

M North American Studies Leiden University **Assessment report**

4 maart 2026



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1. Summary

This report describes the programme assessment of the academic master North American Studies offered by Leiden University.

Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes

The panel finds that the master's programme in North American Studies presents a clear and distinctive profile, characterized by its post-exceptionalist approach in which the United States is studied within broader international and transnational contexts. This perspective enables students to critically engage with American exceptionalism and distinguishes the programme within the national academic landscape. Given the programme's predominantly U.S.-focused content, the panel invites the programme to reconsider whether the current name reflects its scope and to ensure that prospective students are clearly informed of this emphasis. The panel commends the strong integration with research institutes (LUCAS, LUIH, RIAS) and the active collaborations with national and international partners, while noting that further efforts to enhance national visibility would be beneficial. The intended learning outcomes are clearly formulated, aligned with the Dublin descriptors, and appropriate to the master's level. The panel values the strengthening of the interdisciplinary methodological component since the previous site visit but advises the programme explicitly to encourage examiners to pay particular attention to this aspect when assessing theses.

The panel issues a positive judgement regarding the requested name change from master Noord-Amerikastudies to master North American Studies.

Overall, the panel concludes that **Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes** is met.

Standard 2 – Teaching-learning environment

The panel concludes that the master's programme in North American Studies offers a coherent and well-structured curriculum, sequenced according to the Leiden level system to ensure a logical progression toward the master's thesis. Thematic coherence is strong, with recurring topics such as human rights, migration, and cultural identity, and the integration of research and education is effective. The panel encourages the programme to broaden its regional scope beyond the U.S., for example by embedding perspectives on Mexico and Canada, and to explore collaborations with related programmes, such as the Latin-American programme, to enhance visibility and student intake, especially if the current MA North American Studies label is retained. It also advises actively promoting the February intake, which remains relatively small. The panel finds that the programme offers a strong range of transferable skills, with digital humanities forming a distinctive and well-integrated component. While the panel is positive about the development of these skills, it notes that students would benefit from clearer insight into how these competences translate to professional contexts and therefore recommends making employability skills more explicit within the curriculum. The panel also advises the programme to offer

more structured, discipline-specific guidance on how to use GenAI tools responsibly and effectively within the field of North American Studies.

The panel commends the lecturers for their commitment and expertise, which create a supportive and intellectually stimulating learning environment. The panel praises the programme for the high level of coordination among staff and the consistent week-to-week alignment of courses, noting that this effective “bridge-building” between disciplines is both impressive and clearly appreciated by students. Study guidance is well organized, with a dedicated study adviser and clear support structures, including facilities for students with disabilities. The panel appreciates the measures taken to help students manage the sometimes challenging demands of the programme, by implementing the thesis seminar, methodological workshops, and the red-yellow-green tiered system to identify students at risk of falling behind. At the same time, the panel advises continued careful monitoring of workload to ensure that students can meet the programme’s requirements effectively.

The choice of English as the language of instruction is fully justified on academic, professional, and international grounds, and contributes to a diverse classroom environment.

Overall, the panel concludes that **Standard 2 – Teaching-Learning environment** is met.

Standard 3 – Student assessment

The panel finds that the programme has a clear, professionally structured assessment system, well aligned with faculty policy (OER, Faculty Assessment Framework, and Rules and Regulations), and supported by an assessment plan that transparently links intended learning outcomes to courses and testing formats. The curriculum shows a coherent progression towards the master’s thesis—through assessments such as the historiographical essay and a substantial research paper—so that students are step by step prepared for independent research. The panel commends the effective use of diverse and innovative assessment formats, including teach-ins, podcasts, and peer reviews, which foster both academic and transferable skills. The panel finds that the Board of Examiners performs its statutory duties conscientiously and transparently, effectively safeguarding the validity, reliability and independence of assessment, and encourages the continued use of clear, discipline-appropriate rubrics across all assessment types.

At the same time, the panel notes several points for further improvement. The panel recommends strengthening the consistency of thesis grading by making the link between feedback, criteria and final mark more explicit and by clarifying the weighting of categories, and it encourages the continued use of calibration to support uniform standards. The panel values the programme’s thoughtful approach to academic integrity in the context of GenAI; however, it advises the programme to develop a more constructive, discipline-specific vision that trains students to engage with these tools responsibly.

Overall, the panel concludes that **Standard 3 – student assessment** is met.

Standard 4 – Achieved learning outcomes

The panel concludes that the final projects convincingly demonstrate students' attainment of the programme's intended learning outcomes. Across all key areas, students show strengths in integrating literature, using advanced academic sources, demonstrating originality, and engaging in forward-looking research reflection. While the level of execution varies, all theses meet the expectations of a master's programme, with the strongest examples clearly exceeding them. The topics are original, timely, and socially relevant, and students contribute meaningfully to current academic and societal debates.

Graduate performance further confirms the achievement of the final level. Alumni successfully find employment in education, diplomacy, media, and cultural institutions, and there is a strong record of progression into PhD positions in both the Netherlands and the U.S. The panel commends the programme for the very high level of student satisfaction and the above-average NSE score on labour market preparation, which together underline the programme's effectiveness in preparing graduates for diverse career paths. The panel notes that the alumni mentor network is still in its early stages of development and considers that further expansion and operationalization of these initiatives could significantly strengthen the programme's connection to the professional field.

Overall, the panel concludes that **Standard 4 – Achieved learning outcomes** is met.

The master's programme North American Studies meets all four standards. Considering this, the panel communicates at the final opinion 'positive' to the NVAO for the accreditation of the master North American Studies at Leiden University.

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

Date: 4 March 2026



Prof. dr. Gert Buelens
(chair)



Julia Roosenboom 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 *Area Studies I*. This cluster comprises 24 programs 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 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, Gent 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 *zentrum für Literatur*
- 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
- Dr. Lisa Gaufman (member + external reviewer), Assistant Professor of Russian Discourse and Politics, University of Groningen

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 Appendix 5.

After reviewing the documentation (see appendix 5), 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 October 16th, the panel members discussed their first impressions and identified key topics for discussion.

Staff and students of the programmes within the visitation group *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. Appendix 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 (LU) 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 programmes¹. 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 website². 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 Rotterdam³, and internationally, among others, within the League of European Research Universities⁴.

Programme

The master's programme in *North American Studies* at Leiden University offers a multidisciplinary and historically grounded exploration of the United States, with particular emphasis on its history, culture, and literature. While the programme primarily focuses on the U.S., it also critically examines the country's role within the broader regional and global context, as well as the reciprocal influences between the U.S. and the world. Students engage with major themes such as slavery, migration, and emancipation movements, international relations and human rights, immigration and ethnicity, identity constructions and memory politics, and environmental justice. Through this comprehensive approach, the programme equips students with advanced analytical and academic skills, preparing them for careers

¹ See: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/over-ons/feiten-en-cijfers>

² See: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/over-ons/profiel>

³ See: <https://www.leiden-delft-erasmus.nl/nl/home>

⁴ See: <https://www.leru.org/>

in a wide range of fields including education, journalism, business, politics, government policy, publishing, IT, and research, both within the Netherlands and internationally.

Developments since the last accreditation

This programme was last assessed in 2019. The previous panel has made the following recommendations:

- The panel recommends making the Leiden profile more explicit in the final qualifications, particularly regarding the various methodologies students acquire.
- The panel recommends investing in international student intake to enable the realization of an international classroom.
- The panel recommends improving the content of the thesis seminars.
- The panel recommends better alignment of the content of elective courses.

In response to the site visit of 2019, Leiden University has made the profile more explicit in the OER, restructured the thesis seminar to include more attention to (interdisciplinary) methodologies, and worked, through collegial intervention, on a better fit between individual electives. The programme has taken steps to attract international students in line with the previous recommendation, including developing promotional materials in collaboration with the communications department, considering participation in international education fairs, and implementing targeted recruitment strategies towards specific groups such as International Studies bachelor students specializing in North America.

The current panel has examined how the programme has followed up on the recommendations of the previous panel and concludes that the programme has initiated positive developments and has adequately addressed the recommendations. This will be discussed further under the relevant standards.

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 of the programme

The master's programme in North American Studies (60 EC) at Leiden University takes an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to the study of the United States (U.S.), with a particular emphasis on examining key aspects of American history, culture, and literature, from a historical perspective and within an international context. Special attention is given to themes such as emancipation struggles, human rights, migration, global interactions, U.S. exceptionalism, and cultural identities. This approach enables students to discover connections between historical events and cultural and literary developments. The focus of the programme is on the U.S., but not in isolation: students also study the U.S. in relation to other parts of the world. Upon completion, graduates are equipped to enter the cultural and public sectors with a comprehensive, historically grounded perspective on the global interactions that shape and connect both North America and Europe.

The panel considers the current focus on exceptionalism as a well-chosen thematic entry point for integrating multiple disciplinary perspectives. Through this perspective, the programme convincingly distinguishes itself from other programmes within the national academic landscape. However, the panel notes the programme deliberately focusses on the U.S. It therefore questions whether the current name of the programme fully corresponds with the emphasis in the programme. At the same time, the panel recognizes that, within the limited scope of a one-year master's programme, it is necessary to prioritize certain regional perspectives. Given the predominantly U.S.-oriented content, the panel invites the programme to reflect on whether its current name reflects the actual scope of study. The panel further advises the programme to ensure that prospective students are explicitly informed, prior to enrolment, that the programme is predominantly focused on the U.S.—a point the University already conveys effectively on its website.

The programme maintains strong collaborative ties with its home institutes: Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS) and Leiden University Institute for History (LUIH), and with the three main Leiden bachelor's programmes from which most students progress into the master's: English Language and Culture, History, and International Studies. It also engages actively with other North American Studies programmes in the Netherlands through the Netherlands American Studies Association (NASA), with Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS) playing a central role in this network. The

programme further benefits from its partnership with the John Adams Institute, cohosting international speaker events. These networks and institutes are actively involved in research and debate on current issues in American Studies and related disciplines. Through these collaborations, the programme can directly integrate new insights and trends into the curriculum, ensuring its relevance and academic rigour.

The panel commends the programme on the strong connection to research, enabled by the integration with LUCAS and LUIH and the close ties with the RIAS. At the same time, the panel notes that the programme's national visibility could be further enhanced, particularly beyond its current academic and institutional networks. While the programme is perceived as active and visible, this visibility appears to be concentrated largely within its existing disciplinary and regional circles. The programme acknowledges this issue and is actively addressing it through public-facing events and partnerships with national organizations, including the RIAS, the John Adams Institute, the Network for Teaching Indigenous Studies in Europe, and the Netherlands American Studies Association. The panel welcomes these initiatives and encourages the programme to expand them further, for example by strengthening outreach to related disciplines such as History and English Language and Literature programmes at universities outside Leiden, where the programme may be less well known. The panel further emphasizes the importance of maintaining a strong February intake and considers targeted national outreach to be a valuable opportunity in this regard. In addition, the panel notes that these efforts not only strengthen the programme's national profile, but, as the programme itself reflects, can also have a positive impact on student recruitment.

Intended learning outcomes

The programme has defined its intended learning outcomes across five categories of final qualifications, which align with the Dublin descriptors: 'Knowledge and understanding', 'Applying knowledge and understanding', 'Judgement', 'Communication', and 'Learning skills'. For an overview of the intended learning outcomes, see **Annex 2**. The final qualifications are tailored to the choice of profile of the programme, specify the academic skills that students develop, and prepare them for the labour market. Moreover, the qualifications show the scientific orientation of the programme on the master's level, by emphasizing independent research and the ability to compare and integrate knowledge and navigate complex information. In this respect, the programme specifically stresses the ability of students to critically analyze and contextualize primary sources. Communication skills are developed for both academic and public audiences, alongside collaborative, writing, and discussion abilities in English. Some examples of what students should have achieved by the end of the programme: *"comprehensive knowledge and understanding of major issues in the history, politics and culture of the United States [...]"*, *"the ability to apply knowledge of North American history and culture to current issues and developments, nationally and internationally"*, *"the ability to judge the relative merits of academic opinions and scholarly arguments on contemporary developments in North American Studies"*, and *"the learning abilities*

required to be able to follow post-master's professional training or a PhD programme of a largely self-determined or autonomous nature".

The intended learning outcomes are, according to the panel, clearly formulated and align well with the level of a master's programme as defined by the Dublin descriptors, as well as with the international orientation of the field of American Studies. The panel notes that the recommendation to strengthen the interdisciplinary methodological component has been implemented since the previous site visit; the faculty's thesis evaluation form for example includes multidisciplinary application of knowledge as an assessment criterion. At the same time, the panel considers it desirable that the programme explicitly encourage examiners to pay particular attention to this aspect when assessing theses.

Requested name change programme

The master's programme indicates that it wishes to change its name from master Noord-Amerikastudies to master North American Studies. The master's programme is offered entirely in English. The programme's target group consists of both Dutch and international students. Since the programme's inception, the English name has already been used—for example, on recruitment and programme information pages, as well as in the Study Guide. This is in line with the university's policy, in which master's programmes are offered in English. By changing the formal name to master North American Studies, the programme ensures that the official name corresponds to the name by which it is known among all students and staff. This improves recognizability. The panel concludes that the requested name change meets the NVAO criteria listed below and therefore issues a positive recommendation.

- The name provides sufficient insight into the content of the programme;
- The name aligns with what is customary within the sector to which the programme belongs and within the intended visitation group;
- There is no substantial change in content that would require a New Programme Assessment.

Conclusions

The panel concludes that the master's programme in North American Studies at Leiden University has a strong and distinctive profile, offering students an interdisciplinary understanding of North America's history, politics, literature, and cultures.

The programme is well embedded in the national academic landscape, and holds close ties to research institutes such as LUCAS, LUIH, and the RIAS. The intended learning outcomes are clearly formulated, aligned with the Dublin descriptors, and appropriate for a master's level. The panel encourages the programme to further enhance its national visibility and to embed its interdisciplinary methodology more explicitly in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Given the predominantly U.S.-focused content, the panel invites the programme to reflect on whether its current name reflects the actual scope

of study. The panel further advises the programme to ensure that prospective students are explicitly informed, prior to enrolment, that the programme is predominantly focused on the U.S.

The panel issues a positive judgement regarding the requested name change from master Noord-Amerikastudies to master North American Studies.

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

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

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

Findings and considerations

Content and structure of the curriculum

The master's programme North American Studies (60 EC) is designed to offer a coherent and clearly structured learning trajectory that leads students progressively toward the master's thesis. Courses are sequenced according to the Leiden level system⁵ (500–600), ensuring a gradual build-up of thematic understanding and academic skills that culminates in the master's thesis at level 600. For a full overview of the curriculum, see **Appendix 2**.

The core curriculum of the master's programme in North American Studies consists of four courses (a compulsory core course and three electives) of 10 EC each, integrated with a compulsory thesis seminar for which no separate credits are awarded, and a thesis project (20 EC). These core courses provide a comprehensive introduction to key themes, theories, historiographical debates, and methodological approaches in the field. These courses also develop foundational skills in critical reading, historiography, and academic presentation. Students may start the programme in September or February. Students who enroll in September take the compulsory core course *Major Issues in American History and Culture* in their first semester, which has the same structure and objective as *Readings in American History*, the core course of the February entrants. At first, the panel had questions about possible undesirable effects of the programme's two intake moments. During the site visit, it became clear that the February intake enables a seamless transition from the pre-master into the master's programme. The panel regards this alignment as a positive feature and appreciates the way the programme facilitates this. However, the panel notes that the number of students entering in February is relatively low and therefore advises the programme to actively promote this intake.

⁵ Zie: [bijlage-vereisten-onderwijsprogramma.pdf](#)

In addition to the core course, students follow three electives, of which two fall in their first semester of study. Within these electives, students deepen their expertise through advanced training in primary source analysis, independent research, and peer-led teaching. The programme makes sure that in each semester courses are offered both in the field of literature and (popular) culture and in the field of history and politics. The themes of the electives are closely related to the research and expertise of the lecturer. Students value the flexibility of lecturers, who are willing to accommodate and support specific research interests even outside their own areas of expertise. While this is highly appreciated, during the site visit students indicated that they would welcome a broader range of elective courses, particularly those focusing on other regions within North America, such as Mexico and Canada. The panel learned that the programme has already discussed, during the most recent *Heidag*, how it could become more inclusive in terms of regional perspectives. The panel considers such an expansion to be a valuable academic enrichment and encourages the programme to embed this more firmly within the curriculum. In the panel's view, broadening the elective offering and strengthening collaboration with other programmes – developments that are also welcomed by students – could not only enhance the programme's academic profile and visibility, but may also render the title *North American Studies* more appropriate in the future (see also standard 1). The panel therefore invites the programme to explore collaborations with other partners, such as the programme Latin American Studies, to achieve this.

The programme culminates in the completion of a master's thesis (20 EC). Students receive guidance throughout the thesis trajectory, both in a group setting via the thesis seminar and through regular individual supervision meetings; on average five sessions in one-on-one consultation. The thesis seminar provides practical support in designing a viable independent research project, including training in the use of digital archives, formulation of research questions, and project management. In direct response to a recommendation from the previous site visit, the programme has implemented a workshop that addresses methodological approaches within American Studies. Each student receives tailored methodological guidance in a workshop format based on their proposed project, which the panel views very positively.

The panel concludes that the programme offers a well-structured curriculum for students entering both in September and in February. It observes strong thematic coherence across courses, with recurring topics such as human rights, migration, and cultural identity. The panel also observes an effective and meaningful integration of research and education within the programme. By assigning level indicators (500–600) to each course in accordance with the Leiden system, the programme has clearly demonstrated that the curriculum follows a coherent and logical progression in terms of level.

Transferable skills

The programme offers students a range of transferable skills that are relevant across academic and professional contexts. These include critical thinking, academic writing, independent research, group assignments, digital skills, intercultural communication and the ability to analyse complex issues from multiple perspectives. Digital humanities have become a structural component in the programme; digital assignments, such as podcasting, are integrated into methodology and thematic courses. The programme encourages collaborative student work.

The panel is positive about the development of these skills within the curriculum. It notes that critical thinking is strongly emphasized and consistently linked to questions of positionality, representation and framing. The integration of digital skills is seen as a valuable and increasingly distinctive component.

Students express a desire for clearer articulation of how the skills they acquire during their studies translate into professional contexts and potential career paths. The panel observes that within the curriculum, students are offered limited exposure to the professional field through, for example, guest lectures or excursions. In light of this, the panel recommends that the programme make employability skills more explicit, ensuring that students gain a clearer understanding of how their academic, analytical, intercultural and digital competencies can be applied beyond the university setting.

With regard to Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), the panel heard from staff and students that in North American Studies, the emphasis on interpretation, contextualisation and critical reflection means that AI plays a different role than in data-driven fields. Lecturers explicitly warn students about potential biases and gaps in online information about North America. The panel suggests that the programme consider giving students further guidance on how to work responsibly and effectively with AI tools, tailored to the disciplinary context of North American Studies.

Internship

Students may substitute an internship for one elective (10 EC), which must include a research component. The programme actively encourages students to pursue internships. Students in North American Studies have successfully completed internships at, for example, *The Dutch Consulate in New York*, *NOS*, *The Dutch Central Bank*, *The Royal Library in The Hague* and the *Dutch Institute for Military History*. Internships are supervised both by a supervisor at the internship location and by an internship supervisor from the study programme, and generally span a period of three to six months. Extra-curricular internships, which do not require a research paper, must be approved by the Board of Examiners to be formally recognized on the diploma. For practical support, students can consult with the Career Service.

The panel concludes that internships with a research component, such as those offered at the Roosevelt Institute, can be completed within the regular curriculum and therefore do not lead to study delay. By contrast, internships without a research component, which fall outside the standard curriculum, inherently involve a conscious choice by students that may extend their study duration. Students themselves did not perceive this possibility as problematic. The programme provides options for internships that do not cause delay, while appropriately allowing students the freedom to choose placements that may require additional time. Students highly value these opportunities. The panel considers it positive that students receive strong, well-informed guidance from lecturers when making these decisions.

Admission, enrolment and academic alignment

For the master's programme, students must hold a bachelor's degree from a Dutch research university in the field of American Studies or another bachelor's degree from a Dutch research university in Humanities or Social Sciences, that includes components in the field of American Studies worth at least 30 credits. Students also need to submit an English proficiency test, as part of the language requirements.

The panel observes that the programme attracts a diverse student intake in terms of nationalities, academic backgrounds and level of prior knowledge of North American Studies. The panel regards this diversity as a clear strength, as it encourages lively discussions and multiple perspectives. At the same time, students with significant prior expertise sometimes find aspects of the curriculum insufficiently challenging, while others – with limited background in North American Studies – require more grounding. These differences become particularly apparent during the first semester, which students experience as especially demanding because they must familiarize themselves with methodologies in two or more disciplines. This challenge is most pronounced among students with a background in literary studies, who suddenly face a strong emphasis on history and on historiographical methods that are unfamiliar to them. Conversely, students with a historical background sometimes struggle with the literary components of the curriculum.

In this context, the panel appreciates the targeted measures the programme has introduced to support students in bridging differences in knowledge and skills. These include the thesis seminar, the methodological workshop in North American Studies, and the red-yellow-green tiered evaluation system that helps identify students who may benefit from additional attention. During the site visit, students emphasized that lecturers are highly engaged and proactive in offering guidance, which they experience as crucial in navigating unfamiliar methodologies and academic expectations. The flexibility built into assignments—such as the possibility to approach topics from either a historical or a literary perspective—further enables students to draw on their strengths while developing new competencies. Although the panel acknowledges the programme's strong commitment to supporting students, it advises continued

careful monitoring of workload to ensure that students can manage the demands of the programme effectively.

Study advice and student guidance

The panel finds that study guidance in the programme is well organised and contributes to an inclusive learning environment. The programme offers a clear and accessible system of study guidance. A dedicated study adviser acts as the primary point of contact for students, monitors study progress, holds individual meetings at key points throughout the programme, and refers students to relevant support services when needed. Students who require additional support due to a disability are directed to *Leiden University's Fenestra Disability Centre* and may receive further assistance from the faculty's adviser for students with functional impairments. The small scale of the programme allows the study adviser and teaching staff to maintain close contact with students, enabling early identification of potential study delays or personal difficulties.

Lecturers are described by students as approachable and supportive, offering guidance outside class when students experience challenges with academic skills, disciplinary background differences or the demands of the internship. The guidance is complemented by peer support and community building through the study association Leiden University North American Studies (LUNAS), which students consider valuable for academic and social integration and for exploring career interests.

Teaching staff

The teaching staff consists of six lecturers. All lecturers are Americanists. Four lecturers, including two professors and two assistant professors, work at the LUIH research institute and two assistant professors at LUCAS. All lecturers have obtained their University Teaching Qualification (*'Basiskwalificatie Onderwijs'*); the most recent hire is in the process of obtaining one. Lecturers are native or near-native English speakers and fully qualified to teach in English.

According to the panel, students are rightly very positive about the lecturers in the programme, describing them as highly committed and knowledgeable. The panel notes that the learning environment is characterized by an intimate setting and a pleasant, open atmosphere. During the site visit, students reported that the courses are consistently well aligned from week to week and that lecturers carefully coordinate their teaching. The panel considers this an impressive achievement and commends the programme for successfully *"building bridges"* between different disciplines.

In addition, the panel wishes to highlight and commend the teaching staff for their proactive efforts to professionalize in the field of Generative AI. The panel learned that lecturers attend seminars to deepen their knowledge of AI, which it considers a highly positive development, especially given the fact that (incoming) students are increasingly familiar with AI.

Language of instruction

Leiden University has chosen English as the language of instruction for its master's programmes based on three main considerations, as outlined in the faculty appendix of the Self-Evaluation Report. First, the academic rationale: English, as the lingua franca of international science, aligns with the in-depth academic orientation of the programmes. Second, the choice reflects the professional orientation of the programmes, as graduates increasingly operate within an international labour market where English plays a central role in communication, negotiation, and collaboration—both abroad and within the Netherlands. Third, the use of English supports the university's aim to make its (research) master's programmes accessible to international students, fostering a diverse classroom environment that enhances academic exchange and broadens perspectives. All of this, in the panel's review, fully justifies the choice of English as the language of instruction for the North American Studies programme.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the master's programme in North American Studies offers a well-structured curriculum, with strong thematic coherence across courses. The panel particularly praises the way in which the programme succeeds in "*building bridges*" between different disciplines. The panel notes the programme's pleasant and open learning environment. The lecturers are dedicated and knowledgeable, and their efforts are greatly appreciated by the students. The panel has taken note of the workload experienced by students, particularly during the first semester. It commends the measures taken to support students, while advising continued close monitoring of workload. The panel sees valuable opportunities to further enrich the curriculum, by expanding the regional scope and including perspectives on countries such as Mexico and Canada, especially if the current MA North American Studies label is retained. The panel encourages the programme to enhance their guidance on the responsible and effective use of AI tools, ensuring that this support is thoughtfully tailored to the disciplinary context of North American Studies. In addition, the panel recommends making employability skills more explicit, ensuring that students gain a clearer understanding of how their academic, analytical, intercultural and digital competencies can be applied beyond the university setting.

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

Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings and considerations

Testing principles

The assessment policy of the programme is largely harmonized with that of the other degree programmes in the faculty. This policy is laid down in the faculty-wide *Course and Examination Regulations (OER)*, a *Faculty Assessment Framework* and in joint *Rules and Regulations of the Boards of Examiners*. The assessments cover all intended learning outcomes, which are monitored via the programme's assessment plan. The assessment plan of the programme consists of two matrices. The first matrix links the intended learning outcomes to the courses, including the Leiden level indicators, as noted under standard 2 and the weighing of the course. The second matrix connects the courses to the testing formats, specifying the relative weight of each component.

The curriculum culminates in two major assignments prior to the master's thesis: a historiographical essay in the first semester and, within the electives, a substantial research paper. These assignments require students to engage in original primary source analysis and to critically position their work within ongoing scholarly debates. In this way, the programme seeks to prepare students for the independent research required for the master's thesis. The historiographical essay, submitted at the conclusion of the core courses *Major Issues* and *Readings*, functions as a preliminary research report for the thesis. Courses within the master's programme also incorporate practical skill-building exercises, such as student-led teach-ins (in which a group of students teaches a comprehensive hour-long workshop on a specific skill or subject to the rest of the student population) in *Migration Matters* and *American Climate Fictions*. Additional testing formats include research-based presentations and podcasts, in-class response papers, and peer reviews. All courses rely heavily on co-creation, collaborative thinking, and the promotion of fruitful and challenging scholarly debate and discussion, often on politically sensitive, complex and evolving issues.

The panel finds that the programme has established a clear and professional assessment policy, well aligned with the faculty framework. The panel concludes that the relationship between the intended learning outcomes and the assessment formats is transparent and traceable. Moreover, each intended learning outcome is addressed in multiple courses and is tied to several assessment moments. The panel therefore finds that the solid embedding of the intended learning outcomes is clearly reflected in the assessment structure of the curriculum. The panel notes a coherent progression in assessment methods that leads logically towards the master's thesis, thereby preparing students step by step for independent research. Students confirm this experience and indicate that they feel well-prepared to begin work on their thesis. In addition, the programme makes effective use of a variety of assessment formats, including

innovative and creative approaches, which contribute to the development of both academic and transferable skills. Students confirm that they appreciate the variety of formats, noting that creative and reflective assignments allow them to approach material from different angles.

Master's thesis assessment forms

Theses are assessed by two examiners independently. To this end, they use an online system with three forms: one for each assessor separately and one joint final assessment. If the examiners differ significantly in their evaluations (by two points or more), or if consensus cannot be reached, the Board of Examiners appoints a third examiner to determine the final grade, taking the earlier assessments into account. The programme uses a thesis assessment form based on faculty policy, requiring each of five broad assessment criteria, based on the Dublin descriptors. The panel notes that, in practice, every criteria is explicitly evaluated in the assessment forms.

The programme has introduced a student defence conversation (*het eindgesprek*), which takes place after both readers have discussed and agreed on their initial evaluation of the thesis, but before the final grade is communicated to the student. This conversation provides the student with an opportunity to respond to the questions of the second reader. Following the defence, the first and second reader reconvene to determine the final grade, with the possibility of making minor adjustments (up to ± 0.5 points) based on the student's performance during the defence. The panel is positive about the introduction of the thesis defence conversation and considers it a valuable addition to the assessment process.

The programme conducts structural calibration sessions to safeguard consistency, in which small groups of staff discuss a selection of randomly chosen theses. Although the panel appreciates these sessions and acknowledges the systematic attention to calibration, it notes that, in the theses reviewed, grades do not always align consistently with the written feedback: in several instances, the final mark appears either too high or too low compared to the justification provided on the assessment forms. Moreover, the panel found that the way in which holistic judgements (satisfactory, good or very good) are translated into a precise overall final grade (e.g. 7.1 or 8.6) could be made more transparent. The panel therefore recommends the programme to continue strengthening the consistency of thesis assessments by making the link between feedback, criteria and final grade more explicit, and by providing clearer guidance on the weighting of assessment categories.

Generative AI

During the site visit, the panel discussed the use of GenAI with lecturers, students and the Board of Examiners, noting that the present focus lies on its implications for assessment and academic integrity. As mentioned in standard 2, staff explicitly warn students about biases, inaccuracies and representational gaps in online information about North America, and students confirmed that this shapes a cautious approach to GenAI use. The panel considers it positive that the programme already employs a wide variety of assessment methods, such as oral presentation formats and in person writing assignments, and live workshoping of submitted written work. This limits opportunities for students to rely on AI-generated text alone and enables examiners to verify whether students genuinely understand the material.

At the same time, in the panel's view, the programme should also ensure that students learn to work with AI tools in responsible and discipline-appropriate ways. The panel therefore encourages the programme to continue engaging all stakeholders – lecturers, students and the Board of Examiners – in refining how GenAI is addressed in teaching and assessment.

Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners of the master's programme in North American Studies also oversees the master Literary Studies and the Research Master Arts, Literature and Media. The Board consists of four members drawn from these programmes, complemented by an external member with testing expertise, who advises the Board on assuring the quality of the tests. Recently, a sixth member from another university has joined, bringing additional expertise in Italian and other languages. The Board is further supported by an official secretary, who provides procedural and legal guidance to ensure compliance and consistency. The secretary reviews proposed decisions against relevant frameworks and legal provisions, such as the *Course and Examination Regulations* (CER) and the *Higher Education and Research Act* advises on policy and decision-making, trains new members, and manages the administrative processing, preparation, and archiving of decisions.

The panel finds that the Board of Examiners performs its statutory duties in a conscientious and transparent manner. During the site visit, the Board explained how it safeguards the quality of assessment by monitoring grade patterns, reviewing samples of theses annually, and checking the consistent application of procedures such as the use of a second reader. The Board also analyses feedback–grade alignment, potential grade inflation and the distribution of pass rates across courses, enabling it to identify trends and intervene where necessary. In its collaboration with staff, the Board emphasises the importance of shared understanding of procedures, criteria and expectations; both lecturers and Board members described this relationship as constructive.

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 discusses 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 and considers this development positive, provided that clear and discipline-appropriate rubrics are in place. Lecturers are therefore encouraged to ensure transparent criteria and consistent application across all assessment types.

The panel values the Board's systematic quality checks, including blind reviews of theses and feedback to all examiners, and notes that calibration sessions in the master's programme further support a consistent assessment culture. Overall, the panel concludes that the Board of Examiners effectively safeguards the validity, reliability and independence of assessment within the programme.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme has developed a robust and professionally structured assessment framework that is clearly aligned with faculty policies and ensures a transparent and traceable relationship between the intended learning outcomes, the curriculum and the assessment formats. The assessment framework is coherent and demonstrates a well-considered progression towards the master's thesis. The panel values the breadth of assessment formats and welcomes the programme's engagement with creative and academically rigorous forms of evaluation. At the same time, the panel advises the programme to further strengthen the consistency of thesis assessment by ensuring a clearer alignment between written feedback, assessment criteria and final grades, and by providing more explicit guidance on the weighting of criteria.

The panel is positive about the Board of Examiners, which fulfils its statutory duties in a conscientious, transparent and systematic manner and provides appropriate oversight of assessment quality. Calibration sessions, monitoring of grading patterns and regular reviews of theses contribute to a constructive and consistent assessment culture. With respect to GenAI, the panel appreciates the programme's careful approach to safeguarding academic integrity through diverse assessment formats and live, interactive testing. Nonetheless, the panel encourages the programme to further develop a constructive and discipline-appropriate pedagogical vision on GenAI, enabling students to learn to use such tools responsibly and critically.

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

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings and considerations

Final projects

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed a representative selection of 15 recently completed final projects from the programme, including the corresponding assessment forms. The selection process ensured a fair distribution across grades and examiners (see Appendix 5).

The panel concludes that the assessment system of the master's programme ensures that all intended learning outcomes are adequately tested, with the thesis serving as the key indicator of the achieved final level. The theses demonstrate that students are able to design and conduct independent, academically rigorous research that is closely aligned with current debates within the academic field.

Across all key learning outcomes, the panel observes that students show strong abilities in integrating scholarly literature, using advanced academic sources, demonstrating originality, and engaging in forward-looking research reflection within North American studies. While the execution varies—from more descriptive work with a journalistic tone to conceptually refined, academically mature writing, or relatively brief methodological reflection—all theses meet the expectations of master's-level work, with the strongest examples clearly exceeding them. The topics addressed are original, timely, and socially relevant, and students contribute meaningfully to ongoing academic and societal debates.

Performance of graduates

The panel concludes that alumni successfully find employment in fields such as education, diplomacy, media, and cultural institutions. In addition, there is a strong record of progression into PhD positions, both in the Netherlands and the U.S. The panel commends the programme for achieving very high levels of student satisfaction, with 89.9% of students indicating they would choose the programme again. In addition, the NSE score on labour market preparation (4/5) is clearly above the national average. Taken together, these outcomes demonstrate that the programme not only provides a positive educational experience but also equips students effectively for their future careers. The panel considers this a clear strength of the programme.

An alumni community has been cultivated through LinkedIn, where graduates remain connected and participate in local events. Together with the study association LUNAS, the programme organizes annual career luncheons that bring alumni and current students together. Leiden students also take part in national career events hosted by the Netherlands American Studies Association. To further support students in navigating career pathways, the programme is developing an "alumni mentor network". This

initiative aims to connect current students with graduates for career advice and professional networking opportunities. The panel notes that this alumni mentor network is still in its early stages of development and considers that further expansion and operationalization could significantly strengthen the programme's connection to the professional field. The panel sees potential for the alumni mentor network to play a more explicit role in helping students articulate and apply the transferable skills acquired in the curriculum - such as analytical, intercultural and digital competencies - in professional contexts.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that all theses meet the expectations of a master's level, with the strongest examples clearly exceeding them. The topics are original, timely, and socially relevant. Students contribute meaningfully to current academic and societal debates.

Alumni outcomes are strong, with graduates finding employment in diverse professional fields and progressing successfully into PhD positions in both the Netherlands and the U.S. High student satisfaction and above-average NSE scores on labour market preparation further underline the programme's effectiveness and relevance. The alumni mentor network, though promising, remains in an early stage of development. The panel advises further operationalizing and expanding the alumni mentor network to enhance graduates' career opportunities and to consolidate the programme's strong academic and professional profile.

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

Final conclusion

The NVAO approved panel has assessed the programme against four standards. The panel concludes that the **master's programme North American Studies** meets all standards (intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, student assessment and achieved learning outcomes) and thus rates the overall quality of the programme as positive.

Standard	Judgement
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
Teaching-learning environment <i>Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.</i>	Meets the standard
Student assessment <i>Standard 3: The programme has an adequate system of assessment in place.</i>	Meets the standard
Achieved learning outcomes <i>Standard 4: The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.</i>	Meets the standard
Final conclusion	Positive

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

- The panel considers the current focus on exceptionalism as a well-chosen thematic entry point for integrating multiple disciplinary perspectives.
- The panel commends the programme on the strong connection to research, enabled by the integration with LUCAS and LUIH and the close ties with the RIAS.
- The panel concludes that the programme offers an intimate and supportive learning environment, in which highly committed and approachable lecturers provide effective guidance tailored to students' varying academic backgrounds and needs.
- The panel appreciates the measures taken to help students manage the sometimes challenging demands of the programme, by implementing the thesis seminar, methodological workshops, and the red-yellow-green tiered system to identify students at risk of falling behind.

- The panel considers the alignment of the courses an impressive achievement and commends the programme for successfully “building bridges” between different disciplines.
- The panel concludes that the programme has a clear and professionally designed assessment policy in place, with a transparent and well-embedded alignment between the intended learning outcomes and the assessments.
- The panel finds that the programme makes effective use of a variety of assessment formats, including innovative and creative approaches, which contribute to the development of both academic and transferable skills.
- The panel concludes that the Board of Examiners fulfils its statutory duties conscientiously and transparently and is actively engaged in faculty-wide discussions on emerging issues such as the pedagogical and legal implications of GenAI.
- The panel concludes that the theses convincingly demonstrate students’ attainment of the programme’s final level, with meaningful contributions to current academic and societal debates.

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

- The panel advises the programme to consider whether its name reflects the actual scope of study and to ensure prospective students are explicitly informed that the programme is predominantly focused on the U.S.
- The panel notes that the programme’s national visibility could be further enhanced and encourages expansion of public-facing events and partnerships with organisations such as RIAS, the John Adams Institute, the Network for Teaching Indigenous Studies in Europe, and NASA.
- The panel observes that the interdisciplinary methodological component has been strengthened since the previous site visit but advises that the programme explicitly encourage examiners to pay particular attention to this aspect when assessing theses.
- The panel notes that the number of students entering in February is relatively low and advises the programme to actively promote this intake.
- The panel encourages the programme to embed the expansion of electives more firmly within the curriculum and explore collaborations with other partners, such as Latin American Studies.
- The panel encourages the programme to continue engaging all stakeholders in refining how GenAI is addressed in teaching and assessment, and to give students further guidance on how to work responsible and effectively with AI tools.
- The panel advises continued careful monitoring of workload to ensure that students can manage the demands of the programme effectively.

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

- The panel recommends that the programme make employability skills more explicit, ensuring that students gain a clearer understanding of how their academic, analytical, intercultural and digital competencies can be applied beyond the university setting.
- The panel recommends addressing recurring concerns such as discrepancies between feedback and final grades and promoting consistency across assessments.

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	Noord-Amerika Studies
International name	North American Studies
Location	Leiden
Programme number in RIO	60845
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 ECTS
Variant(s) (full-time, part-time, dual)	Fulltime
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 1, 2026
Requested name change from master Noord-Amerikastudies to master North American Studies	Yes

Annex 2: Intended learning outcomes

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

1. Knowledge and understanding

- a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of major issues in the history, politics, and culture of the United States, with
 - a focus on themes like emancipation struggles, migration, global interactions and conflicts, civil and human rights, cultural identities, and environmental justice, as well as the main scholarly and theoretical debates on these issues;
- b. historical understanding of the discourse of U.S. exceptionalism and the ability to reflect critically on it.
- c. knowledge and understanding of the United States in relation to the regions of North America and other parts of the world;
- d. knowledge of and insight into research methods that are used in the field of North American Studies;
- e. knowledge of and insight into the availability of digital tools and databases in the field of North American Studies.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding

- a. the ability to conduct independent research in the area of North American Studies, thereby showing the ability to comprehend and apply relevant theoretical insights and multidisciplinary methodological approaches;
- b. the ability to describe and justify the adopted research methods;
- c. the ability to independently formulate a clear and well-argued research question that is based on a problem that reflects insight into the key discussions and methods of the field;
- d. the ability to identify and collect primary and secondary sources in the field of North American Studies in conventional and digital archives;
- e. the ability to critically analyse primary sources and situate them in their cultural and historical context;
- f. the ability to apply knowledge of North American history and culture to current issues and developments;
- g. the ability to apply the acquired skills of analysis, research and communication in the field of North American Studies to other fields and professional contexts in which academic training at master's level is necessary or useful;

3. Judgment

- a. insight into the potential of (digital) sources and databases in the field of North American Studies and the ability to compare and make critical use of them;
- b. the ability to critically evaluate and utilise primary and secondary sources, to develop viable research questions, and construct an extended argument in the form of a master's thesis in the area of North American Studies;
- c. the ability to judge the relative merits of academic opinions and scholarly arguments on contemporary developments in North American Studies;

4. Communication

- a. the ability to orally present and defend in correct academic English the result of individual and/or group research, including the use of digital presentation software;
- b. the ability to effectively communicate research results in correct academic English in various formats, such as book reviews, research essays, and a master's thesis, as well as using digital formats, such as podcasts;
- c. the ability to provide constructive feedback to, and formulate criticism of, the work of others and the ability to evaluate the value of such criticism and feedback on one's own work and incorporate it;
- d. the ability to engage in academic debates about major issues in North American Studies;

5. Learning skills

- a. the ability to reflect critically on one's own learning process and functioning, both individually and in a team, and on one's own contribution to the learning output;
- b. the learning abilities required to be able to follow post-master's professional training or a PhD programme training of a largely self-determined or autonomous nature.

Annex 3: Curriculum outline

In 2025-2026, the following courses are offered:

North American Studies Curriculum 2025-2026			
Obligatory	Course	Semester	EC
(Sep. starters)	<i>Major Issues in American History and Culture</i>	I	10
(Feb. starters)	<i>Readings in American History</i>	II	10
	Thesis		
	Thesis Seminar North American Studies	I & II	-
	Thesis North American Studies	I & II	20
3 electives, to be chosen from:			
	<i>Anti-Democracy in American History: Independence to the Present</i>	I	10
	<i>American Identities, 1850 to the present</i>	I	10
	<i>American Climate Fictions</i>	I	10
	<i>Arsenal of Democracy?: The United States and the World since 1945</i>	II	10
	<i>American Comics Against the Code: Autobiography and Journalism in Graphic Novels</i>	II	10
	<i>Internship MA North American Studies</i>	II	10

Annex 4: Programme site visit

Cluster Area Studies 1 – site visit 1

Day 1: November 3 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 (voertaal: nnb)
11:45	12:30	Lunch + internal panel discussion
12:30	13:15	Lecturers MA NAS (ENG)
13:15	13:30	Internal panel discussion
13:30	14:15	Students BA/MA African Studies (ENG)
14:15	14:30	Internal panel discussion
14:30	15:15	Lecturers BA/MA African Studies (ENG)
15:15	15:30	Internal panel discussion
15:30	16:15	Board of Examiners BA/MA AS en MA NAS (ENG)
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: November 4 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 (NL)
09:45	10.15	Internal panel discussion
10:15	11.00	Students BA/MA MOS (voertaal: nnb)
11:00	11:15	Internal panel discussion
11.15	12.00	Lecturers BA/MA MOS (ENG)
12:00	12:45	Lunch + internal panel discussion
12.45	13.30	Students BA/MA LAS (voertaal: nnb)
13:30	14:00	Internal panel discussion
14.00	14.45	Lecturers BA/MA LAS (ENG)
14:45	15.00	Internal panel discussion
15.00	15:45	Board of Examiners BA/MA MOS en BA/MA LAS (ENG)
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: November 5 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 (voertaal: NL)
10.00	10:15	Internal panel discussion
10.15	11.00	Lecturers BA/MA RUS (voertaal: nnb)
11.00	11.45	Students BA/MA RUS (voertaal: nnb)
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 (ENG)
16:30	17.15	Internal panel discussion
17.15	17.30	Oral report

Annex 5: Documents

Self-evaluation report M North American Studies

- Self-evaluation report M North American Studies
- Annexes
 - A. Faculty of Humanities 2025 – concise description of the Faculty of Humanities' organization.
 - B. Prospectus MA North American Studies (*Studiegids*)
 - 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. a. Course and Examination Regulations Master's programmes – Faculty of Humanities
b. Course and Examination Regulations North American Studies
 - E. Staff overview
 - F. Assessment plan MA North American Studies
 - G. Rules and Regulations of the Board of Examiners
 - H. Vision on Teaching and Learning (Leiden University and Faculty of Humanities)
 - I. Manuals
 - a. Guide to Teaching Quality Assurance
 - b. Manual for Board of Examiners
 - c. Teaching Evaluation Framework
 - d. Manual for Programme Committees
 - e. Assessment Framework
 - J. 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 report MA North American Studies

Selection of final products

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed fifteen final projects from the master's programme in North American 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	8	2
7,0-8,4 good	38	10
8,5-10 very good	8	3
Total	54	15

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