

DECISION 17 - 233

17 - 234

Rapenburg 70
Postbus 9500
2300 RA Leiden
T 071 527 81 18

of the Examination Appeals Board of Leiden University
in the matter of
the appeal by [name] appellant
against
the Board of the Faculty of Humanities, respondent

1. Origin and course of the proceedings

In the decision of 13 July 2017, the respondent rejected the appellant's application to be admitted to the Master's Programme in International Relations specialising in "Global Conflict in the Modern Era" ("Master's Programme") (admission statement 199296-209502).

In the decision of 20 July 2017, the respondent rejected the appellant's application to be admitted to the Master's Programme in International Relations, specialising in "Global Order in Historical Perspective" ("Master's Programme") (admission statement 199296-209446).

The appellant sent a letter on 25 July 2017, which was received on 3 August 2017, lodging an administrative appeal against these decisions.

In short, the appellant argued that the content of his previous education corresponds sufficiently with the specialisations of the master's programme and that his previous education has not been appreciated at the right level. He further mentioned various – international - qualifications that would demonstrate the level of this programme. He mainly pointed out that the programme he attended has a dual system, to the effect that this system awards both a "US degree" and a "British degree". The appellant argued that only the "US degree" was considered in the assessment of his admission application. He requested an assessment to be carried out based on the British degree he was awarded.

No amicable settlement was concluded.

Decision
17-233
17-234
 Page 2/9

The respondent submitted a letter of defence on 5 September 2017. The letter stated that the Leiden University Admissions Office had been consulted about the assessment of the appellant's previous education. The admission requirement for both these master's programmes is a bachelor's degree in the field of Social Sciences, Economics, Law or Humanities, at the level of a Dutch bachelor's in academic education. The bachelor's degree in Sociology that the appellant was awarded at the American College of Greece does not match this level of previous education.

Admission to the American College of Greece does not require separate grades such as "ACT", "SAT", or "APs"; a mere diploma from an American High School suffices. Leiden University stipulates requirements for results achieved in that respect, such as a 3.5 GPA or 3 APs. Such additional requirements are not set for admission to the American College of Greece. Particular course units - such as Sociology - from the appellant's previous education are at the level of a "college" but other course units are at the level of "secondary school" or similar education levels. As such, this does not match the required bachelor's level. Furthermore, the level of the appellant's previous education cannot be compared to a bachelor's level at a research university such as Leiden University.

Moreover, the respondent argued that the appellant's assertion that his previous education was accredited, cannot be considered. This is because accreditation is not intended to indicate the academic level of a programme. Accreditation is mainly intended to indicate that diplomas may be awarded and that the institution is not fraudulent. The argument that the United Kingdom Open University acknowledged his previous education cannot be taken into account. It is unclear to the respondent whether the appellant actually studied at this university, and, if so, whether the diploma would be equivalent to a programme at the level of a university of applied sciences since this is distance education. Therefore, this does not meet the admission requirement either.

The appeal was considered on 4 October 2017 during a public hearing of a chamber of the Examination Appeals Board. The appellant did not appear at the hearing, and did not give notice of absence. [names], appeared on behalf of the respondent.

2. Considerations with regard to admissibility

The appellant lodged a timely appeal against the decisions of 13 and 20 July 2017 by means of the letter that was received on 3 August 2017 by the Examination Appeals Board. Furthermore, the letter of appeal also meets the requirements as stipulated in the General Administrative Law Act ("Awb", *Algemene wet bestuursrecht*) and the Higher Education and Academic Research Act ("WHW",

Decision
17-233
17-234
 Page 3/9

Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek). Consequently, the administrative appeal is admissible.

3. Relevant legislation

As far as relevant, the Course and Examination Regulations (“OER”) of the Master’s Programme in International Relations the following:

Article 5.2 Admission to the academic year 2016-2017 and following years

5.2.1 Pursuant to Article 7.30b, first paragraph, of the Act holders of one of the following degrees may be admitted to the programme and one of its specialisations:

<i>Specialisation Master</i>	<i>Admission on the basis of Bachelor programme, with specialisation</i>
European Union Studies	[no direct admission]
International Studies	International Studies (Leiden University) Liberal Arts and Sciences: Global Challenges (LUC The Hague): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human Diversity ▪ World Politics

5.2.2 The Board of Admissions may, on request, grant admission to the programmes to persons who do not meet the requirements specified in 5.2.1 but who can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Board of Admissions that they possess an equal level of knowledge, understanding and skills as the holders of a degree specified in 5.2.1, possibly under conditions to be further determined, without prejudice to the requirements in 5.2.4.

5.2.4 Alongside the requirements specified in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, the following qualitative admission requirements apply for the programme pursuant to Article 7.30b, second paragraph, of the Act:

- have earned the degree of bachelor at a university, equivalent to the level of a Dutch academic bachelor’s degree, or demonstrate that they meet the requirements for such a degree, including the General Academic Skills listed in Appendix C; and
- are proficient in the language of instruction, to be assessed by the Faculty Board (English IELTS 7.0, TOEFL 100 (internet-based) or Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE); for the ‘speaking’ and ‘writing’ components a minimum score of IELTS 7.0 or TOEFL 25 is required); and
- are in possession of an academic Bachelor’s degree in the field of social sciences, humanities, law or economics.

Decision
17-233
17-234
 Page 4/9

In addition to the requirements set out above, the following additional entry requirements apply to the following specialisations:

- Specialisation European Union Studies:
 - Applicants must have completed the 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 may be asked to submit a writing sample, proving the aforementioned qualities in the field of knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Specialisation International Studies:
 - Applicants must have completed the following components which are part of a bachelor's programme comparable to International Studies at Leiden University:
 - Global History (5 EC)
 - Introduction to Area Studies (5 EC)
 - Globalisation, Culture and Language (5 EC)
 - International Economics (5 EC)
 - International Politics (5 EC)
 - Politics of a specific area (i.e. Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America, Russia and Eurasia, South and South-East Asia) (5 EC)

If applicants have not completed the specific components listed, they are required to demonstrate in their application that they have completed components worth at least 30 credits in the field of International Studies with comparable content and course objectives.

- Applicants who have not completed components worth at least 30 credits in the field of International Studies as noted above 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, specifically in the area of International Studies, equivalent to the level acquired upon graduating from the Bachelor's programme referred to in article 5.3.1 (lees: 5.2.1). 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 and critically engage with the additional reading specified on the website of the programme (<http://www.mastersinleiden.nl/programmes/international-studies/en/entryrequirements>).

Decision
17-233
17-234
Page 5/9

Admission Requirements for the 2017-2018 academic year
For the specialisations in Culture and Politics, Global Conflict and Security, Global Order and Justice, and Global Political Economy the same entry requirements apply as for the specialisation in International Studies. In addition to this, the following requirements apply for the specialisation in Global Political Economy:

- Applicants must have completed courses on International Economics or International Political Economy that equal to at least 20 credits.

The relevant internet page of Leiden University states the following:

Global Conflict in the Modern Era

Entry requirements

Please note these entry requirements will change. The Master's programme in International Relations will operate on limited capacity from September 2018, and will be selective. The entry requirements for admission to the programme from September 2018 will be updated in August 2017.

Entry requirements September and February intakes 2017-2018

- A bachelor's degree from a university, equivalent to the level of a Dutch academic bachelor's degree, in the field of social sciences, humanities, law or economics.
- Applicants should have completed components at bachelor's level equivalent to at least 30 EC in the field of International Studies with comparable content and course objectives (e.g. Global History (5 EC), Introduction to Area Studies (5 EC), Globalisation, Culture and Language (5 EC), International Economics (5 EC), International Politics (5 EC), Politics of a specific area (i.e. Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America, Russia and Eurasia, South and South-East Asia) (5 EC)).
- Sufficient command of English (IELTS 7.0, TOEFL 100 (internet-based) or Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE); for the 'speaking' and 'writing' components a minimum score of IELTS 7.0 or TOEFL25 is required). For a list of exceptions, see the website on language requirements.

Additional information

- Apart from the standard documents, for this programme, additional documents are required.
 - A sample of written work (e.g. a BA thesis)
 - A clear indication in your motivation letter of the focus area(s) of the programme that you wish to study (700-1500 words);

Decision
17-233
17-234
Page 6/9

- Two letters of recommendation (at least one from an academic staff member).
- In the motivation letter, the student should list the courses in International Studies they have taken, including the course objectives and key readings
- Applicants who have not completed components worth at least 30 ECTS in the field of International Studies as noted above are required to submit a 1,250 word essay as part of the admission process. Please click here for instructions on how to write the essay.
- Applicants with a degree from a Dutch University of Applied Sciences (HBO) are not eligible for admission.

Global Order in Historical Perspective

- A bachelor's degree from a research university, equivalent to the level of a Dutch academic bachelor's degree, in the field of social sciences, humanities, law or economics.
- A good academic record, demonstrated by either an average grade of 7.0 (out of 10), or the equivalent thereof, for the bachelor's thesis, and/or other indicators such as relevant extracurricular activities or participation in an honours programme,
- Applicants should have completed components at bachelor's level equivalent to at least 30 EC in the field of International Relations with comparable content and course objectives (e.g. Global History (5 EC), Introduction to Area Studies (5 EC), Cultural Interaction: A Global Perspective, (5 EC), International Economics (5 EC), International Politics (5 EC), Politics of a specific area (i.e. Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America, Russia and Eurasia, South and South-East Asia) (5 EC)).
- Prior education must include components on the evolution of global order in comparative and/or historical perspective worth at least 20 EC.

Applicants with a degree from a Dutch University of Applied Sciences (HBO) are not eligible for admission.

Language requirements

Sufficient command of English (IELTS 7.0, TOEFL 100 (internet-based) or Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE); for the 'speaking' and 'writing' components a minimum score of IELTS 7.0 or TOEFL25 is required). For a list of exceptions, see the [website on language requirements](#).

Decision
17-233
17-234
Page 7/9

4. Considerations with regard to the dispute

In accordance with article 7.61, paragraph two, of the WHW, the Examination Appeals Board must consider whether the contested decision contravenes the law.

It was established that the appellant was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology at the American College of Greece.

From article 5.2.1. of the OER it shows - in so far as this is relevant - that direct admission to this master's programme is only possible with a Bachelor's diploma in International Studies from Leiden University. Since the appellant does not have this diploma, he does not qualify for automatic admission. The request to be admitted must therefore be assessed on the basis of the requirements stipulated by or pursuant to article 5.2.2 of the OER.

Following article 5.2.2. of the OER the respondent may grant admission, at his or her request, to a student who does not meet the condition as referred to in 5.2.1, but who can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the respondent that he possessed an equal level of knowledge, understanding and skills as the holders of a degree specified in 5.2.1, possibly under conditions to be further determined. A student who deems to qualify for admission on this ground may try to demonstrate this with any means that he considers appropriate to do so. This may pertain to other programmes he attended, but also internships, general or scientific publications, work experience or ancillary - public - positions.

The respondent indicated in the letter of defence that the appellant's previous education does not match the level of a bachelor's degree in Dutch academic education. This decision was reviewed by Leiden University's Admissions Office.

The Examination Appeals Board endorses the respondent in this matter. Grounds include the fact that specific course units completed by the appellant are of a level below College level and, moreover, the fact that the American College has lower entry requirements, which has an impact on the general level of the College.

In his letter of appeal, the appellant refers to the fact that the United Kingdom's Open University acknowledged his Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology.

The Examination Appeals Board considers that acknowledging a degree that was awarded elsewhere does not automatically entail that this degree is of the same level as the level of the United Kingdom's Open University. Moreover, it is not fully clear whether the appellant did actually study at this university.

Decision
17-233
17-234
Page 8/9

Consequently, the Examination Appeals Board holds, in view of the above, that the entry requirement, as set in articles 5.2.2 and 5.2.4 of the OER - possessing a bachelor's degree that matches the level of a Dutch Bachelor's in academic education - has not been met.

Since the Examination Appeals Board has not been informed of any other facts or circumstances that could lead to an alternative decision, the above leads to the conclusion that the appellant's appeal must be held unfounded. This means that the contested decisions will be upheld and the appellant will not be admitted to the Master's Programme in International Relations.

Decision
17-233
17-234
Page 9/9

5. The decision

In view of article 7.61 of the Higher Education and Academic Research Act,
the Examination Appeals Board of Leiden University
holds the appeal **UNFOUNDED**.

.
Established by a chamber of the Examination Appeals Board, comprised
of M.M. Bosma, LLM, (Chair), G. Boogaard, LLM, Dr. A.M. Rademaker,
L.N. Kluinhaar, and D.E. Mulder (members), in the presence of the Secretary of
the Examination Appeals Board, M.A.C. de Boer, LLM.

M.M. Bosma, LLM
Chair

M.A.C. de Boer, LLM
Secretary

Certified true copy,

Sent on: