

Assessment report  
NVAO Limited Framework Programme Assessment  
IAC/EADI Assessment

**Research Master International Development Studies**

University of Amsterdam

*Contents of the report*

1. Executive summary .....	2
2. Programme administrative information.....	5
3. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard .....	6
3.1 Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes .....	6
3.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment .....	9
3.3 Standard 3: Student assessment.....	12
3.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes .....	14
4. Overview of assessments .....	16
5. Recommendations .....	17
Appendix: Assessment process .....	18

## 1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the Research Master International Development Studies of the University of Amsterdam. The programme was assessed according to the four standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands. The programme was also assessed according to the International Accreditation Council for Global Development Studies and Research (IAC/EADI) standards and criteria. The joint assessment of NVAO standards and IAC/EADI standards and criteria has been made possible by the cooperation agreement signed by both the NVAO Board and the IAC/EADI Board to that effect.

The programme is well-organised and is embedded firmly in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of the University of Amsterdam.

The programme profile meets the requirements for research master programmes in the domain of international development studies. The panel recommends, nevertheless, to communicate the profile more clearly, by giving methodology training and methods training a more central position in the communication and by presenting these in a more pronounced manner.

The objectives and intended learning outcomes of the programme meet IAC/EADI requirements. The programme is interdisciplinary, addresses normative and policy concerns, and takes the context-sensitive approach to development studies. The panel advises to consider identifying coherent specialisation pathways (or options) in the programme, and enhance methodological rigour and understanding of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The programme's intended learning outcomes conform to the master level and surpass this level in some respects, adequately preparing students for PhD trajectories.

The argumentation for the English programme name and English as the language of instruction is sound, as English allows the programme to cater to international students and to prepare graduates for the international labour market in this field.

Programme management appropriately followed up on the recommendations of the previous assessment panel.

The number of incoming students in the programme allows for appropriate class sizes and assures the educational viability of the programme. As both the gender diversity and geographic diversity in terms of the proportion of students coming from the Global South are less balanced in the student population, the panel advises to take steps to raise this diversity. The entry requirements and admission procedures of the programme are appropriate. The panel welcomes the preparatory courses being on offer for students with deficiencies. The panel recommends to monitor the contents and the level of these courses and to ascertain students with deficiencies taking the courses

they need. This recommendation especially applies to methods courses and is meant to have students enter the programme with sufficient methods training.

The curriculum contents and coherence are adequate and the curriculum is in line with the intended learning outcomes. The curriculum is interdisciplinary, adequately covers diverse perspectives and sources from the Global South, and takes societal and policy issues as leading. Methodology training is well covered. Research ethics are discussed. Although the panel is positive about the curriculum, it may be improved in some ways. The panel advises to have students do additional challenging assignments, when taking regular master courses, to restructure the methods courses in order to allow students to achieve greater depth in their methods training, to strengthen the training in quantitative methods, and to have the portfolio match more clearly the intended learning outcomes and to have the portfolio assignment and assessment criteria be structured more coherently.

The lecturers in the programme have very good credentials in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records. As most lecturers are Dutch, the panel advises programme management to aim for more diversity among staff and to put in more effort to recruit lecturers from the Global South. The research programme which the lecturers are involved in, shows very good to excellent results in recent research assessments.

The programme educational concept and study methods are appropriate. The study guidance in the programme is up to standard, but the panel recommends to improve the guidance of the methods training and methods courses. The panel sees the study load as reasonable for this research master programme. The drop-out and study success figures for the programme are favourable.

Programme management took adequate measures in the Covid crisis to provide education, to assure the quality of the education, to organise examinations and assessments, to assure the quality thereof, and to monitor the well-being of students.

The rules and regulations for the examinations and assessments in the programme are appropriate. The quality assurance of these is up to standard. The activities of the Examinations Board are adequate as well. The panel advises, nevertheless, programme management to follow up more transparently on the rules, regulations and propositions brought forward by the Examinations Board.

The examination methods in the courses are in line with the knowledge and skills to be tested in these courses. The examination methods are satisfactorily varied. The panel is positive about the fraud and plagiarism rules.

The supervision and assessment processes for the thesis are up to standard. The panel advises, nevertheless, to document the separate assessments of the thesis examiners, to have the thesis examiners give more extensive feedback to substantiate the marks, especially the higher marks, and to have the examiners comment on the plagiarism score.

The panel reviewed fifteen master theses of programme graduates of the last two complete years. No theses were found to be unsatisfactory. Eight of the theses were graded satisfactory. Six theses were found to be good. One thesis was found to be excellent. The marks for four theses were found to be appropriate. The marks for ten theses (2/3 of all theses) were found to be too high, but less than one point. One thesis was found to be graded too low.

The panel advises to reflect upon the journal article format as an option for theses, since some theses are rather lengthy.

The panel sees the proportion of students graduating cum laude as being rather high. The panel recommends to make the cum laude requirements more demanding.

The panel reviewed fifteen portfolios of programme graduates. The portfolios in general offer clear indications of the students' goals, the study activities and the reflection upon goals and activities. The portfolio adds to the labour market orientation by students. The panel, nevertheless, advises to strengthen the career guidance in the programme. The panel also advises to document the proportion of graduates obtaining non-academic research positions.

The panel which conducted the assessment of the Research Master International Development Studies of the University of Amsterdam assesses this programme to meet the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, judging the programme to be positive. Therefore, the panel recommends NVAO to continue the accreditation of this programme.

The panel assesses the programme to meet the IAC/EADI standards and criteria, as listed in the Guide for the Peer Review of Development Studies Programmes of IAC/EADI. Therefore, the panel recommends IAC/EADI to accredit the programme.

Rotterdam, 16 June 2021,

Prof. L.J. de Haan PhD  
(panel chair)

W. Vercouteren MSc  
(panel secretary)

## 2. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO: Master International Development Studies (Research)  
Orientation, level programme: Academic Master  
Grade: MSc  
Number of credits: 120 EC  
Specialisations: N.A.  
Location: Amsterdam  
Mode of study: Full-time  
Language of instruction: English  
Registration in CROHO: 21PK-60218

Name of institution: University of Amsterdam  
Status of institution: Government-funded University  
Institution's quality assurance: Approved

### 3. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard

#### 3.1 Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

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

##### *Findings*

The Research Master International Development Studies programme is one of the master programmes in social sciences of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of the University of Amsterdam. The programme carries 120 EC of study load and takes two years to complete. The programme is part of the Graduate School of Social Sciences. The Graduate School bundles the master programmes, research master programmes and PhD trajectories in the domain of social sciences of the Faculty. The Graduate School director chairs the Board of Studies, on which sit all programme directors as well as two student members. The Board of Studies is responsible for the educational and financial policies of the programmes. Management of this programme is in the hands of the programme director, who is assisted by the programme coordinator/study adviser. The Programme Committee, consisting of lecturers and students, advises programme management on the quality of the programme. The Examinations Board sets rules for examinations and assessments in the programme and monitors the quality of these. Lecturers in the programme are employed at the Department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies. Lecturers are engaged in research, most of them participating in the Governance and Inclusive Development research programme group of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR).

The profile of the programme is to train students to acquire critical analytical skills and qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research methods in the field of development studies and to offer students fieldwork experiences and professional competencies, to be able to work in this field. Students are educated to address complex societal problems in development studies, and to come up with constructive solutions by means of creative use of research methods. The programme has no specific thematic or methodological specialisations.

Programme management showed the programme to be in line with the domain-specific reference framework of the European Association for Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI). The programme is interdisciplinary, as it draws on insights from political science, economics, law, anthropology, geography, and sociology. Subjects may be studied from different perspectives, on different levels of analysis and in relation to each other. The programme is in particular geared towards the study of inclusive and sustainable development. In the programme, the development studies field is approached from normative and context-specific angles.

The programme's intended learning outcomes include knowledge and understanding of theoretical approaches and concepts of development studies, understanding ontological and epistemological debates in this field of study, independent assessment of literature, constructing research designs, deciding on research methods, making judgements on ethical issues, and professional skills.

Programme management demonstrated the intended learning outcomes to correspond to the EADI learning objectives, as specified in the EADI domain-specific framework of reference.

Programme management also showed the intended learning outcomes to correspond to the Dublin descriptors for the second cycle, as indicators of the master level. The intended learning outcomes partly reach the Dublin descriptors for the third cycle, as this research master programme aims to prepare students for PhD positions.

Programme management made the comparison to other programmes in this field in the Netherlands and abroad. Notwithstanding clear similarities to these programmes, the Amsterdam programme distinguishes itself through the emphasis on mixed methods, the compulsory fieldwork component, and the individual student portfolio.

The programme name is English, as development studies is an international field of study. Also, the programme is taught in English. The English name and English as language of instruction are chosen to allow international students to enrol. English also enables graduates to gain access to the development studies labour market, which is largely international. In addition, the programme is closely linked to the Governance and Inclusive Development research group, which is English-spoken. Finally, English allows programme management to recruit international teachers, making expertise available to the programme.

Programme management took up the recommendations of the previous assessment panel, leading to a number of improvements. Students were more strongly encouraged to specialise in quantitative methods, the regular master courses were analysed and seen as being in line with research master requirements, and the research master thesis assessment form was separated from the regular master thesis form to better reflect research master requirements.

#### *Considerations*

The panel sees the programme organisation as adequate and considers the programme to be well-embedded in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of the University of Amsterdam.

The panel regards the profile of the programme to meet the requirements for research master programmes in the international development studies domain. The panel recommends, nevertheless, to communicate the profile more clearly, by giving methodology training and methods training a more central position in the communication and by presenting these in a more pronounced manner.

The programme objectives and the intended learning outcomes meet IAC/EADI requirements. The panel established the programme, among other things, to be interdisciplinary, to address normative and policy concerns, to take the context-sensitive approach to development studies, to have students carry out policy- and practice-focused analyses and academic research and to have students select and apply relevant research methods and communicate the results of the research. Notwithstanding these positive points, the panel advises to consider identifying coherent

specialisation learning pathways (or options) in the programme, and enhance methodological rigour and understanding of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The programme intended learning outcomes meet research master requirements. These intended learning outcomes, so the panel established, conform to the master level and surpass this level in some respects, adequately preparing students for PhD trajectories.

The panel appreciates the comparison of this programme to similar programmes in the Netherlands and abroad, observing the commonalities and differences of these programmes and the distinctive character of this programme.

The panel endorses the English programme name and English as the language of instruction. English allows the programme to cater to international students and to prepare graduates for the international labour market in this field.

Programme management appropriately followed up on the recommendations of the previous assessment panel.

*Assessment of this standard*

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet NVAO Standard 1, Intended learning outcomes, and to meet the related IAC/EADI standards and criteria.



### 3.2 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*

About 55 applications are received each year, from whom about 40 applicants are accepted, the acceptance rate being about 75 %. Approximately 50 % of the accepted students actually enrol. The number of students entering the programme is on average 22 incoming students per year over the last seven years, ranging from 19 to 24 students. The gender balance is largely in favour of female students, being 70 % to 80 % of all students. Approximately 30 % to 40 % of the students are Dutch, and about 50 % come from other European countries or from North America. The proportion of students coming from the Global South amounts to 10 % of total intake.

The entry requirements for the programme are an academic bachelor degree in social sciences with at least 30 EC of courses in the programme domain, and at least 30 EC of training in social sciences research methods, with the grade point average being at least 7.5 (Dutch grading system) and proficiency in English. Applicants having deficiencies in courses in the programme domain or in social sciences research methods, may be admitted after taking preparatory courses.

The curriculum consists of two years. In the first year, mostly courses are offered. This year includes three substantive or thematic courses (21 EC), two of which are electives. The electives (12 EC) are shared with students of the regular, one-year master programme. The first year also comprises one methodology course (6 EC), one compulsory research methods course on mixed methods (6 EC), and two methods elective courses (12 EC). These electives are taken jointly by students of this research master programme and the other two research master programmes of the Graduate School, Social Sciences and Urban Studies. In addition, the first year includes a literature review course (6 EC), meant to lay the theoretical foundation for the thesis research in the second year, and a course (9 EC) to complete both the research proposal for the thesis and the individual portfolio plan. The second year is composed of fieldwork and the master thesis (33 EC). Fieldwork is meant to gather data for the master thesis. This is often done in the Global South, but students also do their fieldwork in the Global North. As a derivative product, students write a journal article on the basis of their thesis (6 EC). Also in the second year, students complete their individual portfolio (15 EC), in which they pursue study activities related to their own goals. Students may include in their portfolio extra-curricular courses, research internships or professional internships, or national research school PhD training courses. In the portfolio, students reflect upon their role as researchers. Finally, students take a course (6 EC) which runs in parallel to their thesis work, allowing them to structure the thesis work, but also to improve transferable skills, such as communication or presentation skills. The final assignment in this course is the communication product, which allows students to present themselves on the labour market. Programme management demonstrated the curriculum to meet the programme intended learning outcomes.

The staff lecturing in the programme comprises 32 lecturers, amounting to 1.9 FTE. Ten of these lecturers are core teachers who are intensively involved in the programme. Of all of the lecturers in the programme, 97 % have PhDs and 88 % have acquired the University Teaching Qualification certificate. The lecturers have different disciplinary backgrounds. They are predominantly of Dutch origin. They are internationally qualified researchers in their field of study and publish in peer-reviewed journals. The research group Governance and Inclusive Development of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR), in which most lecturers participate as researchers, obtained for each of the assessment criteria the scores *very good* or *excellent* in recent research assessments in 2014 and 2020. Lecturers bring forward their research interests in courses.

The educational concept of the programme is research-based education and includes the co-creation approach, allowing students to actively participate in organising the classes and in arranging self-assessments. The study methods in the programme include lectures, tutorials, presentations, discussions, and seminars. The number of contact hours is about 8 to 9 hours per week in the first year. These hours do not include individual consultation hours. In the second year, students are individually supervised by lecturers. Students meet regularly with the thesis supervisor and may turn to the study adviser for additional assistance. Students regard the overall study load of the programme to be manageable, but they experience the completion of four final projects at the end of the programme as rather demanding. In addition, the students find the sequencing of the methods courses, and the alignment of these courses to the fieldwork not optimal. The proportion of students dropping out of the programme is limited to about 10 %. The Graduate School of Social Sciences has set the target figure for the proportion of students completing the programme within three years at 80 %. The average study success rate for this programme was 87 % for the last four years.

Programme management has taken measures to organise education in the Covid crisis and to monitor the quality of the education. Education on campus often proves not to be feasible, mainly due to government regulations. Therefore, learning activities have been changed to online lectures and seminars. Programme management also offers alternatives for fieldwork and data collection, by allowing students to do fieldwork in their home countries or to use existing data sets or to collect data in remote or desk-based ways. These alternative learning activities are assured to meet course goals and programme intended learning outcomes. In student surveys, questions on the quality of online education have been added. Response rates tend to be lower to some extent and results are mixed. Students indicate to appreciate the efforts to offer online education or they suggest improvements. The study adviser regularly contacts students, and organises meetings with them. This way, students' well-being is actively being monitored. The study adviser also assists students in overcoming obstacles in their studies. Thesis supervisors signal students' problems. Lecturers are requested to intensify their contacts with students, and to prioritise education over research.

### *Considerations*

The number of incoming students in the programme allows for appropriate class sizes and assures the educational viability of the programme, enabling sufficient numbers of students in class to come to meaningful interaction. As both the gender diversity and the geographic diversity in terms of the proportion of students coming from the Global South in the student population are less balanced, the panel recommends to take steps to raise the diversity and to improve this balance.

The panel approves of the entry requirements and admission procedures of the programme. The panel welcomes the preparatory courses being on offer for students with deficiencies. The panel recommends to monitor the contents and the level of these courses and to ascertain students with deficiencies taking the courses they need. This recommendation especially applies to methods courses and is meant to have students enter the programme with sufficient methods training.

The curriculum meets, so the panel established, the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The panel approves of the curriculum contents and coherence. The curriculum is interdisciplinary, adequately covers diverse perspectives and sources from the Global South, and takes societal and policy issues as leading. Research ethics are discussed. The panel appreciates the methodology training. Although the panel is positive about the curriculum, it may be improved in some ways. The panel recommends to require students of this research master programme to do additional challenging assignments when taking regular master courses. The panel also advises to restructure the methods courses to allow students to achieve greater depth in their methods training and to improve the alignment of the methods training with the fieldwork. In addition, the panel recommends to strengthen the training in quantitative methods among the methods students may specialise in, i.e. qualitative, mixed or quantitative methods, and ensure sound understanding of both quantitative and qualitative methods by all students. The panel welcomes the portfolio as a means for students to reflect upon their positions and their goals, but recommends to have the criteria for the portfolio correspond more clearly to the intended learning outcomes and to have the portfolio assignment and assessment criteria be structured more coherently.

The panel is positive about the staff teaching in the programme. The lecturers have very good credentials in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records. As most lecturers are Dutch, the panel advises programme management to aim for more staff diversity and to put in more effort to recruit lecturers from the Global South. The research programme which the lecturers are involved in, shows very good to excellent results in recent research assessments. The panel, therefore, finds the programme to be embedded in high-quality research activities.

The panel regards the educational concept and study methods as appropriate for this programme. The study guidance in the programme is up to standard, but the panel recommends to improve the guidance of the methods training and methods courses to be taken. The panel sees the study load as reasonable for this research master programme. The drop-out and study success figures for the programme are favourable.

In the panel's view, programme management took measures to provide adequate education during the Covid crisis, to assure the quality of this education, and to monitor the well-being of students.

#### *Assessment of this standard*

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet NVAO Standard 2, Teaching-learning environment, and to meet the related IAC/EADI standards and criteria.

### 3.3 Standard 3: Student assessment

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

#### *Findings*

The examination and assessment rules and regulations for the programme are specified in the Teaching and Examination Regulations and in the Rules and Guidelines of the Examinations Board.

The Examinations Board is responsible for, among other things, monitoring the quality of examinations and assessments, appointing examiners, and monitoring whether students have met the programme intended learning outcomes. The Examinations Board has these responsibilities for this programme, the Research Master Social Sciences and Urban Studies programmes, and the regular, one-year Master International Development Studies programme. External members sit on the Board. Each year, the Board reviews two to three courses on the alignment of intended learning outcomes, course goals and assignments or examinations. The Board also reviews a number of theses with lower, average and higher grades.

The assessment methods in the programme include essays, written assignments, take-home examinations, presentations and also role-plays and games. The fraud and plagiarism rules of the University of Amsterdam apply to all summative examinations and graded assignments. All of the graded written assignments are checked for plagiarism by dedicated software.

The students completing their master thesis and conducting the fieldwork for the thesis, are guided in these processes by their individual thesis supervisor. Before being allowed to start this process, students have to obtain approval of their research proposal. Students are obliged to sign agreements on the practical feasibility of the thesis and on adhering to principles of ethical research. Students are required to submit the thesis at the official deadline or they may make use of the second deadline which is considered a rewrite. Submitting at the second deadline excludes the student graduating cum laude. The master theses are assessed and graded by the supervisor and the second reader. They give their mark after the oral defence by the student. When the supervisor and the second reader disagree on the thesis mark or when they decide to grade the thesis a marginal pass or fail (between 5.0 and 6.0), a third reader is appointed to independently grade the thesis.

Programme management has taken measures to organise examinations and assessments in the Covid crisis and to monitor their quality. Written assignments, reports, essays and presentations have been organised as in pre-Covid times, be it that presentations are given online. The proportion of on-site written examinations in the programme is very limited. So, changes in the organisation and scheduling of examinations and assessment remain very limited as well. Proctoring has not been adopted. To lower stress levels of students, the Examinations Board is more lenient, extends deadlines for theses and changes some examinations to pass/fail. The Examinations Board monitors the quality of examinations and assessments and assures these to meet the programme intended learning outcomes.

### *Considerations*

The panel regards the rules and regulations for the programme examinations and assessments to be appropriate. The quality assurance of the examinations and assessments is adequate.

The panel sees the activities of the Examinations Board as being appropriate. The panel advises, nevertheless, programme management to follow up more transparently on the rules, regulations and propositions brought forward by the Examinations Board.

The examination methods in the courses are appropriate for the knowledge and skills to be tested in these courses. The examination methods are satisfactorily varied. The panel is positive about the fraud and plagiarism rules.

The panel regards the supervision and assessment processes for the thesis to be up to standard and approves of the thesis assessment form in use. From these forms, it is, however, unclear what the independent judgements of each of the examiners is, as only the joint assessment is presented. The panel advises to document the separate assessments. The panel also regards the comments by the thesis examiners to be rather concise and often not elaborate enough. The panel recommends to have the thesis examiners give more extensive feedback to substantiate the marks, especially the higher marks. In addition, the panel advises for the examiners to comment on the plagiarism score, listed on the thesis assessment form.

The panel considers the measures programme management has taken to organise examinations and assessments in the Covid-crisis and to monitor the quality of these examinations and assessments to be appropriate.

### *Assessment of this standard*

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 3, Student assessment, and to meet the related IAC/EADI standards and criteria.

### 3.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

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

#### *Findings*

Students are to demonstrate the knowledge and skills, they have acquired in the programme, in the thesis, the portfolio and two derivative products, being the scientific article and the communication product. Both products are derived from the thesis. The scientific article gives students the chance to opt for academic careers. The communication product allows students to present themselves for various positions on the labour market or share information relevant for key groups or participants from the research process.

The average grade for the theses was 7.9 in the years from 2016 to 2020. The Examinations Board for the programme, who reviewed a number of theses, found the marks of the thesis examiners in a number of cases somewhat too high but not substantially too high. Over the last six years, about twenty graduates (or about 1/6 of all theses) from the programme managed to have their master theses published in peer-reviewed journals.

The proportion of students graduating cum laude, was 40 % for the last three cohorts.

For the programme, a LinkedIn page has been set up to allow students and alumni to communicate and to obtain information on career opportunities. The Graduate School of Social Sciences schedules a career event for students yearly. The event allows students to get into contact with prospective employers.

The proportion of graduates from the programme proceeding to PhD trajectories is about 15 %. The number of PhD positions offered by the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) has decreased, due to funding issues. The majority of the graduates secured positions in non-academic organisations, such as international organisations, NGOs or government bodies.

#### *Considerations*

The panel reviewed fifteen master theses of programme graduates. The theses were selected from all of the theses of graduates of the last two years. The theses were selected on the basis of grades, lower, average and higher marks. No theses were found to be unsatisfactory. Eight of the theses were graded satisfactory. Six theses were found to be good. One thesis was found to be excellent. The marks for four theses were found to be appropriate. The marks for ten theses (2/3 of all theses) were found to be too high, but less than one point. One thesis was found to be graded too low.

As some of the theses the panel studied, were rather lengthy, the panel advises to reflect upon the journal article format as an option.

The panel sees the proportion of students graduating cum laude as being rather high. The panel recommends to make the cum laude requirements more demanding.

The panel reviewed fifteen portfolios of programme graduates. The portfolios in general offer clear indications of the students' goals, the study activities and the reflection upon goals and activities. The portfolio adds to the labour market orientation by students. The panel, nevertheless, advises to strengthen the career guidance in the programme, not only on the Graduate School level but for students in this programme specifically.

The panel sees the proportion of graduates obtaining PhD positions as quite low. The scarcity of PhD positions in the field may partially explain this. This Research Master programme should, nevertheless, have an acceptable percentage of its outflow to either academic (i.e. PhD) or non-academic research positions. As programme management does not keep track of how many graduates find research positions in non-academic organisations, the panel advises to document the proportion of graduates obtaining non-academic research positions.

*Assessment of this standard*

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 4, Achieved learning outcomes, and to meet the related IAC/EADI standards and criteria.

#### 4. Overview of assessments

Standard	Assessment
NVAO Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Programme meets Standard 1
NVAO Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Programme meets Standard 2
NVAO Standard 3: Student assessment	Programme meets Standard 3
NVAO Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Programme meets Standard 4
IAC/EADI Standards and Criteria	Programme meets Standards and Criteria
Programme	Positive



## 5. Recommendations

In this report, a number of recommendations by the panel have been listed. For the sake of clarity, these have been brought together below. The recommendations refer to both the NVAO standards and the IAC/EADI standards and criteria.

- To communicate the profile of the programme more clearly, by giving the methodology training and methods training a more central position in the communication and by presenting these in a more pronounced manner.
- To consider identifying coherent specialisation pathways (or options) in the programme, and enhance methodological rigour and understanding of both qualitative and quantitative methods.
- To take steps to raise the gender diversity as well as the geographic diversity, in terms of the proportion of students coming from the Global South in the student population.
- To monitor the contents and level of the preparatory courses for students with deficiencies and to ascertain these students taking the courses they need. This recommendation especially applies to methods courses and is meant to have students enter the programme with sufficient methods training.
- To require students of this research master programme to do additional challenging assignments, when taking regular master courses.
- To restructure the methods courses in order to allow students to achieve greater depth in their methods training and to improve the alignment of the methods training with the fieldwork.
- To strengthen the (compulsory) quantitative methods training.
- To have the portfolio correspond more clearly to the intended learning outcomes and to have the portfolio assignment and assessment criteria be structured more coherently.
- To aim for more staff diversity and to put in more effort to recruit lecturers from the Global South.
- To improve the study guidance of the methods training and the methods courses to be taken.
- To follow up more transparently on the rules, regulations and propositions brought forward by the Examinations Board.
- To document the separate assessments of the thesis examiners, to have the thesis examiners give more extensive feedback to substantiate the marks, and to have the examiners comment on the plagiarism score.
- To reflect upon the journal article format for theses as an option for theses, since some theses are rather lengthy.
- To make the cum laude requirements more demanding.
- To strengthen the career guidance in the programme, not only on the Graduate School level but for students in this programme specifically.
- To document the proportion of graduates obtaining non-academic research positions.

## Appendix: Assessment process

Certiked VBI evaluation agency was requested by the University of Amsterdam to support the limited framework programme assessment process for the Research Master International Development Studies of this University. The objective of the programme assessment of this research master programme was to establish whether the programme would conform to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, September, 2018 (officially published in Stcrt. 2019 no. 3198, 29 January 2019) as well as to the criteria listed in the NVAO Specification of additional criteria for research master's programmes, 30 May, 2016.

The objective of the programme assessment was also to establish whether the programme would meet the International Accreditation Council for Global Development Studies and Research (IAC/EADI) standards and criteria. The IAC/EADI standards and criteria have been listed in the Guide for the Peer Review of Development Studies Programmes of IAC/EADI, July 2018. Programmes should meet these standards and criteria to be accredited by IAC/EADI. The joint assessment of NVAO standards and IAC/EADI standards and criteria has been made possible by the cooperation agreement signed by both the NVAO Board and the IAC/EADI Board to that effect.

This programme is one of the programmes in the assessment cluster of Social Sciences Research Master programmes (in Dutch: WO OZM Maatschappij). Management of the programmes in this assessment cluster discussed the composition of the assessment panel and drafted the list of panel candidates. In addition, the IAC/EADI Board was approached to request for one of their experts to be a member of the panel.

Having conferred with management of the Research Master International Development Studies of the University of Amsterdam, Certiked invited candidate panel members to sit on the assessment panel. The panel members agreed to do so. The panel composition was as follows:

- Prof. L.J. de Haan PhD, Professor Emeritus of Development Studies, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands (panel chair);
- Prof. A. Need PhD, Professor of Sociology and Public Policy; Dean Twente Graduate School, University of Twente, the Netherlands (panel member)
- Prof. J.Y. Nazroo PhD, Professor of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, University of Manchester, United Kingdom (panel member);
- J.G. Mönks PhD, Lecturer and Programme Director, University of Geneva; Secretary IAC/EADI, Switzerland (panel member; representing IAC/EADI);
- N. Aerts BSc, student Research Master Social and Behavioural Sciences, Tilburg University, the Netherlands (student member).

On behalf of Certiked, W. Vercouteren MSc served as the process coordinator and secretary in the assessment process.

All panel members and the secretary confirmed in writing being impartial with regard to the programme to be assessed as well as observing the rules of confidentiality. Having obtained the authorisation by the University, Certiked requested the approval of NVAO of the proposed panel to conduct the assessment. NVAO has given its approval.

To prepare for the assessment process, the process coordinator convened with programme management to discuss the documents to be presented to the assessment panel, the site visit schedule, and the planning of the preparatory activities. In the course of this process, programme management and the Certiked process coordinator regularly had contact to fine-tune the process. The activities prior to the site visit were performed as planned. Programme management approved of the site visit schedule.

Well in advance of the site visit date, programme management sent the list of final projects of programme graduates of the most recent years. These final projects are two projects, being the thesis and the portfolio. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator selected fifteen theses and fifteen portfolios from this list. In the selection, theses and portfolios with lower, average and higher grades were represented.

The panel members were forwarded in time the documents, prepared by programme management. These documents consisted of the self-evaluation report, the annexes to the self-evaluation report and additional information. The student chapter was part of the self-evaluation report. The annexes to the self-evaluation report included, among other things, a list of improvements after the previous accreditation, domain-specific framework of reference, relations of intended learning outcomes to curriculum, course descriptions, teaching and examination regulations, core staff overview, recent publications and research grants of staff, data on student intake and success rates, list of students publications, and Covid-19 measures taken by programme management. The additional information consisted of, among other things, course dossiers, and minutes and annual reports of Programme Committee and Examinations Board.

To assist panel members in assessing the programme, they were sent the Certiked Trained Eye for NVAO and IAC/EADI Joint Assessment, this document being the elaboration of NVAO standards for the limited programme assessment, NVAO Specification of additional criteria for research master programmes, and IAC/EADI standards and criteria.

Prior to the site visit date, the assessment panel chair and the process coordinator met to discuss the assessment process procedures. In this meeting, the panel chair was informed about the profile of panel chairs of NVAO. The panel chair agreed to work in line with the profile of panel chairs.

Seeing the continuing spread of Covid-infections in the Netherlands and the measures taken by Dutch government to counter the spread of infections, programme management proposed the site visit to be organised online. All panel members agreed to the online visit.

Prior to the date of the online visit, panel members sent in their preliminary findings, based upon their studying the programme documents, and sent in questions to be put to the programme

representatives on the day of the visit. The panel secretary summarised this information, and compiled a list of questions to serve as the starting point for the discussions with the programme representatives during the visit.

Shortly before the visit date, panel members met to prepare for the site visit. Panel members discussed the procedures to be adopted during the visit, the preliminary findings about the programme, the panel reviews of the final projects studied, and the questions to be put to the programme representatives.

On 31 March, 2021 and 1 April, 2021, the panel conducted the online visit. The visit schedule was in accordance with the schedule as planned. The visit schedule included the following meetings.

31 March, 2021

09.00 – 10.15 Faculty representatives, department head, research group director, programme director

10.30 – 11.30 Examinations Board

11.30 – 12.30 Panel lunch (closed session), with 11.30 – 12.00 Open office hours

12.30 – 13.30 Programme director, core lecturers, study adviser

13.45 – 14.30 Lecturers/final project examiners

14.45 – 15.30 Students, Programme Committee student member, and programme alumni

15.30 – 18.00 Deliberations panel (closed session)

1 April, 2021

16.45 – 17.00 Main findings presentation by panel chair to programme representatives

17.00 – 17.45 Development dialogue

Open office hours were communicated timely by programme management to staff and students. No persons presented themselves during these open office hours.

In a closed session at the end of the visit, the assessment panel considered the findings, weighed the considerations and arrived at conclusions with regard to the quality of the programme. After these internal deliberations, the panel chair presented in broad outline the findings, considerations, conclusions and recommendations to programme representatives.

At the end of the site visit, panel members and programme management met to discuss further improvements in the programme during the development dialogue.

The assessment draft report was finalised by the secretary, having taken into account the findings and considerations of the panel. The draft report was sent to the panel members, who studied this draft and made a number of changes. Thereupon, the secretary edited the final report. This report was presented to programme management to be corrected for factual inaccuracies. Programme management were given two weeks to respond. Having been corrected for the factual inaccuracies, the Certiked bureau sent the report to the University Board to accompany their request to continue the accreditation of this programme.