

Report assessment Information Sciences 2024

Version 13-02-2024

Institution

Open Universiteit Nederland, Faculteit Bètawetenschappen

Details visit

Programs involved

BSc Informatiekunde	Croho-code 56842
MSc Business Process Management & IT (BPMIT)	Croho-code 60094

Assessment period

2017-2023

Dates visit

19-20 September 2023

Panel

Chair:	Prof.dr. O. de Troyer
Member	Prof.dr. G Poels
Member	Prof.dr. J. van Hillegersberg
Student member	A. Pater
Secretary	P. Hilderling

Conclusions of the panel

Standaard	BSc Informatiekunde (56842)	MSc BPMIT (60094)
1	pass	pass
2	pass	pass
3	pass	pass
4	pass	pass

Development points

In the final assessment report, the panel identified the following five development points.

1. Engage in more structural reflection on a curriculum level between teaching staff members to ensure that the profile and curricula of both programs remain up-to-date and aligned. This includes:
 - a. Communicating the overarching aims of the MSc and the connection between individual courses more explicitly to students throughout the curriculum
 - b. Keeping the BSc courses aligned with each other and preventing possible overlap in content
 - c. Incorporating developments in the field into the curricula
2. Invest in more proactive communication to students, and investigate the use of other media beyond written student evaluations to collect student feedback on courses.
3. Consider the introduction of peer assessment in the group projects in the MSc to account for differences in individual contributions of students.
4. Improve thesis assessment procedures by storing the contributions of individual assessors separately in the BSc, and by introducing a more transparent translation between the three-point scores on the separate assessment criteria and the final thesis grade.
5. Ensure that the gap between the central Board of Examiners and the individual programs does not become too large, for instance by more closely monitoring the execution of exam quality control responsibilities mandated to the faculties.

Discussion

Each of the development points identified by the panel is discussed below. It should be noted that this is a preliminary discussion, since further action will require more discussion with all involved parties.

1. Engage in more structural reflection on a curriculum level between teaching staff members to ensure that the profile and curricula of both programs remains up-to-date and aligned. This includes:
 - a. Communicating the overarching aims of the MSc and the connection between individual courses more explicitly to students throughout the curriculum
 - b. Keeping the BSc courses aligned with each other and prevent possible overlap in content
 - c. Incorporating developments in the field into the curricula

- RE 1a and 1c:

- This issue is relevant for MSc BPMIT.
- The panel added in the report:
 - “The earlier mentioned recommendation to increase coherence between courses and keep the curricula up-to-date would ideally be tied to the research agendas of the research groups in the department. The panel fully understands that this might not be feasible at the moment, and underlines that this is not a shortcoming of the program, but given the opportunity, the panel thinks that this would be a good investment.”
- We are thinking of:
 - development and communication of a document explaining the learning objectives of the program and positioning each course in this setting. This can be used at the start of each course to position the course in the program. It can also be used as part of the information for prospective / starting students in information sessions, the website and (possibly) the study guide.
 - organizing regular (e.g. once per year) staff meetings to discuss the profile and curriculum of the program and discuss technical developments. Also (proposed) changes in courses can be presented, so as to be able to avoid overlap between courses. Finally current relevant research activities with actionable impact to the program can be identified. This can lead to changes in the program or in individual courses.

- RE 1b and 1c:

- This issue is relevant for BSc IK.
- We are thinking of:
 - organizing regular (e.g. once per year) staff meetings to discuss the profile and curriculum of the program and discuss technical developments. This can lead to changes in the program or in individual courses.

2. Invest in more proactive communication to students, and investigate the use of other media beyond written student evaluations to collect student feedback on

courses.

- RE 2:

- This issue is relevant for all programs of the faculty.
 - The panel added in the report:
 - “Students mentioned to the panel that they would prefer more proactive communication on behalf of the OU on several issues. This includes for instance the follow-up on course evaluations, activities of the program committee, curriculum choices and the possibilities and limitations of studying with a functional disability.”
 - Regarding more proactive communication we are thinking of:
 - Implement a structured feedback loop where, upon completion of course evaluations, a transparent summary of key feedback and any resultant changes or improvements is shared with students.
 - Also, in new runs of the course, a summary of the evaluation of last year can be presented, e.g., during the kick-off meeting
 - Regarding collecting student feedback the faculty has already started an investigation into the usage of student focus groups to obtain timely and relevant feedback. First experiences are positive.
 - As soon as we know that a new course will be added/changed into the program: first inform the ‘opleidingscommissie’ and second ‘send an announcement through Brightspace to all students enrolled in the program. Something like “coming soon: course xxx” and some description about what the course will be about, and then more details will be available by [date]. In that way students will be informed without having to give too many details if we are still working on it.
3. Consider the introduction of peer assessment in the group projects in the MSc to account for differences in individual contributions of students.

- Re 3:

- This issue is relevant for MSc BPMIT
- The panel added in the report:
 - “During the site visit, the panel spoke with staff, students and the Board of Examiners about the assessment of group projects in the MSc BPMIT. Some students felt that individual contributions to group projects were not always fully recognized in assessment, especially in cases where differences in the group were not severe enough to be reported as freeriding. The panel thinks that including peer assessment in group projects would remedy most of these issues. This would allow a differentiation in grades between students resulting from the amount and quality of work contributed, according to the students themselves. The panel recommends investigating whether this system could be used in the MSc.”
- Here work is already in progress in a OU-funded quality project. This will continue this year.
- The panel also suggested using peer review results not only as a means of supporting students in their group work, but also as part of the grading

process to further motivate students. This will be discussed later on in the project.

4. Improve thesis assessment procedures by storing the contributions of individual assessors separately in the BSc, and by introducing a more transparent translation between the three-point scores on the separate assessment criteria and the final thesis grade.

- RE 4:

- This issue is relevant for BSc IK
- This suggestion will be followed.

5. Ensure that the gap between the central Board of Examiners and the individual programs does not become too large, for instance by more closely monitoring the execution of exam quality control responsibilities mandated to the faculties.

- RE 5:

- This issue is relevant for all programs of the faculty.
- The panel added in the report:
 - “The panel feels that the CvE could have been more proactive in monitoring the execution and results of its mandated responsibilities. Nevertheless, the panel was happy to learn that examination quality control in the faculty is now active and structurally embedded in the faculty’s workflow.”
- A new policy regarding this issue has been developed and is currently being executed. Contact with the CvE will be maintained by the FMT.

Additional issues

Apart from these main development points, a number of other issues was mentioned in the report.

1. During the site visit, the panel discussed the role of the three variants in the MSc BPMIT curriculum with several program representatives. The panel thinks that the specialization courses offered in the variants are attractive and relevant, but that the choice to offer the courses in bundles of two might be unnecessarily restrictive. The panel can envision other relevant combinations of specialization and elective courses that might be attractive for students, but are currently not possible within the curriculum. It suggests the program to critically reflect on these variants, and see whether the specialization part of the curriculum can be opened up more. For instance, the variants could be integrated in suggested coherent packages of specialization and elective courses, with additional other combinations beyond the current three.
 - This issue is relevant for the MSc BPMIT.
 - This recommendation fits in with program redesign activities that have already been set in motion. Redesign of the program will be planned in 2023-2024 and executed in 2024-2025. This recommendation will be taken on board in that process.
2. The panel found that the exact meaning of the OU model of online activating education was not yet fully clear to all students, and they could not yet discern a shared approach throughout the courses beyond group work and mid-term assignments. This is understandable to the panel, considering the relatively recent introduction of the model. It encourages the programs to keep developing the model, and present it more explicitly to students.
 - This issue is relevant for the entire university.
 - Continuous development of the model is being done, e.g. in a number of education quality programs, and will continue.
 - The suggestion of 'more explicit communication' will be addressed by the programs in information sessions, the website and (possibly) the study guide.
3. It considered that it might be interesting to investigate optional internationalization opportunities for students, for instance through inter-university project groups in courses.
 - This issue is relevant for the entire university.
 - It is a difficult issue, since nearly all of our students have an active professional and social life in the Netherlands. So finding time for such an international commitment is not easy. We will take a closer look at this issue in future.
 - a. The panel observed that there is relatively few teaching staff on the full professor level in the programs. There are two full professors in the department, one of whom is currently not available for teaching. The panel thinks that the program would benefit from an additional full professor associated with the program.
 - This issue is relevant for the faculty.
 - This is currently being discussed at the faculty level.
4. Furthermore, the panel thinks that the translation between the three-point assessment of the criteria and the resulting grade on a ten-point scale could be more transparent. The

panel understood that there are no fixed rules for this, and that this is left to the individual assessors. While the panel found that the final grades are usually appropriate, it has the associated risk of introducing subjectivity in the grading. It recommends a more structural translation between scores on the assessment criteria and the final grade. This could for instance be achieved by transforming the rubric from a three-point scale to a ten-point scale, and/or attach fixed weights to the different criteria.

- This issue is relevant for both BSc IK and MSc BPMIT.
- This will be discussed further with the staff.

5. During the site visit, the panel spoke with the CvE on policies on the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT for the generation of texts. It learnt with appreciation that, after an initial phase of labeling the use of AI in assignments as fraud, the Board is now working on a more nuanced policy on possibilities and limitations of using AI assistance tools in assignments. The panel encourages the Board to continue working on this, as it reckons that AI is here to stay for the longer term. (...). The panel recommends the CvE to monitor more closely the execution of its mandated responsibilities, and develop further policies on the use of AI assistance tools in assignments.

- This issue is relevant for the entire university.
- Currently, the OU is working on this issue. In the meantime, the department will develop provisional guidelines for students regarding the use of such tools.

6. The panel learnt during the site visit that the programs aim to further strengthen the ties to their alumni. The panel encourages this, as it thinks that the network of the alumni and the input they provide can help in the continuous improvement of the programs.

- This issue is relevant for the entire university.
- Both at OU and faculty level this is currently being looked at.

Overview responsibilities

The table below provides an overview of responsibilities.

DEVELOPMENT POINTS		
Item	Scope	Responsibility
1A	MSc BPMIT	Program leader(s)
1B	BSc IK / MSC BPMIT	Program leader(s)
1C	BSc IK	Program leader(s)
2	Faculty	Coordinator education
3	MSC BPMIT	Program leader(s)
4	BSc IK	Program leader(s)
5	Faculty	Coordinator education
ADDITIONAL ISSUES		
Item	Scope	Responsibility
1	MSc BPMIT	Program leader(s)
2	University	UCO - Coordinator education
3	University	UCO - Coordinator education
4	BSc IK / MSC BPMIT	Program leader(s)
5	University	UCO - Coordinator education (long term) Program leader(s) (short term)
6	University	UCO - Coordinator education