

B Midden-Oostenstudies
M Middle Eastern Studies
Leiden University
Assessment report

10 april 2026



Content

1.	Summary	3
2.	Introduction	8
	Procedure	8
	Institution	11
	Programme	11
3.	Programme assessment	16
	Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	16
	Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	21
	Standard 3: Student assessment	33
	Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	39
	Final conclusion	42
5.	Annexes	46
	Annex 1: Administrative data	46
	Annex 2: Intended learning outcomes	48
	Annex 3: Curriculum outline	54
	Annex 4: Programme site visit	58
	Annex 5: Documents	60

1. Summary

This report describes the programme assessment of the academic bachelor Middle Eastern Studies and master Middle Eastern Studies offered by Leiden University¹.

Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes

The panel concludes that the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies present clear, coherent and academically well-positioned profiles, grounded in a critically informed academic approach that assigns substantial and well-justified attention to the views and experiences of people living in the region as objects of study. This contributes meaningfully to decolonising academic discourse. At bachelor's level, students develop analytical, methodological, linguistic and intercultural skills relevant to academic and professional contexts. The programme offers an exceptional linguistic range, allowing students to specialise in Arabic Language and Culture, Persian Language and Culture, Turkish Language and Culture, Hebrew Language and Culture, or Modern Middle Eastern Studies. The track in Islam Studies is still part of the current programme but is due to be discontinued from 2026–2027 as part of a forthcoming restructuring. While the bachelor's specialisations differ in focus and depth, they each maintain a considered balance between emic and etic perspectives, ensuring that students engage with the region through both contextualised local viewpoints and broader analytical frameworks. The panel notes that this distinctive profile could be communicated more clearly to external audiences. The master's programme builds on these foundations through an interdisciplinary and research-oriented focus that spans classical humanities and social-scientific approaches. Students continue to engage with the region's linguistic, cultural, historical, religious and political dimensions, supported by advanced methodological and theoretical training and the opportunity to integrate primary-source analysis into their research.

The panel finds that the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of both programmes are clearly formulated, appropriately structured and aligned with their respective Dublin descriptors and NLQF levels. The bachelor's ILOs articulate knowledge and skills across linguistic, cultural, historical and societal domains, complemented by track-specific outcomes for each specialisation. They also include explicit CEFR-based language-proficiency targets for listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing. The forthcoming curriculum revision may require adjustments to these targets, but the existing ILOs accurately reflect the programme's ambitions at this stage. The master's ILOs express the analytical maturity, methodological competence and critical reflection expected of graduates in an

¹ At the time of writing, the programmes are formally registered under the Dutch names B Midden-Oostenstudies and M Midden-Oostenstudies. In practice, the master's programme is consistently referred to as MA Middle Eastern Studies. To formalise this, the programme has submitted a formal name change request. For the bachelor's programme the Dutch name is used. In this report, however, the panel uses the international names for both programmes, as the report is in English.

interdisciplinary, internationally oriented field. The panel considers the vertical alignment between bachelor and master to be coherent and academically convincing.

Furthermore, the panel concludes that both programmes maintain the relevance of their learning outcomes through sustained engagement with international scholarly debates and staff participation in regional and global academic networks. The panel welcomes the faculty's initiative to develop formal alumni networks and advisory structures, which it considers a promising avenue for strengthening external input as the programmes prepare for future curriculum developments.

The panel approves the proposed name change from master Midden-Oostenstudies to master Middle Eastern Studies.

Overall, the panel concludes that both the bachelor's and the master's programmes meet **Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes**.

Standard 2 – Teaching-learning environment

The panel concludes that the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies offer coherent, well-structured and academically robust curricula with a clear and logically sequenced learning trajectory. Both programmes integrate perspectives from history, culture, religion, politics and language, ensuring that students engage with the Middle East through region-specific sources, disciplinary approaches and scholarly debates. The bachelor's programme combines a shared academic foundation in the six tracks listed above, supported by intensive language acquisition. The study abroad semester provides linguistic immersion and intercultural experience, although its feasibility has become increasingly constrained for several tracks due to regional tensions, safety concerns and limited access to host institutions, particularly for Persian and Hebrew. The master's programme, taught entirely in English, builds on the bachelor's foundations through advanced theoretical and methodological training, flexible elective pathways and opportunities for students to tailor their academic focus within an interdisciplinary framework.

Students in both programmes report high levels of satisfaction with the content and organisation of the curriculum. They value the small-scale setting, the accessibility and commitment of lecturers, and the close integration of language training, disciplinary depth and intercultural perspectives. They also appreciate the opportunities for personal and academic growth, including independent research, elective choice and – in the bachelor – the possibility of studying abroad. At the same time, students expressed a wish more consistent integration of contemporary political and societal developments, and, in the master's programme, greater continuity in course availability.

The panel is positive about the development of transferable skills, noting that academic writing, research design, critical thinking, intercultural communication and digital literacy are effectively embedded throughout the curriculum. It highlights in particular the revised master's thesis trajectory, including the renewed *Theories and Methods course* and structured thesis path, as a promising development that strengthens methodological competence and supports early preparation for independent research.

Across both programmes, the panel identifies several points for continued attention. For the bachelor's programme, the evolving structure of study-abroad opportunities requires careful monitoring to ensure perceived equity across tracks. For the master's programme, limited staff capacity places pressure on course continuity in certain thematic areas. The panel also sees room for clearer communication about the role and visibility of career-related activities, as well as for reinforcing consistency in thesis supervision. These points notwithstanding, the panel considers the teaching-learning environment of both programmes to be strong, coherent and well suited to enabling students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Overall, the panel concludes that **both programmes meet Standard 2 – Teaching-learning environment.**

Standard 3 – Student assessment

The panel concludes that the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies have a coherent and professionally organised assessment system, aligned with the faculty's framework for valid, reliable and transparent testing. The assessment plans clearly show how all ILOs are covered through a balanced mix of assessment formats, including written exams and open-ended essay questions in the early stages of the bachelor's programme, alongside research papers, oral presentations, group assignments, and – in the language tracks – regular formative tests and oral components. In the master's programme, academic papers, take-home exams, presentations, weekly assignments and the research-based thesis collectively assess the full range of advanced competencies. Students appreciate this diversity, noting that it enables them to demonstrate different skills.

The panel recognises the programmes' ongoing efforts to strengthen assessment clarity and alignment, for example through structured assessment plans and explicit links between course objectives and assessment criteria. The panel encourages continued attention to the transparency of expectations and rubrics, particularly for innovative assignments such as podcasts and for ensuring consistent standards across the master's many diverse seminar offerings. The programmes' approach to Generative AI in the context of testing is considered appropriate: expectations are communicated at course level, and the variety of assessment types – including in-class exams, oral components and process-oriented assignments – supports verification of students' independent work.

Thesis assessment procedures are applied consistently and are in line with faculty policy. According to the panel, most assessments were well substantiated, with balanced feedback and clear engagement with the intended learning outcomes. At the same time, the reviewers observed some recurring areas where greater clarity would be beneficial; particularly the explicit connection between comments, criteria and the final grade, and the visibility of how assessors reconcile differing evaluations. The panel therefore encourages the programmes to continue strengthening these aspects and welcomes plans to embed calibration more structurally in staff practice.

The panel finds that the Examinations Board carries out its statutory duties in a careful and proactive manner. Through systematic monitoring of grade patterns, annual reviews of theses, and active engagement with developments such as GenAI and innovative assessment formats, the Board effectively safeguards the validity, reliability and independence of assessment across both programmes.

Overall, the panel concludes that both programmes meet **Standard 3 – Student assessment**.

Standard 4 – Achieved learning outcomes

The panel concludes that the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies successfully achieve their intended learning outcomes. The panel's review of a representative sample of recent bachelor's and master's theses confirms that all final projects meet the academic level expected for their respective degree cycles, with several examples in both programmes even exceeding these expectations.

The bachelor's theses mostly have clear research questions, show solid academic writing, and display structured engagement with relevant literature. They also reflect the programme's characteristic breadth, with topics such as media censorship in contemporary Turkey, political communication in Egypt, gender and jihadist movements, COVID-19 and educational inequality in Turkey, and cultural echoes of classical Persian literature in South Asia. Students employ diverse methods including discourse and media analysis, historical contextualisation, small-scale empirical research and the use of sources in Arabic, Persian or Turkish. The master's theses demonstrate strong analytical and methodological competence and frequently draw on varied and original source materials. Examples include studies of Western perceptions of the Taliban, Dutch funding for LGBTI+ activism in Turkey, environmental colonialism in Palestine (with fieldwork-based data), social-media activism among Palestinian women, and archival research on Ayyubid Aleppo. Many theses combine conceptual sophistication with careful analysis of primary sources such as interviews, social-media datasets, historical documents and textual corpora.

Graduate performance provides further evidence of achievement of the ILOs. Bachelor's graduates continue successfully into master's programmes, both in the Netherlands and abroad, or find employment in education, translation, cultural mediation and other social sectors. Labour-market data indicate that approximately 88% of bachelor's alumni are employed within six months (after completing

a follow-up programme). Master's graduates secure positions in academia, NGOs, journalism, research institutes and policy-oriented environments, while others pursue PhD trajectories. According to alumni, the international classroom and language-based curriculum contribute to graduates' strong intercultural, analytical and communicative skills.

Overall, the panel concludes that both programmes meet **Standard 4 – Achieved learning outcomes**.

Both programmes meet all four NVAO standards. The panel therefore issues a positive recommendation to the NVAO for the accreditation of the bachelor's and the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University.

The chair and secretaries 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.

Date: 10 April 2026



Prof. Dr. Gert Buelens
(chair)



Daniëlle de Koning MSc
(secretary)

2. Introduction

Procedure

Leiden University has appointed Odion Onderzoek to coordinate the external quality assessment of the following programmes: the master's programme in North American Studies, the bachelor's and master's programmes in African Studies, the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies, the bachelor's and master's programmes in Latin American Studies, the bachelor's programme in Russian Studies, the master's programme in Russian and Eurasian Studies, the bachelor's programme in International Studies, the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies, the bachelor's programme in Korean Studies, the master's programme in Asian Studies (60 EC), the master's programme in Asian Studies (120 EC), the bachelor's programme in South and Southeast Asian Studies, and the bachelor's programme in Japanese Studies. This assessment takes place in the context of the accreditation of the programme cluster *Regiostudies 1/ Area Studies 1*. This cluster comprises 24 programmes offered by four institutions: Leiden University (16 programmes, reviewed during two multi-day site visits), University of Groningen (4 programmes), University of Amsterdam (3 programmes), and Radboud University Nijmegen (1 programme). From Odion Onderzoek, dr. Alexandra Paffen served as cluster coordinator until August 1, 2025, after which Julia Roosenboom MSc took over her role.

The assessment was conducted in accordance with the procedures and standards of the *Assessment Framework for the Accreditation System of Higher Education in the Netherlands* of the NVAO (*Staatscourant* 2024, no. 6405). The programmes within the Regiostudies 1/ Area Studies 1 cluster are existing programmes, and the institutions involved have successfully completed the Institutional Quality Assurance Audit.

Given the number of programmes at Leiden University, it was decided to divide the programmes into two site visits. During the first visit (3, 4, and 5 November 2025), the master's programme in North American Studies, the bachelor's and master's programmes in African Studies, the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies, the bachelor's and master's programmes in Latin American Studies, the bachelor's programme in Russian Studies, and the master's programme in Russian and Eurasian Studies were reviewed. During the second visit (8, 9, and 10 December 2025), the bachelor's programme in International Studies, the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies, the bachelor's programme in Korean Studies, the master's programme in Asian Studies (60 EC), the master's programme in Asian Studies (120 EC), the bachelor's programme in South and Southeast Asian Studies, and the bachelor's programme in Japanese Studies were reviewed.

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

- Prof. Dr. Gert Buelens (chair), Professor of English and American Literature, Ghent University
- Prof. Dr. Christian Lange (member), Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Utrecht University
- Carlijn van Esch MSc (member), Freelance foreign journalist and researcher/author
- Dr. Lisa Gaufman (member + external reviewer), Assistant Professor of Russian Discourse and Politics, University of Groningen
- Veerle van der Put MSc (student-member), Alumna master North American and Middle Eastern studies, University of Groningen
- Prof. Dr. Clarissa Vierke (external reviewer), Professor of African Studies, University of Bayreuth
- Dr. Matthias Schwartz (external reviewer), specialized in Eastern European literatures and cultures, and in the dynamics of cultures in warless Eastern Europe, Deputy Director *Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung*.
- Dr. Rozenn Guerois (external reviewer), Researcher in African Linguistics at the CNRS and Director of the laboratory
- Prof. Dr. J.M. Michiel Baud (external reviewer), Emeritus Professor of Latin-American Studies, University of Amsterdam
- Prof. Dr. Brigitte Adriaensen (external reviewer), Professor of Hispanic Studies, Radboud University
- Dr. Pieter Coppens (external reviewer), Associate Professor of Islamstudies Veni-laureaat History of Quranic exegesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- Prof. Isa Blumi (external reviewer), Professor of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Stockholm
- Dr. Katy Hull (external reviewer), Assistant professor of Modern Gender History, American Studies, University of Amsterdam
- Dr. Maggie Dwyer (external reviewer), Senior Lecturer of African Studies and International Development Programme Director, University of Edinburgh
- Prof. Nadia Lie (external reviewer), Professor of Spanish and Latin-American Literature and Movies at KU Leuven
- Dr. Boris Noordenbos (external reviewer), Associate Professor of Literary Studies, University of Amsterdam, PhD in Slavic Studies, University of Groningen
- Prof. Diana Castilleja (external reviewer), Professor of Spanish and Latin American Literature, Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the UCLouvain Saint-Louis – Bruxelles
- Dr. Dorien Nieuwenhuijsen (external reviewer), Associate Professor Spanish Linguistics, Director of Studies of the Graduate School of Languages, Literature and Communication (TLC) of the Faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University

The panel was supported by Odion Onderzoek through Julia Roosenboom MSc (process coordinator and secretary for North American Studies), Barbara Roemers (secretary for the bachelor's programme in

Russian Studies, and the master's programme in Russian and Eurasian Studies), and Daniëlle de Koning MSc (secretary for the bachelor's and master's programmes in African Studies, the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies, and the bachelor's and master's programmes in Latin American Studies). All three have extensive experience as NVAO-certified secretaries. The NVAO reviewed the accountability form for the panel composition and confirmed that the panel meets the required expertise. In addition, the panel members, the institution, and the secretaries provided written declarations confirming that the panel and secretaries perform their tasks independently. On 23 October 2025, the NVAO approved the panel composition (approval form PA-2492a).

Prior to the assessment process, the chair was trained by Julia Roosenboom MSc and Daniëlle de Koning MSc on the NVAO's *Assessment Framework for the Accreditation System of Higher Education in the Netherlands* (2024). The cluster coordinator reviewed the standards, procedures, and responsibilities with the chair, in line with the *Profile of the Chair* (NVAO 2016) and the guidelines from the NVAO training *Train the Chair*. The other panel members were instructed and informed during a cluster-wide start meeting by the cluster coordinator and chair about the content and intent of the assessment framework, as well as the procedure, attitude, working methods, and planning within the cluster.

Prior to the site visit, the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University provided the secretaries with a list of recent graduates per programme. In consultation with the cluster coordinator, the panel chair selected fifteen final projects per programme, taking into account the distribution of grades, assessors, and, where applicable, variants and tracks. The panel studied the selected final projects with their corresponding assessment forms, as well as the programmes' self-evaluation report. The theses were assessed in accordance with the NVAO guideline for the review of final projects (Implementation Regulations, September 2024). An overview of the reviewed material, including the selected theses and an explanation of the selection process, is included in Annex 5.

After reviewing the documentation, the panel members formulated their initial impressions and shared them with the secretaries. The secretaries compiled these and distributed the compilation to the panel. During a preparatory meeting prior to the site visit on 3, 4, and 5 November, the panel members discussed their first impressions and identified key topics for discussion.

Staff and students of the programmes within the visitation group Regiostudies 1/ Area Studies 1 at Leiden University were informed in advance by the faculty about the opportunity to speak confidentially with the panel. They could register for this through the secretaries. An *open consultation hour* was scheduled during the preparatory meeting for potential participants. As no registrations were received, this *open consultation hour* was cancelled.

On 3, 4, and 5 November 2025, the panel conducted a site visit at Leiden University. The draft programme of the visit, including representative stakeholders, had been submitted in advance by the programmes to the chair and secretaries. Annex 4 contains information about the site visit.

At the conclusion of the site visit, the panel formed an independent judgment of the programmes, based on the four standards of the NVAO's *Assessment Framework for the Accreditation System of Higher Education in the Netherlands* (2024). The chair presented the main conclusions in a public oral feedback session.

This final report provides a systematic account of the panel's findings, considerations, and conclusions. After the site visit, the secretaries 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.

Institution

Leiden University was founded in 1575 and is therefore the oldest university in the Netherlands. The institution is publicly funded. Over the past three years, the number of LU students has fluctuated around 36,000, spread across 48 bachelor's programmes and 83 master's programmes². The university has seven faculties: Archaeology, Humanities, Medicine (LUMC), Governance & Global Affairs, Law, Social Sciences, and Science. The university's profile is described on its website³. In short, Leiden University aims to equip new generations to make a difference in a global society. Its core values are Connecting, Innovative, Responsible, and Free. Leiden University attaches great importance to partnerships. Within the Netherlands, it collaborates extensively with Delft University of Technology and Erasmus University Rotterdam⁴, and internationally, among others, within the League of European Research Universities⁵.

Programmes

The bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University offer a multidisciplinary and humanities-based approach to the study of the Middle East. Drawing on perspectives from history, cultural analysis, linguistics, religious studies and area studies, both programmes combine academic depth with strong linguistic and area-specific expertise.

- A defining characteristic of the bachelor's programme is the integration of intensive language acquisition (Arabic, Hebrew, Persian or Turkish) with content-driven courses in history, politics, religion and cultural analysis. Students develop the ability to work directly with primary sources

² See: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/over-ons/feiten-en-cijfers>

³ See: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/over-ons/profiel>

⁴ See: <https://www.leiden-delft-erasmus.nl/nl/home>

⁵ See: <https://www.leru.org/>

in the original language and gain interdisciplinary insight into the region through courses spanning historical, social and cultural perspectives. The bachelor's programme offers six tracks. A brief description of each track is provided in the text box below.

Tracks in the BA Middle Eastern Studies

- **Arabic Language and Culture.** This track offers an intensive grounding in Modern Standard Arabic, complemented by exposure to dialects and a broad range of written and spoken genres. Students develop the ability to analyse Arabic texts within their literary, historical, religious and social contexts. Alongside linguistic progression, the track introduces key themes in Arabic literature, media and cultural history, enabling students to work confidently with primary sources.
- **Hebrew Language and Culture.** Students in this track acquire progressive proficiency in Modern Hebrew and explore the historical, cultural and religious traditions connected to Hebrew-speaking societies. The track combines language learning with focused study of Jewish history, Israeli state formation and Hebrew textual traditions, allowing students to engage with sources that illuminate both historical and contemporary developments.
- **Persian Language and Culture.** This track provides a structured introduction to Persian language and a broad orientation on the Persianate world. Students study linguistic forms alongside cultural, literary and historical materials from Iran, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia. The track emphasises cultural production, historiography and modern societal developments, giving students insight into both classical traditions and present-day transformations.
- **Turkish Language and Culture.** Students follow a staged language trajectory from beginner to intermediate Turkish, supported by courses that explore Turkish media, material culture and historical narratives. The track introduces both Ottoman and modern Turkish contexts, enabling students to understand how language, identity and culture have evolved across periods and how these dynamics shape present-day Turkey.
- **Modern Middle Eastern Studies.** This non-language specialisation focuses on political, social and cultural developments in the modern Middle East. Students take introductory language training in year 1 and subsequently specialise in themes such as state formation, political Islam, minority communities, migration and contemporary regional politics. The track brings together political science, anthropology and cultural studies, offering a broad, interdisciplinary perspective on current issues.
- **Islam Studies** (*currently in the programme; planned to be discontinued from 2026–2027*). This track combines Arabic language acquisition with courses on Islamic law, ritual, mysticism and the role of Islam in society. It introduces students to central scholarly debates in the study of Islam and provides conceptual tools for analysing religious practices and their historical development. Although this track will cease to exist as a specialisation from 2026–2027, its themes remain accessible through the faculty's dedicated minor.⁶

- The master's programme builds on this foundation through a one-year interdisciplinary curriculum that combines advanced training in conceptual, historical and methodological approaches with opportunities for independent research. Students engage with current debates in political, cultural, social and historical studies of the Middle East, and many draw on primary sources – including textual materials, media content, archival documents or fieldwork-based observations in the development of their thesis research.

⁶ During the process of fair hearing following the visitation, it became apparent that the faculty has decided to no longer offer the minor *Islam: Religion and Society* as a separate minor as of the academic year 2027-2028. The courses in the field of Islamic Studies will then be made available through the minor *Religion in a Changing World*, to which students of the BA Middle Eastern Studies will have access.

The small-scale character of both programmes contributes to a close academic community with frequent interaction between students and staff, who bring strong international research connections to the classroom.

Curriculum redesign

Both the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies are undergoing notable curriculum adjustments in response to faculty-wide restructuring and the need to ensure long-term programme viability⁷. Within the bachelor's programme, the most significant change concerns the planned discontinuation of the Islam Studies specialisation from 2026-2027 onwards. According to the programme, this decision reflects both the broader scholarly scope of Islamic Studies – which extends beyond the Middle East – and the presence of a faculty minor (*Islam: Religion and Society*), ensuring that the domain remains available to students in a different format (see footnote 6).

Alongside this change, the bachelor's programme is currently revising the structure and distribution of courses across its remaining specialisations with the aim of consolidating shared components and reducing duplication. Some track-specific courses will be merged or repositioned as common courses for all students, allowing the programme to preserve its distinct linguistic and regional breadth despite reduced teaching capacity. As part of this revision, language acquisition may extend further into the second year for a larger group of students, while the Modern Middle Eastern Studies track will incorporate more language-based components than before.

In the master's programme, curriculum adjustments are being prepared to align the structure more closely with faculty-wide programme norms. The programme is reviewing the balance between methodological, theoretical and region-specific components, streamlining the course offering, and strengthening the integration between core seminars and thesis preparation. These developments aim to maintain the academic breadth of the programme while safeguarding feasibility and a clear learning trajectory for future cohorts.

Further details regarding the profile, design, and content of both programmes are provided in the subsequent standards of this report.

Developments since the last accreditation

⁷ The annual intake per specialisation in the bachelor's programme varies considerably. For illustration: in 2024–2025, the distribution among second-year students was as follows: Arabic Language and Culture: 9; Hebrew Language and Culture: 1; Persian Language and Culture: 3; Turkish Language and Culture: 0; Islamic Studies: 0; Modern Middle East Studies: 7

The previous accreditation of the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies took place in 2019. At that time, both programmes received a positive assessment, accompanied by several recommendations for further improvement. In preparation for the current review, the panel examined how the programmes have addressed these points. The programmes provided written updates in their Plans of Action and elaborated on these developments during the site visit. The panel concludes that most recommendations have been followed up adequately, or that the programmes have provided clear and well-argued alternatives where full implementation was not feasible. Many recommendations have led to substantial and meaningful improvements, particularly in curriculum structure, interdisciplinarity, methodological training, language integration and assessment practices. According to the panel, any remaining points are relatively minor, well understood by the programmes, and already the focus of ongoing development. In the sections below, the panel summarises the main actions taken by the bachelor's and master's programmes respectively; where relevant, these developments are further discussed under the corresponding standards.

For the bachelor's programme, the recommendations focused on further sharpening the programme's profile, refining learning outcomes across tracks, and enhancing continuity between courses. In response, the programme has reviewed and clarified its intended learning outcomes, strengthened the distinct profiles of tracks such as Modern Middle Eastern Studies and Islam Studies, and increased pedagogical coordination through regular staff consultation and syllabus sharing. Completion rates have improved following the introduction of structured skills seminars and a thesis seminar, and practical issues – such as onboarding of new staff and communication via Brightspace – have been addressed. With regard to thesis assessment, second readers are now consistently drawn from across the specialisations, and additional options for broadening the assessor pool are being explored.

For the master's programme, the previous accreditation emphasised the need to strengthen the overall coherence and profile of the programme, to harmonise intended learning outcomes across the former tracks, and to improve clarity in organisation, supervision and communication of expectations. In response, the most significant development since the last accreditation is the transition to a unified, trackless curriculum, accompanied by a complete revision and harmonisation of the intended learning outcomes. The programme has also strengthened methodological coherence and introduced a more structured thesis trajectory with clear milestones, has improved communication of expectations, and has developed a dedicated Brightspace environment for all thesis-related information. Teaching methods have been diversified, and communication about deadlines and assessment timelines made more consistent. The programme has also discussed options for broadening the pool of thesis examiners with the Examinations Board, while explicitly taking workload and feasibility considerations into account.

Across both programmes, the previous review emphasised the importance of transparent and consistent assessment practices. In response, the programmes have refined expectations for assessors, improved

communication on timelines, and strengthened procedural clarity, contributing to more consistent grading and clearer justification of assessments.

Overall, the panel finds that the programmes have acted constructively and effectively on the recommendations of the previous accreditation.

3. Programme assessment

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 and considerations

Profile bachelor

The BA Middle Eastern Studies is a multidisciplinary area-studies programme that offers students broad and academically rigorous insight into the histories, cultures, languages and societies of the Middle East, spanning the region from Morocco to Iran and parts of Central Asia. The programme combines humanities and social-science approaches, integrating history, cultural studies, religious studies, linguistics and political developments. A defining feature of the bachelor's profile is its exceptional linguistic offerings: students can specialise in Arabic, Persian, Turkish or Modern Hebrew and alternatively pursue the specialisation in Modern Middle Eastern Studies. Through this combination of linguistic acquisition and region-specific disciplinary training, students engage directly with primary sources – textual, historical, religious and socio-political – thereby developing deep subject knowledge as well as a nuanced understanding of the region. The programme is grounded in the perspectives, intellectual traditions and epistemologies of the Middle East itself, encouraging students to approach the region in ways that counter orientalist framings and foreground indigenous viewpoints. Across its six tracks⁸, the programme builds analytical, methodological, linguistic and intercultural skills, preparing students for the diverse academic and professional contexts in which Middle Eastern expertise is applied.

The panel considers the profile of the bachelor's programme to be distinctive and academically well positioned. It highlights the programme's exceptional linguistic breadth, offering Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Modern Hebrew, with nationally unique provision of Turkish and Persian. The panel emphasises that this breadth is accompanied by genuine depth within each language specialisation, which has traditionally been a hallmark of Leiden's approach to Middle Eastern Studies. The integration of sustained language acquisition with disciplinary training in history, culture, religion and society is considered a major strength that distinguishes the programme within the national and international landscape. According to the panel, the programme approaches the Middle East from a critically informed academic perspective in which the views and experiences of people living in the region receive substantial and well-justified attention as objects of study, thereby contributing meaningfully to decolonising academic

⁸ Arabic Language and Culture; Hebrew Language and Culture; Persian Language and Culture; Turkish Language and Culture; Modern Middle Eastern Studies; and Islam Studies (the latter planned for discontinuation from 2026–2027). A brief description of each track can be found in the introduction under 'Programme'.

discourse. While the specialisations differ in focus and depth, they all maintain a considered balance between emic and etic perspectives, ensuring that students engage with the region through both contextualised local viewpoints and broader analytical frameworks. The panel notes that the programme could communicate this distinctive profile more clearly to external audiences, a point that is further elaborated in the section on *External Communication and Strategic Positioning*.

Profile master

The MA Middle Eastern Studies is a one-year interdisciplinary and research-oriented programme that offers advanced academic training in the study of the Middle East across both classical humanities and social-scientific traditions. As noted in the introduction, the master's programme no longer operates with separate tracks, but functions as a unified curriculum. Students engage with the region's historical, cultural, literary, religious and political dynamics through a combination of theoretical and methodological coursework and a personal selection of specialist seminars, many of which are shared with cognate programmes such as International Relations and Asian Studies. The programme maintains the linguistic breadth that characterises the Leiden tradition: students may pursue Arabic, Persian, Turkish or Modern Hebrew at various levels, allowing them to integrate primary-source analysis into their research where appropriate. The curriculum enables students to develop advanced analytical, critical and research skills, including the ability to work independently with a range of primary and secondary materials. With its wide geographic scope – from North Africa to West Asia – and its integration of multiple disciplinary approaches, the master's programme offers a broad yet coherent framework for in-depth study of the Middle East in global and historical contexts.

The panel considers the profile of the master's programme to be coherent, academically solid and clearly positioned within the field. It values the way the programme brings together multidisciplinary and language-based expertise, allowing students to engage with the Middle East through both humanities-driven and social-scientific perspectives. This combination offers students varied analytical approaches and reflects the breadth of staff expertise. According to the panel, the programme maintains a distinct regional scope within the Dutch and wider European context, supported by the unique availability of multiple Middle Eastern languages and a wide geographical and thematic span.

External communication and strategic positioning

Across both programmes, the panel notes opportunities to strengthen external communication and visibility, particularly for the bachelor's programme where student numbers in several tracks have been structurally low (see Standard 2). The panel thinks that a clearer presentation of the programme's unique language offerings and strong decolonised profile could support broader visibility and potentially improve student intake in the smaller specialisations. The panel sees value in exploring closer collaboration between the faculty-level Communications & Marketing and the programme's own outreach, with a view to developing more targeted and cohesive outreach strategies. Such alignment, in

the panel's view, would contribute to the long-term sustainability of the small disciplines while ensuring coherence with broader institutional messaging.

Learning outcomes of the programmes

The panel finds that the ILOs of both programmes are clearly formulated and appropriate for their respective academic levels⁹. For the bachelor's programme, the ILOs are aligned with the Dublin descriptors and NLQF level 6 and articulate the knowledge, skills and competencies expected of graduates in Middle Eastern Studies. These general learning outcomes apply to all BA students and encompass core disciplinary domains such as linguistic, cultural, historical and societal perspectives, alongside academic skills including critical analysis, independent research and intercultural awareness. In addition to these programme-wide ILOs, each language- or region-specific specialisation formulates supplementary learning outcomes that reflect the distinct linguistic and cultural expertise associated with the track. For example, students in the *Arabic Language and Culture* track are expected to demonstrate knowledge of and experience with a broad range of written and spoken Arabic text genres across periods and regions, and to situate these sources within their historical, religious and sociocultural contexts. Students in the *Persian Language and Culture* track are expected to acquire specialised insight into the history, historiography and cultural production of the Persian-speaking world, including familiarity with key text genres and the sociopolitical structures of Iran, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia. Comparable track-specific learning outcomes exist for the specialisations in Turkish Language and Culture, Hebrew Language and Culture, Modern Middle Eastern Studies and Islam Studies. Together, these general and specialisation-specific outcomes ensure, according to the panel, that graduates achieve both a shared disciplinary foundation and the depth associated with their chosen area of study.

The panel notes that the bachelor's programme has traditionally included explicit language-proficiency outcomes, formulated in terms of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing. These outcomes are embedded in the existing language tracks in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Modern Hebrew, each of which specifies the level of linguistic competence students are expected to achieve by graduation. According to the self-evaluation report, forthcoming structural changes may necessitate adjustments to these CEFR targets, as achievable proficiency levels may evolve if the curriculum offers relatively less space for language acquisition. The panel understands the reasons for these future revisions and considers it important that the programme continues to communicate its linguistic ambitions clearly and transparently for each track, ensuring that students retain a realistic understanding of expected outcomes. At present, the panel concludes that the existing BA learning outcomes appropriately reflect the programme's distinctive linguistic and regional orientation.

⁹ See annex 2 for the intended learning outcomes of the bachelor's and master's programme

For the master's programme, the ILOs correspond to NLQF level 7 and demonstrate a clear academic orientation through their emphasis on advanced disciplinary engagement, methodological training, critical reflection and the capacity to conduct independent research. The panel finds the ILOs to be fully in line with expectations for a one-year master's degree in an interdisciplinary, internationally oriented field such as Middle Eastern Studies. They articulate the level of analytical maturity, theoretical insight, methodological competence and intercultural sensitivity required for graduates to contribute meaningfully to professional or academic settings.

Maintaining the relevance of the intended learning outcomes

The panel observes that both programmes operate within a broad academic and professional context that contributes to the continued relevance of their ILOs. Through research-led teaching, engagement with international scholarly debates and the involvement of staff in academic networks, developments in the humanities and social-science scholarship on the Middle East are regularly incorporated into the curricula. This is complemented by guest lectures and collaboration with external partners and academic centres such as the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (LUCIS), as well as through shared teaching and activities with related programmes and regional institutes, including the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC), the Netherlands Institute in Turkey (NIT) and the Netherlands Institute in Morocco (NIMAR).

The panel notes that formal involvement of alumni and external stakeholders in the review of learning outcomes has so far been limited. It therefore welcomes the programmes' decision, taken shortly before the site visit, to establish a formal alumni network and advisory body, an initiative that is being rolled out more broadly at faculty level. The panel values this initiative. It considers the alumni network and advisory body to be a promising mechanism for more structured external input. This is seen as particularly relevant in light of planned curriculum developments from 2026 onwards, for which the panel recommends the programmes to seek such input.

Requested name change master's programme

The master's programme proposes changing its formal name from master Midden-Oostenstudies to master Middle Eastern Studies. The programme is taught entirely in English. In addition, courses incorporate relevant languages from the region, such as Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, and Persian. It attracts both Dutch and international students. Since its inception, the English name has already been used, for example in recruitment materials, programme information and the Study Guide. This is in line with the university's policy in which master's programmes are offered in English. Formalising the name master Middle Eastern Studies ensures consistency between the official name and the name used by students and staff, thereby improving recognisability. The panel concludes that the name change meets the NVAO criteria listed below and therefore issues a positive recommendation.

- The name reflects the programme's content;

- The name aligns with conventions within the sector and the intended visitation group;
- The change does not involve substantive modifications requiring a New Programme Assessment.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies present clear, coherent and academically well-positioned profiles, each with a distinctive multidisciplinary orientation grounded in region-centred and language-based perspectives on the Middle East. The bachelor's programme is characterised by its exceptional linguistic breadth – offering Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Modern Hebrew, with nationally unique coverage of several of these languages – combined with strong disciplinary foundations in history, culture, religion and society. The panel notes that this distinctive profile could be communicated more clearly to external audiences. The master's programme continues this multidisciplinary and language-informed approach, offering a coherent framework that integrates humanities-driven and social-scientific perspectives. Together, the programmes articulate a recognisable profile that aligns with Leiden's longstanding expertise in Middle Eastern Studies.

The panel finds the intended learning outcomes of both programmes to be appropriately formulated and aligned with the relevant Dublin descriptors and NLQF levels. For the bachelor's programme, the ILOs reflect the linguistic, cultural, historical and societal dimensions of Middle Eastern Studies and include track-specific outcomes that capture the depth associated with each specialisation. It would welcome more explicit profiling around the clear decolonised perspective that also marks the programme. For the master's programme, the ILOs articulate the analytical, methodological and reflective capacities expected at graduate level in an interdisciplinary and internationally oriented field. The panel considers the learning outcomes of both programmes to be sufficiently comprehensive, well-structured and suited to preparing students for further academic study or entry into professional domains that require regional, linguistic and intercultural expertise. The panel notes the explicit CEFR-based language-proficiency targets in the bachelor's programme and understands but regrets that these may require adjustment in future curriculum revisions; nevertheless, the current outcomes accurately reflect the programme's ambitions and orientation at this stage.

With regard to the proposed name change, the panel issues a positive judgement regarding the name change from master Midden-Oostenstudies to master Middle Eastern Studies. The panel concludes that the new name accurately reflects the content, language of instruction and international orientation of the programme, aligns with sectoral conventions, and does not imply a substantive change in programme content.

Based on the interviews conducted during the site visit and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that both the bachelor's and the master's programmes meet the criteria of Standard 1.

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

Content and structure of the curriculum

The panel observes that both the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies are built on curricula that are well designed in terms of structure, coherence and academic level. It characterises the overall curriculum architecture as well structured, balanced and logically sequenced, with clear alignment between course components and the intended learning outcomes. In the following sections, the panel further elaborates on both programmes.

Curriculum bachelor

The BA Middle Eastern Studies is a three-year, full-time programme of 180 EC with six previously mentioned tracks¹⁰. The programme combines shared, programme-wide components with track-specific courses, and includes a 30 EC semester abroad or a home programme in the second year.

- In the first year (60 EC), students follow 55 EC programme components (common and specialisation-specific) and 5 EC from the faculty core curriculum. Common courses introduce the region's languages and history (e.g., *Talenpanorama van het Midden-Oosten*; *Geschiedenis van het Midden-Oosten (600–1600)*; *History of the modern Middle East*; *Seminar Midden-Oosten 1*). In parallel, students begin language acquisition in line with their chosen track.
- The second year (60 EC) deepens disciplinary and thematic knowledge through a combination of compulsory courses and track-specific content, while continuing language acquisition¹¹. In semester 1, students take *Wetenschapsfilosofie* (5 EC), *Economies of the Middle East* (5 EC), a 5 EC elective, and 15 EC specialisation courses. In semester 2, students normally complete 30 EC abroad (or a 30 EC home-based alternative). This component is discussed in more detail under 'Study abroad and internship', as it constitutes a central element of the programme's approach to linguistic immersion, intercultural competence and regional engagement.
- In the third year (60 EC), students shape their individual academic profile through 30 EC of elective space, typically used for a minor, an internship or further disciplinary specialisation. Alongside this, they follow *Comparative Literatures of the Middle East* (5 EC), a course that introduces them to comparative and cross-regional literary traditions, a 5 EC specialisation course, and an additional 5 EC elective. The programme concludes with the BA thesis and

¹⁰ A brief description of each track can be found in the introduction under 'Programme'.

¹¹ This does not apply to students in the Modern Middle Eastern Studies track, who do not take language acquisition courses in the second year.

accompanying seminar (15 EC), in which students conduct independent research, engaging with primary and secondary sources – often in the language of their track – and demonstrate their ability to integrate disciplinary knowledge, methodological skills and academic writing at the final-year level.

Across all three years, the curriculum is designed to support a coherent progression from introductory knowledge to more advanced, integrated and research-oriented learning. A detailed overview of the curriculum structure, including course components and credit distribution, is provided in Annex 3.

Students describe the bachelor as a broad and multidisciplinary programme that offers a solid foundation in history, languages, religion, politics and culture. They appreciate the freedom to shape their own study path and note that the curriculum offers substantial room for electives and personal interests. At the same time, some students observe that the distribution of courses within tracks can be uneven, mentioning for example that courses related to the Persian-speaking world are sometimes clustered within a single semester, which can make planning their programme more challenging.

Overall, students express high satisfaction with the structure and quality of the curriculum, particularly the depth and organisation of language acquisition. They highlight the strong first year, in which the combination of language, history and religion provides a clear introduction to the region. Students also report that the workload is generally manageable, although the first semester can feel more intensive than later stages. Alongside these strengths, they identify areas for improvement, including more consistent attention to recent events and contemporary political developments, and greater coverage of underrepresented topics and groups, such as the Amazigh, Kurds, Druze and Yezidis. While students value the regional depth provided by the tracks, they see room for more thematic variety and broader inclusion within the curriculum.

The panel is positive about the content and structure of the bachelor's curriculum. It considers the programme to offer a coherent progression from broad, shared introductory courses in the first year to increasing disciplinary and linguistic depth within the specialisations. The integration of language acquisition with courses in history, culture, religion and society is seen as one of the programme's core strengths, enabling students to engage meaningfully with primary sources throughout their studies. In standard 1 the panel already highlighted the programme's grounding in Middle Eastern perspectives and its contribution to decolonising academic practice. Overall, the panel judges the curriculum to be well structured, academically coherent and reflective of Leiden's expertise across the region's languages, histories and cultural traditions.

At the same time, the panel notes several points for attention. Given the number of tracks and the relatively small staff team, the programme must continuously balance specialisation depth with staff capacity. The panel also observes that the Arabic track appears more visible than some others, even if

unintentionally, and encourages the programme to continue monitoring the perceived balance between tracks to ensure equal recognition. Regarding engagement with current debates, the panel acknowledges that students expressed a desire for more explicit attention to contemporary political and social developments in the Middle East. The panel discussed this with the teaching team and found that the programme *does* offer meaningful opportunities to work with current issues, including in courses that may appear primarily historical based on their titles. In the panel's view, contemporary perspectives are therefore structurally present – particularly in the Modern Middle Eastern Studies track – and also appear in several language-based courses, though the visibility of these elements may benefit from continued attention as the curriculum evolves.

Curriculum redesign within the bachelor's programme

As outlined in the introduction, the programme has undergone a significant restructuring in response to faculty-wide budget reductions. During the site visit, teaching staff described this process as demanding but ultimately constructive. The consolidation of courses, the merging or repositioning of track-specific components, and the preparation for the discontinuation of the Islam Studies track from 2026–2027 placed particular pressure on the smaller specialisations; especially Persian, Turkish and Hebrew. Staff emphasised, however, that the core identity of the programme has been safeguarded: *“For sure everyone got less space – but everything is still represented.”*

The panel recognises the considerable effort that went into this redesign and considers the revised structure a credible way to maintain the programme's distinctive linguistic breadth and regional focus within the given constraints. At the same time, the panel notes that the removal of Islam Studies as a specialisation represents a substantive change to the programme's academic landscape. While it understands the rationale for discontinuation, the panel regrets the loss of this component and emphasises the importance of ensuring that Islam-related expertise remains accessible and visible to students; whether through the faculty's minor *Islam: Religion and Society* or through continued integration of Islam-related content within other tracks. More broadly, the panel stresses the need to monitor workload, balance between specialisations and the long-term sustainability of the smaller disciplines, which remain vulnerable due to limited staff capacity.

Curriculum master

The master's programme in Middle Eastern Studies is a one-year, full-time programme of 60 EC, taught in English, designed to provide advanced, research-oriented training in the interdisciplinary study of the Middle East. Building on the BA Middle Eastern Studies as well as related disciplinary backgrounds, the programme allows students to assemble an individual course package drawing on a broad selection of specialist seminars across history, politics, culture, literature, religion and area studies. Students may additionally pursue Arabic, Persian, Turkish or Modern Hebrew at varying levels, enabling them to integrate primary-source materials into their research where relevant.

- In the first semester (30 EC), all students take the common course *Theories and Methods of Middle Eastern Studies* (10 EC), which introduces key epistemological, methodological and disciplinary debates and prepares students for independent research. Alongside this core component, students select two elective seminars (2 × 10 EC) from a wide range of offerings, including courses on contemporary politics, anthropology, cultural production, language and textual traditions in the Middle East.
- The second semester (30 EC) consists of one 10 EC elective and the 20 EC master's thesis, an independent research project that may be written in English or in one of the region's languages where appropriate. The thesis is closely connected to the student's first-semester coursework, and students follow a structured "thesis path" with defined deadlines for the proposal, draft and final submission. A detailed overview of curriculum components is provided in Annex 3.

During the site visit, students described the master's curriculum as coherent, intellectually stimulating and well structured, noting that the combination of small-scale seminars, close interaction with staff and freedom to shape their course package results in a motivating academic environment. They appreciate the clear progression from the common *Theories and Methods course* to specialised electives and value the programme's interdisciplinary nature. At the same time, students point to practical challenges in course availability, particularly within the areas of contemporary politics and society. Some experienced cancelled or oversubscribed courses as disruptive, especially when cancellations arose shortly before the semester began. Students also expressed a desire for broader regional coverage, including greater attention to underrepresented parts of the Middle East.

During the site visit, master's students also indicated that they value the freedom of choice and opportunities for specialisation provided by the extensive elective options. They emphasised that the programme allows them to sharpen their own academic interests while maintaining a clear interdisciplinary core. Students experienced the possibility to work with self selected themes or case studies in essays, presentations and research projects as motivating and conducive to deeper engagement. The student chapter of the self-evaluation report further confirms that master's students are generally satisfied with the academic level, the small-scale setting and the opportunities for individual academic development. Students appreciate the flexibility of the curriculum and the close interaction with teaching staff. They note that the programme demands a high degree of independence, particularly during fieldwork and thesis writing, which they regard as challenging but appropriate for the master's level.

The panel is positive about the structure and academic coherence of the master's curriculum. It finds that the programme provides a smooth progression from BA to MA level, offering a wide and well-considered selection of electives that span both historical and contemporary developments. The panel highlights the programme's methodological diversity, combining classical humanities with

social-scientific approaches, and praises the small-scale seminar format, which encourages active engagement, discussion and personalised feedback. The curriculum is regarded as research-intensive and academically rigorous, with strong opportunities for independent work under close supervision.

At the same time, the panel notes several considerations for the future. It recognises the pressure placed on the programme by limited staff capacity – particularly in highly demanded or contemporary oriented electives – and encourages continued attention to ensuring course continuity and balance across thematic areas. The panel also notes that the programme’s substantial flexibility in elective choices, while appreciated by students, requires ongoing monitoring to ensure coherence and alignment across individual study paths. Overall, the panel considers the curriculum academically strong and well aligned with the programme’s ambitions, while encouraging ongoing reflection on sustainability, track visibility and the maintenance of a broad, contemporary offer.

Transferable skills

Both programmes support the development of a broad set of transferable skills relevant to academic, professional and intercultural contexts. Across the bachelor and the master, students build competences in critical thinking, academic writing, independent research, intercultural communication, digital literacy and self-reflection. In the bachelor’s programme, these skills develop progressively, moving from guided assignments in the early semesters toward more independent work in the third year. In the master’s programme, transferable skills are embedded within small-scale seminars, frequent discussion, and the analysis of primary and secondary sources. A recent development is the redesign of the *Theories and Methods course*, which now brings together multiple lecturers who introduce students to different methodological approaches, strengthening students’ capacity to apply methods in their own research and providing early preparation for the master’s thesis.

Students from both programmes indicated during the site visit that the development of academic skills is well integrated into substantive coursework and grows cumulatively over time. Bachelor’s students valued the structured progression of research and writing skills. Master’s students reported that the programme enhances their analytical abilities and confidence, with one international student observing that it “*teaches you how to be very critical – it gives you a wide perspective and opens more doors.*”

The panel is positive about the way transferable skills are developed across both programmes. It notes that critical thinking, positionality and intercultural awareness are consistently embedded in coursework and align well with the multidisciplinary nature of Middle Eastern Studies. The panel especially welcomes the recent improvements to the master’s thesis trajectory: the structured thesis path with clear milestones and the redesigned *Theories and Methods course* – which emphasises applied methodological insight and early thesis preparation – represent, in the panel’s view, a strong and promising direction of development. The panel considers the integration of skills development within substantive courses,

rather than in stand-alone modules, to be an effective approach that supports academic progression and prepares students well for further study or professional engagement.

Link with the professional field

Both the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies equip students with strong analytical, linguistic and intercultural competences that are relevant to a wide range of academic and professional contexts. The programmes maintain meaningful connections with the professional field through guest lectures, public events and staff involvement in academic and societal networks, including collaborations with cultural institutions, NGOs, embassies and governmental organisations. Students also benefit from activities organised by the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (LUCIS), which regularly hosts expert meetings, lectures and discussion sessions that link academic expertise to current regional developments.

During the site visit, students reported that they generally feel well prepared for the labour market. They indicated that lecturers frequently discuss the practical relevance of academic skills acquired in courses, that vacancies and internship opportunities are actively signposted, and that the Humanities Career Service and programme-level activities (such as career events and student-association initiatives) provide useful orientation. Students also noted that internships are possible, but – because they are extracurricular – they require considerable personal initiative and may extend the study duration. At the same time, they emphasised that when they choose to pursue an internship, they receive constructive support from the study adviser and teaching staff.

The panel therefore acknowledges that while labour-market orientation has not always been highly visible in survey data, the programmes already offer several valuable touchpoints with professional practice. It encourages the programmes to continue making these opportunities more explicit; for example by further foregrounding how course-based skills translate to professional contexts, and by communicating clearly about the extracurricular nature of internships and the support available for students wishing to undertake one. As discussed under Standard 1, the panel welcomes the faculty-wide initiative to establish a more formal alumni network and advisory structure, which it regards as a promising step towards strengthening the visibility of professional pathways across both programmes.

Generative AI

With regard to Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), the panel discussed the topic with both staff and students in the context of teaching and learning. As described in the self-evaluation report, the programmes operate within a faculty level framework in which the use of GenAI is addressed explicitly at course level. Lecturers indicate at the start of each course how GenAI tools may or may not be used, and provide guidance through course materials and Brightspace. Students confirmed this during the visit, noting that “on Brightspace the first thing you see is ‘AI and how to use it’.”

Within the bachelor's programme, staff embed GenAI guidance in relation to research design, source criticism and the limitations of AI-generated content, particularly when working with non-digitised materials or sources in Arabic or Persian, where AI tools are often unable to process scanned texts or specialised scripts. Students mentioned that GenAI is most useful for idea generation – such as exploring potential paper topics or structuring their initial thoughts – while they recognise that it cannot replace engagement with primary sources or in-depth disciplinary analysis. In the master's programme, the integration of GenAI is similarly oriented toward critical and reflective use. Methodology-related courses explicitly address common analytical pitfalls, issues of reliability and the challenges of using GenAI-assisted searches or translations in regional research. Students indicated that they increasingly see GenAI as part of academic and professional practice, but that they are encouraged to use such tools only in a responsible and transparent manner.

The panel encourages the programmes to continue strengthening the integration of Generative AI in the learning environment and to make guidance on its responsible and effective use even more explicit. Issues related to the use of GenAI in assignments and assessments, including rules and restrictions, are discussed separately under Standard 3.

Study abroad

The bachelor's programme has traditionally included a mandatory 30 EC study-abroad semester in the second year, undertaken at partner institutions such as the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC), the Netherlands Institute in Morocco (NIMAR), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, and the Netherlands Institute in Turkey (NIT). This component provides linguistic immersion, intercultural experience and direct engagement with Middle Eastern societies, and has long been regarded as a defining strength of the programme. As part of the curriculum redesign to be implemented from 2026–2027, the organisation of the study-abroad component will change. A mandatory study-abroad semester will be retained for the Arabic Language and Culture track, where sustained immersion is considered essential for achieving the intended language-proficiency outcomes. Students in the other tracks will instead follow a structured programme in Leiden. At the same time, international mobility will continue to be actively encouraged for all students through the fifth-semester minor, which can be used for optional study abroad via Erasmus+ or the faculty's partner institutes (including NIMAR and NVIC, which both offer minor programmes).

Students consistently described the semester abroad as one of the most valuable elements of the bachelor's programme. They emphasised that studying in countries such as Egypt or Morocco offers a level of linguistic and cultural immersion that *"cannot be replicated at home"* in Leiden and that it enhances their understanding of contemporary political and social dynamics through first-hand engagement with local contexts. At the same time, students raised concerns about the implications of

the revised structure for balance between tracks. In particular, students from Persian, Hebrew and Turkish tracks noted that their opportunities for mobility are becoming more limited or increasingly dependent on individual initiative. Several students indicated that clearer communication and more structured guidance on alternative mobility pathways would be welcome.

The panel recognises that regional instability, safety considerations and institutional constraints have significantly affected the feasibility of study-abroad placements for some tracks, particularly where traditional destinations such as Iran or Israel are currently not accessible. It finds the programme's reasoning for revising the study-abroad structure clear and well considered. At the same time, the panel emphasises the importance of maintaining balance and perceived equity across tracks, especially given that Arabic already attracts the largest student numbers. The panel therefore encourages the programme to continue exploring complementary forms of internationalisation, such as short thematic programmes, summer or winter schools, and existing Erasmus+ mobility options that may also be accessible to students in Persian or Turkish tracks. Overall, the panel considers the study-abroad component a defining strength of the bachelor's programme and encourages continued attention to feasibility, accessibility and track balance as the revised curriculum is implemented.

The master's programme does not include a mandatory fieldwork or study abroad component. Students may pursue optional international experiences – through Erasmus+ mobility or independent arrangements – but these require individual initiative. Students indicated that clearer visibility of such opportunities would be helpful. The panel agrees and notes that, although not essential to the MA's academic design, increased clarity around optional mobility could enrich the programme and strengthen links with professional and regional contexts.

Admission, enrolment and academic alignment

For the bachelor's programme, the general university admission requirements apply, and the programme attracts a diverse intake ranging from recent secondary-school graduates to students with prior higher-education experience. Students enter with varying levels of familiarity with Middle Eastern languages and regional knowledge; the curriculum accommodates this diversity through beginner-level language tracks and a clear introductory structure in the first year. Students indicated that the programme generally succeeds in aligning these different starting points, though prior exposure to the region or its languages can influence how quickly students advance. The panel finds the admission procedures appropriate and sufficiently transparent, and notes that the programme maintains a good balance between accessibility and academic expectations. At the same time, the panel observes that the variation in students' linguistic and regional background requires ongoing attention to alignment and support mechanisms, such as early diagnostic guidance or clearer preparatory resources.

The panel notes that the master's programme attracts a highly heterogeneous cohort in terms of disciplinary background, international origin and prior regional expertise. Admission is based on a relevant bachelor's degree in the humanities or social sciences, alongside sufficient prior knowledge of the Middle East. Students with a Leiden BA in Middle Eastern Studies enter with deeper regional grounding, while students from other programmes may require additional orientation. For applicants whose prior education does not fully meet the entry requirements, the programme offers a pre-master's trajectory that addresses remaining deficiencies and provides a structured pathway into the master's programme. Students noted that this diversity can be enriching but also leads to varied starting points, meaning that some foundational material must be revisited in class – occasionally limiting the sense of academic deepening for students continuing from the BA. The panel recognises this challenge as inherent to an interdisciplinary one-year master's programme.

Study advice and student guidance

The panel finds that study advice and student guidance in both the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies are well organised and contribute to an accessible and supportive learning environment. As described in the self-evaluation reports, both programmes have a dedicated study adviser who acts as the primary point of contact for students throughout their studies, offering guidance on study planning, academic progress and personal circumstances. Students indicated during the visit that they feel well supported and heard, noting that *"there is more than enough support"* and that both study advisers and lecturers are responsive when students take the initiative to reach out. The small scale of the programmes allows staff to maintain close contact with students, facilitating early identification of potential study delays. Teaching staff are described as approachable and engaged, providing academic guidance both inside and outside the classroom and helping students navigate key programme components, including language acquisition, elective choices and – within the bachelor – the study abroad semester. Students who require additional support are referred to university-wide services such as the Fenestra Disability Centre or the faculty adviser for students with functional impairments.

Students also receive guidance in relation to their thesis trajectory; however, the panel notes that variation in thesis supervision is an important point for attention, particularly at master's level. Students reported differences in the frequency of meetings, the structure of feedback and the clarity of expectations. Staff acknowledged this during the visit, noting that while the programme provides clear guidelines, forms and a structured thesis path, there is no generic thesis seminar and supervision practices differ depending on cohort size and supervisory workload. Some lecturers organise small thesis groups when they supervise multiple students, while others supervise on an individual basis—approaches that not all students perceive as equally consistent. The panel understands the practical constraints but emphasises that students expect equitable supervisory arrangements. It therefore encourages the programme to explore ways of enhancing clarity and consistency, for example by providing more explicit guidance on expected contact moments, feedback procedures and forms of

structured peer exchange. Overall, the panel finds that the combination of structured study advice, accessible teaching staff and a close-knit learning environment forms a strong basis for student support, while encouraging continued attention to the coherence and transparency of thesis supervision within the master's programme.

Teaching staff bachelor and master

The panel finds that the teaching staff of the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies are highly qualified in terms of both subject expertise and research activity. All courses are taught by PhD-holding lecturers, including assistant, associate and full professors, supported by a limited number of temporary staff. The multidisciplinary team brings together expertise in language, history, religion, literature, cultural studies and contemporary politics. The vast majority of lecturers hold a University Teaching Qualification (BKO), with several staff members also holding a Senior Teaching Qualification (SKO), ensuring a solid didactic foundation across the programmes. In the language tracks, teaching is largely provided by specialist linguists, often native speakers, with recognised expertise in language acquisition. Lecturers are active researchers with international profiles and maintain close connections with academic and cultural institutions in the Middle East and beyond, ensuring that students engage with current scholarly debates and region-specific expertise. According to the panel, this strong integration of research expertise and teaching practice contributes significantly to the quality and academic depth of the curriculum across both programmes.

At the same time, the panel notes that the programmes rely on a relatively small number of highly specialised staff members, particularly within the smaller language tracks (Persian, Turkish and Hebrew), where teaching and supervision are largely concentrated among one or two core specialists. During the site visit, staff explained that recent budgetary constraints, unfilled vacancies and upcoming retirements place increasing pressure on capacity, making these tracks more vulnerable and requiring further integration of content across courses. Several staff members expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of these disciplines, especially given the difficulty of replacing highly specialised expertise. The panel recognises these concerns and emphasises the importance of continued attention to workload distribution and to safeguarding continuity in these small but distinctive fields of study.

Students in both the bachelor's and the master's programmes consistently praised the lecturers' approachability, commitment and accessibility, noting that the small scale of the programmes contributes to frequent interaction, personalised feedback and a strong sense of academic support. Master's students additionally emphasised the benefits of studying within an international classroom, where the diversity of backgrounds among students and staff fosters cross-cultural dialogue and broadens academic perspectives. Feedback from the student chapters echoes this picture, highlighting the lecturers' expertise, enthusiasm and willingness to provide guidance both inside and outside the classroom.

Overall, the panel concludes that the teaching staff are well equipped to deliver both programmes and that their disciplinary expertise, international engagement and collaborative working culture create a stimulating and supportive learning environment. These strengths are essential for enabling students to achieve the intended learning outcomes; however, the panel encourages continued attention to staff capacity, workload balance and long-term continuity given the programmes' reliance on a limited number of specialists.

Language of instruction

The bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies apply a well-considered approach to the language of instruction. In the bachelor, the first year is taught chiefly in Dutch, providing a smooth transition from secondary education. As students progress, the languages of the region – Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Modern Hebrew – play an increasingly central role in language acquisition and text-based courses, alongside selected courses taught in English. This multilingual structure reflects the programme's focus on language development and prepares students to work with primary sources in their original languages. The master's programme is taught fully in English, supporting the programme's international classroom and accommodating the diverse backgrounds of incoming students. While English functions as the main instructional language, students engage with sources in the Middle Eastern languages where relevant to their research.

The panel concludes that the choice of language(s) of instruction in both programmes is well justified and consistent with their objectives and positioning. All teaching staff meet the university's language-proficiency requirements, as evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of lecturers hold the University Teaching Qualification (BKO), which includes certified proficiency in English. In addition, specialist language courses are taught by qualified linguists, often native speakers, with expertise in language acquisition. The multilingual teaching environment contributes to a rich and supportive learning experience.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that both the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies offer a coherent, well-structured and academically robust teaching-learning environment, with clear alignment between course components, methodological development and the intended learning outcomes. Interdisciplinarity, region-centred perspectives and strong language acquisition are consistently embedded across the curricula, creating a learning environment that is both intellectually stimulating and well suited to the multidisciplinary nature of Middle Eastern Studies.

Students in both programmes experience the teaching-learning environment as supportive and engaging. The small scale of the programmes facilitates close interaction with lecturers and enables personal guidance, while the study adviser provides accessible and proactive support. Students value the quality of teaching, the strong sense of community, and the opportunities for academic and personal development offered through intensive language training and – within the bachelor – the study-abroad semester. The panel considers these elements important strengths that significantly contribute to students' development as independent and critical scholars.

Across both programmes, transferable skills – including academic writing, research design, intercultural communication and critical analysis – are effectively integrated into content courses. The panel notes positively the structured progression of skills in the bachelor's programme and the strong methodological emphasis in the redesigned *Theories and Methods course* and thesis trajectory in the master's programme. It also values the programmes' multilingual design and regards the choice of languages of instruction as appropriate and well justified.

While the overall quality of the teaching-learning environment is high, the panel identifies several points for continued attention. For the bachelor's programme, the evolving structure of study-abroad opportunities requires careful monitoring to ensure perceived equity across tracks. For the master's programme, limited staff capacity places pressure on course continuity in certain thematic areas. The panel also notes room for even clearer communication about the role and availability of career-related activities and for reinforcing consistency in thesis supervision. The panel also encourages the programmes to continue clarifying expectations around the responsible use of Generative AI, and to further enhance transparency and consistency in master's thesis supervision. These points notwithstanding, the panel considers the teaching-learning environment of both programmes to be strong, coherent and well suited to enabling students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that both the bachelor's and the master's programmes meet the criteria of Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment.

Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings and considerations

Assessment principles

The panel finds that the assessment policy of both the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies is aligned with the faculty-wide framework for testing and examination. The assessment system is governed by the Faculty Course and Examination Regulations (OER), the Faculty Assessment Framework, and the joint Rules and Regulations of the Board of Examiners. Together, these documents provide clear principles for valid, reliable and transparent assessment, including procedures for the appointment of qualified examiners, the use of plagiarism-detection tools such as Turnitin¹², and requirements for ensuring constructive alignment between learning outcomes, teaching activities and assessment methods. The panel reviewed the assessment plans for both programmes and confirms that the intended learning outcomes are systematically addressed across multiple courses. The plans consist of two complementary matrices:

1. a matrix linking each intended learning outcome to specific courses, including Leiden level indicators (i.e. the university-wide course levels that indicate increasing academic complexity and progression, such as levels 100–400) and the EC-weight of each component;
2. a matrix linking each course to its assessment formats, specifying the type and relative weight of all assessment components.

These matrices, visible throughout the BA and MA assessment plans, clearly demonstrate the relationship between the learning outcomes, the curriculum and the assessment programme. The panel considers the system transparent and coherent, offering a clear structure for ensuring adequate coverage of intended learning outcomes and progression across both programmes.

Assessment programme and assessment methods

The assessment plans for the bachelor's and master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies show that both programmes employ a broad and balanced range of assessment methods, aligned with the diversity of disciplinary, linguistic and methodological learning outcomes across the tracks. The panel considers this variety appropriate, as it allows the programmes to assess knowledge, language proficiency, analytical skills and independent research in complementary ways.

- The bachelor's programme uses a structured mix of assessment formats across the three years. In the first year, assessment is primarily based on written exams, open-ended essay questions and short written assignments, particularly in the shared courses on history, religion and cultural

¹² Turnitin is used as the plagiarism-detection tool for all assessments (including papers and the thesis) that are uploaded to Brightspace.

foundations. Language acquisition courses in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Hebrew include frequent formative components, such as weekly assignments, vocabulary tests, midterm exams and oral interaction assessments, which reflect the stepwise progression of linguistic proficiency in each track. As students progress, essays and written papers become increasingly central. In years 2 and 3, students demonstrate disciplinary application and source analysis through research papers, annotated bibliographies, textual analyses, and assignments linked to track-specific courses. Oral presentations and group assignments are used throughout the curriculum, with greater complexity in later years. The bachelor's thesis (15 EC) is assessed through a combination of independent research, academic writing and participation in the accompanying thesis seminar, as reflected in the assessment matrix. Across all tracks, assessment methods follow a similar overall pattern, though language-intensive tracks (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew) naturally include more frequent low-stakes assessments and oral components, while Modern Middle Eastern Studies leans more on essays, exams and thematic assignments.

- The master's programme likewise employs a broad range of assessment methods, aligned with its research-oriented profile. Across the specialist seminars, students are assessed through essays, final papers, take-home exams, oral presentations, weekly or bi-weekly assignments, participation, and – where relevant – group work. The common course *Theories and Methods of Middle Eastern Studies* combines written assignments, presentations and methodological exercises to build advanced research competence. Language courses at beginner or advanced level (optional in the MA) follow assessment formats comparable to the BA, including written exams, weekly assignments and oral components, tailored to CEFR-based proficiency objectives. The master's thesis (20 EC) is assessed on the basis of an independently conducted research project, supported by a structured thesis path with milestones for proposal, draft and final submission. The thesis assessment plan shows clear alignment with the intended learning outcomes related to research design, source use, analysis and academic writing.

Students in both programmes report that assessment is generally clear and fair. Bachelor's students explicitly praised the transparency of grading criteria – “*the requirements are always very clear*” – and indicated that any uncertainties could easily be clarified with lecturers. They also appreciate the structured assessment formats and the occasional use of more innovative assignments, such as writing an English-language Wikipedia page. Master's students did not raise concerns about clarity of assessment during the site visit and described the overall assessment load and variety as appropriate. Some master's students noted, however, that the timeliness and consistency of feedback can vary between courses, making it difficult to use feedback effectively for subsequent assignments. This point was also reflected in the student chapter, where students indicated that, while assessment is generally well aligned with course objectives, earlier or more detailed feedback would further support their learning progression.

Overall, the panel finds that the assessment systems of both the bachelor's and the master's programmes are robust, coherent and professionally organised, with clear alignment between assessment methods, learning outcomes and the faculty assessment framework. The variety of assessment formats is considered appropriate for evaluating the breadth of competences in both programmes. At the same time, the panel notes that the structural design of both programmes – characterised by multiple specialisations in the bachelor and a broad elective space in the master – inevitably results in diversity in assessment formats and practices. Within this context, the panel identifies several points for refinement. Some innovative assignments (such as podcasts, Wikipedia entries or blog-based tasks) may benefit from more explicit rubrics to ensure consistency and fairness. In the bachelor's programme, the diversity of tracks and teaching formats may pose challenges for maintaining full uniformity in assessment practices. For the master's programme, the panel encourages continued monitoring of equivalence in standards across the wide and heterogeneous course portfolio, so that variation in course formats does not lead to unintended discrepancies in expectations, weighting or grading.

Generative AI

As noted under Standard 2, the programmes address the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) explicitly at the course level, where lecturers provide guidance on responsible and discipline-appropriate use at the start of each course. In the context of assessment, the panel discussed the implications of GenAI with teaching staff, students and the Examinations Board. According to the Board, GenAI can function as an *“intellectual sparring partner”* for early-stage idea development, but it cannot replace independent academic reasoning, critical analysis or methodological rigour. Board members emphasised that GenAI output generally replicates existing information rather than producing interpretive or context-sensitive insights, which are essential to the intended learning outcomes of both programmes. The rise of GenAI has prompted the programmes and the Examinations Board to reflect on assessment design, including the value of process-oriented assignments, intermediate submissions and in-class assessments, which help safeguard the authenticity of student work.

The panel considers it positive that both programmes already use a variety of assessment formats, which limits opportunities to rely solely on AI-generated text and allows examiners to verify whether students genuinely understand the material. The Examinations Board also noted variation in staff views on AI and asks lecturers not to take on a detective role, but to report concerns to the Board, which is currently experimenting with ways to make assignments and exams more resilient to AI-assistance. The panel encourages the programmes to continue involving lecturers, students and the Examinations Board in refining policies and practices around GenAI. In the panel's view, the key aim is to ensure that students learn to use AI tools responsibly and transparently, while maintaining assessment formats that allow examiners to determine whether students have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Thesis assessment forms

Both programmes use thesis assessment forms that are based on the faculty's assessment policy. These forms require examiners to evaluate each intended learning outcome separately and to provide written justification for the grade. Theses are assessed by two examiners independently, each completing an individual form before discussing the final grade. If the two assessments differ by more than two grade points, or if the examiners are unable to reach consensus, the Examinations Board appoints a third examiner, whose assessment is decisive for determining the final grade. The panel confirms that this procedure is clearly described in the thesis assessment plans and was consistently applied in the reviewed sample of bachelor's and master's theses.

According to the panel, the majority of assessment forms were adequately completed and the written feedback was generally clear, balanced and aligned with the final grade. Assessors typically highlighted both strengths and weaknesses and provided reasoned explanations for their evaluation. In many cases, the two assessments complemented each other, resulting in a well-substantiated final grade. This was observed for both bachelor's and master's theses. At the same time, the reviewers identified several recurring aspects that would benefit from refinement. In some cases, the specific link between comments and individual criteria was not fully explicit, for example when assessors referred broadly to general remarks rather than criterion-level justification. Reviewers also noted that the weighting of criteria was not always transparent when all individual components were rated lower than the overall "sufficient" grade. Finally, in a small number of cases, the process of reconciling differing assessor views was not fully visible in the documentation. These observations occurred in both programmes, though not systematically.

The Examinations Board recognises these patterns. As explained during the site visit, individual forms are first completed independently and then merged into a joint form, in which assessors record their consensus before the grade is finalised. Minor editorial adjustments may occur at this stage, but the principle of double assessment remains firmly in place. The Board conducts blind sampling and considers consistency between comments and grades an important focus of its quality assurance. The Examinations Board acknowledges that occasional tension can arise – where written comments appear stricter or more lenient than the final grade – but emphasises that sampling results show overall consistency in grading.

The panel nevertheless advises the programmes to continue strengthening the transparency and traceability of thesis assessment. In particular, the panel encourages making the link between feedback, criteria and the final grade more explicit. The panel notes there are no structural calibration sessions within either of the programmes and therefore also recommends establishing a more formal and regular calibration structure, so that differences in interpretation of criteria and expectations can be discussed proactively and consistently across the teaching team.

Examinations Board

The Examinations Board consists of a chair appointed by the Board itself, two other internal members, one external member, and is supported by an administrative secretary. The panel finds that the Board responsible for the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies performs its statutory duties in a careful and transparent manner. As described in the self-evaluation reports and confirmed during the site visit, the Board meets regularly, handles student requests on a rolling basis, and benefits from short communication lines due to its small scale. The Board safeguards assessment quality by monitoring grade patterns, reviewing annual thesis samples, and checking the consistent application of procedures such as the use of a second reader.

The panel notes that the Board is actively engaged in current discussions within the faculty, including those concerning the pedagogical and legal implications of GenAI. While the Board awaits updated faculty-wide guidelines, it regularly reflects on how GenAI may affect assessment integrity and how programmes can safeguard learning outcomes in a changing landscape. The Board is also attentive to the increasing use of innovative assessment formats. During the visit, Board members noted that they monitor marks and assessment types across courses and intervene when teachers consistently grade too highly. The panel values the Board's systematic quality assurance activities and its willingness to refine procedures where needed. It concludes that the Examinations Board effectively safeguards the validity, reliability and independence of assessment within both programmes.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that both the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies have a solid and professionally organised assessment system, well aligned with the faculty's principles for valid, reliable and transparent testing. The assessment plans clearly demonstrate how all intended learning outcomes are covered through a balanced mix of assessment formats, enabling the programmes to assess disciplinary knowledge, language proficiency, analytical skills, methodological competence and independent research in complementary ways.

The panel appreciates the programmes' ongoing efforts to professionalise assessment practices, including the structured design of assessment plans and the clear alignment between learning objectives and assessment criteria. Students value the variety of assignments and the clarity of expectations, while the panel encourages continued strengthening of the transparency of rubrics and grading criteria, particularly for innovative assignments and for ensuring consistency across the master's many diverse seminar offerings. The panel considers the programmes' approach to Generative AI in an assessment context to be appropriate and supportive of academic integrity.

With respect to the theses, the panel finds that procedures are consistently applied and that assessments are generally well substantiated. Examiners engage carefully with the intended learning outcomes and provide balanced and reasoned feedback. At the same time, the panel encourages the programmes to continue enhancing the explicit link between feedback, criteria and the final grade, and underscores the importance of to embed regular calibration more formally within staff practices.

Finally, the panel concludes that the Examinations Board safeguards assessment quality in a careful and proactive manner. Through systematic monitoring of grade patterns, annual reviews of theses, attention to the pedagogical implications of GenAI and openness to innovative assessment formats – while ensuring alignment with faculty guidelines – the Board fulfils its statutory responsibilities and contributes to a reliable and transparent assessment culture.

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

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings and considerations

The totality of the examinations (including the thesis) guarantees that all ILOs are achieved. The panel confirms that the assessment system in both the bachelor's and the master's programme adequately covers all intended learning outcomes, with the thesis serving as the key indicator of the achieved final level. Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed a representative selection of 15 recently completed final projects from both programmes, together with the corresponding assessment forms. The selection ensured a balanced spread of grades, assessors and tracks (see Annex 5).

Final projects bachelor

The panel finds that all bachelor's theses achieve the intended learning outcomes and are appropriate for the level expected of a bachelor's degree in Middle Eastern Studies. The theses cover a broad and characteristic range of topics within the field, including media censorship in contemporary Turkey, political communication in Egypt, gender roles in jihadi movements, the impact of COVID19 on educational inequality in Turkey, and representations of interfaith relations in Arab cinema. Students mostly formulate clear research questions, typically demonstrate command of relevant literature, and construct structured and coherent arguments. The panel also notes methodological diversity across the sample. Students employ approaches such as discourse analysis, media analysis, historical contextualisation, survey-based inquiry, and the use of language-specific sources. Some theses stand out for originality, for example a study exploring cultural echoes of classical Persian literature in South Asia or an analysis of tourism in Taliban ruled Afghanistan, both of which show effective integration of linguistic expertise, contextual knowledge and innovative source selection.

The panel confirms that the vast majority of theses clearly meet or exceed the expected level. A small number show limitations in analytical depth, regional contextualisation or methodological reflection, which are appropriately reflected in their grades. One bachelor's thesis was assessed as being at the lower boundary of sufficiency but nevertheless met the minimum requirements for the final level. On this basis, the panel concludes that all reviewed bachelor's theses reach the intended final level.

Final projects master

The panel likewise concludes that all master's theses demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes and meet the standard of a master's degree in Middle Eastern Studies. The theses demonstrate a rich diversity of themes and source materials, including analyses of Western perceptions of the Taliban, Dutch foreign funding for LGBTI+ activism in Turkey, environmental colonialism in Palestine (supported by fieldwork), identity formation in Syrian literature, and social-media activism among Palestinian women. Many theses display strong theoretical and methodological grounding, clear

academic writing and well-founded conclusions and illustrate students' ability to integrate diverse methods such as ethnographic approaches, textual analysis, archival research and social-media data.

The panel confirms that most theses meet or exceed the expected level. Some theses present minor issues, such as partially underdeveloped methodological sections, which are appropriately reflected in the grades. Two master's theses sit at the lower boundary of what is acceptable at master's level, yet still meet the minimum standards and therefore qualify as sufficient. On this basis, the panel concludes that all reviewed master's theses achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Performance of graduates

The panel concludes that graduates of both the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies perform well in further study and on the labour market. According to the self-evaluation reports, graduates of the bachelor's programme progress successfully to a wide range of master's programmes in the Netherlands and abroad; the panel notes that students who continue their studies internationally report that they are well prepared and able to connect smoothly to other academic environments. Labour market data indicate that approximately 88% of bachelor's graduates secure employment within six months (after completing a follow-up programme), in fields such as education, translation, cultural mediation and other culturally and socially oriented sectors.

Master's graduates likewise perform strongly in academic and professional contexts. The self-evaluation reports show that master's graduates find employment in a broad range of sectors, including academia, NGOs, journalism and policy-related work, reflecting the versatility of the programme and the relevance of its regional expertise. The panel notes that the international and interdisciplinary character of the programme contributes to graduates' strong intercultural and communicative skills, which are valued in both academic and professional settings.

Student reflections in the programme documentation indicate that graduates feel well equipped to operate in contexts requiring critical analysis, cultural sensitivity and independent judgement – competences that align clearly with the ILOs of both programmes. The alumni present during the site visit confirmed this picture, noting that the programme had prepared them effectively for both further study and professional engagement in a range of internationally oriented settings.

Conclusion

The extent to which the ILOs are achieved is evident from the quality of the theses, and from the way in which the graduates perform in further education or in professional practice.

The panel concludes that both the bachelor's and the master's programmes in Middle Eastern Studies successfully achieve their intended learning outcomes. The reviewed sample of final projects shows that all bachelor's and master's theses meet the expected academic level, with several theses clearly exceeding this benchmark.

The panel also finds that graduates of both programmes perform well in their subsequent academic and professional trajectories. Bachelor's graduates progress successfully to relevant master's programmes or enter employment in sectors such as education, translation, cultural mediation and other socially engaged fields. Master's graduates likewise find positions in academia, NGOs, journalism and policy work, while others pursue doctoral studies. Labour-market data and student reflections underline the value of the programmes' interdisciplinary, language-based and internationally oriented approach in preparing graduates to navigate complex societal and geopolitical issues with analytical rigour and cultural sensitivity.

Based on the interviews and the review of the underlying documentation, the panel concludes that both the bachelor's and the master's programmes meet the criteria of Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes.

Final conclusion

The NVAO-approved panel has assessed both programmes against the four standards. The panel concludes that the bachelor's and the master's programme Middle Eastern Studies each meet all standards (intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, student assessment and achieved learning outcomes) and therefore rates the overall quality of both programmes as positive.

Standard	Judgement	
	Bachelor Middle Eastern Studies	Master Middle Eastern Studies
Intended learning outcomes <i>Standard 1: 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.</i>	Meets the standard	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	Meets the standard
Student assessment <i>Standard 3: The programme has an adequate system of assessment in place.</i>	Meets the standard	Meets the standard
Achieved learning outcomes <i>Standard 4: The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.</i>	Meets the standard	Meets the standard
Final conclusion	Positive	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:

- Clear and well-positioned academic profiles: both programmes articulate coherent and academically robust profiles, grounded in Middle Eastern perspectives and characterised by a distinctive combination of linguistic breadth and multidisciplinary expertise across history, culture, religion, politics and area studies.
- Clearly formulated intended learning outcomes: the ILOs for both programmes are well defined, aligned with the Dublin descriptors and appropriate for the respective academic levels, with track-specific outcomes in the bachelor and coherent, research-oriented learning outcomes in the master.
- Strong linguistic and multilingual learning environment: the bachelor integrates intensive acquisition of Arabic, Persian, Turkish or Hebrew throughout the curriculum, supported by meaningful engagement with region-specific primary sources; the study-abroad semester provides deep linguistic and intercultural immersion. In the master, advanced or introductory language modules enable students to incorporate primary-source analysis into their research.
- Highly qualified and internationally connected teaching staff: lecturers bring strong disciplinary expertise, active research profiles and extensive academic and regional networks; students consistently praise the staff's accessibility, guidance and commitment.
- Coherent and well-structured curricula: both programmes present logically sequenced curricula with strong internal coordination and cumulative skills development, including structured language progression in the bachelor and a clearly designed theoretical-methodological trajectory in the master.
- Effective development of transferable skills: critical thinking, academic writing, independent research, intercultural communication and digital literacy are well embedded across courses, with a particularly strong methodological foundation in the redesigned *Theories and Methods course* and thesis trajectory at master's level.
- Rich and varied assessment landscape: the programmes employ a balanced mix of assessment formats supporting diverse forms of learning and reliable evaluation of student achievement.
- Carefully monitored and well-implemented assessment procedures: thesis assessment is consistently applied according to faculty policy, and the Examinations Board monitors grade patterns, assessment forms and emerging issues such as GenAI and innovative assessment formats in a careful and proactive manner.
- Achievement of the intended final level: all reviewed theses meet the expected bachelor's or master's level; graduates perform well in both further academic study and professional practice.

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

- Enhance external communication and visibility: the panel encourages the programmes to articulate their distinctive strengths – particularly linguistic breadth, regional depth and emic and etic scholarly perspectives – more prominently in external communication and recruitment.
- Balance and visibility across tracks: the panel notes that the Arabic track appears more prominent in the bachelor's programme and encourages continued attention to the perceived balance and visibility of all specialisations, particularly in light of small enrolments in some tracks.
- Language entry levels and alignment: given the varied linguistic backgrounds of incoming students in both programmes, the panel suggests exploring additional preparatory or bridging mechanisms.
- Maintain academic alignment in a heterogeneous MA cohort: continue monitoring academic and linguistic alignment for incoming master's students.
- Strengthen guidance and guidelines for the responsible use of GenAI: continue enhancing guidance on the pedagogical use of GenAI tools within the teaching-learning environment, and establish explicit, programme-appropriate rules for their use in assignments and assessments. This should be done in coordination with forthcoming faculty-wide policies and help ensure that students learn to use GenAI responsibly and effectively in preparation for a labour market that will expect familiarity with its optimal usage.

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

- Formalise calibration practices: formalise calibration practices by developing a more systematic and recurring calibration structure for thesis assessment. This should support consistency across assessors and reduce variation in feedback style, interpretation of criteria and alignment between written feedback and final grades.
- Enhance transparency and consistency in thesis grading: enhance transparency and consistency in thesis grading by clarifying the weighting and interpretation of assessment criteria, and by strengthening the explicit link between criteria, written feedback and the final grade. To support assessors in applying standards consistently, the programme could also provide contextual information – such as typical grade distributions from recent years.
- Maintain equity in international mobility and track balance (BA): The panel fully understands that regional tensions and safety considerations limit the feasibility of study-abroad options in certain tracks and acknowledges that the programme has provided a clear and well-argued rationale for the current distribution of mobility opportunities. Nevertheless, the panel stresses the importance of maintaining balance and equity across tracks. In the medium term, the programme is encouraged to explore alternative international components – such as winter or summer schools, short thematic programmes, Erasmus+ pathways (including destinations that

offer relevant language instruction), or virtual/ blended international modules – to ensure that all students, regardless of their specialisation, retain meaningful access to enriching cross-border academic experiences.

4. Annexes

Annex 1: Administrative data

Institution	
Name in RIO	Universiteit Leiden
Adress	Rapenburg 70, 2311 EZ Leiden
Website	www.universiteitleiden.nl/en
BRIN number	21PB

Programme	
Programme name in RIO	Midden-Oostenstudies
International name	Middle Eastern studies
Location	Leiden
Programme number in RIO	56098
Orientation and level	Wo-bachelor
Research master	No
Language of instruction	Dutch
(Legal) professional requirements	No
All study programmes/tracks/specialisations	• Arabische taal en cultuur • Islamstudies • Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur • Moderne Midden-Oostenstudies • Perzische taal en cultuur • Turkse taal en cultuur
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
Working with units of learning outcomes (full-time, part-time, dual)	No
External assessment group classification	WO Regiostudies 1/ Area Studies 1
Submission date of accreditation report	1 mei 2026
Other (e.g. name change or extension of study duration)	No

Institution	
Name in RIO	Universiteit Leiden
Adress	Rapenburg 70, 2311 EZ Leiden
Website	www.universiteitleiden.nl/en
BRIN number	21PB

Programme	
Programme name in RIO	Midden-Oosten Studies
International name	Middle Eastern studies
Location	Leiden
Programme number in RIO	60842
Orientation and level	Wo-Master
Research master	No
Language of instruction	English
(Legal) professional requirements	No
All study programmes/tracks/specialisations	No
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
Working with units of learning outcomes (full-time, part-time, dual)	No
External assessment group classification	WO Regiostudies 1/ Area Studies 1
Submission date of accreditation report	May 1st 2026
Other (e.g. name change or extension of study duration)	The master's programme indicates that it wishes to change its name from master Midden-Oostenstudies to master Middle Eastern Studies.

Annex 2: Intended learning outcomes

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

Intended learning outcomes bachelor Midden-Oostenstudies

1. Algemeen

Afgestudeerden van de opleiding hebben de onderstaande eindkwalificaties bereikt, gerangschikt volgens de Dublin-descriptoren:

1.a Kennis en inzicht

- kritisch bewustzijn van theorieën op het gebied van regiostudies.
- kennis van de regels met betrekking tot wetenschappelijke integriteit

1.b Toepassen van kennis en inzicht

- De afgestudeerde heeft de vaardigheid om de verschillende theoretische benaderingen op het gebied van regiostudies te herkennen en tenminste twee daarvan zelf toe te passen.
- De afgestudeerde heeft de noodzakelijke academische vaardigheden om een BA-eindwerkstuk te schrijven en bediscussiëren.
- De afgestudeerde heeft de vaardigheid de regels met betrekking tot wetenschappelijke integriteit zelf toe te passen.

De Dublin-descriptoren oordeelvorming, communicatie en leervaardigheden zijn opgenomen in bijlage C van het Facultaire deel van de OER.

Voorts leiden de verschillende deelgebieden tot de volgende eindkwalificaties:

2. Geschiedenis

2.a Kennis en inzicht:

- algemene kennis van de taalkundige geschiedenis van het Midden-Oosten.
- algemene kennis van, en inzicht in, historische ontwikkelingen in het Midden-Oosten en een basaal begrip van methoden en technieken van de geschiedwetenschap.
- grondige kennis van de geschiedenis en actuele ontwikkelingen in het door haar/hem gekozen taalgebied.

2.b Toepassen van kennis en inzicht:

- De afgestudeerde is in staat kennis en inzicht op dit deelgebied toe te passen in analyses van bronnenmateriaal en in mondelinge en schriftelijke presentaties en hierover inhoudelijk zinvol te discussiëren.

3. Cultuur

3.a Kennis en inzicht:

- kennis van aspecten van culturele productie, zoals uitvoerende kunsten, literatuur en materiële cultuur.
- kennis van de manier waarop maatschappijen in het moderne Midden-Oosten omgaan met hun cultureel erfgoed.

3.b Toepassen van kennis en inzicht:

- De afgestudeerde is in staat kennis en inzicht op dit deelgebied toe te passen in analyses van bronnenmateriaal en in mondelinge en schriftelijke presentaties en hierover inhoudelijk zinvol te discussiëren.

4. Maatschappij

4.a Kennis en inzicht:

- algemene kennis van de geschiedenis, actuele ontwikkelingen en instituten van religies in het Midden-Oosten. Daarbij beschikt de afgestudeerde over dieper inzicht in ten minste een van deze religies, met name met betrekking tot haar rol in de maatschappij.
- algemene kennis van de geschiedenis van en ontwikkelingen in de antropologie en sociologie van het Midden-Oosten. Inzicht in de rol van hedendaagse politieke bewegingen en ideologieën in het Midden-Oosten.

4.b Toepassen van kennis en inzicht:

- De afgestudeerde is in staat kennis en inzicht op dit deelgebied toe te passen in analyses van bronnenmateriaal en in mondelinge en schriftelijke presentaties en hierover inhoudelijk zinvol te discussiëren.

I Afstudeerrichting Arabische taal en cultuur

In aanvulling op bovenstaande eindkwalificaties gelden onderstaande eindkwalificaties voor de afstudeerrichting Arabische taal en cultuur:

- Kennis van en ervaring met diverse tekstgenres in geschreven en gesproken vorm uit verschillende periodes en regio's van het Arabische taal- en cultuurgebied zowel in het Modern Standaard Arabisch als in een van de dialecten (Egyptisch of Marokkaans Arabisch).
- Inzicht in hoe deze verschillende gesproken en geschreven culturele uitingen passen in hun directe (historische, religieuze, sociale, culturele, taalkundige, geografische) context en zich verhouden tot ontwikkelingen in het Midden-Oosten en de islamitische wereld in bredere zin.

II Afstudeerrichting Perzische taal en cultuur

In aanvulling op bovenstaande eindkwalificaties gelden onderstaande eindkwalificaties voor de afstudeerrichting Perzische taal en cultuur:

1. Geschiedenis: Kennis van de geschiedenis en historiografie van het Perzische cultuurgebied, met een focus op Iran en aandacht voor Afghanistan en (delen van) Centraal-Azië
2. Cultuur: Kennis van de geschiedenis van het Perzisch en de cultuurproductie met betrekking tot het Perzisch in brede zin; kennis van en ervaring met diverse tekstgenres en hun cultuurhistorische en maatschappelijke context; algemene kennis van de materiële cultuur van het Perzische cultuurgebied.
3. Maatschappij: Algemene kennis van sociale structuren, politieke ontwikkelingen en de rol van religie in het Perzisch cultuurgebied, met een focus op Iran en aandacht voor Afghanistan en (delen van) Centraal-Azië.

III Afstudeerrichting Turkse taal en cultuur

In aanvulling op bovenstaande eindkwalificaties gelden onderstaande eindkwalificaties voor de afstudeerrichting Turkse taal en cultuur:

1. Geschiedenis: Kennis van de geschiedenis en historiografie van het Osmaanse Rijk en Turkije.
2. Cultuur:
 - a) algemene kennis van de geschiedenis van de Turkse narratieve cultuur in literatuur, film en media.
 - b) algemene kennis van de Turkse beeldende kunst en materiële cultuur.

IV Afstudeerrichting Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur

In aanvulling op bovenstaande eindkwalificaties gelden onderstaande eindkwalificaties voor de afstudeerrichting Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur:

1. Geschiedenis: Kennis van de geschiedenis en historiografie van het Hebreeuws en de staat Israël.
2. Cultuur: Algemene kennis van het jodendom en cultuurproductie in het Hebreeuws binnen en buiten de staat Israël.
3. Maatschappij: Kennis van de sociale structuren, politiek en economie van het huidige Israël.

V Afstudeerrichting Moderne Midden-Oostenstudies

In aanvulling op bovenstaande eindkwalificaties gelden onderstaande eindkwalificaties voor de afstudeerrichting Moderne Midden-Oostenstudies:

1. Geschiedenis:
 - a. Grondige kennis van de (moderne) geschiedenis van het Midden-Oosten.
2. Maatschappij:
 - a) inzicht in fundamentele socioculturele processen en ontwikkelingen die relevant zijn voor het moderne Midden-Oosten
 - b) algemene kennis van de geschiedenis en ontwikkelingen op het gebied van politieke wetenschappen en economie van het Midden-Oosten.
 - c) inzicht in relevante sociaaleconomische en politieke processen en ontwikkelingen die relevant zijn voor het moderne Midden-Oosten.
 - d) meer uitgebreide kennis van de rol van de islam in de moderne wereld.

VI Afstudeerrichting Islamstudies

In aanvulling op bovenstaande eindkwalificaties gelden onderstaande eindkwalificaties voor de afstudeerrichting Islamstudies:

1. Kritisch bewustzijn van theorieën op het gebied van religiestudies. De afgestudeerde heeft de vaardigheid om de verschillende theoretische benaderingen te herkennen.
2. Meer uitgebreide kennis van de rol van de islam in de moderne wereld.

VII Taalvaardigheid

Doelen in termen van het Europees Referentiekader taalvaardigheid, met betrekking tot respectievelijk Arabisch (afstudeerrichting Arabische taal en cultuur), Perzisch (Perzische taal en cultuur), Turks (Turkse taal en cultuur) of Hebreeuws (Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur):

<i>Arabisch</i>	BA1	BA2	BA3
Luisteren	A1	B1	B1
Lezen	A2	B1	B2
Gesproken interactie	A1	A2	A2
Gesproken productie	A2	B1	B1
Schrijven	A2	B1	B1

<i>Turks, Hebreeuws, Perzisch:</i>	BA1	BA2	BA3
Luisteren	A1	B1	B1
Lezen	A2	B1	B2
Gesproken interactie	A2	B2	B2
Gesproken productie	A2	B1	B1
Schrijven	A2	B1	B1

Voorts leidt elke Leidse geesteswetenschappelijke opleiding op tot facultair geformuleerde algemene academische vaardigheden. Deze hebben betrekking op de Dublin descriptor Oordeelsvorming, Communicatie en Leervaardigheden en zijn opgenomen in bijlage A bij het facultaire deel van de OER.

Intended learning outcomes master Middle Eastern studies

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

1. Knowledge and understanding:

- a. a profound insight into the current issues, core concepts and research questions in the relevant disciplines and regional fields of the programme;
- b. a thorough understanding of various textual corpuses (or other primary source materials), theories and methodological approaches and research techniques that underwrite Middle Eastern Studies;
- c. for students taking beginner's level language modules, an appropriate foundation to build upon in further studies (A1 in listening, reading, writing, spoken interaction, and spoken production according to the Common European Framework).

- d. for students taking advanced language modules, a proficiency in the Middle Eastern language of their choice sufficient to use relevant primary sources in research;
- e. the ability to develop a conceptual framework suitable for addressing relevant problems and issues;
- f. the ability to recognize the relationship between theory, method and research context;
- g. a thorough knowledge of and insight into the interdisciplinary position of the study subject; and
- h. a thorough understanding of the relevance of the study subject outside of academia.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding:

- a. the capacity to critically apply theoretical and interpretative approaches when conducting basic independent research in Middle Eastern Studies;
- b. the capacity to deploy theoretical and methodological tool-sets derived from the humanities and/or social sciences for the analysis and interpretation of the object of inquiry;
- c. the ability to critically analyse primary and secondary sources;
- d. the ability to independently formulate, perform and assess research at a level suitable for preparing students for an academic career.

3. Making judgments:

- a. the ability to select, compile, compare and analyse discipline-related literature and sources independently, using traditional and/or modern approaches;
- b. the ability to independently study discipline-related literature and to assess these as to their quality and reliability.

4. Communication

- a. the capacity to report independently on relevant research that has been carried out according to current academic standards for the field of research;
- b. the ability to write research reports in academic English; and
- c. the ability to give cogent oral presentations;

5. Learning skills

- a. the capacity to apply learning skills that allow them to initiate and conduct a research project independently, under academic supervision. This includes:
 - i. The ability to formulate a clear and well-argued problem under academic supervision;
 - ii. the ability to break these problems down into clear and manageable research questions;
 - iii. the ability to design and execute a research programme that is both innovative and feasible;
 - iv. the capacity to apply ideas, instructions and constructive criticism of supervisors and peers and in turn offer feedback to the work of others; and the ability to set up a realistic work schedule and keep to the agreed time guidelines

Annex 3: Curriculum outline

B Midden-Oostenstudies

JAAR 1	EC	Arabishe taal en cultuur	Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur	Perzische taal en cultuur	Turkse taal en cultuur	Mod. Midden-Oostenstudies	Islamstudies
Facultair kerncurriculum							
Area Studies	5	x	x	x	x	x	
Inleiding religiewetenschappen	5						x
Opleidingsbrede cursussen							
Talenpanorama van het Midden-Oosten	5	x	x	x	x	x	x
Geschiedenis van het Midden-Oosten (600-1600)	5	x	x	x	x	x	x
History of the modern Middle East: transformations and challenges	5	x	x	x	x	x	x
Seminar Midden-Oosten 1	5	x	x	x	x	x	x
Specialisatie Arabische taal en cultuur							
Modern Standard Arabic 1	10	x					
Modern Standard Arabic 2	10	x					
Modern Standard Arabic 3	5	x					
Arabic texts 2: media Arabic	5	x					
Introduction to the study of Islam	5	x					
Specialisatie Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur							
Beginner's Hebrew	10		x				
Pre-Intermediate Hebrew	10		x				
Grammatica Hebreeuws	5		x				
Topics in Israel Studies: state building – from settlement to regional integration (1882-present)	5		x				
Jews and Judaism: an introduction	5		x				
Specialisatie Perzische taal en cultuur							
Persian language and culture 1	10			x			
Persian language and culture 2	10			x			
Media Persian	5			x			
History of Persian language and culture	5			x			
Introduction to the study of Islam	5			x			
Specialisatie Turkse taal en cultuur							
Beginner's Turkish	10				x		
Pre-Intermediate Turkish	10				x		
Turkish through media	5				x		
Turkse 'teksten': van Inscripties tot televisieseries	5				x		
Introduction to the study of Islam	5				x		
Specialisatie Mod. Midden-Oostenstudies							
Kies één taal: Beginner's Hebrew, Beginner's Turkish, Modern Standard Arabic 1, Persian language and culture 1	10					x	

JAAR 1	EC	Arabishe taal en cultuur	Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur	Perzische taal en cultuur	Turkse taal en cultuur	Mod. Mid-den-Oosten-studies	Islamstudies
Islamitische kunst en materiële cultuur	5					X	
Political Islam	5					X	
Topics in Israel Studies: state building – from settlement to regional integration (1882-present)	5					X	
International relations in the Middle East	5					X	
Specialisatie Islamstudies							
Modern Standard Arabic 1	10						X
Modern Standard Arabic 2	10						X
Modern Standard Arabic 3	5						X
Political Islam	5						X

JAAR 2	EC	Arabishe taal en cultuur	Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur	Perzische taal en cultuur	Turkse taal en cultuur	Mod. Mid-den-Oosten-studies	Islamstudies
Facultair kerncurriculum							
Wetenschapsfilosofie	5	X	X	X	X	X	X
Opleidingsbrede cursussen							
Economies of the Middle East	5	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kies 1 cursus: Osmaanse geschiedenis en cultuur, of The living Quran	5	X	X	X	X	X	X
Buitenlandverblijf Midden-Oostenstudies	30	X	X	X	X	X	X
Specialisatie Arabische taal en cultuur							
Arabic literature	5	X					
Research Analysis through Arabic sources	5	X					
Kies 1 cursus: Spoken Arabic: Egyptian, of Gesproken Arabisch: Marokkaans	5	X					
Specialisatie Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur							
Intermediate Hebrew	10		X				
Teksten Hebreeuws	5		X				
Specialisatie Perzische taal en cultuur							
Intermediate Persian	5			X			
History of contemporary Iran	5			X			
Modern Persian texts	5			X			
Specialisatie Turkse taal en cultuur							
Intermediate Turkish	10				X		
Osmaans 1	5				X		

JAAR 2	EC	Arabishe taal en cultuur	Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur	Perzische taal en cultuur	Turkse taal en cultuur	Mod. Midden-Oostenstudies	Islamstudies
Specialisatie Mod. Midden-Oostenstudies							
Anthropology of the Middle East	5					x	
Diasporas and minorities in the Middle East	5					x	
Ideology and politics in the Middle East	5					x	
Specialisatie Islamstudies							
Islam and society	5						x
Islamic law	5						x
Sufism: history, religion and material culture	5						x

JAAR 3	EC	Arabishe taal en cultuur	Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur	Perzische taal en cultuur	Turkse taal en cultuur	Mod. Midden-Oostenstudies	Islamstudies
Opleidingsbrede cursussen							
Comparative literatures of the Middle East	5	x	x	x	x	x	x
BA-eindwerkstuk Midden-Oostenstudies en seminar	15	x	x	x	x	x	x
Specialisatie Arabische taal en cultuur							
Kies 1 cursus: History of Central Asia & Afghanistan, History of contemporary Iran, of Sufism: history, religion and material culture	5	x					
Specialisatie Hebreeuwse taal en cultuur							
Kies 1 cursus: History of Central Asia & Afghanistan, History of contemporary Iran, of Sufism: history, religion and material culture	5		x				
Specialisatie Perzische taal en cultuur							
Kies 1 cursus: History of Central Asia & Afghanistan, Geschiedenis van Marokko, of Sufism: history, religion and material culture	5			x			
Specialisatie Turkse taal en cultuur							
Kies 1 cursus: History of Central Asia & Afghanistan, History of contemporary Iran, of Sufism: history, religion and material culture	5				x		
Specialisatie Mod. Midden-Oostenstudies							
Kies 1 cursus: History of Central Asia & Afghanistan, History of contemporary Iran, of Sufism: history, religion and material culture	5					x	
Specialisatie Islamstudies							
Kies 1 cursus: History of Central Asia & Afghanistan, of History of contemporary Iran	5						x

M Middle Eastern Studies

Semester	Courses		
Sem. 1	Theories and Methods of Middle Eastern Studies (10 EC)	Elective* (10 EC)	Elective* (10 EC)
Sem. 2	Elective* (10 EC)	MA thesis (20 EC)	

* All electives on offer are listed in the Prospectus.

Annex 4: Programme site visit

Cluster WO Regiostudies 1 / Area Studies 1 – site visit 1

Day 1: 3 November 2025

- **MA North American Studies (NAS)**
- **BA/MA African Studies (AS)**

8:30	8:45	Welcome
8:45	9:15	Internal panel discussion
9:15	9:45	Faculty management
9:45	10:30	Programme management MA NAS en BA/MA AS
10:30	11:00	Internal panel discussion
11:00	11:45	Students MA NAS
11:45	12:30	Lunch + internal panel discussion
12:30	13:15	Lecturers MA NAS
13:15	13:30	Internal panel discussion
13:30	14:15	Students BA/MA African Studies
14:15	14:30	Internal panel discussion
14:30	15:15	Lecturers BA/MA African Studies
15:15	15:30	Internal panel discussion
15:30	16:15	Board of Examiners BA/MA AS en MA NAS
16:15	16:30	Internal panel discussion
16:30	17:15	Development dialogue (2 parallel sessions)
17 :15	18 :00	Internal panel discussion / drafting findings + Additional questions programme management

Day 2: 4 November 2025

- **BA/MA Middle Eastern Studies (MOS)**
- **BA/MA Latin American Studies (LAS)**

8:30	9.00	Welcome + internal panel discussion
9:00	9:45	Programme management BA/MA MOS en BA/MA LAS
09:45	10.15	Internal panel discussion
10.15	11.00	Students BA/MA MOS
11:00	11:15	Internal panel discussion
11.15	12.00	Lecturers BA/MA MOS
12:00	12:45	Lunch + internal panel discussion
12.45	13.30	Students BA/MA LAS
13:30	14:00	Internal panel discussion
14.00	14.45	Lecturers BA/MA LAS
14:45	15.00	Internal panel discussion
15.00	15:45	Board of Examiners BA/MA MOS en BA/MA LAS
15:45	16.00	Internal panel discussion
16:00	16:45	Development dialogue (2 parallel sessions)
16.45	18.00	Internal panel discussion / drafting findings + Additional questions programme management

Day 3: 5 November 2025

- **BA/MA Russian Studies (RUS)**

8:30	8:45	Welcome
08:45	09.30	Internal panel discussion
09.30	10.00	Programme management BA/MA RUS
10.00	10:15	Internal panel discussion
10.15	11.00	Lecturers BA/MA RUS
11.00	11.45	Students BA/MA RUS
11.45	12:00	Internal panel discussion
12:00	12.30	Board of Examiners (BA/MA RUS)
12.30	13.15	Lunch
13.15	15.00	Internal panel discussion / drafting findings
14.30	15.00	Additional questions programme management
15:00	15:45	Development dialogue (BA/MA RUS)
15.45	16.30	Final management meeting for all programmes
16:30	17.15	Internal panel discussion
17.15	17.30	Oral report

Annex 5: Documents

Self-evaluation reports and annex

- Self-evaluation report BA Midden-Oostenstudies & MA Middle Eastern Studies

The digital appendices to the self-evaluation reports are listed below:

- A. Faculty of Humanities 2025 – concise description of the Faculty of Humanities’ organisation.
- B. Prospectus BA and MA Middle Eastern Studies (*Studiegidsen*)
- C. Description of the contents of the programme components, with a specification of the learning outcomes, objectives, teaching methods used, method of assessment, assigned literature, teaching staff and number of study credits.
- D. Educational Dashboard (Onderwijsdashboard) – access via guest account.
- E. Course and Examination Regulations
 1. BA and MA Faculty regulations (general stipulations)
 2. BA and MA Middle Eastern Studies (programme-specific stipulations)
- F. Staff overview Middle Eastern Studies
- G. Assessment plan BA and MA Middle Eastern Studies
- H. Rules and Regulations of the Board of Examiners
- I. Vision on Teaching and Learning Leiden University and Faculty of Humanities
- J. Manuals
 1. Guide to Teaching Quality Assurance
 2. Manual for Board of Examiners
 3. Teaching Evaluation Framework
 4. Manual for Programme Committees
 5. Faculty of Humanities Assessment Framework
- K. Thesis Assessment at the Faculty of Humanities

Additional documentation

- AI guide for teachers FGW Leiden University
- Implementing AI in your curriculum FGW Leiden University
- Guidelines for Student Use of Generative AI FGW University Leiden
- Annual Reports of the Board of Examiners
- Minutes of the Programme Committee
- Annual reports BA and MA Middle Eastern Studies

Selection of final products

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed fifteen final projects from the bachelor's programme in Middle Eastern Studies. The selection ensured a balanced distribution in terms of tracks, grades, topics, and supervisors.

Grade Range	Number of theses	Selected
5,5-6,9 sufficient	15	3
7,0-8,4 good	51	10
8,5-10 very good	10	2
Total	76	15

Tracks	Number of theses	Selected
Arabic Language and Culture	23	5
Hebrew Language and Culture	4	1
Persian Language and Culture	5	1
Turkish Language and Culture	9	2
Modern Middle Eastern Studies	28	5
Islam Studies	7	1
Total	76	15

The details of the reviewed final projects are known to Odion Onderzoek and are available upon request.

Selection of final products

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed fifteen final projects from the master's programme in Middle Eastern Studies. The programme does not offer any specialisations. The selection ensured a balanced distribution in terms of grades, topics, and supervisors.

Grade Range	Number of theses	Selected
5,5-6,9 sufficient	13	2
7,0-8,4 good	83	10
8,5-10 very good	17	3
Total	113	15

The details of the reviewed final projects are known to Odion Onderzoek and are available upon request.