

Evaluation of research master programmes

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Research master programmes in the Netherlands

In addition to the regular evaluations in 2003 NVAO started with the introduction and evaluation of research master programmes.

Research masters have a duration of 2 years, more emphasis on research and a selection of prospective student.

Good preparation for PhD and research positions.

Research master programmes in the Netherlands

Research master programmes started in 2003 as new programmes

Between 2003 and 2007 new programmes were evaluated.

In 2007 the second phase started with the re evaluations of the programmes.

At present the third phase is almost finished.

Research master programmes in the Netherlands

Research master programmes are evaluated by fixed committees per field. Consisting of:

- Members of the Dutch Society of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), best scholars in their field
- International member
- Student member that has finished a research master in the field (mainly PhD candidates), in the latter phase selected and trained by NVAO (open competition)

Differences with regular masters

- Selection of students (grades and languages)
- Longer duration (2 years)
- Staff of programme are very good to excellent researchers (based on evaluation of peers)
- Specials courses for RM students (or regular courses with special assignments for RM students)

Research master programmes in the Netherlands

Research master programmes are evaluated in the following fields:

- Biomedical Sciences
- Behavioural Sciences
- Earth Sciences
- Humanities
- Social Sciences

Research master programmes in the Netherlands

Number of programmes varies between the fields:

- Biomedical Sciences about 15
- Behavioural Sciences about 15-20
- Earth Sciences was 2, now 0
- Humanities about 60
- Social Sciences over 30

Research master programmes in the Netherlands

Number of students per year per programmes varies between the fields:

- Biomedical Sciences about 15
- Behavioural Sciences about 20
- Earth Sciences about 7
- Humanities about 8
- Social Sciences about 10

Some more figures

- In total over 130 research master programmes, almost half in humanities
- almost 70% of the students are Dutch, more than 30 % are international students
- More than 50% of students graduates within 2 years
- Over 70% of graduates holds a research job after graduation

Evaluation of Research masters in the Netherlands

The described procedure was appealing for:

- Mainly programmes in Humanities, Social Sciences, Behavioural Sciences and Biomedical Sciences.

Not appealing for:

- No programmes in Physics, Mathematics, Engineering etc.

Relation with research

- In research masters it is required that the research of the staff is of very good or excellent quality, based on international peer reviewed evaluations or other proof.
- In the Netherlands there is a long standing habit in international evaluation of research.

Strengths

- Fixed committees of very good peers
- Consistency within the committee over the years

Weaknesses

- Consistency between the committees

Thesis assessment study

- International study of international peers comparing theses of regular master programmes with these of research master programmes

In the following fields

- Psychology and Neuroscience
- Media Studies
- Communications Science
- Business & Economics

Point of discussion over the years

- Selection of students
- Basic quality of research programmes vs good regular programmes
- Small numbers of students in certain programmes
- Special courses in research masters related to regular programmes
- Does the thesis have to meet standards for good scientific articles
- Very good to excellent research, how to measure that

Future

Changes

- No more fixed committees
- More in line with regular evaluations

Remained:

- Committee of very good researchers
- Demands in the field of very good or excellent research and selection of students

QUESTIONS ?

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