

Development dialogue BA ES

Friday 13 December 2019

Present: Jan Willem Honig (Chair of the panel); Vicky Marissen, Peter Bursens, Claire Dunlop, Erik van der Vleuten; Mariëtte Huisjes, Elissaveta Radulova, Sophie Vanhoonacker, Jessica Mesman, Marjo Krebbeks (minutes BA ES)

Note: before the start of the development dialogue, the programmes presented questions to the panel.

BA ES

1. Could the panel share/point at good examples of interdisciplinary educational collaboration within the same curriculum with disciplines that are highly attached to a disciplinary toolbox (such as economics or legal studies/law)?

The programme director explains that there are discussions with staff members about the appropriate disciplinary toolkit. The panel advises to make more of the current collaborations by introducing (extra) seminars to enhance coherence between the disciplinary lectures.

2. How to reconcile the growing demand for personalized curriculum and educational trajectories while at the same time ensuring a fixed set of intended learning outcomes and final qualifications?

The panel advises to look for consistency: if the ILOs are met, you can be flexible regarding specifics in both set-up and content. Also consider possible (extra) expenses, e.g. staff. But electives can possibly be found within UM (e.g. minor entrepreneurship). Key are coherence and structure, but you need to take administrative and financial constraints seriously.

3. Global Citizenship Education – how best to implement the concept? What are your experiences and recommendations for good practices?

The panel is of the opinion that this is already embedded in the programme – the BA ES creates its own global citizenship. Don't feel urged to introduce something you are already doing – though perhaps haven't labelled it as such thus far. Global citizenship education is about mutual understanding, and the programme – both in content and set-up (PBL) – is already appropriately taking care of this.

The programme will consider ways to test this as an 'academic achievement'.

Development dialogue MA ES

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MA ES

1. We are reconsidering the balance between foundational courses in the curriculum and more specialist courses, as to pay further attention to key issues such as Euroscepticism, trade policy and the crisis of multilateralism. What do you consider a good balance between foundational courses on European studies (about contemporary history, theory, institutions, international relations, comparative politics, etc.) and specialist courses (EU budget and economic governance, EU enlargement and neighbourhood policy, EU foreign and security policy, Europe, Multilateralism, Multipolarity)?

The panel wonders if many specialist courses are necessary/advisable. PBL gives space to manoeuvre, so you can keep the programme lines broad and 'specialise' in the topics you focus on in a course. And perhaps it is possible to get your MA students 'up to speed' before they start (premaster, online preparatory MOOC courses, summer school).

2. The MA ES currently starts with the MA thesis from the first week of September. We want to stress to students its importance and that they need to work on it from day one. At the same time, we notice that this is stressful for students who have just arrived in Maastricht and need to have some time to think about their topics. What do you consider an optimal time for students to start working on their thesis?

The panel advises the programme to consider what would justify the increased EC. According to the panel, the justification lies not with increasing the number of words. A lengthier thesis does not guarantee that a student delivers better, more vigorous work. But it may lead to a tedious thesis. The panel notes that 15,000 is in line with what the programme intended to achieve through the ILOs. The panel also notes that normally about a third of ECTS go to the MA thesis.

3. We are planning to increase the MA ES thesis from 12 ECTS to 18 ECTS in 2020-2021 to better reflect student workload for the thesis. Does this seem sensible? We are also thinking of a word length for the thesis of 14,000-15,000 words (from 12,000-15,000 currently). Is this in line with your expectations of a MA thesis in a one-year programme on European Studies?

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Development dialogue MA EPA

Friday 13 December 2019

Present: Jan Willem Honig (Chair of the panel); Vicky Marissen, Peter Bursens, Claire Dunlop, Erik van der Vleuten; Mariëtte Huisjes, Elissaveta Radulova, Sophie Vanhoonacker, Jessica Mesman, Joost Dijkstra (minutes)

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MA EPA

1. Are there any elements of public affairs that we should consider to include in the teaching curriculum that are not yet there? Something to do more of? Something to do less of?

According to the panel, tracking of information is in there but could be enhanced, extended. How do you monitor and track, deal with information? E.g. lobbying can only adequately be done with the right information; there is a lot of skills training on writing, but not on information and communication to the targeted audience. Not to give the students more workload but extend the courses. And: how do you manage the information. How to integrate simulation game, with tracking information and communication. It is very attractive to students to get into it with social media, but make sure that they focus on the right things. And also focus on integrating all the stakeholders, look for collaboration, possibly include other staff.

Furthermore, transparency and ethics could be boosted (more important in future). Think how you can integrate attention to society and citizens in existing courses and/or the simulation game. The big issue is to balance.

Students come here to get a job in Brussels. Keep an eye on the academic parties. Students will pressure you to job-skills. Make students aware that academic skills are also valuable for professional careers. If you have alumni telling this to your students, it is even stronger.

2. During our conversations we have identified the challenge of finishing the final works package (thesis, internship, report). We have restructured the programme recently to help the students to be better able to complete all the requirements. Would the members of the panel have other advice or thoughts what we could do to facilitate the completion of the final works package?

The panel wonders if students get to see (contrasting) examples of theses. The panel would like to have seen more insights concerning their 'thesis journey' shared by students in their thesis reports. *[NB possibly the panel can add further explanation of what was meant. The programme does not ask students to write a thesis report, but an internship report. In the internship report students are to reflect on their internships]*

Development dialogue MA ESST

Friday 13 December 2019

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MA ESST

1. As discussed we would like to attract more students with a background in the sciences and engineering. We intend to approach the Maastricht Science Programme. But we would like to know if the panel has any thoughts on how else this could be done.

Discussed under 2 below.

2. ESST alumni tend to be enthusiastic and the programme has a good name in the scholarly field. Yet this does not seem to help the influx of students. Prospective students are often unaware of the nature and reputation of ESST.

The panel is of the opinion that this is mainly a marketing question: how do your M&C people frame it? There are two different sources of students and you can use this in the marketing. Now M&C is geared to social developments, you do not explicitly aim at technology students. But this would be a marketing attraction in itself. You need two strategies to get these 'clashing worlds' together in your programme – your programme shows that you are excellent mediators in bringing these worlds together, this should be feasible for bringing students from both worlds together as well. Perhaps you could set up a summer school to prepare students from different backgrounds; this can also motivate students. And use the consortium as a strength, present this more/better as an asset to both your programme and thus to alumni's profiles when entering the job market. Cf. the Netflix series 'Black Mirror' for a good analogy; possibly you can make clips of your own.

3. We try to keep track of our alumni's whereabouts, but this is often a challenge. New privacy regulations also prevent us from actively tracking and tracing them. What would the panel suggest as best practices in this area?

The alumni you've got are very connected and very engaged. They will be in touch with members of the cohort, so you can use their network to tap into their network. Analysis and intervention is the key issue. Of course, you would need to ask their permission before they leave.