

ONDERZOEKERIJ

Research Master

Developmental Psychopathology in
Education and Child Studies

Leiden University

Report of the limited programme assessment

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Executive summary

The outcome of the external assessment of the research master Developmental Psychopathology in Education and Child Studies (DPECS) by an NVAO approved panel is conditionally positive. The programme complies with standards 1 and 4 of the limited NVAO framework and partially complies with standard 2 and 3.

The two-year full-time programme has a dual focus. It offers students the possibility to both specialise in Education and Child Studies research, and graduate with a professional qualification that allows for further advancement in that field. The panel appreciates the dual focus but advises to make this dual focus more explicit in the phrasing of the research programme objectives.

The curriculum consists of 45 EC compulsory courses, 30 EC elective courses (6 x 5 EC), and the final project 'Research Internship and Master's thesis' (45 EC). The panel studied the curriculum and established that the compulsory courses provide students with a solid theoretical foundation for research on developmental psychopathology in education and child studies. These courses are in line with the research orientation of the programme. However, the panel is of the opinion that the programme's focus on research is not sufficiently reflected in the remaining part of the curriculum.

First, the panel wishes more assurances that a substantial part of the 30 EC electives is at the level of a research master's programme. Second, the panel wishes more clarification on what students need to do during their internship if they also obtain their professional qualification during this internship.

The teaching philosophy of the research master's programme is based on small-scale, motivating and intensive teaching. This guarantees intensive interaction between students and lecturers. During the online visit, the committee met very competent and enthusiastic staff members. Lecturers are very engaged with students and the programme.

The programme is a selective master's programme with a yearly intake between 7 and 14 students. In the period 2015-2020, 1 international student per year enrolled in the programme. According to the panel, attracting more students is desired for ensuring the viability of the programme. The panel recommends stimulating the inflow of both national and international students in a more proactive way.

The programme has a good assessment plan and uses a wide variety of assessment methods. However, the panel has several concerns regarding the assessment of the theses. The main concern of the panel is that it is not clear how the internship is assessed and how this contributes to the grade of the 45 EC of the total final project. The panel is of the opinion that the Board of Examiners should take a more proactive approach in order to ensure quality control of the theses.

The panel is pleased with the quality and academic level of the fifteen theses it examined. According to the panel, the students reach the required level of achievement. Almost all alumni work in positions in which they need the scientific knowledge and analytical skills acquired in the research master's programme, and almost all in the field of education and child studies.

The panel noted that the new curriculum and the new grading form, which will be implemented in September 2021, will solve several of the concerns observed by the panel. The panel is convinced that the programme can manage to reach standard 2 and 3 within a reasonable period of time. The panel formulated several conditions to be met within a period of two years.



The chair and the secretary of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 11 May 2021

Janke Cohen-Schotanus
(chair)

Esther Poort
(secretary)



1. Introduction

1.1 Administrative data

Name of the programme:	Master Developmental Psychopathology in Education and Child Studies (Research)
CROHO number:	60159
Level of the programme:	Master of science
Orientation of the programme:	Academic
Study load:	120 EC
Location:	Leiden
Variant:	Full-time
Expiration of accreditation:	1 November 2021

1.2 Introduction

This report focuses on the assessment of the research master's programme Developmental Psychopathology in Education and Child Studies (DPECS) of Leiden University. This assessment forms part of a cluster assessment of thirteen research master's programmes at seven universities. In total, fifteen panel members participated in this cluster assessment. Appendix A provides an overview of the thirteen participating research masters and the composition of the total panel.

The assessment is based on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands 2018 (limited framework). Research master's programmes must meet a number of additional criteria as described by the NVAO (specification of additional criteria for research master's programmes, 2016).

1.3 Panel composition

For every online visit, a (sub)panel was composed, based on the expertise and availability of panel members. Each (sub)panel consisted of five members, including the chair and the student member. The panel that assessed the research master's programme DPECS consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. Janke Cohen-Schotanus (chair), Professor emeritus of Research of Education in the Medical Sciences;
- Prof. dr. Caroline Braet, Professor of Developmental Psychopathology, Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology at Ghent University;
- Prof. dr. Harm Hospers, Professor emeritus of Applied Health Psychology;
- Prof. dr. Guus Smeets, Professor of Education in Psychology, Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Marie Stadel MSc (student member), Behavioural and Social Sciences Research Master, University of Groningen (graduated in 2020).



The panel was supported by drs. Esther Poort, who acted as secretary.

All panel members and the secretary have signed a declaration of independence and confidentiality. In this declaration they affirm not to have had any business or personal ties with the programme in question for at least five years prior to the review.

The NVAO approved the composition of the panel on 26 November 2020.

1.4 Working method

Preparation

On 14 January 2021, the panel of the entire cluster held a general online kick off meeting. In this meeting, the panel received an introduction to the assessment framework and discussed the working methods in preparation to and during the online visits.

The programme drew up a self-evaluation describing the programme's strengths and weaknesses. This self-evaluation included a chapter in which the students reflected on the programme. The panel members prepared the assessment by analysing the self-evaluation report and the appendices provided by the institution. The panel also evaluated a selection of fifteen master theses and the accompanying assessment forms from the programme. The theses selection was made by the panel's secretary based on a provided list of at least fifty theses from the most recent years. In the selection, consideration was given to a variation in assessments (grades), topics and programme variants.

The panel members individually formulated their preliminary findings and a number of questions they wanted to raise during the online visit. The secretary made an overview of these preliminary findings and questions and sent it to the panel members as a starting point for the preparation of the panel during the online visit.

To further ensure that the different panels used the same working method and approach for all thirteen programmes in the cluster, the two chairs and the two secretaries had two additional meetings: one prior to the first visit and one halfway through all the visits.

Online visit

The online visit took place on 22 March 2021 (see Appendix B for the schedule). During the preparatory meeting, the panel discussed the preliminary findings and decided which questions to raise in their meetings with the programme representatives. During the visit, the panel spoke with representatives of the management, students, lecturers, alumni and the board of examiners. Everyone involved in the programme had the opportunity to inform the panel in confidence about matters they consider important to the assessment. No one made use of this opportunity. The panel used the last part of the online visit to evaluate the interviews and had a second meeting with the programme's management to receive answers to any remaining questions. At the end of the visit, the chair presented the panel's preliminary findings and first impressions of the programme.

Report

The secretary drew up a draft report based on the panel's findings. This draft report was submitted to the members of the panel and adjusted on the basis of their review and feedback. After adoption, the



draft report was sent to the institution for verification of factual inaccuracies. The secretary discussed the programme's comments with the chair, after which the secretary drew up the final report and circulated it to the panel for a final round of comments.

The report follows the four standards such as set of in the NVAO's Assessment Framework 2018 (limited framework): 1) the intended learning outcomes, 2) the teaching-learning environment, 3) assessment, and 4) achieved learning outcomes. Regarding each of the standards, the assessment panel gave a substantiated judgement on a three-point scale: meets, does not meet, or partially meets the standard. The panel subsequently gave a substantiated final conclusion regarding the quality of the programme, also on a three-point scale: positive, conditionally positive, or negative.

Development dialogue

Clearly separated from the process of the programme assessment, assessment panel members and programme representatives met to conduct the development dialogue, with the objective to discuss future developments of the programme.



2. Review

2.1 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, analysis, and considerations

The Research master's programme Developmental Psychopathology in Education and Child Studies (DPECS) is one of three programmes offered by the Institute of Education and Child Studies. This institute is embedded within the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences (FSBS). The programme is closely related to the institute's research programme, that consists of six programme groups.

DPECS aims to train students to become qualified scientist-practitioners who can independently and autonomously conduct academic research that is relevant not only to current international academic debates but also to the professional field of clinical practice, youth care, and education. With the research competencies acquired, graduates can contribute to the development of new fundamental and evidence-based knowledge by means of scientific research. The panel supports the intentions of the programme to educate qualified researchers who are able to design, conduct, and evaluate scientific research, and can translate scientific knowledge to practice. As evidence-based clinical practice is much needed, the panel applauds the intentions of the programme to help to fill this gap and to add to the advancement of the clinical practice in the Netherlands.

The programme has a dual focus. It offers students the possibility to both specialise in Education and Child Studies research, and graduate with a professional qualification that allows for further advancement in that field. The panel established that the programme is well positioned for offering this dual focus. The programme is strongly embedded in the research of the Institute of Education and Child Studies and has a direct connection to LUBEC, the outpatient clinic of Leiden University which also conducts scientific research.

The programme translated the objectives and aims of the programme into a set of seventeen intended learning outcomes which are linked to the Dublin descriptors for the master's level. According to the committee, these intended learning outcomes are well described in terms of level and orientation, and reflect the research orientated nature. However, the intended learning outcomes do not clearly reflect the dual focus of the programme. The panel advises to clarify the differences between the graduates that obtained the professional qualification and graduates who followed a different path. It emphasises that the research profile needs to remain visible for all graduates.

The previous accreditation panel also noted that the programme needed to clarify the profile of the programme and its dual focus. The programme is still in the process of defining this dual profile and restructuring the programme accordingly. As explained by the programme management, this process was delayed due to an unexpected structural and cultural reorganisation of the institute. The panel encourages the programme to complete this process in a vigorous way.



Conclusion

The intended learning outcomes are well described in terms of level and orientation, and reflect the research orientated nature. The panel appreciates the dual focus of the programme. It advises to reflect this dual focus more explicitly in the intended learning outcomes. The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 1.

2.2 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, analysis, and considerations**Curriculum*

DPECS is a full-time programme of 120 EC. The academic year consists of two semesters, each divided into two blocks. The curriculum consists of 45 EC compulsory courses, 30 EC elective courses (6 x 5 EC), and a final project of 45 EC 'Research internship and Master's thesis'.

The compulsory courses consist of four substantive courses (4 x 5 EC) and four research methods courses (3 x 5 EC and 1 x 10 EC). The first three substantive courses are closely related to core concepts and models of the research programme of the institute. The fourth substantive course is devoted to recent national and international research results and current discussions within the academic community. The four research methods courses offer advanced training in research methods and techniques that are relevant for the field. The panel was pleased to learn that lecturers bring in the latest developments in their field, for example statistics for small sample sizes. The panel established that the compulsory courses consist of a balanced mix of substantive and research methods courses and provide students with a solid theoretical foundation for research on developmental psychopathology in education and child studies. The panel appreciates that all 45 EC compulsory courses are taught exclusively to research master's students.

Of the total of 30 EC electives, students have to choose 15 EC courses on offer in English in the regular master's programme Education and Child Studies. Research master's students have to meet additional requirements, for example by doing extra assignments. The remaining 15 EC electives can be chosen from master courses at Leiden University or other universities, given that they are in English and their level is at least 500. Students can also use this 15 EC of their elective space to obtain their professional qualification NVO professional registrations *Basis-Pedagoog* or *Basis-Orthopedagoog*). The courses required for the NVO-registrations are only offered in Dutch, as they prepare for working in a Dutch clinical context. The panel learned that the vast majority of students follow this so called 'clinical track'. In the self-evaluation report, the programme stated to be not completely free to change the curriculum, because students have to acquire a specified set of knowledge and skills to obtain the NVO registration.

Everything students have learned during the programme culminates in the Research Internship and Thesis. In this concluding part of the programme, students integrate their academic attitude and all the knowledge and skills they have learned during the programme into one final project of 45 EC. The programme tries to find each student an internship at an academic facility that also has a connection to practice. As stated in the self-evaluation report, one of the main challenges of the dual focus of the



programme is finding an internship that fits all the intended learning outcomes for research as well as practice. Currently, this sometimes calls for customisation at the individual level, specifically for students who do not pursue an internship at the LUBEC. In the student chapter of the self-evaluation report students emphasise the importance of the possibility to follow this internship at the LUBEC. Students refer to this as the 'clinical internship'. The panel learned that the vast majority of students follows this clinical internship.

The panel studied the curriculum and established that the compulsory courses are in line with the research orientation of the programme. However, the panel is of the opinion that the programme's focus on research is not sufficiently reflected in the remaining part of the curriculum.

First, the panel wishes more assurances that a substantial part of the 30 EC electives is at the level of a research master's programme. As mentioned before, students can follow 15 EC courses from other regular master programmes, without having to meet any additional requirements. This enables students to follow the courses that are required to obtain the NVO-registration. For the other 15 EC electives, research master's students have to meet additional requirements. However, the panel learned during the online visit that this often concerns rather limited additional assignments, such as writing a 2-page paper. Moreover, the students told to be disappointed that they did not receive any feedback on a presentation they had given as extra assignment. The panel advises the programme management to be more explicit in their expectations towards lecturers on the additional assignments by formulating clear criteria for the lecturers to work with. In addition, the panel suggests to collaborate with other research master's programmes at the FSBS, in order to offer more electives tailored at research master's level.

Second, the panel wishes more clarification on what students need to do during their internship if they also obtain their NVO registration during their internship. The report did not provide any information how the programme safeguards the research orientation of this internship. During the online visit, the lecturers explained that research master's students have to integrate their research in the clinical internship. The students to whom the panel spoke, indicated that this extra work causes a high work load during their internship. It was of concern to the panel to hear that students sometimes have to complete a research as well as a clinical internship. Students also indicated that it would have been helpful if the programme management would make it more explicit what is expected from research master's students during the clinical internship. The panel strongly endorses this. Given the research orientation of the programme, the panel also urges the management to clarify how this differs from the regular master's students who follow a clinical internship.

In addition, the panel noted that there is ambiguity about the composition of the 45 EC Research Internship and Master's thesis. As stated in the self-evaluation report, in the current set-up of the programme, internship and thesis together form one 45 EC course, and both parts are closely intertwined. According to the programme, it can be a challenge to meet all high standards for both practice and research in one project. Based on the self-evaluation report and meetings during the online visit, it was not clear to the panel whether the Research internship and Master's theses are always integrated or if sometimes these are actually two separate parts. In the student chapter, students indicate that some graduates were expected to work the equivalent of 45 EC solely on their thesis, while other graduates were expected to do both their thesis and internship within the 45 EC. According to the students, it would be helpful to have institute-wide guidelines regarding the thesis and internships, for example about how many hours should be devoted to each part, with a reference to specific research master's learning goals. The panel agrees with this.



New curriculum

The panel took notice of the programme's plans to overhaul the curriculum. It recognises the effort that the programme has put into designing a new curriculum that will solve several of the concerns raised by the panel. The benefits and improvements that the programme expects from the implementation of the new curriculum can only be reviewed after the implementation of the curriculum. However, the panel wishes to make three remarks.

First, the panel appreciates the clear distinction between the research internship (20 EC) and master theses (25 EC) in the new curriculum. Second, the panel was however surprised that research master's students will no longer need to do additional assignments for the electives that are followed with students of the regular master's programmes. As mentioned before, the panel wishes more assurances that a substantial part of the electives is at research master level – which thus requires additional assignments for elective courses at regular master level - and advises to be more explicit in the expectations towards lecturers by formulating clear criteria for these additional assignments. Third, the panel finds that the significant reduction of substantive courses in the compulsory part of the new curriculum should be reconsidered.

Admission and student numbers

Admission procedures and criteria are clearly presented in the self-assessment report. Strict criteria are in place, such as study records and academic achievements, motivation, research experience, and English language proficiency. Candidates are also interviewed individually in order to manage their expectations.

The programme is a selective master's programme with a yearly intake between 7 and 14 students. Roughly three-quarters of these students did the bachelor Education and Child Studies at Leiden University.

Although staff and students seem satisfied with the small-scale education, the panel is of the opinion that the small cohort size provides challenges for the viability of the programme. According to the panel, attracting more students is desired for ensuring the viability of the program. The previous accreditation panel already recommended to attract more students, in particular international students. Despite the efforts made by the programme for attracting international students, the number of international students is still very limited. The panel recommends stimulating the inflow of both national and international students in a more proactive way. In order to attract a broader range of students, the dual focus and in particular the research orientation of the programme should be better highlighted. The panel has the impression that the current communication about the programme focusses too much on the 'clinical track'. Especially for international students, it should be made more explicit that the programme is primarily a research programme with clear relevance in an international context.

Feasibility

The students and alumni all agreed that the workload of the programme is high. However, most students agree that it is feasible. The average study duration for the past few years fluctuates between 2.1 and 3.0 years. Given the low number of students, these averages are hard to interpret. The panel advises to explore if there are structural reasons for study delay, for example the workload during the clinical internship.



Didactical concept

The panel observed that the educational philosophy of the research master's programme is based on small-scale, motivating and intensive teaching. The programme's small scale guarantees intensive interaction between students and lecturers.

The programme uses the master-apprentice model. The self-evaluation report describes that students choose a professor as their supervisor, based on their own field of interest. Students meet with their supervisor regularly (on average six times a year) to discuss their progress, their electives, and their orientation on the future. In their second year, the student joins one of the research projects within their supervisor's programme group. In addition, each student has a daily supervisor within the same programme group, who is available for guidance on a more ad hoc basis. The panel appreciates the master-apprentice model that allows for high-quality individual supervision. However, the panel noted that the different research groups interpret and implement this in a different way.

The students with whom the panel spoke, indicated that it was not always clear to them what they could expect from their supervisor and daily supervisor. According to the students, it also depends on the supervisor whether they could talk about more personal subjects such as the ambition of the student. The panel advises to make more explicit to both staff and students what is expected of the supervisor and the daily supervisor. In addition, the panel has some concerns that this close collaboration and early linkage with the supervisor may also come at the expense of flexibility for students later in the programme. It advises communicating explicitly that students can also ask for another supervisor, for example if their field of interest changes during the programme.

The panel gathered from the student contribution to the self-evaluation report that students appreciate the high level of involvement of academic staff in the courses specific to the research master's programme. The small scale of the programme leads to a close-knit community of students and staff. Students are encouraged to collaborate and support each other. They spoke enthusiastically about the Rommert Casimir Studio, a workspace reserved for research master's students. The second-year students told that they missed this Studio during 'Corona times', also because this studio offered ample opportunities to talk with second-year students. They suggested that as long students cannot come to the university, a buddy system might be helpful for first-year students.

Staff and research context

One of the appendices to the self-evaluation report contains a list of all academic staff members participating in the programme. During the online visit, the panel met very competent and enthusiastic staff members. Lecturers are very engaged with students and the programme. The ambitious and small-scale character of the programme adds to the motivation of the teaching staff to work with DPECS students.

Currently, 21 staff members teach in the research master's programme. In accordance with university policy, all lecturers, associate professors, assistant professors, and senior professors working more than 0.5 fte for at least a year obtained a BKO, (*Basis Kwalificatie Onderwijs*), except one teacher who was exempted due to extensive experience.

The content of the programme is closely connected to the research that is executed by the six participating research programmes. All teaching staff are affiliated to one of the six programme groups of the institute, each representing a particular research area. The panel recognises the staff's scientific quality, national and international academic reputation and teaching experience.



In 2019, the Institute's research programme was assessed by an external committee according to the qualifications of the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP). The institute received an excellent score on quality and the score 'very good' on societal relevance. This reputation of the institute is endorsed by the panel. Research master's students become acquainted with these research areas during the substantive courses, and when they carry out their research internship and write their thesis.

Given its research-oriented nature, the programme naturally has a strong international focus and is therefore taught in English. Staff has to be proficient in English at C-1 level, generally demonstrated by the BKE (*Basiskwalificatie Engels*). The panel supports the choice for the English language and finds it positive that the programme requires staff members to demonstrate sufficient English proficiency.

COVID-19

Due to COVID-19 almost all education of the programme switched to online teaching and assessment in the past year. The movement towards mainly online education has been a giant leap for students as well as staff.

As described in the self-evaluation report, blended learning seemed to be particularly effective with research master's students, because they have a relatively strong intrinsic motivation and prepare well on the basis of the digital material. Also, because of the relatively small group size, it was quite easy for teachers to interact with all students online. To support (new) research master's students, teacher-guided coaching groups were set up. Depending on the students' preferences, group meetings were planned online or on campus. All exams were administered in their original form, but with extra measures to prevent fraud with online examination.

The Institute appointed support staff who have rapidly professionalised themselves, particularly in the technical aspects of online education. To reduce the workload for teachers, the institute helped with various (administrative) tasks and organized Institute-wide meetings for teachers to exchange experiences with digital education and testing.

The panel concluded that although the COVID-19 situation is not an optimal teaching and learning situation, the pandemic has offered a good opportunity to gain experience with blended learning. It suggests the programme to inventory what measures might be kept after COVID-19.

Conclusion

Although the panel acknowledges that the programme has a dual focus, the panel is of the opinion that a substantial part of the curriculum does not sufficiently reflect that the programme is primarily a research master's programme. It has the impression that the choices made by the management are too much geared towards students who want to obtain their NVO registration. The panel wishes more assurances that the electives and internship are at the level of a research master's programme. Therefore, the panel concludes that the programme partially meets standard 2.



2.3 Student assessment

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

Findings, analysis, and considerations

Assessment policy and methods

One of the appendices to the self-evaluation report contains the assessment plan of the programme. Based on the assessment plan, the panel established that the assessment methods are geared to the learning objectives, the mode of instruction, and the level of the course. The programme uses a variety of assessment methods such as written exams, individual and group assignments, papers, contribution to discussions, and presentations. As the programme progresses, the emphasis in testing shifts from assessing whether students have acquired knowledge, skills and an academic attitude to assessing whether they are able to apply what they have learned. This shift reflects the students' development. The panel applauds the practice that all assessments are constructed using the "four-eyes" principle.

The assessment procedures of individual courses are formulated in the course descriptions that are provided on Brightspace. Students indicated to the panel that they are properly informed about the assessment requirements.

Master thesis

The self-evaluation report describes that the thesis is assessed by the supervisor (always a professor or associate professor) and, independently, by a second assessor using a standard form that addresses criteria connected to the Dublin descriptors. These criteria include quality of collecting and reflecting on scientific literature; quality of research skills; adequate data analysis and report; proper reflection on results; quality of academic writing; and the student's amount of self-reliance and initiative during the process.

The panel has reviewed a sample of 15 research master's theses, including the assessment forms. This has raised several concerns among the panel. The main concern of the panel is that it is not clear how the so-called clinical internship is assessed and how this contributes to the grade of the 45 EC of the total final project. Second, the panel noted that the thesis assessment forms were poorly filled out, and contained very limited qualitative feedback. The lecturers explained that students structurally receive oral feedback (8 times during the entire process), but that this qualitative feedback is not documented. Third, the panel noted that the first assessor is not always a professor or associate professor (which is the programme's policy). Several theses reviewed by the panel, had a PhD-student or assistant professor as first assessor. Moreover, it was not possible to determine on the basis of the evaluation form whether the two assessors had evaluated the thesis independently and how the final score (and the arguments underpinning this score) was established.

The self-evaluation report describes that the programme is currently developing a new grading form. This digital form uses rubrics as well as (obligatory) qualitative feedback and automates the procedures for independent grading. The panel urges the programme to ensure that the new grading form and the clear distinction between the internship and thesis, will address the concerns of the panel.



Board of Examiners

The Institute of Education and Child Studies has a Board of Examiners (BoE) who is responsible of the bachelor's programme, the regular master's programme and the research master's programme. The BoE functions independently of the Institute Board and is directly accountable to the Faculty Board. It consists of three members (including the chair) and has a designated Secretary. They have monthly meetings at which they discuss all issues concerning the quality of teaching and assessment, including questions and complaints from students. The BoE works with an external examiner who independently takes yearly samples of theses to assess their quality and the quality of grading. As described in the self-evaluation report, the external examiner has always agreed with the assessment of the research master's theses that were included in de samples.

The panel noted that the BoE was not aware of the concerns the panel observed regarding the thesis assessment. In addition, the BoE did not recognise the concerns from the panel regarding the research master's level of the programme.

The panel urges the BoE to take more responsibility in case of the quality control of the theses. It is of the opinion that more authority and a more proactive approach are required in order to be successful. Also, the panel finds that the BoE should not rely on one external examiner for this task.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme has a good assessment plan. However, it established several concerns regarding the process of the master's thesis assessment. In addition, the BoE could take a more proactive approach in order to ensure the quality control of the assessment in the programme. The programme therefore partially meets standard 3.

2.4 Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings, analysis, and considerations

As described under standard 2, students finish the programme with a Research internship and Master's thesis (45 EC). The research project aims for students to experience the full empirical cycle, resulting in a paper that takes the form of a scientific article.

Based on the 15 theses studied, the panel found that each thesis fulfilled at least the minimum requirements one would expect of a final master's thesis of an academic programme at research master's level. They testify to considerable skills in executing research and reporting on research. All theses paid substantial attention to ethics, which is appreciated by the panel. Overall, the panel agrees with all grades and would have given the same marks, deviating maximally by 0.5 only, sometimes giving a slightly higher or slightly lower.

The panel established that almost all alumni work in positions in which they need the scientific knowledge and analytical skills acquired in the research master's programme, and almost all in the field of education and child studies. In the academic years 2015-2020, 58 students graduated from the research master's programme. Based on the overview in the self-evaluation report, the panel learned that two thirds of the graduates fulfil a position where the dual focus on research and practice is central: 31% acquired a PhD position and 31% work as scientist-practitioners in clinical



work environments. The other graduates found a job as teacher and/or researcher in institutions of higher education (17%), work as behavioral scientist (10%), or found another job (11%).

During the online visit, the panel talked to five alumni. Three alumni currently have a PhD position and two of them work as a behavioural specialist (one of them in combination with a job as lecturer at the Institute of Education and Child Studies). They all reported that they were very satisfied with their education. They pointed out that they had benefited from the large variety of courses and the focus on research skills and critical thinking.

Conclusion

Due to the satisfactory overall level of the theses and the fact that alumni continue on easily to a career in line with the objectives of the programme, the panel is convinced that the learning outcomes are achieved upon graduation. The programme therefore meets standard 4.



3. Strengths and recommendations

3.1 Strengths of the programme

The panel is impressed by the following features:

- Compulsory courses - The compulsory courses consist of a balanced mix of substantive and research methods courses and provide students with a solid theoretical foundation for research on developmental psychopathology in education and child studies. The panel appreciates that all 45 EC compulsory courses are taught exclusively to research master's students.
- Teaching team – The teaching staff is motivated, well-qualified and knowledgeable in their respective areas. They are active researchers and able to bring in the latest developments in their field.
- Variety of assessment system – The programme uses a variety of assessment methods that are geared to the learning outcomes, the mode of instruction and level of the course.

3.2 Recommendations

For further improvement of the programme, the panel makes the following recommendations (next to the conditions that are described in chapter 4):

- Dual focus - Clarify the profile of the programme and its dual focus. Make the differences in intended learning outcomes between the graduates that obtained the professional qualification and graduates who followed a different path more explicit.
- Role of supervisor- Make the different roles of the supervisor and daily supervisor more explicit to both staff members and students.
- Attracting more students – Make a sound strategy to increase the inflow of both national and international students in a more proactive way. In order to attract a broader range of students, the dual focus and in particular the research orientation of the programme should be better highlighted.



4. Conclusion

The outcome of the external assessment of the research master Developmental Psychopathology in Education and Child Studies (DPECS) is conditionally positive. According to the panel, the programme complies with standards 1 and 4 of the limited NVAO framework and partially complies with standard 2 and 3.

The panel concludes that the objectives and intended learning outcomes of the research master's programme DPECS meet the standards required for an academic programme. The panel concludes that the current curriculum does not fully meet the research-orientated requirements of a research master's programme. It wishes more assurances that the electives and internship reflect the research orientation of the programme. The panel also noted several problems regarding the process of the master's thesis assessment. The BoE should take a more proactive approach in order to ensure the quality control of the assessment in the programme. The quality of the theses is good and most alumni find a job in line with the objectives of the programme.

The panel noted that the new curriculum and the new grading form, which will be implemented in September 2021, will probably solve some of the concerns observed by the panel. The panel is convinced that the programme can manage to address all concerns and reach standard 2 and 3 within a reasonable period of time. Therefore, the quality of the programme is assessed as conditionally positive.

The condition to be met within a period of two years is the following:

With respect to standard 2:

- Ensure that a substantial part of the electives is at the research master's level;
- Make explicit how the programme ensures the research orientation of the internship, in particular for students who also obtain their NVO registration during the internship.

With respect to standard 3:

- Develop a procedure and assessment form for assessing the thesis that:
 - reflects the intended learning outcomes of the research master's programme;
 - describes the roles of the first and second assessor and how the independency between two assessors is guaranteed;
 - ensures that all staff members provide substantial qualitative feedback on the thesis form.
- Create a plan how the BoE will take a more proactive approach in order to ensure quality control of the assessment in the programme.

Standard	Judgement
Standard 1	Meets the standard
Standard 2	Partially meets the standard
Standard 3	Partially meets the standard
Standard 4	Meets the standard
Final conclusion	Conditionally positive



Appendix A – Panel composition and programmes of the cluster

Panel composition of the cluster:

- Prof. dr. Janke Cohen-Schotanus (chair) Professor emeritus of Research of Education in the Medical Sciences;
- Prof. dr. Rob Ruiter (chair), Professor of Health and Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience at Maastricht University;
- Prof. dr. Lidia Arends, Professor of Statistics and Research Methodology, Department of Psychology, Education & Child Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. dr. Caroline Braet, Professor of Developmental Psychopathology, Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology at Ghent University;
- Prof. dr. Rachel Gibson, Professor of Politics, Department of Politics, University of Manchester;
- Prof. dr. Harm Hospers, Professor emeritus of Applied Health Psychology;
- Prof. dr. Detlev Leutner, Professor of Instructional Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Duisburg-Essen;
- Prof. dr. Maike Luhmann, Professor of Psychological Methods, Department of psychology, Ruhr University Bochum;
- Hanne Oberman MSc (student member). Methodology and Statistics for the Behavioural, Biomedical, and Social Sciences, Utrecht University (graduated in 2020);
- Prof dr. Arne Roets, Professor of Social Psychology, Faculty of psychology and educational sciences, Department of Developmental, Personality, and Social Psychology, Ghent University;
- Prof. dr. Guus Smeets, Professor of Education in Psychology, Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Yvonne Schittenhelm BSc, (student member), Master Individual Differences and Assessment, Tilburg University;
- Marie Stadel MSc (student member), Behavioural and Social Sciences Research Master, University of Groningen (graduated in 2020);
- Prof. dr. Lieven Verschaffel, Professor of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven;
- Prof. dr. Karine Verschueren, Professor of School and Developmental Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, KU Leuven.

The cluster consist of thirteen programmes:

- M Individual Differences and Assessment (research), Tilburg University;
- M Behavioural Science (research), Radboud University;
- M Clinical and Developmental Psychopathology (research), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam;
- M Social Psychology: Regulation of Social Behaviour (research), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam;
- M Psychology (research), University of Amsterdam;
- M Communication Science (research), University of Amsterdam;



- M Educational Sciences: Learning in Interaction (research), Utrecht University;
- M Methodology and Statistics for the Behavioural, Biomedical and Social Sciences (research), Utrecht University;
- M Development and Socialisation in Childhood and Adolescence (research), Utrecht University;
- M Social & Health Psychology (research), Utrecht University;
- M Behavioural and Social Sciences (research), University of Groningen;
- M Psychology (research), Leiden University;
- M Developmental Psychopathology in Education and Child Studies (research), Leiden University.



Appendix B – Schedule of the visit

22 March 2021

Time	Session
08.30 – 10.00	Preparation panel
10.00 – 10.45	Management
10.45 – 11.00	Evaluation
11.00 – 11.45	Students
11.00 – 12.00	Evaluation
12.45 – 13.30	Lecturers
13.30 – 13.45	Evaluation
13.45 – 14.15	Alumni
14.15 – 14.30	Evaluation
14.30 – 15.00	Board of Examiners
15.00 – 15.30	Evaluation and preparing questions for management
15.30 -16.00	Second meeting management
16.00 – 17.30	Evaluation
17.30 – 17.45	Presentation of first findings



Appendix C – Documents studied

- Self-evaluation report
- Fifteen theses with assessment forms
- Assessment report from the previous accreditation
- Follow up of recommendations from the previous accreditation
- Overview of the current curriculum and course descriptions (2019-2020)
- Overview of new curriculum (2021-2020)
- Course and Examination Regulations (2019-2020) (includes list of intended learning outcomes)
- Inflow and flow figures (2015-2020)
- Overview of staff involved in teaching in the programme
- Assessment methods
- Research Master's programme during COVID-19



Appendix D – Abbreviations

BKE	Basiskwalificatie Engels
BKO	Basiskwalificatie Onderwijs
BoE	Board of Examiners
DPECS	Developmental Psychopathology in Education and Child Studies
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
FSBS	Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences
EC	European Credit
LUBEC	Leiden University Intervention and Expertise Centre
NVO	Nederlandse Vereniging van Pedagogen en Onderwijskundigen
SEP	Standard Evaluation Protocol

