

Bachelor Religiewetenschappen
Master Religious Studies
Leiden University

Assessment report
9 december 2025



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1. SUMMARY

This report describes the programme assessment of the bachelor's programme Religiewetenschappen (Religious Studies) and the master's programme Religious Studies, offered by Leiden University.

Standard 1 Intended learning outcomes

The panel praises the programmes for their academic offerings that provide students with a rich, multidisciplinary, and globally informed education in the study of religion. Both programmes exemplify a dedicated pursuit of excellence in Religious Studies education, preparing students to thoughtfully engage with complex religious phenomena and to contribute meaningfully to a wide range of societal and scholarly contexts. The BA programme impressively lays a broad and comparative foundation, nurturing students' critical, empathetic, and analytical capacities through diverse disciplinary perspectives and a strong emphasis on lived religion and contextual understanding. Building thoughtfully on this foundation, the MA programme elevates students' expertise with advanced theoretical and methodological training, fostering intellectual independence and specialized inquiry that prepares graduates for both academic advancement and impactful professional roles. The programmes' clear alignment with national and international frameworks underscores their academic relevance.

The panel recommends the programmes to consider the establishment of an external advisory board involving representatives from the professional field, which can be consulted to refine the programmes' profile and reformulate the intended learning outcomes. For the MA programme, the panel advises to provide clearer guidance and structure around the tracks, and to explore the creation of one distinctive track, combining the university's strengths: area studies and proximity to the Hague.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that the programmes **meet standard 1: Intended learning outcomes**.

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

The panel appreciates the BA programme's thoughtful design of its curriculum and learning lines, which not only cover relevant content but also integrate methods and societal applicability. The Practicing Religious Studies course is seen as a particularly strong element that provides students with real-life experience and strengthens their connection to the professional field. Regarding the MA programme, the panel positively highlights the opportunity for students to specialize, which enriches the educational experience by allowing students to focus on their individual interests and strengths. The interdisciplinary approach and the inclusion of career orientation contribute to a well-rounded learning trajectory. For

both programmes, the panel welcomes the increasing integration of internships to strengthen the connection between academic knowledge and professional practice.

The panel values the small-scale, safe, supportive and student-centered learning environment of both programmes, with important roles for the study advisor, lecturers and supervisors. The learning environment encourages students' creativity and ownership of their learning process. The quality and engagement of the teaching staff, and the fit between teaching staff expertise and curriculum content, are strong points of both programmes. The panel advises ongoing attention to staff workload.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that the programmes **meet standard 2: Teaching-learning environment**.

Standard 3: Student assessment

The panel appreciates the programmes' assessment system for being valid, reliable, transparent, and aligned with the intended learning outcomes. The panel commends the clarity and explicit linking of final qualifications to the assessment criteria at the course level. The systematic use of varied assessment forms respects diverse learning styles and fosters meaningful engagement with the learning material. The feedback practices and standardized procedures contribute positively to the assessment culture, supporting student learning and maintaining quality. The use of dual assessors and standardized thesis forms are strong points that contribute to consistency and fairness in grading practices.

The active involvement of the Board of Examiners supports the programmes in maintaining high standards of academic integrity. The (future) actions with regard to the incorporation of AI in the system of assessment are encouraging; the panel recommends to go on with the integration of AI into the programmes and to include student perspectives while doing so. The panel suggests to intensify the calibration sessions in order to further improve assessment consistency.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that the programmes **meet standard 3: Student assessment**.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The panel appreciates the quality and rigor of the reviewed theses, combined with positive graduate outcomes in further education and diverse professional fields. They provide evidence of the students' achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the programmes' success in preparing their students for academic and professional careers. It pleases the panel to see that the BA programme effectively equips students with the necessary competencies to not only complete their studies but also to engage successfully in further academic pursuits, while the MA programme succeeds in developing

academic skills that align well with the expectations of postgraduate education and the professional field. The timely success of master graduates in securing employment or continuing their education is seen as another indicator of the programme's effectiveness. The panel advises continuous attention to methodological substantiation in the theses and to the inclusion of positionality reflections.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that the programmes **meet standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes**.

Evaluating this, the panel reaches the advice 'positive' to the NVAO for the accreditation of the bachelor's programme Religiewetenschappen (Religious Studies) and the master's programme Religious Studies at Leiden University.

The chair and secretary of the panel hereby declare that all members of the panel have considered this report and agree with the judgements recorded in the report. They confirm that the assessment was carried out in accordance with the requirements regarding independence.

Utrecht, December 2025

Dr. Kim Knibbe
(Chair)

Dr. Rik Ligthart
(Secretary)

2. INTRODUCTION

Procedure

Leiden University has appointed Odion Onderzoek to coordinate the external quality assessment of the bachelor's programme Religiewetenschappen (Religious Studies) and the master's programme Religious Studies. This assessment was conducted in the context of the accreditation of a cluster of programmes: WO "Religie en Theologie". The cluster consists of 23 programmes offered by eight different institutes: Radboud University, the University of Groningen, Tilburg University, Theological University of Apeldoorn, Utrecht University, University of Amsterdam, Leiden University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Laura van Beek MSc and drs. Marjolein Boessenkool served as cluster coordinator on behalf of Odion Onderzoek.

The assessment was conducted in accordance with the procedures and standards of the NVAO's "Assessment Framework for the Accreditation System of Higher Education in the Netherlands" (Government Gazette 2024, no. 6405). The programmes within the religion and theology cluster are existing programmes, and seven institutions involved hold a positive institutional audit decision on quality assurance. The Theological University of Apeldoorn does not hold a positive institutional audit decision on quality assurance; here, the extended NVAO assessment framework with six standards has been implemented.

In consultation with the programmes, Odion Onderzoek composed a panel of peers (assessment panel) to carry out the assessment of the two programmes at Leiden University:

- Dr. Kim Knibbe (chair), UHD Sociologie en Antropologie van Religie, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen;
- Prof. Dr. Umar Ryad (member), KU Leuven, hoogleraar Arabistiek en Islamkunde
- Dr. Maria Vliek (member), Sira consulting, senior project manager beleidsevaluatie;
- Annebet van Rijn (student-member), Universiteit Utrecht masterstudent Religie en Samenleving.

The panel was supported by dr. Rik Ligthart, as both process coordinator and secretary. He has appropriate experience as NVAO-certified secretary. The NVAO reviewed the accountability form concerning the composition of the panel and concluded that the panel met the required expertise criteria. In addition, the panel members, the institution, and the secretary submitted written declarations confirming that the panel and secretary would carry out their tasks independently. On 29 September 2025 the NVAO approved the proposed panel composition.

Prior to the assessment process, the panel chair completed a training course on the NVAO's "Assessment Framework for the Accreditation System of Higher Education in the Netherlands" (2024). The cluster coordinators and secretary of the first site visit discussed the standards, procedures, and responsibilities

with the chair in accordance with the “Profile of the Chair” (NVAO, 2016) and the guidelines provided in the NVAO training course “Train the Chair”. The other panel members received instructions during a cluster-wide kick-off meeting, where the cluster coordinators and chair informed them about the content and purpose of the assessment framework, as well as the procedure, intended attitude, working methods, and timeline within the cluster.

Prior to the site visit, the programmes submitted a list of recent graduates for each programme to the secretary. In consultation with the secretary, the panel chair selected fifteen final projects per programme, taking into account a spread of final grades, assessors, and programme variants. The panel reviewed the selected final projects and accompanying assessment forms, as well as the self-evaluation reports of the programmes. The panel assessed the final projects in accordance with the NVAO guidelines for the review of final projects (Implementation Regulations, September 2025). An overview of the reviewed materials, including the selected theses, is provided in addendum 5.

After studying the documentation, the panel members formulated their initial impressions and shared these with the secretary. The secretary compiled the input and distributed the compilation to the full panel. During a preparatory meeting on 3 October 2025, the panel discussed these impressions and identified key topics to address during the site visit. Faculty and students of the programmes were informed in advance by the faculty about the opportunity to speak with the panel in confidence. Interested participants could register with the secretary. A week prior to the site visit, an open consultation hour was scheduled for registered participants. No responses were received whereby the open consultation hour was cancelled.

The panel visited Leiden University on 14 October 2025. The draft site visit programme, including representative interviewees, was submitted by the programmes to the chair and the secretary for approval. Further information about the visit schedule is provided in addendum 4. At the end of the site visit, the panel formed its independent judgement on the programmes, based on the four standards of the NVAO’s assessment framework for the accreditation of existing programmes (2024). The chair presented the panel’s main conclusions in a public oral feedback session. The development dialogue took place during the site visit. The secretary wrote the report of this session. It was approved by the panel chair.

This final report provides a systematic account of the panel’s findings, considerations, and conclusions. After the site visit, the secretary drafted a preliminary version of the report and submitted it to the panel members for feedback. Based on their comments, the report was revised in consultation with the chair. The draft report was then sent to Leiden University for a check of factual inaccuracies. After processing any corrections, the report was finalized and approved by the chair.

Institute

The programmes are offered by Leiden University, the oldest university in the Netherlands, founded in 1575, with seven faculties and campuses in Leiden and The Hague. The university has approximately 34,000 students and 6,400 staff members, offers 48 bachelor's and 83 master's programmes, and aims to be a leading international research university. The bachelor Religiewetenschappen and the master Religious Studies are part of the Faculty of Humanities, which oversees their academic quality and development. The Faculty of Humanities is committed to maintaining high educational standards and fostering interdisciplinary research and teaching, as reflected in the structure and staffing of these programmes. It consists of several institutes, such as the Institute for Area Studies, the Institute for History, and the Institute for Philosophy. The bachelor and the master are part of the Institute for Area Studies and situated within the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Religion (LUCSoR).

Programmes

The bachelor's (BA) programme in Religious Studies offers a broad, comparative foundation in the academic study of religion, emphasizing both historical and contemporary manifestations across a wide range of religions. Students are prepared for admission to master's programmes and for professional roles requiring expertise in religious studies, such as education, policy work, and journalism. The master's (MA) programme in Religious Studies builds upon the bachelor's broad foundation by offering advanced, multidisciplinary training focused on analytical tools, theories, and methods in the study of religion. The programme emphasizes intellectual autonomy, scholarly communication, collaborative skills, and prepares students for either further academic careers or professional contexts requiring expertise in religious studies. It offers three specialisations, also referred to as tracks: 1) Religion, Politics, and Governance; 2) Religion, History, and Society; and 3) Religion and Area Studies. These specialisations provide students with a more specific area of focus and are integrated with staff research expertise.

Both programmes have a fulltime and parttime variant, which are identical in content and learning lines. Findings and considerations in this report apply to both variants, unless specifically stated otherwise. The administrative information of the programmes and university is incorporated in addendum 1.

Developments since the last accreditation

The last accreditation of the BA and MA programme at Leiden University took place in 2019, where the programmes received a positive assessment. The assessment report for the BA programme contains several recommendations from that assessment panel, focused on: emphasizing different disciplinary perspectives on religion more clearly in the learning outcomes (standard 1), communicating learning lines more clearly to students (standard 2), monitoring the application of the testing policy, including the four-eyes principle (standard 3) and including a methodology section in bachelor theses where students explicitly demonstrate application of methodological knowledge (standard 4). The recommendations in

the assessment report for the MA programme include among others: ensuring students retain the opportunity to design their own study trajectory despite the new curriculum structure (standard 1), continuing the careful monitoring of the testing policy application (standard 3), and strengthening the methodological reflection and accountability in final projects (standard 4).

The current panel investigated how the programmes have implemented these recommendations and discussed this during the site visit. The panel assesses that all recommendations are implemented adequately and the programmes thus initiated a positive development. This will be discussed further under the related standards.

3. PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings and considerations

Vision of the programmes

The BA Religious Studies offers a broad, comparative, and multidisciplinary foundation in the academic study of religion. The programme emphasizes a comprehensive understanding of a wide range of religious traditions – ancient and modern, institutional and non-institutional – with a global outlook that includes particular attention to the role of religion in Dutch society. It equips students to approach religion through humanities and social sciences lenses such as history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, and international relations. Students are trained to acquire independent research skills in description, analysis, reflection, problem-solving, and communication of research findings. The programme is situated within the Institute for Area Studies, which accentuates the contextual and spatial dimensions of religion, encouraging students to consider religion within diverse cultural, political, historical, and geographic frameworks. It stresses the importance of studying lived religion, i.e. how religions are experienced and practiced in everyday life.

The vision of the BA programme supports an interdisciplinary and reflective approach, where students are trained to be hermeneutically open and critically engaged, able to empathize with religious communities. The programme aims to prepare students for a diverse array of academic and professional opportunities where skills such as analytical thinking, cultural awareness, and communication are essential.

The master Religious Studies builds on the broad generalist foundation provided by the BA programme, advancing students' knowledge and research skills to a higher level of academic independence and specialization. The MA programme equips students to work with complex, real-world religious phenomena by deepening their understanding of advanced theoretical debates, methodologies, and empirical research techniques. It is designed with a distinctly global and interdisciplinary orientation, focusing on the dynamic interplay between religion and processes such as globalization, modernity, and migration. The programme offers three specialisations: Religion, Politics and Governance; Religion, History, and Society; and Religion and Area Studies. These specialisations allow students to tailor their studies according to specific research interests and staff expertise. For each specialisation, the same intended learning outcomes apply. Based on the chosen specialisation, students concentrate on the relationship between religion and history and society, on the relationship between politics and governance, or on particular regional settings.

The MA programme aims to foster intellectual autonomy, original inquiry, and critical reflection on both academic and professional levels. It encourages students to engage with religion in broader cultural and historical contexts, aiming to develop advanced research capabilities and prepare graduates for demanding roles in academia, policy, education, journalism, or other professional fields requiring cultural and analytical expertise.

Based on the documentation and the conversations during the site visit, the panel finds that the BA programme offers a broad and diverse foundation in religious studies, such as African religions (Yoruba), Zoroastrianism, Judaism in Central Europe, Islam in Indonesia, and East Asian religions, as well as special chairs in Tolerance and the Enlightenment. This diversity ensures that students are exposed to a wide range of debates within religious studies and have the space to explore their specific interests within the field. The BA programme displays, according to the panel, a strong interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary character, integrating methodologies from both the humanities (history, philosophy, literature, arts) and social sciences (sociology, anthropology, psychology).

For the MA programme, the panel finds that there is a strong international orientation, addressing global themes such as globalization, migration, and colonialism, which meets international field requirements. The three specializations have a strong interdisciplinary character and offer broad comparative perspectives. The possibility for students to specialize allows focus on topics of interest and the incorporation of interdisciplinary education. While students of the MA programme appreciate the flexibility and freedom to design personalized research projects and curricula, this openness sometimes results in students feeling that the specialisations function more as formalities rather than clearly defined pathways. Consequently, students may experience difficulty in identifying a core message within their chosen track. To address this issue, the panel suggests providing clearer guidance and structure around the tracks. This could include more explicit communication about the content and objectives of each specialisation, ensuring that elective courses within each track are more tightly integrated. Also, the panel encourages the MA programme to explore the creation of one nationally distinctive MA programme, replacing the current specializations, combining Leiden's strengths: area studies and proximity to the Hague (e.g., Religion and diplomacy). The panel considers the Hague to be a city with abundant opportunities for collaboration with international organizations, NGOs, and government institutions.

Intended learning outcomes

The intended learning outcomes of the BA programme reflect broad disciplinary knowledge and methodological skills, emphasizing knowledge of a wide array of religions, research methods, societal changes, and academic skills such as analysis, reflection, and communication. The intended learning outcomes of the MA programme include in-depth knowledge of academic debates, application of complex research methods, scholarly judgment, communication skills, and ethical reflection. Both programmes align their intended learning outcomes with the Dublin descriptors and with the domain-

specific reference framework (DSRK), which establishes qualification standards that all students in Religious Studies in the Netherlands are expected to meet. The DSRK is drawn up and regularly updated by academics and researchers within the field. It serves as a national benchmark that guides the design of intended learning outcomes, ensuring that graduates acquire a broad and methodologically sound understanding of religion, both historically and in contemporary society, along with critical analytical and communication skills. The intended learning outcomes of both programmes are described in addendum 2.

The panel finds that the intended learning outcomes of the BA programme are concrete and focus on content knowledge, methodological skills, and societal applicability. The MA programme, in addition, emphasizes specialization and advanced academic skills, distinguishing it clearly from the bachelor level. The learning outcomes of both programmes are well-aligned with the Dublin descriptors, reflecting the bachelor and master level. Their connection to the domain-specific reference framework ensures proper alignment with the field of religious studies. The learning outcomes' emphasis on research skills and strong theoretical foundation reflect the academic orientation of the programmes. Following the 2019 visitation and based on one of the panel's recommendations, the intended learning outcomes of the MA programme were revised after careful consideration and consultations with staff and students, to reflect the programme's more global orientation. The panel endorses these alterations.

While the programmes have improved their alignment with the professional field (see Standard 2), the panel finds that the professional field is not directly involved in formulating or adapting the intended learning outcomes of the programmes. The panel recommends to enhance the alignment of learning outcomes with the professional field to strengthen the relevance and applicability of the programmes. This could be achieved by establishing an external advisory board involving representatives from the professional field. Such a committee could be consulted to refine the programmes' profile, to assist with the reformulation of learning outcomes, and to help sharpen the unique selling points of each programme, among others.

Conclusion

The panel praises the programmes for their academic offerings that provide students with a rich, multidisciplinary, and globally informed education in the study of religion. Both programmes exemplify a dedicated pursuit of excellence in Religious Studies education, preparing students to thoughtfully engage with complex religious phenomena and to contribute meaningfully to a wide range of societal and scholarly contexts. The BA programme impressively lays a broad and comparative foundation, nurturing students' critical, empathetic, and analytical capacities through diverse disciplinary perspectives and a strong emphasis on lived religion and contextual understanding. Building thoughtfully on this foundation, the MA programme elevates students' expertise with advanced theoretical and methodological training, fostering intellectual independence and specialized inquiry that prepares

graduates for both academic advancement and impactful professional roles. The programmes' clear alignment with national and international frameworks underscores their academic relevance.

The panel recommends the programmes to consider the establishment of an external advisory board involving representatives from the professional field, which can be consulted to refine the programmes' profile and reformulate the intended learning outcomes. For the MA programme, the panel advises to provide clearer guidance and structure around the tracks, and to explore the creation of one distinctive track, combining the university's strengths: area studies and proximity to the Hague.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that the programmes **meet standard 1: Intended learning outcomes**.

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 and considerations

Intake, admission requirements and language

The admission requirements for the BA programme require students to hold a Dutch VWO diploma, a propaedeutic or final diploma from a Dutch university of applied sciences, or a propaedeutic or final diploma from a Dutch research university. For applicants with other diplomas, their applications are reviewed centrally by the university's Admissions Office. The programme currently includes a study choice check during admission (which students complete during their admission process) and plans to introduce a more extensive, compulsory matching activity from the 2026-2027 academic year to assess applicants' motivation and study skills, aiming to enhance student success. The MA programme requires incoming students to have sufficient prior knowledge and skills to achieve the intended learning outcomes within the relatively short duration of the programme. Aspirant-students are eligible to apply for the MA programme if they have a bachelor's degree in Religious Studies from a Dutch research university, or a bachelor's degree from a Dutch or foreign research university, equivalent to the level of a Dutch academic bachelor's degree, in the field of humanities or social sciences, or if they have completed at least 30 EC (or equivalent) of relevant courses, demonstrating knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to the study of religion.

The yearly intake for the BA programme has averaged around 10 students over the past six years. The MA programme has experienced a decline in student numbers from 11 in 2020 to 3 in 2024, but the intake in the current academic year is 15 students. Both programmes aspire a yearly intake of around 15 students.

The primary language of instruction for the BA programme is Dutch, with some courses taught in English. Students in English-taught courses can submit assessments in either Dutch or English. The MA programme is taught entirely in English, with teaching staff possessing native or near-native proficiency. Reasons for choosing to teach in English include providing an international classroom, the inclusion of a wide variety of religious perspectives, and the inherent global orientation of religious studies.

Based on the documentation and the conversations during the site visit, the panel finds that the programmes apply appropriate intake requirements. The panel approves of the choice of the English language for the MA programme's education. It notes the challenge posed by Dutch government policies that might enforce teaching in Dutch, but considers that English remains appropriate. The panel follows the reasoning of the MA programme that students benefit from a global mindset and that instruction in English prepares them for the international job market. The English proficiency of teaching staff is sufficient to teach students properly, both in English-taught bachelor courses and in the MA programme, as is also confirmed by the students.

The panel recognizes that the programmes aim for higher student intake and that different strategies are in place in order to realize this. These include, among others, increasing flexibility and attractiveness of the curricula, engaging students and alumni in programme development and promotion, and providing strong student support systems. The faculty board is also exploring plans to improve marketing and visibility of the programmes. The panel endorses these activities and encourages adequate faculty support in the conduct of effective recruitment activities.

Curriculum

The BA programme consists of 180 EC and is structured into four learning lines: knowledge of religions, methods and techniques, general and comparative study of religion, and the social-scientific approach to religion. The learning lines provide students with both breadth and depth in the academic study of religion, integrating multidisciplinary approaches. The curriculum includes mandatory courses in key religious traditions and theories. Students have flexibility through elective courses and a free elective space in the third year, which they often use for a minor, internship, or study abroad. Students have 15 ECs of electives (*verdiepingsvakken*), with 27 course options, including courses from LUCSoR and cross-listed courses from other Humanities programmes. A full overview of the curricula can be found in addendum 3.

The MA programme covers 60 EC and consists of core courses (20 EC) followed by all students, electives or specializations including internships (20 EC), and a thesis combined with career orientation (20 EC). The MA programme offers three specialisations. The specialisation 'Religion, History, and Society' focuses on religion in its historical context and the development of religion across time, including contemporary forms of religiosity. Students gain knowledge and understanding of the historical transformation of religion and its societal impact. In the specialisation 'Religion, Politics, and Governance' students explore the relationship between religion and political-legal systems, international relations,

education, and governance. This specialisation emphasizes understanding religion's role in politics and governance structures. The 'Religion and Area Studies' specialisation offers an area studies perspective on religion, focusing on the movement of ideas and peoples across different places, spaces, and contexts. It provides a global and comparative perspective on religion. Within each specialisation, students choose elective courses that are cross-listed from related disciplines such as History, Classics, Ancient Civilisations, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and International Relations.

Based on the documentation and conversations during the site visit, the panel observes a logical translation of the intended learning outcomes of both programmes to the curricula. The BA programme demonstrates a clear and coherent structure through the four well-thought-out learning lines. This structure ensures that students receive knowledge across various facets and disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, and psychology of religion, which broadens the research field and allows for interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches. The learning lines are clear to the students and the panel concludes that the BA programmes has successfully followed-up on the recommendation of the previous panel to improve the communication on the learning lines to students. Students appreciate that they can choose their own direction and tailor their study path, following their own interests.

According to the panel, the BA curriculum is diversified with a variety of courses, offering students a rich educational experience. The programme features a solid structure in methodology courses, which are well appreciated by students and which provide a good preparation for their thesis work. Notably, the programme includes a course titled "Practicing Religious Studies", which engages students with real-world assignments from external clients, thus connecting theoretical knowledge with societal relevance and fostering practical skills. The installation of an external advisory board, as discussed under Standard 1, could strengthen the variety and depth of assignments addressed in this course.

The panel finds that the MA programme offers students a flexible structure, which allows them to specialize, promoting engagement with subjects that interest them. The programme covers core courses, electives of specializations including internships, and a thesis combined with career orientation. The panel observes a strong alignment of curriculum components with the programme's intended learning outcomes. The internships enhance the applicability of student knowledge and skills beyond academia. Students have ample freedom to creatively develop projects, reflecting a student-centered approach. The programme's global focus and incorporation of international themes (such as globalization, migration, and colonialism) make the panel conclude that the MA programme is responsive to international developments and perspectives.

Specifically for the MA programme, one of the recommendations from the previous accreditation was to ensure space for students to map out their own trajectory in the new curriculum. The programme now contains courses (such as Tools and Theories in the Study of Religion) in which students can choose which material they want to analyze. Also, in the course 'Religion on the Move: From Local Origins to Global Networks' students are given the opportunity to choose their own case study and methodological

approach. The panel believes these are examples of how students can explore their own interests and assesses that this recommendation was addressed successfully.

Learning environment

Both programmes use a variety of teaching methods to activate different learning styles and to highlight various aspects of the study of religion. Teaching methods include lectures, seminar-based teaching that encourages dialogical learning through small-group discussions, role-playing, structured debates, and in-class analysis of primary sources. Fieldwork is another method, enabling students to learn through direct engagement with religious communities by conducting interviews, participant observation, writing field notes, and administering questionnaires. The course materials include, among others, films, news media, social media, religious texts, objects, and interviews. The BA programme features about fourteen hours per week in the first year, decreasing to around eight hours per week in the final semester, which includes one-on-one thesis supervision. The MA programme starts with about nine hours per week during the first semester, declining to about five hours per week in the thesis-writing phase. Small class sizes in both programmes enable close interaction between students and lecturers, fostering personalized feedback and academic support.

Study duration in the BA programme is on average 3.5 years. On average, around 70% of the first-year bachelor students complete the propaedeutic phase. Graduation rates vary per cohort. Around half of the master students complete their studies within one year. Some of the MA students plan from the start to take longer than 1 year (effectively studying part-time) to spend more time on their thesis, with most completing their studies within 18 months.

Feasibility of the programmes is supported, among others, by careful curriculum design, with study loads distributed progressively and heavier subjects placed later in the programmes. Both programmes share a study advisor who supports students academically and personally by monitoring progress and providing tailored advice. Support consists of introductory sessions, individual consultations, and study plan development, particularly for the MA programme where electives require planning. The BA programme recently implemented a mentorship programme in the first year, where senior students support new students socially and academically, helping them acclimate to university life and study demands. Supervisors provide close one-on-one guidance for theses and internships in both programmes, supplemented by peer feedback in thesis seminars. Regarding facilities for students with special needs, arrangements are coordinated through the university's Disability Centre and faculty student counsellor, with mechanisms in place to accommodate specific requirements such as scheduling, attendance flexibility and deadline extensions. Study information towards students is managed through online study guides and course syllabi, detailing course objectives, assessment methods, and transferable skills. Communication between lecturers and students is facilitated via the Brightspace platform, which is used for disseminating course materials and feedback.

From the documentation and discussions during the site visit, the panel finds that the programmes provide a safe and supportive learning environment that supports an individualized learning process. The teaching methods encourage active participation, formative assessment, and small group work, which support effective student learning. Students appreciate the small-scale, intimate setting of their programme, fostering close interaction and a supportive learning environment. Both bachelor and master students consider their programmes to be feasible. Students are happy with the short communication lines to lecturers and the constructive and detailed feedback that is provided to them. They feel lecturers take them seriously and that their opinions and needs are respected and valued within the programmes. The panel sees that students further benefit from well-organized study counseling for guidance and supervision. For the BA programme this includes the requirement for students to prepare a study plan every semester starting from the second year. The programmes offer clear and detailed information about the curriculum and course learning objectives.

Teaching staff

The teaching staff is responsible for both the BA and the MA programme. Several staff members hold dual appointments in other departments, which brings additional expertise to the programmes. Since the previous accreditation, the staff has become younger, more international, and slightly larger, partly due to retirements, new hires, and staff departures. All lecturers who are required to obtain a University Teaching Qualification (BKO) have done so, including PhD candidates involved in teaching. One staff member has obtained a Senior Teaching Qualification (SKO), and several others plan to pursue this in the coming years. Teaching staff meets monthly to discuss pedagogical and organisational matters for both programmes. Many staff members also participate in faculty-level didactic training and in professionalization programmes related to leadership and supervision. Staff appreciation is reflected in high student ratings, with the BA programme scoring 4.5 out of 5 and the MA programme 4.0 out of 5 on teacher evaluations in the 2024 National Student Survey.

The panel encounters a teaching staff that is characterized by high-quality and broad disciplinary expertise, covering area studies and various disciplines with a strong methodological focus, and ensuring that the curriculum is relevant and up-to-date. Staff qualifications are aligned with the programmes' educational goals.

The programmes admit there is a notable workload, particularly around peak times at the end of the academic year, and in handling requests for extensions or re-sits. Due to the budget cuts for higher education, sometimes certain positions are not filled when staff leaves or retires, which increases the workload further. The panel acknowledges that the programmes undertake action to deal with these issues. Measures include the reduction of administrative tasks, flexible student support, and proactive responses to new challenges such as generative Artificial Intelligence. Through these measures, the programmes have responded well to one of the recommendations from the previous visitation, concerning the careful monitoring of staff workload in relation to the quality of education (applicable to

both programmes). In the context of the budget cuts for higher education, the panel appreciates the initiatives taken to mitigate this context, and advises continuous attention to workload and sustainable employment concerns for staff.

Conclusion

The panel appreciates the BA programme's thoughtful design of its curriculum and learning lines, which not only cover relevant content but also integrate methods and societal applicability. The Practicing Religious Studies course is seen as a particularly strong element that provides students with real-life experience and strengthens their connection to the professional field. Regarding the MA programme, the panel positively highlights the opportunity for students to specialize, which enriches the educational experience by allowing students to focus on their individual interests and strengths. The interdisciplinary approach and the inclusion of career orientation contribute to a well-rounded learning trajectory. For both programmes, the panel welcomes the increasing integration of internships to strengthen the connection between academic knowledge and professional practice. The panel encourages adequate faculty support in the conduct of effective recruitment activities.

The panel values the small-scale, safe, supportive and student-centered learning environment of both programmes, with important roles for the study advisor, lecturers and supervisors. The learning environment encourages students' creativity and ownership of their learning process. The quality and engagement of the teaching staff, and the fit between teaching staff expertise and curriculum content, are strong points of both programmes. The panel advises ongoing attention to staff workload.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that the programmes **meet standard 2: Teaching-learning environment**.

Standard 3: Student assessment

<i>The program has an adequate system of student assessment in place.</i>

Findings and considerations

System of assessment

The assessment principles of both programmes are largely harmonised with faculty-wide policies, as outlined in the faculty's course and examination regulations, the faculty assessment framework, and the joint rules and guidelines of the Board of Examiners. These principles emphasize that assessments must meet quality requirements in terms of validity, reliability, transparency, and usability. Assessments are aligned directly with the learning objectives of individual courses and indirectly with the overarching final qualifications of the programmes.

Both programmes adopt a variety of assessment methods designed to evaluate different types of learning outcomes and accommodate diverse learning styles. The MA programme places more emphasis on advanced, independent research and analytical skills, while the BA programme emphasizes foundational knowledge and skills development gradually. Assessment methods include short and long essay writing assignments, research reports, oral presentations, group work, podcasts, field assignments like interviews, take-home exams, and in-person exams. In the BA programme, assessments progress in complexity across the years to test more integrated knowledge and skills. Course-specific objectives and assessment strategies are communicated to students via online study guides and syllabi, supplemented by the Brightspace platform for communication and feedback. Students have expressed appreciation for the variety and fairness of assessment, rating examinations via the National Student Survey 2024 at 4.0 out of 5 for the BA programme and 3.8 for the MA programme.

The programmes implement several measures to safeguard the quality of assessment. The use of annually updated assessment plans that link assessments to learning outcomes supports content validity. The use of standardized assessment forms for writing assignments and oral presentations ensures consistency and transparency of grading criteria. Feedback is provided, via Brightspace, in order to supporting the learning processes of students. The four-eyes principle is applied to the assessment of theses and internships.

Based on the documentation and discussions during the site visit, the panel finds that the programmes employ a diverse and well-considered system of student assessment. Programmes adopt a wide variety of assessment forms, fit to cover all intended learning outcomes. The diversity in assessment methods respects the different qualities and learning styles of students, and gives all students the opportunity to engage with assessment methods that suit them best. The panel sees a systematic alignment through the annually updated assessment plans, which helps the programmes obtaining coherence throughout the curriculum and which supports the validity and transparency of the examination process. The use of standardized evaluation forms for written assignments and presentations, and the presence of faculty-wide guidelines for assessment enhance fairness and standardization across courses. The panel observes that constructive feedback is a substantial and integral part of the assessment system, with students receiving feedback on draft versions of assignments whenever applicable.

The programmes demonstrate strong student-oriented communication by providing transparent information about learning objectives, assessment formats, and grading criteria. This transparency ensures that students are well-informed about what is expected from them and how their performance will be judged, which was confirmed during the interviews with the students. The panel identifies a clear progression in the complexity of assessment methods in the MA programme compared to the BA programme, which aligns appropriately with the expected academic development at the master's level.

Thesis assessment

The assessment of theses is a critical component in both programmes. Bachelor theses are typically 10,000 words, while master theses are 15,000 words and require a higher level of complexity, originality, and critical reflection. The theses are independently assessed by two examiners (the supervisor, and a second reader appointed by the Board of Examiners) using standardized assessment forms. If discrepancies arise in grading, a third examiner is appointed. The Board of Examiners organizes calibration workshops to align grading standards.

According to the panel, the thesis protocol for thesis assessment is clear and well-defined, providing transparency and structure for both students and examiners. The incorporation of the four-eyes principle in the assessment of internships and theses contributes to fairness in grading. It shows that the programmes have addressed successfully the recommendation from the previous panel to increase attention to the application of the four-eyes principle.

The panel finds that the assessment of bachelor and master theses shows a coherent and joint evaluation where both assessors' views are aligned. Most assessment forms are adequately filled and provide clear, logical, and traceable motivation for the grade awarded. The provided feedback shows assessors' curiosity and encouragement. In most assessments, the evaluations from the first and second reader are clearly distinguished. In a few cases, motivation is considered less detailed or somewhat generic, and sometimes the panel observed different approaches by assessors in valuing certain aspects such as accounting for methods. The panel suggests to intensify the calibration sessions in order to further improve assessment consistency.

The panel notes that the current structure of the master's thesis process, in which the research proposal and the thesis are combined into a single assessment, may contribute to delays in starting and completing the thesis. Students often begin working on their thesis only in the second semester, which impacts timely completion. The panel suggests separating the thesis proposal and the thesis writing into two distinct components. The research proposal could be developed and assessed in the first semester, with a formal go/no-go decision based on the quality of the proposal. This approach would provide clearer guidance and structure for students early in the process, potentially improving timely progress and overall coherence of the master's thesis trajectory.

Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners, which serves both programmes, is responsible for guaranteeing compliance with faculty and programme-specific examination regulations. It consists of three members (including a chair), an external assessment expert, and a secretary. They meet regularly and frequently communicate in writing to handle tasks such as quality assurance of assessments and theses, checking assessment methods and their alignment with course objectives, and drawing up examination rules. Other tasks are granting exemptions, handling fraud cases, issuing binding study advice for the BA programme, and

approving electives and internships. The Board of Examiners also supervises adherence to academic integrity policies and oversees the appointment of examiners for theses.

The panel asserts that the Board of Examiners carries out its legal duties and exercises its legal powers effectively in overseeing the assessment system, thereby ensuring the quality and integrity of student assessments. The collaboration between the Board of Examiners and the programmes is effective and leads to continuous attention for the quality of assessment.

Artificial Intelligence

The programmes are actively addressing the challenges and opportunities in assessment presented by generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). Currently, the use of AI-generated content in assessments is not allowed unless explicitly permitted by the examiner under certain conditions. To counteract potential AI-related academic integrity issues, the programmes have adapted assessments, for example by requiring the use of recent literature not included in AI databases and incorporating reflective components about the research process. Faculty-wide guidelines on AI use are being developed and will be implemented in the 2025-2026 academic year. Additionally, the programmes have held didactic workshops to help lecturers design assessments resilient to AI misuse. Also, they plan to introduce a new course from 2026-2027 focusing on AI and humanities.

It pleases the panel to see that the programmes are exploring ways to incorporate AI in their programmes and assessment. The programmes appear to be somewhat behind compared to other institutions. Therefore, the panel recommends to investigate best practices regarding AI from fellow institutions. This could help in adopting effective strategies and innovations tailored to their specific context and student needs. In developing a clear vision and policy on AI and its integration into course content and assessment, the panel also recommends to make ample use of student insights. The panel found that students hold strong opinions and beliefs about the use of AI (such as ethical considerations and the effect on depth of learning), and it would be wise to actively take their input into account.

Conclusion

The panel appreciates the programmes' assessment system for being valid, reliable, transparent, and aligned with the intended learning outcomes. The panel commends the clarity and explicit linking of final qualifications to the assessment criteria at the course level. The systematic use of varied assessment forms respects diverse learning styles and fosters meaningful engagement with the learning material. The feedback practices and standardized procedures contribute positively to the assessment culture, supporting student learning and maintaining quality. The use of dual assessors and standardized thesis forms are strong points that contribute to consistency and fairness in grading practices.

The active involvement of the Board of Examiners supports the programmes in maintaining high standards of academic integrity. The (future) actions with regard to the incorporation of AI in the system of assessment are encouraging; the panel recommends to go on with the integration of AI into the

programmes and to include student perspectives while doing so. The panel suggests to intensify the calibration sessions in order to further improve assessment consistency.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that the programmes **meet standard 3: Student assessment**.

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The program demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings and considerations

Bachelor and master thesis

The goal of the thesis is for students to demonstrate they realize the intended learning outcomes of the programme. This includes showing sufficient knowledge and insight into the relevant subject matter, applying appropriate methods, engaging critically and reflectively with sources and theory, and producing work that is of sufficient academic level and relevance to the field of Religious Studies. For the bachelor thesis, the goal is to show adequate knowledge and insight, demonstrate critical engagement with sources and relevant literature, and present a well-organized and coherent argument. For the master thesis, the goal is to show mastery of both theoretical and methodological aspects, critically engage with complex scholarly debates, and produce original and relevant research at a high academic level.

The panel reviewed 15 bachelor theses and 15 master theses, proportionally distributed among fulltime and parttime variants. The panel finds that the bachelor theses generally indicate that students demonstrate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, with topics often being original, relevant, and well embedded in the literature. Several bachelor theses engage with contemporary religious phenomena and the use of interpretative methods. The theses show an adequate academic level appropriate for bachelor studies. Some theses receive high marks for originality and relevance, such as works on green churches, Jewish women's roles in literature, and Islamic psychology.

The quality of the master theses is considered reasonably high by the panel. The theses demonstrate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Some works demonstrate very high mastery of methods and literature, originality, and academic rigor. The panel praises these theses for their creative and well-structured approach and deep analytical insights.

In terms of thesis quality, the panel acknowledges that the programmes have addressed one of the recommendations from the previous panel, concerning attention to methodology in the theses. Still, some of the reviewed theses, at both the bachelor and master levels, could do with a stronger

methodological section and depth, including clarity of research questions and deeper reflection on methodological choices. The panel advises continuous attention on methodological substantiation in the theses. For the MA programme, this could be supported by splitting the proposal and thesis (as discussed in Standard 3), as then more attention can be devoted to these topics if they become a mandatory part of the thesis proposal.

The panel recognizes the professional relevance and contemporary significance of many of the theses. Sometimes reflections on positionality – where students recognize their social and cultural context, background and biases and how they influence their approach to research and the interpretation of data – could be strengthened. The panel encourages the inclusion of these types of reflections, in both the bachelor and the master thesis, in order to ensure transparency in methodological choices, to enrich the scientific and professional debate, and to increase the depth of student learning.

Performance of graduates

BA graduates typically continue to master's programmes. Approximately one-third at Leiden's own master Religious Studies, another third at affiliated or related programmes elsewhere, and the remainder in related fields such as Area Studies, History, or International Relations. They also find employment in education and policy work, among others. The majority of MA graduates enter the labour market in roles such as education (including high school teaching), policy analysis (domestic and international), journalism, human resources, management, and political or cultural advising for governmental or semi-governmental organizations. A small portion of MA graduates pursue a PhD.

From the documentation and conversations during the site visit, the panel finds that alumni of the BA programme are well equipped for admission into master's programmes and diverse careers in education. Recent labour market surveys indicate that graduates rate the BA programme highly in terms of the skills they developed, including research, analytical thinking, communication, and social awareness, which are transferable to diverse employment contexts. The panel sees that graduates from the MA programme demonstrate strong performance in both academic and professional arenas. More than 80% of the graduates find a job within two months of graduating and 100% within six months. Some proceed to further academic research degrees such as research masters and PhD programmes, while others transition effectively into professions that require expertise in religious studies, such as policy analysis, education, and cultural advising. The MA programme's integration of research internships and job market orientation contributes positively to the career readiness of its graduates. Alumni would welcome more attention within the programme to career opportunities outside academia, such as roles in (local) government or the private sector. Alumni feedback confirms that the skills developed during the MA programme, especially through the thesis and internships, have been instrumental in their career development.

Conclusion

The panel appreciates the quality and rigor of the reviewed theses, combined with positive graduate outcomes in further education and diverse professional fields. They provide evidence of the students' achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the programmes' success in preparing their students for academic and professional careers. It pleases the panel to see that the BA programme effectively equips students with the necessary competencies to not only complete their studies but also to engage successfully in further academic pursuits, while the MA programme succeeds in developing academic skills that align well with the expectations of postgraduate education and the professional field. The timely success of master graduates in securing employment or continuing their education is seen as another indicator of the programme's effectiveness. The panel advises continuous attention to methodological substantiation in the theses and to the inclusion of positionality reflections.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that the programmes **meet standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes**.

Final conclusion

The panel has assessed both programmes against four standards. The panel concludes that the bachelor Religious Studies and the master Religious Studies meet all standards (intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, student assessment and achieved learning outcomes) and thus rates the overall quality of the programmes as positive.

Standard	Bachelor Religiewetenschappen Judgment
Intended learning outcomes <i>Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the program; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and international requirements.</i>	Meets the standard
Teaching-learning environment <i>Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.</i>	Meets the standard
Student assessment <i>Standard 3: The program has an adequate system of assessment in place.</i>	Meets the standard

Achieved learning outcomes <i>Standard 4: The program demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.</i>	Meets the standard
Final conclusion	Positive

Standard	Master Religious Studies Judgment
Intended learning outcomes <i>Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the program; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and international requirements.</i>	Meets the standard
Teaching-learning environment <i>Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.</i>	Meets the standard
Student assessment <i>Standard 3: The program has an adequate system of assessment in place.</i>	Meets the standard
Achieved learning outcomes <i>Standard 4: The program demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.</i>	Meets the standard
Final conclusion	Positive

In the preceding paragraphs, the panel has discussed and substantiated its positive comments on the programmes for each standard. The programmes are commended for the following features of good practice:

- Dedicated pursuit of excellence in Religious Studies education.
- Rich, multidisciplinary, and globally oriented curricula.
- Small-scale, supportive, and student-centered learning environment.
- High-quality, engaged teaching staff.
- Valid, reliable, transparent assessment system.
- Effective preparation for academic and professional careers.

In this report, the panel makes several suggestions and observations, which are **not** strictly recommendations.

For both programmes, the panel **advises** the following:

- Ensure adequate faculty support in the conduct of effective recruitment activities.
- Keep addressing workload and sustainability employment concerns for teaching staff.
- Intensify the calibration sessions in order to further improve assessment consistency.
- Continue attention to methodological substantiation and reflections on positionality in the theses.

For the MA programme, the panel **advises** the following:

- Provide clearer guidance and structure around the tracks, and explore the creation of one distinctive MA programme, combining the university's strengths: area studies and proximity to the Hague.
- Consider separating the thesis proposal and the thesis writing into two distinct components.

The panel recommends several follow-up actions to further improve the programmes. These **recommendations** do not detract from the positive assessment of the quality of the programmes:

- Consider the establishment of an external advisory board involving representatives from the professional field, which can be consulted to refine the programmes' profile and reformulate the intended learning outcomes.
- Investigate best practices regarding AI from fellow institutions, and actively involve students in developing a clear vision and policy on AI and its integration into course content and assessment.

4. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Administrative data

Institution	
Name in RIO	Universiteit Leiden
Adress	Rapenburg 70, Leiden
Website	www.leidenuniv.nl
BRIN number	21PB

Programme	
Programme name in RIO	Bachelor Religiewetenschappen
International name	Bachelor Religious Studies
Location	Leiden
Programme number in RIO	50902
Orientation and level	Wo ba
Research master	No
Language of instruction	Dutch
(Legal) professional requirements	No
All study programmes/tracks/specialisations	-
Joint programme	No
Distinctive feature	No
Degree awarded and addition to the degree	B of Arts
Study load in EC	180
Variant(s) (full-time, part-time, dual)	full-time, part-time
Working with units of learning outcomes (full-time, part-time, dual)	No
External assessment group classification	WO cluster Religie en Theologie
Submission date of accreditation report	1 may 2026
Other (e.g. name change or extension of study duration)	-

Programme	
Programme name in RIO	Master Religiewetenschappen
International name	Master Religious Studies
Location	Leiden
Programme number in RIO	60974
Orientation and level	Wo ma
Research master	No
Language of instruction	English
(Legal) professional requirements	No
All study programmes/tracks/specialisations	1) Religion, Politics, and Governance 2) Religion, History, and Society 3) Religion and Area Studies
Joint programme	No
Distinctive feature	No
Degree awarded and addition to the degree	M of Arts
Study load in EC	60
Variant(s) (full-time, part-time, dual)	full-time, part-time
Working with units of learning outcomes (full-time, part-time, dual)	No
External assessment group classification	WO cluster Religie en Theologie
Submission date of accreditation report	1 May 2026
Other (e.g. name change or extension of study duration)	-

Annex 2: Intended learning outcomes

Intended Learning Outcomes for the BA Religious Studies

Knowledge and Understanding

- a) The bachelor has knowledge of religions of antiquity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in their historical manifestations.
- b) The bachelor has knowledge of contemporary manifestations of religion.
- c) The bachelor has academic knowledge of religion from a general and comparative perspective.

Applying Knowledge and Understanding

- d) The bachelor has acquired knowledge of the principles of various methods within the field of religious studies, which includes:
 - ▷ Familiarity with contemporary methods for researching written and material sources according to the historical method.
 - ▷ Knowledge of research methods for religious-social phenomena and developments according to the sociology of religion.
 - ▷ Awareness of research methods for questions of meaning according to the psychology of religion.
 - ▷ Understanding of research methods in the anthropology of religion.

Judgement

- e) The bachelor is able to describe and analyse religious statements in light of the methods of religious studies.
- f) The bachelor is able to describe and analyse religious phenomena using methods of religious studies.
- g) The bachelor is able to reflect on contemporary multi-religious realities and current debates on the role of religion in modern society.
- h) The bachelor can formulate and analyse religious issues, independently collect materials and information, assess their validity, and provide arguments for possible solutions to formulated problems.

Communication

- i) The bachelor is able to present both oral and written reports on research into a topic of considerable scope and substantiate these according to the standards of academic scholarship.

Learning Skills

- j) The bachelor is able to apply the knowledge and skills mentioned in points a to i in practical settings within professions or roles requiring expertise in religious studies

Intended Learning Outcomes for the MA Religious Studies

Knowledge and Understanding

- ▷ knowledge and understanding of the most important current debates on method and theory in the academic study of religion – amongst others the literary, historical, cognitive, and social scientific approaches;
- ▷ insight into the mutual impact of globalisation, modernisation, migration, and religion, including the revision and transformation of (self-) understandings of religions and their practices, and the development of (new) religions due to global contacts, colonialism, religious superdiversity, and secularisation;
- ▷ in the specialised pathway Religion, History, and Society: a knowledge and understanding of religion in historical context and the development of religion across time, including contemporary forms of religiosity;
- ▷ in the specialised pathway Religion, Politics, and Governance: a knowledge and understanding of religion in relation to at least one of the following fields: politics, law, political-legal systems, international relations, or education;
- ▷ in the specialised pathway Religion and Area Studies: a knowledge and understanding of religion in an area studies perspective and the movement of ideas and peoples across places, spaces, and contexts.

Applying Knowledge and Understanding

- ▷ the ability to apply a set of up-to-date analytical tools in the study of religious texts, religious beliefs, religious practices, religious traditions, and religious fields;
- ▷ the ability to independently apply these analytical tools to the study of primary material (historical and contemporary) in the context of independent research projects; and
- ▷ the ability to identify and analyse the interactions between religion, globalisation, modernisation, and migration in comparative and historical perspective in contemporary societies worldwide, the changes these processes bring about, and resistance with which these changes are often met.

Judgement

- ▷ the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, to draw conclusions concerning the reliability of information provided by available sources including societal debates and media, and to offer suggestions for further research and arguments for solution of problems.

Communication

- ▷ the ability to communicate conclusions of their research, as well as the knowledge and rational underpinning of these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, clearly and unambiguously, both orally – using modern presentation techniques – and in writing.

Learning Skills

- ▷ the refinement of their research skills enabling them to formulate an independent research problem with only minimal supervision, and to operationalise abstract theory by applying analytical methods to concrete empirical material;
- ▷ the refinement of their cooperative skills, including giving and receiving good quality peer feedback, and preparing class discussions in groups;
- ▷ the refinement of their skills for writing well-argued, academic papers in English; and
- ▷ the refinement of their skills in oral discussion and debate in English.

Annex 3: Curriculum outline

Bachelor Religiewetenschappen

Figure 1: BA Religiewetenschappen Programme in 2025-2026						
YEAR 1						
Semester 1	Methoden en Technieken 1: bronnen-onderzoek, objecten en teksten (10 EC)	Religion in the World (5 EC)	Introduction to Hindu Religions (5 EC)	Jews and Judaism: An Introduction (5 EC)	Inleiding Religiewetenschappen (5 EC)	
Semester 2	Methoden en Technieken 2: Kwalitatief Onderzoek (10 EC)	Antropologie en Religie (5 EC)	Antieke Goddiendiensten (5 EC)	Christendom, De Basics (5 EC)	Wetenschapsfilosofie (5 EC)	
YEAR 2						
Semester 1	Religion and Politics (5 EC)	Sociology of Religion (5 EC)	Psychologie van Religie (5 EC)	Introduction to Buddhism (5 EC)	Introduction to the Study of Islam (5 EC)	Verdiepingsvak (5 EC)
Semester 2	Methoden en Technieken 3: Kwantitatief Onderzoek (10 EC)	Vergelijkende Religiewetenschap (10 EC)			New Religions (5 EC)	Verdiepingsvak (5 EC)
YEAR 3						
Semester 1	Vrije Keuzeruimte (30 EC)					
Semester 2	Practising Religious Studies (10 EC)	Verdiepingsvak (5 EC)	Scriptieseminar + Scriptie (15 EC)			

Learning lines:

- knowledge of religions
- general and comparative study of religion
- methods and techniques
- social scientific study of religion
- electives and free space

Master Religious Studies

Figure 2

Semester 1	Tools and Theories in the Study of Religion (10 EC)	Religion on the Move (10 EC)	Elective (10 EC) Choose a Specialisation
Semester 2	Elective (10 EC)	Thesis Seminar and Job Market Orientation (5 EC)	Thesis (15 EC)

Study components:

- Core courses
- Elective options
- Thesis and job market orientation

Electives per specialisation:

Religion, Politics and Governance:

- Rethinking Secularism in International Relations
- Politics of Culture in Southeast Asia
- The Politics of Destruction: Targeting World Heritage

Religion, History and Society:

- Religion, Nationhood and Citizenship in Dutch History
- Philosophy of Religion: Diaspora Communities in the Persian Period
- Apocalypse Now!? End-Time Scenarios in Ancient, Jewish and Early Christian Literature and Beyond

Religion and Area Studies:

- Pilgrimage and Holy Places
- Confucianism: Tradition and Modernity
- Consciousness in Buddhism
- MA Numata Buddhist Studies Seminar
- Culture and Conquest: the Impact of the Mongols and their Descendants

Annex 4: Programme site visit

Date: 14 October 2025

Location: Academiegebouw, Rapenburg 73, Leiden

Programme:

08:45	09:15	Arrival and consultation panel
09:15	10:00	Management programmes and Faculty
10:00	10:15	Internal deliberation panel
10:15	11:00	Teaching staff (BA and MA)
11:00	11:15	Internal deliberation panel
11:15	12:00	Students BA
12:00	13:00	Lunch
13:00	13:45	Students and alumni MA
13:45	14:00	Internal deliberation panel
14:00	14:45	Board of Examiners Religious Studies
14:45	15:45	Internal deliberation panele nabespreking / preparation final interview management
15:45	16:15	Final interview management
16:15	16:30	Break
16:30	17:15	Development meeting
17:15	18:00	Oral feedback

Annex 5: Documents

Self-evaluation report

- Self-evaluation report BA + MA
- Annexes:
 - Intended learning outcomes

Digital available documents

- Faculty appendix
- Prospectus
- Educational dashboard
- BA Course and Examination Regulations Faculty part
- BA Course and Examination Regulations Religious Studies
- MA Course and Examination Regulations Faculty part
- MA Course and Examination Regulations Religious Studies
- Staff overview BA + MA
- Assessment plans BA
- Assessment plans MA
- Rules and regulations Board of Examiners
- Education vision Faculty of Humanities
- Guide to Teaching Quality Assurance Humanities
- Manual Board of Examiners
- Teaching Evaluation Framework
- Manual Programme Committees Humanities
- Assessment Policy Religious Studies
- BA + MA Thesis Seminar Guidelines
- Thesis assessment at the Faculty of Humanities
- Annual reports Board of Examiners
- Minutes Programme Committee
- Programme annual report
- Additional education data BA + MA
- 15 bachelor theses
- 15 master theses

Final projects

The programmes made available a list of final projects. This list contained all final projects of the last four academic years. The chair of the panel selected 15 final projects per programme. Care was taken during the selection to obtain a balanced overview of grades, majors, full-time/part-time variants, and diversity of examiners.

- **Bachelor Religious Studies:**

The list covering the period 01-01-2021 to 01-07-2025 includes 38 recent graduates. From these, the following selection of 15 final projects was made:

Grade range	Total nr	Selection	Variants	Total nr	Selection
5.5 - 6.9 sufficient	6	2	Full-time	38	14
7.0 - 8.4 good	25	10	Part-time	1	1
8.5 - 10.0 very good	8	3			

- **Master Religious Studies:**

The list covering the period 01-01-2021 to 01-07-2025 includes 27 recent graduates. From these, the following selection of 15 final projects was made:

Grade range	Total nr	Selection	Variants	Total nr	Selection
5.5 - 6.9 sufficient	5	3	Full-time	25	14
7.0 - 8.4 good	19	10	Part-time	2	1
8.5 - 10.0 very good	3	2			

Further details on the selected final projects are available on request from Odion Onderzoek.

Vondellaan 138
3521 GH Utrecht
m 030-2819804
e info@odion-onderzoek.nl
w www.odion-onderzoek.nl