

B Chinastudies
Leiden University
Assessment report

17 April 2026



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1. Summary

This report describes the programme assessment of the academic bachelor Chinese Studies (Dutch name: *Chinastudies*) offered by Leiden University.

Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes

The bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies presents a clear and academic profile within the higher education landscape. It covers a broad humanities-based disciplinary spectrum and combines this with a strong focus on language acquisition. This provides students with a coherent framework for understanding China in its historical and contemporary dimensions.

The intended learning outcomes for the academic bachelor's degree are clearly formulated, coherent and well-aligned with the Dublin Descriptors. They encompass the full range of disciplinary knowledge, methodological insight, language proficiency and transferable academic skills appropriate for graduates in Chinese Studies. The alignment of programme-specific and faculty-wide outcomes, as well as the integration of CEFR-based language levels, contributes to the clarity and structure of the intended learning outcomes.

The panel is confident that the programme safeguards the continued relevance of its learning outcomes. Through research-led teaching, participation in international scholarly networks and collaboration with external partners, current developments in the field are systematically incorporated into the programme.

Based on the documentation reviewed and the interviews conducted, the panel concludes that the programme meets the criteria of Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes.

Standard 2 – Teaching-learning environment

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies provides a well-structured and academically robust teaching-learning environment, firmly grounded in the programme's four learning pathways. The curriculum displays a clear and well-considered progression from introductory knowledge to advanced linguistic, disciplinary and research-oriented learning, with language acquisition playing a consistently strong and distinctive role throughout. The alignment between intended learning outcomes, course level objectives and learning activities contributes to a balanced and logically sequenced programme.

With regard to skills development, the panel values the consistent attention to academic and transferable skills embedded across the curriculum. However, it recommends the programme to

strengthen the methodological component in a more explicit and structured manner. The panel also sees room for enhancing professional orientation, for example through increased involvement of external guest speakers and alumni.

Students experience the teaching-learning environment as intellectually engaging, personal and supportive. They particularly appreciate the small-scale tutorials, the extensive contact hours in the language learning trajectory, and the flexibility to shape their own disciplinary and professional profile. The opportunities for study abroad in China or Taiwan are highly valued and demonstrably contribute to the development of language skills. The panel also notes that study guidance is well organised and accessible, although experiences during the thesis phase can vary depending on the individual supervisor; further coordination in this area is therefore recommended.

The panel notes that the teaching staff are committed, collegial and well qualified, with strong disciplinary expertise and a constructive attitude towards continuous professional development. At the same time, the panel signals structural risks related to staffing developments – particularly concerning Chinese Linguistics and Literature – which require strategic action to safeguard the breadth and quality of the programme in the long term.

Based on the interviews and the documentation reviewed, the panel concludes that, despite a number of areas for further development, the programme meets the criteria of Standard 2: Teaching–Learning Environment.

Standard 3 – Student assessment

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies has a well-structured, coherent and professionally organised assessment system, clearly aligned with the faculty's principles for valid, reliable and transparent testing. The assessment matrices effectively demonstrate systematic coverage of the intended learning outcomes across the curriculum, and the wide range of assessment formats enables the programme to evaluate disciplinary knowledge, language proficiency, methodological skills and critical reflection in complementary ways.

Students appreciate the diversity, transparency and fairness of assessment, and value the clarity of the feedback they receive. The panel welcomes the programme's active engagement with the implications of Generative AI and notes the careful consideration of alternative assignment formats, alongside the strengthening of the writing skills trajectory. The panel also considers it positive that the programme already employs several oral assessment formats, in which the scope for GenAI misuse is limited.

With regard to thesis assessment, the panel takes into account that procedures are clearly documented and consistently applied. The use of two independent examiners, the structured assessment form and the written substantiation of grades contribute to a transparent and reliable process. The panel endorses the programme's holistic assessment philosophy, in which the emphasis lies on substantive feedback rather than strict numerical quantification.

The panel establishes that the Board of Examiners fulfils its statutory duties in a conscientious and systematic manner. Through periodic sampling, calibration among examiners, consistent oversight of assessment procedures, and active engagement with emerging challenges such as GenAI, the Board effectively safeguards the validity, reliability and independence of assessment within the programme.

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 panel concludes that graduates of the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies achieve the intended learning outcomes. The reviewed final projects meet the expected bachelor's level, and the theses display a wide range of relevant topics that reflect the disciplinary breadth of the programme. The panel remarks that it may be advisable to make the use of Chinese language source materials mandatory. Moreover, greater attention may be given during the thesis writing to the formal aspects of academic writing. However, the overall academic standard is satisfactory.

Graduates perform well in further study and in the labour market, progressing to appropriate master's programmes and entering related professional fields. Alumni confirm that the combination of language acquisition, disciplinary knowledge and transferable skills effectively prepared them for both academic and professional contexts.

Based on the interviews and the information reviewed, the panel concludes that the programme meets the criteria of Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes.

The programme meets all four NVAO standards. The panel therefore issues a positive recommendation to the NVAO for the accreditation of the bachelor's programme Chinese 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.

17 April 2026:



Dr. Remco Raben
(chair)



Inge van der Hoorn 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 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 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 second seven programmes at Leiden University.

- Dr. Remco Raben (chair), Utrecht University, Associate professor, Department of History of International Relations
- Prof. dr. Henning Klöter (member), Humboldt University of Berlin, professor of Modern Chinese Languages and Literatures
- Prof. dr. Mark Teeuwen (member), University of Oslo, professor of Japanese Language and History
- Dr. Lisa Gaufman (member and external reviewer), University of Groningen, Assistant professor of Russian Discourse and Politics
- Elliott Bickerton (student-member), University of Amsterdam, student American Studies
- Dr. Vladimir Glomb (external reviewer), Free University of Berlin, Guest professor at the Institute of Korean Studies
- Dr. Anders Karlsson (external reviewer), University of London, senior lecturer in Korean Studies
- Prof. dr. Christian de Pee (external reviewer), University of Michigan, professor of Chinese History
- Prof. dr. Christoph Anderl (external reviewer), Ghent University, professor of Chinese Language and Culture
- Dr. Jonathan Spencer (external reviewer), University of Edinburgh, emeritus professor of South Asian Language, Culture and Society
- Prof. Roger Goodman (external reviewer), University of Oxford, professor of Modern Japanese Studies
- Dr. Lorena De Vita (external reviewer), Utrecht University, Associate professor in the History of International Relations
- Prof. dr. Gerben Nooteboom (external reviewer), Radboud University, Professor Anthropology and Development Studies

The panel was supported by Odion Onderzoek through Julia Roosenboom MSc (process coordinator), drs. Vladimir Bartelds (secretary for the bachelor Japan Studies, bachelor Korean Studies, bachelor South and Southeast Asian Studies, de master Asian Studies 60 EC and the master Asian Studies 120 EC), and Inge van der Hoorn MSc (secretary for the bachelor Chinese Studies and the bachelor International Studies). Both secretaries 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-2492b).

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 2025). 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 25 November, 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 8, 9, and 10 December 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 secretary drafted a preliminary version of the report and submitted it to the panel

members for feedback. Based on their comments, the report was revised in consultation with the chair. The draft report was then sent to Leiden University for a check of factual inaccuracies. After processing any corrections, the report was finalized and approved by the chair.

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 bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies is a unique degree in the Netherlands. It offers Dutch-speaking students training in both Modern Mandarin and Classical Chinese, a solid foundational knowledge of China, and a broad range of discipline specific knowledge and skills. The programme combines language acquisition with a multidisciplinary curriculum in the humanities and social sciences, focused on the Sinophone world: China (including Hong Kong), Taiwan, and the diaspora. It equips students with the tools to study topics, developments and phenomena from a humanities perspective.

Around 70 of the programme's 180 credits are dedicated to language acquisition, covering both Mandarin (60 EC) and Classical Chinese (10 EC). In addition, the programme includes a compulsory study period in China or Taiwan. Its wide disciplinary offering – including economics, linguistics, philosophy, history, culture and politics — gives students considerable freedom to tailor their course selection and academic profile to their own interests.

Developments since the last accreditation

The previous accreditation (2019) resulted in several recommendations for the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies. The current panel examined how the programme has addressed these points.

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/>

The previous panel recommended the programme to make the intended levels of language proficiency more explicit, as the earlier formulation lacked clarity. In response, the programme has defined transparent learning outcomes for both Mandarin and Classical Chinese, now specified in CEFR terms and elaborated in a dedicated overview of the language learning trajectories.

Another recommendation concerned the harmonisation of the intended learning outcomes across the area studies programmes. The panel notes that this has been realised by adopting a faculty-wide framework of academic learning outcomes and integrating the programme-specific qualifications within this structure. The programme has also refined its own discipline-specific learning outcomes accordingly.

The previous panel furthermore urged the programme to strengthen its academic skills learning trajectory, particularly writing and research skills. The current panel finds that steps have indeed been taken: research and writing assignments are now embedded throughout the curriculum – for example in the form of essays and short research papers – and are progressively aligned with the requirements of the bachelor's thesis. At the same time, the panel notes that the academic skills trajectory continues to require attention (see Standard 2). The programme itself has also indicated that the writing line requires further revision, especially in light of the emergence of generative AI.

In 2019, the previous panel identified shortcomings in the functioning of the Programme Committee, as well as the need for more consistent procedures regarding plagiarism and fraud. In discussions with members of the Programme Committee, the current panel observes that progress has been made: the Committee's role in the evaluation cycle has been strengthened, and the faculty has introduced clearer guidelines and tools, such as the systematic use of Turnitin, to support academic integrity. Similarly, previous concerns about the consistency of thesis assessment have been addressed through, among other measures, more explicit procedures to ensure the proper contribution of the second assessor.

Overall, the panel concludes that the programme has acted constructively and effectively on the recommendations of the previous accreditation, while recognising that some areas – such as the academic skills learning trajectory – remain in development.

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 Bachelor of Arts in Chinese Studies explores the culture, economy, politics and history of China, and teaches students to read, speak and write Mandarin. The programme also includes Classical Chinese, enabling students to study original source materials. It is characterised by a humanities-based academic approach.

Compared with similar programmes abroad, the Leiden bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies is distinguished by its wide range of themes and discipline-specific knowledge and skills from which students can make their own selections. The programme is recognised for its wide-ranging scope, encompassing disciplines such as philosophy and religion, literature and the arts, history, politics, society, and economics. In addition, students acquire academic and professional skills. This integrated design enables them to analyse contemporary topics and developments related to China.

The panel considers that the programme presents a clear and well-defined academic profile within the higher education landscape. The language and academic skills that form the core of the programme prepare students for further study or for careers in business, public administration, NGOs, the media or education. For such positions, graduates need research skills, the ability to report effectively both orally and in writing, and sound knowledge of China and the Chinese language.

Learning outcomes of the programme

The intended learning outcomes of the Chinese Studies programme consist of programme specific outcomes and faculty-wide outcomes. The programme specific outcomes are linked to the Dublin Descriptors "knowledge and understanding" and "applying knowledge and understanding", while the faculty-wide outcomes describe general academic and transferable skills, such as research skills, communication skills and study skills. Together, these outcomes form a coherent whole and cover all aspects of the Dublin Descriptors.

The intended learning outcomes include fundamental knowledge of contemporary China as well as Chinese history and culture prior to the twentieth century, and provide insight into historical, political and sociocultural developments. Students also acquire knowledge in self-selected disciplines such as anthropology, political economy, international relations, philosophy, history, religious studies, art history, literature, political science, sociology (society and media) and linguistics. This disciplinary knowledge is embedded in an understanding of sinological traditions and of the methodological challenges associated with studying 'distant' cultures.

In addition, students are expected to develop extensive skills in listening, reading, speaking and writing in Mandarin and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Classical Chinese. Following a recommendation from the previous assessment panel, the programme has clarified its expected levels of language proficiency using CEFR indicators. The panel welcomes the resulting transparency, for example the distinction between reading (B2) and spoken levels of attainment (B1).

The panel considers the intended learning outcomes to be clearly formulated and fully appropriate for the academic level of a bachelor's degree. They articulate the knowledge, skills and competences expected of graduates in Chinese Studies and are explicitly aligned with the bachelor's-level Dublin Descriptors.

The panel notes that the alignment of programme specific learning outcomes with a faculty-wide set of shared learning outcomes follows the recommendation of the previous assessment panel to harmonise learning outcomes across the faculty. Furthermore, based on a benchmark prepared by the programme, the panel observes that the intended learning outcomes of Leiden University's Chinese Studies programme correspond closely with those of comparable international bachelor's programmes.

Overall, the panel considers the intended learning outcomes well structured, coherent and suitably designed to prepare students both for further academic study and for entry into the labour market.

Maintaining the relevance of the intended learning outcomes

The panel notes that the programme operates within a broad academic and professional environment, which supports the continual updating of its intended learning outcomes. Research-led teaching, participation in international scholarly debates, contributions to academic journals (such as the *Chinese Journal of International Politics* and the *Chinese Political Science Review*), and the active involvement of staff in academic networks (including the European Association for Chinese Studies) ensure that recent developments in Chinese Studies are consistently reflected in the curriculum.

Conclusions

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies presents a clear and academic profile within the higher education landscape. Its humanities-based approach, combined with a broad disciplinary spectrum and a strong focus on language acquisition, provides students with a coherent framework for understanding China in its historical and contemporary dimensions.

The intended learning outcomes are clearly formulated, coherent and well aligned with the Dublin Descriptors for an academic bachelor's degree. They encompass the full range of disciplinary knowledge, methodological insight, language proficiency and transferable academic skills appropriate for graduates in Chinese Studies. The alignment of programme specific and faculty-wide outcomes, as well as the integration of CEFR based language levels, contributes to the clarity and structure of the intended learning outcomes.

The panel is confident that the programme safeguards the continued relevance of its learning outcomes. Through research-led teaching, participation in international scholarly networks and collaboration with external partners, current developments in the field are systematically incorporated into the curriculum.

Based on the documentation reviewed and the interviews conducted, the panel concludes that the programme meets the criteria of 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

Curriculum

The bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies is a three-year, fulltime programme of 180 EC that enables students to develop into sinologists. The programme offers insight into the many facets of China, including its culture, economy, politics and literature, and teaches students to read, speak and write Mandarin.

The panel observes that the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies is built on a well-designed curriculum structured around several relevant learning pathways (see Annex 3 for the curriculum outline). It characterises the overall curriculum architecture as well structured, balanced and logically sequenced, with clear alignment between course components and the intended learning outcomes.

Based on the reviewed documents, the panel is of the opinion that the intended learning outcomes are clearly and coherently translated into the curriculum. In particular the Prospectus and the assessment plan, show that the intended learning outcomes have been operationalised into appropriate course-level learning objectives. This also applies to the elective courses. While the content of the disciplinary modules differs, the underlying objectives and accompanying skills training are largely harmonised to ensure that all students achieve comparable attainment levels, irrespective of their chosen learning path. In the panel's view, this transparent and well-considered mapping supports the consistency of student learning across the curriculum.

The curriculum is structured around four main learning paths: (1) language proficiency, (2) substantive knowledge of China, (3) disciplinary orientation, and (4) academic skills, with a particular emphasis on research and writing.

- In the first year (60 EC), students develop a solid foundation in both language proficiency and substantive knowledge of China. They follow an intensive trajectory in Mandarin, in which all language modalities – listening, speaking, reading and writing – are addressed from the outset. From the second semester onwards, students also take Classical Chinese, enabling them to work with basic historical and literary texts. Alongside language training, students build essential background knowledge through introductory courses in premodern and modern Chinese history and a general survey of contemporary China. They are also introduced to several disciplinary perspectives, including philosophy and religion, literature and art, and

politics, society and economy, which prepares them for later specialisation.

Academic skills are embedded throughout the curriculum. Students begin the writing trajectory in the first year with graded assignments in both semesters and receive guidance in formulating research questions, working with sources and producing short academic texts. Through workgroup teaching, they also develop early presentation and analytical skills, forming a coherent basis for further development in the subsequent years.

- In the second year (60 EC), students deepen their linguistic and academic development while beginning to shape their disciplinary focus. Mandarin remains an important component of the programme, for which students have the opportunity to spend a period in China or Taiwan. Students also continue with Classical Chinese, which remains compulsory throughout year 2. Students expand their substantive knowledge of China through a wide range of content courses. In small workgroup settings, they study topics such as contemporary politics, society, economy and media, building directly on the introductory courses of the first year. The second year also marks the beginning of students' disciplinary specialisation, as they can choose from a structured set of courses in areas such as history, literature, philosophy, art, international relations, political economy, sociology, linguistics or media studies. Academic skills remain an integral part of the curriculum: for their content courses, students write more substantial research papers and receive guidance in working with sources, constructing arguments and presenting their findings. Oral presentations form a standard component of most courses, ensuring continued development of students' communication skills.
- In the third year (60 EC), students consolidate and extend their linguistic, disciplinary and academic competencies. Mandarin remains an important component of the curriculum, supplemented by elective options such as Internet Chinese or Reading Chinese Media, while Classical Chinese becomes optional for students wishing to deepen their engagement with primary sources. Students further develop their disciplinary specialisation by selecting an advanced course, building directly on the foundations laid in year 1 and 2. The advanced courses require students to apply their analytical skills to complex topics within the sinophone world. Academic skills reach their culmination in year 3 as students write more extensive research papers and gradually prepare for their final thesis, integrating methodological, linguistic and disciplinary expertise.

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

The panel reviewed the curriculum and discussed it with students and staff. The importance of language acquisition is recognised by all and, to the panel's satisfaction, is prominently embedded throughout the curriculum.

The panel observes that the learning pathways on substantive knowledge of China and the disciplinary orientation are well aligned throughout the curriculum. In the first year, students receive a broad introduction to the core disciplines, which they value as a solid foundation for selecting electives in years two and three that match their academic interests. Lecturers explained that these electives are designed to build on the knowledge and skills acquired in year one. For instance, a lecturer in Chinese philosophy described how his discipline follows a clear internal trajectory: an introductory course in year one (covering Chinese philosophy from past to present), a more specialised course in year two (focusing on early Chinese philosophy, with attention to its contemporary relevance)), and an in-depth exploration in year three (centred on a topic related to the lecturer's research).

At the same time, the panel noted during the interviews that students are not bound to a single disciplinary track. They may choose a different discipline in year two than in year three. This means that the developmental structure of the curriculum relies less on a linear progression within one specific field and more on the academic and transferable skills that students develop across their electives. These skills—such as critical reading, analytical writing, and methodological awareness—equip students to engage in more advanced study in multiple disciplines, even when they shift focus between years.

The panel considers this broad disciplinary range to be both valuable and appealing, as it allows students to shape a personalised and interdisciplinary learning journey. At the same time, the panel notes that this flexibility presents challenges for maintaining coherence within the programme, given the diversity of disciplinary cultures and research methodologies involved.

Attention to research is embedded in the language and content-related courses; the programme does not offer dedicated research courses. When reviewing the theses (see Standard 4), the panel noted that some theses could benefit from stronger methodological foundations. Alumni and students confirmed that the extent to which they are prepared for writing their thesis depends on the set of courses they choose. For example, some electives require students to write a 2,000 word essay each week, and these students feel well prepared. Other students acknowledge that academic and research skills are addressed in several courses, but express a need for more dedicated research courses, such as those focusing on writing a research proposal and using different research methods. The panel therefore recommends that the programme strengthen its research training in a more structured and explicit manner for all students.

Students reported during the site visit that they are generally positive about the bachelor's programme. They appreciate the considerable degree of flexibility it offers to shape their own professional profile through the choice of electives. They also value the extensive attention devoted to language acquisition

and, in particular, the opportunity to study for a period (or multiple periods) at a university in China or Taiwan. The panel values the fact that Leiden University has established specific agreements with these partner institutions to ensure that the coursework undertaken abroad contributes to the attainment of the intended learning outcomes. Students report that their language proficiency increases exponentially during their period abroad.

Increasing collaboration within the faculty

The panel notes that the faculty as a whole is facing increasing pressure, as several programmes are confronted with relatively small student cohorts and limited financial resources. These circumstances require the faculty to explore more efficient forms of organisation and programme delivery. So far, the faculty has opted to retain all programme “labels”, recognising that Leiden University offers several nationally unique degree programmes, including Chinese Studies.

Against this backdrop, the faculty is currently considering the possibility of expanding shared teaching across programmes. The working idea is that programmes with small number of enrolments may, for reasons of efficiency, jointly offer two to four courses with related programmes. The current curriculum already includes two shared core courses, namely *Area Studies* and *Philosophy of Science*, and the faculty is presently exploring further collaboration, for instance by designing a course in the field of History or Culture, aimed at students from the various Asian area studies programmes, in which students from the BA International Studies could also participate.

The panel regrets that the merging of courses will inevitably reduce the specific focus on China, but it hopes and advises that, through such collaborative efforts and with the safeguarding of educational quality, the faculty and its distinctive range of programmes will be able to weather the current challenges.

Link with the professional field

The panel is of the opinion that the programme maintains a clear link with the professional field through its strong emphasis on the development of transferable skills. In line with university-wide educational policy, these skills are embedded throughout the curriculum and supported by the tutorial system, which enables students to practice a wide range of cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies in small group settings. The panel considers this structured and cumulative approach to skill development an effective preparation for both further academic study and future professional contexts.

Students informed the panel that the *Studievereniging Sinologie* organises annual Career Days. This two-day event features lectures by alumni working in a wide variety of sectors. Students also value the contribution of the student association. In addition, students can gain practical experience through

internships (as part of the elective space), although many choose not to do so, as internships typically result in a delay in their studies.

Despite these opportunities to engage with professional practice, both the National Student Survey and the interviews conducted during the site visit indicate that students would welcome a more extensive orientation towards the labour market. While the development of transferable skills and the Career Days are valuable, it does not yet provide them with a clear picture of the types of positions they may pursue after graduation. The panel understood that guest speakers are occasionally invited, such as a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but students expressed a desire for a broader perspective and clearer insight into what they can offer 'the outside world'. The panel establishes that the programme could enhance professional engagement and employability orientation, for instance by placing greater emphasis on the involvement of guest lecturers from relevant professional sectors and by developing a more structured approach to alumni involvement. The panel further notes that the programme could benefit from making its relevance and potential contribution to the professional field more visible, as this could, in the long term, contribute to increased enrolment. The panel therefore encourages the strengthening of ties with relevant institutions and organisations in the professional field.

Educational principles and didactic approach

The design of the educational environment is guided by Leiden University's overarching educational vision, which outlines eight key ambitions and principles further elaborated at faculty level. The panel observes that many of these principles are clearly reflected in the structure and delivery of the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies. This includes the explicit attention to skills development and the opportunities for students to pursue individual interests through flexible learning routes (such as the choice of discipline, study abroad and elective credits).

With respect to didactic principles, Leiden University places strong emphasis on active learning. Because active engagement is understood to stimulate and deepen students' learning processes, the programme in Chinese Studies deliberately combines lectures with small-scale tutorials. Students expressed strong appreciation for this approach. According to the students, tutorials also form the primary context in which they develop essential academic and transferable skills through learning activities such as essay writing, presentations and role plays to practise speaking skills.

Admission, enrolment and academic alignment

For the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies, the general admission requirements apply. Students are admissible with a Dutch *vwo* diploma or with a *propedeuse* obtained at a university of applied sciences or a research university.

The panel established that the programme takes the diversification of the incoming student population into account. This primarily relates to the fact that more students enter the programme with some level of prior schooling in or knowledge of Mandarin. Although the programme assumes no prior knowledge, it provides the possibility to assess students and to accommodate them through an adjusted learning trajectory in Mandarin if they already possess basic proficiency. Students who already have some command of the language may take an exemption test.

Study advice and student guidance

The panel notes that student advising and support within the programme are well developed and easily accessible. The study advisor plays a crucial role as both a point of contact and a trusted counsellor, proactively meeting first-year students with personal circumstances, reviewing annual study plans, and helping to prevent study delays. Students can book appointments independently, and the advisor maintains close links with other university support services. Students expressed strong appreciation for the programme's small-scale learning environment, the personal contact with lecturers, and the guidance they receive throughout their studies, although their experiences during the thesis phase appear to vary depending on the individual supervisor. The panel encourages thesis supervisors to further align their approaches in this regard.

The panel notes that support for students with disabilities is clearly organised through Fenestra and the faculty's dedicated StuFU advisor, ensuring timely arrangements such as extra time, quiet rooms, or flexibility in attendance and deadlines.

Teaching staff

The panel considers the teaching staff of the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies to be well qualified. In recent years, the number of permanent staff positions has increased, which contributes positively to the continuity of the programme. The use of temporary staff is limited to tutors for lectures and student assistants for language acquisition courses in Mandarin and Classical Chinese. These assistants – MA or Research MA students, as well as PhD candidates – teach under the close supervision of the responsible lecturer.

With regard to substantive expertise, the panel notes that all disciplinary areas offered in the programme are covered by staff with appropriate subject knowledge. All lecturers teaching content courses in the second and third year hold a PhD, with the exception of one staff member who is currently completing her dissertation. Permanent language lecturers hold at least a master's degree, and one is pursuing a PhD.

The panel notes that the teaching staff demonstrate good didactic expertise, supported by the university's systematic approach to professional training. The panel appreciates the lecturers'

commitment to continuous development, as evidenced by their widespread attainment of the BKO and the language instructors' initiative to periodically organise TEAL workshops (Teaching East Asian Languages).

Students expressed clear appreciation for their lecturers and tutors during the site visit. They reported having frequent personal contact and feeling well supported and listened to. Students also value the lecturers' expertise and the fact that many of the language teachers are native speakers. They furthermore spoke positively about the detailed and constructive feedback they receive during tutorials and (formative) assessments.

During the site visit, teaching staff indicated that, due to budget cuts, there is in principle a hiring freeze for new staff. When staff members retire, it is uncertain whether they will be replaced. This may eventually put Chinese Linguistics under pressure. Although this is not yet the case, all current lecturers in Chinese Linguistics are expected to retire within the foreseeable future, and replacements have not yet been planned. The programme is keen to retain Chinese Linguistics and aims, as part of the upcoming curriculum redesign, to offer a more general Asian Linguistics course in collaboration with the other area studies programmes. The panel considers this a less than ideal but "better than nothing" solution, while acknowledging and appreciating the constructive attitude demonstrated by the staff and the faculty. The staff's commitment, solidarity, and positive collegial atmosphere are commendable.

The panel expresses its concern to the faculty management and the university leadership. The Leiden bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies is unique within the Netherlands, and even beyond. The breadth of choices and the wide range of disciplines on offer are exceptional. Given the necessary budget reductions, the panel can nevertheless imagine that maintaining the current number of disciplines may not be feasible. However, the panel is surprised that strategic decisions appear to be driven – or effectively left to be determined – by demographic developments such as staff retirements. The panel recommends the programme to take greater ownership of strategic decisions. The panel therefore recommends that the staff, in close consultation with the faculty, carefully consider which disciplinary components are essential to the programme's identity and which elements could be regarded as "nice to have" rather than "need to have".

Overall, the panel concludes that, in their current composition, the teaching staff are well equipped to deliver the programme effectively. Their disciplinary expertise, commitment to students, and constructive collaboration form a solid foundation for high-quality education. At the same time, the panel emphasises that these strengths can only be sustained if the structural risks identified – particularly those related to staffing developments and the future availability of key disciplinary areas – are actively addressed.

Language of instruction

The language of instruction of the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies is Dutch. Nonetheless, a great deal of Chinese is spoken in the language classes, which strongly supports students' language development. Furthermore, in several courses that are shared with other area studies programmes, the language of instruction is English. The panel considers the programme's rationale for offering courses in Dutch, Chinese, or English - depending on the nature of the course - to be well substantiated.

Programme specific facilities

The panel observes that the programme benefits from strong, discipline specific facilities. Leiden University offers the largest China-related library collection in the Netherlands, housed in the dedicated Asian Library, which provides both study spaces and group rooms. There is a close connection between the programme and the library's subject specialist. Students also profit from partnerships with the Wereldmuseum Leiden, the Leiden Asia Centre, and the IAS, which provide lectures, workshops, and internship opportunities.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies provides a well-structured and academically robust teaching-learning environment, firmly grounded in the programme's four learning pathways. The curriculum displays a clear and well-considered progression from introductory knowledge to advanced linguistic, disciplinary and research-oriented learning, with language acquisition playing a consistently strong and distinctive role throughout. The alignment between intended learning outcomes, course level objectives and learning activities contributes to a balanced and logically sequenced programme.

With regard to skills development, the panel values the consistent attention to academic and transferable skills embedded across the curriculum. However, it recommends the programme to strengthen the methodological component in a more explicit and structured manner. The panel also sees room for enhancing professional orientation, for example through increased involvement of external guest speakers and alumni.

Students experience the teaching-learning environment as intellectually engaging, personal and supportive. They particularly appreciate the small-scale tutorials, the extensive contact hours in the language trajectory, and the flexibility to shape their own disciplinary and professional profile. The opportunities for study abroad in China or Taiwan are highly valued and demonstrably contribute to students' linguistic development. The panel also notes that study guidance is well organised and accessible, although experiences during the thesis phase can vary depending on the individual supervisor; further coordination in this area is therefore recommended.

The panel regards the teaching staff as committed, collegial and well qualified, with strong disciplinary expertise and a constructive attitude towards continuous professional development. At the same time, the panel signals structural risks related to staffing developments – particularly concerning Chinese Linguistics – which require strategic action to safeguard the breadth and quality of the programme in the long term.

Based on the interviews and the documentation reviewed, the panel concludes that, despite a number of areas for further development, the programme meets 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 observes that the assessment policy of the bachelor's programme in Chinese 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 Turnitin⁵, and requirements for ensuring constructive alignment between learning outcomes, teaching activities and assessment methods. The panel reviewed the assessment plan for the programme and confirms that the intended learning outcomes are systematically addressed across multiple courses. The plan consists of two complementary matrices:

1. a matrix linking each intended learning outcome to specific courses, including Leiden level indicators 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.

The panel considers these matrices clear, comprehensive and effective in demonstrating the relationship between the ILOs, the curriculum and the assessment programme. In its view, the assessment system is transparent, coherent and well monitored, providing a robust structure for ensuring coverage of learning outcomes and progression across the curriculum.

Assessment programme and assessment methods

The programme employs a broad and well-balanced range of assessment methods. During the site visit, students in the Chinese Studies programme confirmed that a diversity of assessment formats is used across all courses, such as written examinations with closed questions, written examinations with short essay questions, papers, oral examinations, presentations, translations, participation, and weekly assignments. In the language courses, reading, writing, listening and speaking are all included in the assessment and test formats. The panel considers this variety a strength, as it enables the programme to evaluate disciplinary knowledge, language proficiency, methodological skills and critical reflection in complementary ways.

⁵ Turnitin is used as the plagiarism-detection tool for all assessments (including papers and the thesis) that are uploaded to Brightspace.

Students appreciate the variety of assessment methods and generally perceive grading to be fair and consistent. They value the feedback they receive and characterise it as clear and transparent. Students also indicated to the panel that they have the opportunity to discuss grades and feedback with lecturers, although they rarely feel the need to make use of this option.

Assessment generally takes place at the end of each semester during the examination period, which students experience as a peak in workload. In this context, they expressed particular appreciation for the way the programme supports the acquisition of Chinese in the first year. Through weekly formative character tests they are encouraged to maintain their character knowledge consistently throughout the term, which helps to distribute the workload more evenly.

Overall, the panel observes that the programme's assessment system is robust, coherent and professionally organised, with clear alignment to the intended learning outcomes and to the faculty's assessment framework. The wide variety of assessment formats, together with the feedback provided, supports student learning and allows different competences to be evaluated effectively.

Generative AI

With regard to Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), the panel discussed this topic with management, staff and the Board of Examiners in the context of teaching, learning and assessment. As described in the self-evaluation report, the programme operates 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 via Brightspace.

The panel spoke with lecturers about their views on GenAI. They are aware of both the opportunities it offers and the challenges it poses. The panel learned that, with regard to the use of GenAI, the programme is particularly concerned about the way the use of GenAI negatively affects the writing skills of the students. It is currently revising the writing skills trajectory, and the updated version will be introduced in the next academic year.

Staff members are already considering alternative types of assignments and assessment formats. One lecturer, for example, explained that she had replaced an individual assignment with a group assignment in the expectation that group dynamics would discourage inappropriate use of GenAI. Lecturers also indicated that, due to the small-scale nature of seminars and tutorial meetings, they have frequent contact with students and can closely monitor their progress, which facilitates the detection of AI-generated work. In this regard, the Board of Examiners expressed some concern that the university's budget cuts may lead to a reduction in tutorial meetings in favour of larger, lecture-based sessions, which could diminish staff oversight of students' work and academic development. At the same time, the panel

observes that the programme already employs a considerable number of oral assessment formats, in which the scope for the use of GenAI is much more limited.

Thesis assessment forms

The programme uses a thesis assessment form that is based on the faculty's assessment policy. This form requires examiners to evaluate each intended learning outcome separately and to provide written justification for the grade. The theses are assessed by two examiners independently, each completing an individual form before discussing the final grade. If the two assessments diverge significantly or if consensus cannot be reached, the Board of Examiners appoints a third examiner, who determines the final grade while taking the previous evaluations into account. The panel confirms that this procedure is clearly described in the thesis assessment plan and was consistently applied in the reviewed sample of theses.

The panel and external reviewers who evaluated a selection of bachelor's theses consider the assessment forms to be completed adequately, and the written feedback to substantiate the awarded grades. In most cases, the two examiners clearly explain the rationale behind the final grade, highlighting both the strengths and the shortcomings of the theses.

Although panel and external reviewers generally agreed with the grades awarded, it was not always clear to them what specific criteria were applied when assigning a rating of satisfactory, good or very good for each intended learning outcome. Because the panel was particularly interested in how thesis grades are determined – especially given that grades are awarded to the nearest tenth without the use of a grading rubric or scoring table – it discussed this issue with the Board of Examiners. The Board explained that it supports the programme's holistic approach, as the nature of final research projects varies widely. The Board's annual thesis review shows that the feedback provided to students is clear and well aligned with the grade awarded. Students also expressed their satisfaction with the feedback they receive. The panel concurs and endorses the Board's philosophy: the emphasis should not lie primarily on quantification (the numerical grade), but on elucidation (providing clear and substantive feedback). Furthermore, the panel appreciates that new examiners receive close guidance from an experienced colleague, enabling them to develop the necessary professional skills for grading.

Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners for Chinese Studies consists of four members, including an external member, and is supported by an administrative secretary. The panel spoke with representatives of the Board and reviewed recent annual reports. The panel observes that the Board of Examiners responsible for the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies carries out its statutory duties in a conscientious and transparent manner.

The panel notes that the Board of Examiners systematically monitors the quality of assessment through periodic sampling. The Board follows a six-year cycle in which the assessments of one semester are reviewed each year. By appointing qualified examiners, monitoring grade distributions, keeping track of the quality of feedback, and verifying the consistent application of procedures – such as the involvement of a second assessor and the systematic use of Turnitin as a plagiarism detection tool – the Board of Examiners maintains oversight of assessment quality. The Board also safeguards the study results obtained during the compulsory period abroad in year 2, as well as the results achieved during elective periods abroad in year 3.

The panel establishes that the members of the Board of Examiners possess substantial experience in this role and have worked together effectively for many years. Although the Board was temporarily understaffed due to the absence of its secretary, it has now returned to full strength.

Furthermore, the panel notes that the Board of Examiners 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 the programme can safeguard learning outcomes in an evolving landscape.

The panel values the Board's systematic quality checks, including blind reviews of theses. The outcomes of these sample-based reviews are reported back to the programme management and the examiners. The relatively small pool of thesis examiners naturally contributes to calibration, as examiners are intentionally paired in different constellations. 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 bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies has a well-structured, coherent and professionally organised assessment system, clearly aligned with the faculty's principles for valid, reliable and transparent testing. The assessment matrices effectively demonstrate systematic coverage of the intended learning outcomes across the curriculum, and the wide range of assessment formats enables the programme to evaluate disciplinary knowledge, language proficiency, methodological skills and critical reflection in complementary ways.

Students appreciate the diversity, transparency and fairness of assessment, and value the clarity of the feedback they receive. The panel welcomes the programme's active engagement with the implications of Generative AI and notes the careful consideration of alternative assignment formats, alongside the strengthening of the writing skills trajectory. The panel also considers it positive that the programme already employs several oral assessment formats, in which the scope for GenAI misuse is limited.

With regard to thesis assessment, the panel takes into account that procedures are clearly documented and consistently applied. The use of two independent examiners, the structured assessment form and the written substantiation of grades contribute to a transparent and reliable process. The panel endorses the programme's holistic assessment philosophy, in which the emphasis lies on substantive feedback rather than strict numerical quantification.

The panel establishes that the Board of Examiners fulfils its statutory duties in a conscientious and systematic manner. Through periodic sampling, calibration among examiners, consistent oversight of assessment procedures, and active engagement with emerging challenges such as GenAI, the Board effectively safeguards the validity, reliability and independence of assessment within the programme.

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

The totality of the examinations (including the thesis) guarantees that all intended learning outcomes are achieved. The panel confirms that the assessment system 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, together with external reviewers, reviewed a representative selection of 15 recently completed final projects from the Chinese Studies programme, together with the corresponding assessment forms. The selection ensured a balanced spread of grades and assessors (see Annex 5).

Final projects

The panel observes that, overall, the bachelor's theses demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes and meet the level expected of a bachelor's degree in Chinese Studies. The panel noted that several thesis topics and perspectives are relevant not only from an academic standpoint but also from a societal perspective. Thesis topics mostly relate to political science and international relations, cultural and media studies, and sociology and anthropology.

The panel and external reviewers reviewed theses with a range of grades, from a pass mark to a 10. In general, the panel agrees with the grades awarded. The thesis that received a 10 from the examiners would – in the panel's opinion – even excel as an MA thesis; this is particularly evident in the methodology (a quantitative analysis of online discourse). At the same time, the thesis also includes translations of Chinese terms and phrases, demonstrating a broad spectrum of competencies.

In contrast, the panel found one thesis to be a genuine borderline case, which it would itself have judged insufficient. This thesis appeared weak both in its conceptualisation and in its execution. The language was often imprecise, unidiomatic, and at times ambiguous. The panel regards this as an isolated incident. The panel finds that all other students are capable of conducting a final research project, although it notes that a few theses were of a somewhat lower academic standard. Nonetheless, in the panel's view, all of them meet the expected bachelor's level.

In general, the theses could benefit from greater attention to formal aspects, such as a well-structured bibliography and a clearly recognisable academic register. Some theses were also rather short, which at times corresponded with relatively weak methodological quality and/or limited analytical depth. Such theses were, rightly in the panel's view, graded somewhat lower by the programme.

Reviewing the theses prompted the panel to reflect on the role that Chinese language source material should play, as there was considerable variation in the use of Chinese-language sources, ranging from no use at all to very frequent use. The panel understood from staff that the use of Chinese sources is not mandatory for the thesis, as students may, for example, conduct research on diaspora communities for which no Chinese language materials are available. The programme does not wish to limit students in exploring such relevant topics. The panel understands this reasoning and therefore recommends reversing the approach: require the use of Chinese-language sources in the final thesis, while allowing students to request a well-substantiated exception if necessary.

Performance of graduates

The panel concludes that graduates of the bachelor's programme perform well in further study and in the labour market. Alumni of the programme successfully progress to relevant master's programmes. Most graduates (60%) continue to the MA in Asian Studies (60 EC) at Leiden University, which aligns well with the BA in Chinese Studies. The Mandarin and Classical Chinese learning pathways naturally continue into this master's programme.

Some alumni opt for the two-year MA in Asian Studies, which includes a mandatory one-year study period in China. Each year, a small number of alumni are admitted to the two-year Research Master in Asian Studies or the Research Master in Linguistics, also at Leiden University. These students typically have a strong academic interest and a clear ambition to pursue further research.

During the site visit, the panel spoke with two alumni of the BA in Chinese Studies. One had indeed successfully progressed to the MA in Asian Studies and expressed satisfaction with the alignment between the two programmes. The other alumnus entered the labour market directly after completing the bachelor's programme and now works in journalism. The programme enabled her to prepare for this career path by allowing her to take a journalism-oriented minor in the third year and, following consultation with a study adviser, to complete an internship as part of her career orientation and skills development. This proved to be valuable preparation for the professional field.

A recent labour market survey—conducted by the faculty and involving 56 respondents from Chinese Studies—shows that most graduates ($n = 48$) enter the labour market only after obtaining their master's degree. These alumni generally find employment at an academic level relatively quickly. Graduates who seek employment with only a BA degree ($n = 8$) tend to find work somewhat less quickly and are also less likely to work at an academic level.

The 2025 Labour Market Survey further shows that graduates of Chinese Studies enter a wide range of sectors, including government and semi-government institutions, education, communication and marketing, the nonprofit sector and entrepreneurship.

Alumni testimonials and the reflections shared by students during the site visit highlight the value of the programme's interdisciplinary orientation and its strong linguistic component. Students noted that the curriculum equips them to examine regional issues through both a multidisciplinary and a global lens. Several students remarked that this combination represents one of the programme's most distinctive learning outcomes. They felt that it prepares them effectively for further academic study as well as for professional roles that demand contextual awareness and critical analytical skills.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that graduates of the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies achieve the intended learning outcomes. The reviewed final projects meet the expected bachelor's level, and the theses display a wide range of relevant topics that reflect the disciplinary breadth of the programme. Although some theses could be strengthened by requiring the use of Chinese-language source materials and greater attention to the formal aspects of academic writing, the overall academic standard is satisfactory.

Graduates perform well in further study and in the labour market, progressing to appropriate master's programmes and entering related professional fields. Students and alumni confirm that the combination of language acquisition, disciplinary knowledge and transferable skills effectively prepares them for both academic and professional contexts.

Based on the interviews and the information reviewed, the panel concludes that the programme meets the criteria of Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes.

Final conclusion

The NVAO-approved panel has assessed the programme against the four standards. The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme Chinese Studies meets all standards (intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, student assessment and achieved learning outcomes) and therefore 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 assessment of the programmes for each standard. The panel commends the programme for:

- Its distinctive academic profile, offering an exceptional combination of Modern Mandarin and Classical Chinese, a strong foundational knowledge of China, and a broad, well-integrated humanities-based disciplinary spectrum. The wide range of disciplinary perspectives (e.g. philosophy, history, sociology, political economy, art and literature) is considered a key strength of the programme.
- Its clearly formulated intended learning outcomes, which are well defined, coherently structured, aligned with the Dublin Descriptors and fully appropriate for the level of an academic bachelor's degree.
- The clarification of expected proficiency levels in Mandarin and Classical Chinese, through the integration of CEFR indicators, which increases transparency for both staff and students.
- The prominent and integrated language trajectory, which remains a distinctive asset of the programme and is highly valued by students.
- Its flexibility and student-centred pathways, allowing students to tailor their disciplinary and professional profile through elective choices and study abroad- opportunities.
- Its well-qualified teaching staff, both in terms of disciplinary expertise and didactic competence, who provide rich, detailed and constructive feedback that actively supports students' academic development.
- The wide variety of formative and summative assessment formats (including essays, written examinations, oral tests, presentations, translations and weekly assignments), which enables meaningful evaluation of different types of knowledge and skills.
- The effective safeguarding of assessment quality, with the Board of Examiners systematically monitoring assessments, reviewing theses and proactively engaging with emerging developments such as Generative AI.

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

- Strengthen guidance on the responsible use of GenAI in teaching: continue enhancing guidance on the pedagogical use of Generative AI tools within the teaching-learning environment.
- Further align supervision practices in the thesis phase to ensure a more consistent and uniform student experience during the final research project.

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

- Take greater ownership in determining which disciplinary areas are essential to the programme's academic identity. Strategic decisions about disciplinary offerings should not be left to demographic developments alone.

- Develop a more structured and comprehensive approach to employability and labour market orientation.
- Further strengthen the research skills trajectory, in particular the methodological skills of students, ensuring that all students acquire the competencies needed to produce methodologically sound final theses.
- Maintain continued attention to the consistency of thesis quality, particularly with regard to methodological rigour and formal academic standards such as academic writing and structuring.
- Require students to use Chinese-language primary sources in the bachelor's thesis, allowing them to request a well-substantiated exception only where appropriate.

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	Chinastudies
International name	Chinese Studies
Location	Leiden
Programme number in RIO	56818
Orientation and level	Wo-bachelor
Research master	No
Language of instruction	Dutch
(Legal) professional requirements	No
All study programmes/tracks/specialisations	No
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
Submission date of accreditation report	1 mei 2026
Other (e.g. name change or extension of study duration)	No

Annex 2: Intended learning outcomes

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

Eindkwalificaties van de bachelor opleiding Chinastudies

Afgestudeerden van de opleiding hebben de onderstaande opleidingsspecifieke eindkwalificaties bereikt:

a. Kennis, inzicht en vaardigheden

1. Taalvaardigheid in het modern Chinees (Mandarijn) en het klassiek Chinees (voor verdere informatie, zie Endterms Mandarin, bijlage J en Leiden University Pedagogy Survey Classical Chinese 2025, bijlage *):
 - i. Spreek- en luistervaardigheid. Goede beheersing van het gesproken Mandarijn: de student is in staat deel te nemen aan gesprekken en discussies over algemene onderwerpen;
 - ii. Leesvaardigheid. Modern: de student kan authentiek materiaal van verschillende aard verwerken (kranten, literatuur, beschouwelijke teksten, etc.). Klassiek: de student kan, al dan niet met behulp van een woordenboek, eenvoudige teksten begrijpen in verschillende registers (wényán, báihuà);
 - iii. Schrijfvaardigheid. De student kan korte essays schrijven over uiteenlopende onderwerpen in het Mandarijn.
2. Fundamentele kennis van het hedendaagse China en de Chinese geschiedenis en cultuur voor de twintigste eeuw: de student ontwikkelt een brede blik op China en de sinofone wereld.
3. De student heeft een grondige kennis van de belangrijkste historische ontwikkelingen van China, zowel de politieke als cultureel-maatschappelijke. De student heeft daarnaast kennis van de politieke, maatschappelijke en culturele ontwikkelingen in het hedendaagse China, mede in de context van de regio en de rest van de wereld.
4. Kennis van en inzicht in door de student gekozen disciplines: hierdoor wordt de brede blik er één met eigen accenten. Wat de discipline accenten betreft kan de student kiezen uit: antropologie, politieke economie, internationale betrekkingen, filosofie, geschiedenis, godsdienstwetenschap, kunstgeschiedenis, letterkunde, politicologie, sociologie (maatschappij en media) en taalkunde. Deze kennis is ingebed in inzicht in sinologische tradities en in de problematiek die het bestuderen van 'verre' culturen met zich meebrengt.
5. De vaardigheid om te gaan met primaire en secundaire bronnen, ze te lokaliseren en op waarde te schatten.

b. Toepassen van kennis en inzicht

1. De opgedane kennis van land en taal stelt de student in staat interactief en intercultureel te functioneren in een Chinese omgeving.
2. De opgedane disciplinaire-methodologische kennis stelt de student in staat basale onderzoeksvragen te formuleren en te benaderen vanuit de gekozen disciplinaire invalshoek.
3. De opgedane vaardigheid om met primaire en secundaire bronnen om te gaan stelt de student in staat bij de beantwoording van basale onderzoeksvragen de relevante bronnen te vinden en te gebruiken.

Algemene academische vaardigheden (faculteitsbrede eindkwalificaties)

Afgestudeerden van een bacheloropleiding beschikken over de volgende algemene academische vaardigheden:

I Kennis en inzicht

1. De afgestudeerde is vaardig in het vinden van (digitaal) beschikbare literatuur via geëigende zoeksystemen.
2. De afgestudeerde heeft inzicht in de beschikbaarheid van voor het vakgebied relevante (digitale) bronnen en tools.
3. De afgestudeerde heeft inzicht in hoe digitale gegevensverzamelingen tot stand zijn gekomen en hoe die gebruikt worden in digitale onderzoeksmethoden.
4. De afgestudeerde is in staat om te reflecteren over de maatschappelijke en wetenschappelijke gevolgen van digitalisering met betrekking tot het eigen vakgebied.

II Toepassen van kennis en inzicht

5. De afgestudeerde is in staat een goed afgebakende probleemstelling te formuleren.
6. De afgestudeerde kan voor het vakgebied vereiste kwalitatieve en/of kwantitatieve (digitale) technieken benutten om gegevens uit (digitale) bronnen te selecteren, te bewerken, te analyseren en/of te visualiseren.
7. De afgestudeerde is in staat om zelfstandig een origineel onderzoeksvoorstel te formuleren, waarbij verschillende bronnen, benaderingen en/of artefacten worden gecombineerd.

III Oordeelsvorming

8. De afgestudeerde heeft inzicht in de mogelijkheden en beperkingen van (digitale) (onderzoeks)bronnen en methoden in het eigen vakgebied, kan deze vergelijken en combineren met andere bronnen en methoden en kan er kritisch gebruik van maken.
9. De afgestudeerde is in staat op basis van eigen onderzoek een beargumenteerde conclusie te formuleren.

IV Communicatie

10. De afgestudeerde is bekend met verschillende moderne methoden en technieken van publicatie, ook in digitale en visuele vormen, en is bekend met de bijbehorende conventies en het bijbehorende vakjargon.
11. De afgestudeerde kan een beargumenteerde keuze maken uit digitale middelen voor mondelinge en schriftelijke presentatie van onderzoekswerk en die middelen gebruiken.
12. De afgestudeerde kan onderzoeksresultaten helder, overtuigend en beargumenteerd uiteenzetten.
13. De afgestudeerde kan actief deelnemen aan een vakinhoudelijke discussie.
14. De afgestudeerde is in staat om in teamverband doelen te realiseren.

V Leervaardigheden

15. De afgestudeerde heeft het vermogen om zelfstandig nieuwe vaardigheden aan te leren die nodig zijn om productief te kunnen werken met (digitale) bronnen en tools van het eigen vakgebied.
16. De afgestudeerde is in staat op constructieve wijze feedback te geven en te ontvangen, en kan gegronde kritiek verwerken tot een herziening van het eigen standpunt of de eigen argumentatie;
17. De afgestudeerde kan een realistische planning maken en zich houden aan overeengekomen planningen en prioritering.
18. De afgestudeerde is in staat te reflecteren op het eigen leerproces en functioneren, zowel zelfstandig als binnen een team, en op de eigen bijdrage aan een in teamverband ontwikkeld eindproduct.

Annex 3: Curriculum outline

Programme bachelor Chinese studies

Jaar 1 (BA 1)					
Sem. I	Mandarijn 1a (15 EC)		Chinese geschiedenis tot 1911 (5EC)	Introduction to contemporary China: politics, economics, society (5EC)	Core Curriculum Area Studies (5 EC)
Sem. II	Mandarijn 1b (10 EC)	Klassiek Chinees (5 EC)	Modern Chinese History (5 EC)	Filosofie en religie van China (5 EC)	Literatuur en kunst van China (5 EC)
Jaar 2 (BA 2)					
Sem. I	Mandarijn 2a (5 EC)	Klassiek Chinees 2 (5 EC)	Introduction to Contemporary China B: Politics, Economics, and Society (5 EC)	Kerncurriculum: Wetenschaps- filosofie (5 EC)	1 inhoudelijk keuzevak (5 EC)
Sem. II	Mandarijn 2b (5 EC)	2 keuzevakken à 5 EC (10 EC)		Mandarijn 2c in Leiden, China of Taiwan (15 EC)	
Jaar 3 (BA3)					
Sem. I	Mandarijn 3a (5 EC)	Inhoudelijk (keuze)college (5 EC)	1 taalvak (keuze uit 4 vakken) (5 EC)	Keuzeruimte (bijv. Minor) (30 EC)	BA Eindwerkstuk (bij een inhoudelijk keuzecollege) (10 EC)
Sem. II	Mandarijn 3b (5 EC)				

Taalvaardigheid
Inhoudelijke kennis van china
Disciplinaire oriëntatie
Academische vaardigheden
Core Curriculum

Programme structure BA Chinese Studies, Source: Self-Evaluation Report Bachelor Chinese Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University, 2025

Annex 4: Programme site visit

Cluster Regiostudies 1 – Locatiebezoek 2

Dag 1: 8 december 2025

8:30	8:35	Reception
8:35	9:15	Internal deliberations panel
9:15	9:45	Session faculty management (voertaal: NL)
9:45	10:00	Break
10:00	10:45	Session programme management BA International Studies and BA Chinastudies
10:45	11:00	Break
11:00	11:45	Session lecturers BA Chinastudies -
11:45	12:30	Session students BA Chinastudies
12:30	13:15	Lunch
13:15	13:45	Session Board of Examiners BA Chinastudies -
13:45	14:15	Break
14:15	15:00	Session lecturers BA International Studies -
15:00	15:45	Session students BA International Studies -
15:45	16:00	Break
16:00	16:30	Session Board of Examiners BA International Studies
16:30	17:15	Discussing future development BA International Studies
17:15	18:00	Internal deliberations of the panel

Dag 2: 9 december 2025

09.00	10.00	Session programme management BA Koreastudies / MA Asian Studies 60 EC / MA Asian Studies 120 EC / BA SSEAS -
10.00	10.30	Break
10.30	11.15	Session lecturers BA SSEAS -
11.15	12.00	Session students BA SSEAS

		-
12:00	13:00	Lunch
13:00	13:45	Session lecturers MA Asian Studies 60 EC & 120 EC
13:45	14:30	Session students MA Asian Studies 60 EC & 120 EC
		-
14:30	15:00	Break
15:00	15:45	Session lecturers BA Koreastudies
		-
15:45	16:30	Session students BA Koreastudies
		-
16:30	16:45	Break
16:45	17:30	Session Board of Examiners Asian studies
		-
16.15	17.30	Internal deliberations of the panel

Dag 3: 10 december 2025

09.00	09.30	Internal deliberations of the panel
09.30	10.00	Session programme management BA Japanstudies
10:00	10:15	Break
10.15	11.00	Session lecturers BA Japanstudies
		-
11.00	11.45	Session students BA Japanstudies
		-
11.45	12:00	Break
12:00	12.30	Session Board of Examiners Japanstudies
		-
12.30	13.15	Lunch
13.15	15.00	Internal deliberations of the panel
15.00	15.45	Pending issues programme management all programmes
		-
15.45	16.15	Internal deliberations of the panel
16.15	17.00	Discussing future development MA Asian Studies 60 & 120 EC
		-
17.00	18.00	First feedback of the panel

Annex 5: Documents

Self-evaluation reports and annex

- ZER BA Chinastudies 2025 UL

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

- A. Facultaire bijlage ZER UL 2025 ENG
- B. Prospectus BA Chinastudies
- C. Onderwijsdashboard (Education Dashboard) FGW
- D.1. BA OER Facultair deel 2025-2026
- D.2. BA OER International Studies 2025-2026
- E. Docentenlijst BA Chinastudies
- F. Toetsplan BA Chinastudies 2025
- G. Rules and regulations Board of Examiners
- H. Onderwijsvisie (Vision on Teaching and Learning)
- I.
 - 1a. Gids voor Onderwijskwaliteit FGW 2025
 - 1b. Guide to Teaching Quality Assurance FGW 2025
 - 2a. Handleiding voor Examencommissies FGW 2024-2025
 - 2b. Manual for Board of Examiners FGW 2024-2025
 - 3a. Onderwijsevaluatiekader FGW
 - 3b. Teaching Evaluation Framework FGW
 - 4a. Handleiding voor Opleidingscommissies FGW 2024-2025
 - 4b. Manual for Programme Committees FGW 2024-2025
 - 5a. Toetskader FGW
- J. Beoogde eindkwalificaties met betrekking tot taalvaardigheden
- K. Overzicht van vergelijkbare programma's
- L. Richtlijnen voor GenAI gebruik studenten FGW Universiteit Leiden
- M. AI guide for teachers FGW Leiden University
- N. Implementing AI in your curriculum FGW Leiden University
- O.
 - 1. Scriptiebeoordeling bij de Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen NL
 - 2. Thesis Assessment at the Faculty of Humanities ENG

Additional documentation

- AI guide for teachers FGW Leiden University
- Implementing AI in your curriculum FGW Leiden University
- Jaarverslagen examencommissie
- Notulen Opleidingscommissie
- Opleidingsjaarverslagen BA Chinastudies

Selection of final products

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed fifteen final projects from the bachelor's programme in Chinese Studies. The programme does not offer official specialisations, but the selection ensured that all world regions from which students may choose were represented. The sample also reflected a balanced distribution in terms of grades, topics and supervisors.

Bachelor Chinese Studies

Grade Range	Number of theses	Selected
5,5-6,9 sufficient	32	5
7,0-8,4 good	79	7
8,5-10 very good	18	3
Total	129	15

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