Report on Development Dialogue

Programme details	
School	Erasmus School of Economics
Programmes	• B Econometrie en Operationele Research (ISAT 56833) • B Economie en Bedrijfseconomie (ISAT 50950) • B Fiscale Economie (ISAT 56402) • M Accounting, Auditing and Control (ISAT 69313) • M Econometrics and Management Science (ISAT 60079) • M Economics and Business (ISAT 60652) • M Fiscale Economie (ISAT 66402)

Accreditation details		
NVAO Framework	2018	
Date site visit	3 and 4 November 2023	
Panel	*Chair*	Prof.dr. Peter Schotman, professor of empirical finance, Maastricht University
	Member	Prof.dr. Niels Hermes, professor of International Finance, University of Groningen
	Member	Prof.dr. Eelke de Jong, emeritus professor International Economics, Radboud University
	Member	Prof. dr. ir. Paula van Veen-Dirks, professor Management Accounting, University of Groningen
	Member	Prof. dr. Henk Vording, professor Algemeen Belastingrecht, Leiden University
	Student member	Judith Kikkert BSc, MSc student Economics & Governance, Wageningen University
	Secretary	Drs. Titia Buising (AeQui)
Panel conclusion, applicable to all programmes	*Standard 1*	*Meets the standard*
	Standard 2	*Meets the standard*
	Standard 3	*Meets the standard*
	Standard 4	*Meest the standard*
	Final conclusion	*Positive*
NVAO decision, respectively	29-06-2023; 28-06-2023; 18-07-2023; 30-06-2023; 29-06-2023; 28-06-2023; 27-06-2023.	
The most recent results of the programme accreditation can be consulted at https://www.nvao.net/en/decisions/educations		

Development dialogue details	
Date	3 April 2023
Participants	Representatives of the panel and ESE programme management

Context development dialogue
In line with the NVAO assessment framework (2018), each study programme or cluster of study programmes conducts a 'development dialogue' (ontwikkelgesprek) with the assessment panel following the assessment visit. During this development dialogue, future developments and potential improvements are discussed from a development perspective. The agenda is drawn up by the study programme. Although the development dialogue is part of the programme review, outcomes are not part of the accreditation assessment. Pursuant to the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (WHW), Article 5.13 paragraph 6, we publish the report of these discussions with this document. Representatives of the assessment panel and programme representatives met (online) to conduct the development dialogue, with the objective to discuss future developments of the programme. During this meeting the following two topics were discussed.

Discussion points
1. Alternatives for the bachelor's thesis Context Increasing student numbers lead to an increased workload, which is especially noticeable in thesis supervision. ESE aims to make the thesis process more efficient for both supervisors and students. To this end, ESE's Thesis Working Group has made various recommendations, which will be translated into practical solutions for the thesis processes coming years. ESE would like to discuss the panel's views on possible alternatives for the bachelor's thesis. 2. Workload reduction for lecturers Context Lecturers in higher education, including EUR, ESE, have indicated for years that they have and experience a high and increasing workload, including the perceived regulatory pressure. The COVID-19 pandemic as well as increasing student numbers put pressure on the workload of staff. ESE is making efforts to reduce the workload of lecturers, for example by further optimizing the thesis and supervision processes with special attention to workload reduction. In addition, ESE's Innovation Hub provides support to lecturers in teaching courses effectively, for example by using digital practice tools and webcasts. Furthermore, ESE's Tutor Academy has taken away much of the administrative burden related to searching, hiring and training student Teaching Assistants for lecturers of Bachelor-1 and -2 courses. ESE would like to discuss the panel's views on possible other interventions to reduce the workload of lecturers.

Discussion takeaways
1. Alternatives for the bachelor's thesis More and more programmes are starting to work with a portfolio instead of a bachelor thesis, especially in HBO. Another form is a thesis/final product consisting of a research-based professional product, combined with a reflection/portfolio on personal and/or professional development. However, using a portfolio does not necessarily mean that the process becomes more efficient.

Options that were mentioned to make the thesis process more efficient are the following:

- In case of larger groups of students, a more structured approach such as a thesis course including group lessons (e.g., on methodology) and group thesis supervision might work.
- Consider using a limited list of topics around which groups are formed.
- Provide clarity among supervisors about what to expect from a student/thesis/process, about the standard and expectation of what constitutes a good thesis and what is expected from faculty members. Concerning the level of the thesis, ESE created two rubrics for bachelor's and master's theses to indicate and clarify the distinction in level.
- Setting up a helpdesk where senior students (master's students) can help in applying methodology.
- Another option (more often seen abroad) is to have several students write a thesis together. Point of attention however is how to guarantee the individual assessment of students and establish that someone has written the thesis themselves, also given the current developments regarding the availability of AI. AI seems to lead to more work, as more checkpoints will be needed during the thesis process.

2. Workload reduction for lecturers

Work pressure is a recognisable theme for universities. The following suggestions were made:

- Employment of recent postgraduates. These postgraduates work under the responsibility of the UD/UHD/professor on practical and coordinating support of the courses. They can supervise tutorials for example, or do other education-oriented tasks, such as teaching, education and testing development, group supervision of thesis, development of the Canvas course page etc.
  Point of attention might be that standardization and educational support often leads to efficiency and specialization, but might feel for teachers like giving up ownership, autonomy, also due to the academic attitude of perfectionism and an eye for detail. However, seniority and daring to have confidence in student assistants would be helpful.
- Phase and make choices in the implementation of innovations.
- More clarity about the teacher position, by providing career prospects for teachers; an option is to introduce an academic teaching career track that focuses entirely on a career in education: teaching, developing, and managing education.
- Shorten and make an academic year more efficient (Smarter Academic Year), including a hard deadline for submitting theses. This provides clarity for students and thesis supervisors, contributes to workload reduction, and provides room for some weeks of summer closure.
- Relieve new teaching staff with a certain number of teaching tasks (e.g., 100 hours) in their first year, to acclimatize and land well within the university, School.
- Investigate, and if necessary, reconsider the intensity of educational activities with intensive teaching methods (midterms, quizzes, assignments every week) which also lead to stress for teachers (and students).

The ESE representatives present experienced the development dialogue as a feast of recognition with new fresh ideas for challenges that are also being faced in other institutions.