



**European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation**

EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report

Evaluation Report with respect to the request for accreditation of the Master's programme Public Policy and Human Development, Maastricht University, Faculty of Humanities and Sciences, Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Maastricht, the Netherlands.

At its meetings of September 3 and 4, 2018 in Lausanne (Switzerland), the EAPAA Accreditation Committee evaluated the programmes against the EAPAA Accreditation Criteria.

1. Accreditation Criteria

2. Applicability/Eligibility	
0. Preamble	The Master of Science programme in Public Policy and Human Development (MPPHD) is a one-year full-time master's programme taught in English and offered since 2013 as a double degree in collaboration with the United Nations University. The UNU regulations for the programme have been built specifically to replicate Dutch laws and regulations within the UN legal context. Since UNU is not a traditional university that is subject to national laws, several steps have been taken to safeguard the quality of education in the programme. Due to the special status of UNU and the fact that the UN is not subject to legislation, the programme management has requested the SVT to look at all courses as if they were provided by Maastricht University.
2.1 Domain	As can be read from the mission and the programme content, the programme clearly belongs to the public administration domain.
2.2 Geography	The programme is organised under the responsibility of the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Maastricht, the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a member of the Council of Europe; therefore the programme falls within the jurisdiction of EAPAA.
2.3 Programme longevity	The programme has not been accredited by EAPAA before, but exists since 2005. The programme fulfils this criterion.
2.4 Programme variants and locations	There are no variants or other locations.
4 Category of accreditation	The master programme opts for the second cycle graduate/master level public administration programmes accreditation.
5. Standards	

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5.1 Domain of public administration	<p>The MPPHD programme aims to contribute to human development through the analysis and evaluation of public policies. Graduates are knowledgeable in public policy and its application and contribution to human development issues at regional, national and international level. In this way, the MPPHD distinguishes itself from programmes in public administration.</p> <p>The SVT discussed to what extent this programme falls within the remit of the domain-specific reference framework for Public Administration and within the scope of EAPAA. On both accounts, the SVT found that this is the case: the programme has a specific focus on competencies (regarding policy formulation, implementation, analysis, advice and evaluation) that are important for governance, which fit the framework for Public Administration, Public Governance and Governance and Organisation (PAGO) programmes. Moreover, the programme addresses the disciplines (such as economics, political science and law) that EAPAA thinks are crucial for a Public Administration degree. Nonetheless, the SVT noticed that some disciplines are integrated in a rather implicit way and it suggests that these components should become a more explicit part of the curriculum.</p>
5.2 Mission of the programme	<p>The MPPHD programme aims to contribute to human development through the analysis and evaluation of public policies. It offers training in making and analysing evidence-based policy with the goal of strengthening governance capacity in domestic and international organisations. The programme emphasises the connection between public policy and decision-making processes, i.e. the effectiveness and efficiency of governance. the MPPHD puts a strong emphasis on developing professional skills and on equipping students with substantive and methodological knowledge to enable them to work as policy designers and policy analysts.</p>
5.3 Level	<p>The intended learning outcomes reflect adequately the (master's) level and (academic) orientation of the programme. Although there is already an explicit link with the curriculum structure, the SVT considers that the learning outcomes could be formulated in more detail and in a more measurable way. By doing so, there will be more coherence with the learning goals of individual courses.</p>
5.4 Practice and internships	<p>The programme puts a strong emphasis on developing professional skills. The teaching approach prepares students to work in an international environment by allowing them to practice collaboration within a diverse group setting. Several (guest) lecturers on the programme, notably in the specialisation tracks, are academics who combine an academic career with professional positions. These external staff provide not only substantive knowledge but teach students to contextualise how their current study material is used in practice.</p> <p>During the thesis track, students are encouraged to combine the thesis work with an internship. Although students were quite critical in the report about the lack of support and encouragement they received from the programme in organising an internship, the SVT has noticed that at the time of the site visit, the Programme Board was taking several measures to facilitate such internships and to offer various forms of employability support to students.</p>

5.5.1 Curriculum Content	
5.5.1.1 Core components	<p>The MPPHD programme consists of core content courses (16 EC), core skills courses (12 EC), a set of specialisation electives (16 EC) and a master's thesis (16 EC). The content courses train students in the disciplines of policy, economics and policy analysis. The skills courses include a quantitative methods component featuring statistics, data science and regression analysis, as well as a module on research design.</p> <p>The programme focuses primarily on evidence-based policy, and provides substantive and methodological training in policy design, implementation and analysis. During the learning process, the substantive and methodological training is applied to policy problems recognised by the international community as important for human development. However, the SVT felt that intended learning outcomes in relation to an understanding of human development issues could be included more specifically within the MPPHD programme.</p> <p>While the orientation of the programme and faculty is quite international, the course contents are still mostly focused on developed countries. Moreover, issues related to sustainable development goals do not feature strongly in the programme, although they have become top priority for all UN agencies.</p> <p>The curriculum focuses on content, methods and research skills from different disciplines. In this regard the programme is clearly multidisciplinary. While students will reportedly encounter a multi-cultural and interdisciplinary work environment after their studies, the SVT did not gather very clearly from the discussions on site in which parts of the curriculum students have to combine knowledge from different disciplines. This could be made clearer in the programme documentation.</p>
5.5.1.2 Other Components	<p>The spring semester is dedicated to a coherent set of four courses per specialisation track, combining contents and methods. The specialisation contributes to the understanding of public policy in relation to a human development topic. Usually students choose a thesis topic that is related to the specialisation track. Students who do not wish to follow a particular specialisation can opt for a free-elective track, taking courses from different specialisations, subject to approval by the Programme Board.</p> <p>In the view of the SVT, the structure of the curriculum with core components and specialisations is straightforward. The individual course descriptions feature learning goals that are formulated and organised according to the Dublin Descriptors. However, there is little information on how each specialisation contributes in its own right to the programme objectives. Further to the consideration under intended learning outcomes, the SVT thinks that the coherence of the programme would be enhanced by a clearer link between the learning goals of the individual tracks and the overall programme.</p>
5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme	<p>The learning outcomes of the programme are aligned with the three educational elements that compose the programme: (i) the fall semester with core courses common to all students; (ii) the spring semester with sets of specialised elective courses; and (iii) the summer period with supervisory assistance for thesis writing.</p>

	<p>Lecturers use a collaborative learning approach to education. This approach is mainly based on the philosophy of the problem-based learning (PBL) model that is used to stimulate team-based problem solving and to emphasise the individual responsibility of students to contribute to a multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary team tackling a policy problem. The SVT acknowledges that PBL is indeed a relevant approach for this programme. The programme monitors carefully the feasibility of individual courses through course evaluations, informal meetings with students and in sessions organised by the study association. This systematic approach has helped the programme in identifying and addressing some of the severe problems that students mentioned in the Self-Evaluation Report.</p>
5.5.1.4 Intake	<p>Through the admission process, the programme ensures that students that are accepted have the previous education and skills needed to meet the learning objectives of the first courses. Students who enrol on the programme often have very different educational backgrounds. In order to address possible deficiencies, the programme offers a range of refresher courses at the very start of the fall semester covering political science, economics and quantitative skills. The SVT understood from the discussions that this approach to levelling is new, operating since the start of this academic year, and will be evaluated in due course.</p> <p>Students mentioned that the first courses were indeed starting from a very basic level but reached the appropriate, more challenging, level quite quickly. Furthermore, the SVT was assured by the lecturers that all students must pass the same tests and eventually reach the same level of competencies.</p>
5.5.2 Length	<p>Based on the information materials and the discussion on site, the SVT confirms that the MPPHD programme is a one-year full-time programme of 60 EC, so it fulfills the requirements for the length of academic master's programmes in Europe.</p>
5.5.3 Results	<p>In order to establish whether students had effectively achieved the MPPHD learning outcomes, the SVT reviewed a sample of 15 theses covering the whole range of scores given. In each case, the SVT found that the thesis fulfilled at least the minimum requirements one would expect of a final product of academic orientation at master's level. The quality of individual theses varied considerably, but these differences were also appropriately reflected in the scores.</p> <p>The programme not only provides students with substantive and methodological knowledge, but also pays considerable attention to developing professional skills in order for graduates to work as policy designers and policy analysts. The SVT observed in both the Self-Evaluation Report and the discussions with alumni and employers that the programme is quite successful in preparing students for these particular positions on the labour market.</p>
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment	<p>According to the programme, roughly 80% of graduates serve in either an analytical (researcher, consultant) or operational (manager, desk officer) capacity. A quarter of the graduates work directly for the public sector (be it</p>

	<p>in international, national or sub-national organisations), 22% are engaged at research-based institutions (universities), while civil society organisations and consultancies are each attracting 20% of the MPPHD graduates.</p> <p>Given the evidence provided in both report and discussion, the SVT thinks highly of the effective way in which the programme prepares students for a professional position. It applauds the efforts of the programme to follow-up its graduates and suggests that this action is repeated when alumni have moved further on in their career.</p>
5.6.2 Curriculum Development	<p>The curriculum of the MPPHD programme has been adjusted continuously over the past few years by the Programme Board, acting on both formal and informal input from students, specialisation coordinators, course coordinators, Education Committee and Board of Examiners. Moreover, the range of specialisations on offer differs considerably from the tracks that were reviewed by the previous accreditation SVT in 2010. The current SVT observed that the introduction, retention, amendment and replacement of these tracks depended on appropriate consultations and decisions between the faculty, Maastricht University and the United Nations University.</p> <p>The quality of individual courses is reviewed systematically through student evaluations, which are discussed in the Education Committee. Individual course coordinators are informed about the evaluations and discuss these every year with the specialisation coordinator and/or the Programme Board. Moreover, the student association DEMOS acts as a student union and presents concerns and complaints to the Programme Board and/or the Board of Examiners.</p> <p>The SVT observed that, following a recommendation from the previous accreditation SVT, the role of the Education Committee has been revised and now functions in line with the Dutch legal requirements. Similarly, the SVT acknowledges that the programme has enhanced the contacts with the professional field through the alumni network, newly appointed lecturers and the cooperation with UNU. Nonetheless, the SVT sees room for a more systematic involvement of alumni and employers.</p>
5.6.3 External Reviews	<p>The programme reported extensively on the decisions of the previous accreditation visit in 2010 and the way it has addressed the recommendations of the NVAO. The SVT observed that these recommendations are generally followed-up adequately, although some items received more attention than others.</p>
5.7 Student Assessment	<p>Based on the information in the Self-Evaluation Report and the discussions during the site visit, the SVT understands that the assessment of the programme is currently being adjusted. The changes are mainly triggered by developments at central university and faculty level. In the view of the SVT, these adjustments will enhance the quality of the assessment system and the individual assessments. The SVT observed, moreover, that the MPPHD programme involves several stakeholders in the assessment process who have complementary and well defined tasks and responsibilities.</p> <p>The Board of Examiners governing the MPPHD programme covers three master's programmes within the faculty. The Programme Board is currently implementing – with the support of all course coordinators - an assessment</p>

	<p>and grading plan for each course. During the site visit, the SVT studied the latest version of these documents. It supports the measures of the Board of Examiners, as well as the work that is currently being undertaken to align the forms of assessment with the learning goals of the individual courses and the overall outcomes of the programme. Students indicated both in the Self-Evaluation Report and during the visit that assessment is organised in a transparent way.</p> <p>The thesis is evaluated and marked by two independent graders: the thesis supervisor and a second reader assigned by the institute. The second readers are explicitly tasked to serve as in-house quality control and may not be involved in the thesis supervision or in a direct work relationship with the supervisor.</p> <p>The SVT was informed during the visit that an external thesis supervisor can be appointed, for instance when students perform their research in an organisation. While the SVT thinks that such supervisors are useful to support students on the spot, they should not be involved directly in the grading of the thesis. This task should remain with both internal graders who are of course at liberty to seek the opinion of the external supervisor. The SVT observed that each thesis is assessed using an evaluation form. Although the SVT agrees with the scores given by the assessors, it was not always possible to establish how the graders arrived at the final scores, because they did not always substantiate their scores. The Board of Examiners informed the SVT that the thesis evaluation form will change in the near future. The SVT had a look at the new format and suggested that it be adjusted in such a way that the form triggers insightful comments from the assessors and demonstrates the independent character of the grading by both assessors.</p> <p>The SVT considers that the assessment of both courses and theses was done adequately in the past and is currently being adjusted in line with central university and faculty policies. These adjustments will increase the quality of both the assessment system and the individual assessments.</p>
5.8 Programme Jurisdiction	Covered in the Institutional Accreditation
5.9.1 Faculty nucleus Score:	Covered in the Institutional Accreditation
5.9.2 Faculty qualifications	<p>Since the previous accreditation visit, the number of students has grown considerably. As a result, the number of academic and support staff has been expanded: according to the Self-Evaluation Report, the number of internal academic staff increased over the past six years from 5 to 22, while the number of support staff has grown by more than 75% in the same period. In addition to these internal staff members, who are delivering the core teaching load, the programme also uses external academic staff. The Programme Board and course coordinators ensure that external staff meet the specific teaching requirements and receive an in-person briefing about the programme, the context in which their contribution takes place, and the educational philosophy of the curriculum.</p>

	<p>Most academic staff members have a PhD and are encouraged to obtain the university teaching qualification (UTQ). The didactic qualities and the language proficiency of all lecturers are assessed in the course evaluations. The SVT observed from the faculty data sheets in the Self-Evaluation Report that lecturers have adequate qualifications in the domain they are covering in the curriculum.</p> <p>The SVT has noticed that the quality of the individual staff is fine and that the number of staff is sufficient to implement the programme. However, the programme features many temporary contributors and several staff are rather junior (doctoral fellows). The SVT supports the suggestion of the students that more senior permanent staff could be involved in the programme and recommends the programme to find a better balance between permanent and temporary staff.</p>
5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities	<p>The MPPHD programme is committed to values of diversity, and the approach to learning and the curriculum are designed in view of this commitment. It attracts students from around the world and makes use of this diversity in an international classroom setting and by stimulating intercultural knowledge transfers in problem-based learning tutorials. While the programme is very international, the SVT observed that there are only a relatively limited number of students from Developing Countries. In terms of gender diversity, the SVT learned that 70% of the staff on the programme is female and observed that several women take up senior positions.</p> <p>The SVT considers that the MPPHD programme is not only committed to diversity, but also realises this goal in terms of staff, students and educational philosophy.</p>
5.10 Admission of Students	<p>The rules for admission are included in the Education and Examination Regulations. The programme attracts students from all over the world, reaching out and seeking diversity. The admission process is designed to evaluate students on the likelihood of successful completion of the programme. It recognises prior experience that is useful for studying public policy. The programme has defined substantial language requirements and basic academic competences as must-have criteria.</p> <p>The SVT was initially somewhat hesitant about the admission process and its concept of selection based on the likelihood of successful programme completion. This process, however, is well documented and decisions are motivated based on strict criteria which have been summarised in a note the programme director presented to the SVT during the site visit.</p> <p>The SVT thinks the admission process is adequate. Indeed, specifically because it allows for a potentially broad variety of student inflow, the programme could potentially be more successful in recruiting students from 'the South'. The SVT therefore recommends that the programme works together with faculty and university to develop a scheme that takes away non-academic obstacles of admission for people from developing countries.</p>
5.11 Supportive Services and Facilities	Covered in the Institutional Accreditation
5.12 Student Services	Covered in the Institutional Accreditation

5.13 Public Relations	Covered in the Institutional Accreditation
6 Additional Criteria	N.a.

2. Conclusion

Based on all material and especially the report of the NVAO-EAPAA site visit team, the Accreditation Committee has evaluated the programmes.

In conclusion: a truly international programme with a solid didactical philosophy. A diverse student population and a diverse staff. The quality differences between the specialisations need attention. The presence of public administration and governance could be improved.

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.