

Peer Review Biomedical Sciences – public report

Most important conclusions of the peer review

The report of the peer review team identifies a number of strengths of the programme, as well as suggestions for further improvement. These suggestions have already been incorporated into the programme development plan for the coming period. The most important conclusions of the peer review are summarized below.

Strengths of the programme

Biomedical Sciences is a **high-level programme, thoughtfully constructed** with a **passionate teaching team**. In addition to a solid theoretical background, students can count on a strong development of **research skills**, which are an added value on the labour market.

The master's programme offers **plenty of options** for students to further explore their own areas of interest. The **practicals are integrated** into the specialisation, allowing students to work in a more targeted way. Two of the four specialisations are taught in English, with 'Neurosciences' and 'Infectious and tropical diseases' being unique master's programmes in Flanders. The English-language specialisations are **very popular internationally**. The programme makes a large effort managing this to ensure it's an added value to all stakeholders.

The **care for students** is very comprehensive; there are well-developed opportunities to brush up on prior knowledge deficiencies in mathematics, physics and/or chemistry. In addition, students can also count on counselling for questions concerning their study trajectory or for psychosocial needs. There is also an 'honours programme' for students who want an extra challenge. International students can also count on various welcome initiatives. The classes are organised at the live science campus 'Campus Drie Eiken', in an **renewed learning environment** (including the laboratories) with periodically lessons in small groups.

There is a lot of **student participation** in the programme through student clubs, through student representation and through participation in teaching evaluations. The lecturers are very approachable and are committed to make a swift follow-up of any comments. The programme engages in a **data-driven** approach to identify, track and remedy any bottlenecks in the teaching process.

Given the impact a biomedicist has on society, '**scientific integrity**' is an important theme for the programme. A student acquires competences on bioethical issues (including CRISPR-CAS, laboratory animals, PFAS) as well as on topics such as privacy, data ownership, research bias and fraud.

Suggestions for further improvement

To address prior knowledge deficits among about half of the starting students, the programme continues to work on **selection and preparation modules**. The success of the programme has an impact on the organisation of **practicals and (observation) internships**. The programme will look for alternatives so that students can achieve all related competences.

In the upcoming period, the programme will explore how to make 'scientific integrity' more visible in the curriculum with a specific focus on the **connection between science and society**.

Because the English language is important in the master's programme as well as in later careers, the programme wants to prepare students better and earlier for **academic English**, including through a self-study package in the bachelor's programme.

At various moments in the programme, students are given explanations on their **career options**. In the following years, besides informing students about the possibility to obtain a PhD, the programme will also take action to highlight other career options.

. This will be done in cooperation with alumni (via social media and a career evening), via guest speakers, via examples in class and via company visits. The programme, together with the faculty, is looking at how to reactivate the **alumni association**.

With input from students, the programme is working on a **portfolio system** that can be used to map competences, identify any shortcomings and be used in the professional field (e.g. when applying for jobs).

To give students the opportunity for an international experience, the programme wants to further facilitate the possibility of **carrying out a master's thesis abroad**. It will be communicated earlier in the master's programme, and there will be a contact person for each specialisation.

Peer review of Biomedical Sciences

Timing

The site visit of the peer review team took place on **the 17th and 18th of April 2024**.

Peer review team

The programme suggested external and internal candidates as members of the peer review team. The student member was suggested by the Department of Education, with approval of the Student association of UAntwerp. The composition of the peer review team was validated on the 6th of November 2023 by the Board of Programme Evaluation.

Composition of the peer review team of Biomedical Sciences – biomedische wetenschappen:

Chairwoman:

- Prof. dr. Elke Struyf, full professor Educational Sciences at the Antwerp School of Education (ASoE) and chair of the Education Committee of Academic Teacher Training, UAntwerp

External members:

- Dr. Gönül Dilaver, associate professor Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Utrecht
- Gerard Griffioen, Chief Scientific Officer, reMYND
- Prof. dr. Serge Van Calenbergh, full professor Medicinal Chemistry, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, UGent

Internal member:

- Prof. dr. Patrick Cras, emeritus with an assignment, University Hospital Antwerp

Student member:

- Menthe Boers, master student in Rehabilitation Sciences and Physiotherapy, UAntwerp

Result Peer Review

The peer review team decided to **confirm confidence** in the programme of Biomedical Sciences – biomedische wetenschappen.

Creation

With regard to the peer review, the programme made a self-assessment report, describing its vision, good practices, challenges and future prospects. The Department of Education developed a datasheet in consultation with the programme, containing both qualitative (learning outcomes, study programme, staff information, etc.) and quantitative data (amount of enrolments, student success rates, cohort analysis, etc.) about the programme. In consultation with the Department of Education the programme created a time schedule to interview the staff responsible for the programme, students, lecturers, assistants, external partners and alumni. During the interviews between the peer review team and the programme the CIKO staff member of the Faculty was present.

The peer review team evaluated the programme based on qualitative and quantitative information, as the interviews and the preparatory documents: the self-assessment report, the datasheet and the education portfolio of the programme.

The peer review took place conform to the [European Standards & Guidelines](#).

Report and follow up

All findings of the peer review team are written down in a review report. The review report names several strengths of the programme, and some suggestions for further improvement. The programme incorporated these suggestions in a development plan.

The integrated report – review report and development plan – was validated together with the public information by the Board of Programme Evaluation on the 25th of November 2024 and was presented to the Education Board on the 28th of January 2025 and the Executive Board of UAntwerp on the 25th of February 2025.