

Assessment report
NVAO Limited Framework Programme Assessment

Research Master Cultural Anthropology: Sociocultural Transformation

Utrecht University

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 Cultural Anthropology: Sociocultural Transformation programme of Utrecht University. 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 embedded well in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University.

The profile of the programme is very clear, being focused on the mono-disciplinary study of the field of cultural anthropology and the qualitative, ethnographic methods needed to do research in this field. The panel welcomes students being directed towards the study of transformation of politics and society in the context of globalisation.

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

The panel welcomes the comparison of this programme to other programmes, observing both the similarities and the pronounced theoretical and research character of this programme.

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, and to relate to the international research community.

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

Although the intake of the programme is rather small, the average number of incoming students allows for appropriate class sizes and for educational viability. The panel supports the target intake figure of 20 students, set by programme management. The admission requirements and procedures are elaborate and assure admitting students, who have the capacities to complete the programme.

The curriculum is consistent, coherent and cumulative, meeting the intended learning outcomes. The courses allow students to reach advanced levels of knowledge and skills. The methods courses enable students with different backgrounds to achieve the required level in methods training. The panel suggests to keep on thinking of levelling differences by offering reading lists or preparatory courses, if this would be required. Although no electives are offered, students are given adequate opportunities to specialise in fieldwork and the master thesis. The panel appreciates the revisions of

courses programme management is implementing, allowing the programme curriculum to reflect current developments, be more coherent and accommodate students from different backgrounds.

The lecturers have very good credentials in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records. All lecturers are involved in international research and the programme is embedded in high-quality research activities. The panel is positive about new staff bringing dynamics to the programme and introducing new research topics in the programme.

The educational concept and study methods are appropriate for this programme, allowing students to intensively study and discuss subjects and methods in this field. The panel appreciates the measures taken by programme management to balance the study load and to intensify guidance for students. To strengthen community building among students further, the panel suggests to organise meetings of first-year students and second-year students in the second semester.

Suitable rules, regulations and procedures have been put in place to assure the examinations' and assessments' quality. The panel, nevertheless, recommends the Board of Examiners to act more decisively in monitoring examinations and assessments by, among other, scheduling calibration sessions to review master theses.

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

The supervision and assessment processes for the master thesis generally are appropriate. The panel does not doubt the quality of the current processes. The written comments by examiners on the thesis assessment forms are elaborate. To further improve the thesis assessment and grading processes, the panel recommends to make more transparent and to better document the conversion from the proposed grade to the final grade for the thesis, including the weighing in the final grade of the degree of students' independence in the thesis process and of the students' defence. The panel advises to introduce rubrics for theses' assessments, to assure the independent position of the second readers, as the number of examiners is rather small, to relate the assessment criteria for the thesis to the programme intended learning outcomes and to consider to add weights to the assessment criteria.

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 programme graduates of the last three years. No theses were found by the panel to be unsatisfactory. Out of all the theses reviewed, six theses were graded satisfactory by the panel, five theses were found to be good, two theses were regarded to be good to excellent and two theses were found to be excellent. The marks for nine theses were assessed by the panel to be appropriate. The panel found the marks for five theses to be too high, but less than one point too high. One thesis was found to be graded somewhat too low.

The panel regards the average grade for the master theses of 7.7 appropriate. The proportion of students graduating cum laude, being about 30 %, is considered by the panel to be adequate as well.

The programme prepares for academic and non-academic research positions in the programme field. To further improve students preparing for PhD positions, the panel recommends to have students write their master thesis in journal article format, allowing them to publish their thesis in other than peer-reviewed journals including the journal of the Department. To foster students preparing for non-academic research positions, the panel recommends to give students more guidance on non-academic career opportunities and to intensify the interaction with programme alumni.

Programme management adequately keeps track of the number of graduates obtaining academic or non-academic research positions. The panel sees as positive 32 % of the graduates having secured PhD positions or non-academic research positions, acknowledging challenges on the labour market to obtain these positions.

The panel which conducted the assessment of the Research Master Cultural Anthropology: Sociocultural Transformation programme of Utrecht 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 continue the accreditation of this programme.

Rotterdam, 2 September 2021,

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

W. Vercouteren MSc
(panel secretary)

2. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO:	Master Cultural Anthropology: Sociocultural Transformation (Research)
Orientation, level programme:	Academic Master
Grade:	MSc
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specialisations:	N.A.
Location:	Utrecht
Mode of study:	Full-time
Language of instruction:	English
Registration in CROHO:	21PD-60378
Name of institution:	Utrecht 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 Cultural Anthropology: Sociocultural Transformation programme is one of the seven research master programmes of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University. The programme carries 120 EC of study load and takes two years to complete. The organisation of this as well as the other research master programmes is in the hands of the Graduate School of Social and Behavioural Sciences. The Board of Studies of the Graduate School, on which sit the programme coordinators of all seven research master programmes, is responsible for the coordination and quality assurance of these programmes. The programme coordinator manages the programme on the day-to-day basis. The Programme Advisory Committee, being composed of lecturers and students, advises the programme coordinator on the quality of the programme. The Board of Examiners for this and the other research master programmes of the Faculty monitors the quality of examinations and assessments of the programme and verifies programme graduates meeting the intended learning outcomes.

The programme profile is to train students to become qualified cultural anthropologists who arrive at the level needed to pursue PhD trajectories in this field. The objectives of the programme are to educate students to be knowledgeable of current anthropological theory, to apply anthropological insights, to use advanced research methods in this field, and to complete the empirical cycle in this field. The programme is embedded in the research programme *Sovereignty and Social Contestation* of the Department of Cultural Anthropology of Utrecht University and is, therefore, geared towards the study of contemporary transformation of politics and society in the context of globalisation. The programme is mono-disciplinary, being directed towards the study of cultural anthropology, and focuses on qualitative, ethnographic research methods.

The intended learning outcomes of the programme include, among other, proficient in current trends in anthropological theory, formulating research questions about new areas of study from multiple theoretical perspectives, contributing innovative ideas to current scientific and societal debates, doing empirical field research with anthropological, mostly qualitative methods, reflecting critically on scientific and societal debates in this field, being aware of professional ethics and judging ethical use of anthropological data, communicating on research in this field with academics and conveying research work to lay audiences, keeping pace with relevant trends in this field, and pursuing PhDs or non-academic research positions.

Programme management made the comparison to other programmes. In the Netherlands, no mono-disciplinary two-year master programmes in this field are offered. Master programmes in Oslo and Stockholm resemble this programme most. Notwithstanding clear similarities to these programmes,

this programme distinguishes itself through the foundational, theoretical training and through the extensive fieldwork and master thesis research project.

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 English, and the programme is taught in English as well. The English name and English as language of instruction are chosen to prepare students for the international labour market for research positions in this field, and to acquire international and intercultural skills beneficial to act in international research contexts. English is also the *lingua franca* of international research in this field. Finally, the English language allows international students to enrol.

Programme management addressed the recommendations of the previous assessment panel. More career preparation activities are offered to students for both academic and non-academic careers. The staff composition has been changed to raise the research productivity of the programme staff. More diverse examination methods have been introduced. Measures have been taken to increase the number of master theses published.

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 Utrecht University.

The panel appreciates the profile of the programme as being very clear, and focusing on the mono-disciplinary study of the field of cultural anthropology and the qualitative, ethnographic methods needed to do research in this field. The panel welcomes students being directed towards the study of transformation of politics and society in the context of globalisation.

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 in some respects, aiming at higher levels of knowledge production and adequately preparing students for PhD trajectories.

The panel welcomes the comparison of this programme to similar programmes abroad, observing the similarities to these programmes and the pronounced theoretical and research character of this programme.

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, and to relate to the international research community.

Programme management appropriately followed up on the recommendations made by the previous assessment 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 applications for the programme is on average 45 per year for the last six years. On average 25 students are admitted. Only part of them actually enrol, because of other options or because of financial restrictions. The number of students enrolling in the programme is stable, being on average 16 students per year for the last six years and ranging from 11 to 20 students per year. Programme management has set the target intake figure at 20 students. The proportion of international students is quite stable, being on average nearly 40 % of total intake. International students come from around the globe. The gender balance is uneven, almost 75 % of the incoming students being female.

The programme admission requirements are adequate undergraduate training in the programme field. The grade point average of candidates in the previous education must be at least be 7.5 (Dutch grading system). Applicants have to be proficient in English. They have to submit an essay on their motivation to enter this programme as well as a letter of recommendation. The Board of Studies of the Graduate School decides on admissions. Three categories of students with to some extent different backgrounds are admitted to the programme: students having completed the Utrecht University anthropology bachelor, students having finished anthropology bachelors of other universities and students having taken social sciences bachelors with sufficient training in anthropology.

Programme management demonstrated the curriculum to meet the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The curriculum is composed of courses, specifically designed for this programme. Students do not take regular master courses. The curriculum consists of compulsory courses only. No electives are offered, as this is financially not feasible. In the first year, students take courses in theory, methods and the integration of both. In the second year, students do the fieldwork and write their master thesis. The curriculum rests on three course clusters, being the theory, methodology, and research clusters. The theory cluster consists of six courses (45 EC) and familiarises students with anthropological concepts and theories. The methods cluster comprises three courses (22.5 EC) and trains students in qualitative, ethnographic methods, in drafting the research proposal for the master thesis, and in analysing fieldwork data on the master thesis' theoretical model. Programme management intends to introduce new methods, such as sensory and digital ethnography. The research cluster (52.5 EC) includes ethnographic fieldwork to gather data for the thesis, the thesis writing seminar and the master thesis itself. Students are encouraged to go abroad for ethnographic fieldwork. Any risks in areas are addressed in the preparatory courses and are taken into account by students in their research proposals.

Having discussed the curriculum with students and staff, programme management recently revised both theory and methods courses. Unfavourable student evaluations for courses played a role in

these changes. Theory courses have been changed to reflect current developments in the discipline, to better match staff and student research interests and to improve curriculum coherence. Methods courses have been changed to allow students from both anthropology and other social sciences backgrounds to benefit from the methods training. Masterclasses have been introduced to acquaint students with methods and ethics of ethnographic research. The revised courses will be offered in part from the academic year 2020/2021 onwards, and in part from the year 2021/2022 onwards.

The staff teaching in the programme is composed of eleven lecturers, being three full professors, three associate professors, and five assistant professors. The last few years, new staff was recruited. All lecturers have PhDs and are University Teaching Qualification certified, whereas five of them obtained the Senior University Teaching Qualification. Lecturers have different backgrounds, matching subjects taught in the programme. The lecturers in the programme are internationally qualified researchers in this field, who supervise PhD trajectories and publish in peer-reviewed journals. Lecturers are employed at the Department of Cultural Anthropology of Utrecht University and are involved as researchers in the research programme *Sovereignty and Social Contestation*. Thesis supervisors are senior staff members, who participate in the Dutch national research school CERES. Staff members experience the workload as high but manageable.

The educational concept of the programme rests on collaborative learning between teachers and students and among students with face-to-face contact and in-depth discussions. The main study methods in the courses are seminars, being combinations of lectures by teachers and group discussions chaired by students. Class sizes are small. The students-to-staff ratio in the programme is on average 18/1 for the last six years. The interaction between lecturers and students is intensive. The number of hours of face-to-face education when taking courses is about 6 hours per week. To foster community building, students are invited to lectures organised by the Sovereignty and Social Contestation research group. Both first-year and second-year students may attend these lectures.

Students experience the study load in the programme as high. Programme management has taken and is taking measures to address study load and study stress issues. Theory courses, which were previously scheduled in parallel, are now scheduled sequentially. Thesis supervisors are assigned to master thesis projects earlier than before, already in October of the first year. This gives students more time to narrow down research questions and to draft their thesis proposals. Recently, tutors were appointed to assist students in coping with study-related or non-study-related problems. Students express these measures to have balanced the study load and to have diminished study stress. The proportion of students dropping out of the programme is 12.5 % of all students for the last six cohorts. These students all drop out in the first semester. The other students practically all complete the programme within the nominal study time of two years.

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 not feasible, mainly due to government regulations. Therefore, teaching has been converted to online teaching. Lecturers were supported by educational experts and the ICT-support office to transfer seminars to online teaching. To guard the well-being of students, programme management and lecturers kept in

touch with them, offered online teaching, made adaptations to fieldwork, rescheduled courses and offered tutor assistance by. Students appreciate the assistance offered.

Considerations

Although the intake of the programme is rather small, the average number of incoming students allows for appropriate class sizes and for the educational viability of the programme. The panel supports the target intake figure of 20 students, as set by programme management. The entry requirements and admission procedures are elaborate and assure admitting students, who have the capacities to complete the programme.

The curriculum meets, so the panel established, the programme intended learning outcomes. The panel considers the curriculum to be consistent, coherent and cumulative. The courses in the curriculum allow students to reach the advanced level intended learning outcomes. The methods courses are appropriate, allowing students with different backgrounds achieving the required level in methods training. The panel suggests to keep on thinking of levelling differences by offering reading lists or preparatory courses, if this would be required. Although no electives are offered, students are given adequate opportunities to specialise in the fieldwork and master thesis. The panel appreciates the revisions of courses programme management is implementing in the curriculum. These changes are well thought-through and allow the curriculum to reflect current developments, be more coherent and accommodate students from different backgrounds.

The lecturers have very good credentials in terms of educational expertise, academic qualifications and research track records. All lecturers are involved in high-level international research. The panel, therefore, finds the programme to be embedded in high-quality research activities. The panel is positive about new staff bringing dynamics to the programme and introducing new research topics in the programme.

The panel regards the educational concept and study methods as appropriate for this programme. They allow students to intensively study and discuss subjects and methods in this field. The panel appreciates the measures taken by programme management to balance the study load and to intensify guidance for students, maybe lowering drop-out rates. To strengthen community building among students further, the panel suggests to organise meetings of first-year students and second-year students in the second semester.

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.
--

Findings

The examination and assessment rules for the programme are specified in the Education and Examination Regulations of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. The assessment plan for the programme specifies the relations between the programme intended learning outcomes and the course objectives, offers the overview of assessments at course level, meant to test the course objectives, and clarifies how students reach the intended learning outcomes in the programme. Course examinations are mostly drafted and assessed by teams of examiners. To assess course examinations, answer keys and assessment criteria are made available. Students are informed about the set up of course assessments.

As has been said, the Board of Examiners for this and the other research master programmes of the Faculty ensures the quality of examinations and assessments of the programme. On behalf of the Board of Examiners, the Assessment Committee regularly reviews the programme assessment plan, course examinations and master theses. Theses are reviewed on the basis of thesis assessment forms and not on the basis of the theses themselves. The Board communicates the findings to the Board of Studies and the programme coordinator. The programme coordinator in turn informs the staff. The Board of Examiners monitors the follow-up on the Board's findings.

In all courses, multiple examinations are scheduled. Most examinations are assignments or papers. Written examinations are only scheduled in the first two courses, being 40 % of the final grade. The examination methods in the programme are, among other, presentations, essays, assignments, and papers. In some courses, group assignments are scheduled to compare perspectives and discuss ideas. Group assignments always are combined with individual tests to arrive at final course grades. Assignments in courses are checked for plagiarism by course coordinators.

Students drafting the master thesis are individually guided in the process by the thesis supervisor. Master theses are assessed by the supervisor and the second reader independently and completing separate thesis assessment forms. Only the supervisor assesses the thesis process, which is one of the assessment criteria. When supervisor and second reader differ on the grading of the thesis with more than 0.5 points, they have to discuss their differing views and arrive at a common grade. The averaged grade of the supervisor and the second reader is the proposed grade. Students defend their master theses in front of two independent examiners, one of whom may be the second reader. After the defence, the Thesis Examination Committee, being composed of the thesis supervisor, second reader, two independent examiners and programme coordinator, decides to lower or raise the thesis grade by maximum 0.5 points. At the end, all thesis grades are discussed with all programme staff to verify the grades given. These deliberations may affect the grades. After this meeting, students are informed about the grade for their thesis. They are also provided with supervisor's and second reader's written feedback. Master theses are checked for plagiarism by the programme coordinator.

Programme management has taken measures to organise examinations and assessments in the Covid crisis and to monitor their quality. On-campus examinations, in person presentations and assignments by student groups were no longer feasible. The examinations mentioned are adapted to other formats, such as take-home examinations, online presentations, and digital work on joint assignments. Students are allowed to use secondary data instead of having to collect data themselves. Proposed changes in examinations and assessments are submitted to the Board of Examiners for approval. This Board monitors the quality of examinations and assessments and assures these 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, nevertheless, recommends the Board of Examiners to act more decisively in monitoring examinations and assessments by, among other, scheduling calibration sessions to review master theses.

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 and assessment processes for the master thesis generally to be appropriate. The panel does not doubt the quality of the current processes. The written comments by examiners on the thesis assessment forms are elaborate. To further improve the thesis assessment and grading processes, the panel recommends to make more transparent and to better document the conversion from the proposed grade to the final grade for the thesis, including the weighing in the final grade of the degree of students' independence in the thesis process and of the students' defence. The panel advises to introduce rubrics for theses' assessments, to assure the independent position of the second readers, as the number of examiners is rather small, to relate the assessment criteria for the thesis to the programme intended learning outcomes and to consider to add weights to the assessment criteria.

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. Theses are typically about 15,000 words. The average grade for master theses was 7.7 for the last four cohorts. The Board of Examiners expressed adequate mechanisms being in place to guard against the inflation of thesis grades. The proportion of students graduating cum laude was about 30 % for the 2015 to 2018 cohorts.

The programme aims to prepare students for PhD positions or for positions in non-academic research. Students are encouraged by their supervisors to have their thesis published, in order to gain access to PhD positions. A number of students succeeded in publishing their thesis. In the programme, masterclasses are offered to assist students in publishing their master thesis and in preparing them to apply for PhD positions. Every year, students of all seven research master programme organise the annual career event to inform students about career prospects outside of academia and to bring them into contact with graduates from these programmes. The alumni network of the programme is less well-structured.

On the basis of the figures for students having graduated between 2015 and 2020, the proportion of programme graduates proceeding to PhD trajectories is 24 %, whereas 8 % of the graduates found positions in non-academic research.

Considerations

The panel reviewed fifteen master theses of programme graduates. The theses were selected from all of the theses of graduates of the last three years. In the selection, theses with lower, average and higher marks were represented. No theses were found by the panel to be unsatisfactory. Out of all the theses reviewed, six theses were graded satisfactory by the panel, five theses were found to be good, two theses were regarded to be good to excellent and two theses were found to be excellent. The marks for nine theses were assessed by the panel to be appropriate. The panel found the marks for five theses to be too high, but less than one point too high. One thesis was found to be graded somewhat too low.

The panel regards the average grade for the master theses of 7.7 appropriate. The proportion of students graduating cum laude, being about 30 %, is considered by the panel to be adequate as well.

The programme prepares for academic and non-academic research positions in the programme field. To further improve students preparing for PhD positions, the panel recommends to have students write their master thesis in journal article format, allowing them to publish their thesis in other than peer-reviewed journals including the journal of the Department. To foster students preparing for non-academic research positions, the panel recommends to give students more

guidance on non-academic career opportunities and to intensify the interaction with programme alumni.

Programme management adequately keeps track of the number of graduates obtaining academic or non-academic research positions. The panel sees as positive 32 % of the graduates having secured PhD positions or non-academic research positions, acknowledging challenges on the labour market to obtain these 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.

- For the Board of Examiners to act more decisively in monitoring examinations and assessments by, among other, scheduling calibration sessions to review master theses.
- To make more transparent and to better document the conversion from the proposed grade to the final grade for the master thesis, including the weighing in the final grade of the degree of students' independence in the thesis process and of the students' defence.
- To introduce rubrics for theses' assessments, to assure the independent position of second readers, as the number of examiners is rather small, to relate the assessment criteria for the thesis to the programme intended learning outcomes and to consider to add weights to the assessment criteria.
- To promote students writing their master theses in journal article format, allowing them to publish their theses, also in non-peer-reviewed journals.
- To strengthen students' preparation for non-academic research careers, by giving students more guidance on non-academic career opportunities and by intensifying their interaction with programme alumni.

Appendix: Assessment process

Certiked VBI evaluation agency was requested by Utrecht University to support the limited framework programme assessment process for the Research Master Cultural Anthropology: Sociocultural Transformation 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 Cultural Anthropology: Sociocultural Transformation of Utrecht University 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. S. Jansen PhD, Professor Social Anthropology, University of Manchester, United Kingdom (panel member);
- M. Ferreira Torres MSc, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen, 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 three 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 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 self-assessment report. The appendices to the self-assessment report included overview of relations of intended learning outcomes to Dublin descriptors; overview of relations of curriculum to intended learning outcomes; academic skills in programme; curriculum revision; overview of course coordinators, lecturers, study methods, examination methods and literature of all courses; overview of staff with fields of expertise, positions and qualifications; overview of main research activities and main publications of most closely involved lecturers; figures on inflow, drop-out, graduation and labour market positions for 2015 – 2020; achieved teacher-student ratio for 2015 – 2020; and impact of Covid pandemic on education. The additional information consisted of course dossiers, course examinations, Programme Advisory Committee minutes, and Board of Examiners annual reports. Also, the Education and Examination Regulations and the assessment plan of the programme were offered.

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 20 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.

09.00 – 09.45 Faculty representatives, master coordinator
10.00 – 11.00 Programme management and core lecturers
11.15 – 12.00 Board of Examiners
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, Programme Advisory 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. 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 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 time 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.