



# EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT **College of Europe**

An evaluation of the quality of the Advanced Master programmes at the College of Europe

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vluhr



**EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT  
COLLEGE OF EUROPE**

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## PREFACE BY THE VLUHR QA BOARD

The assessment panel reports its findings on the advanced master programmes of the College of Europe. The programmes of the College of Europe are assessed in the spring of 2017 on behalf of the Flemish Higher Education Council (VLUHR).

First of all, this report is intended for the programmes involved. This assessment report provides the reader a snapshot of the quality of the programmes and is only one phase in the process of the ongoing concern for educational quality. After a short period of time the study programmes may already have changed and improved significantly, whether or not as an answer to the recommendations by the assessment panel. Additionally, the report intends to provide objective information to a wide audience about the quality of the evaluated programme. For this reason, the report is published on the VLUHR website.

I would like to thank the chairman and the members of the assessment panel for the time they have invested and for the high levels of expertise and dedication they showed in performing their task. This assessment is made possible thanks to the efforts of all those involved within the institution in the preparation and implementation of the assessment site visit.

I hope the positive comments formulated by the assessment panel and the recommendations for further improvement provide justification for their efforts and encouragement for the further development of the study programmes.

**Petter Aaslestad**  
*Chair VLUHR QA Board*



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# **SECTION 1**

## General Section





# **PART I**

## Educational assessment College of Europe

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

In this report, the assessment panel announces its findings with regard to the advanced master programmes at the College of Europe. The study programmes are assessed from March 8 until March 10, 2017 on behalf of the Flemish Higher Education Council (VLUHR).

This assessment procedure is part of the VLUHR activities in the area of external quality assurance in Flemish higher education which are meant to ensure that the Flemish universities, university colleges and other statutory registered higher education institutions are in compliance with the relevant regulations imposed by law.

### **2 THE ASSESSED STUDY PROGRAMMES**

In accordance with its mission, the assessment panel assessed the:

- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies
- Master of Arts in European Economic Studies
- Master of European Law (LLM)
- Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies
- Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies

## 3 THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

### 3.1 Composition of the assessment panel

The composition of the assessment panel was ratified on March 2, April 18 and June 23, 2016 by the VLUHR Quality Assurance Board. The NVAO advises the panel composition on August 22, 2016. The assessment panel was subsequently installed by the Quality Assurance Board by its decision of September 20, 2016.

The assessment panel had the following composition:

- Chairman of the assessment panel:
  - **Prof. dr. Jan Orbie**, Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for EU Studies, Ghent University
  
- Other panel members:
  - **Prof. dr. Michael Bruter**, Professor of Political Science and European Politics, Department of Government, The London School of Economics and Political Science
  - **Prof. dr. Panos Tsakoglou**, Professor Department of International and European Economic Studies Athens University of Economics and Business
  - **Prof. dr. Bruno De Witte**, Professor of European Union Law, Maastricht University and Part-time Professor of Law European University Institute, Florence
  - **Prof. dr. Brigid Laffan**, Director of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and Director of the Global Governance Programme
  - **Mevr. Elke Verhaeghe**, student master in EU-studies, Ghent University

Andreas Smets, staff member of the Flemish Higher Education Council (VLUHR KZ), was project manager of this educational assessment and acted as secretary to the assessment panel.

The brief curricula vitae of the members of the assessment panel are listed in Appendix 1.

## 3.2 Task description

The assessment panel is expected:

- to express substantiated and well-founded opinions on the study programmes, using the assessment framework;
- to make recommendations allowing quality improvements to be made where possible;
- to inform society at large of its findings.

## 3.3 Process

### 3.3.1 Preparation

The College of Europe was asked to compile five self-evaluation reports in preparation for the educational assessments. An assessment protocol, with a detailed description of the expectations regarding the content of the self-evaluation reports, was presented by the Quality Assurance Unit of VLUHR for this purpose. The self-evaluation reports reflect the accreditation framework.

The assessment panel received the self-evaluation reports a number of months before the on-site visit, which allowed for adequate time to carefully study the document and to thoroughly prepare for the assessment visit. Additionally, the members of the assessment panel were asked to read a selection of recent Master's theses.

The assessment panel held its preparatory meeting on February 13, 2017. At this stage, the panel members were already in possession of the assessment protocol and the self-evaluation reports. During the preparatory meeting, the panel members were given further information about the assessment process and they made specific preparations for the forthcoming on-site visit. Special attention was given to the uniformity of the implementation of the accreditation framework and the assessment protocol. Also, the time schedule for the on-site visit was agreed upon (see Appendices) and the self-evaluation reports were collectively discussed for the first time.

### 3.3.2 On-site visit

During the on-site visit the panel interviewed all parties directly involved with the study programmes. The panel spoke with the board, programme management, students, teaching staff, educational support staff, alumni and representatives from the professional field. The conversations and interviews with all these stakeholders took place in an open atmosphere and provided the panel with helpful additions to and clarifications of the self-evaluation reports.

The panel visited the programme-specific infrastructure facilities, including the library and classrooms. There was also a consultation hour during which the assessment panel could invite people or during which people could come and be heard in confidence.

Furthermore, the College of Europe was asked to prepare a wide variety of documents to be available during the on-site visit for the assessment panel to consult as a tertiary source of information. These documents included minutes of discussions in relevant governing bodies, a selection of study materials (courses, handbooks and syllabuses), indications of staff competences, testing and assessment assignments, etc. An additional selection of recent Master's theses was required to be available for inspection. Sufficient time was scheduled throughout the assessment visit for the panel to study these documents thoroughly. Additional information was requested during the on-site visit when the assessment panel deemed that information necessary to support its findings.

Following internal panel discussions, provisional findings were presented by the chairman of the assessment panel in conclusion of the on-site assessment visit.

### 3.3.3 Reporting

The last stage of the assessment process was the compilation of the panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations into the present report. The panel's recommendations are separately summarised at the end of the report.

The programme management was given the opportunity to reply to the draft version of this report. The assessment panel considered this response and included elements of it into the final version when deemed appropriate.

## PART II

### Table with scores

The following table represents the assessment scores of the assessment panel on the four generic quality standards set out in the assessment framework.

For each generic quality standard (GQS) the panel expresses a considered and substantiated opinion, according to a two-point scale: satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The panel also expresses a final opinion on the quality of the programme as a whole, also according to a three-point scale: satisfactory, satisfactory for a limited period or unsatisfactory

In the report of the study programme the assessment panel makes clear how it has reached its opinion. The table and the scores assigned ought to be read and interpreted in connection to the text in the report. Any interpretation based solely on the scores in the table, is unjust towards the study programme and passes over the assignment of this external assessment exercise.

Explanation of the scores of the **generic quality standard**:

**Satisfactory (S)** The study programme meets the generic quality standards.

**Unsatisfactory (U)** The generic quality standard is unsatisfactory.

Rules applicable to the final **opinion**:

**Satisfactory (S)** The final opinion on a programme is 'satisfactory' if the programme meets all generic quality standards.

**Satisfactory for a limited period (S')** The final opinion on a programme – or a mode of study – is 'satisfactory for a limited period' , i.e. shorter than the accreditation period, if, on a first assessment, one or two generic quality standards are assessed as 'unsatisfactory'.

**Unsatisfactory (U)** The final opinion on a programme – or a mode of study – is 'unsatisfactory' if all generic quality standards are assessed as 'unsatisfactory'.

	<b>GQS 1 Targeted outcome level</b>	<b>GQS 2 Learning process</b>	<b>GQS 3 Outcome level achieved</b>	<b>GQS 4 Structure and organi- sation of Internal quality Assurance</b>	<b>Final opinion</b>
<b>Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies</b>	S	S	S	S	S
<b>Master of Arts in European Economic Studies</b>	S	S	S	S	S
<b>Master of European Law (LLM)</b>	S	S	S	S	S
<b>Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies</b>	S	S	S	S	S
<b>Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies</b>	S	S	S	S	S





## **SECTION 2**

Report of the study  
programmes and  
summary



# COLLEGE OF EUROPE

## SUMMARY OF THE ASSESSMENT REPORT The College of Europe

*From March 8 until March 10, 2017, the five master programmes of the College of Europe has been evaluated in the framework of an educational assessment by a peer review panel of independent experts. In this summary which describes a snapshot, the main findings of the panel are listed.*

### Profile of the College

This college offers five programmes:

- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies
- Master of Arts in European Economic Studies
- Master of European Law (LLM)
- Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies
- Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies

The College of Europe owns two campuses in Europe: in Bruges and in Natolin (Warsaw). The working languages are English and French.

The programmes are organised within the five departments and in correspondence with the five Master programmes. Each department is led by a director of studies who is supported by a permanent professor. The director of studies and the permanent professor are the permanent staff of the departments. In line with the College of Europe's model, the faculty

has always been constituted, almost exclusively, by visiting professors, whose main professional activity takes place at an institution external to the College of Europe.

The core of all programmes at the College of Europe is the 'College formula'. This means that students do not only study together, but they also live together. On top of this, visiting professors are also regularly present at breakfasts, luncheons or dinners. This makes them accessible to the students. 'The campus is a bubble where students are permanently immersed', to put it in the words of one of the students during the site visit. All professors are supported by full-time academic assistants. The academic assistants play a crucial part in the educational organisation. The assistants are appointed to different courses, support the visiting professors during the preparation of their classes and give feedback to the students and support them as well as assist them while they are completing their Master's thesis.

## Programme

The College of Europe offers five extensively specialised Master programmes. Each of them has a different focus and is professionally oriented. The target group of the College of Europe is future practitioners, policy-makers and researchers in EU institutions and advisory bodies, EU delegations, international organizations, NGOs, local, regional or national administration (including Ministries of Foreign Affairs and multinational companies), law firms, international journalism, academic institutions and think tanks. The programmes are aimed at training specialists in a range of professional fields. The College of Europe is less focused on preparing students for a doctoral thesis or training them for an academic career in general.

The curricula of all programmes are up to date and challenging. Each curriculum is re-examined every academic year, based on new developments in the field. This results in a flexible selection of visiting professors, which presents the College of Europe with an advantage. Equally, the ECTS cards are reviewed every year.

The education at the College of Europe is intense. Visiting professors are physically present on campus only sporadically, hence the classes take place during short time periods. It is not exceptional that the classes of a certain course are all programmed during a few days. Every programme offers extra-curricular activities and, in some cases, seminars that do not

yield any ECTS credits. The panel understands that these activities and seminars are popular because students are keen to benefit as much as possible from their education. Nevertheless, this makes them experience the programmes as intense. The panel therefore advises to monitor the average time spent studying.

The teaching methods at the College of Europe are very diverse. The professors come from many different countries, with varying teaching styles and professional backgrounds. Teaching methods of the visiting professors are not harmonised by the College. Hence, students are able to benefit from a variety of teaching methods. This diversifies their experience, improves their adaptability, and allows them to develop a variety of skills in order to effectively cope with different learning environments.

Generally speaking, the structure of the five Master programmes is the same. This structure is divided over two semesters. According to the self-assessment report, the first semester contains the compulsory courses and provides the foundations for more in-depth optional courses during the second semester. While the programmes make significant efforts to 'level up' students with insufficient background knowledge during the first semester, more could be done to provide additional challenges for students who have already specialized expertise in the chosen programme. Indeed, for students with a previously acquired Master's degree that thoroughly prepared them for their chosen degree at the College of Europe, the first semester includes an amount of repetition. During the second semester the students are required to select their optional courses. The optional courses are clustered. The five programmes also include extracurricular activities such as cross-semester seminars or compact seminars on a specific subject, workshops in professional development and study trips.

Each of the five programmes includes a Master's thesis. In each of them the Master's thesis represents 15 credits (ECTS). Exceptionally, the Master's thesis for the Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies and the Master of European Interdisciplinary Studies programme represents 16 credits (ECTS). The role of the master thesis in the programmes varies across the programmes both in terms of length and expectation. Though every programme phrases the Master's thesis' objective differently, its premises are that it should be a piece of academic writing that proves the student's critical and analytical competence, ability to use a research methodology and competence to make an original contribution to the relevant field and literature.

The students receive support on methodological issues from the promotor/ professor and/or the assistants. The quality of this support depends on the programme, the visiting professor and the selected topic. Students hold a range of expectations regarding research methodology. For students who never experienced any training in methodology, the research seminars are extremely useful. Other students found the seminars too basic and not challenging. It is important to ensure that each student receives adequate support in research methods/design. More attention needs to be paid to this.

### **Evaluation and testing**

The College uses a wide range of examination methods. On the one hand there is the continuous assessment, including the use of papers, presentations and class participations. At the end of the semester, final exams that are either oral or written are held. To guarantee the validity of the examinations, the programmes take a variety of initiatives. The director of studies and the permanent professor survey the examination and if necessary they interfere. The assistants review the overall distribution of marks before the professors finalise the list of marks. The College of Europe supplies the visiting professors with a marking grid to evaluate their students.

The programmes also make efforts to guarantee the transparency of the examinations. Students are welcome to look up all data about the course of the examinations in the ECTS cards, including the relative weight of different components (in terms of percentages of the final mark), the expected number of words for papers, the deadlines for submitting papers and the expected length of oral presentations. At the start of the classes the professors supply the students with additional information about the exams and examination procedures. The rules and the organisation of tests and examinations can also be found in the College's education and examination regulations.

After submitting a paper, giving a presentation or sitting an exam, the students are able to receive feedback. However, the panel came to the conclusion that the students themselves need to take the initiative in order to receive this feedback. Each of the five programmes lacks the spontaneous distribution of formative feedback.

## Services and student guidance

Admission to the College of Europe requires either a Bologna Master's degree, or a pre-Bologna equivalent degree, or a final university degree and at least 240 ECTS credits acquired in the course of the applicant's university studies. Candidates must submit an online application. The fee for the 2016-17 academic year amounts to € 24,000, covering tuition (€ 16,000) as well as board and lodging in a College student residence (€ 8,000). Approximately 70% of students are granted full or partial scholarships by their national or regional government, EU programmes, the Flemish Community of Belgium, and other public or private institutions and companies.

Throughout their studies the students receive a sufficient amount of study guidance and study support. Queries regarding the contents of the programmes can be made to the director of studies, the visiting professors or the assistants. In case of problems or when they have practical questions, the students usually get in touch with the assistants. The assistants also communicate information between the professors and the students. Via the Students Affairs Office the students can obtain educational supervision or psychological support. The Student Affairs Office has been enlarged and according to the panel, it functions well.

The facilities of the College of Europe are of a high standard. In Bruges, the buildings are located at two sites in the centre of the city. The campus in Poland is located in Natolin, Warsaw. The College of Europe accommodates almost all of its students in own residences in Bruges and Natolin. All students have individual rooms. In addition, communal leisure and entertainment facilities are available in each residence. Students in Bruges and Natolin have access to a restaurant. The College of Europe has two libraries, one in Bruges and one in Natolin, which contain a good collection of books and periodicals in European studies. Available information resources concentrate on European law, economics, politics/administration and international relations and diplomacy studies. Some students indicated that the number of subscriptions to academic journals is limited.

## Study success and professional opportunities

The pass rates of all the programmes are high and the drop-out is low. More than 90% of all students obtain the qualification within one year. Circa 75% of all students attain the qualification during the first exam session.

Most alumni have embraced a career with a European or international dimension either in the public or in the private sector. Well over a thousand current civil servants working for EU institutions graduated from the College of Europe. Many alumni also work for national governments, international organisations, international law firms, consultancies, private companies and non-governmental organisations. The panel appreciates that almost all students quickly find employment. They are aided in their search for employment by the many contacts and the network they acquire during their time at the College. The Natolin students' network is smaller, but still relatively wide. The College of Europe's own Careers Offices also play an important part in the students' search for employment. A small number of students pursue an academic career. Each year around 5% of the students apply for PhD programmes. Students who do have ambitions in this direction are those who start working as academic assistants after their studies; often they are already writing or preparing a doctoral thesis. According to the panel, the programmes should furnish newly-admitted students with clear information about this.



## ASSESSMENT REPORT

Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies

Master of Arts in European Economic Studies

Master of European Law (LLM)

Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies

Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies

### Preface

This report concerns the five programmes organised by the College of Europe:

- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies
- Master of Arts in European Economic Studies
- Master of European Law (LLM)
- Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies
- Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies

The assessment panel (further referred to as ‘the panel’) visited the study programmes from March 8 until March 10, 2017.

The panel assesses the five study programmes based on the four standards of the VLUHR programme assessment framework. This framework is designed to fulfil the accreditation requirements used by the NVAO quality assurance agency. For each standard the panel formulates a weighted and motivated judgement on a two-point scale: **unsatisfactory and satisfactory**. In assessing the generic quality assurance, the concept of ‘*generic quality*’ indicates that the standard is in place and that the programme – or a specific mode of the programme – meets with the quality levels that can reasonably be expected, from an international perspective, of a Master’s programme in higher education. The score **satisfactory** points out that the programme meets the generic quality because it demonstrates an acceptable level for the particular standard. The score **unsatisfactory** indicates that the programme does not attain the generic quality for that particular standard.

The panel’s decisions are underpinned by facts and analyses. The panel clearly explains how it reached its decisions. The panel also expresses a final decision on the quality of the programme as a whole, according to the same two-point scale.

The panel assesses the quality of the programme as it was established at the time of the site visit. The panel has based its judgement on the self-assessment report and the information that arose from the interviews with

the programme management, with lecturers, students, representatives from the professional field, alumni and staff members responsible at programme level for internal quality assurance, internationalisation, study guidance and student tutoring. The panel has also examined manuals, learning materials, Master's theses, tests and exams, as well as minutes of discussion. The panel has also visited the educational facilities such as classrooms and the library.

In addition to its decision, the panel formulates recommendations for further improvement. In this manner, the panel contributes to the programme's quality improvement. The recommendations are included in the corresponding sections of the standard in question. At the end of the report an overview of these improvement suggestions will be made.

### **Context of the College of Europe**

The College of Europe was the first institute of postgraduate studies that specialised in European affairs. It was founded in 1949 soon after WWII, at the very start of the European unification process. The idea was to bring together teachers and graduate students from different European countries who would deal with issues of importance for the future of the continent from a truly European perspective, and not from a mere national point of view.

The College of Europe owns two campuses in Europe: in Bruges and in Natolin (Warsaw). The working languages are English and French. The College of Europe's faculty currently consists of 282 visiting professors (210 in Bruges, 72 in Natolin), 6 directors of studies (5 in Bruges and 1 in Natolin), 4 permanent professors in Bruges and 1 in Natolin, 4 chair holders (2 in Bruges and 2 in Natolin) and 35 academic assistants (25 in Bruges and 10 in Natolin). The programmes have a student body of 462 students (331 in Bruges and 131 at Natolin).

While the College of Europe operates on two campuses, a single Academic Council, chaired by the rector who directs the activities of the College of Europe, is responsible for the overall approval and quality control of all study programmes as well as all academic appointments of the five Master's programmes.

The two campuses are administered by their governing bodies under Belgian and Polish law respectively. As regards the administration of

the Bruges campus, the supreme governance body is the Administrative Council. The Administrative Council includes representatives of the two host countries and of European governments. It is the highest decision-making authority and is responsible for the implementation of the College of Europe's objectives. The Executive Committee, elected by and reporting to the Administrative Council, ensures sound financial and administrative management. The Natolin campus has been governed since 2001 by an Executive Board which ensures its sound financial and administrative management. Its members include representatives from the two host countries as well as the rector and vice-rector of the College of Europe. The vice-rector is responsible for the day-to-day administrative management of the Natolin campus.

The programmes are organised within the five departments and in correspondence with the five Master programmes. Each department is led by a director of studies who is supported by a permanent professor. Based on an annual proposal by the director of studies, the Academic Council discusses and adapts the curriculum and decides on the (re-)appointment of professors for the next academic year. The mandate of the director of studies requires renewal by the Academic Council every three years. The director of studies and the permanent professor are the permanent staff of the departments. In line with the College of Europe's model, the faculty has always been constituted, almost exclusively, by visiting professors, whose main professional activity takes place at an institution external to the College of Europe. They teach in the programmes on the basis of short-term contracts (duration: one year), which are renewed on the basis of good performance and the requirements of the curriculum. Their teaching activity in Bruges is thus concentrated usually in a small number of sessions that take place during periodic visits scheduled according to the visiting professor's availability. All professors are supported by full-time academic assistants who hold one-year, renewable contracts. Normally, the assistants stay at the College for two or three years.

The following programmes are organised at the Bruges campus:

- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies
- Master of Arts in European Economic Studies
- Master of European Law (LLM)
- Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies
- The Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies is organised in Natolin (Warsaw – Poland).
- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies

Since 1994 the Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies has maintained its focus on political, institutional and administrative issues of the European integration process, whether at European, national, subnational or international levels. It has kept a strong interdisciplinary approach, specific to EU studies, combining political science with Administrative Studies, law and economics. Besides, it has expanded its programme to incorporate more courses and activities that provide students with professional training in addition to academic knowledge.

In order to better reflect the importance of training good leaders capable of good governance, beginning with the 2017-18 academic year the department will be renamed Department of European Political and Governance Studies; the programme will be renamed Master in European Political and Governance Studies.

### **Master of Arts in European Economic Studies**

The Department of European Economic Studies was created in 1994. The European Economic Studies programme has changed in response to the developments in the priorities and policies of the European Union. The methodology's nature has become increasingly analytical and the course contents more technical and rigorous, without neglecting the institutional and legal context, which is extremely important in order to understand the economic policies of the European Union. The programme offers one specialisation (European Integration and Business (EEIB)) and two options (European Law and Economic Analysis (ELEA) and European Public Policy Analysis (EPPA)):

- The European Integration and Business (EEIB) specialisation was established in 2008 in order to study the interaction between business strategy and EU policies. Business opportunities and obligations are partly determined by EU rules that, on the one hand, open up markets, but on the other hand, also impose new requirements on companies, ranging from product safety to the management of personal data. Knowing how the European Union operates and how it affects commercial operations is indispensable for conducting successful business in Europe.
- The European Law and Economic Analysis option (ELEA) was introduced during the 2004-2005 academic year in cooperation with the Department of European Legal Studies. This option takes into account the important

interaction between the disciplines of law and economics, in particular in the fields of competition policy and regulation. It is open to a limited number of students from the Master of European Law and the Master of Arts in European Economic Studies who have a certain degree of knowledge about the other discipline before coming to the College of Europe.

- The European Public Policy Analysis option (EPPA) was established in 2015-2016 in cooperation with the Department of European Political and Administrative Studies. It aims to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to formulate, implement and evaluate policies from the perspectives of different disciplines.

During the past two decades, the actual number of students in the EES programme has on average fluctuated around 42. The number of students for the academic year 2016-2017 is 51.

### **Master of European Law (LLM)**

The European Legal Studies Programme was created in 1973-1974, in response to the increasing development of European Union law as a specific field. The programme was initially taught in French. With the increasing importance of English, the programme progressively became truly bilingual. Currently, one of the programme's most important features is its bilingual character. A basic two-tier structure has been maintained and strengthened throughout the years. The compulsory courses, mainly in the first semester, aim to provide the core fundamental knowledge and tools in EU law that all law students should possess. This serves as a foundation, enabling the students to engage in an in-depth analysis of selected subjects as part of the second semester's specialised interactive courses and seminars, chosen by the students according to their own main fields of interest.

As noted earlier, the department has been offering an option in European Law and Economic Analysis (ELEA) in cooperation with the Department of European Economic Studies since academic year 2004-2005. This option takes into account the important interaction between the disciplines of law and economics, in particular in the fields of competition policy and regulation. It is open to a limited number of students from the Master of European Law and the Master of Arts in European Economic Studies who have a certain degree of knowledge about the other discipline before coming to the College of Europe.

The number of students has progressively increased throughout the years, reaching its highest level of 116 students of 30 nationalities in 2015-2016. The objective of the department is to maintain a stricter upper limit for the coming years. The current year has 97 enrolled students.

### **Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies**

The Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies was launched during the 2006-2007 academic year. The core disciplines of the programme are political science and international relations, including diplomacy studies, but elements from other disciplines such as EU law and international economics are also present, given that the programme aims to cover the legal, political and economic aspects of the EU's external relations. In addition, students are offered to either improve their French, if needed, or to learn a new language.

The initial intention of starting with 40 students was adjusted to a first intake of 62 students. As of 2009-2010, the target was around 80 students and as of 2015-2016 this has increased to around 90 students.

### **Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies**

In the same spirit, the Natolin campus of the College of Europe was created in the wake of momentous changes in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism. While the creation of the College of Europe in 1949 anticipated the emergence of the European Communities, the establishment of a sister campus in Natolin, with identical standards of training and teaching, anticipated the EU's enlargement. The programme has been taught since 1992.

The programme provides students with interdisciplinary expertise in the political, economic, legal and historical dimensions of EU affairs. While allowing for specialisation into four majors in the second semester, it has also further developed its contextual historical, geopolitical, conceptual and cultural approach to the study of EU affairs. The four majors are:

- EU Public Affairs and Policies Major
- EU as Global Actor Major
- European Neighbours and the ENP Major
- European History and Civilization Major

Student intake at Natolin increased over the last years from 34 students in 1992 to 131 students in 2016.

## Standard 1 - Targeted Outcome Level

The assessment panel evaluates the Targeted Outcome Level as satisfactory for the

- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies
- Master of Arts in European Economic Studies
- Master of European Law (LLM)
- Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies
- Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies

The College of Europe offers five extensively specialised Master programmes. Each of them has a different focus and is professionally oriented. The target group of the College of Europe is future practitioners, policy-makers and researchers in EU institutions and advisory bodies, EU delegations, international organizations, NGOs, local, regional or national administration (including Ministries of Foreign Affairs and multinational companies), law firms, international journalism, academic institutions and think tanks. The programmes are aimed at training specialists in a range of professional fields. The College of Europe is less focused on preparing students for a doctoral thesis or training them for an academic career in general.

Based on the self-assessment reports and on-the-spot discussions, the panel understands that the programmes consider themselves as distinctive. The programmes argue that the chosen education model supports this uniqueness. The panel agrees with this reasoning, although there are also similarities with other European studies programmes. The panel finds it useful to implement a **benchmarking exercise** outlining substantive differences and similarities with other programmes. Some programmes have already made a start with this, others have not yet done so.

All programmes have outlined their **learning outcomes**. These outcomes were defined after internal discussions within the various departments and were then recorded in the Academic Council to facilitate a comparison between the five programmes. The learning outcomes proved to meet the employers' key requirements such as a command of languages, communication skills, social and networking skills, cross-cultural sensitivity, organisational skills, research and analytical skills, an ability to work independently, as well as team and leadership skills, self-awareness and confidence. The panel approves of this method and concludes that the learning outcomes were correctly outlined.

After studying the learning outcomes of the five programmes, the panel concluded that, regarding their level and orientation, they meet with the requirements of the Flemish Qualifications Framework. The learning outcomes are student-centred formulated in a sufficiently clear manner. In the following paragraphs the panel will discuss the five programmes' target outcome level more extensively.

According to the self-assessment report, the **Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies** provides education in the field of European political and administrative studies. It aims to produce future leaders in the public and private sectors by equipping the students with the skills and knowledge most relevant to careers that involve EU affairs. Above all, this includes a broad and in-depth knowledge and understanding of EU institutions, actors and policies. Although the primary academic focus is political science, the teaching also incorporates other academic disciplines to make the students understand how the EU functions, and how to be a successful part of it. To achieve this result, the academic environment strives to develop students' skills: academic skills (e.g. formulating a relevant research question and placing it in the framework of existing research) and more practical skills (e.g. leadership, negotiation, debate and drafting policy recommendations). To achieve the Master's objectives, 15 learning outcomes are defined and divided over two clusters: the knowledge-oriented learning outcomes and the skills-oriented learning outcomes.

The panel has thoroughly evaluated the learning outcomes and believes that they are clearly formulated. The panel appreciates the programme's clear focus. The core of the programme is the study of the European Union and the dynamics of European integration, but not exclusively from a political science/public policy perspective. Economic and legal perspectives are also included. The objective of the programme is to specialise 'Europeanists' and to Europeanise 'specialists'. The programme's new title 'European Political and Governance Studies', which is a change from 'Political and Administrative Studies' is rather a misnomer as the programme is strong on policy and governance and not on politics. The panel wonders if 'European Governance' or 'European Governance and Policy' might not be a better descriptor.

The **Master of Arts in European Economic Studies** provides education at an advanced Master's level in the field of European economic integration. It builds on the students' previously acquired academic knowledge about



economics and/or business studies. Its purpose is to prepare students to work as applied economists, with a thorough understanding of European affairs, to occupy positions of responsibility and enable them to develop a pragmatic attitude to find solutions. The study programme prepares graduates for future careers in both the public and the private sector.

The overall aims of the programme are for the students to be able to:

- Acquire detailed knowledge of the theoretical foundations and empirical methods of economics;
- Apply theoretical approaches to analyse European problems, policies, markets and strategies and identify possible solutions;
- Develop professional skills to enter the job market in positions that deal with EU issues.

The programme's general goals are translated into 22 programme-specific learning outcomes, which are grouped into three clusters: 1) knowledge of the discipline of economics - 2) research, empirical and context skills - 3) understanding of the European context. For the specialisation and the two options, additional learning outcomes were drafted.

According to the panel the programme's aims are very clear. The application of economics to the EU, with a focus on its policies and corporate strategies, is a strong aspect. This is a niche as most Masters in economics remain very theoretical with a limited number of field courses. The panel concludes that particularly the European Law and Economic Analysis option (ELEA) is useful and unique.

According to the self-assessment report, the **Master of European Law** offers a study programme in EU law, including relations with national jurisdictions, international law and organisations. The programme especially aims to educate students (building on their previously acquired legal knowledge) about the legal structure that frames the European integration process and the laws that emanate from this process. The programme equally aims to give students a broader view on the European Integration process. The interaction between law and economics is fully acknowledged. The Master of European Law methodological aim is to make the students knowledgeable about European law, but also able to reason, criticise and compare the law in terms of time and space. Other outcomes should be that students can distinguish between the essential and the auxiliary, as well as understand the importance of the overall context in solving legal questions. Apart from its academic components, the Master

of European Law has a strong practical focus, aiming to prepare students for careers in a variety of EU law professions. The general profile of the programme is translated into 16 programme-specific learning outcomes. The panel finds the general mission and the learning outcomes clear. The professional orientation of the programme is a strong aspect of the Master of European Law. Also noteworthy is its truly bilingual education. Graduates from the programme are expected to be able to work in both English and French. This is expressed in an additional learning outcome. The bilingual education distinguishes the programme from LLM's at other higher education institutions.

The mission of the **Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies** is to form competent and open-minded graduates with strong diplomatic skills. The programme aims to enable students to both analyse complex international problems and contribute to solving them in positions of responsibility in the public and private sectors. The programme offers a blend of theoretical and practice-oriented knowledge in EU external relations on the one hand and the development of professional and diplomatic skills on the other hand. The general profile of the programme is translated into 12 programme-specific learning outcomes.

The panel has examined the programme's study results and decides that they are generally clear. However, the panel has noticed that no study results are specified for the options. The panel recommends the addition of clearly drafted learning outcomes that will be in line with the content of the options.

The **Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies** at the Natolin campus responds to the growing need for experts familiar with the EU integration process and EU external relations. Students are trained to think beyond disciplinary boundaries and to understand the broader historical, regional and global context of the EU integration process. Interdisciplinary training in EU history, Central/Eastern European history, EU institutions and decision-making, European economic integration, EU law and geopolitics is provided during the first semester. During the second semester, students can choose between four majors to gain in-depth knowledge about European public affairs and policies, the EU as a global actor, European neighbours and the European Neighbourhood Policy, or European history and civilisation. The programme has 13 shared learning outcomes for all students across the four specialised majors, and three or four that are specific to the majors.

The panel has examined the programme's learning outcomes and decides that, in general, they are clear. In a few cases the learning outcomes are rather quite long and confusing. Consequently, it advises to have a critical look at them and straighten them out. Additionally, the panel is of the opinion that the programme will benefit if the learning outcomes are benchmarked against similar programmes in order to clarify its place in the academic field.

The panel regards the programme's interdisciplinarity as an added value. However, it does advice the inclusion of a clearly stated description of how this interdisciplinarity could be integrated in the programme and the master theses. In this regard, it might be worth-considering to simplify the programme's title to 'Master of Arts in European Studies'. The title 'Master in European Interdisciplinary Studies' places undue emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach.

The panel concludes that the learning outcomes of all five programmes are sufficiently elaborated with some room for improvement. The learning outcomes of the Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies and those of the Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies need to be elaborated a little more. The panel is of the opinion that the learning objectives for all five programmes meet the requirements of the Flemish Qualifications Framework. The learning outcomes were correctly drafted and properly aligned with the corresponding disciplines and professional fields. The panel recommends to carry out a benchmark study. Some programmes have already done this. All things considered, the panel is of the opinion that a sufficient international level of quality has been achieved. Therefore, the panel gives the score 'satisfactory' for Standard 1 -Targeted outcome level.

## Standard 2: Educational Learning Environment

The assessment panel evaluates the Educational Learning Environment as satisfactory for the

- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies
- Master of Arts in European Economic Studies
- Master of European Law (LLM)
- Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies
- Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies

The College of Europe offers five Master's programmes based on 66 ECTS Credits. Each academic year consists of two semesters and takes place from September to June. The first examination session takes place in December/January and in May/June. The second examination session (to resit exams) takes place in September/October.

The core of all programmes at the College of Europe is the '**College formula**'. This means that students do not only study together, but they also live together. On top of this, visiting professors are also regularly present at breakfasts, luncheons or dinners. This makes them accessible to the students. 'The campus is a bubble where students are permanently immersed', to put it in the words of one of the students during the site visit. Obviously, the unique approach of the 'College formula' is much appreciated by students, and the panel is in favour of it.

**The five departments organise the educational side of the five programmes.** Each of the five departments has a permanent staff that consists of a director of studies, a permanent professor, a departmental secretary and academic assistants. In some cases they are joined by a research professor who enjoys the support of a research assistant and a research fellow. Additionally, the departments employ the services of numerous visiting professors. The panel has learned that the programmes are sufficiently staffed to meet the educational quality criteria. During the 2016-17 academic year, 282 visiting professors were active in the five programmes.

A **director of studies** leads each department. This director of studies is connected to an institution outside the College of Europe, but holds an important mandate within the College. Additionally, a **permanent professor** has been appointed in each department. This permanent professor holds a full-time appointment at the College of Europe. In practice, a department's

daily running is in the hands of the director of studies and the permanent professor. They receive support from the departmental secretary. The director of studies and the permanent professor are also members of the teaching staff, together with the **visiting professors**. Visiting professors have their main assignment at a different institution, but teach one or more courses and supervise the students' Master theses at the College of Europe. At the start of each academic year, the visiting professors are proposed by the departments and approved by the Academic Council. Visiting professors are, on the one hand, academics from universities and research institutions and, on the other hand, practitioners from the public or private sector. The College of Europe deliberately encourages this diversity among the teaching staff. Students seem to appreciate this diversity and particularly the presence of practitioners who make a link to their future professional life. The panel equally appreciates this approach.

Some programmes, for instance the Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies or the Master of Arts in European Economic Studies, benefit from the presence of **research chairs**. The chair holder is funded by external means. These means are mainly supplied by firms, institutions and research funds. The research chair is assisted by a research fellow and/or assistant, and introduces research in new areas into the departments. Students are informed about this research via the courses or via the Master's thesis. The panel believes this is one of the strengths of all five programmes and it also meets with a request, made by the previous assessment panel, to bring more contemporary research into the programmes. The panel appreciates this evolution, but remarks that the added value of the research areas seems not always clear from an educational point of view.

The **academic assistants** play a crucial part in the educational organisation. They hold a renewable one-year contract and stay at the College of Europe for two or three years. The assistants are appointed to different courses, support the visiting professors during the preparation of their classes and give feedback to the students and support them as well as assist them while they are completing their Master's thesis. The panel wishes to praise their considerable efforts: the assistants often fill the void caused by the absence of permanent staff at the College of Europe. The assistants carry a great responsibility in the College of Europe's educational model. Hence, relevant attention is paid to their teaching skills. The assistants receive training at the beginning of the academic year to improve their lecturing, presentational and interpersonal skills to aid students with personal as

well as course-related issues (e.g. adapting to the multicultural context of the College of Europe and to the city of Bruges). The panel believes this is one of the College's strengths.

During its site visit to the five programmes, the panel surveyed the CVs of the teaching staff. The panel appreciates the teaching staff's excellent expertise. The College of Europe manages to attract some of the best people in their fields. The College's academic staff members regularly take part in international conferences to be up-to-date on teaching and research techniques. Besides, they are active in the editorial and/or scientific/scholarly committees of the main academic journals centred on EU studies. The teaching staff's educational expertise is of such a high level because of the criteria used in the selection process of the visiting professors. The panel would like to make one remark regarding the staff: it includes very few female teachers. The College acknowledges this problem of gender balance and indicates that this will be addressed by an action plan (which could also include more gender sensitivity within the content of the programmes).

**The panel assesses that the College of Europe's uniquely organised education format creates a certain number of particularities.** The College has a small number of permanent staff and appeals to visiting professors for a large number of its courses. It also allows the programme to be updated every year and attract specialists from all over the world. Because the visiting professors are proposed and selected each year, it is possible to react quickly to new developments in the fields of study. However, students told the panel that sometimes this method results in planning problems. The students receive the lesson schedule weekly, which sometimes prevents long-term planning. The panel recommends paying attention to this point.

**The panel has concluded that the education at the College of Europe is intense.** Visiting professors are physically present on campus only sporadically, hence the classes take place during short time periods. It is not exceptional that the classes of a certain course are all programmed during a few days. Every programme offers extra-curricular activities and, in some cases, seminars that do not yield any ECTS credits. The panel understands that these activities and seminars are popular because students are keen to benefit as much as possible from their education. Nevertheless, this makes them experience the programmes as intense. The panel therefore advises to monitor the average time spent studying.

The panel considers that, due to the high number of visiting professors, **teaching methods at the College of Europe are very diverse**. The professors come from many different countries, with varying teaching styles and professional backgrounds. Teaching methods of the visiting professors are not harmonised by the College. Hence, students are able to benefit from a variety of teaching methods. This diversifies their experience, improves their adaptability, and allows them to develop a variety of skills in order to effectively cope with different learning environments. The visiting professors lecture in a flexible style and students are encouraged to actively participate in class. Whereas students attend some compulsory courses in groups of 100 during the first semester, most other courses at the College of Europe do not have more than 25 students and the groups usually become smaller during the second semester, which facilitates (inter)active teaching. Generally, the students are expected to participate actively during the classes. They engage in debates or give presentations. The students of the Master of European Law (LLM) made a request for more interactivity during the classes. The panel appreciates the organised study trips to various European institutions and the simulation games, which enable the students to practice their professional skills. The College of Europe is not yet using e-learning. The panel therefore advises to investigate the possibilities of e-learning.

The two working languages of the College of Europe are **English and French**. The panel considers this as a strongly distinguishing aspect. Although some students might encounter difficulties in a few courses as a result of this practice, in general all students seem to regard it as extremely positive because a thorough knowledge of English and French is likely to be a considerable advantage during their future professional life. The Master of European Law (LLM) offers bilingual education more than any other programme. The panel believes that this working method is an 'international best practice' and a distinguishing feature compared to other LLMs. The Master of Arts in European Economic Studies pays the least attention to teaching in French, which the panel finds understandable as French is not a prevailing language in the world of economics. French is limited to one compulsory course (and 4 optional courses and 5 compact seminars) in the Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies. The Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies wants to remain sufficiently attractive to Asian students to whom fluency in French is not at all evident. The compulsory course in French is programmed during the second semester, so students have the opportunity to increase their knowledge of French during the first

semester. Besides, the students of the Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies attend one compulsory language course (French, Arabic, Chinese, German, Russian or Spanish). Some students of the Master of Arts in EU International Relations suggested that they would like to see the number of courses in French increased and that the level of a small number of language courses should be raised. All programmes offer the possibility to choose more optional courses in French. The panel appreciates that the College of Europe maintains a bilingual approach, and that sometimes a pragmatic approach has to be taken in this regard given that an active knowledge of French among incoming students is not always of a very high standard.

**Admission to the College of Europe** requires either a Bologna Master's degree, or a pre-Bologna equivalent degree, or a final university degree and at least 240 ECTS credits acquired in the course of the applicant's university studies. Candidates must submit an online application. The applications are evaluated by the different study departments and a preselection of candidates is made by the College of Europe. Preselected candidates are invited for an interview. The decision to admit a candidate is made after the interview by the selection panel and the College. Besides these formal requirements, the candidate's admission depends on the following criteria: academic achievements/study results, EU knowledge, relevant professional experience and extracurricular activities, personal motivation and reference letters. The fee for the 2016-17 academic year amounts to €4,000, covering tuition (€16,000) as well as board and lodging in a College student residence (€8,000). Approximately 70% of students are granted full or partial scholarships by their national or regional government, EU programmes, the Flemish Community of Belgium, and other public or private institutions and companies. The panel finds the admission procedure adequate.

The main tools used to recruit potential candidates are the College's website, personal contacts, promotional brochures and flyers, publicity by the national selection committees, study fairs and press articles. Most students hail from EU-countries. Every year the College admits students from outside the EU, mainly from North Africa, the former Soviet Republics, the Middle East, as well as from the US, Japan and China. The panel sees this as an added value. It proposes that the College of Europe further enhances the admittance of non-European students.



**The panel states that the facilities of the College of Europe are of a high standard.** In Bruges, the buildings are located at two sites in the centre of the city. The campus in Poland is located in Natolin, Warsaw. The College of Europe accommodates almost all of its students in own residences in Bruges and Natolin. All students have individual rooms. In addition, communal leisure and entertainment facilities are available in each residence. Students in Bruges and Natolin have access to a restaurant. The College of Europe has two libraries, one in Bruges and one in Natolin, which contain a good collection of books and periodicals in European studies. Available information resources concentrate on European law, economics, politics/administration and international relations and diplomacy studies. Some students indicated that the number of subscriptions to academic journals is limited.

Throughout their studies the students receive **a sufficient amount of study guidance and study support.** Queries regarding the contents of the programmes can be made to the director of studies, the visiting professors or the assistants. In case of problems or when they have practical questions, the students usually get in touch with the assistants. The assistants also communicate information between the professors and the students. Via the Students Affairs Office the students can obtain educational supervision or psychological support. The Student Affairs Office has been enlarged and according to the panel, it functions well.

The panel has examined the structure and curricula of the five programmes, including the various options and variants. To this end, the panel has used the information contained in the self-assessment report about the programmes' structure, the course materials and the discussions during the site visit. The panel found that the curricula of all programmes are up to date and challenging. Each curriculum is re-examined every academic year, based on new developments in the field. This results in a flexible selection of visiting professors, which presents the College of Europe with an advantage. Equally, the ECTS cards are reviewed every year. This process is carried out by the professor who teaches the course, with the help of the course assistant and finally reviewed and approved by the director of studies. According to the panel, the ECTS cards of the previous academic years were not always completed with the same care. However, almost all the 2016-17 ECTS cards are complete and clear. The panel proposes to make a clear link between the learning objectives and the courses' contents in the ECTS cards.

Generally speaking, the structure of the five Master programmes is the same. This structure is divided over two semesters. According to the self-assessment report, **the first semester contains the compulsory courses and provides the foundations for more in-depth optional courses during the second semester.** While the programmes make significant efforts to 'level up' students with insufficient background knowledge during the first semester, more could be done to provide additional challenges for students who have already specialized expertise in the chosen programme. Indeed, for students with a previously acquired Master's degree that thoroughly prepared them for their chosen degree at the College of Europe, the first semester includes an amount of repetition. Consequently, these students experience the first semester as insufficient. The programme management is aware of this, and indicates that it is up to the teaching staff to make the classes challenging and to match the students' prior knowledge. However, this does not seem to be easy in practice, taking into account that during the first semester, student groups of around 100 people are taught. The panel believes the first semester could be made less rigid by allowing exemptions from mandatory courses for students with proven knowledge about the field. For example, a student with a Master in European law could be exempted from the EU legal studies course and take an additional optional course.

**During the second semester the students are required to select their optional courses.** The optional courses are clustered. The students from the Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies, the Master of Arts in European Economic Studies and the Master of European Law (LLM) can also select courses/seminars offered by the European General Studies programme. **The European General Studies (EGS) courses** cover additional complementary subjects and provide an interdisciplinary experience by assembling students from different backgrounds. European General Studies include foundation courses during the first semester and specialised seminars during the second semester. The five programmes also include extracurricular activities such as cross-semester seminars or compact seminars on a specific subject, workshops in professional development and study trips. The second semester's curricula, which allow for specialisation and a more comprehensive approach, are much appreciated by the students.

In the following paragraphs the panel would like to focus on the curricula of the five programmes.

The **Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies** presents itself as a multidisciplinary programme. It offers a large number of EU-related courses. As already mentioned in Standard 1, the programme's title will change from 2017-18 into Master in European Political and Governance Studies. In connection with this, the panel advises that more attention could be given to domestic politics and policies in Europe (e.g. Europeanization). This programme has a strong professional angle. The programme managers clearly communicate that it focusses on the students' professional development and does not prepare them for a PhD. It must be remarked that this approach lowers the attention for methodology. The research seminars are more content driven.

The **Master of Arts in European Economic Studies** is a distinguished programme with a focus broader than business. Compiling such a wide programme is quite a challenge, but according to the panel the curricula are well-advised, but some more optional courses covering areas of EU economic policies are recommended. The panel notices that this programme has the smallest student population. On top of this, the students are spread over four different options, which creates small classes (minimum 8 students) that enable an active manner of teaching. According to the panel, there may be scope for a small expansion in the number of students, provided that qualified applicants are available.

The **Master of European Law (LLM)** allows a holistic view on EU-law. Students as well as the panel regard the bilingual character and the attention for professional skills as important advantages. The students request more attention for interdisciplinarity than the ones offered now. The students also asked more contacts with the professional field. Some of them also would like more room for other subjects than EU law, such as international law, legal theory and comparative law. The department could reflect on whether these demands can be accommodated without endangering the programme's traditional focus on the study of EU law.

The **Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies** offers a good basis for a future professional life in European diplomacy. Much attention is given to professional skills, although most of this is provided during the second semester. It would be an improvement for the students if practical courses were already organised during the first semester. The students are very positive about the simulation games in which they can practice their negotiation skills to the full. The panel confirms this.

The **Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies** in Natolin seeks to offer an interdisciplinary programme. The panel points out that it is not always easy to successfully integrate interdisciplinarity in a programme. Currently, the interdisciplinarity is limited to a pick-and-mix of courses from a number of different disciplines. Nevertheless, students of the EU Public Affairs and Policies Major and Global Actor Major appreciate that they can choose courses that are in line with their backgrounds and interests. Additionally, the programme offers a wide range of possibilities to specialise during the second semester. This freedom of choice is also much appreciated by the students. The panel noticed that the courses focus on East and Central Europe, not surprisingly because the campus is located in Poland. Nevertheless, a more balanced approach integrating more attention to all parts of Europe in the programme could be desirable.

The panel concludes that the educational learning environment complies with the required generic quality. Every programme's curriculum is challenging and aimed at the learning outcomes. The students are exposed to up-to-date curricula, current research and professional skills. The quality of each programme is high. Consequently, the panel's recommendations for the programmes should be interpreted as ways to refine and upgrade them. The programmes' structure is solid, although there is room for improvement when it comes to the contents of the first semester. The panel appreciates the unique educational organisation of the 'College formula', although the programmes' high intensity should be ameliorated. The programmes are supported by a sufficient number of qualified permanent staff members, by adequate facilities and excellent, extensive student guidance services. Therefore, the panel gives the score satisfactory for Standard 2 - Educational Learning Environment).

### Standard 3 - Outcome Level Achieved

The assessment panel evaluates the Outcome Level Achieved as satisfactory for the

- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies
- Master of Arts in European Economic Studies
- Master of European Law (LLM)
- Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies
- Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies

During its visit the panel surveyed a sample of the examination assignments. It concluded that the five programmes use a wide range of examination methods. On the one hand there is the continuous assessment, including the use of papers, presentations and class participations. The share of this continuous assessment is considerable and the panel approves of this. At the end of the semester, final exams that are either oral or written are held. This way of testing the students creates a clear link with the learning outcomes. The panel appreciates that most of the learning objectives are tested throughout the entire duration of the courses.

Based on conversations with the students, the panel learned that the writing of papers and essays is regarded as very time-consuming and that the effort they have to put into this activity is not reflected in the total number of ECTS credits. The students in Natolin remarked that, during the first semester, fact-based testing takes place. Additionally, the panel learned from several conversations that neither students nor professors clearly know how to evaluate class participation. The panel requests that the programmes investigate these matters and take the appropriate steps.

**To guarantee the validity of the examinations, the programmes take a variety of initiatives.** The director of studies and the permanent professor survey the examination and if necessary they interfere. The assistants review the overall distribution of marks before the professors finalise the list of marks. The College of Europe supplies the visiting professors with a marking grid to evaluate their students. The panel views this as a 'best practice', especially at the College of Europe where professors from a variety of educational systems work side by side with each other. The marking grid is not revealed to the students. The panel finds it important that students are clearly informed about the standards especially because the marking system is new to most of them. The marking grid should be available online.

**The programmes also make efforts to guarantee the transparency of the examinations.** Students are welcome to look up all data about the course of the examinations in the ECTS cards, including the relative weight of different components (in terms of percentages of the final mark), the expected number of words for papers, the deadlines for submitting papers and the expected length of oral presentations. At the start of the classes the professors supply the students with additional information about the exams and examination procedures. The rules and the organisation of tests and examinations can also be found in the College's education and examination regulations. Students of the Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies have the opportunity to take part in mock examinations to make them more familiar with the College's examination methods.

After submitting a paper, giving a presentation or sitting an exam, the students are able to receive **feedback**. However, the panel came to the conclusion that the students themselves need to take the initiative in order to receive this feedback. Each of the five programmes lacks the spontaneous distribution of formative feedback. Hence, the panel advises to increase the distribution of formative feedback. Both formative and summative feedback are essential to the learning process. Prior to exams, if students have completed essays/presentations or any other written documents, they should receive written feedback in order to clarify their progress and the specific points they still have to work on. This remark is not so much aimed at the Master of Arts in European Economic Studies, where students appear to receive more feedback.

Each of the five programmes includes a **Master's thesis**. In each of them the Master's thesis represents 15 credits (ECTS). Exceptionally, the Master's thesis for the Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies and the Master of European Interdisciplinary Studies programme represents 16 credits (ECTS). In this way, the Master's theses meet the legal requirements. The role of the master thesis in the programmes varies across the programmes both in terms of length and expectation. Though every programme phrases the Master's thesis' objective differently, its premises are that it should be a piece of academic writing that proves the student's critical and analytical competence, ability to use a research methodology and competence to make an original contribution to the relevant field and literature. After reading the Master's theses and following a conversation with the programme management, it turned out that sometimes the Master's thesis is regarded as problem-driven while in other cases it is seen as policy-oriented, from both an academic and a professional angle.

The majority of students chooses the latter format because they perceive the Master's thesis as a business card that they want to present to possible future employers.

**The self-assessment reports as well as the conversations on site show an increasing attention to research methodology in all the programmes.**

For this purpose, research seminars and methodology lectures are organised. The panel observed that those seminars and lectures show some differences. The panel points out that the programmes would benefit from exchanging research and methodology approaches.

Moreover, the students receive support on methodological issues from the promotor/professor and/or the assistants. During the conversations and by reading some master theses, the panel learned that the quality of this support depends on the programme, the visiting professor and the selected topic. Given that the College of Europe does not have a large permanent staff, the resources devoted to research methods/design are still relatively limited, which is visible in some of the master theses the panel read. Students hold a range of expectations regarding research methodology. For students who never experienced any training in methodology, the research seminars are extremely useful. Other students found the seminars, for instance the methodology training in the Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies, too basic and not challenging. It is important to ensure that each student receives adequate support in research methods/design. More attention needs to be paid to this. Moreover, the panel points out that students who envisage the Master's thesis as a preparation for a PhD often meet with disappointment because the College of Europe is, after all, more policy-oriented. Whereas the panel is of the opinion that both academically and professionally oriented theses are meaningful, it suggests that the programmes should discuss their intended objectives internally and then communicate this clearly to the students.

**The topics that the students work on are often linked to a course or a research seminar.** Depending on their programme, the students select their Master's thesis topic between October and February. The Master's thesis submission deadline is in May.

**Students are tutored by the professors and by assistants.** Through discussions with students the panel learned that the assistants make many efforts to adequately support them. Tutoring/supervision by visiting professors is variable, but generally adequate in spite of the limited

physical presence of the professors. Some students safeguard themselves against the professors' limited presence by selecting a promotor who tutors on campus during the second semester. The panel concluded that the tutoring/supervision of the Master's thesis is generally sound.

It is noteworthy that students are invited to query the promotor, but the promotor is not expected to proofread parts of the Master's thesis prior to its submission. In the opinion of some of the programmes of the College of Europe, the promotor should be the Master's thesis final assessor, consequently the promotor should not intervene during the writing process. The panel recommends that this rule, which currently applies to all five programmes, is reconsidered. After all, it does make sense to, at least, proofread an introduction in which the student outlines the Master's thesis and its methodology.

**Master's theses are assessed by the promotor.** Master's theses with an unsatisfactory score or with a score higher than 17/20 are read by the director of studies in order to guaranty the scores' reliability. The assessment's reliability is also monitored by the assistants. They check the assessments for anomalies. An unexpected score will lead to a conversation between the professor concerned and the director of studies. The College of Europe does not work with a second thesis reader, although this is common practice in other academic programmes. The College of Europe argues that with its limited permanent staff, it is impossible to read all Master's theses twice and that an additional task load cannot be imposed on the visiting professors. The panel understands this reasoning, but argues that the College of Europe should look at other options to strengthen the reliability of the Master's thesis assessments. For the panel this is not just a theoretical fad, but a real necessity. The panel noticed some inconsistencies in the grading of the master theses, also some academic assistants noticed this as a problem. If introducing a second reader proves impossible, consideration may be given to external assessment through sampling. Another option could be the introduction of oral defence presentations such as those that are already part of the Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies and Master of European Law (LLM): in this way several professors would be involved in the final assessment.

All departments have compiled an **assessment form** for the Master's thesis. The panel thinks this is a good point, but at a point there is mismatch between the learning outcomes and the evaluation criteria. The



panel believes it would make sense to include a criterion for policy-based topics.

**Most alumni have embraced a career with a European or international dimension either in the public or in the private sector.** Well over a thousand current civil servants working for EU institutions graduated from the College of Europe. Many alumni also work for national governments, international organisations, international law firms, consultancies, private companies and non-governmental organisations. The panel appreciates that almost all students quickly find employment. They are aided in their search for employment by the many contacts and the network they acquire during their time at the College. The Natolin students' network is smaller, but still relatively wide. The College of Europe's own Careers Offices also play an important part in the students' search for employment. A small number of students pursue an academic career. Each year around 5% of the students apply for PhD programmes. Students who do have ambitions in this direction are those who start working as academic assistants after their studies; often they are already writing or preparing a doctoral thesis. According to the panel, the programmes should furnish newly-admitted students with clear information about this.

The **pass rates** of all the programmes are high and the drop-out is low. More than 90% of all students obtain the qualification within one year. Circa 75% of all students attain the qualification during the first exam session. This allows them to graduate at the annual graduation ceremony in June. Since there is no such ceremony after the second exam period, students attempt to avoid resits. The panel learned that the typical college atmosphere evaporates when most of the students have left Bruges or Natolin after the first exam session, which makes it rather difficult to become motivated for the second exam session in September/October.

The panel concludes that the five programmes utilise a valid, reliable and transparent method of testing and assessing. The assessment method varies somehow across the programmes but is of a high level and aimed at the learning outcomes. However, more attention should be paid to the distribution of (formative) feedback in each of the programmes. The final level, expressed by the Master's theses and the competence of the alumni, is high and complies with the learning objectives. Therefore, the panel gives the score satisfactory for Standard 3 - Outcome Level Achieved.

## Standard 4 - Structure and Organisation of Internal Quality Assurance

The assessment panel evaluates the Structure and Organisation of Internal Quality Assurance as satisfactory for the

- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies
- Master of Arts in European Economic Studies
- Master of European Law (LLM)
- Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies
- Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies

The **Academic Council** is the supreme educational body within the College of Europe. Every year in May, the quality and relevance of the programmes are considered by the Academic Council, which either approves the proposed programmes or requires that they are amended for the following academic year. The Academic Council is also in charge of the appointment of professors. All appointments are for one year and they are renewed after each department's programme has been approved. This approach allows the College to compile an up-to-date and innovative programme. During discussions the panel has learned that about 15% of the programmes are modified each year. Nevertheless, the Academic Council guarantees the curricula's continuity. The learning outcomes and the alignment with the field serve as criteria for this continuity.

The departments carry most of the responsibility for monitoring the educational quality, based on **stakeholder involvement**. The various stakeholders are frequently involved in the assessment of the education processes and outcomes. On the departmental level, discussions with a view to improving the programme regularly take place between the director of studies, the permanent professor, the research chairs and the assistants. Additionally, individual meetings and conversations of the director of studies with visiting professors, or discussions at the annual professorial meeting, ensure that communication flows. It is obvious to the panel that the director of studies plays an important part in the department's operation. A further opportunity to discuss the programme's quality is the annual faculty meeting. All the programme's professors are invited to this meeting. The annual faculty meeting is where the learning outcomes are discussed before they are recorded in the Academic Council. The students too become involved in the quality assurance. They are mainly encouraged to give feedback to their professors. In case of problems the students can turn to the academic assistants or the director of studies. Further contact persons are the student representatives.

Every programme has a student representative who is also a member of the Academic Council. The professional field as well as the alumni are involved via informal communication channels that professors maintain with national governments, international organisations, international law firms, consultancies, private companies and non-governmental organisations. The chair of the alumni association is also a member of the Academic Council. The panel believes that there is room for improvement regarding the formal involvement of the alumni and the professional field. It advises to organise meetings between the representatives of the professional field and the alumni, programme by programme, in the way it is already happening in the Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies.

**The student surveys** present a further means to monitor the programmes. These electronic inquiries occur annually. While the response rate is sometimes (too) low, programmes have been addressing this issue and higher response rates have already been achieved in many cases. The surveys focus on the facilities, the supervision and the content of the programmes. The outcomes of the consultation and the student surveys are discussed in the departments, which are responsible for the follow-up and for taking improvement measures. The Academic Council is then presented with a summary of the surveys and the follow-up. In effect, these results are discussed by the director of studies, the permanent professor, the assistants and, possibly, the visiting professor concerned. The panel advises to involve the students in these discussions. The panel equally believes that the programmes should keep the stakeholders informed about the measures they have taken. It would, therefore, be useful to furnish the student representatives at the start of each academic year with an outline of the measures that were decided upon during the previous year.

In addition to the course-specific evaluations, the programmes should also organize programme-wide evaluations through student surveys.

**During the visit, the panel noticed that the processing, discussion and follow-up of students' evaluations happen informally and ad-hoc.** There is not always a synthesis made of students' evaluations. Bearing in mind the College of Europe's small-scale, it is understandable that a formal and 'traditional' university approach to quality assurance is not necessarily desirable. However, the panel encourages the College to reflect on practical ways to provide a more formal and systematic analysis, discussion and

follow-up of students' evaluations. Although the panel has not encountered any problems during the visit that could have stemmed from the informal approach, the College and its programmes should anticipate on possible negative consequences in the future and take appropriate measures.

The panel has thoroughly studied the **self-assessment reports of the various programmes** and concludes that they are sufficiently informative. The self-assessment reports grant the panel with a view on the internal workings and provide clear answers to the four questions posed in the assessment framework. However, the quality of reflection and analysis was variable. The critical reflection at the end of each Generic Quality Standard was sometimes detailed and clear, but in a number of cases it turned out to be rather vague. The panel recommends the distribution of the self-assessment reports among the students. Students indicated that these self-assessment reports had not been available to them, which the panel sees again as a missed opportunity to more formally and proactively engage in discussions with students on the quality of education.

The panel concludes that the structure and the organisation of internal quality assurance is aimed at systematic improvement of the programmes. The programmes periodically assess the education's quality and take the right measures. All stakeholders are actively involved in this quality assurance, but the involvement is rather informal and more could be done to involve students. The follow-up appears to be in need of systematisation. Therefore, the panel gives the score satisfactory for standard 4 - Structure and Organisation of Internal Quality Assurance).

## Final rating decisions of the assessment panel

### **Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies**

As standard 1 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 2 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 3 is evaluated as satisfactory and standard 4 is evaluated as satisfactory, the final rating decision of the assessment panel about the Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies is satisfactory, such according to the decision rules.

### **Master of Arts in European Economic Studies**

As standard 1 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 2 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 3 is evaluated as satisfactory and standard 4 is evaluated as satisfactory, the final rating decision of the assessment panel about the Master of Arts in European Economic Studies is satisfactory, such according to the decision rules.

### **Master of European Law (LLM)**

As standard 1 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 2 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 3 is evaluated as satisfactory and standard 4 is evaluated as satisfactory, the final rating decision of the assessment panel about the Master of European Law (LLM) is satisfactory, such according to the decision rules.

### **Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies**

As standard 1 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 2 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 3 is evaluated as satisfactory and standard 4 is evaluated as satisfactory, the final rating decision of the assessment panel about the Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies is satisfactory, such according to the decision rules.

### **Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies**

As standard 1 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 2 is evaluated as satisfactory, standard 3 is evaluated as satisfactory and standard 4 is evaluated as satisfactory, the final rating decision of the assessment panel about the Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies is satisfactory, such according to the decision rules.

## Summary of the recommendations for further improvement (for the five programmes)

### Standard 1 – Targeted Outcome Level

- Compare the programme to similar programmes. Carry out a benchmark in order to fortify the position of the programmes in the academic landscape.
- Make the learning outcomes a pedagogic instrument to direct and shape the programmes' curricula.

### Standard 2 – Educational Learning Environment

- Pay attention to the planning of the classes. Inform the students in advance about when the classes will take place. Do not let the classes take place at a late hour and give the students sufficient break time.
- Increase flexibility during the first semester: students with proven prior knowledge in the discipline should receive the possibility to exchange compulsory courses for optional courses.
- Engage more female professors.
- Monitor the average length of studies in all five programmes. See to it that the students do not drown in the numerous extra-curricular activities. The number of seminars without credits should be kept within moderation.
- Examine the possibilities of e-learning.
- Master of Arts in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies: examine the possibilities to organise more professionally orientated courses during the first semester.
- Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies: reflect on the objectives concerning interdisciplinarity. Introduce interdisciplinarity into the Master's theses. Also increase the number of topics linked to Western Europe.
- Master of European Law (LLM): pay sufficient attention to interdisciplinarity and to contacts with the wider professional field. Add more elements of international law, legal theory and comparative law to the programme.
- Master of Arts in European Political and Administrative Studies: add aspects on domestic politics to the programme. See to it that the balance between professional skills and research methodology is maintained.
- Master of Arts in European Economic Studies: Add more optional courses covering areas of EU economic policies in the current curriculum.

### Standard 3 – Outcome Level Achieved

- Examine the importance of papers and essays in the programme.
- Aim at giving the students formative feedback. Make the marking grid available to the students and use it to give feedback.
- Reflect on the objectives of the Master's theses. Clearly explain the relation between professional and academic objectives to newly-admitted students.
- Increase the supervision/guidance of the students during the writing process of the Master's thesis. Teach all students similar basic methodology skills. Give them feedback about their already written parts of the Master's thesis, particularly the introduction.
- Consider introducing a second reader for the Master's thesis or seek alternative solutions such as external assessment through sampling.
- Clearly explain to newly-admitted students to what extent the programmes prepare them for a PhD.

### Standard 4 – Structure and Organisation of Internal Quality Assurance

- Reflect about the informal way of quality assurance. Consider making a number of its processes more formal. Include an assessment of the programme as a whole in the students' survey. Systematise the follow-up with the students' involvement. Communicate the results of the follow-up to the stakeholders.

The assessment panel wishes to express its appreciation of the improvements implemented by the College of Europe since the site visit. The panel encourages the College to continue these efforts





# **APPENDICES**



## APPENDIX I

### Curricula vitae of the members of the assessment panel

#### Jan Orbie

Jan Orbie is professor in European Union (EU) External Relations at the Department of Political Science and Director of the Centre for EU Studies (CEUS) at Ghent University (Belgium). He teaches on Theories of European Integration, Current Issues in EU Politics, EU Trade Politics, and EU External Relations in the Master EU Studies programme at the same university. He also teaches a module on Discourse Analysis in the Bachelor of Political Science. He has been a member of visitation committees for more than 20 different programmes in European Studies, International Relations and History in Flanders and the Netherlands. His research concerns the external relations of the EU. He currently (co-)supervises doctoral research on Fair Trade policy in the EU, Europeanization of development policy, trade discourses in the European Parliament, climate mainstreaming in EU external relations, the the EU's global health policy. He has also been Erasmus coordinator of the Department of Political Science and member of the Research Council of Ghent University.

#### Brigid Laffan

Brigid Laffan is Director and Professor at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute (EUI), Florence. She was Vice-President of UCD and Principal of the College of Human Sciences from 2004 to 2011. She was the founding director of the Dublin European Institute UCD from 1999 and in March 2004 she was elected as a member of

the Royal Irish Academy. In September 2014 Professor Laffan was awarded the UACES Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2012 she was awarded the THESEUS Award for outstanding research on European Integration. In 2010 she was awarded the *Ordre national du Mérite* by the President of the French Republic.

### **Panos Tsakloglou**

Panos Tsakloglou is professor at the Athens University of Economics and Business in Greece. His research focuses on questions of inequality, poverty, social exclusion, returns to education and social policy (especially, the redistributive role of public policies). He has published over ninety five books, articles in scholarly journals and contributions to collective volumes, presented papers in over a hundred and sixty scientific conferences and workshops and has been a partner in over fifty five international and national research and consultancy projects. He is Research Fellow of the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA, Bonn), Fellow of the Global Labor Organization (GLO) and Senior Research Fellow of the Hellenic Observatory (LSE, London). During the period 2012-2014 he was Chairman of the Greek Government's Council of Economic Advisors and member of the EU Economic and Financial Committee (EFC) and Eurogroup Working Group (EWG) as well as alternate member of Ecofin and Eurogroup. He has also been Employment and Social Policy advisor to Prime Ministers G. Papandreou (2010-2011) and L. Papademos (2011-2012) and a member of the EU Economic Policy Committee (EPC, 2010-2011). Further, he was member of the Greek Government's Council of Advisors on Employment and Social Policy (2001-2002), National Council for Research and Technology (2001-2005) Council of Economic Advisors (2002-2004 and 2009-2012) and member of the Independent Authority for the Evaluation of Tertiary Education (2006-2009).

### **Bruno de Witte**

Bruno de Witte is Professor of European Union Law at Maastricht University, co-director of the Maastricht Centre for European Law, and also a part-time professor of Law at the European University Institute in Florence. His main fields of research and publications are: Constitutional change in the European Union; relations between international, European and national law; protection of fundamental rights in Europe; the rights of minorities, language law and cultural diversity in Europe; internal market law and non-market values; decision-making and legal instruments of EU law.

## Elke Verhaeghe

Elke Verhaeghe is Ph.D. applicant at Ghent University, based at the United Nations University for Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS). Her research focuses on the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative and entails a comprehensive political science analysis of the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA's) between the EU and timber producing countries. At the time of the assessment, she worked as a research assistant at the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), where she was part of the Regional Integration team. She took part in the assessment as a student representative. She holds a Master's degree in EU-Studies from Ghent University, where she was awarded the Marthe Versichelen award for best Master thesis.

## Michael Bruter

Michael Bruter is Professor of political science at the LSE where he leads the ECREP initiative in electoral psychology and has developed a distinguished research profile in the fields of voters' psychology, political behaviour, and political science research methods. Bruter has led a number of exciting research projects funded by prestigious funding bodies such as the ERC and the ESRC including a study of electoral psychology in over 20 countries which has encompassed a broad range of innovative quantitative and qualitative methodologies, a project comparing citizens' European identity in 27 countries and its evolution before and after the 'Euro crisis', and a project aiming at improving the experience and turnout of first time voters in both established and emerging democracies. Bruter has held prestigious visiting professorships or long-term associate status in such universities as Columbia, McGill, and the Australian National University, advised key institutions such as the European Commission, Council of Europe, and a number of Electoral Commissions, and served as expert witness in cases pertaining to voters' psychology tried by the Irish High Court and Irish Supreme Court. Alongside five authored and two edited books, Bruter has authored numerous articles in such journals as Comparative Political Studies, Public Choice, Nature: Human Behaviour, American Behavioural Scientist, Journal of Common Market Studies, Journal of European Public Policy, etc focusing on topics within the fields of voters' psychology, political behaviour, identity, and social science research methods.



## APPENDIX II

### Time schedule on-site visit

#### March 8, 2017

09:00–11:30	internal discussion
11:30–12:30	interview Board of the College of Europe
12:30–13:30	internal discussion + lunch
13:30–15:00	interview programme directors / permanent professors
15:00–15:30	internal discussion
15:30–16:15	interview students IRD
16:15–17:15	internal staf IRD
17:15–18:00	internal discussion
18:00–19:00	visit facilities
19:00	dinner

### March 9, 2017

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09:00–09:45	students EISP
09:45–10:45	staff EISP
10:45–12:45	internal discussion + lunch
12:45–13:30	students POL
13:30–14:30	staff POL
14:30–16:00	internal discussion
16:00–16:45	students LAW
16:45–17:45	staf LAW
17:45–18:45	internal discussion
18:45–19:45	alumni and professional field
19:45	dinner

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### March 9, 2017

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09:00–09:45	students ECO
09:45–10:45	staff ECO
10:45–11:45	open interview and consultation
11:45–12:45	internal discussion + lunch
12:45–13:15	feedback board and programme management (all programs)
13:15–14:00	internal discussion
14:00–14:30	oral report

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