



**European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation**

18 September 2012

EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report

Evaluation Report with respect to the request for accreditation of Master of City Administration (Metropool), NSOB

In consideration of the Self-Evaluation Report of the above programme, the Site Visit Report of 30 August 2012 of the EAPAA Site Visit Team 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 10 September 2013 in Edinburgh, UK, has evaluated this programme against the EAPAA Accreditation Criteria (version 8, September 2011).

1. Accreditation Criteria

2. Applicability/Eligibility	
2.1 Domain	Studying the education process and contents, the Master of City Administration programme provides training to master students for activities that require in-depth fundamental training in public administration and local government, including scientific research and teaching in higher and secondary special educational institutions. The domain of the program is in accordance with the relevant EAPAA criterion.
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 started in 2002, and since that year 174 students have graduated the Basic phase and 64 the Master phase. The programme has been in operation for 10 years. The programme is therefore eligible for the accreditation procedure.
2.4 Programme variants and locations	The Metropool programme is offered only in one variant, namely part-time.
4 Category of accreditation	The Metropool programme falls in the category of 'executive/mid-career public sector specialization master programmes' (2 years).
5. Standards	
5.1 Domain of public administration Score: Adequate	This programme is designed for practitioners/civil servants, and includes cognitive, reflexive and dexterity modules. The programme is innovative: it focuses on urban issues from different angles. The necessary focus on the leading PA-models, -concepts and -theories is mainly guaranteed via the content of the cognitive modules. In the Metropool-programme PA is taught according to the academic standards. It is an executive master programme that combines the teaching

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	<p>of professional skills with the teaching of PA-models and –theories (policy, management, governance). However, as a point of attention, we observed, in some master-theses (passed), a rather limited application of the acquired knowledge of PA-models and –theories in relation to the topic investigated/studied. There is also a bias towards the Dutch model (further narrowed by the focus on the 4 biggest Dutch cities) and to a certain extent neglects the ever-growing international character of the discipline of PA.</p>
<p>5.2 Mission of the programme Score: Good</p>	<p>The programme is part of the larger NSOB-network. This network consists of 7 Dutch universities. The origins of the programme lay in the belief of NSOB that PA should be taught differently to practitioners which have already some experience in the civil service, compared to generation-students that follow the regular bachelor and master courses offered by universities. The advantage of the NSOB-network, of which the programme profits, is at least twofold: (1) the network of 7 universities guarantees the participation of professors from the leading PA-institutions from the Netherlands, and (2) the programme is embedded in a network that also provides consulting, does in-company work and conducts research in PA. As a point of attention, it is not always clear how professors are selected. should not be a problem, if selection- and evaluation-criteria of teaching staff were more specified and formalized. Another important question is why the programme teaching staff is not more international in nature. The mission of the programme is both narrow and broad. Narrow in the sense of focusing on issues of urbanization and urban management, and by only admitting students that are civil servants in the 4 biggest Dutch cities. Broad in the sense that these issues of urban management are studied from different angles (social issues / sociology, management, policy, culture etc.) through cognitive and reflexive modules. Its broadness also is in the combination between theory and practice. The advantage is the opportunity to study urban governance and management in an in-depth manner, providing alumni with high levels of expertise in issues of urbanization. The risk is that the programme reduces PA to urban governance and management, especially for students without a background in PA.</p>
<p>5.3 Level Score: Good</p>	<p>The level of the programme is on par with the international standards for a PA-programme. There is a mix of competencies (cognitive, reflexive, dexterity) aimed at, and the high workload and tight follow-up procedures by distinguished professors ensure that students acquire these competencies.</p>
<p>5.4 Practice and internships Score: Excellent</p>	<p>The participants spend significant time and effort on an internship in the Netherlands or in foreign countries, studying the experiences of municipal governments which differ from their own city. The applicant is strongly encouraged to choose an internship placement which helps to reach their personal learning goal that was created during the intake together with the deans and the learning manager. The internship therefore has adequate, close and direct link to the students' public administration professions. The internship is a mandatory step in the program, and well supported and structured. The quality of the final reports can be improved, particularly on their adherence to accepted academic and institutional standards.</p>

5.5.1 Curriculum Content	
5.5.1.1 Core components Score: Adequate	<p>The Master of City Administration (Metropool) programme's mission is to offer high-potential public sector officials an opportunity to contribute to the solution of complex problems in the field of urban policy and management in the Netherlands within the context of the country's four biggest cities, i. e. Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht. The programme devotes attention to problems the administration of large cities faces, especially how urbanization can be managed.</p> <p>The programme is set up in two phases. The Basic phase lasts 15 months and consists of 5 sub-phases, while the Master phase lasts 1 year. The five sub-phases of the Basic phase are (1) a cognitive phase, (2) an internship, (3) a reflection phase, (4) the finalization phase and (5) the creation of the Personal Professionalism Manual. After having accomplished the Basic phase, the students receive a Metropool certificate which allows them to enter the Master phase.</p> <p>The cognitive phase does not follow the classical disciplines of public administration, such as economics, law, political science, sociology, public finance, informatisation, and public management. Because the cognitive modules are problem-oriented, the lectures have an interdisciplinary approach and use very different theoretical concepts in each single module. The advantage of this didactic concept is the problem-based learning and the proximity to the challenges the students face in their jobs.</p> <p>The dexterity modules strengthen the key skills of the students such as presentation and communication skills. These skills are important for a successful career in the public sector. It is nevertheless quite unusual that there is such a strong emphasis on these skills in a Master's programme, which may lead to fewer class hours for general Public Administration concepts.</p> <p>Unlike other Public Administration Executive programmes, the Metropool Master does not follow the classical Public Administration disciplines, theories, and concepts but structures the curriculum along specific problems metropolitan areas face. It is somewhat questionable whether participants learn the relevant theories and concepts of Public Administration in a systematic way.</p>
5.5.1.2 Other Components Not applicable	<p>There is no specialization. All participants take the same overall programme for the same degree. The individual research projects completed by the students are focused on also the development of the students' special competencies.</p>
5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme Score: Excellent	<p>The programme focuses on enhancing the problem-solving skills of high-potentials in the public sector. The structure and didactical concept support the achievement of this goal. The didactic philosophy of the programme is in line with the needs of the participants. Hours in the classroom are alternated with an internship, writing reports and a Master thesis. The variety of didactic methods shows the integration of the latest research findings in the field of andragogy. It is an effective way of enhancing the participants' problem solving skills.</p> <p>The Master of City Administration programme has a coherent structure and a modern didactical concept, which focuses on the enhancement of the</p>

	problem-solving skills of the participants. There is a good balance between class lectures, writing reports and a master thesis, and the internship.
5.5.1.4 Intake Score: Good	The students entering the programme have an adequate qualification. Because the employers must support the admission and each application is thoroughly checked, it is assured that not only the intellectual skills of the students are adequate, but also the motivation and the working environment.
5.5.2 Length Score: Complies	The curriculum length of two years is in line with the objective of the programme (part-time 60 ECTS master program) and in accordance with the accreditation category that is applied for.
5.5.3 Results Score: Good	The qualifications students acquire during the master programme are adequate and fully in line with the programme's mission. The discussion with the students, alumni and employers have shown us that the programme is strengthening the key and professional skills of the students and enables them to progress in their career. While the strong focus on key skills and reflection is a competitive advantage, the alumni may not have the same level of knowledge about the core concepts of Public Administration as alumni of other programmes.
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment Score: Good	The programme uses a range of evaluation and feedback mechanisms. These include formal/written and informal/oral evaluations, as an integral part of the programme. While there is no quantitative trigger for evaluations leading to consequences, the evaluations are taken very seriously and faculty/convener have to deliver high quality teacher if they want to continue in the programme. The Programme Deans have a crucial role in the supervision of teaching quality and responses to feedback from participants. In this way the programme assesses the accomplishment of its objectives; it uses information about its performance in directing and revising programme objectives, strategies, and operations regularly.
5.6.2 Curriculum Development Score: Good	The programme assesses the accomplishment of its objectives; it uses information about its performance in directing and revising programme objectives, strategies, and operations regularly. The information used is gathered in an informal way from the network of the NSOB. This is appropriate, given the network character of the NSOB as an organization. However, we recommend supplementing these measures with more systematic measures of curriculum development, in particular systematic evaluations by alumni and stakeholder organizations.
5.6.3 External Reviews Score: Adequate	There has been no specific and formal external review of the programme. Feedback is derived from the cooperation of NSOB with the participating metropolitan cities. Additional external reviews could help to continuously improve the programme.
5.7 Student Assessment Score: Adequate	The student assessment is the aspect of the programme that is most open to debate. The debate centers around the method of evaluation. Evaluation is mainly based on group-assignments. Next to that there are individual presentations and (in the master phase) a master thesis. No grading is

	<p>awarded for individual modules. Students pass (or not) for the programme as a whole. The decision lies with the deans of the programme, after having consulted teaching staff, and after having had intense follow-up and feedback discussions with the students. This is a rather unusual manner to evaluate students in order to award them a degree (or not). However, we believe that this method of assessment seems useful for this programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The low number of students allows for follow up students by the deans and the module-professors -The compulsory attendance of students in (small) classes with a lot of interaction shows the qualities, skills and progress of students -There is a lot of 'social control' through group dynamics in a group of motivated and experienced practitioners prevents students from free-riding. -According to the students, group work also invites for reflection through discussion with fellow-students. <p>Despite the 'unusual' evaluation-procedures and -methods, students are evaluated individually and objectively, and based on criteria that were known by the students on beforehand. As a point of attention, however, we question whether this particular (and rather informal) way of evaluating would still be applicable under other conditions, such as a considerable growth of student numbers.</p>
<p>5.8 Programme Jurisdiction Score: Good</p>	<p>The programme could be more specific about the way in which, and by whom, the programme is developed. This includes decisions about content of modules, curriculum changes, appointment of faculty, evaluation procedures, etc. Especially given the amount of stakeholders and institutions involved – 7 universities, programme deans, learning managers, project managers, the 'G4 contact group' –, it needs some clarification how such decisions are taken, and by whom.</p> <p>The programme could give a short formal description ("manual") of the decision-making-procedure on the content development, reflecting the current practice. It should be part of the quality management.</p>
<p>5.9.1 Faculty nucleus Score: Good</p>	<p>The NSOB is an interuniversity organization for executive education of seven universities in the Netherlands. NSOB's own staff remains limited to deans and associate deans, in addition to a director and support staff (20 persons). Lecturers are not employed by the NSOB, but by the universities the NSOB is collaborating with. In the NSOB model of business the faculty is composed of contracted professors by the programme requirements. In terms of number of teaching staff, this practice systematically provides the sufficient number of faculty.</p>
<p>5.9.2 Faculty qualifications Score: Good</p>	<p>All faculty have at least a PhD qualification. The academic professionals have permanent professorship at Dutch universities, the practitioners have the adequate experiences and all of them are senior advisors. At the NSOB the faculty is therefore of very high quality, professionally and scientifically highly prepared for the required field of teaching.</p>
<p>5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities</p>	<p>At the moment there are two female lecturers in the Metropool programme, which amounts to 16.6 %. The programme management has</p>

Score: Poor	made it their aim to strongly increase the number of female lecturers between now and five years from now.
5.10 Admission of Students Score: Good	<p>Only civil servants from the four major Dutch cities are eligible to participate in the programme. This policy stems from the origin, financing and mission of the programme, which was designed as a programme to improve the capacities of civil servants in these metropolitan cities. The programme is financed by these cities, hence the limitation of admission to this group of civil servants.</p> <p>The academic prerequisites are adequate (bachelor & 'some work experience' OR substantial work experience that can substitute for a Bachelor degree). One might consider these criteria as too unspecific and loose, but the programme is designed for ambitious and highly motivated 'fast track' civil servants. From the feedback of students in particular, it is clear that there is a combination of self-selection and competition in the admission to the programme. The admissions process is not very formalized, but the selection of participants is the result of the close collaboration between NSOB and the participating city administrations. The admission goals, admission policy and admission standards are therefore clear and in line with the programme objectives, although the procedure could be more transparent.</p>
5.11 Supportive Services and Facilities Score: Good	<p>NSOB is located in a small building in central The Hague. The building is ideal for the teaching purposes of the programme. The support from 'learning managers', who act as coordinators and facilitators between the academic and skills oriented aspects of the programme is unique and a key asset of the programme. A downside is the limited library facility of the NSOB. While the Royal Library is in close vicinity to the NSOB building and can be used by participants, more direct access to (electronic) material would be desirable.</p> <p>Overall, the accommodation and material facilities are adequate to realize the programme in an effective and efficient way.</p>
5.12 Student Services Score: Good	<p>Student services are adequate in relation to the mission of the programme. Programme advisement, progress appraisal and career guidance are available to students. The access to scientific literature is now dependent on incidental arrangement by the course professors. This could be arranged in a more structured way.</p>
5.13 Public Relations Score: Adequate	<p>Looking at the exclusivity of the programme, the current "minimalist" PR practice seems to be sufficient one. A more up-to-date and comprehensive PR activity would be helpful to involve the stakeholders more efficiently and maintain the high prestige of the NSOB for long time.</p>
6 Additional Criteria Not applicable	Not applicable.

2. Conclusion

Based on all material and especially the report of the EAPAA site visit team, the Accreditation Committee has evaluated your programme. It has a unique, non-regular character, in terms of the

model of business, applied organisational and educational solutions, exclusivity and direct relations to stakeholders. The content of the programme is influenced by the practical needs of the financing cities at first, and there is less pressure for incorporating the comprehensive academic, theoretical knowledge in the curriculum. Keeping the good balance of the practical and theoretical needs permanent attention.

The programme offers a very intensive, personalized way of education to the students in small groups, close cooperation with the professors, ideal facilities. Instead of the usual grading, the system of the complex personal evaluation is much more helpful and developing to the students. The employers are satisfied with the program, they are willing to continue the financing it, and the regular communication between the programme and the stakeholders is organized and well-working.

There are some points which lend themselves to improvement:

1. The business model of the programme is like that of a small business. The participants are committed and motivated. Overall there is a strong community spirit. Individuals and their personal relationships play a very important role in guaranteeing the quality of the operation and its sustainability. These advantages can easily turn into disadvantages if the personal conditions change. Regular and well-organized external reviews of the programme by the representatives of the stakeholders and also wider academic and professional circles may further raise the quality and the reputation.
2. Concerning the content of the program, keeping the adequate balance between the dimensions of practical and theoretical, local administration and wider governance related knowledge is very important. In order to maintain the good balance, a regular and focused communication is required among the professors about the content of their courses.
3. A more systematic description of the operational model of the programme may improve the transparency of the content and regular processes of the education and help the better understanding of it for the students, the stakeholders and academia as well.

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.