

## **Bachelor Urban Studies Leiden University**

*Report of the limited programme assessment  
15 December 2022*

## Colophon

### Programme

Leiden University  
bachelor's programme Urban Studies  
Location: The Hague (Den Haag)  
Mode of study: fulltime  
Croho: 59328  
Result of institutional assessment: positive (2019)

### Panel

Maarten Prak, chair  
Maarten van Ham, domain expert  
Maud Huynen, domain expert  
Christoph Lindner, domain expert  
Anne van de Rijdt, student  
Linda van der Grijspaarde, secretary

The panel was presented to the NVAO for approval.

The assessment was conducted under responsibility of  
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*This document is best printed in duplex*

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## Summary

On December 15<sup>th</sup> 2022 an assessment committee of AeQui assessed the bachelor's programme Urban Studies at Leiden University. The committee judges that the programme meets each standard; the overall quality of the programme **meets the standard**.

### Intended learning outcomes

The assessment committee assesses that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**. The multidisciplinary programme aims to provide students with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to understand and address the challenges faced and opportunities offered by cities in the 21st century. The programme has translated this profile into 27 intended learning outcomes that are defined according to the Dublin descriptors. These intended learning outcomes are properly described in terms of level and orientation. The committee judges that the bachelor's programme offers the students the possibility to obtain a multidisciplinary overview combining perspectives from the humanities, the social sciences and the environmental sciences.

### Teaching-learning environment

The assessment committee assesses that the teaching-learning environment **meets the standard**. The fulltime bachelor's programme is organised around four learning trajectories. These trajectories support the growth and development of the students. In the course of the programme, students have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in two of four themes: Safe city, Healthy city, Multicultural city and Sustainable city, and subsequently specialise in one of them. The committee appreciates the choice of clustering the subject areas into these four key themes, which ensure a meaningful and focused approach. They provide room for individual choices and thereby give opportunities for cumulative learning. By combining humanities, sciences and social sciences perspectives, the programme confronts the students with knowledge, understanding and methodologies from an unusual variety of academic disciplines. The staff is qualified for the execution of the curriculum in terms of content and educational expertise. The multidisciplinary nature of the programme is reflected in the broad range of expertise contributed by the staff.

### Student assessment

The assessment committee assesses that the student assessment **meets the standard**. Multiple assessment types are applied throughout the programme and these are aligned with the learning outcomes. The assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The requirements are transparent to the students. The assessment procedures are sufficiently implemented in the programme. The Board of Examiners performs thoroughly and pro-actively its tasks to control the quality of the exams, the assessment procedures and graduation research projects. The Board shows good knowledge of the programme and its assessment.

### Achieved learning outcomes

The assessment committee assesses that the achieved learning outcomes **meet the standard**. The programme aims to provide students with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to understand and address the challenges faced and opportunities offered by cities in the 21st century. The programme succeeds in achieving this aim. The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is among others demonstrated by the results of the theses.

### Recommendations

In order to bring the programme to an even higher level of quality in the future, the committee's recommendations include the following:

- The methodological part of the curriculum could strike a more even balance between introducing the broad range of relevant methodologies of the disciplines that have their place within the programme and the subsequent acquiring of more specialised expertise in more focussed areas of urban studies. Besides, the programme could explore opportunities to integrate statistics more into the second year thematic electives, to strengthen the connection between the methodology and the disciplines.

- The programme focusses on western cities and on the Global North. The programme could also focus on a more global perspective – or be more explicit and reflective about its chosen focus. The committee also noticed that (urban) sociology, social geography, urban planning and design could be strengthened in the programme.

The programme could consider to think more fundamentally about the specific intellectual inputs required for a programme of this type and profile, also in relation with master's programmes and the professional field.

All standards of the NVAO assessment framework (2018) are assessed positively; the assessment committee therefore awards a positive recommendation for the accreditation of the programme.

On behalf of the entire assessment committee,  
Utrecht, February 2023

Maarten Prak  
Chair

Linda van der Grijsparde  
Secretary

## Introduction

This report describes the programme assessment of the bachelor's programme Urban Studies. The programme is offered by the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University and taught at the campus of the university in The Hague.

### The institute

The Faculty of Humanities is one of Leiden University's seven faculties. The Faculty offers a wide range of programmes in a variety of disciplines: philosophy, history, art history, arts, literature, linguistics, religious studies, and regional studies. The Faculty provides education to approximately 8,000 students, distributed across 24 bachelor's study programmes, 19 master's programmes, and 8 research master's programmes (51 programmes in total).

The university is based in Leiden. In addition, the university operates a campus in The Hague. The bachelor's programme Urban Studies is taught in The Hague.

### The programme

Urban Studies is a three-year full-time bachelor's programme of academic orientation, amounting to 180 ECTS. The programme started in September 2018 and was launched with the idea that the increasingly urban world demands broadly trained urban experts, able to study and address processes of urban growth and accumulation, their challenges and opportunities.

The fundamental idea of the programme is that 21st-century urban life should be understood from a range of disciplinary vantage points, and that knowledge, understanding and skills from the humanities offer essential perspectives on the city.

From its start in 2018 with 31 students, the annual intake has gradually grown to around 91 students.

The programme is taught in English because the programme has a clear international profile, that also aims to take in international students. The committee agrees with the considerations for choosing an English-language programme.

### The assessment

Leiden University assigned AeQui to perform a quality assessment of its bachelor's programme Urban Studies. In close co-operation with the programme management, AeQui convened an independent and competent assessment committee. A preparatory meeting with representatives of the programme was held to exchange information and plan the date and programme of the site-visit.

### The site visit

In the run-up to the site visit, the assessment committee studied the self-evaluation report prepared by the programme, as well as various documents related to the programme such as course manuals and tests, and reviewed a sample of student theses. These documents were input for discussions during the site visit.

The site visit was carried out on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2022 according to the programme presented in attachment 2.

The committee has assessed the programme in an independent manner. At the end of the visit, the chair of the assessment committee presented the initial findings of the committee to representatives of the programme and the institution.

In this document, the committee is reporting on its findings, considerations and conclusions according to the 2018 NVAO framework for limited programme assessment. A draft version of the report was sent to the programme management. Its reactions have led to this final version of the report.

Initiated by the programme, a development dialogue will be planned in the coming months. The results of this development dialogue have no influence on the assessment presented in this report.

## 1. Intended learning outcomes

The assessment committee judges that the programme **meets this standard**. The multidisciplinary programme aims to provide students with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to understand and address the challenges faced and opportunities offered by cities in the 21st century. The programme has translated this profile into 27 intended learning outcomes that are defined according to the Dublin descriptors. These intended learning outcomes are properly described in terms of level and orientation.

### Findings

The bachelor in Urban Studies is the only programme of its kind in the Netherlands. The programme aims to provide students with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to understand and address the challenges faced and opportunities offered by cities in the 21st century.

The programme has a multidisciplinary character: it combines approaches to urbanisation, urban culture, urbanism and urban space from the social sciences and sciences with humanities-based approaches to urban narratives, ideas and ideologies. Combining perspectives from the humanities, the social sciences and the environmental sciences, it explores four key themes in contemporary urban life: Cultural diversity, Safety, Sustainability and Well-being and health.

The programme qualifies the students for master's programmes such as Urban Economic Development (Erasmus University Rotterdam) and Urban and Economic Geography (Utrecht University).

The profile of the bachelor is specified in 27 intended learning outcomes, clustered according to the categories of the Dublin Descriptors: knowledge and understanding, applying knowledge and understanding, judgement, communication and learning skills.

### Considerations

The committee judges that the bachelor's programme offers the students the possibility to obtain a multidisciplinary overview combining perspectives from the humanities, the social sciences and the environmental sciences. The committee appreciates the choice of clustering the subject areas into four key themes, which ensure a meaningful and focused approach.

The programme presents itself as unique in its offering of humanities perspectives on urbanity. The committee suggests that the programme thinks harder about the implications of this unique selling point. Likewise, it would like to see a more explicit reflection on the absence of such disciplines as Social Geography, Sociology and Urban Planning and Urban Design in the course offerings. The committee is not saying that these necessarily need to be included, but this is what many people would expect. Explaining to students, and indeed its own staff, why the Leiden programme has chosen a different path, would make this distinctive feature of the programme even stronger.

According to the committee, the 27 intended learning outcomes are well described in terms of level and orientation. They reflect the multidisciplinary profile of the programme.

Based on the interviews and examination of the documentation supplied by the programme, the assessment committee establishes that the intended learning outcomes **meet the standard**.



## 2. Teaching-learning environment

The assessment committee judges that the programme **meets this standard**. The fulltime bachelor's programme is organised around four learning trajectories. These trajectories support the growth and development of the students. In the course of the programme, students have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in one of the four themes: Safe city, Healthy city, Multicultural city and Sustainable city. They provide room for individual choices and thereby give opportunities for cumulative learning. By combining humanities, sciences and social sciences perspectives, the programme confronts the students with knowledge, understanding and methodologies from an unusual variety of academic disciplines. However, the methodological part of the curriculum could strike a more even balance between introducing the broad range of relevant methodologies of the disciplines that have their place within the programme and the subsequent acquiring of more specialised expertise in more focused area of expertise. The staff is qualified for the execution of the curriculum in terms of content and educational expertise. The multidisciplinary nature of the programme is reflected in the broad range of expertise contributed by the staff.

### Findings

#### Contents and structure

The fulltime bachelor's programme (180 EC) is organised around four learning trajectories:

1. The Urban Studies Learning Trajectory, in which students acquire knowledge, understanding and skills related to the field of urban studies and the four thematic strands of the programme.
2. The Theory and Method Learning Trajectory, which focuses on the understanding and skills related to theories and methods used by scholars and scientists studying the city.
3. The Academic Skills Learning Trajectory, which focuses on the process of doing research, and on academic communication, particularly writing.
4. The Professional Skills Learning Trajectory, which focuses on the application of knowledge and skills in the field of urban studies in society, and prepares students for the next steps in their career.

The first year of the programme offers introductions to disciplines that make up urban studies and its methodologies in Leiden. The Urban Studies Learning Trajectory thus consists of seven

courses that introduce the key disciplines that contribute to Urban Studies.

The second year of the programme has two priorities: it focuses on the four thematic perspectives (Safe city, Healthy city, Multicultural city and Sustainable city) while at the same time offering methodological training. Half of the programme is compulsory. For the other half, the programme offers a set of elective courses, allowing students to specialise. The compulsory part of the programme is made up of six courses, including four lecture series – one on each of the four themes.

The first semester of the third year is made up of the discretionary space of 30 EC, enabling students to follow a minor, do an internship or study abroad. The second semester is the concluding phase of the programme and comprises three courses in which students write their thesis.

In the Student chapter in the Self-evaluation report, students describe that they enjoy the programme. The contents are interesting, and students are happy with the options to choose different specialisations. However, (mostly in the first and second year) students perceive a discon-

nect between the field of urban studies and certain course contents. It is unclear to them what the added value of certain topics or perspectives is in coming to understand the city. Within the programme, there are many methodological courses that teach students the basics of data collection and data analysis. However, students would like to see a greater emphasis on the practical skills to later work within the Urban Studies field. According to the students, it could be interesting to let students study real life 'casework' from municipalities or companies, so they can learn skills they would use in their jobs later on.

In discussions with management and with students, the committee found that the programme is still looking for appropriate choices in the provision of methodology and statistics. Students are now offered methodology across the full breadth of the qualitative and quantitative spectrum of various disciplines. Students do not gain enough experience with all types of research to conduct it themselves in the bachelor's thesis, but there is also limited room in the programme to allocate more time for methodology teaching. Students indicated that in the preparation for the thesis, they are retrained by their supervisor on the desired research techniques.

Students indicated in the conversation with the committee that they wanted lecturers to talk more about their own research in class, rather than about research by others.

### **Didactic approach**

The programme offers a combination of lectures and seminars. During the first year, students have approximately fourteen contact hours per week. In the first semester, the academic writing and presenting course is offered as a working group; the other four courses are lecture-driven, but have four working groups each. In the second semester, teaching is slightly more intensive, as the two methodological courses have four contact hours per week each: two for lectures, two for a seminar group. This results in fifteen contact hours on average.

The second year offers more room for independent study. As a result, the year is less intensive in terms of contact hours. Also, it has a stronger focus on seminars: students have four hours of lectures and six hours of seminars each week.

In the third year, the focus is on independent study and research, much of it related to the writing of the thesis. In the first half of the second semester, students have, on average, two hours of lectures and four hours of seminars per week. In the second half, two hours of seminars per week remain.

The programme is exploring ways to make the teaching in the first year more interactive. Additionally, the programme aims to somewhat increase the number of contact hours in the second semester of the third year.

In the Student chapter, students stress that they are assessed very often on the basis of group work. Many students would prefer more individual assignments so they can practice their individual academic skills, as well as balance the workload. Currently, it is often difficult to plan ahead, because they are depending on other students to start a project.

### **Incoming students**

The programme started in 2018 with 31 students and has since seen its annual intake increase to 91 in 2022. Approximately 40 percent of the students come from outside the Netherlands, and some 9 percent of the students come from outside the European Union/European Economic Area. To qualify for admission into the programme, prospective students need a diploma at Dutch VWO level or its international equivalent. Additionally, the programme requires all students to have a sufficient command of the English language, following Leiden University's admission requirements.

### **Staff**

The programme is institutionally embedded in the Faculty of Humanities at Leiden University.

Given the multidisciplinary nature of the programme, staff are hired from five different faculties like humanities, social sciences and law.

Many of the staff are early to mid-career scholars and scientists. Senior staff are mostly concentrated in the first-year courses. In order to arrive at a better balance within the teaching team, discussions are ongoing with the Faculty of Humanities as well as with the faculties and institutes that employ the teaching staff. Similarly, the programme is working with the partners to further decrease the share of teaching by temporarily employed lecturers without research time.

The committee observes from the interviews and documentation that the programme makes a lot of effort to form a team with lecturers from different faculties. It is a challenge for the young programme to communicate its profile and goals to all staff. Student evaluations reveal that not all lecturers have been able to connect sufficiently with the programme's profile and position in their courses. As was also noted in the Student chapter, teachers sometimes seem unaware of the broader structure of the programme, or sometimes even of what Urban Studies is. This results in different courses explaining the same concepts from scratch. The programme has introduced a regular rhythm of staff meetings, twice a year in the week before the semester starts. The programme has also instituted an Urban Studies Staff Day. The first edition of this annual staff day, held in June 2022, focused on strengthening the didactic cohesion throughout the programme. Further editions are to take place each May or June. For the academic year 2022-2023, the programme intends to invest in developing a platform for discussing ongoing research in the field of urban studies.

### Language

The programme is taught in English. This has enabled the programme to establish an international classroom. According to the Self-evaluation Report, it also meets the needs of the urban studies field, which is international by nature, and al-

lows the programme to capitalise on the humanities approach to urbanity, which is unique in Europe.

The permanently employed staff are didactically trained and hold the required University Teaching Qualification, which ensures that their English-language competences are at the C1 level in the CEFR framework, as required by the university.

### Infrastructure

The programme is taught on the Leiden campus in The Hague. According to the Self-Evaluation Report, the city of The Hague, and the Rotterdam – The Hague metropolitan area, offer an ideal environment for urban studies, as many of the urban challenges and opportunities of the time are directly present in the region. The management of the programme indicated that it is still a challenge to properly shape the connection with the city. It is an important agenda item to organise activities in the city and strengthen the connection.

From discussions with students and alumni, the committee notes that they highly appreciate the The Hague location, because of its cosmopolitan environment. Also because of this location, students experience a strong community among themselves. Lecturers are easily approachable, even though most have their main offices in Leiden.

### Tutoring and student information

First-year students kick off the programme at an introduction day: they are introduced to the programme, the study coordinators, and the facilities available at Campus The Hague. In the first year, mentor groups strengthen the student community and provide low-threshold guidance, according to the Self-evaluation Report. The mentor groups, each with approximately 20 students, overlap with the seminar groups in the programme's first-year courses. These groups are student-mentored by a second- or third-year student. Besides taking classes together, students in a mentor group meet regularly throughout the

first year to discuss study behaviour, the practicalities of studying at Leiden University in The Hague and obtain answers to any questions they may have.

The coordinators of study invite all first- and second-year students for an individual meeting to discuss their study plans. In addition, they have a weekly open office hour and can easily be reached via email. The student website also offers much information. Throughout the year, the coordinators of study organise information sessions to support students in making choices about their electives and the discretionary space.

Students indicated to the committee that supervision in the programme is sufficient and encourages community building.

### **Considerations**

The committee has established that the contents of the curriculum in general enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The learning trajectories throughout the curriculum support the growth and development of the students. The committee studied the four thematic perspectives of the programme and concludes they indeed provide room for individual choices and thereby help students to develop intellectually. By combining humanities, sciences and social sciences perspectives, the programme confronts the students with knowledge, understanding and methodologies from many relevant academic disciplines.

The programme has a strong international focus, through the teaching, the staff, and the internationally-oriented student community. However, the committee notes the focus on western cities and on the Global North and challenges the course to also focus on a more global perspective – or be more explicit and reflective about its current focus. Besides, the committee observed (as already noted) that (urban) sociology, social geography, urban planning and design could be strengthened in the programme. The committee

understands that the possibilities within the programme are limited to offer all possible disciplines, but it advises the programme to think more fundamentally about the specific intellectual inputs required for a programme of this type and profile, also in relation with master's programmes and the professional field.

The committee examined the table linking the intended learning outcomes to the (assessment of) different courses. The committee noticed that there are many crosses in this overview, meaning that many intended learning outcomes recur in different courses. The committee wonders whether this is efficient and necessary. The committee also sees in the course manuals that lecturers do not always relate the learning objectives of their own course to the programme's intended learning outcomes, which makes it unclear whether the linked intended learning outcomes are reflected in the assessment. The committee recommends that the programme periodically checks what the most logical distribution of the intended learning outcomes is across the programme, and whether the assessment reflects these learning outcomes. The committee understands that the programme has planned to work on this.

The quality and information density of course manuals are variable, the committee notes. Students told the committee that they also experienced this. However, it is always clear to them how the assessment of a course will be organised. If this is not clear from the documentation, they can ask the lecturers for an explanation. The committee recommends that when revising the translation of the intended learning outcomes into the learning objectives of the courses, the quality and consistency of the course manuals should also be addressed.

The committee agrees with the programme that the methodological part of the curriculum could strike a more even balance between introducing the broad palette of relevant methodologies of the disciplines that have their place within the

programme and the subsequent acquiring of more specialised expertise in at least one disciplinary subset of methodologies. The committee suggests that the programme looks at similar multi-disciplinary programmes in Leiden and elsewhere, to learn how these deal with the challenge of offering a very broad first year and still aiming to achieve high quality in year 3.

This could possibly mean that each of the four tracks teaches a limited set of disciplines and their methodologies, rather than offering everything for all four tracks. This would also allow the introduction of an additional requirement for the final thesis, to demonstrate an application of at least two disciplines.

In contrast with the programme's multi-disciplinary outlook, the theses could display more of this feature. The committee also suggests exploring opportunities to integrate statistics more into the disciplinary courses, to strengthen the connection between the methodology and the disciplines.

The programme is exploring the possibility of establishing a shared research environment of an interdisciplinary centre for Urban Studies that brings together all expertise available at Leiden University. The committee agrees with the programme that such a centre would enrich multidisciplinary research in the field and this would strengthen the programme, but acknowledges that this will also put a strain on the contribution from some of the teaching staff that do not see themselves primarily as urbanists.

In the eyes of the committee the didactic concept of the programme structures the programme and supports the learning process of the students. The educational formats are adequate. The first year has a relatively strong emphasis on lectures over teaching in seminars. The committee welcomes the aim of the programme to strengthen the role of seminars in the teaching, particularly in the courses focusing on methodology.

According to the committee's observations, the curriculum ties in closely with the qualifications of the incoming students. The committee feels that the admission procedure functions well and is informative for students and the management. The committee noticed that the programme manages to attract a highly motivated, ambitious group of students.

The committee observes that the staff is qualified for the execution of the curriculum in terms of content and educational expertise. The multidisciplinary nature of the programme is reflected in the broad range of expertise among the staff. The teaching staff are easily accessible to students. Since lecturers come from different faculties, it is important to strengthen the collective understanding of the Urban Studies standards across disciplinary boundaries. The programme is aware of this and is addressing it, the committee notes.

The infrastructure, such as accommodation and material facilities, is sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum. It will be important for this programme, however, to get an adequate 'room of its own' (and probably more than just one room) to make the most of the location in The Hague. The programme makes an effort to strengthen its connection with the city.

The tutoring and provision of information to students are conducive to study progress and tie in with the needs of the (international) students. The programme invests actively in offering students guidance throughout the programme.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.

### 3. Student assessment

The assessment committee judges that the programme **meets this standard**. Multiple assessment types are applied throughout the programme and these are aligned with the learning outcomes. The assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The requirements are transparent to the students. The assessment procedures are sufficiently implemented in the programme. The Board of Examiners performs thoroughly and pro-actively its tasks to control the quality of the exams, the assessment procedures and graduation research projects. The Board shows good knowledge of the programme and its assessment.

#### Findings

##### Assessment methods

In the first year, assessment of the lecture-based introductory courses is generally based on the combination of a midterm exam and a final exam (75 percent of the final grade) and assignments and/or class participation in the seminars (25 percent of the final grade).

In the second year, writing and presenting receive a stronger focus: all four thematic electives include some form of presentation and a final paper. The four lecture courses have a midterm and a final exam or combine a final exam with one individual or group assignment. For the methodological courses, the programme allows for some variety, starting from the particular needs of the courses. Generally, there will be an exam and either a paper or a combination of assignments.

With the exception of a period when on-campus examination was impossible due to COVID-19, the exams are made in written form, predominantly using essay questions. The use of multiple-choice questions in the written exams is limited.

##### Quality assurance and assessment policy

The assessment policy is embedded in the assessment policy of the Faculty of Humanities. The programme has an Assessment Plan, and key aspects of the assessment practices in the programme are regulated through the Course and Examination Regulation.

The programme's Board of Examiners currently comprises four members. The Board meets on a monthly basis. Most regular matters are initially dealt with by the Official Secretary, often in consultation with the Chair of the Board of Examiners. The most important aspect of the Board's work centres around the quality control of assessment practices within the programme. This work is divided into two main spheres: the quality assurance of assessment for individual courses, and the quality assurance of assessment for final thesis projects. For individual courses, the Board of Examiners employs a rolling schedule of quality checks, which ensures that every course on the programme is checked at least once within a six-year period. The Board of Examiners has reviewed almost half of the final theses produced in the first year in which Urban Studies theses have been written (2020-2021). Of theses produced in 2021-22 the Board of Examiners quality checked 15 (or 38%) out of a total of 39 theses. The Board's External Member is responsible for selecting a representative sample which spans both grade boundaries and the four different thematic thesis seminars.

##### Considerations

The committee judges that the bachelor's programme has adequate assessment systems and assessment procedures. The assessment procedures are sufficiently implemented in the programme. Multiple assessment types are implemented in the programme. The assessments are planned in such a way that students have sufficient time to prepare. The programme may wish to consider diversifying the assessment mode in

courses with a heavy emphasis on a final written exam. Some assessments rely perhaps too much on group work.

Given the multidisciplinary nature of the programme, the committee appreciates the programme's efforts to develop shared, interdisciplinary assessment standards and practices, particularly with regard to marking papers and theses.

The Board of Examiners performs its tasks thoroughly and pro-actively to control the quality of

the exams, the assessment procedures and graduation research projects. The Board shows good knowledge of the programme and its assessment.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.

## 4. Achieved learning outcomes

The assessment committee judges that the programme **meets this standard**. The programme aims to provide students with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to understand and address the challenges faced and opportunities offered by cities in the 21st century. The programme succeeds in achieving this aim. The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is among others demonstrated by the results of the theses.

### Findings

The learning trajectories in the programme come together in the thesis and in the consultancy course *Setting Up a Project*.

The thesis is the capstone project in the programme. In the thesis (15 ECTS), the students show that they can apply methods and techniques in the humanities, social sciences or (environmental) sciences, and that they can systematically search and select relevant literature related to one of the four thematic perspectives of the programme. In their writing, the programme expects the students to show awareness of the interdisciplinary nature of Urban Studies.

The theses are supervised both individually and through a thesis seminar. The programme offers specialised seminars for each of the thematic tracks of the programme. Each seminar is organised and coordinated by one of the participating institutes. These seminars comprise six meetings culminating in a thesis proposal. On the basis of this proposal, students proceed to write their thesis individually, under the supervision of a staff member associated with the thesis seminar. To ensure shared standards between the disciplines of the programme, the two readers of each thesis come from different disciplines. In practice, this means that theses from the two humanities-focused thesis seminars (*Multicultural City* and *Safe City*) are second-marked by staff members involved in the two thesis seminars with an emphasis on sciences and social sciences (*Sustainable City* and *Healthy City*) – and vice versa. This also means that each thesis will be marked by one specialist (the supervisor) and one academic with

less specialised knowledge (the second reader), guaranteeing a level playing field for the students.

In the course *Setting Up a Project*, students demonstrate their ability to translate theoretical knowledge and understanding to real-life urban problems, and to connect the skills they have developed in the programme to the challenges and opportunities of a partner in society. Skills described in the final achievement levels that are not tested in the thesis are assessed in this project course, including presentation skills, collaboration skills and the ability to operate in a diverse professional environment, and the ability to apply knowledge and skills in a non-academic professional context.

As of 1 September 2022, the programme has 53 graduates, 37 of whom have only graduated in the summer of 2022. Most of the graduates have continued their studies in a master's programme. They have entered a broad range of programmes at Leiden University, at other universities in the Netherlands, and abroad. According to the Self-evaluation Report, informal exchange with a number of the graduates has taught the programme that the alumni have been experiencing the strengths of their multidisciplinary training and bring an added value to the cooperation with more disciplinary trained students.

### Considerations

The committee assessed fifteen theses of the programme and established that all met the requirements for graduation. The committee considers the grades a fair representation of the quality of the theses. Together with the findings from the



interview with a single alumna and information on the alumni's further education, these outcomes demonstrate that the students have achieved the intended learning outcomes as formulated by the programme. The successful completion of the Setting Up a Project course also shows the alumni have sufficient understanding of the urban challenges and opportunities with which potential employers have to deal.

The committee has some comments on the theses. Some of the theses read by the committee displayed limited multidisciplinaryity. Given the programme's emphasis on the humanities, one would expect to see more of that field in the theses. Instead, many theses focused on one field of study. Some of the earlier theses also could have had more urban focus. In response, the programme drew up a list of knockout criteria, which has been used from last year when approving the research question. The committee expects this to have the desired effect. In addition, a number of students use (social sciences) research methodologies not covered in the programme. They have

been trained in this by the supervisor, but their application is limited. As described in standard 2, the committee recommends strengthening the methodology learning path and giving students room to specialise in particular research methodologies, appropriate to their chosen direction. The committee welcomes the proposed set up of 'calibration sessions' in which thesis supervisors and second readers use past examples to discuss and fine tune marking practices in the programme.

As the programme is young, there is only limited insight into (the success of) alumni in their further education and careers. The committee agrees with the programme that a key challenge in the next phase of the programme is to monitor the educational and career paths of the alumni.

Based on the interviews and examination of the underlying documentation, the assessment committee establishes that the programme **meets this standard**.



## Attachments

## Attachment 1 Assessment committee

prof. dr. M.R. (Maarten) Prak, chair

Maarten Prak is professor emeritus of Economic and Social History at Utrecht University

prof. dr. M. (Maarten) van Ham, member

Maarten van Ham is professor of Urban Geography at TU Delft, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment

dr. M.M.T.E. (Maud) Huynen, member

Maud Huynen is assistant professor at Maastricht Sustainability Institute of Maastricht University

prof. dr. C.P. (Christoph) Lindner, member

Christoph Lindner is Dean and Professor Urban Studies at The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment at University College London

A. (Anne) van de Rijdt, student member

Anne van de Rijdt is a Bachelor student International Development at Wageningen Research University

drs. L. (Linda) van der Grijspaarde

Linda van der Grijspaarde is NVAO certified secretary

## Attachment 2 Program of the assessment

Date: December 15<sup>th</sup> 2022

Location: Rapenburg Leiden

Time		Meeting
8.45	9.00	Welcome
9.00	9.30	Deliberation Committee
9.30	10.00	Faculty Board and Programme Chair
10.00	10.45	Programme Board and supporting staff
11.00	11.45	Students
12.00	12.45	Teaching staff
12.45	13.45	Lunch
13.45	14.30	Board of Examiners
14.45	15.30	Alumni and third year student (online)
15.45	16.15	Programme Board (vice-dean, programme chair and programme manager)
16.15	17.45	Deliberation Committee
17.45	18.00	Plenary feedback

## Attachment 3 Documents

### Online documentation

- Online 'studiegids': Description of the contents of the programme components, with a specification of the learning outcomes, objectives, teaching methods used, method of assessment, assigned literature, teaching staff and number of study credits.
- Programme metrics (Opleidingskaart)
- Course and Examination Regulations
  1. BA Urban Studies, 2022-2023
  2. Faculty of Humanities, 2022-2023
- Staff overview BA Urban Studies
- Assessment plan
- Rules and Regulations of the Board of Examiners
- Vision on Teaching and Learning (Leiden University and Faculty of Humanities)
- Faculty Manuals
  - Guide to Teaching Quality Assurance
  - Tips for Tests
  - Manual for Board of Examiners
  - Teaching Evaluation Framework
  - Manual for Programme Committees
- Course manuals from eight different courses, including assessment materials
- Theses and assessment forms of 15 students