

MASTER'S PROGRAMME
MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

QANU
Catharijnesingel 56
PO Box 8035
3503 RA Utrecht
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0) 30 230 3100
E-mail: support@qanu.nl
Internet: www.qanu.nl

Project number: Q0725
© 2020 QANU

Text and numerical material from this publication may be reproduced in print, by photocopying or by any other means with the permission of QANU if the source is mentioned.



CONTENTS

REPORT ON THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES OF LEIDEN UNIVERSITY	5
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME.....	5
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION.....	5
COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL	5
WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL	6
SUMMARY JUDGEMENT.....	11
DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR LIMITED FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENTS.....	13
APPENDICES	25
APPENDIX 1: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES	27
APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM	29
APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT	32
APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL	33

This report was finalised on 28 May 2020



REPORT ON THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES OF LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands for limited programme assessments as a starting point (September 2018).

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

Master's programme Middle Eastern Studies

Name of the programme:	Middle Eastern Studies
CROHO number:	60842
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	Arabic Studies (until 01-09-2019) Islamic Studies (until 01-09-2019) Israel Studies (until 01-09-2019) Modern Middle East Studies (until 01-09-2019) Persian Studies (until 01-09-2019) Turkish Studies (until 01-09-2019)
Location:	Leiden
Mode of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Submission deadline NVAO:	01/05/2020

The visit of the assessment panel Region Studies to the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University took place on 5, 6 and 7 June 2019.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

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

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The NVAO has approved the composition of the panel on 4 March 2019. The panel that assessed the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies consisted of:

- Prof. dr. P. (Peter) Van Nuffelen, research professor Cultural History of the Ancient World at Ghent University (Belgium) [chair];
- Prof. dr. D.M. (Diederik) Oostdijk, professor in English Literature at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam;
- Prof. dr. E.J.C. (Eibert) Tigchelaar, research professor of the research unit Biblical Studies, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Dr. D. (Diana Bullen) Presciutti, senior lecturer in Art History, director of Global Studies and director of the Interdisciplinary Studies Centre at the University of Essex (United Kingdom);
- Prof. dr. A. (Axel) Holvoet, professor at the Institute of the Languages and Cultures of the Baltic of Vilnius University (Lithuania);
- Prof. dr. E.M.H. (Helena) Houvenaghel, professor in Spanish Language and Culture at Utrecht University;



- Prof. dr. J. (John) Nawas, professor in Arabic and Islamic Studies at KU Leuven (Belgium);
- L. (Lara) van Lookeren Campagne, bachelor's student in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Amsterdam [student member];
- Prof. dr. L.P. (Lars) Rensmann, professor in European Politics and Society at University of Groningen [referee International Studies];
- Prof. dr. H. (Harco) Willems, professor in Egyptology at KU Leuven (Belgium) and director of the excavation in Dayr al-Barshā (Egypt) [referee Ancient Near East Studies].

The panel was supported by dr. E. (Els) Schröder and drs. E.G.M. (Mariette) Huisjes, who acted as secretaries.

WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The master's programme Middle Eastern Studies at the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University was part of the cluster assessment Region Studies. Between March 2019 and November 2019 the panel assessed 38 programmes at five universities: Radboud University, Leiden University, University of Amsterdam, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the University of Groningen.

Leiden University has 19 programmes in the cluster Region Studies. To ensure that the workload for panel members was evenly distributed and all programmes were properly assessed, two site visits were planned (in June and November 2019).

Panel members

The panel consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. P. (Peter) Van Nuffelen, research professor Cultural History of the Ancient World at Ghent University (Belgium) [chair];
- Prof. dr. D.M. (Diederik) Oostdijk, professor in English Literature at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam;
- Prof. dr. A. (Umar) Ryad, professor in Arabic and Islamic Studies at KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. E.J.C. (Eibert) Tigchelaar, research professor of the research unit Biblical Studies, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. G. (Gunnar) De Boel, professor in (Greek) Linguistics and Modern Greek and Byzantine Literature (Department of Literary Studies) at Ghent University (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. I. (Inge) Brinkman, professor in African Studies at Ghent University (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. G. (Gert) Buelens, professor in English and American Literature at Ghent University (Belgium);
- Dr. D. (Diana Bullen) Presciutti, senior lecturer in Art History, director of Global Studies and director of the Interdisciplinary Studies Centre at the University of Essex (United Kingdom);
- R.A. (Rianne) Clerc-de Groot MA, teacher in Classics at the Cygnus Gymnasium in Amsterdam;
- Dr. D. (Dario) Fazzi, lecturer in North American Studies and International Studies at Leiden University;
- Prof. dr. A.F.R. (Ann) Heirman, professor in Chinese Language and Culture at Ghent University (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. A. (Axel) Holvoet, professor at the Institute of the Languages and Cultures of the Baltic of Vilnius University (Lithuania);
- Prof. dr. V. (Vincent) Houben, professor Geschichte und Gesellschaft Südostasiens at Humboldt Universität Berlin (Germany);
- Prof. dr. E.M.H. (Helena) Houvenaghel, professor in Spanish Language and Culture at Utrecht University;
- Prof. dr. D. (Daeyeol) Kim, professor at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INaLCO) of the Université Sorbonne Paris Cité (France);
- L. (Lotte) Metz MA, teacher in Greek and Latin at the Stedelijk Gymnasium Nijmegen;
- Prof. dr. J. (John) Nawas, professor in Arabic and Islamic Studies at KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Prof. dr. A. (Andreas) Niehaus, professor in Japanese Language and Culture at Ghent University (Belgium);

- Prof. dr. J.L.M. (Jan) Papy, professor in Latin Literature at KU Leuven (Belgium);
- Dr. N.A. (Nicolet) Boekhoff-van der Voort, teacher Islam studies and coordinator Graduate School for Humanities at Radboud University;
- C. (Charlotte) van der Voort, bachelor's student in Greek and Latin Language and Culture, and pre-master's student Dutch Language and Culture at Leiden University [student member];
- L. (Lara) van Lookeren Campagne, bachelor's student in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Amsterdam [student member];
- G.M. (Gerieke) Prins, bachelor's student in Social and Migration History with a minor in Latin American Studies at Leiden University [student member];
- E.L. (Emma) Mendez Correa, bachelor's student in Greek and Latin Language and Culture at Leiden University [student member];
- Prof. dr. L.P. (Lars) Rensmann, professor in European Politics and Society at University of Groningen [referee International Studies at Leiden University];
- Em. prof. dr. C.H.M. (Kees) Versteegh, emeritus professor in Arabic and Islam at Radboud University [referee Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies at University of Amsterdam];
- Prof. dr. H. (Harco) Willems, professor in Egyptology at KU Leuven (Belgium) and director of the excavation in Dayr al-Barshā (Egypt) [referee Ancient Near East Studies at Leiden University];
- Prof. dr. J. (Jaap) Wisse, professor in Latin Language & Literature at Newcastle University (United Kingdom) [referee Greek, Latin and Classics at the University of Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam].

For each site visit, assessment panel members were selected based on their expertise, availability and independence.

The QANU project manager for the cluster assessment was dr. Els Schröder. She acted as secretary in the site visit to Radboud University and in the first site visit to Leiden University (June 2019). In order to assure the consistency of assessment within the cluster, the project manager was present at the start of the site visits as well as the panel discussion leading to the preliminary findings at the other site visits and reviewed the draft reports. During her leave of absence, she was replaced by her colleagues at QANU. Dr. Irene Conradie acted as project manager in the combined site visit to the University of Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and in the second site visit to Leiden University (November 2019). Dr. Anna Sparreboom acted as project manager in the site visit to the University of Groningen.

Several secretaries assisted in this cluster assessment. Drs. Trees Graas, employee of QANU, also acted as secretary in the site visit to Radboud University. Drs. Mariette Huisjes, freelance secretary for QANU, also acted as secretary in the first site visit to Leiden University and in the site visit to the University of Groningen. Drs. Erik van der Spek, freelance secretary for QANU, acted as secretary in the second site visit to Leiden University (November 2019). Dr. Marielle Klerks, freelance secretary for QANU, acted as secretary in the combined site visit to the University of Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The QANU project managers and the secretaries regularly discussed the assessment process and outcomes.

Preparation

On 22 November 2018, the panel chair was briefed by the project manager on the tasks and working method of the assessment panel and more specifically his role, as well as use of the assessment framework. Prior to the site visit, the panel members received instruction by telephone and e-mail on the tasks and working method and the use of the assessment framework. A schedule for the site visit was composed. Prior to the site visit, representative partners for the various interviews were selected. See Appendix 3 for the final schedule.

Before the site visit, the programmes wrote self-evaluation reports of the programmes and sent these to the project manager. She checked these on quality and completeness, and sent them to the panel members. The panel members studied the self-evaluation reports and formulated initial questions and remarks, as well as positive aspects of the programmes.



The panel also studied a selection of 15 theses and their assessment forms, based on a provided list of graduates between 2016-2018 (see Appendix 4).

Site visit

The site visit to Leiden University took place on 5, 6 and 7 June 2019.

At the start of each site visit, the panel discussed its initial findings on the self-evaluation reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit.

During the site visit, the panel studied additional materials about the programmes and exams, as well as minutes of the Programme Committee and the Board of Examiners. An overview of these materials can be found in Appendix 4. The panel conducted interviews with representatives of the programmes: students and staff members, the programme's management, alumni and representatives of the Board of Examiners. Members of the Programme Committee were included as part of the interviews with staff and students. It also offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. Three persons requested a consultation.

The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair publicly presented the panel's preliminary findings and general observations. The visit concluded with a development dialogue, held in parallel sessions, in which panel members and representatives of the programme discussed various development routes for the programmes. The results of this conversation are summarised in a separate report, which will be published through the programmes' communication channels.

Report

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it to the project manager for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel. After processing the panel members' feedback, the project manager sent the draft reports to the faculty in order to have it/these checked for factual irregularities. The project manager discussed the ensuing comments with the panel's chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The report was then finalised and sent to the Faculty of Humanities and University Board.

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 the standards:

Generic quality

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

Meets the standard

The programme meets the generic quality standard.

Partially meets the standard

The programme meets the generic quality standard to a significant extent, but improvements are required in order to fully meet the 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

The programme meets all the standards.

Conditionally positive

The programme meets Standard 1 and partially meets a maximum of two standards, with the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel.

Negative

In the following situations:

- The programme fails to meet one or more standards;
- The programme partially meets Standard 1;
- The programme partially meets one or two standards, without the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel;
- The programme partially meets three or more standards.

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

The panel is convinced that the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University is of great societal relevance, given that the Middle East plays such a crucial part in world politics nowadays. Leiden University can effectively produce experts who are able to deal with this region with insight and understanding. The panel finds the profile impressive in its breadth and richness. These qualities give it a special position both in the Netherlands and abroad, as is illustrated by the relatively high number of international students. The panel warns against an overly defensive profiling that is mainly based on the available research expertise. Instead, a strong well-funded vision of the kind of experts that the programme wants to deliver would strengthen the programme, the panel thinks. It suggests, for instance, adopting a pragmatic perspective, focussing on the demands of the labour market and present-day conflicts of interests in the region. The panel is of the opinion that some fine-tuning of the intended learning outcomes is needed, specifying the level of knowledge and language acquisition for each of the specialisations.

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

The panel judges the course material in the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies as being of appropriate level and depth. It finds the curriculum well-structured, leaving lots of freedom for students to choose their own learning pathways but at the same time creating a collective base in the 'Theories and methods' course and the thesis writing seminar. Even though students are quite happy with the impressive range and variety of courses in the programme, the panel thinks that reducing the number of courses would not necessarily be harmful. Fewer but well-chosen courses – aligning with a sharp programme profile and perhaps co-taught by several lecturers – could help to reduce the workload and perhaps even give more focus to the programme.

Students remark that they love the informal atmosphere within the programme, but that some practical aspects are not up to scratch, such as the number of students in seminar groups, communication about deadlines and timely assessment of exams. The panel realises that staff workload, an uneven distribution of students among courses and relatively many lecturers on temporary contracts contribute to the organisation of teaching in this programme being a challenge. It nevertheless recommends the programme trying to improve professionalism in practical matters, in consultation with the students.

The cursorial part of the programme consists of seminars with regular assignments and active participation by the students. Although this is definitely an effective didactic form, the panel thinks that varying the teaching methods – as is for instance done very well by the master's programme North-American Studies – may make the programme livelier.

Student support, feasibility of the programme and labour-market orientation are all in order, the panel found. The substantive and didactic quality of staff is quite good, although the high number of lecturers on a temporary basis takes its toll, as does the high workload for staff. The panel fully supports the faculty in its efforts to protect its staff, and encourages it to aim for a higher percentage of tenured staff. The programme's services – such as a world-class library collection on the Middle East and many scholarly events – are excellent, in the panel's view.

In conclusion, the panel states that the curriculum, the didactic environment and the quality of teaching staff enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

Standard 3: Student assessment

According to the panel, the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies has a sound and transparent assessment system. The assessment plan provides sufficient insight into the method of assessment and the relationship between the learning outcomes and course objectives.



The assessment of master's theses is clearly designed and its quality is guaranteed by having it done by two independent examiners, while the programme aims to avoid fixed couples. The panel endorses this goal and believes that the keen eye of colleagues from outside can be of added value to permanently reinforce the objectivity of the assessment. All parties involved think the new thesis assessment system is an improvement, albeit that it takes extra time. The panel studied a sample of the master's theses and broadly agrees with their assessments, although in some cases the panel found the grades somewhat high. Also, an average thesis grade of 7,8 over a two year period seems high to the panel. This is an extra argument for the desirability to broaden the range of examiners.

Finally, the panel notes that the Board of Examiners for the bachelor's and master's programme Middle Eastern Studies is adequately performing its task to assure quality of assessment, while still in the process of further professionalisation. It guarantees that all graduates of the programme have achieved the intended learning goals and in doing so works together well with others. The panel thinks that a six-year cycle of examining all courses is acceptable, provided that the programme management and the Board of Examiners are alert to developments that require their attention. The panel also emphasises that all examiners should be sufficiently compensated for their work. The Board of Examiners is supported by the professionalisation that the faculty has implemented in the field of assessment policy in recent years. The panel encourages the faculty and the Board of Examiners to continue and expand this line.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

Based on the assessment policy, the quality of the master's theses and its discussion with alumni, the panel determines that master's graduates have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The panel found the theses in the sample it studied of sufficient quality, with often original topics.

Research carried out by the faculty shows that on the whole, the master graduates in Middle Eastern Studies are successful on the labour market: after six months 91 have found a job and the vast majority of graduates end up at positions that require higher or academic education.

The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment framework for limited programme assessments* in the following way:

Master's programme Middle Eastern Studies

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
General conclusion	positive

The chair of the panel, prof. dr. Peter Van Nuffelen, and the secretary, drs. Mariette Huisjes, 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: 28 May 2020

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

Context

The master's programme Middle Eastern Studies is one of eighteen master's programmes at the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University. The past few years, it has attracted a growing number of students: from 25 in 2015-2016 to 50 in 2018 -2019.

The faculty is organised as a matrix of research institutes and educational programmes. The lecturers are appointed by one of the faculty's research institutes – such as the Leiden Institute of Area Studies, the University Centre for Linguistics or the Institute for History – and perform their own research there. Besides that, they teach in one or more of the faculty's educational programmes. The Programme Board is responsible for the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies. It consists of a head of department from the academic staff and a student member. The Programme Board receives solicited and unsolicited advice from the Programme Committee, consisting of both staff and students. In addition, assessment within the master's programme is supervised by a Board of Examiners, that also supervises the Dutch language bachelor's programme 'Midden-Oostenstudies'.

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

Profile

The master's programme Middle Eastern Studies is a comprehensive programme focused on the region that stretches from Morocco to Iran and parts of Central Asia. The programme prepares students for a professional career that requires historical, political and cultural knowledge of the Middle East.

At the time of the site visit, the programme offered six specialisations, all of which were a natural follow-up to one of the six specialisations in the bachelor's programme 'Midden-Oostenstudies'. The specialisations were:

- Arabic Studies
- Persian Studies
- Turkish Studies
- Israel Studies
- Modern Middle Eastern Studies
- Islamic Studies

The panel learned that starting September 2019 the separate specialisations would be abolished, leaving more room for students to assemble their own course package. This new situation is outside of the panel's scope. It does seem to address the very uneven distribution of student numbers between the specialisations: in the 2017-2018 cohort, 6 students chose the Turkish Studies Specialisation, 2 students chose Arabic, 1 Persian and 0 the Israel studies. As in the bachelor's programme, the Modern Middle Eastern Studies specialisation is by far the most popular: in 2017-2018 it took 33 registrations out of a total of 47. Letting go of independent specialisations seems to be a logical step, which will hopefully lead to a more balanced distribution of students across the available lecturers.

The Israel Studies specialisation has only recently been added. It is a continuation of the separate master's programme in Hebrew and Aramaic Languages and Cultures at Leiden University, that was terminated in 2018 and divided over the master's programmes Middle Eastern Studies and Classics



and Ancient Civilisations. The panel is satisfied that this specialisation seems to have been harmoniously integrated, even though at the time of the panel's visit it had not attracted any students yet.

The master's programme Middle Eastern Studies builds on the wealth of expertise available in Leiden: its specialisations are closely related to the research areas of the lecturers involved. By making this connection, Leiden University is able to offer the most comprehensive programme of its kind in the Netherlands, enriched with the possibility to study the languages of the Middle East at various levels. Other related Dutch programmes focus exclusively on the modern Middle East or offer a more limited number of specialisations. In Europe, the only other comparable multidisciplinary programme with the same range of available language specialisations is the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Of the student population in the academic year 2017-2018, 33 per cent came from abroad. This also illustrates that the Leiden programme holds a special position, not only within the Netherlands but on an international level as well.

The panel admires the breadth of the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies and the richness of what it has to offer. The panel considers this master's programme of great societal importance, and the growing number of students suggests that others see this as well. Given the geopolitical and economic importance of the region and its status as the centre of both vibrant cultural diversity and entrenched sectarian conflict, there is an urgent need for graduates who know and understand this area and have mastered its languages.

Although the panel agrees that the connection of research and education is a great good, it warns the programme against an overly defensive inclination to preserve the available research expertise by incorporating it in the educational programme. Instead, a proactive strong vision on the kind of Middle Eastern experts the programme wants to deliver would strengthen its position, the panel thinks. It could for instance position itself as pragmatic and focused on the labour market: with language acquisition at its core and paying attention to contemporary conflicts of interest. This is but one suggestion and the panel invites the programme to develop its own ideas.

In general, the panel is impressed by the diversity and depth of Leiden University's cultural profile, to which the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies contributes. The exceptional expertise found under its umbrella testifies to the university's commitment to its cultural and diverse profile. A small programme like this is vulnerable, because it is relatively expensive to maintain. On the other hand, the panel strongly emphasises that such programmes are of vital importance, not only to Leiden University but to the Netherlands as a whole. If academic research is no longer done in certain specialised subfields of the humanities, the university can no longer offer broad programmes with sufficient depth, nor electives to students in other programmes. Also, academics from other faculties and universities in the Netherlands will be deprived of this specialised knowledge. And if expertise in less studied languages and cultures is no longer passed from one generation to the next, the Netherlands will weaken its international position in the humanities.

Intended learning outcomes

The programme's intended learning outcomes are divided into generic final qualifications that all graduates must meet and final qualifications that belong to one of the specialisations. For a full overview of all qualifications, see appendix 1. The general qualifications are grouped into five categories in accordance with the Dublin descriptors. Additionally, for each of the specialisations one learning outcome describes the regional subject-matter that is typical of that specialisation and that the student should have knowledge of. For example, for Islamic studies the specialisation-specific requirement is: 'Graduates of the programme will have knowledge and understanding of the Islamic law and anthropology of the Muslim world from the perspective of the social sciences combined with philology'. For Persian studies, the requirement is: 'Graduates will have knowledge and understanding of the history, literature, politics, religion and visual arts of the Persian cultural realm from the advent of Islam to the present day.'

The panel states that level and orientation of the intended learning outcomes comply with international demands of a master's degree. It appreciates the set-up of the intended learning outcomes, with general requirements for all students and a specialisation-specific requirement that demarcates the subject-matter of the specialisation. The panel thinks some fine-tuning of the intended learning outcomes is in place. For instance, intended learning outcome B1 for Arabic studies states that a 'thorough understanding of Islam' is required, while intended learning outcome B2 for Islamic Studies speaks only of 'knowledge and understanding' without the 'thorough' adjective. In fact, learning outcome B2 is the only one of the specialisation-specific learning outcomes that specifies a level of knowledge. Also, the self-evaluation report tells us that 'for learning outcome 1, we make sure that students acquire *extensive* knowledge and skills pertaining to the history, literature, culture and religion of the Middle East' (p.2), whereas in fact learning outcome 1 specifies that graduates possess '*comprehensive*' knowledge of the same. Since the intended learning outcomes are leading in the didactic process of the programme, the panel thinks it is worthwhile to discuss, specify and harmonise the level of knowledge and language acquisition that is required from graduates in each of the specialisations. Also, the panel recommends harmonising the intended learning outcomes of different programmes within the faculty. Obviously they will differ, but it would enhance transparency if all programmes use the same terminology and categorisation.

Considerations

The panel is convinced that the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University is of great societal relevance, given that the Middle East plays such a crucial part in world politics nowadays. Leiden University can effectively produce experts who are able to deal with this region with insight and understanding. The panel finds the profile impressive in its breadth and richness. These qualities give it a special position both in the Netherlands and abroad, as is illustrated by the relatively high number of international students. The panel warns against an overly defensive profiling that is mainly based on the available research expertise. Instead, a strong well-funded vision of the kind of experts that the programme wants to deliver would strengthen the programme, the panel thinks. It suggests for instance adopting a pragmatic perspective, focussing on the demands of the labour market and present-day conflicts of interests in the region. The panel is of the opinion that some fine-tuning of the intended learning outcomes is needed, specifying the level of knowledge and language acquisition for each of the specialisations.

Conclusion

Master's programme Middle Eastern Studies: the panel assesses Standard 1 as 'meets the standard'.

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

Programme language and name

In principle, Leiden University offers its master's programmes in English. This decision was based on three arguments. Firstly, English is the lingua franca of international science to which the master's programmes intend to connect. Secondly, alumni are increasingly active on the international labour market. Thirdly, the university wants to attract international students because an international classroom enriches students' perspective. Accordingly, the programme name is also in English. During the visit, students did not object to this set-up. The panel can therefore agree with the chosen educational language and name.

Curriculum content and structure

Students with a bachelor's degree of Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University are immediately admitted to the master's programme. For others, the Board of Admissions rules on a case-by-case basis. If there is any doubt about potential deficiencies, the candidate must complete a pre-master's



programme of 30 to 60 EC taken from the bachelor's programme Middle Eastern Studies. The panel considers this to be a suitable procedure.

The curriculum's structure is based on the Leiden 100-600 level structure. In the master's programme, only modules are offered at the 400, 500 and 600 level. Practically, these levels translate as a specialist course (400), an advanced course with a clear academic and research focus (500) and a very specialist course and/or master's thesis project, demanding autonomy and independence in the applied research methods and skills (600). In the panel's view, this course level structure reflects and safeguards the level requirements for a master's degree.

The programme consists of two semesters of 30 EC each. For a full overview, see appendix 2. All students start their studies with a general course entitled 'Theories and methods of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies' (10 EC). This course enables them to develop a foundation for the research they will conduct for their master's thesis (20 EC). In addition, students can pick three elective courses within or outside of their chosen specialisation (10 EC each). A great many courses are on offer on (among other subjects) historical and modern literature, Islam in past and present, historical and current topics pertaining to the Arab world, the Ottoman/Turkish and Iranian region and Israel, anthropology of Islamic societies and the international relations and political economy of the Middle East. Students may also use 10 EC to improve their language skills in Arab, Persian, Turkish or Hebrew. These languages are offered at various levels, both at beginner's level (100) and at an advanced level where students work with original sources in the target language (500).

Students remark in their student chapter that they find the content of the programme excellent. They also like the pleasant, informal atmosphere and easy communication with the lecturers. That said, this informality sometimes results in a lack of clarity – for instance about the deadlines of papers – and unprofessional organisation, for instance when exam results are posted very late.

The panel studied some of the course materials and judges these to be of appropriate level and depth. It finds the curriculum well-structured, leaving lots of freedom for students to choose their own learning pathways – particularly in the new situation without the specialisations – while at the same time creating a collective base in the 'Theories and methods' course and the thesis seminar. The panel remarks that the range and diversity of courses offered by the programme is huge in comparison with the number of students. Even though students are quite happy with this offer because it gives them lots of options to choose from – as they state in their student chapter –, reducing the number of courses would not necessarily harm the programme, in the panel's view. Fewer but well-chosen courses – aligning with a sharp programme profile and perhaps co-taught by several lecturers – could help to reduce the workload and perhaps even give more focus to the programme. The panel recommends the programme improving its organisational aspects, in close consultation with the students.

Teaching methods

In line with the faculty's didactic principle of creating an interactive and research-led classroom, the courses in the master's programme are taught in small interactive groups using various approaches. This allows for intensive contact and exchange among students and between students and lecturers. Most courses require students to complete reading tasks, upload weekly assignments, give verbal presentations, actively participate in discussions during the seminar, write interim papers and a final paper at the end of the course.

Within the programme itself, opinions differ as to how small the seminar groups are in reality. Students say in the student chapter that they find some groups too large, for some courses 25 to 30 students. The panel discussed this with the Programme Board and Faculty Board. They say that there is a cap on the number of students in one group, to maintain the small-scale nature of the programme. Perhaps only the first few weeks seminar groups may exceed 20 students, since at this stage students are given the opportunity to shop around before they settle for one of the courses.

Whatever is the exact arrangement, the panel recommends the Programme Board and Programme Committee keeping a close eye on seminar group size, in the interest of both students and lecturers.

It is obvious to the panel that the programme uses a well-trying and effective teaching method for its courses. However, to enliven the didactic scene and motivate students it could be stimulating to vary the teaching methods more. For inspiration, the programme may have a look at one of its sisters, the master's programme North-American Studies, which has a very good practice in this respect.

For their master's thesis, students choose their own subject. Part of the thesis writing process is the mandatory thesis writing seminar, which supports students with the various aspects of writing a thesis, such as conducting a literature review and formulating a feasible research question. During this seminar, students present their thesis subject and receive feedback from the lecturer and their fellow students. In the following weeks of actually writing the thesis, students receive additional feedback during individual sessions with their lecturers. Students voiced no complaints to the panel about the thesis trajectory, except that they find that the deadline for the submission of the thesis form with a thesis subject and designated supervisor is set unnecessarily early. This puts them under high pressure. The programme, however, explained to the panel that this deadline marks a sharp improvement for the students, since it prevents them from having to wait for a supervisor to be assigned. The panel acknowledges that given the workload of staff and the uneven distribution of students among the fields, finding a suitable supervisor for each student may be problematic. It agrees with the programme that stress at the beginning of the thesis trajectory is the lesser of two evils compared to delay of the thesis trajectory due to the lack of a supervisor.

Feasibility

From the course evaluations and discussions held with members of the Programme Committee, it appears that for most courses the number of EC's is realistic. The language acquisition courses, however, are an exception. These demand more time than students might expect based on the number of EC's, and students say that the language acquisition courses, because of their intensity, tend to drown the other courses. The panel sympathises with the students who choose to do a language acquisition course and admires their courage. As in its assessment of the bachelor's programme, the panel states that learning a new language cannot be done otherwise than by putting in much effort and many hours. A slight reduction in feasibility is therefore an inevitable price to be paid for the combination of thematic courses with language acquisition. The panel is convinced that students who do put in the energy will distinguish themselves and be rewarded for this later on. Even with the potential delay caused by the language courses, or a second degree or a job, students in the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies need on average 1,5 to 1,7 years to graduate. This number approximately equals the faculty and university average. The panel therefore concludes that the programme is indeed feasible.

Labour market orientation

Improving labour market orientation is one of the challenges currently taken up by both the programme and the faculty. Some students still lack confidence in their professional abilities and chances, and have trouble in finding their way after graduating, as alumni told the panel. The faculty organises events where students can gain perspectives on their possibilities on the labour market. There is, for instance, the annual Humanities Career Event, where potential employers such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Google, publisher Das Mag and the General Intelligence and Security Service offer workshops. The Humanities Career Service supports students with their internships and job application procedures. The bachelor's programme 'Midden-Oostenstudies' developed an extracurricular module of 5 EC that helps students find their way to the labour market through self-reflection, orientation on possible fields of work and the development of job application skills and the master's programme considers the possibility of offering such module to master's students as well. To the panel, this seems a very promising idea.

Internships as well are a good preparation for the labour market. The master's programme Middle Eastern Studies does offer support with finding and supervising internships, but classes them as



extracurricular. This choice has been made because the intended learning outcomes can only be realised when, outside of the master's thesis, 40 EC are devoted to cursory education, the programme management says. Between 2015 and 2017, an average of 17 per cent of students completed an internship. They receive a diploma supplement with extracurricular credits. The panel regrets that internships cannot be properly incorporated into the programme, but finds the current practice both defensible and acceptable. It appreciates that students receive support with their internships, even though they are extracurricular.

Student support

The programme's study coordinator also serves as study advisor. In that capacity, she or he is responsible for guiding and advising students during their studies. The study advisor is available to provide individual guidance for study choices, answer study-related questions, discuss study-related problems and present possible solutions. At the start of their master's programme, students are asked to submit a study plan in which they indicate which elective courses they want to enrol in. Since the master's programme comprises only one year and since it is clearly structured, any problems or imminent delay will surface fairly quickly. If the study advisor registers such a problem, the student will be invited to talk about his or her study progress and look for possible solutions. Students told the panel that they feel well looked after, and that the lecturers listen to any feedback they have on the programme and try to accommodate this.

Lecturers

An average of 25 lecturers are involved in the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies. Virtually all of them are affiliated as researchers with the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies. Many of them are renowned scholars at both a national and an international level. In this capacity, they receive numerous research grants: an indication of their quality, which also gives a boost to the lecturers' research, and thus to the education in the programme. A consequence of this success is that often temporary lecturers have to be appointed, to ease the educational burden of staff members who are successful as researchers. This creates discontinuity and unpredictability in the programme. The panel recommends making an effort to increase the number of tenured staff members in the programme and to reduce the number of temporary appointments.

Staff members are well-prepared for teaching, the panel found. They have the appropriate teaching qualifications, or are in the process of acquiring them if recently hired. Their level of English is assessed and monitored prior to being allowed to participate in the master's programme. The faculty stimulates lecturers in their professional development by offering them workshops at the university's teachers training centre ICLON and expert meetings with other lecturers. In the faculty wide Expertise Centre Online Learning they can share best practices and in the university wide Leiden Teacher's Academy they can work out innovative didactic tools. Students told the panel that they communicate very comfortably and frankly with their lecturers, which is also enhanced by the open-door policy.

The panel found that keeping the workload within limits is a continuous challenge, for the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies as well as for other programmes in the humanities. The limited budget of relatively small programmes combined with the intensity in contact hours that is required for writing theses that are up to the mark threaten to overburden the staff. Dealing with this is complicated by the fact that the educational staff is made available for teaching by the faculty's research institutes and centres, in this case the Leiden Institute for Area Studies. The institutes, not the Programme Board, are directly responsible for personnel management. This may get in the way of a fair distribution of labour amongst all members of staff. For instance, some institutes allocate more hours to certain tasks than others. The panel fully supports the faculty in trying to harmonise this, and calls on the institutes to stick to the list of compensation hours per task that is provided by faculty management.

Programme-specific services

The Leiden University Library has world-class collections in the field of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies that are both physically and digitally accessible. These play a significant role in the programme. Thanks to the interfaculty Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society, lectures, congresses and other events take place regularly, where students can join in with international academic practice. In 2018, the Al Babtain Leiden University Centre for Arabic Culture was opened, a cooperation of Leiden University with the AbdulAziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation. The new centre attracts guest lecturers and literati to Leiden and organises a two-day symposium on Arabian culture every year.

Talented master's students with the ambition to take up management positions in the private sector are given the opportunity to follow the Leiden Leadership Programme, organised in Dutch for students from Leiden University, Delft University of Technology and Erasmus University Rotterdam. Through assessments, training sessions delivered by professionals and practical assignments, they learn to apply their own qualities. Students who wish to improve their language skills may make use of the language courses of the bachelor's programme 'Midden-Oostenstudies'. The panel finds the programme-specific services in order.

The panel finds the programme-specific services at the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies excellent.

Considerations

The panel judges the course material in the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies as being of appropriate level and depth. It finds the curriculum well-structured, leaving lots of freedom for students to choose their own learning pathways but at the same time creating a collective base in the 'Theories and methods' course and the thesis writing seminar. Even though students are quite happy with the impressive range and variety of courses in the programme, the panel thinks that reducing the number of courses would not necessarily be harmful. Fewer but well-chosen courses – aligning with a sharp programme profile and perhaps co-taught by several lecturers – could help to reduce the workload and perhaps even give more focus to the programme.

Students remark that they love the informal atmosphere within the programme, but that some practical aspects are not up to scratch, such as the number of students in seminar groups, communication about deadlines and timely assessment of exams. The panel realises that staff workload, an uneven distribution of students among courses and relatively many lecturers on temporary contracts contribute to the organisation of teaching in this programme being a challenge. It nevertheless recommends the programme trying to improve professionalism in practical matters, in consultation with the students.

The cursorial part of the programme consists of seminars with regular assignments and active participation by the students. Although this is definitely an effective didactic form, the panel thinks that varying the teaching methods – as is for instance done very well by the master's programme North-American Studies – may make the programme livelier.

Student support, feasibility of the programme and labour-market orientation are all in order, the panel found. The substantive and didactic quality of staff is quite good, although the high number of lecturers on a temporary basis takes its toll, as does the high workload for staff. The panel fully supports the faculty in its efforts to protect its staff, and encourages it to aim for a higher percentage of tenured staff. The programme's services – such as a world-class library collection on the Middle East and many scholarly events – are excellent, in the panel's view.

In conclusion, the panel states that the curriculum, the didactic environment and the quality of teaching staff enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the programme.



Conclusion

Master's programme Middle Eastern Studies: the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'meets the standard'.

Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment policy at the faculty level

The Faculty of Humanities safeguards the system of assessment for all programmes in the Region Studies cluster at Leiden University, the panel learned from the self-evaluation. The faculty drafted a general assessment policy, which is shared amongst the programmes. In it, teachers are assigned a central role in assuring the quality of assessment; as content experts they know the requirements of the relevant fields. Fraud and plagiarism are considered intolerable; the various boards of examiners active within the faculty are expected to closely monitor academic integrity.

Assessment in the programmes is structured according to shared principles. The design of all assessment methods is always peer-reviewed: assessments and exams are checked on their validity and coherence prior to being administered. Also, the exams are designed in such a way that students are invited to continuously sharpen their skills and broaden their knowledge, based on the principles of structural alignment. In this way, they develop their knowledge and skills from a basic to a more advanced level, appropriate for their degree level. Knowledge acquisition and application are continuously assessed, as along with academic and communication skills. The students are preferably assessed multiple times within a course allowing for a diversity of assessment methods. At least two independent examiners are involved in the assessment of theses or final projects. The panel finds this a reliable procedure.

The faculty developed various guidelines and materials to support the boards of examiners, programmes and their staff in order to enhance their assessment practices and design. Notably, the panel verified that a newly developed *Manual for Boards of Examiners* proves helpful to align assessment practices across the various programmes. It also considered the support materials available to staff very useful. These contain advice regarding the quality assurance of assessment, practical tips and suggestions regarding exam design. These guidelines currently exist only in Dutch; an English version may be useful for international staff members, especially for master's programmes with a high number of international specialists. In addition, the faculty recently introduced a standard online evaluation form for thesis assessment to enhance the transparency across all programmes under its remit.

The panel is pleased with the increased uniformity of assessment procedures, which adds to the transparency and clarity of assessment in all programmes. It appreciates the faculty's efforts in response to recommendations regarding its assessment level, resulting in a good support system for all programmes within the Region Studies cluster. During the site visit, it found the various boards of examiners engaged and in line with faculty policies and principles. It noted, however, that not all boards interpreted the faculty's guidelines regarding the handling of fraud cases in a similar way. In some programmes, staff members still seemed to deal with individual occurrences on a case-by-case basis. While the panel has no concerns regarding the staff members' integrity, it still advocates that the boards and faculty step in. The panel argues that fraud cases should always be handled by the responsible Board of Examiners, not by lecturers. The panel advises clearly communicating the faculty guidelines regarding fraud, and to adjusting them if and where necessary.

Board of Examiners

In addition to the faculty assessment policy, the master's programme in Middle East Studies is subject to programme-specific Education and Examination Regulations. The panel reviewed these, as well as the *Rules and Guidelines of the Middle East Studies Board of Examiners*. The Board of Examiners is

responsible for the quality assurance of assessment in both the bachelor's and the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies. It consists of three lecturers, an official secretary and an external member. The Board of Examiners meets at least once a month and regularly consults with the study coordinator, who is the first point of contact for students and therefore can also mediate for informal complaints.

The board handles requests from students who want to deviate from the programme, it grants exemptions from lectures and/or exams, handles complaints about exams and cases of plagiarism and fraud. The board follows the general university guidelines on plagiarism; when a case is proven, it will, as a rule, impose penalties. Another important task of the Board of Examiners is to guarantee the quality of assessment. To this end, stored tests and theses and their assessments are examined on a random basis, according to a standard protocol. The programme indicates that its quality assurance system is still under construction, but is slowly starting to sink in. The board members are all working hard to further professionalise their working methods; in recent years they have attended training courses both inside and outside the university.

The panel is of the opinion that assessment practice in the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies has improved in recent years, driven by the professionalisation that the entire faculty has undergone in this area. It learned from both the Board of Examiners and staff members that they now feel better supported and that communication about assessment forms and assessment policy has been intensified. However, the panel noted that there is still some resistance to this professionalisation, which seems to be considered time-consuming and, in the eyes of some, infringes on the integrity and professionalism of individual teachers. This resistance manifests itself in particular in the poor delivery of course files, which complicates the work of the Board of Examiners.

The panel notes that the Board of Examiners for Middle Eastern Studies has made significant steps to integrate the various and divergent specialisations to arrive at a coherent and cohesive assessment programme, that it cooperates well with others, such as the study coordinator and the Programme Committee, and that they jointly tackle problems well. The panel found that the workload of the Board of Examiners is high and some board members told the panel that they spend more time on their tasks as board members than they are formally allocated. The addition of an official secretary has, however, provided relief in this respect. Members of the Board of Examiners also expect that streamlining procedures and increasing efficiency could also help to reduce their workload. The panel emphasises the importance of equal and sufficient compensation for members of Examination Boards within one faculty. After all, it takes time to involve colleagues in the necessary professionalisation, so that they can also see its value and feel that professionals are being taken seriously. The assessment practice can then not only become more transparent, but also better and more efficient, which ultimately saves the study programs time. The panel advises the Programme Board of Middle Eastern Studies to discuss with the Board of Examiners where efficiency gains can be achieved.

Assessment practice within the programme

At the cursory level, the programme's learning goals have been operationalised in assignments and evaluation criteria, which are formulated in the assessment plan. Students are informed about these via the e-prospectus and during lectures. Students are given feedback on the substance, structure and argumentation of their essays, assignments and presentations.

The panel has studied the assessment plan of the master's programme in Middle Eastern Studies. All courses in the Regional Studies cluster at the Leiden Faculty of Humanities apply the same approach. The assessment plan consists of two parts; the first part specifies the courses in which the various intended learning outcomes are assessed, the second part describes the types of assessment used and the partial assessments per course. The assessment plan also enables the Board of Examiners to be sufficiently able to determine that graduates, if they have passed all programme components, have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The panel notes that students are assessed in an appropriate manner, with numerous opportunities for feedback. The students indicated to the panel that they feel sufficiently informed about the method of assessment.



Thesis assessment

Master's theses are assessed in the faculty's online thesis assessment system. This recent formalisation is seen as a major advance, although the new procedure takes extra time, in particular from the second examiner. Two examiners assess the thesis independently of each other. If the assessment differs by more than two full points or the examiners disagree on another matter, the Board of Examiners examines the difference or disagreement. In these cases, a third examiner is appointed, who also studies the thesis and determines the final mark. The Board of Examiners has been appointing the first and second examiner for the past three years, trying to prevent fixed assessment couples. The panel is satisfied with this approach, as it demonstrates that the Board of Examiners is aware of the dangers of fixed assessment couples. It recommends the various programmes in the Faculty of Humanities considering cross-programme assessment couples, especially in relatively small programmes such as the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies.

To prepare for the visit, the panel studied a sample of theses and their assessment forms. The assessments were well substantiated, the panel found. Broadly the panel agrees with the assessments given, although it found some theses were given too high a mark. In general as well an average thesis grade of 7,8 (for all theses that passed between January of 2016 and September 2018) seems fairly high to the panel. It recommends the programme and the Board of Examiners continuing to critically follow the assessments handed out. It is precisely in a small community such as that of Middle Eastern studies that subjective colourings of judgment based on personal preferences may lurk. Here, the fresh perspective of colleagues from outside the specialisation, or even outside the programme, could have added value.

Considerations

According to the panel, the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies has a sound and transparent assessment system. The assessment plan provides sufficient insight into the method of assessment and the relationship between the learning outcomes and course objectives.

The assessment of master's theses is clearly designed and its quality is guaranteed by having it done by two independent examiners, while the programme aims to avoid fixed couples. The panel endorses this goal and believes that the keen eye of colleagues from outside can be of added value to permanently reinforce the objectivity of the assessment. All parties involved think the new thesis assessment system is an improvement, albeit that it takes extra time. The panel studied a sample of the master's theses and broadly agrees with their assessments, although in some cases the panel found the grades somewhat high. Also, an average thesis grade of 7,8 over a two year period seems high to the panel. This is an extra argument for the desirability to broaden the range of examiners.

Finally, the panel notes that the Board of Examiners for the bachelor's and master's programme Middle Eastern Studies is adequately performing its task to assure quality of assessment, while still in the process of further professionalisation. It guarantees that all graduates of the programme have achieved the intended learning goals and in doing so works together well with others. The panel thinks that a six-year cycle of examining all courses is appropriate, provided that the programme management and the Board of Examiners are alert to developments that require their attention. The panel also emphasises that all examiners should be sufficiently compensated for their work. The Board of Examiners is supported by the professionalisation that the faculty has implemented in the field of assessment policy in recent years. The panel encourages the faculty and the Board of Examiners to continue and expand this line.

Conclusion

Master's programme Middle Eastern Studies: the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'meets the standard'.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

The assessment plan, the assessment system and the quality assurance role of the Board of Examiners guarantee that the intended learning outcomes of the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies are achieved. Students demonstrate this through a combination of essays, presentations, and finally the thesis. Virtually all categories of the intended learning outcomes feature on the assessment forms for the theses: knowledge and insight (contents of the thesis), application thereof (methodology), judgment (argumentation), communication (writing skills) and learning skills (independent working). The theses alone, therefore, demonstrate that all intended learning outcomes are achieved. From the sample of master's theses the panel studied, it found that their academic level meets the standard, with often original, interesting and topical research questions and sometimes strong knowledge and deep engagement.

The faculty's 2016 study into the labour market position of its alumni shows that master graduates in Middle Eastern Studies take more time to find employment than the faculty average: 62 per cent found a job within two months, with a faculty average of 71 per cent. After six months, however, the Middle Eastern Studies graduates have caught up: then 91 per cent has found a job, with a faculty average of 89 per cent. Also, more than average of these graduates work at a higher education or academic level: 95 per cent versus a 85 per cent faculty average. The master graduates in Middle Eastern Studies find employment in a broad range of positions that require linguistic, historical, political and cultural knowledge of the Middle East, such as with the diplomatic service, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service and NGO's.

Considerations

Based on the assessment policy, the quality of the master's theses and its discussion with alumni, the panel determines that master's graduates have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The panel found the theses in the sample it studied of sufficient quality, with often original topics.

Research carried out by the faculty shows that on the whole, the master graduates in Middle Eastern Studies are successful on the labour market: after six months 91 per cent have found a job and the vast majority of graduates end up at positions that require higher or academic education.

Conclusion

Master's programme Middle Eastern Studies: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'meets the standard'.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The panel assessed standards 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies as 'meets the standard'. Based on the NVAO decision rules regarding limited programme assessments, the panel therefore assesses the programmes as 'positive'.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *master's programme Middle Eastern Studies* as 'positive'.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Graduates of the programme have attained the following learning outcomes, listed according to the Dublin descriptors: Graduates will:

A1. Knowledge and understanding

- a) possess comprehensive knowledge of and skills in the area of history, literature, culture or religion of the Middle East;
- b) possess the ability to use the relevant primary and secondary literature;
- c) have acquired various skills including independent academic thinking and acting, analyzing complex issues; and be able to report academically sound;
- d) have acquired academic knowledge, insight, and skills in theories and methods used in various fields such as social sciences, literary studies, and anthropology, and be able to apply this knowledge to the field of Middle Eastern Studies.

A2. Applying knowledge and understanding

- a) have the ability to make use of knowledge acquired at different courses in their specific field in their theses, but also in their further career with tasks such as teaching, supervising, consulting, writing, translating and editing;
- b) have the ability to use the knowledge in policy making and public relations, as the majority of graduates of a non-European language and culture in their professional career deal with foreign people;
- c) have acquired knowledge and understanding, geared towards problem-solving in new or unfamiliar environments within a broader scholarly and applied context.

A3. Judgment

- a) be able to identify and formulate an original research question, to analyze primary and secondary sources, and to draw conclusions;
- b) have the ability to gauge scholarly publications in the field critically;
- c) be able to write and present orally clarifications and explanations of implicit issues related to the state of the art of the field of research: concepts, ideas, theses and hypotheses;
- d) be able to integrate the knowledge and understanding they have acquired during the study for handling complexity, and formulating judgments;
- e) have the ability to reflect on the academic, social and ethical responsibilities that arise from the field of Middle Eastern Studies.

A4. Communication

- a) be able to present the result of independent research not only in writing but also through oral presentations both for a general and professional public;
- b) be able to contribute to a public debate communicating the conclusions of their scholarly research, knowledge and understanding of the Middle East to an audience beyond traditional academia;
- c) have learned to academically contribute to the field of research.

A5. Learning skills

- a) have developed abilities to follow post-master's professional training or a PhD training of a largely self-determined or autonomous nature.

In addition to the achievement levels above, the following achievement levels per specialisation apply: Graduates will have:

B1. Arabic Studies

- Knowledge and understanding of the history of Arab peoples and culture, contemporary developments in the Arab world, Arabic literature and rich manuscript traditions. This also includes a thorough understanding of Islam.



B2. Islamic Studies

- Knowledge and understanding of Islamic law and anthropology of the Muslim world from the perspective of the social sciences combined with philology.

B3. Modern Middle East Studies

- General knowledge and understanding of the cultures, literatures and religions of the strategically important Middle Eastern regions with a focus on the modern period.
- In-depth knowledge and understanding of the Modern Middle East, depending on the choices of the student, either directed at the Middle East in general, or at one of the regions of the Middle East in depth.

B4. Persian Studies

- Knowledge and understanding of the history, literature, politics, religion and Persian visual arts of the Persian cultural realm from the advent of Islam to the present day.

B5. Turkish Studies

- Knowledge and understanding of Turkish history and culture and Turkey's relation to Europe, viewed against its transition from the multi-ethnic Ottoman state to a nation state.

B6. Israel Studies

- Knowledge and understanding of the history, literature, politics, and religion of Israeli society from the period of political Zionism to the present day.

APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

Schematic overview of study programme MA Middle Eastern Studies: September intake

	EC	Niveau
Common courses		
Choose one of the following: Theories and Methods of Middle East and Islamic Studies 1; Theories and Methods of Middle East and Islamic Studies 2	10	400
MA Thesis Middle Eastern Studies	20	500
Thesis Seminar in Middle East and Islamic Studies	0	500
Extracurricular: Internship MA Middle Eastern Studies	0	-
Arabic Studies		
From Inkwell to Internet: Text and Transmission in the Muslim World	10	500
Themes in Arabic Literature: From Letters to Literature	10	500
Choose one of the following: Culture and Society in the Medieval Muslim World; International Relations in the Middle East: Regional Struggle and Great Power Rivalry after the Cold War	10	500
Islam Studies		
Modern Muslim Qur'an Interpretation	10	500
Choose for 10 EC from one or two of the following (LAT 1-2 of LAA 1-2 of LAP 1-2): Sacred Journeys: Pilgrimage and Holy Places (10 EC, 500); Sharia in the West (5 of 100 EC, 500); Language Acquisition Persian 1 (5, 100); Language Acquisition Persian 2 (5, 100); Beginner's Turkish 1 (5, 100); Beginner's Turkish 2 (5, 100); Modern Standard Arabic 1 (5, 100); Modern Standard Arabic 2 (5, 100); Indonesian 1 (10, 100)	10	-
Choose one of the following: 'Ulamā' in the Modern Muslim World; Anthropology of Muslim Societies	10	500
Israel Studies		
War, Peace, and Mass Media: The Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Public Sphere	10	500
Choose one of the following: The Middle East in the International Political Economy; International Relations of the Middle East and Asia (IRMEA)	10	500
(The third specialisation course is not offered in 2018-2019 since there were no students enrolled in this specialisation)	10	
Modern Middle East Studies		
Choose one of the following: The Middle East in the International Political Economy; International Relations of the Middle East and Asia (IRMEA)	10	500



Kies voor 10 EC uit één of twee van de volgende (LAT 1-2 of LAA 1-2 of LAP 1-2): Literature and Politics in the Persian-speaking World (10, 500); From Inkwell to Internet: Text and Transmission in the Muslim World (10, 500); Material Culture, Memory and Commemoration along the Silk Roads in Central Asia (10, 500); Narratives that Matter: Literature, Film and Television Drama in Turkey (10, 500); Language Acquisition Persian 1 (5, 100); Language Acquisition Persian 2 (5, 100); Beginner's Turkish 1 (5, 100); Beginner's Turkish 2 (5, 100); Modern Standard Arabic 1 (5, 100); Modern Standard Arabic 2 (5, 100); Language Acquisition Modern Hebrew 1 (5, 100); Language Acquisition Modern Hebrew 2 (5, 100)	10	-
Choose one of the following: Developments in the Modern Middle East; International Relations in the Middle East: Regional Struggle and Great Power Rivalry after the Cold War; Turkey and the Middle East in the 20th Century	10	500
Persian Studies		
Literature and Politics in the Persian-speaking World	10	500
Material Culture, Memory and Commemoration along the Silk Roads in Central Asia	10	500
Choose one of the following: Developments in the Modern Middle East; International Relations in the Middle East: Regional Struggle and Great Power Rivalry after the Cold War; Culture and Conquest: the Impact of the Mongols and their Descendants	10	500
Turkish Studies		
Choose two of the following: Narratives that Matter: Literature, Film and Television Drama in Turkey (500); The Ottoman Empire and Turkey (500); Ottoman Turkish (400)	10	-
Choose one of the following: MA courses in Turkey; History and Culture of the Ottoman Empire (1500-1900); Turkey and the Middle East in the 20th Century	10	500

Schematic overview of study programme MA Middle Eastern Studies: February intake

	EC	Niveau
Common courses		
Theories and Methods of Middle East and Islamic Studies 3	10	400
MA Thesis Middle Eastern Studies	20	500
Thesis Seminar in Middle East and Islamic Studies	0	500
Extracurriculair: Internship MA Middle Eastern Studies	0	-
Arabic Studies		
Culture and Society in the Medieval Muslim World	10	500
International Relations in the Middle East: Regional Struggle and Great Power Rivalry after the Cold War	10	500

Choose one of the following: From Inkwell to Internet: Text and Transmission in the Muslim World; Themes in Arabic Literature: From Letters to Literature	10	500
Islamic Studies		
'Ulamā' in the Modern Muslim World	10	500
Anthropology in Muslim Societies	10	500
Choose one of the following: Modern Muslim Qur'an Interpretation; Sacred Journeys: Pilgrimage and Holy Places; Sharia in the West 10 EC	10	500
Israel Studies		
Turkey and the Middle East in the 20th Century	10	500
War, Peace, and Mass Media: The Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Public Sphere	10	500
(The third specialisation course is not offered in 2018-2019 since there were no students enrolled in this specialisation)	10	
Modern Middle East Studies		
Choose one of the following: Developments in the Modern Middle East; International Relations in the Middle East: Regional Struggle and Great Power Rivalry after the Cold War	10	500
Choose one of the following: Turkey and the Middle East in the 20th Century; Anthropology of Muslim Societies	10	500
Choose one of the following: From Inkwell to Internet: Text and Transmission in the Muslim World; International Relations of the Middle East and Asia (IRMEA); Literature and Politics in the Persian-speaking World; The Middle East in the International Political Economy; Narratives that Matter: Literature, Film and Television Drama in Turkey	10	500
Persian Studies		
Choose two of the following: Developments in the Modern Middle East; Culture and Conquest: the Impact of the Mongols and their Descendants; International Relations in the Middle East: Regional Struggle and Great Power Rivalry after the Cold War	2 x 10	500
Choose one of the following: Material Culture, Memory and Commemoration along the Silk Roads in Central Asia; Literature and Politics in the Persian-speaking World	10	500
Turkish Studies		
Choose two of the following: History and Culture of the Ottoman Empire (1500-1900); Ottoman Turkish; Turkey and the Middle East in the 20th Century	2 x 10	400-500
Choose one of the following: MA Courses in Turkey; Narratives that Matter: Literature, Film and Television Drama in Turkey; The Ottoman Empire and Turkey	10	500

APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

Day 1: 5 June 2019 – Bachelors International Studies, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Bachelor Classics, Master Classics and Ancient Civilizations

08.30 – 08.45	Brief welcome
08.45 – 09.00	Installation of the panel
09.00 – 11.30	First meeting and reading of documentation
11.30 – 12.15	Faculty Board
12.15 – 12.45	Lunch
12.45 – 13.15	Programme Board and Coordinator of Studies of International Studies
13.15 – 14.00	Students and alumni International Studies
14.00 – 14.30	Staff International Studies
14.30 – 14.45	Panel meeting International Studies
14.45 – 15.00	Break
15.00 – 15.45	Programme Boards and Coordinators of Studies Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Bachelor Classics and Master Classics and Ancient Civilizations
15.45 – 16.30	Students Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Bachelor Classics and Master Classics and Ancient Civilizations
16.30 – 17.15	Staff Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Bachelor Classics and Master Classics and Ancient Civilizations
17.15 – 18.00	Panel meeting
18.00 – 18.30	Open consultation hour Area Studies I

Dag 2: 6 June 2019 – Bachelor & Master Latin American Studies, Bachelor & Master Middle Eastern Studies, Bachelor & Master Russian (and Eurasian) Studies, North American Studies

08.30 – 09.00	Panel meeting and reading of the documentation
09.30 – 10.00	Programme Board and Coordinator of Studies Latin American Studies
10.00 – 10.30	Students Latijns-Amerikastudies and Latin American Studies
10.30 – 11.00	Staff Latin American Studies
11.00 – 11.15	Break
11.15 – 11.45	Programme Board and Coordinators of Middle Eastern Studies
11.45 – 12.15	Students Middle Eastern Studies
12.15 – 12.45	Staff Middle Eastern Studies
12.45 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 14.15	Programme Board and Coordinators of Studies Russische Studies, Russian and Eurasian Studies, and North American Studies
14.15 – 15.00	Students Bachelor and Master Russian (and Eurasian) Studies, and North American Studies
15.00 – 15.45	Staff Russian (and Eurasian) Studies and North American Studies
15.45 – 16.00	Break
16.00 – 16.30	Alumni Russian and Eurasian Studies, North American Studies, and Latin American Studies
16.30 – 17.00	Alumni Middle Eastern Studies and Classics and Ancient Civilizations
17.00 – 18.00	Panel meeting

Dag 3: 7 June 2019 – Boards of Examiners

08.30 – 09.30	Panel meeting and reading of the documentation
09.30 – 10.30	Boards of Examiners Russian Studies, Art and Literature and American Studies, and Latin American studies
10.30 – 11.30	Boards of Examiners Middle Eastern Studies, International Studies, and Classics and Ancient Civilizations
11.30 – 12.00	Panel meeting
12.00 – 12.30	Lunch
12.30 – 13.30	Final meeting management
13.30 – 16.30	Composing of final judgment
16.30 – 16.45	Break
16.45 – 17.30	Development dialogues – parallel
17.30 – 18.30	Report and drinks

APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Thesis selection

The panel studied 15 theses of the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies, 10 prior to the site visit and 5 afterwards. This was done to complete the panel's picture of the achieved learning outcomes by studying final works from all specialisations. The selection was based on a provided list of graduates between 2016-2018, including information on the 6 specialisations. A variety of topics and a diversity of examiners were included in the selection. The project manager and panel chair assured that the distribution of grades in the selection matched the distribution of grades of all available theses. This resulted in the following distribution:

<i>Specialisation</i>	<i>Total number of theses 2016-2018</i>	<i>Thesis selection</i>
Arabic Studies	3	2
Modern Middle Eastern Studies	45	7
Turkish Studies	5	2
Israel Studies	1	1
Islamic Studies	2	1
Persian Studies	2	1
no specialisation indicated	2	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>15</i>

Further information on the selected theses is available from QANU upon request.

Documents studied

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):

Faculty-wide documents

- Transferable skills at the Faculty of Humanities;
- Flyers Career Services Humanities (including: *Your Future: From university to a career*);
- Flyer Humanities Master's Buddy Programme;
- Overview Leiden University Master's Programmes 2019-2020;
- Flyer education vision: *Learning@LeidenUniversity*;
- *Tips bij Toetsen*;
- Expertisecentrum Online Leren Evaluatierapport 2017-2018.

Specific reading material master Middle Eastern Studies

- Course material on 'Theories and Methods of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies', 'Literature and Politics in the Persian speaking World', 'Turkey and the Middle East in the 20th Century', 'War, Peace, and Mass Media: The Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Public Sphere', 'From Inkwell to Internet: Text and Transmission in the Muslim World', "'Ulama" in the modern Muslim World', 'Anthropology of Muslim Societies';
- Programme Board reports MA Middle Eastern Studies 2015-2018;
- Board of Examiners reports 2015-2018;
- Minutes of the Programme Committee Middle Eastern Studies 2018-2019;
- Factsheets Nationale Studenten Enquête 2018;
- ICLON course evaluations;
- *Onderwijsvernieuwing*;
- Reports of the L.S.V. Sheherazade study association;
- Programme metrics 2015-2018;
- Assessment plan master Middle Eastern Studies;
- *Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam & Society Annual Report 2017*;



- Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405: The Making of a Civilization*.

Links provided on laptops

- Learning environment selected courses;
- Structure of the Faculty of Humanities movie;
- L.S.V. Sheherazade website, the Middle Eastern Studies study association;
- Database *Slavery, Abolition and Social Justice*.