



**European Association for  
Public Administration  
Accreditation**

## **EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report**

**2017**

Evaluation Report with respect to the request for accreditation of the Executive Master Programme of the Netherlands School of Public Administration (NSOB).

In consideration of the Self-Evaluation Report of the above programme, the report of the EAPAA Site Visit Team (SVT) for this programme, and the response of the programme to the draft of the Site Visit Report, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee, at its meeting of 28 August 2017 in Milan, Italy, has evaluated this programme against the EAPAA Accreditation Criteria.

### ***Accreditation Criteria***

<b>2. Applicability/Eligibility</b>	
2.1 Domain	The Master programme is within the domain of Public Administration.
2.2 Geography	The Netherlands are a member of the Council of Europe, therefore the programme falls within the jurisdiction of EAPAA.
2.3 Programme longevity	The programme has more than two cohorts of graduates (started in 1989) and is eligible for EAPAA re-accreditation.
2.4 Programme variants and locations	Not applicable
4 Category of accreditation	Executive master programme
<b>5. Standards</b>	
5.1 Domain of public administration	This professional executive master's programme has a unique profile, partly because of the nature of the fellows, all of them experienced practitioners in the public sector, and partly because of the reflective character of the programme. The EAPAA – criteria related to the domain of public administration are certainly met.
5.2 Mission of the programme	The MPA of NSOB is based on a clear mission for this specific programme, an executive master's programme. The SVT highly commends the mission – driven spirit in this programme and in the NSOB in general. This type of programme counterbalances the rise of

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	hands-on programmes which are considered as being of direct use at the operational level.
5.3 Level	The SVT are convinced of the quality and the level of the programme. However, for the SVT it is difficult to make a precise judgement of the final level reached. There are also questions about the level of research skills and competencies, as one element of the criteria related to the level of the NSOB programme.
5.4 Practice and internships	The SV team affirms this form of internship which has been adapted to the level of the students and the ambitions of the programme. The stay abroad matches the reflective character of the programme.
5.5.1 Curriculum Content	
5.5.1.1 Core components	All the basic concepts, theories and methods of public administration are represented in this programme. One open question is whether or not ethics and ethical behaviour as a discipline and as an attitude on the personal level is represented well enough in the programme.
5.5.1.2 Other Components	Not applicable
5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme	The structure and didactics of the programme are coherent and in line with the mission and learning goals of the programme.
5.5.1.4 Intake	The number of students is declining and is now reaching a critical level for the sustainability of the programme.. There is no evidence yet that this affects the intake. A point of concern is how the programme managers and faculty deal with the different levels of knowledge and experience related to the varied backgrounds of the students.
5.5.2 Length	The length of the programme seems appropriate to the ambitions and the specific nature of this type of students, combining the programme with their job.
5.5.3 Results	The SV team agrees with NSOB that grading this type of student does not accord with a programme that is based on the personal growth of professionals. Nevertheless, it could be helpful to incorporate a final assessment of each student that could also lead to a group assessment.
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment	The critical mass and the high level of engagement of the fellows, the programme structures and the critical internal and external

	environment in which the MPA and the NSOB is embedded, guarantee that the accomplishment of the programme is constantly monitored and adjusted when needed, by informal social control of the small group of students and by formal processes of assessment and evaluation.
5.6.2 Curriculum Development	There is no doubt that the development of the curriculum is continuously evaluated. The SVT advocates introduction of semi-formal meetings between the lecturers (once or twice a year) as an additional instrument in the evaluation policy. The potential of the interaction between those high ranked and very motivated group of lecturers could be exploited more than it currently is.
5.6.3 External Reviews	The previous EAPAA accreditation had an impact on the management of the programme. In reaction to the process, the programme has been changed (for instance: more individual feedback).
5.7 Student Assessment	The SVT agrees that 'normal' grading does not fit well with the specific philosophy and nature of the programme and that personal development is a central dimension of the assessment. Accordingly, the use of the personal contract in the process of assessment should be better explained and integrated. Although there is no doubt that the assessment is well organised, the hybrid nature of the actual assessment makes it difficult for the SVT to give a judgment, for instance, on the fairness and objectivity of the assessment of the final thesis or the stay abroad. The final thesis is of great importance, so the SVT urges management of the MPA to make the assessment policy of the final thesis more explicit and to indicate how group assessment is related to the personal assessment of each member of the group.
5.8 Programme Jurisdiction	The MPA programme has a complex governance and organisational structure which combines formality and informality with a key role played by the Programme Deans. Implementation of the suggestions throughout this review would enhance the programme while retaining its distinctive elements.
5.9.1 Faculty nucleus	Notwithstanding the heterogeneity of academic staff, the philosophy and mission of the programme serve as unifying forces, ensuring consistent but fluid approaches to teaching and assessment and promoting a strong emphasis on linking theory and practice. Faculty are highly motivated. The impermanent and inter-institutional nature of academic staffing for the programme brings potential challenges with regard to coherence. The site-visit team urges implementation of a process for formal team discussions among faculty and organisers.

5.9.2 Faculty qualifications	There is a very good balance of disciplinary expertise within contributing faculty. The site visit team noted the depth and breadth of professional interests and experience within the programme faculty and the scope of their research activity. Established links with practitioners ensure that guest lecturers are drawn from a wide range of relevant organisations. The range of faculty qualifications is consistent with the aims and philosophy of the MPA programme and fulfils EAPAA criteria.
5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities	While there is a contextually-caused gender imbalance among core faculty, there is a conscious effort to ensure some coaches, jurors, guest lecturers, management and Board members are women. The MPA programme management has made it their aim to increase the number of female lecturers over the next five years. The site visit team urges formal monitoring of this target.
5.10 Admission of Students	Because of the employers' selection processes and high tuition fee of 45.000 euros, only highly motivated and skilled students enter the MPA. The site visit team considers that the admission process is in line with the mission of the programme (an executive programme with a strong element of personal development).
5.11 Supportive Services and Facilities	Although the number of students is declining, the budget still is sufficient to cover the costs, partly because of the high tuition fee and because of the sound financial position of the institute.
5.12 Student Services	Both students and fellows value the conversations with and coaching of the deans.
5.13 Public Relations	The overall marketing effort for the programme is modest. Public relations can be improved in order to have more potential students interested in the MPA. The number of students entering the MPA is declining. Therefore it is wise to restructure the present PR-strategy with, for example, more participation of alumni and more direct contact with decision makers in key positions in the field of public administration.
6 Additional Criteria	Not applicable.

## Conclusion

**Based on the above evaluation of the specific criteria, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee concludes that this programme meets the criteria for accreditation sufficiently and can be accredited without restrictions.**