

MASTER'S PROGRAMME HISTORY

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

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This report was finalised on 6 April 2020



REPORT ON THE MASTER'S PROGRAMME HISTORY OF LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands for limited programme assessments as a starting point (September 2018).

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

Master's programme History

Name of the programme:	History
CROHO number:	66034
Level of the programme:	Master's
Orientation of the programme:	Academic
Number of credits:	60 EC
Specialisations or tracks:	- Ancient History - Archival Studies - Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence - Colonial and Global History - Europaeum Programme 'European History and Civilisation' - Europe 1000-1800 - Politics, Culture and National Identities, 1789 to the Present
Location(s):	Leiden
Mode(s) of study:	Full-time
Language of instruction:	English
Submission deadline NVAO:	01/05/2020

The visit of the assessment panel History to the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University took place on 17 and 18 October 2019.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

Name of the institution:	Leiden University
Status of the institution:	Publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	Positive

COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The NVAO has approved the composition of the panel on 4 February 2019. The panel that assessed the Master's programme History consisted of:

- Dr. J.W. (Jan Willem) Honig, senior lecturer in War Studies, Department of War Studies, King's College, London and professor of Military Strategy at the Swedish National Defence College in Stockholm [chair];
- Prof. dr. I.B. (Inger) Leemans, professor Cultural History at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Principal Investigator NL-Lab at KNAW Humanities Cluster;
- Prof. dr. P. (Peter) Bursens, full professor Political Sciences and former vice-dean at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Antwerp;

- Prof. dr. W.P. (Wim) van Meurs, full professor European Political History and chairman of the department Political History at the Humanities Faculty of Radboud University;
- R. (Rikst) van der Schoor BA, student of the master's programme Intellectual History at the University of St. Andrews.

The panel was supported by V.L. (Victor) van Kleef MA, who acted as secretary.

WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The site visit to the master's programme History at Leiden University was part of the cluster assessment History. Between April 2019 and December 2019 the panel assessed 24 programmes at 8 universities. The following universities participated in this cluster assessment: Erasmus University Rotterdam, Maastricht University, Radboud University Nijmegen, University of Groningen, Leiden University, Utrecht University, University of Amsterdam and VU 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. A.H.A.M. (Alexandra) Paffen was project coordinator for QANU. Dr. A.H.A.M. (Alexandra) Paffen, dr. F. (Floor) Meijer, drs. R. (Renate) Prenen, J. (Jaïra) Azaria MA and V.L. (Victor) van Kleef MA acted as secretaries in the cluster assessment.

During the site visit at Leiden University, the panel was supported by QANU coordinating secretary dr. A.H.A.M. (Alexandra) Paffen and V.L. (Victor) van Kleef MA, both NVAO-certified secretaries.

Panel members

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

- Dr. J.W. (Jan Willem) Honig, senior lecturer in War Studies, Department of War Studies, King's College London and visiting professor of Military Strategy at the Swedish National Defence College in Stockholm [chair];
- Prof. dr. I.B. (Inger) Leemans, professor Cultural History at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Principal Investigator NL-Lab at KNAW Humanities Cluster;
- Prof. dr. J.F.J. (Jeroen) Duindam, full professor of Early Modern History and programme director at Leiden University;
- Prof. dr. W.J.H. (Jan Hein) Furnée, full professor European Cultural History at Radboud University;
- Prof. dr. P. (Peter) Bursens, full professor Political Sciences and former vice-dean at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Antwerp;
- Prof. dr. W.P. (Wim) van Meurs, full professor European Political History and chairman of the department Political History at the Humanities Faculty of Radboud University;
- Prof. dr. E. (Eric) Vanhaute, full professor Economic and Social History and World History, as well as head of UGent Research Group Communities, Comparisons, Connections at Ghent University;
- V. (Vicky) Marissen LLM, managing director at PACT European Affairs and partner at consultancy firm EPPA;
- Dr. N. (Nico) Randeraad, associate professor at Maastricht University and interim director of the Social History Centre for Limburg History;
- Prof. dr. N. (Nanci) Adler, full professor Memory, History, and Transitional Justice at the University of Amsterdam and research director Holocaust and Genocide studies at the Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (NIOD);
- Prof. dr. K. (Koenraad) Verboven, professor of Ancient History and programme director for History at the University of Ghent;
- Prof. dr. V. (Violet) Soen, associate professor in Early Modern History and chair of the research group Early Modern History at the University of Leuven;

- Prof. dr. C.A. (Claire) Dunlop, full professor of Politics and Public Policy and head of research at the Department of Politics at Exeter University;
- Prof. dr. E.B.A. (Erik) van der Vleuten, professor of History of Technology and chair of the History Lab at the Eindhoven University of Technology;
- R. (Rikst) van der Schoor BA, student of the master's programme Intellectual History at the University of St. Andrews;
- M. (Mel) Schickel MA, completed the master's programme History of Society at the Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2018 and is working as external relations officer at the Faculty of Science and Engineering of Maastricht University;
- R. (Rico) Tjepkema, third year bachelor's student International Relations & International Organization at the University of Groningen.

Preparation

On 11 March 2019, the panel chair was briefed by QANU on his role, the assessment framework, the working method, and the planning of site visits and reports. A preparatory panel meeting was organised on 14 April 2019. During this meeting, the panel members received instruction on the use of the assessment framework. The panel also discussed their working method and the planning of the site visits and reports. The project coordinator composed a schedule for the site visit in consultation with the Faculty. Prior to the site visit, the Faculty selected representative partners for the various interviews. See Appendix 3 for the final schedule.

Before the site visit to Leiden University, QANU received the self-evaluation report of the programme and sent this to the panel. A thesis selection was made by the panel's chair and the project coordinator. The selection consisted of 19 theses and their assessment forms for the programme, based on a provided list of graduates in 2019. A variety of topics and tracks and a diversity of examiners were included in the selection. The project coordinator and panel chair assured that the distribution of grades in the selection matched the distribution of grades of all available theses.

After studying the self-evaluation report, theses and assessment forms, the panel members formulated their preliminary findings. The secretary collected all initial questions and remarks and distributed these amongst all panel members. At the start of the site visit, the panel discussed its initial findings on the self-evaluation report and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit.

Site visit

The site visit to Leiden University took place on 17 and 18 October 2019. 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: students and staff members, the programme's management, alumni and representatives of the Board of Examiners. It also offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. 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 publicly presented the panel's preliminary findings and general observations.

Report

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



Definition of judgements standards

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework 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.

SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

Standard 1

The panel praises the wide variation of specialisations and subtracks that the MA History of Leiden University offers. This contributes to its unique and international profile. As a programme, it is both classic and innovative, with an international orientation and national and international partnerships.

The panel agrees that the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) are appropriate for an academic master's programme. They are clearly and concisely formulated in terms of level and orientation. The panel concludes, however, that refraining from demanding 'originality' as a criterion would be appropriate. If the programme insists on retaining this learning outcome, it urges the programme management to at least clarify the demands associated with this term with regards to research at the MA level.

The idea of making an internship part of the programme is well received by the panel. It supports the Programme Board in expanding this initiative. It acknowledges that the recommendations from the previous visitation have been successfully implemented and that there is a good connection between the profile, the ILOs and the professional field.

Standard 2

The panel agrees that the curriculum of the MA History enables the students to achieve the final qualifications. It believes that the ILOs have been properly translated into educational objectives (learning goals). It finds the curriculum to be well developed and is of the opinion that completion of the programme in accordance with the set requirements is feasible as well. The proposed changes regarding the enhancement of the MA thesis seminar are well received by the panel. By adding 5 EC to this course, the students will be better motivated to prepare and participate. It also strongly supports the introduction of a 5 EC Methodology course in September 2020 which focuses on the heuristics of the specialisation. It believes this will benefit the quality of the theses.

According to the panel, it is a joint responsibility of the staff and students to ensure that the students can achieve the final qualifications within a reasonable period of time. It therefore asks the Programme Board not merely to look for external reasons of why the completion rate is low—since they would apply to all other universities as well and ignore possible internal areas for improvement. A reduction of the thesis from 30 EC to 20 EC seems a logical measure and is in accordance with comparable MA History programmes in the Netherlands. The panel asks the programme management to monitor closely if this proves to be a successful change.

Relatively few students undertake an internship or follow courses abroad. The panel thinks this number can be raised. The pilot that actively encouraged prearranged internships was a success. During the site visit conversations, the Programme Board was committed to working on this issue. The panel, like the programme management, sees the added value of internationalisation and an international classroom, but thinks that this can be emphasised even more and that the professionalisation of teachers in this area can be better supervised and supported by the Faculty.

The student chapter and the panel's discussions with the students showed that they are particularly satisfied with the expertise, involvement and accessibility of the staff. The panel also witnessed skilled staff with broad expertise. It values the small-scale classrooms and intensive supervision—including the supervision by the study advisors—that the students receive. It proposes that the Programme Board (or Faculty) consider formulating concrete guidelines for teachers and students on time management and expectations when writing the thesis.

Standard 3

The panel concludes that the assessment plan and system are basically sound and comply with the standards current in the academic domain. Based on its findings regarding the thesis assessment procedure and practice and after conversations with the Board of Examiners (BoE) during the site



visit, it agrees that important steps have been taken to improve the assurance of student assessment.

The panel understands that the knock-out criteria can serve as a didactic instrument to inform students on the basic preconditions that an academic paper must meet. However, it welcomes that the criteria will be removed from the assessment form as they do not fully and easily align with the ILOs. At the same time, it is satisfied that the assessment form will be expanded with an additional text box providing a better explanation to the student as to how the final assessment of the various assessors is arrived at. It wishes to express its strong support for the programme and its staff in the pursuit of its goal to be as clear as possible about the thesis standards.

Regarding the introduction of a third reader, the panel welcomes that an extra assessor is now appointed when a final grade lies between 6.0 and 6.5. It is of the opinion that the overall quality of the MA theses will benefit from this mechanism. If this procedure increases the workload significantly in the near future, a possibility would be to organise an extra calibration session with all thesis assessors at least once a year. Calibration sessions and exchanges of best practices are vital elements in the monitoring of shared standards.

The panel would prefer that the second reader is affiliated with a different department and assigned independently—either by the BoE or a mandated assessment committee—as is the case for the BA History. It nonetheless understands and respects that the programme has a different opinion on this issue. It advises that with respect to international tracks (i.e., the *Europaeum*), the programme needs to 'stay on the ball' with assessors from foreign/partner universities since their assessment standards might differ and communications might be more cumbersome.

The panel warmly welcomes the fact that both theses and assessment forms will be read by the BoE as part of a random checking process. It is an important change which helps assure the fair marking of marginal theses in future. The panel suggests that a targeted check can be performed in two years' time focused on theses that have received a 6.0 as the final grade.

Furthermore, the panel advises the Faculty to give the members of the BoE sufficient time and resources to perform their legal responsibilities and to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to the professionalisation of BoE members. The Faculty should also better ensure that its assessment policy is implemented and executed by the various examination committees.

Overall, the panel is very pleased with the constructive response from the Programme Board to its recommendations for the MA History programme and that important changes have already been implemented and further ones committed to. It is optimistic about the functioning of the assessment mechanisms in the future. The confirmation that the History BoE will exchange best practices with the BoE of the MA programme International Relations (MAIR) further reinforces this expectation.

Standard 4

Based on the sample of theses and the information from alumni, the panel concludes that graduates achieve the ILOs in general. It judged that the quality of a total of 19 examined theses varied, and that three of them were not of a desired MA level. It also noted that the grades tended to be on the high side. However, it also saw impressive examples of original research and a keen academic attitude.

The panel agrees that improvements can be made in the attention paid to critical reflection on the scholarly (theoretical) literature and the methods that students apply to their thesis research. By implementing the intended curriculum changes (Standard 2), and by taking the recommendations on the functioning of the BoE and assessment mechanisms to heart (Standard 3), it is confident that the issues regarding marginal theses will be addressed and also that the general standard of theses and their assessment will be raised.

The alumni are satisfied with the programme as a preparation for their further career, and statistics show that the graduates successfully find their way into the professional field.

The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment framework for limited programme assessments* in the following way:

Master's programme History

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 of the panel, dr. J.W. (Jan Willem) Honig, and the secretary, V.L. (Victor) van Kleef MA, 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: 6 April 2020

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

Profile and orientation

The one-year master's programme History at Leiden University is housed in the Faculty of Humanities and has a research-oriented approach combined with a strong focus on international themes. History in Leiden has a long tradition in fields such as colonial history, global history, and migration history, themes that remain relevant in today's world. It thus aims at providing a programme that is 'classic in its setup and modern in its contents'. The programme's intention is to encourage its students to develop broad knowledge, thorough analysis, clear writing, and oral presentation. The students can design their own academic trajectory by choosing from a wide range of subjects, organised in six specialisations and four subtracks. In the student chapter of the self-evaluation and during the site visit, this freedom of choice was praised by the MA students. This translates into a (growing) popularity of the programme. Added value is provided, according to the panel, by the option for those students with high grades and high motivation to easily transfer to the two-year research master after one semester.

The guiding principle of the programme is 'Global Questions, Local Sources', which aims to integrate international developments in historiography with a critical analysis of primary source materials. Staff members are stimulated to develop MA seminars on topics that are closely related to their own research activities. This integration of teaching and research ensures the students are informed on the latest state of affairs in the chosen research theme and can make connections with the relevant historical literature. Since the staff possesses expertise in a broad range of themes, the MA History programme offers six specialisations: (1) Ancient History; (2) Europe 1000–1800; (3) Colonial and Global History (with Maritime History and Postcolonial Studies: Archives and Heritage subtracks); (4) Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence (with Economic History and Governance of Migration and Diversity subtracks); (5) Politics, Culture and National Identities, 1789 to the Present; and (6) the Europaeum Programme: European History and Civilisation. The latter is an international programme which is organised in cooperation with the Université Paris I Panthéon/Sorbonne and the University of Oxford. Students acquire 20 EC at each university and receive a diploma from Leiden University.

Learning outcomes

According to the self-evaluation report, the MA History aims at training students to obtain advanced academic knowledge and skills in the areas of their specialisation. There are general intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for the programme and specific ones for each of the specialisations, which are structured according to the Dublin descriptors. The ILOs formulated for the MA History are comparable in content to those formulated at the BA level, but are of an 'advanced level'. More than in the BA History, the MA programme demands that the students form an opinion in present academic debates by using the appropriate literature and theories. The MA level is more abstract than the BA level, and it requires the students to become familiar with relevant ideas and concepts, and to connect findings from sources with suitable ideas and concepts. The panel agrees that since the last visit, the ILOs have been better formulated and conform to the international standards associated with an academic master's level.

The ability to independently perform research is an important skill the students have to develop at the master's level. In order to achieve this goal, the programme gives them time to visit archives and analyse primary sources, and trains them to reflect on their use and meaning. The panel



endorses the explicit focus on primary sources as this is inextricably linked to the practice of history. It concurs with the programme's thoroughly formulated ILOs. However, it challenges the notion that graduates should gain 'the ability to independently set up and carry out an *original* research project that can make a contribution to existing scholarly debates' (see Appendix 1; ILO II.6). It accepts that originality is an admirable ambition, especially from a conceptual point of view, but one that is primarily associated with the expectations regarding a research MA and, most certainly, a PhD.

The programme management, on the other hand, stressed that originality of research partly constitutes the difference between the BA and MA level. This difference of opinion seems to revolve around a different understanding of where originality is sought: whether it lies with finding and analysing new and unknown primary sources—as seems to be the view of the programme—or whether it is found in cutting-edge conceptual or conceptually embedded research. The panel would advise the programme to review the demand for originality as it can sow confusion and is unnecessary for the MA level, and students can struggle to do it justice in their theses. However, if the programme insists on retaining originality as an ILO, the panel urges the programme management to clarify the students' understanding, especially since any confusion regarding the type and level of originality attained by them could have an adverse effect on their expectations and career prospects, and maybe even on the programme's reputation.

Link with the professional field

The programme aims to deliver academically trained historians who should be able to engage effectively in peer review, co-operate in teams in a range of working environments and communicate the process and results of work projects. Other skills that the students develop include intercultural communication, collaboration, problem-solving skills, analytical and critical thinking, and self-reflection. These 'transferable skills' prepare graduates for the job market. History graduates will be employed in a variety of sectors and professions, hence knowledge-gathering and disseminating information (i.e., analytical ability) are key. The students can follow an internship and/or elective to prepare themselves more directly for the labour market. The panel praised the strong overall focus of the programme on academic research, but suggested that the actual labour market might be less academically oriented. In response, the programme management found that students are not always clearly cognisant of the acquired transferable skills, and therefore it is important to explicitly communicate these qualities to its students and alumni by, for example, organising career activities.

Students can also become acquainted with the world of work through an internship or by exploring actual practices and policies in courses. For example, in 2017 the Politics, Culture and National Identities specialisation started an experiment with actively encouraging internships during the MA programme and offering a list of prearranged internships (mostly government-based). The participating students considered it a success, and the panel lauds this initiative. In order to prepare the students for the international job market and to attract international students, the programme is taught in English.

Considerations

The panel praises the wide variation of specialisations and subtracks that the MA History offers. This contributes to its unique and international profile. As a programme, it is both classic and innovative, with an international orientation and national and international partnerships.

The panel agrees that the ILOs are appropriate for an academic master's programme. They are clearly and concisely formulated in terms of level and orientation. The panel concludes, however, that it would be appropriate to refrain from demanding 'originality' as a criterion. If the programme insists on retaining this learning outcome, it urges the programme management at very least to clarify the demands associated with this term with regards to research at the MA level.

The idea of making an internship part of the programme was well received by the panel. It supports the Programme Board in expanding this initiative. It acknowledges that the recommendations from

the previous visitation have been successfully implemented and that there is a good connection between the profile, the ILOs and the professional field.

Conclusion

Master's programme History: 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

Vision and objectives

The programme can be described as 'research-based'. The students follow one Literature Seminar and two Research Seminars (totalling 30 EC) in the first semester. They are taught research, writing, and presentation skills that are put to use in several assignments across the programme. They can choose from a wide range of subjects, organised in six specialisations and four subtracks (see Standard 1). Within their specialisation, they combine subjects and approaches linking their interests to the specialisations of staff members. In each course, they commit themselves to prescribed class readings while also pursuing individual research interests. According to the self-evaluation, the master's programme encourages the realisation of individual ambitions within the standard learning goals and fosters a student-centred approach.

The ILOs have been translated into educational objectives (learning goals) of the curriculum and its components. The programme has also created a matrix in which the connection between the courses and the ILOs is visualised. According to the panel, this is a clear elaboration and clarification of the learning trajectories and learning objectives—which is a very useful guide for both students and teachers. It is therefore an appropriate framework for the implementation of the ILOs. The Programme Board intends to raise awareness of the programme's learning outcomes among students and staff members by listing them in the e-Prospectus, course schemes, Course and Examination Regulations (OER) and, after the grading of the MA thesis, in the online thesis evaluation system.

Curriculum

After the previous visit in January 2013 and the midterm review of April 2016, changes were implemented in the MA History. Since 1 September 2018, the weight of the thesis has been decreased from 30 EC to 20 EC. This change brings the number of EC in line with other MA History programmes in the Netherlands. Consequently, an extra 10 EC research seminar was added to the programme. The latest change in the curriculum was made by adding a new MA thesis seminar. This thesis seminar, which convenes every two weeks throughout both semesters, helps the students to start their thesis research in a timely fashion. The Programme Board announced that on 1 September 2020, it will introduce a Methodology course that focuses on the heuristics of the chosen specialisation. At present, methodology is part of the Research and Literature Seminars. The panel strongly supports this change because it views expertise on methodology as a vital precondition for a successful thesis.

The current one-year programme consists of 60 EC and is divided across two semesters. It begins with an introductory literature seminar (10 EC) which outlines the main debates and approaches in the fields of the chosen specialisation. Two research seminars of 10 EC each complete the schedule of the first semester—of which one seminar needs to belong to the chosen specialisation. The panel admires the impressive variety of seminars that students can choose from—from *Asian Events in Early Modern European Sources* to *Life Writing as Political History*. In the second semester the MA thesis (20 EC) is written. The remaining 10 EC can be used for completing an optional course (elective or special methods course) or an internship. The panel is of the opinion that the structure of the curriculum is well-developed and appropriate for the learning pathways.



In both semesters, the students take the compulsory MA thesis seminar that meets every two weeks. Groups of one cohort from various specialisations discuss the set-up of a research project, academic ethics and career orientation. Currently, no EC are awarded for this. The panel considers the thesis seminar a good idea to assure the quality of MA theses, but would encourage the Programme Board to reward successful completion of this course with credits—especially since this seminar is being held every two weeks, runs throughout the year, and supports many learning outcomes. It concludes that participation in the thesis seminar can be seen as extra 'hidden work' for students, which is not motivating. The Programme Board agrees and has already taken steps to allocate 5 EC to this course and make it compulsory. It believes the course should improve the generic skills training (including heuristics, hermeneutics and digital humanities) and plans also to introduce a new Methods Seminar of 5 EC. According to the programme management, these developments are at an advanced stage. As a consequence of these changes, one research seminar will be removed from the curriculum. The panel fully supports this plan, especially since it considers that one research seminar of 10 EC should be sufficient and more attention to generic methodological skill training is needed.

The current research-oriented curriculum puts a strong focus on analysing source materials. The panel strongly supports this approach, but also deems it desirable that more attention is paid to developing the students' critical reflection on historiographic debates and methods so that they can then apply this in their thesis research—after all, this is an important fundamental part of an academic programme in History. As the panel has come across some theses with methodological and/or historiographical shortcomings, it concludes that the programme (see Standard 4) should focus more on advanced historiographical and methodological skills. This will have a beneficial impact on the quality of the theses. The panel expects that the suggested changes to the programme and the reorganisation of the methodology course will contribute to a more robust historiographic framework with more attention being paid to critical reflection.

The MA History offers unique, multifaceted (sub)tracks in cooperation with other universities. Students in the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus subtrack Governance of Migration and Diversity, in which they take classes at all three universities, very much value its international and diverse focus and state that the mix of different backgrounds and nationalities leads to interesting conversations and projects. The same applies to the international Europaeum programme, in which the students complete their first semester in Leiden, the first half of their second semester in Paris, and then spend the second half of the second semester working on their thesis in Oxford. A study advisor coordinates the Europaeum programme track, which attracts approximately 8 to 12 students per year. These graduates receive a certificate from the Europaeum and a master's degree in History from Leiden University.

A relatively small group of about ten percent of the students completes an internship. The panel also found that labour market orientation and preparation are not strongly integrated into the curriculum. The Programme Board accepts the urgent need for improvement in these areas and states that this is partly embedded in the MA thesis seminar. A number of workshops and symposia on job market orientation are also being organised outside the curriculum by the Humanities Career Service and the History Institute. Both staff and students agree that the History programme should better highlight the value of the transferable skills the students gain during their studies and the advantages of those skills for their future careers. Diversity in assessment formats could also be directed towards this goal: the students could be asked, for instance, to write policy papers instead of standard essays. Alumni could also be involved more. The active encouragement to take up prearranged internships as part of the Politics, Culture and National Identities specialisation was highly valued by the students, as was the support to schedule the internship in the short (one-year) MA programme. The panel sees it as a great asset in preparing graduates for the labour market and encourages all stakeholders to develop this initiative further.

Feasibility

The completion rate of the MA History after one year is about equal to that in the university in general: around 27 percent. On average, it takes a student up to two years to graduate. The

Programme Board is aware of and concerned about these figures, and it hopes that the recent downsizing of the MA thesis will improve the completion rates and shorten the average period of study. Alumni confirmed during the site visit that the 30 EC thesis was indeed too much for a one-year master's programme. The danger of 'drifting' was high. In addition, the Faculty and Programme Board identified several external reasons for the low completion rates: the students' extracurricular activities, enrolment in a second MA degree programme, a large and lengthy internship or study abroad. The panel suggests that factors within the programme may have an effect as well. For example, following an internship in the second part of the second semester and simultaneously writing the thesis might not be ideal in regard to study success. Perhaps having mixed groups from different specialisations in the same MA thesis seminar is also less effective—though the students emphasised that they like courses in which students of all specialisations are mixed. Furthermore, the panel points out that in some cases the new theses still seemed to follow the 'old model': for instance, a considerable percentage of the ones studied by the panel was far too long. Strictly enforcing the permitted word length of the theses could prevent the students from falling behind. Re-aligning the staff and students with the new expectations of the thesis might also help.

In general, the panel judges the programme to be doable. It is of the opinion that the deadlines at the end of each semester are calibrated in such a way that the students can manage to finalise their essays and assignments in time. The proposed alterations of the programme by its management will very likely benefit the feasibility of completing the MA History in a year. The students confirmed that completing the programme within the official length of study is feasible, but the prospect of entering the labour market after completing a one-year master's programme is daunting. Some prefer to work on their résumés while studying. The Programme Board mentioned that international students and those participating in the Europaeum specialisation, for example, tend to pass within the nominal duration of study. Financial motives and strict deadlines in the study programme contribute significantly in this respect. Of the newest cohort of MA students (as of September 2018), 27 of the 121 students were foreign, which is more than 22 percent. This might improve the average completion rate of the MA programme. Nevertheless, most students who enrol have obtained a BA History from Leiden. Those and others with a BA History from a Dutch university can enrol without preconditions, but students with other BA degrees may need to complete a pre-master. International students have to pass the TOEFL test to prove their English-language skills and sometimes write an essay in English.

Teaching methods and didactics

The educational principle of the Faculty of Humanities is integration of research and education in the various specialisations. In addition to the focus on research-oriented education, the programme management believes in small-scale education with a group size for a seminar or course of around 15 students. Even the two most popular specialisations (Politics, Culture and National Identity and Colonial and Global History) have small-scale education. This contributes to the quality of the learning environment and allows for intensive individual supervision by the instructor. All stakeholders, as well as the panel, value small-scale teaching. The didactical approach in the programme is student-centred, meaning that it is more focussed on learning and less on teaching. This approach is suitable for a programme in which discipline and self-study play an important role. The number of contact hours is therefore relatively low, namely 6 to 8 hours per week in the first semester, and 2 to 4 contact hours per week in the second semester. By offering the MA thesis seminar and an optional course in the second semester, the students have more contact hours in this period than before. In addition, they receive individual supervision from their MA thesis supervisor—usually 5 to 6 meetings, sometimes more if necessary.

According to the self-evaluation report, the Faculty stimulates innovation pertaining to education and online learning. In 2015, an annual subsidy was introduced for lecturers who wanted to improve their education with the help of ICT. From 2015 onwards, several courses in the BA History have been supported by the application of blended learning. The MA programme is less suited to these initiatives because the focus is more on developing independence and deepening research skills.



It became clear to the panel that the students and alumni of the MA History value the relatively small groups in seminars and specialisations which allow for more social cohesion. They know their peers and discuss their projects with one another. Depending on their specialisation, they visit special collections, libraries, museums (such as the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden) and other relevant institutions as part of their chosen seminar. The panel is impressed by these opportunities which also allow the students to work with primary sources. A disadvantage of the current broad programme, which is mentioned by the students in the student chapter of the self-evaluation, is the absence of a course in which the students of all specialisations join together. In their view, this would allow for more insight into differences in research practices and methods and permit them to share different experiences. The panel supports this vision: engaging with other (sub)disciplines heightens reflection on the choice and application of methods and concepts. It therefore welcomes the newly designed MA thesis seminar in which the students from different specialisations are brought together.

Teaching staff and coordination

The teaching staff consists of 18 professors, 7 senior lecturers, 39 lecturers and 9 teachers. All instructors in the MA programme are affiliated with the Leiden Institute for History. All tenured staff hold a PhD and possess a University Teaching Qualification (BKO). Those without a BKO have a restricted appointment. New staff are obliged to obtain a BKO within two years. They are required to attend at least two didactic courses and put together a portfolio that is assessed by an internal Faculty BKO Committee. Internal consultations happen regularly. Three times per year an educational meeting with all teachers is held. At the beginning of each semester, the instructors submit a weekly schedule of readings and topics for each course to the Programme Board and receive feedback on these schedules. The panel compliments the staff on the comprehensive course schemes that are provided to the students. The students were enthusiastic about the staff and confirmed that their level of English is good.

Staff members with an administrative or management position in teaching can participate in the annual Educational Leadership. This initiative is offered in collaboration with Delft University of Technology and Erasmus University Rotterdam. In recent years, programme administrators have used this programme to increase and share their experience in the field of policy, administration and particularly educational innovation. The Faculty of Humanities also stimulates its lecturers to improve their professional expertise through knowledge sharing and encourages them to take part in workshops and training sessions offered by Leiden University. Two instructors are members of the Leiden Teachers' Academy (LTA), a platform for exchanging best practices among lecturers from different study programmes.

The programme currently has two study advisors for the MA History (and Research MA). At the start of the academic year, the study advisors ask the students to develop a study plan and to inform them about their preferred specialisation, electives and possible internship or study plans abroad. The standard forms help the study advisors monitor the progress of the students twice a year. The panel learned that the students and alumni find the study advisors helpful and approachable and praise their commitment and enthusiasm. Communication happens frequently through e-mail, and the students can visit during the open office hours or by appointment. The study advisors answer questions about the programme, provide academic counselling, supervise the graduation procedures, and talk with the students about possible personal circumstances hindering their study achievements.

Thesis supervision

All MA students receive individual supervision from their own thesis supervisor (first reader). The programme management clearly stated that the large MA thesis of 30 EC was a difficult challenge for some students. The new MA thesis is 20 EC and is supported by the expanded and compulsory MA thesis seminar. The students discuss progress with and receive feedback from their supervisor, but also participate in the thesis seminar, where they present their ideas and methods—and give feedback on the progress of others. Some instructors are popular with the students, and so they will tend to supervise more theses. This is compensated by a mechanism that permits them to teach less or spend fewer hours on educational tasks. This is arranged informally. There are no formal

agreements guaranteeing a balanced distribution of theses. In addition, no guidelines have been drawn up by the programme for the amount of supervision time per thesis—although the Faculty sets the time at 15 hours per thesis. A minimum of four meetings between student and supervisor are expected, and a maximum of five or six meetings usually suffice. PhD students cannot be appointed as a first supervisor. In the case of the Europaeum track, the MA thesis is written under individual supervision at Oxford University. The students have an individual supervisor from Leiden University as well. Although no complaints were voiced to the panel during the visit, it does have concerns about the informality governing the thesis process. Not only is it unusual among history programmes in the Netherlands that a programme does not allocate set hours to thesis supervision, fairness to the staff (and students) with regard to thesis supervision mandates that it is important to keep an eye on the transparency of the workload amongst staff members.

The staff members said during the visit that they are happy with the current 'informal' supervision process. The students also expressed their satisfaction with it. The panel fears that when the workload increases, formal structures may become necessary in order to more evenly distribute thesis supervisor allocations. It therefore suggests creating concrete guidelines for teachers and students on time management and expectations when writing the thesis. Currently, the students inform the study advisor about their ideas, and during the thesis seminar their research proposals are further developed and shaped. A supervisor is allocated to the student, although there is room for them to approach a supervisor they think suits their topic best. The alumni and students acknowledged the responsiveness of their instructors and cherished the freedom they have in pursuing their research topic/question.

Despite the time investment in the supervision process, the panel did find that the quality of some theses could have been improved by better targeted and more exact supervision or a stricter reading of the draft versions of the MA thesis (see Standard 4). The Programme Board suggested that those students with low marks most likely had not attended the old thesis seminar. Given the new set-up of the thesis seminar, this is unlikely to happen in the future. The panel is of the opinion that the supervision process as such functions but can be improved by applying a higher degree of strictness during the supervision and assessment of theses.

Language

As the MA History is taught in English, class presentations and discussions are also held in English. According to the Faculty and Programme Board, this trains the students to learn and apply concepts and theoretical views from the international debates and actively apply them. Essays and assignments are written in English as a rule. Students may be granted permission to hand in their thesis (and, if relevant, term papers) in Dutch—for instance in situations in which Dutch archival sources are used, or if the historiographical debate is predominantly conducted in Dutch. This corresponds with the learning objective that the students should acquire the ability to present oral and written reports on research results that meet the criteria of the discipline in correct English when required, or where appropriate in Dutch. The panel considers this a logical choice.

Considerations

The panel agrees that the curriculum of the MA History enables the students to achieve the final qualifications. It believes that the ILOs have been properly translated into educational objectives (learning goals). It finds the curriculum to be well developed and is of the opinion that completion of the programme in accordance with the set requirements is feasible as well. The proposed changes regarding the enhancement of the MA thesis seminar are well received by the panel. By adding 5 EC to this course, the students will be better motivated to prepare and participate. It also strongly supports the introduction of a 5 EC Methodology course in September 2020 to focus on the heuristics of the specialisation. It believes this would benefit the quality of the theses.

According to the panel, it is a joint responsibility of the staff and students to ensure that the students can achieve the final qualifications within a reasonable period of time. It therefore asks the Programme Board not merely to look for external reasons why the completion rate is low— since



they would apply to all other universities as well and ignore possible internal areas for improvement. A reduction of the thesis from 30 EC to 20 EC seems a logical measure and is in accordance with comparable MA History programmes in the Netherlands. The panel asks the programme management to closely monitor whether this proves to be a successful change.

Relatively few students undertake an internship or follow courses abroad. The panel thinks this number can be raised. The pilot that actively encouraged prearranged internships was a success. During the site-visit conversations, the Programme Board was committed to working on this issue. The panel, like the programme management, sees the added value of internationalisation and an international classroom, but thinks that this can be emphasised even more and that the professionalisation of teachers in this area can be better supervised and supported by the Faculty.

The student chapter and the panel's discussions with the students showed that the students are particularly satisfied with the expertise, involvement and accessibility of the staff. The panel also witnessed skilled staff with broad expertise. It values the small-scale classroom and intensive supervision the students receive – including the supervision by the study advisors. It proposes that the Programme Board (or Faculty) consider formulating concrete guidelines for teachers and students on time management and expectations when writing the thesis.

Conclusion

Master's programme History: the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'Meets the Standard'

Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings

Assessment plan and system

The programme's assessment policy is based on the overarching assessment framework of the Faculty of Humanities. The assessment plan gives a breakdown of the course-specific learning outcomes and assessment types in each individual course, as well as a detailed overview of how each individual course contributes to the achievement of the ILOs. For each course, the instructors constructively align their assessments to meet the learning outcomes for the programme. All exams are developed using the four-eyes principle: questions and assignments are presented to a fellow lecturer, who assesses the validity and coherence of the exam. Every semester the Board of Examiners (BoE) checks whether the course and programme aims are assessed by the proposed mix of examinations in the courses. The assessment plan ensures proper assessment through a combination of exams, essays, presentations and, of course, the MA thesis.

According to the self-evaluation report, assessment is generally done through class participation, oral presentations of the literature or term papers, small assignments (such as book reviews) and term papers of 6,500–7,500 words. The final grade is the weighted result of two or more grades, conforming to the Faculty's assessment policy, and a final written essay is always a component. The panel agrees that the assessment plan and system follow the principle of constructive alignment, are sound and comply with the standards in the academic domain.

Students always receive feedback on research questions for the term papers, as the instructors decide whether the topic is feasible and suitable considering the course content and objectives. Feedback on presentations is either given in class or after class. The instructors use Blackboard to comment on essays and grade them via Turnitin, a plagiarism checker. The students can subsequently find the comments on their essays or presentations in Blackboard or in the document/paper. There is a standard assessment form for essays which is used by all teaching staff. The students can always elect to discuss the feedback during an individual appointment with the instructor. In some courses a peer review forms part of the assessment. After each course the

students can fill out an evaluation form which always includes a question on the assessment system—whether the assessment method(s) and content are matched with the learning outcomes.

Assessment criteria MA thesis

The thesis has to comply with a set of criteria that apply faculty-wide and which are aligned with the Dublin descriptors. The explicit link with the Dublin descriptors guarantees that the theses comply with the internationally accepted research-focused standards of the programme. The MA thesis is graded by two staff members. The length of the thesis is 16,000–18,000 words—excluding footnotes, bibliography and table of contents. For the assessment of the MA thesis, each assessor (first and second reader) enters comments in the online Thesis Evaluation System. Six aspects are evaluated based on the Dublin descriptors: (1) knowledge and insight, (2) the application of knowledge and insight, (3) reaching conclusions, (4) communication (including language and annotation), (5) learning skills, and (6) formal requirements, including the knock-out criteria specific to the programme.

The programme has introduced a set of so-called 'knock-out criteria' (KOC) for the MA thesis, to help check whether all minimum requirements are met. The KOC are regarded as formal requirements and specify nine focal points for the thesis. According to the self-evaluation report, the MA thesis:

1. Contains a clear, well-argued, and original research question, taking into account the theory and method of the field;
2. Is convincingly situated within theoretical, conceptual, and methodological debates of the specialisation;
3. Accounts for the chosen research method(s);
4. Is based on critical research and interpretation of an independently collected and selected corpus of sources;
5. Contains an analysis and evaluation of a large body of independently collected scholarly literature;
6. Is based upon a well-structured and consistent argument;
7. Is written in correct English (when required) or Dutch, meeting the criteria of the discipline;
8. Displays thorough knowledge and comprehension of the relevant specialisation and its corresponding historiography;
9. Produces an original scholarly argument.

The staff mentioned during the site visit that these criteria can be seen as minimum requirements for quality assurance. The panel explained that, in its considered view, the KOC partly overlap and differ from the ILOs of the programme. Furthermore, the KOC do not appear on the thesis evaluation/assessment form. It therefore believes that the status of the KOC is unclear and causes confusion. It wonders by which set of prerequisites the thesis is assessed—the ILOs, KOC or the criteria on the assessment form? If the KOC were strictly interpreted and executed, poorly written theses should be knocked out on the basis of criterion 7 and failed by the programme. After all, if any one of the nine criteria is not met, this would mean the thesis cannot pass. However, that seems unduly harsh and does not seem to occur in practice. The system does not seem to function as intended and advertised.

The programme management informed the panel that the KOC are intended as a didactic instrument so that students are clearly informed about the basic preconditions which an academic paper must meet. The final assessment of the thesis takes place via the Faculty-wide online thesis assessment system in which the assessment criteria are arranged on the basis of the Dublin Descriptors. The Programme Board agrees with the panel that the KOC only partially overlap with the formal assessment criteria. Moreover, the 'knock-out' formulation implies a 'fail/pass format' that is not in consonance with the assessment scale in the thesis assessment system. The Programme Board has therefore decided that these nine criteria will be removed from the form with effect from the second semester (starting 1 February 2020). The panel welcomes this decision as it brings greater clarity to the assessment process and principles.



Assessment procedure MA thesis

Grading is done through the digital thesis assessment system provided by the Faculty. The supervisor and the second reader independently assess the thesis and propose a grade. The second reader is usually a close colleague from the same specialisation (department) as the supervisor. The supervisor determines who is a suitable second reader and may ask the student for suggestions. The supervisor then approaches the second reader and selects his or her name in the online Thesis Evaluation System. By contrast, in the BA History, an independent second reader is randomly assigned, and when the final (combined) grade is a 6.0, a third reader is involved by default. The programme management states that in the MA programme more specialist knowledge is needed, especially since the final stage of the thesis process includes an oral examination (discussion) about the thesis which requires specialist knowledge by the second reader. After internal deliberation it was therefore decided that a second reader from the discipline preferably is chosen by the first reader in consultation with the student. The programme management believes it is feasible for two subject-specific experts to arrive at a thorough joint assessment. A third reader knows less about the topic and is therefore not regarded as a pivotal player in the assessment procedure. Hence, under this philosophy, a mandatory third reader in case of a minimal pass (grade 6.0) is not invoked. The panel is not fully convinced, however, and deems it desirable to use the same terms and conditions as apply in the BA History because it guarantees a more independent assessment procedure. This view is further reinforced by the modest achievement level of some MA theses (see Standard 4).

The panel is pleased that the Programme Board agrees with its determination to improve the assessment procedure for the MA programme. After deliberation and based on the solid examination process of the BA History, the BoE has decided, with the approval of the History Programme Board, to have theses with the grade 6.0 or 6.5 reviewed by a third assessor (as of 1 January 2020). The third assessor does not grade the thesis, but only assesses whether the thesis meets the pass requirement or not. His or her opinion is decisive and will be added to the joint assessment form. The introduction of a third reader/assessor will also be applied in the event that the assessments of the first and second assessors differ, and they cannot agree on the final assessment (i.e., grade). The BoE will appoint a third independent assessor, and this person will then be asked to make a final assessment—which will be added to the joint form. The panel is pleased that the principle of a third reader is extended to the MA programme as well. It remains concerned, however, with the continuation of the system of choosing two reviewers from the same specialisation.

The assessments are collated in a third form, which both readers and the student receive—this grading report is automatically sent to the administration as well. The final grade is determined by calculating the average of the two proposed grades. If the two grades are too far apart, or the readers disagree, a third reader can be assigned by the BoE. In the past three years this has occurred only incidentally, according to the self-evaluation report. Differences of opinion between the readers are not clear on the third form because the supervisor can edit the final form. The Programme Board explained that it wants to communicate the final grade to the student without showing any preceding discussion. The panel understands the need for clarity, but stresses that when it went through the assessment forms, it was not clear whether the two readers had reached a judgement independently of each other and/or how the final grade was arrived at. The Programme Board agrees that on the third joint form, which goes to the student, it must be made clear in the future how the final assessment of the various assessors came about. The assessment form will therefore be expanded with an additional text box. The panel is pleased with this commitment.

The Programme Board informed the panel that the assessment instruction for the six criteria will be made more explicit in the modified form as well, so that it clarifies how the assessors should interpret the assessment criteria of (1) knowledge and insight; (2) the application of knowledge and insight; (3) reaching conclusions; (4) communication (including language and annotation); (5) learning skills; and (6) formal requirements.

The panel thinks that the current criteria form a solid foundation for a good and clear assessment process. After examining the thesis grading reports, it observed that the assessment forms often provide extensive, detailed feedback and address the essential points. It concluded that on average

the grading is higher than what it believes to be appropriate—especially given the occasional display of strong criticism on the grading form which is then not reflected in the grade awarded. A positive feature that it appreciates is the public defence of the MA thesis, though it wonders why the presentation and defence are not included in the assessment. Inclusion could serve to highlight the acquisition of transferable skills.

The Programme Board promised the panel that in the spring of 2020, it and the BoE will organise a re-calibration session (focusing on procedure and grading) to evaluate assessment practice and, if necessary, synchronise this amongst staff members. The best practices that are discussed and agreed during this session will also be included in the teacher's guide. The panel is pleased that the History Programme Board has taken these steps to improve the safeguarding of the quality, fairness and consistency of its assessment.

Board of Examiners

The BoE is responsible for the BA, MA and Research MA History. It consists of four staff members and an external member with specialist knowledge on assessment. It is supported by an official secretary. It reviews the assessment plan before the start of the academic year. It approves non-standard course changes in students' programmes, internships and individual study projects. It approves thesis supervisors and assesses the quality of examination in the programme (by taking samples each semester), thereby safeguarding the quality of course assessments. Other tasks include handling cases of plagiarism and fraud, as well as verifying and signing the MA diplomas. An annual report of these activities is made available to the Faculty Board.

A sample of courses and thesis assessment forms is checked every year, according to a rotating schedule which ensures that all courses are checked at regular intervals. In addition, the BoE does extra checks according to a theme—high grades, for example. If concerns arise, it invites the relevant instructors to discuss the issues and remedies. It communicates to the teaching staff that all examinations (exams, answer rubrics, the answer sheets of the students, grades) should be fully archived. The Education Administration shows dedication in this task and ensures that the lecturers provide the necessary documents.

It emerged during the site visit that the BoE only samples the theses assessment forms. Members of the examination committee do not evaluate the theses themselves. As a result, the panel concludes that the BoE cannot fully guarantee its statutory responsibilities, namely to 'objectively and expertly determin[e] whether a student meets the conditions set by the education and examination regulations with regard to the knowledge, insight and skills required for obtaining a degree'. In other words, the BoE does not test whether the theses meet the final objectives of the programme. Given its range of functions, it is not only responsible for the procedural side, but also for the substantive side. It can mandate an assessment committee to perform these tasks, but a sample of theses and assessment forms must be reviewed on a regular basis—and it has the final responsibility. The Programme Board has promised that the BoE will intensify the random checking process. Both theses and assessment forms will be tested every year from 1 January 2020 by means of a sample of at least 10 percent. The panel very much welcomes this response.

The programme management attaches great importance to assessment by two teachers from the same MA specialisation. It is of the opinion that two staff members with subject-specific knowledge are better able to assess a MA thesis. However, the Programme Board accepts that the composition of 'assessment couples' could be better monitored by the BoE. Therefore, from 1 January 2020, the students must complete a digital form prior to assessment, by which the BoE is informed regarding the choice of the first and second reader by the supervisor in consultation with the student. The BoE can intervene if too many permanent assessment couples are formed. Also, monitoring might generate a preventive effect on the formation of fixed assessment couples.

The panel mentioned that the BoE can perhaps exchange best practices with the BoE of the MA programme International Relations (MAIR). This plan was well received by the History Programme Board, and a meeting between these BoEs will take place in the spring of 2020. Furthermore, the



BoE plans to draw up an assessment feedback protocol so that the culture of assessment becomes clearer (in consultation with the Programme Board). Also, the Programme Committee has been asked to contact the BoE when educational evaluations show dissatisfaction with the assessment of a certain course. The panel agrees with these proposed measures.

Workload BoE

The panel, Programme Board and Faculty Board all agreed that a higher compensation for BoE duties (in time or funding) is desirable. At the Faculty level, various initiatives are being designed to make the workload more manageable. For example, the Faculty has developed a guideline for the time requirements for chairs and members of Programme Boards, Boards of Examiners and Programme Committees, which the institutes have translated into time allocations for the chairmanship and membership of the aforementioned bodies.

A working group has issued a recommendation to the Faculty Board pertaining to the development of further guidelines for the structure of educational programmes. Finally, the Faculty is working on organising administrative obligations more efficiently and relieving academic staff. The panel approves of these initiatives and underscores the necessity of appropriate support given the critical legal position and responsibilities that a BoE bears. The Programme Board informed the panel that the chair of the BoE will be more fairly compensated for his/her administrative duties from 1 February 2020 in accordance with the Faculty standard. Agreements have been achieved between the Faculty Board and the Institute for History. There is an ongoing dialogue between the Faculty Board and the Institute for History for additional compensation for other BoE members as of 1 September 2020. The panel is pleased with these improvements.

Considerations

The panel concludes that the assessment plan and system are basically sound and comply with the standards current in the academic domain. Based on its findings regarding the thesis assessment procedure and practice and after conversations with the BoE during the site visit, it agrees that important steps have been taken to improve the assurance of student assessment.

The panel understands that the knock-out criteria can serve as a didactic instrument to inform the students about the basic preconditions that an academic paper must meet. However, it welcomes the removal of the criteria from the assessment form as they do not fully and easily align with the ILOs. At the same time, it is satisfied that the assessment form will be expanded with an additional text box providing a better explanation to the student as to how the final assessment of the various assessors is arrived at. It wishes to express its strong support for the programme and staff in the pursuit of its goal to be as clear as possible about thesis standards.

Regarding the introduction of a third reader, the panel welcomes that an extra assessor is now appointed when a final grade is between 6.0 and 6.5. It is of the opinion that the overall quality of the MA theses will benefit from this mechanism. If this procedure increases the workload significantly in the near future, a possibility would be to organise an extra calibration session with all thesis assessors at least once a year. Calibration sessions and exchanges of best practices are vital elements in the monitoring of shared standards.

The panel would prefer that the second reader is affiliated with a different department and assigned independently—either by the BoE or a mandated assessment committee—as is the case for the BA History. It nonetheless understands and respects that the programme has a different opinion on this issue. It advises that with respect to international tracks (i.e., the *Europaeum*), the programme needs to 'stay on the ball' with assessors from foreign/partner universities since the assessment standards might differ, and communications might be more cumbersome.

The panel warmly welcomes the fact that both theses and assessment forms will be read by the BoE as part of a random checking process. It is an important change which helps ensure the fair marking

of marginal theses in future. The panel suggests that a targeted check can be performed in two years' time focused on theses that have received a 6.0 as their final grade.

Furthermore, the panel advises the Faculty to give the members of the BoE sufficient time and resources to perform their legal responsibilities and to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to the professionalisation of BoE members. The Faculty should also better ensure that its assessment policy is implemented and executed by the various examination committees.

Overall, the panel is very pleased with the constructive response from the Programme Board to its recommendations for the MA History programme and that important changes have already been implemented and further ones committed to. It is optimistic about the functioning of the assessment mechanisms in the future. The confirmation that the History BoE will exchange best practices with the BoE of the MA programme International Relations (MAIR) further reinforces this expectation.

Conclusion

Master's programme History: 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

Theses

On examining a selection of 15 MA theses, the panel judged two theses a fail—though these works received a pass from the Leiden assessors. If one panel member judges a thesis a fail, then a second panel member also evaluates the thesis. In this case, both theses were thus scrutinised, and the fails were independently confirmed. The panel then expanded the thesis selection with a further four theses, and again found one thesis of insufficient quality to merit a pass at MA level.

The self-evaluation states that the programme ensures that the maximum number of words allowed for an MA thesis is maintained. In practice, several works read by the panel exceeded the standard. The panel also sometimes witnessed a discrepancy between the grade and the written feedback on the assessment form, with the feedback suggesting a lower mark than was awarded. Although generally slightly too high, the grading reflected the differences in quality between the theses.

The theses of sufficient quality often identified an original subject or set of sources and were generally strong in their source analysis. The panel noted that it saw theses with excellent topics and critical analysis, but the scope of the research question and/or the available source material at times led to problems with the structure and depth. A good number of theses were overly descriptive and focused on the source material. There was a tendency to pay limited attention to historiography. This suggests that the ability to reflect critically on the relevance and importance of a chosen topic poses a challenge that merits some further attention in the curriculum and thesis supervision process. A greater focus on developing a solid historiographic framework in particular could address these shortcomings. The panel also noted that the level of English was sometimes weak, and historiographical and bibliographical references were not always appropriate.

The panel looked for underlying structural causes for the relatively high percentage of weak theses. It concluded that the organisational mechanisms with regards to thesis assessment did not function optimally in adequately safeguarding assessment. The Programme Board has taken adequate action after receiving recommendations from the panel regarding reducing the confusion of different sets of assessment criteria and strengthening the oversight and assurance function of the BoE (see under Standard 3). The panel concludes that these proposals and planned curriculum changes (see under Standard 2) will be sufficient to effectively address the issues surrounding marginal passes as well as raise the overall quality of MA theses.



Alumni and professional field

The Programme Board intends to intensify its relationship with its alumni and will ask for regular advice regarding the career opportunities and demands. One of the ideas for permanent involvement is the establishment of a board of alumni advisors who would help to pinpoint challenges and opportunities for academic historians entering the labour market. The alumni mentioned during the site visit that they had not been approached before by the programme to share their experiences with current History students or the Programme Board. Activities involving alumni are frequently organised, however, mainly by the Leiden University Fund (LUF) and the alumni committee of the student association (HSVL).

An investigation from 2016 into the labour market of MA alumni in the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University was referred to in the self-evaluation report. It showed that 92 percent of the alumni with a master's degree in History found a job at the vocational (HBO) or academic level (WO) within six months, and 74 percent found a job at these levels within two months. According to the investigators, the analytical skills of graduates in particular are highly valued by employers. Graduates find employment in a variety of sectors and professions, and historians do relatively well compared to other Humanities graduates. The three main sectors of employment include government, education and research (each accounts for 15 to 20 percent), followed by journalism, industry, ICT, non-profit (NGO), consultancy (5 to 10 percent each).

The alumni present at the visit held jobs as privacy officer, archivist, civil servant and researcher. Skills they developed as students included an ability to put questions into a broader perspective and an objective approach. A further skill that was highly prized was the ability to distinguish main from side issues. To make History graduates more aware of their useful academic skills, a booklet was produced in 2019 with job examples and testimonials from alumni. Five areas of skills development were identified, all in line with the above-mentioned sectors in which graduates find employment: (1) writing and reporting, (2) analysis and research, (3) governance and administration, (4) presenting and interviewing, and (5) documenting and archiving.

The alumni enjoyed their time in Leiden. They were pleased with the MA programme, and all stressed the importance of extracurricular activities as a conduit to finding a suitable job. This signal has reached the programme management, as it seeks to provide increasing amounts of information on the job market and prospects. It more actively advocates internships and takes part in initiatives at the Faculty level. Overall, the graduates felt well prepared and were well aware of the fact that possibilities on the labour market depend on economic trends as well.

Considerations

Based on the sample of theses and the information from alumni, the panel concluded that the graduates achieve the ILOs. It judged that the quality of a total of 19 theses examined varied, and that three of them were not of a desired MA level. It also noted that the grades tended to be on the high side. However, it also saw impressive examples of original research and a keen academic attitude.

The panel agreed that improvements can be made in the attention paid to critical reflection on the scholarly (theoretical) literature and the methods that students apply to their thesis research. By implementing the intended curriculum changes (Standard 2), and by taking the recommendations on the functioning of the BoE and assessment mechanisms to heart (Standard 3), it is confident that the issues regarding marginal theses will be addressed and also the general standard of theses and their assessment will be lifted.

The alumni are satisfied with the programme as a preparation for their further career, and statistics show that the graduates successfully find their way into the professional field.

Conclusion

Master's programme History: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'Meets the Standard'.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The panel assesses Standard 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the master's programme History as 'Meets the standard'. According to the decision rules of NVAO's Framework for limited programme assessments 2018, the panel assesses the master's programme History as 'Positive'.

Conclusion

The panel assesses the *Master's programme History* as 'Positive'

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Graduates of the programme have attained the following learning outcomes, listed according to the Dublin descriptors (demonstrated knowledge, ability to apply knowledge, formulate judgements based on information, ability to communicate conclusions, apply learning skills).

These learning outcomes can also be communicated through the Dutch Qualification Framework NLQF Level 7 (which is linked to the EQF: European Qualification Framework). NLQF level 7 addresses (1) Context, (2) Knowledge, (3) Skills (knowledge application and problem-solving, learning and development, information, communication, responsibility and autonomy).

I. Knowledge

1. Thorough knowledge and comprehension of one of the specialisations or subtracks as well as of the historiography of the specialisation, focusing particularly on the following:

- in the specialisation Ancient History: unification processes in the Graeco-Roman World, 400 BC – 400 AD; insight into the recent large-scale debates in the field with respect to both the history of mentality and socio-economic history;
- in the specialisation Colonial and Global History: how global (political, socio-economic, and cultural) connections interact with regional processes of identity and state formation; hence insight in cross-cultural processes (including the infrastructure of shipping and other modes of communication) that affect regions across the world such as imperialism, colonisation, islamisation, modernisation and globalisation (in particular during the period 1200-1940);
- in the subtrack Maritime History also: the development of maritime history from the 16th century onwards; insight into recent issues in the field;
- in the specialisation Europe 1000-1800: broader processes of political, social and cultural identity formation between about 1000-1800; awareness of problems of periodisation and impact of 'national' historiographical traditions on the field;
- in the specialisation Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence: the manner in which migrations (of people, goods and ideas) between and within states have led to shifts (in cohesion, ethnic composition, policies, imaging, culture, and power relations) in the period 1600-2000, with a focus on (urban) networks (within and across borders);
- in the subtrack Economic History also: the origin and outcomes of the Great Divergence, developments in political economy since ca 1600, increasing global interdependence throughout the centuries, the development of global governance in the twentieth century, as well as the most important debates in recent Economic History;
- in the subtrack Governance of Migration and Diversity also: how forms of durable inequality according to ethnicity, gender, class and religion intertwine in the period from 1945 onwards, with a focus on how authorities (national, supra-national, and non-governmental) try to govern on multiple levels issues of 1) migration and 2) diversity;
- in the specialisation Political Culture and National Identities: political practices, symbols and perceptions, nationalism, and national identities in a cultural and societal context from 1800;
- in the subtrack Political Debate also: political debates and debating styles in the Netherlands and abroad, both from a historical and a current perspective;
- in the specialisation Archival Studies: archiving in a colonial context; insight into the significance of archiving processes for the way in which a society deals with its documentation heritage in general and its historical practice in particular; disclosure, including digital disclosure, of archives as part of the broader heritage sector;
- in the specialisation Europaeum Programme European History and Civilisation: Leiden-Oxford-Paris programme: state formation in Europe; European identity from a comparative perspective; the development of culture and society in Europe;

2. Thorough knowledge and comprehension of the theoretical, conceptual and methodological aspects of the specialisation or subtrack in question, with a particular focus on the following:



- in the specialisation Ancient History: the comparative method; application of socio-scientific methods; specialised source knowledge, in particular of documentary sources, and more specifically epigraphy;
- in the specialisation Colonial and Global History: empirical research from a comparative and connective perspective;
- in the subtrack Maritime History also: comparative research; archive research;
- in the specialisation Europe 1000-1800: the ability to analyse and evaluate primary sources from the period, if necessary with the aid of modern translations; ability to make use of relevant methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis to interpret sources in their textual and historical context;
- in the specialisation Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence, including the subtrack Governance of Migration and Diversity: the interdisciplinary approach (application of theories and methods from social sciences), the comparative perspective (diachronic and synchronic) and working with a large variety of primary sources;
- in the subtrack Economic History also: the application of economic concepts, research methods or models; insight into the argumentation of current debates;
- in the specialisation Political Culture and National Identities: international comparison and transfer; the analysis of the specific perspectives of secondary studies; a cultural-historical approach of politics and a political-historical approach of culture;
- in the subtrack Political Debate also: historical and interdisciplinary analysis of political argumentation and rhetoric;
- in the specialisation Archival Studies: theoretical foundations of archivistics; assessment and selection of archives;
- in the specialisation Europaeum Programme European History and Civilisation: Leiden-Oxford-Paris programme: international comparison; archive research; the perspective of three different traditions – Leiden, Sorbonne and Oxford.

II. Skills

Graduates of this programme will have reached the following academic skills at a level that builds on and exceeds the level reached in their previous education:

1. The ability to independently identify and select secondary literature, using traditional and modern techniques;
2. The ability to independently identify and select primary sources, using traditional and modern techniques;
3. The ability to analyse and evaluate a corpus of sources with a view to addressing a particular historical problem;
4. The ability to analyse and evaluate literature with a view to addressing a particular historical problem;
5. The ability to independently formulate a clear and well-argued research question, taking into account the theory and method of the field and to reduce this question to accessible and manageable sub-questions;
6. The ability to independently set up and carry out an original research project that can make a contribution to existing scholarly debates;
7. The ability to give a clear and well-founded oral and written report on research results in correct English, when required, or Dutch, meeting the criteria of the discipline;
8. The ability to participate in current debates in the specialisation;
9. The ability to apply knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to the field of study.

III. Academic attitude

Graduates of this programme will have reached the following:

1. The ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, including the ability to reflect on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of knowledge and judgments;

2. The ability to reflect on one's own professional integrity and moral conduct;
3. The ability to provide constructive feedback to and formulate criticism of the work of others and the ability to evaluate the value of such criticism and feedback on one's own work and incorporate it;
4. Understanding of the relevance for society of the historical discipline in general and the specialisation in particular.

APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

	EC	Level ²⁹	Ancient History	Archival Studies	CMGI	Colonial and Global History	Europaem	Europe 1000-1800	PCNI
Core courses									
MA Thesis Seminar		600	x	x	x	x		x	x
MA Thesis History & Final Exam	20	600	x	x	x	x		x	x
Optional Courses (MA History)	10	≥400	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Research Seminar within department of History	10	500	x	x	x	x		x	x
Ancient History									
Choose a Literature Seminar: The Emperor in the Roman World or The unification of the Mediterranean	10	400	x						
Choose two Research Seminars: The Last Pagan; Diversities of doing Greek; 'Everyone will fear you'	2x10	500	x						
Archival Studies									
Understanding the Archives	10	400		x					
An archival VOC mentality?	10	500		x					
Decolonizing orientalism, religion and heritage practices in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia	10	500		x					
Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence									
Literature Seminar: Migration and Integration	10	400			x				
(subtrack Economic History) Essential Readings in Economic History	10	400		x					
Choose two Research Seminars: Deep Rivers; You Are What You Eat; From Dawn to Sunset; The Business of Empire; Rebels with a cause; Connecting Dreams; History of Migration and Diversity; The power of multinationals	2x10				x				

(subtrack Governance of Migration and Diversity) History of Migration and Diversity	500			x					
Colonial and Global History									
Choose a Literature Seminar: Navigating History; Circulation of People, Commodities and Ideas in the Indian Ocean World; Decentering Global History	10	400				x			
Choose two Research Seminars: An archival VOC mentality?; The Business of Empire; From Dawn to Sunset; Maritime Treasures; Negotiating Power in Africa; You Are What You Eat; Asian Events in Early Modern European Sources; Connecting Dreams; The Decolonization War in Indonesia; Culture and Conquest; Decolonizing orientalism, religion and heritage practices in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia	2x10	500				x			
Europaem Programme									
Europaem – Historiography	5	500					x		
Introduction to the History of States and Nations in Europe	5	500					x		
20 EC courses in Paris, 20 EC MA Thesis in Oxford	40						x		
Europe 1000-1800									
Choose a Literature Seminar: Current Debates in Medieval and Early Modern History I/II	10	400						x	
Choose two Research Seminars: Dynasties in the Medieval and Early Modern World; Maritime Conflict Management around Europe; The Hague; Building (or Breaking) Political Trust	10	500						x	
Politics, Culture and National Identities, 1789 to the Present									
Politics, Culture and National Identities, 1789 to the present	10	400							x
(subtrack Political Debate) Politiek Debat	400							x	
Choose two Research Seminars: Social Movements, Protest and Political Change; Global Perspectives on Neoliberalism; Political Eloquence; The United States and Human Rights; NATO, The Netherlands and the Cold War; The Russian Revolution Revisited; Fighting Epidemics Together; Constructing National Cultures; Music, Politics and History; Life Writing as Political History	2x10	500							x
(subtrack Political Debate) Rhetorical Fireworks	10	500						x	

APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

Location: Faculty Club, Leiden University

Day 1 – 17 October 2019

08.30 – 08.45 Welcome
08.45 – 10.00 Document study and ‘open spreekuur’
10.00 – 10.45 Board History
10.45 – 11.00 Break
11.00 – 11.45 Students History (BA+MA)
11.45 – 12.30 Staff History (BA+MA)
12.30 – 13.15 Lunch Break
13.15 – 14.00 Board International Relations
14.00 – 14.45 Students International Relations
14.45 – 15.00 Break
15.00 – 15.45 Staff members International Relations
15.45 – 17.30 Deliberations, documentation review
17.30 – 18.00 Alumni History and International Relations

Day 2 – 18 October 2019

08.30 – 10.00 Arrival and preparation
10.00 – 10.45 Board of Examiners History
10.45 – 11.00 Break
11.00 – 11.45 Board of Examiners International Relations
11.45 – 12.30 Deliberation
12.30 – 13.00 Lunch
13.00 – 14.00 Final discussion with programme and faculty management
14.00 – 14.15 Break
14.15 – 15.45 Deliberations
15.45 – 16.30 Development Dialogue (two parallel sessions)
16.00 – 17.00 Presentation Findings

APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the master's programme History. Information on the selected theses is available from QANU upon request.

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

- Programme metrics (*Opleidingskaart*)
- Course and Examination Regulations of Master's programme: History (2018-2019)
- Course and Examination Regulations MA Humanities
- Assessment plans
- Assessment forms MA theses
- Thesis evaluations
- Rules and Regulations of the Board of Examiners
- Onderwijsvisie: Learning@LeidenUniversity
- Vision on Teaching & Learning@LeidenUniversity
- Expertisecentrum Online Leren *Evaluatierapport*
- Visitation folder:
 - Course material and course descriptions
 - Annual reports MA History 2015-2018
 - Annual reports Board of Examiners 2015-2018
 - Minutes Programme Committee 2015-2018
 - Factsheets Nationale Studenten Enquête 2018
 - ICLON course evaluations
 - ICLON programme evaluations 2019
- Manuals:
 - Guide to Teaching Quality Assurance
 - 'Tips for Tests'
 - Manual for Board of Examiners
 - Quality Assurance of Assessment
 - Manual for Programme Committees
- Brochures:
 - 'Oriëntatie op de arbeidsmarkt voor studenten Geschiedenis'
 - *Transferable skills at the Faculty of Humanities*
 - *Your Future – From university to a career*
 - *Humanities Master's Buddy Programme*
- Books:
 - Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History*
 - Wim van Meurs (et al.), *The Unfinished History of European Integration*
 - Chris Hart, *Doing a Literature Review*
- Online:
 - E-Studiegids
 - Blackboard
 - Website study association HSVL
 - Youtube promo Universiteit Leiden
- Additional material:
 - Student magazine *Déjà Vu*
 - Yearbook HSVL

