

Assessment report
Limited Framework Programme Assessment

Master Latin American Studies

University of Amsterdam

Contents of the report

1. Executive summary	2
2. Programme administrative information.....	5
3. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard	6
3.1 Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	6
3.2 Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	9
3.3 Standard 3: Student assessment.....	13
3.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	15
4. Overview of assessments	17
5. Recommendations	18
Appendix: Assessment process	19

1. Executive summary

In this executive summary, the panel presents the main considerations which led to the assessment of the quality of the Master Latin American Studies of the University of Amsterdam. The programme was assessed according to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands.

The organisation of the programme is appropriate. The integration into the Faculty of Humanities has been planned and executed well. The shortened duration and decreased study load of the programme have not led to any serious reduction of the programme quality.

Programme management adequately responded to the recommendations of the assessment panel, made during the previous assessment process.

The programme objectives, intended to educate students thematically and methodologically in Latin American studies and to allow students to qualify for academic or professional positions in this domain are sound and up to standard. The programme meets international requirements for Latin American Studies programmes. The programme is in the process of modifying its profile, incorporating a greater emphasis on the humanities to complement its traditional focus on social sciences. Although the panel welcomes this shift to greater interdisciplinarity, the panel advises programme management to be clearer about the programme's profile, in the sense that the focus remains primarily on social sciences perspectives although the programme is gradually giving more consideration to humanities perspectives.

The panel evaluates the programme's objectives to be research-intensive and of high academic quality, meeting the requirements for academic Master programmes. The panel has no doubts about the academic level achieved in this post-initial or postgraduate Master programme, but it advises programme management to be more precise in communicating what this status implies and what students may expect, when taking the programme.

The programme's objectives have been translated well into the programme's intended learning outcomes. The intended learning outcomes of the programme are in line with the programme objectives and meet the requirements for the Master level, as specified by the Dublin descriptors for this level.

The reasons programme management has given for the English name of the programme and for English as the language of instruction are valid.

The rising number of incoming students and the diversity of the student body in terms of nationalities, level of experience and disciplinary backgrounds are positive features of the programme.

The entry requirements and admission procedures are appropriate. The screening of applications by the programme selection committee is thorough. The entry requirements are suitable for the various categories of applicants. The panel regards the research plan that applicants with a Master degree from disciplines outside of the programme domain or a Bachelor degree are required to submit as a highly effective means of selecting suitable students. The panel welcomes the pre-master programme required for students from universities of applied sciences. The panel recommends, nevertheless, that programme management should consider interviewing all applicants from humanities backgrounds to inform them about the social sciences focus of the programme and to refer them to additional reading material to prepare for the programme.

The curriculum meets the programme's intended learning outcomes and is coherently structured. As the Tutorial course prepares for the Master thesis, the panel recommends that programme management ensure the same material cannot be assessed twice, in coursework for the Tutorial course and the Master thesis. The curriculum enables students to acquire appropriate academic and research skills. The panel recommends, however, that the programme address research methods and techniques in the humanities more thoroughly. The panel advises programme management to look to teachers from other programmes of the Faculty of Humanities to bring additional expertise into the programme.

The programme staff are an excellent group of lecturers. The lecturers' educational capabilities are up to standard, as all of them are BKO-certified. CEDLA has a strong research focus, ensuring the research qualities of the lecturers. Although additional staff to be recruited will help relieve the workload burden on staff, the panel advises management to remain attentive to staff workload and to recruit the staff needed to accommodate the broadening of the programme's scope as well as the increase in student numbers.

The educational concept and study methods of the programme correspond to the course goals and course contents. Student guidance is adequate both through the formal tutoring plan and through the informal tutoring mechanisms of the stimulating environment in CEDLA. The panel advises that this distinctive environment and atmosphere of the programme be maintained, even in view of the greater challenges posed by expansion of the programme. Both the student success rates and drop-out rates are very favourable. The panel notes that students are given plenty of warning about deadlines and the material to be submitted at these deadlines.

The measures taken by programme management both for education and for examinations and assessments during the COVID pandemic are sound, enabling students to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the programme. Programme management made serious efforts to counter the effects of the COVID pandemic on students.

The examination and assessment procedures in the programme are adequate, and are in line with University and Faculty rules and regulations. Although the responsibilities and activities of the Graduate School Examinations Board are up to standard, the panel suggests to complement its role by organising quality assurance of examinations and assessments at a more local level. Starting in

September 2022, the Faculty-wide Assessment Committee will assist the Examinations Board and will systematically review the examinations of this and the other programmes of the Faculty.

The examination methods are appropriately diversified and correspond to the course contents and course goals. The panel advises that test matrices be adopted, to ensure that all course goals are covered in assessment. The panel also recommends that the programme introduce grade descriptors (rubrics) for both individual courses and the Master theses, to provide an even stronger basis for marking and to communicate expectations to students more effectively.

The quality and the level of the examinations of the courses, are up to standard. The examinations test adequately the goals of the courses.

The procedures for the assessment of the Master theses, involving two examiners, are adequate. The Master thesis assessment form identifies relevant assessment criteria with suitable weighting. The assessment forms for the Master theses are filled out conscientiously. The written comments on these forms by the programme examiners are generally of high quality and provide useful feedback for students. The panel welcomes the provision to students of access to the final assessment form, which shows the combined assessments of both examiners. The panel recommends, however, that both examiners fill out separate initial assessment forms and document these assessments, to make the assessment process more transparent.

The Master theses match the intended learning outcomes and showcase the level of independence and originality of students. The panel evaluates the marks given by the programme examiners as being fair. The panel agrees with these marks. No Master theses were found to be unsatisfactory by the panel. Although the academic level of the theses meets the requirements, in some of the Master theses the theoretical discussions and the methodological sections could have been more extensive.

The efforts of programme management to inform students about the labour market and to prepare them for their future careers are relevant and productive.

Having conducted the assessment of the Master Latin American Studies of University of Amsterdam, the panel assesses this programme as meeting all four standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, and consequently judges the programme to be positive in terms of the NVAO Assessment framework. Therefore, the panel recommends NVAO to continue the accreditation of this programme.

Rotterdam, 17 March 2022

Prof. A. Varley PhD
(panel chair)

W. Vercouteren MSc
(secretary)

2. Programme administrative information

Name programme in CROHO: Master Latin American Studies
Orientation, level programme: Academic Master
Grade: MA
Number of credits: 60 EC
Specialisations: N.A.
Location: Amsterdam
Mode of study: Full-time (language of instruction: English)
Registration in CROHO: 21PK-75146 (from September 2020 onwards)

Name of institution: University of Amsterdam
Status of institution: Government-funded University
Institution's quality assurance: Approved

3. Findings, considerations and assessments per standard

3.1 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

From the organisational perspective, the Master Latin American Studies programme is one of the Master programmes of the Faculty of Humanities of University of Amsterdam. This programme, like all of the Master programmes of the Faculty of Humanities, is part of the Graduate School of Humanities. Previously, the programme was offered by the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA). Some years ago, CEDLA was integrated into the Faculty of Humanities to become one of the capacity groups within the Department of History, European Studies and Religion Studies of this Faculty. Subsequently, a process of transition started to integrate the programme into the Faculty. In September 2020, this process was completed and resulted in the programme duration changing from 15 months to 12 months and the study load of the programme being reduced from 75 EC to 60 EC. The reason for changing the duration and the study load was to bring the programme in line with the other Master programmes of the Faculty of Humanities. Within the programme, the programme director and the master coordinator are responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme. The education secretary of the programme takes up the role of student advisor. The Programme Committee, composed of both lecturers and students, advises programme management on the quality of the programme. The Examinations Board of the Graduate School of Humanities monitors and assures the quality of the examinations and assessments of this as well as the other Master programmes of the Faculty of Humanities.

The panel was informed about the recommendations of the assessment panel in the previous assessment process, six years ago, and about the follow-up by programme management on these recommendations. Firstly, the entry requirements for incoming students, who show deficiencies in knowledge of or skills in social sciences research, have been made more strict. Secondly, more intensive training is provided to improve the academic writing skills of students, especially in the first two courses of the curriculum. Thirdly, the integration of the programme into the Faculty of Humanities offered the opportunity to strengthen the quality assurance of the programme as a whole and, in particular, the quality assurance of examinations and assessments in the programme.

The Master Latin American Studies of University of Amsterdam is a one-year (60 EC) academic Master programme in the field of area studies, geared towards the study of Latin America. The main objectives of the programme are for students to acquire academic knowledge of and insights into social transformations in Latin American societies, to gain thorough general knowledge in social sciences and humanities within the programme domain, to obtain knowledge and skills to do research independently, and to have the skills to collaborate in multidisciplinary contexts. Students are also trained to do practical field research in Latin America, adhering to academic and ethical

principles and standards. The integration of the programme into the Graduate School of Humanities has strengthened its interdisciplinary profile and shifted the focus from the study of social processes to include the study of cultural and historical processes. Phenomena and processes are studied from the social sciences perspective and/or the humanities perspective.

In a formal sense, the programme is one of the post-initial or postgraduate academic Master programmes within the Dutch system of higher education. This programme is in particular meant for students who want to become specialists in this domain, at the same time as acquiring academic qualifications to proceed to positions in which academic research knowledge and skills on Latin America are required or beneficial.

The programme is well-positioned in the (inter)national context within this domain. Within the Netherlands, the contents of the programme are similar to those of the (non post-initial) Master Latin American Studies of Leiden University, with the difference of offering one integrated track as opposed to three separate tracks in Leiden. The programme may be compared to programmes in this domain in the United Kingdom and in the United States. The programme distinguishes itself from most of these programmes by including empirical research in Latin America as one of the mandatory components.

The objectives of the programme have been translated into the programme's intended learning outcomes. These include intended learning outcomes on academic knowledge and skills, research skills and communicating and reporting skills in the programme field of study. The intended learning outcomes also specify students being able to connect the knowledge and skills acquired with social issues and students knowing how to reflect on the implications of the knowledge and skills gained in relevant institutional contexts. Programme management drafted a table from which the matching of the intended learning outcomes to the Dublin descriptors for Master programmes may be inferred.

The name of the programme is in English, in order to attract foreign students and to allow them to enrol in the programme. The English name has been chosen upon recommendation of the NVAO panel in the assessment process of 2011. Since the change of the programme name to English, the number of students from countries in Latin America or from other countries in Europe or other countries has risen considerably, making up a large part of the student body. The language of instruction of the programme is English, to allow international students to take courses in the programme. The use of English has enriched the programme, making the classroom international, interdisciplinary and multicultural. English in the name of the programme and English as the language of instruction are consistent with the language policies of the Faculty of Humanities.

Considerations

The panel regards the organisation of the programme to be appropriate. The panel evaluates the process of integration of the programme into the Faculty of Humanities as having been well-planned and well-executed. In the panel's eyes, the adaptations of the programme in terms of shortened duration and decreased study load have been managed responsibly and have not led to any serious reduction of the quality of the programme. Programme management and staff reported

that they had found ways to manage the programme more efficiently, compensating for the changes in the duration and the study load.

The panel notes programme management has responded adequately to the recommendations of the assessment panel, made during the previous assessment process. These recommendations have been appropriately followed up on by programme management.

The programme's objectives specify educating students thematically and methodologically in Latin American studies and allowing students to qualify for academic or professional positions in this domain. Therefore, the panel considers the programme objectives to be sound and up to the standards expected for a Master-level programme in this domain. The programme meets international requirements for Latin American Studies programmes. The panel notes the programme to be in the process of modifying its profile, incorporating a greater emphasis on the humanities to complement its traditional social sciences focus. Although the panel welcomes the shift to greater interdisciplinarity, it advises programme management to be clearer about the programme's profile, in the sense that the focus remains primarily on social sciences perspectives although the programme is gradually giving more consideration to the humanities.

The panel evaluates the programme's objectives to be research-intensive and of high academic quality, meeting the requirements for academic Master programmes. The panel has no doubts about the academic level achieved in this post-initial or postgraduate Master programme, but it advises programme management to be more precise in communicating what this status implies and what students may expect, when taking the programme.

The programme objectives have been translated well into the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The intended learning outcomes are in line with the programme objectives and meet the requirements for the Master level, as specified by the Dublin descriptors for this level.

The panel endorses the English name of the programme, as it regards the reasons given by programme management for this name as valid. The choice for English as the language of instruction for the programme is seen by the panel as well-considered and plausible.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 1, Intended learning outcomes.

3.2 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

The number of students enrolling in the programme has increased gradually over the last seven years. While in the years 2015 and 2016 the intake was on average 13/14 incoming students per year, the intake decreased in the years 2017 to 2019 to an average of 7 students per year but increased again to an average of 20 incoming students per year in 2020 and 2021. Students come from different countries around the globe. About 50 % of the incoming students are from Latin America. In the last three years, about 40 % of the incoming students had Master degrees as their prior education, while about 60 % of them had Bachelor degrees.

To be admitted, applicants for the programme have to fill out the online application form and have to submit the application file, including their resume, a letter of motivation with research idea, and the transcript of grades obtained in their prior education. To be eligible for admission, applicants are required to demonstrate verifiable knowledge and experience in Latin American studies and to be proficient in English and Spanish (or Portuguese) to be able to study the required literature and to carry out fieldwork. Applicants having Master degrees in social sciences or humanities are admitted upon submitting the application file. Students with Master degrees in other disciplines or with Bachelor degrees additionally have to present a research plan (about 2,500 words) as part of their application. The research plan should include, among other things, the research problem, the research question, the connection to relevant academic literature, and the methodological strategy to address the research problem. If applicants fail to provide a research plan of satisfactory level, they are requested to study additional material and to submit an updated plan. Students coming from universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands have to take the pre-master programme, which consists of courses of the Latin American Studies specialisation of the Bachelor Spanish and Latin American Studies programme. Applicants are admitted upon the review of their application by the programme selection committee, being composed of the programme coordinator and one of the lecturers. Students are discouraged from enrolling, when topics they want to study are outside of the areas of expertise of the staff. These students may also consider co-supervision with experts from outside the programme.

Programme management presented the programme assessment matrix, showing the correspondence of the intended learning outcomes of the programme and the goals of the courses. As has been said, the curriculum takes one year and carries 60 EC of study load. The curriculum starts with two courses, Introduction to Latin American Studies (6 EC) and Latin American Studies: Deepening the Debates (6 EC). These courses are introductory, thematic courses, meant to provide students with knowledge and insights about the programme domain and to create a common basis for all students. In the second block, students select one out of two thematic courses (both 6 EC), choosing between the courses Socio-Environmental Changes in Latin America: Power, Participation and Governance or Approaches to Popular Culture in Latin America: Researching

Heritage and Worldmaking. After these courses, students take the Tutorial course (6 EC). They may also opt for an elective inside or outside of CEDLA or an internship. The Tutorial course is tailor-made, offering topics in which students have a particular interest. Small groups of students with similar interests take the course together. The topics addressed in this course are mostly related to the topics students want to research in their Master theses. In the course the topics are conceptualised and tend to be covered more broadly than needed for the Master thesis itself. In the Interdisciplinary Methods course (6 EC), students do practical assignments on research methods and techniques and draft the research proposal for fieldwork and the Master thesis. The fieldwork design has to be approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Humanities. Students are informed about the ethical and safety issues related to the research and the fieldwork. In the fieldwork period (12 EC), students perform their research independently. Students are required to submit two assignments: the mid-fieldwork report and final fieldwork report. The first report provides student's reflection on the work progress. The second report is to include the description of the dataset, preliminary findings and the preliminary outline of the Master thesis. The curriculum ends with the writing of the Master thesis (18 EC), the final project of the programme.

A total of eight lecturers are involved in the programme. Five lecturers are regular staff, and three lecturers are collaborating full professors of special endowed chairs. The regular staff members include one full professor, one associate professor and three assistant professors. All of the lecturers hold PhD degrees and all of them have obtained the University Teaching Qualification (in Dutch: BKO). Staff members are experienced scholars, doing research in their fields, speaking at international conferences and publishing in academic journals. Lecturers meet regularly to discuss the programme. In some courses, two lecturers work together. Students are positive about the lecturers, finding them to be very knowledgeable and helpful. The staff workload is very high. In case of shortages of tenured (research) staff, hiring of temporary lecturers is always facilitated to cover the teaching. Programme management is working with the Department of History, European Studies and Religion Studies and the Amsterdam School for Regional, Transnational and European Studies (ARTES), both of the Faculty of Humanities, to maintain sufficient levels of research staff.

From the educational perspective, students are given the opportunity to build up their knowledge and skills gradually throughout the programme. They proceed from acquiring reproductive and conceptual knowledge and understanding in the beginning of the programme to mastering evaluative, designing, analytical and application knowledge and skills in the remainder of the programme. Students are trained to take their learning processes into their own hands. As the diversity of students in the classroom is broad, students learn to adapt to international or intercultural differences. Students experience diversity and the international classroom to be enriching. The teaching methods in the programme include, among others, lectures, class discussions, presentations and so-called QARQs, which are summaries of scientific articles by students. In the Tutorial course the concept of the flipped classroom is adopted, requiring students to present study material for class discussions.

Students are offered student guidance through the tutoring plan. In the context of this plan, three meetings are scheduled in the course of the programme to support students in maintaining the required study pace. In addition to this plan, student progress is checked at the end of January,

when course work and the research proposal should have been completed. Throughout the fieldwork period and the Master thesis writing process, students are entitled to guidance by their supervisor. During the Master thesis writing process, they also have peer-review meetings with their fellow students. In these meetings, students comment on the Master thesis draft chapters each of them submits.

The proportion of students completing the programme within 24 months was 86 % on average for the latest six cohorts. The number of students discontinuing their studies (drop-out rate) in this programme is very low, ranging from one to three students per cohort for the latest six cohorts. Students, nevertheless, experience the study load of the programme as being very challenging. Adding to the study load, in the students' view, are overlapping deadlines, extended periods before feedback on assignments is given and variation in thesis supervision.

During the COVID pandemic, on-campus courses were often prohibited. Thereupon, online teaching methods were adopted in all courses of the programme. These teaching methods were complemented with shorter lectures, more breaks, use of break-out rooms, and group assignments to promote student involvement and interactions. In the Interdisciplinary Methods course, digital research methods and techniques were taught. An additional course on gathering and analysing digital data was scheduled to replace fieldwork. Programme staff assisted students and monitored students' well-being.

Considerations

The panel notes the number of incoming students in the programme is rising. The panel also notes the great diversity of the student group, in terms of nationalities, levels of experience and disciplinary backgrounds. The panel regards both as positive for the programme.

The panel endorses the entry requirements and admission procedures of the programme. The screening of applications by the programme selection committee is thorough. The entry requirements are suitable for the various categories of applicants. The panel recommends, nevertheless, that programme management should consider interviewing all applicants from humanities backgrounds to inform them about the social sciences focus of the programme and to refer them to additional reading material to prepare for the programme. The panel regards the research plan Master students in disciplines outside of the programme domain or Bachelor students are required to submit as a highly effective means of selecting students who are likely to complete the programme. The panel appreciates also the pre-master programme required for students from universities of applied sciences.

The panel notes that the curriculum meets the intended learning outcomes of the programme and is coherently structured. As the Tutorial course prepares students for the Master thesis, the panel recommends that programme staff ensure that the same material cannot be assessed twice, in coursework for the Tutorial course and in the Master thesis. The panel suggests to be attentive to the Tutorial course student groups being composed of students with similar interests. The curriculum enables students to acquire academic and research skills, appropriate for this Master programme. The panel notes, however, that the Interdisciplinary Methods course is mainly focused

on social sciences methods and techniques, research methods and techniques in humanities being only covered more informally. The panel advises to address these latter methods more thoroughly, if the programme continues to increase its emphasis on humanities approaches. The panel advises to look to lecturers from other programmes of the Faculty of Humanities to bring additional expertise into the programme. The panel would like encourage programme management to take advantage of Spanish- and Portuguese-language articles and theoretical texts for the mandatory readings.

The panel regards the staff as an excellent group of lecturers. The lecturers' educational capabilities are up to standard, as all of them are BKO-certified. CEDLA has a strong research focus, ensuring the research qualities of the lecturers. The panel is concerned about the high workload of staff. Although the additional staff to be recruited will help relieve the workload burden on staff, the panel advises management to remain attentive to staff workload and to recruit the staff needed to accommodate the broadening of the programme's scope as well as the increase in student numbers.

The educational concept and study methods of the programme are appropriate and correspond to the course goals and the course contents. The tutoring plan offers adequate student guidance. The panel wish to commend not only the formal tutoring and student guidance arrangements, but also the stimulating environment in CEDLA, offering strong informal tutoring mechanisms. The panel recommends that this distinctive environment and atmosphere be maintained, even in view of the greater challenges posed by expansion of the programme. Both the student success rates and drop-out rates are very favourable. The panel notes that students are given plenty of warning about deadlines and the material to be submitted at these deadlines, and suggests that these practices be maintained.

The panel finds the measures taken by programme management to continue education during the COVID pandemic sound, enabling students to take courses and to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The panel notes that programme management has made serious efforts to counter the effects of the COVID pandemic on students, and acknowledges the important role of the education secretary in this respect.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 2, Teaching-learning environment.

3.3 Standard 3: Student assessment

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

The rules for the programme examinations and assessments are derived from the University of Amsterdam Assessment Policy and the Rules and Regulations of the Examinations Board of the Graduate School of Humanities. As has been indicated, the Examinations Board has the authority to monitor and assure the quality of examination and assessment processes and products of this and the other Master programmes of the Faculty. For this and for each of the other programmes, the Examinations Board has delegates who are close to programmes and who advise the Board on decisions to be taken, such as granting exemptions or extensions to students. The Examinations Board appoints examiners in the programme. Examiners are required to be employees of University of Amsterdam, to have obtained the University Teaching Qualification, and to have completed the doctorate degree.

In the courses, multiple examination methods are adopted. Examination methods include written examinations, take-home examinations, individual essays, oral and written assignments, and group assignments and presentations. The examination methods are selected in line with the course goals to be assessed. Individual examinations constitute at least 50 % of the final grade of courses. All written assignments are checked for plagiarism. Since becoming part of the Faculty, no plagiarism cases have been reported in this programme. Course examinations in the programme have not yet been inspected by the Examinations Board. The Faculty-wide Assessment Committee will take up this task from September 2022 onwards.

The Master thesis assessment in the programme is governed by the Thesis Regulation Master's Programmes of the Faculty of Humanities. The assessments of Master theses are in the hands of the supervisor and the second reader. Both of them assess the Master thesis separately, using the Master thesis assessment form. When both examiners find the Master thesis sufficient, the student is allowed to defend the thesis orally. After the defence, the examiners in mutual consultation determine the final grade. Thesis assessment and grading are discussed in the staff meetings. In general, supervisors and second readers agree on the final mark. Cases where they do not are discussed in the staff meetings. To promote the transparency of the marking process, students are given access to the marking criteria and their respective weights on the Master thesis assessment form. Students are offered the opportunity to consult sample theses that have already been marked. The Examinations Board has reviewed a sample of Master theses of the students in the programme. The remarks made by the Board were followed up on by programme management.

During the COVID pandemic changes in examinations and assessments were submitted to the Examinations Board for approval, if examination methods had to be changed because of the pandemic. As many examinations in the programme are written assignments or essays, not many requests for changes were submitted. In case of changes, the Examinations Board verified whether the course goals were still met.

Considerations

The panel approves of the examination and assessment procedures in the programme, which are in line with University and Faculty rules and regulations. The panel is positive about the responsibilities and activities of the Graduate School Examinations Board. The panel notes, however, that the Board is quite distant from the programme, and suggests to complement its role by organising quality assurance of examinations and assessments at a more local level. Starting in September 2022, the Faculty-wide Assessment Committee will assist the Examinations Board and will systematically review the examinations of this and the other programmes of the Faculty.

The examination methods are appropriately diversified and correspond to the course contents and course objectives. The course dossiers and examination files are well-organised. The panel advises that test matrices be adopted, to ensure that all course goals are covered in assessment. The panel also recommends that the programme introduce grade descriptors (rubrics), for the both individual courses and the Master theses, to provide an even stronger basis for marking and to communicate expectations to students more effectively.

The panel finds the procedures for the assessment of the Master theses, involving two examiners to be adequate. The Master thesis assessment form refers to relevant criteria with suitable weighting. The assessment forms for the Master theses are filled out conscientiously. The written comments on these forms by the programme examiners are generally of high quality and provide useful feedback for the students. The panel appreciates the provision to students of access to the final assessment form, which shows the combined assessments of both examiners. The panel advises, however, that both examiners fill out separate initial assessment forms. This would make the assessment processes more transparent, allowing the Examination Board to verify how the initial assessments of the two examiners might have differed and how any disagreements were resolved, and the resolution of disagreements being consistent across Master theses assessment processes.

The panel finds the measures programme management has taken in the COVID pandemic for the examinations and assessments appropriate. During the pandemic, examinations and assessments continued to assess the course goals specified.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 3, Student assessment.

3.4 Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.
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Findings

The panel studied the examinations of a number of courses of the programme. In addition, the panel reviewed fifteen Master theses of students in the programme of the last three years. The average grade for these Master theses is 7.5. The Examinations Board, which reviewed Master theses of the programme, found the quality and level of the theses to be up to standard.

Programme management seeks to prepare students for their prospective careers. Students may attend, as extra-curricular activities, lectures or seminars, organised by CEDLA. Academics and representatives of the professional field participate in these lectures and seminars. CEDLA offers capacity-building programmes to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and serves as a platform of contact and exchange with this Ministry for students of the programme. Internships at this Ministry are available for students. In addition, students are introduced to LASP, the Dutch interuniversity graduate programme on Latin American Studies. LASP supports students who want to proceed to PhD trajectories. To intensify relations with the working field, programme management has the intention to install a soundboard group with representatives of organisations in the working field. Programme management also intends to invite alumni to inform students about the labour market.

The programme objectives are to equip students with knowledge, skills and understanding of Latin American studies, allowing them to do academic research in this field, and to carry out policy- and practice-related activities on or in Latin America at professional level. Although programme management does not do systematic surveys on graduates' careers, it does have some information about these careers. Since the beginning of the programme in 2001, about 150 students graduated from the programme. About 14 % of them have completed PhDs or are currently enrolled as PhD students. A number of graduates have secured positions as academic lecturers, as researchers in academia or as policy officers in universities. Other graduates have found positions in government organisations or as independent consultants. A number of graduates have started their own companies or their own non-governmental organisations.

Considerations

The quality and the level of the examinations of the courses, which the panel reviewed, were up to standard. The panel finds these examinations to conform to and to test adequately the goals of the courses.

The Master theses the panel studied, match the intended learning outcomes. The theses showcase the level of independence and originality of the students. The panel evaluates the marks given by the programme examiners as being fair. The ranking of the Master theses in terms of the marks given by the examiners is internally consistent. The panel agrees with these marks. No Master theses were found to be unsatisfactory by the panel. Although the academic level of the theses meets the requirements, in some of the Master theses the theoretical discussions and the

methodological sections could have been more extensive and the analyses could have been less descriptive. In these theses, students could have engaged more fully with theories on the topics and could have specified better what their work contributes to the theoretical discussions.

The panel welcomes the efforts of programme management to inform students about the labour market and to prepare them for their future careers. The panel encourages programme management to inform students about PhD positions and to proceed with their plans to install the professional advisory board and to invite alumni to inform students about career options.

Assessment of this standard

These considerations have led the assessment panel to assess the programme to meet Standard 4, Achieved learning outcomes.

4. Overview of assessments

Standard	Assessment
Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes	Programme meets Standard 1
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	Programme meets Standard 2
Standard 3: Student assessment	Programme meets Standard 3
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	Programme meets Standard 4
Programme	Positive

5. Recommendations

In this report, a number of recommendations by the panel have been listed. For the sake of clarity, these have been brought together below.

- To be more clear about the programme's profile, with respect to the focus being mainly on social sciences approaches and methods although the scope is being broadened to include humanities perspectives more thoroughly.
- To be more precise in communicating what the post-initial or postgraduate status of the programme implies and what students may expect, when taking the programme.
- To consider interviewing all applicants from humanities backgrounds to inform them about the social sciences focus of the programme and to refer them to additional reading material to prepare for the programme in this respect.
- To ensure that the same material cannot be assessed twice in coursework for the Tutorial course and in the Master thesis.
- To address humanities research methods and techniques more thoroughly, if the programme continues to increase its emphasis on humanities approaches.
- To look to lecturers from other programmes of the Faculty of Humanities to bring additional expertise into the programme.
- For management to remain attentive to staff workload and to recruit the staff needed to accommodate the broadening of the programme's scope as well as the increase in student numbers.
- To maintain the stimulating and distinctive environment of CEDLA, even in view of the greater challenges posed by further expansion of the programme.
- To adopt test matrices for the course examinations in order to ensure that all the course goals are being covered in the examinations.
- To introduce grade descriptors (rubrics) for both individual courses and for the Master theses, to provide an even stronger basis for marking and to communicate expectations to students more effectively.
- To have the two examiners of the Master theses fill out separate initial assessment forms, and to make the assessment process more transparent.

Appendix: Assessment process

The evaluation agency Certiked VBI received the request by the University of Amsterdam to support the limited framework programme assessment process for the Master Latin American Studies of this University. The objective of the programme assessment process was to assess whether the programme conforms to the standards of the limited framework, as laid down in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands of September 2018 (officially published in Stcrt. 2019 no. 3198, on 29 January 2019). The Explanatory notes to the assessment framework for the assessment of postgraduate master programmes (academic orientation) in the Netherlands of NVAO of October 2020 were taken into account.

Programme management of the Master Latin American Studies of University of Amsterdam drafted the list of panel candidates. Having conferred with programme management Certiked invited candidate panel members to sit on the assessment panel. The panel members agreed to do so. The panel composition was as follows:

- Prof. A. Varley PhD, Professor of Human Geography and Director UCL Gender & Sexuality Studies, Department of Geography, University College London, United Kingdom (panel chair);
- E.D. Rasch PhD, Associate Professor, Sociology of Development and Change Group, Wageningen University, the Netherlands (panel member);
- R.D.P. Dhondt PhD, Assistant Professor in Hispanic Literature, Department of Languages, Literature and Communication, Faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University, the Netherlands (panel member);
- I. Geerse MSc, student Master Latin American Studies, student Master Public Administration, Leiden University, the Netherlands (student member).

On behalf of Certiked, W. Vercouteren MSc served as the process coordinator/secretary in the assessment process.

All panel members and the process coordinator/secretary confirmed in writing that they had no conflict of interest with regard to the programme to be assessed and that they would observe the rules of confidentiality. Having obtained the authorisation by the University of Amsterdam, Certiked requested the approval of NVAO of the proposed panel to conduct the assessment. NVAO have given their approval.

To prepare the assessment process, the process coordinator/secretary convened with management of the programme to discuss the outline of the self-evaluation report, the subjects to be addressed in this report, and the site visit schedule. In addition, the planning of activities in preparation of the site visit were discussed. During the process to prepare for the site visit, programme management and the process coordinator/secretary had contact to fine-tune the process. The activities prior to the site visit were performed as planned. Programme management approved of the schedule for the site visit.

Well in advance of the site visit date, programme management forwarded the list of Master theses of programme graduates, the Master theses being the final projects of the programme, from the three most recent years. Acting on behalf of the assessment panel, the process coordinator/secretary selected fifteen theses from this list. The grade distribution in the selection was chosen to match the grade distribution in the list forwarded by programme management.

The panel chair and the panel members were sent the self-evaluation report of the programme. In this report, the four standards of the NVAO Assessment framework were discussed. The student chapter was part of the self-evaluation report. The appendices to the self-evaluation report included the following documents.

- University of Amsterdam strategic plan
- University of Amsterdam examination policies
- Faculty of Humanities strategic plan
- Faculty of Humanities policies on internationalisation and languages of instruction
- Programme Teaching and Examination Regulations
- Programme information guide
- Programme course catalogue
- Curriculum overview
- Programme assessment matrix
- Dossiers with course contents and course examinations
- Overview of incoming students of recent years, with their prior education
- Student enrolment figures
- Student drop-out figures and student success rates
- Evaluation scores of programme students in Dutch Student Survey (NSE)
- Resumes of core staff members
- Examinations Board annual report from recent years
- Programme management responses to Examination Board's remarks
- Examination Board theses reviews
- Programme management responses to Examination Board's theses reviews
- Programme Committee annual reports of recent years

In addition, the expert panel members were forwarded a number of Master theses of the programme graduates, selected by the process coordinator/secretary. The panel members were also sent the Trained Eye document of Certiked evaluation agency, this document being the explanation of the NVAO Assessment framework.

A number of weeks before the site visit date, the panel chair and the process coordinator/secretary met to discuss the self-evaluation report provided by programme management, the procedures regarding the assessment process and the site visit schedule. In this meeting, the profile of panel chairs of NVAO was discussed as well. The panel chair was informed about the competencies, listed in the profile. The meeting between the panel chair and the process coordinator/secretary served as the briefing for panel chairs, as meant in the NVAO profile of panel chairs. The panel chair agreed to work in line with the profile of panel chairs.

As a result of the persistent spread of Covid infections in the Netherlands and of measures taken by the Dutch and foreign governments to counter the spread of infections by means of travel restrictions and quarantine requirements, programme management and panel members agreed to conduct the site visit online.

Prior to the date of the site visit, all panel members sent in their preliminary findings, based on the self-evaluation report and the Master theses studied, and submitted a number of questions to be put to the programme representatives on the day of the site visit. The panel secretary summarised this information, compiling a list of questions, which served as a starting point for the discussions with the programme representatives during the site visit.

Shortly before the site visit date, the panel met to go over the preliminary findings concerning the quality of the programme. During this meeting, the preliminary findings of the panel members, including those about the Master theses were exchanged. The procedures to be adopted during the site visit, including the questions to be put to the programme representatives on the basis of the list compiled, were also discussed.

On 28 January 2022, the panel conducted the online site visit. The site visit schedule was in accordance with the schedule as planned. The site visit schedule consisted of the following meetings.

- 09.00 – 09.45 Faculty representatives and programme management
- 10.00 – 10.45 Programme director, director of Institute CEDLA, master coordinator, programme coordinator/study advisor
- 11.00 – 11.30 Examinations Board members
- 11.00 – 11.30 Open office hours
- 11.30 – 12.45 Panel lunch (closed session)
- 12.45 – 13.30 Students, with Programme Committee student members, and programme alumni
- 13.45 – 14.30 Lecturers, master theses' examiners, with Programme Committee staff members
- 14.30 – 16.30 Deliberations panel (closed session)
- 16.30 – 16.45 Presentation by panel chair of main findings to programme representatives
- 16.45 – 17.30 Development dialogue between panel and programme management

Open-office hours were communicated in a timely fashion by programme management to programme staff, lecturers and students. No-one came forward to make use of these open hours.

In a closed session at the end of the site visit, the panel considered all of the findings, weighed the considerations and arrived at conclusions with regard to the quality of the programme. At the end of the site visit, the panel chair presented a broad outline of findings, considerations, assessments and recommendations to programme representatives.

At the end of the site visit and clearly separated from the process of the programme assessment, panel members and programme representatives met to conduct the development dialogue. The objective of this dialogue was to discuss future developments of the programme.

The assessment draft report was finalised by the secretary, taking into account the findings and considerations of the panel. The draft report was sent to the panel members, who studied it and made a number of changes. Thereupon, the secretary edited the final report. This report was then presented to programme management to be corrected for factual inconsistencies. Programme management were given two weeks to respond. Having been corrected for factual inconsistencies, the Certiked bureau sent the report to the University Board to accompany their request to continue the accreditation of this programme.