

Assessment report  
NVAO Limited Framework Programme Assessment

**Research Master Social and Cultural Science: Comparative Research on Societies**

Radboud University Nijmegen

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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 Cultural Science: Comparative Research on Societies programme of Radboud University Nijmegen. The programme was assessed according to the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands. The additional NVAO requirements for research master programmes were taken into account.

The programme organisation is adequate and the programme is well-embedded in the Faculty of Social Sciences of Radboud University Nijmegen. The organisational basis for the programme is strong, due to the efforts of programme management and the Degree Programme Committee. The programme representatives were very reflective on the programme's position and future.

The profile of the programme is satisfactorily clear. The profile rests upon the research character of the programme, the themes inequality, cohesion and diversity addressed, the variety of methods taught and the comparative perspective adopted. The panel, nevertheless, recommends to state the profile in more fundamental, comprehensive terms, binding the themes together and allowing the new political science specialisation to be covered by these terms.

The programme intended learning outcomes conform to the master level and surpass this level, aiming at higher levels of knowledge production, and adequately preparing students for PhD trajectories.

The panel endorses the English name of the programme and English as the language of instruction. English enables students to appropriately prepare for international research positions in this field.

Programme management adequately remedied the shortcomings identified by the previous assessment panel and followed up on the recommendations made by the previous panel.

Although the intake is limited, the number of incoming students allows for adequate class sizes and for educational viability of the programme. The admission requirements and procedures are elaborate and assure that the students enrolled have the capacities to complete the programme.

The curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes of the programme, and enables students to reach these high-level learning outcomes. The curriculum is consistent, coherent and cumulative, being steered by the programme profile. The methods courses are robust, allowing students to obtain solid grounding in both qualitative and quantitative methods and to specialise in one of these. Although mixed methods are addressed, the panel recommends to include an integrative course on this subject. The elective space in the curriculum with courses and internships gives students the chance to tailor the curriculum to their interests. The panel is pleased to see students of this programme having to complete extra, more complex assignments in regular master courses to reach the research master level in these courses.

The panel sees the staff members participating in the programme as well-qualified lecturers. Their qualifications in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records are up to standard. The departments the lecturers take part in as researchers, obtained *very good* to *excellent* results in the recent research assessments. The panel regards the work load of the lecturers as manageable, but advises to stay attentive in this respect. The panel endorses the steps the Faculty Board is taking to recruit a new professor in cultural anthropology and development studies, the candidate preferably having a strong research profile.

The educational concepts and study methods are appropriate for this programme. The guidance offered by the programme director, student counsellor and lecturers is adequate and is appreciated by students. Programme management is receptive to students' feedback. Programme management has completed an inventory of study load bottlenecks in order to arrive at a more balanced distribution of study load. The panel recommends to balance the study load in the programme further. This may also improve the student success rates.

The rules and regulations for the programme examinations and assessments are adequate. Suitable procedures have been put in place to assure the quality of examinations and assessments.

The Examination Board actively monitors the quality of the examinations and assessments and decisively enforces rules and regulations in this respect. Programme management follows up on the recommendations made by the Examination Board.

The examination methods in the courses are adequate for the knowledge, insights and skills to be tested in these courses. The methods are satisfactorily varied.

The supervision processes for the master thesis are adequate. The assessment procedures involving two examiners and the elaborate thesis evaluation form are up to standard. The written comments by examiners on the thesis evaluation forms are adequate. The panel recommends to refer more explicitly to the programme intended learning outcomes on this evaluation form. The panel notes master theses are not consistently checked for plagiarism. The panel recommends to check master theses for plagiarism, the programme director to inspect plagiarism scores and to document plagiarism scores.

The measures programme management has taken in the Covid-crisis to provide education, organise examinations and assessments, and monitor the quality of these are appropriate. The well-being of students has been guarded adequately as well.

The panel reviewed fifteen master theses of graduates of programme of the last four years. No theses were found by the panel to be unsatisfactory. Six theses were graded satisfactory by the panel. Six theses were regarded to be good. Three theses were found to be excellent. The marks for eleven theses were found by the panel to be appropriate. The marks for three theses were regarded to be too high, but only one point or less too high. One thesis was considered to be graded one half point too low.

The panel, consequently, considers the average grade for the master theses of 7.8 to be appropriate. The proportion of students graduating cum laude, being 33 %, is regarded by the panel as adequate as well. The panel appreciates the reflective stand of the Examination Board on thesis grades and cum laude rates and recommends the Board to continue monitoring these figures. The panel is positive about the proportion of students having had the Comparative Research Project or master thesis published in peer-reviewed journals.

Career preparation activities are organised in the programme. The panel, nevertheless, recommends to intensify the labour market orientation for students by, for instance, scheduling events just for the particular group of students from this programme and reinforcing connections to programme alumni further, enabling students to get a clearer view of non-academic career options. The panel also recommends to step up the efforts to prepare students for PhD positions by training them in drafting proposals and writing applications.

The panel appreciates the programme preparing well for both academic or non-academic research positions. The panel applauds the results of the programme, 50 % of the graduates having secured PhD positions. The panel recommends better documentation of the number and type of position of graduates obtaining non-academic research positions.

The panel which conducted the assessment of the Research Master Social and Cultural Science: Comparative Research on Societies programme of Radboud University Nijmegen 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.

Rotterdam, 10 September 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 Cultural Science: Comparative Research on Societies (Research)
Orientation, level programme:	Academic Master
Grade:	MSc
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specialisations (two):	Comparing Societies: Questions Regarding Cohesion and Inequality Changing Societies: Questions Regarding Cultural Diversity and Inequality
Location:	Nijmegen
Mode of study:	Full-time
Language of instruction:	English
Registration in CROHO:	21PM-60132
Name of institution:	Radboud University Nijmegen
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.
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##### *Findings*

The Research Master Social and Cultural Science: Comparative Research on Societies programme is one of the research master programmes of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Radboud University Nijmegen. The programme carries 120 EC of study load and takes two years to complete. Being accountable to the Dean of the Faculty, the directors of the educational institute Societal Sciences and of the research institute Radboud Social and Cultural Science are jointly responsible for the contents of the programme. The research institute includes the Sociology department and the Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies department. Researchers from the research group on Gender and Diversity are involved in both these departments. The programme director manages the programme on the day-to-day basis. The Degree Programme Committee, being composed of lecturers and students of the programme, advises the programme director on the programme quality. The Examination Board has been set up specifically for this programme. The Board monitors the quality of examinations and assessments of the programme and verifies programme graduates meeting the intended learning outcomes.

The profile of the programme is to educate students to study and research the themes inequality, cohesion and diversity from a multi-disciplinary perspective and adopting various social sciences' methods. These themes, which are prominent themes in most social sciences, are studied from the perspectives of the disciplines sociology, anthropology, development studies, and gender and diversity studies. The programme is strongly research orientated, educating students in particular on comparative research within and between societies. The programme is multi-method and offers students training in qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. The programme offers two specialisations, being the *Comparing Societies* and *Changing Societies* specialisations. The former specialisation is mainly provided by the Sociology department and the latter specialisation is mostly offered by the Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies department. The research group on Gender and Diversity participate in both specialisations. All three research entities take part in the core courses of the programme. Programme management cooperates with the Political Science Department of Nijmegen School of Management with the intention to add political science as the third specialisation. The plan is to offer this specialisation from 2022/2023 onwards.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme include advanced knowledge of comparative research on societies, understanding how to formulate innovative comparative questions, skills to develop theoretical knowledge from various disciplines into comparative hypotheses, overview and understanding of qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques to test comparative hypotheses, skills to report research questions, theory, analytical designs and results and to discuss results, and skills to carry out internationally orientated research projects in social and cultural

sciences with the focus on the comparison of societies. These intended learning outcomes have been detailed in sixteen final qualifications.

The programme may be said to stand out among similar programmes both in the Netherlands and abroad, as being multi-disciplinary, as being focused on the research themes inequality, cohesion and diversity and as taking the comparative perspective on the study of these themes.

Programme management 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 clearly aims higher and has a much stronger research orientation than regular master programmes in this field and aims to prepare students for PhD positions.

The programme name is in English, and the programme is taught in English. English is chosen, as English is the *lingua franca* of research in this field, which is highly international. The English name and English as language of instruction prepare students for the academic and non-academic research positions in this field.

In 2015, the assessment panel judged the programme not to fully meet the requirements of the limited assessment framework. The shortcomings identified regarded the research context of the Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies Department (CAOS). Measures were taken to remedy the shortcomings. These were, among others, renewing the research vision for CAOS, recruiting two full professors with strong research and education track records, and involving CAOS researchers prominently in core courses of the programme and in supervision of research projects. In 2019, the assessment panel assessed the programme to meet all requirements, judging these measures to have been effective. Programme management took measures to raise the thematic contents of the curriculum in the second year and to diversify the student population, in response to previous panel's recommendations.

#### *Considerations*

The panel sees the programme organisation as adequate and considers the programme to be well-embedded in the Faculty of Social Sciences of Radboud University Nijmegen. The panel sees programme management and the Degree Programme Committee as securing a solid organisational basis for the programme. The panel was pleased to meet with programme representatives who were clearly very reflective on the programme's position and future.

The programme profile clearly rests upon the research character of the programme, the themes addressed, inequality, cohesion and diversity, the variety of methods taught and the comparative perspective. Consequently, the panel judges the profile of the programme as satisfactorily clear. The panel, nevertheless, recommends to state the profile in more fundamental, comprehensive terms, binding the themes together and allowing the new political science specialisation to be covered by these terms.

The programme intended learning outcomes meet the research master requirements. The intended learning outcomes, so the panel established, conform to the master level and surpass this level, aiming at higher levels of knowledge production and adequately preparing students for PhD trajectories.

The panel welcomes the characteristics of the programme, in comparison to similar programmes in the Netherlands and abroad.

The panel endorses the English name of the programme and English as the language of instruction. The English language enables students to appropriately prepare for international research positions in this field.

The panel notes programme management adequately remedied the shortcomings identified by the previous assessment panel and followed up on the recommendations made by the previous panel.

*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 number of students enrolling in the programme is on average 11 students per year for the last six years, ranging from 7 to 21 students per year. The proportion of international students has been growing over the years. The gender balance in the student body is even. Despite the low influx, the Faculty Board is committed to retain the programme. Programme management, however, wants to raise the intake. Adding the political science specialisation is one of the means to achieve this goal.

The admission requirements for the programme are bachelor degrees in sociology, anthropology and development studies, communication science or related, social cultural fields. Applicants' results in their previous education should be good. Candidates have to be proficient in English. The motivation of applicants is considered to be important. They, therefore, have to submit a letter showing their motivation to enrol in this programme. Letters of recommendation are required as well. The Admission Board, being composed of the programme director and the Examination Board, decides on the admissions. From the applications received, a large proportion is rejected. No preliminary courses are offered. Students who are admitted but have deficiencies, are encouraged to remedy the deficiencies by studying recommended literature before the start of the programme.

Programme management demonstrated the curriculum to meet the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The curriculum consists of courses, specifically designed for this research master programme. Four courses (24 EC) are regular master courses. In these courses, research master students have their own workgroups and/or do assignments, specifically designed for them and meant to bring them to research master level. The curriculum is organised in core courses for all students (36 EC), separate specialisation courses for each of the two specialisations (24 EC), elective courses (24 EC), and the master thesis (36 EC). Both core and specialisation courses cover theory in the programme field, social sciences research methods and practical research training. In the core courses, students are acquainted with both qualitative and quantitative methods. In the specialisations, they deepen their knowledge and skills in either quantitative methods (sociology specialisation) or qualitative methods (cultural anthropology/development studies specialisation). Mixed methods are addressed as well, although not in a separate course. In the electives, students may tailor the curriculum to their individual preferences and career interests. The Examination Board approves the electives, verifying the level, coherence and alignment to students' preferences of these courses. As part of the elective space, students may opt for internships in both academic or non-academic organisations. Students should find internships in external organisations and are not permitted to do internships in the Faculty departments. The proportion of students doing internships increased over the years and is now about 50 % of all students. The Examination Board approves of the internship, from the perspective of the internship promoting the student's career preparation. At the end of the first year, students in pairs do the *Comparative Research Project* and go through the entire research cycle in this project. At the end of the second year, students complete the research

cycle in the individual master thesis. Students in the programme are invited to attend seminars in which staff members present their research results.

The staff teaching in the programme comprises 17 lecturers, among whom are nine full professors or associate professors. All lecturers have PhDs and 77 % (13 out of 17) of them are University Teaching Qualification certified. Lecturers are internationally qualified researchers in their field of study and publish in peer-reviewed journals. They participate as researchers either in the research department Sociology or in the research department Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies. Both departments host researchers from the research group Gender & Diversity. In the most recent research assessment in 2020, the Sociology department was evaluated *very good* on quality and relevance and *excellent* on viability, while the Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies department was evaluated as *very good* on all three assessment criteria. Various courses are taught by lecturers coming from different research groups, adding to the multi-disciplinary, multi-method orientation of the programme. Lecturers meet regularly to assure coherence across courses. Lecturers experience their work load as manageable. Recently, a full professor in sociology and the full professor in development studies left the Faculty. The professor in sociology has been replaced by a new full professor in this discipline. The Faculty Board is in the process of recruiting a new professor in cultural anthropology and development studies.

The programme rests upon the educational concepts of *active autonomy* and *collaborative learning*. Active autonomy means students taking their learning process into their own hands and following their own scientific curiosity. The programme offers freedom of choice for students. Collaborative learning implies students learning from each other. In several courses, they work together in small groups. The study methods in the courses are lectures, seminars, workgroups, presentations, (computer) practicums, and individual or group supervision. Class sizes are small. The students-to-staff ratio in the programme is on average 17/1. Students experience lecturers as being easily approachable and as being very helpful. Students are guided in the programme by the programme student counsellor, who meets with students and may be approached by them for assistance. The programme director contacts students regularly and discusses with them their individual curriculum and the electives to be taken. Students find the curriculum challenging and experience the study load as heavy, especially peak loads. In the courses, mid-term assignments are scheduled to balance the study load. Only two out of a total of 75 incoming students in the last six years dropped out of the programme. The student success rates for the programme are 42 % of the students completing the programme within two years and 69 % graduating within three years. The average study duration is 27 months. Students tend to experience study delay in the master thesis or internships.

Programme management has taken measures to organise education in the Covid crisis and to monitor the quality of the education. On-campus education often proved not to be feasible, due to government regulations. Therefore, teaching has been converted to online teaching. Lecturers have been inventive in organising online lectures and incorporating online interaction methods. To guard students' well-being, the programme director, student counsellor and lecturers kept in contact with students online and in person. Programme management put in efforts to maintain the community feeling among students. Students experience learning processes in the Covid crisis as challenging, but they appreciate the assistance offered by programme management and lecturers.

### *Considerations*

Although the intake is limited, the number of incoming students allows for adequate class sizes and for educational viability of the programme. The entry requirements and admission procedures are elaborate and assure that the students enrolled have the capacities to complete the programme.

The curriculum meets, so the panel established, the intended learning outcomes of the programme, enabling students to reach these high-level learning outcomes. The panel considers the curriculum to be consistent, coherent and cumulative, being steered by the programme profile. The methods courses are cumulative as well and robust, allowing students to obtain solid grounding in both qualitative and quantitative methods and to further specialise in one of these. Although mixed methods are addressed, the panel recommends to include an integrative course on this subject. The elective space in the curriculum with courses and internships gives students the chance to tailor the curriculum to their interests. The panel is pleased to see students of this programme having to complete extra, more complex assignments in regular master courses to reach the research master level in these courses.

The panel sees the staff members participating in the programme as well-qualified lecturers. They have good credentials in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records. The departments the lecturers take part in as researchers obtained *very good to excellent* results in the recent research assessments. The panel finds the programme to be embedded in high-quality research activities. The panel regards the work load of the lecturers as manageable, but advises to stay attentive in this respect. The panel endorses the steps the Faculty Board is taking to recruit a new professor in cultural anthropology and development studies, the candidate preferably having a strong research profile.

The panel regards the educational concepts and study methods as appropriate for this programme. The guidance offered by the programme director, student counsellor and lecturers, is up to standard and is appreciated by students. Programme management is receptive to students' feedback. Programme management has completed an inventory of study load bottlenecks in order to arrive at a more balanced distribution of study load. The panel recommends to balance the study load in the programme further. This may also improve the student success figures.

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 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 for the programme are specified in the Education and Examination Regulations and in the Rules and Regulations of the Examination Board. To assure the quality of examinations and assessments, various measures have been taken in the programme. Draft course examinations are peer-reviewed by fellow examiners. Students are informed about the set up of course assessments. To assess course examinations, answer keys are used. Examiners give students feedback on their assignments or papers.

The Examination Board, which is installed specifically for this research master programme, ensures the quality of examinations and assessments of the programme. The Board regularly reviews course examinations, first-year end projects and master theses. The Board intends to review all courses, the coming years. The Examination Board's findings are communicated to programme management. The Board rules on students' choices of electives or internships.

In most of the courses, the final course grades are based upon multiple examinations. Examination methods are take-home examinations, small-group or individual assignments, papers, presentations, or portfolios. Written examinations are relatively rare.

For their master thesis, students may choose their own topic. Students drafting the master thesis are individually guided in the process by the thesis supervisor. Students are entitled to have about ten meetings with their supervisors. In five thesis seminars, students present the progress of their theses and are given feedback from fellow students and all thesis supervisors. Master theses are assessed by the supervisor and second reader, who separately complete the standardised thesis evaluation form. Up to 2021, the programme director was the second reader of all theses. The evaluation form consists of a range of unweighted criteria. Examiners may change the weights, but have to give the arguments to do so. Examiners have to comment on their assessments. The final thesis mark is the result of the discussion between the examiners. If their marks differ more than one grade point, a third examiner is appointed. Students complete the standard checklist on ethical aspects of the thesis. In case of sensitive primary data collection, students are obliged to ask for permission to the ethical review committee. Master theses are not consistently checked for plagiarism. The Examination Board does handle cases of suspected violation of rules with regard to plagiarism.

Programme management has taken measures to organise examinations and assessments in the Covid crisis and to monitor their quality. As most of the examinations in the programme are take-home examinations, essays or papers, the effect of the Covid crisis was relatively limited. Group assignments and peer review among students were organised online. Presentations were also done online or were pre-recorded. Lab examinations or theoretical examinations could take place on campus or were taken from home. The examinations and assessments were assured to meet the programme intended learning outcomes.

### *Considerations*

The panel considers the rules and regulations for the programme examinations and assessments to be adequate. Suitable procedures have been put in place to assure the quality of examinations and assessments.

The panel appreciates the position and activities of the Examination Board. The Board monitors actively the quality of examinations and assessments and enforces decisively rules and regulations in this respect. The panel is pleased to note programme management follows up on the recommendations made by the Examination Board.

The examination methods in the courses are adequate for the knowledge, insights and skills to be tested in these courses. The examination methods are satisfactorily varied.

The panel regards the supervision processes for the master thesis to be appropriate. The assessment procedures involving two examiners and the elaborate thesis evaluation form are up to standard. The written comments by examiners on the thesis evaluation forms are adequate. The panel recommends to refer more explicitly to the programme intended learning outcomes on this evaluation form. As master theses are not consistently being checked for plagiarism, the panel recommends to check master theses for plagiarism, the programme director to inspect plagiarism scores and to document plagiarism scores.

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.

#### *Findings*

Students are to demonstrate the knowledge and skills, they have acquired in the programme, in the master thesis. The average grade for the master theses is 7.8 for the cohorts 2014 to 2019. The Examination Board for the programme finds the marks of the thesis examiners not too high and to reflect appropriately the quality of the theses.

Master theses are written in the format of international journal articles, to allow students to have their thesis published in peer-reviewed journals. About 10 % of the programme graduates of the 2014 to 2019 cohorts succeeded in having their Comparative Research Project or their thesis published in peer-reviewed journals. Some students of this programme have won prestigious prizes for their theses.

The proportion of students graduating cum laude, was 33 % in the years 2014 to 2019. On the Faculty level, rules for cum laude are regularly discussed to keep cum laude proportions within certain boundaries.

The programme primarily aims to prepare students for both PhD positions or for positions in non-academic research. In the programme, students are given the chance to take electives or internships, allowing them to prepare for positions on the labour market. Every year, the study association schedules career events to allow students of this and the other research master programme of the Faculty to meet with alumni and to obtain information about career prospects.

Almost all students having graduated in the years 2000 to 2014 managed to secure university-level positions, about 75 % of them having positions in the field of this programme. On the basis of the figures for students of the 2014 to 2019 cohorts, the proportion of programme graduates proceeding to PhD trajectories is about 50 %. The programme does not distinguish between research or non-research positions in non-academic careers.

#### *Considerations*

The panel reviewed fifteen master theses of graduates of programme. The theses were selected from all of the theses of graduates of the last four years. The theses were selected on the basis of grades, lower, average and higher marks being evenly represented. The programme specialisations were also covered in the selection. No theses were found by the panel to be unsatisfactory. Six of the theses were graded satisfactory by the panel. Six theses were regarded to be good. Three theses were found to be excellent. The marks for eleven theses were found by the panel to be appropriate. The marks for three theses were considered to be too high, but only one point or less too high. One thesis was regarded to be graded one half point too low.

The panel, consequently, considers the average grade for the master theses of 7.8 to be appropriate. The proportion of students graduating cum laude, being 33 %, is regarded by the panel as adequate as well. The panel appreciates the reflective stand of the Examination Board on thesis grades and cum laude rates and recommends continual monitoring these figures. The panel is positive about the proportion of students having had the first-year end project or master thesis published in peer-reviewed journals.

Career preparation activities are organised in the programme. The panel, nevertheless, recommends to intensify the labour market orientation for students by, for instance, scheduling events just for the particular group of students from this programme and reinforcing connections to programme alumni further, enabling students to get a clearer view of non-academic career options. The panel also recommends to step up the efforts to prepare students for PhD positions by training them in drafting proposals and writing applications.

The panel appreciates the programme preparing well for both academic or non-academic research positions. The panel applauds the results of the programme, 50 % of the graduates having secured PhD positions. The panel recommends better documentation of the number and type of position 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.

#### 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 state the programme profile in more fundamental, comprehensive terms.
- To include an integrative course on mixed methods.
- To stay attentive with respect to the work load of the lecturers.
- To recruit a new professor in cultural anthropology and development studies, as the Faculty Board is doing, the candidate preferably having a strong research profile.
- To balance the study load in the programme further, which may also improve the student success rates.
- To refer more explicitly to the programme intended learning outcomes on the thesis evaluation form.
- To check master theses for plagiarism, the programme director to inspect plagiarism scores and to document plagiarism scores.
- For the Examination Board to continue to monitor thesis grades and cum laude rates of the programme.
- To intensify the labour market orientation for students by, among other, scheduling events just for the particular group of students of this programme and strengthening connections to alumni of programme further, enabling students to get a clearer view of non-academic career options.
- To step up the efforts to prepare students for PhD positions by training them in drafting proposals and writing applications.
- To better document the number and type of position of graduates obtaining non-academic research positions.

## Appendix: Assessment process

Certiked VBI evaluation agency was requested by Radboud University Nijmegen to support the limited framework programme assessment process for the Research Master Social and Cultural Science: Comparative Research on Societies programme 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.

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 the Research Master Social and Cultural Science: Comparative Research on Societies of Radboud University Nijmegen programme management, 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);
- Prof. J. van Stekelenburg PhD, Professor Social Conflict and Change, Faculty of Social Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands (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.

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 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 theses of programme graduates of the four most recent years. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator selected fifteen theses from this list. In the selection, theses with lower, average and higher grades were evenly represented. The specialisations of the programme were also represented evenly in the selection.

The panel members were forwarded in time the documents, prepared by programme management. These documents consisted of the self-evaluation report, the appendices to the self-evaluation report and additional information. The student chapter was part of the documentation. The appendices to the self-evaluation report included list of improvements, following the advice of the previous assessment panel, relationships between final qualifications, intended learning outcomes and Dublin descriptors, Education and Examination Regulations, overview of courses, relationships between course goals and programme final qualifications, staff overview, Examination Board Rules and Regulations, thesis evaluation protocol, and programme measures in time of Covid-19. The additional information consisted of organisational information, course dossiers, course examinations, and Degree Programme Committee and Examination Board minutes and annual reports.

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 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 8 June, 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 representatives, programme director
- 10.00 – 11.00 Programme director, members Degree Programme Committee, study advisor
- 11.15 – 12.00 Examination Board
- 12.00 – 13.00 Panel lunch (closed session), with 12.00 – 12.30 Open office hours
- 13.00 – 13.45 Lecturers/final project examiners
- 14.00 – 14.45 Students, Degree Programme Committee student member, and alumni
- 14.45 – 16.15 Deliberations panel (closed session)
- 16.15 – 16.30 Main findings presentation by panel chair to programme representatives
- 16.30 – 17.00 Development dialogue

Open office hours were communicated timely by programme management to staff and students. One person asked for an interview and met with the panel. The information provided was taken into account, but did not affect the panel's assessment of this programme.

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 panel 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.