

COBRA REPORT

Study programme: Master of Psychology: Theory and Research

Written on: 8/11/2019

KU Leuven uses the [COBRA method](#) to assess and improve the quality of its study programmes. In this report the programme committee reports every four years on the quality of its programme(s) and describes the identified strength(s) and planned action(s) of its programme(s) Master of Psychology: Theory and Research.

Strengths of the study programme(s)

- **Research orientated education:** The programme provides a solid statistical and methodological training with a strong focus on hands-on lab experience (e.g. developing and conducting research, proposal writing ...). Students develop high-quality research skills. The development of a critical scientific attitude and attention to research integrity and research practices is stimulated throughout the programme.
- **Internship and Master's thesis:** Both the internship and Master's thesis are valued by all parties, because of the broad array of theoretical development and methodological skills they allow the student to acquire and because of the opportunity to specialize into one or more areas of specific interest they provide.
- **International character of the programme:** The programme attracts students from diverse backgrounds. Erasmus students also contribute to the international character of the programme. The programme does not only have an international audience, it also communicates clearly about the possibilities for international experiences to future students (e.g. in the context of internship).
- **Neuroscience:** The strong focus on neuroscience is considered a strength of the programme.

Planned actions

- **Critical thinking:** Opportunities for critical thinking, self-reflection and personal development could be even more explicit and encouraged throughout the programme. Students now indicate that they lack time for profound reflection. There are a lot of suggestions that will be looked into (for instance the use of technological applications such as poll everywhere, pre-class assignments, open questions as evaluation method, blog posts ...).
→ The programme committee will start by holding a brainstorm about potential formats and evaluation methods that stimulate critical thinking and will think about how these can be implemented more in the programme. Research experts about this topic will also be consulted. The programme will continue to further encourage and support intracurricular and extracurricular student initiatives such as journal reading clubs.
- **Specialisation:** The programme has a strong focus on experimental design and quantitative methods. Qualitative and clinical research is underrepresented in the current programme. The possibility to have more elective courses and more opportunity to specialize was also mentioned as an advice by students and external peers.
→ The programme will actively seek to reorganise the programme that allows more personal choice and the possibility to specialise in a number of subdomains, and will look into the possibilities to broaden the electives.

This COBRA report is a result of the past four-year COBRA cycle (2015-2019). Each study programme that participated in the COBRA cycle has drawn up this document, which specifies the strengths and planned actions of the study programme. These strengths and actions result from the dialogue between the programme and its stakeholders (primary actors, alumni, professional field and international experts from the discipline). This report aims to give a comprehensive indication of the study programme's realised quality. The COBRA report will be made available in the programme guide, so it will be accessible to the public.



More information on COBRA: <https://www.kuleuven.be/english/education/quality/cobra-english/quality-assurance-method>
More information on the quality of education: <https://www.kuleuven.be/english/education/quality>
KU Leuven educational terminology: <https://www.kuleuven.be/english/education/educational-glossary/educational-glossary>

- **Cultural perspective on theory and research:** Students would prefer a stronger focus on different cultural perspectives in conducting research and psychological theorizing.
→ The new course 'Tomorrow in Psychological Science' might be an ideal forum to pay extra attention to different cultural perspectives in psychological science. Of course also other courses should be encouraged to reflect on their discipline from different cultural perspectives, where possible and meaningful.
- **Preparatory programme:** Professors indicated that the statistical and methodological knowledge of some incoming students was not sufficient.
→ Last academic year, we developed a new preparatory programme for promising students who do not entirely meet the requirements of the master's programme. This preparatory programme will be evaluated and student results will be tracked.
- **Student counselling:** Students indicate that the role of student counselling was not always clear. However when they found their way to student counselling, they were often satisfied with the advice and guidance that was offered.
→ In the meantime a student counsellor specific for the international programmes was appointed. This is one of the planned actions to enhance the visibility of the student services.