



**RESEARCH MASTER'S
PROGRAMME**

AFRICAN STUDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

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This report was finalised on 16 July 2021



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

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

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

Research master's programme African Studies

Name of the programme:	Afrika Studies (research)
International name:	African Studies (research)
CROHO number:	60838
Level of the programme:	master's level
Orientation of the programme:	academic research master
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specialisations:	none
Location:	Leiden
Mode of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Submission deadline NVAO:	01/11/2020, extension submission date until 31/10/2021 due to legislation WHW art. 5.16 lid 4

The online assessment of the RMA programme African Studies of Leiden University took place on 3-5 February 2021.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

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

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

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

- Prof. dr. K. (Kristoffel) Demoen, professor Ancient Greek Literature at Ghent University (Belgium) [panel chair Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Leiden University];
- Dr. G. (Gerhard) Anders, senior lecturer African Studies and International Development at the Centre of African Studies of the University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom);
- Prof. dr. T. (Thomas) Meier, professor for Pre- and Protohistory and director of the Käte Hamburger Center for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies at Heidelberg University (Germany);
- Em. prof. dr. phil. J.U. (Jens-Uwe) Hartmann, professor Indian and Iranian Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in München (Germany);

- Em. prof. dr. J.F. (John) Healey, emeritus professor in Semitic Studies at the University of Manchester (United Kingdom);
- Prof. dr. E.H.M. (Helena) Houvenaghel, professor Spanish Language and Culture at Utrecht University;
- Y.P. (Yannick) de Raaff, MA, recent graduate research master Archaeology at the University of Groningen [student member].

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

WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

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

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

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

Panel members

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

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

- Prof. dr. J. (Jeroen) Poblome, professor Classical Archaeology and director of the Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project (Belgium);
- Y.P. (Yannick) de Raaff, MA, recent graduate research master Archaeology at the University of Groningen [student member].
- R. (Rory) Granleese, BA, research master student Archaeology at Leiden University [student member].

Preparation

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

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

Online assessment

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

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

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

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

Site visit

The site visit to Leiden University took place on 3, 4 and 5 February 2021 by digital means. Before and during the site visit, the panel studied the additional documents provided by the programme. An overview of these materials

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

Development dialogues

Five digital development dialogues were scheduled at the following dates:

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

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

Consistency and calibration

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

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

Working method during site visit

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

Report

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

Definition of judgement standards

In accordance with the NVAO's *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* (September 2018) for limited programme assessments, the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of the standards:

Generic quality

The quality that, from an international perspective, may reasonably be expected from a higher education Associate Degree, Bachelor's or Master's programme.

Meets the standard

The programme meets the generic quality standard.

Partially meets the standard

The programme meets the generic quality standard to a significant extent, but improvements are required in order to fully meet the standard.

Does not meet the standard

The programme does not meet the generic quality standard.

The panel used the following definitions for the assessment of the programme as a whole:

Positive

The programme meets all the standards.

Conditionally positive

The programme meets Standard 1 and partially meets a maximum of two standards, with the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel.

Negative

In the following situations:

- The programme fails to meet one or more standards;
- The programme partially meets Standard 1;
- The programme partially meets one or two standards, without the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel;
- The programme partially meets three or more standards.

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

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

The research master's programme African Studies offers a two-year research-oriented programme of 120 EC. The programme is embedded in the African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL), an interfaculty institute administered by the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and the Faculty of Law at Leiden University. In the latest review (2017) according to the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021, the ASCL was evaluated 'very good' (2) in terms of research quality and as 'excellent'/'world leading' (1) for societal relevance. One staff member at the research master's programme African Studies is also based at the Leiden University Centre for Arts in Society (LUCAS). LUCAS was evaluated as 'very good' (2) in 2018 for the period 2012-2017 for both research quality and societal relevance. According to the panel, these two institutes offer a relevant and valuable research environment for a research master's degree programme.

Standard 1

From the panel's perspective, the research master's programme in African Studies at Leiden University is unique in the Netherlands and distinctive within an international context due to its focus on interdisciplinary research, the length of the field research conducted, and the close links with the relevant academic and professional fields. One of the programme's key assets is the emphasis on empirical research and interdisciplinarity. The students benefit from ASCL's international outlook and international networks. The programme combines a substantive focus on theory, methodology and reflexivity with a relatively long period of fieldwork. In this way, the students receive rigorous theoretical training while being able to apply their knowledge in the field and acquiring relevant transferable skills. The programme's intended learning outcomes (ILOs) are linked to the Dublin descriptors for the master's level and are clearly research-oriented in their focus on theory training and acquiring relevant skills to conduct independent research. The panel therefore concludes that they are appropriate for a research master's degree. The ILOs also clearly reflect the programme's interdisciplinary orientation. To connect them more closely to the programme's profile, the panel advises including the unique skills acquired during fieldwork in an ILO.

Standard 2

Based on its findings, the panel concluded that the research master's programme African Studies offers students a high-quality research environment with good access to resources and staff. The curriculum is of the required standard for a research master's degree programme: it offers a coherent design, and the contents pay attention to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, including recent trends in the research field. Ethics and skills training are appropriately incorporated. The students complete a fully independent research cycle in their combined thesis and fieldwork trajectories. Some additional attention paid to the formulation of research questions in the thesis preparation would still be welcome. The panel was positively impressed by the diversity in the training of communication skills. It values the staff's attempts to diversify modules and create new (online) discussion series and lectures, allowing for more non-Western, feminist and decolonised approaches and perspectives. It encourages the programme to see these initiatives as stepping-stones for the establishment of new connections and partnerships, in particular with African organisations and institutes. It supports the suggestion by the previous review panel to explore the interplay between geographical regions and areas together with other relevant master's programmes.

The panel thinks the existing selection and admittance criteria strike the right balance. They aim to attract candidates with a strong academic record while also allowing for diversification of the intake. To the panel, diversity of intake is key for the creation of a rich teaching-learning environment. Hence, the choice for English as the language of instruction, and an English programme name, is considered appropriate and of added value. The staff members are adequately trained, in terms of both their teaching qualifications and language skills, to provide the necessary quality for establishing such a multicultural and international teaching-learning environment. The programme also benefits from their up-to-date research expertise and experience. The staff's diverse multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research projects and interests feed into the curriculum and offer a challenging environment for students to realise the intended learning outcomes. The staff members are committed to and easily accessible for

students, offering valuable guidance and good support throughout their studies. The panel verified that the Programme Board and staff keep a close watch on the students' safety and well-being. It ascertained that the programme acts upon suggestions for improvement by the programme committee, students and external assessors and rose to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Standard 3

The panel verified that the assessment policies and protocols in the programme are of excellent quality. They are transparently organised and solidly grounded in shared Faculty practices. The assessment methods are sufficiently varied; they reflect the level of the programme and adequately test the students' research abilities and awareness of the ethics of research. The panel considers the institutional arrangements in place for safeguarding quality assurance in assessment to be robust. It concluded that the Board of Examiners fulfils its formal tasks and responsibilities and works according to clear procedures. It encourages the Faculty to continue monitoring the workload of the Board of Examiners, and to pay attention to the continuous need for sufficient secretarial support.

The panel verified that the students are satisfied with the quality of the assessment and feedback received. It shares this satisfaction and wants to compliment the staff involved in thesis assessment in the research master's African Studies for their constructive feedback. During the Covid-19 pandemic, assessment and feedback practices at the programme did not fundamentally change, and the panel verified that the Board of Examiners closely monitored the procedures during the challenges posed by the pandemic. It considers assessment within the research master's programme to be of good quality. To strengthen the existing quality culture, it suggests paying extra attention to expectation management and communication regarding the grading criteria. The development of detailed marking criteria with descriptors could be taken into consideration. As for the thesis, the panel is of the opinion that the transparency of the assessment could be strengthened by the creation of a more detailed marking scheme, including explanation of the way fieldwork is assessed. In addition, the programme is advised to uphold and monitor a strict word limit policy for the thesis and to introduce a qualitative reflection on the publishability of (parts of) the thesis on the assessment form for research master theses. Also, the full range of the grading scale may be explored more.

Standard 4

The quality of the theses confirms that the graduates have the ability to design and implement independent research of very good academic quality. The theses inspected by the panel were innovative, relevant and original. They embodied all elements of the research cycle: from the formulation of a research question to the output of an adequately written report that offers sufficient grounds for publication upon reworking into a suitable format. In this way, the intended learning outcomes are convincingly met, including the criteria of the additional framework for research master's programmes. The panel also concluded that the graduates do well in the job market, securing positions in academia and beyond. This is enhanced by the networks they have access to through the ACSL. As a result, they are well-positioned in terms of their achieved skills and knowledge to continue their further career within academic research and/or the professional field.

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

Research master's programme African Studies

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
General conclusion	positive

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

Date: 16 July 2021

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

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements.

Findings

The research master's degree in African Studies at Leiden University aims to provide students with the skills and knowledge to become capable researchers in the field of African studies. To achieve this objective, the programme offers them an overview of contemporary and historical issues in Africa through an interdisciplinary approach, aiming for the acquisition of a firm grounding in (social) theory and ethics, an overview of the relevant methodologies available and the training of (research) skills. Through this training they should acquire a critical research attitude and the ability to position their own research in societal discussions and relevant scientific debates, while also being able to conduct independent, interdisciplinary research. These skills and abilities prepare them for a research position at a university or a comparable position in government, civil society and private-sector organisations related to Africa. According to the panel, these objectives are fitting for a research master's programme. This is the only research-oriented master's programme within this specific academic discipline in the Netherlands, and it is therefore not easily replaced. Internationally, the two-year degree stands out as most master's programmes are one year.

The panel considered the programme's profile, position and approach, situating it in its international context. The programme combines a substantive focus on theory, method and reflexivity with a relatively long period of fieldwork. The fieldwork component is an attractive feature meeting the professional standards of social anthropology, social geography and other disciplines in which in-depth longer term fieldwork is the norm. It allows students to conduct independent research 'on the ground', using and expanding their knowledge and skills. Field research enables students to build up a relevant network and further develop their transferable skills. The programme also derives significant benefits from its embedment in the African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL), an interfaculty institute administered by the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and the Faculty of Law at Leiden University. The ASCL has a strong record in research and a well-established and extended international network of academic and societal contacts. As a result, the research master's programme is truly international in its outlook and offers students experiences with relevant organisations and contacts for their future careers.

The objectives of the programme are summarised in five intended learning outcomes (see Appendix 1), which reflect the Dublin descriptors for academic programmes at the master's level. The panel studied these objectives and the attainment level and the embedment of these objectives within the curriculum of the programme. It concluded that the ILOs reflect the programme's profile in its focus on interdisciplinarity. They are also clearly research-oriented in the attention paid to training in theory and the emphasis on attaining the academic and transferable skills necessary to conduct independent research. Therefore, they are in line with the expectations and practices of the academic and professional field for a research master's degree. The panel would like to suggest the inclusion of an ILO regarding the ability to work in unfamiliar settings and with a multitude of different target groups. This would acknowledge the unique skills acquired during the fieldwork component of the curriculum and would reflect a defining and attractive feature of the programme's profile.

In general, the panel is impressed by the commitment by Leiden University to maintain its diverse offer in research in languages and cultures at the Faculty of Humanities. This commitment is of vital importance for international research and the training of future generations of scholars in these specialised subfields and contributes directly to the excellent reputation of Dutch scholarship and academic teaching in the humanities.

Considerations

From the panel's perspective, the research master's programme in African Studies at Leiden University is unique in the Netherlands and distinctive within an international context due to its focus on interdisciplinary research, the length of the field research conducted, and the close links with the relevant academic and professional fields. One of the programme's key assets is the emphasis on empirical research and interdisciplinarity. The students benefit from ASCL's international outlook and international networks. The programme combines a substantive focus on theory, methodology and reflexivity with a relatively long period of fieldwork. In this way, the students receive rigorous theoretical training while being able to apply their knowledge in the field and acquiring relevant transferable skills. The programme's ILOs are linked to the Dublin descriptors for the master's level and are clearly research-oriented in their focus on theory training and acquiring relevant skills to conduct independent research. The panel therefore concludes that they are appropriate for a research master's degree. The ILOs also clearly reflect the programme's interdisciplinary orientation. To connect them more closely to the programme's profile, the panel advises including the unique skills acquired during fieldwork in an ILO.

Conclusion

Research master's programme African Studies: the panel assesses Standard 1 as 'meets the standard'.

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

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

Findings

Admission, intake and programme language

The research master's programme is selective and aims for a good fit between prospective candidates and its aims. Motivation, proven English proficiency and study results are all taken into account. The required English proficiency level is an IELTS score of at least 7.0 and/or a TOEFL internet-based score of 100 and/or the acquisition of a Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE) certificate. Prospective students should have an average grade of 7.5 (Dutch grading system); their thesis should be awarded at least an 8.0 (Dutch grading system). The students considered the programme's admission procedures to be fair and clear. They sometimes had difficulty in negotiating the university administration systems, but this was often outside their control and related to issues such as graduation dates at their former university.

Due to its interdisciplinary outlook, the research master's programme African Studies is open to students who have completed a bachelor's degree in the field of African Languages and Cultures, Linguistics, History, Cultural Anthropology, Literature, Sociology, Political Sciences, Public Administration, Geography, Development Studies, or other studies related to the Humanities or Social Sciences. If deemed necessary by the admission committee, prospective students could follow the minor African Dynamics that serves as a bridging pre-master's programme for the research master's degree. The panel approves of this practice, as it opens up the programme to a more diverse intake.

The number of enrolments varied from a high of 9 to a low of 3 students per annum over the period of assessment. The international intake fluctuates in number, yet is consistent and always over 50% of the total intake, guaranteeing an international classroom. The programme regrets its low number of non-EU enrolments, which is due to the relatively high tuition fees for non-EU members. As a result, African and Asian students are less likely to apply. The panel was informed that each year, one Leiden University Excellence Scholarship is available for the research master's programme. This allows the programme to attract non-Western students to the programme. Any additional funding or added initiatives by the university to open up the programme for non-EU students would be highly appreciated.

by the panel as the student population directly impacts the student-learning environment in terms of diversity of cultural experiences and perspectives, which is highly relevant to African Studies.

The panel noted that the programme is currently reassessing its promotion strategy, targeting prospective students finishing bachelor's degree programmes with a proven interest in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research such as Liberal Arts degree programmes. Also, awareness is growing within the University of the need for a better match between the bachelor's degree programme in African Languages and Cultures at the Faculty of Humanities, which is more linguistic in its orientation, and the more interdisciplinary approach characterizing the research master's programme African Studies. A better connection between the two programmes may also result in a more consistent intake from Leiden's own student population. The panel was pleased with the level of commitment to this matter by the Faculty of Humanities and the Programme Board of the research master's programme. During the site visit, it was told that the interfaculty nature of the ASCL also guaranteed attention to this aspect at the central University level.

According to the panel, the website needs urgent attention, as the current information on admission requirements is relatively hard to navigate for prospective students. During the site visit, the panel was informed of a matching initiative developed during the pandemic, in which the Board's student member is linked to prospective students to discuss the programme and admission procedure and requirements. This seems an excellent initiative to address questions prospective candidates may have about the Dutch education system and admission requirements. The panel suggests retaining this after the pandemic.

Research in African Studies and many positions in civil society and private-sector organisations related to Africa are strongly multicultural and international in focus. Staff at the ASCL is often trained outside of the Netherlands. The students may also reasonably expect to move abroad or work closely together with foreign colleagues in international collaborations, both during their studies and upon graduation. Hence, the programme adopted English as its language of instruction. This allows for the creation of an international classroom, but also prepares students in an educational setting for their future careers in research and beyond. The panel considers the choice for English as the language of instruction, and an English programme name, appropriate and of added value for students.

Curriculum

The curriculum for the research master's programme African Studies consists entirely of mandatory courses. Although no electives or formal specialisations are offered, two closely connected programme components allow for individual concretisation, thus offering students the opportunity to specialise.

The first part of the programme lays the theoretical and methodological foundation for independent research. The programme is designed in such a way that it starts with African Studies' theoretical foundations, interdisciplinary questions and research methodologies (25 EC in total). Research master students follow one course together with students of the one-year master's programme at this point, exploring the historical and political context of Africa (5 EC). In the second part of the first year, the programme acquires more focus on the connections between (middle-range) theories and specific empirical fields (10 EC). In a dedicated course, a more regional focus is introduced and simultaneously questioned by placing it in a cross-regional and global context of interaction between different regions in Africa and beyond (10 EC).

The second part of the programme allows students to conduct individual and independent research. They prepare for their fieldwork and thesis in the second semester of the programme. They follow a course on methodological specialisation directed towards their fieldwork, which may be fulfilled by attending methodological courses at the master's level offered by other study programmes that fit their methodological fieldwork requirements (5 EC). In addition, they follow a seminar dedicated to writing their research proposal (5 EC). In their second year, they conduct their fieldwork (25 EC), follow seminars dedicated to academic publication and thesis writing (10 EC in total) and write their thesis (25 EC).

The teaching of research ethics and ethics of the field of African Studies is an integral part of the curriculum. Research ethics are taught in all courses, but special attention is paid to it in the Reflexivity and Methodology course in the first semester, and in the Methodological Specialisation course in the third semester. Ethical aspects of research in African Studies are also discussed in relation to the students' research proposals. Supervisors and faculty address, for example, informed consent, informants' privacy and safety, and the researcher's positionality. The students are expected to reflect on these issues in their thesis. The panel took note of an extracurricular workshop on intercultural communication offered to those students who want it. It endorses the plan to include this workshop in the curriculum.

Research techniques and skills training are also integrated within the courses. Research techniques are clearly differentiated from research methodologies, which was requested in the 2016 review. The panel was impressed by the diversity in the students' training in communication skills; it noted attention being paid to diverse audiences (writing for academic and non-academic audiences), to role-taking in discussion settings, and to proposal and grant writing.

The panel considers the curriculum design and the contents of the offered modules appropriate and up-to-date. New perspectives and voices have been included at the students' request, offering a balanced view of tendencies and changes in the field. *History and Politics in Africa*, shared with the one-year master's programme in African Studies, is at the beginning master's level of 500. While questioning the conventional classification of African history into pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, this course provides an introduction to the historical development of power in Africa covering all these periods. It offers all master students an overview at the start of their master's programmes. All other modules are exclusively offered to research master students of African Studies and are at the advanced 600 master's level. This offers coherence and intellectual depth in the panel's view. The students are offered a rigorous training in the theory and methodology of various disciplines and fields, which requires a systematic approach and a clear learning trajectory. The curriculum meets all these requirements. Interdisciplinarity is fully integrated in the curriculum. The students combine at least two disciplines in their fieldwork and thesis, addressing a suggestion for improvement raised by the 2016 review panel. During the interview, the students clearly voiced the advantages of interdisciplinary research, when asked.

The mandatory modules are supplemented by tailored learning within modules and supervision by experts in the field. The students choose their topics and regional approaches based on their own interests as part of their individual learning paths for their course work. This gives all students the freedom to design their individual learning packages within the constraints set by the curriculum, which ensures exposure to key debates and literature in African Studies. This was confirmed by the students during the site visit. They praised the tailor-made feel of the programme that allowed them to fully pursue their own interests and create a unique learning path within a structured curriculum. They considered the programme demanding yet doable. No specific hindrances to study success were recalled by them or by recent alumni, indicating that the imbalance between the first and second semester in year 1 noted by the 2016 review panel had been addressed by the changes to individual modules over the period of assessment. Study success also improved over the period of assessment, the panel noted, indicating increased attention paid to a successful completion in a timely manner. The fieldwork and thesis remain the largest bottlenecks in this respect, but the panel verified that delays were not encouraged by the programme and that the design and support provided favoured a timely completion.

With respect to the curriculum's orientation, the panel supports the suggestion by the previous review panel to explore further collaboration with the research master's programmes Middle Eastern Studies, Asian Studies and Latin American Studies to encourage interplay between these areas. Collaboration would not need to take the form of an entire, dedicated course. The panel suggests organising cross-cutting events and extending invitations to events (including extracurricular ones) and workshops addressing topics and issues relevant for the students and staff associated with the various areas and regions studied at Leiden University.

Fieldwork and thesis

The students spend the first semester of their second year on fieldwork, usually in Africa, for which they develop research plans, supported by two supervisors from different fields of expertise. The panel is supportive of the extensive fieldwork, which is considered a valuable learning experience that is very well-integrated into the curriculum and matched to the thesis project. Some financial support is available for students with an approved research plan in the form of the Uhlenbeck Scholarship and Lustra+ Scholarship. Training, guidance and support are all available at a high level. The research proposals are also scrutinised in terms of ethics and risks in the field and, if necessary, adaptations are made to ensure the students' safety and well-being. During the site visit the students indicated that they felt well-supported by their supervisors, and they also mentioned the help available through the programme's study advisor. Contact during fieldwork is usually via email, phone or video call. Supervisors also arrange for local contacts as external supervisors or advisors who guide and/or welcome students upon arrival, which exemplifies their excellent care for the students.

The attention paid to individual needs was confirmed during the site visit. During the Covid-19 pandemic, fieldwork had to be radically changed or redesigned. For example, one student got stuck in Africa due to flight restrictions, and another student could not go on fieldwork as planned and had to adapt his fieldwork and thesis project. The programme responded swiftly and effectively in both cases. The first student was supported throughout diplomatically and morally, the second student received additional support to reformulate his fieldwork goals and plans in such a way that he could continue his studies to his full satisfaction while also meeting the intended learning outcomes. The panel takes the view that this is remarkable under these difficult circumstances and deserves special mention.

The two supervisors are responsible for supervision during the field research and writing up of the thesis. All supervisors are senior researchers at Leiden University, often full professors, offering students the opportunity to discuss their research dilemmas and practices with highly respected and well-connected academics. The students value the opportunity to work with two different specialists for their fieldwork and thesis. They considered the interdisciplinary approach to be key, adding value to their fieldwork and research.

The thesis is an independent research project, for which students draw on the data collected during the fieldwork. In this sense, their research always makes use of new source material, resulting in fresh, and often original, contributions to the existing body of knowledge in African Studies. Thus, the students meet the requirements of completing a full research cycle in their combined thesis and fieldwork trajectories: from the formulation of a research question, the gathering of raw data in the field to the academic output, a written report suitable for communicating the research to an academic audience. They are amply supported in the preparation of the thesis, especially in terms of structure. The guidance from their supervisors is key to fleshing out research questions. The panel notes, just like the 2016 review panel had done, that developing a research project that is specific enough to make a contribution to the existing body of knowledge is usually the most challenging part for the students. In this context, it strongly recommends ensuring that the students adhere strictly to the word limit.

Staff, classroom interaction and research environment

All teaching staff but one hold a Basic Teaching Qualification (Basiskwalificatie Onderwijs/BKO); the last teacher without this certification is currently working towards obtaining it. In this respect, the programme's staff fully lived up to the 2016 panel recommendation to increase the number of BKO-trained teachers within the programme. The panel ascertained that the staff's level of English proficiency is also of a sufficiently high standard. The staff members are all established researchers with an excellent research and teaching record. They cover a wide range of methodological and geographical expertise in line with the curriculum contents. The staff team for the research master's programme includes five professors, two senior university lecturers, two university lecturers, five researchers employed at the ASCL and a specialised teacher in skills training. The panel considers the staff well-equipped in terms of qualifications and research experience to match the high requirements for teaching in a research-oriented and demanding research master's programme.

Diversity of staff and of orientation is high on the agenda at Leiden, the panel noted. The students in the current cohort were in favour of recognising diversity and including African voices in the curriculum. These demands tie in well with the stated objective to improve diversity in the teaching staff and curriculum. The programme and university have tried to address this issue to the best of their abilities: new staff appointments were explicitly open for candidates with international experience and from less traditionally Western backgrounds. Staff members at the programme revised their literature in class to include more non-Western, decolonised and feminist approaches and views. Discussions regarding the composition of the staff, representation of non-Western viewpoints and shifting societal expectations were not avoided, but openly addressed in class. Guest lecturers were carefully chosen, aiming to include a range of views and opinions. The panel appreciates the efforts made at the ASCL and considers the staff's response to the students' demands adequate and convincing.

The students spoke highly of the staff members and their involvement during their studies. They consider their teachers dedicated and encouraging, taking a keen interest in their students' individual learning trajectories. The panel heard that the staff also offered valuable guidance and help regarding career planning. It concluded that the staff provide excellent guidance and supervision, especially during fieldwork. Supervisors often went beyond their own direct networks to find reliable local contacts for the students. In the self-evaluation report, the students also praised the staff for their flexibility and empathy regarding personal and mental problems.

All staff members participating in the programme are affiliated with the African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL). The ASCL is an interfaculty institute administered by the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and the Faculty of Law at Leiden University. It provides an excellent research context for students and a solid grounding for the interdisciplinary and international profile of the research master's programme. In the latest review (2017) according to the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021, the ASCL was evaluated 'very good' (2) in terms of research quality and as 'excellent'/'world leading' (1) for societal relevance. One staff member is also based at the Leiden University Centre for Arts in Society (LUCAS). LUCAS was evaluated as 'very good' (2) in 2018 for the period 2012-2017 for both research quality and societal relevance.

Classes at the research master's programme are taught in the same building that houses ASCL. Under normal circumstances, this creates ample opportunities for interaction and short lines of communication between staff and students. During the pandemic, the research staff was asked to work from home. Research master students still followed most of their contact hours in class due to the low numbers. In specific cases, hybrid teaching was introduced to meet personal circumstances and/or demands. The students indicated that faculty members were still easily accessible by digital means, even more so in the Covid-19 circumstances. Classroom interaction is experienced as highly personal and direct. The students indicated that they always need to be well-prepared and eager to contribute. They considered the teaching-learning environment challenging and tailored to their needs and interests. The self-evaluation report considered the drop in student numbers to constitute a challenge for maintaining the desired classroom dynamics. The students recognised this concern and welcomed the closer collaboration with the one-year master's programme. Simultaneously, they considered the research master's setting unique and valued its specific status as preparation for a career as an independent researcher.

There are a lot of academic activities as part of the programme as well as at the ASCL and the wider university. This offers a lively environment with ample opportunities for academic debate. During the lockdown in 2020, these talks were organised online. The Programme Board and students mentioned that digital talks also offered new possibilities: the format allowed for a more varied and diverse programme and new opportunities arose for engagement with students and staff from universities and organisations further afield. The panel was pleased to hear that the programme wants to continue these online talks in the future, alongside organising physical events. It could be a valid way to establish new connections and partnerships, in particular with African organisations and institutions for academic outreach and exchange.

The excellent library facilities at Leiden University and in particular at the ASCL deserve special mention. The panel considers the library central to the research environment for students. With its extensive collections, about half of which are unique in the Netherlands, it provides an unrivalled research resource with good access to Western and non-Western literature. Staff at the programme and the library services were praised by the students as being very helpful in pointing out relevant literature and going the extra mile for acquiring materials that were either not available in the Leiden collection or not easily accessible as the result of the restrictions placed on access to the library during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Considerations

Based on its findings, the panel concluded that the research master's programme African Studies offers students a high-quality research environment with good access to resources and staff. The curriculum is of the required standard for a research master's degree programme: it offers a coherent design, and the contents pay attention to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches, including recent trends in the research field. Ethics and skills training are appropriately incorporated. The students complete a fully independent research cycle in their combined thesis and fieldwork trajectories. Some additional attention paid to the formulation of research questions in the thesis preparation would still be welcome. The panel was positively impressed by the diversity in the training of communication skills. It values the staff's attempts to diversify modules and create new (online) discussion series and lectures, allowing for more non-Western, feminist and decolonised approaches and perspectives. It encourages the programme to see these initiatives as stepping-stones for the establishment of new connections and partnerships, in particular with African organisations and institutes. It supports the suggestion by the previous review panel to explore the interplay between geographical regions and areas together with other relevant master's programmes.

The panel thinks the existing selection and admittance criteria strike the right balance. They aim to attract candidates with a strong academic record while also allowing for diversification of the intake. To the panel, diversity of intake is key for the creation of a rich teaching-learning environment. Hence, the choice for English as the language of instruction, and an English programme name, is considered appropriate and of added value. The staff members are adequately trained, in terms of both their teaching qualifications and language skills, to provide the necessary quality for establishing such a multicultural and international teaching-learning environment. The programme also benefits from their up-to-date research expertise and experience. The staff's diverse multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research projects and interests feed into the curriculum and offer a challenging environment for students to realise the intended learning outcomes. The staff members are committed to and easily accessible for students, offering valuable guidance and good support throughout their studies. The panel verified that the Programme Board and staff keep a close watch on the students' safety and well-being. It ascertained that the programme acts upon suggestions for improvement by the programme committee, students and external assessors and rose to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

Research master's programme African Studies: the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'meets the standard'.

Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Assessment policy and system of assessment

Assessment for the research master's programme African Studies is embedded within the regulations and shared assessment practices of the Faculty of Humanities. The Faculty uses one assessment framework for all programmes, which sets out the established procedures. Together with the programme-specific rules and regulations for the

Board of Examiners and the programme-specific assessment plan, both annually revised and updated, this framework forms the backbone for the assessment practices within the programme. The panel concluded that the policies and added regulations and assessment plan are complete and useful for providing transparency and reliability of assessment. The Faculty has introduced a standard online evaluation form for thesis assessment. This adds to the uniformity and transparency of assessment of all programmes under its remit, creating a balanced system of assessment.

At the course level, the teachers are assigned a central role in assuring the quality of assessment; as content experts, they know the requirements of the relevant fields. The panel finds that the programme has a well-arranged assessment policy, which is a balanced combination of both formative and summative testing. The design of the assessments is peer-reviewed and regularly evaluated. Annually, the staff of African Studies come together to discuss whether individual modules still cover all set ILOs, allowing for revisions and adjustments while keeping a close check on the inclusion and attainment of all programme objectives within the curriculum.

The panel is positive about the assessment methods and their variety in the programme. The modules utilise a wide range of assessment methods (both formative and summative), from group discussion in which students are assigned different roles (chair, presenter, discussant), oral presentations, blogs, shorter and longer essays and articles to the formulation of a research proposal and a thesis project that includes a significant fieldwork component. Research skills and ethics are tested in an appropriate manner, and the students go through the full research cycle in their thesis trajectories. During the Covid-19 pandemic, assessment and feedback practices at the programme did not fundamentally change. The students are assessed multiple times within a course, allowing for a diversity of assessment methods. Answer models are used, where appropriate. The assessment methods used are considered fitting for the assessment of research master students as they often strongly encourage original contributions and the application of research skills. The assignments gradually increase in length and complexity based on the principles of structural alignment. Knowledge acquisition and application are continuously assessed, as are academic and communication skills. In this way, the students develop their knowledge and skills to the advanced master's level required in a structured assessment system.

The students receive adequate feedback on their work, both in writing and orally. The provision of timely feedback and grading had improved over the last year. This was confirmed by the students during the site visit. The panel learned that some students, in particular international students, considered the Leiden assessment methods and grading criteria unclear at the start of their studies; they struggled to see what was expected from them. In the panel's view, this may be the result of unfamiliarity with the Dutch system and its requirements. Some additional information at the beginning of the first year on the way students will be assessed in the programme may therefore be opportune. Furthermore, the panel suggests the programme should discuss whether the development of detailed marking criteria with descriptors is desirable. This should, of course, be in line with government and university guidelines. Such marking criteria with descriptors can contribute to the transparency of assessment. Moreover, they can be used in the context of peer-reviewing exercises amongst students, which may, in turn, further contribute to the transparency of assessments.

Research master students African Studies share one course (*History and Politics in Africa*; 5 EC) with master students from the one-year master's programme; all students in this course are assessed according to the intended learning outcomes of that course. No specific differentiation is made for the research master students in the assessment of course requirements, as all students on these courses are assessed at the required master's degree level. The panel considers the programme's reasoning valid, yet is aware that some other programmes under the Faculty of Humanities' remit set added requirements for research master's programmes in the course objectives coupled to tailor-made assessment methods. This variety of approaches within the Faculty, and perhaps within the University, may create confusion and a level of ambiguity in the expectations raised regarding the attainment level for students. Hence, communication to research master students is key regarding expectations, assessment criteria and course objectives. Without wanting to blaze a trail for either approach, the panel challenges all programmes associated

with the Faculty of Humanities – including the research master’s programme Africa Studies – to discuss their approach and to learn from each other’s practices.

Thesis and fieldwork assessment

Fieldwork and its assessment in the research master’s programme African Studies are intrinsically linked to thesis assessment, as the fieldwork is not assessed separately but only as part of the groundwork and research proposal of the thesis. The panel discussed with the programme and Board of Examiners for African Studies whether it is desirable for such a large component of the curriculum in terms of time investment to be seemingly ‘invisibly’ assessed as part of the thesis trajectory. It raises the question of whether the fieldwork could be deemed unsatisfactory and whether students could fail their fieldwork in principle.

The response by the programme representatives addressed these concerns. The ASCL promotes the anthropological approach to fieldwork as a highly reflexive, processual and flexible practice. This reflective element is also part of the assessment criteria for the thesis; the assessment form includes a criterion for process, which concerns the evaluation of a student’s growth during the project. In this way, the fieldwork practice is covered by the current assessment design and criteria. The panel is satisfied that the fieldwork is assessed in an appropriate manner. It concludes that the transparency of its assessment may be improved by making this explicit, for example by linking the fieldwork and its assessment to an additional ILO regarding the student’s ability to work with different target groups in an unfamiliar setting, as suggested under Standard 1.

The panel reviewed a sample of the theses and the accompanying assessment forms. Each student is assigned two supervisors from different disciplines who both mark the thesis. They combine their findings on one assessment form and agree upon a grade as combined first assessor. Their assessment is verified by an official second assessor, who grades the thesis and fills in an assessment form independently of the two supervisors. The evaluation of the first assessment and independent second assessment is then calibrated. After calibration, a final grade is assigned, which is communicated to the students by filling in a third assessment form offering the substantiation of the grade in a merged version. If the assessors cannot agree, a third assessor is involved. The panel approves this procedure and states that this safeguards the independence of the assessment, while it also acknowledges the interdisciplinary approach of the programme.

The panel considered the thesis assessments at the research master’s programme African Studies to be of very good quality. It agreed with the grades awarded. It would welcome the development of a marking scale with detailed descriptors. This would make the current practices more transparent for the students, especially for those from abroad. Notwithstanding this suggestion, the panel compliments the staff for its feedback practices; it considered the feedback transparent and constructive, clearly highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the student’s work. This was also acknowledged by alumni of the programme, who considered the feedback on their thesis highly useful and constructive. The panel would like to encourage the staff to make use of the full range of the grading scale in awarding grades; first-class work may in exceptional cases be awarded the highest possible grade. With respect to the assessment form and criteria, the panel has two further suggestions to improve the high standards already achieved. First, to include a qualitative reflection on the publishability of (parts of) the thesis, including feedback/advice on the format and prospective platforms/media/journals. This would make the ILO dedicated to publishability of the thesis explicit while also helping the students on their way towards the (partial) publication of their research. Second, to uphold the word limit of 30,000 words (with a stringently defined allowance for overrunning) as a strict criterion for grading and, potentially, awarding honours as this will, in many cases, force the students to write more succinctly and improve the presentation of their findings.

Board of Examiners

Assessment in the programme takes place under the supervision of the Board of Examiners (BoE) for the bachelor, one-year master and research master programmes in African Studies. The Board consists of three members: a chair, a staff member based at the ASCL, and an external member specialised in educational assessment plus a secretary.

As of September 2020, all Board members receive compensation for their work. The panel heard that the members of the BoE were pleased about this allowance as it helped them to fulfil their time-consuming but important legal tasks. To the panel, the BoE seemed a rather small entity, but it concluded that the members were up to their important task. Based on discussions with the members of the BoE, the panel acknowledges the valuable contribution of the secretary in managing the BoE's workload. It thus encourages the Faculty to continue monitoring the workload, and to pay particular attention to the continuous need for sufficient secretarial support.

The panel is positive about the work of the BoE, which has a strong positive effect on the quality of assessment within the programme. It also heard that the Board closely monitored assessment during the circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, noting that no major changes were needed within this particular small-scale programme setting. The BoE adequately handles its legally mandated tasks, including regularly reviewing courses and their assessments in their entirety. Additionally, it approves fieldwork, internships and individual study projects, assigns thesis supervisors and second (and third) examiners, and checks graded theses and regular papers. Its practices and rules related to academic misconduct are in line with common standards at the Faculty.

Considerations

The panel verified that the assessment policies and protocols in the programme are of excellent quality. They are transparently organised and solidly grounded in shared Faculty practices. The assessment methods are sufficiently varied; they reflect the level of the programme and adequately test the students' research abilities and awareness of the ethics of research. The panel considers the institutional arrangements in place for safeguarding quality assurance in assessment to be robust. It concluded that the Board of Examiners fulfils its formal tasks and responsibilities and works according to clear procedures. It encourages the Faculty to continue monitoring the workload of the Board of Examiners, and to pay attention to the continuous need for sufficient secretarial support.

The panel verified that the students are satisfied with the quality of the assessment and feedback received. It shares this satisfaction and wants to compliment the staff involved in thesis assessment in the research master's African Studies for their constructive feedback. During the Covid-19 pandemic, assessment and feedback practices at the programme did not fundamentally change, and the panel verified that the Board of Examiners closely monitored the procedures during the challenges posed by the pandemic. It considers assessment within the research master's programme to be of good quality. To strengthen the existing quality culture, it suggests focusing on expectation management and communication regarding the grading criteria. The development of detailed marking criteria with descriptors could be taken into consideration. As for the thesis, the panel is of the opinion that the transparency of the assessment could be strengthened by the creation of a more detailed marking scheme for thesis assessment, including the way fieldwork is assessed. In addition, the programme is advised to uphold and monitor a strict word limit policy for the thesis and to introduce a qualitative reflection on the publishability of (parts of) the thesis on the assessment form for research master theses. Also, the full range of the grading scale may be explored more.

Conclusion

Research master's programme African Studies: the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'meets the standard'.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings

The panel read a selection of fifteen research master theses for the cohorts between 2016-2019. In addition, it studied two theses that were completed in 2020. It concluded that the studied theses convincingly demonstrate the ability of the students to live up to the ambitious aims and objectives of the research master's programme African Studies. The students are evidently capable of formulating a relevant research question, designing and conducting their research, and then transmitting their findings to an academic readership in a structured manner at the required

research master's degree level. The panel considered the attainment level high: the research conducted was original and a timely contribution to existing knowledge, based on fieldwork, and in most cases well-grounded in theory and the relevant literature. The students demonstrated in their theses a keen awareness of interdisciplinary methods and solid knowledge of current debates in the field of African Studies.

The panel was pleased to note the ambition and scope of the reviewed theses. The students addressed a wide range of topics, from a study of biological warfare to one on the empowerment of female entrepreneurs. Geographically, the research projects were set all over the African continent. This thematic and geographical diversity convincingly reflects both the students' individual freedom to pursue their own interests as well as the excellent connections and research expertise of the ASCL and its staff, from which the research master students clearly benefitted. The 2016 review panel suggested improving theses structurally, asking for a clear presentation of research questions, methodological options, and a state of the art of the academic literature related to their subject. The current panel considers these recommendations adequately implemented.

Naturally, the quality of the work varied. Many of the studied theses were considered of outstanding quality by the panel, true contributions to the field of African studies. In a reworked version, these studies could be a highly relevant contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Even weaker theses contained research that could be reworked for academic publication. The panel therefore concluded that the graduates of the programme clearly achieved the intended learning outcomes, including the criteria of the additional framework for research master's programmes. It verified that some theses resulted in publications in article collections and/or peer-reviewed journals.

From the panel's perspective, the graduates' employment record is a clear sign of the programme's quality: in the period under assessment, eight out of twenty recent graduates found a PhD position in the Netherlands or abroad. Others work in governmental positions or research-related positions at relevant companies. This suggests to the panel that the skills taught by the programme are valued in a range of different environments. This was confirmed in the interview with alumni, who commented on the value of their training for pursuing their current careers in academia and beyond. They remarked positively on the willingness of their teachers and the staff at the ACSL to support their career search by connecting them to useful contacts and organisations. Both students and staff mentioned the difficulty of obtaining funding for PhD positions in the Humanities in the Netherlands. The panel therefore believes the Faculty could offer more insights to the students on how to apply for independent funding, including outside the Netherlands, to start their own research projects.

Considerations

The quality of the theses confirms that the graduates have the ability to design and implement independent research of very good academic quality. The theses were innovative, relevant and original. They embodied all elements of the research cycle: from the formulation of a research question to the output of an adequately written report that offers sufficient grounds for publication upon reworking into a suitable format. In this way, the intended learning outcomes are convincingly met, including the criteria of the additional framework for research master's programmes. The panel also concluded that the graduates do well in the job market, securing positions in academia and beyond. This is enhanced by the networks they have access to through the ACSL. As a result, they are well-positioned in terms of their achieved skills and knowledge to continue their further career within academic research and/or the professional field.

Conclusion

Research master's programme African Studies: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'meets the standard'.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The panel assessed standards 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the research master's programme African Studies as 'meets the standard'. It hereby took the additional aspects for research master's programmes as included in the *Specification of Additional Criteria for Research Master's Programmes* into account. Based on the NVAO decision rules regarding limited programme assessments, it therefore assesses the programme as 'positive'.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *research master's programme African Studies* as 'positive'.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

I. Knowledge and understanding

Graduates have:

- A profound awareness of the current issues, core concepts and research questions in the relevant disciplines and regional fields of the programme;
- A thorough understanding of various theories and methodological approaches and techniques that are commonly used in research in African Studies as well as in different related disciplines;
- The ability to develop a conceptual framework suitable for addressing relevant problems and issues;
- Advanced, up-to-date knowledge of the quantitative and qualitative research methodology appropriate to particular projects and locations;
- Sensitivity to the relationship between theory, method and actual research context;
- A thorough knowledge of and insight into the interdisciplinary position of the study subject;
- A thorough understanding of the societal relevance of the study subject.

II. Applying knowledge and understanding

Graduates have:

- The capacity to critically apply theoretical and descriptive approaches when conducting basic independent research in African Studies;
- The capacity to (innovatively) deploy theoretical and methodological tool-sets derived from the humanities and social sciences for the analysis and interpretation of the object of inquiry;
- The ability to critically select, study and analyse literature;
- The ability to independently formulate, perform and assess scientific research at a level suitable for preparing scientific publications;

III. Making judgments

Graduates have:

- The ability to select, compile, compare and analyse discipline-related literature and sources independently, with the aid of traditional and modern techniques (heuristic skills);
- The ability to independently study discipline-related literature and sources and to assess these as to their quality and reliability;
- Profound knowledge of the philosophy and ethics of African Studies research and the limitations of individual research projects;
- Awareness of the role of comparison;
- Sophisticated understanding of the stakes in the politics of knowledge and their relationship with the ethics of fairness and objectivity;
- The fundamentals of research project management, such as framing the research, gathering data, data storage, articulating a thesis, ordering and presenting findings in oral and written form and reflection on the ethics of scientific inquiry.

IV. Communication

Graduates have:

- The capacity to report independently on relevant research that has been carried out according to current academic standards for the field of research;
- The ability to write scientific reports in English;
- The ability to give persuasive oral presentations;
- The ability to engage in the international academic debate and in non-specialist discussions.

V. Learning skills

Graduates have:

- The capacity to apply learning skills that allow them to initiate and conduct a research project with a great degree of independence and autonomy, under expert national or international supervision. This includes:
- The ability to formulate a clear and well-argued problem under expert supervision; and the ability to break these problems down into clear and manageable sub-problems;
- The ability to set up and carry out a research project under expert supervision;
- The capacity to take into account ideas, instructions and constructive criticism of supervisors and peers and in turn offer feedback to the work of others;
- The ability to set up a realistic work schedule and keep to the agreed time guidelines.

APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

Programme 2019-2020

Year 1	EC	Level
The Theoretical Foundations and Interdisciplinary Nature of African Studies	10	500
History and Politics in Africa	5	500
Reflexivity and Methodologies in Africanist Research	15	600
Seminar: Methodological Specialization	5	500
Thematic Fields: Theoretical and Empirical Explorations	10	600
Seminar: Writing Research Proposal	5	500
Africa in Cross-Regional Perspective	10	600

Year 2	EC	Level
Research Project: Fieldwork	25	600
Seminar: Academic Publication	5	600
Seminar: Thesis Writing	5	600
Thesis	25	600

APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE ONLINE VISIT

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

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

Day 1: Wednesday, February 3

Area Studies & Classics and Ancient Civilizations, Faculty of Humanities

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

14:30	15:15	Meeting with students AS and MES Panel: Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen) Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)	Meeting with staff CAC Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)	Parallel sessions
15:15	15:30	Break		
15:30	17:00	Internal panel meeting AS, MES, CAC (panel only)		
17:00	17:45	Alumni AS, MES, CAC		
17:45	18:15	Internal panel meeting wrap up day 1/preparation day 2 (panel only)		

Day 2: Thursday, February 4

Latin American Studies & African Studies, Faculty of Humanities

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

		<p>Panel: Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht) Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester)</p> <p>Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)</p>	<p>Panel: Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen)</p> <p>Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)</p>	
12:00	12:15	Internal panel meeting (panel only)		
12:15	13:15	Lunch		
13:15	14:00	Internal panel meeting (panel only)		Full panel
14:00	14:20	Meeting with all chairs + representatives BoE FGW - Fraud procedures - Faculty support - Quality assurance policies		Full panel
14:20	14:30	Internal deliberation (panel only)		Full panel
14:30	14:50	<p>BoE AS and MES - Assessment strategies - Improvements/Changes - Appointment examiners - Final check diploma</p> <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg) Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht)</p> <p>Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)</p>	<p>BoE CAC - Assessment strategies - Improvements/Changes - Appointment examiners - Final check diploma</p> <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen)</p> <p>Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)</p>	Parallel sessions
14:50	15:10	<p>BoE LAS - Assessment strategies - Improvements/Changes - Appointment examiners - Final check diploma</p> <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Helena Houvenaghel (Utrecht) Em.Prof.dr. John Healey (Manchester) Yannick de Raaff, MA (Groningen)</p> <p>Notulist: Dr. Irene Conradie (Qanu)</p>	<p>BoE AfS - Assessment strategies - Improvements/Changes - Appointment examiners - Final check diploma</p> <p>Panel: Prof.dr. Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent), Dr. Gerhard Anders (Edinburgh) Prof.dr. Jens-Uwe Hartmann (Munich) Prof.dr. Thomas Meier (Heidelberg)</p> <p>Secretary: Dr. Els Schröder (Qanu)</p>	Parallel sessions
15:10	15:30	Break		
15:30	16:00	Internal panel meeting BoEs (panel only)		Full panel
16:00	16:45	Alumni LAS and AfS		Full panel
16:45	18:00	Internal panel meeting LAS, AfS (wrap up day 2) (panel only)		Full panel

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

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

APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the online site visit, the panel studied seventeen theses and assessment forms of the research master's programme African Studies. The thesis selection consisted of 15 theses and their assessment forms for the programme, based on a provided list of graduates between 2018 and 2020 (out of list of 26 theses). In addition, the panel studied 2 theses that were completed in the second half of 2020 (out of a list of 6 theses). There are no specialisations to take into account. A variety of topics and a diversity of examiners were included in the selection. The project manager and panel chair assured that the distribution of grades in the selection matched the distribution of grades of all available theses. Information on the selected theses is available from Qanu upon request.

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

Frameworks and documents pertaining earlier assessments

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

Faculty Documents Faculty of Humanities (FGW)

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

Programme Documents African Studies

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

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

- Reflexivity and Methodology (2018-2019 and 2019-2020);
- Research proposal writing (2018-2019 and 2019-2020);
- The Theoretical Foundations and Interdisciplinary Nature of African Studies (2018-2019 and 2019-2020).