



Development Dialogue

Programme details	
School	Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam
Programme	Urban Management and Development
RIO-isat	75155

Accreditation details		
NVAO Framework	2024	
Date site visit	31 March 2026	
Panel	Chair	Prof. Dr. K. (Katy) Jenkins, professor of Global Development at the Department of Geography and the Environment of Northumbria University (United Kingdom)
	Member	Dr. J. O. (Joanes) Atela, co-director of the Climate Finance and Sustainability Center of Makerere University Business School (Uganda) and Executive director of the Africa Research and Impact Network (Kenya)
	Member	Dr. M. A. F. (Mirjam) Ros-Tonen, researcher and former associate professor, affiliated with the discipline of Human Geography, Planning and International Development Studies of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Amsterdam
	Student – member	C. (Channah) Jonker (BSc.), student in the master’s programmes International Development Studies and Forest and Nature Conservation of Wageningen University
	Secretary	Drs. Y. (Yannick) Slagter (Academion)
Panel conclusion	Standard 1	Positive
	Standard 2	Positive
	Standard 3	Positive
	Standard 4	Positive
	Final conclusion	Positive
NVAO conclusion		
The most recent results of the programme accreditation can be viewed at https://besluitenrapporten.nvao.net/		

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Participants	Participants included the visiting panel, academic staff, programme management, and other relevant stakeholders. The session was facilitated by a moderator with expertise in both the field and higher education.
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Context development dialogue

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

Discussion points

Theme 1: the future of international urban development studies in a challenging environment

Theme 2: evolving student population and programme adaptation

Discussion takeaways

As part of the reaccreditation visit for the Urban Management & Development master's programme at Erasmus University, a thematic session was organised to foster reflection and dialogue on the programme's future. The session aimed to explore opportunities and challenges in a rapidly changing global environment, with a focus on enhancing the programme's relevance and resilience. The discussion was structured around two core questions, addressing the evolving landscape of international urban development studies and the changing student population and career trajectories of graduates.

Participants included the visiting panel, academic staff, programme management, and other relevant stakeholders. The session was facilitated by a moderator with expertise in both the field and higher education. The dialogue was structured to encourage open exchange and synthesis of diverse perspectives.

Theme 1: the future of international urban development studies in a challenging environment

The first theme explored how the programme should position itself in an environment increasingly resistant to traditional development paradigms. The panel emphasized the critical importance of international collaboration and knowledge exchange, particularly between the Global North and South, while acknowledging inequalities within both regions. There was a call to move beyond the traditional "provider-receiver" dynamic and to recognize shared global challenges, such as gender inequality and sustainable production.

The discussion highlighted the need for the programme to clearly articulate its stance in ongoing debates about development, especially as the field faces contestation from both right-wing and critical academic perspectives. Participants suggested that the programme should focus on patterns of transition and transformative change, rather than being constrained by the term "development," which can imply a linear and potentially

problematic trajectory. The panel also stressed the importance of contextual relevance, avoiding overly technocratic solutions that fail to integrate with local complexities.

Theme 2: evolving student population and programme adaptation

The second theme addressed the changing profile of students and its implications for the programme. A shift away from mid-career professionals to a younger, undergraduate-dominated cohort was noted by programme stakeholders and panel members alike. The mid-career professionals previously brought valuable practical insights with them, so the shift presents challenges in maintaining the programme's practical relevance and bridging the gap between theory and real-world application.

To address this, the panel underscored the importance of helping students navigate the field's increasingly unclear career trajectories. Central to this effort is integrating practitioners as guest lecturers and strengthening connections with the professional field, enabling students to gain firsthand insights into potential career pathways and opportunities. The panel stressed that students often struggle with a sense of disillusionment, feeling that "nothing works" in the face of complex global challenges. To counter this, the programme should actively foster an "optimistic realist" mindset, drawing on the experiences of seasoned professionals to demonstrate how meaningful progress can be achieved despite obstacles.

Additionally, the panel highlighted the need to incorporate generative AI (GenAI) into the curriculum, reflecting its growing relevance in both education and professional practice. A balanced approach was advocated, ensuring students develop not only technical skills but also essential soft skills such as writing, presenting, and critical discussion, while addressing rising anxiety about future employment and societal impact.

Challenges and opportunities for students seeking to remain and work in the Netherlands after graduation were also addressed. The panel acknowledged that visa restrictions and high tuition fees limit the diversity of the student body and influence career decisions. The panel advised the programme to be responsive to student expectations and to align training with labour market demands to avoid disappointing graduates. There was a recognition that while the programme cannot control external factors like visa policies, it can adapt its delivery to better prepare students for the realities of the job market, both locally and internationally.