



MSc Conflict Resolution and Governance
University of Amsterdam

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Summary

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The MSc Conflict Resolution and Governance (CRG) aims to provide its graduates with a broad foundation that draws on the range of social science scholarship which is relevant to the conceptual and practical challenges posed by conflict, conflict resolution, and governance. The panel considers CRG's profile to be clear and recognizable, and appreciates the broad definition of conflict and conflict resolution as well as the clear link between theory and practice that characterizes CRG. The profile is clearly reflected in the intended learning outcomes, which match the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes and the national domain-specific framework of reference.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel finds the curriculum of CRG to be carefully structured and well-composed. The recurrent link between theory and academic research on the one hand, and practice and real-life conflict situations on the other, stands out and is seen and appreciated by students. Thanks to a solid introduction to the field and due to the combination of academic, professional and transferrable skills they are taught in the various teaching methods, students feel well-prepared for their Research Project and comfortable interacting with practitioners they encounter in their research. The panel applauds CRG for achieving such a challenging and fitting learning environment. Creating a safe, academic and respectful environment is prioritized and requires constant care in CRG. The panel finds the programme feasible thanks to its clear build-up, well-functioning guidance structure, adequate selection procedure, well-structured thesis project, and sense of community between CRG students and staff. It agrees with the choice of English as a programme language in view of the international content focus and orientation of CRG. The panel appreciates the didactic and academic quality and the quantity of the teaching staff, and particularly values the links with the professional field created through including practitioners and alumni as (guest) lecturers.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The panel appreciates the assessment policies and practice in CRG. Assessment is varied and fitting. The panel is pleased with the way thesis assessment is done. The method of having the first assessor choose the second reader works out well. The panel looked at thesis forms and found that they provided sufficient information to underpin the final grade. However, some contained more detailed feedback than others. The panel recommends clarifying expectations surrounding the thesis form to staff members so that these differences are reduced.

The panel learnt that the programme director in coordination with the EB introduced thesis calibration sessions for staff members, and considers this a good practice. It is impressed with the work done by the EB to check and improve quality of assessment in the programme. It considers the EB to be proactive and valuable to the programme and appreciates the changes made in thesis assessment.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

Based on the quality of the final theses and the success of alumni, most of whom end up working in conflict and governance-related fields, the panel concludes that CRG graduates achieve the programme's intended learning outcomes.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

MSc Conflict Resolution and Governance

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
General conclusion	positive

Prof.dr. Petra Meier
Date: 30 June 2023

Dr. Fiona Schouten

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 4 and 5 April 2023, the BSc and MSc Political Science and the MSc Conflict Resolution and Governance of the University of Amsterdam were assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment Political Science. The assessment cluster consisted of 9 programmes, offered by Radboud University, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam and Leiden University. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (September 2018).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster Political Science. Fiona Schouten acted both as coordinator and secretary in the cluster assessment. She has been certified and registered by the NVAO.

Preparation

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members as well as consistency within the cluster. On 2 April 2022, the NVAO approved the composition of the panel. The coordinator instructed the panel chair on her role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016).

The programmes composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator (see appendix 3) and selected representative partners for the various interviews. They also determined that the development dialogue would be made part of the site visit. A separate development report was made based on this dialogue.

The programmes provided the coordinator with a list of graduates over the period September 2020- August 2022. In consultation with the coordinator, the panel chair selected 15 theses per programme. She took the diversity of final grades and examiners into account, as well as the various tracks. Prior to the site visit, the programmes provided the panel with the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. They also provided the panel with the self-evaluation reports and additional materials (see appendix 4).

The panel members studied the information and sent their findings to the secretary. The secretary collected the panel's questions and remarks in a document and shared this with the panel members. In a preliminary meeting, the panel discussed the initial findings on the self-evaluation reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit. The panel was also informed on the assessment framework, the working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

Site visit

During the site visit, the panel interviewed various programme representatives (see appendix 3). For personal reasons, one of the panel members, Sofie Marien, was unable to be present at the site visit. She provided her findings and input to the other panel members prior to the visit. The panel offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. One student requested a consultation. The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the preliminary findings.

Report

The secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to a colleague in Academion for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the programmes in order to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The panel then finalised the report, and the coordinator sent it to the University of Amsterdam.

Panel

The following panel members were involved in the cluster assessment:

- Prof. dr. Petra Meier, Professor in Politics at the University of Antwerp, Belgium (chair);
- Dr. Chris van der Borgh, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Conflict Studies Utrecht University;
- Prof. dr. Stefan Rummens, Professor in Philosophy at KU Leuven, Belgium;
- Prof. dr. Marijke Breuning, Professor of Political Science at the University of North Texas, USA;
- Prof. dr. Peter Bursens, Professor in Political Science at the University of Antwerp, Belgium;
- Prof. dr. Maarten Vink, Professor in Citizenship Studies and chair of the Global Citizenship research programme of the Robert Schuman Centre at the European University Institute, Italy;
- Prof. dr. Sofie Marien, Associate Professor in Comparative and Historical Political Science at the University of Leuven, Belgium;
- Prof. dr. Amy Verdun, Professor of Political Science at the University of Victoria, Canada;
- Prof. dr. Laura Horn, Associate Professor in Political Economy at Roskilde University, Denmark;
- Fee A'mema MSc, Political Science graduate at Leiden University (student member);
- Elsbeth de Vries, MSc student in Political Theory at Radboud University (student member);
- Mark Dzoljic BSc, MSc student in Political Science at the University of Amsterdam (student member).

The panel assessing the Political Science programmes at the University of Amsterdam consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. Petra Meier, Professor in Politics at the University of Antwerp, Belgium (chair);
- Dr. Chris van der Borgh, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Conflict Studies Utrecht University;
- Prof. dr. Maarten Vink, Professor in Citizenship Studies and chair of the Global Citizenship research programme of the Robert Schuman Centre at the European University Institute, Italy;
- Prof. dr. Sofie Marien, Associate Professor in Comparative and Historical Political Science at the University of Leuven, Belgium;
- Fee A'mema MSc, Political Science graduate at Leiden University (student member).

Information on the programmes

Name of the institution:	University of Amsterdam
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive
Programme name:	Conflict Resolution and Governance
CROHO number:	69314
Level:	Master

Orientation:	Academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	None
Location:	Amsterdam
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Language of instruction:	English
Submission date NVAO:	1 November 2023

Description of the assessment

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 MSc Conflict Resolution and Governance (CRG) offered by the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) is defined by three reference points: conflict, conflict resolution, and governance. These reference points frame a domain of theory and research and a related domain of practical action. The goal of the programme is for students to learn to draw on research and theory to make sense of this domain in terms that are relevant for both domestic and transnational contexts, and for settings in which violence is central as well as peripheral. The focus of the programme is to train graduates who can work, research, and reflect on developments across what are often treated as distinct streams of research and practical action.

The programme aims to provide its graduates with a broad foundation that draws on the range of social science scholarship that is relevant to the conceptual and practical challenges posed by conflict, conflict resolution, and governance. It aims to help them develop the ability to engage with diverse colleagues as reflective partners in a shared and ongoing effort to learn and to act effectively in the world. It also prepares graduates for contributing broadly to the development of critical reflection on conflicts and contentious public problems. Furthermore, graduates develop the capacity to contribute to the forms of dialogue, debate, and negotiation through which these controversies are addressed in public life.

The programme translated this profile into a set of intended learning outcomes (see appendix 1). These exit qualifications reflect the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes and are in line with the domain-specific reference framework shared by Dutch programmes in political science.

The panel considers CRG's profile to be clear and recognizable. From the interview with the programme management, it learnt that CRG defines conflict and conflict resolution broadly, including non-violent conflict. It appreciates this scholarly breadth and the clear link between theory and practice that characterizes CRG. It recognizes CRG's profile clearly in the detailed and concrete intended learning outcomes. These reflect the expectations of the academic and professional fields – the latter through a focus on policy development, teamwork, and governance – and match the academic master's level.

Considerations

The MSc Conflict Resolution and Governance (CRG) aims to provide its graduates with a broad foundation that draws on the range of social science scholarship which is relevant to the conceptual and practical challenges posed by conflict, conflict resolution, and governance. The panel considers CRG's profile to be clear and recognizable, and appreciates the broad definition of conflict and conflict resolution as well as the clear link between theory and practice that characterizes CRG. The profile is clearly reflected in the intended learning outcomes, which match the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes and the national domain-specific framework of reference.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 1.

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

Curriculum

The one-year curriculum (60 EC) of CRG is divided into two semesters, which consist of two blocks of 8 weeks and one block of 4 weeks, resulting in six blocks. In the programme, the second and third blocks of the first semester and the three blocks of the second have been joined together to create greater course units. See appendix 2 for an overview.

The curriculum consists of two required core classes, an elective and a Research Project (RP), where students write their thesis. The first core class, Capita Selecta (12 EC), spans the first period of semester 1. In block 2 and 3, students follow the Seminar on Conflict Resolution and Governance Practice (9 EC), alongside an elective (9 EC). In the second semester, students follow Research Project I, II, and III (total 30 EC). In the RP, students are trained methodologically and prepare a thesis proposal, execute research, and return to draw up the thesis.

The panel studied the curriculum design and discussed it with programme management, staff, students and alumni. It found that students were positive on the Capita Selecta course, which was adapted to explicitly provide students with a coherent theoretical foundation after recommendations by the previous assessment panel. The course starts with theory, introducing conflict and conflict resolution not as a separate field, but as continuous with other fields of study in social science. The theoretical section draws on theory and research from political science, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, organisational development, and international development and peace studies to analyse the complex patterns in which conflicts develop, the factors that shape conflict resolution, and the ways in which both relate to governance. The course then moves on to a case study sequence consisting of seminars and tutorials. Here, students analyse a particular conflict focusing on local settings (e.g., a city, neighbourhood, or national park). These settings are selected to present complex historical, social, and political dynamics and challenge students to draw on a range of theories in a nuanced way to explain particular patterns of action and efforts to exercise governance in a setting marked by conflict.

The students and alumni the panel spoke with mentioned that this large theoretical course is generally experienced as difficult at the start of the programme, since it spans a wide field of theory and practice from various related disciplines. Students do find it coherent and sufficiently clear, as the specificity of the CRG field is made explicit throughout the theoretical part. Over the course of the programme, students learn to appreciate the theoretical framework offered in Capita Selecta as they come to draw on the theories and approaches presented here.

The case study part of the course is well-liked by students as a link from theory to practice where they collaborate intensively in group and individual assignments and focus on various conflicts. The panel appreciates this part of Capita Selecta and recognizes that it clearly builds upon the theoretical outline given at the start. Still, the panel suggests investigating if this part can be made into a separate course, so that the Capita Selecta course looks less overwhelming to students beginning CRG.

The 9 EC Seminar on Conflict Resolution and Governance Practice in blocks 2 and 3 reverses the relationship between theory and practice, introducing students to fields of professional work (mediation, activism, conflict analysis, peace building, humanitarian intervention, etc.) that are prominent in conflict resolution and governance. Students gain knowledge about these fields through interaction with experienced professionals. Class meetings provide a forum for engaging practitioners and for comparing how different practices are organised, how practitioners position themselves, and how they engage the individuals and groups involved in conflicts. Students themselves prepare the encounters with practitioners. They are trained in interviewing practitioners and then get to apply this training in class. The course strives to help students appreciate the contribution that research can make to practice, for instance by surfacing and making sense of the (often tacit) competencies that practitioners rely on and the way these commitments structure their work and shape their ability to perceive and respond to pressures for change. The Seminar contains clusters of talks that focus on different forms of practice: activism; peace building and humanitarian intervention; and mediation and related practices like restorative justice. The Seminar concludes with a six-day Workshop on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution that uses cases to relate theory and practice, inspired by the Winter Workshop on Negotiation cases at Harvard Law School.

The panel understood from students and alumni that they consider the Seminar to be a crucial, well-liked and highly useful course that brings together a number of important aspects of CRG. The course links practice to theory explicitly; it teaches students how to approach practice and practitioners in a professional manner, departing from a theoretically sound perspective; and it introduces students to the various fields and practices they might end up in. It also provides them with useful transferrable skills, such as interviewing, which they can put into practice both during their Research project and after graduation. The panel applauds this many-faceted course and the added value it brings to the CRG curriculum.

In parallel to the Seminar, students follow a restricted-choice elective (9 EC). The opportunities vary slightly from year to year. An annual consultation with the programme director of the MSc in Political Science ensures that the range of offerings includes 'domestic' and international options and a range of topics from policy conflicts to violence and civil war in fragile states and cross-cutting themes such as migration. Students are pleased with this opportunity to either specialize or broaden their views.

The second semester (30 EC) contains the Research Project (RP), which is made up of three parts. Prior to the beginning of the RP, students are interviewed about how they plan to focus their research and what kind of research methods they plan to employ. On the basis of these interviews, students are assigned an RP with a staff member who is also their thesis supervisor. Part I of the RP takes place in block 4. During this period, students develop their research proposals in weekly group as well as individual sessions, and provide each other with support and feedback. They also learn about research ethics (including the particular tensions raised by conducting research on conflict), core methods, and practical issues related to organising and conducting fieldwork. Students finally present their proposal in a poster session in which they also comment on their colleagues' proposals. To further support students in their thesis research, CRG students have access to the series of Method Seminars run by the MSc in Political Science, which train students in 12 different methodological skills ranging from statistics to interviewing, ethnography or content analysis. The Methods Seminars are designed as refreshment or crash courses.

Part II of the RP is devoted to field work, analysis, and writing. For most, the fieldwork means engaging in research in a practice context, usually abroad. For others, it can be devoted to historical document research or quantitative analysis of a data set. The common thread is that it involves empirical research into a research question that links to the programme's themes. Students organize their fieldwork themselves, but are enabled to make use of the contacts and network of CRG staff and usually end up in an environment with

existing connections to the programme. Following their fieldwork, students return for Part III of the RP. Here, again, they work in small groups with their advisor to develop their analysis and move from data to story. During Part III, they also present their developing analysis to their colleagues in poster sessions that provide the opportunity to discuss their work as it develops. The panel appreciates the streamlined build-up of the RP.

The panel considers the CRG curriculum to be carefully structured and well-designed. The recurrent link between theory and academic research, on the one hand, and practice and real-life conflict situations on the other, stands out and is seen and appreciated by students. Thanks to a solid introduction to the field and due to the combination of academic, professional and transferrable skills they are taught in the various teaching methods, students feel well-prepared for their Research Projects and comfortable interacting with practitioners they encounter in their research.

The Covid 19-pandemic was a challenge when realizing international fieldwork, but also led to some innovations that strengthen the programme. Long distance supervision of students who are doing field research abroad has become much easier, and the programme now includes more alumni and other practitioners in the courses via online guest lectures. CRG is working to improve diversity in content by looking critically at the prescribed theories and literature and through engaging teaching staff and practitioners who represent a variety of backgrounds and insights. The panel applauds CRG for these efforts and for achieving such a challenging and fitting learning environment.

The varied backgrounds of students and staff, combined with the delicate subject matter that CRG engages with, require careful handling in the classroom. The CRG management and staff are well aware of this and thematize these issues from the start, determining in-class rules on how to handle differences in outlook with the student group each year. The panel appreciates the attention this receives and understands that, in spite of such efforts, incidents may still occur. Therefore, creating a safe, academic and respectful environment requires constant care in CRG.

Guidance and feasibility

Admissions to the programme are competitive for a limited number of positions. Out of around 200 applications, the programme selects 50-60 students in order to be able to offer sufficiently intensive and small-scale education. Applicants must meet minimum standards in terms of relevant academic background, English proficiency, undergraduate grades, and preparation in social science research methods. Beyond this, case files that include grades, a CV and personal statement, and a writing sample are reviewed on an individual basis. Successful applicants must demonstrate sufficient background in conflict studies and governance through a combination of undergraduate coursework and practical experience, and must articulate learning goals that fit with the organisation of the programme. Applications are reviewed and compared based upon a demonstrated ability to perform at a high level in an academic environment, the fit between interests and the focus and content of the programme, and the ability to write academic English.

Once in the programme, CRG has a kick-off meeting at the start, hosted by the study advisor, the programme coordinator and at least one additional member of the teaching staff. This kick-off informs students about the programme and stimulates their social and academic integration. During their studies, students can turn to the study advisor for advice on study-related or personal challenges. Furthermore, students can approach their teachers in *Capita Selecta* and the Seminar in the first semester, and are guided by their supervisor during the RP in the second semester. The programme also organizes a number of social activities with students and staff.

For the Research Project, students usually go abroad. They are expected to arrange this independently, although the programme will offer support when requested. Students mentioned during the interview that the prospect seems daunting at first, but that the curriculum build-up (particularly the Seminar) prepares them well for planning such an investigation and contacting professionals and academics in the field. The first part of the RP is quite clearly structured, with clear deadlines and assignments, so that students are guided well towards developing a proposal and research plan. Students are also satisfied with the careful matching between student and supervisor: they are asked not only about thematic interests, but also about the style of supervision they would prefer. According to students and alumni, the resulting match tends to be good. RP themes are formulated in such a broad way that students are usually able to pursue the topic of their own interest.

The panel appreciates the way the programme selects and guides its students. It ensures they have the necessary knowledge and skills, as well as the motivation to participate in this practice-oriented academic master's programme. It agrees with the fact that the students are granted academic freedom in their choice of thesis topic and guided towards independence in their fieldwork phase. The clearly streamlined Research Project helps them complete the programme on time. As a result, CRG's study success numbers are positive, with students graduating on average after 14-15 months and above 90% graduated after two years.

An added factor in study success is the community formed by students and staff. Community-building is given a lot of attention, and students and staff get to know one another well throughout the course of the programme. The many activating teaching methods contribute to this sense of community, and the fact that all students start in the same course creates a clear sense of belonging to a cohort. In line with the broad nature of CRG, however, students are also brought together with students from the MSc Political Science, for instance in the electives and Methods Seminars, and through the shared study association Machiavelli, which recently opened a master's branch. The panel is pleased with this sense of community, which is conducive to study success. It considers CRG clearly feasible.

Language

CRG is taught in English, which the panel considers to be in line with the international orientation of the programme and to match the academic and professional fields of conflict resolution and governance linked to it. Students' international backgrounds allow the programme to create a balanced international classroom with a multitude of different perspectives. In addition, the choice of English allows students to do their internship abroad in an international setting and allows the programme to have diverse academic and professional teaching staff with relevant expertise and backgrounds.

Teaching staff

The academic staff teaching in CRG currently consists of 61 staff members, who are predominantly employed by the Department of Political Science. 15 of them are directly involved in teaching. Of these staff members, 100% hold a PhD and 90% a university teaching qualification (UTQ), with 8% in the process of acquiring one. Other staff members have other roles, acting as second readers, guest lecturers or committee members.

All tenured teaching staff with a research appointment (assistant, associate, and full professors) are members of one of the research programme groups of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR). The scores on quality and quantity of the research groups that feed into the programme were assessed as excellent in the latest research reaccreditation report in 2020. Staff members have been successful in acquiring international (EU) and national (NWO) funds over the past few years and are internationally influential academics in their fields. Full, associate and assistant professors spend 60% of their contract time teaching. In case of large research grants or substantial research management

involvement, this can be reduced, but in line with the general Social Sciences policy at the UvA, all permanent staff members teach at least 30% of their contract time in order to realise the UvA's ambition to provide research-based teaching. In recruiting new tenured staff and in staff promotion, teaching performance is therefore given weight.

CRG teaching staff are a mix of senior staff at the level of full, associate or assistant professor, and lecturers. The policy is that teaching in the master's programme should be conducted exclusively by academic staff with a PhD degree. Occasionally researchers, among whom postdocs or PhD students who are almost finished, also teach in the master's programme. This normally involves co-teaching with senior colleagues. CRG includes a senior practitioner as part of the teaching staff for the Seminar on Practice to strengthen the ties to relevant fields of professional practice. The course taught by this practitioner is overseen by an associate professor. Alumni have played roles – particularly during the Covid 19-pandemic – in facilitating small group discussions or simulations. In various courses, guest lecturers provide their insights.

The panel concludes that staff quality and quantity are clearly sufficient for CRG. The staff members have good or excellent track records in research paired with didactic skills. Students consider their teachers to be expert at what they teach. They highly appreciate participation of guest lecturers from the professional field, and applaud the fact that alumni are involved in the courses as well. The panel noted during the site visit that there is a clear team spirit among CRG staff.

The panel is positive about the programme's aim to maintain and increase staff diversity. It was pleased to see that the staff was composed of teachers with varied backgrounds. Like elsewhere, the higher positions still tend to be occupied by a less diverse group, demonstrating the need to keep investing in staff diversity.

Considerations

The panel finds the curriculum of CRG to be carefully structured and well-composed. The recurrent link between theory and academic research, on the one hand, and practice and real-life conflict situations on the other, stands out and is seen and appreciated by students. Thanks to a solid introduction to the field and due to the combination of academic, professional and transferrable skills they are taught in the various teaching methods, students feel well-prepared for their Research Project and comfortable interacting with practitioners they encounter in their research. The panel applauds CRG for achieving such a challenging and fitting learning environment. Creating a safe, academic and respectful environment is prioritized and requires constant care in CRG. The panel finds the programme feasible thanks to its clear build-up, well-functioning guidance structure, adequate selection procedure, well-structured thesis project, and sense of community between CRG students and staff. It agrees with the choice of English as a programme language in view of the international content focus and orientation of CRG. The panel appreciates the didactic and academic quality and the quantity of the teaching staff, and particularly values the links with the professional field created through including practitioners and alumni as (guest) lecturers.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 2.

Standard 3. Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment policies and practice

All programmes in the social sciences at the UvA work with a joint assessment policy, which operates within the central UvA Assessment Policy Framework. Aimed at unity, coherence and transparency, this policy outlines the conditions for the assessment process (notably the relationship between Dublin descriptors, learning outcomes, and assessment design, formats, and procedures); the scheduling and distribution of assessments; the assessment of internships and final projects; the regulatory framework; and the quality assurance of assessment and testing, including the division of responsibilities. A range of practices has been developed to ensure the quality, variation, transparency and effectiveness of assessment within the programme, through the use of assessment keys, rubrics, etc. Assessment criteria are specified either in the course manuals or in separate assignment descriptions distributed to students at the start of the course. The four-eyes principle is applied in test composition.

The assessment of courses in CRG is closely linked to the training of students towards writing their master's thesis. The programme chiefly uses oral presentations, group discussions and written assignments, mainly in the form of scientific papers. All courses require active student participation. Most courses use a mix of individual assignments, such as academic papers or essays, and group assignments, such as case studies or presentations. In some courses, assignments may deliberately resemble products common in the real labour market: e.g., a lobbying strategy, a proposal for a policy analysis, organization advice, weekly 'two-pagers' that shed original light on an issue on the basis of literature, etc. As a standard operating procedure, the programme coordinator (and if necessary the programme director) checks these course outlines before they are put on Canvas. This check takes place on the basis of a detailed course outline format made available to all lecturers. The panel appreciates assessment policies and practices in CRG, which it considers fitting, varied and well-chosen.

Assessment of the final level

The Research Projects lead to the individual master's thesis as the final assessment. The thesis is assessed by the supervisor and a second reader. Second readers are chosen by the supervisor in advance, after consultation with the programme coordinator. The list of second readers is checked by the Examination Board and programme director in order to ensure the quality of second readers. Second readers do not read or comment on any written drafts of the thesis; their task is to assess the final product. In the case of clearly insufficient or unstructured work the supervisor may decide not to pass the thesis on to a second reader and simply sign the grade slip as incomplete/not meeting the requirements.

Before the supervisor and second reader determine the final grade, they each fill out the assessment form and propose a grade. The supervisor also provides a separate grade for the thesis-writing process, including in-class participation. Based on these two assessments, the supervisor and second reader deliberate on a joint final assessment of the thesis that is signed by both and shared with the student. The thesis supervisor communicates the grade and feedback to the student. If supervisor and second reader cannot agree on a grade, the programme director will appoint a third reader in consultation with the Examination Board. The grade and feedback of the third reader should be taken into account by the original two examiners, which normally results in them being able to agree upon the grade. In the case that this still results in a stalemate, the Examination Board could decide to appoint two different examiners, but this has never happened.

The panel appreciates the way thesis assessment is done in the programme. It is pleased with the clear working method. The method of having the first assessor choose the second reader in consultation with the programme coordinator works out well. An advantage of this working method is that it ensures that the second reader is an expert on the thesis subject.

The panel looked at thesis forms and found that they provided sufficient information to underpin the final grade. However, some contained more detailed feedback than others. The panel learnt that some assessors prefer to give extensive oral feedback and then summarize this briefly on the form. Others see the form as a significant feedback document and provide more input. The panel recommends clarifying expectations surrounding the thesis form and the oral feedback moment to staff members, so that these differences are reduced.

Examination Board

CRG shares an Examination Board (EB) with the bachelor's and master's programmes in Political Science. The EB consists of five members, including two chairs (one for the bachelor's and one for the master's programmes), supported by a secretary. In addition, an external member is part of the EB to look critically at the procedural and substantive aspects of testing/assessment and the functioning of the EB in general.

The Board performs regular checks to safeguard quality of assessment in the programme. A rotating committee consisting of one or two EB members, two lecturers, and the department's assessment specialist perform an assessment periodically to monitor alignment between learning objectives, forms of assessment and exit qualifications, as well as the variety of assessment forms and knowledge levels tested. In addition, specific courses may be reviewed in-depth, with a focus on clarity of learning objectives, assessment procedures and quality of feedback. This practice was performed in a less structured manner during the Covid-19 pandemic, but has been taken up in full again per 2022-2023.

The EB also conducts a periodic thesis peer review to monitor the assessment of the final products. Its feedback to the programme management on thesis assessment resulted in a more explicit go/no-go moment regarding the research proposal, and a clearer distinction on the assessment form between what constitutes a pass or fail. Finally, the programme director and the EB initiated calibration sessions between lecturers on thesis assessment.

The panel is impressed with the work done by the EB to check and improve quality of assessment in the programme. It considers the EB to be proactive and valuable to the programme. It particularly appreciates the changes made in thesis assessment and considers the thesis calibration sessions among staff members a good practice.

Considerations

The panel appreciates the assessment policies and practice in CRG. Assessment is varied and fitting. The panel is pleased with the way thesis assessment is done. The method of having the first assessor choose the second reader works out well. The panel looked at thesis forms and found that they provided sufficient information to underpin the final grade. However, some contained more detailed feedback than others. The panel recommends clarifying expectations surrounding the thesis form to staff members so that these differences are reduced.

The panel learnt that the programme director in coordination with the EB introduced thesis calibration sessions for staff members, and considers this a good practice. It is impressed with the work done by the EB to check and improve quality of assessment in the programme. It considers the EB to be proactive and valuable to the programme and appreciates the changes made in thesis assessment.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 3.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

Based on the 15 theses from CRG that the panel read, it concludes that its students achieve the expected academic master's level. The choice in topics is both varied and original, and the research is set up and executed according to the standards that may be expected. The panel agrees with the level achieved in the programme's final theses.

Based on a recent survey, 74% of graduates from CRG end up working in conflict and governance-related fields, such as conflict resolution, governance and policy, diplomacy and international affairs, health and human rights, sustainability and development, peacebuilding, security and strategy, or education and youth advocacy. The non-CRG fields in which 26% of graduates end up include tech, finance & business, media, communication and culture (including journalism) and market research. The field most populated by CRG graduates is that of governance and policy, and generally features employees of governmental institutions from municipal administrations to national ministries. This field also includes graduates who, regardless of their employer's sector, interface with the development and implementation of policy in the public realm, be that from within a consultancy firm, on behalf of an advocacy NGO or as lecturers and researchers at various universities in Europe and the United States. The panel learnt from alumni that they appreciate the way their master's programme prepared them for their careers. It concludes that the programme prepared them well for entering the labour market.

Considerations

Based on the quality of the final theses and the success of alumni, most of whom end up working in conflict and governance-related fields, the panel concludes that CRG graduates achieve the programme's intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 4.

General conclusion

The panel's assessment of the programme is positive.

Development points

1. Clarify expectations surrounding the thesis form to staff members, highlight their purpose regarding feedback to students and make explicit which level of detail is expected when filling them out.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

MSc Conflict Resolution and Governance

1. Knowledge and understanding (DD1)

The graduate has acquired knowledge and understanding:

- a) of the principal theories, research, and areas of practice covered by the field of Conflict Resolution and Governance.
- b) of the literature covered by the field of Conflict Resolution and Governance.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding (DD2)

The acquired knowledge and/or understanding enable the graduate to apply:

- a) the ability—in the context of teamwork— to contribute to developing political policy, and practice-based responses to these issues, in relation to the relevant socio-political context in which they are embedded.
- b) draw on the foundation provided by the programme to adjust in a critical and action-oriented manner to new problems and contexts and to conduct synthetic analyses that bridge gaps between disciplines, analytic constructs, and practice repertoires.

3. Formulating judgements (DD3)

Concerning the ability of formulating judgements, the graduate should be able to:

- a) assess cases, theories, policies, and practices critically, both verbally and in written form drawing on the principal theories and findings from disciplinary and applied research that are covered by the field of Conflict Resolution and Governance.
- b) analyse and interpret contemporary social and political issues drawing on his/her theoretical and practical knowledge and report on these phenomena, both verbally as well as in written form.
- c) adequately catalogue and assess literature and empirical data within a short amount of time and to assess this literature and data critically.

4. Communicative skills (DD4)

The graduate should be able to use the following communicative skills:

- a) proficiency in English at an academic level.
- b) the ability to present synthetic analysis, theory, and research findings to specialist and non-specialist audiences in written and oral communication.
- c) the ability to draw on common designs for organizing different forms of communication in group settings.

5. Learning skills (DD5)

The graduate has acquired the following learning skills:

- a) a critical and practical capacity to analyse the principal issues raised in the literature covered by the programme, in particular the ability to apply the insights developed to new fields of inquiry and to synthesise concepts across scholarly disciplines and contrasting analytic traditions.
- b) the ability to employ at least one method of empirical research methodology in scientific research within a limited field of the chosen specialisation of the master's programme and the ability to produce a scientifically sound interpretation of the results of such research.
- c) the ability to conduct independent research to work in the setting of a team, and to reflect on how structural and behavioral influences affect the development of cooperation.

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

Semester 1		
<i>Extending and deepening</i>	Block 1	Capita Selecta Conflict Resolution and Governance (12 EC)
<i>Deepening and contextualising</i>	Block 2	Seminar on Conflict Resolution and Governance Practice (9 EC) (includes Workshop on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution)
	Block 3	
Semester 2		
<i>Research methods and design</i>	Block 4	Research Project Part I (includes Method Seminars)
<i>Fieldwork, analysis, & presentation</i>	Block 5	Interim Review of required proposal.
	Block 6	Research Project Part II & III (all three parts together 30 EC)
Required courses with the full class	Elective	Required. Plenary, individual & small group work.

Elective courses offered to CRG students in 2022/23:

- Authoritarianism in a Global Age
- Civil Wars and State-building
- Dealing with policy conflicts
- Humanitarianism in crisis and conflict
- Political violence
- Postcolonial borders, territorial rights, and historical injustice
- The Changing Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Times of De-Democratisation
- The EU and the Post-Soviet Space
- The EU as a Global Actor: Peace, Security and Conflict

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

4 April 2023

10.30	10.45	Welcome to Panel
10.45	12.15	Internal session panel/possible walk-in session for students and staff
12.15	12.45	Session with the staff/management responsible: Bachelor (BPol)
12.45	13.15	Session with the staff/management responsible: Masters (MPol & CRG)
13.15	14.00	Lunch
14.00	14.45	Student session BPol
14.45	15.30	Lecturer session BPol
15.30	16.00	Break
16.00	16.45	Student & alumni session MPol
16.45	17.30	Lecturer session MPol

5 April 2023

09.00	09.45	Student & alumni session CRG
09.45	10.30	Lecturer session CRG
10.30	11.15	Internal session panel
11.15	12.00	Examinations Board session
12.00	12.30	Internal session panel (preparation final session)
12.30	13.15	Lunch
13.15	14.00	Final session with formal management all programmes
14.00	16.00	Internal session panel (preparation preliminary oral feedback)
16.00	17.00	Development dialogue
17.00	17.30	Preliminary oral feedback

Appendix 4. Materials

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses for the MSc Conflict Resolution and Governance. Information on the theses is available from Academion upon request. The panel also studied other materials, which included:

- List of Improvements based on Previous Accreditation
- Domain-specific Framework of Reference
- Dublin Descriptors, Domain-specific Framework of Reference and Exit Qualifications
- Relations Exit Qualifications to Curriculum (Learning Outcomes Courses
- Relations Assessments Formats & Learning Outcome (Assessment Plan)
- Curriculum Overview
- List of Electives, methods seminars
- Course Information
- Teaching and Examination Regulations 2022-2023 (TER)
- Information on Numerus Fixus 2023-2024
- Staff Overview
- Student data
- Lecturer-Student Ratio & Staff Composition
- Comparison with other programmes
- Thesis Assessment Form Master Conflict Resolution and Governance
- Alumni
- Adjustments due to Covid-19
- Annual reports and minutes of the last two years of the Examinations Board
- Assessment Policy
- Annual report and minutes of the last two years of the Programme Committee
- Detailed course information/assessment information for selected courses, per programme
- General access to all current courses in the digital learning environment
- Thesis Manuals
- Internship manual bachelor
- Faculty Handbook
- Quality Assurance memo Social Sciences (in Dutch)
- Policy on Free Speech
- Relevant URLs to UvA document (vision on Teaching) and programme sites