

University Council

**Date**

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**Subject**

Appendix 4: Response to FC advice/UC  
input on EMPO

**Our reference**

ESSB/VB/021223/ssa

**Your reference**

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**Appendix**

**Department**

Dean

**Visiting address**

Erasmus School of Social and  
Behavioural Sciences  
Burgemeester Oudlaan 50  
Mandeville  
T15-15

**Postal address**

PO Box 1738  
3000 DR Rotterdam  
The Netherlands

**T** +31 10 408 2065

**E** office.dean@essb.eur.nl

**W** www.eur.nl/essb/English

Dear University Council,

Regarding the Educational Master Primary Education (EMPO), we provided our request for your advice, the context/reasons for doing so, a short summary and the follow-up process and specific remarks in cover note 'New Educational Master Primary Education (ESSB)'.

In this document, Appendix 4 to that cover note, we would like to address the final (positive) advice of the Faculty Council and the initial feedback of University Council representatives on the EMPO TNO application, and explain how this input has been, or will be addressed.

Below, we will paraphrase the specific questions of the FC/UC representatives per subject, and explain our answers point-by-point.

**1. Learning in practice for students of EMPO**

- *The FC questions how and why EMPO internships are different than current ('classic') internships in existing ESSB programmes.*

**Response:** In our conversations with the FC on the learning in practice of EMPO students, we stated that the EMPO internships are different compared to internships in other ESSB programmes. Compared to the existing ESSB master's programmes, the EMPO prepares students for a specific vocation, and therefore it is imperative that they practice and learn the profession, prior to starting work as a qualified teacher. This also means that, aside from the regular NLQF framework for Master of Science programmes, the EMPO has to adhere to the national competency requirements for teachers as described in the 'wet BIO'<sup>1</sup>. These competencies are described in detail and ask for a specific learning environment in practice, and for a specific form of supervision<sup>2</sup>. These two frameworks, and the detailed level of the national competency requirements, result in a different character and status of EMPO internships.

- *The FC asks for an extensive explanation of why EMPO students would not be compensated within the learning in practice scheme.*

**Response:** Regular teacher training programmes at HBO-bachelor level are four year (or: 240 EC) programmes. The EMPO programme aims to train teachers in two years (120 EC) at WO-master level. We believe this is possible, given the maturity of our students and the prior knowledge and

<sup>1</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-2017-148.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.platformsamenoopleiden.nl/>

skills acquired in their bachelor programmes. Nevertheless, 120 EC is needed for becoming a teacher. This requires a learning environment in practice that needs to be just that; a 'learning' place instead of a 'performance' place. Compensating the EMPO student teachers could lead to performance demands, meaning that schools would then expect something in return for their investment, which could jeopardize their learning, whereas in the envisioned scheme a school would be more of a contributor to the training of students.

**Actions taken:** The description of our vision on learning in practice and the requirements of the practice learning place are described in the final TNO application, standard 2, p. 12, and in more detail in the 'Attachments TNO application', description of the practice strand, p. 32

- *The FC furthermore asks for specifications on the workload of students, both in educational meetings and within internships, and the costs involved. The latter subject was also raised by the UC representatives, specifically regarding possible travelling costs.*

**Response:** We agree with the FC it is important to specify, as clearly as possible, the workload and costs involved with the EMPO, including the learning in practice.

Regarding the workload, we would like to emphasize that the EMPO is a full-time master's programme, meaning that officially this master's requires 40 hours of studying per week. However, we do realize this fact may result in lower accessibility for those student groups the EMPO is, in fact, specifically aiming to attract. Therefore, with regard to the costs, we have secured a budget that will enable us to provide scholarships for between 5 and 10 students annually who would otherwise not be able to study full time. The scholarship will compensate for tuition fees and part of living costs. Furthermore, both the EMPO location and most internship schools will be in Rotterdam-South, which will keep additional travelling costs associated with the internship for students to a minimum.

**Actions taken:** The goal of partnerships with Rotterdam-South located primary schools is described in the final TNO application (specifically the 'Attachments TNO application', description of the practice strand, p. 32. The scholarship scheme is currently under development in close consultation with the EUR trust fund and will be shared with the FC as soon as agreement has been reached.

## 2. Assessment methods

- *The FC requested a step-by-step explanation of how these assessments will be carried out, given that a transparent system is imperative to avoid any misunderstandings or dissatisfaction for EMPO students*

**Response:** The programmatic assessment programme reflects the character of the EMPO, which means that it stimulates and guides students in their development as academic teachers by way of giving ample meaningful feedback in terms of content and with a focus on the learning process. Recent insights from research on assessment show that programmatic assessment results in more valid decisions regarding student achievement. These insights have resulted in a trend in higher education; many programmes have started implementing programmatic assessment principles (see for example the recent lecture by prof. dr. Cees van der Vleuten at the Erasmus University)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eur.nl/nieuws/lezing-van-der-vleuten-over-programmatisch-toetsen-cijfers-zijn-de-meest-armoedige-vorm-van-feedback>

**Action taken:** Following the advice of the FC, Standard 3: Assessment of the TNO application has been revised in order to explain the assessment plan more fully. In the revision, we specifically focused on the quality and quantity of feedback and on possibilities for remediation. Below we will highlight the main revisions.

Firstly, we described the moments students will receive feedback. During the academic year, students receive feedback on the various data points in their portfolio at regular intervals (i.e., at least twice per module period). They receive the feedback from the relevant teachers in the programme, this can be both written and oral feedback.

Secondly, each student is assigned an EMPO mentor at the start of the year. The processing of the feedback and the quality of the data points in the portfolio will be discussed at least once per module period with this EMPO-mentor. In this way students will have a clear picture of their progress on the intended learning outcomes and the decision at the end of the year will not be a surprise.

Moreover, halfway through each year, students reflect on the progress made on the intended learning outcomes with their EMPO mentor, that is it will be discussed to what extent they have mastered the intended learning outcomes, where development is still possible, and how this development can best be achieved and demonstrated.

With regard to the remediation, we now detailed the following in our TNO dossier: "Within the EMPO, many data points provide information about the roles and indicators. Therefore, there is not a "retake" for each individual data point, but rather there are many "retake opportunities": the other data points. In addition, at the end of each academic year, there is an opportunity for remediation of one or more components of that year. This remediation is determined by the program's examiners on the basis of the knowledge or skills for which there are not yet enough data points of sufficient quality to determine whether the student has the required level. Because the student has continuous opportunities throughout the year to contribute additional data points, and each subsequent data point effectively provides the information that a retake would also provide, remediation will be an exception to the rule."

Regarding the quality of feedback and assessment, we would like to add that this is guaranteed in two ways. Firstly, the EMPO staff will join in a professional development course in the area of programmatic assessment. As the EMPO assessment method is different compared to what most staff is used to, it is important to learn about the rationale and specifics of programmatic testing. Secondly, the student assignments will be assessed by feedback forms that are collaboratively designed. Furthermore, the assessment of 60 EC at the end of year 1 will be done according to the 'four eyes' principle, meaning that assessment will be reviewed by two teacher. The feedback forms are shared with the students, and together with their active role in the whole assessment process, the quality, also in terms of transparency and assessment equity, is guaranteed.

### 3. Financing by NIVOZ

- *The FC asks whether they correctly perceive the development of EMPO as ancillary activities for current DPECS staff, for which the involved teachers are financially rewarded by the NIVOZ, and asks whether these ancillary activities are officially registered and have they been approved of?*
- *Furthermore, the FC would like to know how these ancillary activities relate to the existing educational planning of the involved sections. That is, are the sections compensated for the time that the involved employees invest in the EMPO?*

**Response:** We would like to point out that the development of the EMPO is not in the form of ancillary activities for current DPECS staff. All staff that is involved, has been asked to note their spent hours in our administrative system, and these hours have been (or will be) replaced by other staff, or accounted for in contract extensions. The business case underlying the development of the EMPO provides for sufficient budget for all spent hours.

However, the FC also raises the important issue of the high workload in our faculty due to Covid-19 and the curriculum renewal that is currently in development. We are fully aware of this issue and do everything in our power to facilitate the EMPO staff who have current appointments in DPECS, in order to minimize a further increase in their workload (see below). Up till now, five people from two DEPCS sections have been involved in the development of the EMPO. The available EMPO budget has been used to replace the two staff members that have been involved most closely, the intended director and coordinator. With the three remaining staff members, satisfactory individual arrangements have been made and replacement or contract extension will be arranged in the next period. All arrangements have been discussed with the department director. Other involved staff have been contracted from outside the DPECS.

At the end of May, we will make a final decision on whether or not we will be offering the pilot programme, based on, amongst other things, the number of interested students. As soon as this decision has been made, meetings will be set up with the staff, the educational planners, and director of DEPCS to discuss all appointments in detail. Given the sufficient budget, and the enthusiasm of all staff involved, also concerning the new possibilities the EMPO offers for career advancement, we are convinced that we will arrive at a satisfactory arrangement for all parties involved.

**Actions taken:** An administration system has been set up, and all involved ESSB staff has been invited to register their EMPO contributions in this system. This system will be used to transfer budget to DEPCS needed for the contract extensions and replacements. Once it is decided that the pilot will start, further agreements will be made between all parties involved.

#### 4. Pilot

- *The FC asks what our back-up plan is for pilot participants, and for the EMPO, in case EUR/ESSB does not successfully complete accreditation in due time. Similarly, the UC emphasized regarding the nature and communication of the pilot, that students (and the EUR) should be aware of the circumstances and possible consequences*

**Response:** In all communications surrounding the pilot, we have mentioned and will continue to mention that the EMPO is not yet an accredited programme. In case students are interested we explain the scenario's in detail of all possible outcomes of the accreditation process. In short, these are the following:

If the accreditation succeeds the pilot students will be transferred to the accredited EMPO, meaning that if they have obtained 60 EC of master-1 within the pilot, they can continue with master-2.

If the accreditation does not succeed, we will compensate the students financially and support a transfer to a different ESSB master programme. Arrangements have been made with the four ESSB master programme directors. If we know the accreditation outcome by September 2021, the delay can be minimised, and students will receive a compensation of one year tuition fee. If we find out later than September, the students will be

compensated to a higher extent (depending on the specific moment and situation).

Furthermore, our contacts with the directors of HBO-bachelor teacher training programmes ('pabo's') in Rotterdam have assured us that they will support a timely transfer to a so-called 'zij-instroom' programme should the students wish to do so.

**Action taken:** The scenarios detailed above are explained in informative and Q&A sessions, and included in an indemnification agreement, drafted by EUR-legal advisors. The students sign this agreement upon enrolment. In this way, we guarantee that students know about possible scenarios, financial compensations in different scenarios, and efforts we make to limit study delay as much as possible.

#### 5. Expected number of students

- *The FC would like to have a more holistic overview of the interest in the programme, based on the EUR-survey but also other data on the labour market, and considering the development of a similar programme by VU/UvA/LU.*

**Response:** Research undertaken for the macro-efficiency assessment (see also: cover note) shows, first, that EMPO would cater to a (quite severe) need in the Dutch labour market. For the Rotterdam metropolitan region (Rijnmond, Haaglanden and Drechtsteden), the UWV found the labour market for primary education teachers to be tight (nationally) to very tight (in the Rotterdam area) in the last three quarters in 2019 and early 2020<sup>4</sup>. Projections of the municipality Rotterdam indicate that this shortage will continue to rise in the next few years, almost doubling in 2019-2023<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the labour market shows a substantial demand for EMPO graduates.

Second, our research showed that EMPO would answer to a demand among students for an academic master's degree that also offers a teaching qualification. In a survey, around 263 bachelor EUR-students (of 407 bachelor respondents in total) stated to be (very) interested in an academic teacher programme, although at the time the broad outline of the programme (as provided in the survey) included a limited qualification for teaching in secondary education as well. Nevertheless, especially when also recruiting among pre-master students and bachelor graduates of neighbouring universities we expect to ultimately welcome around 65 new students each year (taking into account that the VU/UvA/LU together start a similar programme).

**Action taken:** To make sure that we reach our goals in number of students, we will 1- communicate the EMPO profile in our communications & recruitment efforts clearly and attractively, and 2- keep admissions requirements harmonised with the other EMPO programmes, i.e. accepting graduates of social and behavioural sciences bachelors).

- *UC representatives asked us to consider the maximum capacity of the EMPO in relation to best performance, sustainability, and quality of education.*

**Response:** The business case has been designed (and approved) for an enrolment number of 75 students. A high quality EMPO programme can be guaranteed with this number of students. Given the student interest expressed in the macro-efficiency assessment, and the numbers of students

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.werk.nl/arbeidsmarktinformatie/dashboards/spanningsindicator>

<sup>5</sup> <https://onderzoek010.nl/handlers/ballroom.ashx?function=download&id=464>

currently enrolled in our (and other universities) academic 'pabo' tracks, we do not expect to reach much more than this number of students. Should the enrolment number exceed the expected number, we expect the higher overall income from the Ministry of Education to be sufficient for maintaining the same quality level. A possible bottleneck is the availability of quality internship places within schools. This may force us to consider installing a selection scheme based on maximum capacity. Of course, in that case we will follow EUR-procedure to request such a maximum capacity.

## 6. Interdisciplinarity

- *UC representatives asked us to reflect on the possibility of creating more interdisciplinary/interfaculty moments within EMPO, to provide the students with a full EUR experience.*

**Response:** Given the fact that the EMPO programme needs to adhere to two quality frameworks (the Dublin descriptors and the NLQF 7 level indicators, and the national competency requirements) there is not much space in the programme.

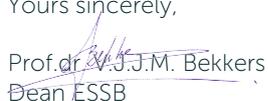
However, we fully agree with the importance of student choice as well as interdisciplinary competencies on a general level. Therefore, we are considering options for interdisciplinary moments, possibly in the form of specialisation tracks within the programme. In these tracks, for example a track focused on family involvement, or on social and behavioural problems, or a track focused on policy development, we will aim to connect to current courses and staff within ESSB. Another possibility would be to connect to other EUR programmes, for example those within ESHCC that provide insight in media literacy, that are relevant to the EMPO. Once the programme is running and has been evaluated in one or two cohorts, we expect to have a clear view of the possible space in the programme. At that point, we will make a plan for interdisciplinary moments.

**Actions taken:** After evaluating one or two cohorts, a plan will be made for interdisciplinary moments.

We hope the outline above informs the University Council sufficiently on how FC advice/UC input is addressed in our TNO application and overall design of the EMPO. Nevertheless, if you have any questions regarding the EMPO, please let us know, as we would gladly answer them.

We are looking forward to hearing your advice on the EMPO, ultimately May 25th.

Yours sincerely,

  
Prof. dr. V.J.J.M. Bekkers  
Dean ESSB

Cc

- Ir. Marloes Eenhuizen-van den Bergen, educational policy advisor Academic Affairs
- Kimberly van Aart-Soppe MA MSc, educational policy advisor ESSB
- Oriana Morales Hernandez, chair Faculty Council ESSB