

Annual Report Board of Studies MSc CIE 2023/24

Delft University of Technology

This annual report of the Board of Studies (BoS) of the MSc Civil Engineering (CIE) provides an overview of the actions of the Board during the academic year 2023-2024. This review serves to inform people and bodies within Delft University of Technology concerned with the CIE MSc about the status of recent and ongoing items within the Board of Studies. This document also gives new members of the CIE programme insight into recent and ongoing items, and it supports the progress of actions in the coming year.

The CIE Board of Studies is a committee that actively, and in a constructive-critical manner, works to ensure the highest quality of education in the CIE programme. The Board interacts regularly with CIE lecturers, students, the Board of Examiners, Education & Student Affairs, and the Programme Coordinator and Director of Studies. The Board consists of 6 members: 3 staff members and 3 student members where the term of student members starts and ends in November. The following members were involved in the Board in this academic year:

Frans van der Meer	staff member and chair	
Sandra Barbosa Nunes	staff member	
Andreas Hegyi	staff member	
Mariana Fuente Zazueta	student member	Nov 2022 – Nov 2023
Nikolaos Antoniadis	student member	Nov 2022 – Nov 2023
Tijn Schell	student member	Nov 2022 – Nov 2023
Deborah Dekker	student member	Nov 2023 – Nov 2024
Eshan Gharpure	student member	Nov 2023 – Nov 2024
Otto Schultze	student member	Nov 2023 – Nov 2024

The Board of Studies was supported by the Programme Coordinator Civil Engineering as Secretary to the Board, a position taken up by Richard Beugeling until April 2024 and by Stefanie Nuhn since May 2024.

In 2023-2024, the Board had nine meetings.

The Board of Studies has performed its lawful roles and responsibilities:

- Provide advice on the establishment of the Teaching and Education Regulations (TER) and Annex
- Assess the implementation of the TER
- Provide advice – solicited and unsolicited – to the Dean, the Director of Education and the Director of Studies concerning the programme and all associated teaching-related affairs.

Important items 2023-2024

In 2023-2024, the Board of Studies focused on the new Civil Engineering programme of which the first year was offered for the second time and the second year for the first time. The board has targeted to evaluate the programme from a broader perspective than what is already covered in the regular evaluation cycle of the modules (*voorblok/nablok* meetings).

Some requests for advice have come in regarding changes in the modules with respect to the original design.

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1. New Civil Engineering programme

1a. Module evaluations and improvements

Minutes from meetings from the regular evaluation cycle of the modules are shared with the Board of Studies, although unfortunately not for all modules.

The board recognizes the value of these meetings that take place before (*voorblok*) and after (*nablok*) the period in which the modules are taught for the quality of education. This is an important venue where student feedback reaches responsible teachers in a constructive conversation and where points that are raised are also brought back to the attention in due time.

The board receives these minutes with interest to get an impression of student experiences and planned improvements. At the board meetings, discussions on individual modules are not repeated, but the board aims to signal trends and challenges on programme level and identify cases where feedback and planned improvements are not properly processed in sequential editions of a module.

1b. CIEM0000 Interdisciplinary Mechanics and Design for CE

One module where the regular module evaluations did not give sufficient clarity on planned improvements after receiving student feedback is the programme base module *CIEM0000 Interdisciplinary Mechanics and Design for CE*. This new module at the start of the programme, shared by all students, is particularly challenging. Some issues regarding the teaching material and the assessment

methods have been raised in the first two editions and the plans for improvement were not clearly described in the evaluation meeting minutes.

The student members of the board have further collected feedback after which the module manager has been contacted with the question to further discuss the main points of concern. The module manager has come to one of the board meetings and explained the plans of the module team to develop new learning material, specifically new reading material for both units, and to improve the way and the coherence of the module is presented to students. The board was satisfied with the explanations and will keep monitoring the quality of this key module.

1c. Communication to students

The board has observed that communication to students about the requirements for following the programme is not always clear. Various projects, electives or internships in the second year have certain prerequisites in place that are important for students to be aware of in advance. In the current situation all the information for this is present through the study guide, but students do not access this information in advance. The request has been made to make this information more widely known and to raise awareness so that students can prepare properly for the second year. The secretary of the board has taken up the action to ensure that announcement is posted to all students in the programme around May to inform the students of the upcoming choices in year 2 (internships, electives, projects, thesis preparation) and the corresponding entry requirements.

Additionally, in the first year, there was a compulsory workshop for the ethics line in the thesis preparation, which was offered in the final week before the Christmas break. Students were not aware of this requirement and already made travel plans. The board has understood that this workshop will not be compulsory in future editions.

1e. Freedom in the new programme

The modular structure in the programme comes with reduction in freedom for students to form their own study plan. Most notably, it is not possible to follow part of a module as elective and get credits for that. This is a reflection of the vision that modules should function as integrated and coherent, not a collection of separate units with their own independent assessments. Nevertheless, in some modules, individual parts can be identified that could be valuable for students that do not follow the entire module. The student members of the board have performed an informal survey on how the modular structure is perceived. Although some individual cases have been identified where students did wish to follow part of a module but could not, concern about lack of flexibility does not seem widespread among students. Options to follow an entire module from a different track as elective, and to follow parts of modules as extracurricular activity could be communicated to students more clearly. It will be important to have a high level evaluation of the implementation of the modular structure, to see whether the modules are indeed functioning as intended, such that the limits in flexibility are the flip side to a design choice that effectively serves a higher good.

2a. TTE: CIEM6220 - CIEM6305

The TTE track has proposed a change to one of the B-modules and the creation of a new elective with the learning content that is now removed from this module. The elective can then also be attended by students from other programs (notably, the TIL and MADE programs). The changes are well motivated and presented with sound transition arrangements. With the addition of a new elective, the track still

adheres to the guideline on the total number of electives. The board has given positive advice for implementing the changes as proposed.

2b. HOS: CIEM4210

The HOS track has requested advice on a proposed change to one of the B-modules, including the addition of a new elective. A shift in focus was proposed in the B-module from resource assessment to the engineering of bottom fixed structures. Content would be removed from the B-module and then offered in a newly created elective course. In the response to the initial request for advice, the board has asked for clarification regarding which learning objectives would go to which of the new modules. It was clarified that learning objectives of the B-module would remain unchanged, as a consequence of which no new course-code would be needed. After the first response, the board has not given positive advice for the creation of a new elective because questions regarding constructive alignment remained. There seemed to be a misalignment in either the old or the new setup, otherwise it would not be possible to move content out of the module without changing learning objectives, and to present the same content somewhere else with a completely different set of learning objectives. The board has advised to further elaborate the plans for the changes such that a request for a new elective can be reconsidered for the study year 2025/26.

2c. Thesis rubric

The new grading guide for the MSc thesis has been evaluated and approved by the board. Changes with respect to the rubric from the old MSc programme were generally appreciated, and some small suggestions for improvement of clarity of the descriptions have been made to the responsible team. Formulating clear descriptions for the different grades on individual criteria remains a challenge, given the diversity among thesis projects. The board intends to perform a comparison with rubrics from other MSc programs and will consider making suggestions for a next revision of the rubric.

3. TER and annex

The board has reviewed the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) and its annex for the MSc Civil Engineering and its proposed changes. A few comments have been made regarding clarity and grammatical correctness of the text. It was observed that the ethics learning line was not mentioned in the Annex. In a following meeting, the updated TER and annex have been approved by the board.

4. Sub-committee

The subcommittee is a combination of the BoS MSc Civil Engineering, the BoS MSc Environmental Engineering and the BoS MSc Applied Earth Sciences. The subcommittee met once (25th of April 2024).

- Evaluation of MUDE and the Cross Overs. Together with the module manager of MUDE and the Cross Over coordinator, insights and suggestions were shared.
- A common concern is the lack of flexibility in the programmes. It is clear that these are full-time programmes. However, the structure with the large modules makes it very rigid. Students cannot slow down a bit if their personal circumstances require it. The subcommittee decided not to give advice on this issue now, but to use the mid-term review (November 2024) of the programmes to highlight this concern.

Actions for 2024-2025

Aside from the regular checks on evaluations and proposed changes, the Board of Studies MSc Civil Engineering will in 2024-2025 at least focus on:

- Entry requirements: identify issues with entry level of students in the programme and best practices for admission requirements and repair options
- Thesis rubric: comparison with MSc Systems and Control
- Evaluation of the modular structure as it is implemented in the new MSc programme