of its teaching staff. In the discussions, the students and alumni indicated their satisfaction with the enthusiasm and quality of the staff, in terms of both content and didactics. This appreciation also extended to the thesis supervision.

The panel ascertained that the level of English is sufficient: the majority of the staff has been teaching in English-taught programmes for several years and/or has been working in an English-spoken environment. In addition, course evaluations generally confirmed the lecturers' adequate use of English in class. Language courses are offered if need be. As of 2019, new staff members who are not native English speakers and/or do not have substantial experience in working in an English-speaking environment are asked to take an English language test.

The students expressed some concern over the staff's workload; although the staff felt available on a personal level, the students considered the amount and quality of feedback given by some of their lecturers as an indication of work overload. Staff members confirmed to the panel that competing pressures on their time required efficient time management and limited the opportunities to provide

feedback. Even so, they consider it important to provide clear and helpful feedback. To improve the appreciation of feedback by the students, the programme management is developing a workshop for staff and students on feedback. For staff (June 2019) it will be focused on improving the effectiveness of feedback, and for students (2019-20) on how feedback can be recognised and should be used to improve work. The panel applauds this initiative for feedback optimisation. The three course evaluations it studied did not specify feedback as a cause for concern.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the Urban and Regional Planning curriculum is coherently designed with a fixed structure for all students. The thesis project offers sufficient opportunity for pursuing individual interests and raising a student's profile. From the course materials the panel concluded that the content of the courses is relevant and challenging, while employing various forms of active learning. Course manuals give students a clear idea of the learning objectives. The courses build logically on each other, and the programme as a whole ties in well with the ILOs. The two learning trajectories on theoretical knowledge and skills give an additional focus to the programme. The panel is convinced that the renewed course *Planning Research: Empirical Research Methods and Techniques* provides an adequate answer to the question of how to accommodate the learning of advanced methods in the programme and link them to the thesis.

The curriculum design also comes at a cost; it consists entirely of compulsory modules. Students can do an internship extracurricularly or opt to combine a thesis with an internship. Some thesis projects explicitly offer this opportunity but students can also develop this themselves. In this regard, the panel shares the concern expressed by the students that the labour market preparation needs to be sufficiently addressed. However, it accepts that this can be achieved by incorporating relevant activities and skills training into the existing courses. It appreciates and concurs with the recent efforts to boost the programme's orientation to the professional field and encourages the programme to keep paying attention to intensifying and/or pointing out the connections with the work field. It fully supports the plan for an alternative thesis trajectory that directly involves the planning practice. In its view, the students' ability to reflect critically on the planning practice would benefit from substantial first-hand experience with the planning practice itself.

In the panel's opinion, the teaching-learning environment of the programme is generally stimulating: it has an adequate number of contact hours, relatively small-scale teaching methods, a competent system of student guidance and good facilities. The international classroom adds to the international comparative approach of the programme; the panel agrees that the diversity of the student population is an asset and encourages the programme to capitalize further on its international classroom. It agrees with the motivation to adopt English as the language of instruction and to use a foreign language name for the programme. It is impressed with the programme's diligent and active stance towards continuous improvement in a way that involves both students and staff. Some notable examples are the attention paid to a more balanced student workload and the care for sustainable and motivating feedback practices. The panel established that the teaching staff of the URP programme is dedicated and qualified and offers the students helpful supervision.

The panel therefore concludes that the curriculum, the teaching-learning environment, and the quality of staff and supervision enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Master's programme Urban and Regional Planning: the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'meets the standard'.



Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings

To assess the quality, validity and transparency of assessment within the programme, the panel considered the assessment policies, the assessment of the theses and the functioning of the Examinations Board. It also discussed the student assessment with representatives of the Examinations Board, teaching staff, students and alumni.

System of student assessment

The programme adheres to the Social Sciences' and university's Assessment Policy, which describes various provisions and measures to promote and monitor the quality of assessment. Important principles are that criteria of assessment are clear in advance to staff and students, that there is constructive alignment in assessment design (i.e. demonstrating coherence between assessment, teaching strategies and intended learning outcomes) and that frequent assessments (both formative and summative) and feedback support the students' learning process. The panel was able to review the programme's assessment matrices, which indicate how the learning goals per course match specific forms of assessment and the ILOs. It found that they sufficiently specify how and when a learning outcome is assessed and how the final grade is determined.

The assessment matrix also indicated that in all courses, multiple examinations are combined to arrive at the final grade. Various assessment instruments are used to test the achievement of the ILOs. Knowledge and the application of knowledge, for instance, are tested in written exams, papers, essay reflections, multiple choice tests and the thesis. Assessment instruments for professional competences include a group assignment to write a policy advice, GIS assignments, excursion grades and a presentation of teamwork linking planning paradigms to key theories, methods and contemporary practices. The panel was satisfied to find that the reliability, independence and transparency of assessment are ensured by the use of answer keys and standardised assessment forms, by peer-reviewed assessment design (in accordance with the 'four eyes principle') and by appointing multiple examiners for the thesis. It noted that course descriptions and additional documentation contained information on the learning outcomes and assessment instruments.

Thesis assessment

The thesis (24 EC) concludes the master's degree programme. All students receive a thesis manual in which the rules and procedures for thesis writing and supervision are described. The manual also includes the assessment procedures, specifying the assessment criteria in advance. The thesis is evaluated by the supervisor and an independent second reader, resulting in a consensual grade following the thesis defence. The quality of the defence and its resulting discussion are included in the assessment as part of the criterion on process. The thesis coordinator assigns a second reader on the basis of guidelines stipulated by the Examinations Board. The supervisor and second reader record their findings and the final grade using a standardised assessment form. This form was developed by the Examinations Board and includes an explanatory note on its use. If there is a significant difference between the supervisor and second reader, a third examiner is called in. However, the panel is of the opinion that the independent assessment procedure should be clearly documented.

After studying a sample of 15 master's theses and the associated assessment forms, the panel concluded that it largely agrees with the assessments and grades given by the assessors. In some cases, these programme assessments were a little higher than the grades that it would have given, but always within a reasonable margin. It noted that while the general outlines of the assessment are standardised, some of the specifics – notably the weighting of the different criteria – are delineated in a broad way. At the same time, it came across very specific final grades (6.3 or 6.8). It warns that the use of a rubric creates the appearance of exactness, while there is no actual and direct correlation between the rubric scores and the final grade. As a result, a relatively low level of validity in reality appears to be the case. In practice, the final grade is determined in the discussion

between the supervisor and second assessor. The grades are, however, sufficiently substantiated by qualitative comments. The panel finds the synthesis of the findings of the supervisor and the second reader somewhat lacking in transparency, yet has no major concerns regarding the quality of the assessment.

Examinations Board

There is one Examinations Board (EB) that oversees the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning (URP) as well as the bachelor's programme *Sociale Geografie en Planologie* and the master's programme Human Geography (HG). It has five members, along with an expert from the professional field as an external member. The panel appreciates that the composition of the EB reflects various ranks and positions. It is responsible for ensuring the quality of examinations and for assessing independently and expertly whether each student meets the programme requirements for obtaining a degree. It also appoints examiners, handles individual cases of fraud and individual requests from students, issues certificates, grants exemptions, and takes care of the handling of appeals and/or complaints about exams.

From the written materials and its interview with the EB, the panel ascertained that the EB adequately carries out its formal tasks and responsibilities. It also confirmed that the EB has undertaken various initiatives to ensure the quality of tests and final projects. For instance, it has issued guidelines on assigning second readers and on when and how to involve a third reader. It screens the abovementioned assessment plan every year as a quality assurance measure of the programme as a whole. Every other year, the EB organises audit checks on the assessment of theses. During the reassessment for 2016-17, the EB had some doubts regarding the quality of a few theses, including ones from the URP programme. The committee carefully considered possible causes and made recommendations for further regulating the guidelines on assigning second readers. These help to prevent recurring couples of supervisors and second readers and ensure that the assessment includes at least one reader who has more than three years of experience as an academic in the Netherlands and, in the case of a thesis written in Dutch, at least one native speaker of the Dutch language. It also looks at the distribution of grades of all courses. If there are any deviations in the outcomes, a meeting is arranged with the programme management, and subsequent actions are taken when necessary.

The EB delegates some of its tasks. One EB member meets weekly with the EB secretary, often in the presence of the study adviser, to discuss students' requests. The testing of individual courses is evaluated during annual test assessment days by a rotating committee consisting of two EB members (including the external member), one lecturer, and one external assessment expert.

The panel believes that the EB is careful in delegating its tasks and is in control of its responsibilities. It appreciates all the initiatives and considers the Examinations Board a hard-working and engaged board. The EB keeps an eye on the quality of assessment on both the course and programme level and draws attention to relevant developments and helps to define improvements. The panel is generally impressed by the way constructive alignment is put into practice, by the EB as well as by the staff. It feels that wider calibration could contribute to further alignment of the thesis assessment process and criteria, for instance, by organising staff calibration sessions on thesis assessment.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning has developed an adequate system of assessment, which is based on the Social Sciences' and UvA-wide assessment policy. There is a suitable assessment plan, and assessment strategies at the course level pay sufficient attention to the validity, reliability and transparency of examinations, for example by jointly developing and peer reviewing tests, by using standardised assessment forms and rubrics, and by clearly communicating assessment procedures and criteria to the students. The panel concluded that the grading of the theses in its sample was generally correct and that the overall level of assessment was adequate. It suggests that the programme look into ways to document the findings of the supervisor and the second reader more transparently. Additionally, it proposes that wider calibration



could contribute to further alignment of the thesis assessment process and criteria, for instance, by organising staff calibration sessions on thesis assessment. It appreciates the active and engaged manner in which the Examinations Board safeguards the quality of assessment in the programme. It is generally impressed by the way constructive alignment is put into practice, by the EB as well as by the staff.

Conclusion

Master's programme Urban and Regional Planning: the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'meets the standard'.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

The panel studied a sample of 15 theses and their assessment forms and met with a number of alumni during the site visit to determine whether the ILOs have been achieved.

Theses

The panel found the level and content of the theses to be satisfactory and was pleased with the creativity regarding topic and methodology. Most of the theses used qualitative case studies and demonstrated that the students are able to study complex phenomena within their relevant contexts. Good theses asked original, innovative questions based on solid fieldwork and connected a theoretical approach to the appropriate methodology. Some theses were clearly rooted in the Amsterdam style of critical analysis. Lesser aspects of some theses were the lack of criteria for case study selection and the limited identification of a knowledge gap, especially in the case of topics less connected to the curriculum. The theses that got lower grades often lacked theoretical framing and methodological reflection, placing more emphasis on the type of research rather than considering the chosen methodological strategy and its consequences for the knowledge produced. The panel noted that the subject choice in the theses matched the broad focus and multi/interdisciplinarity of the domain of urban and regional planning. In a few cases, this breadth blurred the distinction between HG and URP theses, though this did not detract from their overall quality.

Position of graduates

On the basis of information on the first and current positions of alumni in the self-study, the panel established that URP graduates are employable, on par with the other social sciences. They usually find employment at an appropriate level within four to six months after graduation, often in the private sector (62%) or public sector (31%), some in not-for-profit organisations (3%) and as PhD candidates (4%). Alumni mostly find advisory and planning positions, including work as planners for municipalities, as planning consultants, and in advisory roles in the field of mobility and policy. The interviewed alumni told the panel that on the whole the programme had prepared them well for the labour market. Particular aspects that they profit from in their daily working life include the fact that they have learned to approach complex problems from a multitude of perspectives and that they have acquired the skill to build bridges between different groups of stakeholders.

Considerations

The panel studied a selection of theses and found that their overall quality is of a sufficient academic level. Most of the theses used qualitative case studies and demonstrated that the students are able to study complex phenomena within their relevant contexts. The interviewed alumni were positive about their programme, and the panel established that the alumni are quite successful in their careers. Overall, it concluded that they achieved the programme's intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Master's programme Urban and Regional Planning: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'meets the standard'.



GENERAL CONCLUSION

The panel assesses Standards 1, 2, 3 and 4 as 'meets the standard'.

According to the decision rules of NVAO's Framework for limited programme assessments, the panel assesses the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning as 'positive'.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *master's programme Urban and Regional Planning* as 'positive'.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: DOMAIN-SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE

The Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning domain in the Netherlands

The current domain-specific reference framework confines itself to a substantive description of the two core disciplines, in combination with the general expectations regarding the competencies of graduates. Therefore, it is a more concise document than the previous (2012) one. The exit qualifications for bachelor and master programmes are no longer included, partly because the Dublin descriptors already provide an adequate general description of the desired scientific level, but also to give the programmes taking part in the reaccreditation ample opportunity to demonstrate their own specific profile in their self-studies.

The Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning domain is very broad and diverse, and the different academic programmes within the Netherlands highlight different elements. They vary, for example, in the balance between scientific and professional training, degree of research intensity, degree of integration between the two core disciplines, opportunities to specialize, and types of specialization offered. This domain-specific reference framework emphasizes the common features applying to all programmes.

The Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning domain revolves around the complex relationship between people (society) and their environment (space). There are five qualities that determine the mind set of geographers and planners. First of all, the ability to think from a time-space perspective, these being the two dimensions within which human action unfolds. Secondly, the ability to study the relation between people and environment in the context of intertwined spatial scale levels (local, regional, national, global). Insight into socio-spatial transformations is gained by studying the interaction between these scale levels (the multi-scalar perspective), without making prior assumptions about the dominance of any one level (e.g. the global level) over another (e.g. the local level). Thirdly, the mind set of geographers and planners is based on the idea that space and society closely interact and shape each other. Human actions, and the behavioural patterns that develop in the course of time (institutions), crystallize in space, while conversely, spatial structures and place-related features trigger and shape human actions. A fourth quality relates to the strong multidisciplinary orientation in the work of geographers and planners; relationships between humans and their environment are studied from a range of mutually supplementary disciplinary perspectives. The precise combinations chosen depend on the nature of the socio-spatial problems being studied and will vary per programme within the domain. Finally, the fifth quality is closely linked with all the above: the integrative character of the geographical and planning approach. This crux is an ambition to understand the mutual cohesion between economic, social, cultural and political phenomena and processes within their specific spatial contexts.

Key terms in the domain are space, place, location, scale, networks, linkages, spatial behaviour, place attachment, spatial quality, spatial design and spatial interventions. Within the domain socio-spatial problems are taken as starting points of scientific inquiry. These issues include spatial inequality, globalization, migration, segregation, diversity and identity, environmental burden, sustainable area development, mobility and governance. The aim is not only to make critical analyses of the issues concerned, but also to design plans and interventions that may solve or reduce socio-spatial dilemmas.

The international and comparative character of studying the relation between people and environment is inherent to the Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning disciplines. Socio-spatial problems, and planned actions to deal with them, are marked by the specific national, regional and local context in which they arise. The significance of the embeddedness of socio-spatial phenomena is the key to Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning. However, awareness of the importance of context does not imply that the disciplines are merely the sum of an endless series of case-studies. The ambition is to identify the international similarities and differences of socio-spatial processes and developments, in order to unravel both their unique and generic aspects. Both facets are typical of the quest of Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning to



formulate theories (explanation in context). To emphasize this international, comparative character, teaching does not focus solely on the Netherlands. And when studying Dutch cases, the international importance and international suitability of the theoretical perspectives and research angles developed will always be considered. Continuing on from this, the composition of staff and students in all the Dutch programmes in the domain is becoming increasingly diverse (in many ways). The 'international classroom' being introduced in more and more programmes, facilitates and reinforces the international-comparative orientation of both disciplines.

The Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning domain has evolved in close cohesion with the other social sciences. While it shares important qualities with the latter - such as attention for formulating theory and the need for rigid methodology - it is also distinct by emphasizing particular qualities. The strong empirical orientation, apparent in the importance attached to primary data collection and fieldwork, is a typical feature of our domain. Furthermore, 'learning by doing' has become an important part of all programmes, partly because it enhances sensitivity to the time and place (context)-bound character of social, cultural, political and economic phenomena and developments. Geographers and planners are constantly challenged to step outside the comfort zone of their own field. Finally, research within the domain has increasingly opened up for a wide spectrum of methods and techniques. This methodological pluralism corresponds with the choice to study socio-spatial problems at various scale levels, which precludes a standard method of analysis.

Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning graduates are able to identify, analyse and explain socio-spatial problems, based on and contributing to the 'body of knowledge' adhering to the discipline. They are also fully conversant with general social-scientific methods and techniques, as well as more domain-specific research methods, such as GIS and spatial impact analysis. The Bachelor's programmes do this, in line with the basic level of the Dublin descriptors, by laying a broad scientific foundation in the two core disciplines, while the Master's programmes train students, again following the Dublin framework, at a theoretically and methodologically more advanced and specialist level.

The programmes under consideration prepare students for a variety of professions and sectors. Typical jobs include researcher, teacher/lecturer, consultant, policy official and project manager. A common characteristic of staff qualified in Human Geography and/or Urban and Regional Planning is their inclination for a comprehensive approach to problems, and their ability to create awareness on the spatial diversity of societal problems. Students with a specialist Master's degree often find themselves in professions directly connected with their specialism, such as spatial planning, area development, urban policy, construction and housing, regional policy, traffic and transport management or environmental policy. The self-studies of the individual degree programmes will inform more specifically on the professions and sectors in which graduates work.

The domain-specific framework of reference (DSFR) has been formulated by the national disciplinary meeting (Disciplineoverleg Geografie en Planologie). The former DSFR has been adjusted, i.e. updated and shortened by omitting the concrete exit qualifications for bachelor and master. The participating programmes have been able to comment on the draft. It has been laid down during the meeting on 6 September 2018.

APPENDIX 2: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Dublin Descriptors	Exit Qualifications UvA Master Urban & Regional Planning as stated in the Teaching and Exam Regulations (OER) 2018-2019
<p>1. Knowledge and understanding (DD1) Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;</p> <p>2. Cognitive and/or professional abilities (DD2) Can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;</p>	<p>1. The graduate has acquired knowledge and understanding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> of spatial planning and policy-making and their institutional conditions. of conceptual and methodological tools to identify and analyse urban and regional planning processes from a multi-disciplinary and comparative (international) perspective of the interconnectedness of societal dynamics, urban and regional planning, policy and institutional processes. of urban and regional planning, theories, and spatial planning approaches and policy analyses at a level that properly reflects the current state of the art in theory and policy. <p>2. The acquired cognitive and/or professional abilities enable the graduate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> approach, identify and deal with urban and planning problems from a scientific habitus in a systematic, analytical, reflective, critical and creative manner thoroughly analyse urban and regional planning issues, using current theoretical and empirical insights as they pertain to these issues. trace, collect and analyse primary and secondary data as they pertain to such issues in the field of urban and regional planning, to present arguments, both verbally as well as in written form, to defend these arguments, and to contribute to the theoretical and policy-based debate in an active manner. independently design and execute urban and regional planning research, report systematically on this research and draw scientifically appropriate conclusions. make a calculated, well-reasoned choice in the chosen research methods and techniques, taking into account the nature of the subject of the urban and regional planning research and taking into account any restrictions of this research. link the results of urban and regional planning research to the theoretical and societal debates on the subject. translate results of urban and regional research in a constructive and critical manner into scientific and societal discussions about the issue in question and to translate this for spatial interventions.
<p>3. Formulating judgement (DD3) Have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgement;</p>	<p>3. Concerning the ability of formulating judgements, the graduate should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> critically assess different theoretical and policy-based sources and analyses on planning issues, as well as their use in theory building and policy analysis. bring to the foreground any (hidden) presuppositions and normative positions in theoretical and policy views on planning issues. formulate and reflect on an independent opinion about the nature of, and approach to planning issues.



Dublin Descriptors	Exit Qualifications UvA Master Urban & Regional Planning as stated in the Teaching and Exam Regulations (OER) 2018-2019
<p>4. Communicative skills (DD4) Can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously</p>	<p>4. The graduate should be able to use the following communicative skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the ability to deliver a structured and correctly written presentation at academic level of urban and regional planning problems and research. b) the ability to give a professional oral presentation of planning problems and research using modern presentation techniques in English. c) the ability to (re)formulate and present arguments, both verbally as well as in written form, to defend these arguments and critically reflect on them, d) the ability to participate in and contribute to discussions within the policy and theoretical domain of urban and regional planning in a constructive and reflective professional manner. e) the ability to do groupwork
<p>5. Competencies/ learning skills (DD5) Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.</p>	<p>5. The graduate has acquired the following competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) can independently follow and comprehend developments within the discipline of urban and regional planning. b) can identify societal problems and develop solutions that are based on scientific analysis and reflection. c) can work as a qualified professional in the field of Urban & Regional Planning. d) can continue studying at post-master level, including PhD training.

APPENDIX 3: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

MASTER URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING								
Year	Semester 1	Block 1	<i>sept oct</i>	Planning: a Theory of Praxis (6 EC) ▲●	Climate Proof Development of Cities & Strategic Planning (6 EC) ●	Compulsory 60 EC ● Theoretical Learning Curve ▲ Skills Learning Curve		
		Block 2	<i>nov dec</i>	Contemporary Approaches in Property- led Urban Planning (6 EC) ●	Rethinking Urban Transportation Planning (6 EC) ●			
		Block 3	<i>jan</i>	Innovative International Planning Practices (sLIM) (6 EC) ▲●				
	Semester 2	Block 4	<i>feb mar</i>	Planning Research: Empirical Research Methods and Techniques (6 EC) ▲	Master Thesis Urban & Regional Planning (24 EC) ▲●			
		Block 5	<i>apr may</i>					
		Block 6	<i>jun</i>					

APPENDIX 4: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

DAY 0 Monday - 8 April 2019		
16.30	19.00	Arrival of panel at the hotel, internal panel meeting
19.00	21.00	Dinner

DAY 1 Tuesday - 9 April 2019		
8.30	9.00	Arrival / Welcome
9.00	9.45	Meeting with management (all programmes - NL)
9.45	10.15	Internal panel meeting and documentation review
10.15	11.00	Meeting with students and alumni BSc <i>Sociale Geografie en Planologie</i> (NL)
11.00	11.15	Internal panel meeting
11.15	12.00	Meeting with teaching staff BSc <i>Sociale Geografie en Planologie</i> (NL)
12.00	13.15	Internal panel meeting (incl. lunch)
13.15	14.00	Meeting with students and alumni MSc Human Geography (EN)
14.00	14.15	Internal panel meeting
14.15	15.00	Meeting with teaching staff MSc Human Geography (EN)
15.00	17.00	Internal panel meeting: preliminary findings / consultation hour (16.30-17.00)
18.30	21.00	Dinner

DAY 2 Wednesday - 10 April 2019		
8.45	9.00	Arrival and preparation
9.00	9.45	Meeting with students and alumni MSc Urban and Regional Planning (EN)
9.45	10.30	Meeting with teaching staff MSc Urban and Regional Planning (EN)
10.30	11.00	Internal panel meeting
11.00	11.45	Meeting with Examinations Board (EB) (all programmes - NL)
11.45	13.00	Internal meeting (incl. lunch)
13.00	13.45	Final interview with management (NL)
13.45	15.30	Deliberations panel, formulating preliminary findings and conclusions
15.30	15.45	Feedback of preliminary findings and conclusions (NL)
15.45	16.00	Break
16.00	16.45	Development dialogue (NL)
16.45	17.00	Departure

APPENDIX 5: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the master's programme Urban and Regional Planning. Information on the selected theses is available from QANU upon request.

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

Course selection of complete course files:

- Planning Research: Empirical Research Methods & Techniques
- Planning: A Theory of Praxis
- Rethinking Urban Transportation
- Innovative International Planning (sLIM)

The course files included course manuals, sample assignments and answers, a grade overview report for the course and course evaluations (if available).

Additional documents:

- Examinations Board: annual reports and minutes (2016-2017; 2017-2018)
- Programme Committee: annual reports and minutes (2016-2017; 2017-2018)
- List of improvements based on the previous accreditation
- Domain-specific framework of reference for the Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning domain in the Netherlands (2018)
- Exit qualifications
- Curriculum matrix (representing the alignment between the exit qualifications and the curriculum/course learning outcomes)
- Assessment matrix (representing the alignment between the assessment formats and learning outcomes)
- Curriculum overview
- Course descriptions
- List of thesis topic descriptions (2018-2019)
- Teaching and Examination Regulations 2018-2019 (OER)
- Staff overview
- Data on student intake, population and success rates, contact hours
- Lecturer-Student ratio & staff composition
- Linked-In career inventarisation
- Benchmark Master Urban and Regional Planning
- Thesis assessment form Master Urban and Regional Planning