

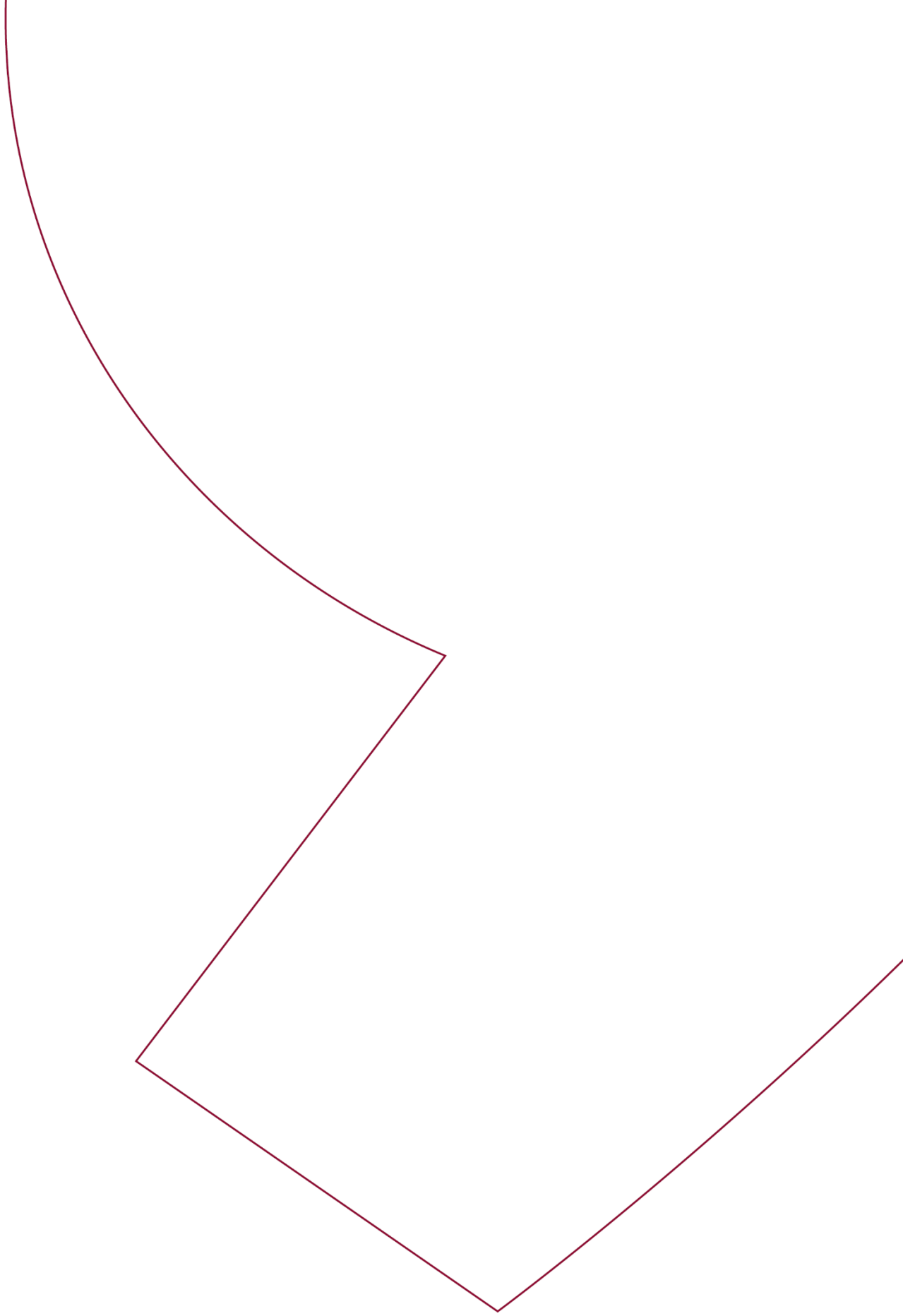
## **ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Limited programme assessment

- **Master European Law**
- **Master Public International Law**
- **Master Law & Economics**

Full-time

**Utrecht University**



# ASSESSMENT REPORT

Limited programme assessment

- **Master European Law (60602)**
- **Master Public International Law (60856)**
- **Master Law & Economics (60742)**

Full-time

## Utrecht University

Hobéon Certificering & Accreditatie

**Dated:**

August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Audit Committee**

Prof. mr. A. Oskamp, chair

Prof. mr. dr. W. Duijst

O. Heijboer

Prof. mr. dr. B. Marseille

Prof. mr. E. du Perron

Prof. dr. R. Wessel

**Secretary / coordinator**

Mr. H.E. Minnema

## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>1.</b>	<b>GENERAL AND QUANTITATIVE DATA</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>FINDINGS AND JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>OVERALL CONCLUSION</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>32</b>
ANNEX I	Overview of judgements	33
ANNEX II	Programme of site-visit	34
ANNEX III	List of documents examined	37
ANNEX IV	Composition of the audit panel	38

## 1. GENERAL AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

Name Institution	Utrecht University
Status	Funded
Outcomes of Institutional Quality Assessment	Positive, decision of March 19th, 2018
Name of programme in Central Register of Higher Professional Education (CROHO)	European Law Public International Law Law & Economics
ISAT-code CROHO	60602 60856 60742
Domain/sector CROHO	Law
Orientation and level	Academic master
Degree	Master of Laws (LLM)
Number of credits	60 EC
Sub-programmes	European Law - General programme in European Law - Law and Sustainability in Europe - Law and Technology in Europe - European Criminal Justice in a Global Context
Location(s)	Utrecht
Mode(s) of study	Full-time
Language(s)	English
Date site visit	February 5 - 7, 2024

## 2. SUMMARY

The master's programmes European Law, Public International Law and Law & Economics are provided by the Department of Law of the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance of Utrecht University (REBO/LEG)). The programmes are part of the faculty's Graduate School.

The three guiding orientations of the department's master's programmes are:

- European and international orientation
- Multidimensional orientation
- Social orientation

### **Standard 1. Intended Learning Outcomes**

Judgement: meets the standard

The panel established that the programmes in European Law, Public International Law and Law & Economics have chosen profiles and ambitions that are appropriate for master's programmes at the academic level and that the chosen profiles of the programmes have been convincingly translated into exit qualifications. The multidimensional and socially oriented departmental profile is clearly reflected in the exit qualifications as well as the European and international orientation. The exit qualifications are consistent with the national Domain-Specific Reference Framework for Law (DSRK), reflect the Dublin descriptors, and meet the (inter)national requirements set for them by the professional field and academia. The *civiel effect* for the toga professions is adequately anchored in the three programmes and the programmes have followed up on the recommendation of the last visitation panel to address not only academic integrity, but also professional ethics in the exit qualifications.

### **Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment**

Judgement: meets the standard

The structure of the programmes is, in the opinion of the panel, well chosen providing students with many choices and a clear framework. The panel is in particular positive about how the *capita selecta* offer both depth in the content of the chosen specialisation or track, while also paying much attention to the students' skills and often deal with current events. The panel established that guidelines have been developed to harmonise the *capita selecta* and that the programmes continue to monitor that a number of basic shared features stay in place.

The selection procedures are sound and transparent, and the programmes make the diversity of the student population productive in the classrooms and in other non-regular teaching activities. The panel has learned with satisfaction that the programmes take adequate measures to address the different entry levels of incoming students and improved the onboarding procedures for new students.

The content of the three programmes adequately covers the exit qualifications as formulated by the programmes. In terms of content and design, the courses studied are at the level that can be expected of a university master's programme. The programmes' assessment plans demonstrate a conclusive relationship between the final competencies of the entire programmes and the learning objectives of its constituent components. The content of the programmes furthermore shows a systematic accumulation of knowledge and skills leading to the achievement of the overall exit qualifications. The assignments students are required to work on fit well with the curricula, and the prescribed literature is relevant and current.

The panel – after studying a selection of courses – has seen that the methods of instruction are varied and appropriate to the profile and learning objectives of the courses. The panel is positive

about the small scale of the learning settings and considers that the work formats of the courses studied help students acquire the intended knowledge and skills. Adding to the panel's positive judgement is the way in which the programmes have interwoven skills – both academic writing and speaking skills/presentation – throughout their curricula. On one hand the educational programmes are strongly linked to the research conducted in the department, at the same time the training of more professional skills is very present in the courses.

The Research and Thesis Trajectory (RTT) is in the opinion of the panel clearly designed and runs through the entire year, thus enabling students to be well prepared before they start the actual writing of the thesis. Nevertheless, the panel sees opportunities for the programmes to learn from each other's best practices, to evaluate practices more frequently as well as to calibrate final results with each other.

Most students find their programme challenging, but doable when putting sufficient effort into it. The programmes have teams of very engaged and knowledgeable teachers and support staff and the students praise them for their personal approach, responsiveness, and readiness to take in feedback. The panel commends the programmes for their firm commitment to an open, safe and encouraging learning environment for all students of different backgrounds and encourages them to continue in this direction. The panel was also pleased with the (individual) attention to the workload and professional development of teachers.

Notwithstanding the above positive observations, the panel sees some room for improvement. First of all, the panel noticed that the choice to have separate programmes under one 'CROHO-number' has resulted in a complex scheme of possibilities for students. This is particularly visible in the master's programme European Law. The panel recommends continuing to pay attention to clarifying the structure of the programmes to (prospective) students.

It also recommends looking into possibilities to increase the attention to the career perspectives of the students, for instance by intensifying contacts with alumni. Appointing an alumni officer could possibly be helpful in this respect. It also recommends communicating more with the students about the existence of these REBO Career Services.

With regard to the Law & Economics programme, the panel was pleased to learn that reforms are in the making regarding differences in course sizes (number of EC). As all programmes are provided by the same faculty, it believes that a further streamlining of the structures could be beneficial. The panel also raised the question whether combinations with other programmes (in particular with the European Law programme) could perhaps enhance efficiency.

The – understandable – backlog in the BKO trajectories is given the urgency it deserves. On a final note, the panel recommends the programmes to address issues of organisational nature seriously – such as coordination between professors, deadlines for assessing grades, scheduling conflicts or streamlining deadlines for research proposals.

### **Standard 3. Student assessment**

Judgement: meets the standard

The quality of testing in the programmes is amply in order, the testing sufficiently covers the learning objectives of the courses and the intended learning outcomes of the programmes, and is generally valid, reliable and transparent. Assessments align well with teaching. Students also indicate that they appreciate the variety of assessment methods. The Examination Board - and with it the Assessment Quality Committee - adequately fulfils its legal duty to safeguard the quality of testing.

The panel was also pleased to establish that the assessment process of the final thesis is carefully designed, and that the assessment of the final works use clear and relevant criteria, laid out in a uniform assessment form with a specification of the criteria. All theses reviewed by the panel had been assessed – in accordance with faculty policy – by two examiners.

In the European Law Programme almost all theses studied by the panel were provided with clear, well-reasoned and followable assessments. The panel has high praise for this. In the other two programmes the panel saw more differences in the way and extent to which the judgments are substantiated and provided with feedback. The panel recommends that the quality of feedback be addressed in the harmonisation process that has been initiated. More generally, the panel firmly believes that there is room for more frequent calibration of the assessment process and grades given between and within programmes.

The panel is also very positive about how seriously the Examination Boards and the Committee on Assessment Quality take their duties and established that they guarantee the quality of assessments and the level achieved within the programmes more than adequately. The Examination Board is – within its capabilities – responding appropriately to the developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence and the impact that they have on education. The panel recommends that the knowledge and experience of students be included in the further development of policies in this regard.

In view of the backlog in UTQ trajectories, the panel advises the Examination Board to monitor closely that teaching staff without a UTQ may be examiners only in exceptional cases.

The panel did note that the (time) compensation in time for the work of the Examination Board and Assessment Quality Committee is on the low side and recommends that management considers whether more compensation is needed for the committees to continue to function effectively.

#### **Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes**

Judgement: meets the standard

All the final works studied by the panel attest to an achieved academic master's level, which leads to a positive conclusion of the panel on Standard 4. The panel rated the quality of the theses of European Law and Public International Law as high and considered them to show remarkably good writing skills. The final works of Law & Economics were also certainly adequate in the eyes of the panel, but it found some of the grades too high and not sufficiently motivated. The panel also observed that the interdisciplinarity of the programme was not always clearly reflected in the final theses and recommends paying more attention to it from the start of the RTT process. The panel more generally advises all programmes to place a limit on the length of the theses to force the student to delineate and focus the research question.

The alumni with whom the panel spoke were unanimously very enthusiastic about the (sub)programme they studied. They indicated that they gained a great deal of substantive knowledge and skills that are useful in their current jobs. In the smaller (sub)programmes - through the close-knit communities - they also built a strong network.

The panel commends the programmes for the level of their graduates and recommends that more work be done on a directed alumni policy. Perhaps appointing an alumni officer could give this a good impetus.



### **Overall conclusion**

Based on the fact that the panel assesses standards 1 and 2, 3 and 4 for the master's programme *European Law* with 'meets the standard', the panel arrives - based on the decision rules for the NVAO's Limited Programme Assessment – at the final assessment of '**positive**' for the University of Utrecht's wo-master's programme *European Law* as a whole.

Based on the fact that the panel assesses standards 1 and 2, 3 and 4 for the master's programme *Public International Law* with 'meets the standard', the panel arrives - based on the decision rules for the NVAO's Limited Programme Assessment – at the final assessment of '**positive**' for the University of Utrecht's wo-master's programme *Public International Law* as a whole.

Based on the fact that the panel assesses standards 1 and 2, 3 and 4 for the master's degree program in *Law & Economics* with 'meets the standard', the panel arrives - based on the decision rules for the NVAO's Limited Programme Assessment – at the final assessment of '**positive**' for the University of Utrecht's wo-master's programme *Law & Economics* as a whole.

The audit panel therefore advises the NVAO to maintain the accreditation of the master's programmes in *European Law*, *Public International Law* and *Law & Economics*.

After agreement of the panellists, this report was adopted by the chairman on August 5<sup>th</sup> 2024.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

#### General information

This assessment report is the result of the 'Limited Programme Assessment' of the academic master's programmes in European Law, Public International Law, and Law & Economics. This assessment was conducted on February 5, 6 and 7, 2024 in Utrecht by an audit panel of independent experts (see appendices II, III and IV for programme, procedure, decision rules and panel composition). In addition to the three master's programmes in question, the Dutch-language bachelor's programme *Rechtsgeleerdheid*, master's programmes *Nederlands Recht*, *Notarieel recht en Onderneming en recht*, and the Legal Research Master were also audited on those days. The results of the audits of those programmes are covered in three other reports.

The programmes are offered by the Department of Law of the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance (REBO/LEG). The programmes are – together with the programmes in Economics and Business, Economics, and Management and Organisational Science – part of the faculty's Graduate School. The department has two directors of education, one responsible for the undergraduate programme and the other for the seven legal master's programmes.

The one-year master's programme European Law has four (sub)programmes<sup>1</sup>:

1) A general (sub)programme in European Law with four specialisations:

- European Law General
- European Cooperation in Criminal Matters
- Law and Sustainability
- Law and Technology

And three thematic (sub)programmes:

- 2) Law and Sustainability in Europe
- 3) Law and Technology in Europe
- 4) European Criminal Justice in a Global Context

The one-year master's programme Public International Law offers three specialisations:

- Human Rights
- Oceans, the Environment and Sustainability
- Conflict and Security

In the European Law programme, this means that the four programmes have a similar structure but have their own content. In Public International Law, students follow two core courses together: General course in Public International Law (7,5 EC) and International Law Moot Court (7,5) and choose their specialisation in 15 EC of courses, in the *capita selecta* and the choice of their thesis subject (see more under standard 2).

The master's programme Law & Economics has no sub-programmes or specialisations.

---

<sup>1</sup> (Sub)programmes have no shared content and are fully independent programmes; specialisations within a (sub)programme have partly shared and partly separate content.

**Recommendations from previous visitation**

In their Self-evaluation reports (SER), the programmes provide overviews of the actions they have taken in response to the recommendations of the previous accreditation panel (2018). Some of the recommendations and their follow-up actions were discussed with the programmes during the site visit. The current panel concludes that by and large the recommendations have been seriously addressed and is generally satisfied with the improvement actions taken. Where relevant, this report will elaborate on this under the individual standards.

**Civil Effect (*civiel effect*)**

The so-called civil effect required for admission to the Judiciary, the Public Prosecution Service or the Bar is not directly part of this assessment, but the panel has indirectly included it under standard 1 in the report ("degree in which the programme meets legal professional requirements and requirements of the profession"). In accordance with the 2016 Covenant on Civil Effect — subject to exceptions defined in the covenant — the basis for obtaining civil effect is a completed legal university bachelor's degree (180 EC) and a completed legal university master's degree (60 EC). Also, the Covenant formulates minimum attainment targets that programmes must meet in order to be allowed to attach civil effect to the master's degree.

## 4. FINDINGS AND JUDGEMENTS

### 4.1. Intended learning outcomes

**Standard 1: 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.**

Explanation: The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level of the programme (Associate Degree, Bachelor's, or Master's) as defined in the Dutch Qualifications Framework, as well as its orientation (professional or academic). In addition, they tie in with the regional, national or international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations.

#### Findings

All master's programmes at the department and thus also the three English-language master's programmes discussed in this report align their profiles with the Utrecht Education Model and the three guiding orientations of all master's programmes at the Department of Law:

- European and international orientation
- Multidimensional orientation
- Social orientation

With its multidimensional orientation, the Department of Law refers both to insights and perspectives derived from other fields of law (internal legal comparison), other (international) legal systems (external legal comparison), and non-legal disciplines (interdisciplinary). The department is also committed to delivering critical, socially engaged and broadly oriented lawyers who not only understand the development of law, but also how law relates to the social context in which it operates. All legal master programmes fulfil the master requirement of *civiel effect* and will lead to *civiel effect* if they are combined with a legal bachelor's programme which fulfils the additional requirements.

This ambition has been translated for each of the three programmes into its own profile and its own programme-specific intended learning outcomes, built along the same structure. The learning outcomes are grouped into three categories: knowledge and understanding, academic and professional skills, and attitude, and they reflect the Dublin Descriptors. All three programmes aim to train students to become lawyers with well-developed academic and legal skills and a strong awareness of the workings and limits of law and the multidimensional and international aspects involved in law-making and law enforcement. The programme Law & Economics has in itself an interdisciplinary approach, combining the legal and the economic professions. The panel considers this a clear and appropriate ambition and profile for the legal master's programmes. The exit qualifications formulated by the three programmes are in line with the national Domain-Specific Reference Framework for Law (DSRK) and are laid down in the Education and Examination Regulations (EER). They clearly lead to graduates at an academic master's level.

A Social Advisory Board of the Department of Law meets once every six months to advise on the quality and content of all legal programmes, including the LLM programmes. This advisory board mainly discusses programme-transcending topics rather than the concrete content of individual programmes. The latter occurs more in the direct and often informal contact that the individual programmes have with alumni and the professional field (see also Standard 4). Additionally, many staff members themselves have other jobs in the field besides working at the

university. The panel believes that this way the programmes have collected enough input from the professional field to develop their profiles and intended learning outcomes and keep them up-to-date.

The profiles and formulated exit qualifications for each programme are discussed in more detail below.

#### *European Law*

As mentioned, the European Law programme has four sub-programmes, a general programme in European Law and three thematic programmes: Law and Sustainability in Europe, Law and Technology in Europe and European Criminal Justice in a Global Context. Completion of one of these sub-programmes in European Law, combined with an academic bachelor's degree in Law, provides access to the protected legal professions in the Netherlands. The aim, however, is to prepare students for a much wider variety of professions in European law-oriented professional practice that require an academic level of expertise, including legal and policy positions, for instance in national and EU institutions, regulators, NGOs, businesses and interest groups. In addition, the programmes provide access to related postgraduate programmes and academic professions (PhD).

The four sub-programmes share 12 exit qualifications, some of which have been specified at the programme level to reflect the specific content of the individual sub-programmes. These qualifications encompass substance, academic and professional skills, and law in context.

The qualifications related to substance cover in-depth knowledge of the foundations of EU law, its constitutional structure, principles, doctrines, the system and the development of EU law, the interaction between EU and national law, and the knowledge of one or more sub-areas of EU law. Amongst the academic and professional skills research, writing and presenting skills take centre stage. Furthermore, the perspective of studying EU law not in isolation, but rather as part of a multilevel system of governance is reflected in the exit qualifications relating to law in context, covering the limits of the law and multidimensional, national and international aspects and sensitivity to the socio-economic and socio-political contexts.

The panel discussed with the programme the name of the – only two-years old – sub-programme Law and Sustainability, rather than European Law and Sustainability. It learned that although EU law is the main focus of the programme, international law, third world perspectives and domestic, comparative law are also part of the courses taught. This makes the present name of the programme appropriate in the panel's view.

Finally, two exit qualifications address a sound ethical methodological attitude and reflection on one's own professional performance. By including these qualifications, the programme has followed up on the recommendation of the last visitation panel in 2018 to not only pay attention in the exit qualifications to academic integrity, but also to professional ethics.

The exit qualifications of the four sub-programmes in European Law are set at the level of an academic LLM (Master of Laws) degree and provide graduates access to a professional career in or outside of academia.

The panel believes that the chosen profile of the European Law programme has been convincingly translated into 12 final exit qualifications, worthy of an academic master's level. They emphasize written and oral skills and the social role that the lawyer fulfils. Ethical conduct and methodological skills are reflected in the exit qualifications to the satisfaction of the panel. They align with the accepted scientific standards and the professional practice, both nationally and internationally, of the European Law field.

### *Public International Law*

Aside from two core joint courses for all students, those in the master's programme Public International Law can specialise in one of three areas: (a) Human Rights; (b) Oceans, Environment and Sustainability; and (c) Conflict and Security. These areas also reflect the research specialisations in Utrecht. The specialisation in Conflict and Security Law is new and was offered for the first time in 2021-2022.

The programme has civil effect (*civiel effect*), provided that sufficient legal subjects have been taken in the bachelor's degree programme. Most graduates, however, pursue careers in diplomacy, national governments, non-governmental organisations, and international courts and tribunals. A smaller number will work as attorneys specialising in public international law (e.g. environmental law litigation) or continue as researchers and teachers in the field of public international law.

Like the master's programme European Law, this programme has 12 exit qualifications, covering qualifications in respect to substance, to academic and professional skills, and to law in context. They are set up in the same way as those of European Law. The qualifications related to substance cover in-depth knowledge of the foundations of international law, its constitutional structure, principles, doctrines, the system and the development of international law, the application of international law in practice – particularly of the settlement of interstate disputes – the interaction between international and national law, and the knowledge of one of the specialisations Human Rights, or Oceans, the Environment and Sustainability, or Conflict and Security.

Academic and professional skills include research methods, writing and presentation, critical analysis, and the ability to take a substantiated position in the public debates. Furthermore, the perspective of studying public international law not in isolation, but rather as part of a multilevel system of governance is reflected in the exit qualifications relating to law in context, covering the limits of the law and of multidimensional, national and international aspects and sensitivity to the socio-economic and socio-political contexts. Finally, two exit qualifications address a sound ethical methodological attitude and reflection on one's own professional performance. By including these qualifications, the programme has followed up on the recommendation of the last visitation panel in 2018 to focus in the exit qualifications not only on academic integrity, but also on professional ethics.

In the eyes of the panel, the chosen profile of the Public International Law programme has been convincingly translated into 12 final exit qualifications, worthy of an academic master's level and providing graduates with access to a professional career in or outside of academia. The exit qualifications pay much attention to written and oral skills and the social role that the lawyer fulfils. Ethical conduct and methodological skills are reflected in the final exit qualifications to the satisfaction of the panel. They are in line with the accepted scientific standards and the professional practice, both nationally and internationally, of the public international field.

### *Law & Economics*

The master's programme Law & Economics offers an interdisciplinary curriculum to students, with a strong, collective foundation of EU competition law and regulatory law as well as its enforcement and underlying methodology. The interdisciplinarity of the programme is reflected in the courses and the study materials that are offered as well as in the educational and professional backgrounds of the teaching team. The programme aims to prepare professionals to ensure the fair functioning of markets and private and public organisations while taking into account the legal, economic and societal challenges facing us.

The programme has civil effect (*civiel effect*), provided that sufficient legal subjects have been taken in the bachelor's degree programme. This means that graduates can and do find employment as judges or attorneys (see also standard 4). Additionally, there is a high demand for the graduates of this programme in other sectors, both nationally and internationally. The programme prepares students for positions as legal-, research- or strategic analyst in consulting firms or governmental institutions such as the Dutch Competition and Markets Authority (ACM), the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), or the European Central Bank (ECB), or in international organisations. They can also become compliance officers for private companies or continue their career as PhD researchers, teaching staff and academics, in the Netherlands and abroad.

The programme's profile has been translated into 13 exit qualifications – along the same lines as the other master's programmes – covering qualifications in relation to substance, to academic and professional skills, and to law and economics in context. The qualifications related to substance include in-depth knowledge and understanding of economic public law, particularly European law and national law issues of market supervision, economic regulation, and the European and national public law and private law aspects of competition law, procurement law, and corporate governance. This also comprises the bases, the general doctrines, the system and the development of the legal area, as well as the legal methods relevant to the legal area. In addition, graduates have knowledge of economic theories and an understanding of the legal economic analysis of economic public law, more specifically market supervision and the regulation of markets and they have knowledge and understanding of the interaction between European and international developments and economic public law.

Academic and professional skills include basic techniques of economic (experimental) research and knowledge and understanding of the legal economic methodology, communicating in English both in writing and orally, critical analysis, and the ability to take a substantiated position in the public debate. The contextual perspective of studying law and economics is reflected not only in the two disciplines that the programme entails, but also in the exit qualifications relating to law in context. Additionally, there is an extra qualification on approaching and analysing multifaceted issues of market regulation and market supervision. Finally – as in the other two programmes –, a sound ethical methodological attitude and reflection on one's own professional performance are incorporated in the exit qualifications. By including these qualifications, the programme has followed up on the recommendation of the last visitation panel in 2018 to focus in the exit qualifications not only on academic integrity, but also on professional ethics.

The chosen profile of the Law & Economics programme has been convincingly translated into 13 final exit qualifications, worthy of an academic master's level. They pay significant attention to written and oral skills and the multidimensional context of law of market supervision, economic regulation and competition law. Ethical conduct and methodological skills are reflected in the exit qualification levels to the satisfaction of the panel. The programme also aims to provide students with broad knowledge of the international and European aspects of the field. The exit qualifications of the master's programme are set at the level of an academic LLM degree and provide graduates with access to a professional career in or outside of academia.

## **Considerations and Judgement**

*Master's programme European Law: meets the standard*

*Master's programme Public International Law: meets the standard*

*Master's programme Law & Economics: meets the standard*

The panel concludes that the programmes in European Law, Public International Law and Law & Economics meet Standard 1, considering that (1) the programmes have chosen profiles and ambitions that are appropriate for master's programmes at the academic level, (2) the chosen profiles of the three programmes have been convincingly translated into exit qualifications, and (3) the multidimensional and socially oriented departmental profile is clearly reflected in the exit qualifications as well as the European and international orientation. The exit qualifications are consistent with the national Domain-Specific Reference Framework for Law (DSRK), reflect the Dublin descriptors, and meet the (inter)national requirements set for them by the professional field and academia. The civil effect for the toga professions is adequately anchored in the three programmes and the programmes have followed up on the recommendation of the last visitation panel to address not only academic integrity, but also professional ethics in the exit qualifications.

These considerations lead to the conclusion, that the programmes meet Standard 1.



## 4.2. Teaching-learning environment

### **Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

Explanation: The intended learning outcomes have been adequately translated into educational objectives of (components of) the curriculum. The diversity of the students admitted is taken into account in this respect. The teachers have sufficient expertise in terms of both subject matter and teaching methods to teach the curriculum and provide appropriate guidance. The teaching-learning environment encourages students to play an active role in the design of their own learning process (student-centred approach). If the programme is taught in a language other than Dutch, the programme must justify its choice. This also applies if the programme bears a foreign language name. The teaching staff must have a sufficient command of the language in which they are teaching. Services and facilities are not assessed, unless they have been set up specifically for the programme concerned.

### **Findings**

#### **Programme**

##### *Structure and design*

All master's programmes in the department follow largely the same structure of four periods. In each of the first two periods, students take two 7,5 EC courses, one of which is always compulsory and one of which is a specialisation choice, the third period they can choose from capita selecta (15 EC total, including one compulsory module Research Proposal Thesis) and the fourth period is entirely devoted to the last phase of the 15 EC Research and Thesis Trajectory (RTT): writing the actual final thesis. The programmes Law & Economics and the general track of European law do not offer specialisation courses, but only compulsory ones, which is inherent to their broad and – in the case of Law & Economics – interdisciplinary nature. The Research and Thesis Trajectory (RTT) starts right in the first period and runs throughout the entire year.

This format offers students many choices, which the panel and students really appreciate. Students can also participate throughout the year in the Honours programme, which consists of a general overarching part and a programme-specific part and which is offered across all master's degree programmes of the School of Law. Participating students in the Honours programme co-shape their own programme and choose to a large extent the topics they want to deal with. Selection is in the three weeks after onboarding and motivation is the main criterion.

The European Law programme in particular has a complex structure with, next to a general programme, several tracks that in practice function as separate programmes. The panel suggests paying attention to clarifying the structure of the programmes to (prospective) students as to the various options within the European law programmes.

Notwithstanding the above positive observations, the panel sees some room for improvement. First of all, the panel noticed that the choice to have separate programmes under one 'CROHO-number' has resulted in a complex scheme of possibilities for students. This is particularly visible in the master programme European Law. The panel has been informed that students are guided through the various options from the moment of their enrolment. The panel recommends continuing to be transparent about the programme name on their final diploma.

With regard to the Law & Economics programme, the panel noted differences in course sizes (number of EC) as well as in certain procedures. The panel was informed that this is related to the cooperation with the School of Economics. The panel encourages the foreseen reforms in this respect. In addition, the question was raised whether combinations with other programmes

(in particular with the European Law programme) could enhance efficiency as courses seem to overlap. As all programmes are provided by the same faculty, the panel believes that a further streamlining of the structures could be beneficial.

Notwithstanding these remarks, the panel is generally positive about the design of the programmes. It studied the content, structure, and teaching-learning environment of the programmes by reading the self-evaluation reports (SER), a number of course descriptions, and by meeting with staff, students, alumni and management. The clear structure of the programmes is, in the opinion of the panel, well chosen and gives students both many choices and a clear framework.

The capita selecta usually tie in with the specialisations and current events (social developments, current research) and challenge students to gain knowledge and understanding of particular issues in a short period of time. In addition, capita selecta often combine the acquisition of substantive knowledge with the training of specific skills. Each module expects much self-study from students and is different in terms of didactics, topic, group size, and test format. The 15 EC of capita selecta are completed by taking 6 modules of 2.5 EC (including a mandatory research module as part of the Research and Thesis Track). The panel is very positive about the way the capita selecta offer both depth on content of the chosen specialisation or track and also pay much attention to the students' skills and often tie into recent developments in society and the professional field.

In the past students have pointed out to the programme the differences in severity and teaching formats between capita selecta modules and their, sometimes difficult, planning. The panel applauds the fact that guidelines have since been developed to harmonise these – the number of contact hours, for example, has been set at 6-8 hours – and that within the deliberately chosen freedom for those in charge of the capita, the programmes continue to monitor that a number of basic shared features stay in place.

*Programme European Law*

Period 1 7,5 EC	Period 2 7,5 EC	Period 3 15 EC	Period 4 15 EC
Regulating the European Union's Single Market (major)	Constitutional Law of the European Union (major)	Capita Selecta	Thesis
<b>7,5 EC</b>	<b>7,5 EC</b>	Six modules from a selection list including a compulsory module Research Proposal Thesis	
Or: <b>General track:</b> Judicial Protection and Enforcement of EU Law Or: <b>Specialisation European Criminal Justice:</b> · Transnational Criminal Law Enforcement Or: <b>Specialisation Law and Sustainability:</b> · Natural Resources Law Or: <b>Specialisation Law and Technology:</b> · The Law of Market Technologies	Or: <b>General track:</b> · European Competition Law Or: <b>Specialisation European Criminal Justice:</b> · Supranational Criminal Law Enforcement Or: <b>Specialisation Law and Sustainability:</b> · EU Climate Protection Or: <b>Specialisation Law and Technology:</b> · Consumers in a Digital Society		
Research and Thesis Trajectory (RTT) LLM's Honours Programme (after selection procedure)			

*Programme Public International Law*

Period 1 7,5 EC	Period 2 7,5 EC	Period 3 15 EC	Period 4 15 EC
General Course in Public International Law	International Law Moot Court	Capita Selecta	Thesis
<b>7,5 EC</b>	<b>7,5 EC</b>	Six modules from a selection list including a compulsory module Research Proposal Thesis	
Choice among: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Rights I: Principles and Institutions</li> <li>International Environmental Law</li> <li>International Security Law</li> </ul>	Choice among: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Rights II: Substantive Rights</li> <li>International Law of the Sea</li> <li>International Humanitarian Law</li> </ul>		
Research and Thesis Trajectory (RTT) LLM's Honours Programme (after selection procedure)			

*Programme Law & Economics*

Period 1 15 EC	Period 2 15 EC	Period 3 15 EC	Period 4 15 EC
Advanced Competition Law & Economics I ('Competition 1') – 5 EC	Advanced Competition Law & Economics II ('Competition 2') – 5 EC	Capita Selecta	Thesis
Law and Economics of Market Regulation ('Regulation 1') – 5 EC	Competition and Regulation of Network Sectors ('Regulation 2') – 5 EC	Six modules from a selection list including a compulsory module Research Proposal Thesis	
Methodologies of Law and Economics – 5 EC	Supervision of Markets, Enforcement and Agency Design – 5 EC		
Research and Thesis Trajectory (RTT) LLM's Honours Programme: HSF Competition Law Moot Court (for 4 students)			

*Incoming students and onboarding*

In the programme European Law, most students originate from EU countries, but all sub-programmes also attract students from EU-neighbouring countries and beyond. In 2020 the programme experienced a steep increase in incoming students from 43 to 105 after it introduced the sub-programmes Law and Technology and European Criminal Justice in a Global Context. Since then, the programme has continued to grow to a number of 201 students in 2022. The sub-programme Law and Sustainability started in 2022 and took in that year a share of 44 students.

The Public International Law Programme rose from 117 students in 2020 to 166 in 2021. Since then, the programme has applied a stricter selection. This created a drop in students to 128 in 2022, which was welcomed by the programme. 72 % of the incoming students in PIL in 2022 had an international background. The Law & Economics programme, although smaller, has also seen a growing enrolment of students from 28 in 2017 to 56 in 2022. It attracts students from the

Netherlands (15 in 2022), the EU (24) and non-EU countries (17). The student populations in each of the programmes are diverse in terms of gender and educational background.

Admission to the three programmes is selective, but they do not have a 'numerus fixus' (capacity limitation). The selection procedure is partly done by the School of Law's Admissions Office and partly by the (sub)programmes themselves. Selection criteria vary slightly between the programmes, but they can include motivation, writing skills and GPA (Grade Point Average) in the bachelor's programme. Also, some basic understanding in the field of the programme chosen and English proficiency will be assessed. A written paper and/or an interview can be part of the procedure. The programme leader is ultimately responsible for admission decisions after consulting with the Admission Office. The panel finds the selection procedures are sound and transparent and appreciates how the interviews are also used to ensure that there is a good match between the candidate student and the content of the programme. The diverse student population, in terms of nationality, creates a true international learning environment, allowing multiple (legal) perspectives to be considered. The panel commends the programmes for the way in which it makes these differences productive in the classrooms – for instance by proactively creating space to discuss controversial current international issues, rather than shying away from them – and in other not regular teaching activities, such as symposiums, moot courts or negotiation exercises. One example is the decolonisation reading club where students prepare for this kind of discussions.

Notwithstanding the selection process, the diverse student populations creates challenges to each of the three programmes. The main challenges are the command of English, pre-knowledge in the field of the programme, possession of key skills, most notably writing skills and educational culture and codes. Bachelor's degrees from other countries may, for instance, be based on a single assessment method, such as oral or written exams and in some countries, students have never had to write a paper or thesis. The panel is satisfied to have established that the programmes takes adequate measures to deal with this disbalance in the entry level of its students. Measures include a stricter – but more individualised – admission procedure, supplying students before the start of the year with a list of relevant law topics, principles and doctrines to make sure candidates understand which level is expected, and advising candidates to invest in improving their English or knowledge base. If they are not willing to do so, they may not be accepted into the programme. Law & Economics created video clips to support the students in this.

The panel also praises the efforts the programmes have put into improving the onboarding procedures for new students. The established introduction weeks include sessions on substance and on skills (e.g. how to write a paper). It is also used to make all students familiar with the rules and procedures that come with studying at Utrecht University School of Law (the academic year, plagiarism, re-taking exams, intercultural communication, and educational culture). The Public International Law programme offers summer courses for prospective students to upgrade their knowledge base. Such smooth onboarding is further accommodated through small class tutorials. In the first semester the programmes map out where the students stand and support them in evening out the different levels where necessary.

The Research and Thesis Trajectory (RTT: see more below) forms another way to address these challenges. The early start of the trajectory and the attention that is paid to developing research skills, reading and analysing as well as presentations skills acquaint students at an early stage with the knowledge and skills required to carry out research at Utrecht School of Law and in the end to write a thesis.

### *Relationship to intended learning outcomes*

The panel finds that the content of the three programmes adequately covers the exit qualifications as formulated by the programmes. In terms of content and design, the courses studied are at the level that can be expected of a university master's programme. The programmes' assessment plans demonstrate a conclusive relationship between the final competencies of the entire programme and the learning objectives of its constituent components (see also Standard 3). The content of the programme furthermore shows a systematic accumulation of knowledge and skills leading to the achievement of the overall exit qualifications. The assignments students are required to work on fit well with the curricula, and the prescribed literature is relevant and current.

### *Learning paths*

The master's programmes are structured along three learning paths: content, skills and context.

In the European law programme and its four sub-programmes content is taught from a basis and point of departure of thorough knowledge of the EU, its institutions and its founding principles. The general European Law programme addresses the common areas (internal market, competition law, the area of freedom, security and justice (AFSJ), the institutions of the EU and its judicial and constitutional features. The thematic programmes start from a specific substantive theme and address this theme through the perspective of EU law and its institutions and the general principles of EU law. With the EU and the EU legal order as their academic context, students engage in studying the interactions between the European and national levels, but they also study the role of the EU as a global actor. The substantive profile of the Public International Law master's programme is characterised by its focus on the general doctrines of international law, their application in practice, in particular the settlement of (inter-state) disputes, the three substantive law specialisations (Human Rights, Oceans, Environment and Sustainability and Conflict and Security) and the *Capita Selecta* modules. The curriculum of the Law & Economics programme is designed to provide a solid foundation of core courses in EU competition law, EU regulatory law, supervision and enforcement, and methodology. In the *capita selecta* modules and RTT students can choose for further specialisation. In the eyes of the panel the content of the programmes is well-chosen in light of the profile and the exit qualifications they want to achieve.

The panel is impressed with how the programmes have interwoven skills throughout their curricula. Both academic writing and speaking skills/presentation are well embedded in the programmes. The programmes are supported by the Legal Skills Academy (LSA) of the school of law regarding skills development. More specifically, the programmes participate in the LSA's Legal Writing Support Programme for selected students who wish to receive additional support for their legal writing skills. Furthermore, on a regular basis, the LSA examines how skills are taught throughout the curriculum to identify whether there is a consistent line for students in building these skills. In doing so, the LSA supports course coordinators and lecturers in thinking about the assignments and assessments in such a way that they can build on previously acquired knowledge and skills from students. The panel is very positive about this consistent and self-evaluating approach of skills components in the programmes.

In most programmes the main focus of skills training is on academic research, writing and presenting skills, mainly but not only taught during the Research and Thesis Trajectory. However, the panel assessed with satisfaction that the training of more professional skills is also very present in the courses – often in combination with the academic skills. Courses and elective *capita selecta* include assignments that require the students to take a practice-oriented view. One example of an assignment that connects academic skills to practice is the module Implementing EU legislation which is offered in the European Law programme. In this module, the students write an EU implementation report from the perspective of the national legislature

(or of the Commission in overseeing national EU implementation). In other programmes as well, students write legal opinions, policy briefs, learn to present their knowledge to a wider public, to give feedback and presentations, to read judgements and discuss real-life cases – sometimes in moot court settings – to develop practical argumentation skills. The programmes demonstrated to the panel that they offer students ample opportunities to learn the academic and professional skills they need in order to meet the exit qualifications. This was clearly confirmed in the interviews with the students and alumni, who were very appreciative of the amount of skills training and the way academic and practical skills are both taught in the programme.

The panel also looked into the context learning path, which aligns with the three orientations formulated by Department of Law for all master's programmes (European and international orientation, multidimensional orientation, societal orientation). In the vast majority of the components of the English-language master's programmes – where relevant – attention is paid to international and European context. From the documentation provided and the interviews conducted, however, it emerged that the degree of attention to societal and multidimensional orientation varies by programme, sub-programme, specialisation and/or course. In a number of (sub)programmes that in itself approach a field from different perspectives – Law & Economics, Law and Technology, Law and Sustainability, European Criminal Justice in a Global Context, Oceans, the environment and sustainability and Conflict and Security – the multidimensional orientation is self-understood. In the capita selecta as well students are challenged to look at a subject from several angles and many of the modules deal with actual present-day societal issues. In line with university and faculty policy, the programmes pay much attention to specific societal challenges and the role of their professional field therein and encourage students to write their thesis on a present-day challenge in society. The panel appreciates that it could clearly recognise this approach in the course material and individual theses it studied but is not sure that this learning path is always recognised as such by the students. It recommends evaluating this and, if necessary, make this approach more explicit to students.

#### *Research and academic orientation*

The master's programmes are strongly linked to the research conducted in the department. The capita selecta – frequently closely related to the own research of the teachers – are a very commendable example of this in the eyes of the panel. As far as the panel is concerned, this clearly adds to the demonstrable academic level of the programmes. The connection with research makes teaching very attractive for teachers and also requires less preparation of them. This also allows the courses to be updated regularly as developments occur within the field. The students with whom the panel spoke also see very clearly the influence of the individual professors' research areas and are enthusiastic about it.

Through the UU-funded project "Students' research for Society", the master's programme Law & Economics puts extra effort into a better use of the research conducted by students, so that their work contributes to academic debate, educational development and knowledge sharing in society. It has been practised in different courses and extra-curricular activities in the programme, for instance by students writing academic blog posts, of which some are selected for online publication. These types of assignments help students learn how to translate their academic research into relevant information for the wider public. The panel is very pleased with this dedicated approach and the positive incentive it creates for students.

#### *Language of instruction*

During the site visit, the panel discussed the use of English as the language of instruction of the programmes with the programme management. The panel considers English an appropriate choice given the international orientation of the professional field of the programmes and the global labour market. English language proficiency (level C1) is one of the recruitment

requirements for academic staff and the university offers courses and training programmes for teachers to invest in their language development. Most staff members have a good command of English, based on their publishing and teaching experience in English. Students appreciate that the programme is taught in English and seem to be satisfied with the level of English proficiency of the teachers. The last visitation panel advised the programmes to include English language in the intended learning outcomes, a recommendation that was followed up by the programmes. Also, the recommendation to use English as language for meetings of the 'Opleidingscommissie' has been implemented. Policy papers are all provided in two languages.

Enrolment in one of the English-language programmes is possible only after it has been demonstrated that the requirement of sufficient command of the English language has been met. Deficiencies in prior education in English must be eliminated before the start of the programme (see also under *Incoming Students and Onboarding*).

#### *Professional orientation*

Throughout the year, guest lecturers provide students with the opportunity to consider how the theoretical aspects of the law work out in practice. As mentioned above under skills, the teaching of written and oral skills involves learning a practice methodology in addition to scientific methods. In addition to the practice-oriented assignments in regular courses, most of the (sub) programmes also offer moot courts, either in compulsory courses, such as the International Law Moot Court, or in the context of the capita selecta, e.g. the environmental Moot Court. Law & Economics gives a highly selective group of students the opportunity to participate in an international Moot Court on competition law as part of the Honours programme. The EU law clinic set up by the European Law Programme in cooperation with specialised EU law firms in particular allows selected students to combine their study with exposure to professional work. Public International Law also offers a legal clinic in the context of the Honours Programme. The panel is very happy with the way in which practical training is imbedded into the regular courses and with the opportunities the programmes offer for the most ambitious students to further prepare themselves for a position in the professional field.

Notwithstanding the above, some students who were interviewed by the panel expressed that they could have benefitted from more attention to the career perspectives of the programmes. They did appreciate activities such as a study trip to Brussels or the ACM ('Autoriteit Consument en Markt') but thought more could be done to help them in getting a clearer picture of their job opportunities. The panel recommends looking into this, for instance by intensifying contacts with alumni of the programmes. Appointing an alumni officer could possibly be helpful in this respect.

#### *Methods of instruction*

The teaching groups in the master's programmes are generally between 20 and 25 students. In the capita selecta, care is taken to ensure that numbers do not exceed 18. This allows for intensive and activating teaching with good supervision. The panel has studied a selection of courses and has seen that the methods of instruction are varied and appropriate to the profile and learning objectives of the courses. The panel is positive about the small scale of the learning settings and believes that the methods of instruction of the courses studied are well chosen. They clearly help students acquire the intended knowledge and skills. The capita selecta are particularly highly rated by the panel because of their connection to current events, the small-scale learning environment, and the connection of many of the capita selecta to faculty research.

### *Research and thesis trajectory (RTT)*

In the three master's programmes, students follow from the very start of the program the Research and Thesis Track (RTT), which they complete in period 4 with a 15 EC thesis. In the first semester they have meetings in small groups, that focus on research skills under the supervision of an instructor. They collectively study and discuss additional regulations, case law and literature, and make presentations on which they give each other feedback. In addition, general lectures are organised that cover research skills, scientific integrity, labour market orientation and reflection on personal functioning. The second phase takes place in period 3 and consists of writing the research design (as one of the *Capita Selecta* modules). The outline of the thesis consists of about 2,000-3,000 words. This outline is provided with feedback by the supervisor and second evaluator and graded separately (2.5 EC).

The third part, from the end of period 3, consists of writing the thesis itself. Period 4 is entirely reserved for doing research and writing the thesis with discussions with the supervisor (an average of three to four times). The final version is then assessed by the supervisor and second reader based on the uniform assessment form and the rubrics available for this purpose (see Standard 3). As said before, the Legal Skills Academy offers a writing support programme for students who may need additional writing assistance for their theses.

From the interviews with students and the student chapters<sup>2</sup> of the self-evaluation reports, the panel found that, in general, students are very satisfied with the set-up and early start of the trajectory and that they feel well prepared for the actual writing process in period 4. The fixed trajectory provides them guidance and it is appreciated that there is sufficient opportunity to deviate from the timeline with good reason, for example, when doing an internship. Students also generally experience the guidance by the staff as very good and personal. The panel noted with satisfaction, that the RTT is clearly designed and guides the students well in their learning process towards the final paper.

Deadlines are the same for all master's programmes of the school of law and are reflected in the joint Education and Examination Regulations (EER), but the way the trajectory is implemented sometimes differs from one to another. In the interviews conducted with those responsible for the programmes, it emerged that work has been done in recent years to harmonise the thesis trajectories. To this end, an inventory was first made of existing practices. From this it appeared that the greatest differences mainly existed between the Dutch and English-language master's programmes. The inventory showed that the approach was largely the same everywhere, that more harmonisation had already taken place in recent years — for example, starting the course early in the year — but also that sufficient room was still left for individual interpretation of the courses and programmes. For example, the pairing of the student with a teacher does not take place in the same way at the same time everywhere, and research skills are taught through different methods of instruction. The panel appreciates the line chosen by the department, in which more has been streamlined while retaining individual interpretation of training. Nonetheless, it still sees opportunities to learn from each other's best practices and to evaluate practices more frequently both within programmes and within the department and to calibrate final results with each other (see also standard 3).

### *Study guidance and feasibility*

The panel was able to establish, that the structure of the programmes, the chosen methods of instruction, study load and guidance of the programmes ensure that the programmes are feasible to be completed within a year. Most students find their programme challenging, but

---

<sup>2</sup> The student chapter of the programme Public International Law was presented to the panel in the form of a podcast.



doable when they put sufficient effort into it. As said before, the established structure of the RTT and its early start at the beginning of the year also contribute significantly to this in the panel's view. The small-scale teaching and strong community building ensure high student commitment to their studies. This was avidly confirmed by the students the panel spoke with and the student chapters of the self-evaluations. Students of all programmes praise the teaching staff for their personal approach, responsiveness, and readiness to take in feedback. For questions about study choice and planning, study skills, regulations surrounding the study or any problems (whether personal or otherwise), students can contact the study advisor. The student advisor is also the first point of contact within the programme for students with disabilities and grants basic services. If necessary, the student advisor refers students to other facilities that Utrecht University has especially for students, such as the student psychologists and deans, Skills Lab, Student Welfare, etc. Furthermore, students can make use of guidance in the area of labour market orientation and career guidance by the REBO Career Services. Considering the above-mentioned feeling under students that they could be better supported in their orientation towards the labour market, the panel noted that not all students seem to be aware of the services that are available. It recommends communicating more with the students about the existence of REBO Career Services.

The recommendation of the previous panel to make the course load of different capita selecta more equal among themselves, has been followed up with more harmonisation and is well monitored by the programmes (see above under *structure and design*).

Students of most of the (sub)programmes seemed to have problems from time to time of organisational nature. They sometimes missed coordination between professors, were confronted with scheduling conflicts, or teachers who missed deadlines for assessing grades. They also recommend streamlining the deadlines for the research proposals, since that gives them the opportunity to work together in the capita selecta module of the RTT with students from other tracks of their programme. The panel recommends the programmes to address these issues seriously, even though it was happy to be informed that students are very positive about the way in which the programmes respond to feedback by the students.

The panel read an EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) Action Plan of the faculty with action to take on faculty level. At the same time, it learned during its visit, that the (sub)programmes themselves are also consciously working on creating an open and safe learning environment for all students. This implies taking into account the very different backgrounds of their students, e.g. by giving them time to get used to the educational system and give a lighter weight to the first exams. Students told the panel that in their programme different cultures are celebrated and that they are asked to share information about their home legal systems. They also confirmed that the teachers try to reach out to students who seem to struggle with their study for various – sometimes not programme related – reasons. Dutch students are encouraged to make contact with students from other countries, with the result that they do not feel a strong divide between them. Teachers try to be proactive and not shy away from sensitive topics. Some of the individual teachers work with the inclusive curriculum reflection tool to reflect on the content of programme components in terms of diversity and inclusion. Other examples of the attention for Diversity and Inclusion are the reading club for students in the programme Public International Law on decolonisation and the review of admission criteria on unconscious biases. The panel praises the programmes for their firm commitment to an open, safe and encouraging learning environment and encourages them to continue in this direction.

## Teachers

### *Quantity*

The panel encountered highly engaged and driven teams of teachers, and the students the panel met with were also very positive about the teachers. The choice of small-scale teaching presents challenges for management. One of the measures to ensure that teachers are not overloaded is to schedule a teaching-free week in the tenth week of each period. During those weeks, teachers do not have to grade exams or participate in meetings. Furthermore, the department has a teaching coordinator for each section, whose job is to monitor the load for each employee. This includes not only teaching but everything involved in being a teacher and researcher. In this way, the department of Law has a clear picture of the balance for each individual teacher. When assigning (teaching) tasks, the degree of experience of the lecturer is also taken into account — someone with a lot of experience is assigned more teaching than a lecturer who has yet to build up experience — and the relationship with the research in which the lecturer is engaged. Lecturers are given — on paper and on average — 40% time for research and 60% for teaching. Teachers indicated that this adjustment of the teaching/research ratio from 70% - 30% to 60%-40% - is a substantial improvement for them. Also, additional appointed teachers - made possible with incentive funds - provide relief from the workload at the programmes. During periods when a teacher is doing a lot of research, he/she is given fewer other commitments. The panel was impressed by the individual attention to workload among teachers. It was persuaded by its discussions with management that small-scale teaching may at first appear to increase workload, but in the long run motivates both faculty and students more and ultimately lowers workload due to the smaller number of students who have to retake courses and exams. The panel was also pleased to learn that management is continually looking for ways to reduce the workload - without losing quality - for example, by more sharply prioritizing the doctrines being covered, but also by making even greater use of blended learning and video clips. One point of attention is the workload of the course coordinators, whose tasks have become heavier since they no longer receive secretarial support. Sometimes the workload is caused by the severe tightness in the job market, as is particularly the case in the Criminal Law section. The panel was happy to notice that this has the constant attention of those in charge who are trying to solve this shortage as creatively as possible.

### *Quality*

Every teacher at Utrecht University must have the Basic Teaching Qualification (BKO). The UU regulation BKO-SKO describes the process for obtaining this qualification. The details of the implementation within the faculty can be found in the Faculty Regulation BKO REBO. Within the faculty, lecturers who want to obtain their basic qualification are offered a BKO Development Trajectory (BOT). In addition to individual supervision, this track consists of didactic training and supervised intervision.

At the time of the visitation, 64 of the 114 lecturers teaching in one of the three programmes had a BKO. In the interviews, the panel was told, that due to a rapid growth in the number of lecturers, a significant backlog has arisen in the BKO trajectories and at the faculty BKO committee in the processing of BKO applications. Therefore, in the 2023-2024 academic year, all BKO-modules will be offered three times to eliminate the resulting waiting lists. The panel understands the existing backlog and is confident that the faculty is sufficiently aware of the urgency and encourages the programmes to continue with this (see standard 3 on the BKO-requirement when appointing examiners).

A Senior Teaching Qualification (SKO) is required for all positions higher than UD ('Universitair Docent') with managerial duties in the field of education. Lecturers, in addition to the BKO and SKO pathways mentioned above, can take advantage of an extensive range of training, such as, for example, educational leadership courses, honours education, interdisciplinary education and

community engaged learning. At the time of writing the SERs 13 staff members of the three programmes were in the possession of an SKO (Senior Teaching Qualification).

The core lecturers in the master's programmes almost all have a doctoral degree and are working in one of the department's research programmes. In the flexible parts of the programmes (especially the capita selecta modules), there is also room for other experienced teachers in the department or, on the contrary, for teachers at an earlier stage of their careers (such as PhD students) to gain teaching experience. The development, coordination and care of the compulsory courses and the specialisation courses, of the Research and Thesis Trajectory, the practicals and capita selecta, is generally provided by doctoral lecturers, preferably the chair holder.

A significant number of the lecturers also work in the legal or other relevant practice. They weave this practical experience into their teaching, not only in terms of content but also when it comes to more practically oriented methods (see also above under *Learning paths*). Guest lecturers from outside the academy are also used for (parts of) courses, but the assessment is always done under the supervision of a qualified examiner appointed by the examination board.

The panel praises the programmes for their knowledgeable and inspired teachers and for the attention paid to their professional development. Students also indicated in the interviews and in the student chapters that they found the lecturers very knowledgeable and unequivocally praised their personal approach and approachability.

## **Considerations and Judgement**

*Master's programme European Law: meets the standard*

*Master's programme Public International Law: meets the standard*

*Master's programme Law & Economics: meets the standard*

For a number of reasons, the panel concludes that the programmes meet Standard 2. First of all, the clear structure of the programmes is, in the opinion of the panel, well chosen providing students with many choices and a clear framework. The panel is in particular positive about how the capita selecta offer both depth in the content of the chosen specialisation or track, while also paying much attention to the students' skills and often deal with current events. The panel established that guidelines have been developed to harmonise the capita selecta and that the programmes continue to monitor that a number of basic shared features stay in place.

In respect to the influx of students, the panel considers (1) that the selection procedures are sound and transparent, (2) that the programmes make the diversity of the student population productive in the classrooms and in other non-regular teaching activities and (3) that the programmes take adequate measures to address the different entry levels of incoming students and improved the onboarding procedures for new students.

The panel concludes that the content of the three programmes adequately covers the exit qualifications as formulated by the programmes. In terms of content and design, the courses studied are at the level that can be expected of a university master's programme. The programmes' assessment plans demonstrate a conclusive relationship between the final competencies of the entire programmes and the learning objectives of its constituent components (see also Standard 3). The content of the programmes furthermore shows a systematic accumulation of knowledge and skills leading to the achievement of the overall exit qualifications. The assignments students are required to work on fit well with the curricula, and the prescribed literature is relevant and current.

The panel – after studying a selection of courses – has seen that the methods of instruction are varied and appropriate to the profile and learning objectives of the courses. The panel is positive about the small scale of the learning settings and considers that the work formats of the courses studied help students acquire the intended knowledge and skills. Adding to the panel's positive judgement is the way in which the programmes have interwoven skills – both academic writing and speaking skills/presentation – throughout their curricula. On one hand the educational programmes are strongly linked to the research conducted in the department, at the same time the training of more professional skills is very present in the courses – often in combination with the academic skills.

Important to the panel is the fact, that the Research and Thesis Trajectory (RTT) is clearly designed and runs through the entire year, thus enabling students to be well prepared before they start the actual writing of the thesis. The fixed trajectory provides students with guidance while allowing sufficient opportunity to deviate from the timeline with good reasons. Nevertheless, the panel sees opportunities for the programmes to learn from each other's best practices, to evaluate practices more frequently and as well as to calibrate final results with each other.

Most students find their programme challenging, but doable when they put sufficient effort into it. The programmes have teams of very engaged and knowledgeable teachers and the students think highly of them, praising the teaching staff (and study advisor) for their personal approach, responsiveness, and readiness to take in feedback. The panel commends the programmes for their firm commitment to an open, safe and encouraging learning environment for all students of different backgrounds and encourages them continue in this direction. The panel was also pleased with the (individual) attention to the workload and professional development of teachers.

Notwithstanding the above positive observations, the panel sees some room for improvement. First of all, the panel noticed that the choice to have separate programmes under one 'CROHO-number' has resulted in a complex scheme of possibilities for students. This is particularly visible in the master's programme European Law. The panel recommends continuing to pay attention to clarifying the structure of the programmes to (prospective) students.

It also recommends looking into possibilities to increase the attention to the career perspectives of the students, for instance by intensifying contacts with alumni. Appointing an alumni officer could possibly be helpful in this respect. It also recommends communicating more with the students about the existence of this service REBO Career Services.

With regard to the Law & Economics programme, the panel was pleased to learn that reforms are in the making regarding differences in course sizes (number of EC). As all programmes are provided by the same faculty, it believes that a further streamlining of the structures could be beneficial. The panel also raised the question whether combinations with other programmes (in particular with the European Law programme) could perhaps enhance efficiency.

On a final note, the panel recommends the programmes to address issues of organisational nature seriously – such as coordination between professors, deadlines for assessing grades, scheduling conflicts or streamlining deadlines for research proposals.

Based on the above arguments, the panel arrives at the judgment “meets the standard” for Standard 2.

### 4.3. Student assessment

**Standard 3: The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.**

Explanation: The student assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The requirements are transparent to the students. The quality of interim and final examinations is sufficiently safeguarded and meets the statutory quality standards. The tests support the students' own learning processes.

#### Findings

##### *System of assessment*

Testing takes place in accordance with the rules laid down in the documents Assessment Policy Department of Law (September 2018; edited and updated September 2023) and Guidelines for Assessment Quality of Law (entered into force 2017). An important starting point for testing within the programmes is the principle of "constructive alignment" which ensures that learning objectives, study and teaching activities and testing formats are aligned. In the University Education Catalogue and in the Course Planner, students can find the descriptions of all courses with information on learning objectives, content, forms of work and contact hours, study materials and the forms of testing used. Every (sub)programme has an assessment plan that provides insight into the way in which the learning objectives of the courses are realised. The Examination Board Regulations describe the procedure of assessing.

The panel examined a selection of a number of courses and the assessment plan for each (sub)programme and found with approval that the structure of the three master programmes and the variety of assessment methods ensure that the final qualifications are achieved. Moreover, all information on assessments is made available to students and teachers in an orderly manner.

The panel believes that the quality of assessments in the programmes is more than adequate and appropriate for the academic master's level of the programmes. The testing is generally valid, reliable and transparent. Based on the interviews and written information, such as the assessment plan, the panel also concludes that the assessments adequately cover the learning objectives of the courses and the exit qualifications of the programmes. Examinations align well with teaching. The system of testing supports the student learning process, with both formative and summative tests. The forms of assessing are sufficiently varied, and many courses have two moments of assessment. The learning path initiated in the bachelor's law programme in which students learn academic writing skills is also continued in the master's programmes, which means that, in addition to exams, relatively many writing assignments are given. These are - depending on the programme taken and the courses - regularly taken from relevant professional practice, both toga professions and beyond. Students also indicate that they appreciate the variety of assessments methods.

##### *Final level assessment*

The panel examined a selection of 15 final works<sup>3</sup> from each programme with their corresponding assessment forms. The panel found that the assessment process of the final thesis is carefully designed, and that the assessment of the final works use clear and relevant criteria, laid out in a uniform assessment form with a specification of the criteria. As mentioned in the description of the Research and Thesis (RTT) trajectory under Standard 2, peer feedback is also used in this track. All theses reviewed by the panel had been assessed - in accordance with faculty policy - by two examiners. These are also involved in assessing the thesis outline during the RTT module, which the panel welcomes.

---

<sup>3</sup> In selecting the theses, care was taken to ensure that alle sub-programmes were represented in the selection. More information about the selection procedure can be found in Appendix III.

In the European Law Programme almost all theses studied by the panel were provided with clear, well-reasoned and followable assessments, which include consideration of why the thesis was not rated higher. The panel has high praise for this. In other programmes – Public International Law and Law & Economics – the panel also saw an adequate assessment process, but in addition differences in the way and extent to which the judgments are substantiated and provided with feedback. The panel is pleased to have learned, that a department-wide harmonisation process has been initiated and recommends that the quality of feedback will be addressed in that process in order that all forms be completed in such a way that they are traceable to the student and relevant to the content. More generally, the panel firmly believes that there is room for more frequent calibration of the assessment process and of the marks given between and within all three programmes.

#### *Examination Board*

The Department of Law has two examination boards: one for bachelor's programme and one for master's programmes. The dean of the faculty appoints the chairperson and members of the examination boards, including an external member, for a term of up to three years. The appointment may be renewed once. The exact duties and roles of the Examination Board are contained in the Regulations of the Master Examination Board.

The department's two Examination Boards have jointly shaped their legal duty to ensure the quality of examinations in various ways. For example, they have issued a number of guidelines including the Guidelines for Test Quality in Law, the Guidelines for the Preparation of multiple-choice tests, and more recently the Guidelines on the Online Taking of Written Remote Tests. These guidelines serve to structure the assessment cycle. They have also installed a Committee on Assessment Quality (CTK). This board investigates the quality of assessments of individual courses based on samples and pass rates, in response to complaints, or at the request of course coordinators.

Every year the CTK assesses a sample of graduation works including the accompanying assessment forms and, together with the university department of Educational Advice & Training, contributes to the assessment expertise of lecturers by means of the 'Toetskwaliteit Kookboek' (Cookbook of Testing Quality). The cookbook provides recipes for reliable and valid testing for the benefit of teachers who are responsible for designing, administering and grading exams.

The panel also discussed extensively with the Examination Board the influence of Large Language Models, such as ChatGPT, on education and found that the Examination Board responds adequately to this and is well aware of the major impact artificial intelligence will have on the education of the future. The panel recommends that the knowledge and experience of students be included in the further development of policies in this regard.

#### *Examiners*

In addition, based on its legal duties, the Examination Board appoints examiners to administer the examinations and determine their results. Conditions for being examination authorised are the teacher's substantive and didactic competencies. A doctoral University Lecturer in possession of the BKO is unconditionally appointed as examiner. In view of the backlog in UTQ trajectories, the panel advises the Examination Board to monitor closely that teaching staff without a UTQ may be examiners only in exceptional cases (see also standard 2 under *Teachers*).

All in all, the panel concludes that the Examination Boards and the Examination Quality Committee take their duties very seriously and guarantee the quality of assessments and the level achieved within the programme more than adequately. The panel noted that the (time)

compensation for the work done by the Board and Quality Committee seem to be rather low and recommends the management to reconsider if more compensation is necessary for the continuation of their effective functioning.

### **Considerations and Judgement**

*Master's programme European Law: meets the standard*

*Master's programme Public International Law: meets the standard*

*Master's programme Law & Economics: meets the standard*

For Standard 3, the panel arrives at the judgment satisfactory because (1) the quality of testing in the program is amply in order, (2) the testing sufficiently covers the learning objectives of the courses and the intended learning outcomes of the programme, (3) the testing is generally valid, reliable and transparent and (4) the Examination Board - and with it the Assessment Quality Committee - adequately fulfils its legal duty to safeguard the quality of testing. Assessments align well with teaching. Students also indicate that they appreciate the variety of assessment methods.

The panel also found that the assessment process of the final thesis is carefully designed, and that the assessment of the final works use clear and relevant criteria, laid out in a uniform assessment form with a specification of the criteria. All theses reviewed by the panel had been assessed - in accordance with faculty policy - by two examiners.

In the European Law Programme almost all theses studied by the panel were provided with clear, well-reasoned and followable assessments. The panel has high praise for this. In the other two programmes the panel saw more differences in the way and extent to which the judgments are substantiated and provided with feedback. The panel recommends that the quality of feedback be addressed in the harmonisation process that has been initiated. More generally, the panel firmly believes that there is room for more frequent calibration of the assessment process and grades given between and within programmes.

The panel was also very positive about how seriously the Examination Boards and the Committee on Assessment Quality take their duties and established that they guarantee the quality of assessments and the level achieved within the programmes more than adequately. The Examination Board is well aware of the major impact artificial intelligence is having on education and is – within its capabilities – responding appropriately to the developments. The panel recommends that the knowledge and experience of students be included in the further development of policies in this regard.

The panel did note that the (time) compensation for the work of the Examination Board and Assessment Quality Committee is on the low side and recommends that management consider whether more compensation is needed for the committees to continue to function effectively.

Based on the above arguments, the panel arrives at the judgment “meets the standard” for Standard 3.

## 4.4. Achieved learning outcomes

### **Standard 4: The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.**

Explanation: The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in postgraduate programmes.

### **Findings**

#### *Quality of final theses*

The theses studied<sup>4</sup> by the panel convinced the panel that the students in each of the programmes are achieving the aspired academic master's level. The final works studied by the panel for each programme are discussed separately below.

#### *European Law*

The panel - obviously taking into account sometimes a small, but not significant difference - agree with the grading of the theses. The grades fit well with the research quality shown by the students. The panel saw some interesting and very good theses, clearly showing that the students in question have excellent analytical qualities. The panel noticed that some theses are very large. In some cases, this seems to be because the student seemed to have difficulty distinguishing main and secondary issues. The panel, therefore, advises the programmes to place a limit on the length of the theses to thereby force the student to frame and focus the research question. The research design is generally appropriate to the question. In one case, the panel had some doubts about the research question, but the student in question more than compensated by demonstrating the ability to tackle a complex issue and even give it a multidisciplinary character.

#### *Public International Law*

The panellists who reviewed theses from the programme Public International Law seem to agree that students research interesting, original and innovative topics. They agreed with the marks given. The very highly rated theses have rightly received a very good grade; the students with a lower grade demonstrate with their thesis, also as far as the panel is concerned, that they have sufficiently achieved the intended learning outcomes. Some of the theses addressed very interesting and underexplored topics; one was in the eyes of the panel an outstanding piece of research of publishable quality. The theses rated lower are in some cases less structured or too descriptive, often at the expense of the analytical content of the thesis. The panel, therefore, endorses the lower grade given to them.

#### *Law & Economics*

The panel generally agrees with the examiners' assessments in the sample provided. The final works studied by the panel were certainly adequate in the eyes of the panel, but it found some of the grades too high. Some of the theses could have reflected a more elaborate theoretical foundation or missed relevant literature. While the panel acknowledges that interdisciplinarity is one of the foundations of the programme and is adequately reflected in various courses, the panel observed that for some of the studied theses the chosen subject and content did not clearly reflect the interdisciplinarity of the learning outcomes of the programme; they seemed to rather focus on either one of the two domains. The panel, therefore, recommends paying more attention to the interdisciplinarity from the start of the RTT process.

---

<sup>4</sup> The panel reviewed 17 theses from the Master European Law, 15 theses from the Master Public International Law and 15 theses from the Master Law & Economics. More information on the selection of theses studied by the panel (e.g. representation of subprogrammes and specialisation) can be found in Annex III.



### *Functioning alumni*

From the panel's interviews with alumni of the three master's programmes, it became clear that the alumni are particularly enthusiastic about the programme they took and the extent to which it had prepared them for the job market. Through the many different and often professionally oriented assessment forms (advising for the municipality, giving a presentation to a 'client', writing company memos, pleadings, judgments, etc) they learned many things that come in handy in their current jobs. The close-knit community also provided a good network for them. The orientation to the job market was appreciated by the alumni, although some of them indicated that they would have benefitted from more information on job opportunities.

The panel, at the same time, noticed that the department does not have a good overview of where alumni end up, nor does it have a structured alumni policy. (Sub)programmes do maintain their own contact via LinkedIn with their alumni, but this is very dependent on individuals and obviously a major challenge for the larger programmes. The smaller programmes, such as Law & Economics, seem to succeed better in keeping in touch. The panel recommends doing more work on a directed alumni policy. This will allow a good view of where graduates end up and how quickly they find suitable jobs, to get these important ambassadors more involved in improving the quality of the programmes and in recruitment of new students. The panel believes that appointing an alumni officer here might provide a good impetus for this.

From the information that is available, it appears that most students do find a job within the field of their master. The type of positions is very broad, but include law firms, local government, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, such as EU and UN and consultancy, European Union. Approximately 50% of the international students go home or somewhere else and 50% seems to stay in the Netherlands.

## **Considerations and Judgement**

*Master's programme European Law: meets the standard*

*Master's programme Public International Law: meets the standard*

*Master's programme Law & Economics: meets the standard*

All the final works studied by the panel attest to an achieved academic master's level, which leads to a positive conclusion of the panel on Standard 4. The panel rated the quality of the theses of European Law and Public International Law as high and considered them to show remarkably good writing skills. The final works of Law & Economics were also certainly adequate in the eyes of the panel, but it found some of the grades too high and not properly motivated. The panel also observed that the interdisciplinarity of the programme was not always clearly reflected in the final theses and recommends paying more attention to it from the start of the RTT process.

The panel advises all programmes to place a limit on the length of the theses to thereby force the student to delineate and focus the research question.

The alumni with whom the panel spoke were unanimously very enthusiastic about the (sub)programme they studied. They indicated that they gained a great deal of substantive knowledge and skills that are useful in their current jobs. In the smaller (sub)programmes - through the close-knit communities - they also built a strong network.

The panel commends the programmes for the level of their graduates and recommends that more work can be done on a directed alumni policy. Perhaps appointing an alumni officer could give this a good impetus.

Based on the above arguments, the panel arrives at the judgment “meets the standard” for Standard 4.

## 5. OVERALL CONCLUSION

Based on the fact that the panel assesses standards 1 and 2, 3 and 4 for the master's programme *European Law* with 'meets the standard', the panel arrives - based on the decision rules for the NVAO's Limited Programme Assessment – at the final assessment of **'positive'** for the University of Utrecht's wo-master's programme *European Law* as a whole.

Based on the fact that the panel assesses standards 1 and 2, 3 and 4 for the master's programme *Public International Law* with 'meets the standard', the panel arrives - based on the decision rules for the NVAO's Limited Programme Assessment – at the final assessment of **'positive'** for the University of Utrecht's wo-master's programme *Public International Law* as a whole.

Based on the fact that the panel assesses standards 1 and 2, 3 and 4 for the master's degree program in *Law & Economics* with 'meets the standard', the panel arrives - based on the decision rules for the NVAO's Limited Programme Assessment – at the final assessment of **'positive'** for the University of Utrecht's wo-master's programme *Law & Economics* as a whole.

The audit panel therefore advises the NVAO to maintain the accreditation of the master's programmes in *European Law*, *Public International Law* and *Law & Economics*.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Multidimensional orientation and the social orientation**

The panel recommends evaluating whether the multidimensional orientation and social orientation is recognised as such by the students and, if necessary, make this approach more explicit to students.

### **Career development and alumni policy**

The panel recommends looking into possibilities to increase the attention to the career perspectives of the students. It recommends communicating more with the students about the existence of the REBO Career Services and involving their alumni more with the programmes. Appointing an alumni officer could possibly be helpful in this respect and would also help the programmes getting a clearer picture of where their students find job positions.

### **Transparency of the European Law programmes**

The European Law programme in particular has a complex structure with, next to a general programme, several tracks that in practice function as separate programmes. The panel recommends remaining transparent towards (prospective) students as to the various options in the European Law programme.

### **Final thesis Law & Economics**

The panel recommends the Law & Economics programme paying more attention to the interdisciplinarity (the link between law and economics) of the final theses from the start of the RTT.

### **Grading of final thesis**

The panel recommends continuing the initiated harmonisation of the RTT, making more use of each other's best practices, and calibrating grading of final theses more frequently within and across programmes. It also advises the programmes to place a limit on the length of the theses.

### **Teachers**

In light of the backlog of BKO trajectories, the panel advises to monitor closely that teaching staff without a BKO may be examiners only in exceptional cases.

### **Examination Board and Assessment Quality Committee**

The panel recommends that management consider whether more compensation is needed for the committees to continue to function effectively.

**ANNEX I**

**Overview of judgements**

<b>Overview of the panel's judgements</b> <b>Utrecht University</b> <b>Master's programmes European Law, Public International Law,</b> <b>and Law &amp; Economics</b> <b>Full-time</b>	
<b>Standard</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standard 1. Intended learning outcomes</b>	
European Law	Meets the standard
Public International Law	Meets the standard
Law & Economics	Meets the standard
<b>Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment</b>	
European Law	Meets the standard
Public International Law	Meets the standard
Law & Economics	Meets the standard
<b>Standard 3. Student assessment</b>	
European Law	Meets the standard
Public International Law	Meets the standard
Law & Economics	Meets the standard
<b>Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes</b>	
European Law	Meets the standard
Public International Law	Meets the standard
Law & Economics	Meets the standard
<b>Overall judgement</b>	
European Law	<b>Positive</b>
Public International Law	<b>Positive</b>
Law & Economics	<b>Positive</b>

## ANNEX II Programme of site-visit

### Visitation programme of the limited programme assessment for the bachelor's and master's programme in law - Utrecht University – February 5-7, 2024<sup>5</sup>

February 5, 2024		
9.30	10.00	Welcome
10.00	12.00	Internal panel meeting
12.00	12.30	Lunch
12.30	13.00	Meeting with the faculty board
13.10	13.55	Meeting with programme managers of the Ba Rechtsgeleerdheid
14.00	14.45	Meeting with students of the Ba Rechtsgeleerdheid
14.55	15.40	Meeting with lecturers of the Ba Rechtsgeleerdheid
15.40	16.30	Internal panel meeting
16.30	17.45	Meeting with the Examination Board (Ba + Ma)
17.45	18.15	Internal panel meeting
February 6, 2024		
8.45	9.15	Internal panel meeting
9.15	10.00	Meeting with programme managers of the 3 Dutch master's programmes
10.05	11.05	Meeting with students of the 3 Dutch master's programmes
11.15	12.15	Meeting with lecturers of the 3 Dutch master's programmes
12.15	13.15	Lunch
13.15	14.00	Meeting with programme managers of the 3 English master's programmes
14.05	15.05	Meeting with students from the 3 English master's programmes
15.15	16.15	meeting with lecturers from the 3 English master's programmes
16.15	17.00	Internal panel meeting
17.00	17.30	Meeting with alumni from the English-language programmes
17.30	18.00	Meeting with alumni from the Dutch-language programmes
February 7, 2024		
8.45	9.30	Internal panel meeting
9.30	10.00	Meeting with programme managers of the Legal Research Master
10.05	10.35	Meeting with students of the Legal Research Master
10.45	11.15	Meeting with students of the Legal Research Master
11.15	12.00	Internal panel meeting
12.00	12.30	Block for pending issues / additional meeting
12.30	13.30	Lunch
13.30	14.15	Final meeting with management
14.15	16.45	Drafting the findings
16.45	17.15	Plenary oral feedback of the findings

<sup>5</sup> 'NB. For privacy reasons, the names are not included in this report. The names of auditees are known to the secretary of the audit panel.

## **Methodology**

From 5-7 February 2024, the bachelor's and master's degree programmes in Law at Utrecht University were assessed by an independent peer review panel as part of the visitation group Rechten, sub-cluster WO Rechten 2. This sub-cluster consisted of 20 programmes from Utrecht University, Tilburg University and Leiden University. The assessment of the programmes in question were based on the 'Assessment framework for accreditation system for higher education in the Netherlands' adopted by the NVAO in September 2018. This sets out the standards on which the assessment panel should focus in the limited programme assessment of a programme and the criteria on the basis of which the assessment panel should determine its assessment of the programme.

On behalf of the cluster WO Rechten 2, the quality assurance agency Hobéon supervised the assessment. Inge van der Hoorn and Meg van Bogaert acted as co-ordinator and Meg van Bogaert and Hester Minnema were secretary within the sub-cluster. All three of them are trained and registered as secretaries by the NVAO.

Prior to the visitation, the sub-cluster coordinators informed the visitation panel in detail about the assessment framework and procedure and the attitude expected of them before, during and after the visitation. The coordinators also ensured calibration of the visitation panel by discussing the interpretation of the standards, judgements and decision rules. During the assessment process, the secretary monitored the correct process, ensured that the panel's judgements were made in accordance with the NVAO framework and supported the process of forming judgements.

Based on the documentation provided by the university, the panel was able to form a picture of the primary and secondary processes of the programmes in question. Prior to the site visit, the panel members studied the documentation received and sent their findings to the secretary. The secretary collected the panel's questions and comments in a document and distributed it to the panel members. In addition, the programme sent a list of graduates covering the period 2021 - 2023 to the coordinators, who selected 15 final works per programme (total of 45 for the 3 English-language master programmes) in consultation with the chairperson. In making the selection, they took into account the distribution of sub-programmes, final grades and assessors. Prior to the visit, the programmes made the selected theses with accompanying assessment forms available to the panel.

During a preliminary internal panel meeting, the panel discussed the information file and underlying documents and the preliminary findings of the different members. Moreover, the review panel's findings on the theses were also shared among the panel members during the preliminary consultation.

## **Site-visit**

During the site-visit the panel focused on verifying the findings from the document analysis and obtaining additional information on the content of the programmes. This was done through discussions with representatives of the programmes, students and the professional field, which could be characterised as 'peer-to-peer discussions'. The verification by the review panel took place by discussing the same topic several times with different stakeholders and on the basis of additional documentation.

The panel reviewed the draft programme for the site-visit and provided feedback on it. After consultation with the relevant master's programmes, the panel determined the choice of interlocutors in compliance with the NVAO rules to this effect.

The review panel offered students, lecturers and others involved in the programmes who were not included in the programme of the site-visit the opportunity to draw attention to issues they considered important for the assessment. The review panel found that the university brought

the opportunity to do so to their attention in a timely and proper manner and informed them on how to contact the secretary of the panel. The panel received no responses.

### **Coordination of subpanels within the cluster**

The reviews within the cluster WO Rechten 2 (Utrecht University, Tilburg University, Leiden University) are all conducted under the supervision of Hobéon. The three universities in this cluster have agreed that the chair and two panel members form the core panel. They participate in all three reviews and they thus ensure an equal method of assessment. Coordination between all subpanels also took place through a joint instruction on the working method and on the assessment framework to all panel members involved in the visitations in the cluster WO Rechten 2.

A first version of the assessment report was drafted by the secretary and circulated among the members of the panel for review and comments. The final draft was subsequently forwarded to the institute to correct factual inaccuracies.

### **Assessment rules**

#### *Limited framework*

Hobéon applied the decision rules, as listed in the "Assessment Framework for higher education accreditation system Netherlands, September 2018". According to the NVAO assessment rules a standard meets, partially meets or does not meet the standard.

### **Final conclusion**

**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 (see Additional assessment rules regarding conditions).

### **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.



## ANNEX III

### List of documents examined

- Self-evaluation Report institute
- Domain-Specific Reference Framework for Law (DSRK)
- Schematic program overview
- Content description of a representative selection of program components, including mention of learning objectives, instruction methods, literature (required/recommended), teachers involved and credits
- Education and Examination Regulations - OER.
- Overview of staff deployed
  - Name, position, degree and expertise, educational qualification obtained.
- Overview of all recent final works (or portfolios / pieces of work from which the final level achieved by the student can be deduced)
- Regulations and annual reports Examination Board 2021-2022 and 2022-2023
- Faculty regulation BKO
- Faculty regulation SKO
- Testing policy Department of Law (REBO)
- Assessment plan of the program
- Assessments + assessment criteria and norms (answer models) and a representative selection of assessments made (presentations, internship reports, assessments, portfolios, etc.) and their grading.

Following NVAO regulations, the panel has studied at least 15 students' final projects per programme prior to the audit.

- For the programme assessment of the Master European Law, the panel selected 17 theses. From each of the four specialisations within the general (sub)programme in European, the panel studied 2 theses (total 8). From each of the other three sub-programmes, the panel examined 3 theses (total 9).
- For the programme assessment of the Master Public International Law, the panel selected 15 theses. From each of the three specialisation the panel examined 5 theses.
- For the programme assessment of the Master Law & Economics the panel selected 15 theses.

For privacy reasons, the names of these graduates and their student numbers are not included in this report. The names of the graduates, their student number, as well as the titles of the final projects, are known to the coordinator of this visitation cluster.

## ANNEX IV

## Composition of the audit panel

On January 31, 2024, the NVAO approved the composition of the review panel for the assessment of the B Law programmes and the M Dutch Law, the M Notarial Law, the M Business and Law, the M European Law, the M Law & Economics, the M Public International Law and the M Legal Research of Utrecht University, under the number PA-1484. These programmes belong to the visitation group below.

Name visitation group:	WO Rechten 2
------------------------	--------------

The table below provides brief job descriptions of the panel members who participated in the review panel of the programme described in this assessment report.

Name	Brief job description	Role
Prof. mr. Anja Oskamp	Former rector magnificus of the Open Universiteit	Chair
Prof. dr. Ramses Wessel	Vice dean and professor of European Law at the University of Groningen.	Member
Prof. mr. Edgar du Perron	Justice at the Supreme Court and professor of Private Law at the University of Amsterdam	Member
Prof. mr. dr. Wilma Duijst	Professor of forensic medicine and health criminal law at Maastricht University	Member
Prof. mr. dr. Bert Marseille	Professor of Administrative Law at the University of Groningen	Member
Otto Heijboer	Student at the European Law School of Maastricht University	Student member
Prof. Sebastiaan Roes BA, MA, LLB,LLM, DJur (Phd)	Professor at the Department of Notarial Law at Radboud University Nijmegen	Thesis reviewer
Mr. dr. Marelle Attinger	University lecturer in Criminal (procedural) Law at the Open University	Thesis reviewer
Dr. Thomas Vandamme	University lecturer in European Law at the University of Amsterdam	Thesis reviewer
Prof. mr. Ben Schuijling	Professor of Civil Law at the Radboud University Nijmegen	Thesis reviewer
Dr. Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh	Associate Professor of Sustainability Law at the University of Amsterdam and lecturer at the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (Port Vila, Vanuata)	Thesis reviewer
Prof. dr. Michael Faure LLM	Professor Comparative Private Law and Economics at the Erasmus University Rotterdam and professor Comparative and International Environmental Law at Maastricht University	Thesis reviewer
Dr. Joseph Powderly	Associate Professor of Public International Law at the Grotius Centre for International Legal Studies at Leiden University	Thesis reviewer
Prof. dr. Bram Akkermans	Professor of Property Law and programme director of the Dutch-language undergraduate programmes at Maastricht University	Thesis reviewer
Dr. Meg van Bogaert	Independent consultant and NVAO registered secretary	Proces coordinator
Mr. Hester Minnema	Independent consultant and NVAO registered secretary	Secretary
Inge van der Hoorn MSc	Consultant at Hobéon and NVAO registered secretary	Logistic coordinator

The independence and confidentiality declarations signed by all panel members are in Hobéon's possession. In this declaration, the panel members declare not to have had, for at least five years prior to the audit, any business or personal connection with the institution concerned - other than that in the context of work as a member of the review panel of the quality assurance agency - that could influence, for better or worse, an independent judgement.

**Hobéon** 

Lange Voorhout 14  
2514 ED Den Haag  
+31 (0)70 30 66 800  
[info@hobeon.nl](mailto:info@hobeon.nl)  
[www.hobeon.nl](http://www.hobeon.nl)