

# Development dialogue re-accreditation Master Biobased Materials 16.12.2020

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The programme management has three questions of which it would like the input of the accreditation committee:

- 1. Programme scope. Could you please elaborate on your views on whether is it advisable to narrow or maintain the current (Biobased materials) scope of the programme?**

The panel believes this is an interesting question, it was also part of the (internal) discussion during the site visit. There are currently some international discussions on the topic of Biobased Materials, where the focus tends to shift towards the circularity aspects. In general working on biobased materials will remain important because there will always be materials which will be unrecyclable. In addition, chemical recycling and electrification will not suffice for a true transition. This means that the panel suggests to keep investing in BBM, but incorporate circularity and sustainability elements in the curriculum. Focus on novel developments and technologies in those fields to keep the unique/niche character. A broadening of the aims of the degree by adding some specialisation/track options for the students should be sufficient with perhaps some additional engineering elements to counterbalance the current focus on chemistry. The programme-management has to keep a clear focus on the BBM field and make sure that any new elements remain within this field, to ensure that the unique "niche" strength only matures further.

In addition of the above, the panel urges to keep interacting with key players in the so called "hinterland", meaning that the master (and research institute AMIBM) should be the "go-to place" for all BBM related matters for the Ruhr area, Eindhoven, Antwerpen and Leuven, because of its unique expertise.

- 2. Student inflow and recruitment. Do you have concrete suggestions to improve our student's recruitment efforts?**

A possible big positive effect on student-inflow would probably be a clearer link between the BBM programme and its proposed solutions for the circular economy. The current proposition (the link

with the depletion of fossil fuels) is not enough. (In fact, incorrect.) The programme should also make a clear link to the CO2 reduction and other transitions. Another improvement would be more emphasis on the possible employment profiles after graduating. A better use of social media is also advised. Especially the ease of access and findability on several platforms (eg. Studiekeuze123.nl) could be improved. In this communication the programme has to keep in mind that the prospective students already have their bachelor degrees and need to be approached as such: they have a rough idea what they want to do and this master has to show the added value the Maastricht BBM programme.

Another addition could be the presence of PhD students in the marketing and communication campaigns because of the high chance that master students will eventually end up doing a PhD (85% of the chemistry students do a PhD) and in the international field it often is a prerequisite for being regarded a chemist in general.

The programme management has to keep in mind that basically everything about the programme is still "young": the programme, the research institute (AMIBM), the faculty and even the university. This means that with regards to acquiring a recognizable profile and "brand awareness", there is extra effort needed. The panel urges the staff to start participating in international platforms/events like the Carbon Master Day and the ACS BBM sessions. Finally, the application procedure could be optimized. The programme states that this optimization is currently in development and will be improved in the near future

**3. Strengthening our academic writing training components. How could we advance our academic writing training components? Could you share any best practices from other universities?**

One of the possible solutions would be the introduction of a portfolio system. As part of regular courses students will be trained (or rather: train themselves) in the writing of reports, proposals, peer reviews but also in presentation and discussion skills. These will all be linked to topic of the course/period and graded on their content. At the end of each course, these materials will also be part of the student's portfolio and graded as such. This means that in the portfolio assessment there will be more emphasis on tracking writing and presentation skills. In this way the student will build a comprehensive portfolio in the two years and will improve the overall level of the competencies required for an academic (i.e., clear communication, being concise, etc) Besides this, it will also help students to focus on the "why" of their endeavours, something that was often missing in the presented theses.