

EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION DOCUMENTS

Master of Arts in Mass Communication

College of Arts
King Saud University
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

APRIL 2020

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EVALUATION REPORT

Master of Arts in Mass Communication

College of Arts
King Saud University,
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

OCTOBER 2019



The King Saud University has mandated the Hcéres to perform the evaluation of its MA in Mass Communication programme. The evaluation is based on the “External Evaluation Standards” of foreign study programmes, adopted by the Hcéres Board on October 4th, 2016. These standards are available on the Hcéres website (hceres.fr).

For the Hcéres¹ :

Nelly Dupin, Acting President

On behalf of the experts committee² :

Julien ZARIFIAN, President of the committee

In accordance with the decree n°2014-1365, November 14th, 2014,

¹The president of Hcéres "contresigne les rapports d'évaluation établis par les comités d'experts et signés par leur président." (Article 8, alinéa 5) – « countersigns the assessment reports made by the experts'committees and signed by their president » (article8, paragraph 5)

² The evaluation reports « sont signés par le président du comité ». (Article 11, alinéa 2) – « are signed by the president of the committee » (article11, paragraph 2)

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I. STUDY PROGRAMME IDENTITY SHEET

1. University/institution: King Saud University
2. Component, faculty or department concerned: College of Arts – Department of Mass Communication
3. Programme's title: MA in Mass Communication,
4. Training/speciality: mass communication, media and public relations
5. Year of creation and context: 1999 in the Male section, ten years later in the Female section
6. Site(s) where the programme is taught (Town and campus): Riyadh, Male and Female campuses
7. Programme director:
 - a. Surname, first name: Dr. Ali Al-Anazi.
 - b. Profession and grade: Associate Professor
 - c. Main subject taught: Public Relations

METHODS AND RESULTS OF THE PREVIOUS ACCREDITATION(S)

Methodology and agency: According to the report documents and appendixes, the MA Program was modified in 2018-2019 and in 2019-2020. In its latest version, the program benefited from recommendations given from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism (ACEJMC), after an international evaluation. The results of this previous accreditation are not indicated in the file (in terms of courses, organization of training, etc.)

There was no previous accreditation.

The following evaluation is the first evaluation by HCERES.

HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES DEDICATED TO THE PROGRAMME

Human resources: teaching staff 104 members for all the department, non-teaching staff 28 members

Material resources: A digital media lab was created for the BA and MA students who were studying digital media as their major, TV and broadcasting studios are available in the department. Students benefit from quality professional equipment. This equipment gives students the opportunity to make a paper journal every week and to make video documentaries; which is a very good thing.

STUDENT POPULATION: EVOLUTION AND TYPOLOGY OVER THE LAST 4 YEARS

Year	admitted	Graduated
2015	20M/21F	3M/11F
2016	26M/26F	11M/14F
2017	33M/33F	10M/11F
2018	27M/29F	8M/10F

The number of admitted students in this MA programme has been stable overall. Secondly, this MA has as many female students as male students, while the women's campus opened more recently, only 10 years ago, which is a brilliant success since female students are pursuing a master's degree in Mass Communication and, since this year, a Ph. D. degree.

II. ON-SITE VISIT DESCRIPTION

COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERTS PANEL

- Mr. Julien ZARIFIAN (President), associate professor, University of Cergy-Pontoise
- Mr. Sébastien ROUQUETTE (Expert), Professor, University of Clermont Auvergne
- Mrs Annick RIVENS MOMPEAN (Experte), Professor, University of Lille
- Mrs Mizgin DEMIR (Experte), Student, University of Rouen
- Mrs GLORIA AWAD (Experte), associate professor, University of Artois

Hcéres was represented by Mrs Anne Vial-Logeay, science advisor at Hcéres.

ON-SITE VISIT DESCRIPTION

- Date of the visit: from 29.09.2019 to 01.10.2019
- Summary of the proceedings: Group discussions in every meeting. Formal and informal discussions with the members of the Quality department.
- Organisation of the visit: Two meetings with the Dean and the board of the College of Arts. Meeting with the Head and members of the Quality department. Meeting with a representative panel of students from the first common year. Meeting with a representative panel of students and alumni from BA + MA Mass Communication. Meetings with the teaching staff in the Male and Female sections of the mass communication department. Visit of the campuses.
- Cooperation of study programme and institution to be accredited: first with the dense file presented to the experts and including the Characterisation sheet, the Self-Evaluation report, the SWOT auto-analysis and the numerous appendixes, then with the oral information provided in the meetings with the different panels of the management and the teaching staff and of the students.
- People met: Female section teaching staff: Dr Ouhoud AL-SHAHIL, Dr Soraya BADAOU, Dr Hala BEN-ALI BERNATT, Dr Shirine SALAMEH, Dr Nora TWEITRI, Mrs Beddoura BOUMEIDAN, Mrs Dora HAMED. Men section teaching staff: Dr. Habib BELGACEM, Dr. Ali Al-Anazi, Dr. Adel Al-Makinzy, Dr Fahad ABDULLAH

III. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1 – PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The MA in Mass Communication is one of the diplomas delivered by the College of Arts (COA) at King Saud University. It takes place in the broad area, which includes Humanities and Social Sciences.

This programme has a number of students that fluctuates from 17 to 32 students on the female campus and from 9 to 29 students on the male campus from 2016 to 2019. Students receive training separately, on the male campus for male students, on the female campus for female students.

The aim of the programme is to provide students with the ability to perform consulting activities and academic research in the field of media and mass communication, and to contribute to the academic, scientific and business development in this field. The MA self-evaluation report presents a generalist program in two years and four semesters. Students must write a master's thesis. The structure of the programme is progressive, from media to media theories with a seminar on new media, a course on media metrics and a presentation of the different research processes and techniques.

The Master does not provide specialization paths. This implies that the specializations of the bachelor's degree do not extend to the master's level.

2 - PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME'S SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

HCERES' expertise is based primarily on three written documents: the self-evaluation report, the characterisation sheet and a final SWOT auto-analysis. Four items are taken into account: the aims of the study programme, the position of the study programme, the study programme teaching structure and the programme management. The documents give also information about the technological equipment, the number of students over the last 4 years, the facilities and resources for student services and the national and international academic partners of the programme involved in education

The on-site visit gave the opportunity to explore these topics in greater depth during meetings organised with the teaching team. The meeting with former students made it possible to measure the adequacy between the training and professional opportunities. A meeting with the students of the MA program allowed the panel expert to explore different subjects more deeply, for example if the objectives of the training are well known to them, what they think of the scientific seminars they have been able to attend, etc.

IV. EVALUATION REPORT

1- AIMS OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The MA in Mass Communication is mainly oriented towards research. Several courses train students in the scientific process with courses on research methods, critical theory in media research, quantitative research, qualitative research and everything related to the theoretical knowledge. These students attend scientific conferences on media or public relations. The programme is therefore in line with the objective of the Master's degree: qualify the students in the field of scientific research.

Considering the research orientation of the MA, the need to update the theories taught is particularly important. The Internet, for example, has brought new professional and theoretical issues. It is thus somewhat surprising that the self-evaluation report does not say much on how the MA takes into account the changes brought about by digital technology: online writing skills, referencing, digital identity, data journalism, public communication and social media, etc. According to the teaching team, the updates are integrated into the existing courses. However, they do not appear as new courses clearly visible in the programmes, whereas it would prove very useful to make more visible students' skills in referencing, digital identity, data journalism, etc. The modification of courses titles would add some visibility to the theoretical updating of the training.

The program also includes a course on research planning and a course on MA thesis. These two courses enable the students to develop their research plan and to apply scientific research methods to one of the topics in the field of specialization. This contributes to the students' understanding of the research process and its results, and helps them connect it to the scientific theories and previous studies like critical studies in media, foundations for public relations and media.

It is worth noting that knowledge and skills are clearly exposed and are available for the students on the website of the department, in the department student handbook and in the courses syllabi.

For a research-oriented master's degree, it should be noted that students can now enrol in a doctoral program. Thus, at the beginning of the 2019 academic year, 9 female students and 7 male students were authorized to continue their doctoral studies. For a first year, it should be noted that this number proves significantly the attractiveness of the programme.

2 – POSITION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

With regard to the positioning of training in its local environment, this MA is well positioned. There are not many other Mass Communication masters in Saudi Arabia, including one in Riyadh, in the Mohammad Ibn Saud University. Two other similar MA – in Journalism and in Mass Communication & Media – are delivered in Mecca and Jeddah, by Umm Al Qura University and King Abdul-Aziz University.

The MA has established several links between research and formation. First, students are invited to attend research conferences and symposia on public communication issues that give them a real opportunity to discover the scientific world. Indeed, the link between the Department and the Saudi Association for Media and Communication is of great help for faculty members and students who can participate to the wide range of activities offered by the Association.

Secondly, the College of Art publishes a scientific journal covering the disciplinary fields of the College's 7 departments, including mass communication. The teachers of the team keep students informed of the issues published in the journal. Questioned on this point, students indicated that they were aware of the existence of the journal and read articles regularly.

Thirdly, students must produce a master thesis. The topics submitted this year by the students correspond to current issues (Digital Public Diplomacy across Twitter, The Role of Digital Media in Creating Political Knowledge to Saudi Youth: A Survey Study. Etc.) in Mass Communication scientific area. In addition to the lectures they can attend, students have access to a university library in the traditional way.

The recent policy of encouraging publication and research at the University encourages teachers to publish their research in journals. Each publication in a qualifying journal is now subject to a financial bonus, which results in adding numerous scientific publications from the teaching team to these research organs. This is of course an improvement for the supervision of MA dissertations. One point still deserves more clarification. The self-evaluation report mentioned that 7 members of the department had recently published 11 books and 22 research articles. However, the visit did not provide any information on this point, in particular, the subjects and titles of these works. It is therefore impossible to know which courses taught in the master's programme benefit from those researches.

At last, for teachers and doctoral students, there is no research laboratory dedicated to the program scientific support (research laboratories are defined here as research units. These laboratories bring together teacher-researchers and researchers who wish to pool their skills and resources in order to develop research in major scientific fields, to obtain research contracts, to challenge scientific projects, to develop collective research, etc.) Research remains thus individual, and sharing the results of research is not encouraged as a public concern in the university.

3 – STUDY PROGRAMME TEACHING STRUCTURE

Many courses focus well on media communication research or public relations: Introduction to Media, Communication Theories, qualitative and quantitative research. However, the content of the study programme is less consistent with the requirements of the socioeconomic world: only two courses have a strong practical and professional orientation, Editing; Foundations for Public Relations and Media. This seems surprisingly low, considering the outcomes of the master's degree indicated by the teaching team: working at a communication manager, mainly in the private sector and mainly in the public relations sector.

This is an important point, given the fact that the MA does not provide internships during which students would indeed strengthen their professional skills. Yet, the weekly publication of a journal by the students of the department is a strong point of the training for master's students aiming at press professions. For students interested in the press or media sector, writing a newspaper undoubtedly brings them real professional competence. However, this editorial work does not replace the lack of internships for master's students interested in organizational communication and public relations.

The study programme teaching structure allows students to acquire additional skills that are useful for PHD study. These skills are implemented by the Deanship of Scientific Research: students have access to specialized scientific courses, such as "Foundations of scientific research", "How to prepare research », « Important site for graduate students", etc. Similarly, students benefit from regular follow-up. In addition to the courses, the full-time teachers offer a tenure each week.

Regarding the internationalization of the MA, the study programme does not prepare enough students for the international environment. One figure should be noted: the number of female and male students in the master's program as exchange students in foreign universities between 2016 and 2019 is zero. This is a weak point of the training, identified as such in the SWOT analysis. Students are clearly not sufficiently encouraged to study abroad for a semester and do not use the partnership agreements between King Saud University and the various universities in Arab, American or European countries. This is partly due to a lack of English practice as only one course is taught in English, even if the female students showed a better level of English than the male students during the meetings organized during the visit of the evaluation committee, even if female students do not have yet many possibilities to study abroad. This one and unique course taught in English introduces students to the most important media terms in English.

The on-site visit made possible to visit the facilities. Overall, the material and digital conditions of the students are very good. It is obvious that the students benefit from all kind of at the College of Arts: restaurants, sporting facilities, transportation, banking services, post and communication, a pharmacy on the female campus, and several infrastructures for the practice of physical activity, etc... It should be noted that these facilities can be used by students with special needs, such as students with visual disabilities, thanks to access plans to the buildings. More importantly, the formation has important material resources (libraries, computer rooms, etc.) to enable it to carry out its mission. These facilities include the introduction of smart classrooms and a media production laboratory. The laboratory is equipped with Apples computers and specialized professional software used for production and electronic publishing. Thanks to these facilities, the students can publish a 20- to 30-page newspaper every week and are encouraged to use digital technologies.

4 – PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The study programme is implemented by a well-identified teaching team. In 2019, it was composed of 104 teaching members for the entire communication department (male and female campuses). For the master's degree more specifically, the file gives a surprising figure, disappointing as members of the teaching team working for the department as part-time members do not exceed 2%. Those part-time members include professionals who teach practical courses involved in the mass communication and media. Admittedly, some 30% of the tenured teachers have previously worked in the private sector, being thus endowed with knowledge of professional issues. However, in communication training, professional teachers bring their expertise in very specific fields (sectoral public communication, public crisis communication, online journalism, etc.). They are in charge of teaching-professional situations, in particular for new professional skills (data journalism, referencing). Therefore, the place given to vocational education is limited.

The assessment of knowledge is carried out in accordance with precisely established procedures known to students; there is a course description for each course that contains the aims of the course and the criteria for assessment and the systems of assessments

The criteria for recruiting master's students are explained by the teaching team. Priority in admission is given to the holders of Bachelor Degree in Mass Communication and to the practitioners of mass communication work as journalist on television, radio or in online press. This selection process is therefore both selective and consistent with the positioning of the master.

The training is part of a formal self-assessment system at the school level. Students have to fill the feedback application online before they get their grade for each module. The self-assessment procedures are therefore carried out in a satisfactory manner. However, the results of these evaluations are neither analysed by the teaching team, nor in the file (nor has it been analysed during the meeting with the experts), which does not allow these data to be used to improve training on an ongoing basis (for example: has the teaching programme evolved? Have new courses been created to respond to comments made by the students during their feedback? etc.)

As far as alumni are concerned, the master's programme does not have exactly figures about the employment rates of alumni; even if, at the request of the committee, the teaching team has provided a list of jobs for about 30 former students. During the visit, the panel expert met about ten former students. They worked in a wide variety of sectors: media, banking communication, film and cinema. According to the teaching team interviewed on this subject during the visit, the former students of the MA in Mass Communication would work more in the field of public communication than in the field of the media. It should be noted that the university plans that surveys of students or former students will be conducted at the central level and not by the mass communication department. However, none of those answers offsets lack of annual follow-up able to indicate the percentage of former students finding a job 6 months or 30 months after graduation or to precise in which sectors students find work. This lack of survey does not make it possible to assess the adequacy between the skills taught in the training and the expectations of companies in the sector. As the teaching team is well aware, the Mass Communication Department needs to be more proactive regarding its alumni.

V. CONCLUSION

The MA in Mass Communication is overall satisfactory.

Indeed, it is oriented towards research, and its program is consistent with this stated objective. This MA has established several links between research and formation. Several courses train students in the scientific process. These students attend scientific conferences on media or public relations, and must write a research paper, whose subjects focuses on current communication issues. Moreover, since one year, doctoral enrolment in communication is possible within the communication department.

As far as the facilities are concerned, students benefit from quality equipment. For example, they have access to a media production laboratory that they use to write a weekly newspaper. This work is very important for the professional component of their training.

However, several points in the master's degree need attention.

With regard to the training programme, it would probably be a good idea to include new course titles that explicitly address the most recent mass and public communication issues (data journalism, e-reputation, etc.), to display the update of the master program.

Regarding to the professional dimension of the degree, it is important to note than - according to the teaching team - the research dimension, though a priority objective, does not prevent students from finding jobs in the private sector, especially in the field of communication and public relations.

For this reason, some points relating to the management of training need to be further developed. It would be probably necessary, at least very helpful, to systematically carry out surveys on the professional integration of alumni at a Departmental level. The analysis of the results would provide an opportunity for continuous improvement in training, and make possible to take into account changes in the targeted sectors by the training as they occur (communication and public relations, journalism and media).

Finally, giving more importance to the international dimension of the training would benefit to the programme. International dimension of the master exists, due to agreements signed with other universities like Nottingham University (United Kingdom) or Shanghai International Studies University (China). However, as far as teaching is concerned, there is only one course taught in English: thus students are not systematically endowed with the ability to study abroad, and do not go in exchange, whereas international exchanges would give them the opportunity to open up to other communication research practices.

STRENGTHS

- Strong link between training and research (conferences open to students, research work, etc.)
- The University Mission Journal published by the students of Journalism, Public relations and Media
- Quality facilities, including the Digital media lab for Mass Communication students studying digital media.

WEAKNESSES

- Very weak proportion of professionals involved in the program
- Lack of systematical survey on the professional integration of alumni at a departmental level.
- No explicit communication issues in the course titles of the programme (data journalism, public relations and online reputation, etc.)
- No international mobility during the last 4 years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A higher percentage of teaching should be entrusted to professional teachers, particularly to address new professional issues faced by communicators working in the public relations or journalism sector.
- It would be opportune to set up a detailed follow-up of alumni to better assess the adequacy of the training with the opportunities of the students recruited. More details on the jobs obtained (type of company, job descriptions) would provide useful data for the continuous development of training. This would make it possible to increase the number of partners in the network (internships, etc.) and to continuously improve the training, and above all to get clear indicators on what students are becoming (jobs, companies, places), in order to understand the pertinence of the master's degree.
- The file does not indicate either whether decisions were made as a result of these self-assessment procedures. This point needs to be reinforced.
- The international dimension of the MA should be developed. This goal requires greater support for mobility projects for master's students. Increasing students' English language skills and the number of exchanges is therefore a point that training should reinforce
- More courses dealing with new professional themes of journalists or public communication specialists would very probably prove beneficial to students, and fill one of the gaps reported in the SWOT auto-analysis, lack of job opportunities for mass communication graduates.
- Currently, the MA offers a unique specialization in mass communication research while the majority of students work in the private sector and in public relations. It would be appropriate to create, in addition to the research speciality, a second speciality more in line with the professional opportunities of this degree

VI. COMMENTS OF THE INSTITUTION

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كلية الآداب
مكتب العميد

January 1, 2020

Dear Ms. Nelly Dupin,

We appreciate your efforts in the evaluation of the College of Arts' five academic programmes (1- *BA in English Language*, 2- *MA in English Literature*, 3- *MA in Applied Linguistics*, 4- *BA in Mass Communication*, and 5- *MA in Mass Communication*). We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Expert Committee that visited and provided insight into the stance of our evaluated programmes. In response to the committee's evaluation reports, we believe that most of the highlights and recommendations provided will contribute to improving the programmes' quality, and thus improve the overall quality and efficiency of our graduates. The programmes will consider the content of the reports for future improvements.

Nevertheless, there are other points mentioned in the reports that we may have different views about or require clarification. These are as follows:

1- *BA in English Language*

Although the programme does not currently offer a Western culture focused course, Western critical thought and ideologies are studied in the ENG 362 Criticism course. This course is designed to introduce students to major schools of thought from Classical Greek criticism to the Modern and Postmodern. In the course, students are introduced to these schools chronologically, and are required to apply the frameworks to literary texts to cement their understanding of the differences and changes that occurred through history. The programme also offers an elective course about the history of the English language, ENG 421, which provides an overview of how historical events in England led to changes in the language throughout different periods. It brings focus to the political, social and intellectual factors that determine these changes.

2- MA in English Literature

The report points out concerns over the small number of students joining the programme. It is true that the number of students is low, however, the number has gradually increased over time. The programme also has both male and female students, even though the majority on the programme are female. It is believed that this reality reflects the fact that humanities in general is less attractive to students and that the number of male literature students is less than females in most universities.

The report suggests to include history courses in the study plan. Indeed, history is important for literature students. Although the programme does not have any dedicated history courses, students are given enough historical context to each literature course throughout the programme.

As for job opportunities and partnerships, the Saudi 2030 Vision is anticipating more opportunities for the graduates in different national and cultural domains. Our graduates are well-rounded in cultural issues and qualified to work in areas outside of teaching and translation. Under the umbrella of King Abdullah Institute for Research and Consulting, our staff and students have the opportunity to partner with various business entities in the country (<https://kai.ksu.edu.sa/en>).

Another point in the report is the job market and competition with the College of Translation. We believe our graduates maintain special characteristics to make them different than graduates from the College of Translation. Translation is one skill our students can perform besides their strong background in Western literature and cultures and humanities. Therefore, we do not see ourselves in direct competition with the College of Translation, whose curriculum focuses on the techniques, theory and practice of translation. Our graduates gain employment with foreign organisations working inside the country and with international organisations in a number of different fields (as highlighted in the report).

3- MA in Applied Linguistics

The report discusses the nature of the study plan as being too general and that graduates may not become "specialized enough". In response, it can be said that applied linguistics is by nature an interdisciplinary field focused on a range of topics, all of which serve the purpose of investigating real-life language issues. Courses offered in the programme seek to provide students with an abundance of information about the field of applied linguistics, but this is not



to the detriment of choosing an area of specialty. Students on both tracks can thus focus on a specific area of applied linguistics in courses like ENG 579 (Seminar), ENG 501 (Trends in Applied Linguistics), ENG 599 (Research Project), and ENG 600 (Thesis). In addition, the programme aims to prepare students to join Ph.D. programmes nationally and internationally. Therefore, having studied a wide range of areas in more depth will help to facilitate any decision making on what Ph.D. programme they will join. That said, the experts' argument is worth considering during the next programme modification.

Furthermore, the report argues that the name of the programme does not refer to English studies since it is taught in English and under the umbrella of the Department of English Language and Literature. Here, the name does not refer to English studies because English is only the medium of instruction, which is apparent in the title of the courses offered that do not refer to any language. The issues discussed in the courses refer to linguistic phenomena, which apply to all languages. For example, in the Language Policy and Planning course students are introduced to theories and frameworks governing language policy creation, interpretation and appropriation. These theories apply to all language policies worldwide. Another example is the Lexicography course that teaches and trains students into building mono- as well as *bilingual* corpora and dictionaries. Therefore, one of the gained learning outcomes is the ability to build dictionaries in Arabic, English, French or in any other language spoken (or learned in the future). In addition, it is common practice to offer Applied Linguistics programmes with similar titles without reference to any language while studying the linguistic phenomena of various languages.

It is further mentioned that "the thesis track attracts only a few students". It should be noted that students are admitted to the non-thesis track and only distinguished students are allowed to switch to the thesis track. This is due to the nature of this track, which requires proficiency in academic writing and strong determination.

4- BA in Mass Communication

The "lack" of a "scientific laboratory" has been stated as a concern by the experts. In response, the Aljazeera Research Chair for International Journalism is associated with the department and serve in offering opportunities for conducting research individually and collaboratively. In addition, the university encourages and funds research groups in Mass Communication as well as in other fields. These research groups promote the participation of student researchers with the aim to encourage knowledge and research expertise from professors to be passed on



to students. These groups, along with the research chair and the quality facilities offered by the department, college and university, can offer the advantage of scientific experience at both the student and staff levels. Therefore, all of this may compensate for the "lack" of a scientific laboratory at the department.

5- MA in Mass Communication

The report similarly highlights "the lack" of a scientific laboratory that can benefit the department. The response provided above (section 4) applies here and should suffice.

Finally, based on the five evaluation reports pertaining to the five academic programmes mentioned at the beginning of this letter, the College of Arts respectfully requests that the French High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES) proceeds with the accreditation process and informs us of their decisions.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Naif bin Thunaian Al Saud

Professor of Mass Communication

Dean of the College of Arts, KSU

Dr. Suliman Mohammed Alnasser

Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics

College of Arts Vice Dean for Development & Quality

ACCREDITATION DECISION

Master of Arts in Mass Communication

College of Arts
King Saud University
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

APRIL 2020

SCOPE OF THE ACCREDITATION GRANTED BY HCERES

HCERES has built its evaluation process based on a set of objectives that higher education institution study programmes must pursue to ensure recognised quality within France and Europe. These objectives are divided up into four fields among which are the accreditation criteria.

As for the “External Evaluation Standards”, the accreditation criteria have been specifically designed for foreign programmes. The accreditation criteria were adopted by the Board on June 2016 and are available on the HCERES website (hceres.fr).

The accreditation committee, meeting his accreditation decision, has wholly taken into account the final evaluation report of the study programme. This accreditation decision is the result of a collegial and reasoned process.

The accreditation decision issued by HCERES shall not grant any rights whatsoever, whether in France or abroad. The decision on training programme accreditation confers an accreditation label and does not infer recognition of the accredited qualifications. The HCERES accreditation process therefore has no impact on the qualifications recognition process in France.

FULFILLMENT OF ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

FIELD 1: AIMS OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Accreditation criterion

The objectives of the study programme with regard to knowledge and skills to be acquired are clearly defined and communicated. Students and other stakeholders are aware of outcomes in terms of job opportunities and further studies.

Assessment of criterion

The MA in Mass Communication is mainly research-oriented. Its academic goal therefore is to prepare students to research in the field of media and mass communication. However, it also provides students with the ability to perform consulting activities in the above-mentioned field, and to contribute to the academic, scientific, and business development of it. The outcomes in terms of job opportunities for the graduates are not precisely stated, but they are mostly to be found in the communication sector (public relations mostly), as communication manager in particular, in the private sector, as well as in the research field, in Mass Communication. This is not entirely coherent with the fact the programme is very much research oriented.

- ***The programme is mostly research oriented, although it also theoretically aims at preparing students for the job market***
- ***The link between the academic thread of the programme and the outcomes in terms of job opportunities is not clear enough***

FIELD 2: POSITION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Accreditation criterion

The study programme has set a comprehensive positioning suited to its objectives and including a clear link with research, scholarly partnerships and/or with the economic and social world, national and/or international partnerships.

Assessment of criterion

The MA in Mass Communication wants to take the role of leader in its field in Saudi Arabia, where three other MA programmes in Mass Communication are proposed. It also aims at positioning itself in the international environment and has benefited from recommendations given by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). This MA, quite much research-oriented, has established strong links with the research field, which is a very positive thing. Students are invited to attend research conferences and symposia on public communication issues. This is facilitated by the fruitful relationship between the Department and the Saudi Association for Media and Communication. Faculty members and students can participate to a wide range of activities offered by the Association. Moreover, the *Journal of Arts* published by the College of Arts regularly publishes articles on mass communication, and the teachers keep students informed when it is the case. The fact that students must produce a master thesis at the end of their MA is also another important point. The programme also benefits from the research chairs established by the department and two media: Al-Jazeera Research and Al-Riyadh Research Chair Program. Other agreements with other media companies as well as with public relations companies make possible for students to prospect for job opportunities, but there is no specific agreement with international institutions or companies.

- ***The programme is well established in the national regional academic landscape***
- ***The articulation between the programme and the research is strong and multifaceted***
- ***Agreements with media and public relations companies exists, but no specific international partnership is to be noted***

FIELD 3: STUDY PROGRAMME TEACHING STRUCTURE

Accreditation criterion

The study programme includes a set of teaching units that are coherent, gradual and adapted to all kind of students. The study programme allows students to acquire additional skills that are useful for employment or further study.

Internships and projects are included in the study programme curriculum. So are Information and Communication Technologies in Education (ICTE) and education innovations. The study programme prepares students for the international environment.

Assessment of criterion

The structure of the MA in Mass Communication is very much research-oriented, which is not really coherent with its outcomes in terms of jobs targeted. Many courses of the programme focus on rather theoretical courses in media communication or public relations. This sharpens the students' global knowledge in these areas, but does not prepare them, concretely, to a job. This may seem surprising, considering the job outcomes of the MA indicated by the teaching team: working as a communication manager, mainly in the private sector, and especially in the public relations sector. More courses explicitly dealing with new professional themes for journalists or public communication specialists would prove beneficial to students. This is an important point, given the fact that the MA does not impose internships during which students could strengthen their professional skills. In contrast, the weekly publication of a newspaper by the students of the department is a positive point. Similarly, the weekly news bulletin (half an hour per week), TV broadcasted by TV Journalism students, is positive too. It offers to the students of the department concrete training in journalism. As implied before, the installations and technical equipment of both the female and male campuses are modern and perfectly adapted to the teaching needs. The internationalization of the MA is weak. The programme does not prepare enough students for the international environment and zero students has been involved in an international exchange programme. Only one course of the programme is given in English.

- ***The studying conditions and equipment on both campuses are remarkable***
- ***The structure of the programme's courses focuses primarily on research- and theory-oriented topics, which is not so coherent with outcomes targeted as far as job are concerned***
- ***There is no compulsory internship but this is partially compensated by the fact that the students publish a weekly newspaper and broadcast a weekly TV news bulletin***
- ***The lack of internationalization of the programme is a weakness***

FIELD 4: STUDY PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Accreditation criterion

The study programme is implemented by a formally identified and operational teaching team including stakeholder and student participation. It is carried out by an educational team which benefits from clear and up-to-date data. Methods for checking knowledge are explicitly stated and communicated to students. Teaching and practical professional units are expressed in terms of skills.

Anti-fraud measures have been implemented.

Assessment of criterion

The study programme of the MA in Mass Communication can rely on the 104 teaching members of the communication department but it is not clear which members exclusively or partially dedicate their time to the MA. Almost all the teachers of the programme (98%) are full-time members of the department, which means that there are almost no professionals involved in the programme. Although many full-time professors have also been working outside the university in the past few years, as explained by the team during the on-site visit, this can be considered problematic and does not facilitate the concrete and constantly updated indispensable

professionalization of the programme. The assessment of knowledge is carried out in accordance with precisely established procedures known by students; there is a course description for each course which contains the aims of the course, the criteria for assessment, and the systems of assessments. Students are required to evaluate all the courses they attend each academic semester, through an online process, which is a positive point. However, it is not clear that and/or how the results of these evaluations are analyzed.

- ***The students are well supervised by a solid teaching team***
- ***The students know about the organization of their courses and the assessments***
- ***The teaching team includes almost no professionals, non-full time professors, which is problematic for a MA in Mass Communication***

FINAL DECISION

Considering the accreditation criteria analysis detailed above, the accreditation committee issues the following decision:

“Five-year unreserved accreditation decision”

and draws attention to the following points:

- **More courses dealing with new professional themes of journalists or public communication specialists would very probably prove beneficial to students, and fill one of the gaps reported in the SWOT auto-analysis, lack of job opportunities for mass communication graduates.**
- **A higher percentage of teaching should be entrusted to professional teachers, particularly to address new professional issues faced by communicators working in the public relations or journalism sector.**
- Currently, the MA offers a unique specialization in mass communication research while the majority of students work in the private sector and in public relations. It would be appropriate to create, in addition to the research speciality, a second speciality more in line with the professional opportunities of this degree
- It would be opportune to set up a detailed follow-up of alumni to better assess the adequacy of the training with the opportunities of the students recruited. More details on the jobs obtained (type of company, job descriptions) would provide useful data for the continuous development of training. This would make it possible to increase the number of partners in the network (internships, etc.) and to continuously improve the training, and above all to get clear indicators on what students are becoming (jobs, companies, places), in order to understand the pertinence of the master's degree.
- The file does not indicate either whether decisions were made as a result of these self-assessment procedures. This point needs to be reinforced.
- The international dimension of the MA should be developed. This goal requires greater support for mobility projects for master's students. Increasing students' English language skills and the number of exchanges is therefore a point that training should reinforce

SIGNATURE

For HCERES and on behalf of



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Date: Paris, April 15th, 2020

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