



Universiteit Leiden

Course and Examination Regulations

valid as of 1 September 2026

Programme-specific section:

Master's Programme: International Relations

These Course and Examination Regulations (henceforth OER) have been drawn up in accordance with the Higher Education and Research Act [*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*; WHW] (henceforth the Act) and the following Leiden University regulations:

- the Leiden Register of Study Programmes Framework Document;
- the Academic Calendar;
- the Regulations for Student Registration, Tuition Fees and Examination Fees;
- the Regulations for Admission to Master's Programmes;
- the Online Proctoring Protocol Leiden University.

The model OER are laid down in Dutch and then translated into English. In the event that there are differences between the two versions, the Dutch version will prevail.

Pursuant to Article 7.14 of the Act, the Faculty Board regularly evaluates the OER and considers, for the purpose of monitoring and adjusting the study load, how much time it takes students to comply. In accordance with Article 9.18 of the Act, the departmental committee is assigned the task of annually assessing the implementation of the OER.

These Course and Examination Regulations consist of two sections:

- a faculty section that is the same for all master's programmes and
- a section that contains information that is specific to a particular programme, what is known as the programme-specific section of the Course and Examination Regulations.

In the text below the relevant articles will refer to this programme-specific section. Other articles are included in the faculty section.

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Chapter 2 Description of the Programme

Article 2.1 Objectives of the programme

The programme has the following objectives:

1. to enable students to acquire academic knowledge, understanding and skills, and train them in the use of scientific methods in the field of International Relations;
2. to enable students to develop the following academic and professional skills:
 - independent academic reasoning and conduct,
 - the ability to analyse complex problems,
 - the ability to clearly report academic results, both in writing and orally;
3. to prepare students for an academic career and further education;
4. to prepare students for a career outside academia.

Article 2.2 Specialisations

The programme has the following specialisations:

- Culture and Politics
- European Union Studies
- Global Conflict in the Modern Era
- Global Order in Historical Perspective
- Global Political Economy

Article 2.3 Learning outcomes

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

1. Knowledge and understanding

- a. knowledge and understanding of the fields of inquiry of International Relations and European Union Studies, including its evolution, key debates and paradigms;
- b. insight into regional and global politics grounded in the diversity of human understanding and experiences across time and space.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to conduct independent academic research that is original and reflects insight into the key discussions of the field;
- b. the ability to comprehend diverse perspectives and apply appropriate theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches in the conduct of research.

3. Judgement

- a. the ability to locate primary and secondary sources and critically evaluate evidence derived from them;
- b. the ability to recognize and assess arguments on the basis of their quality and reliability;
- c. the ability to analyze complex issues, logically, systematically, and coherently;
- d. the ability to draw original, evidence-based conclusions.

4. *Communication*

- a. the ability to present analyses in a cogent manner both orally and in writing and through a variety of formats (including digital) to academic and non-academic audiences;
- b. the ability to debate constructively and negotiate effectively.

5. *Transferable skills*

- a. the ability to apply the academic research skills acquired during the programme of study to professional environments;
- b. the ability to work creatively and effectively, in a self-directed manner and with proper time-management, both individually and in a team;
- c. the capacity to assimilate feedback from supervisors and peers and in turn offer feedback to the work of others.

Specialization in Culture and Politics

1. Knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories, concepts, and methods by which culture and politics are analysed to an advanced level that provides a basis for originality in developing and/or applying ideas within a research context;
- b. the ability to demonstrate insight into the ways in which state and non-state actors leverage culture politically, and how diverse cultural understandings produce, circulate, and reinforce meaning about global political phenomena.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to conduct independent academic research that reflects insight into key discussions of culture and politics;
- b. the ability to analyse cultural works and practices which are diverse with respect to medium (e.g., movies, literature, music, comics and cartoons, games, ceremonies) and relevant to the study of international relations.

Specialization in European Union Studies

1. Knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories, concepts, and methods by which the European Union is analysed from a multidisciplinary perspective (drawing specifically on the disciplines of history, law, political science/international relations, and economics) to an advanced level that provides a basis for originality in developing and/or applying ideas within a research context;
- b. the ability to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the multiplicity and complexity of the study of the European Union across time, including the variety of: levels and units of analysis; policy areas and their codification; actors; institutions; relationships; as well as the various contexts in which the EU operates in order to develop understanding of the EU's place and role in the regional but also global environments;
- c. the ability to demonstrate an understanding of academic and non-academic discussions on European Union policy issues, and the practical challenges to European integration experienced by practitioners.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to conduct independent academic research that reflects insight into key discussions of the European Union.
- b. the application of concepts and theories from different disciplines and policymaking areas.
- c. the ability to engage in academic and non-academic discussions on European Union policy issues.

Specialization in Global Conflict in the Modern Era

1. Knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories, concepts, and methods by which conflict, peace, and security since the nineteenth century are analysed to an advanced level that provides a basis for originality in developing and/or applying ideas within a research context.
- b. the ability to demonstrate an understanding of the historical and contemporary development of conflict through its causes, development, manifestations, norms, and institutions.
- c. the ability to demonstrate an understanding of the historical and contemporary development of conflict, from the perspectives of diverse actors, including states, international institutions, and non-state organizations.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to conduct independent academic research that reflects insight into key discussions of conflict, peace, and security.
- b. the ability to analyse and evaluate evidence on issues relating to conflict, based on the deployment of research methods in history and area studies.

Specialization in Global Order in Historical Perspective

1. Knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories, concepts, and methods by which global order is analysed to an advanced level that provides a basis for originality in developing and/or applying ideas within a research context.
- b. the ability to demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of the global order (including its origins, institutions, norms, and power dynamics).
- c. the ability to demonstrate an understanding of contemporary challenges to the global order, from the perspectives of diverse actors, including states, international institutions, non-state organizations, in the Global South as well as the Global North.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to conduct independent academic research that reflects insight into key discussions of global order;
- b. the ability to analyse, from a historically grounded and a theoretically informed perspective structures and agents of power at the global level, and policy issues concerning global governance.
- c. the ability to evaluate evidence on issues relating to global order, based on the deployment of research methods in history and area studies.

Specialization in Global Political Economy

1. Knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories, concepts, and methods by which the global political economy is analysed to an advanced level that provides a basis for originality in developing and/or applying ideas within a research context.
- b. the ability to demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of world economy since the 15th century, including its social and political foundations, key phases, and dynamic geopolitical foundations.
- c. the ability to demonstrate an understanding of economic growth/capital accumulation in relation to theoretical perspectives of wellbeing, inequality, social reproduction, and sustainability.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to conduct independent academic research that reflects insight into key discussions of the global political economy.
- b. The ability to apply a transdisciplinary and theoretically pluralistic approach, attentive to the diversity of processes, actors, interests, and institutions that shape the world economy.

Article 2.5 Study load

The programme has a study load of 60 credits.

Article 2.8 Language of instruction

2.8.1. Subject to the Code of Conduct on the Language of Instruction and Examination¹ the language in which the instruction is given and in which the examinations and final examinations are held is English. Students are expected to have an adequate command of the language of instruction and examination in the programme, in accordance with the requirements stated in Article 5.2.3. As appropriate, the Faculty publishes the OER in English for English-taught programmes.

2.8.2. Contrary to Article 2.8.1, in individual cases the Board of Examiners can permit the student to write the final thesis in another language, in accordance with the Guideline on Language Policy².

Chapter 3 Curriculum

Article 3.1 Compulsory components

3.1.1 The programme includes compulsory components worth a total study load of 60 credits. These compulsory components include the set components from which a student is obliged to choose.

Chapter 4 Examinations, Final Examination and Further Education

Article 4.2 Obligatory sequence

4.2.1 Students may only sit examinations and, if indicated, participate in class of the following components once they have passed the examination of the preceding components specified below:

<i>Component:</i>	<i>Participation in class and examination after passing:</i>
MA Thesis (Culture and Politics, Global Conflict in the Modern Era, Global Order in Historical	Humanities-Based International Relations and Qualitative Research Design

¹ [Code of Conduct on Language of Instruction](#)

² [Guideline on Language Policy](#)

Perspective, and Global Political Economy)	
MA Thesis (European Union Studies)	Thesis and Methods in European Union Studies

Article 4.3 **Form of examination**

4.3.5 Not applicable.

Chapter 5 Admission to the Programme as of September 2027 or February 2028

Article 5.1 **Confirmation of admission**

See the faculty section.

Article 5.2 **Admission to the programme**

5.2.1 Holders of one of the following degrees may be admitted to the programme (Article 7.30b (1) of the Act):

5.2.1 a. Not applicable.

5.2.1 b. A bachelor's degree from a research university, equivalent to the level of a Dutch academic Bachelor's degree, including the General Academic Skills listed in Appendix B, and

- the bachelor's degree is in the field of humanities, social sciences, law or economics, and
- in addition, applicants must meet the following specific requirements per specialisation:

Specialisation European Union Studies

- a completed minor in European Union Studies at Leiden University or components worth at least 30 credits in the field of contemporary European studies with comparable content and course objectives.

Applicants in possession of a Bachelor's degree from a university of applied sciences, equivalent to the level of a Dutch HBO bachelor's degree, in the field of economics, history, political science (and international relations), law or European Studies can apply for admission to European Union Studies but are not directly admissible and may be referred to the premaster programme, see Article 5.4.

Specialisations (a) Culture and Politics, (b) Global Conflict in the Modern Era, (c) Global Order in Historical Perspective, and (d) Global Political Economy

- prior education must include components worth at least 30 EC that are comparable in level, content and course objectives to the following courses of the bachelor's programme International Studies at Leiden University:
 - World History (5 EC)
 - Introduction to International Studies (5 EC)
 - Cultural Interaction: Conflict and Cooperation (5 EC) or Communicating across Cultures (5 EC)
 - Global Political Economy (5 EC)
 - International Relations (5 EC)
 - Politics of a specific area (i.e. Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America, Russia and Eurasia, South and Southeast Asia) (5 EC)

See the Prospectus of the BA International Studies for more information about the content and objectives of these courses (<https://studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/en/>).

Applicants are required to demonstrate in their application that they have completed components worth at least 30 EC in total that are comparable to the courses mentioned above.

Applicants for the specialisations (a) **Culture and Politics**; (b) **Global Conflict in the Modern Era**; (c) **Global Order in Historical Perspective** and (d) **Global Political Economy** who hold a bachelor's degree in a relevant field, as indicated above, but are unable to demonstrate via their academic record that they meet the specific requirements set per specialisation, are required to submit a 1,250 word essay as part of the admission process:

- in this essay they must demonstrate a clear affinity with and specific knowledge of International Relations in general and specifically in the field of the specialisation for which they apply,
- specifically, the essay must clearly answer an original research question, provide a reasonable and reasonably well organised argument that demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of the essay topic, demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of humanities and/or social science methods, critically engage with the additional reading specified on the [website of the programme](#) and contain no fundamental errors.

5.2.1 c. a bachelor's degree and additionally having passed the prescribed pre-master's/bridging programme pursuant to article 5.4.1. Students may overrun the allotted time for the prescribed pre-masters/bridging programme by one semester (in case of a pre-master's/bridging programme of 30 EC or less) or one study year (in case of a pre-master's/bridging programme of more than 30 EC).

5.2.2 Any person who fails to meet the degree requirements or prescribed pre-master's requirement referred to in 5.2.1 may submit a request to the Board of Admissions. The Board of Admissions assesses whether the applicant may be granted admission to the programme.

To this end, the Board of Admissions assesses whether the applicant possesses sufficient knowledge, understanding and skills at the same level as a bachelor's degree or related bachelor's degree as referred to in 5.2.1, (a) and (b) or whether they meet these conditions after additional requirements have been met.

The Board may also impose further conditions. The Board of Admissions assesses, where relevant, whether the applicant meets the qualitative selection requirements mentioned referred to in 5.2.4.

Article 5.2.3 **English and Dutch languages**

5.2.3.1 As further clarification of Article 2.8 concerning command of the language of instruction, a student who wishes to be admitted to an English-taught master's programme must have one of the following diplomas, or must meet the criteria of:

- an [International Baccalaureate](#) diploma from a programme taught in English (or an IB diploma with English A);
- a diploma of secondary or higher education completed in Australia, Canada (with the exception of French-taught programmes in Canada), Ireland, Malta, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom, the United States of America or SouthAfrica;
- a diploma of an English-taught university degree programme completed at a Dutch research university;
- a diploma of an English-taught higher professional education (hbo) programme of four years at a Dutch university of applied sciences;
- a Dutch pre-university education (vwo) diploma.

5.2.3.2 If a student who wishes to be admitted does not meet the requirements in 5.2.3.1, the language level can be demonstrated with one of the following tests:

- English IELTS 6.5; where each separate component score must be at least 6.0;

- TOEFL (Internet Based) 90; with at least 4.0 (new 1-6 scale as of 21 January 2026) or 20 (old 0-30 scale) for each separate component.;
- Cambridge English C2 Proficiency, or C1 Advanced with overall score 180, where each separate component score must be at least 169³.

At the time when the student applies for the programme, the test must have been taken no more than two calendar years previously.

5.2.3.3 Not applicable.

5.2.3.4 Not applicable.

For more information on language tests and diplomas which are sufficient with regard to the required command of English please see <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/education/admission-and-application/masters/admission-requirements#language-requirements>.

Article 5.2.4 **Qualitative admission requirements**

5.2.4.1 In addition to the requirements specified in 5.2.1 the following qualitative admission requirements apply for the programme pursuant to Article 7.30b (2) of the Act:

- A. A good academic record as an indicator of academic excellence, demonstrated by an average grade of at least 6.50 (Dutch grading system), in the Bachelor programme.
- B. Suitability for the MA programme as demonstrated by other indicators, for example: relevant practical experience (e.g. internship experience that required policy input from the intern, or international experience), relevant extracurricular activities, successful completion of a BA honours programme, or work experience in an international field relevant to the programme International Relations, such as diplomacy, advocacy, organisation, or business.
- C. Demonstrable motivation to study and familiarity with the MA programme and the specific specialisation(s).

5.2.4.2 Where article 5.2.4.1 applies, the admission requirements will be implemented as follows:

- A: as evidenced by a transcript of records/grade list;
- B: to be demonstrated by the required CV, and/or certificates of extracurricular activities relevant to the MA programme. The admissions committee may contact referees listed on the applicant's CV to verify that the applicant meets this requirement;
- C: to be demonstrated by a well-argued and structured motivation letter in which the applicant indicates why he/she wants to follow the (specific focus area/areas) of the MA programme and convincingly discusses what makes the applicant a good candidate for the MA programme, specifically listing the courses taken in International Studies including the course objectives and key readings. The statement should be between 700 and 1,500 words.

In addition, to assess the admission requirements stated in 5.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.2.3, the Board of Admissions will use the following documents:

- copies of diploma(s) and transcript(s);
- curriculum vitae (resume);

³ See also the [English test score equivalency table](#) of Leiden University

- proof of language proficiency (if applicable, see 5.2.3).

The admission process may include an interview with the Board of Admissions, should this be necessary to clarify whether the applicant has the same level of knowledge, understanding and skills as holders of a degree specified in 5.2.1.b. and meets the qualitative requirements specified in 5.2.4.1.

5.2.4.3 Where article 5.2.4.1 applies, the deadline for the admission requirements is as follows:

- The admissions assessment takes place twice a year in respect of the intake in September and February.
- Requests for admission to all specialisations must be submitted respectively before 1 April and 15 October. Given the selective nature of all specialisations, this deadline applies to all applicants.

For further information on the admission procedure and required application documents please see <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/education/admission-and-application/masters>.

5.2.5 Maximum capacity

5.2.5.1 The Executive Board has determined a maximum capacity for this programme. The order of admission will be determined by the qualitative admission requirements as referred to in Article 5.2.4. The maximum capacity set for this programme for the academic years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 is:

	Global Conflict in the Modern Era	Global Political Economy	Global Order in Historical Perspective	Culture and Politics	European Union Studies	Total
September	80	60	40	40	60	280
February	40	20	20	20	20	120
Total	120	80	60	60	80	400

5.2.5.2 Where article 5.2.5.1 applies, the method of selection on the grounds of the criteria will be as follows:

1. With regard to admission to the programme, the Admissions Board assesses the knowledge and skills of the applicants on the basis of the files they have submitted.
2. If necessary the Board can contact the applicant by mail or telephone at any time during the admission procedure in order to gain further information.
3. The Admissions Board decides on the basis of this assessment:
 - a. which applicants meet the entry requirements of the specialisation – if appropriate on the condition that they have been awarded their bachelor’s degree in time – and can in principle be admitted;
 - b. which applicants cannot be admitted because they do not meet the requirements.

4. The Board ranks the suitability of the applicants in category a to the specialisation of the MA programme on the basis of the files they have submitted, having regard to the qualitative admission requirements as specified in article 5.2.4, and, if the Board has requested this, the further information provided by the applicant.

5. Students who have successfully completed the premaster programme European Union Studies, within one academic year, will be admitted to the Master Programme International Relations, specialisation European Union Studies.

5.2.5.3 Where article 5.2.5.1 applies, the deadlines for selection are as follows:

- Applicants who are placed in category b, as referred to in Article 5.2.5.2, point 4, receive a negative admissions decision by 1 June (September intake) or 15 December (February intake) at the latest.

- On the basis of the ranking as referred to Article 5.2.5.2 point 4, the Board issues a recommendation on 15 May (September intake) and 1 December (February intake) at the latest to the Faculty Board to admit the top ranking applicants to the respective specialisations of the programme. These applicants receive a positive admissions decision on respectively 1 June and 15 December at the latest.
- The remaining applicants in category a are informed that they can in principle be admitted to the programme but that they have been placed on the waiting list and will not receive an admissions decision pending places becoming free. They are informed of the latest date by which they will receive an admissions decision.

5.2.5.4 Where article 5.2.5.1 applies, the weighting of the criteria will be as follows:

Applicants are ranked in three groups A, B, and C:

A: An excellent candidate who meets all the admissions requirements: 1) Overall grades 7.50 and above (Dutch grading system). 2) High degree of suitability for the programme as demonstrated by other indicators, for example: substantial extracurricular activities, professional/practical experience and international experience relevant to the programme. 3) An exemplary, original letter of motivation which demonstrates excellent motivation and suitability for the programme.

B: A good candidate who meets the admissions requirements: 1) Overall grades 6.50-7.49 (Dutch grading system). 2) Sufficient degree of suitability for the programme as demonstrated by other indicators, for example: relevant extracurricular activities, professional/practical experience and international experience relevant to the programme. 3) Good letter of motivation which shows clear motivation and familiarity with the programme.

C: The applicant does not meet the qualitative admission requirements: 1) An average academic record (below 6.50, Dutch grading system). 2) Insufficient degree of suitability for the programme as demonstrated by other indicators, for example: no substantial extracurricular activities, professional/practical experience and international experience relevant to the programme. 3) A below standard letter of motivation.

Article 5.3 Deficiencies

See the faculty section.

Article 5.4 Premaster programmes and educational modules

5.4.1 The programme has established the following premaster programmes in order to remove deficiencies.

Specialisation European Union Studies:

This premaster programme is intended for:

- students in possession of a Bachelor's degree from a university of applied sciences, equivalent to the level of a Dutch HBO bachelor's degree, in the field of economics, history, political science (and international relations), law or European Studies, with an average grade of at least 7.00 (Dutch grading system)
- students who have obtained a bachelor's degree from a research university, equivalent to the level of a Dutch academic bachelor's degree in the field of economics, history, political science (and international relations), law or European Studies (who do not meet the entry requirements).

Students who successfully complete this premaster programme will be admitted to the specialisation European Union Studies. Students can only start the premaster programme in September.

Semester	Course unit title	ECTS-Credits
I	The History of European Integration	5
I	Institutions of the European Union	5
I	The European Union Today	5
I	The Political Economy of the European Union	5
		20
II	Pre-master Final Assignment European Union Studies	15
	<i>Choice of two 5 EC electives</i>	10
		25
	Total study load premaster programme:	45

Specialisation European Union Studies:

The following bridging programme is intended for:

- students of the Bachelor programme European Studies from The Hague University of Applied Science [De Haagse Hogeschool], who meet the following requirements:
 - An average grade of 8.00 (out of 10) in the first three years of the programme;
 - Passing grades for the following courses (or an equivalent course)⁴:

Year 1

The Cultural Dimension of Europe, 3 EC

The Business Dimension of Europe, 3 EC

The Political Dimension of Europe, 3 EC

Institutions of the EU, 2 EC

Introduction to Research Skills, 3 EC

Year 2

Contemporary European Politics, 5 EC

Decision Making in the EU, 5 EC

International Relations, 5 EC

European Public Policy, 5 EC

Advanced Research Skills, 3 EC

Year 3

The Legal Dimension of Europe, 4 EC

Research design for the Public & Private sector 4 EC

The bridging programme will consist of the following courses:

- 2 electives (2x 5 EC) from the minor European Union Studies, offered by the Faculty of Humanities at Leiden University
- A pre-master's thesis (10 EC) (Total study load bridging programme: 20 EC)

Students who successfully complete this bridging programme within the time stipulated will be admitted to the specialisation European Union Studies. This bridging programme is for students who intend to register for the

⁴ Students who meet the aforementioned requirements are exempted from an English language test.

MA International Relations: European Union Studies at Leiden University exclusively. Students are required to successfully complete this programme within six months.

5.4.2 Information regarding the premaster/bridging programmes can be requested from the coordinator of studies of the programme.

5.4.3 The language requirements for a pre-master's programme are identical to the language requirements for the master's programme for which admission has been requested. These requirements must be met before the start of the premaster.

5.4.4. Educational modules: not applicable.

5.4.5. Educational modules: not applicable.

Chapter 7 Evaluation of the programme

Article 7.1 Evaluation of the programme

The programme is evaluated as follows:

- course evaluations
- programme evaluation

The Programme Committee advises the Programme Board based on the outcomes of the evaluation.

Appendix F – Transitional provisions

As of 1 September 2026, the structure of the MA International Relations programme will be revised. The following compulsory courses will no longer be offered:

- Regions in World Politics
- Humanities-Based in International Relations (5 EC)
- Thesis and Methods

They will be replaced by the following compulsory courses:

- Humanities-Based in International Relations (10 EC)
- Qualitative Research Design (5EC)

Students who started their specialisation before 1 September 2026 and who still need to complete one or more of these components may make use of the transitional arrangements set out below.

Transitional programme (Global Specialisations)

Old programme	Transitional programme
First semester	
Regions in World Politics (5 EC) + Humanities-Based in International Relations (5 EC)	Humanities-Based International Relations (10 EC)
Second semester	
Thesis and Methods(5 ec)	Qualitative Research Design (5EC)

Students who have completed only one of the former first semester components are required to contact the Board of Examiners for an individual transitional arrangement.

European Union Studies

Old course	New course
Thesis and Methods in International Relations Research	Thesis and Methods in European Union Studies

Students in the European Union Studies specialisation who started the programme before 1 September 2026 may, after consultation with the relevant lecturer and study coordinator, request permission from the Board of Examiners to take a 5 EC core specialisation elective instead of a 10 EC elective in order to fulfil their curriculum requirements.