

B International Studies

Leiden University

Assessment report

17 April 2026



Content

1. Summary	3
2. Introduction	6
Procedure	6
Institution	9
Programme	9
3. Programme assessment	11
Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	11
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	14
Standard 3: Student assessment	24
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	29
Final conclusion	31
4. Annexes	34
Annex 1: Administrative data	34
Annex 2: Intended learning outcomes	35
Annex 3: Curriculum outline	38
Annex 4: Programme site visit	39
Annex 5: Documents	41

1. Summary

This report describes the programme assessment of the academic bachelor International Studies offered by Leiden University.

Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in International Studies at Leiden University presents a clear and distinctive academic profile. Its humanities driven and multidisciplinary approach – integrating four core perspectives with regional specialisation and language training – offers students a solid framework for analysing regional developments in a global context. The programme aligns well with international benchmarks.

The intended learning outcomes are clearly formulated, coherent and appropriate for an academic bachelor's degree. They are well aligned with the Dublin descriptors for NLQF level 6 and encompass the full range of disciplinary knowledge, research skills, academic competencies and intercultural awareness expected in the field. The structured approach to language acquisition, with CEFR-based differentiation, is well considered.

The panel is confident that the programme safeguards the continued relevance of its learning outcomes. Through research-informed teaching, active participation in international academic discussions and collaboration with external partners, contemporary developments in International Studies are systematically integrated into the curriculum.

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

Standard 2 – Teaching-learning environment

The bachelor's programme in International Studies provides a coherent, well-structured and academically sound curriculum, with clear alignment between the intended learning outcomes and the four learning pathways (disciplinary, regional, language, and research skills).

The programme's architecture demonstrates a logical progression from basic knowledge to advanced, integrative and research-oriented learning, supported by careful coordination across both disciplinary (history, economics, politics and culture) and regional components.

The teaching-learning environment is experienced by students as intellectually engaging and supportive. The combination of large lectures and small tutorials is particularly valued, and the panel commends the strong didactic coherence and the high quality, commitment and diversity of the teaching staff. Study

guidance is well organised and accessible from the outset, although students report some variation in the thesis and internship phases.

The panel appreciates the programme's focus on transferable skills and professional preparation, particularly through the PRINS¹ consultancy course and the optional internship track. It also values the effective use of the international classroom and considers the choice of English as the language of instruction well justified.

At the same time, the panel recommends the programme to monitor the impact of increasing tutorial group sizes and to explore possibilities for strengthening language provision, particularly for those languages that are more challenging to learn.

Based on the interviews and the documentation reviewed, the panel concludes that the programme meets the criteria of Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment.

Standard 3 – Student assessment

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in International Studies has a well-structured and professionally organised assessment system, clearly aligned with the faculty's principles for valid, reliable and transparent testing. The assessment matrices demonstrate strong coverage of the intended learning outcomes, and the wide range of assessment formats enables the programme to evaluate different competencies effectively.

Students value the diversity and fairness of assessments. The panel considers the programme's approach to group work appropriate and suggests exploring the use of a CRediT author statement to further clarify individual contributions. It also welcomes the programme's active engagement with the implications of Generative AI and encourages continued reflection on how best to integrate AI-related guidelines into assessment practice.

With respect to the assessment of the bachelor's theses, the panel finds that procedures are consistently applied and that assessments are generally well substantiated. The grading rubric developed by the Board of Examiners is a positive step towards greater consistency, and the panel recommends broader adoption of this tool.

The panel establishes that the Board of Examiners safeguards assessment quality in a conscientious and systematic manner, thereby contributing to a transparent and reliable assessment culture. Overall, the panel concludes that the programme meets Standard 3 – Student assessment.

¹ PRINS: PRactising INternational Studies

Standard 4 – Achieved learning outcomes

The panel concludes that graduates of the bachelor's programme in International Studies achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel's review of a representative sample of recent theses confirms that all projects meet the expected bachelor's level. The theses show a wide range of relevant topics, reflecting the programme's disciplinary breadth. Although methodological depth varies due to the required multidisciplinary approach, the overall academic standard is satisfactory.

Graduates perform well in further study and on the labour market, progressing to suitable master's programmes and entering related professional fields. Students and alumni confirm that the combination of multidisciplinary analysis, regional expertise and language training effectively prepares them for academic and professional contexts.

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

Overall conclusion

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 International Studies at Leiden University.

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

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 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 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 Koreastudies
- 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), Vladimir Bartelds (secretary for the bachelor Japanstudies, bachelor Koreastudies, bachelor South and Southeast Asian Studies, de master Asian Studies 60 EC and the master Asian Studies 120 EC), and Inge van der Hoorn (secretary for the bachelor Chinastudies 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 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, 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 8, 9, 10 December, 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, 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. 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 programmes². The university has seven faculties: Archaeology, Humanities, Medicine (LUMC), Governance & Global Affairs, Law, Social Sciences, and Science. The university's profile is described on its website³. In short, Leiden University aims to equip new generations to make a difference in a global society. Its core values are Connecting, Innovative, Responsible, and Free. Leiden University attaches great importance to partnerships. Within the Netherlands, it collaborates extensively with Delft University of Technology and Erasmus University Rotterdam⁴, and internationally, among others, within the League of European Research Universities⁵.

Programme

The bachelor's programme in International Studies equips students with the tools to study regional topics, developments and phenomena from a humanities perspective and to situate these within a global context. The Leiden programme aims to provide students with in-depth knowledge of one of eight world regions and to enable them to acquire language skills in one of the region's key languages. About 30 of the 180 credits of the programme are dedicated to language skills acquisition. The programme's multifaceted approach enables students to interpret and analyse global issues from a humanities-informed perspective. To achieve this, students explore the historical and cultural background of their chosen region, as well as its political and economic developments. Students are exposed to multiple academic disciplinary approaches and for their thesis either have to combine two of these approaches in-depth or place a regionally defined topic in a global perspective.

International Studies has an annual intake of approximately 400 to 500 students, positioning it as the faculty's largest programme. It is based at Leiden University's The Hague campus and attracts a highly international student body.

Developments since the last accreditation

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

The previous panel recommended clarifying the applicability of the language skills acquired in the programme, as the former formulation of level of language acquisition created ambiguity and led to disappointment among students and graduates regarding the achieved level of language skills. In

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

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

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

⁵ See: <https://www.leru.org/>

response, the programme has defined CEFR levels for each language, ensuring that both students and lecturers have a clear understanding of the language proficiency throughout the duration of the programme (see Standard 1). These levels are now formalised in the examination regulations and the Prospectus.

The previous panel also recommended defining clearly what the programme sees as the benefits of its multi- and interdisciplinary approach in terms of the skills obtained. Following the recommendation, the programme made this issue one of the topics for special attention for the Midterm Review Committee in 2023. Following this, the ILOs were carefully reformulated, in particular by clarifying the phrasing 'understand the regional effects of globalisation'. This was done in response to the observations of the assessment panel that students did not engage in their thesis with globalisation as a concept. The Midterm Review Committee agreed with the Programme Board that the globalisation concept is not central to the curriculum but that students engage with regional topics in a global context. Therefore, the programme has been strengthened through emphasising its core objectives in the definition of course objectives. The main change is that it is now explicitly mentioned that the programme focuses on regional issues in a global context and not on globalisation as such.

Furthermore, the previous panel highlighted concerns regarding mental health support and workspace availability at the The Hague campus. The measures implemented since then have resulted in current students expressing satisfaction with these facilities. The programme is continuing its efforts to alleviate pressure on campus resources, which will be partly addressed by the opening of the new Spui Campus building in The Hague, the further expansion of student support services, and sustained attention to student wellbeing, with particular focus on mental health.

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

3. Programme assessment

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings and considerations

Profile bachelor

The Bachelor of Arts in International Studies is characterised by its humanities-based, multidisciplinary approach, combining four core perspectives (culture, history, politics, and economics) with in-depth regional expertise across one of eight world regions⁶, systematic regional specialisation, and structured language acquisition. This integrated design enables students to analyse regional issues within a global framework.

The programme prepares students to analyse and interpret global developments across diverse cultural and regional contexts, equipping them with strong analytical and practical skills. Graduates are positioned to enter the labour market in fields ranging from business to NGOs, or to continue their academic careers, as the programme qualifies them for a wide range of MA and some MSc programmes.

The panel considers that the bachelor's programme presents a clear and well-defined academic profile within the higher education landscape. The panel particularly values the integrated design, enabling students to analyse regional issues within a global framework, consistently linking contemporary political and economic developments to their historical and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the panel observes good integration with current debates in the humanities, including global humanities and social justice.

The panel also notes that the programme aligns well with international benchmarks, as demonstrated by the benchmarking exercise presented in the self-evaluation report. It differs from other International Studies programmes offered at universities abroad by providing students with greater ownership of the curriculum and by offering the possibility to select from eight world regions with accompanying languages.

The panel established that the International Studies programme clearly sets itself apart from the International Relations and Organisations track – which is offered by Leiden University as part of the BA

⁶ Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America, Russia and Eurasia, and South Asia and Southeast Asia.

in Political Science – by virtue of its strong grounding in the humanities, its emphasis on qualitative research methodologies, and the integration of language acquisition within the programme.

Learning outcomes of the programme

The panel finds that the intended learning outcomes of the International Studies programme are clearly formulated and appropriate for the academic level of a bachelor's degree. The learning outcomes are explicitly aligned with the Dublin descriptors for NLQF level 6, and they articulate the expected knowledge, skills, and competencies associated with an undergraduate degree in International Studies. They encompass key disciplinary perspectives, including historical, cultural, economic, and political studies, as well as international relations.

In addition, students are expected to develop basic skills in listening, reading, speaking, and writing in a modern language (other than English) linked to their chosen geographical area. As some languages are more challenging to acquire than others, the CEFR level indicators provide clear guidance in this respect. The panel appreciates the distinction the programme makes in this regard, for example between German (reading B1+) and Korean (reading A2).

Furthermore, the learning outcomes make clear that the programme considers academic skills such as critical reflection, analysing issues within a global context, the application of research methods, and intercultural awareness to be of primary importance. The panel regards these learning outcomes as coherent, well-structured, and suitably designed to prepare students 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 functions within a wide-ranging academic and professional environment, which helps to ensure the ongoing relevance of its intended learning outcomes. The benefits of the programme's multi- and interdisciplinary approach have been more clearly articulated. Moreover, through research-informed teaching, participation in international academic discussions, and the active engagement of staff in academic networks, current developments in the field of International Studies are systematically reflected in the curriculum. Guest speakers and partnerships with external organisations (e.g. UNESCO, Amnesty International) likewise contribute to the inclusion of contemporary viewpoints.

Conclusions

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in International Studies presents a clear and distinctive academic profile. Its humanities-driven and multidisciplinary approach – integrating four core perspectives with regional specialisation and language training – offers students a solid framework for analysing regional developments in a global context. The programme aligns well with international

benchmarks and is recognisably different from related programmes both within Leiden University and abroad.

The intended learning outcomes are clearly formulated, coherent and appropriate for an academic bachelor's degree. They are well aligned with the Dublin descriptors for NLQF level 6 and encompass the full range of disciplinary knowledge, research skills, academic competencies and intercultural awareness expected in the field. The structured approach to language acquisition, with CEFR-based differentiation, is well considered.

The panel is confident that the programme safeguards the continued relevance of its learning outcomes. Through research-informed teaching, active participation in international academic discussions and collaboration with external partners, contemporary developments in International Studies are systematically integrated into the curriculum.

Based on the interviews and the documentation reviewed, 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

Content and structure of the curriculum

The panel observes that the bachelor's programme in International Studies has a well-designed curriculum with a clear structure, strong coherence and an appropriate academic level. It considers the overall curriculum architecture to be balanced and logically sequenced, with course components clearly aligned to the intended learning outcomes.

Curriculum

The bachelor's programme in International Studies is a three-year, fulltime programme of 180 EC that offers a multidisciplinary introduction to the study of International Studies, combining four key academic perspectives (culture, history, politics, and economics) with analysing a chosen region, and supported by proficiency in a relevant regional language.

The curriculum (see Annex 3 for the curriculum outline) is organised around four main learning paths: (1) disciplinary, (2) regional, (3) language, and (4) research skills. The four pillars in the disciplinary learning path (culture, history, economics and politics) form the basis of the curriculum.

- In the first year (60 EC), students acquire a broad foundational understanding of these pillars. In addition, they follow the cornerstone course *Introduction to International Studies*, which introduces the integrated approach to regions and disciplines. From the 2nd semester onwards, students choose one of eight regions and select a language associated with that region. Through the course Academic Literacy, attention is also paid to the development of academic skills, including academic writing, critical reading and source analysis. The development of research skills is also embedded within disciplinary courses and begin practising small-scale research in the tutorials.
- The second year (60 EC) builds on students' disciplinary knowledge and further develops their understanding of the chosen region. The disciplinary and regional learning pathways converge in the four area courses: Area History, Area Language and Culture, Area Economics, and Area Politics. The research pathway continues in the second year with a compulsory research methodology course, which prepares students for independent research. The Thematic Seminar brings together the central themes of International Studies (International Order and Disorder, Systems of Belief and Religion, Social Justice and Human Rights, Environment and Society, and Technology and Society) and enables students to examine these from various disciplinary angles.

Research skills are strengthened in the aforementioned Thematic Seminar, in which students conduct independent research on a current issue from multiple regional and disciplinary perspectives. In addition, language courses are again offered in the second year. To support language acquisition, language teachers maintain contact with the lecturers of the area courses so that they can align their language materials with the content of those courses.

- In the third year (60 EC), students concentrate on shaping their individual academic profile and on combining a multidisciplinary approach with a global perspective. Through elective credits, they can choose between an internship, a study-abroad period, or one or more minors. In the final semester, the learning pathways within the curriculum culminate in three components: the *bachelor's thesis* (15 EC) and the consultancy project *PRINS* (Practising International Studies, 10 EC). The *Language & Culture in Practice* course (5 EC) links knowledge of the foreign language and culture to the development of research skills by engaging students in the practical application of this knowledge.

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 in Annex 3.

The panel commends the well-considered content and structure of the programme. The four learning pathways are clearly articulated across the three years of study, and the disciplinary components progress from foundational to region-specific, ultimately bringing together and considering all these perspectives within a global context.

The panel finds that the intended learning outcomes are clearly and coherently translated into the curriculum, among other things through the language courses, the dedicated and integrated research courses, and the courses related to the various disciplines. The documentation – and in particular the Prospectus and the assessment plan – shows that the intended learning outcomes have been operationalised into appropriate course-level learning objectives. The panel notes that this alignment is not only formalised on paper but is also apparent in the internal coordination between courses and regional tracks, as evidenced by the interviews. While the content of regional modules differs, the underlying objectives, assessment formats and accompanying skills training are deliberately harmonised to ensure that all students achieve comparable attainment levels, irrespective of their chosen region or seminar pathway. In the panel's view, this transparent and well-considered mapping supports the coherence of the programme and safeguards the consistency of student learning across the curriculum.

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, both in terms of regional focus and language choice, as well as in selecting disciplinary areas of interest and deciding whether to pursue a

study exchange or an internship in their chosen region. Students who opt for an exchange abroad – approximately half of the cohort – indicated that their language proficiency is typically sufficient for everyday communication. At the same time, they emphasised that a period abroad provides a substantial and noticeable boost to their linguistic development.

While students are positive about the opportunities available to them, they expressed a desire for a broader range of language courses, particularly for languages that are perceived as more demanding, such as those from Asian language families. They indicated that broader language provision would further strengthen their ability to engage with original source materials in their coursework and thesis writing. The panel regards this a reasonable request from the students, but also understands the considerations of the programme, which must make choices regarding the breadth and depth of components within the curriculum. The panel considers it not feasible within the International Studies programme to achieve a level of competence in, for example, an Asian language that would enable students to work with original sources in the target language. This would come at the expense of other components of the programme. Students who wish to develop a high level of proficiency in a regional language are therefore better served by one of the dedicated area studies programmes, such as Japanese Studies. That said, the panel considers it worth exploring whether the elective credits within the International Studies curriculum could be used to further develop students' language skills.

Increasing collaboration within the faculty

The panel notes that the faculty as a whole is facing increasing pressure, as several programmes are confronted with small student cohorts and limited financial resources. These circumstances require the faculty to explore more efficient forms of organisation and programme delivery. Although this situation does not apply to International Studies – a large programme with an annual intake of approximately 450 to 500 first-year students – the panel observes that the programme's management is demonstrating a strong sense of solidarity with its smaller counterparts. The faculty has so far opted to retain all programme "labels", recognising that Leiden University offers several nationally unique degree programmes, including Japan Studies and African Studies.

Against this backdrop, the faculty is currently considering the possibility of expanding shared teaching across programmes. The idea is that programmes with very small enrolments may, for reasons of efficiency, jointly offer two to four courses with related programmes. International Studies has indicated both its willingness and its capacity to play an active role in this development, for instance by designing a course such as Culture and Language of Latin America, in which students from International Studies and the various Asian area studies programmes could participate together.

The panel values the constructive and collegial attitude shown by International Studies in this process. It hopes that, through such collaborative efforts and while safeguarding 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 finds that the programme maintains a clear and well-considered 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. Furthermore, the panel notes that the programme has, over the past two years, successfully advanced several initiatives aimed at strengthening its skills framework, most notably the Digital Skills Project, which provided concrete recommendations for embedding digital competencies within the existing skills pathways.

Another example of the programme's labour market orientation is the third-year consultancy course *Practising International Studies* (PRINS), in which students work for twelve weeks on an authentic assignment for an external client. The panel is particularly positive about this component, noting that it offers students meaningful exposure to real-world problem-solving and provides a concrete opportunity to apply their analytical and communicative skills in a professional setting. The students with whom the panel spoke confirmed this view, stating that they experience the PRINS course as highly helpful in becoming acquainted with the labour market.

In addition, the panel notes that students may use their elective credits in the fifth semester to undertake a structured 30EC internship track, which combines workplace experience with an academic research component. This option offers students who wish to orient themselves more strongly towards the labour market a practical and well-supported route to gaining professional experience during their studies.

Students also value the contribution of the student association BASIS, which supports both academic and social integration by organising networking events and speed dating sessions with professionals from the field. According to the panel, these activities strengthen students' engagement with the professional domain. At the same time, the panel observes that the programme could further enhance its focus on professional engagement and employability. The panel therefore advises the programme to formalise and strengthen its interaction with the professional field, for example by placing greater emphasis on the involvement of guest lecturers from relevant professional sectors and by developing a more structured approach to alumni engagement.

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 International Studies. This includes the explicit attention to skills development, the opportunities for students to pursue individual interests through flexible learning routes (such as the choice of discipline, regional focus and elective credits), and the programme's orientation towards the labour market through its emphasis on transferable skills, the PRINS course and the optional internship.

With respect to didactic principles, Leiden University puts strong emphasis on active learning. Because active engagement is understood to stimulate and deepen students' learning processes, the programme in International Studies deliberately combines large-scale lectures – sometimes accommodating up to 400 first-year students – with small-scale tutorials. Students expressed strong appreciation for this approach, noting that tutorials constitute one of the key strengths of the programme. They explained that tutorials challenge them intellectually, expose them to diverse perspectives from fellow students, and provide an important space “to workshop their understanding and what they are learning”. According to the students, tutorials also form the primary context in which they develop essential academic and transferable skills through learning activities such as group discussions, (group) presentations, essay writing and debates.

Students additionally noted that, although lectures and tutorials are sometimes taught by different instructors, they nonetheless perceive the teaching staff as an integrated and coordinated team, with course content being well aligned across teaching formats. The panel commends the teaching staff for this coherence and collaborative approach.

During the site visit, it became clear that, as part of the efficiency measures currently being implemented within the faculty, consideration is being given to replacing programme-specific courses with faculty-wide offerings. One example is the new faculty core course *Humanities in a Digital World*, which will be implemented next year. While some lecturers welcome the opportunity to make such an adjustment, others are more hesitant, noting that the course does not include tutorials. Tutorials are considered crucial in a large programme such as International Studies, both for fostering community building and for fully leveraging the value of an internationally diverse classroom.

During the site visit students also expressed some concern about the increasing group sizes in tutorials. They explained that group presentations are already occasionally carried out with as many as seven students, which limits opportunities for individual practice and feedback. Students indicated that they would regret it if tutorial groups were to grow even larger as a result of budgetary constraints. At the

same time, they emphasised that they strongly prefer having tutorials with larger groups over the prospect of losing tutorials altogether.

The panel recommends that the programme reflect carefully on the choices it makes in this regard. It appreciates, on the one hand, the programme's willingness to show solidarity with its smaller and more precarious sister programmes within the faculty. At the same time, the scale of International Studies and its highly diverse international student population may well require a different approach. The panel therefore advises the programme to ensure that, in its decision-making, it considers not only faculty-wide policies but also the specific characteristics and needs of its own students and staff. In this respect, the Programme Committee also has an important role.

International classroom

Another educational principle of Leiden University concerns internationalisation and diversity. The panel finds that the International Studies programme effectively capitalises on its inherently international character as well as the diversity of its student population. Students and teaching staff bring a wide range of cultural, linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds, which enriches discussions during tutorials and supports the development of intercultural competencies. The panel notes that instructors actively draw on this diversity, for example by inviting students with personal or regional expertise to contribute contextual insights during discussions of specific areas or countries. According to the panel, this diversity is intentionally integrated into teaching practices, for instance through collaborative assignments, peer-learning activities, class discussions and debates, case studies from different regions, and the systematic inclusion of multiple global perspectives in course materials.

Because the programme's didactic principles explicitly emphasise the value of an international classroom, the programme has set the ambition to maintain a student population in which at least 50% of students are non-Dutch, with a substantial proportion originating from non-Western backgrounds. The panel observes that the programme currently meets this ambition, with approximately 57.5% non-Dutch students, of whom around 15% come from non-Western regions.

At the same time, the panel encourages the programme to continue reflecting on how the potential of the international classroom can be further strengthened, particularly in relation to differentiated learning needs and the facilitation of inclusive group dynamics. In this regard, the panel notes that the recently introduced, multifaceted Polarisation Project has enhanced the programme's capacity to address sensitive classroom dynamics by supporting both staff and students through targeted training, intervention sessions and structured safe-space dialogues.

Admission and enrolment

For the bachelor's programme in International Studies, 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. Applicants who do not hold a Dutch *vwo* diploma or a qualification from an English-speaking country must demonstrate adequate English proficiency, evidenced by a minimum TOEFL iBT score of 80 overall and 20 for each component.

The panel finds that the programme applies clear and appropriate admission requirements. The criteria for English proficiency are transparent and ensure that incoming students are able to engage effectively with the programme's international and English-language learning environment.

Study advice and student guidance

The panel finds that study guidance is clearly structured and available throughout the programme, with study advisers and teaching staff providing support at key decision moments, such as the choice of region, language, research methods, thematic seminars, internships and the thesis trajectory.

The programme provides structured study guidance from the outset, with tutorial lecturers acting as the primary point of contact and student mentors supporting first-year students as they acclimatise to academic expectations and progress towards their second year. In addition, the study advisors play a central role in monitoring students' academic development through individual meetings, the review of mandatory study plans and timely referrals to specialised university services when needed. Students generally appreciate this guidance, particularly in the earlier years, although their experiences in the internship and thesis phases appear to vary depending on the individual tutor. The panel encourages tutors and study advisers to further align their approaches in this regard.

Students with disabilities receive appropriate support through the Leiden Fenestra Disability Centre and the faculty's designated StuFU counsellor, who arrange examination facilities, provide guidance on study planning and act as a point of contact, while the programme's study adviser ensures that lecturers and tutors accommodate short-term needs through flexibility in attendance and deadlines.

Campus The Hague

Leiden University has maintained a presence in The Hague since 1998. Campus The Hague offers a relatively large number of English-taught programmes, which has contributed significantly to strengthening the university's international profile. International Studies is one of the few area studies programmes offered at Leiden University's The Hague campus. The panel notes that the facilities are of good quality and students appear to be well established at this location. Whereas student life in The Hague was still limited in the early years of the campus, students report that it has improved considerably with the establishment of a dedicated student association. The panel considers this development

particularly valuable, given the sizeable international student population and their need for community building.

Apart from a few minor scheduling issues – for example in cases where lecturers were timetabled to teach in The Hague and shortly afterwards in Leiden – staff indicated that such matters are resolved promptly and do not affect the overall functioning of the programme. Overall, lecturers and students expressed satisfaction with the facilities and with the academic culture on the The Hague campus.

Teaching staff

The panel finds that the teaching staff of the bachelor's programme in International Studies are highly qualified in terms of subject expertise, research activity and didactic competence. As International Studies is a large and wide-ranging programme, encompassing multiple disciplines and world regions, more than 170 lecturers are involved in its delivery. The programme is taught by lecturers from across the Faculty of Humanities, including the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS), the Leiden Institute for History, the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL), the Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), and the Leiden Institute for Philosophy.

The panel notes that the teaching staff demonstrate strong didactic expertise, supported by the university's systematic approach to professional training. It is impressed by the lecturers' evident commitment to continuous development, reflected in their widespread attainment of the BKO and even advancement to the SKO level.

Students expressed clear appreciation for their lecturers and tutors during the site visit. They reported feeling well supported and listened to, and noted that staff make thoughtful and respectful use of the diversity present in the classroom. Students also spoke positively about the detailed and constructive feedback they receive during tutorials, which they consider an important contribution to their learning process.

During the site visit, teaching staff described and showed a culture of close collaboration and open communication within the team. As also outlined in the self-evaluation report, coordination is organised through the Programme Board. It is clear to the panel that the Programme Board has succeeded in establishing a stable core of lecturers who are strongly committed to the programme. However, the panel also understands that maintaining this core and integrating new lecturers into it remains a challenge, given the size of the programme.

The tutorial lecturing position was originally conceived as a temporary three-year appointment intended to help early-career academics embark on a university career. The panel learned that most tutorial lecturers now hold permanent contracts, which has contributed to greater stability within the programme. At the same time, tutors have limited opportunities for professional development. The

panel supports the programme's intention to address this by enabling its own lecturers to teach regular courses rather than only tutorials, thereby allowing them to broaden their teaching portfolio and open up possibilities for promotion, although this does not always align with the needs and objectives of the research institutes or with the faculty's financial constraints.

Overall, the panel concludes that the teaching staff are well equipped to deliver the programme effectively. Their collective disciplinary knowledge, regional expertise, active engagement in research, international outlook and collaborative ethos foster a learning environment that is both supportive and intellectually engaging. The panel considers these strengths essential for enabling students to achieve the intended learning outcomes, while also emphasising the continued importance of the small-scale tutorial sessions – which are currently under pressure – in a programme serving a large number of students.

Language of instruction

The bachelor's programme in International Studies is delivered almost entirely in English, with the exception of courses focusing on regional languages. As outlined in the self-evaluation report, this choice is firmly grounded in the programme's underlying philosophy. Understanding global developments from a humanities perspective requires students and staff to engage with one another within a genuinely international learning community. Such a community can only flourish when all members communicate through a shared lingua franca. For this reason, the use of English extends beyond the classroom: all formal communication – including meetings, committees and working groups – is conducted in English to ensure equal access and full participation for all.

To support this, students are admitted to the programme only if they demonstrate an adequate level of English proficiency. All teaching staff meet the university's language standards and teach at a native or near-native level. Students confirmed that the English proficiency of their lecturers is more than sufficient.

The panel concludes that the programme's decision to use English as the language of instruction is well justified and fully aligned with its aims and overall positioning. It also considers the English programme name appropriate, as it is essential for attracting international students.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in International Studies provides a coherent, well-structured and academically sound curriculum, with clear alignment between the intended learning outcomes and the four learning pathways.

The programme's architecture demonstrates a logical progression from introductory knowledge to advanced, integrative and research-oriented learning, supported by careful coordination across both disciplinary and regional components.

The teaching-learning environment is experienced by students as intellectually engaging and supportive. The combination of large lectures and small tutorials is particularly valued, and the panel commends the strong didactic coherence and the high quality, commitment and diversity of the teaching staff. Study guidance is well organised and accessible from the outset, although students report some variation in the thesis and internship phases.

The panel appreciates the programme's focus on transferable skills and professional preparation, particularly through the PRINS consultancy course and the optional internship track. It also values the effective use of the international classroom and considers the choice of English as the language of instruction well justified.

At the same time, the panel recommends the programme to monitor the impact of increasing tutorial group sizes and to explore possibilities for strengthening language provision, particularly for those languages that are more challenging to learn.

Based on the interviews and the documentation reviewed, the panel concludes that 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 finds that the assessment policy of the bachelor's programme in International 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 Turnitin⁷, 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 plans consist 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 assessment plan for the bachelor's programme in International Studies shows that the programme employs a broad and well-balanced range of assessment methods. During the site visit, students representing different regions and disciplines within International Studies confirmed that a diversity of assessment formats is used across all courses, e.g. essays, presentations, written exams, group assignments, quizzes, and debate performances. For the language courses writing, listening and speaking are part of 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.

⁷ 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 feel that grading is conducted equitably across the different regions. The programme takes into account that some languages are more difficult to learn than others by differentiating the required language proficiency levels. Students are also satisfied with the range of assessment formats used, mentioning as examples multiple-choice tests, open questions, oral examinations and presentations.

The panel was particularly interested in the assessment of group projects, such as PRINS, and discussed this topic with, among others, the Board of Examiners. The Board of Examiners noted that group work frequently results in higher grades. Current guidelines require that group projects include an element of individual assessment. To this end, students submit a short reflection on the contributions of their group members. The panel suggests that the programme consider introducing a CRediT author statement, in which students formally specify their individual contributions to the group assignment. This could further enhance the transparency and fairness of the assessment of group work.

Overall, the panel finds that the assessment system of the programme is robust, coherent and professionally organised, with clear alignment to the intended learning outcomes and to the faculty assessment framework. The wide variety of assessment formats and the given feedback support student learning and allow 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 Brightspace.

The interview with the teaching staff confirmed that they are actively considering how to adapt their assessment formats. One lecturer, for instance, explained that she had intentionally chosen a group assignment, anticipating that group dynamics and shared accountability would help limit inappropriate AI use. Another lecturer is considering introducing an oral assessment in place of a written essay, although this may be time consuming and challenging to implement in a large programme such as International Studies

The panel encourages the programme to address the role of AI more explicitly within teaching and assessment. Total prohibition is neither effective nor realistic, as students will likely use such tools regardless. At the same time, the introduction of AI can occasionally lead to resistance among more

traditionally oriented lecturers. The panel stresses the importance of having this discussion openly, as policies developed at institutional level must ultimately be translated into classroom practice. Lecturers remain responsible for designing and conducting assessments, and the panel notes that they require clear guidance and room to experiment with appropriate formats. This includes opportunities to explore new tools—such as generative AI applications like ChatGPT—as well as to learn from colleagues' experiences. Several lecturers are already experimenting with alternative strategies.

At faculty level, a working group is currently mapping existing practices and exploring what is possible and appropriate in terms of GenAI use, including how it can be employed productively. The panel welcomes these developments and encourages the programme to remain actively engaged in these conversations.

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 the panel and external reviewers generally agreed with the grades awarded, it was unclear to them what the specific criteria were for assigning a rating of *satisfactory*, *good* or *very good* for each intended learning outcome. Moreover, the panel found that the way in which these 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. In this regard, the panel recommends clarifying assessment criteria and weighting in thesis forms: strengthen the explicit link between criteria, written feedback and final grades in the thesis assessment process.

The panel was informed by the Board of Examiners that, following their own thesis review last year, they developed a grading rubric in collaboration with the thesis coordinator. Each supervisor and second reader is ultimately responsible for determining the final grade, but the Board of Examiners felt that

having a rubric available might ultimately lead to a greater degree of consistency across grades. The panel agrees with the Board of Examiners that greater consistency in the awarding of grades would be beneficial, and that the grading rubric can support this. At the same time, the panel concludes that the rubric should become more widely known and embedded among examiners.

Board of Examiners⁸

The panel finds that the Board of Examiners responsible for the bachelor's programme in International Studies carries out its statutory duties in a conscientious and transparent manner. The panel was impressed by the very detailed and clearly structured annual report, which includes a range of recommendations for the programme management based on the Board's analyses.

The Board meets on a monthly basis and considers student requests on a rolling schedule. During the site visit, the Board outlined how it safeguards the quality of assessment. Each year, assessments of several courses from the previous academic year are reviewed. A six-year assurance cycle has been established to ensure that, within this period, the assessments of every course are examined at least once by the Board of Examiners.

By monitoring grade distributions, verifying the consistent application of procedures – such as the use of a second marker – and reviewing the balance between group and individual assessments, the Board of Examiners maintains oversight of assessment quality. The Board also evaluates the alignment between feedback and grades, potential differences across regional locations, and the distribution of pass rates within courses, enabling it to identify patterns and take action where appropriate. In addition, the conducts an annual review of a sample of theses; in recent years, this sample has been substantial, comprising up to 58 theses.

The annual report, as well as the discussion during the site visit, made clear that the Board of Examiners takes action or provides advice whenever required. The Board of Examiners and the Programme Board formally meet twice a year, but there is regular contact between the two bodies, and important observations are also discussed in the interim whenever necessary. For example, in order to standardise the grades awarded for theses, the Board of Examiners developed a grading rubric to share via the Programme Board with thesis supervisors and second readers as recommended guidance.

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.

⁸ The Board of Examiners consists of a chair appointed by the Board itself, six other internal members, one external member, and is supported by an administrative secretary.

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 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 bachelor's programme in International Studies has a well-structured and professionally organised assessment system, clearly aligned with the faculty's principles for valid, reliable and transparent testing. The assessment matrices demonstrate strong coverage of the intended learning outcomes, and the wide range of assessment formats enables the programme to evaluate different competencies effectively.

Students value the diversity and fairness of assessments. The panel considers the programme's approach to group work appropriate and suggests exploring the use of a CRediT author statement to further clarify individual contributions. It also welcomes the programme's active engagement with the implications of Generative AI and encourages continued reflection on how best to integrate AI-related guidelines into assessment practice.

With respect to the bachelor's theses, the panel finds that procedures are consistently applied and that assessments are generally well substantiated. The grading rubric developed by the Board of Examiners is a positive step towards greater consistency, and the panel recommends broader adoption of this tool.

The panel concludes that the Board of Examiners safeguards assessment quality in a conscientious and systematic manner, thereby contributing to a transparent and reliable assessment culture.

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 reviewed a representative selection of 15 recently completed final projects from the International Studies programme, together with the corresponding assessment forms. The selection ensured a balanced spread of grades and assessors (see Appendix 5).

Final projects

The panel finds that all bachelor's theses demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes and meet the level expected of a bachelor's degree in International Studies. The panel noted that several thesis topics and perspectives are relevant not only from an academic standpoint but also from a societal perspective. Many are highly pertinent to the professional fields associated with the programme, including diplomacy, journalism and related disciplines.

The panel also observed an impressive breadth of thesis topics. While migration is a frequently researched theme, the panel also encountered theses on subjects such as *the commercialisation of Brazil's Baile Funk in the European club scene* and *LGBTQIA+ visibility in media discourse in North America*. The diversity of academic disciplines within the programme is clearly reflected in the range of thesis topics.

The panel concludes that the theses are appropriately assessed as meeting the required academic standards, although it observes that there is still room for improvement in the methodological quality of some theses. For their theses students are expected to make a choice to a) apply at least two disciplinary methodologies and approaches from among the four that constitute the BA International Studies: history, economics, politics, and culture, or b) analyse the regionally defined topic in a global perspective. The panel appreciates the programme's intention to encourage students to combine different disciplinary perspectives, a combination that is also valued by students and alumni (see below). At the same time, the requirement to combine two approaches can limit methodological depth and affect the overall quality of the research design.

The panel considers that students may benefit from being allowed to focus on a single discipline, as in the second variant of the thesis, as that would enable them to apply one methodological approach in greater depth. The panel therefore recommends the programme to reflect on this aspect and consider ways to strengthen methodological focus and clarity.

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. The two alumni with whom the panel spoke had successfully progressed to, respectively, the Research Master's programme in Linguistics at Leiden University and the MA in International Relations in Historical Perspective at Utrecht University. According to the alumni, several of their peers found employment after completing their bachelor's degree in fields such as consultancy, government, NGOs, cultural organisations and other socially oriented sectors. This is consistent with the labour market data presented in the self-evaluation report, which indicate that a large majority of graduates of International Studies secure employment within a relatively short period after graduation.

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 International Studies achieve the intended learning outcomes. The reviewed final projects meet the expected bachelor's level. The theses show a wide range of relevant topics, reflecting the programme's disciplinary breadth. Although methodological depth varies due to the required multidisciplinary approach, the overall academic standard is satisfactory.

Graduates perform well in further study and on the labour market, progressing to suitable master's programmes and entering related professional fields. Students and alumni confirm that the combination of multidisciplinary analysis, regional expertise and language training effectively prepares them for academic and professional contexts.

Based on the interviews and the available information, 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 International 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
	Bachelor International Studies
Intended learning outcomes <i>Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and international requirements.</i>	Meets the standard
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 programmes for each standard. The panel commends the programme for:

- Its clear, well-positioned and distinctive academic profile, characterised by strong interdisciplinarity across history, culture, politics and economics, combined with regional specialisation, language proficiency and a consistently applied global perspective;
- Its clearly formulated intended learning outcomes, which are well defined, aligned with the Dublin descriptors and appropriate for the academic level of the bachelor's programme;
- The well-designed content and structure of the curriculum, with four learning pathways that are clearly articulated across the three years and disciplinary components and that progress from foundational to region-specific within a global framework;
- The effective combination of large lectures and small tutorials, ensuring that a large-scale programme nonetheless feels personal and provides space for social engagement and community building;
- The coherent and collaborative approach of the teaching staff, as well as the high quality, commitment and diversity of its members;
- The detailed and constructive feedback provided during tutorials, which students consider an important contribution to their learning process;
- Its rich and varied assessment landscape, in which a broad mix of formats—including written exams, essays, oral presentations, group assignments, quizzes and debates—supports diverse forms of learning and feedback;
- The effective safeguarding of assessment quality, with the Board of Examiners systematically monitoring assessments, reviewing theses and engaging proactively with developments such as GenAI and innovative assessment formats;
- The achievement of the intended final level, as demonstrated by the fact that all reviewed theses meet the expected bachelor's standard and graduates perform well in further academic study and professional practice.

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.
- 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.
- Consider introducing a CRediT author statement, in which students formally specify their individual contributions to the group assignment. This could further enhance the transparency and fairness of the assessment of group work.

- Explore possibilities for strengthening language provision, particularly for those languages that are more challenging to learn, for example by making use of the elective credits.
- Further align the approaches of tutors and study advisers, as students experience variation in the guidance provided during the internship and thesis phases depending on the individual tutor.

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

- Reflect carefully on whether increasing the size of tutorial groups in the International Studies programme is necessary or desirable, as small-scale tutorials are considered essential in a large and internationally diverse programme; both for fostering community building and for maximising the educational value of the international classroom.
- Clarify assessment criteria and weighting in the thesis forms: strengthen the explicit link between criteria, written feedback and final grades in the thesis assessment process. The grading rubric developed by the Board of Examiners can support greater transparency and consistency in this regard.
- Develop clearer guidelines for GenAI in assessment: establish explicit and consistently communicated programme appropriate- rules for use of Generative AI in assignments and assessments, aligned with forthcoming faculty-wide- policy.
- Enhance the methodological quality and analytical depth of the theses by placing greater emphasis on methodological instruction and analytical approach during the preparatory phase and supervision.

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	International Studies
International name	International Studies
Location	The Hague
Programme number in RIO	59316
Orientation and level	Wo-bachelor
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	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:

A. Knowledge and understanding

1. Knowledge and understanding of the most important classic and contemporary theories necessary for the understanding of regional developments in a global context, used in the disciplinary approaches offered in the programme:
 - history;
 - culture (including cultural studies and socio-linguistics);
 - economics (including political economy);
 - politics and international relations.
2. Knowledge and understanding of key concepts and concept structures used in the disciplines offered in the programme necessary for the understanding of regional developments in a global context .
3. Basic knowledge and understanding of disciplinary methodologies used in the programme relevant for an understanding of regional developments in a global context .
4. A further knowledge and understanding of methods used in at least one of the disciplines in the programme.
5. Knowledge and understanding of the history, culture, economy and politics of one of the eight geographical areas defined by the programme:
 - Africa;
 - East Asia;
 - Europe;
 - Latin America;
 - Middle East;
 - North America;
 - Russia and Eurasia;
 - South Asia and Southeast Asia.
6. Knowledge of the historical, cultural, political and economic aspects of international relations.
7. Knowledge and understanding of the historical, cultural, economic and political developments in the chosen geographical area from a global perspective.
8. In-depth knowledge of a specific aspect of a geographical area in its global context.

B. Specific academic skills

1. The ability to analyse and critically reflect on a specific issue within the field of study of International Studies from a multidisciplinary perspective.
2. The ability to analyse aspects of the historical, cultural, economic and political developments of the chosen geographical area, and put them in a global context.
3. Basic ability in all aspects (listening, reading, speaking and writing) of one modern language, other than English, which is connected to the geographical area the student has chosen, and is different from the student's native tongue.

The level to be reached is at least CEFR level:

Language	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
Arabic	A2	A2	A2	A2
Dutch	B1+	A2+	B1	A2+
French	B1+	A2+	B1	A2+
German	B1+	A2+	B1	A2+
Hebrew	B1	A2	A2	A2
Hindi	A2/ B1	A2	A2/ B1	A2/ B1
Indonesian	B1	A2	B1	A2
Japanese	A2	A2-	A2	A2-
Korean	A2	A2	A2	A2
Mandarin	A2	A2	A2	A2
Persian	B1	B1	B1	B1
Portuguese	B1+	A2+	B1+	A2+
Russian	B1	A2/B1	B1	A2/ B1
Spanish	B1+	A2+	B1	A2+
Swahili	B1+	B1	A2+	A2+
Turkish	A2+	A2+	A2+	A2+

- The ability to work with written and/or audio(visual) sources in one modern language, other than English, which is connected to the area the student has chosen.
- The ability to apply research methods relevant to the field of International Studies that are current in at least one of the disciplines in the programme.
- The ability to operate in a multicultural academic and professional environment.
- The ability to apply the acquired knowledge and skills in non-academic, professional contexts.
- The ability to analyse and critically reflect on relevant knowledge and insights as laid out in scientific literature within the disciplines that are offered in the programme.
- The ability to formulate an opinion with regard to the field of study of International Studies, taking into account the relevant aspects (social, societal, academic and/or ethical).
- The ability to work with others, give and receive feedback to and from peers in a constructive fashion and make use of constructive criticism to revise one's own point of view or own argumentation.

Furthermore, each humanities programme at Leiden University trains students in the general academic skills formulated by the Faculty. These skills relate to the Dublin descriptors Judgement, Communication, and Learning skills as specified in Appendix A of the general section (see the general faculty stipulations of the CER, digital appendix D1).

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 International Studies

Year 1						
Sem. I	Principles of Economics (5 EC)	Socio-linguistics (5 EC)	Cultural Studies (5 EC)	World History (5 EC)	Academic Literacy (5 EC)	Introduction to International Studies (5 EC)
Sem.II	Foundations of Political Economy (5 EC)	Politics (5 EC)	Area Culture & Language (5 EC)	Area History (5 EC)	Foreign Language 1 (10 EC)	
Year 2						
Sem. I	Area Economics (5 EC)	Area Politics (5 EC)	Cultural Interaction (5 EC) or Communicating Across Cultures (5 EC)	Research Methods (5 EC)	Foreign Language 2 (10 EC)	
Sem.II	Global Political Economy (5 EC)	International Relations (5 EC)	Philosophy of Science (5 EC)	Thematic Seminar (10 EC)		Foreign Language 3 (5 EC)
Year 3						
Sem. I	Elective credits (Internship, Study Abroad, Minor) (30 EC)					
Sem.II	Practising International Studies (PRINS) (10 EC)	Thesis (including Thesis Seminar) (15 EC)				Language & Culture in Practice (5 EC)

Research skills	History
Economy	Language related to region
Culture	Elective
Politics	

Programme structure BA International Studies

Source: Self-Evaluation Report Bachelor International 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 International Studies 2025 UL

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

- A. Faculty of Humanities 2025 – concise description of the Faculty of Humanities' organisation.
- B. Prospectus BA International Studies (*Studiegids*)
- C. Education Dashboard FGW
- D.1. BA OER Facultair deel 2025-2026
- D.2. BA OER International Studies 2025-2026
- E. Staff overview BA International Studies
- F. Assessment plan BA International Studies
- G. Rules and Regulations of the Board of Examiners
- H. Vision on Teaching and Learning Leiden University and Faculty of Humanities
- I. Manuals
 - 1. Guide to Teaching Quality Assurance
 - 2. Manual for Board of Examiners
 - 3. Teaching Evaluation Framework
 - 4. Manual for Programme Committees
 - 5. Faculty of Humanities Assessment Framework
- J. Thesis Assessment at the Faculty of Humanities
- K. Thesis Seminars Supervisor Guidelines 2025-2026
- L. Guidelines for Student Use of Generative AI FGW University Leiden
- M. Labour market research BA Geesteswetenschappen 2016-2019
- N. Thematic seminar Guidelines 2025/26

Additional documentation

- AI guide for teachers FGW Leiden University
- Implementing AI in your curriculum FGW Leiden University
- Annual Reports of the Board of Examiners
- Minutes of the Programme Committee
- Annual reports BA International Studies

Selection of final products

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed fifteen final projects from the bachelor's programme in International 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 International Studies

Grade Range	Number of theses	Selected
5,5-6,9 sufficient	70	5
7,0-8,4 good	241	9
8,5-10 very good	42	1
Total	353	15

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