

wo-bachelor
Law in Society
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

14 August 2018

NVAO limited initial accreditation

Panel report

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1 Executive summary

The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) received a request for an initial accreditation procedure regarding a proposed Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) in Law in Society at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. NVAO convened an expert panel, which studied the information available and discussed the proposed programme with representatives of the institution and the programme during a site visit.

The following considerations have played an important role in the panel's assessment.

The Law in Society programme intends to prepare students to gain relevant insights in the role and effects of law in the context of current societal challenges and through the use of the 'mixed classroom' concept. The societal challenges are reflected in four themes: *Security, Globalisation of Markets, Migration* and *Sustainability* which can be substituted over time. The intended learning outcomes comply with the Dublin descriptors for the bachelor's level, obviously reflecting disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills and a clear academic orientation.

However, in the opinion of the panel some of the learning outcomes deserve more specification in order for students to understand how they can realise their learning outcomes.

Concerning the teaching-learning environment, the panel applauds the programme's refreshing approach to law and considers it to be a timely and much needed programme. The curriculum ensures the introduction to the fundamentals of law and social sciences and it enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel is convinced that the development of academic and professional skills is very well addressed within the programme.

The panel, however, recommends that the programme adjust the description of some of the individual courses, especially when it comes to the description regarding the key principles of law and the role of human rights and constitutionally protected fundamental rights. Moreover, the panel also made a recommendation regarding the Artificial Intelligence course which is now part of the Sustainability theme. According to the programme, this course is included since fast-changing technological developments require professionals who are equipped to handle the legal implications of Artificial intelligence. Therefore, the panel advises to better embed the Artificial Intelligence course in the teaching materials of several individual courses to better provide students with tools for their daily reality.

The panel is enthusiastic about the experienced lecturers who seem to be well equipped to handle the embedding of the themes and mixed classroom in the programme. The panel is convinced that the programme is able to embed these themes and the mixed classroom in the programme, and is curious how the embedding will unfold during the following years.

With regard to the assessment plan, the panel established that the programme has a solid assessment plan in place and that it is characterised by a wide variety of assessments. The panel understands the focus on group assignments, although it does wonder how the programme will actually evaluate all these types of assignments and calls to attention that it will be necessary to keep a close eye on making sure that students are indeed assessed on their individual merits. Considering the experience of the lecturers with the educational concept, the panel is positive that the concept and its assessments should work. However

the panel strongly recommends to be aware of the potential excessive workload of these wide variety of written assessments.

In the opinion of the panel, the programme offers the body of knowledge and strengthens competences, while also recognising the difficulty of assessing cultural differences. Subsequently, the panel recommends keeping an eye on the subject-specific learning outcomes and the traditional legal knowledge, to be able to properly assess the four learning trajectories.

Finally, following the 'Protocol toetsing aanvullende eisen bij toelating vanwege onderwijsconcept (NVAO, 2014) the programme asked permission to work with additional entry requirements to pre-select students who are most suited for the programme's educational concept based on their international profile and motivation. The panel agrees that the Law in Society programme requires a diverse student population with an international focus and aspirations in order to properly execute the mixed classroom concept. In the opinion of the panel, the requirement of a motivational letter as an extra selection criteria fits the educational concept. The students' specific backgrounds reinforce each other, forming a cohesive group together with the programme's staff.

The panel comes to the conclusion that the programme meets all assessments standards. Given these considerations, the panel advises NVAO to take a positive decision regarding the quality of the proposed programme Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) in Law in Society at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

The Hague, 14th August 2018

On behalf of the assessment panel convened for the initial limited accreditation assessment of the Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) in Law in Society at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Prof. mr. dr. Maartje van der Woude
(chair)

Yvet Blom
(secretary)

2 Introduction

2.1 The procedure

NVAO received a request for an initial accreditation procedure including the information dossier regarding a proposed LL.B. in Law in Society at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The request was received on 16 April 2018 from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

An initial accreditation procedure is required when a recognised institution wants to award a recognised bachelor's or master's degree after the successful completion of a study programme. The procedure for initial accreditation is slightly different as compared to the approach for programmes that have already been accredited. Initial accreditation is in fact an ex ante assessment of a programme. The programme becomes subject to the normal accreditation procedures once initial accreditation has been granted.

To assess the program, the NVAO convened an international panel of experts (see also Annex 1: Composition of the panel). The panel consisted of:

Chair:

- Prof. mr. dr. Maartje van der Woude, Professor of Law and Society, Leiden University;

Panel members:

- Dr. mr. Bald de Vries, Associate Professor in Legal Theory and Education, Utrecht University;
- Prof. dr. Aurelia Colombi Ciacchi, Professor of Law and Governance, University of Groningen;
- Dr. Robert J. Coelen, Lector Internationalisation in Higher Education, NHL Stenden Hogeschool;

Student member:

- Sebastiaan van Leunen, bachelor student in History and Law, University of Groningen.

On behalf of the NVAO, Aurelie van 't Slot and Yvet Blom were responsible for the process-coordination and the drafting of the experts' report.

This composition reflects the expertise deemed necessary by NVAO (Annex 1: Composition of the panel). All the panel members signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel has based its assessment on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands (Stcrt. 2016, nr 69458). For the assessment of the proposed additional entry requirements, the panel based its decision on the additional criteria described in the 'Protocol toetsing aanvullende eisen bij toelating vanwege onderwijsconcept' (NVAO, 2014).

The following procedure was undertaken. The panel members prepared the assessment by analysing the documents provided by the institution (Annex 3: Documents reviewed). The

panel organised a preparatory meeting on the 4th of July i.e. the day before the site visit. During this meeting, the panel members shared their first impressions and formulated questions for the site visit.

The site visit took place on the 5th of July 2018 at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. During this visit, the panel was able to discuss the formulated questions and to gather additional information during several sessions (Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit). Afterwards, the panel discussed the findings and considerations and pronounced its preliminary assessments per theme and standard. At the end of the site visit, the initial findings were presented to the institution.

Based on the findings, considerations and conclusions the secretary wrote a draft advisory report that was first presented to the panel members. After the panel members had commented on the draft report, the chair endorsed the report. On 10th August 2018 the advisory report was sent to the institution, which was given the opportunity to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report. The institution replied on 14 August 2018. All suggested corrections were adopted. Subsequently the final report was endorsed by the panel chair. The panel composed its advice fully independently and offered it to NVAO on 14 August 2018F.

2.2 Panel report

The first chapter of this report is the executive summary of the report, while the current chapter is the introduction.

The third chapter gives a description of the programme including its position within the institution, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and within the higher education system of the Netherlands.

The panel presents its assessments in the fourth chapter. The programme is assessed by assessing the themes and standards in the Initial Accreditation Framework. For each standard the panel presents an outline of its findings, considerations and a conclusion.

The outline of the findings are the objective facts as found by the panel in the information dossier, in the additional documents and during the site visit. The panel's considerations consist of the panel's judgments and subjective evaluations regarding these findings and their relative importance. The considerations presented by the panel are at the basis of a concluding overall assessment.

The panel concludes the report with a table containing an overview of its assessments per standard.

3 Description of the programme

3.1 General

Country	: The Netherlands
Institution	: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Programme	: Law in Society
Degree	: Bachelor of Laws
Location(s)	: Amsterdam
Study Load (EC)	: 180 EC
Field of Study	: Law

3.2 Profile of the institution

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (hereafter: VU) aspires to be an open organisation, encouraging free and open communication and exchange of ideas in both academic research and education which creates strong links between research and the needs of society. The VU is characterised by its diverse staff and student population, with different backgrounds, religious convictions and cultural roots. The university's open character and diverse population are reflected in VU's three core values: *responsibility*, *openness* and *personal engagement*. These values can be seen throughout its research and teaching.

VU's Faculty of Law offers three bachelor's programmes and eight master's programmes. Each programme comprises education in legal studies and/or criminology in an interdisciplinary and international context. This is aligned with the faculty's educational profile, *Law in Action*, which is centred on the societal implications of the law and is concerned with how law affects society and how social developments influence law.

3.3 Profile of the programme

The bachelor's programme *Law in Society* is a new programme in the Netherlands. The programme document indicates that no other institution of higher education in the Netherlands offers a programme with a similar profile. The bachelor's programme is taught in English and intends to prepare law graduates with an interdisciplinary perspective for a career in an international and culturally diverse environment. Law in Society students learn how to address societal challenges from a legal, dogmatic perspective which, if applicable, will be based on and substantiated by social scientific observations or insights.

The faculty's educational profile that centres on the societal implications of the Law in Action, is reflected in the Law in Society programme. Graduates learn to understand how law interacts with society. They are skilled at interpreting, explaining and implementing law, while being aware of the influence of law on society, attitudes and personal behaviour, and the influence of social developments on law.

Students will gain the relevant insights through the use of the 'mixed classroom', in which project groups are composed in a way that ensures the exchange of different intercultural aspects. This educational concept provides an effective learning environment to develop competences in intercultural interaction and negotiation. To efficiently implement the mixed classroom concept and achieve the intended learning outcomes, the programme strives to

enrol a diverse group of students with different backgrounds who are internationally oriented and have academic ambitions.

4 Assessment per standard

This chapter presents the evaluation of the standards by the assessment panel. The panel has reproduced the criteria for each standard. For each standard the panel presents (1) a brief outline of its findings based on the information dossier and on documents provided by the institution and the site visit, (2) the considerations the panel has taken into account and (3) the panel's conclusion. The panel presents a conclusion for each of the standards, as well as a final conclusion.

The assessment is based on the standards and criteria described in the NVAO Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands (Stcrt. 2016, nr 69458). Fundamental to the assessment is a discussion with peers regarding the content and quality of the new programme.

Regarding each of the standards, the assessment panel gives a substantiated judgement on a three-point scale: meets, does not meet or partially meets the standard. The panel subsequently gives a substantiated final conclusion regarding the quality of the programme, also on a three-point scale: positive, conditionally positive or negative.

4.1 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.

Outline of findings

The programme's main objective is to train students to acquire legal knowledge and empirical and quantitative skills in an interdisciplinary, cross-cutting, international and culturally diverse environment. The programme intends to prepare students to gain relevant insights in the context of current societal challenges through the use of the 'mixed classroom' concept. The societal challenges are reflected in four themes: *Security, Globalisation of Markets, Migration and Sustainability*. These themes can be substituted over time if their importance wanes or if other developments require this.

The mixed classroom provides students to develop competences in intercultural interaction and negotiation. Based on the principles of the faculty's educational profile, *Law in Action*, students will get acquainted with a wide variety of law systems, depending on the focus of the course and students' own knowledge and interest.

The programme has formulated fifteen intended learning outcomes: *subject-specific (5), academic (6), social and communication (2) and study skills and professional orientation (2)*. These learning outcomes are constructed in a matrix and match individual courses and the programme as a whole. The intended learning outcomes are established according to the Dublin descriptors for the bachelor's level.

The learning outcomes reflect an academic and legal character. In the information dossier it is substantiated that they comply with the Dublin descriptors. It is also described how these learning outcomes will facilitate this: *'the graduate has academic knowledge and understanding of the key principles and system structure of (European and international) public, private and criminal law, to include recent developments'* and *'the graduate has*

academic knowledge and understanding of the relationship between European and international law on the one hand, and the legal systems of individual states on the other.'

The panel questioned whether these learning outcomes enabled students to gain a sufficient basic knowledge of the law. The representatives interviewed by the panel explained that these learning outcomes are connected to a thematic teaching approach. Students will focus on a certain theme and study several concepts or disciplines in the context of that specific theme. This learning process enables students to discover the interrelatedness of various concepts and disciplines and to build up to the required knowledge and competences reflected in the intended learning outcomes. The third year of the bachelor programme aims to recapitulate the traditional legal principles and to focus on three legal disciplines in greater depth. The Law faculty of the VU offers the thematic teaching approach in several minor and master's programmes. According to the lecturers and students, this approach has proven to be successful.

The panel also queried the intended learning outcome as described in the information dossier: '*The graduate is able to clearly and convincingly present viewpoints and findings to different target groups, both verbally and in written form, in a scientifically substantiated manner*'. The panel asked the interlocutors if they could elaborate on the 'different target groups' as referred to in the information dossier. The representatives of the programme illustrated that the 'different target groups' refer to both professional and lay audiences. The concept of the mixed classroom contributes to this intended learning outcome in a way that students learn how to explain their findings in a clear and comprehensive manner to legal practitioners and the general public.

The initial accreditation procedure was proposed under the name *Law and Society*. Considering the programme's intended learning outcomes, the panel questioned the extent to which the programme's name *Law and Society* is derived from that specific field, as determined by the already existing international study programmes named *Law & Society*, such as the ones in the US. The framework provided by the field of those *Law & Society* programmes has learning outcomes that do not relate to this programme's intended learning outcomes. According to the programme management, the international *Law and Society Association* does not constitute the foundation for the programme's learning outcomes. Consequently, the name of the programme is merely derived from the two fields of focus, the field of Law and Society and the field of Social Sciences, not the field of Law & Society. After the site visit, the VU Law Faculty suggested to change the programme's name to *Law in Society*.

The large majority of the students who graduate with a bachelor's degree in Law continue studying for a master's degree (95%). For this reason, the intended learning outcomes of Law in Society are all in line with the entry requirements of the seven international master's programmes of the VU Faculty of Law. The interviewed representatives of the VU's master's programmes emphasised that their programmes are multidisciplinary by nature, in terms of combining law and social sciences, students' backgrounds, and cultural diversity. Therefore, the Law in Society programme would generate perfect candidates.

Graduates who are proficient in Dutch have access to the Dutch language track in Criminology. Graduates who are proficient in Dutch and have pursued a minor in Dutch Law, are admissible to various other master's programmes and will therefore also be able to obtain the Dutch civil effect qualification.

The representatives also explained that the professional field is increasingly asking for T-shaped lawyers and encourages the change in the way students are educated. In this new type of education, students learn the principles of law and, additionally, focus on behavioural aspects. The representatives of the master's programmes aim to recruit motivated students with an interdisciplinary sensitivity, who will not merely learn to point out all the rules, but to understand the rules and to understand how to put these rules into perspective. Law in Society graduates are also expected to form an interesting target group for international master's programmes at other universities in the Netherlands.

Considerations

The panel has taken note of the proposed programme description and the comparison with other programmes in the Netherlands. During the site visit, the representatives of the programme convinced the panel how it intends to offer a double-integrated approach of both legal and social sciences. The panel highly appreciates the initiative of the VU to address today's societal challenges from a legal perspective, based on and substantiated by social scientific observations or insights. According to the panel, the programme has the potential of being a best-case example of the realisation of internationalisation of the intended learning outcomes and to provide a valuable contribution to Dutch academic education. Furthermore, in the opinion of the panel, the programme provides a sufficient legal foundation, generating a new type of lawyer in an elegant and also complex way. Additionally, the panel was pleased to hear that the representatives of the VU's master's programmes are really enthusiastic about the programme's international and multidisciplinary potential as influx for their master's programmes.

During the site visit, the panel questioned the programme's considerations that led to the initial name of the bachelor's programme *Law and Society*. To capture what the programme intends to do, the panel recommended using a name such as *Law and societal challenges*. After the site visit, the programme suggested to change its name to *Law in Society*. The panel fully endorses the proposed name change and regards this as a subtle way to preserve the 'law' and 'society' terms and distance itself from the 'Law and Society' domain.

The panel established that the intended learning outcomes comply with the Dublin descriptors for the bachelor's level and, therefore, meet the bachelor's level requirements. Although the panel initially questioned whether the aforementioned learning outcomes enabled students to gain a sufficient basic knowledge of the law, they became convinced that the programme provides a sufficient basis to pursue a master programme or a professional career within the legal domain. According to the panel some of the learning outcomes deserve more specification, in order for students to understand how they can realise their learning outcomes. The panel recommends modification of the *subject-specific learning outcomes* to provide students with a clearer understanding of the legal content of the programme. For example, to reformulate the first learning outcome to: *'the graduate has academic knowledge and understanding of key principles of public, private and criminal law, including recent developments'*.

Additionally, in the *social and communication learning outcome*, the panel recommends to clearly specify who the 'different target groups' are.

Conclusion

The programme meets standard 1.

4.2 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.

Outline of findings

The international bachelor's programme Law in Society intends to address major themes and societal issues from a national, European and international perspective. The programme's curriculum consists of a total study load of 180 European Credits (EC) and has a nominal length of three years. Each academic year is divided into two semesters and each semester is divided into three periods.

The first two years of the programme focus on four specific issues. The current issues in the programme are *Security, Globalisation of Markets, Migration and Sustainability*. To cover these issues on both the local and the global level, each semester is devoted to one of these themes, and courses are taught in the context of the theme both at the local and global level. Students will examine how issues can be addressed and analysed from the perspective of the traditional legal disciplines *Public, Private and Criminal Law*, using one or more of the social sciences. The four issues are a reflection of concrete situations that are analysed such that students develop an understanding of relevant theories and concepts of different disciplines and perspectives. This ultimately provides students with the skills to understand complex situations.

The curriculum

Each semester is dedicated to one particular issue, divided into four learning trajectories in B1 and B2:

- Law, legal sciences and related skills (48 EC)
- Empirical research skills (24 EC)
- Social sciences (24 EC)
- General academic development (24 EC)

The *Law, legal sciences and related skills* trajectory holds the greatest number of European Credits. In the first two years of the programme, every semester of the trajectory differentiates between an international perspective (6 EC per semester) and a local case study (6 EC per semester).

Before the site visit, the panel questioned the legal content of the programme and whether the programme could provide a sufficient understanding of the principles of law. During the site visit, the interviewed representatives explained that designing the trajectory involved an expert group who determined the content of the trajectory and the link to the professional field. The lawyers in the expert group stressed that there is an increasing need for T-shaped professionals, which requires moving away from the concentric way of teaching law. Subsequently, the experts decided which aspects of the three traditional legal disciplines – *Public, Private and Criminal Law* – should be included in the curriculum to ensure that the graduate possesses the adequate level of legal knowledge and competences. The programme applied these core elements to the four themes, while taking the expertise of the lecturers of the faculty into account.

The learning trajectory *Social Sciences* covers theories and concepts of *criminology, psychology, sociology and artificial intelligence*. The themes in the first three semesters of

the bachelor programme are linked to one social science per issue. *Security* is linked to Criminology; *Globalization of Markets* is linked to psychology, *Migration* is linked to sociology and *Sustainability* is linked to artificial intelligence.

The panel questioned the inclusion of artificial intelligence in this programme as part of the Sustainability pillar. The programme management and lecturers explained that fast-changing technological developments require professionals who are equipped to handle the legal implications of artificial intelligence. Questions regarding liability and enforcement processes concerning the processing of big data, profiling and automated decision making are increasingly becoming important. The programme management underlines that the decision to include artificial intelligence in the programme ties in with the requests of the professional field and the majority of students.

The learning trajectories *Empirical research skills* and *General academic development* both offer four courses. The former offers *Methodology of Empirical Research, Statistics and SPSS, Qualitative Research Methods* and *Evaluation Research*. The latter offers *Diversity, Legal Philosophy, Negotiation and Deviation, Professional Ethics* and the *Bachelor's Thesis*.

In the third and final year of the curriculum, students follow courses in their chosen minor (30 EC) and more in-depth courses of the learning trajectories *Law, legal sciences and related skills* (18 EC). The final two periods of the programme consist of *General academic development* and are dedicated to the writing of a bachelor's thesis (12 EC).

The *Law, legal sciences and related skills trajectory* delves deeper into the traditional legal disciplines *Public, Private* and *Criminal Law*, recapitulating these topics by comparing national, international and European law and their influence in the *Public Law* and *Criminal Law* courses. The *Private Law* course covers new material, such as *Property Law*.

The *General academic development* trajectory consists of a final report, the bachelor thesis, with which students need to prove they have a proficient base of legal analysis and demonstrate their ability to conduct a small-scale scientific research. The bachelor's thesis course focuses on consolidating and deepening knowledge, insights and competencies that students have gained in earlier programme components. Students will be working in small groups, gathering both legal/dogmatic and empirical data and finalising the group phase by presenting their findings on a poster during a symposium. Students will individually be collecting literature and other sources, and integrating the results of their analyses in their bachelor thesis.

Educational concept

The information dossier describes a variety of teaching methods, including group work, lectures, practical computer exercises and field research. The hallmark of the programme is the mixed classroom, which fulfils the intended learning outcome to work as part of an international, multinational and multidisciplinary team. This educational concept provides an effective learning environment to develop competences in intercultural interaction and negotiation – a concept that, over time, will be applied throughout the VU. During the site visit, students who had been working with the educational concept in other programmes stated that the concept of the mixed classroom is highly appreciated. They consider it to be a valuable way to learn about their own and other cultural differences and perspectives and to raise awareness about how to approach certain situations.

The mixed classroom concept is introduced at the beginning of in the first semester in the *Diversity* course. The *Diversity* course is part of the *General academic development* trajectory. It aims to strengthen ties between students, staff, the programme and the faculty and accustoms students to communicating with people from other countries, cultures and traditions in an academic learning environment. Over the course of the programme, students will be appointed by the programme management or teachers to different groups in different formations, stimulating them to continuously work in changing international teams.

Based on the principles of the faculty concept of *Law in Action*, students will get acquainted with the basic structures of the core elements of law by offering a wide variety of legal systems; civil law, common law, supranational law, international law and national law, which they will put into a 'law in action' perspective. Essentially, the programme includes both the *law in the books*, and the *law in action or law in reality*, the law that goes beyond the books. Furthermore, working with an intercultural student population, there will be numerous legal bases to address a situation. Therefore, the programme has chosen to apply the legal bases which match the focus of the course and students' own knowledge and interest.

Cohesion

According to the information dossier, the programme has devoted special attention to the interrelationships and synergy of the programme by constructing a matrix. Since the programme addresses *current* societal issues, the programme will have to be revised and updated from time to time. The matrix enables such changes, while ensuring the quality of an internally coherent programme. The responsibility for the overall cohesion between courses and trajectories, the feasibility and the development of knowledge and skills lies with the programme director. In turn, the programme director is supported by theme coordinators (4), learning trajectory coordinators (4) and course coordinators (24).

Intake and selection

The programme is expected to be attractive for Dutch and international students with different cultural backgrounds who are internationally oriented and have academic ambitions. In order to be admitted, candidates are expected to hold a Dutch VWO diploma or equivalent and must show proficiency in English and mathematics. The programme has asked permission to work with additional entry requirements to sustain the programme's educational concept, to which the international mixed classroom is key (also see '4.4 Additional entry requirements based on the educational concept of the mixed classroom'). These requirements involve a focus on the students' international profile and on the students' motivation. The programme management is aware that students with a Dutch nationality may be overrepresented in the student population of the first cohorts. Nevertheless, according to the programme management, the wide diversity of backgrounds of VU Amsterdam's student population will provide fertile grounds for the mixed-classroom concept.

If the influx of students turns out to be higher than expected, the programme has access to additional financial resources. These resources are made available by the Executive Board of the VU, which has adopted measures to support the growth of programmes throughout the university. One of these measures covers looking for housing solutions for international students given the current scarcity on the housing market in cooperation with the municipalities of Amstelveen and Amsterdam. Another measure is investing in personnel and recruitment policies.

Study guidance

Once the students are admitted to the programme, they can receive support and study guidance from tutors, academic advisors and mentors. The tutor is a junior lecturer who is appointed to a group of approximately twelve students at the beginning of the programme and remains a point of contact throughout the programme.

Mentors are senior students who offer peer-to-peer coaching to newly enrolled students throughout their student career. The mentoring system of VU has been in place for forty years. Mentors provide information about the campus and who to contact if additional assistance is needed. Mentors also monitor study progress and provide social support. Due to the diversity of the VU's student population, mentors are trained extensively to ensure that they are equipped to effectively and appropriately guide newly enrolled students.

The VU offers a wide variety of solutions and support for students with disabilities, such as teaching materials that are tailored to the needs of people with auditory and/or visual impairment and special lecture rooms with adjustable tables and chairs.

Staff

Many of the staff members are well-established researchers who are also actively engaged in relevant professional practice. The programme selected the lecturers based on their extensive teaching experience and specialist knowledge. The proposed lecturers are either full professors or associate professors. Every lecturer has a BKO certificate.

The mixed classroom concept requires a single cohesive group – comprising lecturers and students – that creates awareness of working in an international, multicultural and multidisciplinary team. The lecturers' level of experience working with the mixed classroom concept varies. The programme has specified that lecturers must follow the programme *Mixed Classroom in Practice*, where they learn the necessary skills and competences. The programme management and the lecturers explained that interdisciplinarity can easily be guaranteed, since the criminology department and some of the master's programmes within the faculty contain interdisciplinary courses where lecturers of different fields work closely together on one topic. The lecturers also stressed that the lecturers who are involved in the programme were all motivated to be part of this programme and therefore very committed.

Considerations

The panel applauds the programme's refreshing approach to law and considers it to be a timely and much needed programme. According to the panel, the curriculum ensures students are introduced in the fundamentals of law and social sciences and it enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The panel is convinced that the development of academic and professional skills is very well addressed within the programme. However, the panel recommends that the programme modify the description of some of the individual courses, specifying the national legal systems whose legislation, case law and policy documents are to be read by the students. According to the panel, it would be very helpful to know which legal systems are considered in the courses.

Human rights and constitutionally protected fundamental rights play a major role in the interpretation and application of rules of private law, criminal law, and public law. The students should become aware, from the first year on, of this paramount role of human rights and other fundamental rights. Therefore, according to the panel, the content of courses dealing with private law, criminal law, and public law (and also the discussion of

specific cases / examples) should explicitly stress the role of human rights – especially the ones enshrined in the ECHR –and constitutionally protected fundamental rights.

Before the site visit, the panel questioned why the courses that could provide a basic understanding of the principles of law were to be taught in the third year. During the site visit, the panel became convinced of the value of the thematic, cross-cutting approach of the programme. However, the panel has expressed the opinion that the programme also has some disadvantages, namely the risk of confusion in the students' perception of the different sources and branches of law. Therefore, especially in the first-year courses, particular attention should be paid to systematising the different sources, binding force, and way of functioning of supranational (especially European) rules, so as to eliminate the typical misunderstandings of students.

In its present form, the curriculum embeds Artificial Intelligence in the Sustainability pillar. However, in the view of the panel, the Artificial Intelligence course has much broader objectives: it relates to the preparation of future jurists in general. Considering that the law corresponds to societal developments, the fast changing technological developments are also increasingly influencing the law. These technological developments such as the processing of big data, profiling and automated decision making also has its legal implications, regarding for example legal liability and enforcement processes. This requires professionals who are equipped to handle the legal implications of artificial intelligence: *'Who is liable when a machine takes over?'*. Therefore, according to the panel, Artificial Intelligence should be better embedded in the whole programme. Ideally, Artificial Intelligence should play a role in the teaching materials of several individual courses to provide students with tools for their daily reality.

The panel is enthusiastic about the experienced lecturers who seem to be well equipped to handle the embedding of the themes and mixed classroom in the programme. The panel is convinced that the programme is able to embed these themes and the mixed classroom in the programme and is curious how the embedding will unfold during the following years.

Conclusion

The programme meets standard 2.

4.3 Standard 3: Assessment

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

Outline of findings

The VU ensures its quality of education with a Faculty Board, an Education Board and an Examination Board. The Faculty Board is the formal decision-making body of the faculty. The tasks and responsibilities are defined by the university's governance model and operationalised by the Faculty Regulations. The Education Board of the faculty consists of all programme directors within the faculty and holds an advisory role on educational matters. Students of the faculty are represented by a student assessor who attends meetings with the Faculty Board and the Education Board and has an advisory vote.

The Examination Board covers both bachelor and master programmes and consists of a representative of every faculty discipline and one external, non-faculty member. The Examination Board is responsible for the quality of all assessment procedures and regularly

holds meetings with examiners, Programme Directors and the Faculty Board. The Examination board appoints both internal and external examiners.

The quality assessment system is described in the established policy of the Faculty of Law, which corresponds to the policy of the VU University as a whole. In line with the faculty's policy, the Law in Society programme has an assessment plan prescribing the form of assessment per course. The Examination Board is responsible for quality assurance of teaching and assessment.

The regulations regarding the teaching and examinations of the Faculty of Law bachelor's programmes are documented in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER).

The programme contains a wide variety of group assignments which are set to enhance (intercultural) cooperation. The programme also contains many take home exams. Students learn how to interpret, explain and implement law by understanding law in the context of societies. They are stimulated to reflect on their own diversity background. The representatives of the Examination Board and the programme committee pointed out that the diversity of assessments contributes to providing an interesting programme. The Examination Board and the programme are currently preparing a policy regarding the take-home exams and longer essays. According to the interlocutors, this requires expanding the team of assessors. They also mentioned that a method to assess group assessments will need to be developed, which will be based on their experiences with similar programmes of the VU.

Considerations

The panel established that the programme has a solid assessment plan in place and that it is characterised by a wide variety of assessments. The panel understands the focus on group assignments, although it does wonder how the programme will actually evaluate all these types of assessments. Considering the experience of the lecturers with the educational concept, the panel is positive that the concept and its assessments should work. However the panel strongly recommends to be aware of the potential excessive workload of these wide variety of written assessments.

In the opinion of the panel, the programme offers the body of knowledge and strengthens competences, while also recognising the difficulty of assessing cultural differences. Subsequently, the panel recommends keeping an eye on the subject-specific learning outcomes and the traditional legal knowledge, to be able to properly assess the four learning trajectories. The panel suggests using SOLO, the structure of observed learning outcome, as a way of grading assignments.

Conclusion

The programme meets standard 3.

4.4 Additional entry requirements based on the educational concept of the *mixed classroom*

Following the 'Protocol toetsing aanvullende eisen bij toelating vanwege onderwijsconcept (NVAO, 2014) the programme asked permission to work with additional entry requirements to pre-select students who are most suited for the programme's educational concept based on their international profile and motivation. These criteria are:

1. The programme has a specific educational concept that fits the intended learning outcomes, as evidenced by the assessment as at least 'meets the standard' on standard 2 'Teaching-learning environment'.
2. In order for students to fully benefit the educational concept, a student population with specific knowledge, skills or attributes is required.
3. The selection of students on their knowledge, skills or characteristics mentioned under 2, are directly related to its educational concept.

Accordingly, the programme focuses primarily on the aspiring students' motivation, therefore the admission policy requires a letter of motivation. The selection of students with various motivations contributes to the aspired diversity of the student population. The panel agrees that the Law in Society programme requires a diverse student population with an international focus and aspirations in order to properly execute the mixed classroom concept. In the opinion of the panel, the requirement of a motivational letter as an extra selection criterion fits the educational concept. The panel concurs with the progressive insight of the programme management that selection based on nationality would be at odds with legal non-discrimination standards and not appropriate nor desirable.

The panel finds that the student selection based on motivation is very student-centred. The students' specific backgrounds reinforce one another, forming a cohesive group together with the programme's staff. In the panel's opinion, the people involved in the programme really understand how internationalisation works. They are aware of the challenges of international students and address these challenges in an appropriate and effective way.

4.5 Qualification and field of study (CROHO)

The panel advises to award the degree 'Bachelor of Laws' to the bachelor programme Law in Society at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The panel supports the program's preference for the CROHO field of study 'Law'.

4.6 Conclusion

The panel concludes that the programme meets all three standards and assesses the quality of the programme as positive. The panel considers the new bachelor's programme to be a well-developed, refreshing and relevant programme. The programme and its energetic teaching staff go beyond books and doctrines, preparing students for an international real-world work environment. The intended learning outcomes cover the level and orientation of the programme and the curriculum ensures that students acquire the fundamentals of the principles of law and additional empirical social sciences. Students are actively challenged by the mixed classroom concept to work in an international multidisciplinary team. The programme has a solid system of student assessment in place, of which certain aspects such as group assessments and take-home exams, are in process to be further defined based on their experiences with similar programmes of the VU.

4.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the panel formulated the following recommendations:

- The panel recommends that the programme modifies the description of some of the individual courses, specifying the national legal systems whose legislation, case law and policy documents are to be read by the students.

- Furthermore, the content of courses dealing with private law, criminal law, and public law (and also the discussion of specific cases / examples) should also explicitly stress the role of human rights – especially the ones enshrined in the ECHR –and constitutionally protected fundamental rights.
- Artificial Intelligence should be better embedded in the teaching materials of several individual courses to provide students with tools for their daily reality.
- The teaching staff should be aware of the potential excessive workload of the wide variety of written assessments.

5 Overview of the assessments

Standard	Assessment
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 (weighted and substantiated).
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 (weighted and substantiated).
Student assessment <i>Standard 3: The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.</i>	Meets the standard (weighted and substantiated).
Conclusion	Positive (weighted and substantiated)

Annex 1: Composition of the panel

Chair:

- Prof. mr. dr. Maartje van der Woude, Professor of Law and Society, Leiden University;

Panel members:

- Dr. mr. Bald de Vries, Associate Professor in Legal Theory and Education, Utrecht University;
- Prof. dr. Aurelia Colombi Ciacchi, Professor of Law and Governance, University of Groningen;
- Dr. Robert J. Coelen, Lector Internationalisation in Higher Education, NHL Stenden Hogeschool;

Student member:

- Sebastiaan van Leunen, bachelor student in History and Law, University of Groningen.

On behalf of the NVAO, Aurelie van 't Slot and Yvet Blom were responsible for the process-coordination and the drafting of the experts' report.

Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit

The panel visited Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam on the 5th of July 2018 as part of the external assessment procedure regarding the LL.B. in Law in Society.

- 09:00 – 09:30 Reception and preparatory panel meeting (*confidential*)
Welcome and introduction by Joke Harte
- 09:30 – 10:00 Meeting with institutional management
- 10:05 – 11:00 Meet with programme management Teaching staff
- 11:00 – 11:15 Break
- 11:15 – 11:40 Meeting with management of master programs (connections to master programmes and work field)
- 11:45 – 12:15 Meeting with members of examination board and programme committees
- 12:15 – 13:00 Panel meeting, lunch (*confidential*)
- 13:00 – 13:25 Tour of the facilities
- 13:30 – 14:30 Meeting with lecturers
- 14:35 – 15:00 Meeting with the faculty education office
- 15:00 – 15:15 Break
- 15:15 – 15:30 Second meeting with programme management (optional)
- 15:30 – 16:45 Panel meeting (*confidential*)
- 16:45 Presentation of initial findings
- 17:00 – 18:30 Drinks

Annex 3: Documents reviewed

Programme documents presented by the institution

- Information dossier
- Appendices to the information dossier:
 - Intended Learning Outcomes and their relation with the Dublin descriptors
 - Teaching and Examination Regulations 2019-2020 (draft)
 - Description of the themes
 - Relations Intended Learning Outcomes and Courses
 - Course descriptions first bachelor year (B1)
 - Course descriptions second and third bachelor years (B2 and B3)
 - Mixed Classroom in Practice
 - Teachers and courses
 - Short CVs of teaching staff
 - Assessment programme
 - Course Manual Bachelor's Thesis
- Documents made available during the site visit
 - Vakbeschrijvingen B1
 - Literatuur B1 (hardcopy's)
 - Handboek onderwijskwaliteit VU
 - Law in Action binnen het rechtsgeleerde onderwijs
 - Onderwijsvisie Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid
 - Faculteitsreglement
 - Facultaire Nota toetsbeleid herz. versie 2017
 - Kader kwaliteitszorg 2017
 - Internationaliseringsagenda VU
 - Werkdocument Communicatie & Marketing
 - Beleidskader & werkdocument International Office

Annex 4: List of abbreviations

ba	bachelor
EC	European Credit
ma	master
NVAO	Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
wo	wetenschappelijk onderwijs

The panel report was ordered by NVAO for the initial accreditation of the programme Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) in Law in Society of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

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