



Graduate School of Communication Action Plan

December 2016

The Graduate School of Communication has several ways of evaluating its Master's programmes, among which:

- Students are asked to complete digital questionnaires to evaluate individual courses
- Student focus groups are held at the end of every semester to evaluate the programme as a whole, as well as the learning environment and teaching facilities
- Lecturers also complete questionnaires about the course they taught and indicate whether there are areas in which the course could be improved

Also, all programmes offered by the Graduate School are formally accredited by the Netherlands Central Register for Higher Education Programmes (CROHO) and thoroughly assessed for re-accreditation every 5 years by a committee of experts from the field, including student representatives. Each programme is also assessed annually by the Programme Committee (OC), Board of Studies, and the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences.

Based on the results of student course evaluations and feedback in focus groups in the previous academic year, for the academic year 2016-2017 the following improvement measures will be or have already been implemented:

Education

Intensive survey/experimental analytics

As a result of course evaluations and lecturers' experiences, two new summer/winter courses are being offered since August 2016 (2 weeks courses 'Intensive survey analytics' and 'Intensive experimental analytics'). Students with minor deficiencies on these subjects might be served better by these courses instead of the 'Research practice seminar' course.

Senior research staff involvement in Research master courses

In the Research master focus group a wish was expressed to have more senior researchers involved in courses. Per the academic year 16-17, the Research master started the course 'Advancing & building communication science theory'. In this course the RM students gather with a senior research staff member each 6 weeks.

Link to the professional practice

In focus groups it was suggested that meetings for career orientation could contain a stronger connection between university and professional practice. The university is offering a lot of relevant information on this topic online, which might help satisfying these students' needs for a great part. Furthermore, UvA Jobboard was launched. At this platform, students can find vacancies. In addition, the 'Career matters' workshops will be continuously offered and an alumni networking event will be organised as in previous academic year.

Mentorship (research Master)

As of February 2017, students from the Research Master's programme will be linked to a (research) staff member from ASCoR, introducing them to the ASCoR research group, and providing advice during the first steps in their academic career.

Research methods tailored to the thesis (RMTT)

Because of continuously moderate evaluations for the course 'Research methods tailored to the thesis (RMTT)', the Graduate School realises the urgency of changing this part of the curriculum rigorously. For RMTT, one group of students finds the course useful enough but another, equal group would like to be challenged more. From January 2017 on, excellence groups are offered to students. These excellence groups consist of research master courses which are offered in January or June.

Facilities

Course application

As suggested in focus groups, the process of course application could receive some more explanation. Especially for students who did not study at the UvA before (and have no experience in using the course application system). Although the course application system has made quite some progress in getting more user friendly, the Graduate School will try to clarify the instructions and, for future course application periods, will let the ombudstudent and student representatives check the instructions on forehand.

Digital learning environment

A new digital learning environment (Canvas) will be launched to replace Blackboard. We expect the new system will be a welcome improvement to the current learning environment.