

Public report on the quality of the advanced master in maritime and air transport management

Most important conclusions from the external visitations and the recovery plan of the advanced master in maritime and air transport management

The original [visitation report](#), published in 2016, mentions some strong points and contains some recommendations for further improvement. The study programme was accredited for a limited period by NVAO on the basis of this visitation report and a recovery plan. During that period the programme improved by implementing the recovery plan. One of the changes was a shift in the name from *Master in transport and maritime management* into *Master in maritime and air transport management*. After a [visitation with a limited procedure](#) in 2019 the visitation committee was convinced of the basic quality of the programme. In the academic year 2019-2020 the programme is still waiting for the final accreditation by NVAO.

Below are the most important conclusions from the original visitation and the visitation with limited procedure and the recovery plan.

Strengths of the programme

The main objective of the programme is to help employees become top managers who are able to cope with the challenges of the international, competitive market in transport, with a specific focus on air and maritime transport. Overall students and alumni appreciate the **profile** of the programme which combines academic specialization with a practice-oriented approach and site visits to relevant institutions and companies in the Port of Antwerp and abroad.

According to the visitation in 2019, the programme now consists of clear **tracks** which prepare students for careers in industry or for further study. In the last 3 years the programme has improved the admission policy. The panel was enthusiastic to learn how the diversity of **international students** is brought into the programme. Most of the staff are recognized researchers in their field. Experts from the industry are involved in the programme through guest lectures. The course coordinator monitors the content-related coherence within each course and the assessment methods used. The level of examination questions and required answers are in line with what could be expected in an advanced master. The reassessment panel applauds the improved master dissertation process which has resulted in good quality output.

Based on the alumni statistics provided by the programme, the **employability rate** is high.

Recommendations for further improvement of the programme

In 2016 when the original visitation took place, the programme was already in a **transition phase** but the **results** were **not visible** enough for the committee to be convinced of the basic quality of the programme.

The 2016 visitation committee judged that there weren't enough guarantees that all the **competencies** which the programme aimed for could be achieved at advanced master's level. Firstly, several core courses were taught at bachelor's level rather than at an advanced master's level. Secondly, nearly all courses were organized together with another advanced master with a different focus. Thirdly, the admission criteria stated that work experience was required. In practice, a significant number of students didn't have this experience, making it difficult to teach at an executive level and to reach the aims of the programme. As a consequence the 2016 committee was not convinced that all the competencies which the programme aimed for were **evaluated** at advanced master's level. Firstly, the examination questions of several courses were not in line with the expected academic level. Secondly, the methodological and analytical quality of the master's dissertations was too limited. Thirdly, the programme lacked a steering policy on testing and evaluation. It was largely left upon the individual professor to define the evaluation method.

To improve the programme on the critical elements the visitation pointed out, the faculty implemented a **recovery plan**. Firstly, the programme was more **integrated in the faculty** and the **curriculum** was fundamentally **restructured**. Students can now opt for a major either in maritime or in air transport and they can focus on either management or research. Each course is led by an academic course coordinator, however excursions and

guest lectures from industry professionals are still a feature. Crash courses in economics and financial economics at the beginning of the academic year bring all students to the same level. Because of the integration in the faculty the assessment as well as the diversity of the assessment methods have been closely monitored. Also a number of improvements were made to the master's dissertation.

The **reassessment** panel in 2019 was impressed by all the **positive changes** that followed after the first visitation in 2016. The panel feels that all the recommendations of the first visitation committee have been addressed. To improve the programme even further, the second visitation committee pointed out some recommendations on which the programme is now working. The development of **communication skills** in the programme can still be reinforced. **Cross-cutting themes** like sustainability or digitalisation could be better articulated. The committee encourages the programme to scale up the level of the **air transport management** track, for instance by further developing the international network for the air transport track. The committee strongly recommends revising the timing of the master's dissertations. The respective weights of the different assessment methods in the courses should be reconsidered in the final grading. Finally the panel supports the programme to establish an official, faculty supported alumni organization to keep in close contact with the **alumni**.