

Assessment report
Limited Framework Programme Assessment
Research Master Social and Behavioural Sciences
Tilburg University

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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 Social and Behavioural Sciences of Tilburg University. 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. NVAO authorised this assessment to take place under the so-called light regime. The reason for the light-regime assessment was to fit the Research Master Social and Behavioural Sciences of Tilburg University in the OZM Maatschappij assessment cluster of NVAO.

The objectives and intended learning outcomes of the programme have not been changed since 2018. In line with the former panel's judgement, this panel endorses the programme objectives, as they meet the high-level academic and research goals of research master programmes in the field of social sciences. The panel also finds the intended learning outcomes to adequately reflect the disciplinary and multidisciplinary nature, the research orientation, and the academic level of the programme. The intended learning outcomes meet the master level.

The programme has not included knowledge and skills for non-academic positions in the intended learning outcomes. About 50 % of the programme graduates find positions in non-academic research organisations and students undertake non-academic learning activities in colloquia and seminars and in traineeships in non-academic research organisations. As the intended learning outcomes should be congruent with the learning activities in the programme, the panel recommends to add non-academic intended learning outcomes.

The panel appreciates the balance of disciplinary knowledge and skills and the multidisciplinary perspective in the programme objectives and intended learning outcomes. The multidisciplinary dimensions of the programme could, however, be more pronounced and the interaction of different disciplines in the programme could be clarified and fostered. The panel recommends, therefore, to state the multidisciplinary dimensions of the programme more clearly and to propagate the added value of these dimensions.

The panel endorses the English programme name and English as the language of instruction, as the programme caters for international students, next to Dutch students, and as research in the field of social sciences is conducted primarily in English.

In line with the former panel's assessment, this panel approves of the entry requirements and admission procedures of the programme.

As in 2018, the intake of the programme remains rather limited at about 15 incoming students per year. These students are divided across minors, leading to sometimes very small numbers of two or three students in class. These class sizes may diminish the effects of education. The panel proposes to consider measures to raise the intake, as this may be beneficial to the educational viability of the programme.

The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The courses generally address multiple intended learning outcomes. The panel acknowledges the breadth of research topics and methods addressed in the courses, but feels limiting the number of intended learning outcomes per course may add to the focus of courses and may allow for more depth in addressing subjects.

In line with the former panel's assessment, this panel is positive about the curriculum contents and coherence. The curriculum is solid in terms of offering disciplinary grounding to students, introducing them to the multidisciplinary perspective and teaching them research methods and techniques in the social sciences at high levels.

As the former panel, this panel is very positive about the staff lecturing in the programme. The lecturers have good credentials in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records. The research programmes which they are involved in, show very good results in recent research assessments. The programme clearly benefits from the Herbert Simon Research Institute, founded in 2018.

Following the former panel's assessment, this panel regards the educational concept and study methods as appropriate for this programme.

The panel sees the study load as reasonable for this research master programme, but welcomes the steps programme management is taking to balance the study load in the first semester.

The panel acknowledges the positive trends in student satisfaction figures and student success rates, but advises programme management to reflect upon and to learn lessons from less positive figures or events.

In line with the former panel's assessment, this panel finds the rules and regulations for the programme regarding examinations' and assessments' quality assurance to be adequate.

The step to install one separate Examination Board for the social sciences programmes of the Faculty is positive, allowing the Board to be more closely involved with the social sciences programmes, among which this programme sits. Although the Covid-crisis challenges may have slowed down activities, the panel recommends the Examination Board to continue taking a more active role in the programme examinations and assessments quality assurance.

In line with the former panel's assessment, this panel finds the examination methods appropriate for the knowledge and skills to be tested in the programme.

The panel approves of the new marking scheme for theses, as this scheme allows for more precise and better justified grading of theses. The panel found the feedback by master thesis examiners to be sufficient for most theses. For four of the theses the panel examined the feedback was somewhat

lacking. The panel advises to assure adequate feedback being given for master theses and to involve a third examiner in cases of high grades.

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

The course examinations, which the panel reviewed were up to standard. Some examinations, which had been criticised in 2018 as being too simple, were changed and now test appropriate levels of analysis and understanding.

Out of the fifteen master theses the panel reviewed no theses were found to be unsatisfactory. Six theses were regarded to be good, whereas two theses were found to be excellent. Some theses were explicitly found to be publishable. The grades given to the theses by the programme examiners were appropriate for eleven theses. For three theses, the grade given was regarded to be somewhat too high. The grade for one thesis was found to be somewhat too low. The differences between the grades of the programme examiners and the panel were in no instance more than 1.0 point.

The panel that conducted the assessment of the Research Master Social and Behavioural Sciences of Tilburg University 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 accredit this programme.

Rotterdam, 22 March 2021

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

W. Vercouteren MSc
(panel secretary)

2. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO:	Master Social and Behavioural Sciences (Research)
Orientation, level programme:	Academic Master
Grade:	MSc
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specialisations:	Methodology and Statistics (from 2020/2021 onwards) Organization Studies (from 2020/2021 onwards) Sociology (from 2020/2021 onwards) Social Psychology (from 2020/2021 onwards)
Location:	Tilburg
Mode of study:	Full-time
Language of instruction:	English
Registration in CROHO:	21PN-60394
Name of institution:	Tilburg University
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 Social and Behavioural Sciences of Tilburg University is an academic master programme in the social sciences domain. The programme carries 120 EC of study load and takes two years to complete. The leading theme of the programme is the *Individual in Social Context*. The objectives of the programme are to train students to do high-quality research in the social sciences across different contexts (interpersonal, social networks, interorganisational networks, teams and organisations, generations, and societies) and across different levels (micro, meso, and macro). The programme objectives have not been changed since the previous assessment in 2018.

The programme is meant to educate students in a multidisciplinary context, allowing them to study theories and methods from different social sciences. At the same time, students select one of the minors offered, being Methodology and Statistics, Organisation Studies, Social Psychology, or Sociology. Selecting one of these minors gives students the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills in one of these social sciences' disciplines. Compared to 2018, the minor Social Sciences has been split in two separate minors, being the minors Sociology and Organisational Studies. From September 2020 onwards, the minors are changed to tracks to emphasise further the disciplinary choices open to students in the programme. The former panel welcomed the orientation of the programme, as students are given the opportunity to combine disciplinary grounding in one of the programme disciplines with the multidisciplinary perspective. The former panel recommended to communicate these aspects more clearly, as they may be regarded to be strong points of the programme.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme have not been changed since the programme was assessed by the former assessment panel in 2018. The former panel was positive about the academic nature and academic level of the intended learning outcomes, clearly demonstrating the research master requirements. The panel recommended, however, to include knowledge and skills for non-academic positions, as students may not only be eligible for PhD positions, but for non-academic positions as well.

Considerations

The objectives of the programme have, so the panel observed, remained the same as in the previous assessment of 2018. In line with the former panel's judgement, this panel endorses these objectives, as they meet the high-level academic and research goals of research master programmes in the field of social sciences.

The intended learning outcomes have, so the panel established, not been changed since 2018. In line with the former panel's judgements, this panel assesses the intended learning outcomes of the programme to adequately reflect the disciplinary and multidisciplinary nature, the research orientation, and the academic level of the programme. The panel observed the intended learning outcomes to reach master level, as they meet the international Dublin descriptors for this level.

The panel notes the programme not to have included knowledge and skills for non-academic positions in the intended learning outcomes. However, about 50 % of the programme graduates find positions in non-academic research organisations. In addition, students undertake non-academic learning activities, such as doing traineeships in non-academic research organisations and attending colloquia and seminars to prepare for non-academic positions. In the panel's view, the intended learning outcomes ought to be congruent with the student learning activities in the programme. Non-academic learning activities warrant explicit mentioning of non-academic intended learning outcomes to align the learning outcomes to the learning activities in the curriculum. Therefore, the panel recommends to add non-academic intended learning outcomes to the current list.

The panel appreciates the balance of disciplinary knowledge and skills and the multidisciplinary perspective in the programme objectives and intended learning outcomes. The panel feels, however, programme management could bring forward and emphasise the multidisciplinary dimensions of the programme in a more pronounced manner and could clarify and foster the interaction of different disciplines in the programme. The panel recommends, therefore, to state the multidisciplinary dimensions of the programme more clearly and to propagate the added value of these dimensions.

The former panel did not comment on the choice of English for the name of the programme and the language of instruction, probably because these were not part of the assessment framework at that time. This panel endorses the English programme name and English as the language of instruction, as the programme not only caters for Dutch students, but also for international students. In addition, research in the field of social sciences is conducted primarily in English.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 1, Intended learning outcomes.

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

The entry requirements and admission procedures of the programme have not been changed since the previous assessment in 2018.

The number of students entering the programme is on average 15 incoming students per year. This number is similar to the intake in 2018 and the intake prior to 2018.

Programme management demonstrated the alignment of the curriculum with the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The curriculum of the programme was almost the same as in 2018. The only major difference is the split of the minor Social Sciences into two separate minors Sociology and Organisation Studies. Programme management has taken this decision to bring forward these two disciplines more explicitly. In the curriculum, students take joint courses in each of the disciplines offered in the programme (18 EC), joint courses in research methods and techniques (27 EC), skills courses (3 EC), minor-specific courses (18 EC), and individual research activities (54 EC), such as traineeships, colloquia and seminars, the first-year paper and the master thesis. In the courses on research methods and techniques, opportunities are explored to apply methods to research questions in different disciplines, thereby promoting the multidisciplinary dimensions of the curriculum. In addition, students are required to attend at least three out of ten colloquia and seminars outside of their own discipline. Some of the more talented students take additional courses in other disciplines than their own. As has been indicated when discussing Standard 1, students undertake non-academic learning activities. These may be internal and international traineeships in non-academic research organisations or colloquia and seminars to prepare for non-academic positions.

The staff lecturing in the programme has not changed significantly since the previous assessment in 2018 and their qualifications have remained largely the same. At the moment, 97 % of the teachers have PhDs and 81 % of them have acquired the University Teaching Qualification certificate. The staff participate in one of the four research programmes Methodology and Statistics, Social Psychology, Sociology, and Organisation Studies. In recent research assessments, these research programmes obtained on each of the criteria the rankings *very good* or *excellent*. One of the changes relevant to the programme since 2018, is the foundation of the Herbert Simon Research Institute. The Institute stimulates research in the social sciences, provides additional internal traineeships for students and offers extra PhD-positions for programme graduates. The programme clearly benefits from the activities of the Institute.

The educational concept and the study methods in the programme have not markedly been changed since the previous assessment in 2018. The introduction of the Tilburg Educational Profile by Tilburg University increased the weight put on students' character building.

Students regard the overall study load of the programme as reasonable. The first semester of the programme is, nevertheless, rather challenging for students, coming from bachelor programmes. Programme management is working on making this transition easier. The 2018/2019 cohort showed on average low student satisfaction rates. The drop-out rates for this cohort were relatively high. Documentation on the reasons for these figures was lacking, but programme management explained during the visit to the panel this cohort was atypical and longer-term trends in student satisfaction rates and student success rates remain positive.

All learning activities in the programme were changed to online activities during the Covid-crisis, as on campus teaching was practically not feasible. The online learning activities were assured to meet course goals and programme intended learning outcomes. The quality of teaching has been very actively monitored by the programme committee. The programme director and the Education Coordinator approached students to inquire about their well-being and to help them. The Education Coordinator assisted students, who experienced more than usual stress levels.

Considerations

In line with the former panel's assessment, this panel approves of the entry requirements and admission procedures of the programme.

The number of incoming students in the programme remains rather limited. These students are divided across minors, leading to sometimes very small numbers of two or three students in class. These class sizes may hamper the exchange of views and opinions in class, which may restrict debate and consequently diminish the effects of education. The panel proposes to consider measures to raise the intake, as this may be beneficial to the educational viability of the programme.

The curriculum meets, so the panel established, the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The panel observed the courses in the curriculum generally to address large numbers of intended learning outcomes. The panel acknowledges the breadth of research topics and methods addressed in the courses, but feels limiting the number of intended learning outcomes per course may add to the focus of the courses and may allow for more depth in addressing course subjects.

In line with the former panel's assessment, this panel is positive about the contents and the coherence of the curriculum. The panel considers the curriculum to be solid in terms of offering disciplinary grounding to students, introducing them to the multidisciplinary perspective and teaching them in depth research methods and techniques in the social sciences.

As the former panel, this panel is very positive about the staff lecturing in the programme. The lecturers have good credentials in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records. The research programmes which they are involved in, show very good results in recent research assessments. The programme benefits from the Herbert Simon Research Institute.

Following the former panel's assessment, this panel regards the educational concept and study methods as appropriate for this programme. The panel sees the study load as reasonable for this research master programme, but welcomes the steps programme management is taking to balance the study load in the first semester.

The panel acknowledges the positive trends in student satisfaction figures and student success rates. At the same time, the panel advises programme management to reflect upon and to learn lessons from less positive figures or events.

As the panel observed, 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 Standard 2, Teaching-learning environment.

3.3 Standard 3: Student assessment

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

The examination and assessment rules and regulations for the programme have not drastically been changed since the previous assessment in 2018, though some changes were made. The programme assessment plan will be in place in the academic year 2020/2021. Being based upon the principles of constructive alignment, this plan clarifies the relations between the programme intended learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment criteria and illustrates how intended learning outcomes are tested in the programme. The Examiners' Handbook offers examiners guidance on drafting examinations in line with course goals and intended learning outcomes. The examination methods in the courses have not been changed since 2018.

Since May 2019, the Faculty Examination Board has been divided into one Board for the psychology programmes of the Faculty and one Board for the social sciences programmes. The former panel found the Faculty Examination Board to have only limited involvement with the quality assurance of examinations and assessments in this programme. In 2020, the Instructions for Examination Boards took effect, highlighting the responsibilities of the Examination Board, as required by Dutch law. The Examination Board is assisted by the Assessment and Thesis Committee, who will regularly review course examinations and master theses. Thus far, this has not been done, partly because of the Covid-crisis.

The former panel recommended in 2018 to revise the marking scheme for the master thesis, as the panel noted the trend towards inflation of grades. The assessment process and marking scheme for the master thesis have now been updated to address this issue. The new marking scheme includes eight assessment criteria with different weights, contrary to the previous scheme with six equally weighted criteria. Rubrics are provided to examiners to score the criteria. In addition, students are required to meet strict deadlines for submitting their theses and have to orally defend their work. The deadline adds to the accountability of students for the scheduling of their work. The oral defence is also assessed and allows examiners to assess student's independence. As in 2018, the assessment of theses is in the hand of two examiners, who independently assess the thesis.

Programme management has taken measures to organise examinations and assessments in the Covid-crisis and to monitor their quality. Most examinations are written assignments and kept this form. The other examinations were changed to online examinations. Proctoring, rearranging of questions or checking by telephone by examiners were adopted to prevent fraud. As the distribution of grades for on campus examinations and online examinations proved to be comparable, there was no reason to suspect fraud. The Examination Board monitored the quality of online examinations.

Considerations

In line with the former panel's assessment, this panel finds the rules and regulations for the programme regarding examinations' and assessments' quality assurance to be adequate.

The panel sees the step to split the former Examination Board and to install one separate Board for the social sciences programmes of the Faculty as positive. This step allows the Examination Board to be more closely involved with the social sciences programmes, among which this programme is included. Although the Covid-crisis challenges may have slowed down activities, the panel recommends the Examination Board to continue taking a more active role regarding the programme examinations and assessments quality assurance.

In line with the former panel's assessment, this panel finds the examination methods appropriate for the knowledge and skills to be tested in the programme.

The panel approves of the new marking scheme for theses, as this scheme allows for more precise and better justified grading of theses. The panel found the feedback by thesis examiners to be sufficient for most theses. For four theses examined by the panel the feedback was found to be somewhat lacking. In these cases, the feedback was too concise or lacked arguments to substantiate the grades or lacked transparency in integrating the grades for the written report and for the oral defence. The panel recommends to assure adequate feedback being given for master theses and to involve a third examiner in cases of high grades.

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.

3.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

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

The panel studied the examinations of a number of courses of the programme.

In addition, the panel reviewed fifteen master theses of the last three complete years. The theses were selected from all of the theses of the last three years. In the selection, thesis with various grades as well as by students in all of the minors were represented. The average grades for the theses evolved over the years from 8.14 in 2016 to 7.63 in 2019 and to 7.75 in 2020. The former panel considered the grades for the theses as being somewhat inflated. The lowering of grades over the last few years may be regarded as the effect of ending this trend of grade inflation.

The proportion of graduates from the programme proceeding to PhD trajectories is about 50 %. The other 50 % of the graduates secured positions in non-academic research organisations. These proportions are more or less equal to those found by the former panel in 2018.

A number of graduates from the programme have published their master theses in peer-reviewed journals. Although no definite figures on proportions of graduates who have done so are available, part of the master theses have led to publications.

Programme management did not split the thesis supervisor and co-author roles, as the former panel suggested.

Considerations

The course examinations, which the panel reviewed were up to standard. In 2018, students criticised the examinations of the *Survey Research and Psychometrics*, *Structured Equation Modelling & Longitudinal Data Analysis* courses as being too simple. During the visit, lecturers informed the panel these examinations have been changed and now test appropriate levels of analysis and understanding.

All fifteen master theses the panel reviewed were found to be at least satisfactory. No theses were found to be unsatisfactory. Six theses were regarded by the panel to be good, whereas two theses were found to be excellent. Some theses were explicitly found to be publishable. The grades given to the theses by the programme examiners were found to be appropriate for eleven theses. For three theses, the grade given was regarded to be somewhat too high. The grade for one thesis was found to be somewhat too low. The differences between the grades of the programme examiners and the panel were in no instance more than 1.0 point.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 4, Achieved learning outcomes.

4. Overview of assessments

Standard	Assessment
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Programme meets Standard 1
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Programme meets Standard 2
Standard 3: Student assessment	Programme meets Standard 3
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Programme meets Standard 4
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.

- To add intended learning outcomes on knowledge and skills for non-academic positions.
- To state the multidisciplinary dimensions of the programme more clearly and to propagate the added value of these dimensions.
- To consider measures to raise the intake, as this may be beneficial to the educational viability of the programme.
- To limit the number of intended learning outcomes per course, thereby adding to the focus of the courses and allowing for more depth in addressing course subjects.
- To reflect on and to learn lessons from less positive figures or events.
- For the Examination Board to continue taking a more active role regarding the programme examinations and assessments quality assurance.
- To assure adequate feedback being given for master theses and involving the third examiner in case of high grades.

Appendix: Assessment process

Certiked VBI evaluation agency was requested by Tilburg University to support the limited framework programme assessment process for the Research Master Social and Behavioural Sciences of this University. The objective of the programme assessment of this research master programme was to establish whether or not 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 of 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 of 30 May, 2016.

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.

Having conferred with management of the Research Master Social and Behavioural Sciences of Tilburg University, 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);
- C. Fang MSc, PhD Candidate, Interuniversity Center for Social Theory and Methodology, Utrecht 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 have given their approval.

The programme was accredited by NVAO on 31 July, 2018. The programme requested NVAO to be assessed under the so-called light regime (in Dutch: lichte inpassingsbeoordeling), as the programme was assessed relatively recently, in March 2018. NVAO authorised the programme to be assessed under the light regime. The reason for the light-regime assessment was to fit the programme in the OZM Maatschappij assessment cluster of NVAO. Under this regime, the present panel has the right to take the findings, considerations and conclusions of the former assessment panel as their own, in case no substantial changes took place since the previous assessment.

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. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator selected fifteen final projects from this list. In the selection, final projects with lower, average and higher grades were selected. All of the minors in the programme were covered in the selection.

The panel members were forwarded in time the documents, prepared by programme management. These documents included the state-of-the-art report, the appendices to this report, the previous self-evaluation report, the former assessment panel advisory report, course material and course examinations, Programme Committee minutes, Examination Board annual reports, and notes on Covid-related measures taken by programme management. The student chapter was part of the state-of-the-art report. The appendices to this report included, among others, the intended learning outcomes, curriculum structure, teaching methods, examination methods, overview of staff, the master thesis assessment form, and students' publications. In addition, the expert panel members were forwarded a number of final projects of programme graduates, these final projects being part of the selection made by the process coordinator.

To assist panel members in assessing the programme, they were sent the Trained Eye Research Masters Limited Framework document of Certiked evaluation agency, this document being the elaboration of the NVAO Assessment framework and the NVAO Specification for research master programmes.

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 visit. Panel members discussed the procedures to be adopted during the visit, the preliminary findings about the programme, and the questions to be put to the programme representatives.

On 18 February, 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.

- 09.00 – 09.45 Faculty Board representatives and programme director
- 10.00 – 11.00 Programme director and core lecturers
- 11.15 – 12.00 Examination Board
- 12.00 – 12.30 Open office hours
- 12.30 – 13.00 Panel lunch (closed session)
- 13.00 – 13.45 Lecturers/final project examiners
- 14.00 – 14.45 Students, Programme Committee student member, and programme alumni
- 14.45 – 16.15 Deliberations panel (closed session)
- 16.15 – 16.30 Main findings presentation by panel chair to programme representatives

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. At the end of the visit, the panel chair presented in broad outline the findings, considerations, conclusions and recommendations to programme representatives.

Panel members and programme management will meet for the development dialogue in April 2021, after programme management studied the panel assessment report.

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 it 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 these factual inaccuracies, the Certiked bureau sent the report to the University Board to accompany their request for the continuation of the existing accreditation of this programme.