



**RESEARCH MASTER'S
PROGRAMME**

MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

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CONTENTS

REPORT ON THE RESEARCH 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 10

DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR LIMITED FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENTS 13

GENERAL CONCLUSION 27

APPENDICES 29

APPENDIX 1: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES 31

APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM..... 33

APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE ONLINE VISIT 35

APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL 39

This report was finalised on 16 July 2021



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

This report makes use of the NVAO's *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* (September 2018) and the *Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes* (May 2016). It takes the criteria for limited programme assessments as its starting point, supplemented by the additional aspects for research master's programmes.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

Research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies

Name of the programme:	Midden-Oosten Studies (research)
International name:	Middle Eastern Studies (research)
CROHO number:	60843
Level of the programme:	master's level
Orientation of the programme:	academic research master
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specialisations:	none
Location:	Leiden
Mode of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Submission deadline NVAO:	01/11/2020, extension submission date until 31/10/2021 due to legislation WHW art. 5.16 lid 4

The online assessment of the research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies of Leiden University took place on 3-5 February 2021.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

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

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The NVAO has approved the composition of the panel on 2 June 2020. The panel that assessed the research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies consisted of:

- Prof. dr. K. (Kristoffel) Dempo, professor Ancient Greek Literature at Ghent University (Belgium) [panel chair Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Leiden University];
- Em. prof. dr. J.F. (John) Healey, emeritus professor in Semitic Studies at the University of Manchester (United Kingdom);
- Em. prof. dr. phil. J.U. (Jens-Uwe) Hartmann, professor Indian and Iranian Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in München (Germany);

- Prof. dr. T. (Thomas) Meier, professor for Pre- and Protohistory and director of the Käte Hamburger Center for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies at Heidelberg University (Germany);
- Prof. dr. E.H.M. (Helena) Houvenaghel, professor Spanish Language and Culture at Utrecht University;
- Dr. G. (Gerhard) Anders, senior lecturer African Studies and International Development at the Centre of African Studies of the University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom);
- Y.P. (Yannick) de Raaff, MA, recent graduate research master Archaeology at the University of Groningen [student member].

The panel was supported by Dr. E. (Els) Schröder, who acted as secretary and project coordinator. Dr. I. (Irene) Conradie and V. (Victor) van Kleef MA supported the panel and secretary as notulists during the site visit.

WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The online site visit to the research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies at the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University was part of the cluster assessment Archaeology, Classics and Ancient Civilizations and Region Studies. The following universities participated in this cluster assessment: University of Groningen, University of Amsterdam, Leiden University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

On behalf of the participating universities, quality assurance agency Qanu was responsible for logistical support, panel guidance and the production of the reports. Dr. E. (Els) Schröder was project coordinator for Qanu. Dr. E. (Els) Schröder (Leiden University, University of Groningen and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) and V. (Victor) van Kleef MA, (University of Amsterdam) acted as secretaries in the cluster assessment. Dr. I. (Irene) Conradie acted as notulists during the site visit at Leiden University.

The nine programmes of the four universities were scheduled to be assessed between April 2020 and June 2020. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 outbreak made site visits impossible, and all assessments, except that of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, were rescheduled for more suitable dates in the second half of 2020 and 2021. The project coordinator and the representatives of the programmes agreed to schedule digital assessments.

Panel members

The members of the assessment panel were selected based on their expertise, availability and independence. The panel consisted of the following members:

- Prof. J. (Jacqueline) Mulville, professor in Bioarchaeology and Director of Research and Impact at the School of History, Archaeology and Religion of Cardiff University (United Kingdom) [panel chair University of Amsterdam and University of Groningen];
- Prof. dr. K. (Kristoffel) Demoen, professor Ancient Greek Literature at Ghent University (Belgium) [panel chair Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Leiden University];
- Dr. G. (Gerhard) Anders, senior lecturer African Studies and International Development at the Centre of African Studies of the University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom);
- Dr. K. (Kim) Beerden, University Lecturer at the Institute for History of Leiden University;
- Prof. dr. M.B.H. (Martin) Everaert, professor Linguistics at Utrecht University;
- Em. prof. dr. phil. J.U. (Jens-Uwe) Hartmann, professor Indian and Iranian Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in München (Germany);
- Prof. dr. J. (Johannes) Haubold, professor of Classics at Princeton University (United States);
- Em. prof. dr. J.F. (John) Healey, emeritus professor in Semitic Studies at the University of Manchester (United Kingdom);
- Prof. D. (Dan) Hicks, professor of Contemporary Archaeology at Oxford University (United Kingdom);
- Prof. dr. E.H.M. (Helena) Houvenaghel, professor Spanish Language and Culture at Utrecht University;

- Prof. dr. T. (Thomas) Meier, professor for Pre- and Protohistory and director of the Käte Hamburger Center for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies at Heidelberg University (Germany);
- Prof. dr. E.M. (Eric) Moormann, professor of Classical Archaeology at Radboud University;
- Prof. dr. J. (Jeroen) Poblome, professor Classical Archaeology and director of the Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project (Belgium);
- Y.P. (Yannick) de Raaff, MA, recent graduate research master Archaeology at the University of Groningen [student member].
- R. (Rory) Granleese, BA, research master student Archaeology at Leiden University [student member].

Preparation

Planning for the cluster assessment started in October 2019. On 13 March 2020, Prof. dr. K. Demoen was briefed by Qanu on his role as panel chair, the assessment framework, the working method, and the planning of the site visits and reports. Prior to the assessment, the panel members received instructions on the use of the assessment framework and the planning of the (online) site visits and reports.

Before the online site visit to the Leiden University, Qanu received the self-evaluation report of the programme and sent it to the panel. In January 2020, the panel received a report on the measures taken to assure the quality of teaching and assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic. The thesis selection consisted of fifteen theses and their assessment forms for the programme, based on a provided list of graduates between 2018 and 2020. In addition, the panel studied two theses and assessment forms that were completed in the second half of 2020.

Online assessment

At the end of March 2020, it became clear that due to COVID-19, all universities would be closed until further notice. Leiden University indicated an interest in organising a digital site visit. The project coordinator asked the panel chair, Prof. dr. K. Demoen, whether he would be willing to lead a digital assessment. He consented to chairing a digital assessment on 3 April 2020. The panel members involved also confirmed their consent in partaking in a digital assessment. Their messages of consent have been archived by Qanu and can be provided upon request.

For Leiden University, it was decided that the online assessment of the programme would take place on 3, 4 and 5 February 2021, but only if the panel chair confirmed that no hindrances were found in the documentation that would require an actual site visit based on the study of existing documents, a so-called 'go/no go-decision'. After studying the existing documentation, the panel chair communicated a 'go' to the project coordinator/secretary on 1 December 2020.

After studying the self-evaluation report, theses and assessment forms, the panel members formulated their preliminary findings and questions. The project coordinator/secretary collected all initial questions and remarks and distributed them amongst all panel members. Two preparatory panel meeting were organised. A first on 10 December 2020, a second on 18 January 2021. During these meetings, the panel discussed its initial findings based on the self-evaluation report and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit.

The project coordinator/secretary composed a schedule for the online assessment in consultation with the policy officers of the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Archaeology at Leiden University and the panel chair. Prior to the assessment, the Programme Board selected representative partners for the various interviews. See Appendix 3 for the final schedule. Also, a digital protocol was drawn up by Leiden University with input from the project coordinator/secretary and panel chair. This protocol discussed the ways in which communication during the interviews would be organised to guarantee that all interviewees and panel members would be able to speak freely and add whatever seemed important to the conversation. Leiden University provided the necessary software to enable a digital site visit and development dialogue, including a fall-back option in case the digital environment malfunctioned. This back-up option was never used.

Site visit

The site visit to Leiden University took place on 3, 4 and 5 February 2021 by digital means. Before and during the site visit, the panel studied the additional documents provided by the programme. An overview of these materials can be found in Appendix 4. The panel conducted interviews with representatives of the programme and other parties involved: students and staff members, the faculty's Board and the programme's Board, alumni, representatives of the Board of Examiners and representatives of the relevant research institutes. It also offered students and staff members an opportunity for a confidential discussion during a consultation hour ahead of the digital site visit. Qanu stipulated a digital environment for this meeting in order to guarantee privacy. No requests for a private consultation were received. The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair presented its preliminary findings and general observations. This last digital time slot could be accessed by anyone wishing to attend.

Development dialogues

Five digital development dialogues were scheduled at the following dates:

- 2 March 2021: research master's programme African Studies;
- 3 March 2021: research master's programmes Middle Eastern Studies and Asian Studies (combined);
- 8 March 2021: research master's programme Latin American Studies;
- 18 March 2021: research master's programmes Classics and Archaeology (separate discussions).

For the dialogues, the programmes at Leiden University prepared an agenda. At least three representatives of the panel took part in each dialogue. The outcomes of the development dialogue have been drawn up separately, and confirmed by the panel representatives. These documents are not part of the application for accreditation.

Consistency and calibration

In order to ensure the consistency of assessment within the cluster, various measures were taken:

1. The panel composition ensured regular attendance of key panel members, including the chairs;
2. The coordinator was present at the start of all site visits as well as at the panel discussion leading to the preliminary findings for all site visits within the cluster assessment;
3. Calibration meetings were scheduled on 25 September 2020 and 17 December 2020, in which the two chairs discussed the approach to digital assessment and how to reach conclusions regarding the quality of the assessed programmes.

Working method during site visit

For Qanu, a team of NVAO-accredited secretaries was appointed to take notes during the site visit in parallel sessions. Involved were: Dr. I. (Irene) Conradie (notulist during the site visit), V. (Victor) van Kleef, MA (notulist during the site visit) and Dr. E. (Els) Schröder (project coordinator/secretary). The notulists attended the preparatory meetings (December 2020/January 2021). During the site visit, the notulists and secretary attended the relevant panel discussions and the presentation of the findings. The meetings of the various interviews were shared, prior to writing the reports. The project coordinator acted as active secretary, assuring overview during the site visit. She is also the secretary of all six reports. For a division of task, see the programme for the site visit (Appendix 3).

Report

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

Definition of judgement standards

In accordance with the NVAO's *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* (September 2018) 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.

For research master's programmes, the aspects as listed in the *Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes* (May 2016) are considered as supplementary to the criteria in this framework and are assessed accordingly.

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

The research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies offers a two-year research-oriented programme of 120 EC. The majority of the teaching staff is affiliated with the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS). In June 2019, LIAS was assessed for the period of 2012-2017 using the Standard Evaluation Protocol. It scored 'excellent/world leading' (1) for research quality. Three staff members are also based at the Leiden University Centre for Arts in Society (LUCAS). LUCAS was reviewed in 2018 for the period 2012-2017 and was assessed 'very good' (2) for research quality. These high scores reflect the excellent research environment offered to the research master students and testify to the staff members' research credentials and excellent international reputation. According to the panel, these two institutes offer a relevant and valuable research environment for a research master's degree programme.

Standard 1

The panel considers the profile of the research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University distinctive within an international context due to its focus on multidisciplinary research based on the approach derived from Area Studies. It considers the option to integrate fieldwork as part of the programme pivotal for its profile. It appreciates the clearly expressed vision on the programme's contribution to society, public debate and public engagement, but felt that this vision could be better integrated. Prospective students are attracted to the availability of specialist knowledge in Leiden, including linguistic expertise in the regional languages. To avoid disappointment, the panel recommends clarifying the way in which language training is part of the programme's aims and profile. The intended learning outcomes of the programme are linked to the Dublin descriptors for the master's level and are research-oriented in their attention paid to theory and methodology training. They are geared to acquiring the relevant skills for conducting independent research. In the panel's view, these objectives are fitting for a research master's programme and meet the expectations of the professional field and discipline. To make the position of the study of religion within the programme more transparent, the panel advises incorporating the way in which the students gain insight into the differences and dynamics between and within the major religious traditions into the intended learning outcomes.

Standard 2

The panel considers the teaching-learning environment of the research master's Middle Eastern Studies programme to be of good quality. The programme offers a challenging curriculum with sufficient choice in electives and available research expertise. To highlight additional crossover points between subregions in the field, the panel suggests exploring whether conflict areas could be introduced as part of the elective options. The achievement level and research-oriented focus of the programme are carefully monitored in the combined course offer for research master and one-year master students. All formal requirements for a research master's programme are met: methodology training and ethical aspects of research are addressed both separately and as an integral part of core modules. The students independently fulfil the full research cycle in their thesis or combined thesis and fieldwork. The students are offered many opportunities to mix: they follow core courses and core electives with other research master students and share other electives with one-year master students. This offers a dynamic and international classroom setting that allows for changing diverse perspectives and approaches to the curriculum contents. The admission criteria for the programme are adequate and succeed in attracting talented students to the programme. Extended collaboration with partner institutions may further enrich this multicultural classroom experience. The panel endorses the programme's choice of English as its language of instruction and the English programme name. Both are considered necessary in terms of creating a suitable teaching-learning environment for achieving the programme's academic aims.

The available facilities are of a high standard, as are the quality and research expertise of the staff teaching the programme. Staff members are active researchers of excellent reputation, as underlined by the very good rating of both the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and Leiden University Centre for Arts in Society (LUCAS), and hence well-placed to guide students towards a research career. The students are positive and praise the staff

for their commitment and their expertise. The staff's teaching abilities are clearly of the necessary standard and receive glowing feedback from the students. Nevertheless, the staff's formal teaching qualifications are a point for improvement. In the panel's view, the relative low numbers of formal teaching qualifications are not compromising the current teaching quality. The panel considers the issue a matter of professional development. The panel explicitly wants to emphasise its appreciation for the staff's continuous efforts to maintain high standards, creating a valuable and high-quality research programme with a good teaching-learning environment in a difficult period for the humanities as a discipline. It ascertained that the programme supports its students to the best of its abilities. Student guidance has improved since the last assessment in response to suggestions and now seems to function well, also during the Covid-19 pandemic. The panel has some suggestions for additional improvement: formal communication channels (website, IT services) and the course descriptions deserve some additional attention. Career preparation for academia and methodology training may benefit from a rethink by the teaching team to tailor the training more closely to the students' individual needs. The panel noted that the programme is keenly aware of the continuous need for improvement of key elements of its training and has acted upon earlier suggestions. It fully trusts the programme to take suitable measures in reaction to the panel findings.

Standard 3

The panel concluded that the programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place. The existing assessment policies and protocols in the programme are of good quality. As a result, the assessment is transparently organised and solidly grounded in shared Faculty practices. The panel concluded that the members of the Board of Examiners fulfil their formal tasks and responsibilities and work according to clear procedures. It praises the commitment to improvement by the Board members and acknowledges their efforts towards creating a shared quality culture in the programmes under their remit. It encourages the Faculty to continue monitoring the Board of Examiners' workload, to continue communicating with staff regarding the need for a timely delivery of course files, and to pay attention to the continuous need for sufficient secretarial support.

The assessment methods are considered suitable by the panel to test the students' abilities, skills and knowledge at the desired research master's level. In terms of variety of testing methods, some additional variety may be considered by including, for example, peer-review exercises, article writing, abstract writing and group presentations or other assignments challenging student involvement. The panel considers the programme's use of peer-feedback as part of the formative module assessment highly appropriate. The thesis assessment is generally lucid, and the grading of the theses is fair, in its view. In those cases in which fieldwork is part of a student's programme, it is adequately assessed with sufficient attention being paid to the student's individual learning path. In some cases, the substantiation of the grading by the examiners could be improved. This is an area of attention for both the Programme Board and Board of Examiners, and related to the allocated workload of staff members. The students are satisfied with the feedback on their work, in particular with the oral feedback. The panel wants to encourage the staff to make use of the full range of the grading scale in their marking practices. It sees room for some minor improvements. The transparency of the assessment could be strengthened by the creation of a more detailed marking scheme for thesis assessment. In addition, the programme is advised to uphold and monitor a strict word limit policy for the thesis and to introduce a qualitative reflection on the publishability of the thesis (at least parts of it) on the assessment form for research master theses.

Standard 4

The panel verified that the graduates of the Middle Eastern Studies research master's programme convincingly demonstrate having achieved the intended learning outcomes at the required level. Their theses present original, lucid and often pioneering work that are true contributions to the field of study and embody the successful completion of an independent research cycle at the research master's level. The variety of topics and approaches clearly reflect the embeddedness of the students in a challenging environment that allows them to pursue their own interests, while also grounding the research in current lines of enquiry and debate. Many theses contain good leads for academic publication. In this way, the final projects lay the groundwork – and in some cases a very firm foundation – for further research at the PhD level and successful professional careers. This is also evidenced by the

subsequent careers of graduates. Some successfully competed for PhD positions, while others are employed in consultancy, for the government and at leading foundations.

The panel assesses the standards from the NVAO's *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* for limited programme assessments, in accordance with the aspects included in the *Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes*, in the following way:

Research 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, Prof. dr. K. Demoen, and the secretary of the panel, Dr. Els Schröder, hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in it. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 16 July 2021

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

Context

The research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies and research master's programme Asian Studies are run jointly. Originally discrete (2005-2010), these programmes were combined into a single programme under the label 'Area Studies' in 2010, subdivided into Middle Eastern Studies, Asian Studies and Comparative Area Studies. However, soon after this constellation was approved by the accrediting authority, it was decided on a national level to allow only a limited number of master programmes within the domain of the humanities. The labels Middle Eastern Studies and Asian Studies were permitted, but Area Studies was not. At this juncture, the newly unified programme was once again administratively split into two. This became effective in 2012.

Believing in the intellectual coherence of the concept, which had been successfully institutionalised in the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) established in 2009, Leiden University decided to continue running the two programmes jointly, with a single Programme Board: 'a single room with two doors'. Technically, there are two boards, but they have the same members. Besides the Programme Board, the programmes share their Programme Committee and fall under the responsibility of the same Board of Examiners. However, for the purposes of this accreditation procedure, which will result in a decision on the quality of each programme separately, two reports are being submitted. In light of the virtual identity of the legally separate programmes, there is a major overlap between the two reports while paying attention to area-defined differences.

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 research master's degree in Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University aims to provide students with the skills and knowledge to become the next generation of informed scholars and leaders, with specialised knowledge of the Middle East (regions within it) and the skills to apply this knowledge in today's world. To achieve these aims, the programme offers the students a broad theoretical and methodological training in the classroom and, where applicable, in the field. They gain opportunities to develop disciplinary skills (the study of politics, history, literature, philosophy, religion, etc.) and to build upon regional and language specialisations, chiefly Turkish, Persian and Arabic. A multidisciplinary approach, derived from the concept underlying Area Studies as a field, is hereby key; it allows the students to develop in-depth knowledge of their region(s) of interest, to gain insights into transregional and/or comparative perspectives, and to select the right methods for their research. A critical vision of Area Studies lies at its core. Through this training, the students should be able to contribute to the development of new theoretical and/or empirical insights through independent scholarly research. The programme prepares them for various career trajectories which value the ability to critically assess, question and explore topics and problems that matter. Future career options range from 'traditional' academic careers within a university or research institution to positions in government, civil society and private-sector organisations related to the Middle East or embedded in transregional exchange.

The panel appreciates the clearly expressed vision on the programme's contribution to society, public debate and public engagement. Academic skills are highly valued by the programme and believed to be of great use also outside academia, with which the panel concurs. This commitment is supplemented by a clear focus on contemporary issues, sensitivities and social relevance. The students indicated that they were attracted to the programme for its vision on outreach. They felt, however, that outreach and the actual connections with the

professional field could be strengthened, perhaps through the establishment of internships in governmental and NGO environments, both Dutch and international. There might also be opportunities for engagement with Middle Eastern and North African communities established in the Netherlands. The panel asks the programme to explore the students' observations.

From the panel's perspective, the programme has a unique profile. Other institutes differentiate the various components of the Leiden programme which are taught integrally in Leiden. In addition, the opportunity to engage in fieldwork is considered key to the programme's identity, as it combines various fundamental components of the programme's multidisciplinary approach. In the panel's view, fieldwork also strongly contributes to the students' development into independent researchers. Internationally, this approach stands out. The differentiation between the research master's programme and the master's programme is also clear; conceptually, every aspect of the research master's programme is directed toward the independent research expected in the second year. The panel heard from the students that the availability of specialist linguistic expertise in regional languages is part of the programme's attraction to prospective candidates. Some were disappointed, however, that language acquisition could not be integrated into their individual learning paths, a point explored further below (see Standard 2). To avoid such disappointments, the panel recommends clearly stating the position of languages within the programme as part of its profile, while making it very clear that language skills are of crucial importance for those students intending to progress to doctoral research.

The objectives of the programme are summarised in five intended learning outcomes (see Appendix 1), which reflect the Dublin descriptors for academic programmes at the master's level. The panel studied these aims, the attainment levels and the embedding of these objectives within the curriculum of the programme. It concluded that the ILOs are solidly anchored in the programme's profile; a striking aspect is the way these ILOs are closely intertwined in the three main focus areas (the Arab world, North Africa and Iran). The focus on the acquisition of academic skills, attention paid to training in theory and methods, and the research-intensive approach are clearly expressed as part of these aims, substantiating the programme's claim to be at the level of a research master's degree. These objectives are also in line with the expectations and practices of the academic and professional field in the panel's view. It suggests including an ILO addressing the way in which the programme deals with teaching on religion, as this aspect plays a larger role within the field of Middle Eastern Studies than in some other regions of Area Studies. This ILO could, for example, indicate that students of varied backgrounds gain knowledge of the differences and complex relationships between and within the major religious traditions.

In general, the panel is impressed by the commitment by Leiden University to maintain its diverse offer in research in languages and cultures at the Faculty of Humanities. This commitment is of vital importance for international research and the training of future generations of scholars in these specialised subfields, and contributes directly to the good reputation of Dutch scholarship and academic teaching in the humanities. It points out that the research master's programme in Middle Eastern Studies is very relevant for contextualising many of today's geopolitical trends and conflicts, also in terms of understanding the dynamics and social make-up of today's global society and attitudes to our past.

Considerations

The panel considers the profile of the research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University distinctive within an international context due to its focus on multidisciplinary research based on the approach derived from Area Studies. It considers the option to integrate fieldwork as part of the programme pivotal for its profile. It appreciates the clearly expressed vision on the programme's contribution to society, public debate and public engagement, but felt that this vision could be better integrated. Prospective students are attracted to the availability of specialist knowledge in Leiden, including linguistic expertise in the regional languages. To avoid disappointment, the panel recommends clarifying the way in which language training is part of the programme's aims and profile. The intended learning outcomes of the programme are linked to the Dublin descriptors for the master's level and are research-oriented in their attention paid to theory and methodology training. They are geared

to acquiring the relevant skills for conducting independent research. In the panel's view, these objectives are fitting for a research master's programme and meet the expectations of the professional field and discipline. To make the position of the study of religion within the programme more transparent, the panel advises incorporating the way in which the students gain insight into the differences and dynamics between and within the major religious traditions into the intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Research 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 admission procedures

The programme Middle Eastern Studies chose English as its language of instruction and carries an English programme name, which is in line with Faculty practices for research master's programmes. Staff teaching in the programme often received their academic training outside of the Netherlands. By opting for English as the language of instruction, the programme widens the prospective talent pool and offers the students a teaching-learning environment that benefits from multicultural perspectives and multiple viewpoints in an international classroom setting. The students may also reasonably expect to move abroad or work closely together with foreign colleagues in international collaborations, both during their studies and upon graduation. Many positions in civil society and private-sector organisations, related to the Middle East region and beyond, have an international outlook or dimension, while in academia, English is one of the *linguae francae* for this field of study. Hence, the panel considers the programme's use of English as adding to the quality of the teaching-learning environment and the students' future careers.

Admission procedures for the research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies are organised in tandem with those for the research master's programme Asian Studies. Prospective students applying for the research master's programmes need to prove their affinity with and suitability for scholarly research. Interest in the field of study and a drive to study in a challenging and international teaching-learning environment are also required for admission. Formal criteria include a bachelor's degree from a research university and proven knowledge of the fundamentals of Middle Eastern Studies and/or Area Studies, literary studies, linguistics, history and/or social sciences. The students need to provide evidence of a strong academic record (an equivalent average mark of at least 7.5 and a bachelor's thesis graded at least 8.0 in the Dutch grading system). The required English proficiency level is an IELTS score of at least 7.0 and/or a TOEFL internet-based score of 100 and/or a Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)/ Cambridge English: Advanced (CEA) score of 185. A minimum score of IELTS 6.5 or TOEFL 22 is required for each of the four components. In their application files, the students need to prove their knowledge and understanding of the language(s) necessary to successfully carry out the project they broadly envisage at the time of applying. These language requirements are considered adequate by the panel for the selection of students with the linguistic abilities for study success.

Candidates hand over two letters of recommendation, a research proposal including an annotated bibliography, and a letter of motivation as well as the standard application files, which are then assessed by the Board of Admissions. Upon receiving an application, Board of Admissions members usually consult relevant colleagues. If considered suitable based on the application files, prospective students are interviewed to explore their motivation, test their ability to communicate in English, and find out whether both parties consider themselves a good fit. The

interviewed students considered the admission criteria and the procedures for admission transparent and fair. They felt it was good that you had to put effort into the application and come to the programme prepared with an idea of your objectives and wishes. Not all students the panel met were directly admitted to the programme. Some were first asked to follow a personalised preparatory trajectory, which was tailored to their wishes and needs for admission. This all seemed to be in accordance with the approved procedure. The panel concluded that the programme is well able to select suitable candidates.

Intake and the international classroom

The intake in the programme Middle Eastern Studies varies. In 2017, five students were accepted. Since then, those numbers have at least doubled. Aggressive advertising may increase the number of applicants, the panel heard, but the Board does not consider growth a necessity as it does not want to erode the quality of the small-scale teaching and the levels of individual guidance and support. The panel considers this reasoning sound. It verified that study success results in promising careers (see Standard 4). This evidence suggests that the programme indeed attracts the right kind of students. The panel is also pleased that the programme succeeds in attracting students from various corners of the world, with more than 40% of students having enjoyed their prior training outside the Netherlands. The students admitted come primarily from across Europe and Asia, in recent years especially from China. Occasionally, students apply from North America. Applicants from the Middle East are rare. This is in line with the panel's expectations, since graduates of Middle Eastern universities usually prefer to defer the decision to seek a specialist supervisor in Europe or North America until the doctoral level.

For students in the Middle Eastern Studies programme, additional exposure to views and perspectives from the Middle East would be advantageous. If raising intake numbers for these areas is not a feasible option, the programme may want to invest in collaboration with partner institutes in the region and with other European programmes, beyond the optional study abroad semester. Digital discussions or shared assignments in modules may create opportunities for collaboration and intensify peer-to-peer contact amongst the students from the programme and the region. Students interested in practising their skills in the regional languages could also benefit. In return, students from partner institutes would be able to hone their English language proficiency. It may create a win-win situation, in the panel's view, and is offered as food for thought rather than a firm advice. Without a doubt, the existing classroom is already dynamic, multicultural and rich in perspectives due to the varied intake and the practice of mixing up research master students with one-year master students in some of the electives or with research master students in Asian Studies in the core courses.

Teaching concept and curriculum

The programme's didactic concept is based on the idea that research master students are in an advanced stage of their training as professional researchers. The panel verified that the teaching in the programme is strongly research-led and closely connected to the staff members' research and therefore a fair reflection of the demands for a research master's degree. The curriculum comprises a two-year programme of 120 EC. The programme has some common elements, compulsory for all students, but also allows for flexibility and individualised learning paths, offered in a structured set of choices. For an overview of the curriculum, see Appendix 2.

At the start of their studies, the research master students share a core course combined with the research master students in Asian Studies: *Critical Area Studies: Placing Your Research* (10 EC). This course provides a framework: it explores the various approaches, theories and contexts underpinning research and attitudes to research in Area Studies. In addition, it addresses the challenges involved in discussing 'other' cultures in a decolonising academic landscape and asks the students to reflect on their own role within these shifting approaches to the study of the Middle East and Asia. In the second semester, the students of both programmes are encouraged to follow the *Methodologies in the Social Sciences and Humanities* course (10 EC), organised by the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) in collaboration with LeidenGlobal, a network-type consortium of Leiden University with two leading Dutch museums and six international research and teaching institutes. Alternatively, they may opt to follow a course or courses at any of the Dutch National Research Schools in the Humanities for the same number of credits.

Along with these core elements, the students take electives in their first year. Half of these electives (20 EC) are chosen from a list of core modules specifically tailored to the intellectual needs of research master students in the various subregions and disciplines of Middle Eastern Studies (10 EC per module). Topics include, for example, Culture and Society in the Medieval Muslim World; Muslims in a Global Context: Anthropological Approaches; Modern Muslim Qur'an Interpretation; and International Relations in the Middle East. Students may also opt for some of the LIAS PhD Seminars (5 EC each), for example: Archives, Power and Memory or Global Political Economy. The other half of the electives (20 EC) are chosen from options offered to both research master students and one-year master students in Middle Eastern Studies. For these electives, the students may also opt for a limited number of courses at the advanced bachelor's level (400), typically language acquisition courses (10 EC). The research master's programme has no formal specialisations. The students pick courses in line with their regional specialisation, interests and the specialised foci of staff members they want to work with. Some courses offer cross-regional overlap between the various regions, and the students are encouraged to engage in cross-cultural studies. In this way, they assemble their own study trajectory in accordance with their individual research interests and ambitions.

In their second year, the students have two optional routes in their first semester: one that includes studying abroad and/or fieldwork, and one at Leiden University (30 EC). The first route is a highly personalised trajectory. In close contact with their supervisor and/or mentor, the students construct a plan that fits the programme's intended learning outcomes. It is then approved by the Board of Examiners, which checks the level of the proposed research project, fieldwork or suggested modules followed abroad. The Leiden route offers students a selection of electives within the field of Middle Eastern Studies: 20 EC need to be followed within the range of the research master's electives, another specialised core elective or the *Directed Reading* module. For those students remaining in Leiden, some additional flexibility seems to be available on paper. They are told that a research internship at a relevant institution could be part of the elective requirements or integrated as part of the thesis trajectory, under strict conditions. In practice, they feel discouraged from taking this route. This is a matter of frustration for them, as they consider that doing a research internship could be a good way to judge whether they want to opt for a professional or academic career. The panel encourages the programme to start a dialogue with the students regarding this matter and explore whether accommodation would be possible, and to communicate its own viewpoints clearly.

The students finish their studies in their second semester with two compulsory elements of the curriculum: a thesis seminar (5 EC) linked to their research master thesis (25 EC). The thesis is an independent research project with a length of up to 30,000 words (including footnotes and bibliography, but excluding any appendices). The thesis should be based on original research, for which the students may use the data collected during fieldwork, if applicable, and make substantial use of primary source material and secondary literature. The result should be of publishable quality (upon revision, e.g. streamlined and reworked into a scholarly article). In this way, the thesis encompasses the entire research cycle. The panel also discussed with the staff the way the use of languages served the thesis research. It was pleased to hear that thesis plans were carefully vetted in terms of linguistic prerequisites. Thesis proposals have been rejected in those cases where a research question required language skills beyond a student's current level, and those students are encouraged to adjust their research project to ensure that the final project would meet the standards of a research master's thesis.

The thesis seminar offers structure to the writing and research process. The students attend fortnightly seminars, presently under the guidance of the Programme Chair. Besides structure, the seminar also provides peer-to-peer feedback on ongoing projects and guidance and insights into the writing of PhD applications, including showcasing successful applications. The practice of mixing students from both the research master's programme and one-year master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies and Asian Studies in these seminars is considered good practice by the panel, as it allows them to look beyond their own discipline and regional framework. In terms of preparation, the students may need further guidance to narrow down the scope of research questions. The panel also believes that it would be good to keep the students strictly to the deadlines agreed upon in the thesis plans. It verified that the delays in the past were generally the result of personal choices by the students rather than a result of obstacles in the curriculum or lack of access to supervisors. As the programme noted itself in the self-evaluation: finishing in

time is becoming more and more a requirement for finding a funded PhD position, in particular in an international context. The students seem increasingly aware of the need to finish in time.

The panel is impressed by the way in which the curriculum is designed; it considers it an admirable accomplishment that the curriculum accommodates such a wide range of demands and needs. It accommodates an ambitious learning process, a wide range of subjects, a great diversity of student backgrounds, and many options to personalise the student's own learning journey. It offers a clear trajectory of progressive learning and various specialisation options. The build-up of methodology training is arranged in an integrated manner: starting with an overview embedded within a course addressing the main premises of the field of study, allowing for further depth in the second semester while also offering opportunities for tailoring to specific student needs. Some further observations regarding methodology training will be discussed below.

The differentiation between core electives, reserved for research master students, and electives, shared with one-year master students, strikes a balance between focus and breadth, the panel concluded. The core electives allow for specialisation and a focus on research, while the electives offer the opportunity to mix with a larger group of students, broadening their horizons and opening up the classroom to new voices and perspectives. The core courses are positively evaluated by the students and change annually, keeping the topics and examples used fresh, varied and directly linked to the staff's ongoing research. The panel wondered whether the core course introducing Area Studies could be opened to students from other Area Studies programmes at the Faculty, as it offers such a great chance for interregional and interdisciplinary comparison, crossover and discussion. It learned that additional requirements are set for the research master students in the electives shared with one-year master students. These requirements are communicated in the course descriptions. Research master students mentioned that they considered the additional requirements in shared electives very transparent. They found the course descriptions for the shared electives with one-year master students less clear, especially in comparison to those for the core electives. The panel believes that this deserves some attention.

The panel noted that the Programme Board and staff strive for continuous improvement of the curriculum contents and offering. An example is the awareness that more attention needs to be paid to the ethical responsibilities that students have as scholars, including issues related to working in the field such as informed consent. The programme is considering incorporating these topics in *Methodologies in the Social Sciences and Humanities*. The panel recommends searching for another way of incorporating these topics. Technically, *Methodologies* is not a mandatory study element in the programme, although virtually all research master students in Middle Eastern Studies register for this module. It may be more sensible to raise these issues as part of the preparation for fieldwork and/or thesis instead.

Another reason to opt for an alternative solution is that students consider *Methodologies in the Social Sciences and Humanities* as very challenging. They find its syllabus dense and the workload required very high. In conversation with the panel, they indicated that some of them had struggled to complete the module in time. Staff members acknowledged that the students had to work very hard during the programme and in this course in particular. In their view, this was not a cause for concern: the students lived up to the challenge and passed the courses with flying colours. The students also mentioned that they considered the module very broad: it tries to cover all potential methods for research in Area Studies without paying attention to their specific needs. The panel is aware that the students are actively encouraged to follow electives in methods that fit their personal learning demands. Once they have identified the methodology necessary for their further training, this is again implemented tailored to their needs in the rest of their individual study trajectory, guaranteeing an integrated approach to methodology training. Nevertheless, the programme is advised to assess the way in which methodology training is currently implemented in the programme; even though it is well laid out, there may be alternative ways to tailor to the students' individual needs while also giving them an overview of the available approaches and methodologies.

In terms of elective options, the panel concluded that the range is impressive. It observed that research in the Middle East at Leiden is currently often country-based, which is related in its view to being part of a very specialist department that covers a broad geographical range of research areas: the teaching is rightly connected to ongoing research and to the staff's expertise, but the niche areas are often served by only one or two staff members. The students mentioned that the electives shared with one-year master students sometimes offered challenges for their study planning; some courses were easily oversubscribed. As a result, research master students often opted to wait for the same course the next year instead of choosing alternative courses that were considered a lesser fit with their study aims and learning needs, potentially resulting in delays or an uneven study load. The panel understands that this issue is related to the programme being served by a specialist department with staff under pressure: doubling up courses may not easily be realised but could be a solution, as could reserving places for research master students and closely managing students' alternative options and study plans to avoid delays. These testimonies may partly explain some of the study delays noticed by the panel. The panel urges the Programme Board to look into this matter with the help of the Programme Committee, but considers it a matter of fine-tuning.

From closer study of a sample of modules, the panel concluded that they are highly relevant, directly connected to the programme's ILOs and assessment plans, and that the level is fully satisfactory for a research master's degree programme. Crossover initiatives between disciplines and areas within the Middle Eastern region occurred in the core courses in line with the programme's aims, which the panel appreciated. Fewer multidisciplinary connections and topics were found amongst the core electives and electives. The panel accepts this choice but wants to enter a plea for some further attention to be paid to conflict areas as part of the programme's offer, in distinct regions such as Turkey and the geopolitically important Gulf. The modules use a wide variety of teaching methods, which are also geared towards variety in the assignments and assessment forms. The panel was pleased to note that the students were asked to practise the skill of moderating discussions. The teaching is small-scale and clearly student-centred in its choice of methods and forms. Sometimes the students' contribution to the seminars could be further clarified in the course descriptions, by referring to their active participation through seminar preparation, discussion leadership, presentation of literature reviews, delivery of short papers etc. The students mentioned that not all course information was always up to date or easy to find. This is a point for attention that the Programme Board is already addressing, by taking staff and student input into account.

During the site visit, the panel discussed language and its place in the programme and curriculum with the programme representatives. All are in agreement that research heavily benefits from a proficiency in English combined with linguistic skills in the language(s) of the region of interest. For this reason, the programme allows students to take some foundational language courses (at the bachelor's advanced 400 level) as part of their electives (10 EC). After this initial allowance, language acquisition is an extracurricular activity. Staff members mentioned that the research master's programme may be a point of entry into acquiring more or new language skills, but they do not see it as the programme's main objective: language acquisition and training are more appropriate for the bachelor's level and/or PhD level in their view. This is also part of the wider university's viewpoint; the programme is bound by regulations that stipulate that language training is not considered a main task for a master's programme. The panel follows the programme's rationale, but advises the programme to make this position very clear to applicants in order to avoid disappointment.

Going abroad and fieldwork

The students appreciate the flexibility provided by the two routes offered in their second year, allowing them to go abroad or to stay in Leiden. The panel found that all instructions and procedures for ensuring the quality of the fieldwork are in place. The students are responsible for arranging their own fieldwork in agreement with their supervisor and under his/her guidance. Often a local supervisor will be involved for the day-to-day supervision. Prior to the start, the students' proposal must be approved by the Board of Examiners. During the fieldwork, they send a progress report to their supervisor at least every three weeks, unless otherwise agreed. Upon return, they submit a fieldwork report of approximately 7500 words. These arrangements are suitable in the panel's view. It was also highly appreciative of the inclusive nature of the programme. Students with limited financial means could apply for

scholarships that support the fieldwork, creating a more level playing field with students from richer backgrounds. The students mentioned that during the Covid-19 pandemic, the staff reacted quickly and adequately to the new circumstances. Alternative projects were formulated that allowed the students either to change their fieldwork into a digital form or to take an alternative Leiden route. The panel heard that fulfilling the ILOs was closely safeguarded with all these alternatives.

The students write their fieldwork proposals in the research master Middle Eastern Studies as an ungraded assignment; it requires a pass for the student to be able to conduct the fieldwork as an assignment or course outcome, while not being officially included in the curriculum. In other research master's programmes at the Faculty, the preparation for fieldwork is usually incorporated in a dedicated course on proposal writing and/or thesis preparation. The panel acknowledges that in the current curriculum design of the programme, there is no obvious opportunity to integrate such a course without sacrificing some elective space. Nevertheless, there may be an opportunity to integrate this assignment with some aspects now addressed in the thesis workshop and to bring the thesis workshop forward in the programme. This would also give the students an opportunity to reflect upon publication, the importance of time scheduling and PhD career planning at an earlier stage in their studies, which may address some of their wishes regarding a more clearly laid-out academic mentoring programme.

Guidance and support

The panel learned that communication and guidance had improved, partly in response to suggestions made by the last assessment panel and partly due to student requests and input. The students are now systematically and constructively questioned about their research and career interests during their admission interview. Upon arrival in the programme, they are linked to a mentor in their area of interest. Together with their mentor, they design a study plan for the full two years, including fieldwork or applying for a study abroad. Students wanting to go on fieldwork are also encouraged to follow methods courses that may be relevant for their upcoming fieldwork. These arrangements seem to have addressed earlier concerns and student experiences. The supervisory arrangements seem sound to the panel; the expectations are clearly described. The students indicated they regard the guidance and oral feedback provided by their supervisors as of good quality during the thesis trajectory and fieldwork.

The panel also noted that the programme acted upon earlier plans to improve guidance in the programme as a whole. The mentor system seems to function well, as it heard from both students and staff during the visit. In addition to these formal lines of guidance, the students spoke highly of the Study Coordinator, who was very easily contacted and who was always willing to answer questions or refer students to the right person or department. Administratively, some hurdles were acknowledged: the IT system was mentioned, as was the website that did not always contain the latest or most transparent information. The students felt that the aim to guide them towards a professional career was only visible on paper and not truly realised in the programme. This relates to the previously mentioned difficulties experienced in including research internships, but also to the organised Faculty events that they did not really feel addressed their needs. The panel concluded that career guidance continues to be a point for attention. It appreciates, however, the programme's attempts to create more networking events and an academic mentoring programme, especially with regards to preparing applications for PhD programmes, both in Europe and in the US.

In addition, the students mentioned that they considered the university support systems difficult to access (in particular, counselling). Although this is beyond the direct control of the programme, the panel heard that the teaching staff personally tried to help the students in these instances. At the same time, it also noted that this often was outside the staff's comfort zone: staff felt that they were sometimes overtasked, especially when dealing with personal circumstances related to mental challenges. To the panel, this combined evidence suggests that there is a need for investment in the accessibility of counselling services at the Faculty and/or University level. Both staff and students would benefit.

Staff and research environment

The panel considered the staff teaching the programme to be motivated and committed to their students. They meet all formal professional requirements in terms of their English proficiency. The programme is taught by four professors, two senior university lecturers and nine lecturers; four staff members who have either a status as lecturer or a research-based appointment at the university are also involved in teaching. Of the 19 staff members teaching in the programme, 15 are required to have a University Teaching Qualification (BKO). Currently, nine have obtained this (or an international equivalent). The panel notes that the programme is committed to supporting all members of staff in acquiring a BKO; the Programme Board is aware that these numbers are relatively low and discussed its plans to remedy this further during the site visit. The panel trusts the programme to address the matter in the coming years. Positive student feedback clearly underlines the didactic skills of the teachers involved in teaching in the programme and, hence, the panel considers this relatively low number of professional teaching qualifications not a matter that compromises the teaching-learning environment.

Amongst the teaching staff are historians, art historians, philologists, literary scholars, linguists, religious-studies specialists, anthropologists, sociologists, economists, political scientists, and experts on international relations. This covers all areas of expertise and the geographic regions addressed in the programme. Senior staff are also directly involved in the thesis supervision and teaching in the core modules and core electives, exposing the students to their expertise and experience with research. The majority of the teaching staff is affiliated with the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS). In June 2019, LIAS was assessed for the period of 2012-2017 using the Standard Evaluation Protocol. It was scored 'excellent/world leading' (1) for research quality. One staff member is based at the Leiden University Centre for Arts in Society (LUCAS). LUCAS was reviewed in 2018 for the period 2012-2017 and was assessed 'very good' (2) for research quality. These high scores reflect the excellent research environment offered to research master students and testify to the staff members' research credentials and excellent international reputation.

The students were appreciative of their teachers and the chance to work with specialists who could familiarise them with ongoing research projects, offering new insights into academic debate and opening up opportunities. During the pandemic, the research staff were asked to work from home. The students indicated that the research staff were still sufficiently accessible by digital means, even more so in the Covid-19 circumstances. Research master students still followed most of their contact hours in class due to their low numbers. In some specific cases, hybrid teaching was introduced to meet personal circumstances and/or demands.

Leiden University offers an excellent infrastructure for Middle Eastern Studies, which stimulates the students' academic practice. They have access to excellent library facilities, including digital and print collections and the world-famous Oriental Manuscripts department. These collections were expanded in recent years by the addition of the collections of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV). The students are also pleased with the working space these library services offer; they praised the public reading rooms and collective study areas available. They may also attend regular seminars, national and international conventions, and other events relevant to Middle Eastern Studies. These options could be better advertised, the panel heard.

The panel noted that some aspects of the research environment are under pressure, in particular due to the loss of the chair in Turkish history and tensions experienced within LIAS. To the current panel, these issues are only relevant in terms of their bearing on the teaching-learning environment. In terms of its academic quality, the panel has no concerns: the staff are experienced, have designed a very strong curriculum for talented students, and provide good guidance. It considers the teaching-learning environment to be under pressure, however. The students are concerned about their teachers' workload and complained in the period of assessment about late and/or meagre feedback in writing. As discussed below (see Standard 3), this may be related to the division of work amongst LIAS staff members with regards to the thesis assessment. Combined with the high workload professed by staff members, these examples signal that LIAS and the programmes associated with it are still vulnerable. The panel wants to commend the staff members involved in teaching this research master's programme: even under strain, they

managed to create a challenging and exciting place of study for their students. It emphasises the importance of the University's and Faculty's ongoing support and care given to LIAS and its staff members within the available means as it was assured by all involved.

Considerations

The panel considers the teaching-learning environment of the research master's Middle Eastern Studies programme to be of good quality. The programme offers a challenging curriculum with sufficient choice in electives and available research expertise. The course offering represents an impressive range of specialist knowledge, and the module contents are highly relevant, up-to-date and a good reflection of the programme's multidisciplinary aims. To highlight additional crossover points between subregions in the field, the panel suggests exploring whether conflict areas could be introduced as part of the elective options. All formal requirements for a research master's programme are met: methodology training and ethical aspects of research are addressed both separately and as an integral part of core modules. The students independently fulfil the full research cycle in their thesis or combined thesis and fieldwork. Career preparation for academia is addressed as part of the programme, but may benefit from being addressed earlier in the curriculum – perhaps in combination with a more formalised preparation for fieldwork and combined with the preparation for the thesis trajectory. Additionally, methodology training may benefit from a fresh approach. The panel noted that the programme is keenly aware of the continuous need for improvement of key elements of its training and has acted upon earlier suggestions. It therefore fully trusts the programme to act upon student feedback in this matter with the help of the programme committee.

The teaching-learning environment is challenging. The students are offered many opportunities to mix: they follow core courses and core electives with other research master students and share other electives with one-year master students. This offers a dynamic and international classroom setting that allows for changing perspectives and approaches to the curriculum contents. The achievement level and research-oriented focus of the programme are carefully monitored in the combined course offer. The admission criteria for the programme are adequate and succeed in attracting talented students to the programme. Extended collaboration with partner institutions may further enrich this multicultural classroom experience. The panel endorses the programme's choice of English as its language of instruction and the English programme name. Both are considered necessary in terms of creating a suitable teaching-learning environment for achieving the programme's academic aims. Formal communication channels (website, IT services), however, may need improvement to better serve the students.

The available facilities are of a high standard, as are the quality and expertise of the staff teaching the programme. Staff members are active researchers of excellent reputation, as underlined by the very good rating of both the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and Leiden University Centre for Arts in Society (LUCAS), and hence well-placed to guide students towards a research career. The students are positive and praise the staff for their commitment and their expertise. The staff's teaching abilities are clearly of the necessary standard and receive glowing feedback from the students. Nevertheless, the staff's formal teaching qualifications are a point for improvement. In the panel's view, the relative low numbers of formal teaching qualifications are not compromising the current teaching quality. The panel considers the issue a matter of professional development. Student guidance in the programme has improved since the last assessment in response to the suggestions made and now seems to function well, and was also of the required quality during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Study Coordinator in particular deserves high praise. The panel ascertained that the programme supports its students to the best of its abilities. Nevertheless, the programme also needs some help: the panel urges the Faculty and University to invest in its counselling services, as this specialised type of student support should not rest on the shoulders of the teaching staff. It explicitly wants to emphasise its appreciation for the staff's continuous efforts to maintain such high standards, creating a valuable and high-quality research programme with a good teaching-learning environment in a difficult period for the humanities as a discipline.

Conclusion

Research 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 and system of assessment*

Assessment for the research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies is embedded within the regulations and shared assessment practices of the Faculty of Humanities. The Faculty uses one assessment framework for all programmes, which sets out the established procedures. Together with the programme-specific rules and regulations for the Board of Examiners and the programme-specific assessment plan, both annually revised and updated, this framework forms the backbone for the assessment practices within the programme. The panel concluded that the policies and added regulations and assessment plan are complete and effective in providing transparency and reliability of assessment. The Faculty also introduced a standard online evaluation form for the thesis assessment. This adds to the uniformity and transparency of assessment for all programmes under its remit, creating a solid system of assessment.

At the course level, the teachers are assigned a central role in assuring the quality of assessment; as experts, they know the requirements of the relevant fields. The design of assessments is peer-reviewed and regularly evaluated. The panel concluded that the programme's testing policy is balanced on the basis of its study of the programme's assessment plan. It combines formative and summative testing, and assignments gradually increase in length and complexity based on the principles of structural alignment. Knowledge acquisition and application are continuously assessed in this way, as are academic and communication skills, resulting in a structured learning path for students to develop their knowledge and skills to the advanced master's level required. As a rule, the requirements for assessments are transparent, reliable and adequate, as are the assessments, as the panel found in its study of the documentation and examples of assessment. It also ascertained that research skills and ethics are tested in an appropriate manner and noted that the students complete the full research cycle in their thesis trajectories. During the Covid-19 pandemic, assessment and feedback practices at the programme did not fundamentally change, apart from the introduction of an oral presentation of research ideas and findings to support their thesis proposal to some staff members. This ensured that the students practise defending research ideas and gathering sufficient support from multiple staff members for their research project.

For the vast majority of the courses that form part of the programme, the assessment takes place through a combination of oral presentations and written assignments (essays, papers, fieldwork report, etc.). These methods are well-embedded in the programme and are considered suitable by the panel to test the students' abilities, skills and knowledge at the desired research master's level. In terms of variety of testing methods, the panel suggests adding peer-review exercises, article writing, abstract writing and group presentations. The students are satisfied with the feedback on their work, which they receive both in writing and orally. The panel was pleased to note that the practice of peer-feedback is part of the formative module assessment. In its view, the combination of peer-feedback and feedback by highly experienced teaching and research staff underpins the programme's ambition to stimulate independent thinking and multitudes of perspectives, especially in the international student groups.

Students of the Middle Eastern Studies research master's programme share some modules with students from the one-year master's programme in Middle Eastern Studies. These courses mainly focus on the acquisition of academic knowledge and certain skills. The panel learned that assessment forms in these courses partly overlap for the programmes, but that extra requirements are in place for the research master students. They are expected to process more material and to highlight and address theoretical and methodological issues as part of their assignments. The panel agrees with this practice, yet is aware that some other programmes under the Faculty of Humanities' remit do not set additional requirements for modules shared between one-year and research master programmes. This variety of approaches within the Faculty, and perhaps within the University, may create confusion and a level of

ambiguity in the expectations raised regarding the attainment level for students. Hence, communication to research master students is key regarding expectations, assessment criteria and course objectives. Without wanting to blaze a trail for either approach, the panel suggests that all programmes associated with the Faculty of Humanities – including the Middle Eastern Studies research master's programme – discuss their approach and learn from each other's practices.

Thesis assessment and the examination of fieldwork

The theses are assessed by two examiners, who independently fill in an assessment form and assign a grade. The first examiner is also the supervisor, the second examiner is only involved in the assessment as a reader. Afterwards, they calibrate their findings and agree on a final grade, for which substantiation is formulated on a third form. The third form with the justification of the grade is handed to the students. If the assessors cannot agree, and/or their assessments diverge by more than 2.0 points, a third reader is assigned. The panel approves this procedure and states that this safeguards the independence of the assessment, while also guaranteeing transparency.

The panel noted that in some cases, the dialogue between the examiners was missing on this third form, making it harder for the students and external assessors to follow the reasoning for assigning the final grade. Notwithstanding this observation, it considered the feedback on the thesis assessment forms to be lucid and sufficiently detailed. It noted that some examiners were more critical than others. This may not be important in itself, but it is vital in terms of feedback because a critical approach often resulted in very useful suggestions for further improvement. In discussion with the staff members, the panel heard that there were internal issues with the assignment of second examiners. This was partly due to workload pressures within LIAS; some teachers are allocated a high number of theses 'by chance' due to their apparent availability, without actually having the time. Also, the variety and high degree of specialisation in Area Studies could lead in some cases to second examiners feeling that a certain topic is outside their own expertise, leaving them slightly unsure about their marking. The Programme Board and Board of Examiners are aware of these issues and are trying to resolve the situation. They assured the panel that they take the matter, and the panel's remarks regarding feedback, very seriously.

The panel concluded that the thesis assessment procedures are transparent and, aside from the sometimes meagre substantiation, the assigned marks were reasonable: the occasional lack of thorough feedback does not appear to have affected the quality of the grading. It wants to encourage the staff to make use of the full range of the grading scale in their marking practices; first-class work may in exceptional cases be awarded the highest possible mark. Currently, 9.0 seems to be the cut-off point, and in an international context, this may create confusion and a misinterpretation of the students' abilities and results. There is still some room for minor improvements. The panel suggests tailoring the thesis assessment form more directly to the extra criteria for a research master's programme and creating a better fit with the programme's ILOs. For example, a qualitative reflection on the publishability of the thesis (at least parts of it) could be included, with feedback and/or advice on the format and prospective platforms/media/journals. This would make the ILO dedicated to the level of publishable quality of the thesis (ILO II.5) explicit, while also helping students on their way towards the publication of their research. The panel also strongly advises upholding the word limit of 30,000 words (with a stringently defined allowance for overrunning) as a strict criterion for grading and, potentially, awarding distinctions (e.g. cum laude) as this will, in many cases, force students to write more succinctly and improve the presentation of their findings.

The students who go on fieldwork usually use the data collected abroad in their theses. For this reason, the fieldwork is assessed as an examination. The Leiden supervisor, usually also the thesis supervisor, is responsible for the assessment. Assessment is based on two elements: 1. The students' fieldwork report of c. 7500 words, submitted upon their return to Leiden, and 2. their progress reports, submitted at least every three weeks from the field unless agreed otherwise. The panel was pleased to note that fieldwork reports also contain a reflection on the problems encountered in the field and an evaluation of the value of the collected data, and that the process is part of this evaluation. When fieldwork feeds into the thesis, the value and use of the collected data are independently assessed by the second thesis examiner. This seems fitting to the panel.

Board of Examiners

Assessment in the programme takes place under the supervision of the Board of Examiners (BoE) for the research master's programmes Middle Eastern Studies and Asian Studies, for the two master programmes in Asian Studies (60 EC; 120 EC) and for the bachelor's programmes Korean Studies and South and South-East Asian Studies. The BoE consists of six members: a chair, four staff members teaching in the various degree programmes under the BoE's remit, an external member specialised in educational assessment plus a secretary.

The panel is positive about the work of the BoE, which is considered a driving force resulting in the current quality of assessment within the programme. Assessment practices have clearly developed to a higher standard over the period of assessment, driven by the professionalisation of the entire Faculty and the dedication of the Board members to continuous improvement. The BoE adequately handles its legally mandated tasks. It approves the Course and Examination Regulations proposed by the programmes; approves individual study programmes if they deviate from the standard (for example, in the case of exemptions, internships, and education received during a study abroad period); approves fieldwork proposals; assesses requests for additional resits or replacement exams, monitors and addresses cases of academic misconduct, and finalises graduation records (including the awarding of cum laude degrees). To divide these duties, three members of the Board handle student requests and other current affairs. The other three members are responsible for quality monitoring of the assessment process. The three members who oversee current affairs meet once every two weeks. The three members who oversee quality monitoring meet four times a year. The full Board of Examiners meets two or three times a year.

As of September 2020, all Board members receive compensation for their work. However, they still face time constraints and deal with high work pressure, particularly at the end of the semester. The panel learned from the self-evaluation report that the Programme Boards and the Board of Examiners are working on a better distribution of the evaluation and monitoring tasks, trying to identify them more clearly when determining individual workloads. The staff are encouraged to make the relevant materials and course files for the BoE readily available in a more timely manner to help it manage its workload. This is the way forward in the panel's view. Based on discussions with the members of the BoE, the panel acknowledged the valuable contribution of the secretary in managing the BoE's workload. It thus encourages the Faculty to continue monitoring the workload, and in particular to pay attention to the continuous need for sufficient secretarial support.

Considerations

Based on its findings, the panel gained a positive impression of the system of assessment in the Middle Eastern Studies research master's programme, how it is implemented at the programme level and followed through by the staff members. The existing assessment policies and protocols in the programme are of good quality. As a result, the assessment is transparently organised and solidly grounded in shared Faculty practices. The panel concluded that the programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place. In its opinion, the Board of Examiners seemed a small entity for the many programmes under its remit, but it concluded that the members fulfil their formal tasks and responsibilities and work according to clear procedures. It praises the commitment to improvement by the Board members, and acknowledges their efforts towards creating a shared quality culture in the programmes under their remit. The panel encourages the Faculty to continue monitoring the Board of Examiners' workload, to continue communicating with the staff regarding the need for the timely delivery of course files, and to pay attention to the continuous need for sufficient secretarial support.

The assessment methods are considered suitable by the panel to test the students' abilities, skills and knowledge at the desired research master's level. In terms of variety of testing methods, some additional variety may be considered by including, for example, peer-review exercises, article writing, abstract writing and group presentations or other assignments challenging student involvement. The panel considers the programme's use of peer-feedback as part of the formative module assessment highly appropriate. The thesis assessment is generally lucid, and the grading of the theses is fair, in its view. In those cases in which fieldwork is part of a student's programme, it is adequately assessed with sufficient attention being paid to the student's individual learning path. In some cases,

the substantiation of the grading by both examiners could be improved. This is an area of attention for both the Programme Board and Board of Examiners, and related to the allocated workload of staff members. The students are satisfied with the feedback on their work, in particular with the oral feedback. The panel wants to encourage the staff to make use of the full range of the grading scale in their marking practices. It sees room for some minor improvements. The transparency of the assessment could be strengthened by the creation of a more detailed marking scheme for thesis assessment. In addition, the programme is advised to uphold and monitor a strict word limit policy for the thesis and to introduce a qualitative reflection on the publishability of the thesis (at least parts of it) on the assessment form for research master theses.

Conclusion

Research 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

For the research programme Middle Eastern Studies, fifteen theses were selected by the panel from a list containing all projects by students who graduated between 2015 and 2019. Two recent theses were added, to represent the work produced by graduates who finished in 2020. Based on the quality of the research included in this selection, the panel concluded that graduates of the degree programme attain the ambitious aims formulated in the intended learning outcomes. The high standards that may be expected from graduates of a research master's programme are convincingly met. The panel was positively impressed by the quality of the work and the variety in approaches and topics: from gender and queer studies, (geo)political topics to more historically oriented studies. Many geographical areas and the interplay between different areas were represented in the thesis sample: from Turkey to Syria, Iran to Morocco, and the interplay between Muslim countries in and beyond the Middle Eastern heartland. This wide spread of topics and approaches is in line with the available expertise among the Leiden staff of the programme. It reflects a good embeddedness of the students in a fruitful research environment and the opportunity for them to pursue their own research interests within this context.

In general, the theses offer original approaches and often foreground new topics relevant to current socio-political issues which are rarely, or have not yet been, studied. The presented research reflects pioneering work offering strong contributions to the existing body of knowledge in the field. In many cases, the panel praised the extensive archival research and independent fieldwork underpinning an original or compelling analysis. The sophisticated application of theory, well-considered methodology, lucid approach and excellent use of primary and secondary source material are considered very fruitful in some cases, as is the critical stance taken to previous studies. The panel also noted that some students faced severe obstacles during their research, for example as a result of the local bureaucracy. It praised the way in which students reacted to these circumstances, circumvented the hindrances and adapted their research while still making a valiant effort to address the original research aim. This is considered noteworthy, as it clearly demonstrates the students' ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The panel verified that some theses resulted in publications in article collections and/or peer-reviewed journals. It is convinced that the number of successful publications could rise if the theses were more succinct in presentation and orientation.

Some theses were less clear about the use of primary sources in the original languages or could have benefitted from a more extensive study of the regional literature. The style and the formulation of research questions were also points of attention in some theses, as was the balance between the use of theory and the analysis of research results. Some documentation was lacking, especially transcripts or recordings of interviews, in a few of the more anthropologically oriented studies. As a result, the research in these cases read more like the high-quality product of a journalist rather than an academic thesis. For academic publication, this omission would need to be amended. Notwithstanding these observations, these weaker theses still met the level expected for a master's degree and were

based on original research in line with the character and criteria for a research-oriented master's programme. Other ethnographic studies constituted a clear analysis based on astute observations and careful reflections on ethical and social aspects, but the presentation of these observations could in some instances be improved.

The panel ascertained that graduates of the programme make good use of the skills and knowledge acquired in their degree programme. In recent years, alumni obtained PhD positions at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies and at Leiden University. In terms of non-academic careers, graduates found research positions in the government as policy officers, moved into consultancy for well-established firms or found employment in the non-profit sector, for foundations such as Greenpeace. This track record, along with the enthusiasm of alumni for the programme and its staff, confirms the panel's positive assessment. It appreciates the programme's attempts to create more networking events and academic mentoring, especially with regards to preparing applications for PhD programmes, both in Europe and in the US.

Considerations

The panel verified that the graduates of the Middle Eastern Studies research master's programme convincingly demonstrate having achieved the intended learning outcomes at the required level. Their theses present original, lucid and often pioneering work that are true contributions to the field of study and embody the successful completion of an independent research cycle at the research master's level. The variety of topics and approaches covered clearly reflect the embeddedness of the students in a challenging environment that allows them to pursue their own interests, while also grounding the research in current lines of enquiry and debate. Many theses contain good leads for academic publication. In this way, the final projects lay the groundwork – and in some cases a very firm foundation – for further research at the PhD level and successful professional careers. This is also evidenced by the subsequent careers of graduates. Some successfully competed for PhD positions, while others are employed in consultancy, work for the government and at leading foundations.

Conclusion

Research 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 research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies as 'meets the standard'. It hereby took the additional aspects for research master's programmes as included in the *Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes* into account. Based on the NVAO decision rules regarding limited programme assessments, it therefore assesses the programme as 'positive'.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *research 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:

I. Knowledge and understanding

Graduates have and can show knowledge and understanding of relevant models and theoretical notions at a level typical of a master's student. They are capable of surpassing this level or deepening the knowledge and understanding and appear capable of contributing to the growth of knowledge or to its applicability, the latter most likely in a team of researchers.

1. a profound awareness of the current issues and research questions in the relevant disciplines and regional fields of the programme;
2. a thorough understanding of various theories and methodological approaches that are commonly used in research programmes in Middle Eastern Studies as well as in different related disciplines;
3. the ability to identify a theoretical framework suitable for addressing relevant problems and issues, with a particular sensitivity to the significance of 'the Middle East' in this regard;
4. advanced, up-to-date knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies appropriate to particular projects and locations;
5. sensitivity to the relationship between theory, method, place and language;
6. appropriate language skills to access sources in original languages, as relevant.

II. Application of knowledge and understanding

Graduates can apply knowledge and understanding and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to the field of study; they have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity.

1. the capacity to apply a theoretical or descriptive framework in conducting independent basic research in Middle Eastern Studies;
2. the capacity to deploy the theoretical and methodological tool-sets of at least one mainstream academic discipline;
3. the capacity to think critically and creatively about the parameters and origins of disciplinary tool-sets;
4. the ability to critically select, study and analyse literature relevant to the issues and problems presented by the curriculum and the research programmes in question;
5. the ability to independently formulate, perform and assess scientific research at a level suitable to preparing scientific publications;
6. sensitivity to the relationship between theory, method, place and language;
7. ability to deploy comparison as an analytical tool;
8. the fundamentals of research project management, such as framing the research, gathering data, articulating a thesis and ordering and presenting findings in oral and written form.

III. Making judgments

Graduates can formulate judgments on the basis of incomplete or limited information, taking into account the social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and understanding.

1. familiarity with the philosophy and ethics of Middle Eastern Studies research, and the limitations of individual research projects conducted in isolation;
2. sophisticated understanding of the stakes in the politics of knowledge and their relationship with the ethics of global citizenship.

IV. Communication

Graduates can clearly and unambiguously communicate conclusions and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

1. the capacity to report independently on relevant research which has been carried out according to current academic standards;
2. the ability to write scientific reports in English;
3. the ability to give persuasive oral presentations;
4. the ability to engage in the international academic debate.

V. Learning skills

Graduates have the learning skills to allow them to continue studies in a largely self-directed or autonomous manner.

1. The curiosity and eagerness to learn that is expected in any future research position, be it in an academic setting or in that of applied research, which are acquired through the training to develop autonomy and confidence in designing and conducting all stages of research.

APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

All core course electives are specifically designed for the research master's programme – these courses have regular taught versions for the one-year master's programme and the research master's programme.

Programme 2019-2020

Year 1	EC	Level
Common Core Course I: Critical Area Studies: Placing Your Research	10	600
Research Schools or Methodologies in the Social Sciences and Humanities	10	600
Core Elective Courses: select two or more of the following (alternatively students may opt to choose one or more (600-level) courses from one of the other Research Masters or from one of the research schools)	Total of 20	600
LIAS PhD Seminar: Canon and Culture	5	
LIAS PhD Seminar: Archives, Power and Memory	5	
Literature and Politics in the Persian-speaking World	10	
Material Culture, Memory and Commemoration along the Silk Roads in Central Asia	10	
The Middle East in the International Political Economy	10	
Modern Muslim Qur'an Interpretation	10	
International Relations of the Middle East and Asia	10	
Themes in Arabic Literature: Bandits and Outlaws	10	
War, Peace and Mass Media: The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Public Sphere	10	
LIAS PhD Seminar: Global Political Economy	5	
LIAS PhD Seminar: Text and Image	5	
Culture and Conquest: the Impact of the Mongols and their Descendants	10	
Muslims in a Global Context: Anthropological Approaches	10	
'Ulamā' in the Modern Muslim World	10	
Culture and Society in the Medieval Muslim World	10	
Power and Resistance in the Modern Middle East	10	
International Relations in the Middle East	10	
Elective Courses from one of the MA programmes: select two or more	20	-

Year 2	EC	Level
Fieldwork / Study Abroad	30	-
Thesis Writing Seminar	5	600
Thesis	25	600

APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE ONLINE VISIT

AS	Asian Studies
MES	Middle Eastern Studies
CAC	Classics and Ancient Civilizations
LAS	Latin American Studies
AfS	Africa Studies

Dates	Preparatory meetings	Participants
10 December 2020	Preparatory panel meeting (15:30-17:00)	Full panel
18 January 2021	Preparatory panel meeting (10:00-12:00; including office hour)	Full panel

Day 1: Wednesday, February 3

Area Studies & Classics and Ancient Civilizations, Faculty of Humanities

Starts at	Ends at	Activity	Participants	
08:30	09:45	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	Full panel	
09:45	10:00	Break		
10:00	10:30	Meeting with Faculty Board Humanities	Full panel	
10:30	11:00	Meeting with programme chairs FGW	Full panel	
11:00	11:15	Break		
11:15	11:45	<p>Meeting with Programme Board AS and MES</p> <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht)</p> <p>Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)</p>	<p>Meeting with Programme Board CAC</p> <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen)</p> <p>Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)</p>	Parallel sessions
11:45	12:15	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	Full panel	
12:15	13:15	Lunch		
13:15	13:30	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	Full panel	
13:30	14:15	<p>Meeting with staff AS and MES</p> <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht)</p> <p>Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)</p>	<p>Meeting with students CAC</p> <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen)</p> <p>Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)</p>	Parallel sessions
14:15	14:30	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	Full panel	
14:30	15:15	Meeting with students AS and MES	Meeting with staff CAC	Parallel sessions

		Panel: Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen) Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)	Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)	
15:15	15:30	Break		
15:30	17:00	Internal panel meeting AS, MES, CAC (panel only)		
17:00	17:45	Alumni AS, MES, CAC		
17:45	18:15	Internal panel meeting wrap up day 1/preparation day 2 (panel only)		

Day 2: Thursday, February 4

Latin American Studies & African Studies, Faculty of Humanities

Starts at	Ends at	Activity	Participants
09:00	09:15	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	
09:15	09:45	Meeting with Programme Board LAS Panel: Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht) Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen) Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)	Meeting with Programme Board AfS Panel: Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)
09:45	10:00	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	
10:00	10:45	Meeting with students LAS Panel: Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht) Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen) Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)	Meeting with staff AfS Panel: Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)
10:45	11:00	Break	
11:00	11:15	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	
11:15	12:00	Meeting with staff LAS Panel: Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht) Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)	Meeting with students AfS Panel: Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen) Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)

12:00	12:15	Internal panel meeting (panel only)		
12:15	13:15	Lunch		
13:15	14:00	Internal panel meeting (panel only)		Full panel
14:00	14:20	Meeting with all chairs + representatives BoE FGW - Fraud procedures - Faculty support - Quality assurance policies		Full panel
14:20	14:30	Internal deliberation (panel only)		Full panel
14:30	14:50	<p>BoE AS and MES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment strategies - Improvements/Changes - Appointment examiners - Final check diploma <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht)</p> <p>Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)</p>	<p>BoE CAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment strategies - Improvements/Changes - Appointment examiners - Final check diploma <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen)</p> <p>Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)</p>	Parallel sessions
14:50	15:10	<p>BoE LAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment strategies - Improvements/Changes - Appointment examiners - Final check diploma <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen)</p> <p>Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)</p>	<p>BoE AfS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment strategies - Improvements/Changes - Appointment examiners - Final check diploma <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent), Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg)</p> <p>Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)</p>	Parallel sessions
15:10	15:30	Break		
15:30	16:00	Internal panel meeting BoEs (panel only)		Full panel
16:00	16:45	Alumni LAS and AfS		Full panel
16:45	18:00	Internal panel meeting LAS, AfS (wrap up day 2) (panel only)		Full panel

Day 3: Friday, February 5
Archaeology, Faculty of Archaeology

Starts at	Ends at	Activity	Participants	
09:00	09:30	Final interview with management all programs / Faculty Board / academic directors of institutes FGW	Full panel	
09:30	10:00	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	Full panel	
10:00	10:45	Meeting with faculty management Archaeology + Programme Board + chair admission board and coordinator of studies	Full panel	
10:45	11:00	Break		
11:00	11:30	Meeting with students Archaeology	Full panel	
11:30	11:45	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	Full panel	
11:45	12:15	Meeting with staff Archaeology Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent), Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg), Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Munich) Notulist: Victor van Kleef, MA (Qanu)	Meeting with Board of Examiners Archaeology Panel: Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht) Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen) Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)	Parallel sessions
12:15	12:30	Internal panel meeting (panel only)	Full panel	
12:30	13:30	Lunch		
13:30	14:00	Presentation facilities/research opportunities Preparation: Film 3D tour FdA https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IL4bnpS4qo Panel: Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen) Notulist: Victor van Kleef, MA (Qanu)	Alumni Archaeology Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht) Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)	Parallel sessions
14:00	15:00	Internal panel meeting Archaeology (wrap up) (panel only)	Full panel	
15:00	15:15	Break		
15:15	15:45	Preparations final interview (panel only)	Full panel	
15:45	16:15	Final interview with Faculty management and programme FA	Full panel	
16:15	16:30	Break		
16:30	17:30	Deliberations panel, formulating preliminary findings and conclusions (panel only)	Full panel	
17:30	18:00	Feedback of preliminary findings FA / FGW	Full panel	

APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the online site visit, the panel studied seventeen theses and assessment forms of the research master's programme Middle Eastern Studies. The thesis selection consisted of 15 theses and their assessment forms for the programme, based on a provided list of graduates between 2018 and 2020 (out of list of 29 theses). In addition, the panel studied 2 theses that were completed in the second half of 2020 (out of a list of 5 theses). There are no specialisations to take into account. 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. Information on the selected theses is available from Qanu upon request.

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

Frameworks and documents pertaining earlier assessments

- NVAO Accreditation Framework 2018;
- Additional Criteria Research Master 2016;
- Assessment reports and Decisions NVAO for Research master's programmes Classics and Ancient Civilizations (2015), Middle Eastern Studies (2015), Asian Studies (2015), Archaeology (2015), Latin America Studies (2015 and 2017) and African Studies (2016).
- Review reports according to the Standard Evaluation Reports for the review period 2012-2017 for the African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL), Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS), Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL), Leiden University Institute for History (LUIH), Leiden University Institute for Philosophy (LUIP) and the Faculty of Archaeology.

Faculty Documents Faculty of Humanities (FGW)

- Guide to Teaching Quality FGW;
- Manual Board of Examiners FGW;
- Manual Programme Committees FGW;
- Quality Assurance of Assessment – in Dutch;
- Rules and Regulations of the Board of Examiners;
- Tips for Tests;
- Vision on Teaching and Learning: Learning @Leiden University.

Programme Documents Middle Eastern Studies

- Self-evaluation report (Spring 2020) and Programme Covid update (January 2021);
- Answers to preliminary questions as formulated by the panel prior to the digital site visit per programme;
- Opleidingskaart;
- Onderwijs- en Examenreglement 2019-2020 en 2020-2021;
- Annual reports Boards of Examiners;
- Annual reports Programme Board;
- Minutes meetings Opleidingscommissie
- Assessment plan (part I and II);
- NSE report 2019 (student evaluation);

Study materials Middle Eastern Studies (including examples of assessment) and evaluations for the following courses:

- Critical Area Studies (2018-2019 and 2019-2020)
- Methodologies in the Social Sciences and Humanities (2018-2019 and 2019-2020)