



AGENTUR FÜR
QUALITÄTSSICHERUNG DURCH
AKKREDITIERUNG VON
STUDIENGÄNGEN E.V.

EXPERTS' REPORT

“NIEDERLANDE-DEUTSCHLAND-STU- DIEN” (MASTER OF ARTS)

PROCEDURE UNDER THE EUROPEAN APPROACH

University of Münster /

Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands)



DECISION ON THE ACCREDITATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

▪ “NIEDERLANDE-DEUTSCHLAND-STUDIEN” (M.A.)

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MÜNSTER AND RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN (NETHERLANDS)

On the basis of the final report of the panel of experts and the deliberations of the Standing Commission made by circulation of 26 April 2021, the commission issues the following decision:

1. The study programme “**Niederlande-Deutschland-Studien**” leading to the degree of “**Master of Arts**” at the **University of Münster and Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands)** is accredited **without conditions**, taking into account the criteria and procedural rules of the European Approach for Quality assurance of Joint Programmes.
2. The study programme meets the criteria set out in the current version of the European Qualifications Framework and the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.
3. The accreditation is granted for a **six-year period** (taking into account the last full year of study concerned) and is **valid until 30 September 2027**.

Regarding the reasoning behind this decision, the Standing Commission refers to the experts’ report attached to this decision.

**EXPERTS' REPORT ON THE ACCREDITATION
OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME
“NIEDERLANDE-DEUTSCHLAND-STUDIEN” (MASTER OF ARTS)
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MÜNSTER AND RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN (NETHERLANDS)**

Date of site visit: 18 December 2020

Panel of experts:

Professor Dr. Ton Nijhuis

University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Humanities, Director of the Duitsland Instituut Amsterdam,

Professor Dr. Marc Frey

University of the Federal German Armed Forces Munich, Department of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, Department of History,

Marion Hemsing

Saxion Hogeschool (International Office), previously Euregio Qualifizierungs- und Technologieforum e.V., Ahaus (representative of professional practice),

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Master's student of Political Science & International Relations, Utrecht University (student representative)

Coordinator:

Patrick Heinzer

AQAS e.V., Germany

I. Preamble

The University of Münster, together with the University in Nijmegen, is applying for the accreditation of the study programme “Niederlande-Deutschland-Studien” leading to the degree of “Master of Arts”. This final report by the panel of experts is based on the university’s written application documents and the results of the site visit. In particular, the descriptive parts of the experts’ report refer to the application submitted.

II. Assessment procedure

This report is the result of the external review of the Master’s programme in “Niederlande-Deutschland-Studien” (M.A.) offered by the University of Münster (WWU) and Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands).

Criteria

The study programme is reviewed in accordance with the criteria of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, which was agreed with the Ministers of the European Higher Education Area in May 2015.

Approach and methodology

Opening of the procedure

In June 2020, the University of Münster mandated AQAS to carry out the accreditation procedure using the European Approach. For this purpose, the WWU produced a self-evaluation report (SER) describing the programme in its entirety; this report was submitted in July 2020, together with the necessary documents, the relevant appendices, and statistical data on the study programme.

AQAS analysed the self-evaluation report for completeness, comprehensibility and transparency. The final version of the self-evaluation report was submitted in November 2020.

The accreditation procedure was formally opened at the meeting of the AQAS Standing Commission on 24 August 2020.

Nomination of the panel of experts

The composition of the panel of experts follows the stakeholder principle and the requirements described in the European Approach. As a result, representatives from the relevant discipline(s), the labour market and the student body are involved. In addition, AQAS follows the Principles for the Selection of Experts of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

The AQAS Standing Commission nominated the panel of experts in November 2020. AQAS informed the WWU about the members of the panel of experts, and the university did not express any concerns about the composition of the panel.

Preparation of the site visit

Prior to the site visit, the experts reviewed the self-evaluation report and submitted a short preliminary statement containing outstanding issues and any potential need for additional information. AQAS forwarded these preliminary statements to the university and the members of the panel in order to increase transparency of the process and the upcoming discussions during the site visit.

Site visit

Following a review of the self-evaluation report, an online site visit was conducted on 18 December 2020. During the site visit, the experts held separate discussions to interview various stakeholders, e.g. the university management, programme directors, teaching staff and non-academic staff from the two universities, as well as students and graduates. During the online site visit, final theses covering the entire range of grades were also assessed. The online site visit ended with a presentation of the preliminary results obtained by the expert group to the representatives of the universities.

Preparation of the experts' report

After the site visit, the panel of experts prepared the following report assessing the fulfilment of the criteria set out in the European Approach for Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes. The report included a recommendation to the AQAS Standing Commission. The report was sent to the universities for comment.

Decision

The experts' report, together with the university's comments, is the basis for the AQAS Standing Commission's decision on the accreditation of the programme. On the basis of these two documents, the Standing Commission made its decision on accreditation on 22 February 2021. AQAS forwarded the decision to the universities.

III. General information

The Master's programme in "Niederlande-Deutschland-Studien" (Master of Arts) is a consecutive programme offered jointly by the University of Münster (WWU) and Radboud University Nijmegen (RU) as a joint degree programme.

Around 44,000 students were enrolled at the WWU at the time of the application. The range of courses offered by the university's 15 faculties covers around 120 subjects from the humanities, the natural and life sciences, economics and social sciences. The university pursues the goal of further enhancing the importance of excellent teaching for the university's profile, increasing the value of teaching at all levels. By providing research-based teaching and research-accompanied learning, the university seeks to teach its students the ability to make science-based judgements and the skills required to act and solve problems based on those judgements. The study programme to be accredited is based at the Centre for Dutch Studies (ZNS), which was founded in 1989. According to the application, the ZNS focuses on relations between Germany and the Netherlands with the aim of analysing similarities and differences through comparative assessment.

The student population at RU in Nijmegen was around 23,000 at the time of the application. The university consists of seven faculties, covering a total of around 110 study programmes in almost all disciplines. At RU, the study programme is based at the Faculty of Arts (*Faculteit der Letteren*), where it has been located at the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures (*Departement Moderne Talen en Culturen*) since 2019, following a restructure of the faculty. Around 2,400 students were studying at the faculty at the time of the application. The data shows that the study programme had a cohort size of 13 to 17 students over the last six years (with 25 places available each academic year). In all, 51 students from all semesters were enrolled on the study programme at the time of the application (as of: winter semester 2019/2020). 69% of those students were female, 31% were male. 65% of the students were from Germany.

IV. Assessment of the study programme

1. Eligibility

1.1 Status

The institutions that offer a joint programme should be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree(s) should ensure that the degree(s) belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based.

Description

The WWU is recognised as a state-recognised university in accordance with the Higher Education Act of North Rhine-Westphalia, and is authorised under that Act to award joint degrees with foreign universities. RU is recognised under Dutch law as a university (*instelling voor hoger onderwijs*) in the field of academic teaching and research. In accordance with national regulations, RU is also authorised to offer joint degrees with foreign universities.

Experts' evaluation

Both universities are state-recognised in their respective country. The respective national regulations stipulate that both universities may offer joint degree programmes with foreign universities. The degree awarded in the study programme belongs to the higher education system of each respective country. Both universities are jointly involved in the planning, implementation and enhancement of the study programme. During the site visit, it became clear to the panel of experts that both universities attach great importance to the role of the study programme. The panel of experts praised the joint implementation and the well-established relationship, which was clearly evident not only at the study programme level, but also at the university level.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

1.2 Joint design and delivery

The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme.

Description

The study programme emerged from cooperation between the two universities in the context of the double *Diplom* degree programme in "Niederlande-Deutschland-Studien". In the wake of the Bologna reform and the introduction of two undergraduate Bachelor's programmes ("*Duitse Taal en Cultuur*" at RU from 2002 and "Niederlande-Deutschland-Studien" at the WWU from 2006), the two universities decided to expand their cooperation, and jointly develop and offer the Master's programme in "Niederlande-Deutschland-Studien". The application states that there are several national specificities that are mandatory for one of the partners, such as the Commission for Teaching (*opleidingscommissie*); these specificities have been incorporated into the joint process of programme implementation.

Experts' evaluation

The universities' self-evaluation report states that the two universities are equal partners within the consortium. The panel of experts acknowledges the close ties, which are based on the two universities' long-standing tradition, adding considerable value to the study programme. Based on the design of the study programme and the balanced distribution of thematic priorities, the joint, holistic and multidisciplinary approach taken by "Niederlande-Deutschland-Studien" is used wisely to continuously enhance the study programme. Based on the findings obtained during the site visit, the experts can certify that both universities attach considerable importance to the relatively small study programme. The study programme is implemented and planned jointly in equal shares, creating positive synergies that are specifically harnessed for the benefit of the study programme.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

1.3 Cooperation agreement

The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement should in particular cover the following issues:

- *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
- *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.)*
- *Admission and selection procedures for students*
- *Mobility of students and teachers*
- *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium.*

Description

The cooperation agreement governing the study programme regulates the rights and responsibilities of both universities and defines the programme's joint qualification (Master of Arts). The study programme's joint examination regulations govern the admission procedure, for which a joint selection committee has been established. In addition, the examination regulations stipulate all the examination arrangements, such as the methods of assessment, explanatory notes on the respective grading system, and information on the recognition of credits in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The cooperation agreement also regulates the general rules on mobility. The agreement states that students must pay the applicable semester fees for the time spent in Münster and the statutory tuition fees for the time spent in Nijmegen. Students are enrolled at both universities for the entire duration of the programme.

Experts' evaluation

The long-standing cooperation between the two universities and the ongoing enhancement of the study programme are also reflected in the cooperation agreement. The contract contains all the parts required to successfully offer a joint programme. The joint selection committee for the study programme with the participation

of both universities highlights the balanced and equal partnership between the two universities involved in the study programme. The cooperation agreement covers all necessary areas and is state of the art.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

Learning outcomes

2.1 Level

The intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s).

Description

According to the application, the study programme takes four different approaches to achieving multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity (economic-legal, political-historical, intercultural, and communication science-related). The applicant universities state that the learning outcomes are described on the basis of the Dublin Descriptors and linked at the module level using a skills matrix. According to the consortium's statement, the study programme corresponds to the second cycle of the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA, Master's programme) or the respective equivalents in the national qualifications framework (Level 7 of the DQR or the NLQF). Prior to the online site visit, the panel of experts was granted access to a total of eight final theses via an online cloud.

Experts' evaluation

The intended learning outcomes correspond to the level of the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) and the level of the respective national qualifications framework. Despite the fact that multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary study programmes are always a special challenge, the curriculum is convincing in every respect and has been excellently developed. The challenging study programme, which provides students with knowledge, skills and methods in the fields of economics, law, history, politics, interculturality and communication, is characterised by interdisciplinarity, and usefully contrasts the similarities and differences between the two language areas. Despite its more pronounced application-oriented approach, the study programme also has a research focus and provides students with an adequate scientific basis. The final thesis allows students to choose their specialisation within the study programme's broad multidisciplinary focus. The panel of experts certifies that the final theses are of a very high standard and well substantiated in terms of theory and methodology, demonstrating the achievement of the learning outcomes in the curriculum. During the site visit, the final theses made available were analysed and discussed by the panel of experts and with representatives of both universities in relation to the methodological approach taken and the areas of specialisation. The final theses made available covered the whole range of grades, from 1.0 to 3.7 (or 10 to 6 according to the Dutch grading system).

The study programme, which by definition is not designed primarily to train economists, lawyers, historians or political scientists in the classical sense, takes a very precise and systematic approach, thanks to its multidisciplinary, and focuses appropriately on Dutch-German relations and cross-border cooperation. As a result, relevant parts of all the departments involved are presented as a systematic unit, which is very demanding.

Thanks to the excellent implementation of the course, the programme directors basically manage to offer the study programme as an independent and autonomous discipline.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

2.2 Disciplinary field

The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).

Description

The study programme is designed to provide graduates with a detailed scientific basis as well as knowledge, skills and methods in the fields of economics and law, history and politics, interculturality and communication. This knowledge should enable graduates of the study programme to comprehend German-Dutch relations as an element of European integration in their historical processuality.

Since the study programme offers the prospect of a wide range of occupational fields, the internship and the Master's thesis represent an important cornerstone for students' professional orientation.

In addition to the high employment rates of graduates of the study programme, care should also be taken during the admission procedure to ensure that students are well matched to the programme. The structure of the study programme should provide for simple and manageable programme development on the basis of the matrix assignment, which breaks down the achievement of the stated learning outcomes at the programme level to the module level.

Experts' evaluation

The design of the study programme enables students to take both a practice-based and research-based approach. The requirements of the profession are explicitly taken into account; relevant competencies associated with Dutch-German relations and cross-border cooperation are taught throughout the curriculum. In concrete terms, this means that competencies and career orientation are immanent and continuous in virtually all modules. This is enhanced by the internship, conducted in the other country. It is evident that graduates find employment in a relevant area of Dutch-German relations within a very short time.

Besides covering specialised subject content, methods, theories and competencies, the curriculum enables students to gain a high level of proficiency in the respective foreign language. During the site visit, the panel of experts was satisfied that the language acquisition modules are very well structured and tailored to the needs of students. The binational mix of students is used beneficially to encourage the informal use of the respective foreign language throughout the course, making the language mix a living reality of the study programme. During the site visit, the panel of experts was able to gain an impression of the high level of proficiency, which is comparable to the language level of students majoring in foreign languages. This is enhanced by close interaction between teaching staff and students, as well as among students. Although the composition of cohorts is not balanced at present (there were usually more Dutch than German-speaking students in recent years), in practice the small mixed cohorts generate a good group feeling and lively intercultural interaction.

In summary, at the programme level, the learning outcomes of the study programme cover all necessary areas (knowledge, competencies and skills). On the basis of data on labour market entry and feedback from alumni/alumnae, the panel of experts concludes that the learning outcomes were ambitiously and appropriately designed and developed. The graduates' success is striking proof of this.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

2.3 Achievement

The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Description

The application states that the learning outcomes provide the framework for the Master's programme and are taken into account accordingly in the teaching provided and the methods of assessment.

The consortium derives seven specific learning outcomes from the overarching learning outcomes described in 2.2:

- The ability to work both independently and as part of a team in various transboundary areas (business, international organisations, public service, administration and science) of the national, binational and international labour market;
- Problem-oriented thinking and analysis of complex problems, including current developments in German-Dutch relations and any possible social and ethical implications;
- Detailed knowledge of the scientific subdisciplines of economics and law, history and politics, interculturality and communication science, and especially research methods, research approaches, current subject-specific traditions, knowledge of the German-Dutch perspective against the backdrop of political, historical and social foci, multidisciplinary approaches to enable the knowledge to be applied to the professional field, methods for developing research strategies and the ability to work independently on appropriate issues, taking into account contemporary specialist discussions;
- At least level C1 language proficiency in German and Dutch, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR);
- The ability to use relevant methods to generate new knowledge, and to review such knowledge in terms of information content, reliability and significance;
- The professional and social skills required to apply knowledge in an intercultural context.

Experts' evaluation

During the site visit, the panel of experts was able to gain a comprehensive picture on the basis of concrete examples of the methods of assessment used. The methods of assessment used are perfectly tailored to the intended learning outcomes of each module, enabling the teaching staff to check whether the outcomes have been achieved, and to support students' knowledge gain. In the course of the study programme, students become acquainted with a wide range of examination types, which they will be able to use in a targeted manner later in their professional lives. The site visit clearly demonstrated the high standard of the final theses, which is also testimony to good supervision by the teaching staff. The final theses made available, which presented a good picture of the range of grades, reflect a high standard and cover not only subject-specific and interdisciplinary issues, but also language aspects.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

2.4 Regulated professions

If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account.

The joint degree is exempt from the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC. For this reason, the criterion is not applicable.

Study programme

3.1 Curriculum

The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Description

The application states that extensive changes to the curriculum are planned for winter semester 2021/22, albeit without altering the multidisciplinary structure or the focus of the study programme. All modules (apart from the basic module) are to be worth five credit points (CP) in future, with the objective of establishing a clearer structure. Furthermore, a number of module and seminar titles are to be worded more concisely and adapted. According to the statement in the application, the modifications relate to three key aspects.

The intention is now to reduce the number of modules in the study programme from ten to nine. As a result, the previous modules on “Politics and Economics – Germany and the Netherlands since 1945” and “Interculturality and Communication – The German-Dutch Relationship” will be merged into the new basic module “German-Dutch Relations in Europe” or content will be moved to relevant modules, so that the previous two basic modules will become one large basic module worth 20 CP. The aim of this change is to give the study programme a clearer structure. This change is also intended to update the priorities with regard to practice-oriented content. The previous module entitled “German-Dutch Economic Relations since 1945” is to be called “German-Dutch Integration in Practice” in future, allowing room for deeper insights into professional practice. In addition, existing alumni contacts are to be drawn on in this context.

Based on the experience that cohorts of the study programme are becoming increasingly heterogeneous, the basic module entitled Language Practice 1 is to receive a new emphasis towards language and writing skills. The consortium sees this as an advantage in being able to address individuals’ level of learning in a more target group-oriented way, which is expected to result in increased cooperation.

Furthermore, the specialisation modules “Economics and Law” and “Cultural History, Cultural Policy and Cultural Transfer” are to be restructured. Besides optimising the structure of the specialisation modules, this change should also create space to facilitate linkages between theory and practice.

On the basis of these statements, the curriculum is to consist of eight modules and a final module, and will be structured as follows in the future:

- Module 1: German-Dutch Relations in Europe (20 CP, basic module)
- Module 2: Language Practice I (10 CP)
- Module 3: Language Practice II (5 CP)
- Module 4: Comparative Political Developments (10 CP, specialisation module)
- Module 5: Cultural History, Cultural Policy and Cultural Transfer (10 CP, specialisation module)
- Module 6: Corporate Communications (10 CP, specialisation module)
- Module 7: Economics and Law (10 CP, specialisation module)
- Module 8: Practical Module (15 CP)
- Module 9: Final Module (30 CP)

Experts' evaluation

The panel of experts finds the curriculum and the envisaged changes to the curriculum convincing. The curriculum consists of elements of History, Political Science, Communication Sciences, Economics and Law. It is complemented by a substantial and well-implemented element dedicated to foreign language acquisition. Content is taught in an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary manner in the context of Dutch-German relations. The design of the study programme enables students to gain a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of all disciplines, which can be put to effective use in their subsequent professional lives. In addition, the principle of international small group work is predominantly used within the study programme, enabling students to benefit greatly at an early stage. The mandatory internship, which in many cases can be arranged through partner institutions, frequently provides pathways into employment.

Empirical, methodological and theoretical components are very well balanced and interrelated in a meaningful way. The curriculum is generally practice-oriented, but also contains research elements, enabling students to follow either path. The qualitatively and quantitatively ambitious Master's thesis is closely supervised and of a high standard. The Master's thesis enables the achievement of the learning outcomes to be verified at the programme level. Teaching is provided equally at both locations by lecturers from Nijmegen and Münster, regardless of the module or semester. The geographical proximity of the two locations is utilised effectively in the implementation of the study programme, and teaching staff often commute between Münster and Nijmegen. In practice, teaching takes place in two languages at both locations. This also has the effect that the collective character that distinguishes the study programme is greatly emphasised, creating a great sense of community among the students.

The reform of the curriculum seeks to harmonise the module structure (with the same number of CP), increase the practical language components, and further enhance employability. The measures chosen in this context reflect a consistent enhancement and optimisation of the curriculum. The reform is moderate and plausible. It increases the coherence of the curriculum as well as graduates' employment opportunities. The composition of the curriculum and ultimately the joint implementation at both universities ensure intensive, targeted and success-oriented studies. The skills matrix used for the study programme not only enables the programme

directors to easily scale the achievement of the learning outcomes from the programme to the module level, but also makes it easier to manage any changes that may be needed in the course of further modifications, without compromising the balance of the study programme.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

3.2 Credits

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.

Description

The curriculum requires that the first two semesters of the two-year programme are spent at RU and the last two semesters at the WWU. According to the application details, the student workload of the Master's programme comprising 120 CP is distributed evenly, with 30 CP being earned each semester. The curriculum distributes the workload according to the components (60 CP subject-specific teaching, 15 CP language acquisition, 15 CP internship and 30 CP Master's thesis, including the student research colloquium).

Experts' evaluation

On the basis of the application documents and the discussion during the procedure, it became evident that the number of CP available on the programme was transparent and clear. The assessment basis on which CP are awarded is apparent to students. Both universities apply the European Credit Transfer System consistently and transparently. The cooperation agreement regulates the distribution of CP for both universities for the respective stage of the programme. The recognition of credits earned at the partner university is transparently set out in both the application and the examination regulations. This approach is particularly pertinent and expedient for joint degree programmes. The cooperation agreement also regulates the synchronisation of the two grading systems, making them more manageable and comparable for the two university locations.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

3.3 Workload

A joint bachelor programme will typically amount to a total student workload of 180-240 ECTS-credits; a joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60 ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA); for joint doctorates there is no credit range specified.

The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored.

Description

The workload is based on the general guidelines of both universities, and differentiates between contact hours and self-study time. This results in a workload of between 28 and 30 hours per CP. The study programme amounts to a total of 120 CP.

Experts' evaluation

In spite of the programme's multidisciplinary approach and the heterogeneous background of the cohorts, the programme directors manage to spread the student workload equally. Combining two study locations, each from a different higher education system, can be a challenge, but one that the programme directors manage superbly. The workload is comparable in both higher education systems and it is estimated that the workload is equal. According to the students, the higher education systems do differ (e.g. several credits spread over the semester), but these differences are not perceived as an increased workload, but simply as a different approach. This is taken by the panel of experts as a further indication that informal exchange among the university representatives is excellent, enhancing the implementation of the study programme. The close exchange with students also helps to identify any potential problems with workload at an early stage, enabling them to be discussed internally and adapted where necessary. The documentation of study programme records also makes it easy for prospective students to quickly gain an overview of the programme.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

Admission and recognition

4.1 Admission

The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.

Description

The joint examination regulations appended to the application define the admission criteria as successful completion of a Bachelor's degree or a comparable degree (e.g. *Diplom* or State Examination) as well as proof of linguistic and subject-specific aptitude. The entry level for the foreign language is described as CEFR Level B2. Subject-specific aptitude is ideally verified by a content-related reference to the topics of the Master's programme. Prospective students who meet the formal criteria are eligible to participate in the admission procedure. The admission procedure involves a written application and a selection interview conducted by a committee made up of representatives from both universities. On the basis of the selection interviews, a ranking list is drawn up where necessary, which determines admission in the event of an excess number of prospective students. The study programme data also showed that in the last five cohorts, the number of applicants matched the estimated admission capacity for the programme, and that all prospective students were offered a place (an average of 13 to 17 applicants for 25 places).

Experts' evaluation

The study programme stands out on account of its transparent documentation of the admission requirements for both universities in the consortium. Despite being demanding, the entry requirements are adequate and achievable. The criteria for admission to the study programme are described transparently. The discussions held during the site visit show that, on an informal level, the teaching staff put a lot of effort into attracting students with a connection to the Netherlands and the content of the Master's programme. The information culture of both universities can be regarded as exemplary, creating an important asset for the study programme. The binational approach taken by the selection committee, consisting of two professors and two academic staff members, is assessed as positive, and shows how well established the relationship is between the two universities.

The panel of experts considers the entry level for the foreign language (at B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages) to be comparatively high. In practice, however, the admission practice is shown to be practicable, and many students have an even higher entry level. The admission procedure consists of a written application, including documents (certificate / transcript of records, evidence of language skills, letter of motivation, reference details, CV), and an interview with the binational selection committee. The applicants' prior knowledge of the language and the subject is reviewed, and prospective students gain an adequate impression of the study programme at this stage. If there are too many applicants for the study programme, the selection committee decides how places are awarded on the basis of a ranking list. This procedure is also set out in the examination regulations. Based on the data concerning the study programme, however, all prospective students who met the admission criteria have so far been able to gain a place on the programme. As a result of the site visit, the panel of experts was able to gain a comprehensive picture of the measures taken by both universities to increase student numbers. The explanations that students from similar Bachelor's programmes either want to focus on a particular subject at the Master's stage or are unwilling to transfer to another university during the Master's programme are convincing, and are shared by the panel of experts. The measures taken to increase the number of applicants demonstrate a high level of commitment to the programme, and are exemplary compared to similarly small study programmes.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

4.2 Recognition

Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

Description

In line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, both universities are committed to a transparent procedure with regard to the recognition of qualifications and periods of study. The procedure for the recognition of qualifications and periods of study is set out in the joint examination regulations. The examination committee is responsible for the process of recognition. A concrete description of the procedure is set out in the examination regulations. These also include the criteria for credit recognition and transfer from identical study programmes at other higher education institutions, from other study programmes, and from study programmes of state-approved distance learning. The examination regulations also specify the necessary level of informative value of the documents to be provided by students.

Experts' evaluation

During the site visit, both universities were able to explain their recognition practice for credits obtained at other universities. The procedures are published transparently and are accessible to all relevant stakeholders. The examination regulations also provide for the recognition of performances achieved outside higher education. Overall, the process outlined provides a comprehensive picture of the procedure for the recognition of qualifications and periods of study. The individual process steps are well thought out and adequate. The panel of experts rates the procedure very positively.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

Learning, teaching and assessment

5.1 Learning and teaching

The programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the learning and teaching approaches applied should be adequate to achieve those. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.

Description

The study programme is designed in such a way that subject-specific and linguistic development takes place in the basic and specialisation modules, as well as in the language practice modules. In addition, the modules should be interdisciplinary in approach, enabling subject-specific knowledge to be combined to form interdisciplinary expertise. In addition to the intercultural elements, which are to be addressed implicitly in the modules and explicitly in the basic module “German-Dutch Relations in Europe” and in the specialisation module “Cultural History, Cultural Policy and Cultural Transfer”, the curriculum also provides for several months of practical work experience during the practical stage. In addition, guest lectures and field trips are to be held at regular intervals.

According to the application, the didactic approach of the study programme results from the multidisciplinary and binational nature of the curriculum, which lays the foundations for the intended intercultural, linguistic and discipline-based learning outcomes. The exchange of teaching staff from both universities enables the study programme to take a multilingual approach to teaching. This is defined by the individual teaching staff, who teach in their mother tongue. The aim of this is to enable cohorts to come into close contact with both languages at an early stage. In addition, the heterogeneity of student cohorts is supposed to promote interdisciplinary exchange, consequently enabling individual learning trajectories within the common framework of the study programme. Seminars with written and oral exercises, discussion and field trips are specified as forms of learning and teaching. The modular structure provides for participatory forms of teaching to build on specific basic modules, giving them a student-activating character.

According to the application, the programme directors prepare the internship stage well in advance. The curriculum states that students must complete a total of 360 hours of practical training. Students can already start a part-time internship in the second semester, since the programme structure allows time for this. Students can then complete their internship between the second and third semester. To be able to present their experiences accordingly, students are encouraged to reflect on the experiences gained during their internship on the basis of an e-learning unit. The result is then the internship report. In the past, students have completed internships at various institutions in the German-Dutch context, such as special-purpose associations, authorities, educational and research institutions or cultural organisations.

Experts' evaluation

The study programme is designed in such a way that academic feasibility is ensured. This is confirmed not only by the information provided in the self-evaluation report, but also by the discussions held with academic lecturers and with graduates and students of the study programme. The subject-specific, linguistic and intercultural development in the basic and specialisation modules, as well as in the language practice modules, enables students to acquire adequate basic and specialist knowledge. This knowledge provides students with

the tools required to combine specialist knowledge with an interdisciplinary approach and appropriate practical elements.

The changes to the study programme envisaged through this accreditation are an optimisation of the already proven and well-established concept, namely in structural terms (adaptation of modules that previously had fewer CP), with regard to the linguistic context in favour of linguistic competence orientation and the redefined emphasis of the academic context. The panel of experts considers these changes to be very effective, and assumes that the modifications will further enhance the attractiveness of the study programme.

The multidisciplinary and binational approach taken by the study programme is implemented in the best possible way. Conditions are in place to enable a student cohort that is as heterogeneous as possible to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Students are given the opportunity at an early stage to find out about potential career paths during meetings with alumni/alumnae, and about internship options during internship information events. The new programme structure allows students to start their internship earlier, in the second semester, enabling them to complete their studies on time. The close contact with alumni/alumnae and their occasional involvement in teaching represent an interdisciplinary and subject-specific offer of guidance and support.

Within the consortium, the panel of experts considers the role of the Centre for Dutch Studies to be an important element in ensuring successful programme management. The discussions clearly showed that lecturers and students enjoy an informal and very personal relationship with each other, based on trust. Regular sharing of thoughts and ideas means that suggestions, requests for changes and food for thought can be exchanged quickly and directly. If necessary, these changes can be implemented quickly and with minimum bureaucracy. The system of the study programme, featuring divided responsibilities, combined with regular, good and trusting contacts, also with students, results in close coordination between the individual disciplines, also in terms of content.

Flexible switching of the language of instruction, depending on the lecturers' mother tongue, combined with regular, module-dependent changes of location, testify to the high level of linguistic competence and flexibility within the consortium. This structured exchange, exploiting the geographical proximity of the two universities, enables students to come into contact with both languages at an early stage. The panel of experts considers the assessment of students' language competence at C1 level and the C2 language test offered in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut to be positive.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

5.2 Assessment

The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They should be applied consistently among partner institutions.

Description

The consortium states that the two countries' examination systems are designed very differently. While it is the norm for students to take several short tests at RU, examinations in Germany are usually designed as one final major examination. The application states that the consortium has agreed on a compromise, namely to conduct only one examination that contributes to the grade for each subject-specific course. In addition, there

are often coursework requirements that students must pass in order to receive credit points; however, the coursework results do not contribute to the overall grade of the module.

Moreover, the consortium states that there are also differences with regard to quality assurance of examinations in the two countries. To make this practicable for the study programme, the system used in the Netherlands was adopted for the entire study programme and included in its examination regulations. In this context, a special role is played by the examination committee, which is able to take into account both framework conditions by including binational skills. The application states that the consortium has defined specifications for the development, conducting, assessment and evaluation of examinations, with the aim of creating high-quality examinations tailored to the programme. For instance, the consortium has introduced practice-based methods of assessment in addition to the usual types of examination (e.g. written examinations, presentations, position papers and oral examinations). These practice-oriented methods of assessment include reviews, communication plans, research reports and briefing papers. With the aim of transparency, lecturers also develop assessment criteria for all examinations. In addition, written examinations are prepared, together with response models and/or model solutions. As a result of this procedure, both universities are able to organise and conduct examinations according to clear and consistent standards. The examination committee also ensures that these standards are observed by all teaching staff on the study programme by carrying out spot checks on examinations and Master's theses on a random basis. The consortium states that this procedure ensures that there are no differences in assessment between the two universities. Furthermore, the examination system applied is the subject of study programme evaluation.

Experts' evaluation

The plausibility of the student workload was confirmed by current students and alumni/alumnae during the online site visit.

The differences are due to the two countries' different types of examination system. Besides the usual types of examination, practice-oriented methods of assessment were also introduced. These practice-oriented methods of assessment can be reviews, communication plans, research reports or briefing papers. With the aim of transparency, lecturers also develop assessment criteria for all examinations. In addition, written examinations are prepared, together with response models and/or model solutions. The short tests that are taken routinely at RU are uncommon at the ZNS, where students usually take longer, more complex examinations.

The panel of experts assesses the role of the examination committee as positive, since the chosen procedure means that the implementation of the achievement of learning outcomes can be conducted in a clear and consistent way. It is ensured by carrying out random spot checks on examinations and Master's theses that the standards are observed by teaching staff. The regular study programme evaluation of the chosen procedure also ensures as far as possible that there are no major differences.

It should especially be noted that the Centre for Dutch Studies creates a pleasant and learning-friendly environment, and its personal atmosphere creates a productive working environment for students and lecturers alike. Students' suggestions on how to prevent delayed completion of their studies are specially incorporated into the assessment and adaptation of the chosen procedure. Thanks to close interaction between study programme participants and the group feeling that soon develops among students, the study programme manages to convey this atmosphere regardless of the location.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

Student support

The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.

Description

The consortium states that support services are available at both universities for the entire student life cycle (from the time of expressing an interest in the programme through to graduation). The designated responsibilities lie with the programme coordinators (general questions, course planning and organisation), study advisors (admission requirements and admission procedures) and the lecturers (course supervision). Information about the mandatory internship can be requested from the internship coordinators. Moreover, an internship workshop is offered to answer any additional questions. Administrative and organisational questions can be clarified at the Student Admissions Office of either university. As a general rule, Master's theses are supervised with the involvement of both partner universities. Owing to the universities' different organisational philosophies, the picture emerges that at RU, the department's student advisors are responsible for non-academic issues, whereas at WWU, the Student Advice And Counselling Centre is responsible for such matters. Advisory activities also include options for funding higher education, since the costs at RU are higher than at the WWU; but there are funding opportunities such as DAAD scholarships.

As a binational study programme, students also require more detailed support with regard to the conditions at the partner university. For instance, the International Office at RU and the Studierendenwerk Münster at the WWU are responsible for advising students on their stay abroad.

Experts' evaluation

Generally speaking, binational programmes require greater coordination, also in terms of student support. Differences stem from the diverging cultures of support at the partner universities. Differences at the WWU and RU were also discussed in relation to the Master's programme in "Niederlande-Deutschland-Studien" during the site visit. However, rather than viewing these differences as problematic, students see them as an asset in terms of intercultural skills, which can be beneficial to them in their careers. Both universities can draw on a wide range of support services to provide students with tailored advice, sometimes jointly and sometimes on an individual university basis. Needless to say, the programme benefits from its relatively small cohort size, enabling study coordinators and lecturers to provide very personal support.

Study coordinators act as intermediaries between the two education systems and institutions. Students particularly emphasised the study coordinators' commitment at the start of the programme and when changing universities after the first year. In addition to holding detailed briefings well in advance, an exact step-by-step plan of dates and deadlines (monitoring map) was also devised. In addition, there is very close contact with the students, which enables the coordinators to intervene quickly and effectively, especially in case of problems, e.g. with enrolment. In this way, any (bureaucratic) obstacles that students may encounter despite having been briefed in detail can be tackled.

Academic supervision by lecturers was described by students as being thoroughly positive and personal, not only for individual courses, but especially for Master's theses. As for the students' respective foreign language, they receive language learning support during their first academic year to help them continue to enhance and

optimise their language acquisition. Furthermore, additional support is offered to students wishing to take the Goethe-Institut's C2 German test. This additional option gives students a further opportunity to improve their language skills, which the panel of experts rated positively.

These contact points are supplemented by the services offered by the two universities, which are presented at the beginning and can be used by students independently or following a referral. Students described RU's Career Service as very useful, for example. The comprehensive and personal support provided to students and the most dedicated way in which students are advised about the programme facilitate the first-rate implementation of the study programme.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

Resources

7.1 Staff

The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.

Description

According to the information in the application, full-time teaching staff are responsible for all modules. The proportions of teaching at RU and the WWU are undertaken by a professor and five academic staff members at each institution. An additional academic staff member teaches at both universities. Moreover, a total of three external lecturers are involved in teaching. While new university lecturers at RU are required to complete a qualification in higher education didactics, this is optional for new lecturers at the WWU. It is stated that all postdoctoral teaching staff at RU are involved in the interdisciplinary and internationally oriented Centre for Language Studies research institute or the Radboud Institute for Culture & History. The synergies with the Centre for Dutch Studies (ZNS), where lecturers from the WWU conduct research on topics relevant to the study programme, also create regular opportunities for cooperation between RU and the WWU in the form of joint conferences or publications.

Experts' evaluation

Although it is a relatively small study programme, the two universities have around fifteen lecturers, meaning that staffing levels can be considered very good. The study programme's standing was described as highly beneficial for both universities in all discussions, resulting in a very good student-staff ratio. During the site visit, students particularly emphasised the very close and personal support at both university locations. Since the study programme covers a broad range of topics (politics, economics, culture, history), lecturers must be very committed. The discussions during the site visit showed that the lecturers are indeed very committed to the study programme and its enhancement. It is ensured that all topics are well covered by deploying external lecturers in addition to the regular staff. The panel of experts considers the mix of younger and more experienced staff to be very balanced. The systematic exploitation of synergies at both universities also helps to ensure a very high standard throughout. With binational programmes in particular, changing to a new generation of staff can cause difficulties; the question of the programme's sustainability was therefore also a key element with regard to this study programme. It became clear during the discussions, however, that both universities are quite prepared to systematically guide and support this transition. The binational programme is

important to both universities, and is to be strengthened on a permanent basis. Despite being a small study programme, it is considered a flagship project.

The lecturers from Nijmegen and Münster collaborate closely, and also design and evaluate the study programme together on a regular basis. This collaborative exchange means that the curriculum can be jointly enhanced, avoiding the potential fragmentation of the curriculum between the two locations.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

7.1 Facilities

The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

Description

At the WWU, the study programme can make use mainly of the facilities at the ZNS, consisting of two seminar rooms (seating 40 and 16 people, respectively), where a majority of the programme's courses are held. Courses are also held in lecture halls and classrooms at the WWU. At the ZNS, students can make use of group study rooms. Students on the programme receive technical support from the WWU IT. Lecture halls, study rooms and libraries at RU can be used for the study programme. The Central University Library has over 1000 reading desks. In addition, all faculties provide individual and group workplaces. Administrative and technical issues can be clarified via the *Student Informatiepunt Letteren* (STIP) or the ICT Helpdesk.

The consortium states that, at the WWU, students gain literature and information in the field of Dutch Area Studies from the library in the House of the Netherlands (BHN) and the University and State Library of Münster (ULB), giving them access to around 130,000 volumes of relevant specialist literature and around 320 serial journals and special-interest magazines. Thanks to the cooperation with the Specialised Information Service Benelux / Low Countries Studies (FID Benelux), open access publications such as yearbooks and series can also be published. The *Departement Moderne Talen en Culturen* at RU holds a collection of books, journals and audiovisual media that are used for both teaching and research. In addition, students have access to literature on subject areas relevant to the study programme, such as Business Communication, History, Linguistics, German Studies and Dutch Studies, via the University Library.

Experts' evaluation

The binational programme has the advantage of being able to utilise the infrastructure of both universities, meaning that the facilities for the study programme can be rated as excellent. Both university locations have above-average facilities in terms of literature, which is of particular importance for this study programme. In addition, the study programme is affiliated to the House of the Netherlands, meaning that the library, which is already good, is further enhanced by this independent unit. Based on the discussions, the panel of experts was able to satisfy itself of the fact that students have easy and extensive access to the relevant literature they need. The rooms and facilities at both study locations are excellent for both teaching and independent study. The House of the Netherlands has dedicated classrooms for the study programme, enabling students to easily create a group feeling from the very beginning of their studies. The digital infrastructure at both universities can also be rated as excellent.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

Transparency and documentation

Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

Description

The consortium's self-evaluation report states that relevant information, such as the joint examination regulations and the module descriptions, are available on the study programme page at both universities. Depending on the university, students on the programme also have access to relevant documents through the respective learning environment, such as information on internships, courses and a guide to writing a Master's thesis. The evaluation results for both study locations are also published via the respective platforms.

Experts' evaluation

Students can obtain adequate and targeted information about the study programme, especially on the study programme page. The information provided includes the current module handbook, information on individual courses, and information on the requirements for the Master's thesis. Important information about internships and the examination regulations is also published. A key feature of the binational study programme is the publication of information on the programme's consortium. At the start of the programme, students are informed about the orientation week in Münster, which ensures that a good group feeling is created from the very beginning.

The results of teaching evaluations are published, creating a high degree of transparency for the study programme. Overall, a very high level of transparency is achieved at both university locations. Continuous formal and informal feedback loops help ensure that individual problems can be solved directly, creating a relationship of trust between all stakeholders (students, lecturers, administration). Both transparency and documentation are exemplary in the study programme.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

Quality assurance

The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.

Description

It can be seen from the application that the study programme is subject to quality assurance at both universities. The key tools at the WWU are course evaluations, student surveys and graduate student surveys. The WWU has also determined in its university-wide evaluation regulations that all courses should be evaluated at least annually. The regulations stipulate that the results of these surveys are to be made available to both

students and lecturers. The Dutch higher education system provides for the definition of a study programme's basic qualifications and the award of a quality seal in the context of reaccreditation. In this connection, RU focuses on the competency-based description of learning outcomes of the study programme, the adequate communication of learning outcomes, the adequate assessment of learning outcomes, and hence the measurement of actual learning outcomes achieved. In addition to the tools of course evaluation, which exist at both universities, and discussions within the Commission for Teaching, the study programme is also evaluated at the WWU once within the accreditation cycle. At RU, an externally monitored national student survey is also conducted annually.

The application states that in addition to these formal processes, informal quality assurance processes are also important for the study programme. Thanks to the small group sizes, short-term problems can be identified and addressed within the study programme at an early stage. The joint cooperation agreement requires that representatives of the two universities share evaluation results at regular intervals, enabling them to make adjustments if necessary. Evaluation results are appended to the application.

Experts' evaluation

During the site visit, the impression that the panel of experts had gained regarding the past and current effective use of existing quality assurance tools was confirmed. All relevant stakeholders are involved in the formal bodies, and especially the joint Commission for Teaching, and inter-institutional exchange takes place. This is particularly evident in the adjustments to the study programme that have been made in recent years, which were mentioned in a positive light by students and lecturers alike. The panel of experts noted that it would be beneficial for the WWU to evaluate the entire study programme on a more regular basis; at RU, for example, this takes place annually. According to the WWU, this process will be discussed in an internal quality management project in spring, which shows that harmonisation processes between the WWU and RU are the subject of continuous debate. During the site visit, overviews and statistics were analysed that clearly provide information on times to degree and retention rates. The resulting measures and discussion testify to an exceptional culture of debate and a lively exchange of ideas.

The general programme structure has already been modified in the context of quality assurance, with the result that a larger number of students now complete the programme in the standard period of study than was the case a few years ago. The optimisations undertaken in 2021 are also based on feedback and exchange between students and graduates, and the experiences of lecturers at the two cooperating universities. In this respect, informal processes are to be increasingly used in addition to regular student and graduate evaluations if there is a need for swifter action. As an example, the lecture-free days that were scheduled for the internship for one year group were quickly adjusted at the request of the students.

Consequently, not only are relevant formal and informal quality assurance processes in place, they even contribute greatly to the enhancement of the study programme and its excellent quality.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.