



## **Explanatory notes to the assessment framework for the assessment of postgraduate master's programmes (academic orientation) in the Netherlands**

*It is up to the assessment panel to determine whether these notes are relevant to the assessment of the programme under consideration.*

### **Positioning of the programmes**

Postgraduate programmes in academic higher education are characterised by a significant involvement among professional groups or professional organisations. The programmes are intended for graduates who are employed in a particular discipline or field of action who wish to expand their competence by following an academic programme in their own field of study. As a result, the academic orientation of these postgraduate master's programmes features professional overtones. Incoming students are, in principle, expected to have completed an academic programme.

### **Comparison with Flanders**

Dutch academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes are largely comparable to the Advanced Master's programmes in Flanders, albeit that Flanders strictly enforces the admission requirement of having earned a master's degree. Many programmes in the Netherlands enforce the same admission requirement, yet occasionally admit students holding a bachelor's degree under certain conditions.

### **Assessment frameworks for the higher education accreditation system in the Netherlands (2018)**

The NVAO assessment frameworks constitute a satisfactory basis for assessing academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes. The requirements for undergraduate and academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes are basically the same, but the specific nature of academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes calls for a further explanation with respect to some of the standards in the frameworks.

### **Further explanation to the assessment frameworks**

These explanatory notes are focused on the following aspects: the intended learning outcomes, the teaching-learning environment, and the achieved learning outcomes. The specific nature of academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes is manifest in some components of these aspects.

## EXTENSIVE ASSESSMENT NEW PROGRAMMES

### Intended learning outcomes

#### Standard 1

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level of the programme (Associate Degree, Bachelor's, or Master's) as defined in the Dutch Qualifications Framework, as well as its orientation (professional or academic). In addition, they tie in with the regional, national, or international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline about the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations. The points of departure for the set-up of the programme chime with the educational philosophy and the profile of the institution. The intended learning outcomes are periodically evaluated.

#### *Additional explanation for academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes*

The intended learning outcomes of an academically oriented postgraduate master's programme meet the requirements of a master's programme (academic orientation). The intended learning outcomes of a postgraduate programme in academic higher education are usually not primarily focused on the ability to conduct scientific research independently. Graduates rather tend to possess the qualifications to resolve multi-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary problems in a professional practice for which an academic education is required or helpful.

### Teaching-learning environment

#### Standard 2

The curriculum enables the students to master appropriate (professional or academic) research and professional skills.

The curriculum ties in with current (international) developments, requirements and expectations in the professional field and the discipline. Academic skills and/or research skills and/or professional competencies are substantiated in a manner befitting the orientation and level of the programme.

#### *Additional explanation for academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes*

The curriculum builds on and utilises the student's knowledge of the discipline and his (work) experience. In some cases, the curriculum lays an emphasis on expanding the professional competence in the discipline. An academic approach is used throughout. Knowledge (subject-specific) is developed in interaction with a research environment relevant to the domain concerned, and the curriculum enables the students to link up with current academic theories in the field of study.

## Standard 5

The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students.

The admission requirements in place are realistic with a view to the intended learning outcomes.

### *Additional explanation for academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes*

Students have, in principle, completed a related master's programme (academic orientation). Consequently, they command knowledge and skills for conducting scientific research, they possess a well-defined knowledge base and have acquired relevant practical experience.

In some cases, students who have not completed a master's programme (academic orientation) in a related discipline, but do hold other relevant qualifications (academic or professional bachelor's degree), and have relevant practical experience, can be admitted nonetheless. In such cases, the deficiencies with respect to the entrance requirements must have been verifiably removed prior to embarking on the programme. This can be demonstrated, for example, by successfully completing a preparatory programme. The deficiencies may pertain to knowledge and skills in the field of research methods and techniques, but also to (components of) the required subject-specific knowledge base.

### **Achieved learning outcomes**

## Standard 12

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes.

### *Additional explanation for academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes*

The programme involves a final project or thesis, which constitutes a substantial exercise, from a scientific perspective as well, and which can be regarded as a final test of competence.

### **Summary**

Graduates of a postgraduate master's programme satisfy all the requirements of a master's programme (academic orientation) in the discipline concerned. This entails that they demonstrate, at least once during the programme, their ability to conduct a scientific study in their discipline. The combination of the entrance requirements and the contents of the curriculum enables the students to do so.

## LIMITED ASSESSMENT NEW PROGRAMMES

### Intended learning outcomes

#### Standard 1

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level of the programme (Associate Degree, Bachelor's, or Master's) as defined in the Dutch Qualifications Framework, as well as its orientation (professional or academic). In addition, they tie in with the regional, national, or international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline about the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations.

#### *Additional explanation for academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes*

The intended learning outcomes of an academically oriented postgraduate master's programme meet the requirements of a regular master's programme (academic orientation). The intended learning outcomes of a postgraduate programme in academic higher education are usually not primarily focused on the ability to conduct scientific research independently. Graduates rather tend to possess the qualifications to resolve multi-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary problems in a professional practice for which an academic education is required or helpful.

### Teaching-learning environment

#### Standard 2

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The intended learning outcomes have been adequately translated into educational objectives of (components of) the curriculum. The diversity of the students admitted is considered in this respect. The teachers have sufficient expertise in terms of both subject matter and teaching methods to teach the curriculum and provide appropriate guidance. The teaching-learning environment encourages students to play an active role in the design of their own learning process (student-centred approach). If the programme is taught in a language other than Dutch, the programme must justify its choice. This also applies if the programme bears a foreign language name. The teaching staff must have a sufficient command of the language in which they are teaching. Services and facilities are not assessed, unless they have been set up specifically for the programme concerned. The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students. The admission requirements in place are realistic with a view to the intended learning outcomes.

#### *Additional explanation for academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes*

Students have, in principle, completed a related master's programme (academic orientation). Consequently, they command knowledge and skills for conducting scientific research, they possess a well-defined knowledge base and have acquired relevant practical experience.

The curriculum builds on and utilises the student's knowledge of the discipline and his (work) experience. In some cases, the curriculum lays an emphasis on expanding the professional competence in the discipline. An academic approach is used throughout. Knowledge (subject-specific) is developed in interaction with a research environment relevant to the domain concerned, and the curriculum enables the students to link up with current academic theories in the field of study.

In some cases, students who have not completed a master's programme (academic orientation) in a related discipline, but do hold other relevant qualifications (academic or professional bachelor's degree), and have relevant practical experience, can be admitted nonetheless. In such cases, the deficiencies with respect to the entrance requirements must have been verifiably removed prior to embarking on the programme. This can be demonstrated, for example, by successfully completing a preparatory programme. The deficiencies may pertain to knowledge and skills in the field of research methods and techniques, but also to (components of) the required subject-specific knowledge base.

#### **Achieved learning outcomes**

##### Standard 4

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes.

#### *Additional explanation for academically oriented postgraduate master's programmes*

The programme involves a final project or thesis, which constitutes a substantial exercise, from a scientific perspective as well, and which can be regarded as a final test of competence.

#### **Summary**

Graduates of a postgraduate master's programme satisfy all the requirements of a master's programme (academic orientation) in the discipline concerned. This entails that they demonstrate, at least once during the programme, their ability to conduct a scientific study in their discipline. The combination of the entrance requirements and the contents of the curriculum enables the students to do so.

October 2020