Master Asian Studies 60 EC
Master Asian Studies 120 EC
Leiden University
Assessment report

8 april 2026

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1. SUMMARY

This report describes the programme assessments of the academic Masters Asian Studies 60 and 120 EC offered by Leiden University.

Standard 1 – Intended learning outcomes
The panel concludes that the MA Asian Studies programmes (60 EC and 120 EC) are firmly embedded in the academic field of Asian Studies and demonstrate a distinctive and coherent profile at both national and international level. Both programmes are characterised by a strong multidisciplinary foundation and a critical engagement with Eurocentric and Orientalist traditions, in line with the mission of the Leiden Institute of Area Studies. The MA 60 offers a broad and academically rigorous framework with flexible regional and disciplinary specialisations, while the MA 120 is highly distinctive due to its compulsory year abroad and strong emphasis on advanced language acquisition. The intended learning outcomes are formulated at an appropriate master's level and aligned with the Dublin Descriptors, though continued close monitoring is required for the one-year MA 60 given its ambitious scope. The panel issues a positive judgement regarding the name change from MA Aziëstudies 60 and MA Aziëstudies 120 to MA Asian Studies 60 and MA Asian Studies 120.

Standard 2 – Teaching-learning environment
The panel concludes that the MA Asian Studies programmes (60 EC and 120 EC) offer a coherent, well-organised and academically rigorous curriculum that effectively supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The alignment between the two programmes is clear, with the MA 120 building logically on the MA 60 through advanced language training and a compulsory year abroad, which the panel recognises as a major added value. The redeveloped core course *Introduction to Asian Studies* provides a strong shared critical foundation across specialisations, while the recently introduced methodology workshops are highly valued for strengthening students' preparation for the thesis. At the same time, the panel notes that the ambitious scope of the one-year MA 60 places considerable demands on students, making continued close monitoring and targeted support essential, particularly for students with less Asia-specific prior backgrounds. Overall, the panel positively assesses the programmes' attention to academic quality, student diversity, student guidance, supported by a committed and highly qualified teaching staff. The panel advises strengthening field-specific career guidance by further building on existing initiatives and clarifying professional pathways.

Standard 3 – Student assessment
The panel concludes that the assessment principles of the MA Asian Studies programmes (60 EC and 120 EC) are firmly embedded in a coherent and robust faculty-wide assessment framework and are consistently applied in practice. The range and variety of assessment methods are appropriate, well aligned with the intended learning outcomes, and support the development of relevant academic and language competencies, including during the compulsory year abroad. At the same time, the panel identifies opportunities for further strengthening, notably by embedding alternative assessment formats

more consistently across the programmes and by moving towards a more strategic and integrated approach to generative AI in assessment. In addition, the panel recommends further reinforcing the proactive role of the Board of Examiners and institutionalising calibration practices in thesis assessment to safeguard consistency, shared standards and future-proof quality assurance.

Standard 4 – Achieved learning outcomes

The panel concludes that students in both MA Asian Studies programmes generally achieve the intended learning outcomes at an appropriate master's level. For the MA 60, the review of an expanded sample (20) indicates that the vast majority of theses meet the required standard, with two theses raising concerns. The panel is confident that recent measures, including strengthened methodological preparation and the recommendations formulated by the panel under Standard 3, provide sufficient assurance that the learning outcomes are achieved. For the MA 120, the panel finds consistent attainment of learning outcomes, including a high level of academic and language proficiency as reflected in the quality of the theses.

Graduates of both programmes are well prepared for the labour market, with strong and timely employment outcomes across a wide range of professional sectors. The panel values the programmes' engagement with alumni and encourages more systematic use of the alumni network to further strengthen field-specific career guidance and the link between study, graduation and professional development.

The master programmes *Asian Studies 60 and 120 EC both* meet all four standards. Considering this, the panel arrives at the final opinion 'positive' to the NVAO for the accreditation of both *MA Asian Studies 60 and 120 EC* 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.

8 April 2026:

Remco Raben
(chair)

Julia Roosenboom MSc, drs. Vladimir Bartelds
(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 and 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), together with drs. Vladimir Bartelds, 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 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 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, 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 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 programmes[1]. 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 website[2]. 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 Rotterdam[3], and internationally, among others, within the League of European Research Universities[4].

Programmes

The Faculty of Humanities at Leiden University offers two Master's programmes in Asian Studies: a one-year programme of 60 EC and a two-year programme of 120 EC. The key distinction between the two lies in their structure and focus. The two-year programme includes an additional, mandatory year of study abroad at a partner university in China, Japan or Korea and is therefore dedicated exclusively to these three countries. By contrast, the one-year programme has a broader regional scope and also encompasses South and Southeast Asia. Despite these differences, the two programmes share a substantial part of the curriculum and are governed by the same Programme Board, Programme Committee and Board of Examiners.

The MA Asian Studies (60 EC) offers a broad and academically rigorous introduction to Asian Studies, grounded in a multidisciplinary approach that integrates perspectives from the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The programme trains students to critically engage with Asia's historical and contemporary dynamics, including global politics, culture, heritage and the legacies of colonialism, while explicitly reflecting on the field's Eurocentric and Orientalist origins. Through a choice of five specialisations, students can tailor their trajectory to their academic interests while developing solid methodological skills, regional expertise and critical awareness within a one-year framework.

The MA Asian Studies (120 EC) builds on the same strong and critical academic foundation but distinguishes itself through a compulsory year abroad and a pronounced focus on advanced language acquisition. During the year abroad, students are fully immersed in an academic environment in China, Japan or Korea, combining intensive language training with graduate-level coursework. This immersive structure enables students to attain a high level of academic language proficiency and deep regional expertise. Within the two-year programme, students specialise in Chinese, Japanese or Korean Studies,

[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/

preparing them for advanced academic research as well as professional careers in international and culturally diverse contexts.

Developments since the last accreditation

In response to the previous accreditation in 2019 and the midterm review of 2024, the programmes have undertaken a series of targeted measures aimed at strengthening its academic profile, curricular coherence and student support. Central to these developments has been a renewed reflection on the profiles and course offerings of both programmes. Informal course clusters have been introduced to enhance coherence across the curriculum, and from 2026 the former specialisations *History, Arts and Culture* and *Politics, Society and Economy* within the 60 EC programme will be merged into a new *Global Asia* specialisation. In addition, the programmes have explicitly reflected on the meaning and implications of decolonisation within its curriculum, further sharpening its critical positioning within the field of Asian Studies.

Alongside this profile refinement, the programmes have reviewed and strengthened its core elements, with particular attention to methodology and disciplinarity. The syllabus of the *Introduction to Asian Studies* course has been revised, and new methodology modules and core electives with a stronger methodological component have been introduced. These measures aim to ensure a clearer progression in academic skills and a more robust disciplinary grounding across the programme.

For the MA Asian Studies (120 EC), specific improvements have been made with regard to guidance and communication surrounding the compulsory year abroad. These measures are intended to better prepare students for this phase of the programme and to support them throughout their stay at partner institutions. Finally, the programmes have invested in community building and job market preparation, responding to earlier feedback by strengthening students' sense of academic belonging and their awareness of future career pathways.

The current panel has examined how the programme has followed up on the recommendations of the previous panel and concludes that the programme has initiated positive developments and has adequately addressed the recommendations.

3. PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT: MASTER ASIAN STUDIES 60 AND 120 EC

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes

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

Findings and considerations

Profile of both programmes

Both MA programmes share a strong and distinctive academic foundation centered on a critical approach to Asian Studies. Students are trained to engage reflexively with the field's Eurocentric and Orientalist origins and to critically analyse key issues such as Asia's position in global politics, the politics of heritage and culture, and the legacies of colonialism. This perspective aligns with the mission *"Where is here?*[5]*"* of the Leiden Institute of Area Studies (LIAS) and underpins the programmes' multidisciplinary design, which allows students to explore themes across disciplines including politics, economics, history, anthropology, art history, philosophy, religion and linguistics. Both programmes benefit from Leiden University's research infrastructure, including the Asian Library and nearby museum collections, enabling students to work with original sources under expert supervision. In addition to advanced academic skills, students develop key transferable competencies such as intercultural sensitivity, critical thinking and adaptability.

Graduates are well prepared for further academic research as well as for professional careers in international and culturally diverse settings, with the MA 120 EC's year abroad contributing significantly to personal development, independence and maturity.

MA Asian Studies 60 EC

The master's programme Asian Studies (60 EC) offers a distinctive combination of regional and disciplinary perspectives, allowing students to tailor their study trajectory in line with their academic interests and future ambitions. The programme accommodates students with diverse entry backgrounds, including those with limited prior experience in Asian languages as well as students who wish to further develop existing language skills alongside thematic and disciplinary study. Within the one-year structure, students choose one of five specialisations: East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Politics, Society and Economy, or History, Arts and Culture.

A defining characteristic of the MA Asian Studies (60 EC) is its explicitly multidisciplinary profile. It is the only programme in the Netherlands that systematically integrates approaches from the Humanities and the Social Sciences, with clusters of courses focused on politics, economics and international relations; society, inequality and resistance; heritage, arts and politics; postcolonialism, illiberalism and democratisation; religion and philosophy; and language, literature and linguistics. Through this structure, the programme offers students multiple analytical lenses to engage with Asia in both historical and contemporary contexts. Students enrolled in one of the MA 60 specialisations receive solid

[5] **See:** Mission - Leiden University

methodological and disciplinary training through core electives, which introduce them to the main theories, debates and research methods relevant to their chosen field. At the same time, the programme places strong emphasis on developing students' regional expertise and cultural and political sensitivity with regard to Asia. This is achieved through independent research, coursework and close engagement with region-specific materials, enabling students to critically analyse complex phenomena from informed and context-sensitive perspectives.

MA Asian Studies 120 EC

The MA Asian Studies (120 EC) is distinctive within the European context due to its compulsory year abroad, which forms an integral part of the programme. During this year, students study at selected partner universities in China, Japan or Korea, where they combine intensive language training with graduate-level coursework conducted in Mandarin, Japanese or Korean. This immersive structure is deliberately designed to enable students to achieve an advanced level of academic language proficiency, allowing them to read, write and actively participate in scholarly discourse. Within the two-year programme, students choose one of three specialisations: Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies or Korean Studies.

Benchmark with other programmes

In comparison to programmes in the Netherlands and abroad, the MA Asian Studies (60 EC and 120 EC) at Leiden University demonstrates a distinctive and well-defined profile. Within the Dutch context, only one programme shows partial overlap—the Double Degree in China and the World Economy at the University of Groningen—but this programme is narrowly focused on business and finance, limited to one country, and does not include language training, making it only marginally comparable. Internationally, the programmes can be most meaningfully benchmarked against Asian Studies programmes at institutions such as the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London (SOAS) and the University of California. While these programmes similarly combine regional and thematic approaches, the Leiden programmes stand out through their strong interdisciplinary orientation without rigid disciplinary boundaries, their broader and more coherent course offerings at master's level, and their emphasis on themes such as urbanism, digitalisation, power and social inequality. In addition, the compulsory year abroad and advanced language training embedded in the MA 120 EC further strengthen Leiden's distinctive positioning within the international field of Asian Studies.

The panel concludes that the programmes MA Asian Studies (60 and 120 EC) are firmly embedded in the academic field of Asian Studies and demonstrate a distinctive and coherent positioning, both within the Netherlands and in an international context. The panel values the strong multidisciplinary foundation of both programmes, which integrate perspectives from the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Across both programmes, the panel also positively assesses the explicit critical perspective on Asian Studies, including reflection on the field's Eurocentric and Orientalist origins. This critical stance, embedded in the mission of the Leiden Institute of Area Studies (LIAS), provides a strong intellectual framework and aligns well with contemporary academic debates in the field.

The MA Asian Studies (60 EC) offers a broad yet academically rigorous framework that combines regional and disciplinary approaches, enabling students to tailor their study trajectory to their interests and ambitions. The panel considers this flexibility to be a strength, as it accommodates diverse entry backgrounds while maintaining academic coherence through clearly defined specialisations and shared core elements. The panel considers the MA Asian Studies (120 EC) to be highly distinctive within the European context, primarily due to its compulsory year abroad and strong focus on advanced language acquisition. By combining intensive language training with graduate-level coursework at partner universities in China, Japan or Korea, the programme enables students to attain an advanced level of academic language proficiency, which the panel regards as a significant strength.

Intended learning outcomes of both programmes

The learning outcomes of the programme as cited in Appendix 2, are structured aligned with the Dublin Descriptors.

Both programmes (60 EC and 120 EC) are designed to provide students with advanced knowledge and skills for the academic study of Asia at master's level. Graduates acquire a solid foundation in key concepts, terminology and theories in Asian Studies across the Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as the ability to design and conduct original research in an Asian context. All students develop strong analytical, writing and communication skills and demonstrate the independence required to complete an original MA thesis. Within this shared framework, the intended learning outcomes are further specified per specialisation:

- Students following a regional specialisation (Japan, China, Korea, East Asia, South Asia or Southeast Asia) will acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding on the country or region of their specialisation.
- In the MA 60 specialisation East Asian Studies and the MA Asian Studies (120 EC), students combine in-depth regional expertise with advanced language training. A central learning outcome is the achievement of a high level of proficiency in one East Asian language, aiming for recognised standards (HSK 5 for Chinese, JLPT 1 for Japanese and TOPIK 5 for Korean). Students may additionally choose courses in reading classical Chinese or classical Japanese.
- Students enrolled in a disciplinary specialisation within the MA 60 EC (History, Arts and Culture or Politics, Society and Economy), develop appropriate methodological skills in the Humanities or Social Sciences. These skills enable them to apply appropriate research methods and further deepen their thematic and analytical understanding of Asia.

The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes are formulated at an appropriate master's level and show clear alignment with the Dublin Descriptors. Graduates are expected to demonstrate specialised regional and disciplinary knowledge, advanced research and methodological skills, as well as the independence required to design and conduct original research culminating in an MA thesis. The panel considers the differentiation of learning outcomes across regional, disciplinary and language-focused specialisations to be clear, coherent and convincing. The panel appreciates the level of ambition reflected in the intended learning outcomes and the programme's differentiated expectations in relation to students' prior bachelor backgrounds, for example with regard to language proficiency at beginner,

intermediate and advanced levels. At the same time, the limited timeframe, particularly of the one-year MA 60, may put pressure on the development of academic and transferable skills. The panel therefore considers it important that the programme continues to closely monitor whether students are sufficiently supported in achieving these ambitious learning outcomes within the available time.

Requested name change

Both master programmes indicate that they wish to change the name from master *MA Aziëstudies (60 and 120 EC)* to master *MA Asian Studies (60 and 120 EC).* The master programmes in Asian Studies (60 and 120 EC) are taught entirely in English. Depending on the chosen specialization, students take courses in relevant regional languages such as Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, Indonesian, or Sanskrit. The programme's target group consists of both Dutch and international students.

Since the programme's inception, the English name has already been used—for example, on recruitment and programme information pages, as well as in the Study Guide. This is in line with the university's policy, in which master's programmes are offered in English. By changing the formal name to master *MA Asian Studies (60 and 120 EC),* the programmes ensure that the official name corresponds to the name by which it is known among all students and staff. This improves recognizability. The panel concludes that the name change meets the NVAO criteria listed below and therefore issues a positive recommendation.

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

Conclusions

The panel concludes that the MA Asian Studies programmes (60 EC and 120 EC) are firmly embedded in the academic field of Asian Studies and demonstrate a distinctive and coherent positioning, both nationally and internationally. Both programmes are characterised by a strong multidisciplinary foundation and an explicit critical engagement with the field's Eurocentric and Orientalist origins, in line with the mission of the Leiden Institute of Area Studies. The MA 60 offers a broad and academically rigorous framework combining regional and disciplinary perspectives, while the MA 120 is highly distinctive due to its compulsory year abroad and strong focus on advanced language acquisition. The intended learning outcomes of both programmes are formulated at an appropriate master's level, aligned with the Dublin Descriptors and clearly differentiated across specialisations. At the same time, the panel notes that the limited timeframe of the one-year MA 60 makes ongoing close monitoring essential to safeguard the achievement of these ambitious learning outcomes. The panel issues a positive judgement regarding the name change from *MA Aziëstudies 60 and MA Aziëstudies 120* to *MA Asian Studies 60 and MA Asian Studies 120.*

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

Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment

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

Findings and considerations

Content and structure of the curricula

The two programmes share the following core elements: Compulsory core course Introduction to Asian Studies (10 EC), electives from the chosen specialisation (20-35 EC, depending on the specialisation), and the MA thesis (15 EC). For an overview of the curricula, see Appendix 3.

The MA 60 consists of seven course units per specialisation. All students complete the compulsory core course Introduction to Asian Studies (10 EC) in semester 1, and the MA thesis (15 EC) in semester 2. The remaining 20-35 EC (depending on the specialisation) consist of electives. Depending on the specialisation, students also complete other requirements:

- The East Asian Studies specialisation includes compulsory language courses in Advanced Mandarin, Japanese or Korean in both semesters as the core element of the specialisation, in addition to courses on East Asia or thematic courses on the region. These courses are shared with the MA 120. Students are required to have a specific level of language proficiency as a precondition for admission (HSK4, JLPT2, TOPIK 4)
- In case of South Asian Studies and Southeast Asian Studies, optional beginners or intermediate level language courses in Hindi, Sanskrit, Indonesian or Tibetan are offered in addition to electives on South or Southeast Asia or thematic courses on the region
- For students following the Politics, Society and Economy or History Arts and Culture specialisations, 10-20 EC of core electives with a specific focus on methodology are the key elements which distinguish these specialisations. Students can choose from a broad selection of thematic and regional courses with a social scientific or humanities approach and can combine knowledge or different countries within the region.

The first and final semesters of the MA 120 programme largely mirror the structure of the MA 60 programme. In the first semester, students follow the compulsory *Introduction to Asian Studies* course (10 EC), an advanced language course in Mandarin, Korean or Japanese (10 EC), and a specialisation-specific elective (10 EC). Students in the Chinese Studies and Korean Studies specialisations spend the second and third semesters abroad. Upon returning, they take a compulsory language course (5 EC), a specialisation elective (10 EC), and complete the MA thesis (15 EC). Students in the Japanese Studies specialisation depart later, in the second block of the second semester, due to the Japanese academic calendar. Prior to departure, they follow an intensive advanced language course (5 EC) and an elective (10 EC) in Leiden. While in Japan, these students complete two thesis tutorials (10 EC), allowing them to finalise their thesis in the final semester upon return. Although the timelines differ, the core structure and academic components of all three specialisations are equivalent.

The panel concludes that the content and structure of the curricula of both the MA Asian Studies (60 EC and 120 EC) are coherent, transparent and well organised. The panel notes that the curricula allow for appropriate differentiation through regional, disciplinary and language-focused specialisations, while maintaining overall academic coherence. The panel positively assesses the way in which the curricula of the MA 60 and MA 120 are aligned, with the MA 120 building logically on the core structure of the MA 60 while adding depth through advanced language training and the compulsory year abroad. Overall, the panel considers the content and structure of the curricula to be fit for purpose and supportive of students' progression towards achieving the intended learning outcomes.

In the past, the shared compulsory core course *Introduction to Asian Studies* (10 EC) posed a challenge for the programme, particularly given the diverse backgrounds of the student population. Students enter the programme with varying degrees of specialisation, ranging from highly focused bachelor's degrees in Chinese, Japanese or Korean Studies to broader programmes such as International Studies. The coherence of the course has been criticized by students. Subsequenly, the course has been redeveloped to provide a coherent and solid foundation for all students. The revised course now adopts a general critical approach to the study of Asia, focusing on core conceptualisations, analytical frameworks and key issues that are relevant across specialisations. Rather than transmitting a fixed canon, the course equips students with analytical tools to critically examine representations of Asia, the politics of knowledge production and alternative, including decolonial, perspectives.
The panel positively assesses the recent developments in this course and notes that it constitutes the only moment in the curriculum where students engage structurally with perspectives beyond their own specialisation. As such, the course offers valuable opportunities for geographical broadening, comparative analysis and critical reflection on national and regional frameworks, thereby strengthening the overall academic coherence of the programmes.

Thesis trajectory and methodological preparation
The programme has invested in strengthening methodological training, based on the student feedback that indicated the importance and need for more guidance on methodology in preparation for the thesis. Within the core course Introduction to Asian studies, there will be three sessions instead of one session dedicated to methodology and student's research proposal. In addition, both programmes have introduced four two-day research workshops in the first semester aimed at strengthening students' academic skills. Students in both master's programmes (60 EC and 120 EC) are required to participate in two of these workshops. The workshops focus on: (a) interviewing and surveys, (b) working with data and statistics, (c) content analysis and digital data and platforms, and (d) archival research, special collections and museum materials. The panel highly appreciates the initiatives taken by the programmes to further strengthen the methodological preparation for students. The introduction of the research workshops in particular are, according to the panel, a valuable addition to the curriculum, as they are expected to contribute positively to the academic quality of the master's theses. As a suggestion at the institutional level, the panel notes that students in the final phase of bachelor's programmes in Area Studies could also benefit from participation in these workshops.

Within both programmes, thesis preparation largely takes place during the first semester, and students are assigned a supervisor with whom they have four scheduled supervision meetings during the research and writing process. Students express a high level of satisfaction with thesis supervision and emphasise that expectations regarding research design and the use of primary sources are clearly communicated. At the same time, students indicate that this early start can initially feel demanding, but they also experience it as beneficial, as it supports the timely formulation of a clear research question and the identification of relevant literature. Due to the limited timeframe of the one-year programme, many theses primarily employ forms of discourse analysis, as conducting extensive fieldwork is often not feasible.

In both the MA Asian Studies (60 EC) and the MA Asian Studies (120 EC), the 15,000-word MA thesis constitutes the culmination of the programme and is based on original research making substantive use of primary source material. In both programmes, the use of primary and/or secondary sources in an Asian language is mandatory. The thesis is expected to demonstrate a thorough engagement with relevant specialist scholarly literature and the ability to make an original, well-argued contribution to academic knowledge.

The panel considers the thesis trajectory in both programmes to be well structured and concludes that students receive appropriate and adequate supervision throughout the process. The panel appreciates the academic ambition and clearly formulated requirements of the thesis, while noting that the available time places pressure on students—particularly students within the MA 60 programme with a less Asia-specific prior background. In this context, the panel considers the newly introduced methodology workshops a valuable addition that strengthens students' preparation for the thesis.
The compulsory year abroad in the MA 120 provides students with opportunities to conduct basic field research in an Asian context. This experience enables students to enrich their thesis research with empirical insights and primary materials gathered during their stay abroad, thereby strengthening both the academic depth and contextual grounding of their work, according to the panel.

Student admission and enrolment
The entry requirements for both the MA Asian Studies (60 EC) and MA Asian Studies (120 EC) ensure that admitted students are adequately prepared to engage in academic work at master's level. For specialisations that include advanced language training, the requirements also ensure that students are able to progress towards the highest levels of language proficiency during the programme. Both programmes commence in September each year. The possibility to enroll in February for the MA Asian Studies (60 EC) will be discontinued as of the academic year 2026–2027, as it was found not to allow for an equivalent quality of study experience.

The MA Asian Studies (60 EC) admits students holding a bachelor's degree in Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies, Korean Studies, South and Southeast Asian Studies, as well as International Studies, provided that they completed their course work with focus on the region of their specialisation, and their bachelor's thesis relates to the chosen specialisation. Other applicants are eligible if they (1) hold a

bachelor's degree in the Humanities or Social Sciences from a university comparable in level to a Dutch research university, and (2) can demonstrate that they have completed at least 30 EC in coursework related to the history, art, culture, politics, society and/or economy of Asia that is relevant to their chosen specialisation. Applicants must also demonstrate sufficient proficiency in English by means of an appropriate diploma or recognised language test results (such as TOEFL, IELTS or a Cambridge C2 certificate). In addition, applicants are required to meet specific specialisation-related entry requirements concerning prior regional knowledge. For the East Asian Studies specialisation, applicants must furthermore demonstrate advanced proficiency in one East Asian language (HSK 4 for Chinese, JLPT 2 for Japanese or TOPIK 4 for Korean).

The MA Asian Studies (120 EC) has a numerus fixus and a maximum intake of 59 students per academic year, allowing the Admissions Board to apply selective admission criteria. In addition to holding a bachelor's degree from a research university, applicants must demonstrate strong academic performance (an average grade of at least 7.0 and a bachelor's thesis grade of 7.0), relevant academic background and motivation for the chosen MA specialisation. Applicants are required to possess solid academic writing skills in English and demonstrate familiarity with academic inquiry in the Humanities or Social Sciences. Furthermore, applicants must have completed at least 30 EC in coursework related to Asia, covering at least three of the following disciplines: history, art, culture, politics, society or economy, with a focus on one or more East Asian countries or regions. A foundational knowledge of pre-modern and modern China, Japan and/or Korea, as well as awareness of Sinological, Japanological or Koreanist traditions and methodological issues, is required. Finally, applicants must demonstrate language proficiency at a level equivalent to HSK 4 (Chinese), JLPT N2 (Japanese) or TOPIK 4 (Korean).

The panel concludes that the entry requirements of both the MA Asian Studies (60 EC) and MA Asian Studies (120 EC) are clear and appropriately calibrated to the level of the programmes. The selective criteria, differentiated by specialisation, ensure that admitted students are well prepared for master's-level academic work and, where applicable, for achieving advanced levels of language proficiency.

Study abroad

All students in the MA 120 programme spend a compulsory year abroad at a partner university in China, Japan or South Korea. For the Japanese Studies and Korean Studies specialisations, students are placed at partner institutions through established university-wide agreements; these partner universities are among the leading universities in their respective countries. Leiden University currently maintains partnerships with fourteen universities in Japan, five in South Korea and two in China/Taiwan. During the year abroad, students enroll in content courses taught in Chinese, Japanese or Korean, alongside intensive language training, and are assessed in accordance with the academic regulations of the host institution. The primary objective of the year abroad is for students to acquire a level of language proficiency that enables them to actively participate in academic discussions across subject areas and to read and write at an academic level in the target language.

The panel recognises the considerable added value of the compulsory year abroad. The combination of cultural immersion, intensive language acquisition and personal development is clearly reflected in the quality and academic maturity of the master's theses produced within the programme.

Internships and preparation to labour market

To support students in preparing for the labour market, both programmes offer a range of concrete career preparation activities. In addition to faculty-wide initiatives, the programmes organises its own activities, including a PhD workshop, first offered in 2024–2025, in which lecturers and current PhD candidates share insights into pursuing a doctoral trajectory. Students are also encouraged to participate in job fairs and career events, such as Japan Company Day, the Humanities Career Event, and workshops organised by the Humanities Career Service. Students may attend the faculty's international internship workshop and seek guidance from career services when drafting an internship proposal.

Although internships are not a compulsory component of the curriculum, each year, approximately 15–25% of students in the MA 60 programme undertake an internship at a wide range of public and private organisations, both in the Netherlands and in Asia. Recent placements include Dutch embassies and consulates in Beijing, Singapore and Tokyo, research institutes such as the Research Centre for Art and Material Culture, and major multinational companies.

In addition, the programme organised a dedicated session on internships and career development in September 2025, in collaboration with the career office, to provide targeted information and support. Following advice from students and staff represented in the Programme Committee, the programme has invested in improving the visibility of Humanities Career Service activities and enhancing communication about job and internship opportunities. Relevant vacancies and internship advertisements received directly from public and private organisations are regularly shared with students.

The panel positively assesses the way in which the programmes support students' career preparation. The combination of faculty-wide and programme-specific initiatives provides students with insight into academic and professional career paths and supports informed decision-making. At the same time, students express a desire for more field-specific guidance that translates their expertise in Asian Studies into concrete professional pathways. They point to the added value of structured initiatives such as mentorship programmes, alumni networking and industry panels, as well as clearer and more centralised communication about opportunities beyond the curriculum. The panel acknowledges these views and encourages the programme to build on existing initiatives to further strengthen field-specific career guidance and employability.

Study advice and student guidance

Both programmes have a diverse student population in terms of academic background, disciplinary training and international orientation. The panel notes that the programmes are consciously aware of this diversity and actively foster a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment in which students feel supported and valued. The panel positively assesses this approach and considers it a clear strength,

as it supports students' academic development and prepares them to engage constructively with diversity in both academic and professional contexts.

The panel concludes that study guidance in both programmes is well organised and that students are adequately supported by a study adviser. The study adviser is the first contact point for students both in Leiden and during their year abroad and informs students about various aspects of the programme before, at the start, and during the programme, specifically regarding pre-arrival arrangements, enrolments and graduation. Students with a disability are informed at the start of their studies—both in writing and during the introductory session—about the possibility of requesting exam provisions or deadline extensions. The study adviser refers students to the student deans at the Fenestra Disability Centre, who formally assess requests and advise on appropriate arrangements.
Students from the MA 120 programme spending a year abroad in China, Japan or South Korea receive structured support in selecting partner institutions and courses, as well as with practical arrangements. In response to student needs, the programme has strengthened its guidance by introducing additional information sessions for outgoing and returning students and appointing a dedicated coordinator for the year in China. Specialisation-specific coordinators organise sessions on the preapproval of universities, programmes and courses, while the university's central study abroad office handles nominations and provides guidance on visas, housing, health and safety. In collaboration with the study adviser, these offices serve as the first point of contact in case of emergencies. The Faculty of Humanities further supports students by providing information on financial assistance and coordinating placements with partner universities covered by faculty-level agreements.

Teaching staff
According to the panel, both programmes are supported by a highly motivated and committed team. Overall, lecturers receive high rating for engagement and knowledge in the course evaluations. Many staff members are active researchers, and all teaching staff are affiliated with the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and are appointed on the basis of their subject expertise and teaching experience. All lecturers involved in the disciplinary components of the programmes hold a PhD in their field. The team represents a broad range of disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences, including history, art history, linguistics, literature, religious studies, anthropology, sociology, economics, political science and international relations, as well as specialised expertise in East, South and Southeast Asian languages, cultures and societies. During discussions with the panel, staff members indicated that the retirement of several colleagues points to a gradual shift in collective expertise towards more contemporary thematic and regional foci.

Language of instruction
Leiden University has chosen English as the language of instruction for its master's programmes based on three main considerations, as outlined in the faculty appendix of the Self-Evaluation Report. Academically, English is the primary language of international scholarship and therefore aligns with the advanced nature of the master's programmes. Professionally, graduates increasingly operate in an international labour market or in functions of an intercultural and multilingual character, where English

is the dominant language of communication. Finally, Leiden University aims to offer an inclusive and internationally oriented learning environment, and the use of English ensures accessibility for international students and enriches the academic classroom. In the field of Asian Studies, where major publications and conferences are predominantly in English or Asian languages, a high level of academic English proficiency is essential. All of this, in the panel's review, fully justifies the choice of English as the language of instruction for both programmes.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the content and structure of the MA Asian Studies programmes (60 EC and 120 EC) are coherent, transparent and fit for purpose. The alignment between the two programmes is clear, with the MA 120 building logically on the MA 60 through advanced language training and the compulsory year abroad. The panel positively assesses the redevelopment of the compulsory course *Introduction to Asian Studies*, which now provides a strong, shared critical foundation across specialisations and strengthens overall academic coherence. In addition, the recently introduced research workshops are highly valued by the panel as they enhance students' methodological preparation and are expected to contribute positively to the quality of the master's theses. At the same time, the panel notes that the ambitious scope of the programmes, particularly within the limited time frame of the one-year MA 60, places considerable demands on students. Continued close monitoring and support therefore remain important, especially for students with less Asia-specific prior backgrounds. The panel recognises the significant added value of the compulsory year abroad in the MA 120 and positively assesses the programmes' attention to student diversity, study guidance and career preparation. It encourages the programmes to further strengthen field-specific career guidance by building on existing initiatives and making professional pathways more explicit. According to the panel, both programmes are supported by highly motivated and committed lecturers.

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

Standard 3: Student assessment

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

Findings and considerations

Testing principles

The assessment principles of both programmes are firmly embedded in the faculty-wide assessment policy, as articulated in the Course and Examination Regulations, the faculty assessment framework and the joint rules and regulations of the Board of Examiners. These documents collectively safeguard the core principles of validity, reliability, transparency and usability, and ensure that assessment is systematically aligned with the intended learning outcomes through constructive alignment. This alignment is clearly reflected in the Course and Examination Regulations and in the matrix linking course outcomes to the programme's intended learning outcomes. The panel considers this policy framework coherent and robust, and observes that it is consistently applied in practice.

Courses employ a variety of assessment methods. For example, the core course *Introduction to Asian Studies* includes both a midterm and a final examination, while seminars assess students through assignments, presentations and the discussion of term paper and paper drafts. This variety ensures that students receive feedback at multiple points during the semester and are supported in the development of their academic knowledge and skills. Language courses include written assignments and oral presentations as well as exams as forms of assessment. In the most advanced language courses, students learn to read and write on an academic level in the language in question.

During the compulsory year abroad within the 120 EC programme, students are assessed through the regular assessment procedures of the partner universities in China, Japan and Korea. Prior to departure, students submit a study plan for approval to the Board of Examiners, ensuring that the selected courses are relevant to their academic trajectory and thesis focus. While the specific courses and assessment formats vary across institutions, the primary aim of the year abroad is the development of academic language proficiency through coursework conducted in Chinese, Japanese or Korean. Upon return to Leiden, students' enrolment in advanced language courses provides an additional checkpoint to confirm whether the intended level of academic language proficiency has been achieved.

The panel considers the range and variety of assessment methods to be appropriate and fit for purpose. The assessment methods are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the individual courses and are designed to support the development of relevant academic competencies. The panel notes, however, that alternative assessment formats for assignments and term papers are not yet widely embedded in the programme's overall assessment repertoire. During the site visit, the panel observed that such approaches are implemented more structurally in the BA Japan Studies, where, for example, students can complete an External Research Project to demonstrate learning outcomes in an applied context. In line with the Board of Examiners' reflections, the panel therefore sees scope for further harmonisation

by exploring whether comparable alternative assessment formats could be adopted more consistently within the programme.

Generative AI

Both programmes demonstrates, according to the panel, clear awareness of the potential risks associated with the use of generative AI (GenAI) in assessment, particularly in written assignments such as essays. The programmes are actively considering revising existing assessment formats or introducing additional assessment methods in courses that are most affected. Students are regularly informed about the inappropriate use of GenAI, with explicit warnings regarding its misuse in written work.

At faculty level, recently issued guidelines provide teaching staff with a common framework for addressing GenAI and academic integrity. These guidelines aim to enhance AI literacy among teaching staff, while students are provided with clear information on the appropriate and very limited use of GenAI in the context of assessment. This includes guidance on when and how GenAI tools may be used, requirements for disclosure, and awareness of potential pitfalls such as issues related to sourcing, bias, and factual inaccuracies.

Although the panel concludes that the programmes are aware of the challenges posed by GenAI, it concludes that the programmes have adopted a deliberately cautious and restrictive approach, primarily focused on preventing inappropriate use. While this approach is understandable at this stage of development, the panel advises that both programmes may consider working towards a more integrated and strategic perspective on GenAI, in which implications for intended learning outcomes, the learning environment, and assessment are explicitly addressed. Given the rapid pace of developments in this field, the panel is confident that perspectives on GenAI will continue to evolve and anticipates that a future review may reflect a substantially different stage of integration.

Board of Examiners

The programme shares its Board of Examiners with the BA South and Southeast Asia Studies and the MA Asian Studies programmes (60 EC and 120 EC). Given the wide range of statutory responsibilities—such as granting exemptions, overseeing examination facilities, issuing binding study advice (BSA), and approving electives and internship proposals—the workload of the five-member Board is considerable in relation to its role in safeguarding the quality of assessment and degree certification. Over the past years, the work of the Asian Studies Board of Examiners has become increasingly systematic and professional. This development is reflected in the formal training of Board members, the appointment of an official secretary, and the establishment of a dedicated subcommittee for the quality assurance of assessment.

Through systematic sampling, the Board reviews completed theses and reports that the majority of these theses, together with their assessments, meet the required standards. When irregularities or concerns are identified, these are discussed with the assessors involved or communicated to the Programme Board for follow-up. At present, however, the panel observes that the Board's approach is largely reactive in nature. While the Board demonstrably performs its formal duties and periodic checks, the panel considers that a more proactive role would further strengthen the assessment quality culture. The panel acknowledges that the Board is evolving in its role and is confident that a more forward-looking stance,

focused not only on monitoring but also on anticipating assessment-related risks and developments, would significantly enhance quality assurance. Such a role requires clear institutional positioning and sufficient organizational support, enabling the Board to fully assume ownership of its mandate. The panel therefore recommends that the programme further strengthens the institutional positioning of the Examination Board by facilitating a more proactive and strategically embedded role in safeguarding and enhancing assessment quality.

Quality assurance of assessment and thesis

The Board reviews the quality of course assessment on a six-year cycle, while retaining the flexibility to intervene earlier when course evaluations provide reason to do so. In these reviews, the Board examines the alignment between course objectives, assessment methods and assessment criteria, and stresses the importance of systematic archiving of assessment materials to ensure transparency, traceability and effective quality control.

The Board conducts an annual blind quality check of approximately 15% of completed theses to verify whether grading is consistent with thesis quality. All theses are subjected to a plagiarism check using Turnitin. Master's theses are assessed independently by two examiners. In cases where the assessments differ by two grade points or more, the Board of Examiners appoints a third examiner.

The programmes make purposeful use of external assessors, which the panel understands given the breadth of disciplines and specialised expertise required within Asian Studies. For thesis assessment, the student applies for a supervisor (first examiner) based on their research interest and the supervisor's subject-matter expertise; both the first and the second examiner are appointed by the Board in light of relevant expertise and availability. As a guiding principle, the Board ensures that at least one examiner is internal or otherwise demonstrably familiar with the programme's standards.

The panel reviewed several theses for which the awarded grades did not fully align with the panel's own judgement. In this light, the panel notes that the assessment forms, structured around the Dublin Descriptors, contains relatively broad categories. During the site visit, attention was therefore paid to how these criteria are weighted in practice and how the Board safeguards consistent application across examiners, particularly given the significant reliance on external assessors. The Board acknowledged the need for a shared benchmark and indicated that calibration sessions have been organised—also in response to the arrival of new colleagues. The panel appreciates these efforts, but concludes that calibration is not yet embedded in a fully systematic and programme-wide manner. The panel therefore recommends that the programme and the Board of Examiners further strengthen and institutionalise calibration practices for thesis assessment to support a shared understanding of standards, improve consistency in grading and feedback, and safeguard reliable decision-making, particularly in borderline cases.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that the assessment principles of both MA Asian Studies programmes are firmly embedded in the faculty-wide assessment framework and are consistently applied in practice. The range and variety of assessment methods are appropriate and well aligned with the intended learning outcomes, supporting the development of relevant academic and language competencies. At the same time, the panel identifies several opportunities for further strengthening assessment quality. It encourages the programmes to explore a more consistent and programme-wide integration of alternative assessment formats, building on existing good practices. In addition, the panel advises moving towards a more strategic and forward-looking approach to generative AI that explicitly considers its implications for learning outcomes and assessment design. Finally, the panel recommends further institutionalising calibration practices for thesis assessment and strengthening the proactive role of the Board of Examiners in safeguarding consistency and shared standards.

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

Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Findings and considerations

Final projects

Master Asian Studies 60 EC

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed a representative sample of 15 recently completed master's theses, together with the corresponding assessment forms. The selection ensured an appropriate distribution across grades, specialisations and examiners (see Appendix 5). While the panel considered the academic level of most theses to be in line with expectations for a master's degree, it noted that it did not always concur with the grading, both in terms of consistency between examiners and the precision of the assigned marks (see also Standard 3). Two theses in the initial sample raised concerns, particularly regarding the formulation of the research question and the methodological approach. To assess whether these concerns reflected incidental cases or more structural issues, the panel selected an additional five theses. These additional theses did not reveal major shortcomings and confirmed that no serious misjudgments had occurred. Overall, the panel concludes that 18 of the 20 theses reviewed met its expectations, while two remained of questionable quality.

The panel expects that measures taken by the programme, such as the recently introduced methodology workshops (choice of 4 workshops which are all taught in two sessions), together with the improvements observed in the functioning of the Board of Examiners and the recommendations formulated under Standard 3, will strengthen assessment practices, address the observed need for greater consistency and

precision in thesis assessment, and further safeguard the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Master Asian Studies 120 EC

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed a representative sample of 15 recently completed master's theses, together with the corresponding assessment forms. The selection ensured an appropriate distribution across grades, specializations and examiners (see Appendix 5). Based on this review and the discussions with alumni, the panel concludes that students in the programme achieve the intended learning outcomes at a sufficient master's level. In addition, the panel notes that many students attain a high level of proficiency in their relevant Asian language, as evidenced by their ability to use primary and secondary sources in the language of their specialisation in the thesis.

Performance of graduates

Graduates of both programmes move on to a broad range of professional positions, including roles in education, government and semi-governmental organisations, as well as sectors such as finance and communication. Survey results indicate that alumni from both programmes enter the labour market relatively quickly. For the MA 60, 56% of graduates secure a position within two months and 79% within six months. For the MA 120, 38% find employment within two months, rising to 88% within six months. These figures suggest that both programmes provide graduates with a profile that supports timely transition into professional roles, with particularly strong employment outcomes within six months after graduation.

The programmes actively maintain contact with alumni through a dedicated LinkedIn presence and aim to further strengthen their alumni network through targeted seminars, for example on grant writing, PhD positioning and governmental policy processes. The panel views alumni as successful in their subsequent careers and encourages the programmes to sustain—and where possible further intensify—this engagement. The panel also observes opportunities to strengthen cooperation between the alumni network and the student association A.S.I.A., which could enhance continuity between student and alumni communities and increase the visibility and impact of alumni activities. Building on Standard 2, where students expressed a desire for more field-specific career guidance, the panel considers a more systematic use of the alumni network a promising way to translate this ambition into practice.

Conclusion

The panel concludes that students of both MA Asian Studies programmes generally achieve the intended learning outcomes at an appropriate master's level. For the MA 60, the review of an expanded sample indicates that the vast majority of theses meet the required standard, with two theses raising concerns. The panel is confident that recent measures, including strengthened methodological preparation and the recommendations formulated by the panel under Standard 3, provide sufficient assurance that the learning outcomes are achieved. For the MA 120, the panel finds that students consistently meet the intended learning outcomes and demonstrate a high level of academic and language proficiency, as reflected in the quality of the theses and the use of primary sources in Asian languages.

The panel further concludes that graduates of both programmes are well prepared for the labour market, as evidenced by strong and timely employment outcomes across a range of professional sectors. Alumni are assessed as successful in their subsequent careers, and the panel values the programmes' efforts to maintain and strengthen alumni engagement. However, the panel encourages the programmes to make more systematic use of the alumni network in support of field-specific career guidance and to enhance cooperation with the student association, thereby reinforcing the link between study, graduation and professional development.

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

Final conclusion

The NVAO approved panel has assessed both programmes against four standards. The panel concludes that the **master Asian Studies 60 EC** and the **master Asian Studies 120 EC** both meet all standards (intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, student assessment and achieved learning outcomes) and thus rates the overall quality of the programmes as positive.

Standard	MA Asian Studies 60 EC	MA Asian Studies 120 EC
Intended learning outcomes *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.*	Meets the standard	Meets the standard
Teaching-learning environment *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.*	Meets the standard	Meets the standard
Student assessment *Standard 3: The programme has an adequate system of assessment in place.*	Meets the standard	Meets the standard
Achieved learning outcomes *Standard 4: The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*	Meets the standard	Meets the standard
Final conclusion	Positive	Positive

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

- The panel concludes that both programmes are firmly embedded in the academic field of Asian Studies and demonstrate a distinctive and coherent positioning, both nationally and internationally.
- The panel values the strong multidisciplinary foundation of both programmes, which provides many possibilities for specialisation, while maintaining a strong Area Studies perspective.
- The panel appreciates the high level of ambition reflected in the intended learning outcomes of both programmes, including the differentiated expectations aligned with students' prior bachelor backgrounds, particularly regarding language proficiency.
- The panel positively assesses the redeveloped Introduction to Asian Studies course, noting its key role in fostering cross-specialisation engagement, comparative analysis and critical reflection, thereby strengthening overall academic coherence of both programmes.

- The panel highly appreciates the initiatives taken to strengthen methodological preparation, in particular the introduction of research workshops, which it considers a valuable addition expected to enhance the quality of master's theses in both programmes.
- The panel positively assesses the attention to student diversity and the active fostering of a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment in both programmes.
- The panel notes that both programmes are supported by a highly motivated and committed teaching staff.
- The panel considers the range and variety of assessment methods in both programmes to be appropriate and fit for purpose.
- The panel commends the MA Asian Studies (120 EC) programme for its highly distinctive profile within the European context, primarily due to its compulsory year abroad and strong focus on advanced language acquisition. This distinctive design is clearly reflected in the academic maturity and quality of the master's theses.

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

- The panel acknowledges students' wish for more field-specific career guidance and advises both programmes to further build on existing initiatives, such as alumni engagement and career-oriented activities, to strengthen employability and professional orientation.
- The panel advises both programmes to work towards a more integrated and strategic approach to generative AI, in which implications for learning outcomes, the learning environment and assessment are more explicitly addressed.
- The panel invites both programmes to exploring a more consistent and programme-wide embedding of alternative forms of assessment, building on good practices of other BA programmes.
- The panel advises the MA 60 programme to continue closely monitoring student progression, as the limited time frame may put pressure on the development of academic and transferable skills, particularly for students with less Asia-specific prior backgrounds.

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

- The panel recommends both programmes to further strengthen the institutional positioning of the Board of Examiners by enabling a more proactive and strategically embedded role in safeguarding and enhancing assessment quality.
- The panel recommends to both programmes and the Board of Examiners to further institutionalise calibration practices in thesis assessment to support a shared understanding of standards and improve consistency in grading and feedback.

4. APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Administrative data

M Asian Studies 60 EC

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	M Aziëstudies 60
International name	M Asian Studies 60
Location	Leiden
Programme number in RIO	60839
Orientation and level	Wo-master
Research master	No
Language of instruction	English
(Legal) professional requirements	No
All study specialisations	East Asian Studies History, Arts and Culture of Asia Politics, Society and Economy of Asia South Asian Studies Southeast Asian Studies
Joint programme	No
Distinctive feature	No
Degree awarded and addition to the degree	MA of Arts
Study load in EC	60
Variant(s) (full-time, part-time, dual)	Full-time
Working with units of learning outcomes (full-time, part-time, dual)	No
External assessment group classification	WO Regiostudies 1
Submission date of accreditation report	1 May 2026
Other (e.g. name change or extension of study duration)	Yes: *MA Aziëstudies 60 to MA Asian Studies 60*

M Asian Studies 120 EC

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	M Aziëstudies 120
International name	M Asian Studies 120
Location	Leiden
Programme number in RIO	60840
Orientation and level	Wo-master
Research master	No
Language of instruction	English
(Legal) professional requirements	No
All study specialisations	Chinese Studies Japanese Studies Korean Studies
Joint programme	No
Distinctive feature	No
Degree awarded and addition to the degree	Ma of Arts
Study load in EC	120
Variant(s) (full-time, part-time, dual)	Full-time
Working with units of learning outcomes (full-time, part-time, dual)	No
External assessment group classification	WO Regiostudies 1/ Area Studies 1
Submission date of accreditation report	1 May 2026
Other (e.g. name change or extension of study duration)	Yes: *MA Aziëstudies 120* to *MA Asian Studies 120*

Appendix 2: Intended learning outcomes

Graduates of both programmes (MA Asian Studies 60 and 120 EC) have attained the following learning outcomes, listed according to the Dublin descriptors:

1. Knowledge and understanding
a. foundational knowledge of the history and development of Asian Studies;
b. knowledge of research in social sciences and humanities disciplines that is grounded in Asian Studies;
c. understanding of the concepts, terminology and approaches relevant to the regional and disciplinary specialisation of the student, and their application in original research;
d. understanding of aspects and/or countries in Asia in the context of Asia as a whole.

2. Applying knowledge and understanding
a. knowledge of the main humanities and social science research methods and techniques and their application in Asian Studies;
b. skills in locating, retrieving, assessing and using sources and specialist secondary literature for the purposes of original research;
c. the ability to independently design, conduct and complete original research on an aspect of Asian Studies.

3. Judgement
a. the ability to form a judgement on the basis of incomplete or limited information, whilst also taking into account the social and ethical responsibilities that come with the application of knowledge and assessments.

4. Communication
a. the ability to interpret and comment on aspects and/or countries of East, South or Southeast Asia for specialist and non-specialist audiences, and to act as cultural intermediary;
b. the ability to report, debate and discuss in a professional setting, both orally and in writing.

5. Learning skills
a. the learning skills required to be able to follow post-master's professional training or a PhD training of largely self-determined or autonomous nature

In addition, the following achievement levels apply to the specific specialisations of the MA 60

Specialisation: East Asian Studies
6. Knowledge and understanding
a. excellent command of modern Chinese, Japanese or Korean;
b. broad knowledge of China, Japan or Korea, including their internal and external dynamics;

c. knowledge of history, development and current trends in Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies or Korean Studies.
d. excellent command of classical Chinese, classical Japanese or classical Korean.
7. Applying knowledge and understanding a. the ability to locate, assess and use original sources in modern or classical Chinese, modern or classical Japanese, or modern or classical Korean

Specialisation: South Asian Studies
8. Knowledge and understanding
a. broad knowledge of South Asia, including its internal and external dynamics;
b. knowledge of history, development and current trends in South Asian Studies.

For students who have completed language electives:
c. beginners, intermediary, or excellent command of Hindi, Sanskrit, Classical Tibetan or Pali.

9. Applying knowledge and understanding For students who have completed intermediate or advanced language electives: a. the ability to locate, assess and use original sources in Hindi, Sanskrit, Classical Tibetan or Pali.

Specialisation: Southeast Asian Studies
10. Knowledge and understanding
a. broad knowledge of Southeast Asia, including its internal and external dynamics;
b. knowledge of history, development and current trends in Southeast Asian Studies.

For students who have completed language electives:
c. beginners, intermediary, or excellent command of Malay/Indonesian.

11. Applying knowledge and understanding
For students who have completed intermediate or advanced language electives:
a. the ability to locate, assess and use original sources in Malay/Indonesian.

Specialisation: History, Arts and Culture of Asia
13. Knowledge and understanding
a. broad knowledge of one or more regions in Asia, including their internal and external dynamics;
b. knowledge of history, development and current trends in the study of the history, art or culture of these regions in Asia.
c. familiarity with disciplinary theories and methods associated with the study of history, arts, and/or culture.

For students who have completed language electives:
d. beginners or intermediary command of an Asian language.

14. Knowledge and understanding
a. broad knowledge of one or more regions in Asia, including their internal and external dynamics;
b. knowledge of history, development and current trends in the study of the politics, society or economy of these regions in Asia.
c. familiarity with disciplinary theories and methods associated with the study of politics, society, and/or economy.

For students who have completed language electives:
a. beginners or intermediary command of an Asian language

Appendix 3: Curriculum outline

MA Asian Studies 60 EC

East Asian studies (MA 60)	EC
Semester 1	**30**
Introduction to Asian studies	10
Required language course: Advanced Mandarin 1 Advanced Japanese 1 Advanced Korean Reading	10
Elective 1	10
Semester 2	**30**
Required language course: Advanced Mandarin 2 Advanced Japanese 2 Topical Readings in Korean	5
Elective 2	10
MA thesis	15

South Asian studies (MA 60)	EC
Semester 1	**30**
Introduction to Asian studies	10
Elective 1	10
Elective 2 or language course	10
Semester 2	**30**
Elective 3	10
Elective 4 or language course	5
MA thesis	15

Southeast Asian studies (MA 60)	EC
Semester 1	**30**
Introduction to Asian studies	10
Elective 1	10
Elective 2 or language course	10
Semester 2	**30**
Elective 3	10
Elective 4 or language course	5
MA thesis	15

Global Asian studies (MA 60) Politics, Society and Economy History Arts and Culture	EC
Semester 1	30
Introduction to Asian studies	10
Core elective 1	10
Elective 2	10
Semester 2	**30**
Elective 3	10
Elective 4	5
MA thesis	15

MA Asian Studies 120 EC

Chinese studies (MA 120)	EC
Semester 1	**30**
Introduction to Asian studies	10
Advanced Mandarin 1	10
Elective 1	10
Semester 2	**30**
Year in China A	30
Semester 3	**30**
Year in China B	30
Semester 4	**30**
Elective 2	10
Advanced Mandarin 3	5
MA thesis	15

Japanese studies	EC
Semester 1	**30**
Introduction to Asian studies	10
Advanced Japanese	10
Elective 1	10
Semester 2 block 1	**15**
Elective 2	10
Advanced Japanese	5
Semester 2 block 2	**15**
Year in Japan A	15
Semester 3	**30**
Year in Japan B	25
Thesis tutorial 1	5
Semester 4 block 1	**10**
Year in Japan C	5
Thesis tutorial 2	5
Semester 4 block 2	**20**
Advanced Japanese 3	5
MA thesis	15

Korean studies	EC
Semester 1	**30**
Introduction to Asian studies	10
Advanced Korean Reading	10
Elective 1	10
Semester 2	**30**
Year in Korea A	30
Semester 3	**30**
Year in Korea B	30
Semester 4	**30**
Elective 2	10
Topical readings in Korean	5
MA thesis	15

Appendix 4: Programme site visit

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 China Studies**
10:45	11:00	Break
11:00	11:45	**Session lecturers BA China Studies**
11:45	12:30	**Session students BA China Studies**
12:30	13:15	Lunch
13:15	13:45	**Session Examinations Board BA China Studies**
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 Korea Studies / 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 Korea Studies**
15:45	16:30	**Session students BA Korea Studies**
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 Japan Studies**
10:00	10:15	Break
10.15	11.00	**Session lecturers BA Japan Studies**
11.00	11.45	**Session students BA Japan Studies**
11.45	12:00	Break
12:00	12.30	**Session Board of Examiners Japan Studies**
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**

Appendix 5: Documents

Self-evaluation report M Asian Studies 60 EC and 120 EC

- Self-evaluation report M Asian Studies 60 EC and 120 EC
- Appendixes
    - Faculty Appendix SER
    - Prospectus MA Asian Studies
    - Education Dashboard FGW
    - Master Course and Examination Regulations – Faculty of Humanities
    - Master Course and Examination Regulations – Asian Studies 60 EC
    - Master Course and Examination Regulations – Asian Studies 120 EC
    - Staff overview master Asian Studies
    - Assessment plan MA Asian Studies 60 EC & 120 EC
    - Rules and Regulations Board of Examiners
    - Vision on Teaching and Learning
    - Guide to Teaching Quality Assurance
    - Manual for Board of Examiners
    - Teaching Evaluation Framework
    - Manual for Programme Committees
    - Assessment Framework
    - MA Asian Studies course regulations
    - MA Asian Studies thesis protocol
    - MA Asian Studies prospectus information on career preperation
    - Thesis Assessment at the Faculty of Humanities

Additional documentation

- AI guide for teachers FGW Leiden University
- Implementing AI in your curriculum FGW Leiden University
- Guidelines for GenAI use students FGW Leiden University
- Annual report Board of Examiners
- OLC Meeting notes
- Annual Report MA Asian Studies 60 EC and 120 EC

Selection of final products

Master Asian Studies 60 EC

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed twenty final projects from the master's programme in Asian Studies 60 EC. The selection ensured a balanced distribution in terms of tracks, grades, topics, and supervisors.

Grade Range	Number of theses	Selected
5,5-6,9 sufficient	39	7
7,0-8,4 good	129	10
8,5-10 very good	36	3
Total	204	**20**

Tracks	Number of theses	Selected
East Asian Studies	58	5
History, Arts and Culture of Asia	58	6
Politics, Society and Economics of Asia	77	5
Southeast Asian Studies	11	4
Total	204	**20**

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

Master Asian Studies 120 EC

Prior to the site visit, the panel reviewed fifteen final projects from the master's programme in Asian Studies 120 EC. The selection ensured a balanced distribution in terms of tracks, grades, topics, and supervisors.

Grade Range	Number of theses	Selected
5,5-6,9 sufficient	4	3
7,0-8,4 good	28	8
8,5-10 very good	10	4
Total	42	**15**

Tracks	Number of theses	Selected
Chinese Studies	15	5
Japanese Studies	20	6
Korean Studies	7	4
Total	42	**15**

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