



Report on Development Dialogue

Programme details	
School	Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Programme name	M Media Studies
CROHO	60830

Accreditation details		
NVAO framework	2024	
Date site visit	22 and 23 January 2025	
Panel	<i>Chair</i>	Prof.dr. G. (Geert) Jacobs, professor in English Business Communication at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of Ghent University
	<i>Member</i>	Prof.dr. H (Hilde) Van den Bulck, professor of Communication at the College of Arts and Sciences of Drexel University (United States)
	<i>Member</i>	Dr. A.F. (Aleit) Veenstra, acting director of Stichting JIC Buitenreclame and research manager at Nationaal Media Onderzoek
	<i>Member</i>	Dr. R (Rico) Lie, assistant professor in Communication for Development and Intercultural Learning at the chairgroup Knowledge, Technology and Innovation of Wageningen University & Research
	<i>Student member</i>	V.C.T. (Vincent) Heijboer BA, master's student Media Studies, track Film and Photographic Studies at Leiden University
	<i>Secretary</i>	Dr. F. (Fiona) Schouten (Academion)
Panel conclusion	<i>Standard 1</i>	Meets the standard
	<i>Standard 2</i>	Meets the standard
	<i>Standard 3</i>	Meets the standard
	<i>Standard 4</i>	Meets the standard
	<i>Programme</i>	Positive
NVAO decision	TBD	
The most recent results of the programme accreditation can be consulted at Decisions and reports NVAO .		

Development dialogue details	
Date	23 January 2025
Participants	Panel and programme management

Context development dialogue

In line with the NVAO assessment framework (2024), 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, the 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.

Discussion points

1. Balance in freedom of choice

The programme consists of one Dutch specialisation and four English specialisations. The English specialisations cover different topics. Each specialisation consists of mandatory core courses, as well as electives and a research workshop of choice. Against the backdrop that students are already able to select specialisations, what would be a proper balance between the number of mandatory courses and courses students can select themselves?

2. Master thesis

All students conduct their thesis research under the individual supervision of an experienced researcher. The final thesis has a traditional format of a written report of max. 20.800 words. Given the high enrolment numbers (approx. 300), the programme would be interested in alternative forms of supervision and/or format. However, we would like to safeguard the academic quality of the programme. Are there any good practices the committee can share?

3. Engagement and societal impact

The mission of Erasmus University Rotterdam is to create positive societal impact. The master specialisations offer students courses that teach them how to do just that, for instance in Media and Socio-Cultural Change in Media, Culture, & Society and Marketing Media and Entertainment in Media & Creative Industries. Students, in general, highly appreciate these courses and sometimes express a desire for more. How would the programme be able to further develop impact driven education in the Master Media Studies without harming the academic integrity of the programme?

Discussion takeways

1. Balance in freedom of choice

- The panel members point out that the students they interviewed generally appreciate the freedom of choice currently offered within the programme (i.e., elective space and thesis topic selection), and that they agree a level of coherence is needed that may consolidate elements related to this perceived freedom of choice.
- The panel agrees with the programme that it could communicate more clearly that the specialisation itself is already a choice. This might help reduce any dissatisfaction students experience regarding the number of electives they can choose.

- In the larger specialisations, students have more elective options than in the smaller ones. At the same time, they may not always be admitted to their first choice, and this can lead to dissatisfaction. The programme should optimize the demand and supply of electives so that such disappointments can be avoided. One way to do this might be to reduce the elective space or options in the larger specialisations, so that a more focused approach is possible.
- To increase flexibility in staffing, electives could get more general titles for instance on “contemporary issues in xxx,” that can easily be adapted in content by new staff members.
- Currently, it is not possible in the master to follow courses outside EUR. The programme is now looking to organize faculty-wide and/or interfaculty courses. This seems a promising new direction.

2. Master thesis

- First practice shared: There is a cooperation in place between Breda University of Applied Science (BUAS) and Wageningen University and Research (WUR) in Leisure & Tourism. Here, a clear interaction between the programme and the professional field is achieved, showing that it is possible to move beyond the ‘traditional’ academic approach.
- Second practice shared: Another programme has students select one of various papers they write as part of their coursework and submit it as their final work. The choice has to be motivated by the student, and the paper is not reworked in any way. It is the motivation that is graded.
- Third practice shared: A quick solution could be to shorten the thesis (e.g. to 8000 words). This matches academic and wider professional practice, where the word count is usually much more limited. Of course, less writing implies more editing, so the workload of supervisors might remain the same. This method may be complemented by having students disseminate their findings to a wider audience through for instance film or a website or news article.
- Alternatively, or additionally, student-driven writing groups can serve to partly replace supervision and reduce the workload of supervisors, as students give each other support and peer feedback.

3. Engagement and societal impact

- In the professional field, you need to be able to explain clearly and quickly what you did, where you stand, and what should be done next. The programme could teach students to better communicate results in this way, for instance by having them make a summary (elevator pitch) or present to clients. Presenting and communicating skills can be further cultivated (as well as related technical competencies related to workplace software) and should be part of student assignments and tests, without losing academic rigour.
- Students and alumni told the panel that their critical (academic) thinking is what distinguishes them in the working field. The programme should keep on fostering this strong point.