

Development report Vrije Universiteit M Oncology

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Secretary: Jessica van Rossum, Academion

Theme 1: The program ambition & development

As a programme, we always think ahead towards the future. The students that come and enrol in the academic year, where will they end up, what training do they need to reach this and how will they perform in society? It greatly determines the curriculum that the programme is going to provide. Do we want all our students to become translational researchers, or should we be open and provide insights into industry-related fields? Perhaps integrating grant proposal writing or a PhD proposal would also be of interest. It could be that some students do not want to continue into the research (laboratory environment) but rather go into reviewing or publishing work in oncology.

The panel notes that in the future, the programme could devote attention to

- *Training students to be aware of the possibilities and impacts of AI.* Since this is not specific to the MSc Oncology, the panel suggests the programme management to examine this beyond the MSc Oncology programme.
- *A translational focus: from basic oncology to clinical innovation.* The programme management could search for aspects that are specific to translational research in the context of oncology, for example, research into ethics, and include this in the curriculum. It could collaborate with other programmes to offer courses to strengthen the curriculum while retaining its oncology identity. These could be programmes closely related to their programme but also, for example, to more technological programs within their universities or at technical universities. This latter is of significance considering the ever increasing role of technology in health and health care. The panel suggests that the programme management takes students' and alumni's perspectives as a starting point: what knowledge and skills from other fields are needed to contribute to curing cancer? The curriculum would then prepare students for an academic career with a broad horizon of possibilities, focusing on researchers, data scientists and clinicians collaborating to cure cancer.
- *Investigating where the programme can better align with other programmes.* The programme management could investigate whether parts of the programme can be organized in conjunction with other programmes. However, including the entire (translational) spectrum within the MSc Oncology would probably overload the curriculum and the teaching staff.

Theme 2: Data science and AI

As described in Chapter 2.5 (Student Guidance and Student Facilities, p. 11), data science and AI should receive more attention in the master's program. We wish to discuss the following question with the panel: How can we use data science and AI, and other (technological) developments to come, in an appropriate manner in the master's program?

The programme management comments that it seeks ways to better incorporate data science and AI in the programme. It is already working on adding this to the curriculum. The panel adds that it could search for ways to work efficiently in this area with other programmes. For example, joining forces with the MSc BMS and other related programmes could ensure the programme remains up-to-date regarding data science, AI and other (technological) developments. The curriculum committee is investigating which aspects of data science to include in the curriculum. The panel suggests coupling this with students' interests and what they need to prepare them for their future careers.

Theme 3: Alumni

We would like to connect more with our alumni. As described in Chapter 2.5 (Student Guidance and Student Facilities, p. 15), we started a large number of activities to have more contact with the programme's graduates and use their input. We would like to discuss how we can strengthen the contact and input from our alumni with the panel.

The panel observed that the programme management could use input from the alumni to improve the curriculum since they are the eyes and ears in the outside world. In addition, the panel believes the programme could offer alumni something in return, such as a refresher course on the latest developments in the field, innovative lectures and meetings. In this way it can be developed in a really two-way relationship. Relevant topics could include research ethics, ethical handling of patient data and data ownership. The programme could consider guest lectures on AI for students and alumni. Activities could take place online to improve feasibility. The programme could formulate a vision of how it wishes to interact with alumni and what can be gained from this interaction on both sides.