



# Utrecht University Education Guideline

Final version, 12 December 2017

## **Higher Education and Research Act**

### **Section 9.5**

*The Executive Board may draw up guidelines regarding the organisation and coordination of the powers referred to in Section 9.14, subsection 3 and Section 9.15, subsection 1.*

### **Section 9.15**

*Without prejudice to Section 9.5, the Dean is also responsible for:*

- a. *adopting the Education and Examination Regulations (OER) referred to in Section 7.13 and the regular evaluation thereof, [..]*
- d. *supervising the implementation of the OER and the annual research programme, as well as giving regular reports on these to the Executive Board, [..].*

## **A. General**

1. Degrees and programmes
  - a. Faculties only offer Bachelor's degree programmes and majors, Master's degree programmes (CROHO labelled) and Master's programmes<sup>1</sup> that have been approved by the Executive Board and included in the University Register of Degrees and Programmes (URO). To maintain the educational concept of the Education Guideline and meet the quality requirements, the Dean submits plans for new Bachelor's degree programmes and Master's degree programmes as well as proposals for changes to existing degree programmes to the Executive Board for certification.
  - b. Faculty courses that may be part of a university degree programme are included in the *University Course Catalogue*.
  - c. A faculty may work with other institutions to develop or administer a degree programme. However, to be able to award a Utrecht University diploma, the faculty's effective contribution to the degree programme in question must account for at least 50% of the curriculum.
2. Standardised framework
  - a. All teaching is timetabled according to the university's academic calendar, period classification and timeslot model. An academic year may not begin later than 2 September. Each academic year has 2 semesters consisting of 2 blocks/periods each: Semester 1 – period 1 and 2, Semester 2 – period 3 and 4.
  - b. Course registrations and degree programme enrolment take place in the periods determined by the Executive Board.

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<sup>1</sup> See C1 for the distinction between Master's degree programmes with a CROHO Label and other Master's programmes.

### 3. Lecturers

- a. The Dean is responsible for ensuring that all teaching is provided by qualified lecturers, who are given room to improve and innovate their teaching. Assistant Professors must have at least obtained the University Teaching Qualification, while Associate Professors with a substantial education task and Professors must have obtained the Advanced Teaching Qualification.
- b. Professors are present in all phases of teaching, including the first year of the Bachelor's programme.
- c. The Dean is responsible for ensuring that lecturers are experts in the area of testing (developing, administering and assessing tests) through the University and Senior University Teaching Qualifications and continued professionalisation.

### 4. Quality assurance

1. The Dean is responsible for ensuring an internal quality assurance system is in place that meets the following minimum requirements:
  - quality assurance in the degree programmes is cyclical (plan – do – check - act)
  - the internal quality assurance reflects the external quality assurance
  - internal quality assurance is at both subject and curriculum level
  - students, lecturers, alumni and the professional field are periodically involved in quality assurance.
  - the results of quality assurance checks are publicly accessible to all parties involved.
  - responsibilities for quality assurance are clearly allocated and documented.
2. The Dean ensures that
  - the quality assurance functions properly
  - the quality assurance of the teaching and examinations is fully integrated into the internal quality assurance system
  - consultations and knowledge sharing are planned in such a way that the various responsibilities can be properly fulfilled.
3. The Dean ensures that the Boards of Examiners have sufficient time and expertise to perform their tasks as monitors of:
  - the quality of tests and exams
  - the level of the graduates (does the student have the knowledge, insight and skills required to obtain a degree?)
  - if the quality of tests or exams is insufficient, the Dean is responsible to ensure that action is taken to remedy this.
4. The Dean is responsible for ensuring that Directors of Education / programme leaders are sufficiently equipped to assume their responsibilities in terms of educational quality assurance.

## **B. The Bachelor's phase**

### **1. Curriculum**

1. The Bachelor's phase is characterised by small-scale teaching that requires active engagement by both the teacher and the student.
2. The structure and execution of a course during the Bachelor's phase meets the following requirements:
  - a. the standard number of credits for courses in this phase is 7.5;
  - b. courses are divided into three study levels: introductory (1), in-depth (2) and advanced (3);
  - c. the testing of the student is completed by the end of the course;
  - d. courses are designed to encourage students' active participation so that they are able to satisfy the course's learning outcomes. The number of weekly contact hours in the first year of all Bachelor's programmes is at least 12 and no more than 18; in the second and third years, the average university-wide contact hours are at least 12 hours a week.
3. A Bachelor's degree programme contains at least the following programme components:
  - a. a major comprising at least 90 and no more than 135 credits, of which 75 credits are derived from compulsory major-related courses and the remainder from major-related elective courses;
  - b. an optional course profile of at least 45 credits, in which students are free to choose any courses from the entire university offering, including major-specific electives and courses offered in minors, as registered in the University Course Catalogue;
  - c. at least 45 credits obtained from major courses and an optional course profile at level 3;
  - d. at least 15 credits obtained in the optional course profile at level 2 or higher;
  - e. a thesis of at least 7.5 credits, in which students have the opportunity to prepare a final paper as a demonstration of their academic competence, in which the required knowledge, skills and attitudes can be assessed. The thesis is not compulsory if the degree programme in question can prove by means of a graduation portfolio or a combined overview of final products/tests of the continuous learning pathways that all the learning outcomes for the Bachelor's programme have been achieved.
4. The major is described by a set of courses and criteria.
5. The major includes courses that address the context of the discipline.
6. Starting in the first Bachelor's year, students are familiarised with the theory and practice of scientific research.
7. Students are evaluated on their academic schooling during all courses. Academic development includes the development of competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) in regard to:
  - a. academic thinking, behaviour and communication;
  - b. applying a set of relevant academic tools;
  - c. (academic) communication in one's own language;
  - d. applying specific knowledge of a particular field of expertise in a wider scientific, philosophical and social/cultural context;
  - e. behavioural standards that apply during students' studies and within academia.
8. In period 2, faculties give international students the option to complete a number of designated courses before the revision week around Christmas.

### **2. Course testing and assessment**

1. The test results are announced within ten working days of the test being taken.
2. Every course has several tests throughout the period in which it is taught. No later than midway through the course, the lecturer evaluates the students' progress and informs them accordingly.
3. If a student has met the requirements described in the course description but failed the final assessment of the course, with a final mark of at least 4, this student will be given one more opportunity to pass the course in a manner to be determined by the lecturer.
4. A thesis is always assessed by at least two lecturers (the supervisor and a second assessor).
5. Measures to be taken in case of fraud or plagiarism are included in the Education and examination regulations (OER) and comply with the model issued by the Executive Board.

### **3. Academic advising**

Academic advising consists of at least the following components:

1. A compulsory matching process for prospective students prior to enrolment in a Bachelor's programme<sup>2</sup>, with the aim of guiding students in choosing a degree programme that suits their ambitions, expectations and abilities;
2. The orientation programme for first-year students in the first week of the first semester; the orientation is intended to make students feel welcome, get them acquainted with lecturers and inform them about their degree programme;
3. Assigning a tutor to each Bachelor's student, introducing them to the degree programme in the first semester and available to them for guidance in their further studies and in making choices throughout the Bachelor's phase;
4. An urgent recommendation regarding the continuation of studies after the first semester, and a binding recommendation regarding the continuation of studies after the second semester of the first year, based on all the credits obtained in the first year;
5. Advice on finding the right post-degree option after completing the Bachelor's degree;
6. A portfolio may be used as an instrument in the academic advising process.

### **4. Honours programmes**

An Honours programme has been set up for each Bachelor's programme, for which students are selected at the start. It may be possible to start later in the first Bachelor's year.

1. An Honours programme meets at least the following requirements:
  - a. The Honours programme consists of at least six components each worth 7.5 credits, of which a minimum of 7.5 credits are awarded for the Honours thesis;
  - b. a maximum of 15 of these credits may be for extracurricular activities;
  - c. The Honours programme comprises both more in-depth elements (in the major) as well as broadening elements (in the optional course profile);
  - d. students take an active part in extracurricular activities within the honours community;
  - e. students gain international experience within the context of their Honours programmes.
2. The Education and Examination Regulations (OER) stipulate the following rules concerning the Honours programme:
  - a. selection criteria;
  - b. selection moment;
  - c. criteria for suspension from the programme;
  - d. who is authorised to decide on the above.

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<sup>2</sup> This does not apply to selective degree programmes and degree programmes with intake restrictions.

## C. Master's phase

1. **1. General** Education in the Master's phase is provided in the form of Master's programmes. Utrecht University distinguishes between
  - a. Master's degree programmes that have a CROHO label (these are registered in the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes – CROHO),
  - and
  - b. Master's programmes that are subsidiary to a CROHO labelled degree programme.
2. All formal matters such as accreditation, enrolment, funding, the diploma, and quality assurance (are required to) take place at the level of the CROHO labelled Master's degree programme, and these are the only programmes acknowledged by the NVAO and the Ministry of Education. A Master's degree programme with a CROHO label may have several subsidiary Master's programmes, which share the same entry requirements and learning outcomes.
3. All programmes (both CROHO label and subsidiary programmes) are registered in the University Register of Programmes (URO). For recruitment purposes, the University communicates the names of all Master's programmes in external communication. A Master's programme may in turn contain various tracks. A track is a cohesive set of courses and programme components that a student may choose within a Master's programme. In its external communication, Utrecht University does not use the names of the tracks. However, the names of the tracks may be used in the programme content description.
4. Master's programmes are organised within a Graduate School.

### 2. Curriculum

1. Master's programmes comprise either 60, 120, 180 or 240 credits. Following approval by the Executive Board, dual<sup>3</sup> Master's degree programmes (with CROHO label) of 90 credits may be offered, in which 30 credits are reserved for professional practice developed in consultation with the relevant professional field.
2. A Master's programme includes at least the following components:
  - a. theoretical and in-depth courses;
  - b. an independent research assignment and/or research internship that is considered proof of academic competence, showing that the intended final qualifications of the Master's degree have been met;
  - c. specific attention for the principles of academic integrity;
  - d. components that provide students with an international orientation;
  - e. components that focus on labour market orientation.
3. A Master's programme has compulsory courses and electives.
4. The curriculum ensures acquisition of academic skills and professional skills that prepare students for a rapidly changing labour market.
5. Master's programmes are organised efficiently according to the following principles:
  - a. at least three chairs provide content for the Master's programme;
  - b. there is a minimum intake of 20 students per programme;
  - c. a Graduate School has flexible programming and joint courses;
  - d. a Master's programme has one or two equivalent starting dates per year that coincide with the start of the semester.

These provisions may only be deviated from in special cases with the approval of the Executive Board.

### 3. Course testing and assessment

1. The test results are announced within ten working days of the test having been taken.
2. If a student has met the requirements described in the course description but failed the final assessment of the course, with a final mark of at least 4, this student will be given one more opportunity to pass the course in a manner to be determined by the lecturer.

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<sup>3</sup> In the Netherlands, a dual programme means the student combines the study programme with a study-related job.

3. A research assignment and/or research internship is always assessed by at least two lecturers. At least one expert who is not responsible for supervising the student is involved in the assessment.
4. Measures to be taken in the event of fraud or plagiarism are included in the Education and Examination Regulations (OER) and comply with the model issued by the Executive Board.

#### **4. Admissibility to Master's programmes**

1. Admissions or entry requirements are formulated in terms of knowledge and competences. For admission to a Master's programme, students must demonstrate knowledge, understanding and skills at least at academic Bachelor's degree level. In addition to these general entry requirements, the following may be required:
  - knowledge, understanding and skills at the level of an Utrecht University major of up to 135 credits;
  - a Bachelor's degree with similar content obtained from an institution other than Utrecht University.
2. Admission to a Master's programme is based on the assessment of the selection committee about the student's aptitude to successfully complete the programme within the time specified.
3. Selection is based on objective standards with relation to:
  - previous academic achievements in relevant field(s)
  - relevant skills and competences
  - fluency in the language(s) in which the programme is taught
  - possible additional criteria with demonstrated relevance for the assessment of the candidate's aptitude.
4. The criteria for admissibility are formulated in a clear and transparent way so that candidates can inform themselves about the requirements they need to meet in order to be admitted.
5. The purpose of selective admission is realizing an optimal match between the student's ambitions and competencies on the one hand, and the Master's programme and UU learning environment on the other hand. The university thereby strives to promote excellence, equal opportunity and a diverse student population.

#### **5. Admission procedure**

1. An admission procedure is in place for each Master's programme, in which the Admissions Committee can assess the aptitude of a candidate to successfully achieve the final qualifications of the Master's programme within the time specified.
2. Information about the admissions procedure is clear and transparent, so that candidates can acquaint themselves with the different steps and deadlines.
3. The Admissions Committee, on behalf of the Dean, issues an admissions decision to the applicant who meets the Master's programme's entry requirements. The admission's decision is issued within three weeks of the faculty having received the complete application file.
4. Following approval by the Executive Board, a Master's programme may apply an intake restriction.
5. For programmes with an intake restriction for which all candidates must simultaneously sit a standardized test, the Dean determines a selection procedure including the deadlines for application, the period within which the selection process takes place, and when the admissions decisions are issued.

#### **6. Guidance**

1. Candidates are enabled to make a well-informed choice for the Master's programme and about the options available after completing the programme.
2. The Master's programme and/or the Graduate School are responsible for creating a close-knit community.
3. The Master's programme and/or the Graduate School are responsible for assisting (international) students. Each student has an adviser who is responsible for:
  - a. promoting a sense of community among students;

- b. assisting students in making programme-related choices;
- c. assisting students in labour market orientation.

## **D. Implementation regulation**

The Education Guideline was adopted on 1 July 2014 by the University Council and will enter into effect on 1 July 2014. It replaces the Education Guideline of 25 June 2013.

Amended by the Executive Board on 12 December 2017 with the consent of the university council.

## Explanation

### Utrecht University Education Guideline

The Executive Board adopted the Education Guideline with the intention of implementing the educational concept of Utrecht University. Subjects that have already been included in legislation or other regulations applicable to the university (such as the accreditation framework of the NVAO regarding internal quality assurance), are not repeated in the Guideline in order to prevent different interpretations of the same terms. The Guideline is binding, however, deviations from the Guideline are possible, but only in very specific cases and only after they have been approved by the Executive Board.

The Dean holds complete and autonomous authority with respect to the organisation of the teaching and research of his or her faculty, within the frameworks set by the Higher Education Act (WHW) and the Executive Board. The WHW determines the educational quality requirements (through checks carried out by the NVAO against the accreditation framework). Other statutory requirements set for the teaching include:

- organisation within degree programmes
- OER for each degree programme or group of degree programmes with a Board of Examiners, which has the authority to evaluate the contents of exams and tests
- a Degree Statute that lays down the rights and obligations of students, in addition to the OER
- representation with respect to the faculty regulations (the non-academic part) of the OER and the Student Charter by the Faculty Council; representation with respect to the contents of education by the joint degree programme committees.

### Education at Utrecht University

All of the teaching at Utrecht University is geared towards the two, partly distinct, aims of academic education: academic schooling within a particular discipline on the one hand, and specialised academic preparation for the labour market on the other. In the Bachelor's phase, the focus is on academic schooling. Students delve into a specific discipline; the Bachelor's programmes focus on the associated professional and intellectual capacities at academic level, including the behavioural standards that apply during students' studies and within academia.

In an academic environment, education and research are inextricably linked and therefore students are familiarised with the theory and practice of (current) scientific research from the first year of their Bachelor programme as a matter of course. The subsequent Master's phase focuses on specialisation, either in the direction of scientific research or in the direction of professional practice at an academic level.

Both educational phases can be roughly characterised by the following features and objectives:

Bachelor's phase, leading to the Bachelor's degree:

- Academic schooling and a broad orientation (optional course profile)
- In-depth study of a specific (disciplinary) interest (major)
- Preparation for choosing a further (study) career

Master's phase, leading to the Master's degree:

- Specialisation
- Preparation for further training in academic or professional practice at an academic level

Good teaching engages the students, is personal and, whenever possible, small-scale, so that students are challenged to realise their full potential. For this it is important that genuine tasks are given which teach students to work with knowledge, insight and academic skills. Good teaching provides interim feedback to ensure students stay on track and perform to the best of their ability. Good teaching is coherent: learning objectives, testing, assignments, feedback and educational methods are consistent with the course level and continue the line from the students' required entry level to the objectives and longer-term learning goals of the curriculum. Good teaching takes place in an atmosphere of mutual involvement: students and lecturers are not on opposite sides, but rather cooperate to achieve the same goals; there is an academic learning community.

## **Good lecturers**

Good teaching is provided by highly qualified lecturers who are given opportunities to improve and innovate their teaching. Teaching qualifications play an important role in the academic career. Lecturers are required to obtain a Basic Teaching Qualification to be eligible for a permanent contract; this ensures the quality of the Assistant Professors. Associate Professors with a substantial education task and all Professors must meet the requirements of the Senior Teaching Qualification. The requirements set for both the Basic and Senior Teaching Qualifications are set out in a university-wide context. Faculties define their own domain-specific priorities within these university frameworks.

## **The Bachelor's phase**

Academic schooling and broad orientation are the central focus of the Bachelor's phase. Students delve into a particular discipline and prepare for their further (study) career. The Bachelor's phase is demand-driven: alongside a uniform compulsory core curriculum, students are free to compose part of their own curriculums within the rules laid down by the degree programme.

A quarter of the Bachelor's programme consists of an optional course profile that students can choose

themselves, based on their interests and ambitions. Students can choose to broaden or deepen their knowledge within their majors. Students are encouraged to spend some time studying abroad. This reflects the diversity of students and the fact that students do not arrive at their career choices in the same way.

The Bachelor's phase is concluded with a graduation paper or thesis that demonstrates that a student has achieved the intended level of academic skills, including designing, performing and reporting about research in accordance with the methods of the discipline in question, as described in the learning outcomes of the degree programme. If the graduation paper is a joint project, each student's individual contribution must be made explicit, on which basis they will be individually assessed.

The learning outcomes of the Bachelor's programme are formulated so that the level is described, but the content is not uniformly fixed.

A key word in education is commitment. The degree programmes offer stimulating and, as far as possible, personal and small-scale education. Students are expected to be actively involved in their education: when they register for a course, they are expected to meet their commitment requirements and to perform sufficiently.

General resits are a thing of the past. In the first year, students are informed in good time about their study prospects by being given a binding recommendation on the continuation of their studies, and are faced with the consequences of any negative results. The university strives to ensure that students realise their full potential and offers Honours programmes to students who seek additional challenges.

The flexibility of the degree programmes and the choices in the optional course profiles means the teaching needs to be well organised. Therefore, all courses in the Bachelor's phase are worth 7.5 credits as standard; the academic year is divided into four equal ten-week periods and a university-wide level categorisation is applied. A university-wide timeslot model and a uniform registration period for courses is intended to facilitate students' freedom of choice within and outside of the major.

In addition, the flexibility and freedom of choice means that students need good guidance. For this reason, at the beginning of their first year all students are assigned a tutor who provides individual and group mentorship.

## **The Master's phase**

The Master's phase is focused on specialisation and, unlike the Bachelor's phase, is more expertise-driven. Emphasis is on preparing for the labour market. All Master's programmes have a selective admission policy based on competences and knowledge. The teaching in the Master's phase is provided in the form of Master's programmes: cohesive packages of course-based education and other educational activities.

## **Article-by-article explanation of the Education Guideline**

### **B.1. Curriculum**

The Education Guideline focuses on students' commitment. Article B.1.2.c states that courses are designed to promote the active participation of students. The number of weekly contact hours in the first year of all Bachelor's programmes is at least 12 and no more than 18; in the second and third years, the average, university-wide weekly contact hours are at least 12.

The number of contact hours for each course is laid down in the University Course Catalogue<sup>2</sup>.

Utrecht University feels it is important for their academic schooling that students also devote time to extracurricular activities, and promotes this.

Article B.1.1. states that the teaching in the Bachelor's phase should be engaging and small-scale, wherever possible. The Executive Board operates on the principle that it is the responsibility of the lecturers to ensure that students devote 35 to 40 hours a week to their studies. The degree programme advisory committees are responsible for evaluating this.

Within the context of the structure and objective of the course, lecturers are given the freedom to offer

an optimal mix of educational methods. Where appropriate, the faculties are given the option of providing lectures. If a degree programme offers too many lectures, the degree programme advisory committee or Faculty Council, and in extreme cases the Executive Board, should point this out to the Dean.

The structure of the Bachelor's phase, with its distinction between the major and optional course profile, as well as the related courses, is laid down in Articles B.1.3 - B.1.6. For their optional course credits, students are free to choose from any of the courses available in the University Course Catalogue<sup>4</sup>, provided they meet the entry requirements of the course. An exception to this is courses that have intake restrictions or placement rules. With the approval of the Board of Examiners, students may also select courses for their optional course profiles from universities elsewhere in the Netherlands or abroad.

## **B.2. Course testing and assessment**

Learning objectives and tests are directly related. Tests show whether learning objectives have been achieved to the required level. The combination of teaching methods, didactics and testing ensures that students make every effort to achieve the learning objectives at the highest possible level.

With the introduction of the Bachelor's-Master's structure, Utrecht University wished to end the situation where students could endlessly resit tests: students are now only given one opportunity to resit a test. Another principle of testing is that the final assessment is not solely dependent on a final exam, but that students can earn credits throughout the course and that they receive good feedback from lecturers regarding their study progress no later than mid-course. If students have underperformed at that point, they know they will have to work harder to pass the course. The mid-course evaluation, as defined in Article B.2.3, is generally a test, but may also take other forms, including weekly assignments, a presentation, a practical or a research assignment to be completed during the course, for which weekly feedback is given. The important thing is that the student is kept informed of his or her progress by the lecturer.

For the sake of educational feasibility, Utrecht University has determined that in principle all testing should be completed by the end of the course in question, and that lecturers must mark the test within ten working days of the test date. This may only be deviated from in consultation with the students and the Board of Examiners. A student is entitled to take an additional or substitute test if he/she has failed the final assessment with a mark of 4 or higher (B.2.3 and C.2.2). According to the Executive Board the final mark may not be rounded up in this respect; so a 3.51 may not be interpreted as a 4. A final assessment lower than 4 indicates that a student has not sufficiently mastered the material and will need to re-take the course at a later date. The content of this course need not be identical to the content of the initial course, but the course must comply with the Guideline (for instance, engaging education and a mid-term assessment). It goes without saying that Articles B.2.3 and C.2.2 do not apply to unforeseen circumstances, such as illness, given that the hardship clause from the OER ('exceptional case of serious unfairness') provides for such situations.

## **B.3. Academic counselling**

Throughout the Bachelor's programme, every student has a tutor he/she can turn to (B.3.2). The tutor is a lecturer in the programme. Students bear a part of the responsibility for the way in which they receive assistance and how much assistance is given. The Executive Board has set requirements regarding the structuring of tutorship in the students' first year (B.3.1, B.3.2, B.3.3) as it feels that students require the most guidance in finding their way around their degree programmes and academic education during this period. At the end of the first year of their Bachelor's programme, all students receive a binding recommendation regarding the continuation of their studies. Students are also guided by their tutors when considering post-graduate studies (B.3.4). Faculties have more freedom in the second and third years to design their tutorship programmes as they see fit. The tutor:

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<sup>4</sup> [www.uu.nl/onderwijscatalogus](http://www.uu.nl/onderwijscatalogus)

- offers advice regarding general questions about the curriculum and the major (electives, Honours programme, studying abroad, work placements, choice of Master's programme and professional practice);
- coaches the student in his or her personal development of skills in a way that gives the student a realistic impression of his or her own competence development, and monitors whether or not this impression is compatible with the student's academic environment and degree programme;
- has general knowledge about the entire programme and can hold in-depth talks about choices;
- coaches and offers advice in a way that corresponds to the personal development of the student, but is emphatically not a student counsellor;
- refers students to the study advisor in the event of study delay, personal problems and more complex issues about regulations and non-programme-related matters.

### **C.1. General**

Utrecht University distinguishes between Master's degree programmes that are registered in the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO) and have a CROHO label, and Master's programmes. A Master's degree may be composed of several Master's programmes, while a programme may contain various tracks. A track is a cohesive set of courses and programme components that a student may choose within a Master's programme. In its external communication, Utrecht University only uses the names of the Master's programmes and not the names of the tracks. However, the names of the tracks may be used in the programme content description. The learning outcomes and admission procedure are determined at the level of the Master's degree, in accordance with statutory requirements.

### **C.2. Curriculum**

A Master's programme:

- receives content-related support from several chairs and is coordinated by a programme coordinator. The Executive Board requires that the Master's programmes contain a course part and a distinct independent research assignment or research work placement part.
- offers students an international orientation in the education components, such as:
  - courses or projects in international classrooms;
  - courses in which the discipline is placed in an international context;
  - taking one or more courses abroad;
  - an international placement or assignment;
  - an international summer school;
  - educational activities that match the international profile of the research in question.
- includes courses (offering credits) in which students can get acquainted with the professional field, through, for example:
  - work placements and/or graduation assignments;
  - lectures by lecturers who work in the professional field or have relations with the professional field.
- has activities focused on community building between students, staff and alumni, activities organised by student organisations and extracurricular activities, such as a career day. A community is a learning society composed of students and lecturers and students amongst themselves, which is intended to increase interaction in the group.
- has included the acquisition of academic and professional skills in the curriculum to ensure that students are prepared for a rapidly changing labour market. This includes:
  - skills to continue learning and innovating;
  - the ability to work in heterogeneous groups, in interdisciplinary and international teams;
  - career skills, such as flexibility and adaptability;
  - information skills, ICT and technological literacy.
- meets the requirements of minimal intake and supporting chairs to promote efficient spending of government funding;
- has one or two equivalent starting dates per year that coincide with the start of the semester. Each starting date is a full start moment in the sense that it is included in the curriculum and the community-building activities. In the certification procedure, the Dean justifies the decision per programme for there to be one or two starting dates, addressing the following aspects:
  - level of intake
  - curriculum (structure of the programme);
  - community building;
  - efficiency.

With the approval of the Executive Board, a Master's programme may, in the certification procedure, and if sufficiently justified, deviate from all stipulations referred to under C.2.6.

### **C.3. Course testing and assessment**

For the sake of educational feasibility, the same requirement applies to the Master's phase as does to the Bachelor's: that test results must be made known within ten days of the test date. The Master's phase does not carry the explicit requirement that a student gradually builds up a final result, for example, through interim testing, as the nature of the Master's phase differs from that of the Bachelor's phase. However, the same rule applies that a student is only allowed one resit, provided that he or she at least obtained at least a 4 in the initial attempt.

### **C4. Entry requirements for Master's programmes**

The goals and principles for good practice in selective admissions are included in the Additional Explanation to the Education Directive, themed 'Admissions to Graduate Studies at Utrecht University'.

The purpose of selective admission is realizing an optimal match between the student's ambitions and competencies on the one hand, and the Master's programme and UU learning environment on the other hand: is the programme suitable for the student, and vice versa. The university thereby strives to promote excellence, equal opportunity and a diverse student population.

Selection is based on objective standards that are communicated in a clear and transparent way, so that candidates are clear on the criteria they need to meet in order to be admitted to the programme. These criteria relate to:

- previous academic achievements in relevant field(s)
- relevant skills and competences
- fluency in the language(s) in which the programme is taught
- possible additional criteria with demonstrated relevance for the assessment of the candidate's aptitude.

It is not permitted to base an admissions decision on grades alone. Selection must take place based on at least two qualitative criteria.

The central issue in determining admissibility is whether the student has or is able to acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to successfully complete the Master's programme in the time specified.

### **C.5. Admission procedure**

Contact with the prospective student starts during the admission procedure; the Master's programme strives to build a relationship with each prospective student from the moment of his or her application.

Each Master's programme has an Admission Committee that assesses students based on the entry requirements set for the programme. The admission procedure is intended to allow an Admissions Committee to form an opinion about a candidate's suitability. After the admissions procedure is complete, the Admission Committee issues a proof of admission to each student who meets the entry requirements.

At the request of the Master's programme, the Executive Board may grant an intake restriction. This may be based on e.g. a demand from the professional field, availability of internships, the available infrastructure, to ensure the quality of the degree programme, the balance between research and education, or the popularity of the degree programme among students. The Dean determines the selection procedure for each degree programme, including criteria, enrolment deadlines and the term in which the results are communicated to candidates.

### **C.6. Assistance**

The Master's programmes ensure that students are given the opportunity to form an opinion of the programme and explore the options available after it. This enables the students to assess whether a programme is in line with their ambitions and talents. The Master's programme provides adequate assistance to students, to encourage their personal development and study progress.

Within a Master's programme or a Graduate School, students are given the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, including meetings, lectures, excursions and travel. These extracurricular activities play an important role in the promotion of community building.



# Additional Explanation to the Education Directive, themed Admission to graduate studies at Utrecht University

## Purpose

Selective admission to graduate programs at Utrecht University (UU) is aimed to ensure an optimal match between the student's abilities and aspirations and the UU learning environment.

In order to provide excellent learning opportunities and an optimal preparation for future careers, the student experience is supported by an engaging, international, and diverse community, stimulating students to fully develop their individual talents, a broad range of skills, and a collaborative spirit.

UU is therefore committed to promoting excellence, equality of opportunity and to further the diversity of its student body.

## Eligibility

Admission to graduate studies is based on an assessment of the candidate's potential to successfully complete, i.e. to achieve the learning outcomes of, the degree program of choice within the given duration of that program.

Criteria for eligibility include objective measures of prior academic achievement (GPA / grades, standardized test scores, proofs of proficiency, work samples) in relevant subject area(s), of relevant skills, and of the proficiency in the language of instruction.

These and possible additional criteria with proven relevance for the assessment of the candidate's suitability for the degree program, and (in case of professional degrees) for access to the profession / license to practice, are transparent and clear to the candidate upon application.

Specific provisions:

- As part of his/her application, a candidate can indicate if and explain why his/her grades or scores would not be an adequate indication of his/her actual academic potential.
- The admission committee can deviate from certain criteria in specific cases, considering the overall suitability of the candidate. This may for instance apply to candidates in category D (see below), yet the conditions stated under evaluation and integrity should be respected<sup>5</sup>.

## Process

UU is committed to ensuring optimal transparency of information<sup>6</sup> and timely and swift handling of applications on a rolling basis (see below) during the admission process as to ensure an optimal choice and decision making process for the candidate.

Consequently, the various steps, deadlines, maximum response periods, and information requirements implied in the admission process are transparent and clear to all candidates upon application, and throughout the admission process, including transparent information on whether:

- admission to a specific program is granted to all eligible candidates, or that priority is given to the best qualified candidates (category A, below).
- there is a maximum number of places available
- places are still available
- there is a waiting list

All candidates have access to all information relevant to inform him/herself about the degree program of choice, the learning environment, and the experience of previous students (alumni, including their career perspectives), as to ensure an optimal decision making process.

Advisory services are available to support candidates in this process.

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<sup>5</sup> This requires an additional component to the decision-making process, i.e. application is verified independently by at least two members of the admission committee and personally approved by the committee chair. Specific advice may be sought, e.g. from the central level Admissions Office or from Nuffic (NARIC/ENIC).

<sup>6</sup> Art. 7.15 WHW: the university provides such information to the prospective students about the selection criteria and procedure that prospective students are able to prepare themselves well for the admission requirements

## Rolling admission

Timely and swift handling of applications, as well as consistency in the application of criteria, are supported by using the following standard categories:

- A. candidate's profile meets or exceeds eligibility criteria (excellent candidate): rapid and unconditional admission
- B. candidate could meet the eligibility criteria in time, but has either to provide further proof of proficiency (e.g. grade transcript of degree to be obtained, language test, etc.) or has to address some deficiencies<sup>7</sup>: conditional admission with clear indication of additional requirements
- C. student does not meet minimum requirements and isn't likely to meet these in time: rejected
- D. student's profile deviates substantially from eligibility criteria but deserves specific assessment, e.g. previously acquired competencies (EVC), interrupted study course (e.g. adult learners, refugees), etc. (see specific provisions, above).

Applications can be efficiently processed by specially trained<sup>8</sup> graduate school staff, coordinated by the Admission Officer. The Admissions Committee is responsible for the integrity of the process, the effective and consistent implementation of categories and criteria, for decisions on specific cases (category D), appeals, and for an annual evaluation (see below).

Programmes using centralized measures for admission, i.e. their own standardized tests required to be taken by all eligible candidates at the same time, can deviate from the principle of rolling admission.

## Integrity

The admission process is carried out with full respect of national and international regulations regarding equal opportunity, students with special needs, relevant EU directives, and international conventions<sup>9</sup>.

## Appeal and deferral

Conditions and procedures for appeal against the admission decision are transparent and clear to all candidates upon application<sup>10</sup>.

Candidates can defer admission granted with a maximum of one academic year. Admission is not transferable to other UU programmes.

## Evaluation

The admission process is carefully monitored and evaluated on an annual basis as to provide evidence of the relevance of criteria, effectiveness, transparency, and integrity of the process<sup>11</sup>, which may be a basis to suggest adjustments. Evaluation reports will be shared as an instrument of mutual learning and improvement.

## Implementation

The implementation process will accommodate the admission of current bachelor students (i.e. the cohorts that started in 2014 and before) taking into account the extent to which they have been provided with adequate information to enable them to prepare for the admission requirements taking effect from 2016 onwards. The specific implementation may also be contingent upon the extent to which a Graduate School or program is being exposed to (inter)national competition.

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<sup>7</sup> Art. 7.30e and art. 7.57i WHW: The universities shall be responsible for providing the opportunity to make up the deficiencies in previous education for those who do not fulfil the admission requirements and are expected to fulfill the requirements within a reasonable period.

<sup>8</sup> Basic training and annual updates will be provided for staff carrying out admission tasks. Advanced training will be available for admission officers.

<sup>9</sup> Algemene wet gelijke behandeling, Wet gelijke behandeling op grond van handicap of chronische ziekte (WGBh/cz), Lisbon convention on the recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (art. 7.30d WHW), EU directive on the recognition of professional qualifications, etc (zie Nuffic info), and Code of Conduct international student in higher education (Rev 1 September 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Guidelines and a toolkit for the efficient handling of appeals will be provided.

<sup>11</sup> In line with the expectations from government and other stakeholders in the Netherlands and with the international state of the art.