

Participants:

Panel: J. Baetens (Chair); J. Boomgaard; K. Vanhaesebrouck; M. Willemsen; E. van der Wal

QANU staff: P. van den Hoorn; F. Schouten; L. Ravestein

FASoS staff: A. Supper; N. Vaage; B. De Bruyn; E. Sitzia; V. van Saaze; G. Verbeeck; J. de Jong; S. Vanhoonacker; J. Mesman; R. Dirix

After the re-accreditation site visit of the BA and MA programmes in Arts & Culture, a development dialogue was held. This report summarises the questions posed by the programme management and the answers given by the panel members.

Round 1: MA Arts & Culture

Question 1: Could you please elaborate on your suggestions to rethink the profile of the Art, Literature & Society (ALS) and Politics & Society (PS) specialisations, and to turn the Arts & Heritage (AH) specialisation into a separate dual master? Why did you propose the latter, and what would be the added value of a 90 ECTS master?

Panel: For ALS-PS, start with contemporary problems. We need a new kind of young professionals who are equipped to reflect upon the complexity of the current world, engaging with political and societal issues within an academic framework. Involve the work field more to develop a more distinct profile for the ALS and PS specialisations. Undertake efforts to make the interaction with the 'real' world and non-academic partners visible. Involve for example alumni and people in the field to reflect on ILOs, language, topics, etc.

ALS's content currently does not fully correspond with what the specialization aims to problematise. In addition, students' expectations of the PS specialisation differed from its actual content. It seems closer to nationalism studies, or to the interaction between politics and technology, than to arts and culture.

ALS could have a more politically engaged profile. Also re-think the position of PS as a specialisation of Arts & Culture.

As for AH, training reflective practitioners within one year is rather ambitious. By extending the programme to one and a half years, you could create more space for both academic education and reflective practice. In a dual master, all students would do a long-term internship, instead of only a couple of students who do it now via the extracurricular option. A dual master would allow for a stronger involvement of the professional field, and would provide all students with work experience before they enter the labour market. These are crucial advantages. We advise not to offer both a 60 ECTS and a 90 ECTS (dual) variant; make a choice.

Question 2: Do you have concrete suggestions for the position of Dutch in the programme?

Panel: For AH it would make sense to develop a full-fledged Dutch programme, both in terms of language of instruction and in terms of content. So you would not offer the same AH programme in two languages, but a specific programme with Dutch content for Dutch-speaking students.

For ALS-PS it depends on how you plan to re-profile. ALS-PS could offer the same content both in Dutch and in English. In the current set-up, you train your students to step into international debates, but there are crucial cultural debates in the Netherlands for which knowledge of Dutch is required. We suggest that you could initiate a content-driven discussion on ALS-PS, leading to a clear strategy. Subsequently you could recruit Dutch students with an approach geared specifically towards them.

Question 3: How could we enforce non-academic literature (novels, essays) on MA level in ALS-PS? Could you share any best practices from other universities?

Panel: You could for example address how books are adapted in cinema, or study transnational translation agreements. There is room for literature in languages other than English in what ALS-PS is supposed to become. Dutch literature is fading in the programme. PBL is about sharing knowledge, so consider how to take advantage of different backgrounds. Teach students how to find and use non-English information. The multilingualism of your students is an opportunity. Reading French literature in English seems like a missed opportunity. "International" seems to mean Anglo-Saxon here, while you are at crossroads of European languages. While you cannot force non-English literature upon your students, there are rich possibilities to make use of students' native languages for example.

ALS-PS and AH could share courses on certain literature and/or methodologies.

Round 2: BA Arts & Culture

Question 1: The narrative of the programme is an ongoing point of concern for current and prospective students, also regarding job perspectives. Are there any places to go to for best practices?

Panel: Do emphasize to prospective students that the programme does not prepare them immediately for the job market. Your students are attracted by the fact that the programme is very broad and can lead to many different paths. They can progressively develop their passions and interests, which they can then deepen through more specialised MA programmes.

Question 2: We are continuously brainstorming how to improve the profile, perhaps even the name, of the programme. What is your take on this?

Panel: Tell the story of your students and alumni. They are very capable of articulating the aims of the programme. But the name is an issue indeed. We advise you to draw a comparison with Cultural Analysis programmes, in the Netherlands as well as abroad. Broaden the discussion about the name by involving contacts in the workfield and the External Advisory Board. The programme is not the same as Liberal Arts or Cultural Studies, so those are not suitable names. However, "Arts & Society" might be an option. The contextual approach is a defining feature of the programme, but to incorporate that in the name would make it too unwieldy.

Question 3: As you know, the past reaccreditation round led to a lot of improvements regarding the process of grading BA theses, but also left its traces in terms of second-guessing whether we are strict enough. What are your insights regarding the thesis grading process and the weighing of different elements in the thesis grading?

Panel: We encountered no problematic issues in the sample theses – if anything, we found that you do not seem to be overly generous when it comes to giving high grades and rewarding students for original and innovative ideas. Pay attention to good writing instead of only academic writing, and don't hesitate to include the quality of writing and even elements of the writing process among the assessment criteria. Focus on the future and forget about traumas from the past: don't be afraid to be generous!