



**European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation**

EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report

Evaluation Report with respect to the request for accreditation of the Bachelor's programme Public Governance, and the Master's programme Public Governance of Tilburg University, Tilburg School of Governance, Tilburg Law School, Tilburg, 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	
2.1 Domain	The bachelor and master programmes are standard academic degree programmes in public administration, with an emphasis on law and economics. The programmes fulfil this criterion
2.2 Geography	Both programmes are organized by the Tilburg School of Governance, which is situated in Tilburg, as part of the Tilburg School of Law, Tilburg University, 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	All programmes have been accredited by EAPAA before (lastly 2011). The programmes fulfil this criterion.
2.4 Programme variants and locations	There are no variants or other locations of the programme.
4 Category of accreditation	The bachelor programme opts for the first cycle bachelor level public administration programmes accreditation. The master programmes opt for the second cycle graduate/master level public administration programmes accreditation.
5. Standards	
5.1 Domain of public administration	Both programmes clearly are public administration programmes. Compared to other public administration programmes in the Netherlands, the <i>bachelor's programme Public Governance</i> displays a quite specific profile: it features a strong emphasis on law and on the interplay of public administration and its political and societal environments, and it is embedded in public administration practices. The profile of the <i>master's programme Public Governance</i> has changed over the years. In 2016, it was transformed into an international programme that

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	<p>encompasses all research interests of the newly created Tilburg School of Governance. Several strengths such as the interdisciplinary design, the connectedness with governance practices and the interplay between public administration and society have been preserved.</p>
5.2 Mission of the programme	<p>The SVT gathered from the documentation and the discussions on site that the BPA profile is visible in the intended learning outcomes, as well as in the delivery and the educational philosophy of the programme.</p> <p>Master's students are trained towards achieving sixteen learning outcomes, which have been formulated in an insightful way. The SVT was satisfied that the exit qualifications are aligned with the Dublin Descriptors for master's programmes. Also for this master's programme, the SVT found that the intended learning outcomes reflect both the specific profile of the MPG programme and the key elements of the domain-specific reference framework.</p> <p>The redesigned programme prepares students for strategic positions in public administration on any level of government: students should become both strategists in public administration and generalists who grasp the complexity of strategic issues in different policy sectors.</p> <p>The SVT acknowledges that it has evaluated two programmes that have undergone considerable changes in the recent past. The new international track in the bachelor's programme has been designed with great care and is likely to provide a relevant complement to the long-standing Dutch track. By developing an international track with its own rationale, the bachelor's programme as of now will cater for students who aim to pursue a career in the Dutch public governance system and for those who prepare for positions at national, international, public, semi-public or private organisations. The SVT considers that the English-language master's programme is truly international in content and outlook, yet leaves sufficient opportunities for students to focus on the Dutch public governance system.</p>
5.3 Level	<p>Bachelor's students are trained towards achieving seventeen learning outcomes, which have been formulated in an insightful way. The competencies cover knowledge, skills and personal development and are aligned with the five Dublin Descriptors for bachelor's programmes.</p> <p>The master's programme courses focus in particular on 'applying knowledge and understanding', as this category aims for higher order learning objectives.</p> <p>The SVT considers that both programmes set out to achieve academic, theoretical, analytical and conceptual abilities and prepare students to be sensitive to practice. In the view of the SVT, the programmes will deliver graduates to the labour market who can impact on their jobs in a practical way.</p> <p>The intended learning outcomes reflect adequately the content (public governance), orientation (academic) and level of the two programmes.</p>
5.4 Practice and internships	<p>Throughout the <i>bachelor's programme</i>, students are trained in academic, professional and technical skills. The curriculum also features a compulsory internship period in the second year. Furthermore, in the Project Workshop in year 3, students perform an advisory group assignment for a public</p>

	<p>sector organisation.</p> <p>During the <i>master's programme</i>, students discuss and study a range of different practices relating to current organisational and policy issues. This happens first and foremost in the Governance Clinic, where students integrate insights from different disciplines to develop a strategy recommendation for an external consortium that is associated with the course. The SVT gathers from the discussions that students are also exposed to real-life cases in class because their lecturers often hold relevant positions outside academia or have been providing consultancy to public sector organisations.</p>
5.5.1 Curriculum Content	
5.5.1.1 Core components	<p>The curriculum of the <i>bachelor's programme</i> is composed almost entirely of compulsory courses. The SVT observed that this is a deliberate choice which reflects the profile of the programme. As a result the programme is able to address all basic concepts, theories and methods in public administration. The SVT noticed that the intended learning outcomes of the programme are translated adequately in the different components and individual courses of the bachelor's curriculum.</p> <p>The SVT observed that the Public Governance programmes at Tilburg University are by definition multi-disciplinary because they cover different core disciplines: law, economics, political science, sociology.</p> <p>The curriculum of the master's programme features no electives, only compulsory courses. This is again a deliberate choice and fuelled in part by the recent transformation of the curriculum into an international English-language programme. The SVT observed that the new master's programme is tightly connected to the research portfolio of the recently created Tilburg School of Governance. Hence, students acquire knowledge of the latest developments in the discipline. The <i>master's programme</i> is based on three central pillar courses: 'Governance & Politics', 'Governance & Law' and 'Governance & Economics'. The SVT observed that these courses establish links between governance issues and the three fields of interest. In addition, politics, law and economics are connected conceptually in the 'Good Governance' course.</p>
5.5.1.2 Other Components	<p>The number of electives in the <i>bachelor's programme</i> is limited to two courses of 6 EC each. However, students have ample room for choice within the mandatory curriculum: in different courses they can choose from a wide variety of topics for papers and presentations; this applies in particular to the internship (in year 2) and the project workshop (in year 3). Finally, in the newly started international bachelor's track Public Governance students can choose a minor at other faculties of Tilburg University or at other Dutch universities.</p> <p>The master's programme features no specialisation tracks nor electives. The SVT gathered from the discussions that during the thesis trajectory of 18 EC, students can build a strategy portfolio in a policy sector of their own choice. Master's students can combine the thesis work with an internship or traineeship, which they have to organise themselves.</p>
5.5.1.3 Structure and	In the view of the SVT, the curriculum structure of the <i>bachelor's</i>

didactics of the programme	<p><i>programme</i> is coherent: it contains the core elements of the domain specific reference framework for public administration programmes and reflects the programme's particular focus on law, on governance and on public administration practices. During the visit, the SVT consulted a sample of course materials and concluded that both the contents and the didactical approach were relevant and interesting. It observed that teachers use a variety of methods such as lectures, interactive sessions and working groups to give substance to the educational philosophy of the programme. At the time of the site visit, the master's programme in its current set-up was only being delivered for the second time. Nonetheless, students and staff were generally satisfied with the coherence of the courses and their feasibility. In fact, students were quite positive about the structure of the curriculum. One of the major challenges for the master's programme is to accommodate students starting the programme in February. The structure of the curriculum has optimum coherence when students start in September and the programme is not in a position to offer courses twice.</p>
5.5.1.4 Intake	<p>Until recently the <i>bachelor's programme</i> was mainly in Dutch and therefore only Dutch speaking students could enter the programme. As almost all students have a pre-university qualification, their educational background ensures that they have no problems in following a handful of courses in English. Moreover, such homogeneous inflow does not require any particular adjustments in terms of levelling up their knowledge. Obviously, this finding applies to the Dutch track of the programme, as the international track has only started in September 2017.</p> <p>For two years now, the master's programme essentially consists of three groups of students: Dutch students with a relevant academic bachelor's degree, international students, and Dutch students being admitted after successfully completing the pre-master programme. During the discussions on site, both staff and students indicated that there was no need for specific levelling-up courses.</p>
5.5.2 Length	<p>The SVT confirms, based on the information materials and the discussion on site, that the bachelor's programme is a three-year full time programme of 180 EC. The master's programme consists of 60 EC and is delivered as a one-year full-time programme.</p> <p>Both programmes thus fulfil the requirements for such programmes in Europe.</p>
5.5.3 Results	<p>In order to establish whether students have effectively achieved the 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 an academic programme at bachelor's level.</p> <p>The SVT concludes that the intended learning outcomes of the <i>bachelor's programme</i> are achieved by the end of the curriculum. Obviously, this consideration applies to the Dutch track of the programme, as the international track has only started in September 2017.</p> <p>In order to establish whether the master students have effectively achieved the learning outcomes, the SVT reviewed a sample of 15 theses covering the whole range of scores given. In two cases, the SVT found that the thesis</p>

	<p>did not fulfil the minimum requirements one would expect of a final product of an academic programme at master's level. As a result, the SVT read another five theses with a relatively low score and found that each additional thesis was of sufficient quality. The SVT therefore does not think there is a structural problem in over-grading poor quality theses. The SVT considers that students achieve the intended learning outcomes by the time of their graduation. However, the findings from the thesis review indicate that the programme needs to tighten its assessment procedures to avoid over-grading of theses around the minimum requirements of the programme.</p>
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment	<p>The SVT observed that the bachelor's programme is facing challenges in terms of drop-out and success rates. Roughly one quarter of the incoming students drop out during and after year 1.</p> <p>The SVT considers that upon graduation students tend to find a job that is in line with the level and domain of their studies. It commends the programmes for surveying their graduates at the start of their professional life and suggests that this action should be repeated when alumni have moved further on in their career.</p>
5.6.2 Curriculum Development	<p>Tilburg Law School has a system of internal quality assurance to ensure the maintenance and improvement of education quality. It is organised at school level and procedures are agreed for all bachelor's and master's programmes. Staff are involved in monthly meetings on education, as well as yearly gatherings to discuss the state of the programme. All bachelor's courses and some master's courses are evaluated through a digital questionnaire. Moreover, after each block, the quality of the programmes is monitored in a so-called Quality Circle, which consists of two students from each bachelor's year and the master's programme who meet the programme directors.</p> <p>Each degree programme at Tilburg Law School has its own Programme Committee, with lecturers and students as members.</p> <p>The previous assessment SVT thought that graduates should be involved more strongly in the quality assurance of the programmes. Until now, however, alumni have mainly been involved in coaching and mentoring of students, in guest lectures or site visits. In the view of the SVT, the programme would benefit from a more systematic involvement of alumni and employers also in curriculum development and in assuring the quality of the programmes.</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 have generally been followed-up adequately, although some items received more attention than others.</p>
5.7 Student Assessment	<p>Both the bachelor's and the master's programme organise assessment according to the assessment policy of Tilburg Law School. The Tilburg Law School has one joint Examination Board for all degree programmes.</p> <p>The SVT thinks that the assessment system is fine. Both programmes pay</p>

	<p>sufficient attention to ensuring that assessments are valid and reliable. In order to monitor the quality of testing, a test committee was established which screens twice per year tests from several randomly selected courses among all TLS programmes. The quality of theses is monitored on behalf of the Examination Board by a thesis SVT. This SVT consists of representatives of the different TLS programmes and has already operated for some time at master's level and will perform a similar task for the bachelor's theses as of 2017-2018.</p> <p>The SVT found that the Board has a very broad remit because it has to serve all programmes offered by TLS. Moreover, the SVT did get the impression from the discussion that the Examination Board could be more proactive and decisive in enforcing its regulations.</p> <p>The <i>bachelor's thesis</i> is evaluated and marked by two graders who are staff members and operate independently from each other: the thesis supervisor and a second assessor. Both assessors use the same thesis assessment form and only discuss their assessments after they have independently evaluated the thesis.</p> <p>The <i>master's thesis</i> is graded by the supervisor and a second reader, who together form the assessment committee. On the basis of ten criteria, the assessment committee assigns a preliminary thesis grade. The second reader carries a strong weight in determining this grade.</p> <p>Although the SVT agrees in almost all cases with the scores given by the assessors in both programmes, it was not always possible to establish how the graders arrived at the final mark, because they did not always substantiate their scores.</p> <p>The SVT considers that both programmes have an adequate assessment system. Moreover, the assessment plans are set up in such a way that each learning outcome is tested in various courses and through different forms of assessment. Individual tests are valid, reliable and transparent.</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>Most staff members are involved in both research and teaching and have an average teaching load which accounts for 30% of their time. The research experience of teaching staff is reflected in the education offered. The School also involves PhD students in teaching.</p> <p>According to the overviews in the Self-Evaluation Report, twelve teaching staff (out of 23) in the bachelor's programme hold a PhD, including three full professors. Thirteen staff already have a university teaching qualification and another eight will acquire the qualification soon. The master's programme also features 23 teaching staff: 19 staff hold a PhD, including six full professors. Currently, 42% hold a teaching qualification. Students indicated both in the report and during the discussions that they are satisfied with the quality of the staff, both content-wise and in terms of didactics; this appreciation also applies to thesis supervision.</p> <p>Furthermore, students were very enthusiastic about the small-scale</p>

	education in which teachers and students know each other well.
5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities	<p>The Tilburg School of Governance strives to ensure a substantial number of women among its teaching staff. At the time of the site visit, 30% of the staff members who are engaged in the bachelor's curriculum are female. In the master's programme, this is only 17%.</p> <p>The male-female ratio among students has been relatively stable over the past few years: in both programmes roughly one third of the students is female. The most recent figures (2016-2017) show that 40% of the master's students were female.</p> <p>For a long time, both programmes had an explicitly national focus and attracted only Dutch speakers. In the first cohort of the English-language master's programme, 23% of the students were of non- Dutch nationality. The programme expects that this share will grow in the near future. Similarly, the creation of an international track in the bachelor's programme should lead to a more diverse student group.</p>
5.10 Admission of Students	<p>The SVT observed that admission of students to the <i>bachelor's programme</i> is regulated by Dutch law. Admission is possible for everyone with a pre-university qualification and there is no cap on student intake. Non-Dutch students who want to enrol in the newly created international track should have a secondary school degree that is considered equal to the Dutch pre-university qualification. Moreover, they need to demonstrate their English language proficiency.</p> <p>With regard to the <i>master's programme</i>, the SVT observed that admission is organised according to either a national or an international procedure. In both cases the educational background is crucial in determining if a candidate can be admitted directly or upon successfully completing a pre-master track. While the university offers a one-year 60 EC pre-master trajectory, students at the local Avans University of Applied Sciences in 's-Hertogenbosch can follow all pre-master courses alongside their vocational education. Furthermore, applicants need to demonstrate that they have adequate knowledge of English.</p> <p>In the view of the SVT the admission requirements are clear and described in sufficient detail.</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 good straightforward public administration programme. The assessment procedure could be sharpened, and the influence of the examination board improved. The international track is interesting, but the consequences for the programme need attention.

Based on the above evaluation of the specific criteria, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee concludes that these programmes meet the criteria for accreditation sufficiently and can be accredited without restrictions.