



**RESEARCH MASTER'S
PROGRAMME ARCHAEOLOGY**

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

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This report was finalised on 20 January 2021

REPORT ON THE RESEARCH MASTER'S PROGRAMME ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

This report makes use of the NVAO's *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* (September 2018) and the *Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes* (May 2016). It takes the criteria for limited programme assessments as its starting point, supplemented by the additional aspects for research master's programmes.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

Research master's programme Archaeology

Name of the programme:	Archeologie (research)
International name:	Archaeology (research)
CROHO number:	60133
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	Heritage, Memory and Archaeology
Location:	Amsterdam
Mode of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Submission deadline NVAO:	01/11/2020, extension submission date until 31/10/2021 due to legislation WHW art. 5.16 lid 4

The online assessment of the RMA programme Archaeology of the University of Amsterdam took place on 6 and 7 October 2020.

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 2 June 2020. The panel that assessed the research master's programme Archaeology consisted of:

- Prof. J. (Jacqueline) Mulville, professor in Bioarchaeology and Director of Research and Impact at the School of History, Archaeology and Religion of Cardiff University (United Kingdom) [chair];
- Prof. D. (Dan) Hicks, professor of Contemporary Archaeology at Oxford and curator of World Archaeology at the Pitt Rivers Museum (United Kingdom);
- Prof. dr. E.M. (Eric) Moormann, professor of Classical Archaeology at Radboud University;
- R. (Rory) Granleese, BA, research master student Archaeology at Leiden University [student member].

The panel was supported by V.L. (Victor) van Kleef, MA, who acted as secretary. He was supported by Dr. E. (Els) Schröder, project coordinator.



ASSESSMENT PANEL AT THE ONLINE VISIT

On the morning of 6 October 2020, panel member Prof. Hicks had to leave due to health reasons: he was therefore unable to take part in the video sessions with the UvA. Despite these circumstances the following measures were taken to carefully incorporate his active participation. Prior to the visit, he shared his preliminary findings with the other panel members, had contact with the chair during the visit, and stayed informed about the process via the internal channel of communication. During the visit, the other panel members integrated specific focus points and questions of Prof. Hicks in the discussions as best as possible. His judgement was also taken into account in establishing the provisional findings. Naturally, he also read the report based on the online visit afterwards, and his comments were taken into account. On 19 October 2020, the board of the NVAO was notified about the matter, and it confirmed that it understood and agreed with the actions taken.

WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The online site visit to the research master's programme Archaeology at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Amsterdam was part of the cluster assessment Archaeology, Classics and Ancient Civilizations and Region Studies. The following universities participated in this cluster assessment: University of Groningen, University of Amsterdam, Leiden University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

On behalf of the participating universities, quality assurance agency Qanu was responsible for logistical support, panel guidance and the production of the reports. Dr. E. (Els) Schröder was project coordinator for Qanu. Dr. Els Schröder and Victor van Kleef, MA, acted as secretaries in the cluster assessment.

The nine programmes of the four universities were scheduled to be assessed between April 2020 and June 2020. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 outbreak made site visits impossible, and all assessments, except that of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, were rescheduled for more suitable dates in the second half of 2020 and 2021. The project coordinator and the representatives of the programmes agreed to schedule digital assessments, unless a site visit would be possible at that time.

Panel members

The members of the assessment panel were selected based on their expertise, availability and independence. The panel consisted of the following members:

- Prof. J. (Jacqueline) Mulville, professor in Bioarchaeology and Director of Research and Impact at the School of History, Archaeology and Religion of Cardiff University (United Kingdom) [panel chair University of Amsterdam and University of Groningen];
- Prof. dr. K. (Kristoffel) Demoen, professor Ancient Greek Literature at Ghent University (Belgium) [panel chair Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Leiden University];
- Dr. G. (Gerhard) Anders, senior lecturer African Studies and International Development at the Centre of African Studies of the University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom);
- Dr. K. (Kim) Beerden, University Lecturer at the Institute for History of Leiden University;
- Prof. dr. M.B.H. (Martin) Everaert, professor Linguistics at Utrecht University;
- Em. prof. dr. phil. J.U. (Jens-Uwe) Hartmann, professor Indian and Iranian Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in München (Germany);
- Prof. dr. J. (Johannes) Haubold, professor of Classics at Princeton University (United States);
- Em. prof. dr. J.F. (John) Healey, emeritus professor in Semitic Studies at the University of Manchester (United Kingdom);
- Prof. D. (Dan) Hicks, professor of Contemporary Archaeology at Oxford University (United Kingdom);
- Prof. dr. E.H.M. (Helena) Houvenaghel, professor Spanish Language and Culture at Utrecht University;



- Prof. dr. T. (Thomas) Meier, professor for Pre- and Protohistory and executive director of the Heidelberg Center for the Environment at Heidelberg University (Germany);
- Prof. dr. E.M. (Eric) Moormann, professor of Classical Archaeology at Radboud University;
- Prof. dr. J. (Jeroen) Poblome, professor Classical Archaeology and director of the Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project (Belgium);
- Y.P. (Yannick) de Raaff, MA, recent graduate research master Archaeology at the University of Groningen [student member];
- R. (Rory) Granleese, BA, research master student Archaeology at Leiden University [student member].

Preparation

On 17 September 2020, the panel chair was briefed by Qanu on her role, the assessment framework, the working method, and the planning of the site visits and reports. Prior to the assessment, the panel members received instructions on the use of the assessment framework and the planning of the (online) site visits and reports.

Before the online site visit to the University of Amsterdam (UvA), Qanu received the self-evaluation report of the programme and sent it to the panel. The thesis selection consisted of all 13 theses and their assessment forms for the programme, based on a provided list of graduates between 2014 and 2020 (all theses of the programme in the last six years).

After studying the self-evaluation report, theses and assessment forms, the panel members formulated their preliminary findings and questions. The secretary collected all initial questions and remarks and distributed them amongst all panel members. A preparatory panel meeting was organised on 5 October 2020. At the start of the assessment, the panel discussed its initial findings on the self-evaluation report and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit.

At the end of March 2020, it became clear that due to COVID-19, all universities would be closed until further notice. The UvA indicated an interest in organising a digital site visit—since a conventional site visit proved to be unlikely given travel policies as well as the applicable standards and guidelines of universities. The project coordinator asked the panel chair, Prof. Mulville, whether she would be willing to lead a digital assessment. She consented to chairing a digital assessment on 1 September 2020. The panel members involved also confirmed their consent to partaking in a digital assessment. Their confirmations have been archived by Qanu and can be provided upon request. After studying the existing documentation, the panel chair communicated a 'go' to the project coordinator, who shared this information with the UvA. Then a date was set for a digital visit on 6 and 7 October 2020.

The project coordinator composed a schedule for the online site visit in consultation with the Faculty. Prior to the digital site visit, the Faculty selected representative partners for the various interviews. See Appendix 3 for the final schedule.

Site visit

The assessment of the UvA took place on 6 and 7 October 2020. Before the assessment, the panel studied the additional documents provided by the programme. An overview of these materials can be found in Appendix 4. The panel conducted interviews with students and staff members, alumni, the programme's management and representatives of the Examinations Board. It also offered students and staff members an opportunity for a confidential discussion during a consultation hour. No requests for a 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. The development dialogue was held after the presentation of the findings and observations.



Consistency and calibration

In order to assure the consistency of assessment within the cluster, various measures were taken:

- The panel composition ensured regular attendance of key panel members, including the chair;
- The coordinator was present at all site visits;
- A calibration meeting took place on 25 September 2020, in which the chairs in the Archaeology, Classics and Ancient Civilizations and Region Studies cluster discussed the assessments and shared their best practices.

Report

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

Development dialogue

A digital development dialogue took place after the visit on 7 October 2020. For this dialogue, the UvA prepared an agenda. The outcomes of the development dialogue have been drawn up separately, and confirmed by the panel chair, in a separate document that is not part of the application for accreditation.

Definition of judgements standards

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (September 2018) 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.

For research master's programmes, the aspects as listed in the *Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes* (May 2016) are considered as supplementary to the criteria in this framework and are assessed accordingly.

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

Standard 1

The panel found that the new profile of the programme aspires to develop interdisciplinary thinkers with high levels of skills and knowledge. It therefore considers it a highly ambitious RMA programme. To further bolster the profile, it suggests emphasising and strengthening the bridging function of Memory Studies. In particular, it values the programme's research-oriented nature and new approach to the discipline, focussing on training students in the modern-day scientific domain of archaeology and memory studies. It verified that the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) are aligned with the Dublin descriptors for the research master level and pay sufficient attention to the training of research skills at the required attainment level. It encourages the programme management to refine the programme-specific ILOs to better guide students through their studies. In particular, the acquisition of transferable skills could be made more explicit in this regard. Adjustments to the ILOs could also make the programme's interdisciplinary approach clearer.

Standard 2

The panel judged that in its content, structure, and composition of the curriculum, the programme lives up to the expectations of a research master's programme. It is positive about the coherence of the curriculum across both years of the programme. The research-oriented nature of the programme and its embedding in a research context are clearly outlined in the curriculum, in which the inter-relationship of educational content and research skills match throughout the 2-year curriculum. The revision of the programme has contributed in this respect. The content of the RMA benefits from the involvement of international staff and an interdisciplinary faculty. The panel concluded that the curriculum, the teaching-learning environment, and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the ILOs.

The panel advises the programme management to be stricter about time management in the thesis project. The implementation of the proposed 'thesis supervision contracts', which can also be used for the tutorials, is an adequate step in addressing the delay. The programme is free to determine how it wants to organise this. By working with strict time slots, it becomes easier for staff and students to manage expectations and keep students from falling behind. Innovations from the Faculty on monitoring students' progress are very much welcomed by the panel. The panel supports the initiatives taken by the programme and Faculty in their revision of the admission requirements as well: the admission process is well-organised and should attract more students (local and international).

The panel judged the programme to be feasible and is pleased with the excellent support offered by staff members. It confirmed that the students are pleased with the programme and its focus on general theoretical, empirical and methodological topics. They have ample possibilities to follow their own interests and/or join existing research projects. The panel underlines the importance of training presentation skills and multivocality; being able to speak to different audiences is very useful in all sectors of the labour market. The research context of the programme enables students to become part of research groups by working closely together with highly skilled staff members. The RMA students are exposed to a wide range of researchers external to the institution as well, providing a sound basis for engagement with research across the globe.

Standard 3

The panel judged that the assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The requirements are transparent to the students, while the quality of interim and final examinations is sufficiently safeguarded and meets the statutory quality standards. Based on the written documentation and additional information provided during the site visit, the panel concluded that the assessment is based on a sound assessment plan and system. It suggests that all stakeholders should think about new and relevant assessment types such as press releases, grant applications and ethical reviews.

The panel perceived that student assessment and feedback are timely. Students are offered a number of feedback opportunities, and their feedback is reviewed and used to support the learning experience. There is a wide variety



of assessments employed, which both reflects and supports students' learning styles as well as providing a broad spectrum of specific academic and transferable skills.

The revised thesis assessment forms are a great improvement, and the panel praises the way in which the staff gives feedback to the students. It does see some room for improvement, however: the development of marking criteria would be useful to allow students to understand how to perform well across the different elements of the programme. If the ILOs are expanded, this should allow clearer linkages between the individual ILOs and the assessment types—especially with regards to 'critical evaluation'. The panel encourages the programme management to take a look at the way marking criteria are composed at foreign (e.g. British) universities.

Finally, the panel encountered a dedicated and professional GSH Examinations Board. The latter needs to stay a robust, well-coordinated and incisive committee that can act promptly and efficiently. For all those reasons it should continue receiving the attention and resources needed from the Faculty Board to stay in the lead and amplify transparency.

Standard 4

The panel is of the opinion that the theses comply with the RMA-level expectations. It deems the outcomes of the final projects to be of publishable quality, and has seen innovative and original theses. It judged the theses as substantive pieces of work which employ theory, critical analysis, and extensive datasets to provide new insights. After reading the theses, it concluded the ILOs are achieved by the students—thereby successfully completing the research cycle.

The panel concluded that the testimonies of the alumni showed optimism and confidence regarding their skills and opportunities on the labour market. The quality of the studied research is also in line with this optimism. The fact that some graduates of the programme found their way into an international academic career stresses the solid groundwork the RMA lays for such opportunities. However, evidence to assess alumni success is limited, as the programme is small, and relatively few students have graduated. Notwithstanding these remarks, the panel concluded that the RMA offers a good starting point for launching a research career. It is of the opinion that the Faculty could do a better job in monitoring RMA alumni, keeping in touch with them, and offering support to them if needed—especially with regards to applications for PhD positions and independent research funding.

The panel assesses the standards from the NVAO's *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* for limited programme assessments, in accordance with the aspects included in the *Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes*, in the following way:

Research master's programme Archaeology

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, Prof. Jacqueline Mulville, and the secretary, Victor van Kleef, MA, of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in it. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 20 January 2021

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

Institutional context

The research master's programme Archaeology (hereafter: RMA Archaeology) is an interdisciplinary, two-year programme of the Faculty of Humanities of the UvA. It offers one track with two specialisations: Heritage and Memory, and Archaeology (HMA). The Faculty of Humanities at the UvA has a faculty-wide Examinations Board, which is responsible for ensuring the quality of the examinations within the research master's programme. The Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) of the programme are the responsibility of the Faculty Board, which established these regulations after consulting the relevant student and employee participation bodies.

While the RMA Archaeology is accredited at the UvA only, it also benefits from its close association with the Amsterdam Centre for Ancient Studies and Archaeology (ACASA) through its staff. Since 2012 ACASA has been a collaboration between the UvA and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU), which offers three joint bachelor's programmes in Classics, Ancient Studies and Archaeology and two one-year master's programmes in (1) Classics and Ancient Civilizations and (2) Archaeology. In addition, the two universities offer specialisations in Ancient History within their own separate bachelor's degrees in History. ACASA has its own executive board (ACASA Board) to handle management on a day-to-day basis.

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings

Profile of the programme

The RMA Archaeology is a small-scale programme, which aims at promoting the significant understanding that the past exists in the present and that it emerges on multiple trajectories as a consequence of human and non-human interactions. It aims to deliver graduates who critically assess the past beyond event-based, cultural historical perspectives in which the past is seen as separate from the present, and in which objects are passive and merely reflect human actions. The programme's objective is to train students to examine material memories and transformations, reflect on temporality, durations, and the emergence and interplay of consensual and/or politically contested pasts.

The RMA degree engages students to think critically about how human societies have dealt with the past in pre-modern times, as well as the diverse and conflicting ways in which traces of the past are interpreted and put to use in the world today. This translation of the past to modern society is a distinctive feature of the programme compared to other RMA programmes in Archaeology in the Netherlands. Over the course of the two years, the students may choose to specialise in either Archaeology or Heritage and Memory Studies. Participation in archaeological fieldwork is a key component of the Archaeology and material culture specialisation.

The programme management explained to the panel that the RMA programme has revised its profile since the previous assessment. The profile was modified from 'Archaeology' to 'Archaeology and Heritage', bridging the two disciplines. This was done to create a distinctive identity for the programme that could spark enthusiasm and attract new students and to connect the Archaeology team with Heritage staff members. By implementing the Heritage perspective in the Archaeology degree, a new interdisciplinary profile was formed. The panel noted that the Memory 'pillar' can function as a bridge to connect Archaeology and Heritage.



The students and alumni value the research-based profile of the programme. It became apparent to the panel that all students praise the strong focus on theory and methodology offered by the RMA programme. In order to prepare students for the international job market and to attract international students, the programme is delivered in English. The panel understands and supports this choice.

The panel believes that the programme management has succeeded in putting together a challenging and modern interdisciplinary RMA programme with a profile that is internationally competitive and attractive. It is impressed with the research-oriented nature and vision of the programme, focussing on training students in the modern-day scientific domain of archaeology and memory studies.

The panel found that the current programme aspires to develop interdisciplinary thinkers with high levels of skills and knowledge. It is therefore a highly ambitious RMA programme in scope and content. This is endorsed by the focus on merging theory and practice which will train students to acquire both subject-specific knowledge and transferable skills. The attractive and unique profile also fits with the international trend in the field of Archaeology. The panel suggests that the programme management strengthen the Memory Studies component of the programme, bridging Heritage and Archaeology. This may also prove beneficial to the goal of attracting more international students to the programme.

Learning outcomes

The general goals of the programme have been translated into Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) that closely follow the Dublin descriptors. The programme's ILOs correspond with the general objectives of the Faculty, as well as with the expectations of achievements and abilities of the ACASA programme (see Appendix 1). There are five specific exit qualifications that focus on content, level and orientation and the fit with the (inter)national professional field. The panel is of the opinion that the ILOs comply with international standards and the expectations of the professional field and that they help students move towards the end part of their learning journey. It agrees that the ILOs demonstrably describe the level and research-oriented nature of the programme, as well as its professional and academic orientation by reflecting a range of standards required for practitioners within the field of professional heritage employment. The focus on the research-based character of the programme and its academic abilities is underpinned by ILO a1-6 and b4-5; while societal aspects of the ILOs reflect on the ability of the graduate to link topics from the field of study to current social debates and to identify potential contributions (ILO a7 and b2).

The RMA Archaeology aims to offer a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge grounded in an academic approach, preparing students for a wide range of (research-based) employment opportunities. Throughout the programme, the students are trained in a range of 'transferable skills' as part of the programme's objectives. The panel noted that the active acquisition of transferable skills is not mentioned as such in the ILOs. In its opinion, this could be made more explicit and systematic. It encourages the programme management to describe transferable skills better, such as critical thinking, self-reflection and multivocality in the ILOs—multivocality can be described in this context as an approach to archaeological reasoning, explanation, and understanding that accepts a high degree of relativism and thus encourages the contemporaneous articulation of numerous different narratives or parallel discourses. A slight adjustment of the programme-specific ILOs could also help make the claim of interdisciplinarity of the RMA programme more explicit.

The panel wholeheartedly supports the programme management in its recent revision of the RMA profile. It therefore encourages the programme management to rephrase some of the ILOs in this regard to better reflect the new profile. It proposes redrafting words like "insight" as "critically evaluate" or "take individual position on", "being aware" as "engage with". By reformulating the programme-specific ILOs, the programme's learning objectives will be better suited to the skills and knowledge that the students attain during their learning journey. The objectives will also become more easily measurable, which is relevant for all stakeholders. The panel believes this would underline even more the transformation the students undergo after completing the 2-year research programme: they become active researchers, discussing the past while firmly being rooted in the modern world.



Considerations

The panel found that the new profile of the programme aspires to develop interdisciplinary thinkers with high levels of skills and knowledge. It therefore considers it a highly ambitious RMA programme. To further bolster the profile, it suggests emphasising and strengthening the bridging function of Memory Studies. In particular, it values the programme's research-oriented nature and new approach to the discipline, focussing on training students in the modern-day scientific domain of archaeology and memory studies. It verified that the ILOs are aligned with the Dublin descriptors for the research master level and pay sufficient attention to the training of research skills at the required attainment level. It encourages the programme management to refine the programme-specific ILOs to better guide students through their studies. In particular, the acquisition of transferable skills could be made more explicit in this regard. Adjustments to the ILOs could also make the programme's interdisciplinary approach clearer.

Conclusion

Research master's programme Archaeology: 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

Programme language and name

The RMA programme Archaeology is taught in English as it trains students to be researchers, specialists, or professional archaeological managers in an international environment. The panel verified that staff members are qualified to teach in English—they can opt for academic language classes if necessary. The programme also checks that potential RMA students are able to speak, read, write and understand English at an advanced academic level. The proficiency requirement in English can be met by successful completion of set standards for the IELTS, TOEFL, or Cambridge International Examinations.

The panel considers the language of instruction and the name of the programme appropriate and in line with its profile and orientation. After all, English is the common language in the academic domain of archaeology, thus English is essential to allow archaeology to thrive—particularly at higher education levels. From a marketing perspective and to attract students from abroad, the choice for English is not only logical, it is pivotal. The panel noted, however, that there should be room for students to focus on other languages as well in their research and chosen literature depending on specific areas of study and research like Greece, Turkey, and Italy.

Curriculum

The RMA programme comprises 120 EC, with 36 credits allotted to three core courses (12 EC each). The second largest part of the curriculum is the RMA thesis project, which consists of 30 EC. Other components of the 2-year curriculum include: the research seminar (6 EC), individual tutorials (18 EC), elective modules at the National Research School ARCHON (6 or 12 EC), and electives (24 or 18 EC). See Appendix 2 for a diagrammatic overview of the curriculum.

The RMA is given coherence by its three shared core courses. These courses are compulsory and essential, as completion lays the foundation for the RMA research training and orientation:

- *Matter, Materials, and Materiality*. This course offers in-depth training in archaeological theory and practice and enables students to understand how archaeological data is collected, analysed and interpreted.
- *Critical Heritage Studies*. Combining perspectives and research methodologies from a range of disciplines, Heritage Studies introduces students to the theoretical precepts that underpin current heritage research and explores the past as a field of contestation and meaning-making.



- *Memory Studies*. This course focuses on the ways in which collective memory is constructed and transmitted. By looking at sites of memory and commemorative practices throughout time, the course explores memory politics and its sociocultural contexts.

The content of the RMA programme clearly distinguishes itself from the one-year MA programme as well by emphasising the theoretical and methodological aspects of archaeology in the core courses specific to the RMA programme. Area-specific knowledge is mainly transferred through small group teaching and individual research-based tutorials. More so than the one-year master's programme, the RMA expects and incites students to shape their own study programme based on their interests and desired career trajectory. The panel studied the composition and content of the core courses and considers them to be well-designed. The individual modules benefit from a good interdisciplinary approach in line with the programme's profile and goals. The courses use recent literature, and touch on current ideas and new research in the relevant fields and disciplines.

Students may choose to follow one of two specialisations: (1) Heritage and Memory or (2) Archaeology. Both specialisations give access to a wide range of courses offered across the Faculty of Humanities, while individual research tutorials enable students to follow their personal interests in the fields of heritage and memory or archaeology. Every specialisation has a coordinator who acts as a personal coach and advisor for all students. This task involves conducting individual meetings with all students at the start of the programme during which the student's overall two-year programme is discussed. The coordinator can be described as a study coach, as he or she arranges regular individual meetings to monitor students' progress and offers advice on subjects for individual modules (tutorials, thesis) and their chosen curricula. The students expressed their appreciation of the efforts made by the RMA Archaeology team to stay in touch with them, despite the fact that they map out their own study routes through the wide variety of RMA modules and (R)MA electives that are on offer. The panel judged that the suggested improvements (regarding the structure of the curriculum) by the assessment panels of 2015 and 2017 have been successfully implemented, and it agrees that the programme offers a great variety of electives, enabling students to tailor their learning journey based on their own interests. It also believes that the cohesion of the programme and information on internships have improved since the last panel visit.

Individual tutorials are an important component of the RMA programme. They typically comprise a research assignment and include material research at museums and work on excavations or finds. Tutorials may offer RMA students an opportunity to participate in archaeological fieldwork projects directed by ACASA staff (or other qualified researchers) in Northwestern Europe or the Mediterranean, but also internships in heritage institutions and museums. The students find the individual tutorials the most challenging element in the curriculum, because they are intense and time consuming. The staff involved are easy to approach (by e-mail or even WhatsApp) and generally quick to respond. The panel believes the level of staff responsiveness is very good, though the programme needs to flag up expectations and deadlines on the tutorials. Although this is a small-scale programme, it advises formalising these meetings and setting up a strict plan from the beginning. A tutorial manual has already been prepared by the Programme Committee (in 2015). The panel concluded that the manual with its updated guidelines is fine but needs to be better communicated to students, because not all of them are aware of its existence.

According to the panel, the coherence of the curriculum across both years of the programme and the inter-relationship of educational content and research skills throughout the curriculum are in line with the standard for RMA programmes. The research aspect is prominent in the curriculum. The thesis is of substantial size, and curriculum components specific to the research master's programme are proportionally evident. The panel praises the attention devoted within the curriculum to academic and scientific methodologies, which is not limited to the research seminar. The ethics of conducting research is part of the (core) courses. Special attention to ethical matters is paid in the essay that forms the basis of the research proposal. The panel noted that the ethics theme is indeed embedded in the ILOs and hence integrated in the programme, but in striving for research leadership it considers it best to make this more explicit in the ILOs ('from passive to active', see Standard 1). The programme management answered that the topic of ethical considerations is currently being addressed by a management team in the Faculty.

The students are pleased with the programme and its focus on general theoretical, empirical and methodological topics. They stated that they acquire an advanced understanding of research terminology, methodologies, datasets and problem-solving perspectives within their specialisation. They indicated that they not only like the theory and



methods in the core courses, but they enjoy working and studying together with their cohorts as well. The teaching in seminars offers active learning through specific assignments, oral presentations, and peer feedback. This requires the students to work both individually and in teams. Opportunities for the students to incorporate specific individual components into their programme curriculum are numerous, enabling them to deepen or broaden their research. The elective modules at the National Research School ARCHON contribute greatly to this end. The interaction with fellow students from other Dutch RMA programmes in these modules is valuable and helps them in preparing for their academic career.

Research environment

The panel learned that staff members expect dedicated students and ask them to undertake preparatory reading at home, followed by discussion and problem-solving in class, with written and oral presentations of their work. In the lectures the teaching staff aims to set up a theoretical introduction, followed by case studies which are initiated and elaborated upon by the students in the classroom. At the end of the *Matter, Materiality and Material Culture* course, a conference is organized by the students, during which they present their research to their peer group and a wider public audience.

The students are very pleased with the RMA courses and curriculum. They mentioned that the overhaul of the programme has made it more up-to-date in terms of content. The panel noted that the RMA students are exposed to a wide range of researchers external to the institution, providing a sound basis for engagement with research across the globe. This is particularly the case in the research seminar, where a series of special lectures is delivered by invited guest lecturers from the Netherlands and abroad, both academics from universities and professionals from the field. The panel praises this initiative as it prepares the students for doing research in an international setting.

The ACASA cooperation allows students to follow classes at the UvA and VU, resulting in a much greater diversity of courses offered. Students of the RMA Archaeology may also choose electives from among the courses offered by ACASA. The staff participating in ACASA consist of lecturers working at the Humanities Faculties at VU and UvA and the Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture (AHM). This renowned research institute and doctoral school is committed to the analysis of the remnants and narratives of the past in the present, as well as of the remaking of pasts into heritage, memory and material culture. The SEP evaluation of 2018 showed that the societal relevance of the AHM is regarded as excellent, and the research quality and viability as very good.

At the online visit, the panel saw 'showcases' by both staff and students. It became clear that the students are being offered ample possibilities and inspiration to engage in interesting research projects. They have, for example, access to the Allard Pierson, which houses the internationally renowned collections of the UvA in the fields of archaeology and heritage. The panel was particularly impressed by the 4D Research Lab, which is focused on digitising visual memories in architecture and cityscapes. This state-of-the-art lab facilitates researchers from different disciplines in the Humanities who have specific spatial and architectural 3D questions. The 4D lab offers high-tech computers and computational specialists to support the analysis of transformations in the built environment.

A special feature of the programme is the annual SOJA conference (Symposium Onderzoek Jonge Archeologen), hosted by ARCHON. The conference is organised and visited by ACASA (R)MA Archaeology students who present their research (even preliminary) which they carried out as tutorials or a thesis during their studies. In 2020 it focussed on the Amsterdam Troy Project that is dedicated to researching 'the archaeology of archaeology' in Troy (Turkey). The panel praises this initiative as it helps the students to become better acquainted with the presentation of research and peer review, which helps in shaping young researchers.

The students and alumni indicated that they were pleased with the approachability of the staff members and the personal attention they have received. Some of the current cohort want to continue in academia by pursuing a PhD position; they mentioned that their assignments are geared to successful applications, and they can work on mock proposals supported by staff members.



Thesis supervision

The final 30 credits of the curriculum are awarded for a successfully completed RMA thesis project, consisting of the research project (12 EC) and the thesis itself (18 EC). In the second semester of their second year, RMA students select a thesis supervisor on the basis of their intended topic and research area. The subject of the thesis is mutually agreed upon by the student and the academic supervisor, and is in the field of Heritage and Memory or Archaeology. A timetable with regular meetings for completion of the thesis is set in the first meeting with the supervisor. Students are expected to regularly hand in parts of or whole draft chapters, which are then reviewed and discussed by the supervisor—in his or her capacity as first reader.

After interviews with both staff and students, the panel concluded that this happens correctly in general, though not every supervisor is as strict on the procedures, and the number of meetings varies. It noted that because of the nature of a small-scale programme, informal structures and practices take place in the supervision process. The programme management acknowledged this and considers it a point of attention. The panel therefore proposes implementing 'supervision contracts' to strengthen the supervision process. This will work both ways (that is to say, for students and supervisors) and is helpful to prevent delay. In these contracts strict deadlines for completion of the thesis project should be set. A standardisation of the framework will manage expectations, and it will give the students guidance on what should be done by which date. It will restrict freedom and allows the students to focus their research. Of course a contract may include options for flexibility. The staff will benefit from more formal structures as well as it helps them in managing their workload.

Intake

The biggest challenge for the programme has been attracting students, though since 2019 the number of students is on the rise. The panel learned that the staff-student ratio is basically balanced at the moment, meaning that there are enough staff members to teach, support and supervise the RMA students. It believes that the programme stands at a crossroads with possibilities that are both 'alarming and fantastic': student numbers must go up to guarantee the successful continuation of the RMA degree, while at the same time all facilities are in place so candidate students can count on small-scale education with excellent facilities. More students (especially international ones) will bring in new perspectives on research and intensify cooperation and cultural exchange.

The Faculty is employing initiatives to create more diversity and international classrooms. This is relevant in a globalising academic landscape and international labour market. In 2019 the admission criteria were revised by the Faculty. Bachelor programmes are now more open to international students, and more programmes are offered in English. The bachelor programme in Archaeology is doing well in terms of student intake, and numbers show that bachelor students are generally more inclined to stay and do their master's programme (MA or RMA) in Amsterdam as well. Most of the current RMA Archaeology students completed their bachelor's degree at the UvA, so this is indeed considered an important source of candidates. The panel agreed with this reasoning and suggested that it would help to clearly describe what sort of archaeology is offered. By showing a more specific profile online, this might attract new students. The programme management agreed with this strategy and has witnessed that after the revision of the profile and curriculum, the Heritage Studies component especially is sparking interest from students all over the world.

Admission requirements

According to the self-evaluation report, the updated RMA programme is open for application to students with a bachelor's degree from an accredited university in the Humanities or Social Sciences, with a minimum of 30 EC (equivalent to a full-time semester of academic studies) taken in the field of Archaeology or Heritage. When students are admitted from other disciplines, their profile and evidence of motivation must show a substantial interest in heritage and memory and/or archaeology—in addition to their wider understanding of theory and research in the field of Humanities. Furthermore, the RMA coordinators expect students to have an overall grade point average of at least 7.5 in the Dutch system, or the equivalent in other systems. Students with a lower grade average may still apply, but they will need to demonstrate a sufficient grade average for the courses related to the RMA programme and/or courses taken in the advanced stages of prior education, such as their thesis. Naturally, the programme checks that potential RMA students are able to speak, read, write and understand English at an advanced academic level.



A strong emphasis is put on the candidates' personal motivation. Not only should they express signs of enthusiasm, interest and independence in their applications, they are expected to submit a short written piece of work that explores the differences between heritage and archaeology. This additional entry requirement was introduced in 2020, and it helps to ensure that potential students have sufficient prior grounding in archaeology and/or heritage and memory before entering the intensive study programme of the RMA. The panel believes this selection process is fitting for a RMA degree. It hopes to see an increase in applications after the implementation of the redrafted requirements, because that would make the degree more resilient. It noted that taking in people from the professional field might help increase the diversity within the programme.

Feasibility

The RMA degree in Archaeology is designed to be completed in two years. It is balanced, and its small-scale nature allows the students to make personal arrangements to tailor their learning journey. Still, it became clear that there are issues with timely academic progression for all students. The RMA programme is not unique in this regard; it is a faculty-wide phenomenon. The Faculty firmly believes that academic freedom is part of the identity of the UvA. All agree that freedom works if the students embrace it, but they also struggle because of it—especially during the thesis process. According to the panel, the delay is not caused by the feasibility of the programme, as completion is achievable in two years.

During the meetings it occurred to the panel that both alumni and students did not seem to feel the urgency of nominal graduation. The panel supposed that this is partly due to the relatively low tuition fees in the Netherlands for EU students—compared to the tuition fees in the UK, for example. The programme management added that a limited group of students enjoys the programme very much. They take extra tutorials and participate in extracurricular fieldwork in the summer to lengthen their stay. The programme and the Faculty are aware of the situation and are indeed more focused on this issue than six years ago. The programme management advises the students to focus on their academic studies instead of undertaking additional activities, e.g. fieldwork. Central initiatives to better monitor individual study progress are being undertaken by the Faculty. Students with an above-average delay in their studies are on the radar now, and they are personally contacted in order to help them move forward. The panel is glad to hear that the Faculty is more rigorous on the issue of study progress and supports the efforts of collective action in this regard.

The students indicated that they would like a more structured 'tutor' meeting at the beginning of the programme (and other moments) to help shape their study path for the next two years. This would also solve any possible issues with thesis delay and difficulties of finding suitable tutorials. The programme management admits there should be more regular contact between RMA students and supervisors with regards to the thesis and tutorials. On paper, the student-tutor meetings look well-designed, but in practice the students experienced shortcomings. The panel therefore proposes implementing 'supervision contracts' for tutorials as well. Again, this will work both ways (for staff and students) and is key to managing delay. The relationship between the staff members and the students is nonetheless good. The RMA students have the possibility to give feedback on courses via evaluations organised by the Programme Committee and in the courses (final lecture). The RMA teaching team has two calibration meetings each year to discuss the programme, chaired by the programme director. There are also curriculum evaluations, held once a year, to discuss problems and potential new developments. The panel agrees that the students and staff members have sufficient possibilities to make themselves heard.

The students consider the application and enrolment process to be very smooth. All feel 'at home' within the RMA programme and are happy with their choice of study. Some students found the programme to be more theoretical than they expected, but they are still happy with the quality and quantity of the study material. Most students enrolled because of the theoretical profile of the programme. The current cohort has students from outside the Netherlands who bring more diversity and international perspectives to the classroom. Dutch students expressed that they benefit greatly from their international co-students. The RMA does not have a lot of students, which can be quite isolating for them, but the many electives are generally interdisciplinary and allow students from other disciplines and nationalities to enrol and participate. The students are satisfied with the extensive written feedback on course work and presentation skills. The panel values the focus on presentation skills and multivocality; being able to speak to different audiences is very useful in all sectors of the job market. It noticed that despite possibilities



to study abroad, the opportunities provided by overseas activities need to be balanced against the need to complete the programme.

Staff

The RMA programme has a small team of seven senior researchers and professors who are involved in teaching and the supervision of graduation trajectories. Although most of the teaching staff are Dutch, they actively operate in international networks involving scholars from all over Europe and the United States. The core modules of the RMA programme are taught by full professors and associate professors from ACASA and Art & Culture in collaboration with the Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture (AHM). The staff involved in the RMA programme are all well-connected and leading researchers in their respective fields. The panel learned that all of these staff members possess a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) and are permanently involved in research. This adds to the excellent research environment. The same qualified team also supervises the RMA theses, tutorials and electives offered by the UvA. Regular staff meetings and consultations within the ACASA framework take place, which ensures that all agreements and regulations are known to everyone concerned, and are implemented and complied with in a consistent way. A Canvas Community site called 'Information for ACASA lecturers', accessible to the staff of both institutions, is used and managed by the programme directors.

Despite the limited number of students, the workload of the staff is a serious challenge. It became clear that this is a problem of Faculty employees in general. The staff members indicated that the high workload existed before COVID-19, and online teaching has only increased it. Nonetheless, because of the sudden changes and restructuring of the academic year 2020-2021 to mostly online education, staff members have experienced demanding semesters. Staff members expressed that they miss having personal contact with their students, and travel limitations have slowed down some research projects. The panel understands the difficulties that have arisen and noted the unwavering commitment of all the staff members and compliments them on their dedication and enthusiasm. It believes that the continued workload stress is a problem the Faculty needs to constantly address to the Executive Board of the UvA.

Considerations

The panel judged that in its content, structure and composition of the curriculum, the programme lives up to the expectations of a research master's programme. It is positive about the coherence of the curriculum across both years of the programme. The research-oriented nature of the programme and its embedding in the research context are clearly outlined in the curriculum, in which the inter-relationship of educational content and research skills match throughout the 2-year curriculum. The revision of the programme has contributed in this respect. The content of the RMA benefits from the involvement of international staff and an interdisciplinary faculty. The panel concluded that the curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The panel advises the programme management to be stricter on time management in the thesis project. The implementation of the proposed 'thesis supervision contracts', which can also be used for the tutorials, is an adequate step in addressing the delay. The programme is free to determine how they want to organise this. By working with strict time slots, it becomes easier for staff and students to manage expectations and keep students from falling behind. Innovations from the Faculty for monitoring the students' progress are very much welcomed by the panel. The panel supports the initiatives taken by the programme and Faculty in their revision of the admission requirements as well: the admission process is well-organised and should attract more students (local and international).

The panel judged the programme to be feasible and is pleased with the excellent support offered by staff members in this regard. It concludes that the students are pleased with the programme and its focus on general theoretical, empirical and methodological topics. They have ample possibilities to follow their own interests and/or join existing research projects. The panel underlines the importance of training presentation skills and multivocality; being able to speak to different audiences is very useful in all sectors of the labour market. The research context of the programme enables the students to become part of research groups by working closely together with highly skilled staff members. The RMA students are exposed to a wide range of researchers external to the institution as well, providing a sound basis for engagement with research across the globe.



Conclusion

Research master's programme Archaeology: 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

Assessment plan and system

The programme's assessment policy is based on the overarching assessment policy of the Faculty of Humanities. The exit qualifications can be found in the Teaching and Exams Regulations (TER) and are specified further in course manuals and the assessment matrix. Both students and staff can find the policies for examinations and assessments on the Canvas website. The assessment plan gives an insightful breakdown of the course-specific learning outcomes and assessment types in each individual course, as well as a detailed overview of how each individual course contributes to the achievement of the ILOs. The panel regards the assessment plan as valid and compliant with the standards in the academic domain.

The learning outcomes are tested by various means of assessment, including weekly assignments (essays, short commentaries); group work; internship reports; oral presentations; written (final) papers; written exams; and theses. There are several assessment moments and weightings in the core courses, and all information on the assessments can be found on Canvas. All forms of assessment in the RMA Archaeology follow the Faculty guidelines and focus on the core skills of academic reasoning, academic argumentation, the ability to back up personal views and standpoints, and personal awareness of and positioning within relevant academic debates. The panel agrees these are appropriate assessment methods and objectives for a research master's programme, though it reminds the programme management that weekly assessments in demanding core courses may be too tough for students. The students who were interviewed expressed that they could cope with the high number of weekly assessments for now. The panel suggests that all stakeholders should think about new and relevant assessment types such as press releases, grant applications and ethical reviews. Though it saw a good variety of assessment forms, the proposed ones might help students prepare for their professional career.

Since the ILOs of the RMA differ from those of the regular MA, other assessment forms and extra criteria for safeguarding the research master characteristics (publishable final project, beginning PhD level) are in place. This too is a policy implemented and executed by the Faculty. The panel agrees with these extra criteria, but it believes that the element of 'critical evaluation' could be made more prominent in the assessment methods. It suggests that the programme management and Examinations Board can learn from the British system, where marking criteria are more extensive. The development of marking criteria would be useful to allow students to understand how to perform well across the different elements of the programme. The objectives of each course in the curriculum are described in the course manual, and are aligned with the exit qualifications.

The panel confirmed that student assessment and feedback are timely. The students are offered a number of feedback opportunities, and their feedback is reviewed and used to support the learning experience. There are a wide variety of assessments employed, which both reflect and support the students' learning styles as well as providing a broad spectrum of academic-specific and transferable skills. Written exams are archived with correct-answer models, and the four-eyes principle is followed to ensure that each test is appropriate. Presentations and essays are commented on by instructors filling out special assessment forms. In addition, written work is always submitted via Turnitin to check for plagiarism. The panel agrees that the four-eyes principle and the use of rubrics are commendable and sufficiently ensure both transparency and objectivity.



Thesis supervision and assessment

In the second semester of their second year, RMA students select a thesis supervisor on the basis of their intended topic and research area. A timetable with regular meetings for completion of the thesis is set in the first meeting with the supervisor. The students are expected to regularly hand in parts of or whole draft chapters, which are then promptly reviewed and discussed by the supervisor in their capacity as first reader. This generally happens as expected, but not every supervisor is as strict on the procedures, and the number of meetings varies. The panel pointed out that because of the nature of a small-scale programme, informal structures and practices are part of the supervision process. The Programme Director acknowledges this and considers this a point of attention. The students and alumni indicated that they were pleased with the supervision by the staff members and the personal attention they have received.

The students know what is expected of them because at the beginning of the thesis-writing process, they receive an overview of the thesis criteria. The regulations and thesis assessment form with the assessment criteria can be found on Canvas. According to the self-evaluation report, the elements that play a key role in the assessment of a thesis are: (1) research design and execution (formulation of the research question, definition and embedding of the subject, answering the research question, references and citation); (2) the quality of the write up (organisation and presentation of the primary research data, reflection upon and interpretation of data, handling and evaluation of the relevant literature and other non-primary sources; completeness and relevance of the source materials used); (3) the quality of the argumentation and level of independence (structure of the text and its chapters, theoretical framework, level of thinking, clarity and relevance of arguments); and (4) the language and presentation (spelling, grammar, clarity of language/phrasing, choice and relevance of illustrations, layout).

In contrast to an MA thesis, the RMA thesis should demonstrate: (1) detailed knowledge of a research specialisation (Heritage and Memory, Archaeology) and/or an interdisciplinary research area; (2) evidence of an advanced graduate intellectual level as is required for a PhD project; (3) the capacity to select and apply theory from Heritage and Memory and Archaeology in different fields and contexts; and (4) potential for publication in a peer-reviewed journal of all or part of the research produced as part of the RMA. According to the panel, this is indeed more demanding compared to the MA thesis in Archaeology, and successful completion of the RMA thesis ensures the entire research cycle is completed within the graduation trajectory.

The assessment forms contained variations due to chronological differences; the later, more extensive forms encouraged a more structured and detailed response from the assessors. The thesis assessments are now very detailed, solid and sufficiently substantiated. Also, a better balance between summative and formative feedback is put in place in comparison to the previous forms. The panel believes the thesis marking sheets are clear in how marks are divided up between sections, though strict marking criteria would also be useful. It concluded that the new assessment form provides a structured assessment and clear evidence on why the mark was reached, and gives clear and extensive feedback to the student. It is of the opinion that the overall assessment is adequate and the thesis quality is high, which is demonstrated by the high marks achieved. It therefore applauds the programme management for these improvements and compliments the staff for the way that communication is organised.

Examinations Board

The GSH Examinations Board is responsible for the quality of assessments and, therefore, for the quality of the degree awarded upon graduation. In order to fulfil its legal duties, it is supported by a secretary. The Faculty Examinations Board appoints lecturers as examiners who have obtained their PhD and a Basic Education Qualification (BKO). It systematically checks some test files and investigates suspected cases of fraud and plagiarism—the latter has not happened in this RMA programme. In the case of the RMA degree Archaeology, all teaching staff and all course coordinators meet the conditions for being an examiner. Furthermore, all teaching staff have been designated as examiners by the Examinations Board without problems in recent years.



Every year the Examinations Board pursues different forms and shifting themes of evaluations (i.e. internship reports, tutorials, re-examination policies). It works with sub-committees and sometimes involves external expertise, for example when evaluating the level of written English. Members and delegates of the Examinations Board who work for the RMA programme Archaeology check the thesis assessment forms. The programme coordinator encourages and facilitates peer review and the evaluation of courses, which are included as part of the regularly scheduled ACASA teaching staff meetings. These calibration meetings are regarded as indispensable by the staff and the panel. Another task of the Examinations Board is to assess students' requests to be allowed to make exceptions to the programme.

As internships are becoming more relevant for preparation for the labour market, the Faculty has put forward policies on internships. There are faculty-wide forms for internships which are usually filled out by two persons. Assessment is always done by an assessor from the UvA; a second supervisor can be from outside. The students can submit objections about the assessment and assessors. The Examinations Board is informed when there is a problem or conflict. Sometimes a student is not happy with a grade, and then a third assessor is appointed to intervene. The Examinations Board is not involved in approving fieldwork as an elective from other institutions. It explained to the panel that it is difficult to check if that fits the student's learning path. In any case, carrying out fieldwork during the RMA programme is not encouraged and, hence, students do not choose fieldwork much as an elective. The panel noted that it is worth monitoring the procedures on fieldwork if the student numbers grow.

The Examinations Board clarified that RMA students can take MA courses as an elective, but no additional assessment is required—nor are there different means of examination in place for the RMA students. The stakeholders fear that would create a “messy situation”, and they want students protected against arbitrariness. The panel understands the logic and reasoning behind it, as it only applies to electives, and supports their decision on this matter.

The panel confirmed that a lot has been improved since 2017: the thesis assessment forms are more detailed, and regular courses have assessment forms as well. Second assessors are always employed by the UvA. The panel concluded that the procedures have become stricter over the last few years, and the old bureaucracy has diminished considerably. It believes that the Examinations Board has sufficient control. In the near future, some work will be delegated to sub-committees, which is not a superfluous luxury since the Faculty offers more than 75 (R)MA tracks. It concluded that the Examination Board is actively engaged in monitoring and guaranteeing the assessment quality.

Considerations

The panel judged that the student assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The requirements are transparent to the students, and the quality of interim and final examinations is sufficiently safeguarded and meets the statutory quality standards. Based on the written documentation and additional information provided during the site visit, the panel concluded that the assessment is based on a sound assessment plan and system. It suggests that all stakeholders should think about new and relevant assessment types such as press releases, grant applications and ethical reviews.

The panel perceived that the student assessment and feedback are timely. The students are offered a number of feedback opportunities, and this feedback is reviewed and used to support the learning experience. There is a wide variety of assessments employed, which both reflects and supports the students' learning styles as well as providing a broad spectrum of specific academic and transferable skills.

The revised thesis assessment forms are a great improvement, and the panel praises the way in which the staff gives feedback to their students. It does see some room for improvement, however: the development of marking criteria would be useful to allow students to understand how to perform well across the different elements of the programme. If the ILOs are expanded, this should allow clearer linkages between the individual ILOs and the



assessment types—especially with regards to ‘critical evaluation’. The panel encourages the programme management to take a look at the way marking criteria are composed at foreign (e.g. British) universities.

Finally, the panel encountered a dedicated and professional GSH Examinations Board. The latter needs to stay a robust, well-coordinated and incisive committee that can act promptly and efficiently. For all those reasons it should continue receiving the attention and resources needed from the Faculty Board to stay in the lead and amplify transparency.

Conclusion

Research master’s programme Archaeology: 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

Quality of the theses

The reorganisation of the RMA in 2017-2018, and the failure to recruit any new students in that academic year, means that the restructured RMA has yet to run a full two-year cycle in this period of assessment. The thesis sample is therefore limited to a small number of graduates: the panel examined 13 theses, all of the final projects of the last six years. The 30 EC RMA thesis project has to comply with a set of criteria that apply faculty-wide, guaranteeing the research-centred standards of the Archaeology programme. The panel judged the size of the final project to be in line with the structure of the curriculum.

The panel read theses demonstrating the ability to evaluate the academic literature in the field of Archaeology, Heritage and Memory Studies. There were original research questions in the domain of archaeology. The panel found that the theses represent a body of work confirming that the students are capable of independent research and can transmit their findings to an academic readership at a high level. It also agrees that the students support their work with an excellent range of references, and all demonstrated a wide readership and clear expertise within their chosen area. It further noted that the project content indicated that the students produce substantive bodies of work (and data analyses) which demonstrate exceptional levels of commitment. This has led to some interesting theses of very good quality, which may well lead to a publication.

In the panel’s view, the theses reflect the research orientation of the programme and embody all elements of the research cycle, from the formulation of a solid research question to the output of a written report that is suitable for publication. The panel noted that one thesis was more suited to the field of Heritage Studies and had little Archaeology. Nevertheless, the final theses contain robust theory and methodology chapters, demonstrating insight into the key research methods in the current scientific and international field of Archaeology. By finalising the substantive research project, the panel believes the ILOs are indeed achieved within the graduation trajectory.

Alumni success

The alumni indicated that they are satisfied with the RMA programme as a preparation for their future career. All alumni valued the acquisition of knowledge and writing skills, which benefits many of them in their daily work (i.e. composing reports). Another positive and relevant attribute the alumni mentioned is the strong focus on engagement to contemporary society.

Of the seven students who have finished their RMA programme since 2015, most now work in commercial archaeology, or in local or national archaeological services or museums. Some have found international PhD positions, or have an external PHD position combined with an administrative (university) job. Five current students,



who have almost completed their RMA theses, are employed in a diverse range of settings in the world of art dealing, IT, the Dutch national research council (NWO), and individual enterprises. The alumni who were interviewed felt well-prepared for research positions, and also considered themselves at an advantage for obtaining research-oriented positions. Both students and staff mentioned the difficulty of obtaining funding for PhD positions in the Humanities in the Netherlands at this moment. The panel therefore believes the Faculty could offer more insights to students on how to apply for independent funding, including outside the Netherlands, to start their own research projects.

Considerations

The panel is of the opinion that the theses comply with the RMA-level expectations. It deems the outcomes of the final projects to be of publishable quality, and has read innovative and original theses. It judged the theses as substantive pieces of work which employ theory, critical analysis and extensive datasets to provide new insights. After reading the theses, the panel concluded that the ILOs are achieved by the students—thereby successfully completing the research cycle.

The panel concluded that the testimonies of the alumni showed optimism and confidence regarding their skills and opportunities on the labour market. The quality of the studied research is also in line with this optimism. The fact that some graduates of the programme found their way into an international academic career stresses the solid groundwork the RMA lays for such opportunities. However, evidence to assess alumni success is limited, as the programme is small, and relatively few students have graduated. Notwithstanding these remarks, the panel concluded that the RMA offers a good starting point for launching a research career. In its opinion, the Faculty could do a better job in monitoring RMA alumni, keeping in touch with them, and offering support to them if needed—especially with regards to applications for PhD positions and independent research funding.

Conclusion

Research master's programme Archaeology: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'meets the standard'.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The panel assessed standards 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the research master's programme Archaeology as 'meets the standard'. It hereby took the additional aspects for research master's programmes as included in the *Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes* into account. Based on the NVAO decision rules regarding limited programme assessments, it therefore assesses the programme as 'positive'.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *research master's programme Archaeology* as 'positive'.





APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Exit qualifications 2-year RMA

a. Academic ability

The student who has completed the Research Master's degree programme:

- a1. should have insight into the key research methods in the field;
- a2. should be able to interpret, assess and take an individual position on academic practice – and the results thereof – within the field of study;
- a3. be able to assess the academic practice in line with the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice (see the website of the NWO: Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity);
- a4. should be able to assess relevant academic literature;
- a5. should be able to independently formulate questions with regard to the field of study, to operationalise those questions and represent them in a research plan;
- a6. should be able to independently carry out research in the field of study and report on that research orally and in writing in a way that complies with the common academic conventions in the field of study;
- a7. should be able to present any scientific knowledge and insights gained during the degree programme and transfer them to a broader audience than the academic community;
- a8. should be able to answer scientific questions using knowledge of a specialism within the degree programme;
- a9. should be able to work in a team and give and incorporate feedback in a constructive way.

b. Subject-specific exit qualifications

The student who has completed the Research Master's degree programme should:

- b1. be able to apply the insights gained in their own field of study or discipline on adjoining scientific domains;
- b2. be able to link topics from their field of study to current social debates and identify potential contributions;
- b3. be able to reflect on their own position and the knowledge they have gained and identify areas of development;
- b4. be able to formulate a concise individual research approach that is embedded in current scientific research questions;
- b5. have gained practical experience with ongoing (international) research.



APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

Outline of Program RMA Heritage, Memory & Archaeology 2019-2020

	2019-2020		2020-2021	
Semester 1 Block 1	Core Course Materiality and Material Culture	Elective or Tutorial	Elective or Tutorial (international)	Elective or Tutorial
Block 2		Elective or Tutorial	Elective or Tutorial	Elective or Tutorial (international)
Block 3	Research Seminar: Current Issues			
Semester 2 Block 1	Core Course Memory Studies	Core Course Critical Heritage	Masters Thesis: Research Project	Masters Thesis: Research Project
Block 2			Masters Thesis	Masters Thesis
Block 3	Elective or Tutorial			

Core Courses: 3 x 12 = 36 EC

Current Issues = 6 EC

Electives: 5 x 6 = 30 EC or 4 x 6 = 24 EC

Tutorials: 3 x 6 = 18 EC

Research School = 6 EC (or 12 EC)

Thesis = 30 EC

Totaal: 120 EC (24 maanden)

APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE ONLINE VISIT

6 October 2020

09.30	10.00	Preliminary meeting panel
10.00	10.30	Open office (pre-registration necessary)
10.30	11.00	<i>Break</i>
11.00	11.15	Welcome by dean/short presentation GSH director
11.15	12.00	Interview programme management
12.00	12.15	<i>Break</i>
12.15	13.00	Interview Examinations Board
13.00	14.00	<i>Lunch break</i>
14.00	15.00	'Showcase'
15.00	15.15	<i>Break</i>
15.15	16.15	Internal deliberation panel
16.15	16.30	<i>Break</i>
16.30	17.15	Interview alumni

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09.30	10.00	Internal deliberation panel
10.00	10.45	Interview students
10.45	11.00	<i>Break</i>
11.00	11.45	Interview teaching staff
11.45	12.30	Internal deliberation panel
12.30	13.30	<i>Lunch break</i>
13.30	14.00	Interview programme management and Faculty representatives
14.00	14.15	<i>Break</i>
14.15	15.45	Internal deliberation and formulation preliminary findings
15.45	16.15	<i>Break</i>
16.15	16.30	Presentation preliminary findings
16.30	17.00	<i>Break</i>
17.00	17.45	Dialogue about programme development



APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the online site visit, the panel studied 13 theses and assessment forms of the research master's programme Archaeology. Information on the selected theses is available from Qanu upon request.

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

- Self-evaluation report UvA RMA Archaeology 2020
- Report KNAW (2015)
- Report reparation procedure (2017)
- Decisions NVAO (2015 and 2017)
- NVAO Accreditation Framework 2018
- Additional Criteria Research Master
- Course manual and assessment forms core course Critical Heritage Studies
- Course materials and assignments core course Matter, Materiality and Material Culture
- Teaching and examination regulations for master's programmes at the UvA Faculty of Humanities 2019-2020
- Programme-specific section of the teaching and examination regulations for the research master's degree programme in Archaeology at the UvA Faculty of Humanities 2019-2020
- Assessment matrix 2019-2020
- Exit qualifications 2019-2020
- Overview of possible electives in RMA Archaeology
- Overview of the curriculum 2019-2020
- Overview of core staff members and their résumés
- ACASA research seminar series 2016-2020
- Self-evaluation report ARCHON (2018)
- Research review Amsterdam Institute for Humanities Research (2019)
- Rules and guidelines Examinations Board GSH 2019-2020
- Access to digital learning environment UvA Canvas

Showcases:

- The Amsterdam Troy Project: SOYA 2020 conference programme booklet, videos on Facebook and YouTube
- Core course Matter, Materiality and Material Culture: Canvas
- The 4D Research lab: YouTube videos
- The Vlooienburg project and exhibition: YouTube videos
- The CARE European village community archaeology project

