

Board of Studies for the MSc Programmes of the Faculty of TPM Annual report, course year 2017-2018

The Board of Studies for the MSc programmes of the TPM (BoS MSc) consists of both staff and student members involved in the three MSc programmes of Complex Systems Engineering and Management (CoSEM), Engineering and Policy Analysis (EPA), and Management of Technology (MoT) are members. The BoS is one of the two Boards of Studies of TPM. The tasks legally assigned to the BoS MSc are specified in annex 1 below.

In this document the BoS MSc reports about its activities during the course year 2017-2018. The report will be made available to everyone associated with the Faculty of TPM, as specified in the Faculty Regulations. (See annex 2 below).

Instalment and changes with respect to the situation in 2016-2017

The BoS MSc was formally installed by the Faculty of TPM only at the start of the course year 2017-2018. The Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) requires each programme or group of programmes to have a Board of Studies. Until September 2017, the BSc programme Technische Bestuurskunde and the three MSc programmes each had their own Board of Studies. In September 2017, TPM abolished the three separate MSc boards and replaced them by a single board for the three MSc programmes jointly. This was done in response to a change in the Higher Education and Research Act which gives Boards of Studies a right of approval with respect to a selection of the subjects of the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) of a programme. Because to continue with four separate boards which each had a right of approval was judged to have as a potential consequence a deterioration of the efficiency of decision-making, the faculty decided that a reduction of the number of separate Boards of Studies was required. Discussion of the situation with the four boards in the summer of 2017 resulted in a decision to continue with two boards, one for the BSc programme and one for the three MSc programmes jointly .

As specified in the Faculty Regulations which came in force in November 2017, the BoS MSc has twelve members, half of whom are students representative for the three MSc programmes and half of whom are staff members representative for the teaching staff engaged in the three MSc programmes. The student members in 2017-2018 were nominated in strict accordance with the intended representativeness in that two members were CoSEM students, two EPA students and two MoT students, and of each pair one representativeness is less straightforward because staff can teach in more than one programme, but here as well two staff members were primarily associated with CoSEM, two primarily with EPA and two with MoT. The full list of members is given in annex 3.

Again as specified in the Faculty Regulations, the staff members were nominated for three years, with the possibility of a three-year extension, and the students members for one year, with the possibility of a one-year extension. To ensure the benefits of a degree of continuity, exactly half of the student members and half of the staff members that were nominated had been members of the three separate boards in 2016-2017. For the sake of continuity, the three student members who were first-year students in 2017-2018 will be encouraged to be candidates for a one-year extension of their nomination, and this is expected to be continued as a general policy.

Meetings and formal matters dealt with

Due to the exceptional situation which characterized the start of the course year 2017-2018, as described above, the BoS MSc had its first meeting relatively late, on 14 December 2017. After that, four subsequent meetings have taken place, on 19 January, 8 March 2018, 26 April and 20 June 2018.

Due to the novelty of the situation, a lot of attention had to be given to the settling of formal matters. This included the election of a chair and agreeing upon the BoS MSc's Rules of Operation. During the first meeting Maarten Franssen was elected as chair (previously he had chaired the BoS for MoT). During the first meeting also a standing invitation to attend all meetings of the BoS MSc was presented to the Commissioner Master & Career of Curius, the Student Association of TPM. The

board's Rules of Operation were finally agreed during the meeting of 8 March. They extended the standing invitation to attend all meetings to a representative of the Student Faculty Council; they also added the post of vice-chair, to be preferably taken by a student member

An important issue that was dealt with through the Rules of Operation was the installation of three permanent committees, one for each of the three MSc programmes and each consisting of the four student and staff members who represented this programme in the BoS MSc. In this way the BoS MSc intended to secure the role of the former separate boards of serving as the primary point of contact between students, teaching staff and Programme Director where concerns with respect to the programme could be brought up and discussed. It was anticipated that in the new set-up, the meetings of the BoS MSc would no longer be able to take care of this, or at least not sufficiently adequately. The committees report at each meeting of the BoS MSc and decide which of the issues that were discussed should be brought to the board's attention. Accordingly it is mainly through the three permanent committees that the BoS MSc expects to be in regular contact with the Directors of the three MSc programmes. Although the Programme Directors are free to attend meetings of the BoS MSc, as specified in the Faculty Regulations, the board was not expecting the Programme Director to attend the board's meetings on a regular basis.

Main activities during 2017-2018

1. *Issues falling under the right of approval of the BoS MSc.*

(i) In the very first meeting, the BoS MSc was asked to discuss an issue that required its approval, being the proposal to discontinue one of the four tracks – Built Environment and Spatial Development from which students in the CoSEM programme have to make a choice. In the meeting of 19 January 2018, The Director of CoSEM was present to clarify the proposal to discontinue the track, which he supported, and to answer questions. In this meeting, the BoS MSc approved of the proposal.

(ii) In the meetings of 26 April and 20 June, the BoS MSc discussed the new TER for 2018-2019. The changes with respect to 2017-2018 were more substantial than usual and required extensive discussion, which also received input from the representative of the FSC. In the course of this process, the draft TER was repeatedly modified. In the meeting of 20 June, the BoS MSc finally approved of the articles covered by its right of approval with exception of one article, as it was the board's opinion that some corrections were still necessary. After some corrections were agreed and others were seen to be unnecessary since the concerns were based on misinterpretations, the BoS MSc approved of the final article through an ad-hoc virtual meeting on 17 July 2018. To its letters of approval, the BoS MSc added a document with suggestions for further future improvements of the TER.

2. *Issues of relevance to the general role of the BoS MSc*

(i) Faculty policy with respect to the programmes

The first and fourth meeting were attended by the secretary of the faculty, Martijn Blaauw, and the fifth meeting was attended by the Dean, Hans Wamelink, and the future (from 1 September 2018 on) Director of Studies, Neelke Doorn. A major issue discussed during these meetings was the intention of the Faculty to grow, in particular to grow in terms of the number of students – which had been presented as a goal by the Dean earlier in 2017. Many BoS MSc members expressed worries that this would increase the already high workload of staff, which could result in a decrease of the quality of the programmes. In response, the reasons for aiming to grow were explained, which are mainly financial, and the faculty's acknowledgement of the workload concerns were expressed. The aim of growth concerns first of all the BSc programme; for the MSc programmes the faculty's goal is 100 students per programme, which is currently already met by MoT, though not yet by the other two programmes.

(ii) In relation to this both staff and student members of the BoS MSc brought up repeatedly that there were reasons for concern about student quality, not as regards average quality but as regards the great variance of quality. Each year some students are admitted whose progress

remains significantly below standard. Growth should be interpreted not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, in the sense of an improvement of average student quality and performance. With respect to mastery of English and reading and writing skills there is generally still considerable room for improvement.

3. *Issues directly related to the MSc programmes*

(i) The BoS was kept informed by Wendela Louwerse about the progress of the implementation of the new rules concerning the duration of the MSc thesis project, which were included in the new TER for 2018-2019. Students voiced concerns mainly with how the new scheme is communicated to students. They were quite critical of the clarity of the graduation portal. Monitoring of the implementation of the new scheme will continue into 2018-2019.

(ii) For each of the programmes, specific problems were discussed in the permanent committees: communication about the linkage programme (CoSEM), the course 'Preparation for the master thesis' (MoT), the python skills and coordination problems due to schedule conventions differing between Delft and The Hague (EPA). None of these were considered so serious or urgent to lead the BoS MSc to consider an action at board level.

4. *Contacts and communication with other Faculty bodies*

(i) In a meeting with the new dean, before the first BoS meeting, the chairs of the BoS BSc and the BoS MSc expressed as their opinion that in order to allow the operation of the new boards to run smoothly, it would be helpful if at the start of the course year a preliminary schedule for the entire course year would be available, with an overview of planned activities. This would allow the boards to set preliminary schedules for their planned meetings and in this way (i) prevent being put under pressure in approving of Faculty decisions falling under their right of approval and (ii) prevent clogging of issues to be dealt as the course year proceeds. This suggestion has not been implemented, however, and annual planning remains a concern for the BoS MSc.

(ii) With the start of the new set-up, contact and coordination between the formal bodies of the Faculty has received much intensified, from almost non-existent in the pre-2017 set-up. The chairs of the BoS BSc and the BoS MSc have agreed to have regular informal contact to exchange information and coordinate their activities. With the Board of Examiners, contact and coordination is still up for improvement.

Contact with the Faculty management team formally take care of through the requirement in the Rules of the Faculty that twice a year the dean attends a BoS meeting. In practice, however, this turned out to be quite hard to implement, as the BoS meeting schedule is fixed at the start of the year. A *modus operandi* has to be found here, in which it makes sense to involve the Director of Studies of the faculty as well. The BoS MSc did not meet with the acting Director of Studies, but as indicated above it did meet with Neelke Doorn, nominated to become Director of Studies from 1 September 2019 on, in the final meeting, jointly with the Dean.

(iii) For all external communication of the Board, a web page is available on the Faculty's website, which is monitored by the coordinator of studies. However, the Board is struggling with finding the time to prepare announcements and documents to be made available in this way.

Agreed by the Board of Studies in its meeting of 7 March 2019

Annex 1: Formal tasks of the Board

The tasks of the Board of Studies are described in the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW, Article 9.18). These tasks are:

1. To exercise its right of approval of the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) of each of the three MSc programmes of the faculty insofar as these regulations concern: (a1) the way in which the teaching in the programme is evaluated, (b) the contents of the programme, (c) the final attainment levels of the programme, (d) the organization of practical exercises, insofar as necessary, (e) the study load of the programme and of its components, (g) the assessment of whether the programme exceeds a size of 60 EC, and (v) the way students are selected for the tracks of the programme, insofar as the programme has tracks.
2. To advise on the TER concerning all remaining aspects.
3. To annually assess how the TER has been implemented.
4. To advise the Programme Directors of the three MSc programmes and the Dean on all matters that concern the teaching in the three MSc programmes

Annex 2. Annual report

As specified in the Faculty Regulations, the Board of Studies draws up a short annual report of its activities. This report is made available to everyone associated with the faculty.

Annex 3: List of members and attendees at meetings during 2017-2018

Staff members: Maarten Franssen (chair), Hadi Asghari, Yilin Huang, Stephan Lukosch, Mark de Reuver, Behnam Taebi.

Student members: Frank Ribbens (first-year MoT, vice-chair), Erin Bartholomew (second-year EPA), Max Bosch (first-year CoSEM), Mythili Ezhilkumar (first-year MoT), Housam Hammoud (second-year CoSEM), Erika van der Linden (first-year EPA).

Regular attendees: Wendela Louwerse-Houtzager (educational advisor from the TPM department of Education and Study Affairs); Paulien Burgers (trainee from Education and Study Affairs); Isabelle van Schilt (commissioner Master & Career of Curius), Samuel Natalius (representative of the Student Council of the Faculty).

Occasional attendees: Hans Wamelink (Dean of TPM), Martijn Blaauw (secretary of TPM), Neelke Doorn (future Director of Education TPM), Ivo Bouwmans (Programme Director of CoSEM);