

Development report Water Technology

Wageningen University

University of Twente

University of Groningen

20 November 2024

During the site visit of the MSc Water Technology on 20 November 2024, panel and programme representatives engaged in a development dialogue on four topics. Representatives from the programme management, teaching staff and programme committee participated in the session. Each topic was introduced by a programme representative, followed by a discussion between the participants and panel.

Topic 1: Long-term sustainability of the programme

The panel and the programme discussed possible directions for growth, as the programme could benefit from higher student numbers. The panel was pleased to learn that the programme is strongly supported by the management of each of the three universities, even though student numbers are low. The panel believes that future growth might best be focused on 1) students from the northern part of the Netherlands, for whom the location of Leeuwarden is an asset rather than a constraint, and 2) on international students from countries where clean water is a scarce resource and the importance of water technology is recognized. The panel suggests investigating why current students from these two target groups chose the programme and building on this in recruitment.

Topic 2: Balance between theory and application

Based on student feedback, the programme is looking for ways in order to better connect theoretical coursework with applied projects. In discussing this with the programme, the panel believes that theory is the foundation of an academic programme. However, the panel believes that the Wetsus environment could be used to add additional practical components to the courses, such as short visits to the lab to explain a concept, or smaller projects based on challenge-based learning or reverse design (See also the suggestions for the three first blocks in the report). The panel also believes that a better explanation of the curriculum could help students understand what the programme is already doing to connect theory and practice: the curricular learning pathways recommended in the panel report could help with this.

Topic 3: Attention to digital skills in the programme

The programme is considering adding content related to digital competencies to the programme, as this is of increasing importance in the water technology sector. The panel believes that the curriculum should focus on designing solutions in water technology where digital tools could be useful, rather than teaching digital skills as a separate skill. A good starting point might be to approach the programme management of an AI programme in one of the three universities and see what content relevant to the MSc Water Technology could be offered there.

Topic 4: Social activities in the programme

The programme asks the panel if they see opportunities to strengthen the social life for students at Wetsus, as the lack of campus life in Leeuwarden is one of the main criticisms of students interested in the programme. The panel thinks that inviting students to social events and initiatives at Wetsus, as is currently the case, is a good starting point. It also welcomes the planned establishment of a study association by the

students, as more student-specific activities would probably be welcomed. In addition, reaching out to other student groups either in Leeuwarden or at the three participating universities could be a way to connect students to a broader campus experience.