

Annual Report, 2019-2020

Programme Committee of the Department of Psychology

Programmes: Bachelor Psychology
Master Psychology
Master Gezondheidszorgpsychologie
Research Master Psychology

Faculty: Social and Behavioural Sciences

Reported year: 2019-2020

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Composition and procedures of the Programme Committee

Ten monthly meetings were held between September 2019 and June 2020. The committee consisted of 7 staff members and 7 student members. See Table 1 for the committee composition. Marijke Tichelaar was Secretary to the Programme Committee (PC). Regular other attendants of the meetings were the director of the College (Ingmar Visser) and the director of the Graduate school (Edwin van Hooft), policymakers (Sonja Houtkooper, Eveline Zandvliet and Rifka van der Meer), and a representative of the Faculty Student Council (Siddharth Jethwani and Nadya Manuputty).

Following a long tradition, the student and staff members worked in duos on specific topics. A duo consists of a partnership between a student and a staff member. Another function of the duos is to discuss the content of the plenary meetings to reduce the distance between students and staff. These one-on-one discussions have not taken place very often but the student and staff members did not feel much distance to each other. The composition of the duos and the topics they worked on are in Table 1.

Table 1, Staff members, Student members, Duo Topic(s)

Staff member	Student	Duo topic
Brenda Jansen (chair)	Egbert Peppelman (vice-chair)	Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER)
Henk-Jan Conradi	Ruby Manten	Reforming bachelor theses
Roeland Voskens	Daan Heijke	Reforming the bachelor programme
Laura Schneider	Miriam Idris	Communication during the new bachelor
Hillie Aaldering	Karel Veldkamp	External education
Max van der Linden	Hannah van der Laan and Ruby Manten	Wellbeing
Marte Otten	Tosca Beijaert	Course evaluations

Requested advice

Annually recurring advice

Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER)

A key task of the PC is to review the Teaching and Examination regulations (TER). This year there were a lot of changes following the reforming of the bachelor programme. Our main task was to check whether the changes would create any problems for the students and the staff members. The changes in the programme will most likely have a good impact on the long term but we focused on preventing problems on the short term. Ingmar Visser involved us from a very early stage in this process. Because of the many changes Egbert Peppelman and Brenda Jansen looked at the entire TER and divided some specific parts to experts of that topic (e.g. Laura Schneider and Roeland Voskens helped a lot with the changes for the first and second year). We discussed our evaluation with the Faculty Student Council (FSR) and with Sonja Houtkooper. The final advice was sent to the programme directors. The TER was changed accordingly. The final advice can be requested from the chair.

Course evaluations

One of the most important tasks of the PC is to evaluate courses. This has been done by discussing the semester reports, which are produced by the College and the Graduate School. The semester report consists of a summary of UvA-Q results of all courses in one semester. The report of the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019 was discussed in December, and the report of the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020 was discussed in May and June.

Each year the PC asks the programme coordinators to respond to the semester report, to see if anything irregular can be found. During the meeting, the semester report was examined for abnormalities (e.g., a very high or low pass rate, or average grade). When a course has multiple abnormalities, it was discussed whether the programme coordinator's response was sufficient in addressing these abnormalities, e.g., an explanation of the abnormalities. When the programme coordinator's response is not sufficient, additional explanations and strategies for improvements are requested. These are to be discussed at the next meeting, where further action will be taken if needed.

Some evaluations of certain courses led to the PC's concern. For instance, the second year course Psychological Assessment. However, due to the new bachelor that will be implemented in the study-year 2020-2021, multiple courses are to be changed drastically, including Psychological Assessment.

A new procedure to evaluate courses was proposed, where the PC would be more involved with courses that show irregularities, and has increased communication with programme coordinators and student delegates. **Appendix A** summarizes changes that were implemented this year and recommendations for next academic year. It's essential to balance workload of the PC members and precision of the evaluation.

Quality funds

At the request of the directors of the College and Graduate School, the PC reviewed the proposals for spending the funds for improving the quality of education. Quality funds were divided between the Bachelor's programme and master tracks. It was proposed by the directors to spend quality funds assigned to the Bachelor's programme on the transformation to the new Bachelor's programme, implying that all Bachelor's courses would receive a certain extra amount of teaching hours. The PC advised positively.

The PC was critical on the number of hours requested, advised to investigate whether some projects were truly necessary and warned for overly full courses when merging courses. The PC also pointed out requests that were invalid because they concerned translation or intervision, which are not goals of the quality funds.

Internal regulations

In the academic year 19/20, there have not been any significant changes to the internal regulations of the PC.

Other requested advice

Selection procedure for new psychology students

In February we discussed whether we would advise positively or negatively on the selection procedure of the Bachelor Psychology. This selection procedure has remained largely the same as the year before, except that the numerus fixus has decreased from 650 students to 600 students. This is a nationally agreed number of students that can be accepted. We advised positively on this proposal of the College of Psychology.

New Bachelor

The director of the College of Psychology requested the PC to provide input for changing the bachelor's curriculum of psychology. Both a student member (Daan Heijke) and a staff member (Roeland Voskens) attended the meetings of the 'commissie nieuwe bachelor'. The PC responded to the request and gave additional unsolicited advice.

The essence of the advice was that the PC was positive about the proposed curriculum (the mobility window and a possibility to follow a second specialization). We did, however, express our concerns about (1) the size of change and how this may affect the workload of the teaching staff (more working hours, higher probability of burnout), (2) the deintensification of education and how this may affect the learning goals and the quality of education, (3) the communication with staff of the upcoming change, (4) the feasibility of the first semester of the second year, (5) the possibility of tutorial teachers to work the whole year around and (5) the expected financial consequences. The final report can be requested from the chair.

Bachelor Thesis

The director of the College of Psychology set up a committee to formulate and discuss a new procedure for the bachelor thesis. This was necessary because budget cuts forced the teaching load for the bachelor's thesis to be reduced by 25%. Matthijs Baas chaired the committee, which consisted of representatives of every programme group, the Educational Institute and a staff- and student member from the PC (Henk Jan Conradi & Ruby Manten/Egbert Peppelman). The bachelor thesis committee's tasks were to reduce the teaching load for supervision time to 15 hours per student, while (1) maintaining the learning outcomes and quality of the current bachelor's thesis, (2) maintaining the course load (12 EC), (3) guaranteeing the connection with other courses in the teaching programme (e.g. scientific writing), (4) making sure that the collected data during the bachelor's thesis is useful for staff and, (5) taking into consideration that the thesis could be implemented by all programme groups in period 2 (parttime) and period 3 (fulltime) of the first semester per '20-'21. The committee has discussed and considered several solutions to fulfill the above mentioned five aims. They debated about e.g. the amount of people per empirical study group and the group-based teaching and intervision methods (workshops). This led to eight key changes compared to the current bachelor's thesis, which were communicated in a report seen and approved by the PC. The final report can be requested from the chair.

Unsolicited advice

Communication

In 20-21, a New Bachelor's Programme will be implemented in the Psychology Department.

One duo has looked at the current and possible communication regarding the implementation of the new bachelor's programme. To describe the current situation and identify possible bottlenecks, interviews were conducted with the communications officer, the involved policy officer and two experts in the field of organizational transition. A student survey was distributed via informal channels (Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp), and a survey for staff was distributed via email (PC members emailed their stakeholders).

A limited, yet diverse sample of students (N=34) filled out the survey. Results indicated that there is uncertainty about the upcoming academic year ('20-'21), but that students know where to find the relevant information. Canvas and the A-Z list could be implemented more efficiently, and students value email the most (even though the communication plan is hesitant in sending many emails).

A diverse sample of staff members (N=67, approximately 25% of academic staff) filled out the survey: they had either executive or coordinating roles, or a combination of both. Results indicated that awareness of practical consequences of implementation can be increased, especially about relevant deadlines (but also regarding responsibilities and course content). Furthermore, understanding of the plan can be increased: especially the consequences of the New Bachelor for the Psychology Department are unclear (other advantages and individual consequences of implementation could be addressed, as well). There is also a call for transparency in communication, acknowledgement of hardship and effort, and for a more central and structured way of sharing information.

The report in question has been sent to the board in the hope that the information will be used in the implementation of the new bachelor. The board invited representatives of the PC to discuss this report and the two reports on wellbeing (see below). The PC accepted the invitation. The meeting gave the PC the possibility to express its concerns and emphasize the necessity of clear and timely communication. The PC was satisfied with the discussion.

Wellbeing

Last year, the PC published two reports on increased workload, budget cuts, staff welfare and the quality of education. The conclusion was that a large part of the staff experienced pressure of work, and this was directly related to the austerity measures. Following up on this, one buddy group this year (consisting of three PC-members) examined the welfare of the staff by means of in-depth interviews instead of quantitative research. The aim of this project was to find out how we can make the transition to the new bachelor as smooth as possible. Central to this were questions such as "how can the staff best deal with workload? What is the best way to keep the staff motivated and involved? How do we ensure that no one is overworked? How should leaders act during such transitions?"

In order to answer these questions, we made use of the expertise within our own organization, namely employees of the work & organizational psychology programme group. We interviewed dr. Brigitte ten Brink, dr. Machteld van der Heuvel and prof. dr. Astrid Homan as they have expertise in leadership, organizational change, wellbeing and motivation, effective collaboration, diversity and perceived organizational support and health. We asked them to do a SWOT-analysis of our organization and what recommendations they would suggest for realizing a smooth transition.

From the in-depth interviews, we conclude that the board and the programme group leaders are essential in ensuring that the transition runs smoothly. They have to provide the context in which everyone can develop as optimally as possible to the new bachelor programme. Factors that can contribute significantly to this are a clear vision, open, honest and two-way communication and a high perceived organizational support. On a more structural level: make the wellbeing of the staff an explicit part of the (long-term) institutional plan for which the management and the programme group leaders are jointly responsible.

The plan was to close our project by conducting the same survey as last year (on workload, austerity measures and welfare) among the staff of psychology. However, due to the corona crisis and increasing pressure on education as a result of this, we have decided that the results would not be comparable to last year's. It may be interesting to take this survey again next year.

External education

In light of budget cuts, one duo looked into the possibility for lecturers at our programme to provide masterclasses to external professionals as a means to earn money for the programme. This idea was inspired by the UvA business school, where they successfully developed master programs for professionals, increasing the budget of their programme. It was investigated whether something similar would be possible for Psychology at a smaller scale, where lectures would teach a masterclass of a few sessions to professionals, which could possibly be a means of income for the programme, while at the same time diversifying the teaching experience of lecturers.

In a meeting about the possibilities around such a project, Edwin van Hooft, Director of the Graduate School of Psychology, explained why it might be challenging to make such a project profitable. Because lecturers work on a 50/50 research/education balance, that means that if a lecturer provides a workshop of eight hours, they would cost the programme 16, as they would earn 8 hours of research by giving the workshop. This would make external education expensive for the programme, and therefore poses the main challenge for external education as a way to earn the programme money.

To see whether workshops could earn enough money to make it profitable, another meeting was planned with Masha Walbeek, coordinator of UvA-Academy and Ed Peelen, director of UvA Academy. UvA-Academy is a UvA platform that supports external education, and we wanted to hear from them about the financial prospects of using this platform, as well as practical matters like planning and marketing. Unfortunately, the financial prospects were disappointing, partly due to high marketing costs and a relatively low profit margin which would make it hard to 'earn back' the research compensation.

We agreed to follow up with Masha after polling the interest of lecturers at our programme in teaching a course at UvA academy, but the corona situation caused us to cease these efforts, as it seemed like lecturers had enough on their plates right now, and should not be worried about creating external courses while adapting the courses for our programme to online versions. We plan to complete this poll in the fall semester and will discuss the results with Edwin van Hooft.

Pilot on proctoring exams

Installing software that could track computer activity while making an exam was suggested by the directors of the College and the Graduate School as a solution to the problems of exam administration during online teaching under corona measures. Student members have set out their thoughts on such a procedure, which were used by the Educational Institute to design the procedure and write an explanatory letter. Also, the directors planned a pilot for using this software. Although the PC applauded the pilot, she advised to postpone the pilot to the next study block.

Other activities

Facebook activity

We posted polls or messages relevant to the psychology programme on our Facebook page weekly. The posts are meant as a means to maintain engagement with students, and give them an impression of the topics we are dealing with within the PC. Experience shows that polls receive much more engagement than updates or links to articles. We regularly request the VSPA and the UvA Psychology Facebook page to share our posts to increase the amount of students we can reach.

Education Awards

Every year, the Psychology department presents two teaching Awards. The Christiaan Hamaker Award is presented to a lecturer whose teaching performance has been particularly outstanding that year, and the Nico Frijda Cup is presented to a person or group whose teaching performance, in the broadest sense of the word, was impressive over the course of previous years. Members of the PC, amongst others, are allowed to nominate people, groups or associations for these Awards.

This year, members of our committee nominated Annemie Ploeger for the Christiaan Hamaker Award and Max van der Linden and Roeland Voskens for the Nico Frijda Cup.

Annemie Ploeger ended up winning the Christiaan Hamaker Award, and Brigitte ten Brink has won the Nico Frijda Cup.

Visibility

The student members brainstormed, amongst other things, about ideas to achieve more input from students to discuss during student- and plenary meetings. Ideas were, for example, having a lecture talk during first- and second year's courses, and a virtual poster projected on the TV-screens in the G-building of REC. Unfortunately, due to the corona crisis kicking in, not all ideas were executed (properly). These ideas will be passed on to next year. However, we do believe that the visibility has elevated during the year as the amount of student applications was much higher than previous years.

Reflecting on the Programme

We think that the programme is in good shape. The course evaluations give a good insight into the quality of the courses. The NSE shares this positive assessment of the programme, with high grades for points such as student satisfaction, content, and scientific skills.

At the moment, the programme is working on two big changes; transitioning to a bilingual programme (second and third year) and reforming the bachelor's programme. The way these two points work out will determine whether the programme can remain a high quality programme. The changes on these two points affect the workload of the staff members and, as a consequence, the quality of the education. So, concluding from this annual report we think that the programme is in good shape at the moment, but that we have to be careful that the big changes do not take its toll on the quality of education. We believe that the board is working hard to realise positive changes and that the future will bring us good education.

Resolutions for the coming academic year.

- **New Bachelor:** The coming year we want to keep an eye on the implementation of the new curriculum. To be specific, we want to keep an eye on the workload of students and staff members, on the incorporation of courses, on meeting learning goals and demands, on the bachelor thesis, on the availability of rooms and on meeting the financial goals.
- **Covid-19:** We want to keep an eye on the effects of the current corona crisis on the quality of the programme and the motivation of the students. In particular, we want to focus on the methods of examination, communication of decisions made, and on the teaching methods used.
- **Course evaluations:** (1) We want to see whether courses structurally (for multiple years) have the same flags during semester evaluations and (2) demand more thorough analyses of flagged courses.
- **Workload:** We want to follow up on our previous research on workload.
- **Application procedure:** We want to involve the ombuds student again in the application procedure (as we are supposed to). The procedure for recruitment of staff members should take into account that staff members should re-apply after ending of their term.
- **Internationality:** We would like to include international student members/staff members to better represent our current demographics.
- **Visibility:** This year, a lot of ideas were presented to increase visibility. Due to the chaos that corona brought to the PC, some are still not worked out. Next year, we want to continue executing these plans.

Appendix A: PC procedure Semester Report

Currently, the OC reviews the semester rapportage. With every semester report, the teaching coordinators provide us with a response to the report, including the results of discussions with the student delegates. On paper, this sounds like a good idea as it would be too much work for the PC to review all courses individually. It also puts the responsibility for improving and evaluating the courses to those who have most knowledge of the ins and outs of day to day teaching – the programme coordinators and the course coordinators.

However, we observe that the PC is less active than desired with regards to the course evaluations – one of the core tasks! Replies from the programme groups are sometimes only very short and problems that might be clear from the full evaluation report, from for example student remarks, hardly ever come to the attention of the PC. This is particularly the case because we only get the information from the student delegates (who directly represent the students' point of view) second hand, if at all.

Halfway this academic year, the procedure of evaluating the semester report was adapted. First, the Educational Institute (OWI), instead of the PC, has asked the programme groups for their comments on the semester report as the directors of College and Graduate school would like to receive these comments first hand and not through the PC. The comments of the programme groups are collected by Rifka van der Meer (OWI) and sent directly to both the directors and the PC.

Second, questions for the programme groups were reformulated:

1. *In courses where good and varying grades are achieved and students are satisfied with the learning effect: is it possible to formulate why? (so that colleagues can possibly make use of that knowledge)*
2. *In courses that achieve a different success rate than expected (lower or higher), is it clear what happened there and are there plans (necessary) to adjust this? (in a small-scale course with intensive education, a high success rate is not necessarily unexpected).*
3. *In a course in which the students indicate that they did not learn much and/or were dissatisfied with the test: is it clear why (possibly after a discussion with the student delegates) and is there a plan for improvement?*
4. *Any other comments on the quality of education are welcome.*

The new questions resulted in more satisfying answers but a few more recommendations were made (June meeting). For the next academic year it is recommended for the PC to:

- Go over the full semester report during the meeting to see if there are general trends that we need to pay attention to
- Request full evaluation reports for those courses with 4 flags or more and divide these reports among duos
- Duos ask the template questions to the course coordinator (see above)