

MSLAS Re-accreditation – Development Dialogue

<i>Date:</i>	27th November 2024
<i>Time:</i>	15:30 – 16:30
<i>Location:</i>	Paul-Henri Spaaklaan 1, 6229 EN, B4.011
<i>Accreditation Panel:</i>	Em. prof. dr. Ton van Haaften, Em. prof. dr. Gerda Croiset, Prof. dr. Henrik von Wehrden, Prof. dr. Marlies Van Bael, Borbála (Lucy) Karvalits, Adrienne Wieldraaijer-Huijzer
<i>MSLAS Management:</i>	Dr. Hanne Diliën, Dr. Wolfgang Giernalczyk, Prof. dr. ir. Gerco Onderwater, Prof. dr. Pim Martens, Eefje Nijst, Linzi Hall, Rogier Gerardu
<i>Minutes:</i>	Megan Entzinger

Topic 1: LAS education for the (future) labour market: how can we respond to needs and (technological) change?

The panel advised that the programme should directly engage with the labour market, as it is best positioned to articulate its needs and priorities. The importance of allowing academic staff the time and freedom to innovate was also emphasised.

Social sciences and humanities play an important role within a LAS programme. There is a balance between the technical and the social; problems of today cannot be solved with technical solutions alone.

LAS graduates offer additional skills that more specialised graduates may lack: learning quickly, cooperation, teamwork, cultural awareness, and problem-solving. Due to the breadth of the MSLAS programme, graduates may feel they are behind in content when entering the labour market. The panel believes graduates can quickly compensate for this with the skills acquired during a LAS degree; skills that graduates from more specialised programmes may lack. The panel believes that the MSLAS programme teaches its students *how* to learn and what is needed to develop and strengthen the essential skills and knowledge. In particular, problem-based learning (PBL) equips them with the ability to identify and fill knowledge gaps, a highly practical skill in the workforce. MSLAS graduates become even more valuable after completing a master's degree as they can combine specialised knowledge along with skills only taught by a LAS programme.

Topic 2: Owning your curriculum: how can self-reflection be emphasised in academic advising and the introduction of a portfolio?

The panel highlighted that while portfolios can be a useful tool for personal growth (development of skills, experiences, and reflections throughout their education), it may not be beneficial for all students. Experiences from the panel showed that the incorporation of portfolios in a curriculum could undermine confidence in some students. It can also turn into bureaucratic exercise that increases workload for staff. An option, however, is a light version of a portfolio that could be integrated into the existing advising processes, building a degree of reflection into natural check-in moments throughout the academic year. It would be a "storytelling" opportunity for students to communicate with other students about "what they did" and "why they did it", rather than a judgemental exercise on progress.

If a portfolio is included in the curriculum, it is essential to highlight the significance and purpose of the assignment; why the student has been asked to complete it and who it is for. Without this, it may lose its power.

It was advised that AI should be used with caution in the course selection/advising process as it may reduce the human aspect and oversimplify the process.

It was concluded that self-reflection should be facilitated through advising and the programme should reflect carefully before introducing a portfolio.

Topic 3: Research and Education in the college context: How can staff be encouraged to invest time in their research? How do you view the role and position of research in a college context?

Finding the balance between research and education for teaching staff was likened to finding the *holy grail*. The panel praised MSP for its organisational structure in this regard, as it seems that while staff have a heavy teaching load, they are still able to work on their research. This is achieved through the aimed structure of having one teaching period per semester, and one non-teaching period which can be utilised for course development or research, and by incorporating students in their research. This, however, is more common and achievable in the sciences than the other academic domains.

It was highlighted by the panel that university colleges were founded in the Netherlands, by Hans Adriaansens, without the prospect of research; however, this has changed; research now plays an important role in education at university colleges. Research allows educators to continue updating their knowledge, which they share with their students. This tends to happen naturally as tutors are often PhD students.

The extent to which MSLAS research staff connect with other UM research groups was unclear to the panel. The development of peer networks for researchers to discuss their progress, give feedback and strengthen professional relationships in a UM-wide research network would be beneficial for supporting continuous research. This would not only be within MSLAS but beyond, to the wider UM circle.

Additional Topic: MSLAS collaboration: What potential opportunities could emerge from further collaboration, and what challenges might be encountered?

The panel highlighted the significance of collaboration for students and staff. It was mentioned that while current MSLAS students occasionally take classes together, they tend not to socialize and lack connection across the three colleges. Interaction between the students could be encouraged by the three study associations and supported by the management. This would strengthen the community on both a college and MSLAS level.

In addition to this, there are plenty of opportunities for joint projects, particularly due to the significance of humanities for scientists and vice versa. The students would benefit from being exposed to further perspectives and disciplines beyond those offered at each college.

Collaboration is already extensively established; however, there are further opportunities for growth in the coming years due to the existing commonality across the colleges.