



Research Master Media, Art and Performance Studies
Utrecht University

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info@academion.nl

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Summary

On 28 November 2025, the research master's (RMA) programme Media, Art and Performance Studies (MAPS) of Utrecht University was assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment WO OZM Mediastudies (research masters Media Studies). The panel judges that the programme meets all four NVAO standards. Moreover, it establishes that MAPS fulfils all additional aspects of the assessment framework that apply specifically to the quality of a research master programme. As a result, the panel's assessment of the programme is positive.

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The RMA Media Studies programme at Utrecht University has a clear and distinctive research-oriented profile at the intersection of media, art, and performance studies. It brings together different fields of study, emphasizing its international, intercultural, interdisciplinary and comparative dimension and scope. The intended learning outcomes (ILOs) do justice to the domain, level and orientation of the MAPS programme. Moreover, its research-oriented nature is properly substantiated in the ILOs, as is its applicability after graduation. The programme explicitly caters to students who envisage positions in either academic or non-academic research. Hence, it is important that the ongoing relevance of the learning outcomes and curriculum contents are monitored and validated. In this regard, the programme may benefit from a more formalised advisory structure involving both alumni and employers. In addition, there is room for making MAPS' unique selling proposition more visible in its communication materials.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel endorses the English name of the MAPS programme, as well as the decision to offer the RMA in English. Its international dimension and orientation have been evident from the outset in the course contents and are now also visible in the geographical and cultural diversity of students and teaching staff. The MAPS programme operates in a strong teaching-learning environment. This appreciation applies to the relevant and coherent curriculum, the befitting learning environment, the appropriate and meticulously implemented admission criteria, the pertinent support services, the transparent information provision, and the expertise and commitment of the teaching staff on the programme. Moreover, the panel commends the MAPS team for the way in which it addresses the recommendations from the previous accreditation report. Similarly, the programme team pays attention to student concerns regarding the quality and relevance of the respective courses, the feasibility of the programme as a two-year full-time endeavour, and their future career opportunities. In the future, the programme team could pay more attention to the ethical aspects and positionality of research, and ensure that the existing knowledge on the programme and the operational responsibility for the programme are distributed across different members of the team.

Standard 3. Student assessment

The MAPS programme relies on a robust system of assessment that is embedded in relevant policies and practices of the university and the faculty. Its Curriculum and Assessment Plan is comprehensive and transparent, and the adopted assessment methods ensure broad coverage of the ILOs. If anything, the team may want to develop alternative forms of assignments and assessments, and offer students the opportunity to deliver a graduation product that befits their future career path. Course and thesis assessment are of good quality. The sample review demonstrates that thesis assessment is well structured and rigorously implemented with assessors providing insightful feedback in the substantiation section of the form. The programme proactively addresses the role of AI in education and how it is integrated in assessment protocols. The quality assurance system for assessment is both comprehensive and effective. The Board of Examiners is to be commended for its expertise and pro-active commitment.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The ILOs are assessed and demonstrated in a systematic way: students who graduate the RMA MAPS have effectively acquired all ILOs, while programme graduates invariably find suitable employment in research informed positions inside and outside academia. The RMA thesis constitutes a substantial test of research competence that covers all components of the research cycle and is of value to the academic and scientific discipline. The thesis review demonstrates that graduation projects are of good quality. Nonetheless, the programme could encourage students and supervisors to pay more attention to positionality in the thesis. Furthermore, MAPS graduates display a strong trajectory into both academic and professional research. They find jobs that are commensurate with the domain and the level of their study, and do so in a variety of positions and with a broad range of public, private and non-governmental employers. If anything, the programme team may want to monitor the careers of its graduates more closely.

Score table

The panel assesses the programme as follows:

Research master's programme Media, Art and Performance Studies

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

The assessment panel has reviewed the report and agrees with its contents.

On behalf of the panel,

Prof. dr. Daniël Biltereyst, panel chair
Date: 20 March 2026

Mark Delmartino MA, panel secretary

Introduction

Procedure

Assessment

On 28 November 2025, the research master's programme Media, Art and Performance Studies (MAPS) of Utrecht University was assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the cluster assessment WO OZM Mediastudies (research masters Media Studies). The assessment cluster consisted of three programmes, offered by the Erasmus University Rotterdam, the University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University. The assessment followed the procedure and standards of the NVAO Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands (April 2024). It also followed the Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes (2016).

Quality assurance agency Academion coordinated the assessment upon request of the cluster WO OZM Mediastudies. Fiona Schouten acted as coordinator in the cluster assessment and Mark Delmartino acted as panel secretary for the assessment of all programmes in the cluster. They have been certified and registered by the NVAO.

Panel composition

Academion composed the peer review panel in cooperation with the institutions and taking into account the expertise and independence of the members. In order to strengthen the mutual consistency between the assessment panels within the cluster, the Academion coordinator ensured joint instruction for the panel members and a consistent assessment method for all site visits. This consistency was also a point of attention at all concluding panel meetings during the site visits. Finally, overlap in assessment panels across the various site visits in the cluster further strengthened consistency. The composition of the panels was designed so that at least two panel members also served on another assessment panel in the cluster.

On 18 July 2025, the NVAO approved the panel's composition. The coordinator instructed the panel chair on his role in the site visit according to the Panel chair profile (NVAO 2016) on 2 September 2025. Moreover, a common introductory briefing was held on 30 September 2025 for all panel members in the cluster. At this online meeting, the coordinator informed the panels on the assessment framework, the working method, and the planning of the site visits and reports.

Preparation

In the run-up to the site visit, the programme team at Utrecht University composed a site visit schedule in consultation with the coordinator and the secretary, and selected representative partners for the various interviews (see Appendix 3). The MAPS programme opted for a development-oriented assessment process. Instead of drafting a self-assessment report, it put at the disposition of the panel an extensive SWOT-analysis, a student chapter, and a comprehensive information dossier. During the visit, the panel participated in two thematic sessions. The findings from these sessions did not impact the outcome of the accreditation exercise and have been captured in a separate report.

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed a sample of 15 graduation works among the 22 master theses which had been successfully submitted in the academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. The sample was representative of the final scores and the examiners involved in thesis supervision across all theses. The list of materials put at the disposition of the panel, as well as details on the thesis review are provided in Appendix 4.

The panel members studied the programme materials, reviewed the thesis selection and submitted their first observations to the secretary, who compiled the input. This compilation served as a basis for the preparatory online meeting on 19 November 2025, when the panel identified the programme's key strengths, challenges and questions. On behalf of the panel, the secretary reported the main outcomes of this meeting to the team in Utrecht on 21 November 2025. An Open Consultation Hour for students, teaching and support staff involved in the programme was scheduled alongside the panel's preparatory meeting. Eventually, nobody used the opportunity to discuss individually and confidentially with the panel.

Site visit

During the site visit on 28 November 2025, the panel interviewed various programme representatives and participated in two thematic sessions. It used the concluding meeting to deliberate on the programme quality according to the assessment framework. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the panel's preliminary findings, general observations and suggestions for further development.

Report

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to the coordinator for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel for feedback. After processing this feedback, the coordinator sent the draft report to the programme team in Utrecht for a check on factual inaccuracies. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The panel then finalized the report, and the coordinator sent it to the Faculty of Humanities and Utrecht University.

Panel

The panel assessing the research master's programme Media, Art and Performance Studies at Utrecht University consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. D. (Daniël) Biltreyst, full professor in Communication Sciences at the Department of Communication Sciences of Ghent University Gent (Belgium) [panel chair];
- Prof. dr. S. (Sarita) Malik, associate Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research Impact and professor in Media, Culture and Communication, Social and Political Sciences at Brunel University of London (United Kingdom);
- Prof. dr. M.S. (Martine) Prange, full professor in Philosophy of Humanity, Culture, and Society at Tilburg University;
- A. M. (Annemoon) Westland, student of the research master's programme Sociology of Culture, Media and the Arts at the Erasmus University Rotterdam [student member].

Each panel member, the panel secretary and the programmes have filled out the Statement of Impartiality and non-disclosure agreement, as required by the NVAO. They can confirm that the assessment was carried out in complete independence.

Information on the programme

Name of the institution:	Utrecht University
Address:	Heidelberglaan 8, 3584CS Utrecht
Website:	http://www.uu.nl
BRIN-number:	21PD
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive

Programme name:	M Media Studies (research) (Media, Art and Performance Studies)
ISAT number:	60832
Orientation of the programme:	Academic
Level of the programme:	Master (NLQF7)
Number of credits:	120 EC
Language of instruction:	English
Professional requirements:	no
Specializations or tracks:	none
Location:	Utrecht
Mode(s) of study:	Fulltime
Assessment group:	WO OZM Mediastudies
Awarded degree:	MA
Submission date NVAO:	1 May 2026

Description of the assessment

Organization

The Research Master's programme (RMA) Media, Art and Performance Studies (MAPS) is part of the Faculty of Humanities at Utrecht University (UU). The faculty offers 21 bachelor's, 19 master's and 11 RMA programmes, and is organised into departments, schools, research institutes and support services. Departments are responsible for personnel management, budget and coordination of education and research activities, while Schools oversee the content scheduling and organisation of education, education policy and education quality. The Faculty has four departments, all headed by a Head of Department, and five schools, each under the leadership of a Director of Education.

The RMA MAPS belongs to the Department of Media and Culture Studies and the School of Media and Culture Studies. The Director of Education is responsible for the quality of education. The Programme Coordinator is the central contact person of the MAPS programme and ensures its content, coherence and feasibility. The MAPS programme has a dedicated Curriculum Committee, which advises the Director of Education on the quality of the courses and on (developments in) the curriculum. The assessment quality of the RMA MAPS is ensured by a Board of Examiners which is common for all research master programmes in the faculty.

Recommendations previous panel

In the previous accreditation round (2020), the then panel issued a positive conclusion on the research master MAPS. It highlighted several strengths of the programme under each standard and made nine recommendations, for instance on the role of methodology and methods in the programme, and on thesis assessment. During the site visit, the current panel discussed the follow-up given by the programme team to these recommendations. It acknowledges the efforts of the team in this regard and concludes that all recommendations have been addressed properly. The recommendations and their follow-up will be addressed throughout the respective standards in this report.

Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Findings

Profile

The research master (RMA) programme Media, Art and Performance Studies (MAPS) offers advanced training in research methods and insights, grounded in the critical and creative humanities, with an international and transdisciplinary focus. It examines how contemporary media, art, and performance transcend disciplinary boundaries and drive cultural transitions in today's mediatized world. The MAPS programme bridges theory and practice, equipping students with methodological tools to study how social and material contexts shape cultural production. Students gain expertise in independent research, scholarly publishing, and fieldwork with cultural institutions. The programme empowers RMA students to become engaged citizens and scholars and prepares them for PhD trajectories and careers in other professional sectors that require strong analytical, communicative, and methodological skills.

MAPS partly covers similar ground as other programmes in media studies, art and culture, social sciences, and communication sciences. Compared to other RMA programmes under the broad label 'media studies' or in the domain of culture and the art, MAPS stands out through its critical cultural analytical perspective, exploring the intersection of media, art, and performance. Through interdisciplinary and comparative approaches, students examine media, art, and performance within global and local contexts, addressing issues such as cultural representation, inclusion, inequality, transformation, performativity, power, institutional challenges, data ownership, and implications of Artificial Intelligence.

Based on the written materials and the discussions on site, the panel establishes that the RMA MAPS has a unique profile, which focuses on contemporary art in relation to media and performance, and pays particular attention to four themes: (i) Embodiment and Technology, (ii) Future Algorithmic Imaginaries, (iii) Screens and Interfaces, and (iv) Makers and Their Contexts. The panel was informed that these themes are works in progress and constitute threads that pervade the curriculum.

During the visit, the panel discussed the position of the media domain in a programme that addresses the fields of Media, Arts and Performance studies. According to the programme team, MAPS uses a broad definition of media, and looks at them in an interdisciplinary perspective – next to art and performance. RMA students bring their own specific interests and are at the same time introduced to a broader set of academic debates connected to media, arts, and performance. In this respect, media, arts and performance each represent a cultural phenomenon that feeds the debate. The panel was furthermore informed that the field of Media Studies is emphasised in the bachelor's and the master's programme, while RMA students who sign up for MAPS do so for the complete package (Media-Art-Performance) and for the cultural analysis approach.

The panel acknowledges that MAPS aims to educate for a broad labour market that includes - but also goes beyond - academia. In fact, MAPS graduates can fulfil various roles in society, in line with the international, interdisciplinary and advanced research-oriented nature of the curriculum. During the site visit, the career perspectives of MAPS students were tabled as a topic for the thematic sessions: while MAPS prepares them for research-oriented careers within and outside academia, students are uncertain about their career options. Hence, the programme organised a dedicated event on pursuing a PhD and introduced a MAPS career event. The panel attended part of the latter, joining discussion tables where graduates share their professional experience with first- and second-year RMA students. The panel welcomes these initiatives, whose added value lays in the fact that they cater specifically to MAPS students and involve speakers who are familiar with the programme. According to the panel, this allows students to reflect on their future career based on ambitious yet realistic scenarios. This session confirmed according to the panel that labour market preparation is an explicit part of the MAPS programme.

Furthermore, the panel notes that the programme's unique selling proposition – a humanities and research oriented, interdisciplinary, critical cultural analytical perspective at the intersection of media, art, and performance studies – is clearly described at the level of the profile, in the written self-evaluation report and in the discussion with programme representatives. However, there is room for making this unique selling point more visible and explicit in the communication to the outside to attract more new students.

In sum, the panel establishes that the MAPS programme is well embedded in the vision and disciplinary strengths of the university, faculty, department and school in Utrecht. The RMA is ambitious in trying to bring together different fields, whereby trans-disciplinarity and the international and comparative perspectives are important. Its objectives and themes are clear, valid and sound. The programme's orientation in the humanities is visible, and its research-oriented profile at the intersection of media, art, and performance studies is clearly defined.

Intended learning outcomes

The RMA MAPS aims to provide specialised knowledge, insight and skills in Media, Art and Performance Studies, and prepares students for a career as researcher in an academic or non-academic context. To this end, the programme has formulated seven intended learning outcomes (ILOs), which are listed in Appendix 1 to this report.

Having studied the set of programme ILOs, the panel acknowledges that there is a clear link between the seven ILOs and the five Dublin Descriptors for master programmes. The learning outcomes, moreover, are formulated in such a way that they do justice to the substance (media studies), level (research master) and orientation (academic) of the MAPS programme. Hence, it is fair to state according to the panel that the ILOs are in line with the requirements for master programmes as described in NLQF level 7.

The panel notes that the ILOs describe the competencies required for a research career and reflect the dual focus of the programme, combining a solid grounding in disciplinary knowledge and research methodology with broader academic and professional skills. The ILOs, moreover, prepare students for a research-oriented career in both academic and non-academic contexts in which they will address both specialist and non-specialist audiences. These elements, according to the panel, confirm the focus of the RMA programme on its applicability after graduation. If anything, the panel notes that the international and intercultural orientation of MAPS, which is clearly outlined in its profile and curriculum, is not mentioned explicitly in the programme learning outcomes.

In sum, the panel establishes that the ILOs translate very well the programme's vision, profile and aims, as well as its orientation on humanities. In their alignment with the Dublin Descriptors, the learning outcomes demonstrate a balance of theoretical sophistication, methodological competence, and transferable research skills. They reflect the faculty's emphasis on critical, interdisciplinary, and creative research that bridges academic and societal engagement, and prepare graduates for both doctoral study and professional roles.

Professional field

The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that staff involved in the programme is well informed about the current domain-specific developments in the field. In this way, the teaching staff ensure that the contents of the MAPS programme (continue to) reflect the state-of-the-art in the domain of media studies.

Moreover, the panel was informed that the programme has good and regular connections to the professional field through its alumni. Although alumni are increasingly involved in the programme – for example in the career event, which the panel attended – the team acknowledges that this remains very much work in progress. The programme would love to involve alumni more systematically in the development of the MAPS programme, but resources are limited and priorities have to be set carefully. Hence, the contacts with alumni have not yet led to their structured and systematic involvement in a work field advisory committee.

According to the panel, the programme would benefit from a more formalised structure of alumni and employers. Such a Sounding Board would ideally represent the breadth of the MAPS domain, exchange state-of-the-art knowledge on the employability of MAPS graduates, and monitor current and validate future programme objectives and curriculum contents.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the RMA programme has a clear and distinctive research-oriented profile at the intersection of media, art, and performance studies. It brings together different fields of study, emphasizing its international, intercultural, interdisciplinary and comparative dimension and scope.

The panel considers that the intended learning outcomes do justice to the domain, level and orientation of the MAPS programme. Moreover, its research-oriented nature is properly substantiated in the ILOs, as well as its applicability after graduation.

The programme explicitly caters to students who envisage positions in either academic or non-academic research. Hence, it is important that the ongoing relevance of the learning outcomes and curriculum contents are monitored and validated. In this regard, the panel acknowledges the expert position of the teaching staff, and welcomes the increasing involvement of alumni in the programme.

In addition to these considerations that altogether warrant a positive judgement on this standard, the panel recommends the MAPS programme to make its unique selling point more visible in its communications to the outside world. Moreover, the programme team may benefit from a more formalised structure involving both alumni and employers to monitor current - and validate future - programme objectives and curriculum contents.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 1.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Findings

Curriculum

The RMA MAPS is a two-year full-time 120 EC programme taught in English. Each academic year consists of two semesters/four terms of equal size. The six core courses (30 EC) in the first semester provide a common ground for all students; the second semester consists of two core courses (10 EC), two electives (10 EC), and research school credits (10 EC). The second year brings theoretical and methodological specialisation and enriches the academic outlook and international experience of students: in the third semester, MAPS students take one core course (5 EC) and spend the remaining credits on (combining) a study period abroad, an internship and/or electives. The fourth and final semester is entirely dedicated to the research master thesis (30 EC). Details on the curriculum are provided in Appendix 2 to this report.

During the visit, the programme team clarified the different curriculum components and their interrelationship. The panel was informed that all RMA programmes in the Faculty of Humanities follow a similar set-up. Moreover, the MAPS curriculum was revised and has been adjusted as of the academic year 2025-2026: core courses were added or their contents modified, while the electives, research school credits, and third semester options were streamlined. According to the panel, the current structure and content of

the MAPS curriculum is strong and well aligned with the intended learning outcomes. The combination of the different components (core courses, electives, research labs, etc.) suggest a full engagement with both conceptual and applied research across the fields of media, art and performance.

Moreover, the panel was informed that the MAPS programme and the Examination Board are currently looking into the feasibility of allowing students from disciplinary one-year master's degrees to enrol in the RMA programme. These students would bring along 15 EC (in elective space) and follow 105 EC of RMA programme courses. The panel appreciates the meticulous approach of the programme team in devising the transfer variant, which includes a sufficiently high number of research master courses.

The panel notes that the programme's core principle is research based: the courses are set up in such a way that they follow advancements in relevant fields and subject areas, and ensure that students develop knowledge and skills for academic research. The programme is well-balanced and rigorously research-driven. According to the panel, the curriculum is coherent across both years of the programme and features a clear connection between the educational content and the research skills to be acquired. It provides a research-intensive trajectory combining theoretical depth, methodological rigour, and independent research practice.

According to the panel, the MAPS curriculum fulfils all requirements concerning analytical and methodological skills, awareness of current developments in the field, and pressing societal issues. The inclusion of courses such as Research Lab and Research Design establishes strong methodological and theoretical grounding. The panel notes that almost all courses are offered at research master level. Prior to going abroad, MAPS students obtain validation of the courses they will take during their international exchange. Moreover, RMA students take on additional study load in the elective courses that are attended together with one-year master students.

Moreover, the written materials and the discussions on site have shown that the MAPS programme pays ample attention to the future career opportunities of its students: career preparedness is stated among the aims of the programme and several initiatives have been launched where students are informed on what it takes to pursue a PhD trajectory or find a job outside academia. The panel welcomes these initiatives, which involve alumni and are quite effective in showing how MAPS students can prepare for an academic career and for a variety of professional jobs in education, cultural institutions, media industry and government. Moreover, MAPS students undertake field trips and are exposed to the 'real world' as part of their optional internship. In fact, several alumni indicated during the career event and in the session with the panel that the internship constituted the basis for their professional career.

Furthermore, the MAPS students and alumni mentioned to the panel that they have/had a considerable degree of freedom to tailor the programme to their individual interests: the first year mainly consists of compulsory core courses, where students write assignments on topics of their interest. In the second year, students pursue their own path in terms of curriculum components and content, and are free to propose a research topic and a supervisor for their thesis. Hence, the panel establishes that the MAPS programme allows students to incorporate specific individual components in the curriculum that broaden their research interests and capacities. Moreover, the panel notes that irrespective of the flexibility and freedom that is built into MAPS, the programme has a clear structure in place to ensure that all students can acquire all learning outcomes. In this regard, the Curriculum and Assessment Plan is an important document.

Students indicated both in the written materials and during the site visit that they are generally satisfied with the MAPS curriculum: the core courses offer a diverse range of topics, methods, and research objects, while

the other components provide valuable learning opportunities, such as national or international internships, the study period abroad, the electives, and the research school courses. Students also appreciate the willingness of the programme team to regularly update courses in response to feedback on their didactic quality or their academic and societal relevance.

As points for attention, students noted that certain courses change so frequently that they sometimes appear more like pilot projects than fully developed courses. In these cases, students would like to be more (pro)actively involved in discussing the (envisaged) adjustments and get clear information on the course expectations. Moreover, students experience the first semester, and notably the second block, as particularly demanding and intense. The panel acknowledges the concerns reported by the students and was satisfied to hear that the programme team is looking into the set-up of these courses together with the MAPS students. In fact, the team intends to increase the flexibility, improve the workflow, and reduce the workload in the core curriculum courses of the first semester.

Finally, the panel discussed extensively the recommendations of the previous accreditation report. Following the previous visit in 2020, the programme team has created a so-called Programme Monitor in which it lists the recommendations, describes the envisaged actions, and tracks the progress made on these actions. The panel has looked into the programme monitor and finds it a very useful tool. Moreover, the document and the discussions revealed that the programme team has undertaken considerable efforts to follow-up on the recommendations, such as a clearer description of the curriculum structure or the alignment of core course learning goals and programme learning outcomes. The current panel also welcomes the programme's attention to methodology and methods in the core courses – another recommendation from the previous panel – for students to understand better how they can use methodology and methods as a basis for their thesis project. To this effect, the programme team has increased the visibility of research methods in the courses and produced a handbook on Performance Research Methods, which is used widely across bachelor and master programmes at the Department of Media and Culture Studies.

Graduation trajectory

All MAPS students write an individual master thesis, which consists of a substantial 25,000-30,000-word piece of research, under the supervision of a teaching staff member. The graduation trajectory starts in block two of the third semester when students build the research plan for their thesis as part of the Research Design course (5 EC). In the fourth semester (Master Thesis, 30 EC) students work on their research and have regular meetings with their supervisor, who provides oral and written feedback. The panel was informed that students are provided with a comprehensive thesis manual and are encouraged to publish their thesis as a journal article. Moreover, students and staff mentioned that the Research Design course, which was introduced recently, is helpful in launching the thesis process. It also ensures that students advance in their preparations for the master thesis prior to starting the bulk of their research in the second semester. Following feedback from students and alumni that the entire graduation process is a source of considerable stress and anxiety, the programme team informed the panel that it is currently exploring, together with other (research) master programme coordinators in the Department of Media and Culture Studies, how to improve the structure of the graduation trajectory with the aim of increasing student success.

Based on the written materials and the discussions on site, the panel establishes that the graduation trajectory is a well-structured process that is transparently communicated to students and meticulously implemented by the teaching staff/supervisors. As part of its external assessment, the panel reviewed a sample of master theses. The outcomes of this review will be discussed in dedicated sections of standards 3 and 4. In so far as the graduation trajectory is concerned, the panel establishes that it is coherently designed

and academically rigorous. Students effectively can complete the entire empirical research cycle within their thesis, from conceptualisation and design to data collection, analysis, and dissemination. The sequential structure, beginning with proposal design and leading to full empirical execution allows students to apply the skills they developed across the curriculum. According to the panel, the size of the thesis and the credits allocated to it allow students to work with empirical rigour and benefit from sufficient supervision and feedback. It also welcomes the attention of the programme team to mitigating feelings of study overload and anxiety among MAPS students. While students and alumni indicated that the graduation trajectory is overall feasible, more ambitious students find it particularly challenging to finish their thesis in time.

Further to its thesis review, the panel wondered to what extent ethics and positionality are part of the curriculum. The teaching staff informed the panel that ethics are addressed among others in the Research Lab and Research Design courses, while students indicated that their research proposal should be handed in to the Ethics Committee. According to the programme team, there is no policy on positionality, but it is left to the students and their individual supervisors to pay attention to positionality in the master thesis. As a result, some students make a personal statement in their thesis, while others do not feel the need to do so. The panel therefore suggests the programme team to pay more explicit attention to ethical aspects of research throughout the curriculum, to communicate this accordingly in the course manuals, and to consider embedding positionality as an integral component of the master thesis.

Language of instruction

Since its initial accreditation, the MAPS programme has been taught in English. The panel understands that this was a conscious decision by the programme team, which was embedded in the language policy of Utrecht University. This choice reflects the international orientation of the programme and prepares students for a labour market (inside and outside academia) that is becoming increasingly international. By offering the programme in English, students are equipped to engage with global academic standards and participate in international professional networks. In addition, the English language makes the programme accessible to a diverse student body and enriches the learning environment with a variety of cultural perspectives.

The current panel endorses the English title of the programme, as well as the decision to offer the research master programme in English. The written materials and the discussions on site have convinced the panel that the MAPS programme is embedded in an internationally oriented teaching and research environment. Its international orientation has been evident from the outset and has further increased throughout the years in the courses and the programme structure, as well as in the teaching staff and the students. This diversity in the student and staff body fosters a vibrant and enriching international learning environment, where the diversity of (inter)disciplinary backgrounds of the students and the staff contributes to stimulating class discussions, interesting collaborations, and a rich study culture.

Learning environment

The MAPS programme is closely aligned with the educational philosophy of Utrecht University, whose educational model stands for personal and activating forms of education, flexibility and freedom for students to tailor their studies, and professional development opportunities for lecturers. The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that these overall university features are applicable to the MAPS programme. Teaching methods are varied, students have plenty of opportunities to tailor their study programme (see curriculum section above), and staff is well qualified (see staff section below).

The panel notes that cohorts are often small, sometimes less than a dozen students. This allows for small group teaching in seminars and tutorials, which in turn facilitates fast, reliable and informal communications with teaching staff, programme coordination, as well as with other MAPS cohorts. The small scale of the programme also enhances the sense of community: MAPS students regularly undertake activities together, help organise events such as the curriculum dialogue or the Career Event, and co-create MAPS-related projects as a community. Because group discussions and student presentations are an important part of seminar meetings, MAPS students develop high-level academic skills such as reading, writing and presenting. They learn how to develop research questions and use appropriate theoretical frameworks and methods to carry out their own research projects. In addition, they learn to critically assess and improve their own work, as well as that of their fellow students.

In sum, the panel establishes that the learning environment at MAPS reflects the educational model of the university and befits a research master programme: teaching methods are varied, the cohorts form a community and the small-scale groups allow for a fast exchange of knowledge and information between students, teaching staff and programme coordination. Moreover, students and alumni indicated to the panel that they feel heard by the teaching staff and are taken seriously as junior researchers by the thesis supervisors.

Student guidance and information

The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that the university, the faculty, the department and the school have a comprehensive system of support facilities in place, which allows the MAPS programme to provide appropriate guidance and information to all its students. These facilities and staff also cater for the needs of specific groups, such as new or international students, as well as students with a functional impairment.

The MAPS programme can rely on dedicated staff members who provide targeted support to students: in addition to tutors, study advisers and the career adviser, the programme coordinator plays a pivotal role in the programme. The discussions on site have convinced the panel that these individuals, as well as the teaching staff and supervisors, play an important role in turning the study period of the MAPS students into a success. Students and alumni indicated to the panel that the teaching and support staff genuinely care about the MAPS students, as well as about their academic and personal growth. The staff members take their (informal) role of mentor seriously. Moreover, students and alumni were positive about the information and guidance they received prior to enrolment, as well as about the introduction period at the very start of the two-year programme.

In sum, the panel establishes that the MAPS programme provides a comprehensive guidance framework that balances academic ambition with individualised support. Students receive appropriate guidance from their teachers, mentors, tutors and study/career advisers.

Admission, intake and success rate

MAPS is a selective RMA programme targeting motivated students with a strong academic record and a demonstrable interest in conducting research in the transdisciplinary fields of media, art and performance studies. The admission requirements and the application procedures are clearly stipulated on the programme website. In order to be admissible to the MAPS programme, applicants must hold a bachelor's degree that includes knowledge, skills and methods in media, art and/or performance studies. Moreover, applicants are selected on the basis of an assessment of their motivation and talent, their command of English, and their level of general and domain-specific knowledge, skills and mastery of research methods and techniques. To this end, applicants submit a dossier which includes among others a motivation letter

and an English academic writing sample. The dossiers are assessed by two staff members who may conduct an online interview and eventually admit the student together. According to the panel, the admission process is clearly defined and transparent, the selection criteria befit a research master's programme, and the admission and selection procedure is administered meticulously. The panel also welcomes the collegial assessment, which it understood was implemented as a follow-up to a recommendation of the previous panel.

The data on application, admission and enrolment numbers provided by the programme team show that the RMA MAPS features a rigorous admission system. Over the years the number of applicants has been fluctuating between 75 and 113. Just over half of the applicants (56%) eventually submit a complete application dossier, and a similar share of the assessed dossiers (52%) are considered admissible. Eventually, about 60% of the admitted students also enrol. Moreover, the panel gathered from the data and the discussions on site that applicants who meet the MAPS criteria tend to be particularly resourceful and often are also admitted in other programmes. Students and alumni indicated that they experience the application process as straightforward. When they had questions, they could always contact the programme coordinator, who was helpful in providing clarification. The programme team pointed out that on the one hand there is a sufficient number of candidates expressing an interest in the programme, but that these applicants on the other hand often lack an adequate study profile or do not have sufficient financial means to enrol: notably international students from outside the EU decide not to come to Utrecht University because of the high tuition fees, the scarcity of scholarships, and the lack of housing opportunities.

Since the previous accreditation, 107 students were admitted to the MAPS programme. On average, the yearly student intake is just above 15 students. While the intake has been somewhat lower in 2022, 2023 and 2024, the most recent cohort starting in September 2025 consists of 16 students. Around 40% of the students are Dutch. The panel was informed that notwithstanding the recent increase in intake, the programme has not yet reached its full capacity. Therefore, the programme team is considering to open the MAPS programme for students who graduated selected one-year master programmes in media, art, and performance studies (see curriculum section above).

Across the years, the drop-out has been limited (less than one student per year on average), while about half of the MAPS students finish their programme within the nominal period of two years. The programme team mentioned to the panel that it plans to increase the current success rate. Because the elements that cause a study delay are well-known – study load, feelings of stress and anxiety, and a curriculum set-up that makes it difficult to catch up incurred delays – the programme team has recently introduced the Research Design course in the third semester and is structuring the master thesis in the final semester. The panel understands that these adjustments are also a relevant response to the recommendation of the previous accreditation to try and raise student success rates: while it is too early to measure their impact, the changes are likely to prevent students from incurring additional delays in the graduation trajectory and thus reduce their overall time-to-completion.

In sum, the panel welcomes the efforts of the MAPS programme to stipulate both the admission requirements and the application process in a transparent way. Moreover, the student data show that the programme is effective in attracting the envisaged audience, i.e. talented and motivated Dutch and international students with an interest in media, arts and performance studies research. The success rate moreover demonstrates that almost all admitted and enrolled students eventually graduate the programme successfully.

Staff

According to the staff overview, the MAPS programme involves 15 teaching staff members, most of whom hold a professorial rank. The size of the staff team allows for a student-centred teaching approach, small-scale education and a high level of interactivity that is central to the programme's didactic concept. All staff members in MAPS have a PhD and hold a university teaching qualification (UTQ); eleven staff also obtained a senior qualification. The panel was informed that several staff members have joined the programme since the previous accreditation visit, including three full professors in media studies, while other staff left mainly because they had reached retirement age.

The panel notes that all lecturers are experts in media, art and performance studies. Through the courses they teach, but also via research tutorials, research internships, and thesis supervision, staff members connect students to their own research specialisms, which are invariably linked to one of the four core themes in the curriculum (see profile section above). Moreover, they open their extensive network of local, national and international relations to the MAPS students and encourage them to participate in scholarly and professional environments.

The previous panel concluded in 2020 that the MAPS programme had a strong staff team, featuring lecturers who were experts in their subjects and often displayed excellent research competencies. In the 2024 external research assessment - conforming to the Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP) - the performance of the research units at the Faculty of Humanities to which the MAPS lecturers and supervisors belong was considered impressive in terms of research quality and societal relevance. According to the SEP report, the Faculty offers a dynamic and stimulating research environment, which is characterised by a positive culture, strong academic leadership, and many opportunities for collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and societal engagement. The current panel reconfirms this analysis: the current staff team at MAPS is equally strong and in addition has grown to cover even more domains of specialist research.

The students and alumni the panel spoke to during the site visit indicated that they very much appreciate the expertise and dedication of the teaching staff. Students described their teachers as very skilled and engaging. Moreover, teachers tend to be empathetic and understand the struggles of students. They convinced the panel that, in line with the educational philosophy of the programme, there is a genuine MAPS community, a strong bond between the programme, its students, teachers, and professional services staff. The staff mentioned that they like to work in the programme because of the international character of the cohorts and their motivation and ambition. Moreover, they are open to the diversity in the student group and actively draws on their variety in backgrounds, experiences, skills and experiences.

In sum, the panel has met enthusiastic and committed staff during the visit, and acknowledges all the positive characteristics of both the individual staff members and the MAPS team as a close-knit collective.

However, the panel is also concerned that currently the knowledge of and responsibility for the programme is too much concentrated in one person: the programme coordinator is involved in admissions, teaching, tutoring, research supervision, while also keeping all staff and students together. It shared its concern with other members of the programme team: they confirmed the central position of the coordinator but at the same time nuanced somewhat her role as the single responsible, and emphasised instead the close ties that exist with every team member. Nonetheless, the panel remains concerned that at some point the current division of work may not be feasible anymore, and a (temporary/unforeseen) absence may jeopardise the institutional memory of the programme. Hence, it advises the programme to ensure that knowledge and responsibility is distributed – both formally and operationally - among more members of the team.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the research master MAPS operates in a strong teaching-learning environment. This appreciation applies to the relevant and coherent curriculum, the befitting learning environment, the appropriate admission criteria, the pertinent support services, the transparent information provision, and the expertise and commitment of the teaching staff on the programme.

The panel endorses the English name of the programme, as well as the decision to offer the research master programme in English. Its international dimension and orientation have been evident from the outset in the course contents and is now also visible in the diversity of students and teaching staff.

Moreover, the panel commends the programme team for the way in which it addressed the recommendations from the previous accreditation report. The changes and adjustments to the curriculum, the admissions process and the student throughput have contributed to improving the overall programme quality.

Similarly, the panel thinks highly of the way the programme team is seeking to mitigate student concerns regarding the quality and relevance of the respective courses, the feasibility of the programme as a two-year full-time endeavour, and their future career opportunities.

In addition to these considerations that altogether warrant a positive judgement on this standard, the panel recommends the MAPS programme to pay more explicit attention to ethical aspects of research throughout the curriculum and to embed positionality as an integral component of the master thesis. Similarly, it advises ensuring that the existing knowledge on the programme and the operational responsibility for it are distributed across different members of the team.

Furthermore, the programme team may want to consider communicating the programme's unique selling proposition more widely among potential applicants rather than attracting more transfer students who graduated a one-year master. The team may also want to consider reducing the size of the master thesis and offer students the opportunity to deliver a product (publishable article, consultancy report, ...) that befits their future career path.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 2.

Standard 3. Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment system

Assessment in the MAPS programme follows the assessment policy of the university and the guidelines of the faculty for testing and assessment. Just as in any other degree programme in Utrecht, the learning outcomes, course objectives, and assessments methods in the MAPS programme are aligned according to the principles of constructive alignment and described in a dedicated Curriculum and Assessment Plan.

Similarly, it is common practice in all master programmes that each course has at least one assessed assignment, and that - in line with the four-eyes principle - all tests and assessment criteria are submitted to a colleague before the test is taken. The panel studied the Curriculum and Assessment Plan of the RMA MAPS and found it a comprehensive document that not only describes the overall assessment framework and its principles, but also its operationalisation in courses and learning trajectories.

The panel was informed that the Curriculum and Assessment plan is adjusted on an annual basis, following a discussion that involves all MAPS teachers. Similarly, the individual assessment methods and grading calibrations are on the agenda of the annual MAPS Teachers Lab. According to the panel, the assessment system is transparent, and the diverse written, performative and research-based assessment methods are aligned with the course objectives and the programme learning outcomes.

All mandatory courses require at least one written final report for assessment, which is sometimes supplemented with other forms such as portfolios, presentations or group projects. These assignments feature clear guidelines, deadlines, rubrics and feedback protocols. Students and alumni indicated to the panel that the assessment system of the MAPS programme is adequate and transparent, qualifications that also apply to most course assessments. In fact, there have been a few hiccups in courses recently, in terms of grading consistency and delays in receiving grades. The panel gathers from the discussions with students and staff that the programme team is usually addressing these flaws in a straightforward and constructive way.

During the visit, the panel discussed at length the role of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in education and assessment. It notes that the development of GenAI is an important topic of discussion among and between staff and students, and a topic in several courses. For instance, students were asked in one of their assignments for the Research Lab course to write an essay about their view on the application of GenAI in the programme and in academic writing. The outcome of this assignment formed the basis for the second thematic discussion the panel held on site. The panel concurs with the programme team that there is a need to fundamentally examine what GenAI means for scholarly research and for the design of the MAPS curriculum. In fact, the current curriculum relies heavily on acquiring core academic skills of reading and writing, but these skills and their assessment are significantly affected by the emergence of GenAI. The panel welcomes on the one hand that MAPS students reported in their essays and in their discussion with the panel that they are cautious in using GenAI. On the other hand, the panel notes that some of the assessment concerns could be mitigated by making more extensive use of oral assessments and vivas in the courses and the master thesis.

Thesis assessment

To ensure the quality, reliability and transparency of the thesis assessment, the MAPS programme follows a structured and uniform system. All students independently write a master thesis, which is assessed by the supervisor on five formal preconditions and on ten substantive criteria by both supervisor and second reader. The assessment criteria cover the different stages of the research cycle. The conditions and criteria, as well as the grades are described in detail in the thesis assessment form. Once the preconditions are met, the supervisor and the second evaluator each assess the thesis independently, filling out an evaluation form and determining a provisional grade. This grade, then, is substantiated through feedback that may cover all criteria. Afterwards the assessors determine the final grade and adjust where necessary their feedback.

As part of its external assessment, the panel reviewed a sample of 15 research master theses and their assessment. While the quality of the master thesis will be addressed in the next standard, the panel found the quality of the thesis assessment overall convincing. In almost all cases the evaluation forms are

completed in an informative and insightful way. Moreover, in most – though not all - cases the panel also concurs with the final grade. Regarding this latter observation, the panel was informed about – and welcomes - the annual refresher workshops during which teaching staff involved in thesis assessment meet to exchange information and participate in a calibration exercise.

Moreover, the panel acknowledges the efforts of the programme team and the thesis assessors to address the assessment-related recommendations of the previous accreditation panel, notably to provide more elaborate comments in thesis evaluation forms.

Quality assurance

The Faculty of Humanities has ten Boards of Examiners, including one that safeguards the quality of assessment of all RMA programmes, including MAPS. Each degree programme delegates one staff member to the Board of Examiners. Moreover, the faculty has one assessment committee which investigates on behalf of the Board of Examiners assessment-related issues that go beyond individual programmes. Based on the written materials, the panel establishes that the Board fulfils all legal obligations and actively monitors the assessment quality through course and thesis sampling.

During the visit, the panel spoke to representatives of the Board of Examiners in charge of MAPS. They indicated that the MAPS programme is doing well in terms of assessment quality, and confirmed that notwithstanding the degree of freedom in deciding on their individual study plan, all MAPS students eventually follow a study programme that allows them to achieve the learning outcomes. Moreover, students who want to study abroad need approval of their study plan from the Board of Examiners, which bases its approval on the motivation issued by the coordinator. In addition, the Board explained that there is hardly any room in the MAPS curriculum to follow regular one-year master courses. If students want to take such course, often an elective, they follow a strict procedure and have to satisfy different requirements. Furthermore, the Board checks the grade pattern for all courses to verify if there is sufficient differentiation. They also perform a similar exercise on the final grades because there is a tendency towards grade inflation and a relatively high share of RMA students tend to graduate cum laude. Finally, the Board of Examiners monitors the quality of the internship, the master thesis and the study period abroad on a rotating basis.

The panel notes that the members of the Board of Examiners are aware of their tasks implementing these in a proactive way and with much expertise. Every year, they report on their activities in a comprehensive and insightful way. According to the panel, the Board of Examiners functions well, in line with the overall quality of the MAPS programme.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the research master MAPS relies on a robust system of assessment that is embedded in relevant policies and practices of the university and the faculty. Their operationalisation in the Curriculum and Assessment Plan is comprehensive and transparent. The MAPS programme employs a variety of assessment methods, ensuring broad coverage of the intended learning outcomes. The panel appreciates moreover the solid view of the programme stakeholders on the role of AI in education, and how it is integrated in assessment protocols.

The course assessments and the thesis assessment are of good quality. The assessment criteria are clearly communicated in course manuals, and rubrics are standardised across modules. Its sample review of thesis assessment forms demonstrates according to the panel that thesis assessment is well structured and rigorously implemented. The panel particularly appreciates the insightful feedback provided in the substantiation section of the form.

Furthermore, the panel thinks highly of the quality assurance system for assessment, which is both comprehensive and effective. It commends the Board of Examiners for its expertise and pro-active commitment.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 3.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

There are two ways to establish whether the intended learning outcomes have been achieved: by reviewing the quality of the final projects and by looking at the professional whereabouts of the alumni after their graduation. The panel has looked at both elements when assessing the quality of this research master programme in Media Studies.

Thesis quality

All courses in the MAPS programme are designed in such a way that they contribute to achieving the intended learning outcomes, with all seven ILOs being covered and assessed in the core components of the curriculum. The master thesis is the final and integrative component in which students demonstrate their ability to conduct independent academic research. It reflects the knowledge and research skills acquired throughout the programme and covers the entire research cycle: from formulating a clear research problem and question, selecting and applying appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches, conducting empirical analysis, to drawing well-founded conclusions.

As part of its external assessment, the panel reviewed a representative sample of research master theses. The panel found that in all 15 cases, the theses were of sufficient quality. They all reflected a level one can reasonably expect of a research master programme and their overall quality ranged from fair to very good. Hence, it is fair to conclude according to the panel that MAPS students who successfully pass the master thesis have effectively achieved the programme learning outcomes.

Reflecting on the quality of the thesis sample, the panel notes that students overall demonstrate the ability to independently investigate and reflect on subjects within their fields of inquiry. The best theses exhibit a strong analytical capacity, methodological rigour, and a notable degree of originality. Theses on the lower end of the continuum do not always show evidence of an interdisciplinary and comparative approach, have less developed theoretical and conceptual sections, and rely in a few cases on older theoretical frameworks. As a point of general attention, the panel notes that, in their theses, several students do not sufficiently elaborate on research design and methodology. This is surprising, according to the panel, given the attention to methods and methodology in the curriculum. In fact, the strongest thesis in the sample is entirely conceptual, yet lacks methodological reflection.

The previous panel recommended the programme team to intensify its efforts to have RMA theses published. The current panel was informed that initially, the team was somewhat reluctant to address this

recommendation as this was not considered the primary task and responsibility of the programme. Nonetheless, the team has been encouraging students to contact their mentors for additional guidance and orientation towards publication plans, in particular if they envisaged a PhD trajectory. At the time of the current site visit, all RMA programme in the Faculty of Humanities are considering a shift in the master thesis deliverable from a comprehensive piece of research to a journal article. Based on the thesis samples it reviewed, the current panel notes that each thesis has the potential to eventually lead to a publication. However, it does not believe that each thesis is ready for publication right-away. If the scope of the research master thesis is to produce high-standard publishable work, then further development is needed.

Finally, the sample review shows that issues of positionality and ethical reflection are present in some – but not all – graduation projects. According to the panel, reflexivity does not only strengthen the methodological integrity of the work but also aligns it with contemporary academic standards that emphasize transparency and critical self-awareness. Hence – and in line with its consideration on the graduation trajectory – the panel advises the programme team to encourage both students and supervisors to pay more attention to positionality in the research master thesis.

Graduate performance

By attending MAPS, students gain academic skills that enable them to pursue a PhD trajectory or work in other professional fields that require analytical, communicative and methodological competences. The panel gathered from the written materials and the discussions on site that MAPS graduates are indeed widely deployable in the academic field and are now connected to various fields of study and disciplines, both in the Netherlands and abroad. They prove to be competitive on the national and international PhD market and are also successful in other high-end research-oriented professions, and in the broader cultural field. These results confirm according to the panel that MAPS achieves its goal of cultivating independent, critically engaged researchers with advanced methodological and communication skills.

However, in recent years, students indicated that they do not have a clear view of how their knowledge and skills apply in the job market, and that they would like the programme to pay more attention to career orientation. Moreover, the programme team indicated in its SWOT-analysis that there is lack of opportunities for academic career paths. Even though career perspectives are generally positive, the lack of structural funding for PhD projects at Utrecht University and in the Netherlands makes it difficult to keep and foster highly talented alumni after graduation. Acknowledging the latter point, the panel welcomes the recent efforts of the programme team to organise events that are tailored to the needs of each MAPS student, irrespective of whether they envisage an academic career or a position in a research-informed profession.

The previous panel recommended the programme team to monitor the careers of MAPS graduates more closely. The current panel was informed that the programme team sees the value added of such alumni network, but has not yet implemented it in view of other competing priorities and the limited capacity within the programme, department and faculty for alumni-related activities. In fact, each department has one alumni officer for all degree programmes, and this is not a fulltime position. As a result, each degree programme now has its own LinkedIn group and maintains a contacts database. Moreover, the team organised a MAPS Alumni event in 2022 and held a MAPS Career Event in 2025. While it subscribes in principle to the recommendation of its predecessor, the current panel also acknowledges the limited capacity of the department and the programme to set-up a comprehensive alumni network.

Considerations

Based on the above-mentioned findings, the panel considers that the intended learning outcomes are assessed and demonstrated in a systematic way: students who graduate the RMA MAPS have effectively

acquired all intended learning outcomes, while alumni invariably find suitable employment in research informed positions inside and outside academia.

The panel considers that the research master thesis constitutes a substantial test of research competence that covers all components of the research cycle and is of value to the academic and scientific discipline. The thesis review demonstrates that graduation projects are invariably of good quality, and that thesis topics are original, creative and well aligned with the thematic scope of the programme.

Furthermore, the panel considers that MAPS graduates display a strong trajectory into both academic and professional research. They find jobs that are commensurate with the domain and the level of their study, and do so in a variety of positions and with a broad range of public, private and non-governmental employers.

In addition to these considerations that altogether warrant a positive judgement on this standard, the panel recommends the programme team to encourage students and supervisors to pay more attention to positionality in the thesis. Moreover, the programme team may want to monitor the careers of its graduates more closely.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 4.

General conclusion

The panel judges that the programme meets all four NVAO standards: intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, student assessment, and achieved learning outcomes. Moreover, it establishes that the programme fulfils all additional aspects of the assessment framework that apply specifically to the quality of a research master programme. The panel's assessment of the research master's programme Media, Art and Performance Studies is therefore positive.

Recommendations

In addition to its overall positive judgement, the panel recommends the MAPS programme to:

1. make its unique selling proposition and its distinctive field of study more visible and explicit in its communications to the outside world;
2. ensure that the existing knowledge on the programme and the operational responsibility for it are distributed across different members of the team;
3. pay more attention to ethical aspects of research in the curriculum and embed positionality as an integral component of the master thesis.

Appendix 1. Intended learning outcomes

The programme aims to:

- provide specialised knowledge, insight and skills in Media, Art and Performance Studies as practiced today;
- prepare students for a PhD programme in the field of Media, Art and Performance Studies;
- prepare students for a career as a researcher in academic and non- academic context in the field of Media, Art and Performance Studies and related non-academic contexts.

Graduates:

- have advanced knowledge of, and insight in the field of Media, Art and Performance Studies, particularly with regard to the chosen area of specialisation;
- have thorough knowledge of a specialism within that field showing due regard for its position within the broader field of the Humanities;
- have the academic skills to independently identify, formulate, analyse and suggest possible solutions to problems in the field of Media, Art and Performance Studies;
- have thorough knowledge of current research methods and methodologies within Media, Art and Performance Studies, and the academic skills to critically evaluate them within their own research;
- have the academic skills to report on their research in the field of Media, Art and Performance Studies in line with the general standards of the discipline;
- are able to develop and apply knowledge and understanding in a way that demonstrates a knowledgeable and academically-trained approach to their work or profession;
- are able to communicate insights and conclusions, as well as the underlying knowledge, fundamentals and considerations, to an audience composed of specialists or non-specialists.

Appendix 2. Programme curriculum

Study Programme MAPS – Year 1

	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4
Year 1 60 EC	• State of the Art 5 EC • MAPS Research Lab 5 EC • Humanities Today 5 EC	• Body, Mind, Method 5 EC • Play, Perform, Participate 5 EC • AI and Creativity in Global Contexts 5 EC	• Between Media, Art and Performance 5 EC • Elective / Research School credits / Tutorial 2 x 5 EC	• Emerging and Transforming Cultural Institutions 5 EC • Elective / Research School credits / Tutorial 2 x 5 EC
			MAPS Electives - Year 1 • Urban Interfaces 5 EC • Tool Criticism for Media Cultures 5 EC • Histories, Archaeologies, Archives 5 EC	

Study Programme MAPS – Year 2

	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4
Year 2 <i>60 EC</i>	• Elective <i>or</i> • Internship <i>or</i> • Study Abroad <i>15 EC</i>	• Research Design MAPS <i>5 EC</i> • Elective <i>or</i> • Internship <i>or</i> • Study Abroad <i>10 EC</i>	MAPS RMA Thesis <i>30 EC</i>	
	MAPS Electives – Year 2 • Screen Cultures <i>5 EC</i> • Corporeal Literacy <i>5 EC</i> • Ecologies of Curation <i>5 EC</i>			

Appendix 3. Programme of the site visit

Friday 28 November 2025

08.30	09.15	Panel arrival and preparation
09.15	10.00	Interview faculty and programme management
10.00	10.15	Break
10.15	11.00	Thematic session Career Perspectives
11.00	11.15	Closed panel meeting
11.15	11.45	Interview Board of Examiners
11.45	12.00	Break
12.00	12.45	Interview teaching staff
12.45	13.30	Break
13.30	14.15	Interview students and recent alumni
14.15	14.30	Break
14.30	15.15	Thematic session AI
15.15	15.45	Closed panel meeting
15.45	16.15	Final interview programme management
16.15	17.00	Closed panel meeting
17.00	17. 30	Presentation of the panel's main findings

Appendix 4. Materials

The MAPS programme opted for a development-oriented assessment process. Instead of drafting a self-assessment report, it put at the disposition of the panel an extensive SWOT-analysis, a student chapter, and a comprehensive information dossier. A cover letter explains the set-up of the programme and indicates how altogether the materials in the information dossier show that the MAPS programme meets the standards set out in the NVAO assessment framework.

The digital information dossier contained among others the following materials:

- Cover letter
- Organisation Faculty of Humanities
- SWOT-analysis
- Student chapter
- Programme monitor
- Education and Examination Regulations
- Curriculum overview
- Course materials
- Language policy
- Education data
- Overview of lecturers
- Student supervision
- Career services
- Admission and application
- Curriculum and assessment plan
- Assessment guidelines
- Thesis student manual
- Thesis teacher manual
- Thesis assessment form
- Annual report Board of Examiners
- Faculty regulations Board of Examiners
- Handbook Board of Examiners
- National Student Survey factsheet
- Materials for theme session on career perspectives
- Materials for theme session on AI
- Accreditation report 2020
- Research accreditation report 2024

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed 15 graduation works among the 22 master theses which had been successfully submitted in the academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. The sample was representative of the final scores and the examiners involved in thesis supervision across all theses. Information on the thesis review is available from Academion upon request.