



**European Association for  
Public Administration  
Accreditation**

## **EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report**

**Master Public Management (MPM), School of the Management and Governance, University of Twente**

Evaluation Report with respect to the request for accreditation of the Master Public Management (MPM), School of the Management and Governance, University of Twente, The Netherlands.

In consideration of the Self-Evaluation Report of the above programme, the Site Visit Report of 15 August 2013 of the EAPAA Site Visit Team for this programme, and the response of the programme to the draft of the Site Visit Report, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee, at its meeting of 10 September 2013 in Edinburgh, UK, has evaluated this programme against the EAPAA Accreditation Criteria (version 8, September 2011).

### **1. Accreditation Criteria**

<b>2. Applicability/Eligibility</b>	
2.1 Domain	According to the self-evaluation, the programme can be classified as a professional academic programme within the general domain of public administration and the specific domain of public management. The programme is clearly aimed at training for practice in the public sector. The conception of public management adopted by the programme includes management both in public and not-for-profit organisations.
2.2 Geography	The Netherlands are a member of the Council of Europe, therefore the programme falls within the jurisdiction of EAPAA.
2.3 Programme longevity	The MPM programme has applied for re-accreditation. The programme has been accredited by EAPAA already in 2006 for the first time. The programme started in September 1990. Since then 312 students have graduated.
2.4 Programme variants and locations	The programme does not comprise programme variants and/or other locations of the programme. The only variation comes from choosing different elective courses within the programme during the second year.
4 Category of accreditation	In the categories of EAPAA accreditation MPM programme is a part-time (two-year) executive/mid-career public sector specialisation master program specialising in public management.
<b>5. Standards</b>	
5.1 Domain of public administration <b>Score: Adequate</b>	Central to the programme is the aim to be both multidisciplinary as well as a focus on practitioners. The Twente tradition of attempting to be multidisciplinary shines through in

Website: [www.eapaa.org](http://www.eapaa.org) ; Secretariat: Mrs. Seeta Autar  
University of Twente, School of Management and Governance  
p.o.box 217, NL 7500 AE Enschede, the Netherlands  
tel. +31-53-489-4408, e-mail [secretariat@eapaa.org](mailto:secretariat@eapaa.org)

	<p>the programme's stated desire. However, in practice, the term multidisciplinary is used somewhat loosely, perhaps indicating only the idea of multiple domains or interdisciplinarity in the sense of integrating the perspectives of different disciplinary backgrounds. The definition of multidisciplinary adopted by the UT is obviously too demanding to be implementable in the MPM programme.</p> <p>The second element, a focus on practitioners, is strongly visible in the programme. At the same time, and considering the programme structure and content, this focus does not dilute its academic content.</p> <p>Connections between the courses could be strengthened. A great advantage is that many of the instructors are affiliated with the university; it is thus that the MPM programme is clearly embedded in the larger environment of the School of Management and Government.</p>
<p>5.2 Mission of the programme <b>Score: Adequate</b></p>	<p>The elements of mission-based accreditation are clearly fulfilled. However, the SVT recommends revisiting the mission statement together with relevant stakeholders with the purpose of making it sharper in defining the identity of the programme as a programme of public management with a renewed structure. The educational philosophy should be clearer in terms of integration of different disciplines. The follow-up of the programme-level learning outcomes and the achievement of the mission objectives could be more systematic.</p>
<p>5.3 Level <b>Score: Adequate</b></p>	<p>The final qualifications of the programme correspond to general, internationally accepted descriptions of the qualifications of an academic master degree as formulated in the Dublin descriptors. Teaching is conducted by academic staff and is of adequate academic level – comparable to other executive master programmes. The course material meets the scientific standard. In this respect it is also important that the assessment of the students has significantly improved. However, given the unclear implementation of the principle of multidisciplinary and the formulation of (partly) very demanding educational objectives, it is doubtful whether the programme is able to attain all of them in an executive programme of 60 EC.</p>
<p>5.4 Practice and internships <b>Score: Good</b></p>	<p>The MPM programme has adequate links with the public administration profession. The practice element in the programme is strongly visible. Since the programme is meant for experienced students, an internship as part of the programme is unnecessary.</p>
5.5.1 Curriculum Content	
<p>5.5.1.1 Core components <b>Score: Adequate</b></p>	<p>The core curriculum clearly reflects the mission of balancing theory and practice and the general idea of public management programme. Together the core courses provide the students with the knowledge and skills necessary at mid- to higher level positions in the public sector. However, the programme should consider ways to strengthen the legal approach in the core modules and the inclusion of systematic analysis of the conceptions of public management, because the core modules are mandatory for all students.</p>

	<p>What makes this programme attractive to practitioners is that it offers electives relevant to the work environment, such as operational management, eGovernment, entrepreneurship and sustainability, and public procurement and contract management.</p> <p>From the student point of view, course abstracts are useful in terms of indicating the coherence of the programme: each course abstract includes a description of the course's relation to other elements in MPM programme. This is a good practice and is an example of how horizontal coordination of the modules can be made transparent to students.</p>
5.5.1.2 Other Components <b>Score: Adequate</b>	The elective curriculum is appropriate for this type of executive programme, and allows that students can select those courses that fit their interests best. The SVT encourages the programme to consider whether the place of administrative ethics could be strengthened in the curriculum and whether some basic ideas of philosophy of science could be integrated in teaching practices.
5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme <b>Score: Adequate</b>	The programme didactics are in line with the overall educational philosophy of trying to bridge and link theory and practice, but educational philosophy does not include any principles of implementing multidisciplinary in practice. Two-thirds of the students are able to finish the programme in the 2.5 years mentioned by the programme management.
5.5.1.4 Intake <b>Score: Good</b>	The programme provides a curriculum that is appropriate to its audience of practitioners. There is a clear procedure for candidates to 'repair' lacunas in the entrance prerequisites. Students are selected upon an extensive evaluation of their prior educational background (a BA at minimum) and current job environment. According to the self-evaluation, a conditional entrance (for one course) is possible to give the student the opportunity to prove that he or she is able to function and think at an advanced academic level.
5.5.2 Length <b>Score: Complies</b>	The programme curriculum length meets the accreditation standards and is mostly in line with stated objectives.
5.5.3 Results <b>Score: Good</b>	The self-evaluation report states that 78% of graduates accept new higher level positions, an indication that the graduates have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to meet larger and higher responsibilities. Based on student evaluations and interviews, the programme clearly offers its students the knowledge and skills required of middle to upper level managers in the public sector.
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment <b>Score: Good</b>	The range of tools employed by the programme management for assessing the accomplishment of its objectives is broad, including notably students 'satisfaction questionnaires' and the inputs by the Advisory Board (mainly composed of employers). Both are used, quite systematically: questionnaires are delivered at the end of each lecture – lectures taking place all Fridays - the immediate student feedback with the ensuing delivery to teachers on Fridays is a good practice. The Advisory Board

	<p>convenes twice a year. The advisory board has been active in proposing changes, and the staff has been receptive to these proposals.</p> <p>The accomplishment of the programme's objectives is therefore systematically assessed, through more formal means (questionnaires for students and alumni, meetings of the staff and students, externals' inputs) as well as more generally through the heedful involvement of the faculty. The creation and usage of performance information might be more transparent, at least for students.</p>
5.6.2 Curriculum Development <b>Score: Good</b>	<p>There have been significant developments to the curriculum. Relevant stakeholders have been involved in the curriculum development. Some changes are still on the way, however, at the time the site visit took place, and these will require careful assessment of the impacts of such developments.</p>
5.6.3 External Reviews <b>Score: Good</b>	<p>There seems to be ample evidence that the recommendations received on occasion of the previous EAPAA accreditation of 2006 have been taken into account. An elective element has been built in; courses of public management at the European Union level, e-Government, and research methods have been established; the legal perspective has more emphasis brought in through a course on risk and regulation; a formal grade system for students' individual assessment has been put to use; a separate Advisory Board for the MPM programme only has been in place since 2010.</p> <p>The issue of multidisciplinary has also been addressed, but the result has been no more than adequate. In the previous EAPAA assessment, the mission of the programme was deemed to be too ambitious for monitoring its effectiveness. This need to reconsider the mission statement still remains.</p>
5.7 Student Assessment <b>Score: Adequate</b>	<p>In the EAPAA evaluation report of the accreditation in 2006, it was remarked that there was no formal grading system and no independent assessment of individual student- performance. This implied a risk for achieving programme objectives. In reaction to these findings, the programme has made a number of improvements.</p> <p>These various improvements that were made in the assessment of student performance have contributed to the quality of the programme. In our view the assessment procedures now meet all requirements. And this in turn contributes to the maintenance of the scientific level of the programme.</p>
5.8 Programme Jurisdiction <b>Score: Good</b>	<p>The programme jurisdiction fulfils the criteria of EAPAA accreditation. The division of labour and distribution of authority seems to work properly in practice. PLD and the MPM programme might consider more transparent description of authority of formal decision-making and responsibilities for improvement and development in academic and administrative issues respectively.</p>
5.9.1 Faculty nucleus <b>Score: Good</b>	<p>There is an identifiable nucleus accepting primary responsibility for the programme: the majority of the academic staff of PLD and the academic course coordinators are full professors of the School. Without any doubt</p>

	<p>the programme meets the requirements. It would be good if there was a clearer overview of which staff members are involved in which part of the curriculum to what degree.</p>
<p>5.9.2 Faculty qualifications <b>Score: Adequate</b></p>	<p>The faculty is well qualified: in terms of staffing, size and the range of skills and expertise mobilised is surely adequate for living up to the expectations and objectives that the university has set for this programme. The faculty has an international orientation and publishes actively. Teaching seems to be quite extensively research-based. Most faculty members also have experience in the practice of public management through their research and consultation. However, there seems to be relatively limited core expertise in public management <i>stricto sensu</i>. The School may consider the option to make more room, in the longer run, for faculty whose core academic expertise is essentially public management as an academic domain.</p> <p>There is training to improve one's teaching quality, and most of the teachers of the MPM programme have followed such training during their career. The programme actively collects student feedback about the quality of teaching and has a clear procedure to deal with problems of teaching below minimum standards.</p>
<p>5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities <b>Score: Poor</b></p>	<p>The male dominance of the faculty and the female dominance in the staff working for the MPM programme constitutes a challenge when desiring to establish a better gender balance. The implementation of relevant gender policies should be encouraged.</p>
<p>5.10 Admission of Students <b>Score: Good</b></p>	<p>Students enrol in the programme with varying educational backgrounds, but do have a BA-degree at a bare minimum. Admission standards are clearly and unambiguously stated. Based on provided written information and on several interviews, the in-take process is careful and extensive and certainly comparable to other in-career master programmes. The mission and program objectives are therefore clearly met in the admission goals, policy and standards.</p>
<p>5.11 Supportive Services and Facilities <b>Score: Good</b></p>	<p>The facilities and supportive services that are described in the self-evaluation are: library services, classrooms, support staff, ICT facilities. The courses are partly taught on campus and partly in Utrecht which is approx. 130 km from the University. From the interviews with students and alumni it became apparent that the physical distance was not seen as a problem since the use of Internet reduces this problem to a minimum. To facilitate this even further, the programme gives all the students an iPad. In addition, text books are provided by the programme and teachers deliver course materials through an electronic platform (Blackboard).</p> <p>The accommodation and material facilities are sufficient to realize the programme in an effective and efficient way.</p>
<p>5.12 Student Services <b>Score: Good</b></p>	<p>It is especially important to have good support in place since this program is aimed at older students who have a working career and perhaps a family, so 'life events' (family matters, old-aged parents etc.) or problems at work etc. might interfere with the study. In such cases it is important that there is</p>

	<p>good support and that special adaptations for the student can be discussed.</p> <p>The students and alumni were content on this point. Students that actually ran into (temporary) problems said that they found good support and that they felt that they were not 'left alone'.</p>
<p>5.13 Public Relations Score: Good</p>	<p>The programme is active in approaching prospective students and communicating with alumni. It seems that the programme has no clear picture of all important stakeholders that may have effect on the future of the programme. It is recommend to conduct a systematic stakeholder analysis that covers also employers as a target group. It would strengthen both stakeholder management and marketing. For example, the HRM directors of public organisations constitute a key target group. It is responsible for supporting the staff development of their organisations facing many external and internal pressures for change. The marketing of the programme may become stronger also, if the mission process leads to a sharper identity of the programme.</p>
<p>6 Additional Criteria Score: N.A.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

## 2. Conclusion

The MPM program is an attractive program that appears to target a specific category of public servants, namely those working at provincial and local levels of government. It therefore fills a clear niche in the market of in-career, executive education.

### STRONG POINTS

The relation to practice is very strong in the programme and it is implemented in various ways from techniques of admission of students to teaching methods and development of curriculum. The programme has found a very functional way of providing practitioners broader, academic frameworks that improve the abilities of working adequately as managers in political environment. The recently established Advisory Board has already shown its usefulness in providing input from the practitioners' point of view in the development of the programme.

The programme didactics are in line with the overall educational philosophy of trying to bridge and link theory and practice. The module of public procurement and contract management is an excellent innovation and fulfils an educational need that is rarely met by programmes of public management. Quality improvement includes many tools that are actively used in the development of the curriculum.

The programme has addressed all the recommendations from the previous EAPAA accreditation and has generally found good solutions for most of them. For example, the programme applies today the regular methods of student assessment as it is done in non-executive programmes. This improves the credibility of the programme in creating the competencies linked to master programmes in general.

There is an identifiable nucleus of the faculty that carries the responsibility of the programme and is qualified also researchwise. Admission standards are clearly and unambiguously stated. The intake

process is careful and extensive. Support services and facilities as well as student services are good or even excellent. The programme is actively marketed using instruments that are effective for the potential students of the programme.

#### **WEAK POINTS**

The principle of multidisciplinary is not implemented in the sense that it is defined by the UT. On the whole, the curriculum and teaching practices and educational philosophy are not sufficiently transparent in this respect.

The mission statement could be stronger and more precise in terms of identifying the core idea of the programme, not just aiming at the employability in leading managerial positions in public organisations.

The legal approach is too weak in core modules, but legal aspects of risk and regulation and public procurement and contract management are, to some extent, present in elective modules. There should be more emphasis on administrative ethics as opposed to business ethics in the Integrity and Ethics module and it could be integrated to studies of organisational culture of public sector. Philosophy of science should be part of the research-oriented teaching. The programme could consider providing an international and comparative component to each course.

The self-evaluation report does not show a prospect for improving the learning results (e.g., which learning outcomes are most challenging to achieve).

A more regular information provision for the Advisory Board between its meetings would be instrumental for improving the effectiveness of the Board in the development of the programme.

The gender imbalance – male dominance – is obvious in the faculty as well as in the student core, while the female dominance is clear in the administrative staff of the programme. No minority issues have been addressed.

**Based on the above evaluation of the specific criteria, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee concludes that this programme meets the criteria for accreditation sufficiently, and so the programme can be accredited without restrictions.**