

# Policy Framework for Admission to and Selection for Master's degree programmes

Approved by the Board of the University: 10 March 2020

---

## 1. Statutory regulations for admission and selection

1. Faculties are allowed to set a minimum and/or maximum number of students who will take part in selective Master's degree programmes. If a faculty sets a limit on the number of students taking part in a degree programme, this number then becomes a statutory requirement which may not be exceeded (WHW [Higher Education and Research Act] Art. 7.30b.3). Faculties must make their own internal rules about the procedure to be followed in cases where the maximum number of students is exceeded, and these rules must be communicated to prospective students (WHW Art. 7.30b.4).
2. Faculty boards are responsible for the configuration, organization, and implementation of the selection procedures for their own Master's degree programmes. They may mandate a selection committee to do this on their behalf.
3. Faculties should base the configuration of their selection procedure on the Model Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER) for Master's degree programmes. They may amend their Teaching and Examination Regulations in line with new policy where necessary.
4. The admission requirements and qualitative selection criteria must be set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations of the degree programme concerned.
5. Faculty boards should ask the programme committee of the Master's degree programme in question for advice about the admission requirements and qualitative selection criteria that they intend to use for the selection procedure (WHW Art. 9.18).<sup>1</sup>
6. Faculty councils do not have the right of consent with regard to the qualitative selection criteria that the programmes decide to use (WHW Art. 9.38b).
7. The student section of the University Council has the right to prior consultation about the selection procedure (WHW Art. 7.30b.2 in conjunction with 9.33a.2.d). Every year, the procedures for Master's degree programmes that intend to introduce selection are sent to the University Council for advice.
8. Selection criteria are set per individual degree programme and apply to every track of that programme. It is not possible to use different selection procedures or selection criteria for different tracks within the same degree programme.
9. Prospective students must meet a minimum of the following admission requirements: they must have a recognized (specific) Bachelor's degree certificate or be able to prove that they are able to think and work at an academic Bachelor's degree level. If the latter applies, the faculty must assess this at the student's request (the procedure is similar to admission to a Bachelor's degree programme via an entrance examination). In all cases, admission is provisional until a student satisfies one of these two conditions.
10. The WHW states that the procedure must involve using at least two

different qualitative selection criteria.

---

<sup>1</sup> N.B. Consultative participation is therefore part of quality assurance at the programme level; this is discussed in more detail in 'Monitoring/Evaluation'.

11. Admission requirements can only be used to assess the level that prospective students should have attained during their prior education. Selection criteria may be set over and above the BA level.
12. It is up to the faculty boards to decide how they weigh up the various criteria, or to ensure that their selection committees do this. In cases where a cap has been put on the maximum number of students that can take part in a Master's degree programme, the faculty board must decide how to rank the results of the assessments for prospective students, or mandate their selection committees to do this.
13. Faculties may set additional admission requirements for international students: these students can be asked to prove that they possess certain knowledge and/or skills at the Bachelor's degree level (e.g. language skills, as demonstrated by a particular IELTS or TOEFL score).
14. Faculties may not set different and/or additional qualitative selection criteria for Dutch and international students; all students who apply for a Master's degree programme must go through the same selection procedure with the same qualitative selection criteria.
15. Faculties must pay attention to the timeline when implementing a selection procedure.<sup>2</sup>
16. Selective degree programmes involving a pre-Master's programme may ask students to take part in a pre-Master's selection procedure. The purpose of this selection procedure is to assess whether it is reasonable to expect that the prospective student will ultimately pass the Master's degree programme. Students who successfully complete the pre-Master's programme will be admitted to the Master's degree programme without taking part in another selection procedure. However, progress requirements can be made of pre-Master's students (e.g. they must complete the pre-Master's programme within one year).

## 2. Policy on admission and selection

The policy below has been categorized according to the following key themes:

A.	<b>Transparency</b> <b>Uniformity</b>	<b>Transparency:</b> Applicants must be perfectly clear about the way that the procedure works. This refers to the who, what, where, when, and why aspects. <b>Uniformity:</b> First, this means that the procedures used for all degree programmes at the UG must be as similar as possible in terms of structure and information. Secondly, the procedures must also be as similar as possible to the procedures used at other Dutch universities.
B.	<b>Equality</b> <b>Fairness</b>	Equal cases must be treated equally. Where possible, any differences in the way that cases are dealt with should be kept to a minimum. Procedures must be fair.

<sup>2</sup> This is important in cases where marks are used as a criterion, for example. The timing of the selection procedure depends on the precise mark being used for the assessment; if the average mark for Bachelor's programme is chosen, selection can only begin a year later. In addition, in certain cases this may imply that the policy on resits would need to be amended in the Teaching and Examination Regulations for certain Bachelor's degree programmes. For example, if an average mark of 7 is set as a selection criterion for admission to a particular Master's degree programme, students must be given the chance to resit exams for which they scored below a 7 for their Bachelor's programme.

<b>C.</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Information:</b> The information on the website must be presented in a way that safeguards and clearly communicates the above-mentioned transparency, uniformity, and equality/fairness.
<b>D.</b>	<b>Monitoring Evaluation</b>	In order to uphold this quality, the UG must operate a system that monitors and evaluates the quality of its procedures.
<b>E.</b>	<b>Sharing knowledge</b>	Knowledge about the aspects of the procedures and information that go smoothly, and about those which do not, must be exchanged within the UG in order to optimize quality. Knowledge on the subject is also shared between universities at the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands) level.
<b>F.</b>	<b>Safety net</b>	The universities stand for sectoral accessibility to the Master's phase. To prevent students from falling between the cracks, in late 2017, all of the universities set up a 'safety net' to guarantee Bachelor's graduates access to an appropriate Master's degree programme (in the discipline for which they were awarded a Bachelor's degree certificate). The UG has already introduced this policy.

## **A. Transparency, Uniformity and Information**

1. Admission requirements are used to assess the suitability of prospective students.
  - a. Is this person capable of completing the degree programme successfully, within the given time? The basic requirement is a Bachelor's degree certificate in a subject related to the Master's degree programme concerned.
  - b. In view of the current detailed profiles of Master's programmes and increasing internationalization, the term 'related to' needs to be more closely defined. It should be taken to mean that a student has the required knowledge of the discipline and methodology, and is proficient in English.
2. Admission requirements must correspond with the objectives.
3. The degree programme should make a clear distinction between 'admission requirements' and 'selection criteria'.
  - a. Admission requirements concern the knowledge and competencies that students should have acquired during the Bachelor's phase and are therefore linked to the content of the Bachelor's degree.
  - b. Selection criteria concern skills that a student has acquired above and beyond the learning outcomes of the Bachelor's degree. These can be aspects relating to the student's personal qualities (motivation) or the final results that they achieved for their previous programme (and which transcend the level of the learning outcomes for that programme).
4. The degree programme must specify the relationship between the criteria that have been set and the objectives of the degree programme.
5. The degree programme must specify which students it wishes to accept.
6. During the admission process, applicants will be assessed in terms of the criteria relevant to the programme.
7. The degree programme sets a standard for each of these criteria.
8. Different methods may be used to assess whether a student satisfies the

criteria. These will be specified.

9. Scores will be kept for every method used.
10. The degree programme will give students feedback about their performance.
11. The degree programme uses the following terminology for admission requirements/selection criteria:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Admission</b>	<b>Selection</b>
<b>Criterion</b>	The capacities expected of students	Substantive knowledge, insight, and skills at the Bachelor's degree level	Capacities that go above and beyond, or apply in addition to, the Bachelor's degree level
<b>Standard</b>	The level at which students must have acquired the capacities	Dutch Bachelor's degree level	Above/in addition to Dutch Bachelor's degree level
<b>Method</b>	The way in which students are assessed against the standard	Several methods are possible, such as a related Bachelor's degree certificate or a non-related Bachelor's degree certificate with course units/Minor/course/exam (e.g. a score comparable with a related Bachelor's degree certificate in the GMAT/language test)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An average mark (GPA)</li> <li>- A score in a test (e.g. GMAT/language test)</li> <li>- Letter of motivation</li> <li>- CV</li> <li>- Reference letter</li> </ul>
<b>Score</b>	The value of the results of the method used	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A related Bachelor's degree certificate or</li> <li>b. specific course units/course/Minors passed, a score of X for a test (corresponding with Dutch Bachelor's degree level)</li> </ol>	Special motivation, score X (above Dutch Bachelor's degree level)

## **B. Equality/fairness**

1. The degree programme will make no distinction between groups of students when assessing admissions to Master's degree programmes. The same criteria must be used for all groups of students.
  - a. The various groups in the selection procedure - including UG students, students from other institutions, students with a Bachelor's degree certificate from within the EEA - must satisfy the same admission requirements.
  - b. Where possible, students will be treated as a group; where necessary, individual cases can be considered separately.
1. The faculty/degree programme must consciously create equal opportunities.
  - a. Attention will be paid to supervising and supporting specific groups of students in order to prevent prejudice (conscious or unconscious) and to promote equal opportunities and inclusiveness in teaching.
  - b. Where necessary, the faculty/degree programme must develop specific policy aimed at creating equal opportunities for admission to the Master's programme.

## C. Information

1. Educational level:
  - a. Every Master's degree programme must mention the following essential points in the information it provides:
    - i. The type of degree programme.
    - ii. The aim of, and reasons for, the admission/selection procedure.
    - iii. The timeline for the procedure, the steps that an applicant must take, and the various deadlines;
    - iv. The criteria and standards.
    - v. In the event of selection, a clear distinction between admission requirements and selection criteria.
    - vi. The methods used to assess the requirements and criteria.
    - vii. A clear distinction between 'what' (e.g. motivation) and 'how' (e.g. letter of motivation).
    - viii. The way in which criteria are weighted, in other words, how the degree programme decides whether or not to admit a student.
    - ix. The type of feedback that students can expect after the selection procedure, and when they will be notified.
    - x. How students can get in touch personally to ask for extra information.
2. General policy:
  - a. The information will be presented on the website as simply and transparently as possible. (Statutory requirement of degree programmes: WHW Art. 7.15.1 and Art. 7.30b.)
  - b. The website will present a central section posting general information about how the admission and selection procedures at the UG work. The information will explain what they are, why and how they are used, and which degree programmes operate selection.
  - c. Although a clear distinction will be made between various groups of applicants, the information and communication for these groups will be as uniform as possible in order to safeguard equality and fairness.
  - d. Information will be published as early as possible.
  - e. The information will be presented in a uniform manner throughout the UG, and the application system will be as uniform as possible for all institutions.
    - i. This relates to aspects such as how and where information (for various groups) will appear, the order in which and how documents will be dispatched, the mode of interim communication about progress, and how feedback will be given. The process will be automated as much as possible to minimize the workload.
    - ii. Based on the principles stated above, an institution-wide, uniform communication template will be produced for information, communication, and the system regarding application, admission, and selection for Master's degree programmes, including for on the website.

## D. Monitoring/Evaluation

1. Degree programme level

- a. The degree programme is responsible for quality assurance relating to the admission procedure and requirements.
  - b. The degree programme must evaluate the admission and selection procedures and requirements periodically, and check that the right students are being admitted to the right degree programmes. It is important to ensure that the criteria (corresponding with the objectives) correspond with the students that the degree programme wishes to admit.
  - c. One of the aspects of monitoring is to check that the admission requirements and selection criteria are deployed to make sure that students follow the right degree programmes for them, not for creating unnecessary obstacles.
  - d. Consultative participation bodies must be involved in quality assurance at the degree programme level.
    - i. The programme committees have the right to prior consultation on the selection criteria for their own degree programmes.  
N.B. The right to prior consultation is the right instrument here, because it would be wrong for students who are already enrolled for a degree programme to decide which students should be admitted to 'their' programme. There is a risk that students could set unnecessarily strict selection criteria to safeguard the level of their degree programme.
    - ii. The student section must issue advice about the procedure and the selection criteria.
    - iii. The student section must also focus on the information about the procedures.
2. Faculty level
    - a. At the faculty level, consultative participation relating to quality assurance has been passed to the faculty council.
  3. Institutional level
    - a. Consultative participation bodies are involved in quality assurance at the institutional level.
    - b. Students on the University Council must advise about the selection procedure.
    - c. Admission and selection must be evaluated every year in the University Committee for Education (UCO). This evaluation should examine: quality, compliance with the regulations, added value, predictive value, effect on diversity, and equality of opportunities. This is also a moment for sharing knowledge; see below.
    - d. If deemed necessary, the UCO may give the Board of the University solicited and unsolicited advice about admission and selection.
    - e. The Board of the University will discuss admission and selection with the faculties every year, if necessary.

## **E. Sharing knowledge**

1. The annual evaluations in the UCO are also an opportunity for the institution-wide sharing of knowledge about the admission/selection procedures used by the various faculties/degree programmes. Knowledge should be shared about: the effectiveness of differences/similarities between the criteria, standards, methods, and scores that the degree programmes use to assess whether students satisfy the criteria.
2. The UCO may use this information to give solicited or unsolicited advice to the Board of the University.

## F. Safety net

1. The universities stand for sectoral accessibility to the Master's phase. The UG does this by ensuring that all UG students graduating from a Bachelor's degree programme have direct access to at least one Master's degree programme at the UG.

## 2b. Check-list

One of the ways to check whether the above-mentioned policy is being implemented correctly is to answer the following questionnaire. The questions were compiled for students by the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands):

Question		Answer
<p><b>How transparent is the admission policy?</b></p> <p>1. Choose a Master's degree programme from your own university.</p> <p>2. Answer <b>questions 1 and 2</b> in the table from the following four perspectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. You are following a Bachelor's degree programme that is closely related to this Master's programme at a Dutch university</li> <li>b. You are following a Bachelor's degree programme that is loosely related to this Master's programme at a Dutch university</li> <li>c. You are following a Bachelor's degree programme that is closely related to this Master's programme at a foreign university</li> <li>d. You are following a Bachelor's degree programme in a field related to this Master's programme at a university of applied sciences. Please answer the <b>remaining questions</b> from 1 or 2 perspectives.</li> </ol>		
Please answer the following questions about the way that the admission policy is currently formulated		
0	For which degree programme are you completing the questionnaire?	
1	Are the admission requirements clear to you? If not, why not? <i>Requirements regarding prior education, level, language.</i>	
2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Are you clear about which requirements apply to the four groups?</li> <li>b. Have different requirements been set for the various groups?</li> </ol>	
3	Does this refer to the admission or the selection procedure? <i>Is this explained or indicated?</i>	
4	Have the aims and reasons for the admission requirements been explained?	
5	How are students expected to prove that they meet the admission requirements?	



6	Which method is used for measuring and assessing the admission requirements?	
7	Are students expected to produce additional documents, alongside proof of satisfying the admission requirements?	

8	What are the possibilities for students who do not satisfy the admission requirements? <i>Can these students follow the programme elsewhere or switch?</i>	
9	What is the timeline for the admission procedure and when are the deadlines?	
10	What feedback are students given during/after the admission or selection procedure? <i>What feedback and information can students expect?</i>	