



Report on Development Dialogue

Programme details	
School	Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Programme name	M Media Studies (research)
CROHO	60832

Accreditation details		
NVAO framework	2024	
Date site visit	26 November 2025	
Panel	<i>Chair</i>	Prof.dr. D. (Daniël) Biltereyst, professor in Communication Sciences at the Department of Communication Sciences of Ghent University (Belgium)
	<i>Member</i>	Prof.dr. S. (Sarita) Malik, associate pro vice-chancellor of Research Impact and professor in Media, Culture and Communication, Social and Political Sciences at Brunel University of London (United Kingdom)
	<i>Member</i>	Prof.dr. G.E.E. (Ginette) Verstraete, visiting professor in Comparative Arts and Media at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
	<i>Member</i>	Dr. U. (Unni) From Andreasen, associate professor in Media and Journalism and head of the School of Communication and Culture of Aarhus University (Denmark)
	<i>Student member</i>	A. (Aengus) ten Cate-Schulte BA, student of the research master's programme Media, Art and Performance Studies at Utrecht University
	<i>Secretary</i>	M. (Mark) Delmartino, MA (Academion)
Panel conclusion	<i>Standard 1</i>	Meets the standard
	<i>Standard 2</i>	Meets the standard
	<i>Standard 3</i>	Meets the standard
	<i>Standard 4</i>	Meets the standard
	<i>Programme</i>	Positive
NVAO decision	TBD	
The most recent results of the programme accreditation can be consulted at Decisions and reports NVAO .		

Development dialogue details	
Date	26 November 2025
Participants	Panel and programme management

Context development dialogue

In line with the NVAO assessment framework (2024), each study programme or cluster of study programmes conducts a 'development dialogue' (ontwikkelgesprek) with the assessment panel following the assessment visit. During this development dialogue, future developments and potential improvements are discussed from a development perspective. The agenda is drawn up by the study programme. Although the development dialogue is part of the programme review, the outcomes are not part of the accreditation assessment. Pursuant to the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (WHW), Article 5.13, paragraph 6, we publish the report of these discussions with this document.

Discussion points

- Expand exchange options

Currently, it is mandatory for all students in the two-year programme to go on an *international* exchange. For some prospective students, however, this is a reason not to enroll – both because of associated costs as well as housing inconvenience. We would like to continue to offer students the opportunity to go on an international exchange, but add the option of going on exchange at a university in the Netherlands. After all, going on an exchange in the Netherlands still allows students to gain new cultural experiences as well as academic insights. How does the panel feel about adding this option? Are there any restrictions or specific criteria they would advise for a national exchange?
- Potential repositioning

Most of our Research Master students pursue a PhD after graduation, however not all. We are considering a repositioning of the Research Master as a programme that trains students to be all-rounded researchers who cannot only seek employment at universities, but also at governments, NGO's or research agencies. Furthermore, we would also like to highlight and reinforce the relevance of the Research Master for other types of employment. What kind of recommendations would the panel give for such a repositioning?
- Engagement and societal impact

The [mission of Erasmus University Rotterdam](#) is to create positive societal impact. The department's bachelor programme ([International Bachelor Communication and Media](#)) and master programme ([with five specialisations](#)) offer students courses in which students, for example, get the opportunity to apply research and evidence-based knowledge to real life case studies. Our bachelor and master students, in general, highly appreciate these courses and even express a desire for more courses with a focus on societal impact. How does the panel feel about adding a course on engagement and societal impact of academic research in the Research Master curriculum? Does the panel have a suggestion for a particular format and types of content?

Discussion takeaways

1. Expand exchange options

Currently, it is mandatory for all students in the two-year SCMA programme to go on an international exchange. For some prospective students, however, this is a reason not to enrol because of associated costs as well as housing inconvenience. The programme would like to continue offering research master students the opportunity to go on an international exchange, but would also add the option of taking elective courses at a university within the Netherlands. After all, this would still allow students to gain new cultural experiences as well as academic insights.

The panel spoke to several stakeholders prior to the development dialogue session. They all concurred in emphasising that the international exchange is an important component of the programme – for some students, it was even the decisive factor in enrolling in the SCMA. They also concurred in emphasising that the international component of the exchange should be optional, allowing students to organise their two-year study period in a way that suits their individual interests and (financial) needs. This is also the position of the panel: ensure that all SCMA students take up some credits outside EUR during their study, and broaden the options within the ‘international exchange’ course component. While for several students, the international exchange will remain the preferred option, others may opt for a series of electives at another university, and/or for a training period at an agency, organisation or company. In this way, the compulsory ‘exchange’ component will become an opportunity for all rather than a hurdle for some students, while remaining both a strength of the programme and a selling proposition of SCMA for all applicants.

2. Potential repositioning

Approximately half of the research master students pursue a PhD after graduating the SCMA. The programme team is considering a repositioning whereby the programme trains students to be well-rounded researchers who can pursue employment not only at universities, but also at governments, NGO’s or research agencies. In that case, it will highlight and reinforce the relevance of the SCMA for other types of employment.

The panel fully subscribes to the idea of emphasising the relevance of the SCMA for career perspectives outside academia. In fact, it was somewhat surprised that this (still) requires a repositioning of the programme: already for some time, research master programmes in the Netherlands tend to focus on both academic and non-academic pathways; moreover, several SCMA graduates are already making good use of their research background in a variety of jobs outside academia.

The programme team clarified that it is happy with the quality of the students it attracts and that these students get a research-oriented training that is also suitable for other jobs outside academia. However, the programme needs to attract more students and is somewhat struggling with the perception that a research master programme is suitable only for students who aspire a PhD trajectory. Hence, one possible way to attract more students is to emphasize explicitly that the SCMA also caters to students who envisage a research-informed position outside university.

According to the panel, the unique selling proposition of the SCMA profile/programme (the combination of social sciences and humanities) can be used explicitly to attract more students. The panel acknowledges that the current curriculum is indeed very research-oriented in both educational formats and assignments. However, it should not be too difficult for the programme team to adjust this through a greater variety in course approaches, dissemination formats and assignments while still living up to the course learning goals and programme learning outcomes. In fact, when reading the programme materials in preparation for the site visit, the panel noticed that there is room for diversity in the current curriculum - for example in the way courses are assessed, how the internship is designed, or what type of research master thesis is produced. With regard to the latter, the panel sees opportunities for students to produce a research thesis in cooperation with an industry partner (or an NGO) whereby students demonstrate that they are able to perform research and then translate their research outcomes to a specific audience.

In general, the panel thinks there is room to involve more explicitly the professional field (i.e. the broader field where SCMA students will eventually find employment) in the curriculum and the learning environment. One panel member shared expertise from her home university where programmes have arrangements with different organisations, also in industry, which in turn provides a nice narrative on how students (and staff) can gain from experiences in the professional field. Another panel member recommended strengthening the ties with the relevant Research Schools in the Netherlands and joining forces with other universities in the Netherlands, as it is a nation-wide issue that is on the agenda of the NWO already for a long time.

3. Engagement and societal impact

The mission of Erasmus University Rotterdam is to create positive societal impact. Other bachelor and master programmes in the department offer courses in which students get the opportunity to apply research and evidence-based knowledge to real life case studies. Students generally appreciate these initiatives and would even welcome more courses with a focus on societal impact. Hence the idea of the SCMA programme team to add a course on engagement and societal impact of academic research in the Research Master curriculum.

In general, the panel welcomed the idea. After all, SCMA is a degree programme of EUR and the university is very clear about – and known for – its mission. Moreover, research master students are not much different from their bachelor and master fellow students in their interest and ambition to make a difference in society. Given the current curriculum structure and the size of the actual student intake, the panel suggests the programme team to develop the idea within one or more of the existing courses rather than design an entirely new course that would be added to the curriculum and, as a consequence, require to drop/take out another course. Furthermore, the panel considers it a good idea to emphasise engagement and societal impact within the SCMA curriculum, as it might contribute to a higher student intake. In this way, the team ensures that the programme is not just surviving, but also thriving.