

Research master's Classics and Ancient Civilizations Development dialogue – 12 June 2020

Participants

Programme: Dr Ton Derks (programme director; associate professor of Roman Archaeology); Dr Bas ter Haar Romeny (Master's coordinator; professor of Ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern History); Dr Rutger Allan, LLM (assistant professor of Ancient Greek), Dr Wouter Schrover (report)

Panel: Dr Kim Beerden (assistant professor of History, Leiden University); Dr Kristoffel Demoen (professor of Ancient Greek Literature, Ghent University); Dr Johannes Haubold (professor of Classics, Princeton University); Dr Eric Moormann (professor of Classical Archaeology, Radboud University); Yannick de Raaff, Ba (research master's student Archaeology, University of Groningen)

The proposed topics for the development dialogue were:

- A) Recruitment and communication: how to increase international intake in particular?
- B) Internationalization: cooperation with a foreign partner that also has a two-year master's degree, whereby for example each other's students are exchanged for six months? Incoming students in the first semester during core courses, outgoing students in the second semester?

Ad a: recruitment and communication

Derks introduces this subject: recruitment is related to the profile of the degree programme, because the profile determines how you can "sell" the programme. The intake of international students in particular is rather low – much improvement is possible. What are qualities that we currently don't bring to the fore enough? The committee formulated the following advices:

- What is striking is how the programme ranges geographically and across cultures. This is something that could be played out more. This could be done by starting out from the mission of the VU: broadening students' minds, the added value of diversity, et cetera. Of course the VU wants to deliver a robust programme and students might want to focus on their field of interest, whether Ancient Studies or Classics (e.g. reading as much Homer as they can); yet it is important to make students more curious about other aspects of studying Classics and Ancient Civilizations. Lecturers should try to be more convincing in arguing for the relevance of studying interdisciplinary and of widening their scope of study.
- The Research Labs and specific teaching formats (e.g. the seminars) might also be used to recruit students, as the current students were very positive about this. Participating in research is also something that is appealing to students. And try to make use of UvA's University Library and the collection of The Allard Pierson even more than you do now.
- The Research Room is very much focused on Classics: try to make it more inclusive, see it as a facility for all students in the programme.
- Try to increase the visibility of the specializations (e.g. "reception") that can stress the relevance of antiquity
- Increase the involvement of students and alumni in recruitment activities: they are good ambassadors of the programme.
- The difference between the 1 year Master's programme and the Research Master's programme could be much clearer on the website. This concerns both the programme descriptions and the career perspectives mentioned. In an international context, the term "Research Master" is not so common and difficult to understand. But what you do in the programme makes a lot of sense, because it is about teaching students skills and about broadening their knowledge. You might want to stress that in your recruitment.

- The requirements in relation to the results obtained are only formulated in terms of the Dutch grading system on the website. Maybe you could also formulate the requirements in terms of other grading systems.
- Consider the possibility of offering a shortened programme for students who have already obtained a 1 year Master's degree.

Ad b: internationalization

Derks says the programme currently doesn't have any "preferred partners" from outside the Netherlands. There are good connections with Pisa and Venice, however, and some colleagues have good connections with Durham. Collaborations are still in an embryonic state. If we would exchange students, this would benefit us, because it would be easier to have a truly international classroom. Ter Haar Romeny indicates that the programme advises students to go abroad, but they don't do this very often. Yet all staff members are willing to organize the funding, the contacts, et cetera. But maybe we should have a fixed arrangement with one or two institutions outside the Netherlands? The committee formulated the following advices:

- The programme should have fixed arrangements with some institutions outside the Netherlands, because you want to train academics with international networks and experience.
- Contacts with institutions abroad are also important for recruitment (especially considering the high fees in the UK). If you send students abroad, they can also act as "ambassadors" of your programme.
- The programme invites interesting guest speakers. You could point out to students that visiting the universities of guest speakers is also an opportunity.
- The programme should consider the option of stimulating students to visit conferences. Conferences can be quite stimulating for students, as they are able to learn from more experienced researchers (cf. OIKOS, that brings ReMa- and PhD-students together).