



**RESEARCH MASTER'S  
PROGRAMME LINGUISTICS**

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

**LEIDEN UNIVERSITY**

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This report was finalised on 4 October 2021.



# REPORT ON THE RESEARCH MASTER'S PROGRAMME LINGUISTICS OF LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

This report takes the NVAO's Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands for limited programme assessments as a starting point (September 2018).

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE PROGRAMME

### Research master's programme Linguistics

Name of the programme:	Linguistics
CROHO number:	60817
Level of the programme:	master's
Orientation of the programme:	academic
Number of credits:	120 EC
Specializations or tracks:	-
Location:	Leiden
Mode of study:	full time
Language of instruction:	English
Submission deadline NVAO:	1 November 2021 (extended due to legislation WHW art 5.31 lid 3)

The visit of the assessment panel to the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University took place on 16 and 17 June 2021.

## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA REGARDING THE INSTITUTION

Name of the institution:	Leiden University
Status of the institution:	publicly funded institution
Result institutional quality assurance assessment:	positive

## COMPOSITION OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The NVAO approved the composition of the panel on 25 May 2021. The panel that assessed the research master's programme Linguistics consisted of:

- Prof. dr. H.E. (Henriette) de Swart, professor of French linguistics and semantics at Utrecht University [chair];
- Prof. dr. B.L.J. (Bettelou) Los, full professor English Language at the University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom);
- Prof. dr. D. (Dominiek) Sandra, full professor in Linguistics at Antwerp University (Belgium);
- S. (Sannah) Debreczeni BA, research master's student Language & Cognition (Linguistics) at the University of Groningen [student member].

The panel was supported by dr. F. (Fiona) Schouten, who acted as secretary.

## WORKING METHOD OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The assessment of the research master's programme Linguistics at the Faculty of Humanities of Leiden University was part of the cluster assessment ResMA Linguistics and Literature. Between May 2021 and December 2021 the panel assessed nine programmes at six universities. The following universities participated in this cluster assessment: the University of Groningen, Leiden University, Utrecht University, the University of Amsterdam, Radboud University and Tilburg University. The site visits to Groningen and Leiden were held online due to Covid-19 restrictions.

On behalf of the participating universities, quality assurance agency Qanu was responsible for logistical support, panel guidance and the production of the reports. After 1 July 2021, Qanu was supported by quality assurance agency Academion. Dr. Fiona Schouten was project coordinator for Qanu as well as Academion, and acted as secretary in the cluster assessment. Peter Hilderling MSc acted as secretary during the site visit to Utrecht University.

### *Panel members*

The members of the assessment panel were selected based on their expertise, availability and independence. The panel consisted of the following members:

- Prof. dr. M.P.G.M. (Maarten) Mous (panel chair)
- Prof. dr. H.E. (Henriette) de Swart (panel chair/panel member)
- S. (Sannah) Debreczeni BA (student member)
- Prof. dr. Y. (Yra) van Dijk (panel member)
- S. (Suze) Geuke BA (student member)
- Prof. dr. B. (Birgit) Hellwig (panel member)
- Dr. N.H. (Nivja) de Jong (panel member)
- Prof. dr. B.L.J. (Bettelou) Los (panel member)
- Em. prof. dr. M.J.H. (Maaïke) Meijer (panel member)
- Prof. dr. A. (Ad) Neeleman (panel member)
- J. (Julia) Neugarten BA (student member)
- Prof. dr. D.M. (Diederik) Oostdijk (panel member)
- Prof. dr. H. (Hugo) Quené (panel member)
- Prof. dr. D. (Dominiek) Sandra (panel member)

### *Preparation*

On 14 December 2020 and 12 April 2021, the panel chairs were briefed by Qanu on their role, the assessment framework, the working method, and the planning of site visits and reports. A preparatory panel meeting was organised on 12 April 2021. During this meeting, the panel members received instruction on the use of the assessment framework. The panel also discussed their working method and the planning of the site visits and reports.

The project coordinator composed a schedule for the site visit in consultation with the Faculty. Prior to the site visit, the Faculty selected representative partners for the various interviews. See Appendix 3 for the final schedule.

Before the site visit to Leiden University, Qanu received the self-evaluation report of the programme and sent it to the panel. A thesis selection was made by the panel's chair and the project coordinator. The selection consisted of 15 theses and their assessment forms for the programmes, based on a provided list of graduates between 2017 and 2021. A variety of topics and tracks and a diversity of examiners were included in the selection. The project coordinator and panel chair ensured that the distribution of grades in the selection matched the distribution of grades of all available theses.



After studying the self-evaluation report, theses and assessment forms, the panel members formulated their preliminary findings. The secretary collected all initial questions and remarks and distributed these amongst all panel members.

In a digital meeting before the start of the site visit, the panel discussed its initial findings on the self-evaluation reports and the theses, as well as the division of tasks during the site visit.

#### *Site visit*

The assessment of the programme of Leiden University took place on 16 and 17 June 2021. Before and during the site visit, the panel studied the documents provided by the programme. An overview of these materials can be found in Appendix 4. The panel conducted interviews with representatives of the programmes: students and staff members, the programme's management, alumni and representatives of the Board of Examiners. It also offered students and staff members an opportunity for confidential discussion during a consultation hour. One student or staff member requested a consultation.

The panel used the final part of the site visit to discuss its findings in an internal meeting. Afterwards, the panel chair presented the panel's preliminary findings and general observations. At the end of the site visit, programme and panel held a development dialogue. The outcomes of the development dialogue are published in a separate document that is not part of the application for accreditation.

#### *Consistency and calibration*

In order to assure the consistency of assessment within the cluster, various measures were taken:

1. The panel composition ensured regular attendance of (key) panel members, including the chair;
2. The project advisor attended parts of all site visits and acted as secretary in almost all of them.

#### *Report*

After the site visit, the secretary wrote a draft report based on the panel's findings and submitted it for peer assessment. Subsequently, the secretary sent the report to the panel. After processing the panel members' feedback, the secretary sent the draft report to the Faculty in order to have it checked for factual irregularities. The secretary discussed the ensuing comments with the panel's chair and changes were implemented accordingly. The report was then finalised and sent to the Faculty and University Board.

#### *Definition of judgements standards*

In accordance with the NVAO's Assessment framework for limited programme assessments, the panel used the following definitions for the assessment of the standards:

#### **Generic quality**

The quality that, from an international perspective, may reasonably be expected from a higher education Associate Degree, Bachelor's or Master's programme.

#### **Meets the standard**

The programme meets the generic quality standard.

#### **Partially meets the standard**

The programme meets the generic quality standard to a significant extent, but improvements are required in order to fully meet the standard.

#### **Does not meet the standard**

The programme does not meet the generic quality standard.

The panel used the following definitions for the assessment of the programme as a whole:



**Positive**

The programme meets all the standards.

**Conditionally positive**

The programme meets standard 1 and partially meets a maximum of two standards, with the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel.

**Negative**

In the following situations:

- The programme fails to meet one or more standards;
- The programme partially meets standard 1;
- The programme partially meets one or two standards, without the imposition of conditions being recommended by the panel;
- The programme partially meets three or more standards.





## SUMMARY JUDGEMENT

### *Intended learning outcomes*

According to the panel, the Leiden University research master in Linguistics has a distinctive and fitting profile. It combines the linguistic diversity and variation that characterises the Leiden Faculty of Arts with a theory- and data-driven approach, tying in with linguistics research at the Leiden University Centre of Linguistics (LUCL). The panel finds that this profile is reflected well in the programme's intended learning outcomes, which match the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes. The panel appreciates the fact that the intended learning outcomes pay explicit attention to research ethics. It considers the programme's profile and learning outcomes to be clearly academic and research oriented. At the same time, it recognises the professional orientation, which is particularly visible in the attention paid to the acquisition of transferable skills.

### *Teaching-learning environment*

The panel considers the content and structure of the ResMA in Linguistics well-designed and fitting for a research master's programme. The curriculum reflects the programme's ambition of research-led teaching, as well as the Leiden approach to linguistics. Students acquire knowledge and transferable skills in an integrated manner, through fitting and varied working methods, and work closely with the senior researchers on the teaching staff. The panel also appreciates the way the programme is built up: students are first provided with foundational knowledge and skills as well as an overview of LUCL research, and then given increasing independence in designing, formulating, and implementing their own research projects. The panel is pleased to see that a mechanism is in place to ensure that research master students follow regular courses at research master level through an extra requirement. It advises the teaching staff, Board of Examiners, and programme management to monitor this practice continuously in order to ensure that the extra requirement always matches the desired level. It suggests formulating a vision and/or providing concrete guidelines for lecturers on how to shape the extra requirement.

Student admission takes place in a well-designed manner and both supervision and guidance in the programme function well. Feasibility of the programme has improved recently, and the panel is pleased with the addition of a Thesis Seminar. The panel particularly appreciates the study plan that students make with the programme coordinator, which they can use and adapt over the course of the programme in order to ensure coherence in their personal learning trajectory. It does recommend including a mentorship programme to alleviate the workload of the most prominent teachers. The panel approves of the choice of English as a language of instruction in light of the international academic and professional field. The programme has good facilities and labs which, together with the expert and didactically trained staff members, provide the students with a suitable, research-oriented environment.

### *Student assessment*

The panel finds that the assessment policy and practice in the programme are well designed. The programme's Assessment Plan provides insight into the manner of assessment and the alignment of learning objectives per course with the intended learning outcomes. Assessment types are sufficiently varied and match the learning objectives. In line with its recommendation on Standard 2, the panel advises the programme to ensure that the extra requirement for ResMA students in MA courses is always assessed in a fitting way. The panel is pleased with the setup of the thesis, which ascertains that students complete the entire research cycle. Regarding thesis assessment, the panel is positive about the independency of the second thesis assessor. The panel recommends storing the separate forms of the two readers along with the final assessment form in order to be able to demonstrate this practice to external reviewers. The panel was pleased to see that the direct supervisor also rates the writing process and development of the student as a separate criterion.

According to the panel, the Board of Examiners is proactive in the fulfilment of its legal duties and works hard to ensure the programme's assessment quality. The panel finds that a lot of responsibilities rest with the Board of Examiners. It recommends placing more responsibility with individual members of the teaching staff and with the



programme management itself. This could be done by adding a narrative to the Assessment Plan explaining the points of departure and principles guiding assessment in the research master.

#### *Achieved learning outcomes*

The panel considered the final theses of the ResMA to be of adequate level, ranging from satisfactory to excellent, and to reflect the focus of the programme. The panel learned that some theses have been turned into publications. A number of the programme's graduates end up in fitting or even prestigious positions in the academic or professional field. Alumni feel well-prepared by the programme and benefit from its focus on transferable skills. The panel advises the programme to strengthen its alumni policy in order to be able to keep track of their careers. The panel concludes that the programme achieves its aims.

The panel assesses the standards from the *Assessment framework for limited programme assessments* in the following way:

#### *Research master's programme Linguistics*

Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes	meets the standard
Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment	meets the standard
Standard 3: Student assessment	meets the standard
Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes	meets the standard
General conclusion	positive

The chair, prof. dr. Henriette de Swart, and the secretary, dr. Fiona Schouten, of the panel hereby declare that all panel members have studied this report and that they agree with the judgements laid down in the report. They confirm that the assessment has been conducted in accordance with the demands relating to independence.

Date: 4 October 2021

## DESCRIPTION OF THE STANDARDS FROM THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK FOR LIMITED FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENTS

### **Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes**

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

### **Findings**

The research master's programme in Linguistics organised by the Faculty of Arts at Leiden University identifies with the nature of research carried out at the Leiden University Centre of Linguistics (LUCL). LUCL views language as key to understanding human nature and focuses on linguistic diversity and variation as well as on multi-methods in the analysis and description of languages. The ResMA Linguistics reflects this focus and combines the linguistic diversity and variation that characterises the Leiden Faculty of Arts with a theory- and data-driven approach that draws on the expertise available at LUCL. It aims to provide students with the skills, tools, and methods to gain a more sophisticated insight into and theoretical understanding of how languages work, how people use languages in communities, and how languages are acquired and change over time.

The principal objective of the programme is to broaden the knowledge and understanding of students and to provide them with skills and training in the use of scientific methods in linguistics. It also aims to equip students with analytical, critical, methodological, and communication skills that enable them to pursue further academic study at PhD level or a professional career outside of academia. Graduates of the programme are prepared for research-based careers in research bodies, (academic) education, and in management positions in governmental and non-governmental organisations.

The programme developed a set of intended learning outcomes (see appendix 1) that match this profile. The learning outcomes are divided into five subsets which reflect the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes and clearly specify the linguistic diversity covered by the programme. They also reflect the academic orientation of the programme and dedicate special attention to the ethics of linguistic research.

The panel approves of the programme's distinctive profile and the clear way this is reflected in the intended learning outcomes. It considers both the programme's vision and the way this is elaborated in the learning outcomes as fitting for a research master's programme. The panel finds that the orientation is clearly academic, but that sufficient attention is also paid to preparing students for the professional field. The programme's professional orientation is reflected in its focus on transferable skills, such as data collection and analysis. The panel appreciates the fact that the intended learning outcomes explicitly refer to research ethics.

### **Considerations**

According to the panel, the Leiden University research master in Linguistics has a distinctive and fitting profile. It combines the linguistic diversity and variation that characterises the Leiden Faculty of Arts with a theory- and data-driven approach, tying in with linguistics research at the Leiden University Centre of Linguistics (LUCL). The panel finds that this profile is reflected well in the programme's intended learning outcomes, which match the Dublin descriptors for master's programmes. The panel appreciates the fact that the intended learning outcomes pay explicit attention to research ethics. It considers the programme's profile and learning outcomes to be clearly academic and research oriented. At the same time, it recognises the professional orientation, which is particularly visible in the attention paid to the acquisition of transferable skills.

### **Conclusion**

*Research master's programme Linguistics:* the panel assesses Standard 1 as 'meets the standard'.

**Standard 2: Teaching-learning environment**

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

**Findings***Admission*

The ResMA Linguistics is a selective programme. Its admission policy combines quantitative and qualitative selection criteria. Candidates must hold a bachelor's degree in linguistics or in a language and culture programme from a research university. They must show good grades comparable with an average mark of at least 7.5 (Dutch grading system) for their bachelor's programme, and a grade for the bachelor's thesis of 8 or higher. Candidates are required to have affinity with and suitability for scholarly research in linguistics, an ability to collect linguistic data, discover patterns in them, and understand basic linguistic analyses. They are also required to have a demonstrable motivation to study in the programme. Their application file must include two letters of recommendation and a letter of motivation, besides standard documents such as relevant diplomas and transcripts, CV, and proof of English proficiency. In addition, they are required to include a research proposal of approximately 1,000 words, including an annotated bibliography. The programme's Board of Admission assesses the applications and decides on admission.

The panel appreciates the careful and strict selection of students, which leads to an average of 12 students entering the programme in September, and 3 to 6 students in February. It discussed the admission policy with the programme management and the Board of Examiners, which shares its advisor with the Board of Admissions. The panel wondered whether the research proposal sent in by the applicants predetermines the direction and choices open to them upon enrolment in the programme. The panel was reassured on this account by the programme management and Board of Admissions: the research proposal is used to determine whether prospective students achieve the desired entry level, and tests whether they fully grasp the nature of the research master. Students are free to choose their own learning trajectory upon enrolment, independent of the research method and choice of topic in the proposal.

*Curriculum structure and content*

The programme, totalling 120 EC, consists of four semesters with a course load of 30 EC each. The curriculum is divided into three phases. In the core phase, during the first year, two core courses (20 EC in total) treat the programme's thematic profile of diversity in languages and methods in linguistics. In these courses, the students acquire knowledge of the methodological approaches and debates, and the variations in structures across languages that will go on to define their own research. Students then move on to the deepening phase (year 1 and 2), developing their interests and deepening their knowledge in particular areas of linguistics by focusing on at least two Topics courses (10 EC in total) and at least two elective courses (20 EC in total). In addition, students follow two courses in the Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics (LOT; 10 EC in total). In the final synthesis phase, which takes place in year 2, students write a thesis for which they carry out independent research by conducting fieldwork or carrying out experimental research in the laboratory (30 EC). For an overview of the curriculum and the various courses, see Appendix 2.

The panel studied the curriculum and its content. It found that the first core course, Research Methods in Linguistics, was introduced after the previous assessment and fulfils an important function at the start of the programme. It is the first course for students who start in September, and is taught by various teachers from the LUCL, who each introduce the students to the methods used in five of the following subdisciplines of linguistics, depending on availability of staff: theoretical linguistics, second language acquisition, language in society, language use & discourse studies, descriptive linguistics, experimental phonetics, and comparative historical linguistics. Through this course, students become acquainted with the various research methods and specialisation options offered in the



programme, as well as with key staff members representing these directions. The panel appreciates the fact that this course clearly links the programme to the LUCL expertise and provides the students with a vantage point from which to approach the rest of the programme. The second mandatory core course, Samples of Linguistic Structure, is offered in the second semester, and constitutes the first core course for students enrolling in February. It reflects the diversity of languages offered at the Faculty of Arts in Leiden and deals with them at various levels of analysis. In this way, students starting at either moment in the programme are presented with a course that provides an overview of linguistics research at LUCL.

Next to the core courses, students always follow at least two Topics courses. Two of the Topics courses are offered every year: Academic Skills for Linguists, which students are strongly encouraged to follow in their second year, and Introduction to Descriptive Statistics and Programming in R for Linguists. In practice, all students take Academic Skills for Linguists. The panel gained a positive impression of this well-structured course, which prepares students for doing independent research. The course offers students training in transferable research skills, but also trains presentation and communication skills. They practise different academic writing formats, including scientific dissemination and funding proposals. The course explicitly deals with research ethics, a theme which is present more implicitly elsewhere in the curriculum. The panel compliments the programme with the addition of this valuable and well-executed course after the previous site visit. It also appreciates the Statistics and Programming in R course, which offers students the possibility to develop specific transferable skills. The other Topics courses are diverse in nature and usually match certain areas of expertise present at LUMC, which the panel appreciates.

The inclusion of the LOT Summer and Winter Schools in the curriculum provides students with national and international perspectives on the academic field. They meet with peers and teaching staff of other Dutch Linguistics programmes, and familiarize themselves with their research expertise. The LOT Summer and Winter Schools also offer students a valuable opportunity to build a network within the field of Linguistics. Students can also choose to follow relevant courses at the LOT approved Leiden Summer School in Languages and Linguistics, or participate in activities for RM students organized by other Dutch National Research Schools.

The ResMA programme offers students a wide range of elective options. A relatively large number of electives is shared with regular master's programmes. In order to ensure that ResMA students attain the research master level in these MA courses, they are required to do extra assignments. It is up to ResMA students to take the initiative and ask the teacher of the course if they can upgrade the course level for them, and up to the staff member to determine the nature of the extra requirement. The panel learned from students as well as staff members that this usually works well. ResMA students may for instance be asked to write a longer, more research-oriented paper than master students. The panel is pleased to see that this mechanism is in place and that staff members in MA courses are usually aware of the extra requirement – something that wasn't always the case in the past, as the panel learned. However, the panel finds that responsibility for attaining research master level in master courses should not be placed predominantly with the student and lecturer. The panel advises the teaching staff, Board of Examiners, and programme management to monitor this practice continuously in order to ensure that the extra requirement always matches the desired level. It suggests formulating a vision and/or provide concrete guidelines for lecturers on how to shape the extra requirement.

On the whole, the panel considers the curriculum setup and content to be well-designed. The curriculum reflects the programme's ambition of research-led teaching, as well as the Leiden approach to linguistics. Students acquire knowledge and transferable skills in an integrated manner, and work closely with the senior researchers on the teaching staff. The panel also appreciates the way the programme is built up: students are first provided with foundational knowledge and skills as well as an overview of the programme, and then given increasing independence in designing, formulating, and implementing their own research projects.

*Teaching methods and impact Covid pandemic*



The teaching concept of the programme is based on the view that ResMA students are being trained as professional researchers, either in preparation for an academic PhD trajectory or for trajectories outside academia for which advanced academic and research skills and training are required. The teaching methods and practices are sufficiently varied, ranging from classroom discussions, presentations, and peer review exercises to essay writing. They also aim at developing students' own research, learning, and transferable skills. Much stress is put on in-class discussion and interaction, allowing students to learn from each other's perspectives. The language of instruction is English, as is the programme name, which the panel considers the logical choice in light of its dominance in the academic and professional field.

The manner of teaching was impacted by the Covid pandemic. Many of the courses were offered digitally, but the programme continued to offer the Core and some Topics courses on campus, with online streaming for students who could not be on campus because of quarantine or other health reasons. The government's advice for only essential international travel and the University's ban on research travel abroad affected the plans of students wishing to undertake fieldwork outside the Netherlands. The programme actively supported students to seek alternatives. Some found speakers of the languages in which they were interested in the Netherlands and worked with them. Others found data sets to mine to address their research questions. Experimental work based on already collected data also continued. The panel appreciates the programme's efforts to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on the curriculum.

#### *Student guidance and feasibility*

Since the programme offers flexible learning trajectories and much freedom of choice, the research master students face the challenge of selecting the best options to match their own interests and create a coherent individual trajectory. In order to help them achieve this, the programme coordinator sits down with the individual students at the start of the programme to design a study plan and help them navigate their choices. The plan is checked by the Board of Examiners. The panel learned that this study plan is a living document, and can be adapted at all times during the programme to suit the students' changing needs. It considers the study plan in this form a valuable way to help students navigate the curriculum.

The programme offers students a variety of meetings and information options, such as an introductory meeting at the start of the first year, a lunch meeting with senior students and (during the Covid period) a student buddy system. A key role is reserved for the programme coordinator, who keeps an eye on study results and progress as well as on possible personal issues. Students also turn to other teaching staff members for advice. However, there is no formal mentorship programme in place, and the panel recommends introducing one. Such a programme would not only make it easier for students to ask for help and advice, but also combats a heavy workload among key staff members in the programme. Students naturally turn to the teachers they know best and whose research interests match their own. This can result in a heavier workload among those members of the teaching staff who offer the more popular courses or teach right at the beginning of the programme. A mentoring programme would create a more equal distribution of work over all staff members.

According to the self-evaluation and the student chapter, the Covid pandemic had an effect on students' wellbeing. Students and alumni that the panel interviewed on the subject mentioned that cohort formation is already quite difficult in normal circumstances: the students follow only a limited number of classes together and then embark upon very different individual trajectories. In the past, a study room for students, social events, and similar measures and activities allowed ResMA Linguistics students to encounter one another. During the Covid pandemic, cohort forming required more effort from the programme and students alike, and was felt to be not entirely successful. The panel noticed that the programme was aware of this and tried bringing its students together as much as possible. It appreciates these efforts. The panel advises to make sure that in the planned move to a new building, students of this programme will once again be given their own space.



Feasibility in the programme was an issue in the previous assessment, but this issue has now been solved. Students graduate within 2,5 years on average. The programme believes that the improved study success is the result of the close monitoring of students throughout the programme, and particularly of measures such as the newly introduced Thesis Seminar to guide the process of writing the ResMA thesis. In the Thesis Seminar, students share progress on thesis writing and present their findings to peers and teaching staff. Although the panel finds it too soon to draw any conclusions, it does consider the Thesis Seminar a promising addition. It also appreciates the guidance students receive while writing their thesis. In their fourth semester, students choose a topic of their liking, and carry out independent research by conducting lab- or fieldwork. The thesis is written under supervision of a researcher at LUCL, who is usually chosen on the basis of the theme and topic the student chooses, if necessary with the help of the programme coordinator. Students the panel spoke to were pleased with this working method and the panel concludes that the process of thesis supervision functions adequately.

Internships are not a structural part of the curriculum. A student wishing to replace an elective with an internship must seek prior approval by the Board of Examiners. A number of students have embarked on extracurricular internships both in the Netherlands and abroad. For internships abroad, they can make use of the outstanding facilities Leiden has in place to find international internships. The core staff members are part of international networks on which students can draw for internship experience, and help arrange for local supervision in close contact with Leiden supervision. Some students fulfil research internships within ongoing research projects at the University, thereby becoming part of a larger research team. The panel considers these internships valuable experiences for students.

#### *Teaching staff*

The programme is taught by a core staff of senior researchers, most of whom are senior university lecturers (UHD) and full professors at LUCL. The research quality of LUCL was judged as 'very high' in its most recent SEP evaluation. All ResMA Linguistics lecturers have obtained their University Teaching Qualification (BKO), and one has acquired a Senior Teaching Qualification (SKO). The lecturers in the programme also have native or near-native competence in English. Evaluations indicate that students appreciate the command of English of their teachers. The panel is pleased with the strong expertise, research background and didactic skills of the teaching staff. Students told the panel that they found their teachers to be helpful, approachable and clearly expert in their subjects.

The matrix structure of the Faculty of Arts generates ample opportunities for collaboration in research groups, but at the same time prevents programmes from forming natural 'teams' of staff members. The staff members who are teaching different courses within the programme often do not meet in the context of the research master. When asked about this by the panel, the teaching staff agreed that regular meetings to discuss the coherence, learning trajectories, and assessment practices in the various courses would be a good addition, but they indicated these were not taking place because they would add to the already high workload. Although the panel is aware that staff members experience a high work pressure, it still suggests finding ways to bring all staff members in the ResMA together on a more regular basis. It considers this beneficial for the programme's coherence and quality. The panel learned from the programme and faculty management that plans are made to address and reduce the workload of staff members. The panel applauds this initiative.

#### *Programme-specific facilities*

The ResMA Linguistics programme is embedded in the research environment of LUCL. Students are invited to participate in a number of research events of the institute. These include the (bi-)monthly LUCL colloquia, where invited experts (mostly from outside Leiden and the Netherlands) share ideas about their current research in the language sciences. A dedicated Master Colloquium for both ResMA and regular MA students is used to share information about administrative matters, e.g. regarding the thesis. Also, teachers may use the occasion to provide information about specific elective courses (such as Forensic Linguistics). Moreover, students use the colloquium to share the results of their research, as well as their internship and fieldwork experiences, including the practicalities involved. Additionally, various research clusters within LUCL (e.g., Comparative Syntax, Sociolinguistics, and Neuro-





and Psycholinguistics) have regular seminar series which are open to students. ResMA students are also recruited to assist in organising various conferences at Leiden, and can present some of their work there. The panel appreciates these possibilities.

ResMA students have access to the linguistics laboratories of LUCL: the Phonetics, Baby and EEG labs. They can also borrow recording equipment for their data collection from the labs. The panel was able to look at these labs during a virtual tour in the digital site visit. It found the labs to be fully equipped, there was a structure in place to train students (shadowing) and the panel noticed that they provided students with a good, central and accessible place to do their lab work. Some of the theses examined confirmed that the labs are a valuable addition to the data collection toolkit of the students.

### **Considerations**

According to the panel, the content and structure of the ResMA in Linguistics are well-designed and fitting for a research master's programme. The curriculum reflects the programme's ambition of research-led teaching, as well as the Leiden approach to linguistics. Students acquire knowledge and transferable skills in an integrated manner, through fitting and varied working methods, and work closely with the senior researchers on the teaching staff. The panel also appreciates the way the programme is built up: students are first provided with foundational knowledge and skills as well as an overview of LUCL research, and then given increasing independence in designing, formulating, and implementing their own research projects. The panel is pleased to see that a mechanism is in place to ensure that research master students follow regular courses at research master level through an extra requirement. It advises the teaching staff, Board of Examiners, and programme management to monitor this practice continuously in order to ensure that the extra requirement always matches the desired level. It suggests formulating a vision and/or providing concrete guidelines for lecturers on how to shape the extra requirement.

Student admission takes place in a well-designed manner and both supervision and guidance in the programme function well. Feasibility of the programme has improved recently, and the panel is pleased with the addition of a Thesis Seminar. The panel particularly appreciates the study plan that students make with the programme coordinator, which they can use and adapt over the course of the programme in order to ensure coherence in their personal learning trajectory. It does recommend including a mentorship programme to alleviate the workload of the most prominent teachers. The panel approves of the choice of English as a language of instruction in light of the international academic and professional field. The programme has good facilities and labs which, together with the expert and didactically trained staff members, provide the students with a suitable, research-oriented environment.

### **Conclusion**

*Research master's programme Linguistics:* the panel assesses Standard 2 as 'meets the standard'.

#### **Standard 3: Student assessment**

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

### **Findings**

#### *Assessment policy and practice*

The assessment policy of the programme follows that of the Faculty and defines important issues such as the sequence, distribution, and results of tests. Furthermore, the programme has a detailed Assessment Plan, in which the learning objectives per course are related to the final learning outcomes and the assessment forms associated with the courses are mapped out. With the help of the Assessment Plan, the Programme Board and the Board of Examiners see to it that there is sufficient diversity in assessment methods, and that the learning objectives and learning outcomes are adequately assessed.





The methods of assessment (papers, oral presentations, written assignments, thesis) have been chosen so as to guarantee that the learning outcomes are achieved. Assessment methods aim to challenge students and draw on their capacity to conduct original research. Research and academic skills are assessed through assignments, presentations, and active participation in seminars/groups, often in combination. Assessment methods also include the writing of funding proposals, reflecting the academic practice that the programme prepares for. The panel noticed that even though students are frequently expected to produce papers, there is enough variation in tests: every course offers a combination of multiple assessment types. In the case of internships, the Leiden assessor decides on the final grade with input from the internship supervisor. The panel considers assessment in individual courses to be apt and adequate for the programme's level. It was told by students and teaching staff that although assessment sometimes needed to be adapted due to the covid pandemic, this caused no great issues in the programme.

When regular MA students and ResMA students take part in the same course, the assessment forms partly overlap. As mentioned before, extra requirements apply for the research master students. The panel learned that sometimes, this assignment differs from the MA assignments in form rather than content, for instance, ResMA students are asked to present their paper in the shape of a publishable article. In line with its recommendation on Standard 2, the panel advises the programme to ensure that the extra requirement in MA courses is assessed in a fitting way.

#### *Thesis assessment*

The theses are assessed independently by two readers, using Faculty-wide thesis assessment forms. The first reader is the supervisor, the second is an expert in the subdiscipline related to the thesis topic and research. The second reader is not involved in the supervision. Both readers assess the thesis independently and fill out separate assessment forms. The final mark, along with the feedback from both readers, is released via a digital thesis assessment system that operates at Faculty level. Following this, students have the opportunity to receive oral feedback on their performance by their supervisor. During the graduation ceremony, students give an elevator pitch on their research, aimed at presenting their achievements to a wider, non-academic audience (in this case, family and friends) and at increasing their confidence as young scholars.

The panel is pleased with the way theses are assessed in the programme, including the graduation ceremony. It ascertained that students complete the entire research cycle, from research proposal to doing fieldwork or lab research and presenting the results in writing as well as orally. It is positive about the independent second assessor. In the assessment forms of the theses that it studied (see Standard 4), the panel could not always recognise the separate judgements of both readers, since the end result presented to the student is a synthesis of both assessments. The panel was pleased to see that the direct supervisor also rates the writing process and development of the student as a separate criterion.

#### *Board of Examiners*

The ResMA Linguistics shares its Board of Examiners with the MA Linguistics. The Board consists of three academic staff members (including the chair), all of whom regularly teach courses in the MA and/or ResMA Linguistics, and an external member, who is an expert in educational studies and the theory of assessment methods. The Board has the support of an official secretary and is advised by the coordinator of studies.

The Board of Examiners performs an annual quality check on ResMA theses by selecting a random sample of 15-20 % of all ResMA theses, representing different parts of the grade field. It also has its external member check all thesis assessment forms in order to find out whether they demonstrate internal logic and whether the grade awarded matches the sub-assessments noted in the forms. The Board also reviews courses as well as course assessments. The outcome of the entire quality check is laid down in a report that is shared with the Programme Board. If necessary, the Board of Examiners discusses its overall findings (e.g., regarding calibration of grades and leveling of course load) at meetings with the staff of the programme. Recent meetings have addressed the relatively low



number of cases of plagiarism and the relatively high number of cum laude and summa cum laude distinctions awarded.

According to the panel, the Board of Examiners is proactive in the fulfilment of its legal duties and works hard to ensure the programme's assessment quality. For instance, the Board appoints second thesis assessors and checks whether course outlines and learning objectives are aligned within the programme and its intended learning outcomes. The panel finds that a lot of responsibilities rest with the Board of Examiners. It recommends placing more responsibility with individual members of the teaching staff and with the programme management itself. This could be done by adding a narrative to the Assessment Plan explaining the points of departure and principles guiding assessment in the research master.

During the site visit, the panel discussed the absence of rubrics for thesis assessment with the Board of Examiners. It learned that this choice for holistic grading (albeit with the use of a grading scale) has been a conscious one and that it has been reflected upon by the Board of Examiners. The panel invites the Board to have a broader discussion on this subject with the teaching staff to raise awareness of assessment practices. The panel also discussed the matter of the high number of (summa) cum laudes. It is pleased that this has been noticed and addressed by the Board of Examiners.

### **Considerations**

The panel considers the assessment policy and practice in the programme well designed. The programme's Assessment Plan provides insight into the manner of assessment and the alignment of learning objectives per course with the intended learning outcomes. Assessment types are sufficiently varied and match the learning objectives. In line with its recommendation on Standard 2, the panel advises the programme to ensure that the extra requirement for ResMA students in MA courses is always assessed in a fitting way. The panel is pleased with the way theses are assessed in the programme. It ascertains that students complete the entire research cycle and is positive about the independent second thesis assessor. The panel was pleased to see that the direct supervisor also rates the writing process and development of the student as a separate criterion.

According to the panel, the Board of Examiners is proactive in the fulfilment of its legal duties and works hard to ensure the programme's assessment quality. The panel finds that a lot of responsibilities rest with the Board of Examiners. It recommends placing more responsibility with individual members of the teaching staff and with the programme management itself. This could be done by adding a narrative to the Assessment Plan explaining the points of departure and principles guiding assessment in the research master.

### **Conclusion**

*Research master's programme Linguistics: the panel assesses Standard 3 as 'meets the standard'.*

#### **Standard 4: Achieved learning outcomes**

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

### **Findings**

The panel studied 15 final theses from the Leiden ResMA and considered them to be of adequate level, ranging from satisfactory to excellent. The panel was pleased to see that the theses reflect the profile of the programme in their breadth of subject matter, while frequently demonstrating the unique LUCL research profile in their choice of topics. The panel learned that some theses have been turned into publications, which testifies to the attainment of the intended learning outcomes. The panel feels that this number could be increased and advises the programme to stimulate its graduates in publishing their research.



The panel learned that a number of the programme's graduates end up in PhD positions. The programme could not account for all of its alumni, but the panel gathered from the site visit interview and the self-evaluation that many of them end up in fitting or even prestigious positions in the academic or professional field. Alumni told the panel that they felt well-prepared by the programme and benefitted from its focus on transferable skills while developing their career outside academia. The panel advises the programme to strengthen its alumni policy in order to be able to keep track of their careers. The panel concludes that the success of alumni indicates that the programme achieves its aims.

### **Considerations**

The panel considered the final theses of the ResMA to be of adequate level, ranging from satisfactory to excellent, and to reflect the focus of the programme. The panel learned that some theses have been turned into publications. A number of the programme's graduates end up in fitting or even prestigious positions in the academic or professional field. Alumni feel well-prepared by the programme and benefit from its focus on transferable skills. The panel advises the programme to strengthen its alumni policy in order to be able to keep track of their careers. The panel concludes that the programme achieves its aims.

### **Conclusion**

*Research master's programme Linguistics*: the panel assesses Standard 4 as 'meets the standard'.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

### **Conclusion**

The panel assesses the *research master's programme Linguistics* as 'positive'.



## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX 1: INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

### ***I. Knowledge and understanding***

Graduates demonstrate, in their written and oral work:

1. a thorough knowledge and understanding of the discipline of linguistics, the scientific study of human language;
2. familiarity with the basic concepts, research methods and techniques, and current developments in the field; graduates have a good overview of various approaches to linguistic diversity, the way in which variation and uniformity in languages can be identified and studied;
3. an in-depth knowledge of at least one subdiscipline of linguistics, such as descriptive, formal, experimental, or comparative linguistics; being acquainted with its specific research questions and methodology.

### ***II. Application of knowledge and understanding***

Graduates demonstrate, in their written and oral work, the ability to:

1. define a research topic, formulate research questions, and collect data, e.g. through fieldwork, study of existing corpora or an experimental setup;
2. perform an analysis and interpretation of the object of inquiry;
3. relate the analysis to the relevant literature;
4. contribute to on-going debates in the discipline, based on independent research and theoretical reflection.

### ***III. Making judgments***

Graduates demonstrate, in their written and oral work, the capacity to:

1. critically evaluate their sources;
2. build an argument that leads to its conclusion in a cogent, clear and verifiable manner;
3. take into account the philosophy and ethics of linguistic research in doing research;
4. be able to relate the results of their research to the existing literature.

### ***IV. Communication***

Graduates demonstrate, in their written and oral work, the ability to:

1. formulate clear and well-founded research questions, hypotheses and analyses in grammatically correct English, and present this in a coherent and convincing way to an academic and non-academic audience.

### ***V. Learning skills***

Graduates demonstrate, in their written and oral work, the ability to:

1. apply learning skills that allow them to initiate and conduct a research project with a great degree of independence and autonomy, under expert national or international supervision; this means that the student:
  - a) has articulated the research question or thesis independently;
  - b) has independently conducted relevant bibliographical research;
  - c) has drawn up a realistic research plan;
  - d) has applied other relevant linguistic research skills in an independent way.
  - e) has the ability to contribute to the growth of knowledge or to its applicability, the latter most likely in a team of researchers.



## APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM

Year 1	EC	Level
<b>Core courses</b>		
Research Methods in Linguistics	10	600
Samples of Linguistic Structure	10	600
<b>Select topics in Linguistics (two needed in ResMA)</b>		
A: Multilingual Practices: Code Switching	5	600
B: Academic Skills for Linguists	5	600
C: Sign linguistics	5	600
D: Methods in Sociolinguistics	5	600
E: Introduction to descriptive statistics and programming in R for Linguists	5	600
<b>Select research school electives (10 EC needed in ResMA)</b>		
LOT Summer School/Winter School	10	600
Research School Course Linguistics	10	600
<b>Select elective courses from MA Linguistics of at least level 500</b>		

Year 2	EC	Level
Thesis	30	600
Thesis Seminar		
<b>Select topics in Linguistics (two needed in ResMA)</b>		
A: Multilingual Practices: Code Switching	5	600
B: Academic Skills for Linguists	5	600
C: Sign linguistics	5	600
D: Methods in Sociolinguistics	5	600
E: Introduction to descriptive statistics and programming in R for Linguists	5	600
<b>Select research school electives (10 EC needed in ResMA)</b>		
LOT Summer School/Winter School	10	600
<b>Select elective courses from MA Linguistics of at least level 500 and/or:</b>		
Corpus Lexicography	10	600





## APPENDIX 3: PROGRAMME OF THE SITE VISIT

Site visit Leiden University M Linguistics (research master)

Online

Day 1: Wednesday 16 June 2021

13.00	15.00	Preliminary meeting; office hour
15.00	15.15	Welcome
15.15	15.45	Interview with Faculty Board
15.45	16.00	Panel meeting/break
16.00	16.45	Interview with Programme Management
16.45	17.15	Panel meeting/break
17.15	17.45	Interview with alumni

Day 2: Wednesday 17 June 2021

09.00	09.30	Panel meeting
09.30	10.15	Interview with students
10.15	10.45	Panel meeting/break
10.45	11.30	Interview with teaching staff
11.30	12.00	Panel meeting/break
12.00	12.30	Virtual tour of Language Lab
12.30	13.15	Lunch; panel meeting
13.15	13.45	Interview with Board of Examiners
13.45	14.15	Panel meeting
14.15	15.00	Final interview with management
15.00	17.00	Preparation of preliminary assessment
17.00	17.30	Development dialogue
17.30	18.00	Oral report of preliminary assessment

## APPENDIX 4: THESES AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY THE PANEL

Prior to the site visit, the panel studied 15 theses of the research master's programme Linguistics. Information on the selected theses is available from QANU upon request.

During the site visit, the panel studied, among other things, the following documents (partly as hard copies, partly via the institute's electronic learning environment):

- The impact of Corona and the programme's response
- Admission to the Programme
- Intended learning outcomes
- Staff overview
- Overview Research Quality Assessment of LUCL
- Schematic overview of the curriculum 2020-2021
- Overview admissions
- Students who graduated with distinction
- List of alumni and their current positions (selected)
- Publications of ResMA students based on their theses
- e-Prospectus
- OER ResMA Linguistics
- Opleidingskaart Research Master Linguistics
- Visitatierapport 2015
- Guide to Teaching Quality Assurance FGW 2017
- Manual Board of Examiners FGW 2018
- Manual Programme Committees FGW 2018
- Quality Assurance of Assessment (Dutch) 2019
- Rules and Regulations of the Board of Examiners
- Tips for Tests
- Vision on Teaching and Learning
- Addendum bij ZER

