

LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE GRONINGEN

UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN

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This report was finalised on 27 February 2019.



REPORT ON THE BACHELOR'S PROGRAMME LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE GRONINGEN

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for Limited Programme Assessments (September 2016) and the Assessment Framework for the Distinctive feature of small-scale and intensive education (4 November 2011) as a starting point.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences

Name of the programme:	Liberal Arts and Sciences
CROHO number:	50393
Level of the programme:	bachelor's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	180 EC
Location(s):	Groningen
Mode(s) of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Expiration of accreditation:	30/03/2020

The visit of the assessment panel Liberal Arts and Sciences to University College Groningen of the University of Groningen took place on 3 December 2018.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

Name of the institution:	University of Groningen
Status of the institution:	publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	positive

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

Cluster Liberal Arts and Sciences

The assessment of the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences at University College Groningen, during which also the assessment of the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education took place, is part of the cluster assessment Liberal Arts and Sciences. From May to December 2018, a panel assessed bachelor's programmes Liberal Arts and Sciences at eight universities. A panel of six to nine members was appointed for each site visit, based on the expertise and availability of each panel member and taking into account possible conflicts of interest.

The full panel Liberal Arts and Sciences consisted of eighteen members:

- Prof. dr. Th.L.M. (Theo) Engelen, professor in Historical Demography, and former Rector Magnificus, of the Radboud University [chair]
- Em. prof. H. L. (Laurent) Boetsch, founding executive co-director of the European Consortium of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ECOLAS) and emeritus professor Romance Languages at Washington and Lee University (United States) [vice chair]
- Prof. S. (Samuel) Abraham, co-founder and managing director of ECOLAS and founder, professor and rector of Bratislava International School of Liberal Education (BISLA, Slovakia)
- [REDACTED]



- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- Prof. C. (Carl) Gombrich, Professorial Teaching Fellow in Interdisciplinary Education, programme director of the BASc Art and Sciences at the University College London (United Kingdom)
- [REDACTED]
- Y. (Yara) van Ingen, bachelor's student Maastricht Science Programme, Maastricht University
- [REDACTED]

For the assessment of the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education, two panel members (Prof. dr. Th.L.M. Engelen and [REDACTED]) were trained by the NVAO and appointed to head the assessment of the Distinctive Feature. Prof. dr. Th.L.M. Engelen was involved in all site visits. [REDACTED] was involved in the site visits at Leiden University College, University College Utrecht, University College Roosevelt, Liberal Arts and Sciences at Utrecht University, Amsterdam University College, Erasmus University College, University College Venlo, University College Maastricht and Maastricht Science Programme.

The panel was supported by dr. Els Schröder as project coordinator of the cluster assessment Liberal Arts and Sciences. She also acted as secretary during the visit to Leiden University College, University College Roosevelt, University College Utrecht, Liberal Arts and Sciences Utrecht, Amsterdam University College, Erasmus University College, University College Venlo, University College Maastricht and the Maastricht Science Programme. She was supported by [REDACTED] at University College Roosevelt, University College Utrecht, Liberal Arts and Sciences Utrecht, Amsterdam University College, Erasmus University College, University College Venlo, University College Maastricht and the Maastricht Science Programme, who also wrote the reports of the first five colleges. Dr. Marianne van der Weiden acted as secretary during the site visits to Groningen University College, University College Tilburg and University College Twente.

The project coordinator attended all site visits, briefed all panel members and read and commented on draft versions of each report in order to monitor the consistency of the assessments and the resulting reports. Calibration of the assessments took place between the core panel members at several moments during, between and after the various site visits.

University College Groningen:

The panel that assessed the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences consisted of five members:

- Prof. dr. Th.L.M. (Theo) Engelen, professor in Historical Demography, and former Rector Magnificus, of the Radboud University [chair];

- Em. prof. H. L. (Laurent) Boetsch, founding executive co-director of the European Consortium of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ECOLAS) and emeritus professor Romance Languages at Washington and Lee University (United States) [vice-chair];
- Prof. S. (Samuel) Abraham, co-founder and managing director of ECOLAS and founder, professor and rector of Bratislava International School of Liberal Education (BISLA, Slovakia);
- Prof. C. (Carl) Gombrich, Professorial Teaching Fellow in Interdisciplinary Education, programme director of the BASc Art and Sciences at the University College London (United Kingdom);
- Y. (Yara) van Ingen, bachelor's student of the Maastricht Science Programme at Maastricht University [student member].

The panel was supported by dr. M.J.H. (Marianne) van der Weiden, who acted as secretary.

For the assessment of the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education, Prof. dr. Th.L.M. Engelen was trained by the NVAO and appointed to head the assessment of the Distinctive Feature. The practice-based assessment of the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education took place on 3 December 2018, combined with the regular assessment of the bachelor's programme.

The NVAO approved the composition of the panel on 16 april 2018.

WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

Preparation

Before the assessment panel's site visit to University College Groningen, the project coordinator received the programme's self-evaluation report, based on both the NVAO framework and the framework with the assessment criteria for the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education. The QANU project coordinator sent it to the panel after checking it for completeness of information. Upon reading the self-evaluation report, the panel members formulated their preliminary findings. The secretary made an overview of these preliminary findings and sent it to the panel members as a preparatory document.

The panel also studied a selection of fifteen capstone theses and the accompanying assessment forms for the programme, based on a provided list with capstone theses of the last two years. This selection was made by the panel's chair, in cooperation with the project coordinator, based on input from the other panel members. The chair and project coordinator took care that a variety of topics and disciplines was covered, and made sure that the distribution of grades in the theses selection matched the distribution of grades over all theses. The panel chair, project coordinator and programme jointly composed a schedule for the site visit. Prior to the site visit, the programme selected representative partners for the various interviews. See Appendix 4 for the definitive schedule.

Site visit

The site visit to University College Groningen took place on 3 December 2018. At the start of the site visit, the panel held a preparatory meeting during which it was instructed regarding all assessment frameworks and procedures. After this, the panel discussed its working method and its preliminary findings for the site visit with respect to both the regular assessment and the assessment of the Distinctive Feature. It also paid attention to the content and use of the programme's domain-specific framework of reference, which is included in Appendix 1.

The visit started with a development conversation, in which the panel and representatives of the programme discussed various development routes for the programme. The results of this conversation are summarised in a separate report, which will be published through the programme's communication channels. The information received during the development conversation are not part of the conducted assessments.

After this initial meeting, the panel focused on its assessments. The panel conducted interviews with representatives of the programme and toured the premises to see the available facilities, and examined materials provided by the programmes. An overview of these materials is given in Appendix 5.

The panel used the final part of the visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards the panel chair gave an oral presentation, in which he expressed the panel's preliminary impressions and general observations.

Report

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report with two separate chapters based on the assessment panel's findings: the first part of the report focuses on the regular NVAO programme assessment of the bachelor's programme, and the second part of the report specifically addresses the standards related to the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the assessment panel and project coordinator. After processing the panel members' feedback, the project coordinator sent the draft report to the university in order to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel's chair and adapted the report accordingly before its finalisation.

Definition of judgements standards

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments, the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of both the standards and the programme as a whole.

Generic quality

The quality that, in an international perspective, may reasonably be expected from a higher education Associate Degree, Bachelor's or Master's programme.

Unsatisfactory

The programme does not meet the generic quality standard and shows shortcomings with respect to multiple aspects of the standard.

Satisfactory

The programme meets the generic quality standard across its entire spectrum.

Good

The programme systematically surpasses the generic quality standard.

Excellent

The programme systematically well surpasses the generic quality standard and is regarded as an international example.

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework for the Distinctive Feature of Small-scale and Intensive Education, the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of the standards:

Meets the standard

The programme meets the generic quality standard.

Does not meet the standard

The programme does not meet the generic quality standard.

The panel used the following definitions for the assessment of the programme as a whole:

Positive

All the criteria are scored as "meets the standard".

Negative

One or more of the criteria are scored as “does not meet the standard”.

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

Summary Judgement Framework for Limited Programme Assessments

Standard 1

The intended learning outcomes of the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) of University College Groningen (UCG) meet the requirements of the discipline and correspond with the Dublin descriptors at bachelor's level. The linkage to national and international frameworks is well-described and convincing. The panel appreciates the strong grounding in interdisciplinarity, not only in academic disciplines, but also including the arts. The description in terms of five roles is innovative and helps students to understand the learning objectives. The focus on the three societal themes of the University of Groningen (UG) (Energy Transition, Healthy Ageing and Sustainable Society) gives a clear focus and links the programme well to university-wide knowledge and resources.

Standard 2

The programme is a three-year full-time programme, taught in English. Each year focusses on a different aspect of the student's scholarly development: Creating Horizon, Creating Scholarship and Creating Leadership. The programme offers three majors: Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities. The content is truly interdisciplinary and connected to the societal themes of the university. The structure of the programme gives both guidance and flexibility. The labelling of the three years is a good way to show how students progress from a broad overview to more in-depth knowledge and research skills in their major. The balance between the three majors is good. The fourth option of a free major is a valuable addition. The fact that students go to other faculties for part of their courses is an advantage rather than a drawback, because it allows them a wider range of courses than could be offered by a relatively small faculty as UCG. It also enables them to broaden their experience beyond UCG and meet students from other faculties.

The small class-size and interactive teaching methods encourage students to develop their knowledge and skills as self-directed learners. The panel appreciates the many choices in projects and courses and, additionally, the possibilities for students to earn extra credits through the World Language Programme and the Honours Programme. It shows that students have ample opportunities to develop their talents and tailor the programme to their personal ambitions. Students are guided and supported in making the right choices through their meetings with a tutor, as part of the Individual Learning Line. The panel feels that UCG has a comprehensive support structure in place, both for academic and personal issues. The communication about (changes in) the programme and whom to turn to with questions, has been considerably improved by making the Student Affairs Office the central contact point.

The UCG programme is taught by well-qualified and motivated staff. Almost forty per cent is listed as internal staff, sixty per cent as external. This is a good balance, ensuring a strong UCG core, while drawing from the university's wider resources. External staff members are introduced to the typical content and method expected from them. A more formal teaching-learning centre and tailor-made workshops is recommended by the panel as a useful resource for staff members. Teaching is the focus of UCG staff, which is a great asset for the programme, but is felt to limit their academic career chances. The panel hopes that the international example of professorial teaching fellows may contribute to finding alternative ways besides research performance to build an academic career.

Standard 3

The assessment system has a number of strong points, such as the use of multiple assessment moments and a variety of assessment methods in each course, a detailed assessment plan and the use of uniform course guide formats and grading rubrics. UCG is aware of possible difference in assessment cultures when staff comes from various faculties and backgrounds and has taken adequate steps to ensure that assessment and grading are harmonised. The Board of Examiners implements its safeguarding role adequately, especially by regularly checking course examination outcomes and theses. The exams are well-designed, with good model answers.



Further work needs to be done to improve transparency: all examiners should provide written feedback and offer inspection hours to students after the exam results have been published. Feedback on project work and especially the distinction between individual and group performance needs improvement. The panel advises to add a short holistic feedback paragraph to the thesis assessments. Finally, the letter grading system needs adjustment to do more justice to differences in achievement at the higher level (between 8.0 and 10.0 in the Dutch grading system).

Standard 4

The panel concludes on the basis of the theses and the meeting with alumni that graduates have attained the programme's intended learning outcomes. The theses are generally of high quality. The programme has a significant added value, especially in regard of research and communication skills. Alumni find their way to – sometimes very selective – master's programmes of their choice easily.

The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment Framework for Limited Programme Assessments* in the following way:

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	Good
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Good
Standard 3: Student assessment	Satisfactory
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Good
General conclusion	Good

The chair, Prof. dr. Th.L.M. Engelen, and the secretary, dr. M.J.H. van der Weiden, of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 27 February 2019

Summary judgment Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education

Standard A

The intended learning outcomes are very appropriate for the distinctive feature. The very nature of the programme is interdisciplinary and aims at a broad understanding of a wide spectrum of disciplines (sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts). The five roles aptly describe how students can learn to take their role in solving societal problems. The panel especially appreciates the role of academic integrator, because of its reflective nature. The link to the three societal profiles of the university ensures that students are stimulated to work with relevant and topical issues.

Standard B

The panel is impressed by the extracurricular activities, not only because of their large number, but also because they show a good combination of fun and academics and a strong link with project learning. The use of the seven C's (Community building, Content, Civic engagement, Communication, Cultural awareness, Committee work and Career) is a very good way to align curricular and extracurricular activities. The active role of study association Caerus is also a strong point.

Standard C

The small-scale and intensive character of the programme are demonstrated by the close involvement of students and staff with the teaching activities. Lecturers are not committed to a specific didactic approach, but use the method that is appropriate for their course. The small class size makes it possible to introduce innovative methods. Project work makes up a large part of the programme. UCG also feels responsible for the classes that students have to follow outside their own faculty. The panel concludes that UCG has created a strong learning community for its students.

Standard D

The programme has a sound selection procedure in place, that is regularly evaluated and improved to increase its effectiveness. The selection procedure assures the proper level and best fit of students.

Standard E

The lecturers have the required academic knowledge and didactic skills, and are very motivated to teach at UCG. They are dedicated and committed to their students.

Standard F

The student-staff ratio of 17:1 enables a good execution of the curriculum and small-scale teaching.

Standard G

The facilities in the faculty building are good and encourage both the learning community and the social community. Students start their life at UCG by living together in the international student housing building. UCG is scheduled to move to a new, larger location by 2020. A new student housing will be developed at the same location. The panel has seen and felt how much the students feel at home in the current building, and agrees with the management that it will be a challenge to maintain this atmosphere in the new venue.

Standard H

The final projects, capstone courses and theses are a good set to demonstrate the final level of the programme. The outcomes are in line with the intended level and interdisciplinary approach. UCG students perform better in their coursework than other UG students. The dropout rate in year 1 is expected to remain lower than at other faculties. UCG students graduate faster than their counterparts in UG generally. The alumni listed the selective and respected programmes where LAS graduates have been admitted. The sample size of graduates is still small, but, on the basis of the first results, the panel is convinced that UCG graduates are well-channelled for high-quality master's programmes.



Practice-based assessment

The panel concludes on the basis of the practice-based assessment that the programme has shown that it meets all standards for the Distinctive Feature. The intended learning outcomes, programme and extracurricular activities, didactic approach, staff and facilities are in line with the requirements for small-scale teaching and support the development of a learning community. LAS students perform better than other UG students. The first cohorts of graduates show that LAS graduates are admitted to selective and prestigious master's programmes. UCG has addressed the two issues that were specifically raised by the 2014 panel: the current panel confirms that even with the increased number of students, UCG is able to offer the learning community and the innovative teaching approach that are expected from a small-scale and intensive programme. The panel commends the programme for what has been achieved in such a short period of time.

The panel advises the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to grant approval for the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education for an indefinite period of time to the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences of the University College Groningen.

The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment framework for the distinctive feature of small-scale and intensive education* in the following way:

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences

Standard A: Intended learning outcomes	Meets standard
Standard B: Relationship between the goals and content of the programme	Meets standard
Standard C: Structure and didactic concept	Meets standard
Standard D: Intake	Meets standard
Standard E: Quality of staff	Meets standard
Standard F: Number of staff	Meets standard
Standard G: Available facilities	Meets standard
Standard H: Level realised	Meets standard
General conclusion	Positive

The chair, Prof. dr. Th.L.M. Engelen, and the secretary, dr. M.J.H. van der Weiden, of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 27 February 2019

DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR LIMITED FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENTS

The bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences (further: LAS) under review is offered by University College Groningen (further: UCG). UCG was founded in 2014 and has since then grown to an annual intake of more than 100 students. UCG is a separate Faculty of the University of Groningen.

The Faculty Board is responsible for the strategy and control of the Faculty of UCG, and is advised by the Faculty Council, Programme Committee, Board of Examiners and Board of Admissions. The Academic Director of Education is responsible for the daily management of the LAS programme. The academic staff is organised in three departments (Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences). A fourth department, the UCG Support Staff, assists in the operation of the LAS programme. The design and development of the LAS programme is done by the Academic Director of Education in collaboration with the Academic Directors, who are responsible for specific parts of the programme (core, majors, minors). The programme's daily management team consists of the Head of Student Affairs and the senior tutors, supervised by the Academic Director of Education.

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Findings

The bachelor's programme LAS at UCG aims to deliver graduates with a broad interdisciplinary perspective and a creative, initiative-rich attitude towards finding effective solutions for the challenges of today's society. The intended learning outcomes of the programme are described in competences related to five roles:

1. Content expert;
2. Researcher;
3. Innovator;
4. Collaborator and Communicator;
5. Academic Integrator.

The panel found a detailed specification of these five competences in the documentation provided, including an explanation how they are aligned with the Dublin descriptors at bachelor's level (see appendix 2), the domain-specific framework of reference for the Liberal Arts and Sciences (provided in appendix 1) and the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes (guidelines for liberal education at universities that prepares students for 21st century challenges). The panel confirms that the intended learning outcomes are realistic and reflect the national and international expectations of a LAS programme. The panel is enthusiastic about the innovative translation in the five roles. They clarify the nature of the programme very well to (prospective) students and facilitate the communication of the learning outcomes to the students. The panel appreciates that, as a content expert, graduates not only have a broad understanding of the major insights of the academic disciplines (science, social science and humanities) and the social and cultural characteristics of society, but also of the world of arts. The roles of researcher and innovator include artistic approaches. This distinguishes the UCG programme from other LAS programmes.

The programme describes its specific profile in terms of an overarching ambition and the linkage to the societal profile of the University of Groningen (further: UG). The overarching ambition is to provide students with a genuinely interdisciplinary outlook, flexibility of choice and a collaborative and guided approach to learning. This will enable students to acquire a collaborative interdisciplinary approach and a creative solution-focused orientation with which they can face the challenges of the 21st century. The content of the programme is explicitly linked to the societal challenges that the UG



has chosen as its profile: Energy Transition, Healthy Ageing and Sustainable Society. The panel feels that taking these themes as an inspiration provides a good scaffold for the programme, effectively drawing on what the university has to offer.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes meet the requirements of the discipline and correspond with the Dublin descriptors at bachelor's level. The linkage to national and international frameworks is well-described and convincing. The panel feels that the intended learning outcomes are to be assessed as more than satisfactory. The panel appreciates the strong grounding in interdisciplinarity, not only in academic disciplines, but also including the arts. The description in terms of five roles is innovative and helps students to understand the learning objectives. The focus on the UG societal themes gives a clear focus and links the programme well to university-wide knowledge and resources. The panel assesses this standard, therefore, as good.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard 1 as 'good'.

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Findings

Curriculum structure

UCG's LAS programme is a three-year full-time programme, taught in English. Each year focusses on a different aspect of the student's scholarly development: Creating Horizon, Creating Scholarship and Creating Leadership. In the first year, students are acquainted with complex societal problems and the need for an interdisciplinary, research-oriented and critical-reflective approach to address them. In the second year, students deepen their knowledge and understanding of major fields, applying it to real-life challenges and acquiring more advanced research and methodological skills. They specialise in one of three majors: Sciences, Social Sciences or Humanities. In the third year, students apply knowledge and skills in projects of their own choosing and their bachelor thesis and prepare themselves for their post-bachelor career. In the first semester of the third year, they may opt to study abroad and/or do an internship (for an overview of the curriculum see appendix 3).

The programme consists of three components: an academic core (60 EC), a major (90 EC) and a minor (30 EC). Within the major and minor components, students have a wide variety of choices. In this way, the programme achieves a balance between offering flexibility of choice and ensuring that students achieve the intended learning outcomes. For example, within the academic core, all students are required to participate in projects and methodology courses. This ensures that all students achieve the intended learning outcomes related to these elements, but they have freedom of choice in terms of which project and, to a more limited extent, which academic methodology to choose in line with their academic specialisation. The panel appreciates the format of the curriculum, the labelling of the three years and the flexibility it allows.

In order to achieve a feasible programme, the workload is spread evenly over the years and semesters. Each course has a minimum of three assessment moments. This encourages lecturers to spread the workload and the stress of deadlines and exams over the course of the semester.

Curriculum content

In the academic core, two learning lines can be distinguished: the Research and Methodology learning line (R&M) and the Academic Skills and Projects learning line (Skills and Projects). The content of R&M includes courses in academic writing, logic and argumentation, mathematics, programming, statistics, philosophy of science, et cetera. In the first block, the content is the same for all students. After that, the content of courses is tailored toward the major of choice. In Skills and Projects,

students learn to integrate their knowledge from different disciplines in addressing complex challenges in the context of different projects. Students develop their interpersonal, entrepreneurial, communication and project management skills. The students confirmed that the projects play an important role in embedding the curriculum content in the three societal themes (Energy Transition, Healthy Ageing and Sustainable Society). The themes are part of many projects, particularly the capstone projects of the final year. During the site visit, the panel was introduced to a few examples of UCG projects. The panel feels that these are great examples of students addressing topical issues and genuinely working with the city. In one of these projects, the artistic perspective was nicely integrated.

Part of the academic core is the first year course 'Challenges of modern society', where a subject (e.g. climate change) is addressed from different points of view (history, law, physics etc.). The panel considers this combination of disciplinary perspectives a good introduction to the interdisciplinary nature of LAS.

The programme offers a choice of three majors: Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities. Each major consists of three or four specialisations. The majors and specialisations prepare the students for specific master programmes. For the first cohort, the distribution of students across the majors was in balance, each attracting approximately a third of the students. In subsequent cohorts, the major Social Sciences attracted roughly two-thirds of all students. Students can also opt for a free major, a combination of elements from two or all of the three majors. The Board of Examiners needs to approve such a personalised programme, to ensure that it meets all the intended learning outcomes. Students told the panel that the free major is much appreciated and is seen as a serious option. The panel considers this an illustration of the sense of ownership the programme allows the students.

Currently, the UCG course portfolio comprises over 140 courses. The ambition is to offer all courses at UCG, to ensure their compatibility with the UCG programme and didactic approach, but for some specialisation courses and electives, students go to other UG faculties. The panel agrees that this widens the opportunities for students, and offers specific facilities, such as laboratories, that are not available at UCG. The panel learned that, when students of a small specialisation (Physics and Energy) complained that they had to go outside UCG too often, the programme management remedied this by hiring additional staff. The programme staff is also responsive when classes are filled up too soon and not all students can sign up for their favourite course. In such cases, lecturers discuss with the academic director about offering an alternative or running the course twice. Students conclude their programme with a capstone, consisting of an integrative capstone course, a project and the bachelor thesis. During the site visit, the panel studied a few examples of capstone courses and found them to be substantively solid. The other course materials were also excellent and appropriate.

A minor allows the students to broaden their horizon. At least 15 out of the 30 EC must be taken outside of the chosen major. 10 EC is taken during the first year, the remaining 20 in the third year. The latter part can be used to study abroad. Students can choose minors on offer at the UG or design their own minor by picking a number of courses. Opportunities to go abroad are facilitated by the UG Multi Faculty Exchange programme. The panel applauds the wide range of opportunities offered to the students.

In addition, students can acquire extra credits through extracurricular courses, such as the World Language Programme (offering courses in Dutch, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese) and the UG Honours College, a selective 45 EC excellence programme.

Didactic concept

UCG aims to educate self-directed learners and provide a learning environment in which they can develop themselves. Students are given the opportunity to fit the curriculum to their personal learning ambitions. The flexibility of choice in the LAS programme is in line with the ownership that



students have over their own learning process. In their meeting with the panel, the students confirmed that they value this greatly. They are enthusiastic about the ways they can shape their curriculum in terms of courses and projects.

Students work in small groups (never more than 25 students), in close interaction with students from other disciplinary majors and under the guidance of experts. Courses have a minimum of four contact hours per week, thus ensuring regular interaction between students and lecturers. Both staff and students told the panel how much classes at UCG differ from classes in other faculties. UCG students want to be engaged in discussions and are much more active than students in other programmes. This attitude is reinforced by the lecturers at UCG, who find the small audience in class inspiring. The lecturers enjoy bringing in a broader perspective than they are used to in monodisciplinary courses.

Project groups are small and students work together towards the project deliverables. The panel considers the score sheets on the group work an appropriate method to keep track of each student's contribution. This way, it is noted when individuals are not contributing equally.

Individual guidance

Students are offered guidance in exploring the various possibilities and making their choices. They have a tutor who offers academic advice, support and information in individual meetings during the course of the programme. This is implemented in the programme as the Individual Learning Line (2 EC) in which students reflect on their personal study behaviour, performance and academic choices.

For personal issues, students can approach the study advisor and make use of the university-wide services such as the Student Service Centre and the confidential advisor, if required. Because UCG is still a fairly small community, much can be addressed along informal lines, but all formal services are available as well. The panel is convinced that students are able to get the support they need, but advises to monitor closely that the services at university level are adequate for the specific group of UCG students.

In the UCG Student Portal, a centralised digital environment, students can find all relevant information concerning the faculty, its committees, relevant procedures, rules and regulations. The major specialisations offer pre-structured options that grant access to particular master programmes. Communication within UCG was problematic for a while, as a consequence of the growth of the student population. Students were uncertain about whom to address for a specific issue. The panel was reassured that this has been addressed. Student Affairs is now the central nexus for all student questions and will forward the question to the relevant staff member or committee. The students confirmed that this is a major step forward. They also appreciate the up to date information in Nestor (the digital learning environment) and the newsletters twice a month. The panel appreciates that the formalisation of communication has been an improvement, but also heard from the students that UCG now runs the risk of an overflow of information. The panel advises to continue working towards a good balance.

Staff

Courses at UCG are taught by both core staff (staff members with their primary position at UCG) and external staff (staff with their primary position at other UG faculties) who are brought in to teach courses. This allows UCG to attract active researchers, including many full professors, from other faculties, who can provide research-driven education within the LAS programme. It also strengthens the links between UCG and the other faculties. The panel agrees that the combination of internal and external staff is positive. It avoids the risk of UCG becoming an isolated bubble.

All lecturers have obtained a PhD in a relevant discipline, ensuring that students are taught by skilled researchers and experts in their field. Many lecturers bring in international backgrounds and experience. UCG staff includes experts in particular areas of teaching, such as project work and tutoring. All lecturers are required to have their universal teaching qualification (UTQ) or to obtain it within two years of their appointment as lecturer. The focus of UCG staff on teaching is further

illustrated by the fact that a number of lecturers also have, or are in the process of obtaining, a senior teaching qualification (STQ) and that twenty UCG lecturers have obtained a Fellowship for Innovation of Teaching. These grants offer financial support for lecturers to develop new ideas and innovate their teaching. The students appreciate their lecturers for the personal connections they are able to build with the students, the way they encourage active participation and their willingness to be part of the UCG community.

New lecturers are introduced to the UCG didactic concept and the key aspects of teaching, learning and assessment at UCG. In their meeting with the panel, lecturers explained that this introduction was a natural outcome of participating in departmental meetings, discussions at the end of a block on how each course went, and meetings with project supervisors throughout the year. Recently, a more formal approach has been adopted, as was explained by one of the new external lecturers: the programme coordinator has a role in disseminating the UCG approach, supervises the course, and discusses in a number of sessions how to fit the content and method of the course into the rest of the programme. The panel is convinced that this works satisfactorily, although a specific teaching-learning centre and targeted workshops would help lecturers to learn the necessary skills faster.

The programme management and lecturers expressed their concern that being a core staff member at UCG limits the academic career chances within the university. Research time for UCG staff is less than at other faculties, while in the university research performance is considered a prerequisite for an academic career. The panel recognises this as a significant issue, that needs to be discussed at university level. The panel advises to look into possibilities to give teaching a much higher priority in career development and to look for appropriate examples in other universities internationally, such as the professorial teaching fellows in the United Kingdom.

Considerations

The panel is impressed with the curriculum: the content is truly interdisciplinary and connected to the societal themes of the university. The structure of the programme gives both guidance and flexibility. The labelling of the three years (Creating Horizon, Scholarship and Leadership respectively) is a nice way to show how students progress from a broad overview to more in-depth knowledge and research skills in their major. The balance between the three majors is good. The fourth option of a free major is a valuable addition. The fact that students go to other faculties for part of their courses is an advantage rather than a drawback, because it allows them a wider range of courses than could be offered by a relatively small faculty as UCG. It also enables them to broaden their experience beyond UCG and meet students from other faculties.

The small class-size and interactive teaching methods encourage students to develop their knowledge and skills as self-directed learners. The panel appreciates the many choices in projects and courses and, additionally, the possibilities for students to earn extra credits through the World Language Programme and the Honours Programme. It shows that students have ample opportunities to develop their talents and tailor the programme to their personal ambitions. Students are guided and supported in making the right choices through their meetings with a tutor, as part of the Individual Learning Line. The panel feels that UCG has a comprehensive support structure in place, both for academic and personal issues. The communication about (changes in) the programme and whom to turn to with questions, has been considerably improved by making the Student Affairs office the central contact point. In trying to provide full information, the programme now has to watch out that students are not overloaded with e-mails.

The UCG programme is taught by well-qualified and motivated staff. Almost forty per cent is listed as internal staff, sixty per cent as external. This is a good balance, ensuring a strong UCG core, while drawing from the university's wider resources. External staff members are introduced to the typical content and method expected from them, both before and at the beginning of their course at UCG. A more formal teaching-learning centre and tailor-made workshops could be a useful resource for staff members. Teaching is the focus of UCG staff, which is a great asset for the programme, but is felt to limit their academic career chances. The panel hopes that the international example of



professorial teaching fellows may contribute to finding alternative ways besides research performance to build an academic career.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'good'.

Standard 3: Student assessment

The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Findings

Assessment policy

Student assessment at UCG is based on an assessment policy and an assessment plan. Assessment is meant to (1) provide feedback to the student in order to support and guide self-directed learning, and (2) assess whether the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. In order to achieve the first of these objectives, each course must have at least three assessment moments, where each provides an opportunity to give the students feedback. No single assessment may contribute more than 40% of the final grade for a course. Lecturers are encouraged to use different methods of assessment, in order to assess a greater variety of skills and knowledge per course. For the second objective, UCG requires lecturers to use a course guide format, which specifies the manner in which the course's learning objectives are tested and the course learning objectives are linked to the programme learning outcomes.

UCG examiners have a wide variety of backgrounds, in terms of discipline, faculty and international experience, which can lead to different views and practices regarding assessment. In order to ensure that assessments yield comparable results with different graders, UCG grading policy requires the use of uniform grading rubrics. The use of a standard format for course guides presents the information on a course and its assessment in a uniform way for students. The panel agrees with this policy.

For each assessment moment, UCG has a number of quality requirements. Examiners are appointed by the Board of Examiners. All examinations are peer-reviewed before they are administered. They are checked on validity, representativeness, reliability, transparency, relative weight and feasibility. If necessary, the test is adjusted. The panel confirms that these quality guidelines lead to good assessments (see below).

Students have the chance to do a mock exam. After the examination, model answers must be made available on Nestor and students may inspect their work. The panel considers this inspection to be a valuable part of the feedback and learning process. Currently, this is done on an informal basis, but the panel advises to organise this more formally, with a specified time window, in order to increase the transparency of assessment. More generally, with the growth of UCG, the feedback process should be more targeted and structured, also in project work (both at group and individual level) and the thesis. Students and staff are satisfied with the content of feedback, but the panel cannot find sufficient documentation.

UCG adopted a letter grading system instead of the Dutch grading system. Students are rated on a scale from A+ (excellent) to F (fail). The rationale is that the interval scale provides an incentive for lecturers to give more extensive feedback and, in addition, that it is recognised more easily internationally. It should, therefore, make it easier for UCG graduates to apply for master's programmes outside the Netherlands. A conversion table is provided between letter grades, grade points and Dutch grades. This letter grading system is referred to as the American letter grading, but the conversion is not in line with USA practice. The panel feels that awarding the same grade point of 4.0 to a wide range of grades in the Dutch system (8.0-10.0) is unjustified. The panel agrees that the use of a grade point average is useful for international admission procedures, but the letter grades are not necessary to compute this. The panel advises to adjust the grading system.

Assessments

A variety of assessment methods is used to assess the learning outcomes, such as written exams, essays, (individual and group) presentations and assignments, literature reviews and project deliverables. The panel heard that some lecturers have introduced innovative methods as well, such as asking students to write a blog instead of a paper.

During the site visit, the panel has studied a number of tests and assignments, including their assessment and feedback. The panel confirms that the documentation is generally very clear and comprehensive. The exam papers are thoughtful and with good model answers. The panel notes a careful range of exam questions, covering the full substance of the course in one case, and a very clever mixture of critical thinking and methodology in another. All exams are found to be solid.

The thesis is the student's final project for the bachelor and must demonstrate whether the student has realised the intended learning outcomes. The students must show competence in devising a research plan, conducting the research, writing the thesis and be able to orally defend it. Supervisors can be members of different faculties, depending on the subject a student has chosen. In such cases, the co-assessor will always be a UCG-lecturer. UCG uses assessment rubrics for the different elements of the thesis to ensure validity and reliability in assessing different theses. The oral defence must be completed before finalisation and contributes to the grade. The panel considers the grading rubrics to be adequate, but the possibility for examiners to add narrative feedback is hardly used. The panel advises to ask examiners to add a short (100-200 words) holistic feedback to their assessment.

Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners is responsible for safeguarding the quality of assessments and providing assurance that the programme learning outcomes are met. The Board consists of members who work at UCG (internal members) and members who work at other UG faculties (external members). The internal members have weekly meetings to discuss student requests and, when necessary, other cases (e.g. plagiarism cases). Periodically, the Board selects a number of course units to check whether the course learning outcomes adhere to the programme learning outcomes and whether the assessment is adequately done. The Board also checks examination results. When the grading is out of the ordinary, the assessment of that course is further examined. Annually, the Board selects fifteen theses at random to check their level and assessment. This second opinion round confirmed that the grading of the theses was adequate and that the theses showed the required bachelor level. The use of the assessment forms and the provision of feedback were, however, not consistent. The panel agrees with the Board that this needs further attention. Based on its meeting with the Board during the site visit and studying the annual reports, the panel concludes that the Board is doing its work adequately.

Considerations

The assessment system has a number of strong points, such as the use of multiple assessment moments and a variety of assessment methods in each course, a detailed assessment plan and the use of uniform course guide formats and grading rubrics. UCG is aware of possible differences in assessment cultures when staff comes from various faculties and backgrounds and has taken adequate steps to ensure that assessment and grading are harmonised. The Board of Examiners implements its safeguarding role well, especially by regularly checking course examination outcomes and theses. The exams are well-designed, with good model answers.

Further work needs to be done to improve transparency: all examiners need to provide written feedback and offer inspection hours to students after the exam results have been published. Feedback on project work and especially the distinction between individual and group performance needs improvement. The panel advises to add a short holistic feedback paragraph to the thesis assessments. Finally, the letter grading system needs adjustment to do more justice to differences in achievement at the higher level (between 8.0 and 10.0 in the Dutch grading system).



Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'satisfactory'.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

The intended learning outcomes, specified in the five roles (see standard 1), are assessed at the final level in the thesis, the capstone course and the projects of year 2 and 3. Capstone courses comprehensively cover all learning outcomes of a major. Students who do a free major, have to take a capstone course as well. In the projects, especially those in year 3, students must demonstrate their ability to develop ideas and turn these into reality. The bachelor thesis provides a check of the exit level of a student's overall ability to function as a researcher and academic integrator at a bachelor's level.

Prior to the site visit, the panel read a selection of fifteen theses and their assessment forms. It confirms that all theses show the intended bachelor level. Most of the theses are of high quality. The panel found a few of them very mature, with a strong analysis and excellent use of empirical data. All are written in clear and idiomatic English. Further, topics are original and, evidently, students devoted much time to the thesis finalisation. The panel found the grading overall to be fair and consistent.

During the site visit, the panel met with a number of alumni. They had all continued in a master's programme. Looking back, they mentioned their skills in academic English writing and doing research as the most notable added value of the LAS programme, together with the ease in connecting with diverse groups of people and their skills in group work. All of them had been accepted in the master's programme of their first choice. Some of these are highly selective programmes at prestigious international universities.

Considerations

The panel concludes on the basis of the theses and the meeting with alumni that graduates have attained the programme's intended learning outcomes. The theses are generally of high quality. The programme has a significant added value, especially in regard of research and communication skills. Alumni find their way to – sometimes very selective – master's programmes of their choice easily.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'good'.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The intended learning outcomes show the appropriate level, are convincingly described in terms of five roles for which the programme prepares its students, and are well linked to the societal profiles of the university. The curriculum has a good balance between structure and flexibility and offers students extensive possibilities to attain their personal ambitions. The staff is well-qualified, very motivated and committed to the students. The programme has an adequate system of student assessment and an active Board of Examiners to safeguard its quality. The theses and careers of the graduates persuasively show that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences* as 'good'.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF SMALL-SCALE AND INTENSIVE EDUCATION

Introduction

The bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences at University College Groningen (UCG) is a relatively young programme. UCG opened its doors in September 2014 and has since then grown from an intake of 33 students to a little more than a hundred in 2018-2019. UCG has its own faculty building, where curricular and extracurricular activities are hosted. First-year students live together in the Frascati international student housing. Up to September 2018, UCG has had 43 graduates, spread over two cohorts.

Given the prominence of its educational approach, the bachelor's programme was awarded the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education in 2014. It allows the programme to select every year a group of first-year students, for which an elaborate admission procedure has been established. In addition to the regular assessment of the bachelor's programme, which is discussed separately in the preceding chapter of this report, the panel performed a practice-based assessment to verify whether the distinctive, small-scale and intensive character of the bachelor's programme can be reaffirmed. The panel chair was specifically trained and appointed by the NVAO to lead the assessment of this Distinctive Feature. The practice-based assessment took place in combination with the regular assessment of the bachelor's programme.

As advised by the panel of the initial assessment of the Distinctive Feature in 2014, the current panel pays attention not only to the realisation of the intended high level and success rate (standard H), but also to two additional items (under standard C):

- the relationship between the number of students (proposed intake) and the characteristics of the academic learning community;
- the implementation of the innovative didactic approach.

A. Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes are not only aimed at achieving a high level in the relevant academic discipline and/or professional practice, but also have a broader aim: to train socially skilled and initiative-rich scholars and/or professionals with a wide interest in social developments and issues within a multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary context.

Findings

The intended learning outcomes are aimed at educating students who combine a broad interdisciplinary perspective with a creative, initiative-rich attitude towards finding effective solutions for the challenges of today's society. The intended learning outcomes are translated in competences related to five roles. These roles describe what effective, innovative academics in society need today:

1. Content expert: a broad understanding of the major insights of the academic disciplines, the world of arts, and the social and cultural characteristics of society, particularly related to the societal challenges that the university has formulated as its profile: Energy Transition, Healthy Ageing and Sustainable Society. The student has a more in-depth understanding of one of the majors.
2. Researcher: a broad understanding of the fundamental research methods and techniques of the academic disciplines and artistic approaches, and the ability to design and implement a scientific research project addressing complex societal issues.
3. Innovator: the ability to recognise research themes in the fields of Energy Transition, Healthy Ageing and Sustainable Society, to use alternative methods, including artistic approaches, in creating innovative and effective solutions, to convert innovative and creative ideas into reality and to assume leadership when solving complex research themes.



4. Collaborator and Communicator: the ability to constructively collaborate with peers and experts and to communicate ideas, visions and research results clearly to a broad audience.
5. Academic Integrator: the ability to reflect upon the persistence and bias of personal, societal, ethical, scientific perspectives and positions, upon personal behaviour and performance in both a local and global context.

Considerations

The panel considers the intended learning outcomes very appropriate. The very nature of the programme is interdisciplinary and aims at a broad understanding of a wide spectrum of disciplines (sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts). The five roles aptly describe how students can learn to take their role in solving societal problems. The panel especially appreciates the role of academic integrator, because of its reflective nature. The link to the three societal profiles of the university ensures that students are stimulated to work with relevant and topical issues.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard A as 'meets the standard'.

B. Relationship between the goals and content of the programme

The content of the programme is inseparably connected to relevant extra-curricular activities, which ensures a high level and broadening of interests as set down in the intended learning outcomes.

Findings

The education at UCG is intertwined with extracurricular activities. Students are expected to apply their problem-solving skills to other domains aside from the content of the programme. To ensure that the curricular and extracurricular activities mutually support each other, UCG has formulated extracurricular objectives in the seven C's:

1. Community-building: supporting and maintaining the UCG learning community through social activities;
2. Content: providing a variety of lectures, masterclasses and symposia to supplement the academic programme;
3. Civic engagement: involving students in civic engagement and community outreach activities and programmes;
4. Communication: offering workshops aimed at teaching/practicing communication, collaboration and other relevant skills in support of/addition to those taught within the academic programme;
5. Cultural awareness: stimulating students and staff to learn about each other's cultural customs and heritage, as well as broader cultural expressions such as art forms;
6. Committee work: creating the opportunity to gain experience with committee work as well as positions on boards and faculty committees;
7. Career: helping to prepare students for possible exchange programmes, master's programmes and career tracks with both events focused on information and advice, as well as workshops that help students to prepare future job applications and functioning in a professional setting.

Extracurricular activities may be organised by UCG staff, the student association Caerus, as a personal initiative or by an external organisation (e.g. national or local student organisations). Caerus aims to be the students' family away from home. Approximately 80% of the students are members of Caerus. They organise over forty events each year, always linked to one of the seven C's. The self-evaluation report provides an extensive overview of the extracurricular activities organised since 2014-2015, ranging from movie nights, sports events, conferences and study trips to community dinners. In 2017-2018 more than ninety activities were organised.

Some activities are linked to long-running projects with the local community, such as the Shelter City Project (aimed at international human rights defenders) and the Noorderbrug project (a specialist health care organisation). Another initiative worth mentioning is the global classroom on climate change, in collaboration with a college in Phoenix, Arizona USA. Students who participate in the Honours Programme, can earn credits for this class, for other students it is an extracurricular activity. Students on both sides work together to acquire information, share it and make presentations. The panel was introduced to these projects and initiatives during the site visit and was impressed by their quality and the ways in which it invited students to connect their interdisciplinary skills with community work.

Considerations

The panel is impressed by the extracurricular activities, not only because of their large number, but also because they show a good combination of fun and academics and a strong link with project learning and outreach activities. The use of the seven C's is a very nice way to align curricular and extracurricular activities. The active role of the study association is also a strong point.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard B as 'meets the standard'.

C. Structure and didactic concept

The concept of the programme is aimed at creating an academic and/or professional community. Key terms are small-scale and intensively organised education, leading to a high number of hours of face-to-face teaching, close involvement between students and teachers and between students among themselves and socially relevant extra-curricular activities.

Findings

UCG is a residential college at a city campus, where academic staff are present daily and where the students work and live. Both the programme and the residential college facilitate the interaction and cooperation between students and staff. Classes are small, never more than 25 students. Students are expected to prepare group assignments and be able to work together in projects. The learning community is strengthened by working with a cohort system in the programme: the Class of 2017 comprised all students who started in 2014 and were scheduled to graduate in 2017.

Teaching methods are intensive and interactive, as was confirmed by both students and staff during the site visit. Courses have a minimum of four contact hours per week. The small class size allows innovative approaches, such as flipping the classroom, and frequent feedback. There is regular interaction between staff and students, both during and outside lecture hours. Tutors coach the students on site and help them explore new knowledge domains, develop new skills and encourage them to find effective solutions.

Students also follow courses at other UG faculties. UCG pre-checks all such courses when they are part of the requirements for a major specialisation, to make sure that they are compatible with UCG's programme and didactic principles. Students recognise the different approaches and favour the interactive teaching at UCG, but alumni told the panel that they valued the outside classes as well as the extracurricular activities in the wider university and local community. It helps to avoid the risk of living in a UCG bubble and challenges them in different ways. The panel shares this view.

Considerations

The panel recognises the small-scale and intensive character of the programme. Students and staff are closely involved with the teaching activities. Lecturers are not committed to a specific didactic approach, but use the method that is appropriate for their course. The small class size makes it possible to introduce innovative methods. Project work makes up a large part of the programme. UCG also feels responsible for the classes that students have to follow outside their own faculty. The



panel concludes that UCG has created a strong learning community for its students. The panel confirms that, even with the increased number of students, UCG is able to offer students the close-knit community and innovative teaching approach that is expected from a programme with the distinctive feature of small-scale and intensive education.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard C as 'meets the standard'.

D. Intake

The programme has a sound selection procedure in place, aimed at admitting motivated and academically and/or professionally talented students.

Findings

Prospective UCG students go through an extensive admission and selection procedure before the Board of Admission (consisting of the Dean and two other academic staff members) decides on their admittance. Applicants submit their CV, grades and a personal statement. The central UG Admission Office evaluates whether candidates meet the formal admission requirements. Usually the Board of Admission follows the advice of the UG Admission Office, but a negative advice may be compensated by a strong profile fit and personal motivation. After conditional admission is granted, students are invited for an interview. The purpose of the interview is to check if there is a good match between student and programme. UCG aims to attract and admit talented students with broad multidisciplinary interests and preferably experience with civic engagement and volunteer/charity work. Final admission is granted only after the student has graduated from high school. The panel heard from the students that the application process is generally clear and timely.

The increase in number of applications and interview invitations shows that the transfer of the recruitment process from the central UG department to UCG has been effective. Contacts with prospective students are now more personalised. The conditional admission has helped to give candidates an early indication of their chances. UCG aims to reach wider target groups, such as students outside of the EU and Dutch students from less privileged backgrounds.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the programme has a sound selection procedure in place, that is regularly evaluated and improved to increase its effectiveness. The selection procedure assures the proper level and best fit of students.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard D as 'meets the standard'.

E. Quality of staff

The teachers have high-quality knowledge of the relevant subject and feel involved in the distinctive nature of the programme.

Findings

UCG staff consists of core staff, with a primary position at UCG, and external staff who are brought in from other UG faculties to teach courses. This system allows UCG to attract active researchers, including full professors, from other faculties, who can provide research-driven education and specialised knowledge within the LAS programme. All lecturers who teach at UCG, have obtained a PhD in a relevant discipline.

UCG lecturers are required to have their universal teaching qualification (UTQ) or obtain this within two years of their appointment as lecturer. A number of lecturers have or are obtaining a senior teaching qualification (STQ) and, since 2015, twenty UCG lecturers have obtained a Fellowship for Innovation of Teaching. With this financial support they can develop new ideas and innovate their teaching.

The UCG staff includes experts in particular areas of teaching relevant to the UCG didactic concept, such as project work and providing individual guidance for students. They also share their expertise with the other staff member, such as the coordinator of the projects who teaches other lecturers how to supervise projects. New lecturers are invited to introduction meetings and briefings in which the key aspects of teaching, learning and assessment at UCG are explained. UCG includes its didactic principles in course contracts, which are agreed upon with external lecturers, to ensure small-scale and intensive teaching and adherence to the UCG learning environment. Both students and lecturers emphasised in their meeting with the panel the significant difference in teaching approach between UCG and other faculties. This refers not only to the interdisciplinary character of the lectures, but also to the interactive nature of the classes.

Besides their quality in teaching, UCG lecturers are also involved in the UCG learning community. They work with students to organise events from lectures to theatre workshops to board game nights.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the lecturers have the required academic knowledge and didactic skills, and are very motivated to teach at UCG. They are dedicated and committed to their students.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard E as 'meets the standard'.

F. Number of staff

There is sufficient staff available to provide small-scale and intensive education and to ensure and develop individual contact between teachers and students.

Findings

UCG aims to keep the ratio between students and teaching staff at or below 17:1. The self-evaluation report mentions that, on the whole, this has been achieved, with the exception of 2017-2018. By hiring new staff this has been corrected again. In addition, support staff is available to take care of other needs of students.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the student-staff ratio of 17:1 enables a good execution of the curriculum and small-scale teaching.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard F as 'meets the standard'.

G. Available facilities

The programme has its own infrastructure with facilities for small-scale and intensive education and common extra-curricular social activities.

Findings

UCG has its own faculty building. In addition to the regular classrooms and offices, the building offers several features that fit the small-scale education and community development. This includes project



rooms for small groups and 'Classroom Big' for innovative teaching. 'Classroom Big' is a large space with movable whiteboards and furniture and eight screens across three sides of the room that can be turned on or off based on the lecturer's requirements. During an 'arts-meets-technology-meets-social-sciences-workshop' these screens allowed the group to simultaneously present different facets of the same topics. During the site visit, the panel was shown the use of this classroom for a global classroom (see standard B). Students have large tables, work spaces and a number of reference books in the study landscape, and more books and reading tables in the library. The building offers ample opportunities for community development and interaction, such as the canteen, the common room and the room for study association Caerus. The kitchen facilities in the UCG building deserve to be specially mentioned.

UCG's first-year students live together in the Frascati international student housing. This helps students to bond and creates the community feeling which is central to the UCG philosophy. Students have their own private bedroom and share the living room, kitchen and bathroom facilities with other students in the same unit. Students are allocated over the different living units by the UCG Admission Office. The Office aims for a balance with regard to gender and nationality. Residential living is obligatory for first-year students. After the first year, students can request to remain at Frascati, but most of them move to alternative housing in the city of Groningen. Many choose to continue to live together outside of Frascati, which demonstrates the bond that has formed during the first year.

The current faculty building is too small to accommodate the aspired growth of the UCG student population for the next five years. UCG is scheduled to move to a new, larger location by 2020. A new student housing will be developed at the same location. The panel has seen and felt how much the students feel at home in the current building, and agrees with the management that it will be a challenge to maintain this atmosphere in the new venue.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the facilities in the faculty building are good and encourage both the learning community and the social community. Students start their life at UCG by living together in the international student housing building.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard G as 'meets the standard'.

H. Level realised

The content and the level of the final projects are in line with the level and the broadening of interests as set down in the intended learning outcomes. Graduates are admitted to prestigious postgraduate programmes and/or jobs. The success rates are substantially higher than those of other relevant programmes.

Findings

The final level of the LAS programme is assessed on the basis of the capstone course, project work and the bachelor thesis. Capstone courses are designed to tie in with everything the major specialisation has been building up to. The projects in year 3 are the culmination of the skills and knowledge that the students have learned during earlier projects. Students have considerable ownership over their projects in year 3, which requires them to demonstrate their ability to develop ideas and turn these into reality. The bachelor thesis shows the student's overall ability to function as a researcher and academic integrator at bachelor's level. The panel recognises the interdisciplinary nature of the capstone courses and projects and affirms that the theses are generally of high quality.

UCG monitors the performance of its students both at UCG and at other UG faculties. The self-evaluation reports provides figures to show that, in courses at their own faculty, UCG students perform notably better than students at other faculties. At UCG, 96% of the students pass the

courses, while this is around 70% in other UG faculties. When UCG students follow courses at other UG faculties, their success rates are 72%. The panel agrees that this is still a good outcome, since UCG students have to adjust to large-scale lectures and multiple-choice exams. Furthermore, UCG students will have taken fewer courses on a given subject than their monodisciplinary counterparts.

The dropout rates in the first year have been lower than the UG average for cohorts 2015-2016 and 2016-2017: 4 and 8% respectively for UCG, compared to 20.7 and 21.2% for UG in general. First-year dropout was considerably higher in 2017-2018 (27%). This was investigated thoroughly during the site visit. The panel learnt from both staff and students that this was the result of a sad combination of causes. Some students left as they could not follow courses of their first choice due to a procedural error, which has now been adequately addressed. Others left because of personal circumstances and some found programmes that closer matched their personal goals and aims. The latter group often moved to these programmes based on their good experiences with relevant courses at UCG. The panel ascertained that the programme acted proactively and implemented good measures to address the causes within its remit. The panel also verified that at the time of the site visit the dropout rates for 2018-2019 were in line with those of the earlier years. It is therefore assured that the high dropout number in 2017-2018 was an anomaly which will be unlikely to occur again due to the measures taken. The panel compliments the management on its competent reaction.

Up to September 2018, UCG has had 43 graduates, spread over two cohorts. On average, slightly above two-thirds graduated within three years, which is considerably higher than the UG average (44%). Out of the first cohort, the remaining students graduated within four years since they started at UCG. This is a good result.

UCG held a survey among the graduates to learn about their further career. The survey shows that UCG graduates are well-channelled for high-quality master's programmes in the Netherlands and abroad. Some of them have been admitted to highly selective (Vienna) and prestigious university programmes, such as LSE and an International Politics programme at Leiden University that is connected to Oxford University. Some graduates have chosen to enrol in internships, where they benefit from the skills and knowledge they have acquired in the many UCG projects. The alumni confirmed these outcomes during the site visit. Looking back, they mentioned their skills in doing research as the most notable added value of the LAS programme, together with the ease in connecting with diverse groups of people and their skills in group work. All of them had been accepted in the respected and often selective master's programme of their first choice. The self-reflective and confident attitude of the alumni and the way in which they conveyed the added value of the LAS programme was very convincing. Although the sample is still relatively small, the panel considers these results to be very encouraging. The panel has, therefore, full confidence in the level of the graduates and the success they will have in their further careers.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the final projects, capstone courses and theses are a good set to demonstrate the final level of the programme, and that the outcomes are in line with the intended level and interdisciplinary approach. UCG students perform better in their coursework than other UG students. The dropout rate in year 1 is expected to remain lower than at other faculties. UCG students graduate faster than their counterparts in UG generally. The alumni listed the selective and respected programmes where LAS graduates have been admitted. The sample size of graduates is still small, but, on the basis of the first results, the panel is convinced that UCG graduates are well-channelled for high-quality master's programmes.

Conclusion

Bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences: the panel assesses Standard H as 'meets the standard'.



GENERAL CONCLUSION

The LAS programme of UCG has been granted the Distinctive Feature of Small-scale and Intensive Education in 2014. The panel concludes on the basis of the practice-based assessment that the programme has shown that it meets all standards for the Distinctive Feature. The intended learning outcomes, programme and extracurricular activities, didactic approach, staff and facilities are in line with the requirements for small-scale teaching and support the development of a learning community. LAS students perform better than other UG students. The first cohorts of graduates show that LAS graduates are admitted to selective and prestigious master's programmes. UCG has addressed the two issues that were specifically raised by the 2014 panel. The current panel confirms that even with the increased number of students, UCG is able to offer the learning community and the innovative teaching approach that are expected from a small-scale and intensive programme. The panel commends the programme for what has been achieved in such a short period of time.

The panel advises the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to grant approval for the Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education for an indefinite period of time to the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences of the University College Groningen.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences* as 'positive'.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: DOMAIN-SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE

This reference framework is intended for the Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) programs in the Netherlands. This includes selective University Colleges as well as non-selective LAS programs situated within a university. These programmes are a constituent part of Dutch “scientific” or “scholarly” education (wetenschappelijk onderwijs). The LAS education framework articulated here distinguishes itself from (emerging) broad programs through its proximity to academic inquiry and research and through its commitment to wide-ranging intellectual formation not chiefly aimed at preparing students for particular professions.

As this accreditation process is reviewing an ever more diverse range of programs, this framework of reference is short rather than extensive. Rather, it is a reference framework that reflects shared educational aims with each of the programs under review.

Liberal arts and Sciences emphasises intellectual growth through both broad and deep learning as the foundation of the curriculum. Standing in the liberal arts tradition that seeks to free the individual through intellectual and ethical engagement, LAS encourages inquiry through profoundly open curricula that allows students to explore a diversity of academic fields from the Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. This enables them to attain depth in disciplinary, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary concentration areas of their own choosing. By combining the disciplinary depth and multi- or interdisciplinary learning with undergraduate research and communication skills, students develop their creativity, initiative-taking, skills in working together. Often conducted in a strongly international context, LAS programs regardless of setting promote intercultural understanding abilities and societal engagement.

LAS takes place within distinct learning and social communities. The formal program and extracurricular activities are often linked and in such cases students, faculty and staff participate actively in the governance of the program and the community. Teaching and learning experiences are typically characterized by small-scale and intensive education, with a high level of interaction between students and teachers and among students themselves. Giving this emphasis on active discussion and debate, LAS programs strive for diversity in their student population in terms of nationality, ethnicity, gender and cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and offer dynamic environments that invite curricular experimentation and educational innovation and attract academics dedicated to excellence in teaching.

Liberal Arts & Sciences programs have intended learning outcomes that include:

- a. multidisciplinary familiarity in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences combined with depth of knowledge in a chosen concentration area;
- b. ability to approach complex questions or issues in an inter- or multidisciplinary way;
- c. advanced academic skills in communication, quantitative and qualitative methods, critical thinking, research and learning;
- d. attitudes and skills for engaged citizenship, including international and intercultural understanding, social skills and a will to contribute to solving societal issues;
- e. intellectual curiosity, reflexivity, integrity and an open mind, learning skills necessary for subsequent graduate studies and the workplace.

Approved in Tilburg on October 25, 2017 by

- Dean Amsterdam University College: [REDACTED]
- Dean Erasmus University College: [REDACTED]
- Dean Leiden University College The Hague: [REDACTED]
- Dean University College Groningen: [REDACTED]
- Dean University College Maastricht: [REDACTED]
- Dean University College Roosevelt: [REDACTED]
- Dean University College Tilburg: [REDACTED]
- Dean University College Twente: [REDACTED]



- Dean University College Utrecht: [REDACTED]
- Director Liberal Arts and Sciences @ Utrecht University: [REDACTED]

APPENDIX 2: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Intended learning outcomes compared to Dublin descriptors

Intended learning outcomes <i>The LAS graduate ...</i>	Dublin Descriptoren
<p>Role I Content expert Has broad understanding of the major insights of the academic disciplines, the world of arts, and the social and cultural characteristics of society; in particular related to Healthy Ageing, Energy and Sustainable Society. Has more in depth understanding of one of the majors.</p>	<p>Knowledge & Understanding Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and supersedes their general secondary education, and are typically at a level that, while supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study.</p>
<p>Role II Researcher Has broad understanding of the fundamental research methods and techniques of the academic disciplines and artistic approaches, and designs and implements ascientific research project addressed to complex societal problems.</p>	<p>Knowledge & Understanding Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and supersedes their general secondary education, and are typically at a level that, while supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study.</p>
<p>Role III Innovator Recognises societal issues in the field of Healthy Ageing, Energy and Sustainable Society and uses alternative solution methods, including artistic approaches, in creating innovative and effective solutions to complex societal problems. Shows the ability to convert innovative and creative ideas into reality and is prepared to assume leadership when solving complex societal issues.</p>	<p>Applying knowledge & understanding Can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study. Making judgements Have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, academic or ethical issues.</p>
<p>Role IV Collaborator and Communicator Constructively collaborates with peers and experts and communicates ideas, visions and research results clearly with a broad audience.</p>	<p>Communication Can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.</p>
<p>Role V Academic integrator Reflects upon the persistence and bias of personal, societal, ethical and scientific perspectives and positions and upon personal behaviour and performance, both in a local and global context.</p>	<p>Learning Skills Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.</p>



APPENDIX 3: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

	Block 1 (15ECTS) Week 1 - 9	Block 2 (15ECTS) Week 11 - 19	Block 3 (15ECTS) Week 21 - 29	Block 4 (15ECTS) Week 31 - 39
 <p>Year 3 Creating Leadership</p>				Bachelor Thesis (Major, 10 ECTS)
				Skills & Projects (Core, 5 ECTS)
	Minor courses (Minor, 20 ECTS) and Major courses (Major, 25 ECTS)			
 <p>Year 2 Creating Scholarship</p>				Skills & Projects (Core, 10 ECTS)
	Major courses (Major, 35 ECTS)			
	R&M: Discipline-Specific Research & Methodology (Core, 15 ECTS)			
 <p>Year 1 Creating Horizon</p>	Skills & Projects (Core, 10 ECTS)			
	Exploring the Challenges of Modern Society (Core, 5 ECTS)	Electives (10 ECTS)	Electives (10 ECTS)	Electives (10 ECTS)
	Total (30 ECTS of which 20 ECTS Major and 10 ECTS Minor)			
	R&M: Logic and Argumentation (Core, 5 ECTS)	Discipline-specific R&M: Mathematics (Core, 5 ECTS)		
Academic Writing (Core, 5 ECTS)				



APPENDIX 4: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

	Monday 3 December – UCG
8.45 - 9.00	<i>Arrival panel/welcome</i>
9.00 - 9.45	<i>Development dialogue</i>
9.45 - 10.30	<i>Programme management</i>
10.30 -10.45	<i>Break</i>
10.45 - 11.15	<i>Board of Examiners</i>
11.15 - 12.15	<i>Tour + treasure trove</i>
12.15 - 13.15	<i>Lunch and break</i>
13.15 - 14.00	<i>Students (incl. programme committee members)</i>
14.00 - 14.45	<i>Teachers and tutors (incl. programme committee members)</i>
14.45 - 15.00	<i>Break</i>
15.00 - 15.30	<i>Alumni</i>
15.30 - 17.00	<i>Internal panel meeting</i>
17.00 - 17.30	<i>Programme management</i>
17.30 - 17.45	<i>Presentation findings</i>
17.45 - 18.00	<i>Goodbye and thank you</i>

APPENDIX 5: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied fifteen theses of the bachelor's programme Liberal Arts and Sciences. Information on the selected theses is available from QANU upon request.

During the site visit, the panel studied, among other things, the following documents (partly as hard copies, partly via the institute's electronic learning environment):

- Self-assessment report 2018
- Assessment report accreditation 2014 and decision NVAO
- Assessment report Distinctive Feature Small-scale and Intensive Education 2014 and decision NVAO
- Overview of the major specialisations
- Teaching and Examination Regulations 2018-2019
- Assessment Plan
 - o UCG Assessment Plan
 - o Matrix Programme Learning Outcomes per course
 - o Overview of Achievement of Learning Outcomes
- Admission criteria
- Overview of Teaching Staff
- Overview of Extracurricular Activities
- Course materials and assessments of a sample of capstone courses and projects